

## Press release

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# Minister Hackett announces Independent Review of Ash Dieback Scheme supports

From [Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine \(/en/organisation/department-of-agriculture-food-and-the-marine/\)](/en/organisation/department-of-agriculture-food-and-the-marine/).

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Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine with responsibility for forestry matters, Senator Pippa Hackett, has announced the establishment of an independent review of her department's Ash dieback support scheme.

The group will review the existing and previous supports available to landowners with ash plantations funded under the National Forestry Programme which are now infected with Chalara and will make recommendations on these supports to the Minister within three months.

The group will comprise three members of the Project Board overseeing the implementation of Project Woodland:

- Ms. Jo O'Hara, former CEO of the Scottish Forestry Commission
- Mr. Jerry Grant, former Managing Director of Irish Water
- Dr. Matt Crowe, former Director of the EPA

Minister Hackett stated:

"Unfortunately ash dieback is now endemic in our countryside. To date my department has provided over €9 million in support to landowners with infected plantations by removing and replanting their sites with alternative species. We have also doubled the rates for this recently. As we approach 10 years of these supports, I have listened to the concerns of landowners and I have tasked an independent group to review existing department supports. Jo O'Hara, Jerry Grant and Matt Crowe have been immense assistance in helping to deliver Project Woodland and I am grateful for their willingness to take on this additional task."

The Minister added:

"My department has received applications for assistance under these schemes for almost 6,500 hectares of grant aided ash to date. It's important with the upcoming introduction of a new Forestry programme that farmers continue to have confidence in the Forestry schemes and this review will be very timely. Consultation with stakeholders will be an essential part of the Review and the Group will be in direct contact with stakeholders to ensure that their voice is heard. I expect to receive the group's final report by 15 September after which I will fully consider its recommendations."

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## Notes

The Terms of reference for the Review are:

1. Review existing DAFM supports for Landowners affected by Ash Dieback in grant aided plantations;
2. Engage with relevant stakeholders to seek their views on the current supports for landowners;
3. Make recommendations to the Minister on the effectiveness of these supports

- the first confirmed finding of Ash Dieback Disease (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) in Ireland was made on 12 October 2012 at a forestry plantation site which had been planted in 2009 with trees imported from continental Europe

- in March 2013, a Reconstitution Scheme (Chalara Ash Dieback) to restore forests planted under the afforestation scheme which had suffered from, or which were associated with plants affected by disease
  - following a Review of the National Response to Ash Dieback Disease arising from scientific advice and evidence that eradication of ash dieback disease is no longer feasible the Reconstitution and Underplanting Scheme (Ash Dieback) was launched in June 2020
  - the purpose of the RUS scheme was to clear all ash trees and replant with other species. Grants for site clearance and replanting to cover the costs associated with these operations were provided and premiums continued to be paid where the contracts were still in premium
  - a total of €9.2 million has been expended to date on both schemes
  - in March this year, Minister Hackett introduced an Interim Reconstitution Scheme for Ash Dieback via general de minimis which contains a doubling of site clearance rates, increased grant rates and an improved premium regime
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- 100% increase in the site clearance grant rate from €1,000 to €2,000
  - enhanced grant rates as per draft Forestry programme 2023-2027
  - those applicants whose sites are still in premium will continue to receive the premium due for the remaining years
  - in addition, for those in receipt of farmer rate of premium, a top up premium equal to the difference between the equivalent forestry type and the existing premium will be paid. This will be calculated for the remaining years left in premium and paid in a single sum

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