

Procurement, Contract Management and Finance Supplier/Client FAQ's Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Who should I contact in Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) about the impacts to my contract as a result of COVID-19?

We encourage all of our suppliers whose contracts have been impacted or paused as a result of COVID-19 to maintain dialogue with us and discuss any emerging risks or concerns as soon as they occur.

All of our contracts have a designated FLS contract manager who will be able to discuss your contract with you, including the associated impacts of COVID-19. The majority of our contract managers are available at this time and we encourage you to contact them directly, either by email or phone to discuss any concerns.

Where you need to discuss an issue and are either unsure of who to contact, or have been unable to reach the relevant contract manager, please email us at procurement@forestryandland.gov.scot with the following details, which will help us respond to your enquiry swiftly:-

- the Contract Reference;
- the FLS Contract Manager you normally deal with;
- a short description of your contract e.g. fence building in Dalmally;
- any concerns or questions you have for FLS relating to the impacts of COVID-19

What work is FLS undertaking to resume their activities and in turn to re-start contracts?

Our recovery planning and implementation is underway and will be fully compliant with Scottish Government guidance at all times. As Scottish Government continues to ease restrictions in a phased manner, we in turn are planning and resuming activities progressively. Whilst some restrictions have eased, others remain in place; necessitating agreement on new ways of working for some contracted activities, before they can resume. All of the contracts we have paused are under continuous review and we will keep all relevant parties updated as our plans evolve, including when and how certain activities can resume.

How are you dealing with contracted activities where seasonality is key to their undertaking and/or success?

Many of our contracted activities are seasonal and a large proportion are impacted by the current situation. Opportunities to complete some programmed activities at the end of our financial year 19/20 were lost e.g. parts of our planting programme, and it is likely that other seasonal opportunities will be lost this financial year e.g. the undertaking of certain seasonal surveys and other programmed operations. This is frustrating and disappointing for both FLS and contractors, however we must stick to the current government guidance and only resume these activities when it is safe and timely to do so.

Under the current circumstances, can I sign contract variations or new contracts electronically, if I do not have a scanner?

Yes. Please follow the instructions in [this guide](#) to create an electronic signature in PDF. It should be possible for anyone with the free version of Adobe Reader to do this.

When will FLS start to resume tendering activities for new work?

Planning for and re-mobilising of existing contracts remains as one of our highest priorities, however as further restrictions are eased or removed and markets begin to re-open for business, we will progressively increase our tendering activity to deliver our pipeline of new work, which will shortly be published on our [website](#).

If work has been put on hold or temporarily reduced, can FLS pay me in advance?

All of our contracts contain clauses which confirm that we can only pay for goods, services and works after they have been received, this being standard practice across Government. However, Scottish Government have offered some alternative solutions in light of the situation brought about by COVID19 and these are detailed in procurement policy notes [SPPN 5/2020](#) (valid from March until the end of June 2020) and [SPPN 8/2020](#) (valid from 1st of July).

The policy notes set out a variety of options, including the amendment of payment terms to offer supplier relief where contracts have been paused or services have been reduced with an expectation that these measures are phased out as contracts begin to resume. The policy also deals with contracts that have become unviable as a result of COVID19 with open dialogue on these matters being encouraged. In all cases options should be discussed and agreed between parties while contracts remain paused or impacted and suppliers must read the policies carefully before seeking any form of relief.

What other sources of financial help are available to suppliers and clients during this time?

There are a number of [financial support measures](#) that have been put in place by government (such as the [Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund](#) and [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme – “Furlough”](#)) and these options may offer more appropriate relief than the supplier options covered within the SPPN’s linked above. However it is important that where support is required, each affected supplier or client works through all of their options to understand which financial measures will provide their business with the most appropriate relief.

We understand this will be a uncertain time for many businesses and would signpost any business with financial concerns to Scottish Government’s business telephone helpline. **Tel: 0300 303 0660**

Is there any impact to supplier payments?

FLS has adopted the Scottish Government target for the payment of all invoices within 10 working days of their receipt which means that many suppliers should receive payment in advance of their contractually agreed terms.

As far as reasonably possible we will endeavour to continue to meet that target however, as homeworking and physical distancing measures continue, we may not have access to paper invoices, submitted to our offices by post. With this in mind, we encourage all of our suppliers to submit their invoices electronically. This can be as simple as a scanned PDF version of an invoice, attached to an email and sent to the FLS contract manager. Submitting invoices in this manner will minimise any potential disruption to payments.

What do I do if I need to update my payment or contact details?

Invoice fraud remains an area of significant risk across all sectors. While we look to ensure that we continue to make our payments to suppliers in a timely manner by flexing our resource according to the evolving situation; our commitment to the protection of public funds and our suppliers' details will remain unchanged. Please continue to notify your FLS contract manager of any changes in the normal way. We would also like to take this opportunity to ask our suppliers to remain vigilant and be alert for any attempts to maliciously intercept communications, especially around invoice and payment details, with the intention of exploiting the uncertainty that may be apparent at this time.

Can I pay FLS for goods and services in my usual way?

The vast majority of our clients make payment by bank transfer already and we ask that this continues. Those clients who are yet to adopt this method are being asked to move to making payments to FLS by bank transfer effective immediately. This is the safest and most efficient method of settling your account with us by allowing physical distancing and not being reliant on a presence in our offices.

A small minority of clients have, until recently, paid for goods or services by cash or cheque. As of Monday 23rd March FLS teams were advised not to accept cash or cheques as payment until further notice. This is to reduce personal contact and assist in maintaining physical distancing, not only between FLS and our clients but also with pick up services and reduce unnecessary travel and additional exposure of our team members at bank branches.

Prior to COVID-19 we had been endeavouring to take payment by credit or debit card over the telephone, where there were facilities to do so at our head and regional offices and visitor centres. However, now that our administrative and business support functions have moved to home working this is no longer possible. Home working does not allow for compliance with legislated security measures in processing card payments and we are unable to provide an alternative. Therefore all clients are asked to settle their invoices by bank transfer.

Please contact banking@forestryandland.gov.scot for information on how you can move to settling your accounts by bank transfer if you have not already done so.