



Business Plan

2014/2015



An Agency within the Department of
**Agriculture and
Rural Development**
www.dardni.gov.uk

AN ROINN
Talmhaíochta agus
Forbartha Tuaithe
MANNSTRÍE O
Fairs an
Kintra Fordèrin



**INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE**



Business Plan

2014/2015

Foreword	3
Introduction	5
Status	5
Vision and Aims	5
Functions	5
Corporate Governance	6
Organisation and Resources	7
Strategic Context	8
Executive Programme for Government	8
Operating environment	9
Scope for forest expansion	9
Managing forests sustainably	9
Business Priorities for 2014/15	11
Business Priorities	11
Targets and Objectives	11
Key Strategic Objectives and Targets	12
Forest Service Budgets	16
Monitoring and Reporting	17
Appendix 1: Forest Service Standards	18
Appendix 2: Agency Organisational Senior Structure	19
Appendix 3: Agency Offices	20



Foreword

By the Chief Executive



This Business Plan sets out our strategic objectives and associated targets for the 2014/15 business year. This is to deliver the Minister's policy aims for forestry and plant health encapsulated in 7 key targets, and her objective that the Forest Service Headquarters moves to Enniskillen as quickly as possible. To support this I have set a further 21 targets which are designed to cover the scope of what the Agency does and prepare us for the future. This is more than has been the case in recent years and represents a challenging programme of work.

Subject to funding, we will continue to promote forest expansion by providing financial support and by providing advice to forest owners.

We will also continue to manage the natural capital represented by state forests, testing the evidence base to determine our scope to maintain the supply of timber and other ecosystem services into the long term, developing opportunities for generating renewable energy, and investing in recreation and tourism infrastructure. We will continue to support and regulate private forest owners as they deal with the consequences of tree diseases and plan to regenerate forests after tree felling, and we will work to embed within the Agency the new responsibilities for all aspects of plant health.

We have been encouraged by the success of the investments made by our delivery partners in forest trails and other infrastructure. We will continue to encourage our partners in local government and industry to invest in our forests and deliver customer facing services, and look forward to achieving more during the year.



Malcolm Beatty
Chief Executive



Introduction

Status

Forestry functions are delivered by the Forest Service on behalf of the Department. The Forest Service became an Executive Agency within the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development on 1 April 1998. The Agency is subject to the overall direction of the Minister, who determines the policy framework within which the Agency operates, the level of resources made available each year, and the scope of Agency activities. During 2013, the Agency's functions were extended to include responsibility for all plant health matters. The Minister approves the Business Plan, sets the key performance targets and monitors the Agency's performance.

Vision and Aims

The Minister has affirmed that the policy vision remains that there should be a steady expansion of tree cover to increase the many diverse benefits that forests provide, and that woods and forests would be sustainably managed. The aim over the next 50 years is to increase the area of forest from the current 8% to 12% of land area by planting trees on 50,000 hectares (ha) of agricultural land, and to manage forests to provide a wide range of public and private benefits.

The aim is also to control and where possible eradicate plant pests and diseases that occur, but are not normally present, in Northern Ireland.

Functions

The Forestry Act (Northern Ireland) 2010 requires the Department to promote afforestation and sustainable forestry, so as to encourage public enjoyment and recreational use of its own forests and to promote the social benefits of other forests. The Act defines "forestry" to include the production and supply of timber and other forest products, the maintenance of adequate reserves of growing trees, and the management and development of forests so as to contribute to the protection of the environment, biodiversity and the mitigation of, or adaptation to, climate change.

The Plant Health Order (Northern Ireland) 2006 implements certain European Council and Commission Directives and decisions concerned with the control of organisms harmful to plants or plant products. The Order also imposes restrictions and requirements on relevant material imported into Northern Ireland from third countries. The principal controls are general prohibitions and restrictions on relevant material being landed in Northern Ireland, from third countries and from another part of the European Community (which includes other parts of the United Kingdom) including advance notice of landing of relevant material and the requirement for certain documents. Other legislation concerns reproductive materials and bee health.

The key tasks required to deliver the Minister's policies are:

- 1) To promote forest expansion by private landowners and public bodies through advice and grant aid;
- 2) To provide a regulatory framework and administrative process to support the achievement of policy objectives, including inspection programmes to monitor compliance with forestry and plant health legislation, aid scheme rules, seed certification schemes and bee health.
- 3) To maintain the knowledge base needed to inform forestry development and the inspection programme; and
- 4) To manage the Department's forests in consultation with stakeholders so as to:
 - Supply timber and to regenerate and protect areas following harvesting, and affected by disease and fire, by monitoring forest productivity, by planning harvests, by negotiating sale of forest products, and by investment to improve access and restock forests;
 - Provide public access for recreation, by maintaining and improving facilities and visitor services, increasingly through partnership arrangements with other public authorities, commercial providers, or groups of recreational users;
 - Verify sustainable management performance through a process of independent audit against the UK Woodland Assurance Standard; and
 - Release land from forestry for renewable energy generation and environmental improvement where this is consistent with our sustainable development obligations.

Corporate Governance

The Chief Executive is responsible to the Minister for the Agency's operations and performance, and is the Agency Accounting Officer. The Chief Executive is advised by a Management Board comprising five Executive Directors and two Non-Executive Directors; a Senior Civil Servant working



in another part of the Department and a senior Strategic Investment Board (NI) official.

The Chief Executive is also advised by an Audit Risk and Assurance Committee, established as a sub-Committee of the Board, about business risks, internal control and governance of the Agency. The Committee is chaired by a member of the Senior Civil Service from the Department for Regional Development and has two additional members, one of whom is a member of the Agency's Board.

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.

Organisation and Resources

The Minister has allocated the Agency £8.95million (m) in 2014/15 for running costs, staff salaries and wages. Under the NI Executive Economy and Jobs initiative (launched in November 2012 to take action to support the local labour market and to boost employment) Forest Service was allocated £4m over two years (2013-2015) under the theme of "Supporting Infrastructural Investment", and our intention is to target strategic recreational supporting infrastructure improvements at forest sites.

The Agency has 254 staff located at the Agency's headquarters in Belfast, in DARD Direct offices and at three main forest offices at Enniskillen, Castlewellan and Garvagh, and in forests.

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 the reduced target level set for absenteeism, and specific targets are included in this Business Plan. Specific action to meet our absenteeism targets will include the strict application of the absence management procedures, action on the prevention and investigation of industrial accidents and management reviews of absenteeism.

Strategic Context

Executive Programme for Government

During the 2010/11 business year we published a Delivery Plan outlining how we intended to deliver our duties under the new Forestry Act and listed 44 actions to be taken. The highest priority requirements follow from the Executive's Sustainable Development Strategy "Everyone's Involved" and the Executive Programme for Government (PfG) for the period to 2014/15. Forestry has scope to support achievement of:

- Executive Priority 1: "*Growing a Sustainable Economy and Investing in the Future*" by promoting forest expansion, by supplying timber for manufacturing and export, and for wood fuel; by providing access to forests to support tourism development; and by exploiting the strategic location of forests as sites for wind-energy;
- Executive Priority 3: "*Protecting Our People, the Environment and Creating Safer Communities*" by the way we look after forests to protect biodiversity through careful planning and execution of operations in our own woods, and enforcing legislation to curb anti-social behaviour affecting forests;
- Executive Priority 4: "*Building a Strong and Shared Community*" by improving access for community development, and using forests as vehicles for "*encouraging active citizenship ... unlocking the potential of the culture, arts and leisure sectors ... greater involvement in sporting and pastoral activities ...*"; and
- Executive Priority 5: "*Delivering High Quality and Efficient Public Services*" by continuing to focus on service quality and costs.

These priorities are reflected in the Department's strategic goal to help deliver improved sustainable environmental outcomes and Agency targets to support forestry projects by planning to incur Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme expenditure (excluding administration costs) of at least £1.3 m on forestry projects, to create at least 100 ha of new woodland, and to earn an income of £7.95 m from forest resources. It is also reflected in the Departmental goal to manage our business and deliver services to our customers in a cost-effective way. Through careful management of our costs and maximisation of revenue generated from the forest estate the



public subsidy of the Agency has been substantially reduced in recent years, but this also meant that expenditure on important assets has been less than is desirable if we are to meet public expectations and support a forest based tourist economy. Although the Agency will strive to maintain the subsidy at the lowest possible cost it will continue to seek out opportunities for investment to improve and extend the life of assets in line with the Executive policy on care for the historic estate, and to enable partners' investment in delivering recreation and other services.

The Agency shares in the Department's target to meet the combined industrial and non-industrial Departmental absenteeism target of 7.5 working days lost per Whole Time Equivalent (WTE). Forest Service combined absence target for 2014/15 has been set at 7.5 working days lost per WTE. During 2012 the Minister announced that the Forest Service should move its headquarters to Fermanagh. We will develop plans to achieve this aim during 2014/15.

This plan also contains supporting targets to provide greater clarity about how the key targets are to be achieved, and to prepare the ground for progress in future years.

Operating environment

Scope for forest expansion

The changes to the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) in Northern Ireland will be the main factor determining the rate and type of forestry expansion. There is little sign that landowners intend to change land-use from agriculture to forestry and, while they are adjusting to the CAP reforms, we expect the demand for forestry support to remain similar to that of recent years. Consequently, we plan to support new planting through a challenge scheme run on similar lines to the one in 2013, and to incorporate support for small scale planting into the Department's new Agri-Environment Scheme. In the interim, we will re-open the existing Woodland Grants Scheme to offer support for small planting schemes and for forest restoration following outbreaks of tree diseases.

Managing forests sustainably

Our principal obligation is to ensure that forests are managed in a sustainable manner, and we do this under the powers of The Forestry Act (2010). As evidence of this we hold a certificate of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) against the independently audited UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) issued in relation to our stewardship of the Department's forests. This means, broadly, that forest management complies with all legal obligations and is committed to a rigorous planning process that pays proper attention to the needs of people and public values in the design of forests at all stages of development. Forest Service ensures that forest operations comply with the plans and follow good practice; that forests are properly protected and maintained and that conservation and enhancement of biodiversity are given significant consideration. The Agency encourages community participation and supports community access. The Department is an "Investor in People" employer and we respect the rights of our staff and provide all training and equipment as necessary.

Previous investments created a substantial timber asset which is also used to deliver public access to forests and environmental improvement. Current plans indicate that timber can be supplied at current levels for about 15 years but thereafter supply will decrease sharply. Consequently, this year we will examine the scope to maintain timber supplies at constant levels in the long term. Subject to this and our obligations to manage forests sustainably, we will market timber to support the wood using industry and the rural economy, we will continue to invest in refreshing our recreation and tourism infrastructure using the money provided as a Forestry Fund from the Executive's Economy and Jobs Initiative, and we will seek to agree terms with our timber customers and recreation delivery partners to realise the benefits of the investments in growing timber and recreation infrastructure.

Work done during 2009 showed that extensive plantations occur in areas which are now considered unsuitable for forestry on grounds of loss of natural habitat. As these plantations mature we will work closely with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, the Strategic Investment Board and others to ensure that replacement plantations remain consistent with our forest policy obligations and, where land would be better under another use, consider how it can be restored to natural habitat or made available for renewable energy development.

Unfortunately, both public and private forests are currently being challenged by tree diseases, and action to limit the impact of these diseases will continue this year. As part of that action the Forest Service now incorporates plant health specialists that previously were located elsewhere in the Department, so that Forest Service responsibilities now include the full range of inspection services for crops and plant health.



Business Priorities for 2014-15

Business Priorities

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. Within the context of implementing our strategic aims, we have agreed a number of business priorities for this business year. These are to:

- Encourage forest expansion.
- Manage forests using evidence that production and other services are sustainable and cost-effective, to produce an income, to protect forest environments, to promote social use of forests, and to exploit opportunities for renewable energy investment, principally in wind-farms.
- Continue to make investments using funds provided from the Executive's Economy and Jobs Initiative to improve recreation and tourism infrastructure and support improved partnership working consistent with our Recreation and Social Use Strategy.
- To enhance plant health on an all Ireland basis and help the agri-food industry prepare for future market opportunities and economic challenges.
- Develop plans to move Forest Service Headquarters to Fermanagh.

To achieve this, the Business Plan sets a number of priorities, actions, key and supporting targets or milestones. These are set out in the next section.

Targets and Objectives

The Minister has set key targets for the Agency. The business priorities, actions, key and supporting targets are shown in Table 1 on page 12. Table 2 shows the net budget allocated to the Agency to deliver the work programme.

Table 1 Key Strategic Objectives and Targets

<p>Business Priorities</p>	<p>Actions During 2014/15 we will:</p>	<p>Key or supporting Target or milestones By March 2015 we will:</p>
<p>Encouraging forest expansion</p>	<p>Develop a new Forestry Grant Scheme, subject to agreement of a draft Rural Development Programme.</p>	<p>Key target</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Achieve creation of at least 100 ha of new woodland under Rural Development Regulation transitional arrangements. 2. Plan to incur NIRDP expenditure (excluding administration costs) of at least £1.3m on forestry projects.
<p>Managing forests sustainably to produce an income, to protect the environment, and to promote social use of forests</p>	<p>Plan the development of forests to sustain timber production, maintain environmental quality, and support recreational use; promote partnership working consistent with our Recreation and Social Use Strategy; and provide assurance that we comply with the requirements of the UK Woodland Assurance Standard in the management of our own forests.</p>	<p>Key targets</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Obtain income of at least £7.95m from forest resources. 4. Deliver a £2m programme of works in forests in support of the Executive's Economy and Jobs Initiative that will underpin forest recreation infrastructure investment.
<p>Collect and analyse information about the condition and use of forests.</p>	<p>Supporting targets</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Maintain the validity of our Certificate of Registration SA-FM/COC-002480 (FSC® Certified). B. Maintain the annual supply of wood for industrial processing at a minimum of 400,000 m3. C. Complete planning reviews for forests in East Fermanagh and Armagh. D. Cut 100 ha of Rhododendron and laurel in high risk forests. E. Produce a draft timber production forecast at the scale of landscape unit. F. Report on status of Forest Service ancient woodland sites following monitoring programme. 	<p>Supporting targets</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Maintain the validity of our Certificate of Registration SA-FM/COC-002480 (FSC® Certified). B. Maintain the annual supply of wood for industrial processing at a minimum of 400,000 m3. C. Complete planning reviews for forests in East Fermanagh and Armagh. D. Cut 100 ha of Rhododendron and laurel in high risk forests. E. Produce a draft timber production forecast at the scale of landscape unit. F. Report on status of Forest Service ancient woodland sites following monitoring programme.

<p>To enhance plant health on an all Ireland basis (DARD Goal 3) and help the agri-food industry prepare for future market opportunities and economic challenges (DARD Goal 1)</p>	<p>Regulate private felling and replanting.</p> <p>Work to prevent epiphytotic pests and diseases becoming established by applying official controls under the authority of national and EU legislation.</p> <p>We will develop our capability to anticipate and manage plant health threats through the consolidation of resources within Forest Service and co-ordinating our actions across these islands and, in line with recommendation 100 of the Agri-food Strategy Board (an all-island Plant Health Policy must be agreed and vigorously implemented), we will promote common approaches and industry stakeholder engagement on plant health matters with colleagues in the south.</p>	<p>G. Publish results of forest visitor surveys.</p> <p>H. Establish service baselines for recreation and tourism.</p> <p>I. Determine 90% of valid applications within 3 months.</p> <p>Key targets</p> <p>5. With DAFM, implement the actions in the all-island strategic plant health and pesticides work programme and update Ministers at NSMC Agriculture Sector meetings.</p> <p>6. Document the operational requirement for staff and resources to progress the transition of DARD plant health functions to Forest Service by end June 2014.</p> <p>Supporting targets</p> <p>J. Achieve at least 95% of planned inspections, surveys and samples.</p> <p>K. Develop a protocol for the cross border movement of timber affected by <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i>¹.</p> <p>L. We will support an all Ireland conference on the causes and management of the disease causing dieback of ash trees.</p> <p>M. Contribute to the establishment of a Plant Health consultative forum consisting of a broad range of industry stakeholders by August 2014.</p>
---	--	---

¹ Targets K - M reflect specific actions that implement the actions in the all island strategic plant health and pesticides work programme.

<p>Exploitation of wind energy opportunities on the forest estate</p>	<p>Prepare a procurement strategy looking at various options and a series of recommendations for how Forest Service should move forward with the development of wind energy opportunities on the estate. This will have the necessary approval documents in accordance with internal governance and procurement procedures. Publish this for stakeholder input and responses.</p> <p>Carry out a GIS lead criteria based assessment of the Forest Service sites and associated analysis (planning, financial etc.) to inform site prioritisation and next steps.</p> <p>Review the process of community engagement and consultation. This will include a review of best practices models, wind developer lead models and community engagement in other jurisdictions. We will meet with relevant stakeholders from industry and the community/voluntary sector.</p>	<p>Key Target</p> <p>7. Publish a procurement strategy for the exploitation of opportunities for wind farm development on the Forest Service estate.</p> <p>Supporting targets</p> <p>N. Develop a business case with recommendations on next steps for the development of wind energy by the end of September 2014.</p> <p>O. Subject to business case agreement, inform stakeholders of strategy progress and anticipated timeline and next steps by the end of December 2014.</p>
<p>Manage our business and deliver services to our customers in a cost-effective way</p>	<p>Implement the Departments absence management system.</p> <p>Facilitate recruitment, promotion and training of professional, technical, administrative and industrial staff and promote safe working practices.</p> <p>Aim to have zero reportable accidents.</p>	<p>Supporting targets</p> <p>P. Achieve the Agency average annual days sick absence of 7.5 days per employee.</p> <p>Q. Develop, review and submit a training plan to training providers.</p> <p>R. Publish the number of days since the last reportable accident.</p>

	<p>Improve the effectiveness of corporate records management and business processes.</p>	<p>S. Implement recommendations from reviews of electronic (TRIM) and paper records, and the DARD information 'legacy' project.</p>
	<p>Develop the capability and use of our Geographic Information System (GIS) to support integration with the DARD Corporate GIS Programme, and to service our forestry, plant health and wind-farm programme development needs, and revise forest data to reflect updated forest management plans.</p>	<p>T. Provide a business plan and operational requirement for a replacement GIS system by December 2014.</p>
	<p>Plan to complete the HQ relocation to Fermanagh by the summer of 2015.</p>	<p>U. Complete an assessment of the merits of relocation to Inishkeen House, with HQ Relocations Division, by summer 2014; and develop a staff transition plan with DHR by March 2015.</p>

Forest Service Budgets 2014-15

Table 2

Description	2014/15 Opening Baseline	2013/14 Opening Baseline
	£'000	£'000
Salaries	3,961	3,836
Wages	4,198	4,060
GAE	781	781
Current – Other	3,010	3,010
NIRDP Axis 2 Forest Resource Grant National	477	458
Receipts: Current	-8,950	-7,950
TOTAL FOREST SERVICE OTHER RESOURCE	3,477	4,195
Depreciation	788	788
Impairment	15	15
TOTAL FOREST SERVICE OTHER RESOURCE / DEPRECIATION / IMPAIRMENT	803	803
Recurrent Capital: Plant, Vehicles, Machinery & Roads	387	497
Forest Fund (Non EJI Ring Fenced)	500	0
Forest Fund (EJI Ring Fenced)	2,000	2,000
TOTAL FOREST SERVICE CAPITAL	2,887	2,497
NIRDP Axis 2 Forest Expansion Woodland Grant Scheme National	420	420
TOTAL FOREST SERVICE CAPITAL GRANT	420	420
TOTAL FOREST SERVICE DEL	7,587	7,915

DEL = 4 year Departmental Expenditure Limits as per the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review.

Monitoring and Reporting

The Forest Service Management Board will monitor performance against the key targets. 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.

Appendix 1

Forest Service Standards

Customer Service standards

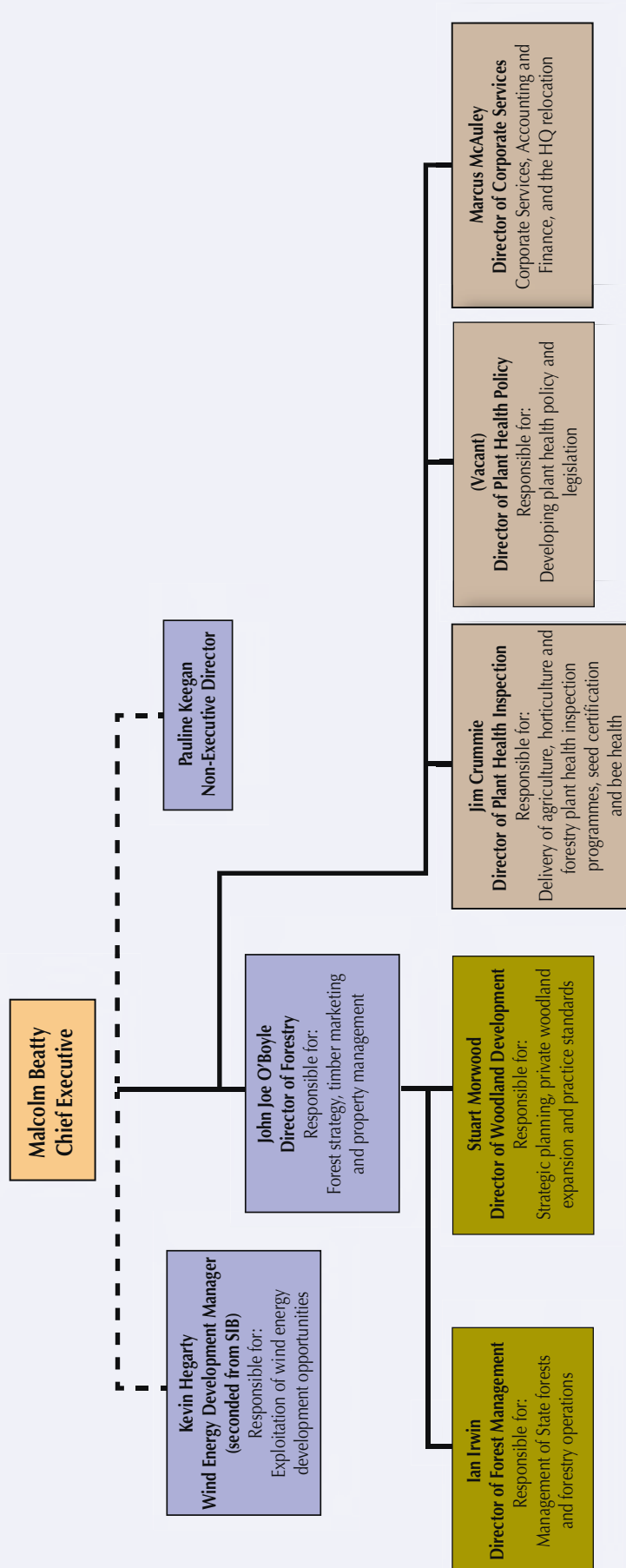
Respond to 90% of written correspondence within 10 working days.

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.

Financial control standards

Achieve a financial outturn that is within resource limits in line with the Department's targets that the Provisional Capital and Resource Outturns should be between 98.5% and 100% of the Final Budget. 1

Appendix 2 Agency Organisational Senior Structure



Appendix 3

Agency Offices

Agency Offices

Headquarters
Forest Service Customer Services
Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Ballymiscaw
BELFAST
BT4 3SB
Phone: 028 6634 3165
Fax: 028 6634 3144
e-mail: customer.forests@ardni.gov.uk

Inishkeen House
Killyhevin
ENNISKILLEN
BT74 4EJ
Phone: 028 6634 3032
Fax: 028 6632 4753

The Grange
Castlewellan Forest Park
CASTLEWELLAN
BT31 9BU
Phone: 028 4377 2240
Fax: 028 4377 1762

Forest Office
6 Forest Road
GARVAGH
BT51 5EF
Phone: 028 2955 6003
Fax: 028 2955 7162

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 6634 3165
Fax: 028 6634 3144
e-mail: customer.forests@ardni.gov.uk
web sites: www.nidirect.gov.uk/forests
www.dardni.gov.uk/forestry



FS 3C 06/14 NTH
ISBN 978-1-84807-483-5

Printed on recycled paper

