



NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME





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Forest Service
Department of the Marine and Natural Resources

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Published by:
Forest Service
Department of the Marine and Natural Resources
Johnstown Castle Estate
Co. Wexford
Ireland

Designed and printed by Graham & Stapleton Design Consultants, Dublin 6.

Photos by Forest Service (Gerard Cahalane, Kevin Collins, Eugene Curran), Dúchas The Heritage Service and Richard T. Mills.

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FOREWORD



As the Minister responsible for forestry, I wholeheartedly welcome the launch of the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME. This scheme, perhaps one of the most eagerly awaited in recent years, is aimed at protecting and enhancing Ireland's native woodlands. Native woodlands are among Ireland's most valuable habitats and today form an important part of our heritage, culture and landscape. However, they have suffered from centuries of clearance, exploitation and neglect and now represent a tiny fraction of our overall land area. As we embark on a new millennium, there has never been a more appropriate time to secure a future for this vital national resource.

The NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME provides support to landowners to protect and enhance existing native woodlands and to establish new native woodlands, using 'close-to-nature' silviculture. The scheme also supports the sensitive development of native woodland along streams, rivers and lakes to promote habitat quality for fish and other forms of aquatic and riparian life. The scheme is designed to accommodate a diverse range of projects, with safeguards to ensure that this unique opportunity to invest in Ireland's native woodlands is fully realised.

The NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME is funded by the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources under the National Development Plan 2000-2006, supported by the European Union. It was developed by the Forest Service, Department of the Marine and Natural Resources, in close co-operation with the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME Development Group, including Woodlands of Ireland, Dúchas The Heritage Service, the Central and Regional Fisheries Boards, Heritage Council, COFORD, The People's Millennium Forests, environmental non-government organisations and others. This process has resulted in a wide consensus on the scheme's underlying ecological principles and structure. It is envisaged that this group will continue to input into the development of the scheme, with each member organisation bringing its own particular expertise to the process.

The NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME represents a further step in the Forest Service's implementation of Sustainable Forest Management in Ireland. The scheme, together with the FOREST BIODIVERSITY GUIDELINES and other measures, will ensure that Irish forests continue to provide rich and varied habitats for native flora and fauna in addition to fulfilling important social, economic, recreational and landscape functions. The NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME will also contribute to Ireland's commitments under the EU Habitats Directive and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. In addition, the scheme strongly complements other national initiatives focusing on native woodlands. These include Woodlands of Ireland and The People's Millennium Forests, both funded in part by my Department.

I wish to thank all those involved in developing the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME for their expertise, effort and enthusiasm. This scheme will encourage a unique partnership between landowners, statutory bodies, environmental interests and the private sector which will ensure that native woodlands endure as a growing legacy for future generations. Perhaps there could be no greater testament to the memory of Freda Rountree, whose vision, spirit and love of trees inspired all of us to work together to cherish this vital part of Ireland's natural heritage.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Hugh Byrne".

Hugh Byrne TD
Minister of State, Department of the Marine and Natural Resources

THE NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME – PROTECTING AND EXPANDING IRELAND'S NATIVE WOODLANDS



Ireland's native woodlands – a vital national resource.

Native woodlands once covered most of the island of Ireland, and represent the natural vegetation which most of the countryside would revert to in the absence of human activity. They are among our most valuable ecosystems, each made up of a unique community of woody and non-woody plants and associated wildlife.

However, Ireland's native woodlands have been under constant pressure since early history, compounded by significant clearance, exploitation and neglect in recent centuries. Today, surviving fragments scattered across the island account for just 80,000 hectares or about one percent of Ireland's land area. Many have no designated conservation status and are under severe pressure from development, grazing and invasive species. Many are also in urgent need of sensitive management to secure their survival and long-term regeneration.

The last decade has seen a growing recognition of the immense ecological and cultural value of these unique habitats, leading in recent years to several major national initiatives. This new appreciation has developed in line with Ireland's clear obligations to protect important habitats under national, European Union and international legislation, conventions and protocols, including the Wildlife Act, the Habitats Directive, Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.



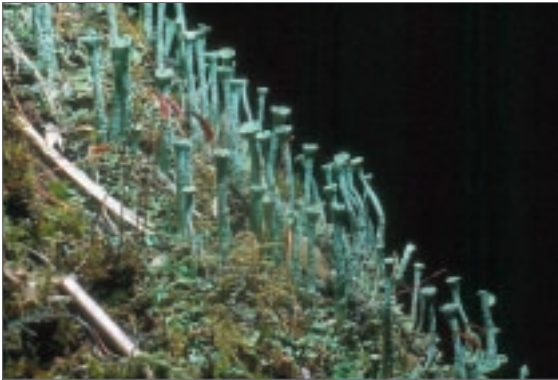
Native woodlands support diverse and complex plant communities, including ferns and bluebell.

The Forest Service NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME is a grant package for landowners aimed at encouraging the proactive protection and expansion of Ireland's native woodland resource and associated biodiversity, using appropriate 'close-to-nature' silviculture. Through a partnership with statutory bodies, landowners, environmental non-government organisations (ENGOS) and others, the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME has the potential to significantly reverse the decline of Ireland's native woodlands and to secure a healthy, vibrant resource for future generations.

The NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME originated from discussions between the Heritage Council, the Forest Service and Dúchas The Heritage Service, and a subsequent outline proposal by the Woodlands of Ireland group in 1999. The scheme was further developed by the Forest Service in close co-operation with the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME Development Group, including Woodlands of Ireland, Dúchas The Heritage Service, the Central and Regional Fisheries Boards, the Marine Institute, Heritage Council, COFORD, Coillte, The People's Millennium Forests, environmental non-government organisations (ENGOS), woodland owners, the nursery sector, research ecologists and geneticists, forestry consultants and others. Detailed consultation throughout this process has achieved wide consensus on the scheme's underlying ecological principles, structure and details.

The NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME is administered by the Forest Service, Department of the Marine and Natural Resources, and will operate until the end of 2006. It is funded by the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources under the National Development Plan 2000-2006, supported by the European Union.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME



Native woodland microflora include lichens (above), mosses and fungi.

The NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME is aimed at encouraging the proactive protection and expansion of Ireland's native woodland resource and associated biodiversity, using appropriate 'close-to-nature' silviculture. Where compatible, the realisation of wood and non-wood products is also encouraged. The scheme provides financial support for landowners to protect and enhance existing native woodlands and to establish new native woodlands. Both elements include native woodland on riparian sites adjoining streams, rivers and lakes.

A range of silvicultural approaches are eligible under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME, from protective fencing and rhododendron clearance to promote natural regeneration, to the implementation of traditional, close-to-nature systems such as coppicing and continuous cover forestry, which promote native woodland development while also enabling compatible wood production.

HOW DOES THE NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME DIFFER FROM OTHER FOREST SERVICE SCHEMES?



The wren is one of many bird species closely associated with our native woodlands.

The NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME differs from other Forest Service schemes in the following ways:

1. Conservation and biodiversity are prioritised, with wood production encouraged where appropriate.
2. The NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME Development Group, comprising a wide range of relevant bodies, will continue to play a major role in the scheme's development and review, advising on training, guidelines, monitoring and research.
3. Sites within Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) are eligible.
4. As part of the application procedure, applicants submit a site-specific ecological survey and management plan. Grant payment is dependent on the achievement of the objectives set out in this plan.
5. Each project must aim at securing the native woodland type identified as being the most appropriate to that particular site.
6. Non-native species are excluded under the scheme.
7. Emphasis is placed on the use of natural regeneration.



Herb Robert – a typical native woodland species.

8. Where planting is required, all stock must originate from suitable indigenous seed sources.
9. In addition to the general Afforestation Premium, applicants under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME may also be eligible for an annual Native Woodland Premium to assist in the long-term maintenance and improvement of native woodlands.
10. The grant and premium structure is designed to cater for the unpredictability associated with natural regeneration while also minimising the cost burden carried by applicants between expenditure on initial operations and the achievement of adequate stocking.
11. Woodlands funded under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME will be subject to more stringent felling controls, which may, for example, stipulate individual selection or small-scale coupe felling, cable or horse extraction, etc.

The NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME is open to private and public owners of existing woodlands and 'greenfield' sites. Particular emphasis is placed on ensuring an even uptake of the scheme both regionally and among the different applicant groups, and on its use to 'fortify' existing native woodlands and to promote the development of ecological corridors across the countryside.

The NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME is innovative in nature and will require a gradual build-up of expertise across several sectors before it can be implemented at full capacity. In order to facilitate this, the number of applications processed during the initial period may be limited. The scheme will also be reviewed periodically, incorporating any alterations deemed necessary. Various measures are being developed to support the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME, including a monitoring and research programme, a NATIVE WOODLAND MANUAL, training courses and support for nursery development.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME?



Native woodlands provide a habitat for numerous invertebrates, including the cockchafer or may-bug.

By facilitating the protection and expansion of Ireland's native woodlands, the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME will generate a wide range of benefits.

1. Native woodlands are among Ireland's rarest habitats and contribute significantly to our indigenous ecosystem, species and genetic biodiversity. The NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME will assist in securing their future survival as habitats of prime conservation value.
2. The scheme will promote silvicultural practices, skills and knowledge traditionally associated with native woodlands, e.g. coppicing, continuous cover forestry. These will have applications elsewhere in Irish forestry, particularly in the context of SFM.



Native woodlands support many of Ireland's mammal species, including the fox.

3. Native woodlands represent an indigenous seed source for native tree species, and their expansion will increase the supply of this valuable forest reproductive material for Ireland's ongoing broadleaf planting programme.
4. Many areas of native woodland, particularly native riparian woodland, serve as corridors or stepping-stones for plants and animals to move across the countryside, providing vital ecological connectivity between important habitats.
5. Native riparian woodlands play a major role in promoting water quality, protecting riverbanks from erosion, cooling water temperatures and creating favourable conditions for fish and other components of aquatic and riparian biodiversity.
6. Native woodlands represent an important element of the character and appeal of Ireland's landscape.
7. Native woodlands are part of Ireland's natural heritage and have a significant cultural, historical and educational value. Their protection and enhancement will provide an important legacy for future generations.
8. Native woodlands represent a valuable but under-utilised source of quality hardwood timber and a range of other wood and non-wood products. With careful management, these can be realised without compromising ecological values, thereby contributing to the long-term economic sustainability of native woodlands.
9. Native woodlands have played an important part in local economy and livelihood down through the ages. By supporting the protection and enhancement of native woodlands, the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME will promote this role, providing an alternative land use to agriculture and stimulating job creation among rural communities.
10. The NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME will contribute to Ireland fulfilling its obligations under national legislation and various European and international directives, conventions and protocols. These include the Wildlife Acts 1976-2000, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, EU Council Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive), the Lisbon Resolution on SFM and the Kyoto Protocol, as embodied in national initiatives such as the National Biodiversity Plan, the IRISH NATIONAL FOREST STANDARD and the National Climate Change Strategy.
11. The implementation of the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME will require a close partnership across the statutory, environmental and private sectors. This will engender a greater level of co-operation and synergy between all those interested in securing a future for Ireland's native woodlands and associated biodiversity.



WHAT ARE THE MAIN ELEMENTS OF THE NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME?

Applicants can apply under two separate elements:

- i. Element 1: Native Woodland Conservation;
- ii. Element 2: Native Woodland Establishment.

Details of both are described below. All grants under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME are cost-based.

Under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME, all management inputs into the site must be kept to the minimum required to achieve success, avoiding unnecessary operations and blanket prescriptions. All operations must be carefully selected and planned according to the specific site requirements, and sensitively implemented to minimise disruption and disturbance. Best forest practice is detailed in the Forest Service CODE OF BEST FOREST PRACTICE – IRELAND and environmental guidelines. Additional best practice specific to native woodlands is detailed in the NATIVE WOODLAND MANUAL.

ELEMENT 1: NATIVE WOODLAND CONSERVATION



Oakwood with hazel understorey, with opening for natural regeneration.

Overview

Element 1: Native Woodland Conservation is aimed at protecting and enhancing existing native woodlands. Also eligible is the phased, long-term conversion of existing non-native broadleaf, mixed and conifer forests (including those on riparian sites) to native woodland status, particularly where such forests are adjoining existing areas of native woodland.

To be eligible under Element 1, woodland should satisfy one of the following ecological conditions:

1. the overstorey is dominated by native species; or
2. the herb layer is characterised by a typical native woodland community; or
3. the woodland is bordered by woodland which satisfies one or both of the above conditions.

What operations are eligible for funding under Element 1?

Operations eligible for funding under Element 1: Native Woodland Conservation include:

- the preparation of a site-specific ecological survey and management plan;
- the purchase of indigenous planting stock;
- soil preparation, where appropriate (e.g. light scarification to facilitate natural regeneration);



Rhododendron is a major threat to native woodlands, preventing natural regeneration.

- forest protection (fencing and other measures);
- clearance of non-commercial woody growth, where ecologically appropriate (e.g. the creation of coupes for canopy rejuvenation);
- clearance of invasive exotic species (e.g. laurel and rhododendron);
- forest rejuvenation (planting, natural regeneration works, filling-in);
- maintenance (including vegetation control);
- woodland edge management;
- maintenance of open spaces, rides and glades;
- respacing;
- coppice management restoration;
- other specified operations, where appropriate.

What are the maximum grant and premium levels under Element 1?

The grant payable under Element 1: Native Woodland Conservation is based on approved costs (exclusive of VAT if the applicant is registered for VAT) subject to the maximum rate of €4,444 (£3,500)/ha.



The control of deer and other grazing animals is essential for successful regeneration.

In addition, applicants under Element 1 may also be eligible for an annual Native Woodland Premium. This premium is aimed at maintaining and improving the environmental stability of forests where the protective and ecological role of these forests is of public interest and where the cost of maintenance and improvement measures for these forests exceeds the income from these forests. Sites deemed to have an ecological benefit are eligible for an annual Native Woodland Premium up to a maximum of €120 per hectare, paid on a contract basis. The Native Woodland Premium is only available to private landowners.

How are Element 1 grants and premiums paid?

The first instalment (incurred costs up to 75% of the approved grant) is paid on verification that the site has been adequately prepared for the purpose of native woodland regeneration. Relevant operations include the preparation of the ecological survey and management plan, clearance of invasive exotics, coupe opening, fencing, scarification, etc. The second instalment is paid four years later, on verification of successful establishment and the achievement of the required stocking levels and species mix specified in the management plan, brought about through natural regeneration and/or planting. Where applicable, the Native Woodland Premium commences with payment of the second instalment. The second instalment and commencement of the Native Woodland Premium may be delayed if successful establishment and the required stocking levels and species mix have not been achieved.



Many of our coppice woodlands are in urgent need of restoration work.

This structure is designed to create a 4-year 'window of opportunity' to cater for the unpredictability associated with natural regeneration, while also minimising the cost burden carried by the applicant between expenditure on initial operations and the achievement of adequate stocking.



ELEMENT 2: NATIVE WOODLAND ESTABLISHMENT

Overview

Element 2: Native Woodland Establishment is aimed at encouraging the establishment of new native woodland, particularly in areas bordering existing native woodland and on riparian sites, ideally following the natural floodplain. An emphasis is placed on promoting ecological connectivity and woodland corridors at a landscape level.



With careful planning and management, sites adjoining streams and rivers may be suitable for the establishment of native riparian woodland.

To be eligible under Element 2: Native Woodland Establishment, sites should satisfy the following two ecological conditions:

1. the site adjoins a viable seed source of native species (including woodland, hedgerow, copse, scrub, etc.);
and
2. the site does not contain non-woodland habitats or vegetation types of particular ecological value (such sites are excluded from the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME, regardless of whether or not they lie within an SAC, NHA or other designated conservation area).

What operations are eligible for funding under Element 2 ?

Operations eligible for funding under Element 2: Native Woodland Establishment include:



Natural regeneration can play a significant role in establishing new native woodlands.

- the preparation of a site-specific ecological survey and management plan;
- soil preparation, where appropriate;
- forest protection (fencing and other measures);
- clearance of invasive exotic species and other woody growth, where ecologically appropriate;
- the purchase of indigenous planting stock;
- planting, natural regeneration works, filling-in;
- maintenance (including vegetation control);
- other specified operations, where appropriate.

What are the maximum grant and premium levels under Element 2?

The maximum grant rates for Element 2: Native Woodland Establishment are set out below.

Table 1. Maximum grant rates for Element 2: Native Woodland Establishment.

1st Instalment €(£)/ha	2nd Instalment €(£)/ha	Total grant €(£)/ha
3,809 (3,000)	1,143 (900)	4,952 (3,900)
The following rate is only available on sites where oak-dominated (i.e. above 75% stocking) woodland is identified as being the most appropriate native woodland type.		
4,825 (3,800)	1,524 (1,200)	6,349 (5,000)
Notes 1. The 1st Instalment Grant payable is based on the costs involved (exclusive of VAT if the applicant is registered for VAT) subject to the maximum rates shown. The 2nd Instalment Grant is a fixed rate as shown.		

Applicants under Element 2: Native Woodland Establishment may also be eligible for Afforestation Premiums under the general Forest Service Afforestation Grant and Premium Schemes. This premium varies according to applicant status and species.

Table 2. Afforestation Premium under Element 2: Native Woodland Establishment.

Applicant status	Species	Premium €(£)/ha
Farmer	Approved species other than oak	442 (348)
	Oak	474 (373)
Non-Farmer		184 (145)
Notes 1. On land owned by farmers, a supplement of £10/ha will be payable on sites greater than 6 ha, and £20/ha on sites greater than 12 ha. 2. Premiums are payable for 20 years in the case of farmers, and 15 years in the case of non-farmers. Status is as defined in the current Forest Service FORESTRY SCHEMES PROCEDURES & STANDARDS MANUAL. 3. The higher premium rate for oak is only available on sites where oak-dominated (i.e. above 75% stocking) woodland is identified as being the most appropriate native woodland type. 4. Further details and conditions relating to the Afforestation Premium are contained in the current FORESTRY SCHEMES PROCEDURES & STANDARDS MANUAL.		

In addition to the above grant and Afforestation Premium, applicants under Element 2 may also be eligible for a Native Woodland Premium. This premium is aimed at maintaining and improving the environmental stability of forests where the protective and ecological role of these forests is of public interest and where the cost of maintenance and improvement measures for these forests exceeds the income from these forests. Sites deemed to have an ecological benefit are eligible for an annual Native Woodland Premium up to a maximum of €120 per hectare, paid on a contract basis. The Native Woodland Premium is only available to private landowners.

How are Element 2 grants and premiums paid?

The first instalment (see Table 1) is paid on verification that the site has been adequately prepared for the purpose of native woodland establishment. Relevant operations include the preparation of the ecological survey and management plan, the clearance of exotic woody growth, fencing, soil preparation, etc. The second instalment is paid four years later, on verification of successful establishment and the achievement of the required stocking levels and species mix specified in the management plan, brought about through natural regeneration and/or planting. Where applicable, the Afforestation Premium commences with payment of the

second instalment. The second instalment and commencement of the Afforestation Premium may be delayed if successful establishment and the required stocking levels and species mix have not been achieved. Where applicable, the additional Native Woodland Premium commences after the Afforestation Premium payments cease.

This structure is designed to create a 4-year 'window of opportunity' to cater for the unpredictability associated with natural regeneration, while also minimising the cost burden carried by the applicant between expenditure on initial operations and the achievement of adequate stocking.



New native woodlands rapidly develop into diverse habitats for plants and animals.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR THE NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME?

All proposed work must receive the prior written approval of the Forest Service. Any work which proceeds without such approval will not be eligible for grant assistance or premium payment.

Step 1: Initial application

The applicant submits a NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME Application Form to the Forest Service, together with the standard Form 1 and necessary maps and documentation detailed in the current FORESTRY SCHEMES PROCEDURES & STANDARDS MANUAL. This submission must be prepared by the applicant and a Forest Service-approved forester. Where projects involve both Element 1: Native Woodland Conservation and Element 2: Native Woodland Establishment, each element must be applied for as a separate application.

Step 2: Initial assessment

The proposal is assessed by the Forest Service in relation to its ecological and silvicultural merit and general suitability under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME. Sites may be excluded at this initial stage, e.g. for ecological reasons or in cases where the proposal is more suited to a different Forest Service grant scheme.

Step 3: Ecological survey/management plan

The applicant is invited to submit an ecological survey/management plan. This is prepared by a Forest Service-approved forester and a qualified and experienced woodland ecologist, both of whom have completed the Native Woodland Training Course. The plan must follow a set framework supplied by the Forest Service, and must incorporate any specified amendments arising from the initial assessment.

The ecological survey/management plan is a key part of the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME, setting out the ecological priorities (including the native woodland type to be promoted), long-term aims, management objectives, operations, costings, etc. The document details specific management objectives to be achieved by those operations for which funding is being sought. Grant payment is dependent on these objectives being achieved.

Step 4: Approval

The ecological survey/management plan is assessed by the Forest Service. Sites in or adjoining SACs, SPAs and NHAs, and sites containing or adjoining streams, rivers and lakes, are referred to the relevant statutory agencies for consultation. Approved operations can commence after receipt of written approval by the Forest Service, adhering to any conditions specified. All operations must be undertaken by a woodland contractor who has successfully completed the Native Woodland Training Course.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS REGARDING NATIVE WOODLAND TYPES, SPECIES AND STOCKING DENSITIES?



Pedunculate oak – one of Ireland's native broadleaves.

A number of different native woodland types are found across Ireland, each influenced by soil type, climate and other physical factors. Examples include Killarney's acid oak woodlands, hazelwood in the Burren, Co. Clare, and ash-oak-hazelwood associated with many of our esker ridges. Each project under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME must aim at securing the native woodland type most appropriate to that particular site, as identified during the application procedure.

Native species acceptable under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME are listed below. Understorey and minor species can comprise up to 15% of the initial stocking. A higher percentage may be acceptable where such species dominate the native woodland type identified for the site, e.g. hazelwood, riparian woodland dominated by willow species. All species must be suited to the native woodland type identified for the site.

Table 3. Acceptable species under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME.



Hazel is an understorey species in many of our native woodlands.

Overstorey species

Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>
Silver birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>
Downy birch	<i>Betula pubescens</i>
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Sessile oak	<i>Quercus petraea</i>
Pedunculate oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Scots pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>

Understorey and minor species

Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Spindle	<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Crab apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>
Aspen	<i>Populus tremula</i>
Wild cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>
Blackthorn, sloe	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Eared willow	<i>Salix aurita</i>
Goat willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>
Rusty willow	<i>Salix cinerea</i> ssp. <i>oleifolia</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>
Yew	<i>Taxus baccata</i>
Guelder rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>

Other native species may also be acceptable on a case-by-case basis, after consultation with the Forest Service. Shrub species such as roses, bramble, gorse and broom are not eligible for grant-aid. These colonise sites naturally, and this process should be encouraged where not in conflict with emerging trees.





Ancient specimens have a high habitat value, both as living trees and as future deadwood.

Woodlands entered under Element 1: Native Woodland Conservation may contain existing stands of non-native species. While the long-term aim will be to convert the entire woodland to native species, the immediate felling of such stands may conflict with landscape, recreational, ecological and commercial considerations and with the wishes of the local community. Such stands should be gradually converted over the medium- to long-term on a phased basis set out in the management plan, with associated natural regeneration regularly controlled during the interim period. Ancient specimens – both native and non-native – should also be retained for their habitat value, both as living trees and as future deadwood.

A minimum stocking level of 3,300 plants/ha, achieved through natural regeneration and/or planting, applies to all species except oak under both elements of the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME. Areas under oak are subject to a minimum stocking level of 6,600 plants/ha. These stocking levels will facilitate successful woodland establishment and will promote stem quality where future hardwood production is a consideration. Where required for ecological reasons, respacing can be applied to reduce stocking levels once establishment has taken place.

ARE THERE ANY RESTRICTIONS REGARDING SEED ORIGIN?

The use of natural regeneration is encouraged under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME. However, on many sites, overhead or adjoining seed sources may be absent, unsuitable or inadequate, therefore necessitating the partial or full use of planting stock. In order to conserve Ireland's genetic biodiversity, this material must originate from suitable indigenous sources of native seed.

All seed and planting stock used under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME is subject to the EU Council Directives 66/404/EEC and 71/161/EEC on the marketing and external quality standards of forest reproductive material, or to the Forest Service internal rules concerning the certification of seed and plant material used under its grant schemes. From 1 January, 2003, the two existing Directives will be replaced by a new single EU Council Directive 1999/105/EC on the marketing of forest reproductive material.

The regulations are based on the use of a master Certificate of Provenance which is issued for seed collections. All seed collectors and suppliers of plants must be registered with the Forest Service and all seed collections must be notified in advance, following which a Certificate of Provenance will be issued. A Provenance Declaration Form/Supplier's Document incorporating the unique number of the Certificate of Provenance must then accompany the seed and plants through the nursery cycle to the final planting site. Under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME, these rules provide traceability and assurance to the end-user regarding the origin and quality of the planting stock he/she is receiving. They also provide a mechanism for ensuring that all planting stock used under the scheme originates from a suitable indigenous source.

Planting stock used in or adjoining SACs, NHAs, Nature Reserves, National Parks and known ancient woodlands must originate from seed collected from within or nearby these areas. Also, individuals may wish to use planting stock on a particular site produced from seed collected from that same site. The above regulations apply to both cases. As a natural process, natural regeneration does not fall under the above regulations.



Oak planted under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME must originate from indigenous registered seed stands.



Other native species, including holly, must originate from sources within Ireland identified as being indigenous and heterogeneous.

Sessile and pedunculate oak

With the exception of limited licence, **all sessile and pedunculate oak planted under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME must originate from a registered seed stand included in the National Catalogue of Seed Stands and regarded as being indigenous**, with an emphasis placed on those registered seed stands closest to, and ecologically similar to, the site. As a backup measure to the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME, efforts will be directed at increasing the number of indigenous registered seed stands from which acorns can be collected for use under the scheme.

Other acceptable native species

Given the lack of registered seed stands for native species other than oak, seed for these species will have to be collected from other sources such as unregistered stands, hedgerows and trees. In order to promote genetic variability and to facilitate effective seed collection, nursery propagation and grant administration within the context of the above regulations, **all planting stock of native species (other than sessile and pedunculate oak – see above) must originate from within Ireland from sources identified through good seed collection practices as being indigenous and heterogeneous.**

This measure is an interim arrangement, pending research to investigate whether or not environmental conditions across Ireland have given rise to genetically discrete local populations of native species, and the impact, if any, on future genetic diversity arising from the use of locally collected seed from stands which may have been genetically impoverished through extended periods of exploitation.

The use of local sources is encouraged where adequate knowledge exists regarding history, origin, ecological zones, etc., and where traceability through the seed collection and nursery chain can be guaranteed.

ARE THERE ANY SITES EXCLUDED FROM THE NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME?



Sites containing valuable habitats and vegetation types, such as fenland (above), are excluded from the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME.

During proposal evaluation, sites deemed to contain non-woodland habitats or vegetation types of particular ecological value will be excluded from the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME, regardless of whether or not they lie within an SAC, NHA or other designated conservation area. Sites above the natural treeline are also excluded.

Sites unlikely to support adequate woodland development in keeping with the objectives of the scheme, due to physical factors such as exposure, soil infertility, degree of rockiness, etc., will also be excluded.

Areas under the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS) are not eligible under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME.

ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS

- The decision of the Minister of the Marine and Natural Resources on any matter relating to the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME is final. The decision on any aspect of the work or whether or not satisfactory establishment has been achieved also rests with the Minister. Any special conditions attached to grant approval, including environmental conditions, must be complied with in full by the applicant. Failure to do so will result in the withholding of grant aid for the entire area. The Minister reserves the right to amend the scheme at any time.
- If, for the purpose of obtaining aid under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME, an applicant knowingly makes a false or misleading statement or withholds information, the aid shall be withheld or reimbursed. The Minister reserves the right to exclude such a person from further participation in the scheme.
- All woodlands are subject to the provisions of the Forestry Act 1946, under which illegal felling is a prosecutable offence.
- The NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME is funded by the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources under the National Development Plan 2000-2006, supported by the European Union. All publicity (including signage, leaflets, articles, etc.) must acknowledge this support in full.
- Each of the two elements of the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME can only be availed of once for a particular site. Similarly, unless there is a particular ecological benefit, projects previously grant-aided for improvement or establishment under any other Forest Service scheme are only eligible under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME for development of a different type.
- The minimum area eligible under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME is 0.1 ha. In general, sites must be greater than 40 m in width, although narrower sites (such as riparian sites) may be eligible in certain situations.
- All projects receiving grant aid under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME must be adequately maintained and protected in accordance with their original ecological survey and management plan, as verified by ongoing spot inspections by the Forest Service. Failing this, premiums will cease and all monies paid or part thereof will be refundable.
- All work funded under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME must be compatible with the protection of the environment and will be subject to environmental auditing by the Forest Service. All operations must be in accordance with the Forest Service FORESTRY SCHEMES PROCEDURES & STANDARDS MANUAL, CODE OF BEST FOREST PRACTICE – IRELAND, FORESTRY AND THE LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES, FORESTRY AND WATER QUALITY GUIDELINES, FORESTRY AND ARCHAEOLOGY GUIDELINES, FOREST HARVESTING AND THE ENVIRONMENT GUIDELINES and FOREST BIODIVERSITY GUIDELINES, and with any other guidelines issued by the Forest Service from time to time.
- Where applicable, all planting stock must comply with EU Council Directive 2000/29/EC (Plant Health Directive).
- The Forest Service will, as required, consult with other relevant authorities in relation to any aspect of the proposal, and will take their views into account when considering grant approval.
- Appeals to decisions made under the NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME should be addressed to the Forest Service, Department of the Marine and Natural Resources, Johnstown Castle Estate, Co. Wexford.

GLOSSARY

Afforestation Premium: Annual payment made in relation to forests which qualify for an afforestation grant, designed to compensate the landowner for the loss in income earning potential from the establishment of new forest on his/her land.

Ancient specimens: Old, overmature trees. Important for forest biodiversity, providing a range of habitats for invertebrates, birds and other animals, e.g. deep fissured bark, broken snags, cavities, dead branches. FOREST BIODIVERSITY GUIDELINES stipulate the retention of ancient trees for habitat creation.

Ancient woodland: Semi-natural woodland which has been under continuous cover since the year 1600 or before.

Biodiversity: The variability among living organisms and the ecosystems of which they are part. Three levels are recognised – ecosystem, species and genetic.

Carbon sequestration: The process by which carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere and stored in plant tissue, including wood.

Close-to-nature silviculture: Forest management where natural processes such as windthrow and fire are emulated and processes such as natural regeneration are encouraged in order to manage age and species diversity while reducing management costs.

CODE OF BEST FOREST PRACTICE – IRELAND: Describes the appropriate manner in which all forest operations should be carried out to ensure the implementation of SFM.

COFORD: The National Council for Forest Research and Development.

Continuous cover forestry: Forest management which facilitates timber production while maintaining continuous canopy cover. Characterised by a high diversity of age classes and species in any given area, and the use of single tree/small coupe harvesting regimes. Continuous cover forestry facilitates or improves woodland ecosystem, landscape and recreational functions, as well as timber production and economic sustainability.

Coppice: Traditional form of woodland management involving the repeated cutting back of woody shoots on a cyclic rotation, the length of which can be varied to yield different produce. Creates a range of habitats and light conditions within the forest, benefiting flora and fauna.

Coupe: A small-scale opening within an existing canopy, created to facilitate woodland rejuvenation through natural regeneration or planting.

Deadwood: Dead stems and other woody debris standing or lying on the forest floor. As the deadwood breaks down and decays, it provides a valuable habitat for a wide range of organisms. FOREST BIODIVERSITY GUIDELINES stipulate the retention of some deadwood after harvesting for habitat creation.

Dúchas The Heritage Service: (Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands) Ireland's statutory conservation body. National Parks and Wildlife section is responsible for national parks, nature reserves and other protected areas, and the implementation of various national, EU and international legislation, directives and conventions relating to nature conservation and biodiversity.

Ecosystem: A community of different plant and animal species interacting with one another and with their non-living environment.

Environmental guidelines: Govern forest operations in relation to the protection of the environment, covering landscape, water quality, archaeology, harvesting and biodiversity. Compliance is a condition of Forest Service grant aid.

Establishment: The point in early woodland development at which the height of the desired tree species is above that of competing vegetation.

Forest reproductive material: A collective term used to describe seeds, plants and other propagating material important for forestry purposes.

Forest Service: (Department of the Marine and Natural Resources) Ireland's national forest authority, responsible for forest policy, the promotion of the forest sector, the administration of forestry grant schemes, forest protection, felling control and the promotion of research. Also responsible for the implementation of SFM in Ireland.

Forestry Act 1946: The principal national legislative instrument governing forestry, containing the main provisions for controlling tree felling.

FORESTRY SCHEMES PROCEDURES & STANDARDS MANUAL: Forest Service publication detailing the operational and administrative procedures and standards under various forestry grant schemes.

Habitats Directive: EU Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. Provides for the establishment of SACs.

Habitat: The physical and living environment in which an organism or community of organisms lives.

Heritage Council: Body with a statutory responsibility to propose policies and priorities for the identification, protection, preservation and enhancement of the national heritage.

Indigenous: Native to Ireland.

IRISH NATIONAL FOREST STANDARD: Outlines criteria and indicators relating to the implementation of SFM in Ireland, and measures by which progress towards SFM will be monitored.

Kyoto Protocol: International protocol (1997) setting targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions to offset global warming. Implementation in Ireland set out in the National Climate Change Strategy, developed by the Department of the Environment and Local Government with cross-sector input.

Lisbon Resolution: Pan-European resolution (1998) on the implementation of SFM, arising from the Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe.

Marine Institute: National agency with responsibility for promoting, directing and co-ordinating marine research and development.

Native species: Tree species which have naturally colonised Ireland since the last Ice Age. Of particular biodiversity value, having developed alongside other native flora and fauna over thousands of years.

Native woodland: Woodland dominated by native species of trees and other native plants.

Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs): Protected areas of natural heritage and geological importance proposed under the Wildlife Acts 1976 and 2000.

Natural regeneration: The process by which a woodland is naturally rejuvenated. Normally involving the emergence of a young understorey from seedfall.

Natural woodland: Woodland which has persisted in its natural state since before human settlement. Given the extent of human activity over the entire island, it is thought highly unlikely that any such woodland now remains in Ireland.

People's Millennium Forests: National initiative aimed at expanding Ireland's native woodlands, centred on the restoration of 16 semi-natural woodlands. Managed by Coillte (Ireland's Forestry Board) in consultation with stakeholder groups, funded by AIB Bank, the National Millennium Committee and the Forest Service.

Plant Health Directive: EU Council Directive 2000/29/EC on protective measures against the introduction into the Community of organisms harmful to plants or plant products and against their spread within the Community.

Regional Fisheries Boards: Together with the Central Fisheries Board, are the state agencies responsible for conserving, protecting, developing, managing and promoting Ireland's inland fisheries.

Registered seed stands: Stands selected on the basis of origin, quality, health, production, etc. which are included in the Forest Service National Catalogue of Seed Stands.

Riparian: Associated with the banks of streams, rivers and lakes. Riparian sites are generally regarded as the land between the river bank and the upper level of normal flooding. Distinctive native woodland types, usually characterised by willows, alder, ash and sometimes pedunculate oak, occur naturally on such sites.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS): Measure supporting environmentally-friendly farm management.

Semi-natural woodland: Woodland which resembles the natural woodland cover, dominated by native trees but considerably altered by human activity. Stands originating from previous planting may be termed semi-natural if they are now regenerating naturally, as may stands which were formerly coppiced.

Silviculture: The science of growing and managing forests.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs): Protected areas designated under the Habitats Directive.

Sustainable forest management (SFM): "The stewardship and use of forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems." (From the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, Helsinki, 1993.) Implemented in Ireland by the Forest Service, using the IRISH NATIONAL FOREST STANDARD, CODE OF BEST FOREST PRACTICE – IRELAND, environmental guidelines, legislative review and the Forestry Inspectorate.

United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity: International convention (1992) on the protection of global biodiversity. Implementation in Ireland set out in the National Biodiversity Plan, developed by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands with cross-sector input.

Wildlife Act 1976: The principal national legislative instrument governing nature conservation. Wildlife Acts 1976 and 2000 provide for the establishment and protection of NHAs.

Woodlands of Ireland: A partnership project established in 1997 with funding and support from the Forest Service, Heritage Council and Dúchas The Heritage Service to promote the conservation, expansion and sustainable development of native woodlands.



Further information:

Forest Service

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Cuirfear fáilte le comhfhreagras i nGaeilge.

Tá breis eolais le fáil ach glaoch ar:

An tSeirbhís Foraoise

Roinn na Mara agus Acmhainní Nádurtha

Eastát Chaisleán Bhaile Sheonach

Co. Loch Garman

Éire