



Regional Emergency Response is in Operation at Cloosh Valley, County Galway

Tuesday, May 09th, 2017: After some respite this morning, the ongoing fire incident at Cloosh Valley, Co. Galway, escalated this afternoon as high winds and warm temperatures combined to spread the fire even further.

A regional emergency response operation is now in place as Coillte staff, along with the fire service, army and air-corps, battle to bring the fire under control. It is hoped there will be some respite to the situation later this evening as temperatures are expected to drop.

At the 169MW Galway Wind Park, Ireland's largest wind farm currently under construction within the valley, three units of Galway Fire Service are on site to tackle fire events in close proximity to wind farm infrastructure.

The forest fire at Cloosh is also threatening the welfare of many homes and local communities, as well as causing devastation to vast areas of wildlife habitat.

The fire at Cloosh currently comprises three separate fronts, the longest of which stretches across an 8km long area. In total, approximately 1,500 hectares of forestry and 2,000 of bog land has been destroyed.

Coillte greatly appreciates the tremendous assistance it continues to receive from the defence forces and emergency services, whose lives are put at significant risk in combating these forest fires. A Coillte-deployed helicopter was joined this afternoon by a helicopter from the Air Corps, which is on-site to support these efforts.

While the cause of the fire at Cloosh Valley has yet to be definitively established, it is believed that the fire originated from deliberately set gorse fires, which subsequently spread into Coillte owned forestry.

Overall, it is estimated that 20 - 30 fires are ongoing across the country however, Cloosh Valley is by far the most serious. Coillte are urging the public stay away from any areas affected by these fires and to immediately report any uncontrolled or unattended fires to the Fire and Emergency Services.

Under the Wildlife Act, it is illegal to set fires to growing vegetation from 1st March to 31st August and those found responsible for deliberately starting fires can be prosecuted. Recent dry and windy weather has greatly increased the risk of gorse and forest fire, but deliberate fire setting has also been a significant factor in the cause of many of the fires on Coillte property around the country.

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About Coillte

Coillte is Ireland's largest forestry company and we manage our forests and land sustainably, to maximise the economic, social and environmental return for all our stakeholders. Our business ranges

from supplying logs to the sawmill sector, to manufacturing innovative value added wood panel products to delivering renewable energy through wind and biomass. As well as fulfilling our commercial mandate, we are a leader in Ireland in the provision of recreation facilities and the protection of biodiversity across the 7% of the country we manage.

With 440,000ha of land, Coillte owns and manages approximately 7% of the land cover of Ireland.