



FOREST SERVICE

Business Plan 2011/2012



An Agency within the Department of
**Agriculture and
Rural Development**

www.dardni.gov.uk

AN RÓINN
**Talmhaíochta agus
Forbartha Tuaithe**

MINISTRE O
**Fairs an
Kintra Fordèrin**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Cover photograph:
Walkers, Portglenone Forest, County Antrim

Business Plan 2011-12

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Foreword

By the Chief Executive



This Business Plan sets out our key strategic objectives and associated targets for the 2011/2012 business year. It includes targets specifically linked to the achievement of our proposed Public Service Agreement (PSA) target for woodland expansion and our wider commitments under the DARD Business Plan. Resourcing pressures and the requirement to deliver further efficiencies are likely to continue and this will ensure a challenging business year.

The Plan identifies our business priorities for the 2011/2012 year, and sets five key strategic objectives for the Agency, agreed by the Minister. These will set a challenging programme of work for us.

We will continue to manage timber production and timber sales to support the wood processing industry. Our aim will be to improve performance in the market place and support the timber industry and the important role it plays in supporting the local economy and rural jobs. The Forestry Act (NI) 2010 received Royal Assent in June of last year, and much of the Act became law with a Commencement Order last September. This included the General Duty, which of course is the central axis of the Act, encompassing economic, environmental, and social and recreational forestry.

However, two important elements of the new Act yet to become law, and subject to subordinate legislation, are the regulation of felling of trees in woodlands; and a public right of pedestrian access to the Department's forestry land, which is subject to new Byelaws. The subordinate legislation has been developed and has been put out for consultation.

It is widely acknowledged that our forests offer great potential for the development of tourism opportunities and, during the year, we plan to work jointly with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to assess, through a tourism research study, the tourism potential of our forests.

Performance against our woodland creation PSA target for the last PSA period (2008 – 2011) was disappointing with lower than expected levels of uptake of our forestry grant schemes. Our proposed PSA target for the next four year PSA period is 800 hectares of new woodland up to 2015. Woodland creation remains one of our key goals, and associated targets are included in this Business Plan.

During the year, we will also be continuing our work to optimise commercialisation opportunities within the forest estate. We believe there are significant opportunities in the areas of recreation, leisure and renewable energy, and we will be developing our plans and strategies to realise these. The Plan commits us to secure business case approval and proceed to the market for the provision of caravan and camping and the development of wind farms in the Department's forests.

Throughout the year, we will continue to manage the risk posed by the Ramorum disease in our forests and liaise with stakeholders and other forestry organisations on the management of the disease.

Finally, 2011/2012 will be another challenging year for the Agency, but one during which I hope real progress against a number of important areas will be made.



David Small
Chief Executive



Introduction

STATUS

The Forest Service is an Executive Agency within the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and is subject to the overall direction of the Minister with responsibility for the Department.

FUNCTIONS

The Forestry Act (Northern Ireland) 2010 recognises the integrated nature of modern forestry and our strategic vision of forest expansion and sustainable forestry. Our General Duty under the Act covers economic, environmental and social and recreational functions, and a duty to maximise the value of the forest estate in creative uses other than forestry.

MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Chief Executive is responsible to the Minister for the Agency's operations and performance. The Minister determines the policy framework within which the Agency operates, the level of resources made available each year and the scope of its activities. The Minister approves the Business Plan, sets the key performance targets and monitors the Agency's performance.

The Forest Service Framework Document sets out the context and parameters within which it operates. This includes its role, business objectives, performance measures, relationship with the Department and delegated authorities, and its accountability to the Minister.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Chief Executive is the Accounting Officer. The Agency is managed by a Board comprising the Chief Executive, three Executive Directors and an Independent Non-Executive Director who joined the Board in March 2009 and provides a constructive challenge across all of the Board's business. There is a Corporate Governance and Audit Committee, established as a sub-Committee of the Board. The Committee is chaired by an Independent member of the Senior Civil Service from the Department for Regional Development and has two members, one of whom is a member of the Agency's Board. The Corporate Governance and Audit Committee provides objective advice to the Chief Executive about business risks, internal control and governance of the Agency.

ORGANISATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES

The Department has allocated the Agency £8.2m in 2011/12 for running costs and to meet the salaries and wages of administrative, professional, technical and industrial grades. Staff are located at the Agency's headquarters in Belfast and in three main offices at Enniskillen, Castlewellan and Garvagh.

Forest Service has set a range of standards relating to how we deal with customer correspondence and complaints. These standards are at Appendix 1.

Details of the current organisational structure and main office locations can be found in Appendices 2 and 3. We regularly review structures, staffing levels and business processes in order to deliver our business in the most efficient and effective way.

In line with wider NICS objectives, the Agency will seek to achieve a reduced level of staff absenteeism and specific targets are included in this Business Plan. Specific action to meet our absenteeism targets will include the strict application of the absenteeism management procedures, action on the prevention and investigation of industrial accidents and management reviews of absenteeism.

We have a responsibility to ensure that robust procedures are in place to provide for continuity of service in the event of a civil emergency. Our business continuity plan sets out the controls in place and we review the plan regularly to ensure that it provides the necessary assurance that the controls remain effective.



VISION

Our vision is to have more extensive sustainable forest cover across Northern Ireland that meets the diverse needs of present and future generations.

AIMS

Our key strategic aims are:

- To manage existing woods and forests to promote economic and environmental benefits and provide recreational opportunities for the people of Northern Ireland; and
- To secure a steady expansion of tree cover to increase these benefits and opportunities.

Within the context of implementing our strategic aims, we have agreed a number of key business priorities for the 2011/12 business year.

BUSINESS PRIORITIES FOR 2011/12

- Utilise forests for timber production and renewable energy products – re-forest land following harvesting and maintain sustainability of our forests through careful management of the environmental, social and economic aspects of our work;
- Retain certification of good forest management under the UK Woodland Assurance Standard. This requires a programme of conservation, environmental and social provision, whilst ensuring economic viability. During the business year, we will continue to manage the outbreak of Ramorum disease in our forests;
- Encourage further forest expansion so that people can derive the wide range of benefits which more woodland can offer, including the contribution forestry expansion can make towards mitigating climate change;
- Develop partnerships with operational providers to improve the quality and range of services and visitor experiences, consistent with our Recreation and Social Use Strategy and our aim to improve forestry performance in the marketplace;
- Put in place subordinate legislation and administrative processes in support of the Forestry Act;
- Commercialisation – we will seek to optimise commercialisation opportunities available within the Forest Estate.

To achieve this, the Business Plan sets a number of key strategic objectives and associated key performance indicators. These are outlined in the next section.



Business Plan for 2011/2012

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Our Business Plan is informed by the Department's key strategic goals and targets for 2011/12. The Department's targets relating to forestry are primarily delivered by the Forest Service.

CONTRIBUTION OF FORESTRY

Forestry contributes to a number of wider government objectives. It provides employment in rural areas; and it provides timber and wood products used by the wood processing industry, which makes an important contribution to the local economy. Forestry also contributes to a range of other wider societal benefits. It contributes significantly to biodiversity, habitat management, and conservation through sustainable forest management. Forests also deliver significantly in the areas of recreation, outdoor opportunities, tourism and health and well-being. We will continue to explore how these wider opportunities can be further developed.

TARGETS AND OBJECTIVES

During the 2010/11 business year, we published a Delivery Plan, outlining how we intended to deliver our duties under the new Forestry Act. The Delivery Plan indicated that progress against key themes would be managed and monitored through our business planning process. Many of the targets and actions outlined in this year's Business Plan will contribute directly towards implementation of the Delivery Plan.

Our PSA target for the three year period 2008-2011 was to create an area of new woodland of 1,650 hectares. This has been an area where progress has been difficult, due to low levels of uptake of the forestry grant schemes. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, levels of participation in the Woodland Grant Scheme remained low and by 31 March 2011 only 754 ha of new woodland were created within the target period. In order to encourage more farmers and landowners to create their own woodland, increases in grant rates were announced in November 2009 and this was followed by a rise in applications. Nevertheless, we continue to see low levels of uptake of the forestry grant schemes and, taking account of woodland creation trends over the last three years, a woodland creation target of 200 ha has been set for the 2011/2012 year. This is lower than we would like, but is a realistic target. An associated target to develop new mechanisms to support higher levels of woodland creation is included as a specific target in this Business Plan.

The Minister has set key performance targets for the Agency. These are shown in Table 1 below, which outlines our key strategic objectives and targets for 2011/12. Table 2 lists the supporting objectives and targets. Table 3 shows the net resources allocated to the Agency under the 2011 budget to deliver the work programme.

The plan assumes that the Department will continue to provide support services, accommodation and IT, as set out in the Agency's Framework document, and that these will continue to be charged on a notional basis.

Key Strategic Objectives and Targets for 2011/12

Table 1

KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	11/12 TARGETS
To optimize the return from timber sales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sell total annual volume of at least 400,000 cubic metres through our competitive timber marketing arrangements. • Generate receipts of at least £6.5m from timber sold.
To manage forests in a sustainable manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet UK Woodland Assurance Standard certification requirements.
To extend the area of woodland in Northern Ireland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop proposals for new mechanisms to support woodland creation. • Manage Woodland Grant Scheme to deliver 200ha of new woodland.
Optimise commercial opportunities in the Leisure and Renewable Energy Sectors as identified in the Forest Service Commercialisation Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure business case approval and proceed to market for the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision of Caravan and Camping facilities • development of Wind Farms in DARD Forests
To put in place Subordinate Legislation and administrative processes in support of the Forestry Act.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the Forestry (Felling of Trees) Regulations (NI) 2011. • Make the Forestry (Felling of Trees) (Calculation of the Area of Land) Regulations (NI) 2011. • Make the Forestry (2010 Act) (Commencement No 2) Order (NI) 2011. • Make the Forestry Land Byelaws (NI) 2011. • Support the Minister in presenting the Forestry (Felling of Trees) (Calculation of the Area of Land) Regulations (NI) 2011 to the Assembly under Affirmative Resolution. • Develop supporting administrative processes.

Supporting Objectives and Targets

Table 2

SUPPORTING OBJECTIVES	11/12 TARGETS
Manage Forest Service response to Ramorum disease in Forests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet felling requirements required under Quality Assurance Branch notification letters. • Conduct aerial survey to assist management of disease.
Implement Recreation & Social Use Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver 2011/12 commitments set out in the Recreation Strategy implementation plan. • Complete Forestry tourism research study in conjunction with Northern Ireland Tourist Board to inform Forest Plans.
Engage positively and promptly with customers and stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update Timber Customer Charter. • Meet twice yearly with Recreation and Social Use Strategy Implementation Stakeholder Forum. • Meet twice yearly with Woodland Stakeholder Group. • Convene review meetings with individual timber customers and maintain proactive engagement with Confederation of Forest Industries (UK) Ltd.
To manage and report on the Agency's income and expenditure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain expenditure within resource limits and to approved budgets. • Present draft Accounts to DARD Finance by 13 May 2011. • Produce unqualified accounts which are laid in the Assembly by the summer recess. • Meet expenditure and income requirements of the Memorandum Trading Account, in relation to Recreation and Plant Health.

Supporting Objectives and Targets (continued)

SUPPORTING OBJECTIVES	11/12 TARGETS
<p>Establish baseline data of woodland cover and type in Northern Ireland.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete analysis of data on woodland area and type and publish preliminary results.
<p>To develop and deploy staff to meet business delivery objectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the Departmental combined non-industrial/industrial absenteeism target. • Deliver 80% of high priority training against the Training Plan. • Revise and implement Service Delivery arrangements with College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise to meet Professional and Technical and Industrial needs.

Forest Service Budgets

Table 3

PSA Budget	Category	Budget	Notes
	Resource DEL	£4.444m	£8.208m Resource Running Costs
			£2.960m Programme
			£0.423m Grants
			£(7.950)m Operating Receipts
			£0.803m Non-Cash Charges
	Capital DEL	£0.713m	£0.293m Capital
			£0m Capital Receipts
			£0.420m Capital Grants
	Total DEL	£5.157m	
	Total AME	£(1.840)m	£(1.840)m Timber valuation movement

DEL = 4 year Departmental Expenditure Limits.

AME = Annually Managed Expenditure.

The Resource DEL budget of £4.444m excludes DARD Central Services costs.

Monitoring and Reporting

The Forest Service Management Board will monitor performance against the key strategic objectives and targets set for 2011/2012. If it appears that the achievement of key targets may be at risk, due to factors outside of the Agency's control, the Chief Executive will consult with the Department and the Minister about options for remedial action. In these or other circumstances, it may be necessary to review the Business Plan during the year and make changes in policies, resources or priorities. The Business plan is subject to formal in-year and year-end reviews by the Permanent Secretary and the Department's Fraser Figure, in discussion with the Agency's Board.

Following the end of the financial year the Chief Executive will publish an Annual Report and Accounts. The Report will review the Agency's activities during the year and will comment specifically on its performance against the key targets set by the Minister.



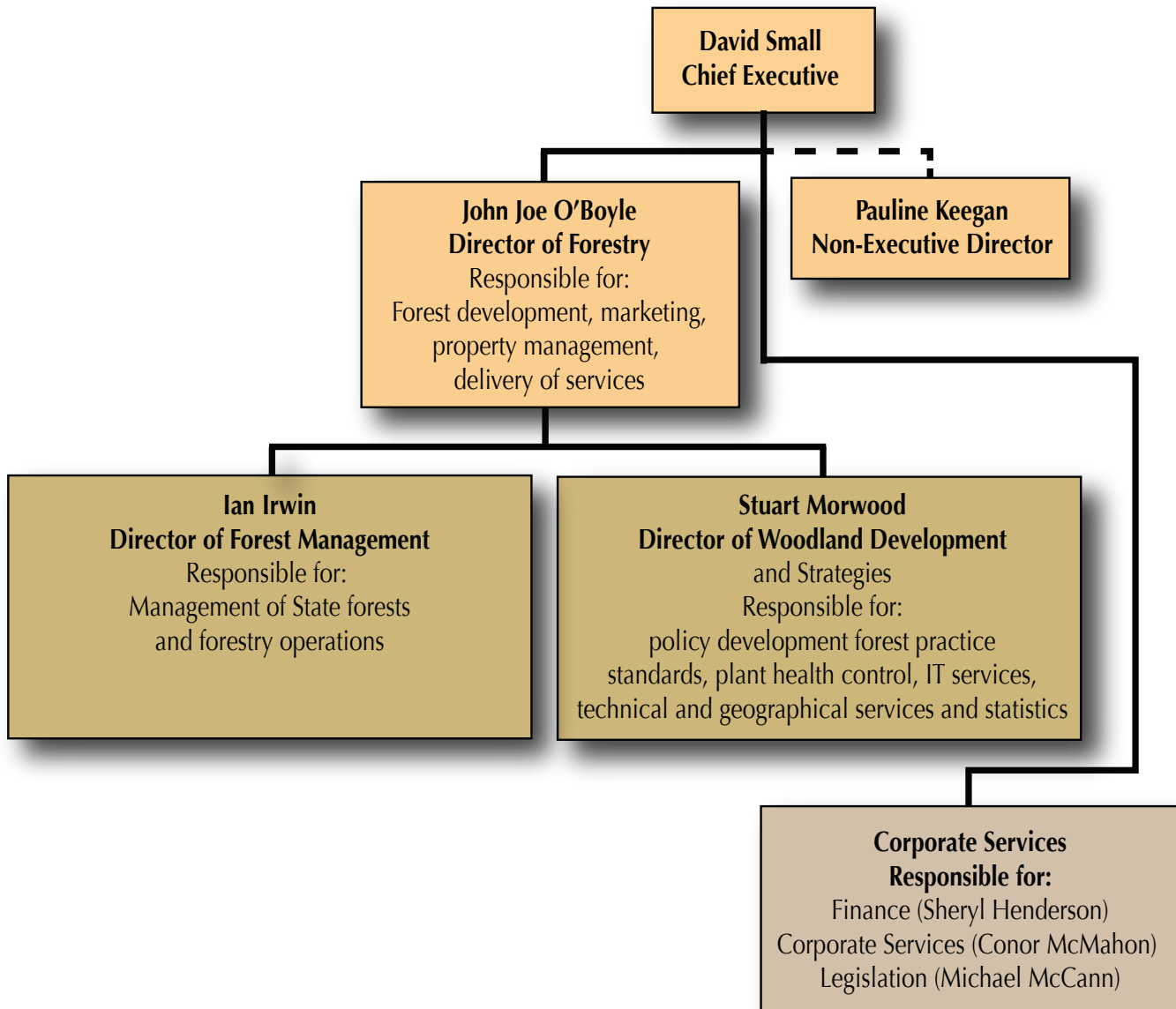
Appendices



Forest Service Standards

Area	Performance Standards
Customer Service standards	<p>Respond to 90% of written correspondence within 10 working days.</p> <p>Acknowledge all written complaints within 3 working days of receipt and provide a full response to 90% of written and verbal complaints within 15 working days of receipt.</p>
Financial control standards	<p>Achieve a financial outturn that is within resource limits.</p>

Agency Organisational Senior Structure



Agency Offices

Headquarters
(Customer Services Manager)
Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Ballymiscaw
BELFAST
BT4 3SB

Phone : 028 90524480

Fax : 028 90524570

e-mail to : customer.forests@ardni.gov.uk

The Grange
Castlewellan Forest Park
CASTLEWELLAN
BT31 9BU

Phone : 028 43772240

Fax : 028 43771762

Inishkeen House
Killyhevlin
ENNISKILLEN
BT74 4EJ

Phone : 028 66343032

Fax : 028 66324753

Forest Office
6 Forest Road
GARVAGH
BT51 5EF

Phone : 028 29556003

Fax : 028 29557162



Should accessible formats such as large type, audio cassette or a language other than English be required, please contact the Customer Services Manager at Forest Service Headquarters and appropriate arrangements will be made as soon as possible.

Forest Service Headquarters
Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Ballymiscaw
Belfast
BT4 3SB

Tel: 028 9052 4480
Fax: 028 9052 4570
e-mail: customer.forests@ardni.gov.uk

web sites: www.nidirect.gov.uk/forests
www.dardni.gov.uk/forests



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