



Assessment of Attitudes by Communities and Interested Parties on Forestry and Woodlands

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Irish Rural Link is core funded by the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO) funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development through Pobal



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

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Terms of Reference

The range of voices involved in forestry policy debate range from active management, to promotion of different types of trees, to varying degrees of opposition to forestry development. This study examines the many and varied interests motivating communities and collates it so that policy related to forestry can be influenced in such a way that stakeholders' concerns are recognised and solutions that seek to maximise community involvement is inclusive and sustainable.

Term of Reference of the Study

- 1. Community involvement:** The study will collate the extent of community involvement in forestry, in terms of planting and managing forests of different types and groups who are critical of forestry policy.
- 2. Methodology:** The study will incorporate the following methodologies:
 - It will be conducted by staff of Irish Rural Link, who in turn will be advised by persons representing the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, the relevant member/s of the Forestry Policy Group, in particular the chair of Shared National Approach and others as determined by the Minister.
 - Qualitative and quantitative surveys; These will establish the different actors involved in forestry in Ireland. It will also map out the various parts of Ireland where forestry exists as well as the types of trees planted. The surveys will also act as a means to determine focus groups.
 - Following on from this, it is proposed to establish four to six focus groups, which will be identified on the basis of information gathered by the questionnaires. It will also be determined by the advisory group, bearing in mind the overall time schedule that is agreed.
 - The focus groups, which will be held remotely will be applied to the number of interests that exist ranging from tree types planted, farm generated planting and others. It will also include groups who are opposed to plantations of all types of forestry or are partially opposed. These groups will be facilitated by a facilitator and a note taker and held remotely. Attendees will be asked a number of key questions related to the name of the workshop, which will include their proposals for solutions.
 - The study will identify international practice in terms of community involvement in Forestry. Projects in Finland and Scotland will be documented.
- 3. Report:** A report outlining the work and findings including recommendations will be presented to the Minister following its examination by the advisory group.

Executive Summary

Ireland has one of the lowest cover of forest in the EU at 11.4% compared to an EU average of 38.3% in 2020. Worldwide forest cover was 31.1%. Over half (50.8%) of total forest area is in public ownership, mainly Coillte. Just under 30% of total forest area is comprised of broadleaves while 71% is made up of conifers with Sitka Spruce the most common tree species at 44.6%. Ireland's forests are still relatively young with 68.5% of forest area aged 30 years or less with 97.8% of grant-aided privately owned forests aged 30 years or less. (DAFM¹, 2021). County Leitrim has the highest percentage of forest cover in the country at 18.9% followed by Wicklow at 17.9%. County Cork has the highest forest cover area at 90,020ha or 11.6% of the national forest estate. (National Forestry Inventory, 2017).

The contribution of the forestry sector to the economy as well as employment figures are often included in wider agricultural sector figures. In 2014 a report by COFORD² which looked at Irish Forestry and the economy estimated that 12,000 people were employed in the forest and wood products sector and accounted for €136.6 million of Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2012. In 2018, exports of forest products from Ireland were valued at €450 million with wood-based panels accounting for nearly 54% of this value. (DAFM, 2021).

The CSO³ Quarterly Labour Force Survey⁴ does not gather specific data on numbers employed in the forestry sector but are included under the NACE Rev 2⁵ of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing. However, Census 2016 showed that the total in the labour force employed in Forestry and Logging was 2,468 while those employed in manufacture of Wood and Wood Products (except furniture) was 4,000.

Sustainably managed forests are a sequesterer of carbon and an important contributor to reducing carbon emissions and reaching targets. The need to move away from fossil fuels to greener energy sources is becoming more prevalent. The use of wood and timber to supply the energy sector will become more important in the coming years. In 2018, 40% of wood fibre available for use in Ireland was used for energy generation. (DAFM, 2021).

While the contribution forestry and woodlands make to economic activity, employment and tackling carbon emissions are all important, individual and community perception and

¹ Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine.

² COFORD - The COFORD Council is a body appointed by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to advise the Minister and his Department on issues related to the development of the forest sector in Ireland. Its membership is appointed by the Minister and comprises stakeholders from across the forestry sector. www.coford.ie

³ CSO – Central Statistics Office is Ireland's national statistical office whose purpose is to impartially collect, analyse and make available statistics about Ireland's people, society and economy www.cso.ie.

⁴ The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is the official source of labour market statistics for Ireland. It includes the official rates of employment and unemployment, which are based on International Labour Organisation (ILO) concepts and definitions. It replaced the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) at the beginning of Q3 2017.

⁵ The LFS sectoral employment figures are based on the EU NACE Rev. 2 classification as defined in Council Regulation (EC) no 1893/2006. Fourteen NACE sub-categories are distinguished in the LFS.

integration with forests and woodlands is becoming just as important to ensure that Ireland's forest and woodlands adapt more sustainable practices that go beyond the three pillars of sustainability (Economic, Social and Environment) to include Partnership as set out by the UN Sustainable Development Goals⁶.

This study, carried out by Irish Rural Link⁷ on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) looks at the role of forests in communities. The purpose of the study is to explore the attitudes of communities towards forests and woodlands as well as current forestry practices in Ireland. The study builds on the work done by Dr. Áine Ní Dhubháin and University College Dublin in 2019 on "The Socio-Economic Impact of Forestry in Co. Leitrim". It aims to engage with those communities and community groups, including Leitrim, some of who feel adversely impacted by forests developed in their local area over the past number of years as well as those involved directly in the sector and those interested in forestry from an environmental, recreational and wellbeing point of view. This study will inform the development of the wider 'Shared National Vision' for forests, woodland and trees to develop a new Forest Strategy for Ireland.

The study by Ní Dhubháin, A. (2019) "The Socio-Economic Impact of Forestry in Co. Leitrim" assessed the social impacts of forestry in Co. Leitrim including the attitudes to forestry of people living there. It assessed the economic impacts of forestry to the county including employment in the sector and the impact on farm incomes relative to other types of farming. It also examined the environmental regulation of forestry in the county. Mixed views were expressed as to the contribution forestry makes to supporting rural life. One view was that forestry allowed people to stay in Leitrim as it allowed them to continue to farm and provided an opportunity for people to come back to live in Leitrim. Forestry supported the whole rural community by strengthening the local economy with local timber businesses and recreational areas. However, an opposing view to this was that forestry makes rural life more difficult. The use of farmland for forestry makes it difficult to expand existing farms or start a new generation of farmers. Also, where forestry has replaced abandoned houses, they cannot be taken back by people making it harder for people to return or move to the county. The prevalent Sitka spruce plantations in the region did not coincide with the vision local people have for their community and without public consultation conflicts with Government goals for local areas.

⁶ The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030 have set out five critical dimensions of sustainability: people, prosperity, planet, partnership and peace, also known as the 5Ps.

⁷ Irish Rural Link represents the interests of locally based rural groups in disadvantaged and marginalised rural areas by highlighting problems, advocating appropriate policies, sharing experiences and examples of good practice. It has a membership of nearly 600 rural community groups dedicated to sustainable rural development and represents rural communities at a national and international level.

The report by Jo O'Hara on the Implementation of the MacKinnon Report also gave some background for the need for this study. Under recommendation 12 of the report, development of a forestry strategy for Ireland, it was noted that the ambitious forestry and planting targets of past forestry policies did not have the necessary public support and collaborative action across multiple stakeholders. It suggested the need for clear leadership to gather the various interests into a single narrative. Buy-in from not just those directly involved in forestry but the interests from the private, public and non-profit sector need to be included in the development of a national strategy.

This study aims to expand on the findings and recommendations of these reports and explore some of the concerns further and in other parts of the country where some of the same sentiments are felt towards forestry. It will also look at the positive attributes forestry can bring to local communities.

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the study and gives the background to the study.

Chapter 2 of this report looks at forestry and woodland practice in Ireland and Government policies that shaped forestry since the beginning of the State. It looks at different schemes that were introduced to encourage greater planting of trees and better integration of forests and woodlands into the local community. It also looks at other relevant Government policy on climate action and rural policy and how a new Forestry Strategy should be aligned to these.

Chapter 3 looks at forestry in the EU including the coverage of forestry and woodland across the EU. It looks at EU policy on Forestry and wider policy where forestry has a role to play. The study looked at Forestry practices in Finland and in Scotland how communities and civil society integrate with forests and woodlands. Interviews were carried out with two forestry practitioners; Simo Tiainen from Finland and Brendan Burns from Scotland. While Scotland is no longer a member of the EU, they have a strong forestry sector and history of inclusive forestry. Additional interviews/focus groups with others involved in forestry and with people or communities who are not directly involved in forestry would have given a better comparison between practices and attitudes. However, given time restraints, this was not possible.

The methodology of the study is covered in Chapter 4. It outlines the steps involved in undertaking the study and the programmes used for designing the survey. Chapter 5 gives an analysis of the survey results. The survey was distributed to Irish Rural Link members and National Rural Network⁸ members as well as other interested groups. The diverse membership of Irish Rural Link allowed for the collection of varied views and attitudes

⁸ Irish Rural Link is the lead partner in the National Rural Network (NRN). The NRN is a network membership of farmers, agricultural advisors, rural communities and others interested in rural development and aims to bring the Rural Development Programme into the lives of as many people as possible by communicating its key opportunities and outputs to all relevant stakeholders.

towards forestry and woodland. The survey consisted of 35 questions and was distributed to just over 6,000 recipients and received 641 responses, with an 81% completion rate.

The final two chapters gives an analysis of the Focus Groups. Five general focus groups were formed from the pool of 208 who stated in the survey they were interested to participate. This would ensure that all interested parties had an equal opportunity to participate. A further two groups were also formed; one was a base group made up from stakeholders of Working Group 4 of Project Woodland and other stakeholders involved in the forestry and wood sector and the second from the “Save” advocacy groups. There were many similar opinions, comments and solutions proposed in the focus groups and these were compiled into six main outcomes. The final chapter summarises the views and comments from the “Save” Advocacy groups. These groups did not participate in the survey as they felt questions were biased towards the forestry sector and those directly involved in the sector. However, Irish Rural Link felt that their views should be included. Irish Rural Link felt that a separate Chapter on their views is warranted to ensure there is an inclusive and shared vision on the future of forestry, woodlands and trees.

Recommendations

Following the analysis of the survey and Focus Groups the following are recommendations that should be considered for the 'Shared National Vision' for forests, woodland and trees to develop a new Forest Strategy for Ireland.

1. Continued Stakeholder Engagement – The Government should facilitate a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan to ensure all relevant stakeholders be included. It was highlighted very clearly both in the Focus Groups and survey responses, that this should only be the beginning of the public conversation and dialogue on forestry and woodlands. Continued engagement with all stakeholders should take place during the development of the new Forest Strategy but also as part of its implementation to ensure it is inclusive of communities with no negative impacts on communities or people's livelihoods within all sectors.

2. Forest Advisory Services – Government should immediately establish a 'Forest Advisory Service' whose advice is available to all stakeholders. Under the new EU Forest Strategy for 2030, the EU Commission will promote the creation of a "Forest Advisory Services" in Member States, similar to the Farm Advisory Services developed under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Teagasc provides a forestry advisory service with advice available to all stakeholders. There are currently 8 advisers nationwide supported by one forestry specialist. This service should be built upon and additional resources put in place to extend the services provided including; engagement with communities on forestry and woodland, especially where large scale plantations by state bodies and large private investors/companies are planned to discern what works best for the community and to ensure they are not adversely impacted.

3. Local Authority Engagement – Each Local Authority should develop a suitable land use policy which includes the promotion of forestry in line with current EU and national directives. Each Local Authority produces a Local Development Plan following public consultation. These plans set out a local authority's objectives for the area in relation to development, developing and improving infrastructure and improving amenities. The new Forestry Strategy should engage with Local Authorities especially where there are larger forest plantations and public forests and how these can be incorporated into development plans and integrated into local communities better or if the plantation will have social, environmental or other economic impacts to the community. Local Authorities must also be key stakeholders in the Land Use Review.

4. NeighbourWood Scheme - The NeighbourWood Scheme⁹, launched in 2017, is currently under subscribed and is clearly not as attractive to communities as it should be. **We recommend a thorough review of this scheme should take place to ensure it is fully subscribed.** Fully subscribed it would encourage local farmers and foresters to become

⁹ Details of the NeighbourWood Scheme are included in Chapter 1 of this report.

involved, particularly those who would like to open up their forests but are concerned about insurance costs as well as public liability. A concerted effort to include communities and community investment should be made. Since the current *Programme for Government 2020* commits to an expansion of this scheme, measures should be put in place to improve the awareness and uptake of the scheme and enable local communities and local forest owners to become involved more easily. Incentives on how the local forester or farmer can be financially rewarded for this should also be explored. These could include; long-term grants and payments to owners, state backed insurance scheme and protection of ownership and right to manage maintained.

5. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to prevent excessive plantation of Sitka Spruce - We recommend a series of KPI's be established through consultation to monitor the density of plantations of Sitka Spruce and Conifers at county or regional level. Many communities are concerned that excessive forest plantation of Sitka Spruce may have an impact on their community in terms of farmland, water systems and general biodiversity systems or development of other sectors. These KPI's would serve as a guarantor for any adverse effects that may impact on communities as a result of excessive plantations of conifers and are managed by the relevant stakeholders.

6. Mixed Tree Plantation – We are recommending that the policy of mix tree plantation should be adopted by all stakeholders. While local farmers and foresters must plant a percentage of broadleaves and native woodland trees as part of their plantation, some participants of the survey and focus groups were of the opinion that this was not the case for public and large private investment companies. There was a strong belief from participants of the study that these public and private investors could plant one type of tree in one part of the country and a native or broadleaf in another part and that this is what has led to excessive, dense plantations of Sitka Spruce and monoculture plantation in some parts of the country. All forest plantation sites, irrespective of public, private investments, or local farmers, foresters should plant a mix of trees.

The principle of planting and growing “*the right tree in the right place and for the right purpose*” should be applied in the new Forestry Strategy and future forestry policy.

7. Payments for Native Woodlands and Biodiversity – A comprehensive review of payments for native woodlands and biodiversity should take place. Payments to plant broadleaves and native woodlands must increase to encourage greater plantation of these type of trees. The review should explore making an annual payment for the plantation of native woodlands so that those who would like to plant more than the required amount and also those who are protecting local biodiversity and wildlife are properly compensated.

8. Licencing and Clear Felling – There is a perception among respondents to the survey that there are significant delays in licencing for clear-felling. This is particularly difficult for small

holders. **This study recommends that a study on feasible alternatives to clear-felling be carried out.**

It is important that measures are put in place to address the delays in issuing these licencing. In relation to Clear-Felling, the aesthetics can be off-putting and does not look very appealing for a local area, especially for people living close by or if the community is trying to develop the area for tourism.

9. Engagement with Communities – We are proposing that a comprehensive community engagement process be established in each local community affected by plantation proposals. Where there is planning for plantations by large private companies and public forests and woodlands, communities should have a right to transparent and meaningful engagement. This would allow for a conversation to take place on any concerns the community might have for example, community benefit from the forest, ensuring a mix of trees can be planted that are suitable for the soil type and how the forest and/or woodland can be integrated into the community and can the forest be used as a local amenity, by local schools etc. Engaging with communities can also help remove and avoid misinformation on forestry and different tree types that communities may have.

10. Education and Raising Awareness – We recommend that through the Department of Education through the DAFM an education and raising awareness exercise be undertaken around forestry and woodlands to include; what type of trees are being planted; what are the trees used for; the value and uses of timber from certain types of trees that are planted and why certain type of trees need to be planted; what benefits do forests bring to the local community; how are they used by the local community; do they create employment or can they be used as a local amenity; education resource for local schools, research, mental health and wellbeing purposes.

11. Align our Forestry Policies with International Best Practice - We recommend further examination of International Best Practice of sustainable forestry management practices. This should include how forests are managed, how they are perceived by local communities and if or how they are integrated into local communities.

12. Community Ownership – We recommend a further exploration of community ownership of forestry. A concerted effort should be made under a cooperative structure to invest in forestry at a local level. This would give communities a say in what type of trees are to be planted as well as its development as a local amenity and possible tourist attraction.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Irish Rural Link have undertaken this independent study on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) on the role of forests in communities. The purpose of the study is to explore the attitudes of communities towards forests and woodlands as well as current forestry practices in Ireland. The study builds on the work done by Dr. Áine Ní Dhubháin and University College Dublin in 2019 on “The Socio-Economic Impact of Forestry in Co. Leitrim”. It aims to engage with those communities and community groups, not just in Leitrim but across the country, who feel adversely impacted by forests developed in their local area over the past number of years as well as those involved directly in the sector and those interested in forestry from an environmental, recreational and wellbeing point of view. This study will inform the development of the wider 'Shared National Vision' for forests, woodland and trees to develop a new Forest Strategy for Ireland.

The study by Ní Dhubháin, A. (2019) “The Socio-Economic Impact of Forestry in Co. Leitrim” assessed the social impacts of forestry in Co. Leitrim including the attitudes to forestry of people living in the area. It assessed the economic impacts of forestry to the county including employment in the sector and the impact on farm incomes relative to other types of farming. It also examined the environmental regulation of forestry in the county.

Interviews carried out as part of the study found that some people in Leitrim felt that forestry as a land use should not be the only choice available to people and that viable farming land should not be planted by trees. The type of trees planted, mainly Sitka Spruce, negatively affects people’s mental well-being and the environment most. Mixed forest was suggested as a way that could fulfil both economic and environmental/recreational expectations. Other alternative forest models were suggested including; agroforestry, community forests, forests producing non-timber products and natural regeneration. Large investors and investment companies from abroad were not aware of the social and cultural effects that their plantations were having on local people as they were absent and not present in the community. There was no contact from or no contact can be made with these investors by local people. The study also looked at the impact of forestry on the mental wellbeing of people living in Leitrim and found that depending on the tree species, it can impact on mental wellbeing differently, e.g. broadleaves can have a therapeutic affect and can help people feel good but not so with Sitka Spruce, as their growth blocks out sunlight. This not only isolated people from neighbours but brought with it a security issues also. Clear-felling also brought problems to immediate neighbourhoods.

The study also looked at who owned forestry in Co. Leitrim. It found that 75% of forest owners were farmers. Two-thirds of owners had planted forests on their own land. Just over 30% of the forest owners were not resident in Co. Leitrim with half of these living in neighbouring counties and 26% were investors. The average total area planted per owner was 14 hectares and 40% had planted more than one plot.

Some of those interviewed as part of the study had expressed concern on the misinformation that surrounded forestry in the area and that this was impacting those working in the sector.

The annual Farm Income Survey by Teagasc, highlights the viability of farms and farm incomes across the country. The 2020 survey found the border region had the lowest level of farm income at €14,297. Thirty-three percent of farms still remain economically vulnerable in 2020; meaning they have no alternative or off-farm income. Again the Border and Western regions had the highest percentage of vulnerable farms. The percentage of farms that were economically vulnerable was higher in the Northern and Western region at 37%. With less viable land for farming in these regions, the move to forestry by many farmers and landowners as an extra source of income may explain the higher level of forestry planted in Leitrim, which in 2017 was 18.9% compared to the national level of 11%. Other counties in the border and western regions also experience high levels of forestry compared to other parts of the country. Outward migration of people from these areas to larger towns and cities for employment over the past few decades meant the sale of land, in some cases to private investors, to plant forestry.

This study has explored some of the concerns that were raised in the 2019 study and in other areas where some of the same sentiments are felt towards forestry.

Chapter 2: Forestry in Ireland

This chapter looks at forestry policy in Ireland over the years. It looks at the policies in place since the foundation of the State as well as current Government policy, not just in forestry but in other policies that are relevant and need to be considered in the development of a new Forestry Strategy.

Brief History of Forestry in Ireland

At the time of the foundation of the State, forest cover was at 1%. It continued to decline up to 1928. In this year, the first Forestry Act was introduced however, afforestation levels remained low. It was not until the 1950's afforestation levels started to increase. This followed a planting programme in 1948 with an annual planting target of 10,000 hectares with an overall target for 40 years of 400,000 ha or 1 million acres. This programme was reconfirmed in The first Programme for Economic Recovery in 1959 and the second in 1964 with a target of 1 million acres (400,000 ha). These Programmes also included the social dimension of forestry around rural employment particularly in the western half of the country and the strategic aim of self-sufficiency in timber. The 1-million-acre target was reached in 1993. (DAFM, 2021)

It was not until the introduction of the State and EU funded forestry grant and annual payment / premium schemes in the 1980's that private landowners, mainly farmers, began to plant significant amounts of forest. (COFORD, 2014). The first payment scheme – the Western Package Scheme, was introduced in 1981. The scheme had limited success. Coillte Teoranta was established in 1989 under the 1988 Forestry Act; transferring State's ownership role in forestry from the then Forest and Wildlife Service. The role of Coillte was to carry on the business of forestry and related activities on a commercial basis but that with due regard to the environmental and amenity consequences of its operations. (National Forest Inventory, 2017).

The Forest Premium was introduced in Ireland in 1990. However, only farmers were eligible for the Forest Premium at this time. Premiums were paid annually for 20 years for broadleaf planting with a 15-year duration for the planting of conifer.

In 1996, "Growing for the Future" was launched by the Department of Agriculture. It set out to "develop forestry to a scale and in a manner which maximises its contribution to the national economic and social well-being on a sustainable basis and which is compatible with the protection of the environment". (DAFF, 1996). It set an afforestation target of 25,000 ha per annum to the year 2000 and 20,000 ha per annum to 2030. It also set out to increase the diversity of tree species with a minimum of two species being planted with every grant-aided project.

In 2000, as part of the new millennium over 1500 acres of native woodland were designated as “People’s Millennium Forests”. Coillte, in partnership with Woodlands of Ireland, were given responsibility to manage the project.

Under the initiative, a native tree was planted free of charge on behalf of each household in Ireland in one of 16 forests across the country included newly planted areas. A total of 1.2 million native trees were planted. Every home was issued with a certificate giving details about the tree planted for each family and where it is located. It is not possible to locate individual trees but each household will still be able to find which forest their tree was planted in.

Current Government Policy

Current level of forest cover in Ireland is 11% of the total land area which is very low by European standards which stands at approximately 40%. There is scope to expand Ireland's forest area further and the development of the next Irish Strategy will provide opportunities to shape the development of a shared national approach for our existing and future forests.

The current *Forestry Programme 2014 – 2020* identified four needs to achieve a 100% state funded Forestry scheme during the design of the programme. These needs included; Increase of Ireland's forest cover to capture carbon, produce wood and help mitigation; Increase and sustain the production of forest-based biomass to meet renewable energy targets; Support forest holders to actively manage their plantations; Optimise the environmental and social benefits of new and existing forests.

Priority 6 of the SWOT Analysis and Identification of Needs within the Programme looked at promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas with a focus on;

Facilitating diversification, creation and development of new small enterprises and job creation

Fostering local development in rural areas and;

Enhancing accessibility to, use and quality of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) in rural areas.

A key objective of this priority was to increase the levels of recreational forest use amongst local communities. Strengths and opportunities identified to achieve this objective included the Community Led local development approach to the delivery of local development and the alignment of Government proposals to the work of Local Development and Local Government with increased cooperation between both to facilitate more efficient and effective delivery of development interventions at local level.

The measures put forward in the Forest Programme 2014-2020 were consistent with those set out in “Forests, products and people Ireland’s forest policy – a renewed vision”. The overarching goal of this policy was; “To develop an internationally competitive and sustainable forest sector that provides a full range of economic, environmental and social benefits to society and which accords with the Forest Europe definition of sustainable forest management.” (DAFM, July 2014).

The NeighbourWood Scheme, launched in 2017 DAFM under the *Forestry Programme 2014-2020*. The scheme aims to develop amenity woodlands for local access and to directly deliver the important social benefits associated with woodlands and forests to local communities. It is envisioned that the scheme will bring communities and woodlands together, by helping local authorities and other landowners, both public and private, to create ‘close-to-home’ woodland amenities in partnership with communities, for local people to use and enjoy. Local Authority involvement in creating local woodland amenities, was seen as another strength to achieving the objective of increasing the levels of recreational forest use amongst local communities. The improvement in public knowledge about the multifunctional benefits of sustainably managed forests and woodlands and the expected increase in demand for public access to private forests as these mature were also seen as opportunities to achieve this objective also. The NeighbourWood Scheme funds operations directly associated with the development of new and existing woodland for public amenity, and the associated recreational infrastructure. Ongoing expenses such as litter collection, the provision of security services, public liability insurance and unspecified contingency funds, are not covered under the scheme. (DAFM, 2017).

The current Government outlined its commitments to fully support the forestry sector in its *Programme for Government 2020* with the publication of a new forestry programme which “Project Woodland” sets out to do. Some of the commitments outlined on the delivery of forestry and better incorporation of the environmental and social elements include;

- Incorporation of afforestation into the new CAP to provide incentives for farmers to plant woodland on their farms, acting as a carbon store, helping to promote wildlife corridors, and providing a future fuel source for the household.
- Actively promote and support farm forestry/rewilding options that do not impact on agricultural production and support biodiversity and habitat creation. Incentivise, the option of small-scale (e.g. one hectare) forestry/rewilding.
- Embark on an ambitious programme of afforestation on state-owned lands, building on the Coillte/Bord na Móna initiatives.
- Task Climate Action Regional Offices to work with public bodies to review land available for planting providing feedback on the potential in this area, by the end of 2020.

- Engage with local authorities and local communities in a radical expansion of urban tree planting and neighbourhood and community forests with an expansion of the NeighbourWood Scheme, providing communities with amenity woodlands for local access, enjoyment and increasing tourism opportunities.
- Promote close to nature-continuous cover forestry systems to ultimately create permanent biodiverse forests containing trees of all ages.
- Encourage the private sector to meet corporate social responsibility or sustainability objectives by investing in native woodlands, building on the Woodland Environmental Fund.
- Ensure that Coillte's remit supports the delivery of climate change commitments and the protection of biodiversity. We are fully committed to the retention of the commercial forests of Coillte in public ownership.

It is important to look at forestry in the wider Government policy context and how it's relevance is incorporated into other policies and strategies.

The new "Climate Action Plan 2021" includes actions to further develop Forestry and woodlands as a means of mitigating climate change and reducing carbon emissions as well as its use as an alternative energy source. Through a Land Use Review, this will examine the land availability and suitability for forestry as a land use change taking into account biodiversity and environmental impacts and constraints. There are approx. 16 actions set out in the Action Plan to support forestry and forest owners while protecting biodiversity, water quality and soil.

"Housing for All – a new Housing Plan for Ireland" aims to build 33,000 homes each year up to 2030. The plan outlines the importance of the future environmental sustainability of our housing stock, including low-carbon housing. There is a vital role for timber in supporting the delivery of these targets. Making Ireland's forestry sector one of the main supplier of timber to the construction sector must also be a key component in implementing the Housing Plan.

In 2021, the Department of Rural and Community Development published "Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021 -2025". Its overall vision is; "For a thriving rural Ireland which is integral to our national economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing and development, which is built on the interdependence of urban and rural areas, and which recognises the centrality of people, the importance of vibrant and lived-in rural places, and the potential to create quality jobs and sustain our shared environment." (DRCD,2021)

The policy supports the sustainability of forestry and recognises the role forestry plays in rural communities in terms of employment, biodiversity, circular economy and as a carbon sink. It is also committed to the delivery of an ambitious afforestation plan to achieve an afforestation target of 8,000 ha/ year.

Ireland was one of the lead countries in the signing of the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDG's), as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹⁰, with 17 goals to achieve by 2030. Some of the goals include; No Poverty, Climate Action, Sustainable Cities and Communities, Life on Land, Decent Work and Economic Growth and above all Partnership of Goals. It is important that the new Forestry Strategy recognises these goals and that they are reflected in the new Forestry Strategy and in the development of the forestry and woodland sector.

¹⁰ This Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom. We recognise that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

Chapter 3: Forestry in the EU

Forests and other woodlands cover approximately 43% of the EU's land space. They are recognised for the wide range of benefits they give; from protecting biodiversity, improving air and water quality, provision of greener sustainable energy.

Forestry and the wood processing industries provide employment for more than 2.6 million people in Europe. However, employment in the forest sector is declining. Nearly 24% of forests are in areas protected for the conservation of biodiversity and landscape, this has grown significantly over the past number of decades. 32% of forests are designated for the protection of soil, water and other ecosystem services. The vast majority of European forests are open to the public with 6% designated or managed for public recreation. (Forest Europe, 2020).

EU Green Deal and Biodiversity Strategy 2030

The EU Green Deal has set its overarching goal of making Europe the first climate neutral continent by 2050 and reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030.

The ***Biodiversity Strategy 2030*** was published to coincide with the Green Deal and includes objectives and actions on the role forestry can play not only for protection of biodiversity but also for rural development. A number of measures set out in the Biodiversity Strategy include;

- Uptake of agroforestry support measures under rural development should be increased as it has great potential to provide multiple benefits for biodiversity, people and climate.
- Addressing land take and restoring soil ecosystems. Actions include:
 - Degradation of soil caused by deforestation as well as unsustainable forestry practice.
 - Share of forest areas covered by management plans should cover all managed public forests and an increased number of private forests and biodiversity friendly practices such as 'closer-to-nature' forestry should continue and be further developed.
 - Further develop FIS – Forest Information System.
 - EU Biomass supply and demand. Use of forest biomass for energy production.

A significant measure under this strategy pertaining to forestry was the proposal by the Commission of a dedicated EU Forest Strategy. Its purpose to provide a roadmap of planting at least 3bn additional trees in the EU by 2030.

EU Forest Strategy 2030

The new EU Forest Strategy for 2030 sets out commitments and actions that will contribute to achieving the EU's greenhouse gas emission reduction target of at least 55% in 2030. The Strategy is attached to the European Green Deal and the EU 2030 Biodiversity Strategy.

The strategy recognises the multiple functions of forests and woodlands and sets out proposals for Member States on how to further develop and build upon these functions in the coming years.

Bioenergy:

Wood based bioenergy is currently the main source of renewable energy, supplying 60% of EU's renewable energy use. The Strategy proposes that member states design their support schemes for the use of biomass for energy in a way that minimises undue distortive effects on the biomass raw material market and harmful impacts on biodiversity.

Non-Wood Bio-Economy:

The Strategy outlines the benefits of non-wood forest-based bio-economy including eco-tourism and how these should be developed as part of overall targets and the benefits these can bring to the local community. Other non-wood products mentioned in the strategy includes; cork, honey, seeds, mushrooms and medicinal purposes and that these types of products can contribute approx. 20% of the marketable value of forests. This can generate additional revenues for local communities and it is recommended that it be supported with national and local authorities and relevant stakeholders.

Tourism:

The Strategy identifies the important role Forestry can play in the tourism sector which has been devastated as a result of Covid-19. However, by building on the increase in demand during the pandemic for nature and outdoor activities, incorporating forests to promote this style of tourism is an important opportunity. There is also the opportunity to provide significant income in rural areas and improve rural welfare, while further promoting biodiversity conservation and preservation of carbon stocks. The Commission will

“Create a new alliance between the professionals of tourism and foresters, involving the World Tourism Organisation and the network for Europe's natural and cultural heritage”.

This collaboration should develop sustainable tourism that has a positive impact on human health, without negatively impacting on the natural values of the intended destinations, especially in protected areas.

Construction Sector:

The socio-economic benefits of forests and use of long-life wood products see the important role of wood products to help turn the construction sector from a source of greenhouse gas emissions into a carbon sink. Wood products are still only a tiny fraction of building materials

in Europe that largely remain dominated by energy intensive and fossil fuel-based materials. The Commission aims to develop a 2050 roadmap for reducing whole life-cycle carbon emissions in buildings. The Commission will also develop a standard, robust and transparent methodology to quantify the climate benefits of wood construction products and other building material.

Developing Skills and Empowering People:

It will be important to develop the skill-set of people for the forest-based bioeconomy so there is the labour supply available to develop the sector. These jobs need to be attractive. Forestry stakeholders should join the *Pact for Skills*¹¹ which aims to mobilise and incentivise private and public stakeholders to support the upskilling and reskilling of people. Forest and forestry stakeholders should work together under the Pact in order to adapt education and apprenticeships, including work-based learning, which are key to attracting young people to the sector and equip them with the skills needed to work in a sustainable forest bioeconomy.

Biodiversity and Forest Management:

Sustainable forest management means the *‘Stewardship and use of forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration, capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social function, at local, national and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems’.* (Forest Europe)

The new EU Forest Strategy sets out for Member States measures to ensure forest policy contributes and helps restore and improve biodiversity and adopt biodiversity-friendly forest management practices. However, it is important that forest owners and managers are properly supported to do this through financial incentives, technical knowledge and information.

‘Close to Nature’ Forest Management is a concept proposed to provide a vision and direction for managed forests in Europe to improve their conservation values as well as their climate resilience. The EU Forest Strategy also proposes developing a definition and adopting guidelines for closer to nature practices, as well as developing a voluntary closer-to-nature forest management certification scheme¹². This will provide the most biodiversity friendly management practices with an EU quality label and incentivise other forest practitioners to strive for this label¹³.

¹¹ Pact for Skills was launched in November 2020 to support a fair and resilient recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and deliver on the targets of a Green and Digital Transition. Public and Private organisations are invited to collaborate and action the upskilling and reskilling people in Europe.
<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1517&langId=en>

¹² Introduction of such a scheme will be subject to an impact assessment and stakeholder engagement.

¹³ Forestry labels such as FSC and PEFC are already incorporated into forestry management. It is intended that this new certification scheme, on closer-to-nature, will be in addition to labels that already exist.

EU Member States should ensure that all Publicly owned forests strengthen forest protection and restoration efforts. Private forest owners and managers, especially for small holdings depend on forests directly for their livelihoods. The ecosystem services these forests provide are rarely or never rewarded. Financial incentives should be put in place to ensure the adoption of better climate and biodiversity friendly forest management practices.

EU Forest Governance Framework and Stakeholder Dialogue

A new EU forest Governance Framework is set to be developed under the new Forestry Strategy. This framework will aim to promote policy coherence and synergies between the different functions that are required for a sustainable and climate neutral economy. It will outline the role of forests to deliver this and allow for an inclusive space for Member States, forest owners and managers, industry, academia and civil society to discuss forest policy matters.

It is proposed within this Framework that updated governance will bring the Standing Forestry Committee and the Working Group on Forest and Nature together to form a single expert group with a mandate reflecting all the environmental, social and economic objectives of the new EU Forest Strategy. Member States are encouraged to establish broad multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms to discuss and inform European, national and local forest policies.

A 'Forest Advisory Services' in the Member states equivalent to the Farm Advisory Services will also be promoted as part of the Strategy. In Ireland, Teagasc have a Forestry Development Department which provides advisory, training and development support. This service could be built upon to meet this requirement.

NEW CAP 2023 – 2027

It is envisaged that the new CAP (2023 – 2027) will offer increased flexibility to design forest-related interventions according to national needs and specifications. Recommendations in CAP on forestry are mainly aimed at adapting a sustainable approach to forest management and re- and afforestation, the role of forests as carbon sink, protecting forests and restoring forest ecosystems to reach good condition of habitats and species, building forest resilience to climate change, and enhancing the socio-economic development of rural areas.

Better involvement of forest stakeholders in the development of the CAP Strategic Plans at Member State Level must be undertaken by Member States.

Member States are specifically encouraged to set up a payment scheme for ecosystem services for forest owners and managers in order to cover for costs and income foregone, the Finnish METSO is given as a Best Practice example that other Member States could follow.

Member States are also encouraged to accelerate the roll out of carbon farming practices, through eco-schemes on agroforestry or rural development interventions to cover biodiversity friendly re- and afforestation investments. New forest creation or additional management to existing woodland may also be eligible for payments under new schemes developed as part of the new CAP. The Commission will provide advice and technical guidance on the development of payment scheme for ecosystem services.

Forestry Examples

The study looked at Forestry practices in Finland and Scotland and how communities and civil society integrate with forests and woodlands. These countries were chosen as they are considered as having strong forestry sectors. However, while a direct comparison between jurisdictions cannot be made due to many factors such as; land ownership, geographical size, population of rural towns and villages of each country, there can be some lessons learnt on how communities are engage with forestry and their attitudes towards it and how these could be adapted to suit an Irish context.

The first interview looks at the forestry sector in Finland. The interview was carried out with Simo Tiainen. Simo is a forester and Director of MTK – Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners of Finland. He is also a member of the European Economic and Social Committee Diversity Group III.

Finland

As of 2021, there are 26.2 million hectares of forestry land in Finland, which is 86% of total land area. The Forestry sector was worth €7.7bn to the Finish economy in 2020 accounting for 3.8% of the national economy. It is the most significant bio-economy sector in Finland accounting for 32% of the total value added and 35% of its output. It is also a valuable sector for the food and construction sector accounting for approx. 19% of value added for both sectors and for 23% of output in the food sector.

Over half (52%) of forestry land in Finland is owned privately. Of this, 74% is owned by an individual person or with their spouse and 17% is owned by a partnership. In 2016, private individuals owned more than 344,000 forest entities of at least 2 hectares of forest land. Thirty-five percent of forest land is owned by the State with companies owning 7%. The remaining 6% is owned by municipalities, parishes and various associations.

Pine makes up over half of the forest tree stock in Finland, followed by 30% spruce and 17% birch. The remaining 3% is made up of other broad-leaved trees. A total of 2.9 million hectares of Finish forest land is protected. The majority of protected forests, nearly 80%, is in Northern Finland with 5% in Southern Finland.

There were 63,000 persons employed in the forestry sector in Finland in 2020. Of those employed in the sector 45% were self-employed or unpaid family members. Wood products industries and pulp & paper industries both employed 19,000 persons.

A lot of the harvesting in Finland is done by the farmer or forest owner and often it is done collectively with neighbouring farms/forests. Continuous thinning can also be done this way.

The **METSO Programme** - Forest Biodiversity Programme for South Finland aims to halt the decline of forest habitats and species and establish a stable favourable trend in forest biodiversity. The programme is based on the voluntary participation of forest owners and expanded the network of protected areas by more than 79,000 hectares between 2008 and 2020. It also includes restoration activities and active nature management agreements. The principle in removals and other forest management activities is to save deciduous trees, reserve trees and decayed trees and favour mixed forests.

In spite of the majority of forests in Finland being owned by private individuals the general public can access private forests within reason. They maintain the old system of 'Everyman's Right' – meaning everyone can go to the forest and use it for walking and other leisure activities, to pick mushrooms, berries and forage. There is a 'Gentleman's Agreement' between the owner and the general public. Although one can walk freely through the forest there is an understanding that don't come too close to a person's house or other property. There is no issue around insurance, public liability etc.

The second interview took place Brendan Burns from Scotland. Brendan owns a Forestry Business in Scotland and is former President of the NAT Section of the European Economic and Social Committee.

Scotland

Forestry and Land Scotland is the Scottish Government agency responsible for managing Scotland's national forests and land. Formed in 2019, it took over from the Forestry Commission.

It is felt by some in Scotland that there have been difficulties with forestry since Forestry and Land Scotland took over and liken it to the Irish experience; now experiencing many of the same problems as Ireland when it comes to forestry. It is felt that a move from mutual community benefit to how much profit can be made has developed. Before, Scotland followed a more European model in that it had a much more social obligation as well as making money from forestry. The Forestry Commission and Government were more open to having a discussion and conversation around forestry and would take on board concerns and criticism from the public.

There was a vast amount of knowledge and expertise lost when a lot of people retired from the Commission about 15 years ago. The staff were very hands on in the past but this knowledge was not passed on to new staff as no funding for training was provided.

Ownership of forests in Scotland is different to that in Finland and indeed in Ireland. In Scotland there are too few people owning large amounts of land and this is often seen as the problem as it does not benefit the rural communities it impinges upon. There are very few benefits to rural communities.

While many know there is a need for Sitka Spruce for construction sector, fuel etc., it can be difficult for rural communities to see it as they don't benefit from this asset, which is seen as a dark dense solid plantation that people cannot walk through. The interviewee suggests that hardwood could be built around the sides or through the middle to allow people to walk through and this should be open to conversation. If the public of an area have a say in how commercial forestry is grown everyone could benefit. The local people need to be engaged with and an explanation provided for what is happening in their area.

There are some community woodlands in Scotland. These were bought from the Forestry Commission by communities with funding supports from the Scottish Government. They are a small player in a big business though. These community forests are used for tourism, local schools and communities. A lot of estates have taken up this social side of things and see the benefits for the local communities with jobs and new businesses, such as shops and cafés being set up as a result.

Chapter 4: Methodology of Study

In order to gain a better understanding on the attitudes of communities towards forests and woodlands and how they are integrated into communities, Irish Rural Link designed a survey and aimed to ensure a good balance of questions so the results of the study would be as unbiased as possible. A mix of open and closed questions were included. A draft of the survey was circulated to Working Group 4 of Project Woodland (IRL is a member of this Working Group) and DAFM before finalised.

The Survey-Monkey platform was used to design the survey and analyse the results of each question. The survey was distributed to Irish Rural Link members and National Rural Network members as well as other interested groups. The survey was distributed to just over 6,000 recipients and received 641 responses to the survey, with an 81% completion rate. It is important to note that the “Save” Advocacy Groups (Save Leitrim, Save Cavan, Save Kerry, Save Wicklow) abstained from participating in the survey as they felt the questions were too bias towards the sector and just participated in the focus groups.

There were a total of 35 questions included in the survey with Q35 asking respondents if they were interested in participating in a Focus Group to further discuss their views on forestry.

On the close of the survey, 208 respondents expressed an interest in participating in one of the focus groups. To ensure a meaningful and engaging focus group could operate, the team opted to select 12 respondents at random per focus group as 208 could not be facilitated. This number of 12 was selected based on the experience that, not all invited will be able to attend due to time, date etc. With a participation rate of 50%, each focus group would still have 6 participants with a maximum of 12 per focus group. This gave the best opportunity for a meaningful dialogue developing without over or under filling the focus groups.

Five general focus groups were formed from the pool of 208 interested respondents. This ensured that all interested parties had an equal opportunity to participate. A further two groups were also formed; one was a base group made up from stakeholders of Working Group 4 and other stakeholders involved in the forestry and wood sector and the second from the “Save” advocacy groups who declined to participate in the general questionnaire, but a voice which was felt needed to be included.

The selection process for the 5 general focus groups was carried out by two IRL staff members to ensure the validity of the selection process. First, all 208 respondents were assigned a number at random in Excel. Then a generic Random Number Generator (RNG) was used to select 12 names per focus group, totalling 60. This process was carried out in sequence from focus group 1 to focus group 5. Each focus group was then assigned a formal number and a date and time was selected for each of the 7 focus groups.

Due to continued Covid-19 restrictions, the Focus Groups took place online, via Zoom over 2 weeks in November. There was a mix of daytime and evening Focus Groups to suit as many invitees as possible, each given 1.5 hours for discussion.

An overview including the aims of the study were presented at the beginning of each Focus Group as well as a short round of introductions and what people's involvement or interest in Forestry and Woodlands was. While each Focus Group was a space for open discussion and for all voices and opinions to be heard, three questions were provided to start the conversation. The questions included:

- What are the challenges and opportunities *you* see in Irish Forestry and Woodland Management at present?
- How do you think these challenges and opportunities can be addressed?
- How can forests and woodlands be better developed to serve local communities?
- Any further comments or suggestions.

All Focus Groups were recorded on the Zoom platform with agreement from all participants and transcribed by an external transcriber.

The results of the survey and outcomes of the Focus Groups help to inform the recommendations to Project Woodland in this report.

Limitations to the Study

While this study sets out to gather the attitudes of communities

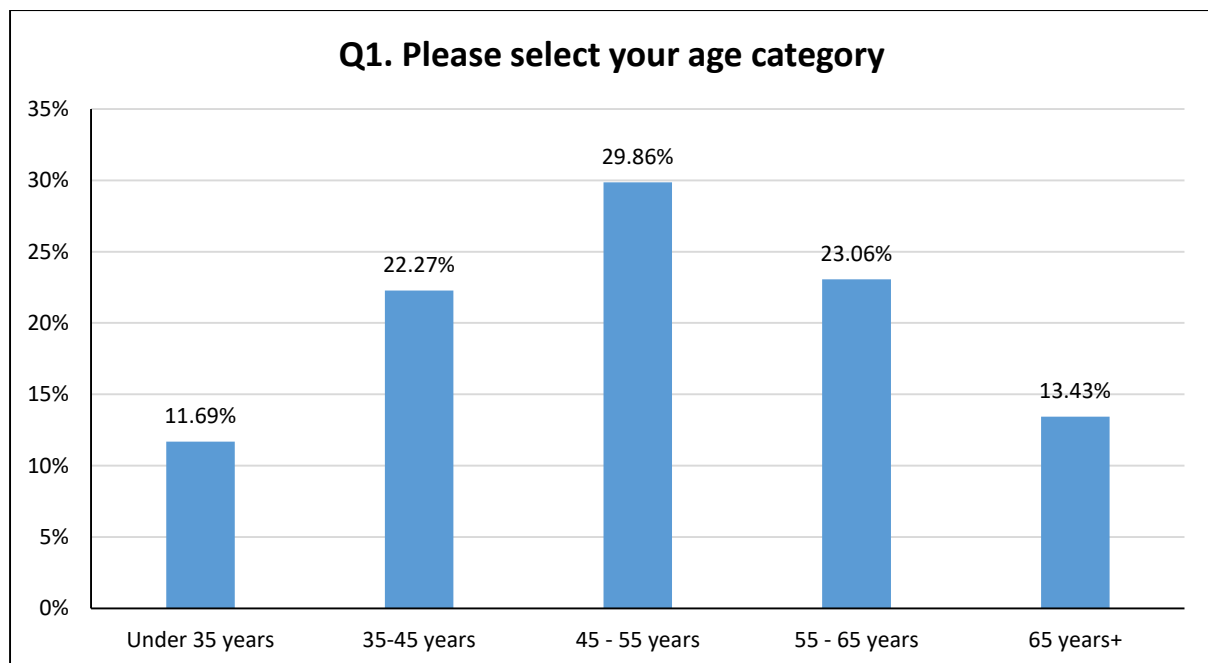
- Members of the 'Save' Groups did not participate in the survey as they felt the questions were too biased towards the sector. They did however, participate in one of the focus groups so their views on forestry were included in the report.
- Not all respondents to the survey answered every question. It is likely that they responded to the questions that were most relevant to them or were interested in. This may mean that some results are slightly skewed.
- The information gathered with forestry practitioners in two other jurisdictions was limited. Additional interviews/focus groups with others involved in forestry and with people or communities who are not directly involved in forestry would have given a better comparison between practices and attitudes. However, given time restraints, this was not possible.

Chapter 5: Results of Survey

The survey was distributed to Irish Rural Link members and National Rural Network members as well as other interested groups. The survey was distributed to just over 6,000 recipients and received 641 responses to the survey, with an 81% completion rate. It is important to note that the Save Groups (Save Leitrim, Save Cavan, Save Kerry, Save Wicklow) abstained from participating in the survey as they felt the questions were too bias towards the sector and just participated in the focus groups.

There were a total of 35 questions included in the survey with Q35 asking respondents if they were interested in participating in a Focus Group to further discuss their views on forestry. The Survey-Monkey platform was used to design the survey and analyse the results of each question.

The following is an analysis of the survey results.



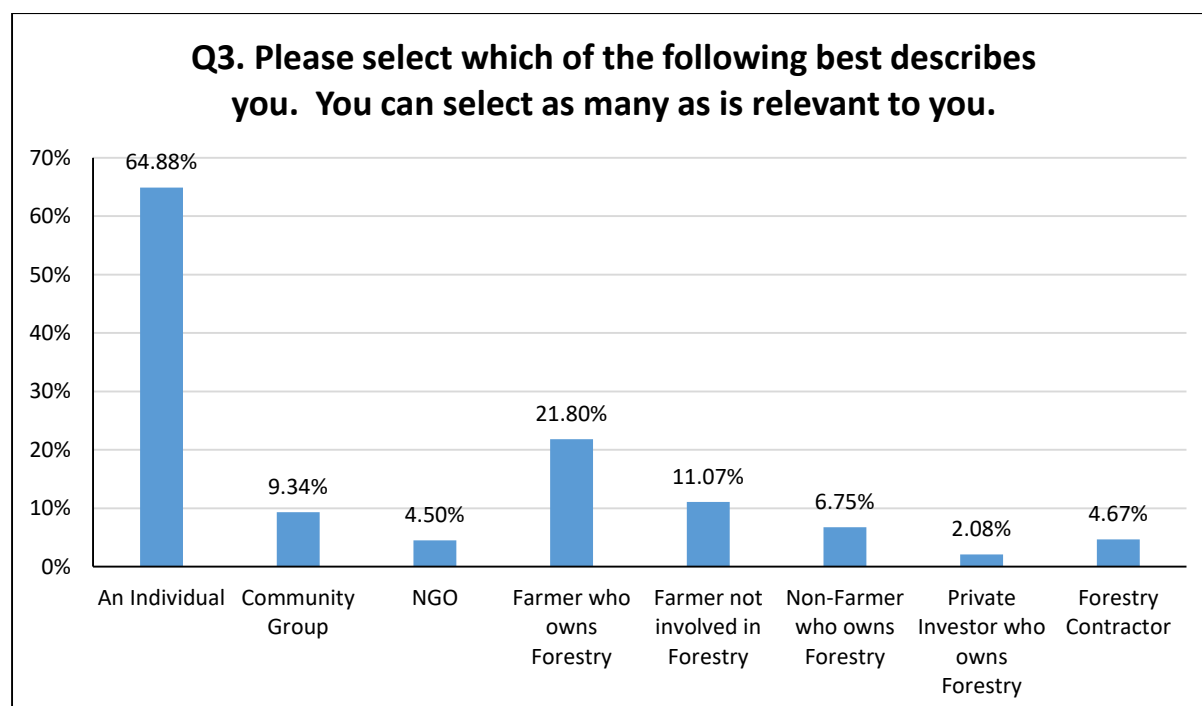
The first question looked to find the age of the respondents to the survey. 633 respondents answered this question. The majority of respondents were aged between 45-55 years old at 30% with 23% aged between 55-65 years old and 22% between 35-45 years old. 12% and 13% of respondents were aged under 35 and 65 years+ respectively.

Q2: In what County do you Live?

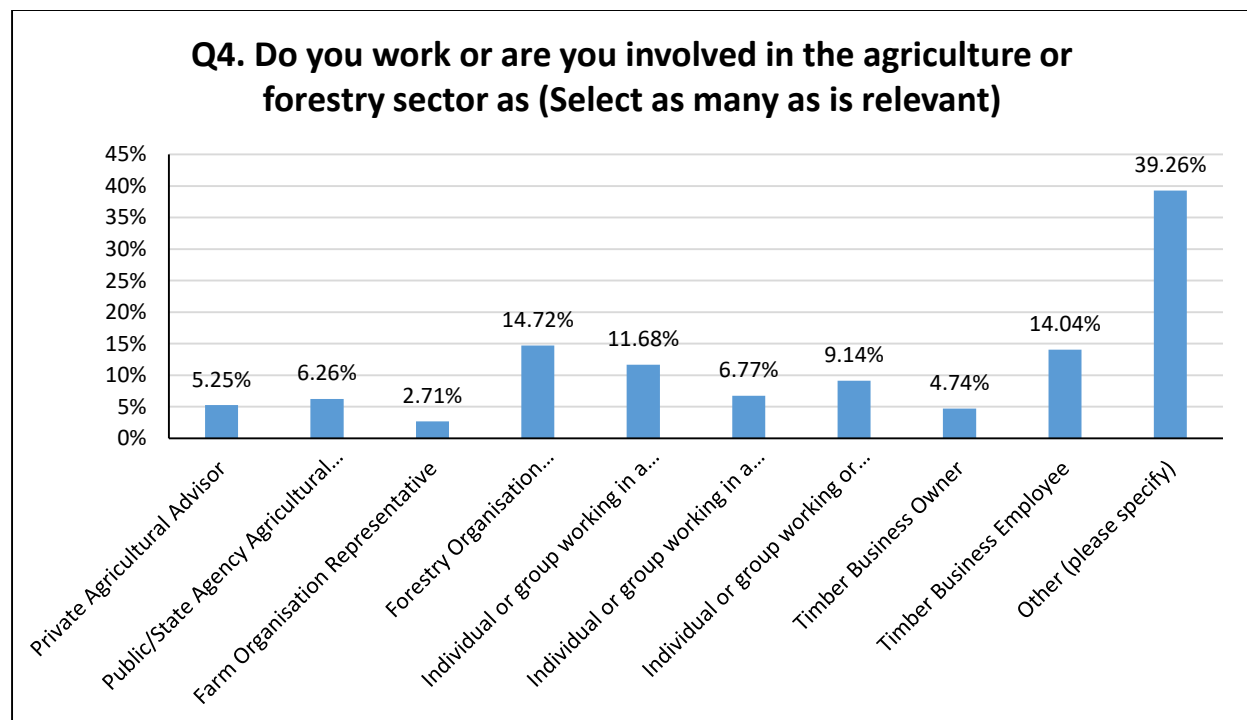
Question 2 asked in which county people lived. This was an open question. 631 respondents answered this question. There was a good dispersion of people from across the country that took part in the survey with some from Northern Ireland and other EU countries also. A total of 630 respondents answered this question Table 1 shows the number of respondents by county/country.

Table 1: Disperson of Respondents by County

County	No. of Respondents	County	No. of Respondents
Carlow	12	Mayo	41
Cavan	9	Meath	18
Clare	25	Monaghan	8
Cork	49	Offaly	10
Donegal	28	Roscommon	21
Down	1	Sligo	34
Dublin	39	Tipperary	18
Fermanagh	1	Tyrone	1
Galway	48	Waterford	14
Kerry	32	Westmeath	15
Kildare	18	Wexford	23
Kilkenny	26	Wicklow	42
Laois	17	Midlands	1
Leitrim	20	Ireland	22
Limerick	15	Austria	1
Longford	9	Finland	1
Louth	10	Northern Ireland	1



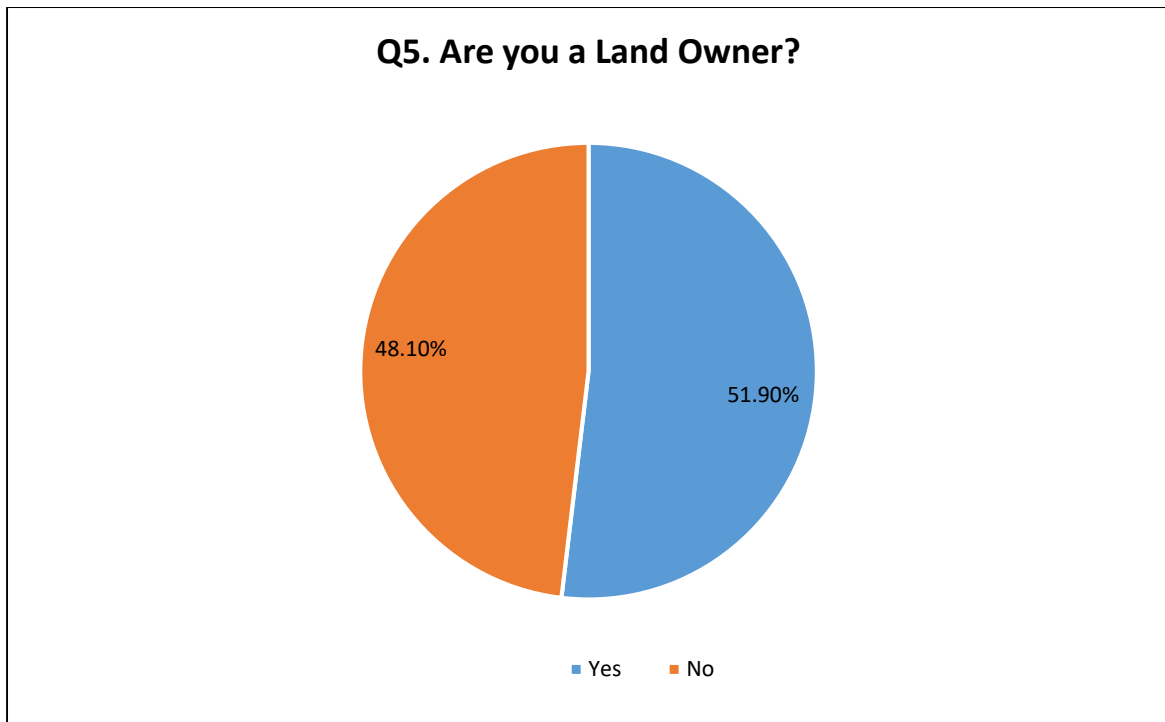
578 respondents answered question 3, which gave a list of options to participants that best describes them in relation to their involvement or interest in forestry. 65% of respondents described themselves as an individual, with just 22% describing themselves as a 'Farmer who owns Forestry' and 11% as a 'Farmer not involved in Forestry'. However, as the survey continued it became evident that respondents were more directly involved in forestry than the response to this question would suggest. If the question was posed differently, for example – answering the survey as an individual/community group/farmer involved in forestry etc. a more accurate response may have been given.



In Q4 participants were asked if they worked in or how they were involved in the agriculture or forestry sector. 591 participants responded to this question.

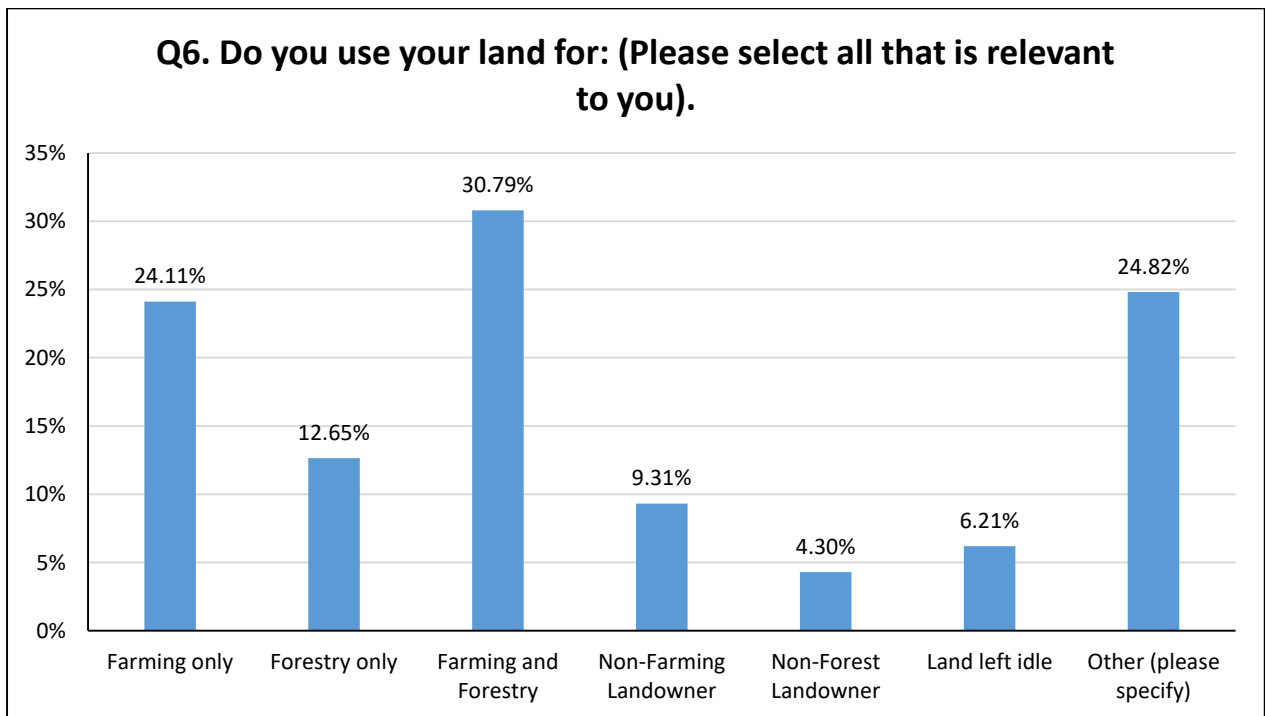
After 'other', the next higher response was Forestry Organisation Representative at 14.7% followed by 'Timber Business Employee' at 14.04% and 'Individual or group working in a Private organisation in the area of conservation/environmental protection' at 11.68%.

Thirty-nine percent of respondents selected 'other' for this answer. However, some of the respondents were working directly in forestry and agriculture; i.e. forest owner, farmer or working with a public, private or NGO forestry agency. Others were involved in the sector as individuals interested in planting forestry, interested in the environment, biodiversity or use forests for walking, recreation, mental health and wellbeing or interested in using for such practice, teachers, bee keepers, journalists all who have an interest in making better use of forests in their work.



Q5 asked if respondent was a landowner or not. This was a closed question with simple response of Yes or No. 632 respondents answered this question, with 52% identifying themselves as a landowner and 48% stating they do not own land.

Those who answered 'Yes' in question 5 were then asked to complete Questions 6-10 of the survey. This set of questions were to help determine how people use their land and how much, if any, have or plan to plant forestry or woodland.



In Question 6, respondents were asked how they use their land and given a list of options to select the ones most relevant to them. 419 participants responded to this question. Over 30% or 129 respondents use their land for both Farming and Forestry, with 24% or 101 respondents using their land for 'Farming only'. 13% or 53 respondents used their land for 'Forestry only'. 25% of respondents used their land for other purposes. This number is lower and closer to 17%. It was found that where respondents were asked to comment on what land was used for, some did use land for farming and/or forestry. Other uses of the land included:

- Recreation purposes
- Land leased for farming
- Biodiversity protection and management
- Beekeeping
- Future forestry and auxiliary services
- nursery plant production
- Non-commercial woodland
- Growing vegetables
- Land is bog and used as a carbon sink
- Equine use
- Research, education and demonstration purposes
- Eco-tourism
- Hen-harrier project
- Native tree growing.

Q7. If you use land for both Farming and Forestry what percentage is used for Forestry?

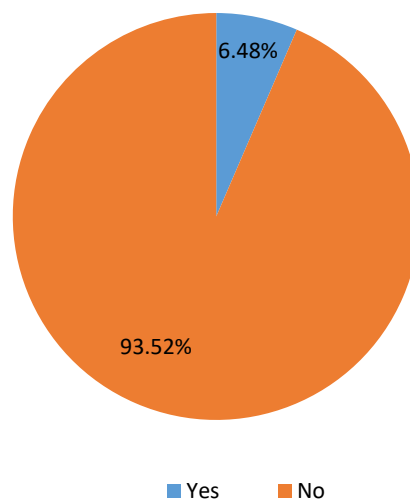
Question 7 was aimed at those who said they use their land for both 'Farming and Forestry' and asked what percentage of their land is used for forestry. However, more participants answered this question – a total of 311 participants. The average amount of land used for forestry where both farming and forestry takes place is 30%.

Q8. Have you established a forest with government funding in the past? if so, how many hectares?

This was an open ended question, where respondents were asked to state the number of hectares was planted with forestry using Government funding. 338 participants responded to this question. However, 179 respondents answered that it was not applicable or they had not planted a forest with government funding. Approx. 3 respondents planted privately, with 2 waiting for application to be approved with one respondent interested in planting native woodland was advised by forestry advisor that land was only suitable for Stika Spruce so did

not proceed with planting. Of those who had planted forestry using government funding the number of hectares ranged from less than 1 hectare to 190 hectares.

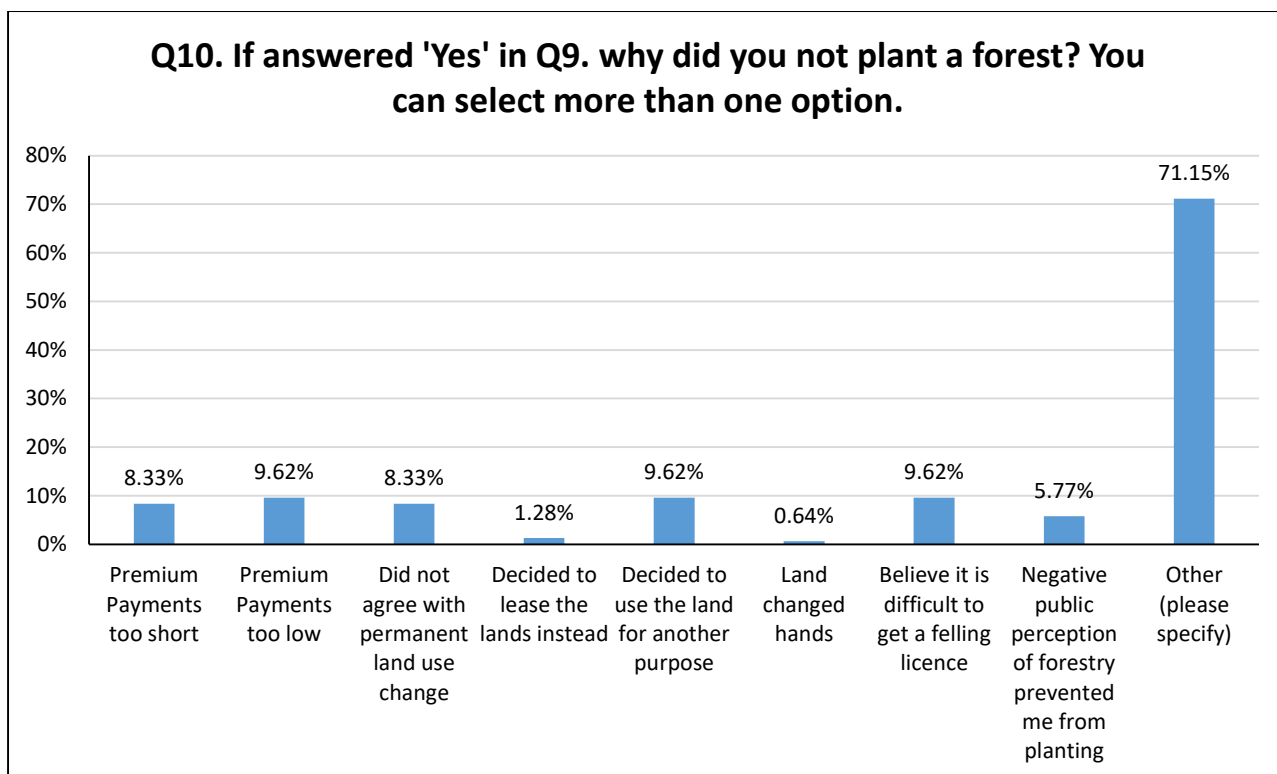
Q9. Have you received a licence for afforestation in the past but did not go ahead with planting a forest?



Question 9 was a closed question with simple Yes/No answer. 386 respondents of the survey answered this question. Of the 386 respondents who responded to this question, 25 or 6.4% answered 'Yes', with 361 or 93.5% answering 'No'.

Respondents who answered 'Yes' to this question were then asked to answer Q10 - why did you not plant a forest? A number of options were given and respondents could select more than one option.

- Premium Payments too short
- Premium Payments too low
- Did not agree with permanent land use change
- Decided to lease the lands instead
- Decided to use the land for another purpose
- Land changed hands
- Believe it is difficult to get a felling licence
- Negative public perception of forestry prevented me from planting
- Other (please specify)



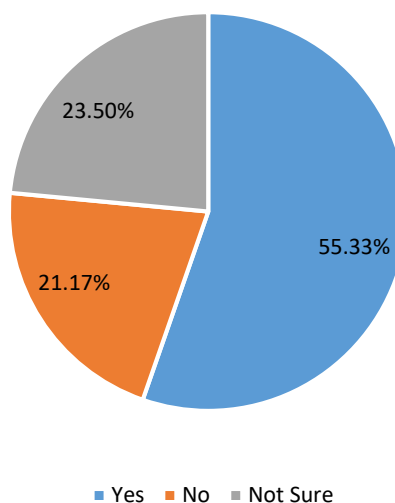
While only 25 respondents answered 'Yes' in Q9, there were 156 responses to this question. 8% of respondents selected Premiums were too short or they Didn't agree with land use change. 10% said Premiums were too low, decided to use the land for another purpose or believe it is too difficult to get a felling licence. 6% of respondents said they didn't plant forest because of the negative perception prevented them from planting.

Of the 156 respondents, 71% selected 'other'. While some of the answers were invalid as respondents had selected No in Q9 other comments or reasons why respondents didn't plant forest after receiving a licence included;

- Unhappy to give public access, actual planting about 50% of site size and spurious archaeological sites quoted on already reclaimed ground.
- Disastrous planting licence situation
- Approval of licence took too long, went with other schemes (GLAS)
- Too much red tape and a limited choice of tree species offered in current grant rules.
- A huge amount of land has been lost to spruce plantations in our area.
- Native woodland scheme too short. there could be other schemes less demanding of timber quality and more suitable to natural features of the landscape. There is a lot of land with high biodiversity value that could be difficult to bring to NWS sign off but is naturally very high in biodiversity mixed scrub.
- Planted what they could afford to.
- All Sitka spruce and destroying rural areas.
- Agroforestry scheme was unsuitable. It was either blanket forestry or nothing.

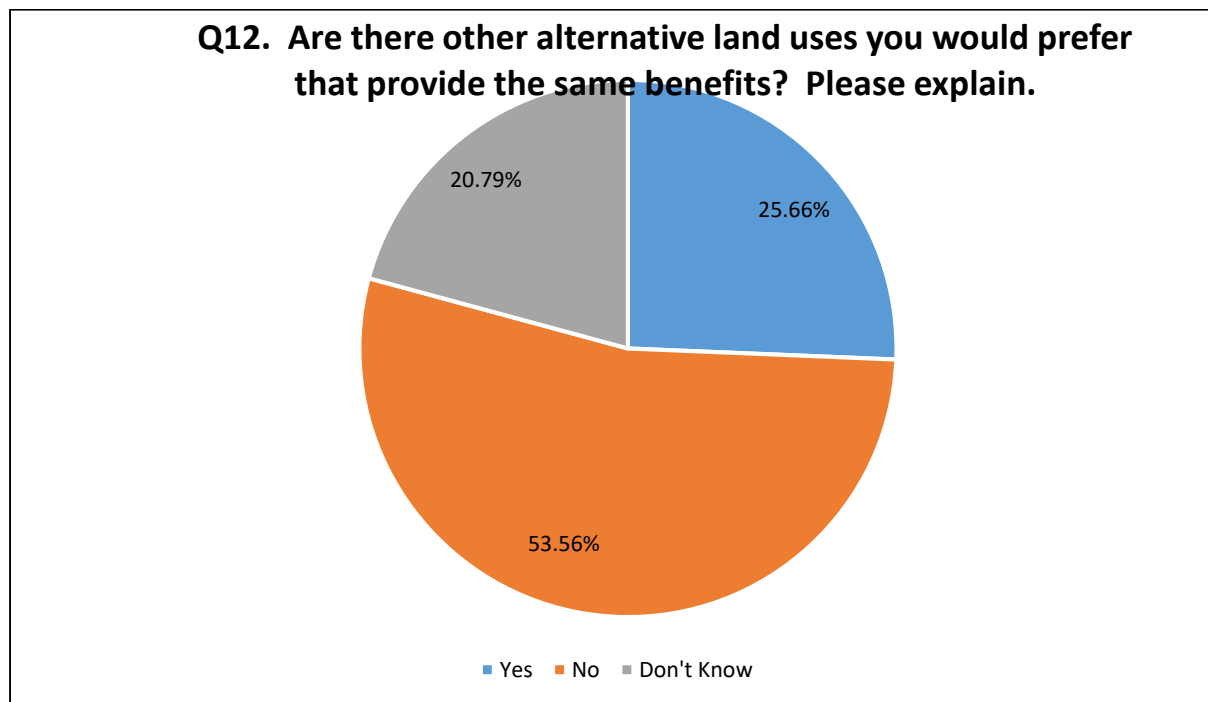
- Negative encounter with the local Forest Service Inspector.
- 50% frozen due to archaeological and public access conditions
- Agent did not plant and licence ran out.
- Negative for bees
- Premium should be every year not just 15yrs for native woodland
- The entire Regulation of Irish Forestry is out of control. It is not grower friendly. The Forest service is not aligned with the needs of woodland owners. The emphasis and desire to use native species automatically eliminates the viability of the woodland or any potential to give any economic return to the owner. Virtually all hardwood crops are now uneconomic. Virtually all hardwood crops are being neglected and left to their own devices. The failure of policy makers to consult with owners and to devise a carbon payment scheme for woodland owners will also negatively impact on forestry development. The reality is that Farmers were fraudulently induced into planting such lands as they planted. The Forest service should have first ensured that prior to the investment in any afforestation that full permissions are in place for all fellings at the least for each rotation. That road access is also agreed and in place prior to any afforestation. It is my opinion that the Forest service and government have committed an act of gross malfeasance in their failure to develop forestry in a way that is aligned with standard European practices with regard to forest planning, Forest management, and access to forests from the public highways.
- bureaucracy - Delays in processing applications & licences
- too slow getting approval. lost land sale

Q11. Are you interested in or considering Forestry in the future?



600 participants answered this question with 55% or 332 respondents stating that they were considering or interested in Forestry in the future, with 24% saying they were not sure. 21% said they were not interested or not considering Forestry in the future.

Section 3: The next section of the survey focused on Land Use, Consultation and Future of Forestry.



534 participants responded to question 12 of the survey which asked if there were other alternative uses of land, other than forestry, to mitigate climate change etc. 25% or 137 respondents answered 'Yes' to this while 54% or 286 respondents said 'No', meaning they felt forestry was the best source of combating these issues. A further 21% did not know.

212 respondents went on to further explain their answer. Some of the comments included those that felt forestry was the best way to tackle these issues and that the area of forests in Ireland need to be urgently increased as they are the fastest sequesterers of carbon and that we don't have the time to wait for longer term solutions such as 150 - year rotation of most broadleaves, re-wilding and/or rewetting. Also if want timber to replace/reduce use of steel and concrete in construction and fossil fuels we need to increase timber production.

However, others felt the type of forestry and trees planted are relevant. The monoculture model is seen by some of the respondents as not good forestry practice and that the forestry pre-process can be damaging to rivers and catchments. Also industrial farming was seen as having a negative impact on flood relief with clear-felling causing carbon release. Some respondents would like to see more native tree species, broadleaves, etc. being planted with continuous cover or wider spacing plantations which would also cater for grazing animals. It

was also felt that forestry should be only one of a suite of measures to tackle these issues including; agroforestry, rewilding, regenerative agriculture, agro-ecological farming, natural flood defences/mitigation, rewetting of peatlands and wetlands. Land that is valuable and beneficial to the biodiversity of the local area should not be damaged in order to plant more forests.

Bog and peatland restoration was mentioned a number of times by respondents and seen as an alternative use of land to mitigate climate change, as a carbon storage, soil protection and in some instances 'more beneficial than Sitka spruce plantations'. One respondent noted in their local area both blanket and raised bogs have been planted with Sitka spruce plantations and recently led to a bog slide, causing damage to both farms and biodiversity.

One suggestion was for an approach of 'The Right Tree in the Right Place for the Right Reasons' be followed.

Q13. Regarding existing and future Forests your local area, how do you see these forests integrating into the local community?

Question 13 was an open-ended question. 494 respondents answered this question and gave their views on how forests could better integrate in the community. This question was also asked in the focus groups with similar responses. Many of the respondents felt there were more opportunities for existing forests to better integrate into the local community. While many saw the could be used more for recreation to include different activities, picnic tables and used by local schools for educational purposes. They were also seen as important for the protection of wildlife and the creation of jobs. It was also felt that they could become a bigger part of new Culture, Recreation and Heritage of local community.

However, in some parts of the country it was felt that existing forests in the area does not allow forests to be used by the community as they are dark with no light and no room beneath or between the trees for walking or for native flora to grow. Clear-felling of the trees has left land ravaged and exposed with one liken it to a 'WW1 battle-field site'. Also feels that it depletes local water and soil.

Public Liability risks for owners and the issue of insurance was raised by those who owned private forests.

"I would love to integrate our forest into the local community but the cost of insurance makes it impossible".

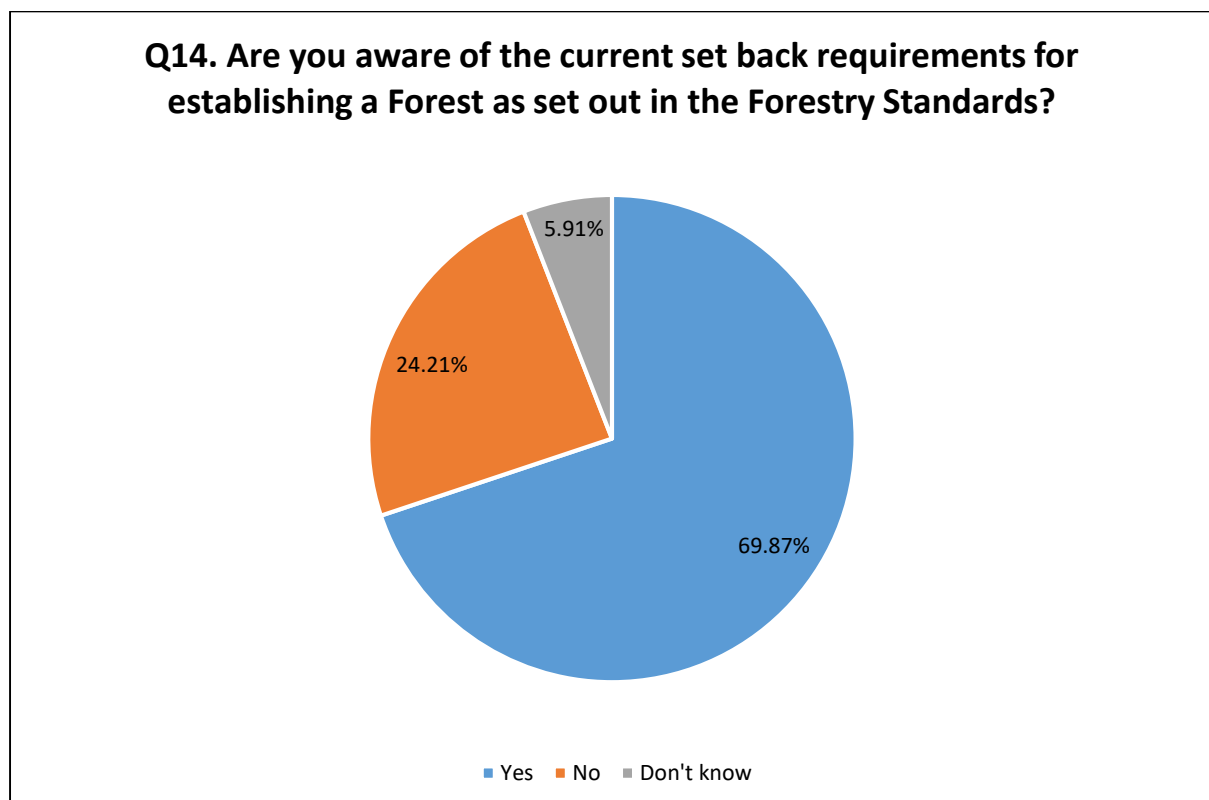
(Farmer who owns Forest, Co. Roscommon)

Others would like to see private forests owners being paid to open plantation for local recreation and education, while some felt the current regulations and requirements and delays in licencing makes it difficult to integrate forests into the community.

It was also felt by some that consultation with communities has improved in more recent years while others felt they should have more input into the type and amount of forestry planted in their community. One respondent suggested that plantations over 10ha should have a small community element and gave the example of Terryland Forest Park in Galway for how to successfully integrate a new forest into a community. Coillte Nature was also cited as good practice for planting native woodland and regenerate urban forests for benefit of people and nature.

One suggestion for rural communities was for development of community forests, especially in areas struggling economically and from outward migration of youth.

“Funds could be used to purchase land along waterways or close to the urban centre whereby they provide multiple benefits to the community (mainly recreation) and have the community involved in the project. Many small towns and villages have land that is unused within the vicinity that could be purchased with state funds to develop woodland and help contribute to local regeneration and climate targets. It could be developed through the likes of tidy towns whereby the local community is central to the woodlands development and protection”. (Farmer not involved in Forestry).



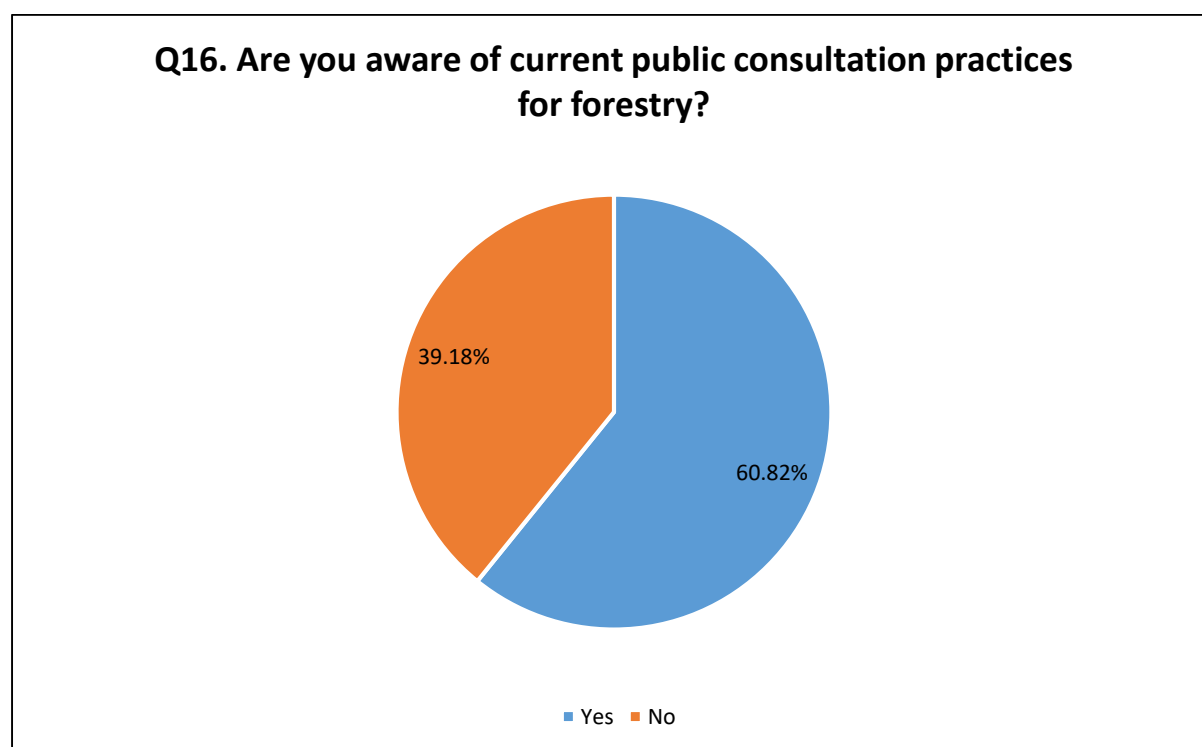
541 respondents answered this question with 70% or 378 respondents answering 'Yes' that they were aware of current set back requirements. 24% of respondents answered 'no' with 6% not knowing the current set back requirements.

Q15. Would you suggest any changes and if so, why?

406 respondents answered this question. Almost half (45%) of respondents commented that they felt the minimum set-back requirements were appropriate, others, mainly farmers felt some were too restrictive and also the type of trees that are planted impacted people's response. Some felt that set-back requirements should not be in place for native woodland and broadleaves. However, in areas where there is a lot of plantation of Sitka Spruce and Firs it was felt that 60m from a dwelling should be extended with one suggesting,

"a MINIMUM of 100 meters from a dwelling, preferable 150 -200 mtrs. My neighbours and I have direct experience of this and the effects on light is unacceptable. It needs to be extended also for a watercourse and drinking water".

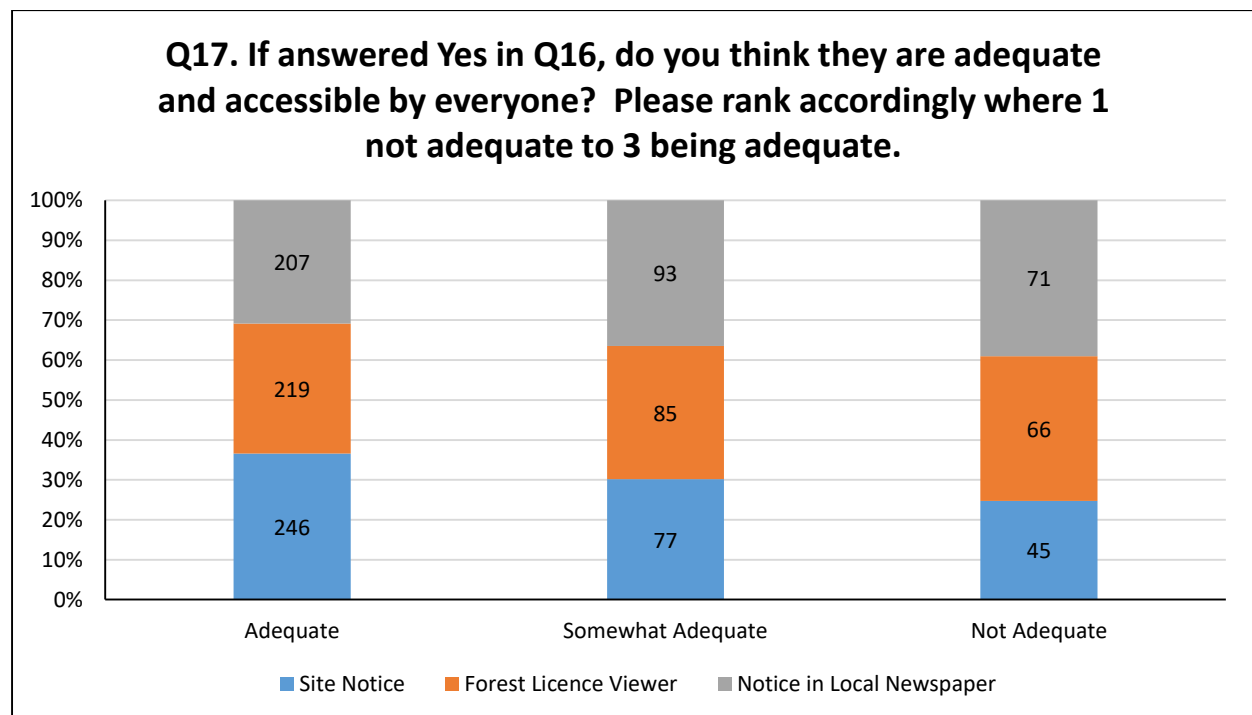
Where new plantations take place, there was also a suggestion for set-back requirement from existing plantations to allow for *"Fire break, mitigate wind damage to the newer plantation when the older plantation is felled and potential to develop recreational use on the spared land"*.



Question 16 aimed to ascertain respondents' awareness of current public consultation practices for forestry. 536 people responded to this question. 61% said they were aware of current public consultation practices while 39% were not aware.

Those who answered 'Yes' to Q.16 were then asked how adequate and accessible each of the public consultations – Site Notice, Forest Licence Viewer, Notice in Local Newspaper are and

were asked to rank accordingly where 1 not adequate to 5 being adequate. 379 respondents answered this question.

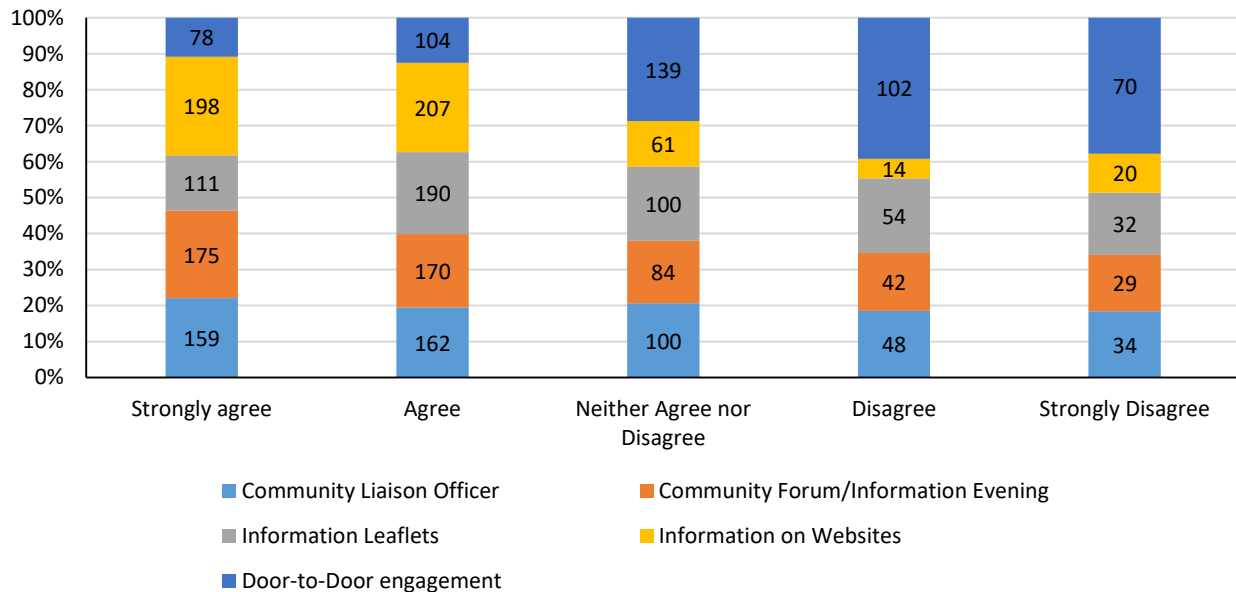


Overall respondents to this question found all three public consultation practices as adequate. 67% of respondents found 'Site Notice' as adequate with 21% stating it was somewhat adequate. 12% said that it was not adequate.

For the Forest Licence Viewer, 59% or 219 respondents found that it was adequate with 23% saying it was somewhat adequate and 18% finding it not adequate.

56% or 219 respondents found a Notice in Local Newspaper was adequate, with 25% saying that it is somewhat adequate and 19% saying that it is not an adequate form of public consultation.

Q18. Are there any other forms of engagement you would see beneficial with regard forest management and forestry practices? Please select the ones you would agree or disagree with.



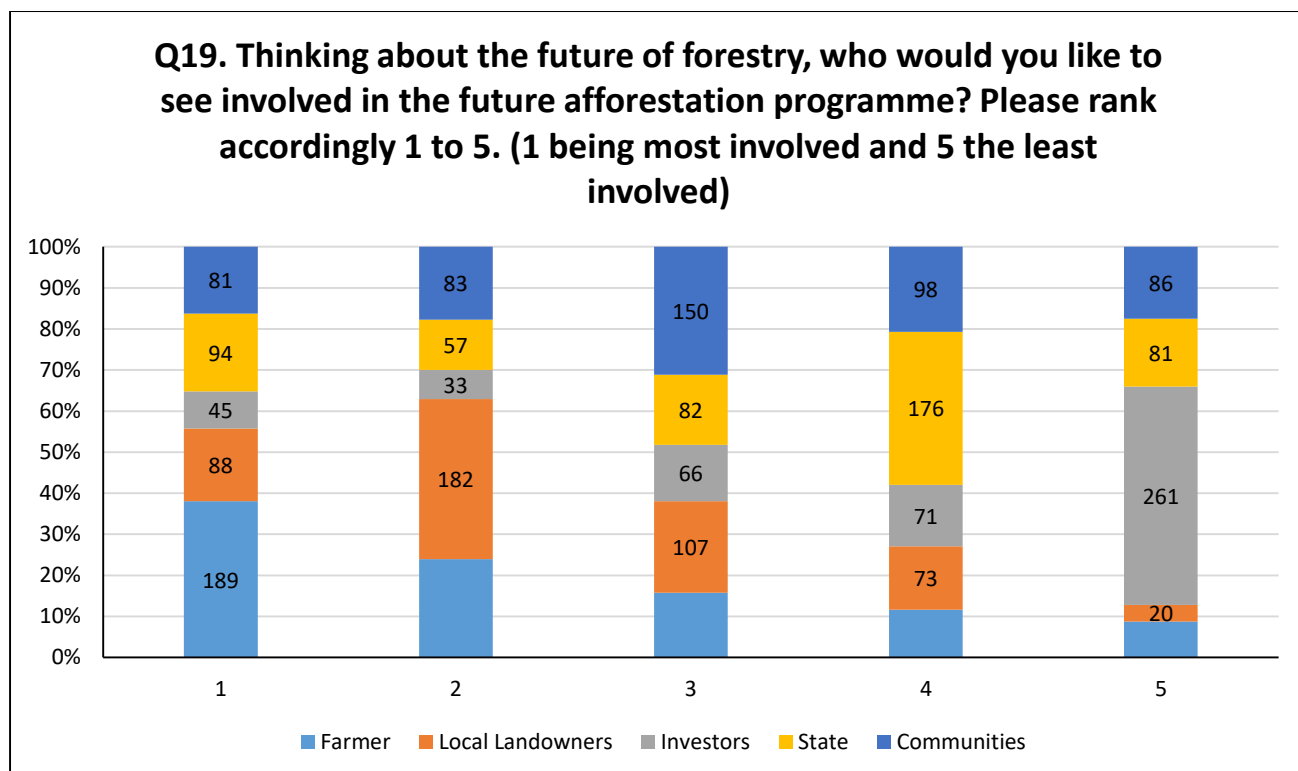
519 respondents answered this question. In terms of having a Community Engagement Officer, 31% or 159 respondents strongly agreed with 32% agreeing and 20% neither agreeing or disagreeing with this form of consultation.

175 or 35% of respondents strongly agreed with Community Forum or Information Evening to take place with 34% or 170 respondents agreeing and 17% neither agreeing or disagreeing.

23% or 111 respondents strongly agreed that 'Information Leaflets' would be a beneficial form of engagement with 39% or 190 respondents agreeing with this form. 20% of respondents neither agreed or disagreed with this form of engagement.

Information on websites was shown to be the most beneficial form of engagement with 39% or 198 respondents strongly agreeing that this would be most beneficial and 41% or 207 respondents agreeing. Just 3% and 4% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this form of engagement.

It was shown that Door-to-door engagement was seen as the least beneficial form of engagement with just 16% or 78 respondents strongly agreeing with this form. 21% of respondents agreed while 28% neither agreed or disagreed. 21% or 102 respondents disagreed with this form of engagement with 14% strongly disagreeing.



The final question in this section was trying to get people’s attitudes and opinions on the future of forestry and afforestation programme and who is best placed to be involved. Respondents were given a list of 5 options to select from and how involved they should be ranking from 1 = being most involved and 5 = least involved.

529 respondents replied to this question. From the graph and results of the survey, it is clear respondents felt investors should be the least involved in the future of afforestation. 55% or 261 respondents felt that they should be least involved, with just 9% or 45 respondents saying they should be most involved.

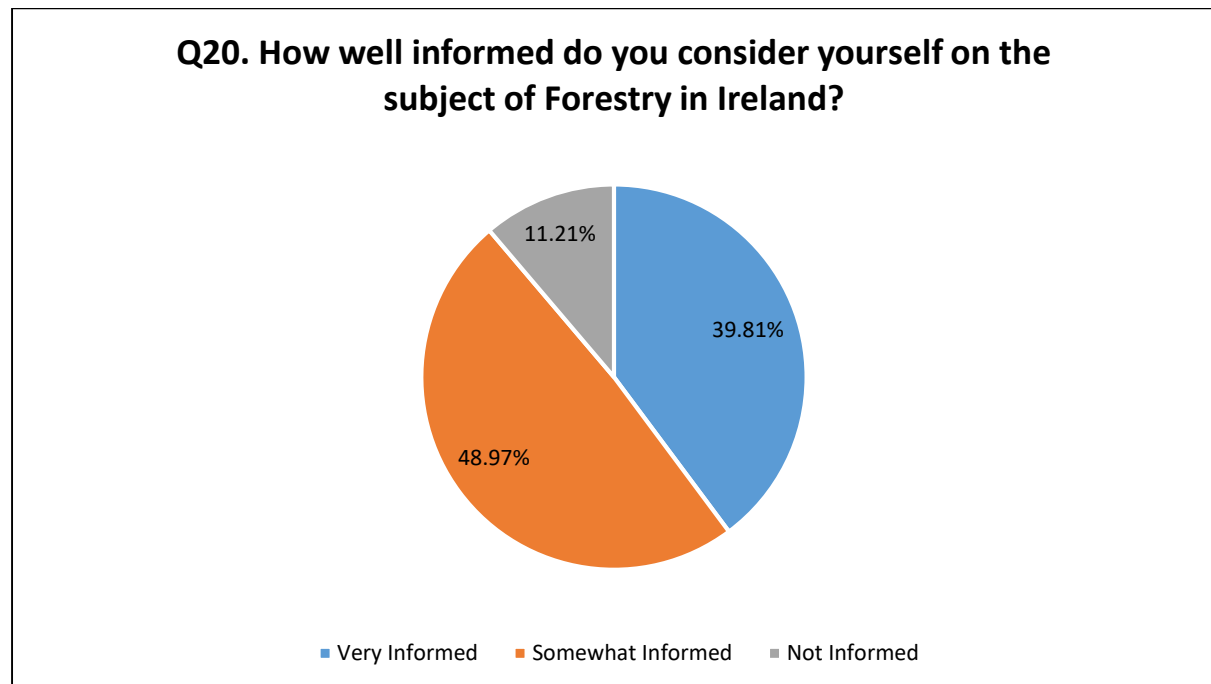
Farmers and Local Landowners were most favoured by respondents as those that should be involved in the future of afforestation. 40% or 189 respondents felt farmers should be the most involved in the programme with 23% saying they should be involved. 19% or 88 respondents felt local landowners should be most involved with 39% or 182 respondents saying they should be involved.

19% or 94 respondents feel that the state should be most involved in afforestation while 16% feel that they should be the least involved with 36% saying that they shouldn’t be involved.

16% or 81 respondents felt that Communities should be most involved in afforestation, with 17% stated that they should be the least involved. 30% or 150 respondents were indifferent on whether communities should be most involved or not in afforestation.

Section 4: Knowledge of Forestry in Ireland

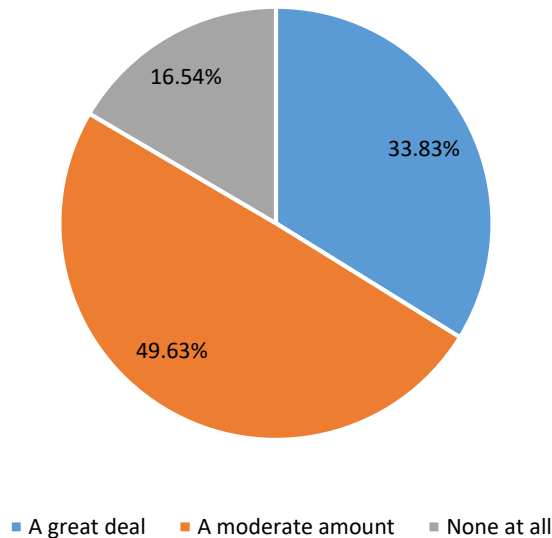
The set of questions in this section of the survey was to help find out the level of knowledge on Forestry in Ireland and its uses.



Respondents were given three options to select from in this question – very informed, somewhat informed or not informed.

535 participants responded to this question; 49% or 262 respondents considered themselves somewhat informed about Forestry in Ireland, with 40% or 213 respondents saying they were very informed. Just 11% considered themselves not informed.

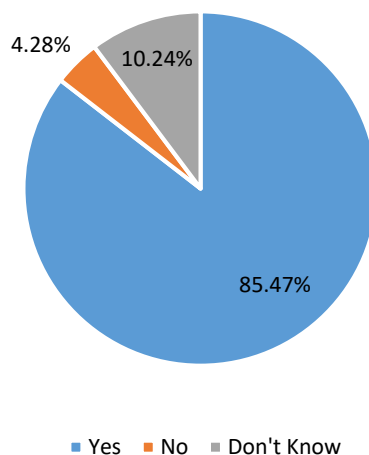
Q21. How much knowledge do you consider to have on forestry management practices used in Ireland?



This was a closed question, with respondents given three options again; A great deal of Knowledge, A moderate amount or None at all.

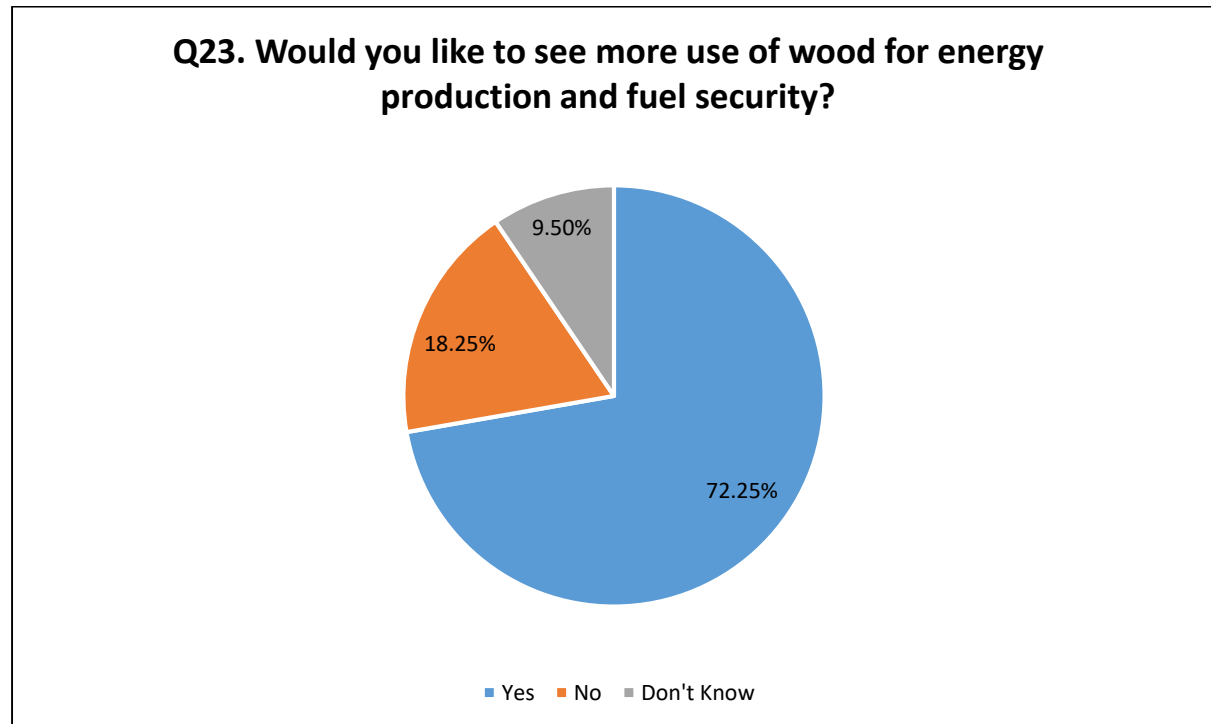
538 respondents answered this question. From the responses and from the graph above, almost 50% or 267 respondents considered they had a moderate amount of knowledge on forestry management practices used in Ireland. 34% or 182 respondents considered themselves having a great deal of knowledge on this with 16% or 89 respondents saying they had none at all.

Q22. Would you like to see more wood used in building construction sector in Ireland?



This was a closed question with respondents asked simply to answer Yes/No or Don't Know.

537 respondents answered this question, with 85% or 459 respondents saying that Yes they would like to see more wood using in the construction sector. Just 4% said No and 10% said Don't Know.



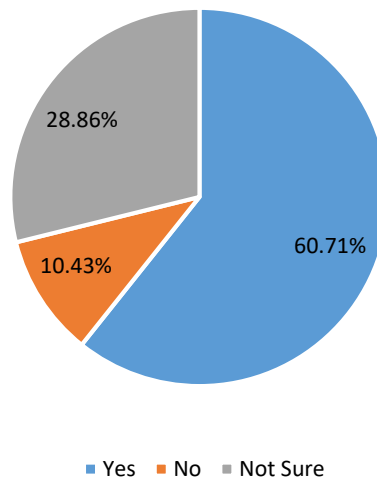
Question 23 was a similar question to Q.22 in that it asked if respondents would like to see more use of wood for energy production and fuel security given the move away from the use of fossil fuels to generate energy and heating.

Again 537 survey participants responded to this question. 72% or 388 responded said Yes, they would like to see more wood used for energy production with 18% saying No and 10% saying Don't Know.

Q24. Do you know where wood for these sectors is sourced?

Respondents were then asked if they were aware of where the wood that currently supplies these sectors is sourced. This was a closed question with respondents given the option to answer Yes/No or Don't know with those who answered Yes give the opportunity to expand on their answer.

Q24. Do you know where wood to supply these sectors is sourced?

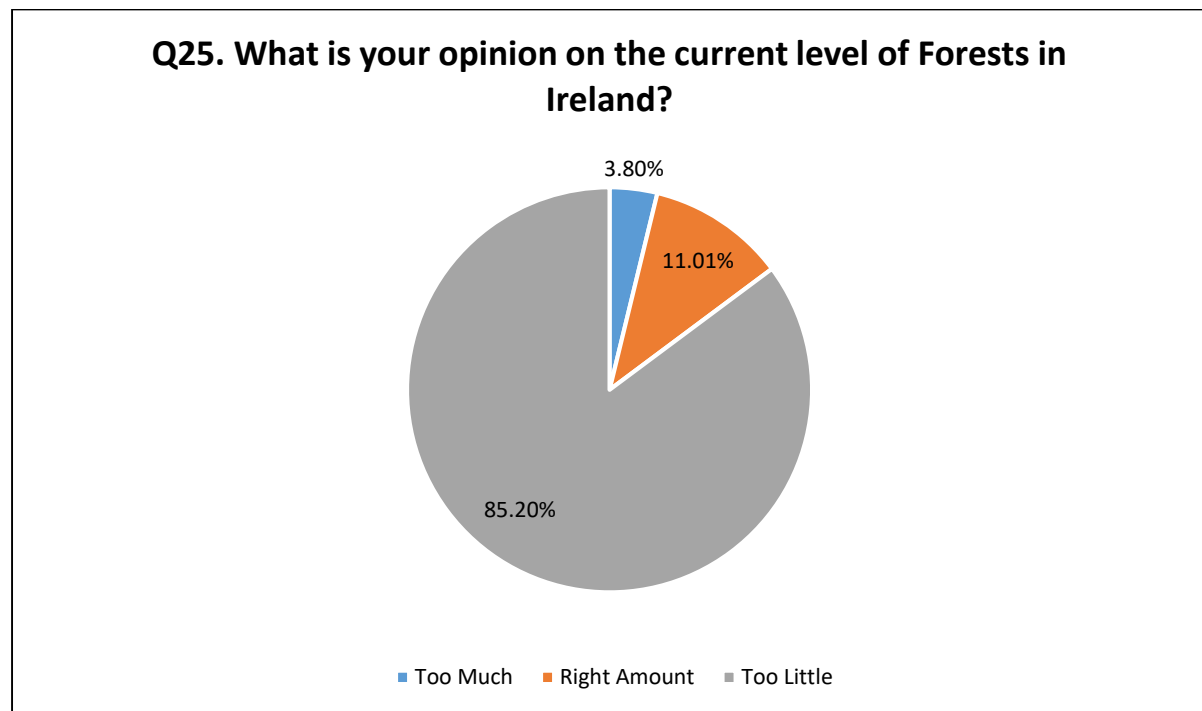


537 participants responded to this question, with 61% or 326 respondents saying they knew where wood was sourced. 10% answered No with 29% Not Sure where wood is sourced from.

Those who answered Yes and expanded on their answer, identified wood being sourced from Ireland but majority stating that it was imported from Scotland, Eastern Europe, Russia and Canada. It was felt for many that most of the wood imported could be grown and supplied here in Ireland. One respondent made the point about Power Stations using imported wood with more emissions generated as a result of importation.

Section 5: Views on Current Forestry Practices

This section of the survey looks at people's attitudes and views to current forestry practices in Ireland.

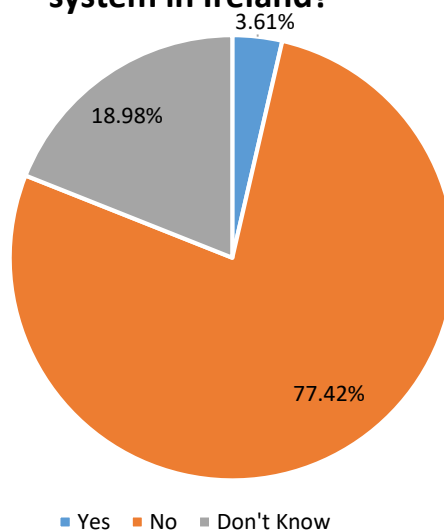


The first question in this section (Q.25 of the survey) asked the opinion of respondents on the current level of Forests in Ireland. In this question, participants were given three options – Too Much, Right Amount or Too Little.

527 respondents answered this question. 85% or 449 respondents felt that there was too little Forestry happening in Ireland with just 4% saying there was too much and 11% saying just the right amount.

It is important to note that as some community groups who are impacted by forestry had not responded to the survey so this may be a reflection of the involvement of those in the sector who did respond to the survey.

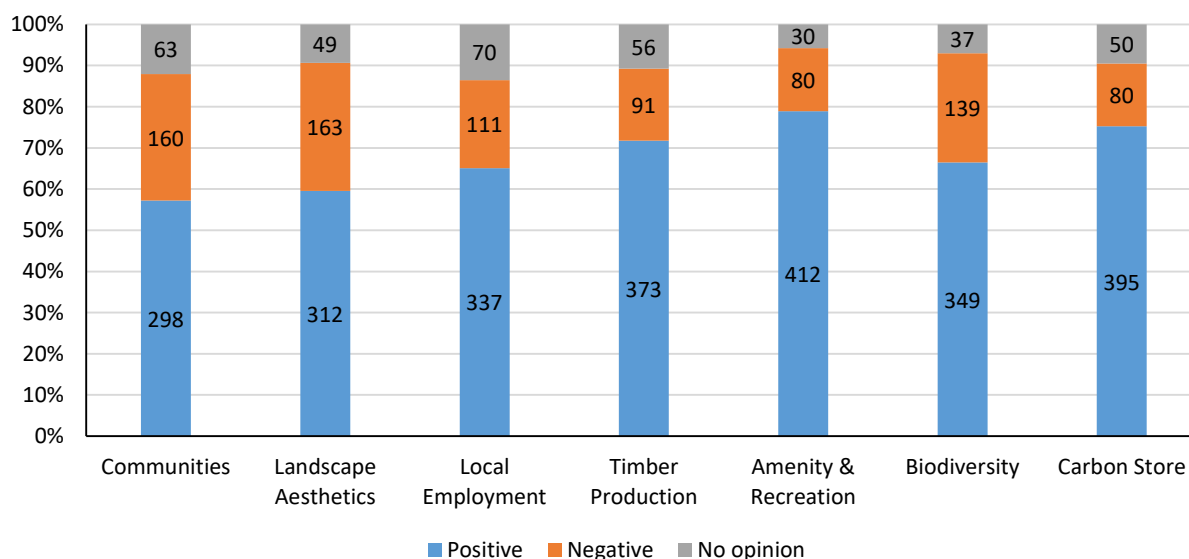
Q26. Are you satisfied with the current forestry licencing system in Ireland?



527 respondents also answered this question. It was a closed question with respondents given the option to answer Yes/No/Don't Know.

77% or 408 respondents said that they were not satisfied with the current forestry licencing system in Ireland, with 19% selecting Don't Know. Just 4% answered Yes – they were satisfied with the current system.

Q27. What is your feeling on forestry in Ireland with regard to



In Q.27 respondents were asked if they felt forestry had a positive or negative impact on a list of areas – Communities, Landscape/Aesthetics, Local Employment, Timber Production, Biodiversity and Carbon Storage. Respondents could select for each one and an option of selecting no opinion for each was also included.

526 participants answered this question and overall the majority felt forestry had a positive impact on the different areas.

In terms of the impact on Communities, 57% said forestry had a positive impact on them, with 31% saying they had a negative impact and 12% having no opinion.

60% of respondents felt forestry had a positive effect on the Landscape/Aesthetics, with 31% saying it had a negative impact. 9% of respondents had no opinion on this.

65% of respondents felt forestry had a positive impact on Local Employment. 21% felt it had a negative effect and 14% had no opinion.

In terms of timber production 72% of respondents felt that Forestry was positive for this with 17% saying it was negative. 11% had no opinion.

Amenity and Recreation was seen as the highest area in which Forestry had a positive impact at 79%. 15% felt forestry had a negative impact on this and 6% had no opinion.

67% of respondents felt Forestry had a positive impact on Biodiversity with 27% felt it had a negative impact. 7% of respondents had no opinion.

76% of respondents felt the use of Forestry as a Carbon Store was positive with 15% feeling it had a negative impact. 9% had no opinion.

Q.28 is an open-ended question where respondents were asked what types of trees were planted in their area.

499 survey participants responded to this question. The main types of trees respondents named a mix of hard and soft woods and broadleaves including; non-native Sitka Spruce, Lodge-pole Pine, Scots Pine, Ash, Sycamore, Oak, Alder, Birch, Douglas Fir, Norway Spruce, Silver Fir, Willow.

The percentage of Conifer to Broadleaf that is planted by both State compared to the private sector was highlighted in the comments – (State 80% Conifer and 20% Broadleaf compared to 70% Conifer and 30% Broadleaf in the private sector).

Some respondents also commented on the types of trees that were planted in their area, with some conflicting views, that are worth highlighting.

“Broadleaves for biodiversity, conifer for production. Too much emphasis on broadleaves which do not return a viable income. There are currently more than enough broadleaves for biodiversity”.

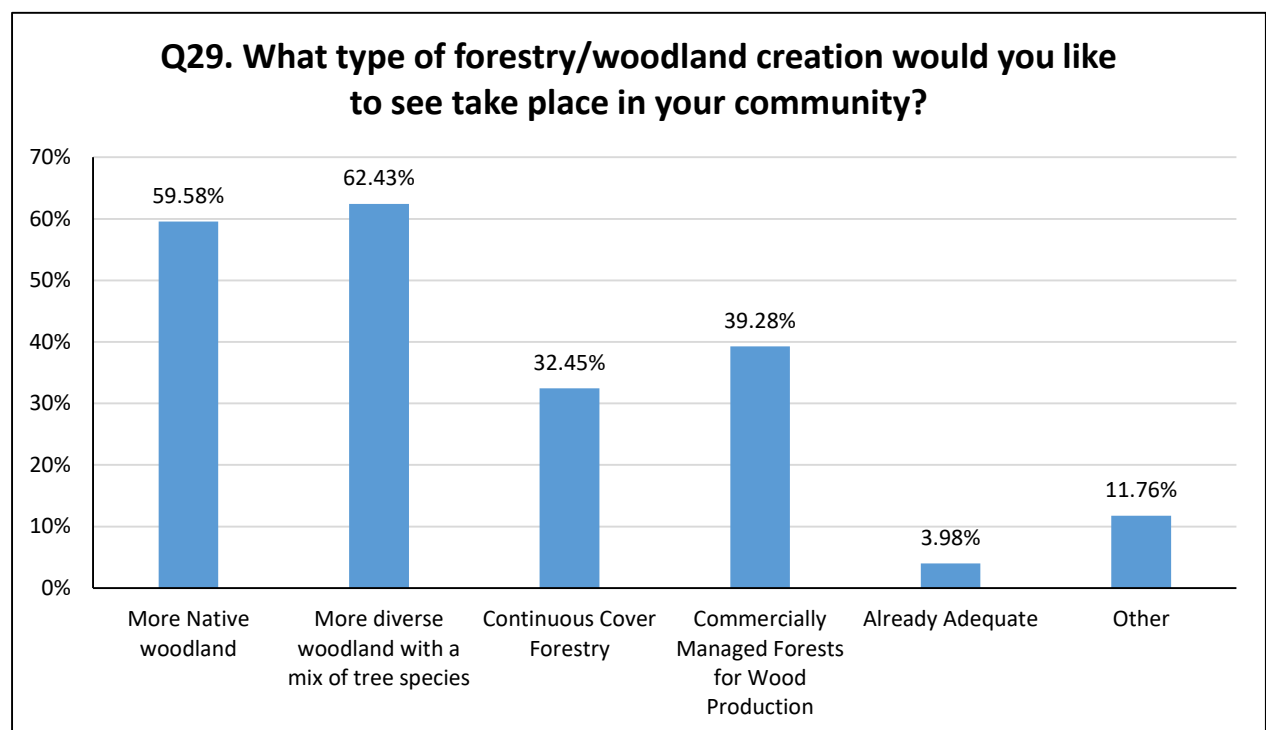
(Forestry Contractor and Timber Business Owner)

“Sitka Spruce and a very small amount of native trees which seems to be usually alder. Understand need trees for construction industry and firewood however, spruce not good enough quality for either sector. Also need trees to create woodlands not for profit but biodiversity. Area is running out of green areas for the protected birds and animals to exist”.

(Farmer not involved in Forestry, Co. Leitrim)

“Too much Sitka Spruce – total monoculture and virtually zero species mix in most Coillte woods – some exceptions with small eucalyptus plantation in Coolmeelagh along with some oak but generally not enough native broadleaf”.

(Farmer with non-commercial woodland)



Question 29 was interested in finding out the type of forestry/woodland creation respondents would like to see in their communities. They were asked to choose from; more of one type of tree; more native woodland, more diverse woodland with a mix of tree species, continuous cover forestry, commercially managed forests for wood production, already adequate level of forest planted and other.

527 respondents answered this question. 59% or 314 respondents would like to see more native woodland created while 62% or 329 would like to see more diverse woodland with a mix of tree species. 32% of respondents would like to see continuous Cover Forestry while 39% would like to see Commercially managed forestry for wood production created. Just 4%

of respondents felt that there was an already adequate level of forestry and woodland, while 11% selected other.

In the comment section, some respondents expanded on their answers and the types and percentage of coverage. Again, there were a lot of different views here depending on the respondents' involvement or interest in forestry. Most comments included a mix of trees was needed that is well managed for a diversity of purposes and suggesting a 70% conifers and 30% broadleaf coverage provided that farmers are compensated for growing long rotation broadleaves. Development of community woodlands that could focus on carbon storage and mental health. Some specific suggestions include;

"Community native woodlands managed by trained local people using the co-operative model and also use of fencing to allow natural regeneration where there are adequate seed sources and expansion of ancient and semi-natural woodlands adjacent to natural regeneration which is the only way to ensure the right tree is in the right place"

(Individual working or involved with an NGO in the area of conservation/environmental protection)

"Better opportunities for farmers to plant commercial forestry. Role for native woodland planting, also tree line, hedges, etc. under new CAP. Greater appreciation of trees and forestry among rural communities. Need to get away from harmful, negative and often uninformed narrative on commercial forestry".

(Farmer who owns forestry, Roscommon)

"Balance is the operative word. We need more commercial woodland for housing, employment and climate management but need a balanced biodiversity management to this too. Diversity in tree species need management too but only within the reality of balanced needs. Our coniferous forests absorb Co2 faster. Climate is an emergency and need the most of what is the fastest".

(Individual)

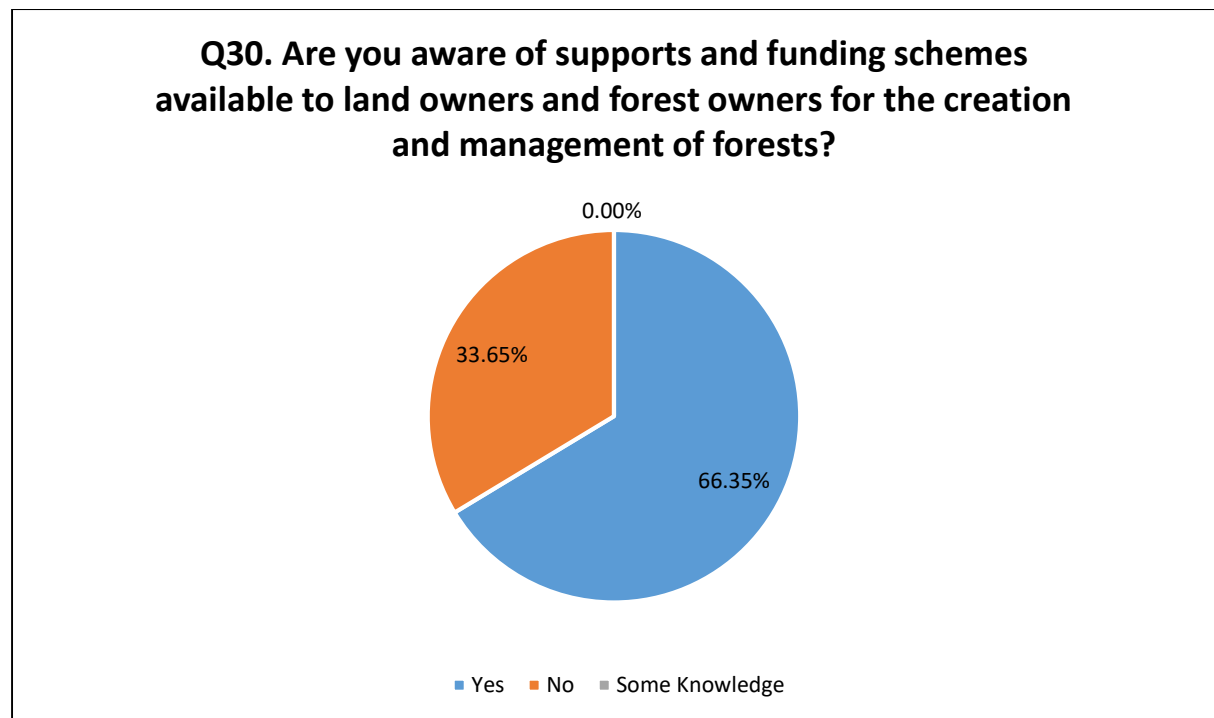
"All types but trees need to be suitable for the land and diverse woodlands are great but not all trees are compatible. Also no point looking for native woodlands if the owners aren't paid yearly like the agricultural payments as why else would they plant it".

(Forester, Co. Leitrim)

"Once conifer plantations on peatlands have matured and been felled the peatlands should be given back to the communities for restoration projects".

Section 6 – Government Supports and Schemes for Forestry.

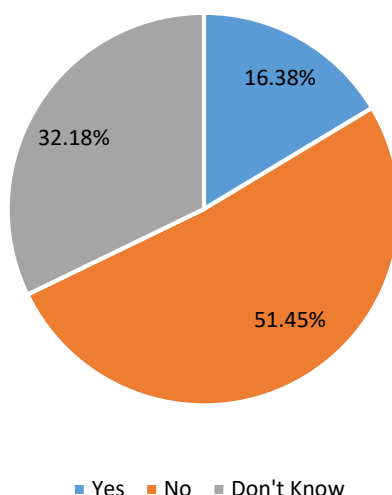
This section looks at people's knowledge and attitudes to what Government Supports and schemes for Forestry are available.



Q.30 was a closed question. Respondents were asked to select Yes, No or Some Knowledge.

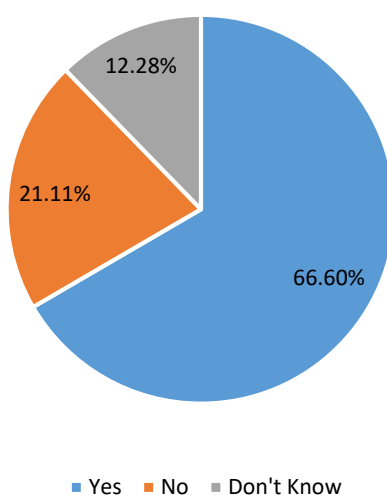
523 respondents answered this question with 66% of respondents saying that they were aware of the supports and schemes available while 34% had no knowledge.

Q31. Do you think the supports and funding for these schemes are adequate?



Question 31 was a closed question where respondents were asked if they thought the current supports and funding available for these schemes are adequate. 519 respondents answered this question, with over half (51%) saying that the funding and supports for the schemes were not adequate and a further 32% saying that they did not know. 16% thought the funding and support for current schemes were adequate.

Q32. Do you think current Government supports/schemes should better encourage a wider mix of tree species?



Question 32 was also a closed question to find out if people thought current Government supports and schemes should encourage a wider mix of tree species. 521 respondents answered this question with approx. two-thirds (66%) saying Yes that schemes should encourage a wider mix of tree species. 21% said No and 12% Don't Know.

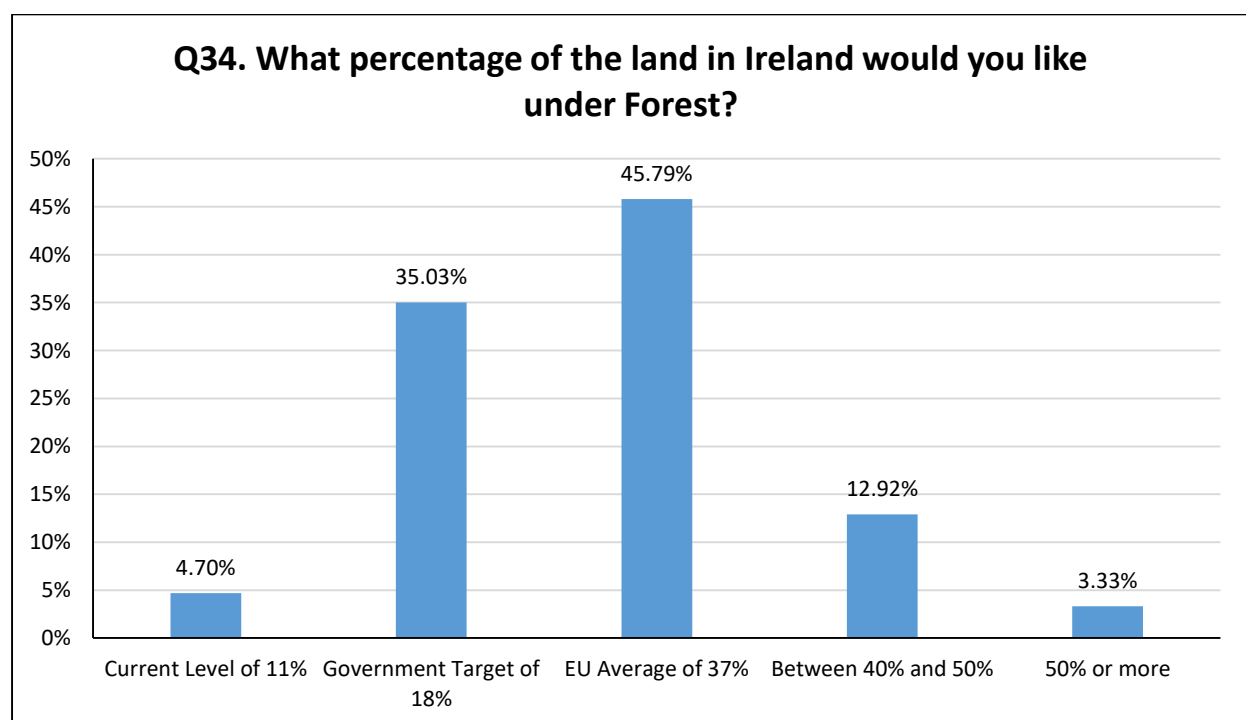
If respondents answered Yes to Q32, they were asked in Q33, **what type of tree species would they like to see planted.**

359 responded answered this question, with many including species that were included in question 28.

Some still see the need for commercial species as the 'bread and butter' for viable forestry but a mix of broadleaves be planted on the edge of these forests or extending the size of the forest. Many respondents emphasised the importance of getting the correct mix of species to suit the site and that planting should be based on the suitability of the soil, landscape and owner objectives.

One suggestion was that schemes should be locally specific such as agri schemes like the Bride or Burren projects while another suggestion was the need for more funding over the length of the rotation as most broadleaf plantation will not be financially sustainable.

One responded felt there was an education piece required on the management of mix and also provenances within species.



Question 34 aimed to find out what percentage of land survey participants would like to see Planted as Forest. Respondents were asked to select from 5 options from current level of 11%, to the Government target of 18%, EU average of 37%, Between 40% and 50% or 50% or more.

511 respondents answered this question, where 46% or 234 respondents said they would like to see the EU Average of 37% of land under Forest. 35% said they would like the Government target of 18% planted with just 5% wanting the current level being maintained. 13% would like to see between 40% and 50% of land planted with 3% wanting 50% or more.

Chapter 6: Analysis of Focus Groups

As part of the survey, a question was included at the end asking if respondents would be interested in taking part in a Focus Group to further explore people and communities' attitudes to Forestry and Woodlands. 208 respondents to the survey said they were interested in participating in such an exercise.

It was decided there would be seven Focus Groups in total to include one specifically for representatives from the Save Advocacy Groups, i.e. Save Leitrim, Save Cavan, Save Kerry, Save Wicklow, etc. with no more than 12 in each Focus Group. Due to the large number of people expressing an interest in taking part in a Focus Group, it was decided to randomly select participants to be invited to register to take part.

Due to continued Covid-19 restrictions, the Focus Groups took place online, via Zoom over 2 weeks in November. There was a mix of daytime and evening Focus Groups to suit as many invitees as possible, each given 1.5 hours for discussion.

An overview including the aims of the study were presented at the beginning of each Focus Group as well as a short round of introductions and what people's involvement or interest in Forestry and Woodlands was. While each Focus Group was a space for open discussion and for all voices and opinions to be heard, four questions were provided to start the conversation.

What are the challenges and opportunities *you* see in Irish Forestry and Woodland Management at present?

How do you think these challenges and opportunities can be addressed?

How can forests and woodlands be better developed to serve local communities?

Any further comments or suggestions.

All Focus Groups were recorded on the Zoom platform with agreement from all participants and transcribed by an external transcriber.

Summary of Main Outcomes from Forestry Focus Groups

The Focus Groups provided a space for a deeper discussion on Forestry practices in Ireland and how they impact communities and those directly involved in the sector. While there were differing views on forestry many of the same challenges and opportunities were raised in each of the Focus Groups.

The following are the main outcomes from the Focus Groups.

- **Community Engagement**

This consultation was welcome by most participants of the focus groups and seen as a way to get the conversation started but it emphasised that this shouldn't be the end of the conversation. It needs to be the beginning of a wider discussion or forum on Forestry with all stakeholders so solutions can be sought together.

It was felt by some of the participants that no community engagement takes place and that it would be beneficial to communities if it did. Many community groups felt that it was difficult to get their voices and concerns heard at local and national level.

Some acknowledged the divide in people's vision of forestry in Ireland at the moment and how it would be beneficial to see industry people coming together with communities and others interested in the sector sit down and talk respectfully with each other.

"It would be nice to see that divide getting a little bit closer, that everyone is working along to the same goal".

- **Planning**

The issue of planning came up in many of the Focus groups and especially that there seems to be different rules for small farmers and landowners wishing to plant forestry on their own land compared to rules for Coillte or large private investors. Some participants were of the view that smaller forest owners needed to plant 30% broadleaf versus 20% for Coillte. They were also of the view that Ireland was seen as 'one site' by Coillte and large private investors, meaning they can plant conifers and spruce in one county and make up the broadleaf and native woodland percentage in another part of the country.

The cost of an environmental assessment when there is no guarantee of getting planning permission to plant was also raised in some of the Focus Groups and was identified as a strong deterrent. Also, the fact that the cost is the same no matter how many hectares you want to plant was off-putting for smaller farmers, young farmers and small landowners considering forestry. While a proposal by Working Group 4 of Project Woodland has gone to the project board on the environmental assessment for consideration, the outcomes of this is still ongoing.

It was felt that Local Authorities should be more involved in the planning around forestry and indeed clear-felling. It was seen that by not having forestry part of the local planning system, the social and environmental impacts are not accounted for. Local Authorities development plans should include forestry. Local Authorities Development Plan sets out objectives and measures to improve services, create employment opportunities, attract people to remain or return to rural areas, address climate change, protect environment and biodiversity to a county or local authority area. It was felt that by not including existing forestry and forestry management into these plans and the development of new forestry programmes, the full

implementation of these Plans was compromised, especially in those areas where excessive and dense plantations of Sitka Spruce have occurred, making it more difficult for people to return or driving people out of the county, impacting on local schools, businesses and public services.

“There does need to be more powers given, there needs to be a much greater balance of power. It’s unfair that a forestry inspector with a civic cultural background can have the power to make the decisions that they do. And to be fair it’s unfair on the forestry inspectors themselves to put that responsibility on them”.

There were different views on the cost of the fees for objecting to forestry planning. For some, especially those who regularly submit objections, it was felt that the true purpose of the increase to €200 was to deter them from objecting. On the other hand, those directly involved in the forestry sector or working with foresters saw it as a positive change, that appeals are a lot more constructive and that people have informed themselves a lot better than in the past.

- **Clear Felling**

Delays in getting licences was raised in all of the Focus Groups and the associated problems with this. Also, the aesthetics of Clear felling on local landscape was raised as a strong concern and similar to one comment in the survey, made the site unsightly and resembling a ‘war zone’.

There was the opinion from some of the participants that the damage caused by clear-felling to the landscape, environment, biodiversity, water quality was also raised and it was clearly expressed that often more damage can be done to the land and local biodiversity and water quality as a result of clear-felling. Incidents of mud slides and other soil disruption were highlighted in some of the Focus Groups.

- **Education and Awareness Raising**

Many participants of the focus groups felt that there is a need for education on forestry and woodlands at all levels – targeted at the very young through the primary school curriculum age to adults through lifelong learning activity. Educating and raising awareness about Forests and woodlands, what are the uses, the different types of species, the environmental, social and economic and wellbeing benefits and how can communities get more involved are clearly called for.

The current Agricultural Science curriculum for the Leaving Cert, gives very little attention to forestry and its role in the wider agricultural sector. Apart from some Level 5 and Level 6 certificate courses in Agriculture and in forestry as well as a Forestry Machine Operators

degree courses, there are limited degree courses in third-level institutions dedicated to Forestry.

Education can help change the narrative and the negative perception of forestry that has prevailed for a number of years in some parts of the country and also among the farming community. It was raised in some of the Focus Groups that there is often the perception that forestry is a way out of traditional farming, that farming is a dying profession as a result and those who do move to forestry are not seen as proper farmers.

Promoting how farming and forestry can be better combined and better schemes for longer rotation tree species could help challenge these perceptions.

Highlighting best practice examples of where foresters are working with their local community and protecting the environment is needed. This would allow for others to learn and adapt practices to their forest or their local community.

"I think it would be a clever way to produce that in a forestry concert where people can't ignore it. It's like, you know, this has been done, it's been successful, and we can do it with forestry. And I'm sure, like, the powers that be, they couldn't not listen to that."

The role of hedgerows came up in some of the focus groups and how they can be better integrated into forestry and plantation development. Again communication and showcasing where this has worked and the steps involved is needed.

- **Better Integration of Forests into Communities**

There was a general consensus among Focus Group participants that there are many opportunities for better use of forests by the local community. There were a lot of similar suggestions discussed to what was in the survey as well as the challenges to achieving it. It was however emphasised that it needs to work both ways, forests must be respected by the local community and not used for dumping.

The opportunity to use forests as an education resource, recreation, mental health and wellbeing services, carbon store, protection of local biodiversity were all mentioned as potential uses that could better integrate forests into the local community. However, not all participants agreed with these views and the type of forests planted in some local area do not allow for such activity to take place where much of the local biodiversity and nature has been lost as a result of excessive and dense plantations of Sitka Spruce.

"Trees can enhance the spirit; they can depress the spirit as well.....I am at my happiest when I'm in a good and proper woodland. They are good for the soul, and I think we need to try and get as many people out into them as we can".

Issues of access to forests were also raised especially among small private forest owners and farmers involved in forests about opening up their forests for local people to use. The main concern was the problem of public liability and insurance costs to open forestry up to the public. Again if there was payment made to support farmers to open up their forests for locals to enjoy this would be made much more feasible.

The attitude of 'planting and leaving it' needs to change as this has caused a lot of the grievances about forestry in areas. When land is sold in an area, young and local farmers are often outbid by big corporations and end up with absentee landlords.

Understanding the perspective of the farmer or landowner who is planting the forest and the types of trees they are planting is needed. For the most part, many farmers or small holdings plant trees and forests as an extra source of income. While it may be ideal to have more native trees and broadleaf, it is not always commercially viable for the small farmer or forester.

"If you think of the forestry industry as a whole it's very easy to forget about the small farmer with six hectares and very little money coming into the house".

The point was also raised that when a farmer wants to change its land use from for example, dairy farming to tillage farming or vice versa, it doesn't seem to be anyone else's concern, but when they want to plant forestry, it becomes a laborious task and everyone's concern.

- **Type of Trees planted**

There was a general consensus among participants across all focus groups that a mix of tree species should be planted. However, it was acknowledged that this was not always possible or financially viable for small foresters to do this.

The opinion that Ireland was unfairly seen as 'one site' by the public and large investor corporations, in that they can plant their percentage of broadleaf and native trees in one part of the country while in other areas large monoculture plantations, mainly Sitka Spruce was also raised again by some participants in the Focus Groups.

For the smaller farmer and/or forester and for those working with them however, the right tree for them as an individual and for the soil are the most important factors.

"However, for individual's needs would come first and foremost but also what suits the ground and the particular area. So there's many different factors that go into it, you know. And like, if someone is saying they want to plant Sitka spruce and the ground is good for Sitka spruce, of course foresters can give them the conversation surrounding broadleaves, but ultimately it's the owner of the land that will direct the conversation to where he wants it to go. Once the tree is suitable for the site".

Looking at how the payment schemes can better support smaller farmers and foresters to plant a better mix of trees that would have environmental and social benefits arose in many of the focus groups.

“We need to look at tweaking economic systems so that we make it easier for landowners to make decisions that are beneficial for the environment and beneficial socially, as well as just purely on the basis of business as usual forestry which it’s anticipated will give a yield in 30 years’ time”.

The role of Sitka Spruce for timber production, increasing the use of timber as a source of energy and in the construction sector was also discussed in some of the Focus Groups. While there were arguments put forward that Sitka Spruce plantations and in turn the clear-felling of these, act as a carbon emitter, they were viewed by others as needed and if they had to be imported, this would lead to larger carbon emissions.

“I think it’s probably a balancing act between trying to meet our national demand but also not growing too much of the one type”.

Chapter 7: Analysis of Save Advocacy Groups Focus Group outcomes

While there are many issues and concerns in the areas where Save Groups operate; namely – Leitrim, West Cavan, Kerry, parts of Wicklow, North Roscommon, East Galway and other parts of the west of the country, the groups also saw many opportunities.

It was noted during the Focus Group that

“everyone attending believe in the power of trees and the power of forestry and can see the good of trees and forestry. And in fact some of their members have planted forestry themselves to grow trees. But they see the absolute destruction that rampant plantation by investors is doing to our communities”.

The main issues and concerns that these groups have on the plantation of forestry include:

Engagement

There has never been any meaningful or significant engagement with communities impacted by excessive and dense plantations of Sitka Spruce over the years in affected counties. There is a feeling among the groups of an unwillingness at national level to deal with the issues at all or even listen to the issues in any reasonable manner. It's very hard for people in these counties to have any say on forestry policy. They are blocked at every turn; nobody wants to meet them. There is a feeling that the policy is to remove people from the west of Ireland and to replace them with trees.

“Nobody is listening; nobody will give us a voice”.

The members of the Save Leitrim group felt that the Terms of Reference of the UCD Study were very narrow and that it didn't provide a social impact analysis of forestry to any significant level. The same point was made regarding environmental assessment.

Participants in the Focus Group raised the point that even after all the objections that these groups have submitted over the years; the protests that have taken place, that no one has

“bothered to actually look into it and see if there are actual problems”.

The members of these groups thought this engagement on 'Project Woodland' are diverse but commonly find the process inadequate due to the complex issues these communities have experienced with Forestry and fear that results of this report will be ignored also. They fear that this will prove a tick box exercise in developing a forestry policy. They had believed that those communities significantly impacted from plantation of forestry in particular would be represented directly on 'Project Woodland' and are very disappointed that this didn't happen.

Planning and Decision Making

These community groups have been dealing with the same problems for over 30 years and these problems are only getting more complex. There was a feeling that the planning system is lost, that foresters are making decisions about forestry and those decisions should be made as part of the wider planning decisions which consider wider objectives, like the objectives of county development plans - climate mitigation, biodiversity and water quality as well as the objectives on location, landscape character, the situation in the local school, the social impacts. All of these things are not being considered in forestry decision making but continue to be negatively impacted by the current forestry model in place. There is a need to change the decision-making process to include local impact. If local decision makers were involved in forestry much better decisions could be made, instead of decisions being made where geography can't be considered and where the need to meet targets is the overriding purpose.

Farmers have to be involved in the living landscape and they can be involved in a very positive way that benefits the local communities and acknowledges that they provide so much in the way of eco system services.

It was felt that if a factory or anything else was being established in these areas, there would be a proper planning process put in place and people would make proper observations. While the objector may not always win it would mean proper interaction with the community and with people who have a genuine reason for making an objection had taken place.

Impact and Challenges of Forestry 'Save Groups' see on their Communities

The groups face all the same challenges and impacts of forestry in their communities. It is difficult to sustain these communities where almost 100% of forestry planted is conifer trees. It is challenging to keep schools, churches and shops open in these communities as people have left and farmers are feeling isolated. These small villages will disappear if the communities and farmland are not there to sustain them. Speaking about West Cavan;

"There have been very few opportunities from forestry in the area and all the promises made years ago that there would be jobs for local people such as management of forests and milling etc. never materialised".

One participant involved in agriculture can see the effect of forestry on community in Leitrim and it's forcing farmers off the land.

"It's not so much that the bailiffs are coming, but basically the darkening effect of conifers, the acidification at the adjacency to the forests and so on, the damage to roads and to infrastructure locally and all that, it's just having such a negative effect that they just give up and decide to move on".

Who is involved in the planting of forests in these counties is one of the major concerns and issues for these community groups. The groups see large private investors, all of them absent landlords, coming in and buying up the land. They have no connection to the local area and make no effort to have any connection or involvement in the local community. Smaller farmers that planted in the 70s, 80s and 90s are now selling up because investor funds are putting together large tracks of land. Young farmers in the area who were renting the land and tried to purchase the land are outbid by larger forestry companies. There is no comeback or knowledge of ownership detail.

“A lot of what’s going on has been bad for the industry and bad for Leitrim and bad for the other counties as well”.

Impact of the types of trees planted and Clear felling on communities and environment

The type of trees that are planted is also a major issue of contention. As mentioned almost all of the trees planted in these areas are conifers. The Groups feel this isolates people and compromises natural light. It also threatens the biodiversity, water quality, soil quality etc. in the area. It was felt that while farmers are under real pressure on climate issues, the same pressure is not on the forestry sector. They feel the forestry sector seems to believe that it shouldn’t have to change how it does clear fell. They highlighted the concern they have on damage done to the land where tram lines are placed often on side of hills causing mudslides etc. and feel that this is being ignored.

Where clear felling has taken place, these communities don’t want to see land replanted with Sitka spruce or even some of the land replanted at all. Instead the ground should go back into some other use and not necessarily woodland, maybe back into what they were originally such as, peatland or grazing land.

“We would hope and expect that woodlands and forests can be developed to serve local communities in much different way than that. Rather than having a reaction like that when we raise concerns we want to see some positive interaction with the policy makers, with the industry that is destroying our communities”.

Opportunities for Forestry

The ‘Save’ Groups see little opportunity for Forestry in their communities in its current state but if there was higher value placed on the land and local farmers were compensated for this there is more scope to develop more sustainable forestry and woodlands that work better for local communities. There are some positive things happening and positive things that can happen that can help achieve this.

A case in point, in one area in Leitrim, the local community have worked with a local farmer and a Coillte forester to develop walks in the area. It is a good project and the trail is very

well used by the local community. While this is positive there is simply not enough of this happening and can be difficult with the amount of conifer trees planted.

Groups are also involved in looking at a farm biodiversity initiative that farmers can get paid for the land that is High Nature Value (HNV) land. The land can often be seen as not of good use by dairy farmers in other parts of the country and should be used for forestry only but there is now an environmental piece and climate justice piece of how land is used to ensure it protects the soil, biodiversity and reduce carbon as well as sustaining local communities.

As mentioned previously, members of these groups see the benefits of trees but want to see mixed and diverse forests. They are very clear that they do not want to see any more replanting on the bogs and other wetland that were damaged by the planting in the 1970's. Some of these forests are now coming into second and even third rotations and they are being 100% replanted with Sitka Spruce in the majority of cases. The wetlands in these areas can do much more for the community in terms of biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

Having a model of forestry that enhances the landscape of the areas would be a more welcome approach. It would make it a more attractive place to live as well as to visit. In Leitrim for example, they are developing eco-tourism in small villages and on farms also. However, planting of Sitka spruce over vast areas does nothing for these areas, people do not want to visit and there is no amenity value to these forests in their current form. The model envisaged would include the involvement of farmers and local people planting the land and making better use of the forestry such as; a farming practice, recreation, tourism purposes, for fuel and for local activities. Participants of the Focus Group believe that if more trust was placed in the farmers in these areas they would deliver high quality forestry, mixed forestry with good management and that over time their skills and interest in trees will evolve back to where it was before Ireland was deforested. The support given to large investors by the state to plant forestry in these areas would be better used to support the local farmers and communities to plant more mixed forests.

They also see an opportunity for these positive activities being included into the new CAP and that it needs to be flexible enough to incorporate these activities onto farms. From this, many other opportunities could develop such as educational programmes about forestry and native woodland and outreach to schools and local communities.

Coillte Nature was discussed and the work that has been done in providing forest amenities. However, much of this work is done in Dublin and the Dublin mountains but when it comes to the North West and West of the country, the same type of forestry amenity development is not happening. There is no amenity value for all of the trees that have been planted by Coillte in these counties. For example, a community group in Leitrim wanted to create an outdoor recreation cycling mountain bike trail and spoke to Coillte about this. While Coillte had strategic objectives to do something on these lines it was only going to be in two places in the country and Leitrim wasn't going to be selected.

The Save Groups would like to see something put in place, such as an assessment to ensure the sustainability of communities. Indicators should be in place such as; if population drops below a certain percentage; loss of services, teacher in schools, GP's etc. or threats to infrastructure, quality of roads etc. that no more trees be planted in that area as it is driving people out of these communities.

Conclusion

Ireland's forest cover remains well below the EU average. This study set out to examine the attitudes of communities towards forests and woodlands as well as current forestry practices in Ireland to help inform the development of the wider 'Shared National Vision' for forests, woodland and trees to develop a new Forest Strategy for Ireland. Building on previous work undertaken by Dr. Áine Ní Dhubháin and University College Dublin on the socio-economic impact of forestry in Co. Leitrim in 2019 it aimed to gather the views of diverse range of stakeholders involved directly in forestry and woodlands or have an interest in trees, including communities who have opposing views to current forestry practice.

Irish Rural Link's diverse membership allowed access to individuals and communities who have different opinions on current forestry practices and what their vision for future forestry and woodlands is. One clear point from this study was that no person or community group was against trees and understand the benefits that some tree species bring to the environment and community. The results of both the survey and some of the Focus Groups highlighted the need to increase Ireland's forestry and woodland coverage. The need to move away from fossil fuel to renewable heat sources as well as meeting housing targets will require an increase in timber and other wood products. It also highlighted the many benefits forestry, woodlands and trees can provide for biodiversity, as an education resource and mental and physical health. However, the impact certain monoculture and excessive and dense plantations of Sitka Spruce has had on some communities, mainly rural communities have formed a negative attitude towards forestry over the years.

Another strong view that came from the Focus Groups is that this should not be the end of the conversation. If the new Forestry Strategy for Ireland is to be successful and implemented fully, continued engagement with all stakeholders must continue for the lifetime of the strategy.

Ireland needs to increase its forest coverage from its current rate of 11%. It also needs to reduce carbon emissions; moving away from fossil fuels for energy and increasing the use of timber in the construction sector. However, achieving these targets must not be done in a silo and people must be brought along to ensure that the best approach for everyone is taken.

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Appendix 1: Survey Questions

Engagement with Communities and Interested Parties on Forestry October 2021

Introduction

Irish Rural Link are undertaking an independent study on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) on the role of forests in communities. The purpose of this engagement process is to gather views to inform the development of the wider 'Shared National Vision' for forests, woodland and trees to develop a new Forest Strategy for Ireland. Current level of forest cover in Ireland is 11% of the total land area which is relatively low by European standards which stands at approximately 40%. There is scope to expand Ireland's forest area further and the development of the next Irish Strategy will provide opportunities to shape the development of a shared national approach for our existing and future forests.

This study will build on the work done by University College Dublin in 2019 which assessed the social and economic impacts of forestry. In this new study, Irish Rural Link will engage with communities to determine feedback on the important role forests can play, including the beneficial and potential adverse impacts of forests and trees in communities. As part of this study a number of focus groups will be established and Irish Rural Link will make recommendations which will be used to inform the development of the new Irish Forest Strategy.

More details on Project Woodland are available on [Youtube](#) and the [Department Website](#).

Irish Rural Link represents the interests of locally based rural groups in disadvantaged and marginalised rural areas by highlighting problems, advocating appropriate policies, sharing experiences and examples of good practice. It has a membership of nearly 600 rural community groups dedicated to sustainable rural development and represents rural communities at a national and international level.

Irish Rural Link has extensive experience in community engagement on various projects including; the TV Digital Switch Over Programme, The Postal Eircodes, The Peatlands Directive on Turf cutting, SEAI retrofitting Programme, COVID-19 Community Outreach Programme and most recently Eirgrid's Consultation on Shaping our Electricity Future.

The survey should take between 10 and 15 minutes to complete. Thank you for taking the time to participate in our survey. Your feedback is very important.

About You

This section will gather some information on your association with forestry.

1. Please select your age category:

☐ Under 35 years

☐ 35-45 years

☐ 45 - 55 years

☐ 55 - 65 years

☐ 65 years+

2. In which County do you live?

3. Please select which of the following best describes you. You can select as many as is relevant to you.

☐ An Individual

☐ Community Group

☐ NGO

☐ Farmer who owns Forestry

☐ Farmer not involved in Forestry

☐ Non-Farmer who owns Forestry

☐ Private Investor who owns Forestry

☐ Forestry Contractor

Other (please specify)

4. Do you work or are you involved in the agriculture or forestry sector as: (Select as many as is relevant)?

☐ Private Agricultural Advisor

☐ Public/State Agency Agricultural Advisor

☐ Farm Organisation Representative

☐ Forestry Organisation Representative

☐ Individual or group working in a Private organisation in the area of conservation/ environmental protection

☐ Other (please specify)

☐ Individual or group working in a Public/State Agency in the area of conservation/environmental protection

☐ Individual or group working or involved with an NGO in the area of conservation/environmental protection

☐ Timber Business Owner

☐ Timber Business Employee

5. Are you a Land Owner?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ If answer Yes, please complete Q6 - Q10. If answer No, please scroll down to Q11.

6. Do you use your land for: (Please select all that is relevant to you)?

☐ Farming only

☐ Non-Farming Landowner

☐ Forestry only

☐ Non-Forest Landowner

☐ Farming and Forestry

☐ Land left idle

☐ Other (please specify)

7. If you use your land for both Farming and Forestry, what percentage is used for Forestry?

0 50 100

8. Have you established a forest with government funding in the past? if so, how many hectares?

9. Have you received a licence for afforestation in the past but did not go ahead with planting a forest?

☐ Yes

☐ No

10. If answered 'Yes' in Q9. why did you not plant a forest? You can select more than one option.

☐ Premium Payments too short

☐ Premium Payments too low

☐ Did not agree with permanent land use change

☐ Decided to lease the lands instead

☐ Decided to use the land for another purpose

☐ Land changed hands

☐ Believe it is difficult to get a felling licence

☐ Negative public perception of forestry prevented me from planting

☐ Other (please specify)

11. Are you interested in or considering Forestry in the future?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not Sure

Land Use, Consultation and Future of Forestry

This section focuses on gathering your views on alternative land use, consultation and the future of forestry.

12. Forests contribute to climate change mitigation, flood relief, carbon storage, soil protection and enhances biodiversity. Are there other alternative land uses you would prefer that provide the same benefits? Please explain.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

Please explain your answer

13. Regarding existing and future Forests your local area, how do you see these forests integrating into the local community?

14. Are you aware of the current set back requirements for establishing a Forest as set out in the Forestry Standards? (60m for dwelling, 5m for Hedgerow, 10-20m for Public Road, 5m for Watercourse and 20m for drinking water)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

15. Would you suggest any changes and if so, why?

16. Are you aware of current public consultation practices for forestry?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

17. If answered Yes in Q16, do you think they are adequate and accessible by everyone? Please rank accordingly where 1 not adequate to 5 being adequate.

	Adequate	Somewhat Adequate	Not Adequate
Site Notice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Forest Licence Viewer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Notice in Local Newspaper	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. Are there any other forms of engagement you would see beneficial with regard forest management and forestry practices? Please select the ones you would agree or disagree with.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Community Liaison Officer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community Forum/Information Evening	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information Leaflets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information on Websites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Door-to-Door engagement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

19. Thinking about the future of forestry, who would you like to see involved in the future afforestation programme? Please rank accordingly 1 to 5. (1 being most involved and 5 the least involved)

☐ Farmer

☐ Local Landowners

☐ Investors

☐ State

☐ Communities

Knowledge of Forestry in Ireland

The following set of questions is to gather information on knowledge of current Forestry practices in Ireland.

20. How well informed do you consider yourself on the subject of Forestry in Ireland?
- Very Informed Somewhat Informed Not Informed
21. How much knowledge do you consider to have on forestry management practices used in Ireland?
- A great deal A moderate amount None at all
22. Would you like to see more wood used in building construction sector in Ireland?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know
23. Would you like to see more use of wood for energy production and fuel security?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know
24. Do you know where wood to supply these sectors is sourced?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not Sure
- ☐ If Yes, please elaborate your answer
-

Views on Current Forestry Practices in Ireland

This section will gather your views on current level of forestry and forestry practices in Ireland

25. What is your opinion on the current level of Forests in Ireland?
- ☐ Too Much
- ☐ Right Amount
- ☐ Too Little

26. Are you satisfied with the current forestry licencing system in Ireland?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

27. What is your feeling on forestry in Ireland with regard to

	Positive	Negative	No opinion
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Landscape Aesthetics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local Employment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Timber Production	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Amenity & Recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Biodiversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carbon Store	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

28. What type of trees are planted in your area? List as many as you are aware of.

29. What type of forestry/woodland creation would you like to see take place in your community?

- ☐ More Native woodland
- ☐ More diverse woodland with a mix of tree species
- ☐ Continuous Cover Forestry
- ☐ Commercially Managed Forests for Wood Production
- ☐ Already Adequate
- ☐ Other

Government Supports and Schemes for Forestry

The questions in this section will help us gather information on your knowledge and views of Government Supports and Schemes for Forestry.

30. Are you aware of supports and funding schemes available to land owners and forest owners for the creation and management of forests?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If Yes, what schemes are you aware of?

31. Do you think the supports and funding for these schemes are adequate?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't Know

32. Do you think current Government supports/schemes should better encourage a wider mix of tree species?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't Know

33. If answered Yes in Q32, which mix of tree species would you like to see planted? List as many as you think.

34. What percentage of the land in Ireland would you like under Forest?

Current Level of 11% _____

Between 40% and 50% _____

Government Target of 18% _____

50% or more _____

EU Average of 37% _____

Focus Groups

35. Would you be interested in taking part in a focus group to further inform our study

☐ Yes

☐ No

If interested, please provide the following details and complete survey as soon as possible:

Name:

Email:

Telephone: