



Coillte is updating its District Strategic Plans (DSP) throughout the country. Advertisements have been placed in national newspapers and further details of the plan review process can be seen on this website. Open public consultation meetings are also organised to allow stakeholders to discuss the draft district strategic plans of interest to them, and give us their feedback and comments. For meeting details please check this website.

During our Forest Management Plan (FMP) Consultation process back in 2008/2009, stakeholders highlighted key topics that they felt we should consider in our plan. We are very grateful for the time and effort people took in compiling these submissions and we have acted on suggestions where it has been possible to do so.

A total of 251 people and organisations submitted comments. The topic of most interest, with just over a third of the submissions, was recreation provision in forests. Other topics included the following: access/roads, archaeology, deer nuisance/damage, dumping, habitat impact, harvesting, landscape impact, local heritage, renewable energy, park/recreation, property sales, restocking species choice, trespass, unauthorised land use, water nutrient release and fire protection.

As a way of helping our stakeholders understand the process, the following table provides a summary of extracts from submissions under the topics listed above and Coillte's response.

FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN (FMP) CONSULTATION SUBMISSIONS

| Consultation topics highlighted during our consultation process | Coillte response to consultees on these topics |
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| <p>(a) ACCESS/ROADS</p> <p>A small number of respondents cited problems with access/roads in their consultation submissions. Among those outlined were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Coillte should take greater account of the potential adverse impacts of forest operations on the local road network. ▶ Whether damaged roads would be re-dressed, with many roads having been left with very rough stones. ▶ Coillte should prepare and maintain a timber production/haulage plan for each forest property. ▶ Coillte should put in place an agreed protocol to deal with the construction of new entrances. | <p>Each year Coillte builds a number of kilometres of new forest roads, and lay-bys in order to access areas for thinning and clear felling.</p> <p>Coillte gives each local authority a schedule of harvesting areas and volumes for a number of years ahead and agrees designated timber haulage routes.</p> <p>Coillte tries to minimise usage of County roads by only using the designated haulage routes.</p> <p>Coillte also endeavours to build new internal roads to exit on to those designated routes.</p> <p>If road damage is caused by Coillte we repair such damage and redress to an agreed standard.</p> |
| <p>(b) ARCHAEOLOGY</p> <p>One stakeholder had questions about the protection of archaeological monuments by Coillte.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Is it Coillte's plan to enhance and protect archaeological sites. | <p>Coillte protects known archaeological sites and monuments on its estate, particularly during high impact forest operations such as tree planting, road making and timber harvesting.</p> <p>In addition, Coillte protects numerous sites which are not defined as national monuments, but are of local cultural value and interest. All recorded archaeological monuments are highlighted at the planning stage for forest operations, and are identified and taped off on site to ensure their protection.</p> |
| <p>(c) DEER NUISANCE/DAMAGE</p> <p>A small number of stakeholders responded with issues in relation to deer nuisance/damage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Concerns about deer trespassing from Coillte forests onto private land, causing damage, eating bark of trees and consequently killing them. ▶ Concerns about people trespassing onto private lands from Coillte lands. ▶ A comment expressed, "Generally Coillte is a good, responsible neighbour". ▶ Concerns about deer hunters saying they have licence from Coillte but actually shooting on private lands. | <p>In developing and implementing appropriate deer management strategies, Coillte endeavours to balance its primary objectives of preventing damaging impacts, public safety and animal welfare with the requirements of conservation and the management of a valuable biological resource. Where possible Coillte aims to achieve deer management through collaboration with local land owners/managers and other stakeholders.</p> <p>Coillte issues licences for suitable areas of forests for both bird and deer hunting. All holders of licences to hunt on Coillte lands are issued with a map clearly indicating the licensed area. The onus of responsibility rests with all hunters to know the extent of the rights to which they are entitled to exercise. Hunting on lands where a person does not have permission of the owner or holder of sporting rights, is contrary to section 44 of the Wildlife Acts (as amended) and they could be subject to prosecution.</p> <p>Furthermore, it is an offence for non-licensed hunters to hunt deer or game on Coillte lands and Coillte's policy is to report such offences to the Garda Síochána. Coillte encourages stakeholders who are aware of illegal hunting on Coillte lands to inform Coillte and to report it to the Garda Síochána also.</p> |

FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN (FMP) CONSULTATION SUBMISSIONS

Consultation topics highlighted during our consultation process

Coillte response to consultees on these topics

(d) DUMPING

Comments from stakeholders regarding dumping were expressed. Their views were in particular about the problem of illegal dumping:

- ▶ Some respondents felt that dumping, particularly at forest entrances, is too common.
- ▶ Comment made, “the woods are a great pleasure to us all”.
- ▶ Others felt that certain areas need to be blocked off to limit/lessen chances of dumping.
- ▶ Coillte should control dumping on its estate.

Illegal dumping on Coillte sites is a serious problem and dealing with it is a costly activity for us. Removal and proper disposal of the dumped material is our responsibility as the owner or occupier of the land.

The issues we deal with include one off and persistent dumping at specific locations, and the dumping of large items such as cars, dead animals, large household items etc.

Illegal dumping is identified as a security issue and is dealt with in Coillte’s security action plans and in Coillte’s Environmental Impact Appraisal (EIA). These plans and EIA’s are drawn up for all Coillte sites in the country and are co-ordinated by the local forest manger.

Coillte deals with illegal dumping as follows:-

1. Notification to the litter warden for domestic rubbish or to the enforcement officer of the County Council for non-domestic rubbish.
2. If possible, establish the owner by examination of the material.
3. Notify Garda authorities if appropriate to do so.
4. The relevant authorities i.e. Garda/Litter warden to pursue prosecutions in normal way.
5. Coillte to pursue all costs associated with removal and disposal of rubbish.

By strict adherence to Coillte’s Internal Security Policy and the laws of the land, we expect a reduction in dumping in the short to medium term.

(e) HABITAT IMPACT

A number of respondents sent in consultation submissions on this topic, querying some of Coillte’s operations. Special interest groups also expressed their views...

- ▶ Concerns about the effects of planting trees on fish and insect life
- ▶ Concerns over safeguarding protected species within Coillte forestry following land sales.
- ▶ Leading authority on Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) had a keen interest in the consultation process near areas of interest to him.
- ▶ Birdwatch Ireland suggested surveys on a representative sample of Coillte forests in terms of documenting our moths and butterflies to provide indicators of the impacts of forest operations on biodiversity.
- ▶ Stakeholder would like to see more native hardwood trees which we believe would improve the forest as a habitat for wildlife.
- ▶ “We welcome this collaboration and mention of it in our local community plan”.
- ▶ Stakeholder “very satisfied with the presence of the lesser horseshoe bats commuting and foraging needs being clearly recognised and highlighted. Good work between Coillte and NPWS on this which will ensure long term conservation of this species”.
- ▶ Bird watch Ireland welcomed the nature conservation approach set out in the FMP.

One of Coillte’s main sustainable forest management objectives is the identification, mapping and protection of areas of nature conservation significance. In addition to its responsibilities in relation to Natura 2000 sites, ecological surveys have been commissioned across the Coillte estate in recent years, to assess, evaluate, propose and protect the best such areas in the Country. Coillte also contributes in a meaningful way to Irelands “National Biodiversity Action Plan”, having designated a minimum of 15% of each Forest District for nature conservation is the primary management objective.

Coillte complies with the EC Birds and Habitats Directives also. These directives provide for the protection of certain bird species and for the protection of a range of habitats and their species. Where necessary the Directive also requires their restoration to favourable conservation status. For more information on Coillte’s work in the biodiversity management area, please click on www.coillte.ie.

Coillte has in addition identified areas of its estate of national and European significance for nature conservation. Through the EU LIFE Nature fund, Coillte has successfully restored 1,988 hectares of blanket bog habitat, 571 hectares of raised bog habitat and 550 hectares of priority woodlands habitat. In 2011 Coillte is embarking on a fourth LIFE Nature project to restore further raised bog habitats in Ireland. Details of these projects may be found at:

www.irishbogrestorationproject.ie

www.raisedbogrestoration.ie

www.woodlandrestoration.ie

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(f) HARVESTING

- ▶ One stakeholder was concerned about a stand of trees growing too close to his house, and asked when they would be felled.
- ▶ Other stakeholders wished to see less clear felling of forest stands.

Coillte's clear felling is a natural part of forest management, where mature crops are removed and replanted with a new crop. The extent of clear felling is strictly controlled both externally and internally and carried out under licence from the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Food. In addition, operational consultation is carried out with local stakeholders in advance of all high impact operations such as harvesting which may include changes to felling plans due to market conditions, for silvicultural reasons, or due to wind blow.

The principal forms of tree harvesting carried out in Coillte are thinning and clear-felling. Coillte also replant these sites post harvesting. Regular thinning improves the quality of the remaining trees and while a clear felled site may look unsightly post harvesting; within three to four years the appearance will ameliorate as the newly planted trees begin to grow and the site is colonised with other vegetation. Deadwood, retained in the forest after harvesting may often look untidy but places a vital role for woodland biodiversity and nutrient cycling in Irish forests.

Coillte's felling throughout the country is controlled by the Forest Service who issue appropriate felling licences under the 1946 Forestry Act. All such felling proposals are consulted on in advance with the appropriate statutory bodies and their recommendations fully considered.

(g) LANDSCAPE IMPACT

- Comments and questions on the topic of landscape impact included:
- ▶ Coillte should implement more sympathetic harvesting to avoid very dramatic changes to the landscape by brutal clear felling.
 - ▶ Concerns expressed at the degree of de-forestation which impacts on the landscape significantly.
 - ▶ More open space allowed to let old hedgerows regenerate naturally.
 - ▶ Coillte should maintain scenery by not planting trees in certain Regions.

Forests can add considerable value to rural areas when appropriately located and on a scale and design that is sympathetic to the character of the existing landscape. Coillte recognises its responsibility to ensure its forest are planned and managed in a manner that enhances the landscape. Across the country there are Coillte staff trained in forest landscape techniques and design. Coillte's forest landscape areas have been assessed and given a sensitivity rating and forest design plans are developed and implemented for areas of high sensitivity. In order to minimise dramatic changes to the landscapes, limits are set in relation to harvesting trees on upland forests, and also on lowland forests.

Coillte also follow the Forest Service guidelines on Landscape Design and our staff liaise with the Forest Service experts in this area.

(h) LOCAL HERITAGE

- Questions about local heritage were raised by a stakeholder.
- ▶ Stakeholder question regarding the name of river in a specific area of interest to them.

Coillte makes every effort to respond to queries in relation to local heritage interest. Questions may be addressed locally to the forest manager during consultation or directly through Coillte's website by e-mailing, pr@coillte.ie

(i) RENEWABLE ENERGY

- Comments in relation to this topic included:
- ▶ Reducing carbon emissions.
 - ▶ Another stakeholder requested that Coillte should become involved in biomass production by utilising its residues from harvesting sites. The stakeholder felt that this would create local jobs, improve the look of harvesting sites and leave the ground more amenable to replanting.
 - ▶ "I saw at first hand some of the good work being undertaken and developed by Coillte in the past few years".

- ▶ Coillte is committed to helping reduce Ireland's carbon emissions and achieving the Irish Governments renewable energy targets. Coillte is involved in a range of wind energy projects throughout Ireland either on its own or with venture capital partners.
- ▶ Coillte is strategically positioning the biomass resource to play an important part in contributing to the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and climate change mitigation for Ireland. Forestry can act as a sink for the removal of CO2 from the atmosphere, and biomass can replace fossil fuels such as oil and gas. All of these actions contribute to the reduction of Ireland's carbon production. For more information on Coillte's renewable energy plans please click on www.coillte.ie

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(j) RECREATION

Coillte's forest parks and recreation areas are of great interest to the general public. 34% of submissions received during the FMP consultation period centred around the topic of forest recreation. Amongst the improvements suggested and comments made were:

- ▶ More and better signage on forest trails.
- ▶ "I was encouraged that you were open to submissions from members of the general public regarding input".
- ▶ "Overall experience is of excellent woodland and great resource to local area".
- ▶ Further development of some forest areas for recreation.
- ▶ More pony trekking routes.
- ▶ More interpretative panels to enhance the visitor experience.
- ▶ Permanent orienteering courses in suitable locations.
- ▶ "I would like to congratulate Coillte on their decision to include our local woodland in the FMP".
- ▶ Improving forest tracks and roadways.

Coillte has a long tradition of responsive community involvement through its extensive forest network. The development of recreational activities, along with Coillte's open forest policy are some of the many ways Coillte contribute towards the "public goods" value of forests in communities, and enhance long term relationships and good will.

Coillte recognises that forests provide an excellent landscape for a wide range of recreational activities and the company, as the country's largest land owner, has a special place in the provision of access to recreation. As such Coillte seeks to provide low-impact non-motorised recreation to the general public and other specialist activities under special permit.

The company will continue to provide recreation that is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.

Coillte welcomes all visitors to the forest and expects them to respect the environmental code for users.

In recognising its role in the rural community Coillte seeks to work in partnership with the tourism sector to facilitate developments e.g. the redevelopment of Lough Key Forest Park, in Co. Roscommon within partnership arrangements. For further information on Coillte's recreational facilities, please visit the Coillte outdoors website www.coillteoutdoors.ie

(k) PROPERTY SALE

Consultation responses relating to land sales were mostly in the form of questions about the policy for land sales and policy on leasing areas for sporting and recreational purposes.

Coillte sells, leases or develops limited areas of non-strategic land for purposes other than forestry. Most of these sales are made in response to local demand and typically comprise house sites, isolated uninhabited dwelling houses, small outlying forest properties, small areas of forest to neighbouring land owners, gravel pits, and land to local authorities for infrastructural projects. Before any sale takes place, a consultation process is carried out with those most closely involved (e.g. neighbours, and other people likely to be affected by the sale).

A signing-off committee within the company considers all sales proposals, with very large sales requiring the approval of the Board of Directors. Coillte is also involved in renewable energy through wind farm development. Other areas of interest are telecommunications, biomass etc.

Coillte issues licences for suitable areas of forests for both bird and deer hunting, for which it receives a certain amount of revenue. Such activities are carried out in strict accordance with Coillte Deer and Game Management policies, Guidelines and Codes of Practice, as well as the conditions of the licence agreement.

Each year Coillte publishes a list of areas that have been excised from its estate on its website: www.coillte.ie

(l) RESTOCK SPECIES CHOICE

Some consultees were concerned with the choice of species for planting and replanting. Comments included:

- ▶ A number of stakeholders would like to see replanting with more native broadleaved species or more areas left to naturally regenerate.
- ▶ Negative views on replanting with Pine as there is a need to use chemical fertiliser on such crops.
- ▶ "We are delighted to hear about your plans for biodiversity and broadleaf planting".
- ▶ Stakeholders want to see native Irish trees included and want to see pathways made available, which would assist both local walkers and enhance wildlife.

Coillte policy is to encourage species diversification in order to maintain and enhance the productive potential of its estate and to increase biodiversity in its forests.

The company has a specific objective to increase the current % of broadleaves from 10% upwards over the next rotation.

Coillte has also developed a species diversification strategy based on the requirements of the FSC Standard. To reduce or eliminate the need for artificial fertilisation programmes, a more cautious species selection is being applied so that the species planted will not need supplementary fertiliser over its rotation. In some Districts we are pursuing a policy of planting lodge pole pine or pine/spruce mixtures on the low yielding sensitive sites. Diverse conifer species such as Scots pine can also be used in areas of shallow peat.

Buffer zones are being left beside watercourses in new planting and replanting schemes. These consist of open space which allows establishment of natural ground vegetation and often complimented with the planting of a fringe of native broadleaf trees. These have benefits for both water quality and wildlife.

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(m) TRESPASS

- ▶ One stakeholder felt that there was no control over public using forest entrances after forest hours, leading to antisocial behaviour.

Coillte deals with the issue of anti social and unauthorised usage of forests on an ongoing basis. Trespass after forest hours constitutes a security issue for Coillte. Responses to unauthorised activity includes..

- ▶ Keep forest barriers locked, at allocated times.
- ▶ Erecting warning notices, and safety signage.

This type of issue is also dealt with under Coillte's security action plans.

(n) UNAUTHORISED LAND USE

One stakeholder expressed dismay at the levels of unauthorised use of forests such as deer poaching dumping, burnt out cars, lighting of fires, scramblers, quads, car use, horses, sheep straying etc.

One stakeholder felt that Coillte staff were not concerned about the issues and make no effort to discourage unauthorised use. One stakeholder felt that Coillte should apply all of its published policies on the ground.

Coillte's response to some of the issues raised have been outlined elsewhere in section (d) Dumping and (m) Trespass.

Unauthorised land use, is a security issue for Coillte and is dealt with under our security plans.

Coillte staff are very concerned about these issues and work actively to deal with them according to the company policy on a daily and weekly basis.

An example of our response in relation to such issues follows:

- ▶ Identify firstly that there are no Rights of Way or access problems, such as barriers not being locked.
- ▶ Renew signage at entry re unauthorised uses such as bikes, dumping etc.
- ▶ maintain frequent visits by supervisory staff to keep a watch on activity.

Coillte issues licences for suitable areas of forest for both game bird and deer hunting. Such activities are carried out in strict accordance with Coillte Deer and Game Management Policies. See Coillte website for this policy http://www.coillte.ie/coillteforest/policies/deer_management/

Poaching is a security issue, like dumping or unauthorised land use and is dealt with under Coillte's security action plans.

(o) WATER NUTRIENT RELEASE

Some stakeholders were concerned at the impacts of forest activities on water quality, and particularly at the potential for nutrient releases to water from forested areas. Comments made were that

- ▶ Sites with peaty soils should not be planted.
- ▶ Soil analysis should be carried out prior to planting.
- ▶ Planting of native broadleaved trees along watercourses, and buffer zone would be beneficial to appropriate habitats.
- ▶ Ground disturbance should be minimised during planting.
- ▶ No harvesting activities should take place during heavy rain, to minimise discharges of polluting matter.
- ▶ Inland Fisheries Ireland is strongly opposed to aerial fertilisation. No areas of forestry should be planted that might require aerial fertilisation.

Coillte actively participates in the implementation of the Water Framework Directive ensuring that the forest industry is playing its part in protecting water bodies. Water protection areas (buffer zones) are being established in all our plantations.

Environmental assessment is carried out in all high impact operations. Long term monitoring of selected rivers in sensitive forest areas is being carried out to study the long term effects of forests on water.

Coillte is also reducing and in some cases eliminating chemical usage in forests by adopting control methods other than pesticide use and by continuing to review and evaluate non-pesticide alternatives as they become available.

As outlined in section (l) on restocking, in order to reduce or eliminate the need for artificial fertilisation programmes, a different species selection is being applied so that the species planted will not need supplementary fertiliser over its rotation.

Buffer zones are being left beside watercourse in new planting and replanting schemes. These consist of open space and a fringe of broadleaves. These have benefits for both water quality and wildlife and can often act as wildlife corridors linking areas of adjoining forest lands.

(p) FIRE PROTECTION

- ▶ All forestry should be provided with adequate fire breaks.

Fire break provision are part of normal operational activities to protect the Coillte and surrounding forests. Coillte are actively raising awareness of the dangers of forest fires through a media initiative and the hosting of forest fire awareness days.