

Northern Ireland Native Woodland Group

Work Programme

2009-2012

Introduction

The Northern Ireland Native Woodland Group addresses the following priority habitats in Northern Ireland which are the subject of Habitat Action Plans (HAPs); mixed ash wood, wet woodland, oak wood and parkland.

The role of the Northern Ireland Native Woodland Group is to ensure that activity in relation to meeting the objectives of the woodland HAPs is well co-ordinated and supported. The activities of the Group will facilitate effective communication between the relevant government agencies, local government, the private and voluntary sectors and relevant stakeholders and will include the maintenance and strengthening of links within the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Further details of the groups remit and membership is specified in the terms of reference.

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Site designation

Objective 1: Ensure that all priority woodland and parkland habitats that meet the scientific criteria required for ASSI designation are designated by 2016 and that all locally important sites are identified and protected.

Key Action 1.1: Designate all priority woodland and parkland habitats that meet the scientific criteria required for ASSI designation, by 2016.

| Key Tasks | | Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold | Timeframe | Comments/Update |
|-----------|--|---|-----------|-----------------|
| 1.1.1 | Review the coverage of woodland and parkland habitats within the ASSI/NNR/SAC series and designate parkland and additional woodland sites. | NEA | 2016 | Ongoing |
| 1.1.2 | Produce conservation objectives for NNRs. | NEA | 2012 | Ongoing |

Key Action 1.2: Protect locally important sites by identifying them in Area Plans and in Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

| Key Tasks | | Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold | Timeframe | Comments/Update |
|-----------|--|--|----------------------------------|--|
| 1.2 | Identify woodland and parkland SLNCIs in Development Plans and in Local Biodiversity Action Plans. | Planning Service NIEA, NGOs, Councils | In line with Area Plan Programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> L/derry is the only council area where woodland SLNCI surveys are still required. The publication of draft Area Plans and the adoption of Area Plans have been delayed. |

Special Management of designated sites

Objective 2: Work to maintain favourable condition or improve the conservation condition towards favourable, of 95% of the features underlying the designation of internationally important wildlife sites and Areas of Special Scientific Interest by 2016.

Key Action 2.1: Monitor and report on the condition of designated woodland and parkland sites and associated species.

| Key Tasks | | Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold | Timeframe | Comments/Update |
|-----------|--|---|--------------------------------|--|
| 2.1.1 | Monitor and report on the condition of woodland and parkland ASSIs | NIEA | To be repeated every six years | First cycle complete 2002 - 2008. Results published. |

Key Action 2.2: Identify ASSI/SAC in unfavourable condition and implement site management plans for restoration for identified sites by 2010.

| Key Tasks | | Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold | Timeframe | Comments/Update |
|-----------|---|---|-----------|--|
| 2.2.1 | Initiate a programme to restore woodland and parkland ASSIs/SACs which are not in favourable condition. | NIEA & Other members that own and/or manage ASSIs. | 2009 | Remedies: NIEA (CDP) are preparing management prescriptions for ASSIs/SACs to bring sites up to favourable condition status. Woodlands are the first habitat to be targeted. |
| 2.2.2 | Ensure that agri-environment schemes, Woodland Grant Schemes and MOSS are used effectively to deliver woodland and parkland management and restoration on ASSIs/SACs. | DARD CMB, FS, NIEA and landowners | Ongoing | |

Management of designated sites and priority habitats

Objective 3: Maintain the current extent and overall distribution of woodlands and parklands currently in favourable condition and improve the condition of those areas, which are degraded but readily restorable by 2010 and introduce management regimes to improve the condition of the remaining areas by 2016.

| Habitat | Target unit | Current extent | Area of favourable condition to be achieved by 2015 | Favourable condition (%) | Area to be restored by 2015 | Restoration (%) | Area of expansion by 2015 | Expansion (%) |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|---|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| Mixed Ashwoods | Hectares - ha | 3,430 | 2,000 | 58% | 170 | 5% | 340 | 10% |
| Oakwood | Hectares - ha | 2,350 | 1,600 | 68% | 120 | 5% | 240 | 10% |
| Wet woodland | Hectares - ha | 2,600 | 1,650 | 63% | 130 | 5% | 260 | 10% |
| Parkland | Hectares - ha | 500 | 350 | 70% | 10 | 2% | 3 | <1% |

Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS) reports on these targets. Last reporting round covered 2005 to 2008. View results on <http://www.ukbap-reporting.org.uk/default.asp>

Key Action 3.1: Maintain the extent and condition of woodland sites and the distribution and population of key species.

| Key Tasks | | Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold | Timeframe | Comments/Update |
|-----------|---|---|-----------|---|
| 3.1.1 | Ensure planning policies provide adequate protection and promotion of the value of woodland and parkland habitats biodiversity. | Planning Service , NIEA and consultees | 2009 | Include appropriate references to woodland and parkland in Planning Policy Statement 2. |
| 3.1.2 | Contribute to the implementation of relevant Species Action Plans. | ALL | Ongoing | |
| 3.1.3 | Ensure that MOSS and other NIRD schemes are used effectively to deliver woodland management and restoration. | DARD, NIEA | Ongoing | |
| 3.1.4 | Encourage the development of forestry/ | Forest Service & | 2012 | Underpinned by UK Forestry Standard and |

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| | landscape strategies to promote the expansion and positive management of woodlands and parkland. | Other members that hold woodland and other priority habitat data | | NI Forestry Strategy (2006) |
| 3.1.5 | Encourage the use of local provenance native trees in planting schemes. | ALL | Ongoing | |
| 3.1.6 | Promote the conservation and expansion of woodland as part of the measures being implemented to achieve good conservation status in all river basins under the WFD. | NIEA, Forest Service, DARD | Ongoing | |

Key Action 3.2: Compile an inventory on priority woodland habitats in Northern Ireland.

| Key Tasks | | Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold | Timeframe | Comments/Update |
|-----------|---|--|-----------|--|
| 3.2.1 | Produce an inventory of the extent of woodland habitats | Forest Service & Other members that hold data | 2010 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FS to collate existing GIS layers on FS estate, forestry grant schemes, designated woodlands, SLNCs, CMS woodland data, AONB woodland surveys. Land Cover Map 2009 is potentially useful. |
| 3.2.2 | Produce an inventory of the condition of woodland habitats. | Forest Service & Other members that hold data | 2013 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NINWG needs to determine condition assessment standards for sites outside ASSIs before a condition inventory can be developed. |
| 3.2.3 | Inform all owners of land included in the Ancient Woodland Inventory of the nature conservation value of this | Woodland Trust & Other members | 2012 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WT involvement - dependent on funding. |

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| | habitat. | | | |
| 3.2.4 | Produce an inventory of restoration and extension projects in Northern Ireland. | Woodland Trust & Other members | 2015 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WT involvement - dependent on funding. • Candidate PAWS projects identified within Forest Service (FS) estate. FS strategy on AWI woodland in place. • Woodland Trust NIEA grant aid proposal – visit PAWS in private ownership. • Areas of New Native Woodland supported by FS grants and established by FS are summarised annually. |

Key Action 3.3: Compile an inventory on priority parkland habitats in Northern Ireland.

| Key Tasks | | Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold | Timeframe | Comments/Update |
|-----------|---|--|-----------|--|
| 3.3.1 | Produce an inventory of the extent of parkland habitats. | NIEA & Other members that hold data | 2009 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parkland and wood pasture scoping study was published in 2008. Keith Alexander presented findings at workshop on 5/12/08. • Available data from AWI, Register of Historic Parks, Gardens & Demesnes, Ancient Tree Hunt and CMS parkland data. NT hold Crom data. • NIEA to conduct further surveys of the quality of the parkland resource using a sample based approach |
| | Produce an inventory of the condition of parkland habitats. | NIEA & Other members that hold data | 2015 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NINWG needs to determine condition assessment standards for sites outside ASSIs before a condition inventory can be developed. |

Key Action 3.4: Monitor the condition of woodland habitats and species in the wider countryside.

| Key Tasks | | Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold | Timeframe | Comments/Update |
|-----------|--|---|-----------|--|
| 3.4.1 | Produce definitions for “favourable condition”, “unfavourable condition” and “unfavourable recovering” for woodland habitats in the wider countryside. | NIEA & Other members | 2010 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial work conducted by Faber Maunsell (Discussion paper – condition assessment standards for woodlands outside ASSIs). Northern Ireland Countryside Survey sample squares located in woodlands over 2009/10. Data to be presented when available. Set up a sub-group to look at condition assessment. |
| 3.4.2 | Agree condition protocols and indicators for priority woodland habitats in the wider countryside. | NIEA & Other members | 2010 | As 3.4.1 |
| 3.4.3 | Produce a programme for monitoring the condition of priority woodland habitats and species in the wider countryside. | NIEA, FS | 2012 | As 3.4.1 and 3.4.2 |

Key Action 3.5: Monitor the condition of parkland habitats and species in the wider countryside.

| Key Tasks | | Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold | Timeframe | Comments/Update |
|-----------|--|---|-----------|---|
| 3.5.1 | Produce definitions for “favourable condition”, “unfavourable condition” and “unfavourable recovering” for parkland habitats in the wider countryside. | ALL | 2012 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group agreed to look at condition assessment of oak, ash and wet woodland first. NIEA developing ASSI selection criteria for parkland. |
| 3.5.2 | Agree condition protocols and indicators for priority parkland habitats in the wider countryside. | ALL | 2012 | See 3.3.1 |
| 3.5.3 | Produce a programme for monitoring the condition of priority woodland | NIEA, FS | 2012 | |

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| | habitats and species in the wider countryside. | | | |
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Key Action 3.6: Carry out a strategic review of restoration opportunities for woodland habitats.

| Key Tasks | | Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold | Timeframe | Comments/Update |
|-----------|--|--|-----------|---|
| 3.6.1 | Produce a Restoration Strategy for woodlands and parklands in NI. | NIEA, FS, DARD, LBAP | | <i>To review in 2011.</i> |
| 3.6.2 | Initiate restoration of sites prioritised in the Restoration Strategy. | NIEA, Forest Service, District Councils, DARD, LBAP. | | <i>To review in 2011.</i> |
| 3.6.3 | Ensure an integrated and effective approach to funding restoration management of woodland and parkland habitats. | NIEA & Other members with funding provision | 2010 | |
| 3.6.4 | Promote and develop demonstration sites for the management and restoration of woodlands and parklands. | ALL | 2007 | All members to promote demonstration sites: National Trust re: parkland Woodland Trust re: PAWS Ulster Wildlife Trust re: Glenarm Belfast City Council re: council sites NIEA re: nature reserves / country parks. |

Research

Objective 4: Initiate and support research to advance the implementation of this work programme.

Key Action 4.1: Continue to carry out research as necessary to improve our understanding of woodland and parkland distribution, function, management and associated species.

| Key Tasks | | Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold | Timeframe | Comments/Update |
|-----------|--|---|-----------|-----------------|
| 4.1.1 | Continue to support and undertake research to develop our understanding of woodland and parkland habitats and their management for biodiversity. | FS, NIEA. DARD. | Ongoing | |

Education and Awareness

Objective 5: Encourage active participation and increase the awareness and understanding of woodland and parkland issues amongst the public, landowners and stakeholders.

Key Action 5.1: Promote access to woodlands and parkland and raise awareness of woodland and parkland habitats and species.

| Key Tasks | | Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold | Timeframe | Comments/Update |
|-----------|--|---|-----------|-----------------|
| 5.1.1 | Provide appropriate access, interpretation and educational provision on key woodland and parkland sites. | ALL | Ongoing | |

Key Action 5.2: Promote good practice guidance for woodlands and parklands.

| Key Tasks | | Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold | Timeframe | Comments/Update |
|-----------|--|--|-----------|--|
| 5.2.1 | Review relevant guidelines and materials on woodland and produce a directory of best practice | Forest Service & Other members | 2009 | FS to collate best practice guidance and provide links on FS website. |
| 5.2.2 | Provide consistent and informed management advice to woodland and parkland landowners and managers. | ALL | Ongoing | |
| 5.2.3 | Produce of a booklet which will promote the cultural history, landscape and biodiversity of parkland and wood pasture. This will also provide information on the management of parkland and wood pasture to inform landowners / managers of best practice. | DARD CMB , NIEA, National Trust & Other members | 2011 | Action arose from Dec 08 parkland workshop. Explore possibilities for an all Ireland leaflet. |

Implementation

Objective 6: Ensure that this work programme is implemented and review progress annually...

Key Action 6.1: the NINWG, including Government, NGOs and forest industry representatives, will help implement this work programme.

| Key Tasks | | Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold | Timeframe | Comments/Update |
|-----------|--|---|-----------|-----------------|
| 6.1.1 | Review work programme and progress on an annual basis. | ALL | Annually | |
| 6.1.2 | Review terms of reference. | ALL | 2012 | |

Key Action 6.2: Further develop links with Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland.

| Key Tasks | | Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold | Timeframe | Comments/Update |
|-----------|--|---|-----------|-----------------|
| 6.2 | Continue to develop links with the UK, the Republic of Ireland and International organisations on woodland and species management. | Woodlands of Ireland, UKWHAP, FC. | Ongoing | |