

THE IRISH FORESTER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF IRISH FORESTERS



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The Bacon Report: Let the Debate Recommence!

The Bacon Report "A Review and Appraisal of Ireland's Forestry Development Strategy" was published in September 2004. Its publication was quickly overshadowed by the production of the EU Commission's "Rural Development Draft Proposal (2007-2013)". The proposals continue, and rightly so, to catch the attention and focus of all within and outside the Irish Forest Industry. Recently, Minister Browne indicated to the Joint Forestry Liaison Group that he wished them to assess the Bacon Report, but as yet no timescale has been set for this assessment.

This timely Ministerial statement is to be welcomed, as the report recommendations need to be considered in terms of a revision of the 1996 Strategy Document and the likely impact of the EU Rural Development Proposal (2007-2013).

The report recommendations come under three headings:

- Afforestation targets and incentives
- Development of the industry
- Financing the Forestry Programme

While the environmental and non-timber benefits (public goods value) of forestry are important, deriving value from timber production remains the greatest source of economic benefit and captures the potential of the Irish forest resource. It is noted that some issues raised in this report have also been highlighted in other reports and little, if any, action was taken towards implementation.

In the overall context of sustainable forest management, the configuration of Irish plantation forestry into production, protection and protected forest categories, enhances the realistic promotion of commercial timber production, allied to the achievement of national environmental objectives.

Funding and providing incentives for the National Forestry Programme remains a difficult task, yet the Bacon Report's recommendations in this regard are at once innovative, imaginative and thought-provoking to a point of rejection by some.

This Report requires careful analysis and discussion, but it does provide signposts to the way forward. Let the debate recommence!

Joint SIF / ITGA Field Day at J.F.K. Arboretum



Chris Kelly leads Field Day at JFK Arboretum, New Ross.

The Society of Irish Foresters, in association with the Irish Timber Growers Association, held a joint field day at JFK Arboretum on Friday 29th April. The field day was very well attended with over 60 people participating.

The arboretum encompasses 252 ha and rises from 36 m at its southern boundary, to 271 m at the summit of Sliabh Coillte, 'Mountain of Woods'. It is situated only 15 km from the coast and the climate is typical of the south eastern coastal region, with a rainfall of 1,000 mm and long hours of daylight in the summer. The area is ideally suited to tree growth with a slightly acidic, deep brown earth soil. It is an exposed site and shelter belts are still being planted where necessary.

Half of the total area is devoted to the Plant Collection, which contains 4,500 types of trees and shrubs, planted in botanical groupings. 200 Forest Plots of different species, with a separate area allocated to each continent, are spread across the higher slopes.

During the morning session, Chris Kelly led the group on a tour of the Asian, European, Australian, South and North American forest plots, discussing species performance, health and stability of species. The Larch plots were the subject of some lively discussion with regard to hybridisation and caution was recommended when selecting seed, as sources can vary significantly in quality.

The Society AGM took place during the lunch break, followed by the afternoon session, which focused on a provenance display of seven North American forest tree

species widely grown in Ireland. The differences in growth and form within the natural range of the various species were observed and discussed.

The Society wish to thank the staff at JFK Arboretum for facilitating the Field Day, particularly Chris Kelly for leading the group. The co-operation and permission of the Heritage Service of the Office of Public Works in hosting this field day is gratefully acknowledged.

Recent Meetings Attended by The Technical Director

The following is a list of meetings attended by the Executive Director, Tony Mannion, in recent months.

- 19/01/05: Clare Environmental Forum, Ennis
- 28/01/05: IFIC Meeting, Dublin
- 04/02/05: Marian Harkin, MEP, Sligo
- 11/02/05: COFORD Workshop "IT in Forestry", Portlaoise
- 16/02/05: IFIC Council Meeting/AGM, Dublin
- 22/02/05: DAF Joint Liaison Group (Forestry), Dublin
- 03/03/05: IFCI Steering Group, Dublin
- 07/03/05: SIF/ITGA/FDA Delegation to DG Environment, Brussels
- 10/03/05: SIF/ITGA meeting with Piero Mora, DG Agriculture, Tullamore
- 11/03/05: SIF/ITGA/IFIC/COFORD, National Forestry Conference, Tullamore

Roundwood Price Information for Growers & Foresters

SIF would like to congratulate the Irish Timber Growers Association (ITGA) on their important new initiative which will be of significant benefit to both growers and foresters. The Association is developing a roundwood price database which will provide information on prices achieved by private growers for their round timber sales from forests.

With the increase in the volume of timber forecast to be harvested from private forests over the coming years, this is a very timely initiative that will inform growers and foresters on the current roundwood prices being achieved in private forests. It will provide valuable information on timber prices that growers and foresters can expect for thinning and clearfell sales and ultimately it will be a valuable decision-making tool in relation to the marketing of timber.

ITGA members, consultant foresters and forestry companies are invited to supply information on roundwood sales so that a comprehensive price database can be compiled for the benefit of all. The Association is aware that growers and forest managers may have concerns in relation to releasing price information to others. To alleviate these concerns, the Forestry Section of University College Dublin

has agreed to act as an independent facilitator, that will compile price information from growers on a quarterly basis, before averaging the data and releasing it to the ITGA. UCD is ideally placed to fulfill this pivotal role and ITGA fully acknowledge UCD Forestry Section's independence in the collection and collation of this data. The Association will therefore receive the compiled average prices at the end of each quarter and no details of individual sales, forest owners, consultants or companies will be released by UCD. This average quarterly roundwood price data will then be displayed on the ITGA website www.itga.ie on a page accessible to Association members. After establishing a number of quarterly averages, it is proposed that an index would be developed to track roundwood price movements over time.

Mechanism for collection of Roundwood Price Data

It is proposed to employ the same average tree size bands as used by Coillte in their standing roundwood sales information as given in current ITGA Newsletters.

ITGA is currently compiling price data for roundwood sales transacted in October, November and December 2004 and since 1st January 2005. If any grower has any such sales information, UCD Forestry Section would be grateful to receive it for compilation. If you wish to receive the standard forms for submission to UCD please email roundwooddatabase@ucd.ie.

For further information on this roundwood price database initiative please contact Donal Whelan, ITGA at 17 Castle Street, Dalkey, Co. Dublin. Email: donalpw@eircom.net

An Taoiseach launches Coillte's Centenary Forest Trail at Avondale, Co. Wicklow



Coillte Chairman, Mr. Brendan McKenna with An Taoiseach.

On 22nd April, An Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern TD, launched Coillte's Centenary Forest Trail at Avondale Forest Park in Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow. The walk was established to celebrate 100 years of Irish Forestry at Avondale and explores the species trial plots which were planted at the beginning of the last Century.

Speaking at the launch, An Taoiseach, emphasised the benefits of forestry and stated that "Increasingly, the environmental and social benefits are also being recognised,

as society comes to appreciate the importance of forests in combating climate change, in providing wildlife habitats, in water and soil protection and as a place where both Irish people and visitors alike can access the countryside”.

He also announced that Coillte and the Office of Public Works have agreed to jointly restore the courtyard buildings at Avondale, which were originally designed by Charles Stewart Parnell. “These buildings, which will be restored to provide facilities suitable for conferences and cultural events, will add to the attractiveness of the estate for visitors and will add to the tourism infrastructure of Co. Wicklow”, added An Taoiseach.

Position Statement of the Union of European Foresters (UEF).

The following statement is a summary of the main points of the UEF Position Statement on the proposal for a Council Regulation on Support for Rural Development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). SIF is a member of UEF and has been proactive in the compilation of the Position Statement, which has been circulated to the EU Commission and the relevant DGs.

General comments on the EU contribution to the forestry sector

- The more efficient and understandable rural development policy with a single funding and programming framework should be welcomed.
- A clear sharing of responsibilities between the EU and national levels according to the activities in the forestry and wood sector should be outlined.
- The guiding principles of the EU Forestry Strategy must be recognised when increasing the contribution of forests and forestry to rural development.
- Rural development programmes will enable the Community to support the implementation of national or sub-national forest programmes in line with the objectives of rural development.
- Forestry is an independent market-oriented economic activity. Any measures, which possibly distort competition or cause distortion to markets, should be avoided.
- The new EU programme period should ensure that the contributions to forestry programmes should be expanded and include, not only forestry, but also rural activities and social needs.
- Taking into consideration the situation with the new and incoming EU members, the possibilities of support for rural development should be as open as possible without considerable difference to financing on the basis of type of forest ownership.

Diversification of the rural economy and the quality of life in rural areas

- The EU should, by the new programme period, encourage

and support the interchange of views and experience between professional foresters.

- The EU contribution to forestry should especially concentrate on further developing new and promising activities connected to the sustainable use of forest resources, for instance the use of wood for bio energy and higher use of wood in all forms of construction.
- Support for creating an enabling environment and infrastructure for forestry is justified. Support should be available for activities other than market based primary forestry production.
- The support for establishing and developing forest owners’ associations, or similar organisations, should be reinforced in the regulation.

Land Management

- The Council Regulation should promote, more largely and proactively than proposed, the long term growth and sustainability of the forests and forestry sector through afforestation of rural areas.
- Special national forest expansion programmes should be supported in the rural development. Afforestation is a viable option in any land use change scenario. Afforestation should be promoted as an attractive land use option, which is eligible for support, taking the national differences into consideration. Support to cover loss of income should be granted if the land was used for agricultural production during the preceding years.
- Support should continue to be granted to help address specific disadvantages in areas resulting from the implementation of Council Directives on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora and on the conservation of wild birds in order to contribute to the effective management of Natura 2000 sites.
- Support should be granted for restoring forestry potential in forests damaged by natural disasters and fire and for introducing preventive actions.
- Land-owners should be able to produce environmental values, benefits and products to society. Payment for these values to land-owners should be relative to the price of the value or product produced.

ITGA Forestry & Timber Directory - Now Available Online

The ITGA Forestry & Timber Directory is now available online at: www.itga.ie/directory.asp. Email links are provided for all those listed in the 2005 ITGA Forestry & Timber Directory under their relevant service headings. This is a very quick and easy way to source a contact in the industry and to communicate with them directly.

The user friendly Online Directory is proving to be a popular way to contact people involved in the industry. Log on to discover more.

Win £250 (Stg.) - Help find the best trees in Britain & Ireland

Woodland Heritage in conjunction with the British and Irish Hardwoods Improvement Programme (BIHIP) is offering at least seven and possibly nine Sir Eric Weiss prizes of £250 each to landowners, local authorities, the Forestry Commission and the public who can locate the best mature examples ('plus' trees) of oak (*Quercus robur* or *Q. petraea*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), common walnut (*Juglans regia*), sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and wild cherry (*Prunus avium*).

Such 'plus' trees will form the parent material in a programme for improvement of broadleaved trees for woodlands. The best of them will be used to create seed orchards, to provide British and Irish seed to the nursery industry, from good quality parents of known origin.

If you have very high quality examples of any of these species, then please complete the form available on <http://www.woodlandheritage.org.uk/> and send it, together with a photograph of the tree (including some idea of scale), to Dr Jason Hubert at the address below. Entries will close at the end of December 2005.

Dr Jason Hubert, Forest Research, Northern Research Station, Roslin, Midlothian EH25 9SY, or jason.hubert@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Conditions of entry are available from John Fennessy Research Programme Manager, COFORD at: john.fennessy@coford.ie

Manch Open Day 2 June 2005

Minister of State for Forestry John Browne will unveil a plaque at the Irish Natural Forestry Foundation's [INFF] demonstration estate at Manch Demesne followed by a farm walk on 2nd June. Manch is a 340 acre estate situated near Dunmanway, 40 miles west of Cork. 100 acres of old woodland, bordering the fertile fork of the rivers Bandon and Blackwater which wind through 200 acres of arable and riparian grasslands with more than 14 salmon pools. INFF, a registered charity, with the support of the Forest Service afforestation programme, planted 17 hectares of mixed species in 2004 with a similar area addressed this year under the Native Woodland Scheme. The plantings demonstrate sustainable management and regeneration techniques for Continuous Forest Cover (CFC). With the support of the Forest Service and LEADER, INFF is working to develop Manch as a centre of excellence and an 'Outdoor University' to demonstrate and promote forestry, based on natural ecosystems, that are economically, socially and environmentally beneficial.

If you are interested in attending please contact: irishnff@eircom.net / Tel: 027 73131.

Members Recently Deceased

It is with sadness we record the deaths of the following members: Pat Finnerty, former Divisional Inspector, Forest Service, Sligo; Myles Cosgrave, former District Inspector, Forest Service, Cavan; John McGhie, RSPB Brendan Murphy, Forest Manager, Gort, and Tim O'Brien, Managing Director, Green Belt Ltd.

May they rest in peace.

Upcoming Events

DATE	VENUE
17th June	Joint SIF/ITGA Field Day, Caledon Private Forest Estate and NIFS, Co Armagh
4th Sept	Forest Walks
8th Sept	Sean Mac Bride Forestry Lecture, "The Effect of Climate Change and Human Impact on Ireland's Native Woodland Development" Prof. Séamus Caulfield, UCD.
19-23rd Sept	Annual Study Tour - South Scotland (Places available)
30th Sept	Joint SIF/ITGA Field Day, North West. - Biodiversity.
<i>Note:</i> All events noted are eligible for the SIF Continuous Professional Development Programme. For more information on CPD please visit the Society website: www.societyofirishforesters.ie/cpd.htm	

New Members

The SIF would like to welcome the following new members:

TECHNICAL	STUDENT
Mark O'Loughlin	Michael Flannery Kieran Hickey

NOTICE BOARD

SUBSCRIPTIONS 2005

Thank you to all who have paid your membership subs for 2005. There are however, still some subs outstanding. Payment would be appreciated.

MENTOR PROGRAMME

SIF now has a panel of mentors who have offered to give the benefit of their knowledge and experience to new technical members. Please contact the office for details.

OPERATION GROWTH

There is a 50% discount of current membership rates for 2005 to all new members who join SIF before 30th June. All members are requested to assist in this recruitment drive.

ARTICLES WELCOME!

Please send articles to Tony Mannion or Cara Doyle for inclusion in the newsletter.