

Customer Service Standards For Grant & Regulatory Activity

1 Introduction

This leaflet sets out what the Forestry Commission England service standards are in relation to grant and regulatory activity. It includes the standards we aim to provide for every application and claim we deal with.

2 Customer Service Aims

We aim to provide the following customer service standards when dealing with grant or licence applications and claims:

- FC staff will always carry identification when carrying out site visits
- FC staff will always give their names when communicating with customers
- Phones will be answered promptly within normal working hours
- If you speak to someone who cannot provide advice or you need technical advice we will arrange for someone who can help to call you back and if appropriate arrange a site visit
- If you write to us and it needs a reply, we will respond within 2 weeks
- Where we won't meet the aims stated above, we will contact customers to explain the reasons why and keep customers informed on progress
- We will endeavour where possible to exceed our customer service standards to meet individual needs, for example where work or grant payment is urgent
- If we require further information to assess your application we will write to you explaining what information is required. The time spent waiting for your reply will not be included in our processing time

Grant or Licence applications

When dealing with a grant or licence application, we aim to provide the following customer service standards:

- We will acknowledge your application within 3 days of receipt and tell you the name of the FC member of staff who will be dealing with the application. If the application is incomplete we will return it explaining what further information is required

- We will contact you within 2 weeks if more information is required to progress the application
- If we cannot proceed with your application we will write to you within 2 weeks explaining why
- We will contact you if a site visit is required and give you the opportunity to attend if mutually convenient
- If a site visit is required, we will do this within 6 weeks of receipt of a complete application
- If we require further information in order to progress an application, we will write to you setting out what is required and give a reasonable time for the information to be provided
- We will inform you, and where possible mutually agree, what work will be included in the licence/contract (including restocking conditions) while it is entered on the FC public register or consulted upon
- Where an application is linked with a scoring or judging round, we will notify applicants whether they have been accepted or not within 4 weeks of the closing date.
- We will conclude consultation within 1 month, where consultees have been timely with their replies
- Service to consultees / register comments – we will consider all responses received and adjust the proposals with the applicants agreement where appropriate. Where proposals are not being altered, we will explain why

Note

A 'complete application' is taken as a fully completed set of application forms including maps that meet our published standards

Grant claims and licence conditions

When dealing with a grant claim or inspection, we aim to provide the following customer service standards:

- If an inspection is required before payment, we will contact you to arrange a visit within 2 weeks of claim receipt. We may carry out inspections after the claim has been paid
- If, following inspection, we find remedial work is required in order to comply with licence or grant contract conditions and it is reasonable to do so, we will write setting out the work required and timescale to complete it. We will set out what action will be taken if the work is not carried out as requested or within the timescale allowed e.g. grant reclaim, interest charged, enforcement notice, direct action and reimbursement

Important notes

A 'satisfactory claim' is deemed to be a completed claim form with map has been received, and if required, the inspection has found the work to meet the contract conditions

The claimant must ensure their grant claim is only for work that has been completed in accordance with the terms and conditions of the contract. If grant is claimed for work that has not been completed, has not been done during the agreed period, is not to the standards agreed in the contract then the FC may refuse payment, apply a penalty, reclaim grant with interest or any other such action as set out in the approved contract

The onus to maintain compliance with licence / grant contract conditions lies with the owner/manager for the entire obligation period. The FC will provide advice to help maintain compliance where we have relevant information e.g. remote sensing investigation, or have carried out an inspection

Suspected illegal felling

When dealing with a suspected illegal felling, we aim to provide the following customer service standards:

- We will try to contact the owner of the site before entering the land
- If requested, we will report the facts surrounding our investigation to the reportee or owner with an indication of what action, if any, that will be taken

3 Complaints and disputes

If you have any problems with our service these should initially be discussed with the member of staff handling your case who will do their best to resolve the matter. If you wish to make a formal complaint about our service, you can tell us in writing or by email. In the first instance you should contact the appropriate Regional Director. We will acknowledge your complaint within 2 days of receipt, and aim to respond to your complaint within 2 weeks