

THE IRISH FORESTER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF IRISH FORESTERS

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EU Council Regulation on Rural Development (2007 - 2013) - A Forester's Perspective

The Rural Development Regulation was adopted by the EU Council of Ministers last June. It sets out the general rules governing EU support for rural development and will be financed by the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The Regulation defines the objectives to which rural development will contribute as follows:

- Improving the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry by means of support for restructuring;
- Improving the environment and countryside by means of support for land management;
- Enhancing the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of economic activity.

Critically, and as an important first step, it brings EU Rural Development under a single funding and programming framework. It is this framework which will form the basis for the Irish Rural Development Plan (2007-2013), and replaces the plan currently in position.

The Regulation sets out the basis for the creation of the Irish Rural Development Strategy, accompanying action plans and funding proposals for the period 2007 - 2013. It further envisages stakeholder consultation in the design, implementation and evaluation of the National Strategy proposals, the integration of the LEADER 'bottom-up' approach and exchange of best practice and networking, all of which will help to ensure the necessary dialogue underlying good governance.

Clearly the challenge for the forest owners, the forest industry, Department of Agriculture and Food and the Forest Service, is **how best to position forestry within the context of the Regulation and to ensure that the Irish National Forest Strategy is securely embedded in the Irish Rural Development Strategy and Programmes (2007 - 2013)**. There is no doubt that forestry has a major role to play in rural development and can make a serious contribution to the rural economy. Over the period, agricultural returns are likely to remain static or indeed decline, and forestry offers an opportunity to increase income in rural areas.

The outlook for grant aid and support is positive and the afforestation scheme operates in a definite land use change scenario consequent to ongoing CAP Reform and the Single Farm Payment Scheme. However, it is fair comment that the Irish Forest Industry is a small player in a highly competitive business, focused on the production and trading of wood fibre. Unfortunately, the industry is a price-taker and has little



Members taking part in the joint SIF / ITGA Field Day at Lough Key Forest Park.

influence on the price of internationally traded wood and wood products, and this scene is unlikely to change in the medium to long term. The target for future afforestation is the farmer landowner. A 20,000 ha annual afforestation programme will enhance and underpin timber supply, investment, employment, land restructuring and rural stability and make a positive contribution to climate change management.

The National Development Plan also needs to address the ongoing development of an infrastructure to support and underpin the viability of the forest industry. Two (2) major issues arise:

- How to bring the small roundwood volumes from the private forests to the market?
- What markets should this additional volume of timber support?

Existing markets will absorb much of the increased volume, but the industry will also need to grow the market in new areas such as engineered wood products and wood energy. Wood energy in particular has a major role to play in the National Strategy on Climate Change and Renewables. In the short to medium term, forest strategy should favour the development of energy wood markets, as these are likely to be more suited to initial scale and geographic distribution of thinning volumes in the private sector.

In summary, an enlightened and imaginative forest policy and strategy within the National Development Plan will help the Forest Sector to achieve its potential to grow and develop into a world class and competitive industry, based on a sustainable supply of quality timber, optimising the value of the forest resource, enhancing the environment and contributing to rural development and the economy.

SIF/ITGA Field Day - 17 June 2005 Lough Key Forest Park, Co. Roscommon

On a gloriously sunny day last June, a field trip was held in the woodlands of Lough Key Forest Park in Co. Roscommon, with the aim of exploring some of the principles and practices behind nature conservation aspects of forestry. This was a field event organised on behalf of the Society of Irish Foresters and the Irish Timber Growers' Association. The hosts were: Séamus Duignan (Lough Key Forest Park Manager), Eugene Griffin (District Manager, Sligo District) and Aileen O'Sullivan (Coillte Ecologist) - all from Coillte, with Ian Herbert (Freelance Ecologist) and Orla Fahy (Ecologist, Forest Service).

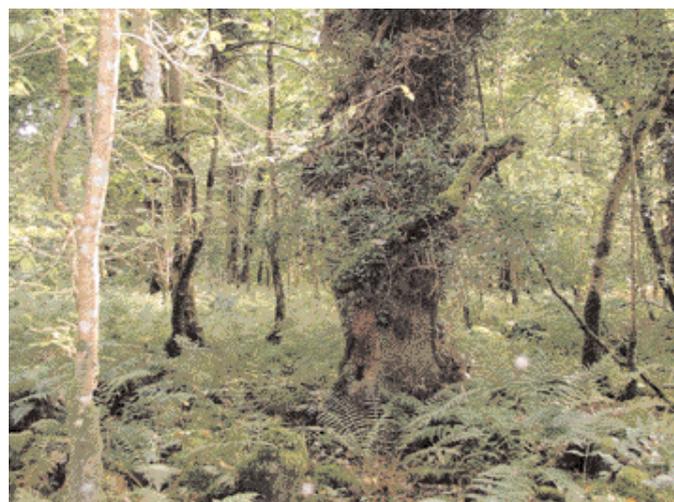
The day got under way with tea/coffee and a welcome from Donal Whelan, President of ITGA. Attendance on the day was good and much use was made of the megaphone brought along by Donal Whelan! Séamus Duignan introduced the field day with a brief synopsis of the history of Lough Key Forest Park, which was formerly part of the Rockingham Estate.

Eugene Griffin introduced the measures being taken by Coillte to address biodiversity issues as part of forest management in the Sligo District. He outlined that in 2004, Ian Herbert was engaged on contract to carry out a survey of biodiversity areas on the Coillte estate in the Boyle Forest Management Unit. Management plans are in preparation by Coillte Districts for biodiversity areas identified in the ecological surveys.

Ian Herbert then outlined how he went about selecting important biodiversity areas on Coillte land. These surveys primarily entail a vegetation-based assessment of habitat quality. His survey found that Lough Key includes areas of woodland habitat that are of very high nature conservation value because they have: a wide range of native tree and shrub species including some scarce species, e.g. alder buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*); a species-rich woodland ground flora; and an abundance of large, old (overmature) trees. Significantly, the woodlands here have a very long history of woodland cover. They are identified as *old woodland sites* on Coillte's Woodland History database, but their woodland history probably extends back in time to before 1830. Sites that have a long history of woodland cover, and where there is still at least some of the native vegetation present, tend to support rare or scarce woodland species. Such sites are rare in this country, so this site is of special value.

Drumman's Island. The first site visit entailed a walk around Drumman's Island, which is a short peninsula jutting out into Lough Key. Much of the "island" consists of mature oak-ash-hazel woodland (classified as WN2 in the Heritage Council's 2000 *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland*) with wet willow-alder-ash woodland (WN6) fringing the lakeshore. The woodlands look as though they have been virtually undisturbed for centuries - a rare and wonderful sight! Stands of sycamore and grand fir were planted into the oak-ash-hazel woodland in the past (estimated planting date 1880), while western red cedar trees were planted alongside the pathway.

There are many situations where non-native species have a role in nature conservation. For example, at Drumman's



High quality oak-ash-hazel (WN2) woodland habitat in Drumman's Island, Lough Key Forest Park.

Photo: Saoirse O'Donoghue

Island, some of the mature stands of sycamore (planted c. 1880) have an excellent lichen flora. Likewise, the western red cedars are to be retained because they are now magnificent old specimen trees. On the other hand, invasive exotic species need to be removed where their spread threatens the semi-natural woodland habitat. For example, cherry laurel is spreading through the woodlands here and control measures have been attempted by Coillte. This species poses a major threat to semi-natural woodland habitats and its control is an important aspect of their conservation. Experience within Coillte shows that the most effective form of control is achieved by cutting growth back hard, with immediate follow-up application of herbicide (glyphosate) to the stumps. Orla Fahy pointed out that financial support is available from the Forest Service for this kind of work under the Native Woodland Scheme, and that this site would be an ideal candidate for that Scheme. Apart from control of exotic species and grazers, this area requires no management input - the best way to treat it is as a "natural reserve", i.e. retain it and let nature take its course.

Protection of Rare Plant Species in Forest Stands. The next site visited was a Norway spruce stand, planted in 1965. Ian's survey revealed the presence of bird's-nest orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*) and the lichen species lungwort (*Lobaria pulmonaria*) - two species that are restricted to sites with a long history of woodland cover. The lungwort is growing on sycamore trees and can be protected by gradually thinning the Norway spruce in advance of clearfelling, thereby allowing natural regeneration of broadleaves which provide shelter from the effects of clearfelling. Management of stands to protect the bird's-nest orchid is problematical - the species has a complex biology.

Other Habitats in Coillte Biodiversity Areas. Black Lake is a small lake (0.35ha) located within a patch of wet birch/willow woodland and a stand of lodgepole pine planted in 1962. The lake is probably man-made, but is fringed by calcareous fen and wet woodland vegetation (0.5ha) containing notable plant species such as great fen sedge *Cladium mariscus* and greater tussock sedge *Carex paniculata* - indicators of a base-rich water chemistry. Small

habitats like this where they occur within forest stands have enormous value in enhancing the biodiversity of the forest. Orla Fahy outlined the importance of wetland habitats within forests for invertebrate species (insects). Suitable management measures might include: thinning or removing conifers from their margins, to open them up to the light and improve natural regeneration; no drainage; and removing invasive laurel/rhododendron.

Finally, we ended with a picturesque stop in the evening sunshine at Fin Lough, a large lake (and a proposed NHA), with emergent wetland vegetation (reedbeds and sedge swamps) and wet woodland occupying the buffer zone between the lake and the surrounding conifer plantations. Michael O'Brien (SIF Business Editor) closed the field day with thanks and gifts presented to the event organisers.

Author - Aileen O'Sullivan

The kind co-operation and permission of Coillte Teoranta in the hosting of this Field Day is gratefully acknowledged, particularly Aileen O'Sullivan for leading the group and Seamus Duignan, Manager of Lough Key Forest Park.

Recent Meetings Attended by the Technical Director

The following is a list of meetings attended by the Executive Director, Tony Mannion, up to the end of August:

08/06/05	Forest Audit Protocol Meeting, Dublin
08/06/05	FS Policy Liaison Group Meeting, Dublin
14-19/06/05	UEF 16th Congress, Bavaria
22/06/05	SIF Council Meeting, Lucan
23-24/06/05	COFORD Broadleaf Seminar /Field Day, Co Kildare
14/07/05	SIF Strategy Group Meeting, Lucan
27/07/05	Audit Protocol Meeting, Dublin
22/08/05	IFCI AGM, Tullamore

Forest Walks 2005 take place across the country

The annual SIF forest walks took place on Sunday 4th September as part of National Heritage Week 2005. The walks were attended by over 100 people at four sites around the country and proved an enjoyable and educational day for all who attended.

The walk in **Co Limerick** took place in the ideal setting of the new 'Neighbourwood' in **Newcastle West** Demesne and was lead by John Madden from the Forest Service. Despite the overcast day the walk was well attended by 35 people including 10 children. This 'Neighbourwood' is strongly supported by Limerick County Council, particularly Jim Condon who put a lot of effort into the advertising of this walk.

The walk at **Union Wood, Co Sligo** was guided by Martin Ruane and Paul Murray and 15 people attended. The rain held off and an enjoyable afternoon was had by all. A small but



Walkers enjoying the forest walk at Monicknew, Co. Laois.

lively group attended the walk at **Monicknew, Co Laois** which was lead by Richard Jack, a Coillte forester who is a keen walker and outdoors enthusiast.

Two walks took place at **Avondale Forest Park, Co Wicklow** including a buggy walk, aimed at young families and children, lead by David Thompson & Jimmy Neilan. Michael Bulfin and Peter McGloin also guided a walk on the recently opened Centennial Trail marking the 100th Anniversary of Irish Forestry at Avondale. These walks were well attended by over 50 people and the day was enjoyed by all.

Advertising was by way of posters in towns and villages in the surrounding areas, announcements in local newspapers and through the Heritage Week website. The Society plans to extend the programme of walks for 2006 and invites those interested in guiding a walk in their area to contact Clodagh Duffy, (Coillte) who has successfully organised this event for the past two years. The walks are an effective and enjoyable way to promote and educate the public with regard to forestry and the Society thanks all those who made the 2005 walking event a success.

For further information please contact Clodagh Duffy Tel: (01) 2011111 / Email: cduffy@coillte.ie .

Annual Seán Mac Bride Forestry Lecture

- Native Woodland Development in the Prehistoric Period

The 2005 Seán Mac Bride Forestry Lecture was presented by Professor Seamas Caulfield at UCD on 8th September. The impact of human activity as the dominant factor in explanations of woodland change was examined, mainly in the prehistoric period. The human woodland experience was considered from an archaeological perspective from Mesolithic times onwards. The practical problems of the initial colonising of an island, with an ecosystem unknown on the mainland where the colonising originated, were examined and

an indication of the impact of the forest on the initial four thousand years of human settlement was given.

SIF thanks Professor Caulfield for this interesting insight to prehistoric woodland development in Ireland.

The full paper was published in Ireland's Native Woodland Conference Proceedings and is available from Woodlands of Ireland. Email: woodsofireland@iol.ie

SIF Annual Study Tour 2005 visits Scotland

The Annual Study Tour took place 19-23rd September 2005 to SW Scotland. Twenty five participants took part and the tour was based in the North West Castle Hotel, Stranraer. It proved to be an interesting and informative tour covering private estates, Forestry Commission and community forests. There were also visits to Port Logan Botanical Gardens, Glenlee Estate - magnificent tall trees - and a small local sawmill, producing garden goods. Recurring forestry themes were: forest multi-functionality, community involvement in forestry management, wood energy and poor timber prices. A full report will be published in Irish Forestry.

Browne Announces Increase in Forestry Planting Grants

Mr John Browne T.D, Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture and Food with responsibility for Forestry recently announced that he has secured agreement from the EU to increase the grants payable for forest planting. The current grant rates will be increased by 9% for the planting of oak, beech and other conifers, where costs had risen sharply, while a 5% increase will apply to planting of ash and sycamore. The maximum grants available will now range from €3,114.03 per hectare for the most usual form of conifer planting (20% diverse), and up to €7,335.28 per hectare for beech.

The Minister of State said that he wanted to ensure that these grants continued to cover establishment costs and he recognised that there had been significant increases in costs over the last few years. "The current package of supports is the most attractive there has ever been and I am determined to ensure that it remains a real incentive to plant", the Minister said. He added that the successful outcome to this application for an increase in the planting grants was further evidence of the Governments ongoing commitment to forestry. Minister Browne urged farmers who are ready to plant, to plant now. He reminded farmers that they could plant up to 50% of their holding without affecting their Single Payment, and that free, independent advice was available from Teagasc to any farmer considering planting. Diarmuid McAree, Chief Forestry Inspector, Forest Service, welcomed the Minister's announcement and commented that "it is a clear indication of the Government's commitment to promote the forestry campaign in Ireland".

Recruitments at the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture & Food

Diarmuid McAree recently announced that the Forest Service are in the process of recruiting seven new Forestry Inspectors in the areas of inventory, forest protection, district management and in the area of cross compliance between the various schemes available. The Forest Service requires five additional Forestry Inspectors and the remaining vacancies have come about due to retirements.

Draft Programme of Events for 2006

DATE	EVENT
5-11 March	National Tree Week
9 March	Augustine Henry Forestry Lecture, RDS
10 March	Joint COFORD/ IFIC/ ITGA Annual Symposium
28 April	Joint SIF/ITGA Field Day and SIF AGM National Botanic Gardens
19 May	Joint SIF/IFA Field Day Harvesting first thinning, Fermanagh
16 June	Joint SIF/ ITGA Field Day, Waterford
3/10 Sept	Heritage Week
3 Sept	Forest Walks
7 Sept	Seán Mac Bride Forestry Lecture, UCD By Joe O'Carroll - Sustainable Energy
6/23 Sept	Annual Study Tour - North West Spain
29 Sept	Field Day with IFA & ITGA, Slieve Bloom Mountains

New Members

The SIF would like to welcome the following new members:

TECHNICAL	ASSOCIATE
Keith Brennan Jonathan Spatzi Anne Marie Clarke Dermot Cantwell	Patrick Kinsella

NOTICE BOARD

SUBSCRIPTIONS 2005

Thank you to all members who have paid their membership subs for 2005. There are still however, some subscriptions outstanding. Your attention to this matter would be appreciated.

CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As the first three year period to accumulate 90 points in the CPD Programme draws to a close, members are asked to let the office know if they have attended any eligible events not already recorded.