



File Ref: C2/3/2A

Ms. Niamh Maguire,
Committee Secretariat,
Committee of Public Account,
Leinster House,
Dublin 2



Dear Ms. Maguire,

I refer to your letter of 6th January 2014 in which you advised of a query raised by Deputy Robert Dowds regarding the sale of lands by Coillte. The referral of this query by the Secretary General of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform was noted.

Coillte Teoranta was established as a private commercial company under the Forestry Act, 1988 and day-to-day operational matters, such as the sale and acquisition of land which take place regularly, are the responsibility of the company. As the Minister with responsibility for forestry, there are a number of powers assigned to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine under the Forestry Act 1988. While the Forestry Act 1988 provides, under Section 14, that *"The company shall submit to and agree with the Minister each year a programme for the sale and acquisition of land and the sale of timber, whether standing or felled"*, this programme states the overall area of land for which agreement is sought. The implementation of the programme, and the actual land parcels involved, is a matter for the company.

In relation to the specific query i.e. whether Coillte sold lands in recent years, the request was conveyed to Coillte, who provided the following information in relation to the land sales by the company over the last 11 years:

Land sales 2003-13

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Area (hectare)	473	488	775	319	552	422	590	635	346	215	742
Value (€m)	13.64	12.09	38.67	16.42	22.48	11.13	13.48	8.96	10.62	6.99	9.97

Coillte requested that, in forwarding these details to the Committee, the members of the Committee be also informed of the following:

- Since 1989, Coillte has acquired some 64,000 hectares of land for forestry purposes and sold some 16,000 hectares, a net increase of approx. 48,000 hectares, and
- Of the land sold, the principal uses and categories of customers are:
 - Infrastructure, where the company's land assets have been used for key infrastructure provision including local authority water schemes, construction of new roads and motorways, road upgrade schemes and various utility schemes.

- Industrial development including major export projects such as Coca Cola Bottlers in Ballina, Co. Mayo, Irish Distillers' warehouse complex in Midleton, County Cork and Grants Distillery in Tullamore, Co. Offaly.
- Community and sports facilities including sites for schools and sports clubs
- Agriculture: small (<5ha) to medium scale transactions with farmers, who are seeking to increase their holdings and thus increase their own output, typically by acquiring adjoining lands from Coillte.
- Rural housing: typically sites for one-off houses.

The Committee may also wish to note that at its meeting with the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine on 19th November 2013, Coillte responded to a query on the subject of land disposal.

I trust this will be of interest to Deputy Dowds and the other members of the Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Tom Moran
Secretary General

21 May 2014