

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Coillte's purpose is to manage the state forests on behalf of the people of Ireland. Our mission is to balance and deliver the multiple benefits of our forests to society. We welcome feedback from our service users and stakeholders about how we manage our forests for the benefit of society.

Coillte's Service User and Stakeholder Charter reflects the mutual expectations of Coillte and its stakeholders and seeks to ensure that our organisation conforms to the highest principles of professional service. The Charter outlines our commitment to engagement with our service users and stakeholders. Equally, it outlines our expectation in return that people engaging with Coillte staff will be courteous, forthcoming, and respectful.

Coillte values feedback from our service users and stakeholders and is committed to dealing with all issues raised and complaints received fairly and impartially. We have robust procedures in place for dealing with all issues raised and complaints received that are subject to the requirements of our certifying bodies and relevant regulatory authorities. We are committed to ensuring that those who interact with Coillte are treated with fairness and respect.

## 2.0 UNREASONABLE BEHAVIOUR AND CONTACTS

While, in the majority of cases service users and stakeholders interact with us in a reasonable manner. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate behaviour that is abusive, offensive, threatening, vexatious, or, due to the frequency of contact, accounts for disproportionate amount of time and resources that could be spent more effectively dealing with other complaints and issues. This type of behaviour is classified as unreasonable service user conduct and can be identified as comprising:

**2.1 Unreasonable persistence** –This can include, but is not limited to, persistent refusal to accept a decision made on a complaint or continuing to pursue an issue /complaint without presenting new information, raising further additional queries on foot of receipt of the initial answer provided, changing or reframing a closed query to present it as a new issue, or insisting that another member of staff examine a matter deemed to be closed.

Service user or stakeholder action may also be considered unreasonably persistent if all review mechanisms have been exhausted and the stakeholder continues to challenge Coillte's decision relating to their complaint or issue.

**2.2. Unreasonable demands** – this can include insisting on an investigation which falls outside the scope of Coillte's remit or outside of our control or responsibility, demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale, continual emails, calls or letters telling Coillte how to perform an investigation, repeatedly looking for information on a continuous and/or unreasonable manner, seeking a solution which is not realistic or proportionate to the matter raised, or seeking personal information on members of staff.

**2.3. Obstructive communication** – this includes attempts to hinder the core business of Coillte, such as attempting to overload a division with excessive or voluminous correspondence; unreasonable requests to replace members of staff dealing with a query or seeking to provoke or create discord.

**2.4. Unreasonable lack of co-operation** –Examples include:

- 2.4.1. not identifying the issue(s) clearly
- 2.4.2. presenting too much information or manifestly disorganised information and expecting a swift response
- 2.4.3. a repeated failure to comply with procedures
- 2.4.4. withholding information which is needed to advance a query or complaint or failing to provide information to substantiate a complaint
- 2.4.5. Changing the basis of their complaint or request in the middle of their engagement with Coillte or being misleading with the facts of their concern.

**2.5. Unreasonable arguments** –Examples include, but are not limited to, misrepresenting issues, presenting irrelevant or unreasonable opinions, focussing on disproportionate or irrelevant details, advancing conspiracy theories that are unsupported by any evidence, insisting that a version of events is accepted as fact, despite an absence of objective evidence to support it, refusing to consider other versions of events, or being guided by desire for revenge or a grievance against Coillte, its employees and contractors.

**2.6. Unreasonable behaviour** – Examples of unreasonable behaviours (whether oral or written) include threats, physical violence, personal abuse, derogatory remarks, aggressive or intimidatory communication, and rudeness. It is also considered that inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations can be abusive behaviour.

### 3.0. PROCEDURE TO MANAGE UNREASONABLE BEHAVIOUR AND CONTACTS

If Coillte considers service user or stakeholder behaviour to be unreasonable, the person in question will be notified and asked to cease. If it is considered useful and appropriate, Coillte will consider changing the engagement in a way that may help avoid unreasonable behaviour in the future.

If the unreasonable behaviour continues, Coillte will take action to restrict the service user or stakeholder contact with Coillte staff and contractors. This decision will normally only be taken after a senior staff member (Director) has reviewed the situation. Restrictions will be appropriate and in line with the nature of the behaviour. Any restrictions put in place will be appropriate and proportionate. The responses to unreasonable communications include but are not limited to:

- 3.1. Limiting contact to a particular contact channel or format (e.g. by letter only)
- 3.2. Limiting contact to a named Coillte staff member
- 3.3. Limiting the frequency and duration of telephone calls (e.g. to specified days and times and to a maximum duration)
- 3.4. Future correspondence relating to the same complaint is read, acknowledged, and then filed but no substantive response is provided.

# Unreasonable Service User Policy

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In all cases, Coillte will write to state that the behaviour is unreasonable and what action is proposed to address this matter. If the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of Coillte staff or others, we will consider other options. These could include, reporting the matter to An Garda Síochána or instigating legal action. In such cases, we may not give prior warning of that action.

Regardless of behaviour, Coillte staff will act respectfully and take an impartial attitude to any contact received.