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# Deliberative Dialogue on Forestry

Report on the outcomes of the 'Deliberative  
Dialogue on Forestry' and participant feedback

June 2022



# INTRODUCTION

## WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT?

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The Deliberative Dialogue was part of a series of consultations conducted by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) to gather the views of people living in Ireland on the reasons why we plant forests, the places they are planted, the types of trees we plant, and how forests are managed. This report presents findings from a 'Deliberative Dialogue on Forestry', which took place in May 2022, with participation from a group of citizens who were nationally representative of Irish society.

The two sessions were designed to inform the DAFM new Forest Strategy and new shared vision for trees and forests in Ireland. The development of a new Forest Strategy is a key commitment for Project Woodland and is due to be published in 2022 and the deliberative dialogue was one element of this consultation. In total, 99 citizens participated in two separate online sessions to contribute an informed view, and to deliberate on the vision and ambition for Ireland's Forest Strategy. At the end of the consultation participants brought their new understanding of forestry to vote on the vision and ambition proposed.

As part of an ongoing consultation, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) conducted the two-day Deliberative Dialogue as one of five consultations which gathered the views of people living in Ireland on the reasons why we plant forests, the places they are planted, the types of trees we plant, and how forests are managed.

A Deliberative Dialogue provides a way for members of diverse views and experiences to seek a shared understanding of a problem and to search for common ground for action. In this case, 99 citizens joined the dialogue to learn about forestry in Ireland today and the value for the expansion of the forestry to meet a range of needs, economic, social and environmental, in the future.

The Deliberative Dialogue on Forestry included presentations from five experts from different areas of Forestry to explain the benefits, and challenges, that forestry brings to Ireland and Irish society. Day 1 of the Deliberative Dialogue focused on the history of Forestry in Ireland, including information on our forests, as well as the environmental and economic benefits and challenges brought about by forestry. Day 2 of the Deliberative Dialogue discussed the social value of forests, as well as an in-depth discussion of the new vision for Forests in Ireland and the level of ambition needed to achieve this vision. Day 2 allowed participants to bring their new understanding of forestry to a vote on both the vision and ambition as proposed by DAFM.

Along with the four other DAFM consultations, feedback from this Deliberative Dialogue will help to shape a shared national vision for forestry in Ireland, one that is truly reflective of the whole of Irish society. These consultations will also help to shape the new national Forest Strategy, which will provide a framework with robust objectives and actions needed to drive forward the ambition set in the national vision to 2050. These objectives and actions will be far reaching with the aim of delivering for our economy, environment, and for our communities.

# CONTENTS

The report presents feedback according to key thematic areas which broadly correspond to sectoral areas of forestry. The report presents a collation and summary of the main themes, comments and policy suggestions of those who participated in the Dialogues. We have endeavored to capture a full and fair representation of those who took part.

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# METHODOLOGY

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The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Marine (DAFM) appointed M-CO as an independent facilitator of a deliberative dialogue on the proposed Vision for Forestry. The aim of the deliberative dialogue was to bring together a representative sample of Irish society, to provide a detailed context and background to inform their feedback. The deliberative dialogue approach has been used successfully on a wide range of national and international consultations and is useful in ensuring that policy is developed in line with informed public feedback.

The participants were recruited by means of recruitment based on a nationally representative quota. Participants reflected the gender, age, location and rural/ urban makeup of Irish society - ensuring that their views were reflective and representative. Participants were provided with a small remuneration to acknowledge their time and participation. All participants were provided with prereading material (found in Appendix 2) outlining some key data on forestry in Ireland and the proposed vision to be discussed. The two sessions were designed to provide information that was factual and nonbiased on the key topics within the Vision for Forestry. The sessions were held online to facilitate national participation and were chaired by Helen Carroll, an independent journalist and expert on agricultural issues.

There were five presentations given across the two days;

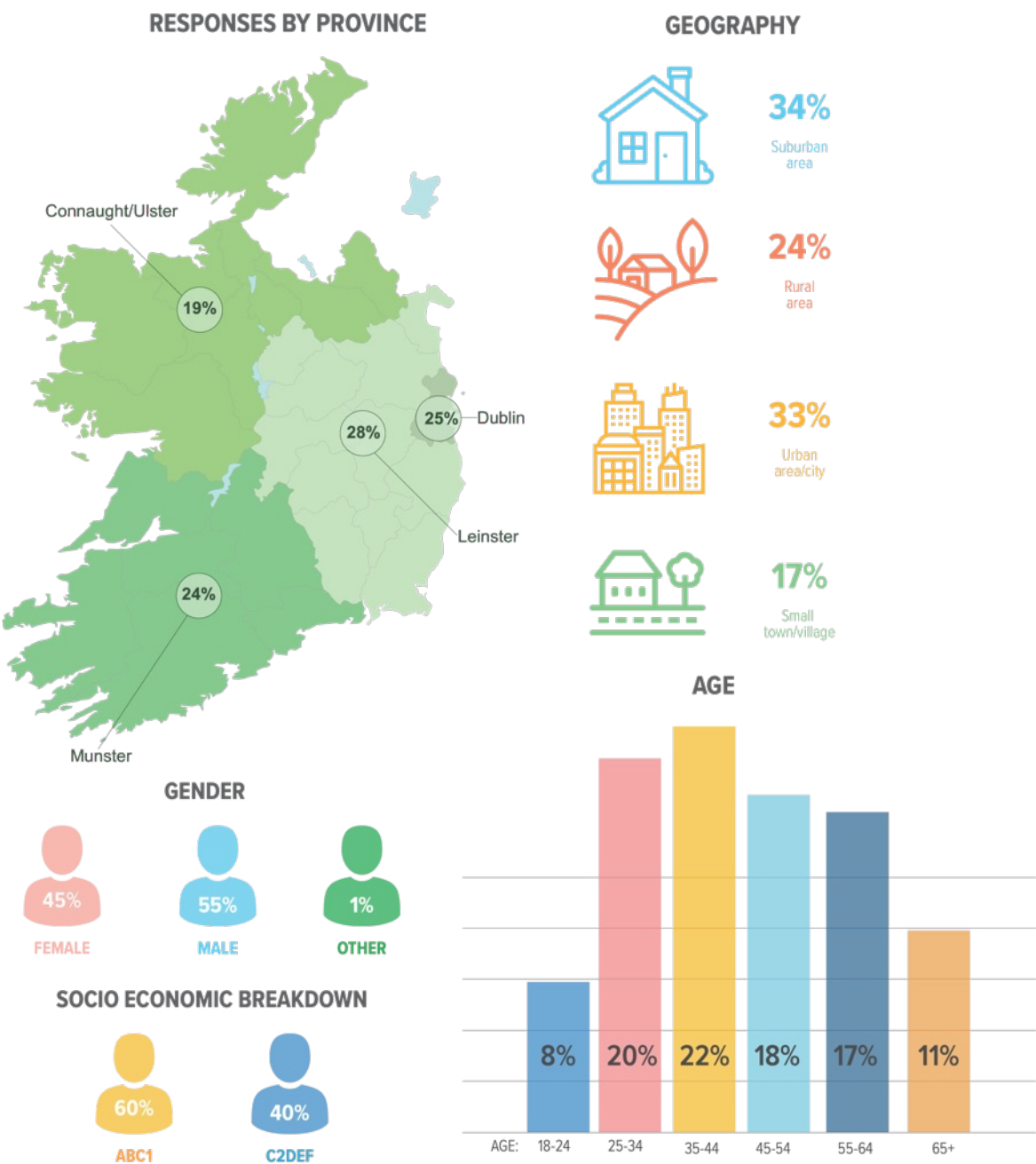
- **Overview of Forestry in Ireland:** Fergus Moore, *Head of Forest Sector Development at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine*
- **Forests for the Environment:** Dr. Jenni Roche, *Woodland Ecologist, National Parks and Wildlife Service*
- **Forests for Economy:** Brian Murphy, *Chairman of Forest Industries Ireland, CEO of Balcas*
- **The Social Value of Forests:** Mark Carlin, *Managing Director at Coillte*
- **Setting our Vision and Ambition:** Dr. Matt Crowe, *Chair of Working Group 2, Project Woodland*

The Deliberative Dialogue was structured so that after each presentation the participants broke out into smaller subgroups of ten participants. Each subgroup had an independent facilitator and could outline any queries or clarifications that they had on what had been presented. The speakers and other experts were available to answer questions or to provide additional information. The subgroups then discussed their responses to what had been presented. The discussions were moderated by the independent facilitators and participants views were capture on whiteboards that all participants could review. A summary of the key issues and challenges that the participants raised during this breakout sessions, and in the plenary sessions is provided in the attached report.

The key purpose of the discussions was to deliberate on whether Ireland's Shared Vision for Forestry, presented over the two days, is compelling, what should be the key goal of the strategy and what was an appropriate level of ambition. The participants were asked based on all the information that had been shared, discussed and examined by them to provided an informed opinion by the end of the process. The final session provided an opportunity for participants to agree with the goal of the strategy and to decide what level of ambition was appropriate for the new strategy.

# Who were the Deliberative Dialogue Participants?

We had 99 participants in our Online Dialogues – their profile provided a robust representation of the population. All age groups contributed and there was a balanced rural, urban and suburban response:



Grades based on occupation-  
ABC1- professional/ management  
C2DEF- Admin/ manual/ agriculture/  
unemployed.

# Taoiseach Micheál Martin's address to members of the deliberative dialogue

Dia Dhaoibh a chairde,

Cé nach bhfuil sé ar mo chumas a bheith libh inniu don ócáid rí-thábhachtach ina bhfuil sibh gafa, ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas chroíúil a ghabháil libh as ucht bhur n-am agus bhur n-iarrachtaí agus sibh ag tabhairt faoi machnamh a dhéanamh ar Stráitéis na bhForaoiseachta.

As Taoiseach and on behalf of the Government, I am delighted to have this opportunity to thank you for taking part in this important dialogue about the future of Ireland's approach to forestry. You have been selected as a representation of the people and your voice will have an important role to play in shaping our future. Every generation has the opportunity to make a positive difference and the work that you will carry out over the next couple of days will help influence how we understand and shape the future of our approach to forestry.

It is an issue that is not without its complexities and its challenges but it is one that will have an enormous bearing on our future wellbeing as a people. You will hear from a range of speakers about the importance of forests and the requirement for us to plant more trees. You will also hear of successes and failures of the past, problems we have encountered in regulating forestry, and even planting decisions made that have left us with profound challenges for the future.

I have said before and I repeat it to you that forestry in Ireland is at a crossroads. It needs a new vision and one I hope you can help shape. I ask you to be fearless and questioning. This is a unique opportunity to ask questions and to deliberate on the decisions ahead. I ask you to engage fully, and don't be afraid to challenge our speakers and panellists on the key questions that will arise over the coming days. Nobody has a monopoly of wisdom on these issues.

We all have an image of forests in our heads. Many of us will have childhood memories of walking in the woods and know of places where we can go to relax. There is something about forests and being in nature that resonates deeply within us. Over the last few COVID years many of us have reconnected with these places and perhaps that time has allowed us to reassess our relationship with the natural world.

Forests also provide livelihoods, be it through the timber or biomass they produce, as areas for commercial recreation or as magnets for tourists. Timber itself can displace carbon intensive building materials such as cement and is likely to become more used in our buildings and homes. This could form a sound basis of a much larger, thriving timber industry over the coming decades.

As important as that is, this new strategy and our future forestry policy direction cannot be just about the production of timber. I would ask you that throughout the course of this dialogue to keep in mind that climate change, of course, is happening, and it is the most profound and far-reaching threat of our time. We have also seen a dramatic decline in ecosystem health and biodiversity in Ireland in recent decades. A well thought through forestry policy is a central element of addressing both these challenges.

As a society we know that we must significantly reduce the amount of greenhouse gases we put into the atmosphere.

We know that the right trees, planted in the right place, and at an unprecedented scale will be necessary if we are to succeed in achieving a climate neutral and biodiversity rich society by 2050.

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We know that trees absorb carbon from the atmosphere and lock it up as wood and biomass, helping us tackle climate change. But it is not always that simple and unfortunately, we have not always put the right trees in the right places. We understand now that the approach taken in Ireland in previous decades of planting trees predominantly in organic, carbon rich, peaty soils actually released more carbon than it captured. From a carbon perspective, bogs and peat soils must be central to your deliberations because they can no longer be considered suitable for afforestation.

Peat soils make up more than 20% of our land. The reality we face is that we must now find space for trees on the remaining non-organic or mineral soils, much of which is being used for other purposes.

So a question that I am sure you will be considering is where this should happen and how it should happen. How can landowners be encouraged to move from current land uses to planting trees? How can this be done quickly?

What is required is nothing less than a new vision of the future. You are invited to contemplate what the Irish landscape could look like in thirty or forty years' time. What is the role for forestry in the mix of land uses that will provide future generations with the best chance of addressing the challenges that they will face.

The toolbox available to you includes a rich a mix of possibilities. Native woodlands, commercial plantations, agro-forestry, biofuel production, the bio-economy, recreational woodland use - These might all be part of that vision.

Of vital importance is how forestry can contribute to a vibrant rural economy, and how forestry can be best used to address our climate and biodiversity crises and make the Ireland of tomorrow resilient to the changes that are upon us.

Land-use and forestry decisions that are good for the climate can also be beneficial in rehabilitating ecosystems, helping flood and drought prevention, improving water quality and helping create new economic opportunities.

We need to be ambitious in our afforestation efforts – substantially increasing our annual rates, increasing the area of our native forests and encouraging the establishment of more trees in our cities and parks.

We also need to continue to increase the sustainable use of wood and related products across the whole of society and Ireland's new forestry strategy can help make this happen.

There is a saying 'Mura gcuirfidh tú san earrach ní bhainfidh tú san fhómhar' or as Leonard Cohan might put it, "you reap what you sow".

You are being asked to help sow a better, more considered forestry policy for Ireland. One that will reap rich dividends for future generations.

I look forward to hearing of your contributions and engagement on the future direction of our forestry.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh go léir.



# Overview of Forestry in Ireland

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At the opening presentation of the Deliberative Dialogue, Mr. Fergus Moore of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine presented an overview of Forestry in Ireland.

The key points outlined were that Ireland had gone from a natural state of almost 80% tree cover, to as low as 1% in the 1900s. There had been a relative rapid increase over the last 100 years to almost 11%, but Irelands' forest cover is still significantly behind the EU average for forest cover of 40%. This presentation also highlighted the variation in forest cover between countries.

The presentation also outlined the species that make up Ireland's forests with 62% conifers, 25% broadleaves and 13% open space. It also outlined the ownership of Irelands forests with approximately 50% in public ownership and 50% in private ownership. There are over 23,000 private landowners that own forests.

The challenges facing forestry were also outlined. The current national target is to grow forestry to over 18% by 2050. This would require an additional half a million hectares of agricultural land and would require different choices on land use to meet this target.

## KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED:

### **Ireland's current level of forest cover was lower than expected**

There was surprise at the current figures around forestry in Ireland with many participants expressing surprise at only 11% of land being covered by forest in Ireland. This was seen to be a low level of forest cover overall, and especially when it was presented in relation to the EU average. While the relative rapid level of growth over the last fifty years was recognised, the current rate of increase in forest cover was seen as being too low and some questioned why this was the case, given the environmental benefits particularly.

### **Variation by county and low levels in some counties was surprising**

Participants noted that there was a strong variation in levels of tree cover by county. They recognized the difference in land use and topography across counties, but some highlighted that every county would need to be involved to meet the current target. The differences from an environmental impact between counties with a high rate of forestry, compared to counties with a high share of land used for agriculture was discussed by some. The concept of setting county level targets and of reflecting the contribution of highly forested counties to carbon emissions was suggested.

### **Recognising the huge scale of the challenge**

Participants were also surprised at how far below the EU average Ireland was and that it was effectively one of the least forested countries in Europe. The higher level of forestry in other countries was seen as a goal to aspire to by most participants, but they recognised that this would be a very large challenge given the low starting base.

# Overview of Forestry in Ireland

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## **Role of public versus private forestry**

There was discussion about the respective roles of public versus private landowners in achieving the forest strategy. Many felt that the main responsibility should be with public forests and queried why there had not been faster growth in forest cover to date.

The role of private landowners was seen to be important, but less easy to change rapidly. There were mixed views on how they could be encouraged to participate- from incentives, to legislation to facilitating intergenerational benefit transfers. In general, it was felt that while the public sector should lead, the private landowners would be key to achieving more rapid growth.

## **Keeping smaller landowners and communities involved**

Some participants who identified as landowners highlighted the need to protect smaller landowners and communities in how a new forest strategy is being developed. While private forestry was understood as key to reaching forestry targets, some concern was raised around the privatisation of forests and long-term outcomes of this approach.

# OVERVIEW - QUOTES

*'I never realised we had so little forestry, I always thought we had a lot of trees'*

*'Why are we so far behind other EU countries, we are not doing enough'*

*'The public sector should be leading on this, need to plant more on public land'*

*'It took 30 years to go from 1 -11% cover – how can we speed up this process?'*

*'I was looking to see my county there and how many trees we have, it's very low'*

*What about people in apartments, how can they be part of this?*

*'The right trees for right places – I like this as a philosophy for the future, nice and simple'*

*'why take land off farmers who produce world class beef to grow trees that create way less value'*



# FORESTS FOR ENVIRONMENT



# FORESTS FOR ENVIRONMENT

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**Dr. Jenni Roche of the National Parks and Wildlife Service presented an insight on the value of forests from an environment and biodiversity perspective (the presentation can be read in the appendix). The presentation outlined the importance of trees in capturing and storing carbon dioxide and reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the opportunity to rapidly increase forest cover to mitigate climate change.**

**The presentation also highlighted the benefits of forest cover for protecting and supporting Ireland's natural biodiversity, and how the choice of forest type would impact on ecosystems. The presentation also presented challenges that may arise when protecting biodiversity when increasing forestry cover.**

**It was highlighted that there has been ongoing discussion in Ireland regarding the types of forests that have been planted. The new strategy would reflect that a balance needs to be struck between fast-growing planted forests and the planting and establishment of native forests. Ireland's remaining natural forests are fragmented across the country and often degraded. However, if planned correctly, both planted and semi-natural forests can complement and enhance the important biodiversity that we have, both within their boundaries and serving as wildlife corridors and refuges in the wider landscape.**

## **KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

### **Forests for tackling Climate Change**

Across the Deliberative Dialogue, environment emerged as a key area of discussion over both days of the dialogue. Participants were very much aware of the immediacy of the climate crisis and understood the importance of the potential role of forestry in helping Ireland meet its carbon emission targets. Trees were understood to be an important carbon store for Ireland, but several participants highlighted the need to maintain forests properly lest they become carbon emitters. Similarly, the use of peatlands for forestry was a source of concern as peatlands can be significant carbon emitters if not managed correctly.

### **Right mix of trees for biodiversity**

The challenge of the correct management of forests was also raised, in relation to the types of trees planted and the importance of protecting Ireland's biodiversity

However, participants were quick to add that forests should not only be thought of in terms of carbon offsetting when it comes to the environment – there was concern of the impact to biodiversity and water quality and peatlands if carbon sequestering was given priority over other environmental concerns. There was an impression among many participants that conifer forests are bad for biodiversity, however the point was made that different kinds of forests can support different habitats and ecosystems – for example spruce forests are good environments for squirrel and pine martin.



# FORESTS FOR ENVIRONMENT

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While there was a clear preference for the planting of broadleaf forests for supporting biodiversity, many participants said that they felt there was a lack of knowledge and education regarding the kind of 'good trees' that should be promoted in order to support biodiversity.

## **The Right Trees, in the Right Place**

The 'right mix of species' was noted as of particular interest and concern to participants – there was an understanding of the benefit of mixed species planting but less so of the benefits of the individual species. The differences between fast-growing and slow growing forests were discussed but it was felt that participants did not have enough information on the trade-offs between both. Participants mentioned the need to educate people on what are perceived as 'good trees' and 'bad trees'.

## **Rethinking how we think of 'suitable land'**

The kind of land used for planting of forestry was also highlighted as a concern with the current reliance on poor soil land, former farming land and peatland. The conservation and regeneration of peatland was of particular concern in this context.

## **Improving Incentives and long-term returns**

The need to incentivise tree and forest planting was raised several times during both sessions. A range of issues were mentioned, such as environmentally focused grants for tree planting, similar to setaside approaches. Some mentioned that the environmental benefit of trees could offset the negative carbon impact of livestock. Or alternatively that the carbon impact should be paid for not just the timber. There was recognition that the long-term nature of the returns from timber would limit the attractiveness for some farmers. Participants felt that in order to meet the country's climate goals, groups other than farmers should be incentivised to plant trees and forests. Landowners not engaged in farming, or large developers were mentioned.

## **Urban engagement**

Some participants commented that there was a disproportionate focus on rural areas when it came to planting of trees and that urban communities should also be given the opportunity, and expected, to contribute to the Forest Strategy, either practically, through tree planting, or financially, allowing people to invest in forestry. There was a sense among participants that more should be done to make people aware of the importance of forests in Ireland to tackling climate change and reaching Ireland's climate goals.

## **Community Forests**

A few discussed the options for community forests to be developed, allowing communities to create forestry on more marginal land and to manage it and the benefits for the community. How the land would be owned was not clear, but there was a desire to avoid large land purchase for forestry by private funds. There was also a discussion around setting up incentives in a way that would allow for intragenerational arrangements, where younger community members could lease land from retired or semi retired farmers for forestry and pay some of the benefits ahead of time.

# FORESTS FOR ENVIRONMENT - QUOTES

*'Let's learn from other countries, like Italy, there is a building in Milan that has trees as part of it- we need to think differently'*

*'We have to look at forestry the long term which is saving this planet'*

*'It's not just about the economic value, trees are valuable on so many levels- they just make me feel better'*

*'Some spruce planting can help biodiversity - e.g. squirrel, pine martin. It doesn't have to all be negative.'*

*'For changes to happen in the way land is used, there has to be major engagement with landowners and in Ireland that means farmers and they have to agree to it as well'*

*'It shouldn't just be farmers .. I really do think that with the new housing estates, it would make such a difference if they had to allocate a certain amount to trees'*

*'I didn't know there were good trees and bad trees - we need to educate the public about this'*

*'We need to focus more on identifying the land we can plant, as well as focusing on the farmers as the people who can help'*

# FORESTRY FOR ECONOMY



# FORESTS FOR ECONOMY

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Day 1 also involved an in-depth discussion in the ways in which trees and forests can support a strong and sustainable economy and thriving, resilient communities as presented by Brian Murphy, Chairman of Forest Industries Ireland and CEO of Balcas (the presentation can be found in the appendix).

The presentation highlighted how Ireland is an excellent climate for growing forests and how, as Irelands forest are increased, we have developed a highly efficient timber products industry based on the forest output of fast-growing conifer species, while hardwood species are limited to more niche industries. The forest sector, which includes the state, Coillte, farmers, private forest owners, sawmills, and other manufacturers of forest products, makes a sizeable contribution to the national economy. For instance, in 2020 forestry contributed over €320 million, and the manufacture of wood and wood products contributed €1.76 billion. These activities supported over 9,000 jobs, primarily in rural Ireland.

The forest sector has significant potential to further increase its contribution to the economy and provide alternatives to fossil fuel. However, there is a trade-off between the more economically viable conifer forests and native species which can more effectively support biodiversity which must be carefully considered.

## KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED

### Low awareness of the wood economy

Most participants had been unaware of the size of the wood economy prior to hearing expert input during the Dialogue. The depth and potential of the industry was seen as a positive thing and something to be developed in the future, both to generate employment and revenue, but also to reduce reliance on import of materials. However, while the potential for job creation in the wood economy was welcomed some queried if the necessary skills were in the labour force and how people would be trained for this work.

### Trade-off between broadleaf and conifer for economic growth

The trade-offs between broadleaf and conifer forests for economy and the biodiversity were a key point of discussion, with 'the right tree, in the right place' emerging again as a priority for participants. However, there was also a view from participants that if the economic objectives could be achieved alongside climate objectives, it would be a positive step forward for Ireland.

### Engaging farmers is seen as key to potential growth

There was a sense that farmers should be and would need to be incentivised to engage with the wood economy and many felt this was a key issue to be factored into the implementation plan. A lack of sufficient financial incentives for farmers to plant more trees was seen as a key challenge. Encouraging farmers to have alternative options that would be climate positive was seen as a good outcome.

# FORESTS FOR ECONOMY

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## **Creating stronger confidence in growing timber among landowners**

There was discussion among landowners around the risk of growing timber – both from the longer-term value of the incentives and frustrations with the operations of previous schemes, and current issues with forestry regulations. The longer-term financial return on timber compared to other farming activities was seen as a key factor here with some people suggesting a forward payment scheme as a potential option. Similarly, the lead time for attaining felling licences was raised as a further barrier to investing in timber and the wood economy.

## **Confidence in timber materials**

Many were surprised at timber frame accounting for a quarter of the housing stock especially in contrast to the Scottish figure of 80%. However, there was a lack of knowledge as to how timber frame compared to more conventional building methods in terms of its strength and durability and there were several requests for data on this. The default opinion from participants was that timber frame was not as durable. There was a sense that the public, and construction industry in Ireland, lacked confidence in the robustness of timber frame construction and this needed to be addressed with an awareness campaign.

## **Competing land uses**

While increasing use of land for forestry and the timber industry was perceived as a positive, participants questioned how this increase would impact current land use. The need for land for housing and agriculture was highlighted and there was concern that the cost of both could increase in future if the balance was shifted towards forestry.



# FORESTS FOR ECONOMY - QUOTES

*'Just as 10% of housing in any development must be social housing, why not have 10% or more of housing land be devoted to forestry?'*

*'There is a shortage of hardwood, because no farmer is going to commit to growing a tree that will outlive him... and not all farmers have someone coming after them'*

*'Targets need to be shorter term, annual planting levels need to be said and hit. The overall plans shouldn't be more than 10 years, anything longer than that is pointless'*

*'I have a small piece of land, and I planted forestry and it is like the man who spoke in the video said- it was worth doing, I'd recommend it'*

*'I'd only buy a timber frame house if it was cheaper, I feel bricks and mortar would be stronger and last longer- just does not seem as secure and it's such a wet country'*

*'Sure the price of wood is gone mad, having a good supply in Ireland makes sense...'*

*'I have no land and would love to invest in forestry, what about an SSIA type of investment fund so that ordinary folk can get involved and benefit from afforestation of the country?'*

*'I didn't know that we supplied so much of the wood for building, I thought we imported most of it from Sweden'*

# FORESTS FOR PEOPLE



# FORESTS FOR PEOPLE

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The social value of forests, presented by Mark Carlin of Coillte, was the topic of the first half of Day 2, highlighting the role of forests as an important recreational activity for millions of people, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Forests provide an important access point to nature for many people and are deeply embedded in the culture of Ireland through our place names and history. They also offer a variety of social and health benefits and the potential for forests as sites for activity-based pursuits, education and learning and as tourist attractions was also highlighted.

The balance between public access and the increase in privately owned forests was flagged as an issue for ongoing discussion, to ensure the continued social benefits of forests and trees across Ireland.

## KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED

### Wellbeing for People

The mental health and wellbeing benefits of forests as well as the physical health benefits of taking exercise in forests were widely discussed and seen as a unique positive feature of forests. Many agreed that Covid-19 restrictions had encouraged people to use forests who never would have before, and this should continue to be encouraged.

### Access to Forests

Good forest infrastructure (trails, signage, seating, bins) was seen as key to enabling people to utilise and enjoy forests. There was a view that this could be improved in many areas. Similarly, many forests are located far away from where people live and not on public transport routes. Increasing physical access to forests is also seen as a challenge and public transport links need to be considered. The cost of transport and cost of upgrading facilities for visitors was also a potential challenge and participants suggested there be a budget allocation for facilities in new forests.

### Forests and community

There was a lot of discussion around planning forests with people in mind. Many felt forest planning should be linked to county development plans so that new forests would be close to where people will be living in future. Participants felt there was a need to involve local communities when new forests are being planned to get buy-in and ownership. In urban areas in particular, it was felt that trees aren't a key priority for some urban local authorities. There was a perceived level of negative public attitude to forests such as trees blocking views and light. This was seen as a minority opinion, but it did get media coverage and could be an issue for promoting future forest plans.

# FORESTS FOR PEOPLE

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## **Access to Private Forests**

Lack of access to privately owned forests was identified as a key challenge to the social use of forests. As private landowners are encouraged to plant forests there was a concern that limited access to forests could become an issue in future. Linked to this challenge was the issue of liability risk for forest owners. Many participants felt forest owners are reluctant to allow people into their forests because of the risk of being sued for accidents and this needs to be addressed.

Anti-social behaviour was also identified as an issue both in terms of current behaviour keeping people away from forests and also in terms of an increase in visitor numbers generating more anti-social behaviour.

## **Forests as a source of education**

There was some discussion in the session and the plenary of the potential of forests to provide an educational resource around the environment, and around biodiversity. Most participants felt that they had learned more about forests and that there should be more education on how they contribute. They also felt that trees and forests themselves could be tools for education, in showing the importance and benefits of climate action and showing people the importance of protecting Ireland's unique biodiversity.

# FORESTS FOR PEOPLE - QUOTES

*'Visiting forests is not just about seeing trees but about the wider experience'*

*'My granddad planted an apple tree for all his grandchildren...it was a great way to educate them and to feel connected to trees'*

*'I think the plan should include planting more trees in urban parks and areas close to towns – that way lots of people could easily access trees and benefit from them'*

*Could it be sold to local communities as 'a forest for each town and village in Ireland' that could have walking paths etc for the locals'*

*'I think they do the (forest) infrastructure stuff much better in UK forests, there's always good signs for walks, fairy trails for the kids, that kind of thing, it makes it very welcoming'*

*'...antisocial behaviour can be a real issue, there's a forested area near me that people simply won't go into as bad stuff goes on there and people don't feel safe going in'*

*'...public engagement is key, show what the value forest offer'*

*'Most of us live in towns, I'm in an apartment - but I get out into woods and it keeps me connected, and makes me feel I want to protect what we have....'*



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# VISION & AMBITION



# VISION

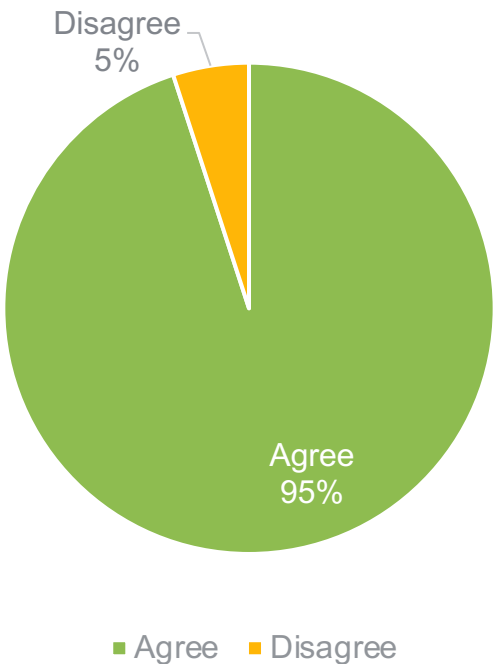
Following an address by the Minister of State for Land Use and Biodiversity Pippa Hackett that outlined the government's ambition for forestry in Ireland and the significant benefits from increasing forest cover, participants were asked to consider the Draft Vision and the development of Ireland's Forest Strategy as presented to them by the DAFM.

***"The right trees in the right places for the right reasons with the right management supporting a sustainable and thriving economy and society and a healthy environment."***

Participants were then asked if they would agree that Ireland should turn this vision into strategic action to meet the goal for forest cover.

**Based on all that you have heard and seen would you agree that:**

*Ireland needs to take action to meet our 18% target for forest cover. As we establish more forests, we should be increasing the value we gain from trees in the following areas - meeting our climate and biodiversity goals, supplying sustainable wood products for our bioeconomy, creating local employment and rural incomes and enhancing citizens quality of life.*



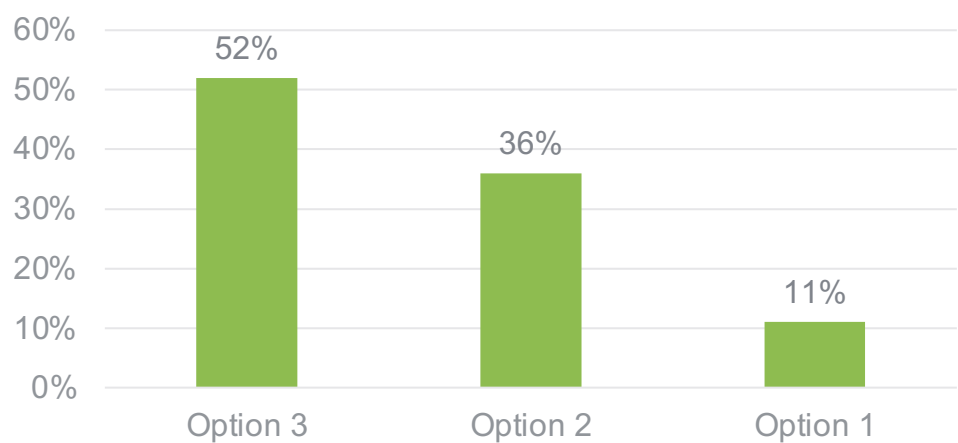
# VISION & AMBITION

Participants were then asked to vote on what should be the level of ambition of the strategy and were presented with three options of the target to be achieved. Each option would be higher than what is currently achieved but would require different levels of ambition. Option 1 would be the least ambitious, with option 3 being more ambitious than current targets.

Based on all that you have heard and seen and understanding that at current forest establishment rates it will take 250 years to reach the 18% target. Please choose the level of ambition that the government should consider as it develops the new strategy?

1. Aim to meet the 8,000 hectares per annum target for new forest establishment set in the Climate Action Plan. [At this rate, it will take approximately 60 years to reach the 18% target].
2. Aim to achieve the 18% target by 2050 or sooner [to reach 18% by 2050 will require approx. 16,000 hectares per annum of new forest establishment].
3. Aim to achieve an even greater expansion of forest cover to help combat climate change [which will mean a change of land use in more areas from grassland to forestry with farmers getting a lot more involved in forestry]

Level of Ambition



# VISION & AMBITION

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## Discussion post voting

The majority of participants endorsed an ambition to achieve an even great expansion of forest cover relative to the current rate of planting. Participants felt that Ireland needed to increase the percentage of forest cover and recognised the environmental benefits of forests. Participants also cited the importance of Ireland becoming increasingly self-sufficient with regards to timber products and the potential for the economy through forest expansion. This group cited the need to consider balance of species diversity and land use when increasing forest cover to accommodate the environmental and economic trade-offs that had been highlighted throughout the sessions.

Just over a third of participants endorsed an even faster rate of expansion. Those who chose option 2 felt that the 2050 target felt too far in the future given current levels which lag so far behind Europe and felt that Ireland was long overdue a focus on this issue. This group also emphasized the immediacy needed to tackle the current climate crisis.

A small minority choose to continue to aim to meet the annual target of 8,000. Reasons given for this choice referenced past forest planting which had had negative impacts on biodiversity, and they lacked confidence that future planting would address this. Concerns were also raised over the cost of implementing the strategy in the context of housing shortages and potential rising costs of imported food if land were to be reallocated to forestry.

95% of participants, agreed, based on what they had heard, and given the outline vision. that Ireland should take action to reach the 18% target for forest cover.

There was consensus from participants that forestry was essential for Ireland from a climate perspective and that the strategy represented a long-term investment in the country.

Participants highlighted the need to ensure that the approach in the vision was reflected in the strategy in the short to long-term. They pointed out that ‘the right tree in the right place’ was an essential component of the vision for the resulting strategy to be sustainable and effective. However, participants asked if there had been a reflection on the forestry strategy of the past 20 – 40 years during which time many felt that the wrong trees had been planted in the wrong places. Participants asked what was being done to prevent these mistakes being repeated with the new strategy.

Participants questioned the known impact of the strategy and increased forestry on Ireland's ecosystems. Concerns were raised about the balance of planting and what safeguards are in place to monitor the strategy and guarantee that harm is minimised.

# VISION & AMBITION

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## Discussion post voting

There was a strong recognition that the right management was key and that there would need to be improvement in both incentives and licensing to maintain momentum of the strategy. A number of participants indicated that there was the reliance on farmers to realise the strategy through planting on land that is currently farmland. There was consensus that there should be more incentives for private citizens and corporations to become involved in the planting or funding of forestry.

Another area highlighted was to have clear targets set on an ongoing basis, annually and potentially at a local level, with clear communication with the public as to how these targets were being monitored and met.

Finally, questions were raised over the overall financial investment needed to deliver the forest strategy and the lack of detail available on this. This was seen as a key aspect that needed to be communicated more strongly to the public.

There was consensus that Ireland should take action to increase our forest cover, but this vision could only be achieved through engaging all facets of society from farmers, to young people, to urban communities, to ensure that there was sustained support for the increase in forestry and investment in the success of the strategy.



# VISION & AMBITION - QUOTES

*'I think it is great to really think about the type of forests that we want, and we have to think about how we balance agriculture and forests, and what type of trees we need for wildlife'*

*'We need to think about how we increase land for trees - if we go for denser planning, this would leave more land for trees'*

*'We need to stay focused on the climate, and not just incentives - planting more trees is going to help us reach our targets- but only one of the things we need to do'*

*'We need to focus on identifying more public land we can plant, as well as focusing on the farmers as the people who can help'*

*'I do think we are asking an awful lot from our farmers with this proposal'*

*'Education keeps coming up - it's really important- teach children to plant trees and come how to their parents- spreading the message that trees are so valuable'*

*'I would like to have clarity around the targets, and how we are going to achieve the targets. It will be really important to have accountability and to have a clear and structured plan'*

*'The best time to plant trees is twenty years ago. The second best time is now'*



# APPENDIX 1

## Forests: An Overview

Fergus Moore, Head of Division, Forest Sector Development, Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine

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I am going to give you a brief overview of forestry in Ireland and to introduce some of the key themes which you will hear over the next couple of days. The speakers that will follow me, will provide more detail as our conversation develops.

If we go way back in time, Ireland was covered in forests. After the last ice age, as temperatures increased, Irelands forests covered up to 80% of our island. These forests covered vast areas and contained species such as oak, hazel and pine. All these forests have virtually disappeared, but a few remain in small areas throughout the country. Through centuries of exploitation, Irelands forests were felled, the wood used for industrial expansion, and land converted to agriculture. The echoes of our forest landscape are still found in the many placenames and townlands which reference trees and forests from a by gone age. Trees and forests are an important part of our natural environment, our heritage, our forest industry, and our culture. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Irelands forest cover was reduced to 1% of our land area.

However, over the last 100 years Ireland has made great strides in creating new forests. Our forest cover today now stands at 11%, which is the highest it has been for over 350 years. Although our forest cover is low by European standards, which is approximately 40%, we must acknowledge the achievement of getting to 11%.

I will tell you about our existing forests, about the species they contain and who owns these forests. Our national forest inventory collects a range of information. We know that our forest estate contains about 70% conifers and about 30% broadleaved species. The most common tree planted is Sitka spruce and we also have a range of native and non-native trees. About 50% of our forests are in public ownership, which mainly includes Coillte and the forests in our National Parks. The remaining 50% is owned privately by over 23,000 landowners. Our forests are quite young, with over half less than 20 years of age. Our inventory provides lots of information on our forests and we can tell you more about this later.

You will hear from our speakers about the importance of our forests and the many functions they provide.

Our forests make an important contribution to our environment. Forests established with native and non-native species, have an important role to play in providing habitats for a range of plants and animals. Collectively our forests make a positive contribution and depending on their purpose will provide a range of different benefits. However, in some cases, forests planted in the wrong place will have negative impacts and you will hear more about this later. Irelands forests and their soils store over 300 million tonnes of carbon and make a positive contribution to our climate when they remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

## Forests: An Overview

Fergus Moore, Head of Division, Forest Sector Development, Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine

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The management of our forest resource supports a thriving forest industry and provides many jobs in rural areas. Our national forest estate produces about 4 million cubic metres of wood annually and this harvest is increasing as our forests mature. It is also important to note, that the planting and the felling of forests is licensed. Regulation helps support the sustainable management of forests in accordance with good forest practice and ensures that felled areas are replanted.

Our forests are managed by many people whether it's growing the tree seedlings in the nurseries, planting and tending the trees in the forest, to harvesting the trees when mature, including the truck drivers that take the logs to our sawmills. The building of houses using timber also supports many jobs in the construction sector. Using wood for energy also replaces our dependency on fossil fuels such as oil and gas. Later you will hear more about the importance of wood and the forest industry from our speakers.

It is important to acknowledge that our public forests, which in addition to the timber they provide, provide access for recreation and quite places for us to enjoy. Coillte forests and the forests in our National Parks are an excellent national resource providing many trails for walking, mountain biking and quite enjoyment. Over the course of the next two days, you will hear about the wide variety of functions that forests provide.

You will be asked to deliberate on the value of our forests and to determine the level of ambition on increasing our national forest area. We have a national target to grow our forest estate to over 18% by 2050, which will need an additional area of around half a million hectares of agricultural land, that's about an area the size of County Kerry. This will create significant challenges and will require choices in land use if this target is to be realised. We are way off target, and if we are to achieve 18% forest cover, we need to significantly scale up our planting of new forests now.

We also know that the challenge of climate change requires all countries to significantly reduce the amount of carbon dioxide that is emitted to the atmosphere. This is needed to limit global warming to acceptable levels by 2050. The science and evidence are clear. All countries need to take significant action and change how we live in our daily lives and become more sustainable. Ireland needs to reduce our emissions and increase the removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Our existing forests, and significantly planting many new forests, is crucial if we are to meet our climate change commitments. Although the challenges are many our forests provide many opportunities to place Ireland on a pathway to a sustainable future.

Thank you for listening and we look forward to answering your questions as you deliberate on the future of Ireland's forests.

## Forests and the Economy

Brian Murphy, Chairman of Forest Industries Ireland, and CEO of Balcas

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I would like to talk to you this evening about forests and the economy.

Forests and the forest-based sector provide multiple economic functions and benefits, including additional jobs and growth opportunities in rural areas and recreational functions contributing to the general public physical and mental health.

Ireland has very good climate conditions for growing trees. As we have heard forest cover has increased over the last 100 years or so from a low of 1 % to just above 11 % today. Most of the forests planted over that period were planted with the main objective of producing wood, while also providing jobs in rural areas.

A forest sector developed alongside the growth in forest area and has become highly efficient in the production of sawn wood and other products primarily based on wood from fast-growing conifer species. Hardwood - wood from broadleaves - is currently a very small component of the wood processing sector.

The forest sector itself includes farmers, forest owners, forest managers, sawmills, processors and the manufacturers of forest products. This sector makes a sizeable contribution to the national economy. For instance, in 2020 forestry contributed over €320 million, and the manufacture of wood and wood products contributed €1.76 billion. These activities supported over 9,000 jobs, much of them in rural Ireland. While since 1980 nearly 23,500 private landowners have received grant aid to establish forests. For instance, in 2019 alone over €64 million was paid in forest premium payments to forest owners.

The forest sector holds significant potential to further increase its contribution to the economy. Estimates indicate that the annual potential supply can increase from 4.7 million m<sup>3</sup> in 2021 to 7.9 million m<sup>3</sup> by 2035, with the increase largely driven by the private sector, mainly farmers.

With this increase in wood availability, the forest sector can capitalise on the increasing demand for sustainable construction materials. For instance, there are currently low levels of wood used in house building and construction in Ireland. Timber frame accounts for only 24% of new builds, which is low by European standards. This represents a significant opportunity for the sector, both in the use of existing products such as sawn wood and panel products, but also in the development of new and innovative engineered wood products. This in turn can help decarbonise the economy by increasing the availability of raw materials sourced in Ireland and reducing the use of steel and cement in our buildings.

There is also significant potential for wood fuel to displace fossil fuel, particularly in the generation of heat in industrial, commercial, domestic and institutional markets.

However, wood is not the only way forests contribute to the economy. As we have heard trees take carbon out of the atmosphere and store it in their wood, they provide clean air, support biodiversity, contribute to clean water and provide recreational spaces for us to enjoy. All of these benefits have a wider economic value for our society.



## Forests and the Economy

Brian Murphy, Chairman of Forest Industries Ireland, and CEO of Balcas

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The type of forest planted will result in trade-offs between the types and range of benefits that forests provide to our economy, whether that be for wood, nature, climate or the wider economy. For example, the commercial conifer forests that the sawmills depend on are very efficient at capturing carbon from the atmosphere, are excellent at producing wood that the economy needs and provide the forest owners with a product that has a ready market. However, these types of forests do not support the same level of biodiversity as a mixed species forest and can be damaging to the environment if not managed appropriately. While mixed species and native forests can be great for biodiversity and water protection, and can also be healthier and more resilient to the impact of climate change. However, there is currently a very limited market for the wood that they produce.

So how do we encourage the creation of new forests of all shapes and sizes, that have multiple objectives - not just wood production - and are also seen as a good investment for the landowner?

This is a significant challenge, for achieving at least 18 % forest cover will require the support of landowners and farmers in particular, in very large numbers throughout Ireland.

For farmers, the land is their livelihood and there is a very reasonable expectation that if they choose to plant trees that there will be an economic return in doing so.

Therefore, we need to get better at valuing the non-wood benefits of forests and rewarding landowners for protecting biodiversity and water, and for capturing carbon from the atmosphere. We need to get better at developing markets for hardwood broadleaf trees so that the forest owner can be confident that there is a timber market for their forest, we need to get better at developing the recreational potential of forests. And in doing all this we need to ensure that farmers and other landowners are supported through training to deliver this range of benefits.

We are currently in the midst of a climate and biodiversity crisis. The draft vision for the future of Irish forests envisions a much larger and more diverse forestry and woodland footprint being successfully managed to balance and deliver forestry's multiple objectives and benefits for climate, nature, wood production, people, and the wider economy and rural communities

To achieve this ambition, we need to have targeted action to deliver the broad range of economic benefits that forests can provide. For climate, for nature as well as for wood.

We are currently in the midst of a climate and biodiversity crisis. The draft vision for the future of Irish forests envisions a much larger and more diverse forestry and woodland footprint being successfully managed to balance and deliver forestry's multiple objectives and benefits for climate, nature, wood production, people, and the wider economy and rural communities.

To achieve this ambition, we need to have targeted action to deliver the broad range of economic benefits that forests can provide. For climate, for nature as well as for wood.

## Forests and the Environment

Dr Jenni Roche, Woodland Ecologist, National Parks, and Wildlife Service

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Good evening everyone. I'm Dr. Jenni Roche. I work for the national parks and wildlife service in the role of woodland ecologist. As a member of the group that has been working on the shared national vision for trees and forests in Ireland, I want to speak with you for the next ten minutes or so about the connections between forests and our natural environment.

Here, the term forests includes both plantation forests and the more natural native forests. One of the most important points I would like you to think about and remember is that forests can be both good and bad for our natural environment, depending on how they are established, their location, their tree species and how they are managed.

On the positive side, forests can play a major role in helping us tackle climate change and restore biodiversity. As you may know there is too much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which is changing our climate and having a negative impact on our weather, on the environment and on our lives. You may be less aware that Ireland's biodiversity- of animals, plants and habitats, is also under threat due to the many pressures we humans place on our land and water. In a large-scale research project undertaken in Ireland between 2001 and 2006 called bioforest, a main conclusion was that 'in general, forest plantations can make a significant positive contribution to biodiversity in the landscape if properly planned and managed, and can have a negative effect if not'. The types of forests we establish, and how we establish and manage them is therefore really important to ensure we get positive impacts for the environment.

Trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through photosynthesis and use that carbon to grow. Large amounts of carbon are locked up in trees and when wood from these trees is used to produce wood products the carbon is stored for life in that product. The more natural native forests are also a haven for biodiversity and man made forests, when located, planted and managed correctly, can support a variety of plants, insects and animals and protect water courses. Trees planted in urban areas are good for air quality, local biodiversity and our overall health and wellbeing.

Forest coverage has grown from only about 1% of our land area in the early 1920's to approx 11% now. The cover of native forest in Ireland currently comprises about 1.8% of the land area. We know that trees grow very well in our climate and many years ago Ireland was a heavily forested country. According to the environmental protection agency, or EPA, every year, our forests absorb about 4 million tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and our forests are now a significant and important carbon store.

In simple terms, if done in the right way, the more forests we establish, the more carbon we suck out of the atmosphere. By careful management and choosing the right trees for the right places, we can make sure we maximise carbon stores in trees, soils and wood products, while also providing other benefits to the environment including clean air, clean water and a diverse range of plants and animals.

## Forests and the Environment

Dr Jenni Roche, Woodland Ecologist, National Parks, and Wildlife Service

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On the negative side, if we plant the wrong trees in the wrong places with the wrong management practices, which we have done in the past in Ireland, forests can damage water quality and have negative effects on both habitats and species. According to the EPA, in its most recent state of the environment report, forestry can impact negatively on natural vegetation, soils, biodiversity and the landscape. It can pollute water through acidification and nutrient release. Tree felling, planting and replanting activities can also allow soils to enter water courses if not carefully managed and monitored. When planted on peat soils, such as bogs, forests can also act as a source of carbon emissions. In relation to water quality, forestry has been identified by the EPA as a significant pressure in 215 rivers, 18 lakes and 5 groundwater bodies. These pressures from forestry are largely associated with soil and sediment from clear felling, drainage, planting and establishment and are predominantly located in upland areas, at the top of river catchments.

According to the national parks and wildlife service, whom I work for, forestry is a significant pressure for approximately 30% of Ireland's protected habitats and 15% of Ireland's protected species. In relation to forestry and biodiversity, a recent research review concluded that the 'current state of Irish plantations is not optimal for biodiversity conservation' but also that 'a number of management options exist which can be utilised to improve plantation forests biodiversity value'.

Progress has been made. However, some of these problems associated with water quality and biodiversity are due to practices that originated when there was a poorer understanding of the potential negative impacts that forestry (and indeed agriculture and other land uses) can have for the quality of our natural environment and biodiversity. These negative impacts need to be addressed to enable a better future, based on the principle of the right trees in the right places for the right reasons with the right management to make sure that all Irish forests, both old and new, are being developed and managed to help protect water quality, help restore biodiversity and contribute to our fight against climate change.

To combat climate change, there is a need for farmers and other land owners to start growing a lot more trees in Ireland. The proposed target is to grow our overall forest cover to at least 18% from its current 11%. When done in the right way, forest establishment is one of the best and most natural and long lasting ways for us to suck carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. This will lead to noticeable changes in our landscape with a lot more land used for forests. But we also want this to happen in a way that will be positive for water quality and biodiversity and also for our farmers, other land owners and the public. This means designing and implementing systems, in consultation with farmers, other land owners and the public, that encourage and incentivise the creation of forests of all shapes and sizes that will be seen as a good investment by land owners and that are good for water quality, biodiversity, the economy and the public.

We can do this by working together to create a better future for us all and by basing our conversations, assessments and decisions on sound scientific evidence.

## The Social Value of Forests

Mark Carlin, Managing Director, Coillte

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There is little to compare with a walk in the forest and it is something that Irish people place great value in. Visits to our forests increased nearly 40% during the covid pandemic with 2.2 million people visiting Coillte's top 50 forests between march and December 2020.

In a recent public attitudes survey to forestry 96% indicated that exercise/ recreation was their reason for visiting forests. But Irelands relationship with trees and forests is not a new phenomenon and it stretches beyond recreation.

Today grassland accounts for 58.4% of our total land cover in Ireland but our roots are very much linked to our connection with trees and forests.

You find trees within our placenames; or in our sports and music for example. In ancient pre-Christian society, trees were protected because of their importance to the community. Penalties and heavy fines for damaging trees were enforced according to the value of the tree harmed. The very name Gael is thought to come from a term in old Irish meaning 'forest people'. So our connection with trees and forests is deep rooted.

When we speak about social value today we are talking about how trees and forests can benefit people's wellbeing and we know that they can have a really positive impact on us. For example, the woodlands for health programme, has been developed by Coillte and has been prescribed by medical professionals for adult patients who experience mental health challenges to engage them in forest activities to enhance their quality of life. The findings indicated an improvement in the well-being of participants of on average 75% after the 12 week programme.

But we know there are many other positive ways that forests benefit society, among them:

- Serving as a carbon sink and carbon store in our fight against the impacts of climate change.
- Supplying sustainable wood products, which can substitute fossil based materials like concrete & steel in the construction of our homes.
- Supplying a sustainable source of fuelwood for heat & power
- Providing valuable habitats for wildlife and nature.
- Supporting approximately 9,000 jobs in rural communities within the forest sector.
- Strengthening our economy through the export of wood and packaging products valued at €751 million in 2020 and payment of over €64 million in forest premiums payments to Irish forest owners.
- Providing outdoor learning and development opportunities for adults and children.
- Creating new tourist destinations which promote tourism in Ireland and support rural towns and villages

## The Social Value of Forests

Mark Carlin, Managing Director, Coillte

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Public access is a very important factor to the social value of our forests. Approximately half of all forests in Ireland is owned by Coillte who have an open forest policy – allowing access on foot to 440,000 hectares and over 6,000 forests. Coillte is the largest provider of outdoor recreation in Ireland – with 12 forest parks, 260 recreation sites, 3000 kms of trails & 6 mountain bike trails. This results in an estimated 18 million visits to Coillte forests each year.

The decision to allow access to privately owned forests rests solely with the forest owner in Ireland and is provided on a goodwill basis. Some of the potential drawbacks for a private owner in allowing public access is their exposed risk to public liability, anti-social behaviour and littering for example.

Ireland needs to grow more trees. Under the climate action plan we have committed to creating 8,000 hectares of new forests each year. In 2021 we planted just over 2000 hectares, so it is essential that afforestation is significantly increased in the coming years.

So how would this increase in forests likely impact their social value to us?

There will be more forests in the landscape and there will be a greater balance between agriculture and forestry in Ireland. In the recent attitudes poll 75% of people said they would like to see more forests in their county, with 65% stating that their ideal landscape is one that has an even balance between agriculture and forestry. 7 in 10 also said they want a mix between conifers and deciduous trees.

In the same survey 76% said they would like to see more trees in their nearest urban area, so considering most of our population now live in these areas, there is a really significant opportunity of bringing the benefits of trees to a greater portion of society.

These facts help us to understanding how society values forests today and they can inform effective planning and decision-making when we are creating new forests and managing existing ones.

The experience of communities with forestry differs across the country. In a recent study carried out by Irish rural link it was found that while there is an overwhelmingly positive attitude toward trees and forests and their benefits to communities, some had had a negative experience of forestry, which largely related to the lack of diversity, and engagement & collaboration with local people. This correlates with earlier research that shows the social impact of forestry is more positive in areas with a long-standing history of forest cover than in those that have been recently forested. So it is important to acknowledge these issues and address them in our future forest strategy.

It is important to note that Ireland has gone from less than 1% forest cover in the early 1900s to 11% today, which means that good progress has been made, but Ireland is still a long way behind the EU average of 40% forest cover.



## **The Social Value of Forests**

Mark Carlin, Managing Director, Coillte

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This can serve as a valuable learning experience for us when planning and managing our future forests so that they deliver balanced benefits for the people of Ireland. It will require working closely with people, most essentially the farming community so that diversifying to forestry is considered as an integrated part of the farm as a whole, so that there is as much pride in growing trees as there is in a crop of wheat or in rearing sheep and cattle.

In the draft shared vision our ambition is to provide - “a profitable diversification option for farmers with people living in rural, urban and suburban communities feeling a sense of connection and pride in their local forests and woodlands and the many benefits that they provide.”

In striving to reach for this ambition Irish society can experience the multiple benefits that more forests can bring but on a much greater scale. It can provide generations of Irish people with these same benefits and at the same time help us to reconnect with an integral part of our natural and cultural heritage in the process.

## Setting Our Vision and Ambition

Matt Crowe, Chair of Working Group 2, Project Woodland

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Over the past two days you have heard about the environmental, economic and social issues relating to forests and forestry practice in Ireland. You have also heard about the history of forests in Ireland and how Irelands landscape has changed over many centuries and millennia from being heavily forested after the last ice age to being largely denuded of forests by human activity since the island was colonised by humans over 5000 years ago - to recent growth over the past century from about 1% land cover in the 19th century to the current level of about 11%. You have heard that our ancient woodlands are now few and far between and in many cases in poor condition and in need of protection if they are to survive and that the majority of trees planted over the past 100 years are non-native conifers like Sitka and Norway spruce.

You have also heard that the majority of land use change to forestry over the past century took place on land considered at the time to be of poor economic value such as peatlands and uplands with very little planting of trees on productive grasslands. You have heard that our understanding of value has also changed with much greater value now being placed on the ecological services that land can provide to help combat climate change, restore biodiversity, provide flood relief and protect water quality and the 'public good' services that provide spaces for walking, sport and relaxation. You have also heard that we need to build many more homes and other buildings from wood as a more environmentally sustainable and lower carbon choice than building from concrete.

You have heard that forests can have either positive or negative impacts on the environment, the economy and society depending on how forests are planned and managed. The mantra the right trees in the right places for the right reasons with the right management has been proposed to you as the way to ensure that the overall impact of forests and forestry is positive for the environment, the economy and our society. But you have also heard that changes are needed to ensure that all future forests are established and managed according to the principle of the right trees in the right places for the right reasons with the right management.

You have heard that the recent public attitudes survey and research conducted by Irish rural link showed broad support for more forests in Ireland. In the recent public attitudes survey 75% of people said they would like to see more forests/ woodland in their county with 65% saying that their ideal landscape is one that has at least a fairly even balance between agriculture and forestry. 7 in 10 also said they want a mix between conifers and deciduous trees. So what kind of future are we aiming for? One with the same amount of forest cover as we currently have? Less forestry than we currently have? - Or a future where much more of Irish land is dedicated to forests of all different shapes and sizes - from small pockets of forestry on a typical farm to urban forests to expanded native woodlands to small commercial farm level plantations to much larger forests with a mixture of different types of trees providing multiple benefits across nature, climate, wood production, local employment and public amenity?

## Setting Our Vision and Ambition

Matt Crowe, Chair of Working Group 2, Project Woodland

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As a country, we are at a critical point in deciding what future we want to plan for as the decisions made now will have lasting impacts for many years to come. Trees take time to grow so to move from the current level of 11% forest cover to 18% or even greater will take time but the crucial decision right now is to decide as a nation is this what we want to do. More forests will mean less productive grassland if we are to ensure that all future forests are created on the principle of the right trees on the right places for the right reasons with the right management - we can no longer plant trees in wrong places like peatlands and upland areas where much of the new planting took place over the past century. Whenever decisions are made about land use there are trade off's involved and the biggest trade off in planning for a more heavily forested country is that some land currently used as pasture for dairy and beef production will need to be used for forestry instead. This means working with farmers, other land owners and communities to work out how forestry and other land uses like grassland and cereal production can co-exist in harmony to deliver better environmental, economic, social and cultural outcomes.

If for no other reason than to combat climate change, we need farmers and other land owners to start growing a lot more trees in all parts of Ireland to grow our overall forest cover to at least 18% from its current 11%. There is simply no way around this - we have to work out how to do it and then do it as growing trees is the best and most natural and longlasting way for us to suck carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. This will lead to noticeable changes in our landscape with a lot more land used for forestry. But we also want this to happen in a way that will be positive for water quality and biodiversity and also for our farmers, other land owners and the public. This means designing and implementing systems, in consultation with farmers, other land owners and the public, that encourage and incentivise the creation of forests of all shapes and sizes that will be seen as a good investment by land owners and that are good for water quality, biodiversity, the economy and the public.

We can do this by working together to create a better future for us all and by basing our conversations, assessments and decisions on sound scientific evidence.

You are now going to be asked to deliberate on two questions - the first relating to the value we can create from planting more trees and the second seeking your considered view on how ambitious we need to be in transforming Ireland into a more heavily forested country.

I hope that you have found the various presentations and information provided useful in helping you become more informed about the issue at hand and I wish you will with your deliberations.



# APPENDIX 2



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,  
Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine

# **Deliberative Dialogue on Forestry**

## **Participant Information Pack**

Prepared by the Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine

[agriculture.gov.ie](http://agriculture.gov.ie)





# IRISH FORESTS IN A NUTSHELL 2022

## FOREST COVER

11%

IRELAND

38.3%

EU27  
AVERAGE

50 50  
OWNERSHIP

PRIVATE STATE

28.7%  
BROADLEAVES

71.2%  
CONIFERS

OVER  
23,491  
FOREST  
OWNERS

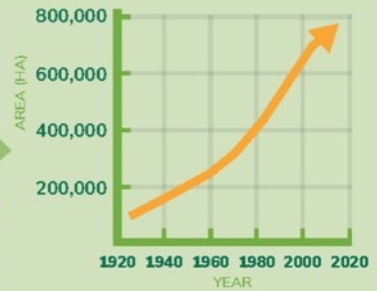
AVERAGE PARCEL OF  
AFFORESTED LAND IS



8.6 HA.

A TARGET OF  
8,000 ha  
OF NEW FOREST  
PER ANNUM

OUR TOTAL  
FOREST  
AREA IS  
GROWING



29 MILLION  
VISITS TO  
IRISH  
FORESTS  
PER ANNUM



WOOD PRODUCTS  
EXPORTED  
TO OVER 50  
COUNTRIES

VALUED AT  
€450  
MILLION

81% OF THE  
FORESTS  
AFFORESTED SINCE 1980  
HAVE BEEN PLANTED BY  
FARMERS

CONTRIBUTES  
€2.3  
BILLION TO  
THE ECONOMY

SUPPORTING  
9,000  
JOBS



FORESTS  
REMOVE  
AN AVERAGE  
OF

4.3 MT OF  
(CO<sub>2</sub>EQ) / YR

CO<sub>2</sub>



1 M<sup>3</sup>  
OF ROUNDWOOD  
USED IN PLACE OF  
CONCRETE/STEEL  
SAVES  
0.77 T  
OF CO<sub>2</sub>E



***“Trees are a vital part of our natural heritage and make significant contribution to our rural economy. The shared vision for forests and the forest strategy we are developing will have an impact for generations to come.”***

Pippa Hackett, Minister of State for Biodiversity and Land Use

## Welcome to our consultation

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this discussion, we really value your time and contribution in helping us develop a forestry strategy for Ireland. We wanted to hear from people who represent all Irish citizens- so people who are joining us are from all over Ireland, all walks of life and every generation.

No one is expected to be an expert on forests, we will share some of the facts and figures to explain why the Government think that having a strategy on forests is important and we will then ask for your views. We would like to hear everyone's views and we will run the session in a way that everyone will get a chance to ask questions and share their views in smaller breakout sessions. All participants will be able to ask for support from the team running the two sessions, and if you have any difficulties, we will provide a contact number.

The two sessions are set up to provide information on Forests in short presentations, and we will try and make this completely accessible to everyone. We are sharing some of this information in advance if you would like to look at it, but don't worry you will also be able to see it during the sessions. If you have any questions, you can share them with the team on the day, and we will do our best to answer them quickly.

We will be running the event in a way that everyone feels included, listened too and respected on the day- and we hope that all participants also respect each other's points of view. We have a short outline of how we will run the session and some very simple codes of behaviour for everyone to follow. We are sharing more about how the day will run below and some basic information to set you up for the two days. We are really looking forward to hearing from you all!

## Why are we consulting?

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is developing a new Forest Strategy and a new shared vision for trees and forests in Ireland. The development of a new Forest Strategy is a key commitment for Project Woodland and is due to be published in 2022.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine are gathering the views of people living in Ireland on the reasons why we plant forests, the places they are planted, the types of trees we plant, and how forests are managed.

A target has been set to achieve 8,000 hectares of newly planted forest per year but we are currently far from reaching this target with just 2,016 ha of newly planted forests in 2021.

If targets are to be meaningful, realistic and achievable then it is essential that they are set with the support of society; the people who will be creating new forests and living with them in their communities.

By engaging now you can influence how forestry evolves over the coming decades in Ireland. Your input to this consultation will help to shape a shared national vision for trees and forests in Ireland, one that is truly reflective of the whole of Irish society.

Your information will also help to shape the new national Forest Strategy, which will provide a framework with robust objectives and actions needed to drive forward the ambition set in the national vision to 2050. These objectives and actions will be far reaching with the aim of delivering for our economy, environment, and for our communities.

By influencing the direction of the Forest Strategy you can also impact the shape of the next Forestry Programme 2023-2027. The new Forestry Programme will be a key mechanism for the implementation of the Forest Strategy and will set the ground conditions for the move towards the longer-term vision for forestry in Ireland.





# TREES, WOODS AND FORESTS IN IRELAND 2030



## What will the consultation look like?

To get a balanced view, we are asking for 100 people who are broadly representative of all Irish citizens to come together, be given information about potential goals for the new forestry strategy and to capture their views. This will help us create a new shared vision for trees and forests in Ireland. This is called a deliberative consultation and is similar to the 'citizen assembly' approach that you may have heard about that was used to consider other policy goals.

You have been invited to participate in this process as we wanted to bring a group of people together who represent a wide range of different citizens. As well as being interested in forests, we asked people to join based on different criteria such as:

- Age
- Gender
- Geography

We also wanted to get a good mix of individuals from all walks of life so that members could learn about, understand, and connect with people who have different backgrounds and experiences.

The views you share will inform the final Shared National Vision for Trees and Forests in Ireland and in the development of a new Forest Strategy for Ireland.

## How is the consultation being run?

The consultation will be made up of two sessions held over two days and you will hear a series of presentations from experts on Forests and Forestry. They will present on topics such as climate change, biodiversity, the wood industry, and accessing forests for recreation.

After these presentations you will break out into small groups of 10 people, and you will have a facilitator for the discussions. You will be asked what you think of the presentation and hear from other participants. If you have any questions or need clarifications, an expert from the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Marine will be available to answer. The facilitator in the room will capture the views in the room and these will be shared with the wider group afterwards. All views will also be shared in a report on the session, and this will be available for everyone to see.

At the end of the second day, when all the information has been presented you will be asked to vote on whether you think the strategy is something you agree with, and also what level of ambition the government should set for more trees. This vision, together with feedback from all consultations which are taking place, will then be used to form a national policy on forestry.



# What can you expect from the two days?

Day 1 - Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> May 18.30pm

Time		Presenter
18:30 - 18:35	Welcome and Introduction	Helen Carroll, Chair
18:35 - 18:40	Video welcome from An Taoiseach Micheál Martin	An Taoiseach Micheál Martin
18:40 - 18:50	Presentation - Forests in Ireland	Fergus Moore, Senior Inspector at the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine
18:50 - 18:55	Forestry and Diversity video with Michael Ryan	
18:55 - 19:05	Presentation - Forests and the Environment	Jenni Roche, Woodland Ecologist, National Parks and Wildlife Service
19:05 - 19:10	Explaining the process	Colleen Savage, M-CO
19:10 - 19:30	Breakout Room 1	
19:30 - 19:40	Presentation - Forests and the Economy	Brian Murphy, Balcas
19:40 - 20:00	Breakout Room 2	
20:00 - 20:20	Plenary Session Recap	Colleen Savage, M-CO
20:20 - 20:30	Wrap up	Helen Carroll, Chair

We have a busy first session, with three presentations and two breakout sessions and the team will let you know what you need to do, what group you are in, help you with technology and capture everyone's views.

## Homework

This is optional! After wrapping up the first day we will ask you to consider what has been shared, and you can look at what other people have said on our consultation site. This is optional but we would welcome any thoughts or feedback between sessions. We will also be thinking about the final ambition for the forestry Vision, and we will leave that with you to think about before the final session.

## Digital tools being used over the 2 days

Your discussion facilitators will be using a digital tool called Miro. Do not worry, you do not have to use this if you do not want to, but you can add your own ideas and opinions to Miro if you wish. Your facilitator will explain this to you on the day but this short video will explain how to navigate around Miro. If you do not want to use the Miro board, you can let us know and we can capture what you want to say.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oolcwCD9-GM>



## Day 2 - Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May 10.00am

Time		Presenter
10:00 - 10:05	Welcome and Introduction	Helen Carroll, Chair
10:05 - 10:10	Video welcome from the Minister of State for Land Use and Biodiversity, Pippa Hackett	Pippa Hackett, Minister of State for Land Use and Biodiversity
10:10 - 10:20	Recap on key points from Day 1	Helen Carroll, Chair
10:20 - 10:30	Recrafted final plenary questions	Colleen Savage, M-CO
10:30 - 10:40	Presentation - Social Value of Forests	Mark Carlin, Coillte
10:40 - 11:00	Breakout Room 1	
11:00 - 11:15	Final Ambition and Vision for Forestry	Matt Crowe
11:15 - 11:35	Break out rooms to discuss questions and seek clarification	Colleen Savage, M-CO
11:35 - 11:45	Voting and presentation of Voting results	Colleen Savage, M-CO
11:45 - 12:15	Plenary session on Vision for Forestry	Helen Carroll, Chair
12:15 - 12:30	Wrap up, next steps and thanks	Helen Carroll, Chair

## Code of Conduct

There is no strict code of conduct for this session, but we would ask you to respect the other participants and their opinions. We would suggest the following:

- Use the hand up signal if you would like to speak
- Stay on mute unless you are speaking
- Leave your camera on during the smaller group sessions and while discussions are taking place.
- Do not speak over other people, and if you disagree, please do so politely
- Feel free to contribute but allow time and space for everyone to share.
- Please stay involved during the session, and where possible do not be on other media.
- Do not share the details of other participants on the session or their images.
- Do not tweet during the sessions or personally contact participants unless they give their permission.

We will be treating all your information under strict GDPR rules, and all views will be shared in an anonymous way in the final report.



# A SHARED NATIONAL VISION FOR TREES, WOODS AND FORESTS IN IRELAND BY 2050





# The right trees, in the right places for the right reasons, with the right management

The right trees in the right places for the right reasons, with the right management – referred to here as the “four R’s” – captures the overall objective of the vision statement. However, the term ‘right’ can have different meanings for different people. It is important to identify and understand what these meanings can be and the values that can be associated with forests in Ireland.

## The Right Reasons

Clearly defining the reasons behind the creation of new forests and the management of existing forests will help to ensure that their purpose is closely aligned to the things we value most about trees and forests.

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### Forests for Climate

Forestry (and forest products) will be the single largest land-based climate mitigation measure available to Ireland because as trees grow and mature, they take up carbon dioxide by photosynthesis and store carbon in biomass and soils. The carbon stock in forest soils is the dominant component, accounting for 79.1% of the carbon stock in Ireland forest estate.

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### Forests for Nature

Biodiversity is the very foundation of our environment and forests are among the most biologically diverse ecosystems on earth. Ireland’s remaining natural forests are fragmented across the country and often degraded. However, planned correctly, both planted and semi-natural forests can complement and enhance the important biodiversity that we have, both within their boundaries and serving as wildlife corridors and refuges in the wider landscape.

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### Forests for Wood

For the majority of forest owners selling timber is the primary source of income from forests. It has been estimated that by using just 1 tonne of wood in construction instead of concrete or steel it is possible to avoid 2.4 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions on average.

This highlights the importance of using wood as a building material to mitigate against climate change. Softwoods (wood derived from conifers) are essential in providing us with wood products. The Irish hardwood resource is currently very limited but as broadleaf forests mature it is expected that the volume of hardwood will increase. This will create new opportunities around this supply.

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## Forests for People

Visits to Coillte-owned forests increased by nearly 40% during the Covid-19 pandemic, with 2.2 million people visiting Coillte's top 50 forests between March and December 2020.

There is an ever-increasing demand for activity-based pursuits in Ireland's forests but significant opportunities also exist around their potential use as centres of learning and in outdoor education.

Coillte has an open forest policy but the decision to allow access to privately owned forests rests solely with the forest owner. Potentially, public access could be considered and agreed upon in a planned way through the development of forest plans for larger areas, such as at a catchment level, ensuring that public access develops in tandem with other forest objectives and the legitimate rights and expectations of private forest owners.

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## Forests for Economy and Rural Development

Trees and forests are part of our natural and cultural heritage and can support a strong and sustainable economy and thriving and resilient communities. Forest creation can provide opportunities for income and enterprise diversification, particularly in rural areas and for farmers.

Total employment generated by activities in the forest and wood products sector was estimated at 12,000 full-time equivalents. Since 1980, nearly 23,500 private landowners have received grant aid to establish forests, the majority of which were farmers.

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## The Right Trees

Ireland has a limited number of native tree species compared to the rest of Europe, and more limited set again suitable for timber production. When Ireland began establishing new forests in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century only relatively poor land was available for planting trees. In more recent times Ireland has been guided by the principles of Sustainable Forest Management.

More productive land types are becoming available through farmer participation in afforestation and this is leading to an increased focus on native and broadleaved species, whilst also recognising the importance of non-native conifers to wood production and the forest sector economy.

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### Non-native and naturalised tree species

Non-native conifers such as Sitka spruce remain the most common species planted in Ireland, occupying 44.6% of the forest area. The species thrives in the wet and mild conditions of Ireland and has proven itself to be one of the most productive species grown in this country. Nevertheless, there are negative perceptions associated with it, from both a landscape and biodiversity perspective. Furthermore, there are sectoral vulnerabilities associated with large scale use or reliance on a single species, regardless of their origins.

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### Native tree species

Native forests or native woodlands range from ancient oak and ash forests, some of which are over 400 years old, to naturally emerging woodlands such as birch wood colonising cutaway bog, to recently established plantations. The cover of native forest in Ireland is relatively low, currently comprising about 1.8% of the land area. Our native forests tend to be small in size and are highly fragmented which indicates the need for a continued effort to create new native forests that can be connected across the landscape.

It is estimated that there are approximately 689,000 km of hedgerows nationally. As habitats these features are considered linear woodland in Ireland and they play an important role to play in enabling biodiversity by linking habitats, wildlife corridors, shelter for livestock and controlling surface water.

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### Looking to the future – climate adaptation, diversity and resilience

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The impact of climate change means we need to develop a greater understanding of the adaptability of the tree species we use to potential future growing conditions. Management of diverse forests will require investment in the generation of knowledge as well as training for forest owners and practitioners.

## The Right Places

Planning appropriately for more diverse forests that connect to existing trees in the landscape can help provide many benefits; creating networks of habitats that support biodiversity, water quality, whilst also improving the quality of life for local communities and the economy.

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### Matching species with site

The health of a forest is determined by correctly matching tree species with the site they are planted. A key job of the Forester is getting this decision right. There are a range of environmental, cultural and social considerations but most importantly the site must be able to support the species planted and provide conditions for them to thrive.

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### Connecting People with Places

To meet our current targets under the Climate Action Plan forests will have to be established on a much larger scale than currently exists. The creation of new forests can be a cause for concern for people in some communities. Local partnerships of local landowners, communities and other stakeholders could identify the most appropriate places for new trees.

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### Health and Well Being

Forests provide people with physical, mental, social health and well-being benefits. For example, the Woodlands for Health programme, developed by Coillte, has been prescribed by medical professionals for adult patients who experience mental health challenges to engage them in forest activities to enhance their quality of life. There is an opportunity to provide accessible spaces for recreation, exercise, and promoting physical and mental health and well-being.

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### Urban and Near Urban Areas

The majority of our population now live in urban areas. It is important that their needs are considered in the vision for trees, woods and forests and the Forest Strategy. Forests can become as much a part of the natural fabric of urban areas as they are for rural communities, enabling people to experience the multiple benefits that these areas can provide. We need to reimagine our urban spaces in our cities, towns and villages as ones that can support forests at a scale that works for these spaces and for the people living within them.

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## The Right Management

Forest practice in Ireland is guided by the principles of Sustainable Forest Management, as defined by the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (Forest Europe). There is a growing appreciation of the multifunctional role of forests at both the national and European level and a greater understanding of the range of eco-system services that forests provide. Nevertheless, there are associated risks for biodiversity if good practice is not followed, this is especially associated with tree felling and ground cultivation activities.

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### Even-aged Forest management

Most forests in Ireland have been established and managed under an even-aged management structure. Trees are planted at a high density and thinned over the lifetime of the forest before the final crop is felled and the timber used to generate forest products. The forests are then replanted and the cycle starts again.

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### Continuous Cover Forestry

Continuous Cover Forestry is an alternative forest management approach, where the forest canopy is retained, and individual or small groups of trees are removed at appropriate times to allow light to reach the forest floor and new seedlings to grow naturally. The result is a multi-layered structure that closely mirrors that of a natural forest. The approach is considered “closer to nature” as it is generally associated with delivering a greater range of ecosystem services

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### Agro-forestry

Agroforestry is a system of forestry that allows the growth of trees on land being used for farming. The system gives the landowners the flexibility to graze and cut hay/silage while growing trees for timber. It provides multiple benefits for the owner, supports biodiversity and protects soil and water quality.

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### Natural & artificial regeneration

Natural regeneration is the establishment of new trees from seed arriving naturally (by animals, wind, water, etc.). Most forests in Ireland are established artificially. Seed is collected, sown and grown on in a nursery, and later transported to the forest where it is planted in the ground. This approach gives the landowner choice, whether that be species, its provenance, or the use of improved planting material, that may have been selected for traits of biological and economic importance, such as improved growth and survival, quality, and resistance to stresses such as disease or drought.

Natural regeneration on the other hand results in the seed germinating in-situ and is considered part of a closer to nature approach to forest management. However, the results can often be unpredictable and sporadic.

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### Food Forests

There is growing interest in ‘Food Forests’ throughout Europe. A ‘food forest’ can include perennial plants, trees and shrubs, which can provide edible and other products. In parts of the world, small-scale, intensively managed food forests were cultivated. Plant foods were harvested in the form of edible fruits, nuts, seeds, leaves, shoots, stems and roots. Other products from these areas can include fodder, firewood, flowers, medicines, honey, mushrooms, etc.

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## Synergies and trade-offs in Sustainable Forest Management

The choice of forest type will result in trade-offs between the types and range of benefits.

Each will have its advantages and disadvantages depending on the objectives and purpose of the forest. For example, if improving biodiversity is the main goal then this means increasing the amount of light reaching the forest floor to improve the diversity and abundance of species of flora and fauna present.

However, managing the forest in this way can reduce the carbon stock of that forest. It also means waiting longer for potentially lower volumes of marketable wood products.

Part of the Vision for Trees, Woods and Forests wants much larger and more diverse forest footprint being “managed successfully to balance and deliver forestry’s multiple objectives and benefits for climate, nature, wood production, people, the wider economy and rural communities”.

## Effective processes

To ensure the shared vision is implementable, administrative processes and support structures for grant aided forestry schemes should not be a disincentive for those interested in planting trees or those seeking support for forest management.

Improving the efficiency of the various forestry licensing processes and application procedures should deliver better results, fully address legal and regulatory requirements and deploy resources effectively.

Processes like this need to be streamlined, efficient and user friendly.

An examination of how these processes can be improved is currently being conducted under another workstream of Project

Woodland. A regulatory review of forestry licensing will also be carried out and will involve wider expertise on both EU and domestic legislation aspects.

Effective communication, cooperation and collaboration will be key across the entire forest sector.

## More information and Videos

If you would like more information ahead of the session on forestry, there are documents and videos available. This is optional but may give you some useful information when you are listening to the presenters. Please click on these links below.

### **Forestry Statistics - Ireland 2021**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dd4y4Xy3QTA>

### **The Forestry Sector in Ireland: some facts and figures**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6f4CKFLIhpE>

### **Ireland's trees: our heritage 10,000 years in the making**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThIx88XFB\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThIx88XFB_Y)

### **The many benefits of our forests**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbpQX2-buGk>

### **Wood for Good – The Story of the Tree – the role of trees in carbon capture**

<https://worldofwoodfestival.org/wood-for-good-the-story-of-the-tree/>

### **Andrew O'Carroll, the inaugural winner of the RDS Teagasc Farm Forestry Award category**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wEeySTQpHw>

### **Ireland's current forestry policy – Forests, products and people – a renewed vision (2014)**

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d3bco-forests-products-and-people-irelands-forest-policy-a-renewed-vision/>

### **New EU Forest Strategy for 2030**

[https://ec.europa.eu/environment/strategy/forest-strategy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/strategy/forest-strategy_en)

Forestry related material can be found at [www.gov.ie/forestry](http://www.gov.ie/forestry)