

**Forestry Bill - 2010
Agriculture and Rural
Development Committee
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Northern Ireland Environment Link

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Woodland in NI

- “ 6% woodland cover . amongst lowest in EU; UK = 12%, EU=37%
- “ 70% of woodland in NI is publicly owned
- “ <0.1% of our ancient woodland remains
- “ 273 ancient woodlands felled in last 50 years

Benefits of Woodland

- “ Forestry . £30m industry in NI
- “ Recreation, leisure . valued at >£400m in GB
- “ Climate change
 - . Adaptation
 - . Mitigation
- “ Biodiversity . Ancient woodland richest land habitat
- “ Amenity . can increase house values 4-7%

Ecosystem Services

- “ Provisioning . food, fibre, fuel, biochemicals, natural medicines, pharmaceuticals
- “ Regulating . air quality, climate, water purification, erosion, noise, waste treatment
- “ Supporting - soil formation, photosynthesis, primary production, nutrient cycling, water cycling
- “ Social/cultural benefits . health, well-being, educational resource, cultural value, sense of place, inspiration, aesthetics, recreation

Untapped Potential Benefits for NI

Underexploited benefits of woodland for NI include -

- “ Recreational & associated social and economic benefits
- “ Biodiversity benefits
- “ Flood management

Forestry Bill represents an opportunity to derive greater benefit from woodland in NI

Legislative/Policy Context

- “ Targets:
 - . Forest Service Strategy . 12% in 50 years
 - . Programme for Gov . 1,650 ha new woodland by 2011
- “ Duty to further Sustainable Development
 - . April 2007
- “ Duty for Conserving Biodiversity
 - . Wildlife & Environment Order 2010
- “ DARD ~~g~~ general duty of promoting forestryq
 - . Forestry Bill 2010

What is Forestry?

- “ Definition needs amplification
 - . Include ecosystem services and other environmental benefits
 - . Recognise public benefits . recreation, health, tourism
 - . Differentiation between
 - “ Commercial forestry - timber
 - “ Ancient woodland
 - “ Short rotation coppice (etc.) for energy

Statutory Purpose

Encourage and resource sustainable woodland through restoration, creation and management

- “ Provide timber & other forest products*
- “ Deliver ecosystem services*
- “ Help northern Ireland adapt to and mitigate against climate change*
- “ Restore and enhance biodiversity*
- “ Provide opportunities for recreation*
- “ Provide an educational resource*
- “ Protect the heritage represented by ancient woodlands*

Statutory Purpose

Apply to *ALL WOODLAND* . public and private

Statutory *PRESUMPTION AGAINST FELLING* of ancient and long established woodland

Statutory Requirement to produce and maintain up-to-date *WOODLAND INVENTORY*

Woodland Creation

- “ Forest Service Strategy 2006 target
 - . Double area of forestry in 50 years (12%)
- “ PfG target 1650 ha by 2011
- “ No target in Act
- “ Need target for native woodland
- “ Not on target to meet; indeed rate of woodland creation decreasing

Ensure all woodland creation respects priority natural habitats and integrates all woodland functions to deliver maximum benefits

Powers of the Department

- “ Power to use or develop forestry land for a purpose other than forestry
 - . Too general; have due regard to duty not strong enough
- “ Incidental Powers . anything which appears to it to be conducive
 - . Too general, allows anything and no outside checks
- “ Disposal of land . only in accord with rigorous public benefits test

National Forestry Advisory Committee to advise Minister and provide external input

Protection of Trees

- “ Need explicit mention of which animals, or explicit exclusion of all protected native animals
- “ Only destroy after other control methods have failed . fencing, protection
- “ ~~reasonably suspects~~ .likely to be damaged
- “ Access to private land to kill animals
- “ Vegetation powers also too great

Role for NFAC?

Felling Licences

- “ Welcome and necessary
- “ Apply to all, including Government & Forest Service
- “ Subject to Conditions including reducing pollution (during and after felling) and prompt reinstatement to prevent erosion
- “ Ancient Woodland Inventory essential for efficient delivery, and all sites on it fully protected
- “ Public register for significant applications and consultation period

Ancient Woodland & Venerable Trees

- “ Presumption against felling of any ancient woodland . requires Inventory
- “ Presumption against felling of trees in Conservation Areas, subject to TPOs
- “ Licence to fell for Planning Permitted Development . backwards; need FL to get PP; Planners do not have expertise to determine value of woodland

Compensation & Fees

- “ **Compensation** dangerous Potentially expensive . could lead to licences granted to save public money
- “ **Fees** for licences should not be used to generate income and encourage inappropriate felling

Additional Points

- “ **Public Access** - General right of access welcomed
- “ **Interpretation** - Definition of Ancient and Long Established Woodland (i.e. on the register)