

Northern Ireland Native Woodland Group

Work Programme

2009-2012

Report for 2009/2010

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 woodland, wet woodland, oak woodland 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.

Reporting against the Work Programme

The first NINWG work programme covered the period 2006 to 2009. The NINWG reported progress against the work programme in late 2008 and a progress report was sent to the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group in January 2009.

This report covers the period from April 2009 to December 2010.

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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.	NIEA	2016	Ongoing
1.1.2	Produce conservation objectives for NNRS.	NIEA	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) have developed a Woodland Remedies programme which provides management guidance for ASSIs/SACs to bring sites up to favourable condition status.
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	Figures for agri-environment as at 31/12/2009: Farm woodland (unclassified) – 1,175ha Ash woodland ungrazed – 3,266ha Ash woodland grazed – 234ha Oak woodland ungrazed – 894ha Oak woodland grazed 20ha Wet woodland ungrazed 1,508ha Wet woodland grazed 105ha Wet woodland (carr) 200ha Scrub 4,090ha Parkland and low land raised pasture - 2,772ha Riparian zone – native tree planting 29ha (areas less than 0.2ha) Ungrazed grass margin planted with native trees 598ha (areas less than 0.2ha).

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 (Currently out to consultation-closing date 8 July 2011).
3.1.2	Contribute to the implementation of relevant Species Action Plans.	ALL	Ongoing	
3.1.3	Ensure that MOSS and other NIRDPS schemes are used effectively to deliver woodland management and restoration.	DARD, NIEA	Ongoing	
3.1.4	Encourage the development of forestry/landscape strategies to promote the expansion and positive management of woodlands and parkland.	Forest Service & Other members that hold woodland and other priority habitat data	2012	Underpinned by UK Forestry Standard and 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	2010/11 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish baseline data of woodland cover and type in Northern Ireland based on existing data sources. Complete the analysis of data on woodland area and type and publish preliminary results.
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. A Forest Service monitoring plan for woodlands managed by FS will be initiated in 2012.
3.2.3	Inform all owners of land included in the Ancient Woodland Inventory of the nature conservation value of this habitat.	Woodland Trust & Other members	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WT involvement - dependent on funding Forest Service Woodland Officers advise private landowners who apply for a forestry grant scheme to restock AWW sites
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. 29 PAWS restoration projects have been identified within Forest Service (FS) estate based largely on an internal study in 2000. FS strategy on AWI woodland in place. FSGIS is currently being updated and

				<p>this will facilitate reporting of planted AWW sites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of New Native Woodland supported by FS grants and established by FS are summarised annually.
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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	2012	<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. • Future datasets will contribute greatly - Land Cover Map 2011 and DARD LIDAR data. • NIEA to conduct further surveys of the quality of the parkland resource using a sample based approach. • Forest Service have identified over 100ha of parkland within its estate in consultation with NIEA and DARD.
	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	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).

	habitats in the wider countryside.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 habitats and species in the wider countryside.	NIEA, FS	2012	

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 has collated draft best practice guidance on which NINWG members have been consulted
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. NIEA advice note in draft.

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	