



NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME



NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME

Forest Service
Department of the Marine and Natural Resources

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FOREWORD

As the Minister of State responsible for forestry, I welcome the release of the new NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME. The scheme offers considerable support to local authorities, community groups, environmental NGOs and private woodland owners to work in partnership to develop appropriate woodland amenities in and around villages, towns and cities. Such amenities, designed and equipped for public access, recreation and enjoyment, will impart a wide range of benefits to the surrounding communities. These so-called 'neighbourwoods' will represent a resource for all and will form an integral part of the locality and community life.

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

The NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME represents a complete restructuring of the former Urban Woodland Scheme. This process involved consultation with relevant professionals from almost 30 local authorities during a nationwide series of workshops held by the Tree Council of Ireland, and intensive effort by a core working group comprising officials from the Forest Service, local authorities and the Tree Council of Ireland.

Some noteworthy features of the new NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME are as follows.

- The scheme is designed to complement existing local authority activities, funding structures and programmes (e.g. Area Action Plans, Management Agreements, Development Plans, Urban and Village Renewal Schemes, Tidy Towns Competitions and Local Agenda 21), and the growing involvement of community groups and environmental NGOs in the management of local amenities.
- The scheme is tailored to the practicalities of developing woodlands in the urban environment, taking into account confined landbanks, year-to-year funding mechanisms, safety and vandalism, catering for people with special needs, and the need to develop partnerships with communities and NGOs. The scheme also highlights the potential role for relevant consultants and forestry contractors in undertaking the work.
- The NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME recognises the valuable role of privately owned woodlands around villages, towns and cities in providing amenity and recreation for local communities. Such woodlands are eligible under the scheme, through the development of management agreements and other arrangements between the owner and the local authority.
- Increased grant rates for woodland establishment, improvement and the installation of recreational facilities.
- A streamlined grant structure, conditions and application procedure, e.g. a preliminary application form is included to screen out unsuitable projects at an early stage for the benefit of all parties.
- An accessible 'one-stop-shop' brochure containing all relevant details of the NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME, practical guidelines on project development, a suggested reading list, and realistic examples of how the scheme might be applied.

The NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME represents an excellent opportunity for local authorities, community groups, environmental NGOs and private woodland owners to provide communities in villages, towns and cities with their own neighbourwood amenity. Such initiatives will contribute greatly to the development of sustainable, liveable and enjoyable environments for urban-based communities, while further broadening the growing range of public benefits generated by Ireland's woodland resource.

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

Hugh Byrne TD

Minister of State, Department of the Marine and Natural Resources



Neighbourwoods –
a chance to relax and play...



...and to learn about nature
and the environment.



Opportunities for new
neighbourwoods extend
from open spaces within
residential areas...

INTRODUCTION

Woodland amenities developed for public enjoyment and located in and around villages, towns and cities create a host of social, environmental and economic benefits. For example, they:

- greatly improve the local landscape and environment;
- offer users daily contact with a natural setting, thereby promoting health and well-being;
- provide for a wide variety of recreational activities for both young and old;
- create valuable habitats for wildlife in and around the urban environment;
- play a major role in promoting air quality and in carbon sequestration;
- screen noise pollution and eyesores;
- enable direct contact with wildlife and nature, thereby providing an ideal resource for environmental education, particularly for young people;
- provide a buffer to integrate mixed developments and landuses within the urban landscape;
- contribute to local character and distinctiveness;
- provide a vehicle for people to become involved in their local environment, thereby encouraging a sense of community ownership, identity and wider community activity;
- provide an opportunity to 'reclaim' former landfill sites and derelict land;
- represent a financial saving, as urban woodlands are often cheaper to maintain than other forms of greenspace;
- help to create an attractive 'green' landscape which encourages inward investment, employment and tourism.

Given these benefits, the development of such woodland amenities by local authorities in partnership with the local community shows a clear commitment to sustainable development, public participation and the quality of life.

With the rapid expansion of Ireland's urban centres over recent years, there has perhaps never been a greater need to provide communities with woodland amenities – or 'neighbourwoods' – which are accessible, attractive and which form an integral part of the locality. These can range in scale from small pockets in and around residential areas and public parks, to larger scale woodland amenities situated on greenbelts and along the urban fringe, to existing woodlands located outside towns and villages and used by local communities for amenity and recreation.

The NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME can be used to create new woodland on parts of a site earmarked for future housing development, thereby putting in place a woodland amenity for the benefit of future residents. The scheme can also be used to fund integrated woodland strategies aimed at developing pockets of existing and new woodland cover throughout a particular area, such as a residential estate or public park. Other potential sites include derelict land, land unsuitable for development, existing greenbelts, public open spaces, watercourses, former landfills, etc. The scheme can also be used to improve and develop existing woodland in and around villages, towns and cities for public access and enjoyment.

The Forest Service NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME provides attractive support for the development of new and existing 'neighbourwoods' for public access, recreation and enjoyment on land owned or managed by local authorities in or near villages, towns and cities. The scheme is aimed primarily at local authorities. Proposals developed by recognised community development associations and voluntary non-government organisations (NGOs) with local authority support will also be eligible for funding. In these situations, the local authority acts as the official applicant for and recipient of funding under the NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME on behalf of and in partnership with the community development association/NGO.



...to sites on the outskirts of towns and villages.

THE NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME will be of considerable interest to local authorities in relation to lands in their ownership or which they manage. The scheme can form part of a local authority's strategic planning function in the development of public amenities. It can be used, for example, to achieve objectives contained in **Local Area Plans** for the creation of new public amenities. Local authorities can also use the NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME in combination with their powers under the Local Government (Planning and Development) Acts to ensure that public amenity areas are provided in tandem with other developments, including housing. The scheme may be applied to lands which are subject to **Management Agreements** under Section 47 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, where it can be demonstrated that the lands will ultimately be vested in the Planning Authority.

The NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME may also be used to further policies and objectives contained in statutory **Development Plans** and **Integrated Area Plans**, and in the development of facilities under the **Urban and Village Renewal Schemes** and the **Tidy Towns Competition** programmes. The scheme will also be relevant to initiatives aimed at the protection and corridor development of **urban watercourses** and the creation of woodland amenities in existing public parks. As community consultation and participation will represent a major component of those projects funded, the NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME will also enable local authorities to demonstrate, on a very practical level, their commitment to implementing **Local Agenda 21**.



The NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME can be used to protect and develop river corridors in urban areas.

THE NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME, COMMUNITY GROUPS AND NGOS

Over recent years, numerous woodland projects have been initiated by community development associations and NGOs in and around villages, towns and cities throughout Ireland, involving both existing and new woodlands. These projects are invariably developed by local people for the benefit of their own community. The NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME offers a vehicle for such groups to acquire considerable levels of funding to realise this vision. Such proposals which have the support and backing of the local authority will be eligible for funding under the NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME, with the application for funding made through the local authority.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME

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

The emphasis during proposal evaluation will be on:

- high quality projects which maximise the potential for public access, recreation and enjoyment;
- projects with a high broadleaf content;
- projects which demonstrate a clear commitment to long-term maintenance and management;
- projects which incorporate a high degree of local participation in planning and management; and
- a regional distribution of projects, to ensure that as many communities as possible benefit under the scheme.

WHAT EXACTLY DOES THE NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME FUND?

The NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME provides funding under three separate elements:

- the establishment of new neighbourwoods;
- the improvement of existing neighbourwoods; and
- the installation of recreational facilities into new or existing neighbourwoods.

Grants are cost-based subject to the maximum grant levels detailed below for each element.



Element 1 funds the establishment of new neighbourwoods.

Element 1: Establishment

The first element provides up to £5,300 (€6,730)/ha grant assistance towards materials and operations associated with the establishment of new neighbourwoods, including planning and design, site preparation and cultivation, planting, fertilisation, weed control, fencing, etc. 75% of the grant aid is paid upon planting. The remaining sum is paid after four years as a maintenance payment.

Sites over 0.1 ha in area and with an average width greater than 30 m are eligible for grant aid. Smaller and narrower sites may also be considered, if the site is essential to the overall planting or represents part of a wider neighbourwood strategy for a particular locality. The NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME therefore provides funding for the establishment of neighbourwoods on sites ranging from smaller greenspaces within residential areas to large scale tracts of land along watercourses, in greenbelt areas and along the urban fringe.

Up to 30% open space is allowed within the proposed neighbourwood boundary. Open space may include areas left unplanted for footpaths, picnic areas, car park, etc. and unplanted areas enforced by existing features such as overhead powerlines, utility wayleaves and watercourses. For example, a proposed 1.5 ha neighbourwood can include up to 0.45 ha of open space within its boundary to allow for the above features, and still be eligible for the establishment grant over its entire 1.5 ha.

Maximum grant levels under Element 1 are set out below.

| <i>Species</i> | <i>Planting payment £(€)/ha</i> | <i>Maintenance payment £(€)/ha</i> | <i>Total payment £(€)/ha</i> |
|---|--|---|---|
| Approved conifers | £1,900 (€2,412) | £600 (€762) | £2,500 (€3,174) |
| Approved broadleaves other than oak & beech | £3,000 (€3,809) | £900 (€1,143) | £3,900 (€4,952) |
| Oak | £3,800 (€4,825) | £1,200 (€1,524) | £5,000 (€6,349) |
| Beech | £4,000 (€5,079) | £1,300 (€1,651) | £5,300 (€6,730) |



Element 2 funds the improvement of existing neighbourwoods in need of silvicultural input.

Element 2: Improvement

The second element provides up to £3,500 (€4,444)/ha grant assistance towards materials and operations associated with the improvement of existing neighbourwoods, including thinning, invasive scrub clearance, reinforcement planting, pruning, etc.

Existing neighbourwoods over 0.1 ha in area and capable of being improved to an acceptable standard, are eligible. Smaller neighbourwoods may also be considered, if they are of special amenity value or if they represent part of a wider neighbourwood strategy for a particular locality.

As with establishment, up to 30% open space is allowed within the neighbourwood boundary.

Maximum grant levels under Element 2 are £3,500 (€4,444)/ha for broadleaves and £2,000 (€2,540)/ha for conifers.



Element 3 funds the installation of suitable woodland recreational facilities.

Element 3: Installation of recreational facilities

The third element provides funding for the provision and/or upgrade of recreational facilities within new or existing neighbourwoods, including footpaths, nature trails, seats, litter bins, signs, picnic tables, playground equipment, carpark facilities or any other facility consistent with the general public enjoyment of the neighbourwood. Particular emphasis is to be placed on the provision of suitable facilities to enable access and use by people with particular needs, from wheelchair users to parents with baby-buggies.

The maximum grant level under Element 3 is £2,000 (€2,540)/ha.

SOME GENERAL ADVICE ON THE NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME

All three elements allow considerable flexibility in the application of the NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME. For example, a single project could involve an application for funding under one, two or all three of the above elements. A project might include improvement work on an existing 2.0 ha broadleaf neighbourwood, the establishment of 1.5 ha of new woodland of approved broadleaves other than oak and beech on a contiguous site, and the installation of recreational facilities throughout all 3.5 ha. Such a project would be eligible for funding of up to £19,850 (€25,206) under the scheme.

Payment is made on the completion of approved work. Given the year-to-year nature of local authority funding structures, a useful arrangement would be to divide the work to be carried out over the project's entire duration into discrete clearly-defined tasks which are realistically achievable within a given 12-month period. Payment can then be made at the end of each 12-month period for the agreed work carried out during that period. This 'roll-over' arrangement will ensure that funds are made available to finance ongoing work throughout the project's duration, enabling the applicants to proceed onto further work based on funding received for previous work. With projects involving community development associations and NGOs, this arrangement will also help to ensure that work proceeds steadily over the project's entire duration, thereby engendering confidence within the group and maintaining interest and support. Examples of clearly defined tasks include a discrete area to be planted, a set number of seats to be installed or a certain length of footpath to be laid down.

The NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME is aimed primarily at land owned by local authorities. However, many areas of existing woodland in and around villages, towns and cities are owned and managed by other individuals or organisations. These woods are often used on a daily basis by local people for recreation, a use which often gives rise to community groups interested in developing the resource further. In order to bring such woodlands under the NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME, the local authority should enter into an acceptable arrangement or management agreement with the landowner regarding the long term management of those areas/facilities to be funded. This approach will encourage a partnership approach between the woodland owner, local authority and community association/NGO during the project's realisation, with the local authority, as the official applicant, receiving and distributing funds accordingly. This situation can also be applied to vacant land suitable for the development of new neighbourwoods but outside local authority ownership.

Applicants are responsible for the ongoing maintenance and management of the grant-aided woodland and/or facilities. In this regard, it is strongly recommended that, where appropriate, applicants enter into agreements with relevant consultants and forestry contractors, to promote continuity and to ensure that regular maintenance is applied. Applicants should also consider employing such services to undertake proposal development and initial work. Some useful addresses are included in Appendix A.

All projects must demonstrate due consideration for the practicalities of developing woodland amenities in an urban setting. Guidelines on the practical development of

woodland amenities in an urban setting are included in Appendix B, and a suggested reading list in Appendix C.

In all cases, species must be selected according to site conditions, both physical (e.g. soil fertility and drainage) and social (e.g. visitor pressure and possible vandalism) (see Appendix B for further information). A list of species acceptable under the NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME is included in Appendix D. All planting carried out under the scheme should have a high broadleaf content, with an emphasis on native species, where suitable.

Environmental and general conditions are included in Appendix E.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

In developing a proposal under the NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME, attention is drawn to the series of guidelines on practical urban woodland development and the suggested reading list contained in this brochure (Appendices B and C respectively). As outlined, the application must be made by the local authority.

Step 1

Complete and return a copy of the Preliminary Form included at the back of this brochure. This short form, which requests general information on the proposal and a map showing the location and extent of the site, will enable an initial assessment of the project and its suitability for funding. This procedure is intended to screen out unsuitable projects at an early stage for the benefit of both the applicant and the Forest Service. This form must be completed by the local authority.

Step 2

Projects deemed potentially suitable on the basis of the Preliminary Form will be sent a 4-page NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME Application Form. This form requests information on specific aspects of the proposal which will enable the Forest Service to approve and administer grant payment. The form focuses on relevant information, thereby standardising applications and avoiding lengthy submissions. Information sought will include: project partners; details of the proposed work and costs under the relevant elements; a scheduled work programme; details of community participation; and an outline of the long-term management strategy. An original Ordnance Survey map will also be required (25" OS maps are preferable, although 6" OS maps may be used for larger projects over 2 ha in area), indicating the location and boundaries of the project, areas relating to applications for funding under each element, and other basic information. This map must be prepared by a person competent to do so.

The completed NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME Application Form and accompanying map are then sent to the Forest Service for detailed assessment.

Step 3

Written notification is given stating approval or otherwise of the project for funding under the NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME. Approval must be obtained in writing from the Forest Service before starting any work for which funding is sought. Such work must commence within 12 months from the approval date, unless the Forest Service has agreed otherwise in writing before the expiry of that period. Work is to be completed by 31 December, 2006.

Step 4

Following the completion of the approved work, the applicant completes and submits a Grant Payment Form. A Certificate of Provenance/Provenance Declaration Form is also required. This documentation, which indicates that the planting material originated from a suitable seed source, must be supplied by the forest nursery/supplier to the applicant on delivery of the stock. The approved grant will be paid upon verification by the Forest Service of the satisfactory completion of the work involved.

APPENDICES



APPENDIX A

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Forest Service,
Department of the Marine and Natural Resources,
Johnstown Castle Estate,
Co. Wexford.
Tel. (053) 60 200; LoCall 1890 200 223
Fax (053) 43 834/5/6
Homepage www.marine.irlgov.ie

Tree Council of Ireland,
Cabinteely House,
The Park,
Cabinteely,
Dublin 18.
Tel. (01) 284 9211
Fax (01) 284 9197

The Tree Council provides information, advice and support to local authorities, community groups and NGOs developing projects under the NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME. Contact John Brosnan, Urban Forester (e-mail john.brosnan@treecouncil.ie).

Society of Irish Foresters,
Enterprise Centre,
Ballintogher,
Co. Sligo.
Tel. (071) 64434
Fax (071) 34904
E-mail sif@eircom.net

The Society of Irish Foresters provides details of professional forestry consultants.

APPENDIX B

GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICAL URBAN WOODLAND DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

Developing new woodland amenities in and around villages, towns and cities requires an awareness of the impact on design, establishment and management of a wide range of social and physical factors specific to the urban environment. The following is included as a series of guidelines regarding the specific practicalities of developing urban woodlands. They are designed to complement input from relevant professionals such as landscape designers, urban planners, horticulturists, arboriculturists and foresters, and are supported by the suggested reading list included in Appendix C regarding woodland management, landscape design, designing for outdoor recreation, etc. The following guidelines deal specifically with woodland establishment in a distinctly urban setting, but are also relevant to neighbourwood development in general.

THE NEED FOR PRACTICALITY

The long-term aim of urban woodland development is to create an attractive, informal and accessible woodland environment which provides the local community with opportunities for recreation and passive aesthetic enjoyment. However, the woodland must first be established on the site – a tall order given that many newly-created urban woodlands are often subjected to intense and unpredictable pressure from vandalism and the persistence, at least in the short term, of conflicting site activities ranging from simple ball-games to horse grazing and illegal dumping. In some areas, urban woodland development may simply not be possible due to such pressures. But where it is, the over-riding short-term objective should be to get a basic woodland canopy ‘up and running’ as quickly as possible, one which is capable of developing despite the hostile conditions likely. Once established – both physically and in the minds of the local community – this basic resource will provide the foundation for further development.

But in the meantime, how do we get the basic woodland resource in place on the site? Although an obvious need for woodland protection exists, fencing designed to restrict people from certain areas of an urban site is often ineffective – it just doesn’t stand up to would-be vandals or to horse-owners annoyed at having potential grazing areas blocked off. Simple plain stock fencing can, however, be very useful in demarcating newly planted areas to remind users of the presence of vulnerable trees, particularly when complemented by good levels of community awareness and involvement in the project. In such cases, be sure to leave regular gaps in the fenceline, to allow easy access – for example, to retrieve a football – which will avoid damage to the fence. Also make sure to leave gaps where the fenceline crosses over established pathways and natural desire lines. This enables existing users, such as local residents walking their dogs, to continue using the site, thereby avoiding conflict and securing a valuable presence which discourages undesirable activity.

With protective fencing largely discounted, a range of alternative protective measures are relied upon, as described below. A combination of these, implemented in the context of local awareness, support and involvement in the project, will lay the foundation for successful urban woodland development.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The first step in design is to incorporate established pathways, natural desire lines and areas used for existing site activities (both official and unofficial) as access routes and open spaces within the future woodland. The reason for this is that existing usage patterns will very often persist, regardless of the developing woodland. In effect, if the



Exclude any 'natural desire lines' and other unsuitable areas from planting.

ground vegetation is disturbed or flattened, the chances are that trees planted in such areas will be too. Retain open spaces around viewpoints, rocky outcrops, important habitats and historical features, to safeguard them and to provide the foundation for a 'sense of place' in the future woodland. Forest Service guidelines relating to water quality, landscape, archaeology and biodiversity detail buffer zones, clearance distances and other measures designed to ensure that woodland development protects and enhances the environment. These guidelines must be adhered to in all grant-aided projects. Identify locations on the site suitable for the introduction of facilities such as picnic tables, seats, pathways and carparks, and retain these as open spaces to enable their future development. Unplanted areas beneath utility lines and adjacent to residences, public roads and proposed developments crossing or adjoining the site are also required, to avoid future conflict and overshadowing.

The above considerations often dictate the basic layout of the woodland, indicating where trees can be planted and where open spaces and access routes should be placed. At this point, additional open spaces and access routes can be incorporated into design, to create a choice of recreational areas and circular routes for users. The shape of the future woodland blocks can also be altered, to eliminate unnaturally straight lines imposed by, for example, standard clearance distances beneath overhead powerlines. Also, wherever possible, position woodland blocks to take advantage of protection offered by any existing features such as walls, watercourses, hedgerows and pockets of scrub. Earth banks can also be prescribed along adjoining roads, to restrict illegal vehicle access onto the site.

When designing the woodland, try to link it in with other trees, shelterbelts and woodlands in the vicinity. This will maximise the woodland's impact on the local landscape, reinforcing the role of urban trees and woodlands in providing a 'green network' throughout the urban area.

SPECIES SELECTION



Species such as alder and birch can undergo rapid growth, even on difficult sites.

When it comes to species selection, the basic condition is suitability to physical site conditions such as soil fertility, drainage, climate and exposure. However, other factors must be considered. For example, many urban sites have been disturbed by human activity and may be heavily compacted, rubble-strewn or stripped of their topsoil. In all cases, a simple soil analysis (service available from Teagasc, Coillte and UCD) will indicate whether or not a particular site is capable of supporting tree growth. On more disturbed sites, so-called 'pioneer species' such as birch and alder are often most suitable – as well as being able to withstand poor conditions, they will also improve site fertility for future planting. Fast growing species such as birch, alder, rowan, sycamore and ash should also be favoured, as they promote swift canopy development which shortens the woodland's vulnerable establishment period while fulfilling community expectations with satisfying results. Species capable of profuse coppicing are ideal wherever high levels of damage are expected, such as areas alongside access routes, open spaces and entrance points into the woodland, and areas adjoining residential estates and public roads. With such species, stems which are broken either maliciously or by accident simply resprout as bushy scrub, thereby ensuring tree survival and creating a self-initiating thicket which will help to screen adjacent areas of developing woodland from further damage. In such cases, tree form can be reinstated at a later point through stem thinning. Other factors are worth considering. For example, alder is useful on sites where horse grazing might be a problem, as its foliage is unpalatable to horses. Likewise, species of spruce and fir are often not a good idea, as they are likely to disappear in the run-up to Christmas!

Consider additional objectives. For example, species with vivid seasonal changes in colour maximise the natural experiences 'produced', while native species will further benefit wildlife. Slower growing species such as oak, beech and Scots pine can often be included to create a core of high-amenity woodland on the site. As these take longer to develop, such species are often more prone to physical damage. They should therefore

be positioned in more isolated areas of the site. At this point, it is also important to decide on edge treatment, i.e. the interface between the edge of a woodland block and the adjoining open space. The incorporation of low-lying tree and shrub species will maximise habitat diversity, while the introduction of fruit-bearing trees and shrubs presents an opportunity for berry-picking by users.

Appropriate planting of mixtures increases amenity and promotes biodiversity, and very often creates a nursing effect between constituent species which benefits growth. When deciding on mixtures, constituent species must be compatible in growth rate and shade tolerance, to avoid suppression. In all cases, each species within a mixture must be compatible with site conditions.

Apart from oak and beech, most acceptable broadleaves (see Appendix D) are considered compatible in mixtures with each other. Due to their rapid growth rates, birch, rowan and alder can also be used together to provide a fast growing mixture of pioneer species which is particularly suitable for difficult sites or in areas where pressure from use is envisaged.

Various conifer species can also be planted together to form attractive mixtures. Details of compatible conifer mixtures are given in the Forest Service CODE OF BEST FOREST PRACTICE – IRELAND (see Appendix C).

Mixtures can be planted intimately, but this approach can often be difficult to implement and landscape diversity tends to be lost at all but the smallest scale. Instead, mixtures involving groups of 9–25 trees of each species are considered best. Species can also be planted in pure blocks, with several species represented on the same site. Oak and beech should be planted in mixture with European larch or Scots pine, in order to capitalise on the ‘nursing’ benefit afforded by these slow growing conifers.

STOCK SIZE AND SPACING

While standards and other larger stock types may have a valuable role to create instant cover at key focal points on the site, good quality forestry transplant stock, accompanied by forestry site preparation and establishment techniques, is by far the most appropriate choice of stock for the type of mass planting required in the development of new urban woodlands. As well as being extremely economical to use, transplants undergo vigorous establishment and initial growth which ensure the rapid ‘greening’ of the site, and present a low ‘challenge value’ to would-be vandals – they’re literally too small and numerous to bother with! Meanwhile, the relative ease with which transplants can be handled creates a great opportunity to involve local people of all ages and abilities in planting. However, just like large stock sizes, transplants need careful handling during transport and storage, to avoid root desiccation, stem damage and shoot breakage. Planting should only be carried out during the planting season October to March, avoiding periods of cold, dry winds or if the soil is frozen or waterlogged. Transplants should be trenched, with their roots placed into a shallow trench and covered with soil, if a delay between delivery and planting is expected. Source planting material from well-established forestry nurseries, and bear in mind that a Certificate of Provenance/Provenance Declaration Form must be obtained for grant payment purposes.

When it comes to spacing, i.e. the distance between each newly planted tree, smaller spacings (e.g. 1 metre) are usually the best. The resulting high stocking levels serve to ‘fortify’ individual woodland blocks, enabling canopy closure and development even if high levels of damage occur. High stocking in broadleaves also encourages straight and rapid leader growth, as each newly planted tree races upwards to secure its share of sunlight. Planted areas should be checked during the second growing season to assess whether or not ‘filling in’, or the replacement of dead trees, is required to achieve canopy closure. Make sure to use ‘heavier’ transplants when filling-in. This allows the new trees to hold their own with those originally planted, which have a 2-year head-start by the time filling-in is carried out.

Proper weed control is essential for woodland establishment on all sites, to reduce com-

petition with weeds for water, nutrients and light, and to enable the rapid establishment and growth of newly planted trees. Post-planting weed control should be aimed at maintaining a 1-metre diameter weed-free area around each tree for at least the first three growing seasons after planting. While effective control may be possible using mulching and manual weeding in small-scale urban woodlands, proper herbicide application is the only effective answer on most sites. In the case of herbicide application, adhere strictly to both manufacture guidelines and the Forest Service FORESTRY AND WATER QUALITY GUIDELINES to ensure effective control, operator safety and the protection of adjoining habitats. In many cases, a strip of uncontrolled vegetation around the edge of the planting will help to de-emphasise the presence of the young trees, as well as promoting biodiversity.

All plantings are subject to a minimum acceptable stocking level for grant purposes. Mixtures involving oak and beech are also subject to certain specifications. Details are given in the Forest Service CODE OF BEST FOREST PRACTICE – IRELAND (see Appendix C).

SAFETY AND SECURITY



Pruning and the control of undergrowth promote safety.

Safety and security must be promoted at all stages, not only to discourage undesirable and threatening behaviour such as loitering, cider parties, substance abuse, burglary and assault, but also to promote a sense of safety, reassurance and orientation among visitors, and a positive perception of the woodland within the local community. During design, avoid the creation of blind spots and isolated alcoves, and ensure clear lines of vision between adjacent open spaces and to recognisable features of the surrounding urban landscape. Limit the amount of access routes to promote greater contact between visitors. Opportunities for concealment beneath the canopy in areas adjoining access routes, open spaces, houses and public roads can be minimised using wide corridor design, reduced stocking levels, thorny shrub planting and undergrowth control. Standard woodland operations such as formative shaping, pruning and early thinning – all designed to improve stem form and to ‘weed out’ weaker and misshapen trees – will also serve to increase lines of vision beneath the canopy, again promoting safety and security. Additional measures include clear evidence of active ongoing management (which discourages ‘undesirables’ and attracts legitimate users), signposts and way-markers, and active discouragement of use during darkness.

HORSES AND FIRE



Horses and establishing neighbourwoods don't mix!

Horse grazing is a major obstacle facing urban woodland development in Ireland. Impounding is effective but needs to be enforced continually, and usually antagonises horse-owners. Various alternative measures can be deployed, including careful design, the selection of suitable species, dialogue with horse-owners, and even the establishment of a nearby ‘corral’ to relieve pressure on the site. Recent legislation regarding the control of horses also enforces responsibilities on horse-owners, and can be called into effect where difficulties arise.

Fire damage is a possibility in urban woodlands, arising from arson, refuse burning and bonfire parties. However, the number of open spaces and high broadleaf content which usually characterise urban woodlands will serve to compartmentalise fire, should it occur. Nevertheless, a detailed fire plan, showing entrance points onto the site, canopy layout and the location of watercourses, should be submitted to the local Fire Brigade to enable the swift deployment of control. Also, don't encourage the lighting of fires, avoiding, for example, the installation of barbecue facilities. Signs warning people not to light fires are often counterproductive, as they can give some individuals bad ideas!



Neighbourwoods provide a perfect venue for outdoor arts and crafts for both young and old.



Planting days reinforce the link between communities and their neighbourwoods.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND INVOLVEMENT

Involving people in the planning, planting and care of trees and woodlands in their own locality is a key element in the success of any urban forestry project. Facilitating the local community to take part in development benefits management greatly, instilling a sense of protection and responsibility towards the woodland as a resource influenced and 'owned' by local people. It encourages individuals to act as management's 'eyes and ears' on the ground, is a major force in offsetting vandalism, and leads to a greater understanding of what is realistically possible to achieve. The social benefits to the community itself are also significant, as encouraging people to become actively involved in an element of their own environment promotes social interaction and cohesion, instils a sense of local pride and identity, and often leads to wider community activity in other aspects of community life.

There are numerous ways to involve local communities in development, from the initial stages of gauging people's opinion of the proposed development to ongoing involvement in management. Initial steps include public displays, explanatory leaflets and articles in the local press outlining the proposed woodland and inviting feed-back and comment. Public meetings held onsite or in local civic centres and dialogue with existing site users and community groups also facilitate communication and feedback. Other approaches involve household surveys and the establishment of dedicated community representative groups to liaise with management. Other measures which help achieve local 'buy-in', ownership and eventual involvement include: art competitions involving the design of an official project logo by local school children; 'tree fairs'; woodland walks and tree talks; fun-filled community events based on litter clean-up, planting and after-care; the 'recruitment' of volunteer wardens to keep an eye on the woodland; the establishment of small-scale educational nurseries within local schools to supply trees for future school planting days in the woodland; and facilitating local groups wishing to become directly involved in management. Another effective way to encourage the link between the community and the woodland is to develop a training and employment programme based on planting and maintenance for local people experiencing long-term unemployment. As well as benefiting the trainees directly, this approach encourages the perception of the woodland by the local community as providing vital opportunities for training and employment. Be realistic about how much the community will be able to offer, particularly in the initial stages. For example, a community planting event may only involve the planting of a small but strategically located proportion of the woodland, with the rest planted by in-house work crews or forestry contractors.

To be successful, involvement must be a genuine ongoing partnership, with the woodland planned and managed with, and not just for, the community. Be sure to incorporate the community's opinions, aspirations and concerns into design and management where at all realistic and appropriate. It must also be attractive, imaginative, inclusive and fun, in order to have the widest appeal. 'Targeting' young people and schools in the surrounding area can be a great way to reach the community. Partnerships with national tree-related NGOs can also help. Such groups have wide-ranging experience of community-based environmental projects, know exactly what type of events and activities are likely to have the most appeal, and often have an on-the-ground network of volunteers who can be called upon to stimulate and co-ordinate community involvement.

In many situations, a strong community representative group may already be in place calling for increased resources to be directed at the development of new or existing urban woodland. Such groups vary greatly in both their composition and activities, the latter ranging from the orchestration of simple clean-up and planting events to the development of proposals for the installation of recreational facilities and for other operations within the woodland itself. Such groups represent a wealth of local knowledge, goodwill and energy, and working directly with them secures local support and ensures a resource suited to its eventual 'end-users'. Success in this area often lies with how well the group can organise itself to contribute effectively. Pitfalls such as the domination of the group by individuals, a 'mushrooming' of committees and subcommittees, endless meetings and members drifting away out of a lack of progress, should all be avoided.



Local involvement can include the development of community tree nurseries.

Very often the best approach is to encourage the development of a steering group to oversee activities at a strategic level, supported by working groups to forge ahead with particular tasks and comprising individuals with a particular interest and enthusiasm for that area. In order to nurture this level of community involvement, management must demonstrate the important role the group has and work in partnership to achieve common goals.

Community involvement does take time and resources to initiate, but the end result is a woodland tailored to the needs and desires of its eventual user group, and a resource regarded by local people as a desired element of their own surroundings.

MANAGEMENT

Co-ordinating the efforts of a wide range of relevant professionals is a vital aspect of urban woodland development, and should be considered from the outset. Given the very location of urban woodlands, a huge range of professionals are relevant, from landscape architects, planners, horticulturists, arboriculturists, foresters and political representatives to recreational experts, engineers, developers, public utility personnel and environmentalists. The development of a management workgroup, involving in-house expertise, key outside organisations and community representatives, is a good way to draw in the necessary expertise into a formal structure to oversee development. The formulation of an agreed strategy, outlining management and funding projections, is also a vital component in ensuring continuity and securing future funding. These measures avoid conflict and ensure that a permanent structure is in place to apply a consistent approach to project development and management, a factor absolutely essential for success.

New urban woodlands are often an unfamiliar prospect for many local authorities, and concerns may be raised as to whether or not suitable in-house expertise is available to oversee development. In such cases, it is strongly recommended that advice from experienced forestry consultants is sought, particularly in relation to silvicultural aspects. In many cases, it may also be appropriate to employ forestry contractor companies to undertake the necessary site preparation and planting. The establishment of a contract arrangement to carry out essential annual maintenance is also recommended, as this is often the most effective way of isolating young urban woodlands from fluctuating resources and budgets which often beset local authorities.

The Tree Council of Ireland provides support to local authorities, community groups, environmental NGOs and others on all aspects of neighbourwood development, from technical assistance at the proposal stage to advice on the establishment of steering and management groups and other partnership structures to oversee implementation. The Tree Council of Ireland also provides contact details for similar projects elsewhere in Ireland, to encourage networking and a sharing of experiences and expertise. Contact details for the Tree Council of Ireland are provided in Appendix A. This work is funded by the Forest Service of the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources under the National Development Plan 2000-2006.

THE SECRET TO SUCCESS...

The secret to successful urban woodland establishment is to be practical and to aim initially for a simple and robust woodland resource. A certain amount of damage is always to be expected, given the volatile nature of the urban environment. However, adopting the above common sense approach combining practical design and management with real community involvement, will go a long way towards achieving successful urban woodland development and the creation of an invaluable resource for both current and future generations of urban dwellers.

APPENDIX C

SUGGESTED READING LIST

- Code of Best Forest Practice – Ireland. Forest Service, Department of the Marine and Natural Resources, Johnstown Castle Estate, Co. Wexford. 2000.
- Guidelines on the Recognition of Dangerous Trees. Forest Service, Department of the Marine and Natural Resources, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2. 1998.
- Suite of Forest Service environmental guidelines on forestry and water quality, archaeology, the landscape, harvesting and biodiversity. Forest Service, Department of the Marine and Natural Resources, Johnstown Castle Estate, Co. Wexford. 2000.
- Forestry Schemes Procedures & Standards Manual. Forest Service, Department of the Marine and Natural Resources, Johnstown Castle Estate, Co. Wexford. 2000.
- Community Woodland Design Guidelines. Forestry Commission. HMSO, London. 1991.
- Creating and Managing Woodlands around Towns. S. Hodge. Forestry Commission Handbook 11. HMSO, London. 1995.
- Design for Outdoor Recreation. S. Bell. E & FN Spon, London. 1997.
- Forest Recreation Guidelines. Forestry Authority. HMSO, London. 1992.
- Forestry Yearbook. Irish Timber Growers Association, 84 Merrion Square, Dublin 2.*
- Proceedings of the First National Conference on Urban Forestry, UCD, Dublin, June 1991. Tree Council of Ireland, Cabinteely House, The Park, Cabinteely, Dublin 18. 1991.**
- Proceedings of the Second National Conference on Urban Forestry, Limerick City, Ireland, March 1996. Edited by K.D. Collins. Tree Council of Ireland and ECO UNESCO. Tree Council of Ireland, Cabinteely House, The Park, Cabinteely, Dublin 18. 1996.**
- Proceedings of the Third National Conference on Urban Forestry, Galway City, Ireland, April 1998. Edited by K.D. Collins. Tree Council of Ireland, Cabinteely House, The Park, Cabinteely, Dublin 18. 1999.**
- Trees and Woods in Towns and Cities: How to Develop Local Strategies for Urban Forestry – A Guide. National Urban Forestry Unit, The Science Park, Stafford Road, Wolverhampton, WV10 9RT, UK. 1999.
- Urban Forestry in Practice: Case Studies. National Urban Forestry Unit, The Science Park, Stafford Road, Wolverhampton, WV10 9RT, UK. 1998.
- Urban Forestry Practice. B.G. Hibberd (ed.). Forestry Commission Handbook 5. HMSO, London. 1989.

* The current ITGA Yearbook contains contact details for a wide range of forestry contractors, consultants, nurseries, suppliers, etc.

** All three conference proceedings contain papers on practical urban forestry initiatives in Ireland and abroad, covering a wide range of related topics.

APPENDIX D

ACCEPTABLE SPECIES

Acceptable species for planting under the NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME are listed below. It is intended that all planting carried out under the NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME will be predominantly broadleaf in nature.

Broadleaf species

Sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*)
Pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*)
Red oak (*Quercus rubra*)
Common ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*)
Small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*)
Large-leaved lime (*Tilia platyphyllos*)
Common alder (*Alnus glutinosa*)
Common beech (*Fagus sylvatica*)
Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*)
Spanish chestnut (*Castanea sativa*)
Southern beech (*Nothofagus procera*)
Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*)
Cherry (*Prunus avium*)
Silver birch (*Betula pendula*)
Downy birch (*Betula pubescens*)
Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*)

Conifer species

Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*)
Monterey pine (*Pinus radiata*)
Austrian pine (*Pinus nigra* var. *nigra*)
Corsican pine (*Pinus nigra* var. *maritima*)
European larch (*Larix decidua*)
Japanese larch (*Larix kaempferi*)
Hybrid larch (*Larix x eurolepis*)
Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*)
Western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*)
Western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*)
Norway spruce (*Picea abies*)
Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*)
Lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*)

All of the above require a Certificate of Provenance/Provenance Declaration Form.

Additional species (e.g. horse chestnut, walnut, hazel, willow) included to provide local interest and variety along pathways, woodland edges, etc. may also be considered on application to the Forest Service.

APPENDIX E

ENVIRONMENTAL AND GENERAL CONDITIONS OF THE NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

- All work funded under the NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME must be compatible with the protection of the environment.
- Grant aid is subject to compliance with the Forest Service 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, the forthcoming FOREST RECREATIONAL GUIDELINES and with any other guidelines issued by the Forest Service from time to time.
- The Forest Service will, as required, consult with other relevant authorities (e.g. Dúchas–The Heritage Service, Regional Fisheries Boards), in relation to environmental, scientific and archaeological aspects of the proposal, and will take their views into account when considering grant approval.
- The Forest Service retains the right to request additional information which will assist it in determining a proposal's compatibility with the protection of the environment.
- Afforestation grants are not available for areas which are protected or qualify for protection under the EU Council Directives 79/409 and 92/43 regarding the protection of wildbirds and natural habitats.

GENERAL CONDITIONS

- The NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME is aimed at encouraging the development of woodlands in and around villages, towns and cities for public access and recreation. Therefore, other types of woodland cover, such as motorway planting and screening around enclosed industrial sites, may not be eligible for funding.
- All promotional material, including entrance signs, leaflets, articles, etc., must indicate that the project is funded by the Forest Service of the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources under the National Development Plan 2000-2006, supported by the European Union. Appropriate logos and guidelines on their usage are available from the relevant statutory bodies.
- The NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME will run until 31 December, 2006.
- Any special conditions, including environmental conditions, attached to a grant approval must be complied with in full by the applicant. Failure to do so may result in grant aid being withheld or redeemed.
- The Forest Service may request supporting documentation for costs in relation to grant payments.
- The Forest Service retains the right to request additional information which will assist it in determining the merit of a particular project.
- Each of the three elements of the NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME can only be availed of once for a particular site. Similarly, projects previously grant aided for establishment, improvement or the installation of facilities under any other Forest Service scheme (e.g. the Planned Recreational Forestry Scheme, the Urban Woodland Scheme) are only eligible for grant aid under the NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME for development of a different type. For example, an application for facilities under the NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME cannot be made for a project which previously received funding for facilities under the Planned Recreational Forestry Scheme.
- The project must be adequately maintained and protected for a period of at least 10 years after the date of grant payment, otherwise the grant paid in relation to the entire project may be redeemed. At any time during this period, the Forest Service may carry out an inspection to determine that grant-aided elements are being satisfactorily maintained and protected.

- All plantings are subject to a minimum acceptable stocking level for grant purposes. Mixtures involving oak and beech are also subject to certain specifications. Details are available from the Forest Service.
- A woodland developed under the scheme may be subject to the provisions of the 1946 Forestry Act, which controls the felling and replanting of trees.
- The Forest Service reserves the right to make public general information regarding the implementation of the scheme, such as the total number of projects and participants, hectares planted, types of facilities, etc. Applications made under the scheme may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act.
- The Forest Service reserves the right to amend or revise the terms of the scheme, including the grant rates, at any time.
- If an applicant knowingly makes a false or misleading statement or withholds essential information for the purpose of obtaining grant aid under the scheme, the grant aid given or to be given shall be redeemed or withheld. The Forest Service reserves the right to exclude such applicants from further participation in the scheme.
- The decision of the Forest Service on any matter relating to the NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME is final.

NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME PRELIMINARY FORM

(Photocopy this form, as required)

- Applicants for funding under the NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME are requested to return a completed copy of this form to the Forest Service at the address provided below, clearly marking the envelope 'NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME'. This procedure is intended to screen out unsuitable projects at an early stage for the benefit of both the applicant and the Forest Service.
- This form must be completed by a local authority. In projects involving other landowners, community associations and voluntary environmental NGOs, please list project partners in the space provided, briefly outlining their role.
- Where a project involves two or more sites, this form must be completed and accompanied by a relevant map for each of the proposed sites.

Contact Details (please print)

Name of local authority _____

Contact name _____

Position _____

Address _____

Tel. _____ Fax _____ E-mail _____

Preliminary Site Details (please attach a map clearly illustrating the location and boundary of the site)

Location of site _____

Area (ha) _____ Ownership status _____

Basic site description _____

Overview of proposed project _____

Project partners _____

Element(s) of the NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME being applied under (please tick the relevant box(es)):

Establishment ☐ Improvement ☐ Recreational facilities ☐

Signed _____ Date _____

Completed forms to be returned to the Forest Service,
Department of the Marine and Natural Resources, Johnstown Castle Estate, Co. Wexford

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

Tel: 053 60200
LoCall: 1890 200 223
Fax: 053 43834/5/6

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