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CHAPTER 11
Forestry and Boglands

11 FORESTRY AND BOGLANDS

11.1 (A) Forestry: Background

There are approximately 8,472 hectares (20,934 acres) of land in forest cover in County Kildare. This forest coverage is broken into 2,963 hectares (8,122 acres) of broadleaf, 4,056 hectares (10,022 acres) of coniferous and 1,453 hectares (3,590 acres) of unclassified species. Broadleaf species accounts for 35% of County Kildare's total forest coverage, which is above the national average of 20%. Coillte and Dúchas own approximately 47% of the forestry, while the remainder is in private ownership.

Table 11.1 Forest Coverage in Kildare

Species	Ha	%
Coniferous	4,056	49
Broadleaf	2,963	35
Unclassified Species	1,453	17

Source: Irish Forestry Service

11.1.1 Goal

To encourage the development of an environmentally sustainable and well managed forestry sector.

11.1.2 Objective

- (1) To encourage the development of well-sited forested areas, which are appropriate in terms of nature and scale to the surrounding areas.
- (2) To encourage the use of native species.
- (3) To encourage the careful selection of felling 'coup' (area) size and shape.

11.1.3 Afforestation

The introduction of large-scale forestry areas can have significant negative impacts on an area if they are not in context with the surrounding environment. Forestry activities must be appropriate in terms of nature and scale with the surrounding area, so they are not visually intrusive on the landscape or cause damage to important habitats or the ecology of the area. The use of native species or broadleaf/conifer mixture and age class diversity can enhance the visual impact and biodiversity of forests. Figures 11.1-11.3 illustrate the visual impact of afforestation on three different landscapes; lowland areas, hill slopes and hilltops. Table 18.6 in Volume 2 shows the likely perception of the landscape impact of forestry in different landscape character areas.

Fig. 11.1 Forestry development on lowland areas



Large-scale afforestation, particularly when using coniferous tree species, transforms the visual appearance of lowland areas. In some cases, lowland forestry development can also affect scenic vistas to upland areas. In other cases however, the visual effect is outweighed by the potential for screening visually obtrusive developments such as landfills or quarries from adjacent roads/viewpoints. On the other hand, afforestation of cutaway bogland areas provides rehabilitation benefits, converting a degraded landscape into a new landscape.

Fig. 11.2 Forestry Development on Hill Slopes



Afforestation on hill slopes generally occur in patches running uphill in isolation, thus affecting the visual amenity due to lack of landscape continuity. However, when a relationship between the forest/woodland and the unplanted ground areas is established, the visual impact is minimised and the forest plantations render complexity to the landscape. Furthermore, the overall visual effect is outweighed by the screening potential of tall vegetation.

Fig.3 Forestry Development on Hill Tops



Afforestation on hilltops generally occur in patches running uphill, thus affecting the visual amenity as a result of intrusion and lack of landscape continuity. Due to the prominent location and visibility of skylines from lower elevations, forest development on ridgelines are likely to affect the visual integrity of wider areas of the County landscapes. In some cases, when a relationship between the forest/woodland and the unplanted ground areas is established, forest plantations can render interest to the landscape.

11.1.4 Felling

Next to planting new forests, felling the crop at the end of the rotation can have the greatest potential adverse impact on the site and local environment generally. The careful selection of felling 'coupe' (area) size and shape will minimise landscape impact and create opportunities to introduce age-structure diversity within the forest.

Felling in very sensitive landscapes should be limited to 5-15 hectares (12.4-37 acres). Clear felling of not more than 25 hectares (62 acres) should take place at any one time.

11.1.5 Future Forestry Trends

The future for forestry in Kildare will be affected by Government policy and grants schemes. Coillte's policy is to continue to expand the forest estate in line with Government and EU policy as set out in the Government's forestry strategy "Growing for the Future". Afforestation of lands is likely to occur in cutaway bogland areas as part of rehabilitation schemes.

11.1.6 Policy Statement

It is the policy of the Council:

- FD 1** To encourage forestry development, to be planted, managed and harvested in accordance with the published Forest Service Guidelines for: (i) Landscape, (ii) Forest Harvesting and Environmental, (iii) Archaeology, (iv) Biodiversity and (v) Water Quality.
- FD 2** To promote forestry development of appropriate scale and character whilst ensuring that the development does not have a negative visual impact on the countryside or cause pollution or degradation to wildlife habitats, natural waters or areas of ecological importance.
- FD 3** To encourage the improved management of woodlands and to promote the “Native Woodland Scheme” which aims to increase the total native woodland cover where appropriate, in forms that respect and enhance local character and local biodiversity.
- FD 4** To cooperate with the the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources in order to encourage and promote the preparation and implementation of an Indicative Forest Strategy for the county.
- FD 5** To prohibit a total clear felling of any tree crop, to ensure that felling is carried out in a controlled manner. Felling in very sensitive locations should be limited to 5 to 15 hectares (12.36 –37 acres). Clear felling of not more than 25 hectares (62 acres) shall take place at any one time. All commercial felling will be subject to the conditions of a felling licence, which may involve re-planting.
- FD 6** To encourage asymmetric and irregularly shaped felling coupes which follow landform, with edges diagonal to the contour, rising in hollows and descending on spurs, in order to minimise the visual impact.
- FD 7** To ensure that buffer zones or exclusion zones of 10 metres and 15 metres are applied to aquatic zones and sites of archaeological importance, respectively. These may need to be increased following discussions with the appropriate state authority depending on the level of sensitivity involved.
- FD 8** That in the event of any road damage occurring due to forestry work, the onus to repair the road will lie within the forestry company.
- FD 9** To actively partake in the NeighbourWood Scheme and to identify areas at a local level that are suitable for woodland, given that the rapid expansion of urban areas in recent years has led to the need to provide communities with woodland amenity areas that are accessible and attractive to the local community.

11.2 (B) Boglands: Background

Background

There are approximately 24,300 hectares (60,045 acres) of land in Kildare covered by bogs, which represents 14% of the total land coverage of the county. Most of the bogland resources in Kildare are located in the north-west and south-west of the county, the majority of which are raised bogs with smaller blanket bog areas. 38% of this bogland is in industrial production with the majority (8,277 hectares) being operated by Bord na Móna. A number of bogs in the county are designated SACs, SPAs and proposed NHAs.

11.2.1 Goal

To ensure that a balanced approach is taken to the development of the county's peat resources and the restoration of cutaway bogs, in order to minimise the negative impact on biodiversity and the archaeological and cultural heritage of the county.

11.2.2 Objective

- (1) To promote and facilitate the development of the county's peat resources in a sustainable manner.
- (2) To seek the conservation of designated bogs and to protect the bogland landscape character areas within the county.
- (3) To encourage a balanced approach to the re-development of cutaway bogs.

11.2.3 Policy Statement

It is the policy of the Council:

- BL 1** That in assessing bogland coverage and peat extraction activities within County Kildare, the Council shall seek to identify bogland areas currently under extraction and remnant bogland areas, so as to maximise the peat extraction potential of the county whilst ensuring protection and conservation of bogland habitats. Limiting extraction to those areas currently under development will help to minimise impacts by localising effects and thus protect the bog landscape character areas within the County. [Table 18.6 in Volume 2 shows the likely perception of landscape impacts of bog/peat extraction in different landscape character areas.]

- BL 2** To take a balanced approach to the re-development of cutaway bogs. Large portions of cutaway bog should be developed as areas for wildlife, biodiversity conservation and their amenity value, whilst other portions can be utilised for economic uses such as grassland, forestry and wind energy.
- BL 3** To liaise with Bord na Móna, the Irish Peatland Conservation Council, Coillte, National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, to ensure the sustainable use of cut away bogland, with due consideration given to their ecological and amenity value.
- BL 4** To recognise that cutaway boglands represent degraded landscapes and/or brownfield sites and thus are potentially robust to absorb a wide variety of sympathetic developments. It should be noted that they have potential for grass and forestry, however difficulties can arise with crop production.
- BL 5** To seek a Hydrological Report which will also incorporate a Flood Studies Report for significant developments within boglands so as to ensure that the quality of ground or surface water is not impaired.
- BL 6** To pursue the persons responsible for restoration costs where damage has occurred in protected areas as a result of unauthorised development.

