

Forestry Policy Group Meeting
18 November 2021
14:30 by Webex

Attendance:

DAFM: Minister of State Pippa Hackett, B Gleeson (Secretary General), C Hayes (Asst Secretary General), B Delany (Director of Forestry), S Dunne, P Kelly, F Moore, A Maguire, S Maurus, A Cunningham, G Izabelle, J Farrell, C Smith, S O'Mahony, J Casey, C Murphy, S O'Sullivan, E O'Doherty, J Byrne,

Chairs of Project Woodland Working Groups: M Layde, M Crowe, T Hennessy

Stakeholders: M McAuley (FII), M Carlin (Coillte), M Boyden (SWAN), D Houlihan (AIFC), D Whelan (ITGA), J Roche (NPWS), T Ryan (None so Hardy), , B Murphy (FII), A St Ledger (Environmental Pillar), E Hendrick (COFORD), J Gowran (Woodlands of Ireland), V Nally (IFA), P Fogarty (Irish Wildlife Trust), K O'Donoghue (FOCS), P Barry (IGBC), M Conway (FII), N Sweetman (IFO)

Apologies: A Dunne (ACA), P Purser (Pro Silva), O Duggan (Birdwatch Ireland), N Ni Fhlatharta, (Teagasc), B Hyde (EPA), E McGoff (An Taisce), S Boland (Irish Rural Link), M Moroney (FCI), M Cantwell (Chair WG1), S Hona (DAFM)

Minister Hackett opened the meeting, welcomed all attendees, including the 3 Chairs of the Project Woodland (PW) Working Groups (WGs). Minister Hackett:

- Thanked all members for their involvement and commitment noting that the success of PW is dependent on all stakeholders and DAFM working together and having a good working relationship.
- Acknowledged that there has been an improvement in licensing output in the last few weeks but that Afforestation is not at the same level and this will be given priority.
- Reiterated her personal commitment to forestry in a time where it needs to play an important role in relation to climate change, home construction and eco services.
- Noted that forestry has a large part to play in the Climate Action Plan 2021 and the future model of forestry will be important, and we need to engage with communities and bring them along.
- Confirmed that a budget of €100m has been allocated to forestry for 2022. Over 3,300 forestry licences have been delivered so far in 2021 and 4,000 should be delivered by the end of the year. The Process Review that WG4 are undertaking and the Regulatory Review currently underway will both impact how licences are delivered in the future including influencing whether additional resources may be required.
- Urged members not to lose sight of the new Forest Strategy that is being developed, this will have an impact on forestry in Ireland for the next 100 years.
- Welcomed Barry Delany to his first FPG meeting and to his new role as Director of Forestry.

Presentation by Brendan Gleeson, Secretary General, DAFM, Chair of Project Board (PB), Project Woodland. B Gleeson:

- Echoed Minister Hackett's sentiments in welcoming B Delany.
- Has been struck by the active engagement of all WGs particularly as the process is extremely important for a collaborative approach.
- Announced that the initiation meeting for the Regulatory Review has taken place and engagement with WGs is part of the contract. Philip Lee who won the tender to deliver the Regulatory Review have been asked to look at the 15km zone and the Single Consent question. Statutory timelines will be looked at and the question of whether a thinning licence must undergo the same process as an afforestation licence will be examined.
- Acknowledged that WG3 had some concerns on the role of governance in the internal review and the PB will revert on that in the coming days.
- Noted that 1,000 forestry licences have issued in September and October but there has not been a corresponding increase in Afforestation, so a focus needs to be put on that.

Presentation by Dr Matt Crowe, Chair of Working Group 2- A Shared National Approach, Project Woodland. M Crowe:

- Welcomed Brian Clifford as an additional DAFM staff support to the WG. DAFM has delivered dedicated resources to WG2.
- Reminded members why we are here highlighting the potential benefits of our work and the long-lasting nature of our decisions urging that we do this once and do it right.
- Explained the focus for WG2 for the remainder of 2021/Early 2022 including their updated work-plan for the new Forest Strategy.
- Gave a timeline and overview of the various types of public and stakeholder consultation.
- Shared WG2's initial thoughts on the new Forest Strategy.
- Presented the Shared National Vision and level of ambition as well as what is next for the Group and their deep dive into the 4 R's and 100/200-year vision. Challenged members to think about these and what they mean to you.



Working Group
2.pdf

Presentation by Michael Layde, Chair of Working Group 4 - Process Improvement, Project Woodland. M Layde:

- Introduced the themes that WG4 are focusing on.
- Gave an update on status of the Pre-application Discussions (PAD) and Environment Report/Grant (ER). The Group have concerns on the proposals from DAFM and are working to consensus to allow a rollout on a pilot basis.
- Discussed the Group's End-To-End Process Review – the 'meat' of what the Group are working on.
- Gave an update on the current position of the Group – asked about the Business Analyst's Interim Report, Regulatory Review PID brought some reassurance, some frustration at speed of reaching agreement on how to move ahead with the PAD and ER.



Working Group
4.pdf

Update by Working Group 1 - Reducing the Backlog, Project Woodland

Chair of WG1, M Cantwell was unavailable to attend this meeting, so the attached update was submitted and circulated following the meeting.



Progress report
from WG1 Nov21.pdf

Presentation by Professor Thia Hennessy, Chair of Working Group 3, Organisational Development and Communications, Project Woodland. T Hennessy:

- Highlighted the remit and objectives of WG3.
- Gave an overview of the work of the Group on the Customer Charter, Organisational Review (OR), Training Needs Analysis and Communication.
- Concluded that progress has been slower than anticipated. There have been some governance issues around progressing work that caused some delays. It is hoped that commencing work on the Training Needs Analysis and the OR will kick start activity again.



Working Group
3.pdf

Summary of topics raised and clarifications given during the meeting:

- Dashboard: Inclusion of Native Woodland Conservation approvals on dashboard will be dealt with in New Year.
- Forest Strategy:
 - Youth Forum on new Forest Strategy: The National Youth Council was considered but could not commit to the timelines that are needed; there could be an opportunity to work with them in the future.
 - Suggestion that EU Forest Strategy and EU Biodiversity Strategy should be guiding documents for the development of the new Forest Strategy.
 - Suggestion that examples of successful models of Sustainable Forest Management in other countries, such as the Swiss model, should be presented to the participants of consultation. Reference made to an area in South-West Norway, similar in size and climate to Munster and Connaught. This area has achieved 50% Afforestation since 1965, with farmers' incomes in South-west Norway 70% derived from their woodlands and associated multiple benefits.
- Licensing:
 - A bias in license issuing between private and public applicants should be avoided and realistic targets should be set. Afforestation target must be set and not await regulatory review.
 - Felling licensing needs should be predictable and adequately resourced, with no impact on afforestation.
 - Question of inclusion of forest management requirements in felling licence will be dealt with by Regulatory Review.
 - Focus should be both the quality and quantity of output.

- Project Board and Working Groups:
 - SG confirmed that dialogue will continue between the PB, WGs and DAFM and that if there is consensus between the WG and DAFM the PB will not take an independent view. He mentioned a positive meeting between WG 3 and the PB on the approach to the Organisational Review.
- Coillte and DAFM's role: The Minister committed to answering a specific question directly with the person who raised it outside of the meeting

Minister Hackett concluded the meeting by thanking all participants and acknowledging that members need to see action being taken quickly. The next meeting is due to take place in January.

END