

Guidance on Forestry Activities near Public Water Sources and Scottish Water Assets

Protecting Scottish Water sources and assets during forestry activities

This guidance outlines precautions that Scottish Water would like to see when forestry activities are undertaken in source water catchments and areas that contain our assets. Source water catchments are defined as areas that generate public drinking water supplies, including land draining to reservoirs, lochs, rivers, springs and boreholes. Scottish Water sources provide drinking water for 97% of the Scottish public, so it is vital that forestry activities do not reduce water availability, deteriorate raw water quality, or cause damage to the water supply and wastewater assets.

Abstractions are designated as Drinking Water Protected Areas under Article 7 of the Water Framework Directive, therefore protection is required to avoid deterioration. Each water treatment works is designed according to the quality of raw water that supplies it, so any deterioration in raw water quality can affect its ability to treat water to meet drinking water quality standards and regulatory requirements.

Extra precautions around public drinking water sources

This guidance helps forest managers and practitioners understand what extra precautions should be taken in our source water catchments, and near assets, to demonstrate compliance with relevant legislation; in particular the legal requirement that forestry operations must not lead to harmful or polluting substances contaminating drinking water supplies. We can also provide additional advice to help you determine site sensitivity and inform forest proposals and operations.

There are separate requirements for Private Water Supplies as these fall to the relevant Local Authority. Ground truthing may be required to identify private supplies as they are not always recorded.

Guidance for ALL Forestry Activities

Step 1: For all forestry proposals and activities please contact us at protectdwsources@scottishwater.co.uk and provide the central NGR and map of proposed activity, to determine if it lies in a source water catchment or near our assets.

Step 2: If it does, we will confirm the risk the activity poses if any and if extra precautions are required at that site. Forest managers can discuss with us the appropriate risk-based measures for the site, which in turn will inform their forest proposal plans and operations. This discussion might consider natural and artificial drainage patterns, proposed infrastructure and protection, potential changes to water availability, and pollution mitigation measures. In the event the activity is deemed high risk a site visit by one of our Catchment Liaison Officers will be arranged.

Step 3: All activities can then be fully informed in regards public drinking water sources and Scottish Water assets, as it enters the formal Scottish Forestry approvals process.

In the event of an incident, notify Scottish Water immediately to avoid serious harm to human health or assets 0800 0778 778

Guidance for operations in an existing forest

Extra precautions:

Hazardous substances

- As far as practical, undertake no refuelling, storage or handling of fuels, oils or hazardous materials within source water catchments.
- If the above is not feasible, keep a 50m buffer around all surface watercourses, boreholes and springs, within which fuel and chemicals are not stored or handled. Where possible go beyond a 50m buffer area and create dedicated fuel/chemical storage and handling areas.
- Keep a spill kit in all vehicles and plants.
- Minimise the use of fertilisers and pesticides.

Roads and drains

- When constructing roads, drainage ditches and trenches, retain water within the existing catchment rather than directing it into an adjacent catchment.
- Manage sediment and debris, which can build up in sources reducing storage and blocking intakes.
- Minimise soil disturbance, particularly for organic-rich soils.
- For water-bound roads and tracks, avoid using material resulting in metallic, sulphide-rich or strongly acidic polluted water run-off, ideally using inert materials with low erodibility.
- Regularly maintain site roads and access routes to minimise erosion, run-off and pollution.

Near Assets

- Identify the location of assets, such as water and wastewater pipes, and clearly mark them on site.
- Provide sufficient buffers from the asset. The width of the buffer will vary according to the asset type, and the Highway Authorities and Utilities Committee (HAUC) will provide guidance on this.
- Proposals should comply with Water for Scotland Edition 4 (in particular section 2.3.10) and Sewers for Scotland Edition 4 (in particular section 2.14.10).

Proposals for ALL Forestry activities where there are assets should be sent to the HAUC Diversions Team via the Development Services portal at

<https://swastroprodweb.azurewebsites.net/home/default>

- If crossing a pipeline is unavoidable, use log bridges, steel plates, etc

Please see our website for links to relevant documentation:

<https://www.scottishwater.co.uk/SLM>

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