

THE IRISH FORESTER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF IRISH FORESTERS



Produced by the Society of Irish Foresters, The Enterprise Centre, Ballintogher, Co. Sligo. Tel: 071 9164434, Fax: 071 9134904

Email: sif@eircom.net Website: www.societyofirishforesters.ie

Editors: Cara Doyle, Tony Mannion

Whither Irish Forestry Now?

On the 14th July 2004, the EU Commission published a proposal for a Council Regulation on Support for Rural Development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

The Proposal indicates that following on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy in 2003/2004, the major focus for the new financial period 2007/2013, will be rural development. With over 50% of EU-25 population living in rural areas, rural development will be an important policy domain with farming and forestry remaining of over-riding importance for land use. The first step is to bring rural development under a single funding and programming framework. This proposal will underpin the EU Strategy Document for Rural Development and critically will serve as the basis for NATIONAL rural development strategy and programmes. This is, of course, very much a first draft, but represents the Commission's opening salvo in negotiations.

The explanatory memorandum, and indeed the introductory statement, extols the benefits of forestry, and its role in rural development. It states that private forests play an important role in economic activity in rural areas and therefore community aid is important for improving and broadening their economic value, for increasing diversification of production and enhancing market opportunities, such as renewable energy. However, this is not followed through, as from an examination of the Articles of Regulation, it is clear that forestry, and in particular, the provision of environment values and services, leaves aside the equally important economic and social aspects of forestry, which are critical for the ongoing development and stabilisation of rural communities.

While there are many positive aspects to the proposal, as ever the devil is in the regulation and in annex 1 - amounts and rates of support. Here are some examples:

- Annual premiums to have a 10 year time frame and be capped at €500 p.a. for farmers and €150 for non-farmers.
- Grant aid to be fixed at 40% of eligible costs.

This Proposal signals a clear and dramatic change in policy, and if it goes through as outlined, the question must be raised; is this the end of the line for afforestation in Ireland and the demise of many, if not all, of the attendant forestry infrastructure, service and management businesses?

It is recognised that the proposal is an opening gambit, and there is still room to negotiate an outcome more favourable to Ireland. The Forest Service needs help here, and SIF has within its membership, expertise which is available and should be used. There exists an urgent necessity for the Forest Service to bring to the meeting table all the major players in the industry to (a) clarify issues and (b) allow a consensus to develop as to how the Sector should best approach the upcoming negotiations. Now is the time for all forest industry stakeholders to unite and consolidate behind a common agenda.

This Proposal can be downloaded at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/capreform/rurdevprop_en.pdf



Members at the Recent Society Tour in the West

Recent Meetings Attended by The Technical Director

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

- 13/05/04 SIF Council Meeting, Dublin
- 14/05/04 CFRG Meeting, Portlaoise
- 02/06/04 FS (re: Cross Compliance), Portlaoise
- 03/06/04 Ministerial Launch of Blanket Bog Restoration Programme, Co Mayo
- 16/06/04 FS (SIF funding), Dublin
- 16/06/04 IFIC Council Meeting, Dublin
- 16/06/04 IFCI Steering Group Meeting, Dublin
- 01/07/04 Sligo/Leitrim/West Cavan, Social and Environmental Meeting

Society visits Galway-Mayo for an Irish Study Tour

A decision was taken by the Society to hold a study tour in Ireland in 2004 to mark the Centenary year of the beginning of State forestry in Ireland. The tour was located in the Galway Mayo area and headquartered in the Atlantic Coast Hotel, Westport.

On Friday 11th June the group travelled north to Eskeragh bog which is located west of Crossmolina. The Tour Leader, Tony Mannion, welcomed everyone and gave a brief history of forestry in Ireland over the last 100 years with an emphasis on forestry in Co Mayo. He stated that the wheel had come a full circle from the extensive planting on peats in the 1950s to the restoration work currently being carried out. In the 1950s the area was used for rough grazing and forestry, today it is seen as a valuable international ecological site.

Kevin Donnellan, Coillte, who is Project Manager for the EU LIFE Blanket Bog restoration project introduced the team working on the Eskeragh Bog complex, Dr. John Conaghan, Project Ecologist and Caroline White, P.R. and Project Administrator. The project budget is €4.2 million and focuses on the restoration of 1,200ha of blanket bog at 14 sites nationwide. Dr. Conaghan outlined the importance of conserving blanket peatlands. "While in Ireland we think of blanket peatland as an extensive resource, in fact internationally it is of very limited extent. The blanket bogs found abroad are not similar to the type found in Ireland, so it is imperative that we should conserve a portion of this unique landscape". The Peatlands of the West of Ireland are internationally among the most important intact areas of active blanket bog found in Europe. Since 1997 approximately 135,139ha of active blanket bog have been proposed as candidate Special Areas of Conservation [SAC] under the Habitats Directive. It is estimated that only 20% of our blanket bogs are intact, while 30% are cutaway with severe erosion caused by overgrazing. Mayo still has 30% of all the intact blanket bog in Ireland. In the past, the blanket boglands of Ireland were extensively afforested, with unfenced open areas often heavily overgrazed. This has resulted in degradation and drying out of the habitat. These threats are the focus of this project.

Following lunch, the group travelled to Nephin Beg Forest where they were first met by Tony O'Keeffe, formerly of Coillte and now a Consultant Forester. Tony outlined the difficulties in managing forestry in a very sensitive river catchment, and Kieran Mc Loughlin, the current harvesting manger, outlined the current situation with harvesting in the catchment. There are 12,500ha in the catchment and Coillte own 30% of it. Over the next six years 133,000m³ will be clearfelled and the major challenges are: steep slopes, low yield class pine and high rainfall. More environmentally friendly machines and forwarders with twin wheels are being used. The management of timber sales has also been modified resulting in lower concentration of harvesting in any one area. In areas of very severe slope, cable extraction is being used and in areas of yield class 14 and lower, the area is not being felled.

Brendan O'Hea from the Marine Institute praised the forestry sector for the cooperation received, a lot has been

learned by both sides from the consultative process. He pointed out that at the reforestation phase long vertical drains were a problem as the velocity of the water increased and silt was deposited in the main watercourses. Drains leading to a silt trap should be short. The lessons learned in the catchment were that planning and consultation for all felling and reforestation operations with all interested parties was essential. The group then went to the Research Building where Brendan O'Hea gave a presentation on the work being carried out at the centre.



Walking the land at the recent Society Tour in the West of Ireland

On Saturday 12th June, the group travelled south through Connemara to the first stop at Cloosh Valley where they were welcomed by Coillte's District Manager, Myles Mac Donnacatha. Cloosh Valley has an area of 5,500ha while the entire catchment is 6,500ha. Currently, 85% of this is planted, the land is particularly poor and there is a 50/50 mix of pine and spruce. The management problems encountered were significant. Dr Dermot Tiernan, Coillte gave a presentation on how to optimise the productive potential of low production forests.

Professor Ted Farrell, FERG-UCD, introduced the team that has been working on research projects in Cloosh for the past few years. The Forest Ecosystem Research Group (FERG) have been involved in the forest ecosystem studies there since 1991. The core of this work is the long-term ecosystem monitoring study. Dr Ken Byrne outlined the carbon sequestration potential of peatland forests and stated that the ability of forests to sequester atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) is well known. As a result, forests are recognised as having an important role in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. Despite this, the carbon balance in peatland forests remains poorly understood. Pristine peatlands sequester small amounts of CO₂ and release methane (CH₄). Drainage from forestry reduces or stops CH₄ emissions while soil CO₂ emissions are greatly increased. If these emissions are offset by CO₂ sequestration by the forest crop, there can be a net uptake of CO₂. Tom Cummins also outlined the research work he conducted on the impact of management operations on stream-water quality.

The group drove through Connemara and the next stop was at Brackloon where the group was met by Jerry Hawe,

Sylvion Ltd, who is a consultant to Coillte. The current management project for Brackloon woods is being carried out under the Forest Service Woodland Improvement Scheme (WIS). Although Brackloon is classified as semi-natural Atlantic oak woodland, at least 50 of the 74 hectares of the site have been impacted upon through the establishment of coniferous crops during the 1960s. During the 1990s the ecological importance of the oakwood became apparent. And from 1995 onward, the coniferous stands within the woodland were prematurely removed.

The management objectives of the current project are to restore and conserve the semi-natural status of the entire woodland, to ensure its sustainability and longevity and to maximize biodiversity.

The Contribution of Forests and Forestry to the Mitigation of Greenhouse Effects - COST E21

Final Plenary Meeting, University College Dublin, 6-9th October 2004.

The final plenary meeting of COST E21 takes place in Dublin at UCD. The issue of the role of forests in the mitigation of greenhouse effects is an important one to contemporary forestry and should prove very interesting to many SIF members. Anyone interested in attending this conference, presenting the latest research and discussion from across Europe on this very important and current topic, can consult or download details from <http://www.ucd.ie/ferg/coste21dublin.pdf>

It is recommended to book your place as early as possible. Please send your registration details to:

Carly Green carly.green@ucd.ie or Brian Tobin btobin30@hotmail.com. Alternatively please fax your details to +353 1 716 1102.

For further information, contact Mairin Delaney, Public Relations Manager, Tel: 01-6635279/086-2529609, or Cliodhna Parker, Public Relations Executive, Coillte.

Tel: 01-2011143/086-2236493.

(Attendance at this event is eligible for eight (8) SIF CPD Points per day)

Website News:

There are two new pages on the Society website www.societyofirishforesters.ie both of which can be accessed by buttons on left of home page, which we hope will be of benefit to our members, as follows.

The Discussion Forum - where members are encouraged to share their views on forestry topics. There is also a facility to set up restricted discussion groups, e.g. each SIF management board could have its own discussion group accessible only to the members of that board (contact the office for details).

The Members Area - this area is password protected and your USERNAME and PASSWORD can be obtained by emailing the office at sif@eircom.net Upon entering your

unique password, you will be able to see your personal contact details and CPD points to date. Information for members only will be posted on this area (for example, at the moment there is a list of the latest national and international journals and magazines which come into the office, with their tables of contents. Photocopies of any article are available on request).

Other items of interest on the website are the list of Society field days, study tours and lectures, details of upcoming courses, conferences and seminars on relevant forestry matters, details of the Continuous Professional Development Programme, with list of eligible events and the points allocated to them.

The Irish Forestry Journal search facility on the website is almost completed - we now have the abstracts/summaries of all technical articles from the current journal down to 1960, and we hope to have completed this list to 1943 by the end of the year. Just type in the name of the author or a keyword of the article you are searching for and it will come up. Photocopies of articles are available from the office. This archive should be of great benefit to students of forestry and all those interested in forestry matters through the years.

Paula Lahiff is the webmaster for the Society website and it is updated on a weekly basis. If your details have changed, please let her know by email at sif@eircom.net All suggestions/comments on how to keep our website relevant and up-to-date are most welcome.

NOTICE BOARD

2004 Membership Subscription

Members are requested to forward any outstanding subscriptions to Paula Lahiff in the Sligo office (Tel: 071 9164434 or email sif@eircom.net). Direct Debit Mandates are available on request. Many thanks to all members who have paid their 2004 subscription

Submission of CPD Points

Please submit attendance sheets for eligible CPD events at your earliest convenience

ITGA Yearbook 2005

To place a Directory Listing or Advertisement in the 2005 Yearbook please contact Ben Quinn at 071 9644210 or email: benqn@indigo.ie Deadline is 22nd September.

Articles or News Items

Members are invited to submit articles or news items for the newsletter to the Editors, Cara Doyle or Tony Mannion.

Biodiversity Components of Forestry



University College, Cork

- a new course dealing with forestry and biodiversity
- provides participants with an understanding of the ecological principles of biodiversity and how they can be better applied to forestry in Ireland
- open to all who are involved in forest management, forest planning and forestry regulation
- this course is accredited by NUI, C
- Module 1 Introduction to Biodiversity and Habitats
- Module 2 Forests and the Environment
- Module 3 Conservation and Forest Practice
- open to people nation-wide
- the course is run over two blocks : September and April/May

The next cycle begins this September.

For further information contact:

Dr Fidelma Butler, Department of Zoology, Ecology & Plant Science, UCC, Lee Maltings, Prospect Row, Cork. Tel. (021) 4904390 Email: f.butler@ucc.ie
(Attendance at this course is eligible for 45 SIF CPD Points)

Coillte Headquarters Move

Coillte Headquarters has closed it's Leeson Lane Doors after 15 years! Coillte Headquarters is now located at a large state-of-the-art premises at Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow. The beautiful all timber building, designed by Duncan Stewart, was built in two phases. The first phase which was completed in 1997, has since been home to Coillte's Southern Region and the second phase, which was factory built by Griffner Coillte in Mullingar, is only just complete and merges to form the new Corporate Headquarters.

This building is the first all timber office complex built in Ireland and covers almost 25,000 square feet of floor space. Wood, a renewable resource was the obvious and natural choice for the building which accommodates almost 100 staff working in a wide range of forestry disciplines.

The second phase of the building was built by Griffner Coillte, which is a joint venture company between Griffner Haus of Austria and Coillte. It manufactures, markets and sells modular buildings in which the main construction material is wood. Griffner Coillte place great importance on aesthetics, ecology and design, using leading edge production and design technology which are apparent at the Coillte Newtownmountkennedy office.

New Coillte HQ contact details:

Coillte Headquarters, Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow.
Tel: 01-2011111, Fax: 01-2011199.



New building at Coillte Headquarters, Newtownmountkennedy, Co Wicklow

Recent Publication:

Forest Road Manual - COFORD publication

Guidelines for the design, construction, and management of forest roads by *Tom Ryan, Henry Philips, June Ramsay and John Dempsey*

New Members

The SIF would like to welcome the following new members:

<i>Technical</i>	<i>Student</i>
Michael Donnellan Tony Glynn Marianne Lyons Kevin Mullin Aine O'Callaghan Geraldine O'Sullivan	Gerry McTiernan

Dates for Your Diary, 2004

Below are some provisional dates for the 2004 diary:

DATE	EVENT & VENUE
September 13 - 24	Annual Study Tour to New England, USA
October 3	Forest Walks at Avondale, Co. Wicklow, Mountrath, Co. Laois and Ballykelly, Co. Derry
October 7	Seán Mac Bride Forestry Lecture - "Trees & The Law in Ireland" UCD, Dublin 4
October 15	Field Day With ITGA Baronscourt Estate, Co. Tyrone

Members are invited to submit articles or news items for the Newsletter to the Editors, Cara Doyle or Tony Mannion.