

Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking

2012 Edition

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Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking

Introduction

This publication contains provisional statistics for the year to March 2012 on:

- UK woodland area;
- certified woodland area; and
- areas of new planting and restocking.

Estimates for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are included in addition to UK totals.

Figures at March 2012 and for the period 2011-12 are published for the first time in this release and are provisional. Some figures for earlier years have been revised from those previously released. For further details, see the Revisions section of the Annex.

Key findings

The main findings are:

- The area of woodland in the UK at 31 March 2012 is estimated to be 3.08 million hectares. This represents 13% of the total land area in the UK, 10% in England, 15% in Wales, 18% in Scotland and 7% in Northern Ireland.
- Of the total UK woodland area, 0.87 million hectares is owned or managed by the Forestry Commission (in Great Britain) or the Forest Service (in Northern Ireland).
- The total certified woodland area in the UK at 31 March 2012 is 1.36 million hectares, including all Forestry Commission/Forest Service woodland. Overall, 44% of the UK woodland area is certified.
- Thirteen thousand hectares of new woodland were created in the UK in 2011-12, mostly with broadleaved species.
- Twelve thousand hectares of woodland were restocked in the UK in 2011-12, mostly with conifers.

Area of Woodland

Woodland is defined in UK forestry statistics as land under stands of trees with a canopy cover of at least 20% (25% in Northern Ireland), or having the potential to achieve this. The definition relates to land use, rather than land cover, so integral open space and felled areas that are awaiting restocking are included as woodland. Further information, including how this UK definition compares with the international definition of woodland, is provided in the Annex.

Statistics on woodland area are used to inform government policy and resource allocation, to provide context to UK forestry and land management issues and are reported to international organisations.

Increases in woodland area result from the creation of new woodland. This can be achieved through new planting or by natural colonisation of trees on land near existing woodland. Further information is available in the Section on New Planting.

Decreases in woodland area result from the conversion of woodland to other land uses. Regulatory approval is usually required before trees can be felled. Felling approval will normally require the area to be restocked, but there are some cases in which trees may be permanently removed, generally for environmental reasons. The permanent removal of trees may also be authorised under planning regulations, to enable development.

Most public sector woodland is owned and managed by the Forestry Commission (FC) in Great Britain and the Forest Service (FS) in Northern Ireland. Other public sector woodland (e.g. owned by local authorities) are included with privately owned woodland as "non-FC/FS" in this release.

Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking

The area of woodland at 31 March 2012 is estimated to be 3.08 million hectares (Table 1). This represents 13% of the total land area in the UK, 10% in England, 15% in Wales, 18% in Scotland and 7% in Northern Ireland.

0.87 million hectares of woodland in the UK (28%) is owned or managed by the Forestry Commission (in Great Britain) or the Forest Service (in Northern Ireland).

Conifers account for around one half (52%) of the UK woodland area, although this proportion varies from 26% in England to 76% in Scotland.

Table 1: Area of woodland, 2012

	thousands of hectares				
	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	UK
FC/FS					
Conifers	154	100	448	55	757
Broadleaves	60	17	33	6	116
Total	214	117	481	61	873
Non-FC/FS					
Conifers	180	51	610	10	852
Broadleaves	900	136	302	17	1,355
Total	1,081	187	912	27	2,207
Total Woodland					
Conifers	334	151	1,058	66	1,609
Broadleaves	961	153	335	23	1,471
Total	1,295	304	1,392	88	3,080

Source: Forestry Commission, Forest Service, National Forest Inventory.

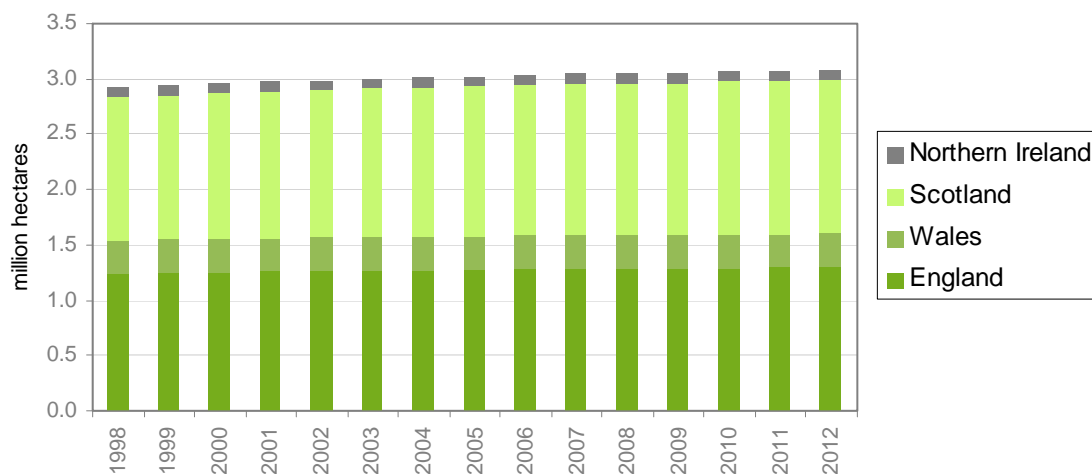
Note:

- (1) Areas as at 31 March 2012. Figures are provisional.
- (2) Figures for England, Wales and Scotland are based on data obtained from the National Forest Inventory and adjusted for new planting, but at present no adjustment is made for woodland recently converted to another land use. Further information on how the figures have been estimated is available in the Annex.
- (3) Broadleaves include coppice and coppice with standards.

Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking

Chart 1 shows woodland area by country since 1998. Figures for earlier years have been revised for consistency with results from the National Forest Inventory, to enable comparisons over time. The chart indicates that woodland area has risen by around 160 thousand hectares since 1998, an increase of 5% over the period.

Chart 1: Area of woodland, 1998 to 2012



Source: Forestry Commission, Forest Service, National Forest Inventory.

Note:

(1) Woodland areas for England, Wales and Scotland shown in this chart are based on data from the National Forest Inventory. The trends shown take account of areas of new planting and identifiable permanent woodland loss. Areas of woodland loss that are not yet identifiable (e.g. conversion of woodland for the restoration of open habitats) are not accounted for. Further information on the National Forest Inventory is available at www.forestry.gov.uk/inventory.

Area of Certified Woodland

Certified woodland in the UK has been independently audited against the UK Woodland Assurance Standard. Forestry certification schemes are owned by international non-governmental organisations and exist to promote good forest practice. They offer product labels to demonstrate that wood or wood products come from well-managed forests.

Figures for certified woodland areas are often used as an indicator of sustainable forest management. However, it should be noted that woodland that is not certified may also be managed sustainably.

Most changes to the certified woodland area figures over time are a result of new areas being certified or certificates not being renewed upon expiry. Temporary changes can also occur if there is a time lag between expiry and renewal.

Table 2 shows the area of certified woodland. The total area of certified woodland in the UK at 31 March 2012 is 1.36 million hectares. This represents 44% of the total UK woodland area, 27% of the woodland area in England, 45% in Wales, 58% in Scotland and 73% in Northern Ireland.

Table 2: Area of certified woodland, 2012

	thousands of hectares				
	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	UK
FC/FS	214	117	481	61	873
Non-FC/FS	141	21	327	3	491
Total	355	138	807	64	1,365
% of woodland area	27%	45%	58%	73%	44%

Source: Forest Stewardship Council, Forestry Commission, Forest Service.

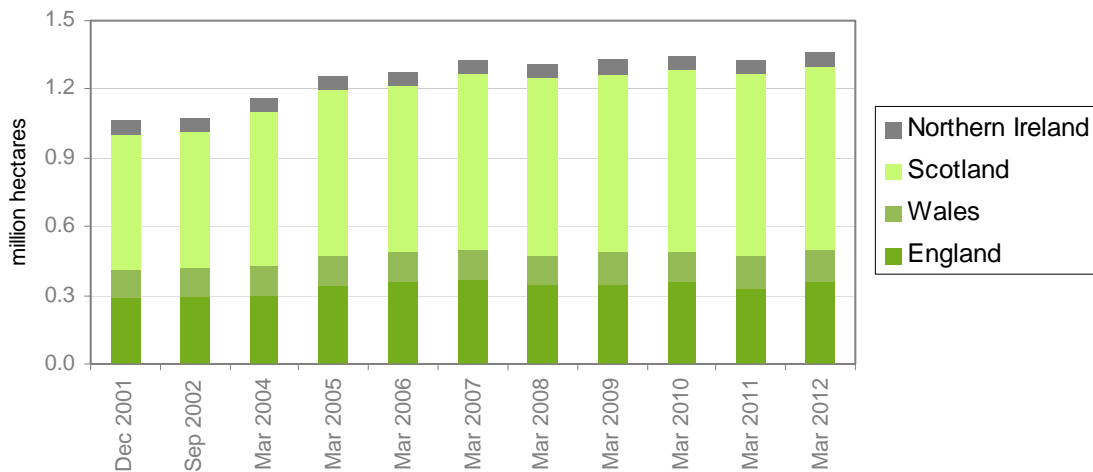
Note:

- (1) Areas as at 31 March 2012.
- (2) All certified woodland in 2012 is certified under the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) scheme. Some of these woodlands are also certified under the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) scheme.
- (3) The estimates are based on UK data published by FSC, supplemented by data from individual certificates and other sources. Where possible, figures are for the woodland area certified, rather than the land area certified.
- (4) All Forestry Commission/Forest Service woodland is certified. The Forestry Commission/Forest Service areas are the latest areas, as shown in Table 1, rather than the areas shown on certificates.

Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking

Chart 2 presents certified woodland area by country since December 2001, with figures for earlier years revised for consistency with results from the National Forest Inventory. This shows an increase in certified woodland area of around 300 thousand hectares (29%) since December 2001.

Chart 2: Area of certified woodland, 2001 to 2012



Source: Forest Stewardship Council, Forestry Commission, Forest Service.

New Planting

New planting is the creation of new areas of woodland by planting trees on land that was not previously woodland. The statistics presented here also include new woodland that is created by natural colonisation of trees on land near existing woodland. Statistics on new planting are used to inform government policy and resource allocation, and are used in producing annual estimates of woodland area.

There are a number of factors that can affect the level of new planting in the UK. These include:

- choices by landowners reflecting their own motivation and needs;
- the costs and availability of land for conversion to woodland;
- the availability of grants for new planting, the level of grant payments available and the awareness of grants among potential recipients;
- the tax benefits available from owning woodland;
- expected future markets for wood products such as timber and woodfuel;
- income from payments for ecosystem services, particularly carbon storage;
- national and local initiatives, for example on biodiversity, green infrastructure and water management.

Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking

Table 3 shows the area of new woodland that was created in the year to 31 March 2012. The total area of new planting in the UK in 2011-12 was 12.7 thousand hectares. Broadleaves accounted for 73% of the total area of new planting. Most new planting (90%) took place on non-FC/FS land. Most new planting (71%) took place in Scotland, 21% in England, 6% in Wales and the remaining 2% in Northern Ireland.

Table 3: Area of new planting, 2011-12

	thousands of hectares				
	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	UK
New planting by forest type					
Conifers	0.0	0.1	3.3	0.0	3.5
Broadleaves	2.6	0.6	5.7	0.3	9.2
All new planting	2.6	0.7	9.0	0.3	12.7
New planting by ownership					
FC/FS	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.0	1.3
Non-FC/FS	2.6	0.7	7.7	0.3	11.4
All new planting	2.6	0.7	9.0	0.3	12.7

Source: Forestry Commission, Forest Service, grant schemes.

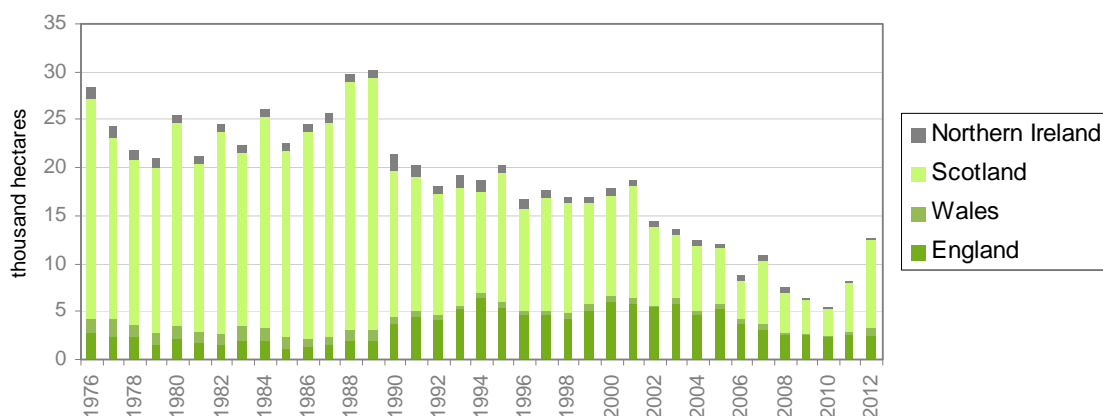
Note:

- (1) Non-FC/FS figures are based on areas for which grants were paid during the year, together with an estimate of areas planted without grant aid. Figures for grant-aided planting under Rural Development Contracts in Scotland relates to calendar years.
- (2) The planting season lies both sides of 31 March, and the weather can cause planting to be advanced or delayed.
- (3) Includes woodland formed by natural colonisation.
- (4) Figures are provisional.

Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking

Chart 3 shows areas of new planting by country since the year ending March 1976. UK new planting rates have fallen from the late 1980's, decreasing by 82% between 1988-89 and 2009-10. This followed changes to the tax benefits from owning forestry in the UK, introduced in the 1988 Finance Act (www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/39/contents). However, the area of new planting in the UK has more than doubled since 2009-10, largely driven by increases in Scotland following the introduction of Rural Development Contracts. For further information, see the Data Sources and Methodology section of the Annex.

Chart 3: Area of new planting, 1976 to 2012



Source: Forestry Commission, Forest Service, grant schemes.

Restocking

Restocking is the replanting of existing areas of woodland that have been felled. The statistics presented here also include felled areas that have been restocked by natural regeneration.

As restocking takes place on woodland that has been previously harvested and it is a condition of most felling licences that the area is restocked, restocking rates are mainly driven by harvesting levels (with a time lag, usually of around 2 years, between harvesting and restocking). Figures for timber harvesting were most recently released in *UK Wood Production and Trade: 2011 provisional figures* (available at [www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/trprod12.pdf/\\$FILE/trprod12.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/trprod12.pdf/$FILE/trprod12.pdf)).

Economic factors, including grant rates, may have some effect on the species choice at restocking. In addition, the precise timing of restocking may be affected by weather conditions.

Table 4 shows the area of restocking that took place in the year to 31 March 2012. The total area of restocking in the UK in 2011-12 was 12.3 thousand hectares. Conifers accounted for around three quarters (73%) of the total area of restocking. Most restocking (73%) took place on FC/FS land. Almost one half of all restocking (46%) took place in Scotland, 30% in England, 16% in Wales and the remaining 8% in Northern Ireland.

Table 4: Area of restocking, 2011-12

	thousands of hectares				
	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	UK
Restocking by forest type					
Conifers	2.0	1.4	4.6	0.9	9.0
Broadleaves	1.6	0.6	1.1	0.0	3.3
All restocking	3.6	2.0	5.7	1.0	12.3
Restocking by ownership					
FC/FS	2.2	1.2	4.7	0.9	8.9
Non-FC/FS	1.5	0.8	1.0	0.1	3.3
All restocking	3.6	2.0	5.7	1.0	12.3

Source: Forestry Commission, Forest Service, grant schemes.

Note:

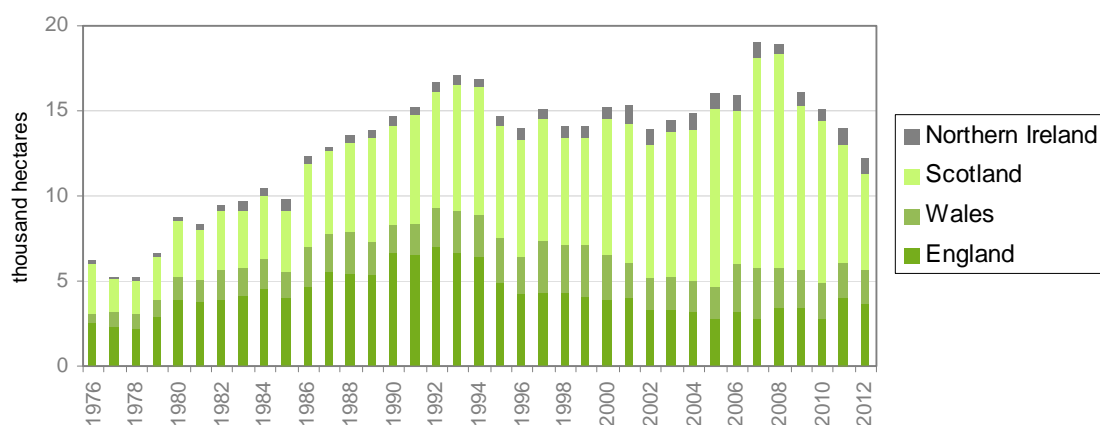
- (1) Non-FC/FS figures are based on areas for which grants were paid during the year, together with an estimate of areas planted without grant aid. Figures for grant-aided planting under Rural Development Contracts in Scotland relates to calendar years.
- (2) The planting season lies both sides of 31 March, and the weather can cause planting to be advanced or delayed.
- (3) Includes woodland restocked by natural regeneration.
- (4) Restocking by natural regeneration in non-clearfell areas may be under-represented in the above table.
- (5) Figures are provisional.

Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking

Chart 4 shows areas of restocking by country since the year ending March 1976. It indicates an increase in restocking rates over most of the period. Over the same period, there has been a general increase in UK wood production (see www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-7aqj5b).

The area of restocking has fallen by around one third since the peak of 19 thousand hectares in 2006-07. This follows changes to grant support for restocking in Scotland. For further information, see the Data Sources and Methodology section of the Annex.

Chart 4: Area of restocking, 1976 to 2012



Source: Forestry Commission, Forest Service, grant schemes.

Annex

Introduction

This annex provides background information on the woodland area, planting and restocking statistics presented in this release. It covers the data sources and methodology used to produce the statistics, information on quality measures and on any revisions to historic data and links to further information.

Glossary

Broadleaves Trees that do not have needles or cones, such as oak, birch and beech. A few, such as alder, have cone-like structures for their seeds which are not true cones.

Clearfell areas Sites where all trees have been felled at once. In non-clearfell areas, only some of the trees are felled at any one time.

Conifers Trees with needles and cones, such as spruce, pine and larch.

Coppice Trees that are cut near ground level (or sometimes higher, in which case they are called pollards), causing them to produce many small shoots. These shoots are harvested every few years at a relatively early age for products such as staves, fencing, fuel and charcoal. "Coppice with standards" includes scattered trees that are left to grow as normal ("standards").

Establishment The first five to ten years or formative period that ends once young trees are of sufficient size that, given adequate protection, they are likely to survive at the required stocking.

Forestry Commission (FC) The government department responsible for forestry matters in Great Britain. The responsibility for forestry is devolved to ministers in the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government, but some executive functions are exercised throughout Great Britain by the FC.

Forest In the United Kingdom, there is no formal definition of "forest"; the term is often used for large woodland areas (especially conifers) or for old Royal hunting preserves such as the New Forest or the Forest of Dean.

Forest Service (FS) An agency of the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

FSC Forest Stewardship Council.

Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking

Great Britain (GB) England, Wales and Scotland.

Hectare (ha) unit of area defined as 10,000 square metres (100 m by 100 m), approximately equivalent to 2.47 acres.

Natural colonisation The creation of new woodland by natural means, i.e. without sowing or planting.

Natural regeneration The regeneration of existing woodland by natural means, i.e. without sowing or planting.

New planting Establishing woodland on ground that was not woodland in the recent past.

NFI National Forest Inventory.

NIWT 1995-99 National Inventory of Woodland and Trees.

Restocking The replanting of an area after trees are removed.

United Kingdom (UK) Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Woodland Land under stands of trees with a canopy cover of at least 20% (25% in Northern Ireland), or having the potential to achieve this, including integral open space, and including felled areas that are awaiting restocking.

Data Sources and Methodology

Area of woodland

The provisional woodland areas at March 2012 provided in this release are based on the NFI woodland area map of Great Britain at March 2011. The map is overlaid with a map of Forestry Commission land, to enable a breakdown by ownership type to be estimated and the figures derived from these maps are then updated to March 2012 by adding areas of new planting in 2011-12. Initial estimates of conifer stocked area and broadleaved stocked area at March 2011, derived from NFI interim field survey results, were used to estimate the breakdown by type of woodland.

The methodology has been refined since the previous release to take account of revisions to the NFI woodland area map and the availability of initial results on stocked areas from the NFI field survey. Details of the changes and their potential impact on the figures are available in the *Methodology Note: Annual Woodland Area Estimates*, available at: [www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/mnwoodarea.pdf/\\$FILE/mnwoodarea.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/mnwoodarea.pdf/$FILE/mnwoodarea.pdf)

Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking

Information on the effect of these revisions is provided in the Revisions section of this Annex.

Further information on the methodology used by the National Forest Inventory and comparisons of results from the NFI and previous woodland area estimates is available at www.forestry.gov.uk/inventory.

Figures for Northern Ireland (Forest Service and non-Forest Service woodland) are provided by the Northern Ireland Forest Service.

Certified area

The data on certified woodland areas are obtained from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), and contact with individual land owners and managers. Some of the certified woodland has dual certification, i.e. it is certified under both the FSC scheme and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) scheme.

As all Forestry Commission and Forest Service woodland is certified, the areas used are those provided in Table 1, rather than the areas shown on the certificates. The change in data source for estimating Forestry Commission woodland area had led to a discontinuity in the time series for certified woodland area. Revised Forestry Commission woodland areas for earlier years have now been produced to give a consistent time series, as shown in Chart 2 and in the accompanying time series tables (available at www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/inf-d-7aqknx). For further information on the changes to data sources for woodland area, see the *Methodology Note: Annual Woodland Area Estimates*, available at: [www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/mnwoodarea.pdf/\\$FILE/mnwoodarea.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/mnwoodarea.pdf/$FILE/mnwoodarea.pdf)

New planting and restocking

New planting is the creation of new areas of woodland. Restocking is the replanting of existing areas of woodland that have been felled. Both new planting and restocking can use planting/seeding or natural colonisation/regeneration.

Information about Forestry Commission new planting and restocking comes from administrative systems. Non-FC information comes principally from grant schemes, including the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS), Glastir in Wales, Better Woodlands for Wales (BWW), Rural Development Contracts in Scotland, Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme (SFGS) and Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS).

For natural colonisation/regeneration, the areas are generally those for which the second instalment of the grant has been paid during the year. The second instalment is approved when woodland reaches a certain stage and density of growth, so this information corresponds approximately to the amount of new and restocked woodland created.

Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking

Changes to grant support for restocking of conifers has changed with the introduction of Rural Development Contracts in Scotland in 2008. As a result, grant aid is no longer available for restocking with Sitka spruce in many cases. This is likely to have led to a reduction in areas of grant-aided restocking.

Further information on current and closed grant schemes in Great Britain is available at:
England - www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-6dccen
Wales - www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-8jwbnb
Scotland - www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-5zad6a

Local estimates for areas of planting and restocking which are not FC and which are not grant-aided are included for England, Scotland and Wales. These estimates are relatively small (less than one thousand hectares per year in total), and it has been assumed that all of this area is broadleaves.

The use of natural regeneration in non-clearfell systems is increasing substantially - particularly for broadleaves in England. These systems are not satisfactorily represented by measuring restocking area within any given year, and so broadleaf planting is likely to be under-reported in this First Release and other statistics.

Figures for Northern Ireland (Forest Service and non-Forest Service woodland) are provided by the Forest Service (www.dardni.gov.uk/forests-service/index.htm).

Quality

The statistics on woodland area presented here refer to woodland as a land use rather than a land cover, so felled areas and newly planted areas are included within the definition of woodland. Some statistics on woodland area as a land cover are available from other sources (e.g. Countryside Survey 2007, www.countryside-survey.org.uk, and associated Land Cover Map).

Detailed information on the quality of the statistics presented in this publication is available in the *Quality Report: Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking* at: [www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/qrwapr.pdf/\\$FILE/qrwapr.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/qrwapr.pdf/$FILE/qrwapr.pdf)

Further quality information on FC Official Statistics is available at: www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-7zhk85

Revisions

Figures at March 2012 and for 2011-12 are provisional and published for the first time in this release.

Woodland area figures for earlier years have been revised to take account of further checks on the NFI woodland area map and as a result of the change in methodology for deriving the conifer/broadleaf breakdown.

The revisions to the woodland area map have resulted in very small (less than 0.5%) revisions downwards to the overall woodland area estimates in each country for 2010 and 2011 from those provided in *Forestry Statistics 2011*.

The changes to the methodology for estimating the conifer/broadleaf breakdown has resulted in decreases to the conifer areas and corresponding increases to the broadleaf areas in 2011 from those provided in *Forestry Statistics 2011*, as shown below:

Country	% change to conifer area	% change to broadleaf area
England	-19%	+8%
Wales	-10%	+12%
Scotland	-2%	+6%
Great Britain	-7%	+8%

These revisions to conifer and broadleaf areas suggest that:

- areas of woodland newly identified in the NFI map are mainly small broadleaf woodlands;
- some conifer woodland has been converted to broadleaf on restocking.

Revisions to woodland areas for 2009 and earlier years, to produce a consistent time series, has resulted in increases of up to 14% for England, 6% for Wales and 3% for Scotland from the figures provided in previous statistical releases.

Certified woodland areas for earlier years have been revised to take account of changes to the Forestry Commission woodland areas, arising from the revisions to the NFI woodland area map. This has resulted in a 1% increase to the Forestry Commission certified woodland area in Wales in 2011 and small changes (less than 0.5%) to the Forestry Commission certified woodland areas in England and in Scotland. Revisions to certified woodland areas for 2009 and earlier years, to produce a consistent time series, has resulted in increases to the Forestry Commission certified woodland area of up to 7% for England, 9% for Wales and 8% for Scotland.

New planting and restocking figures for 2010-11 and earlier years have not been revised.

Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking

The Forestry Commission's revisions policy sets out how revisions and errors to these statistics are dealt with, and can be found at:

[www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCrevisions.pdf/\\$FILE/FCrevisions.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCrevisions.pdf/$FILE/FCrevisions.pdf).

Further information

Accompanying tables to this release, available at www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-7aqknx, provide longer time series data by country for new planting and restocking and for certified woodland.

Further information on the National Forest Inventory is available at:

www.forestry.gov.uk/inventory.

Statistics for previous years are available in *Forestry Statistics 2011* (September 2011) and *Forestry Facts & Figures 2011* (September 2011), and can be found at:

www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-7aqdgc

Figures in tables have been independently rounded, so may not add to the totals shown.

Figures for woodland area in the UK are provided to international organisations; the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) for the 5-yearly *Global Forest Resources Assessment* (www.fao.org/forestry/fra/en), and Forest Europe for the 4-yearly *State of Europe's Forests* (www.foresteurope.org/eng/State_of_Europes_Forests_Report_2011). Latest UK figures in international reports, submitted in May 2009 (for the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010) and in August 2010 (for the State of Europe's Forests 2011), are based on data from the 1995-99 National Inventory of Woodland and Trees.

Figures for woodland area and new planting are also used to compile the UK's Greenhouse Gas Inventory for the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector, submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, http://unfccc.int/national_reports/annex_i_ghg_inventories/national_inventories_submissions/items/6598.php). A summary factsheet is produced by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC), available at www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/statistics/climate_stats/gg_emissions/gg_emissions.aspx.

The international definition of forests differs slightly from the UK definition of woodland in terms of the minimum canopy cover threshold. For the UK, there is a requirement for canopy cover of at least 20%, whilst the international definition specifies a minimum of 10% canopy cover. The latest estimate of the effect of this difference in definition, based on the 1995-99 National Inventory of Woodland and Trees, is that there is around 50 thousand hectares of land with 10-20% canopy cover in the UK (or around 2% of the total UK woodland area).

Release schedule

Final results for woodland area and certified woodland area at March 2012 and for new planting and restocking in 2011-12 will be published on 27 September 2012 in *Forestry Statistics 2012* and *Forestry Facts & Figures 2012*.

Provisional figures for woodland area and certified woodland area at March 2013 and for new planting and restocking in 2012-13 will be published on 13 June 2013 in *Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking: 2013 Edition*.

National Statistics

This is a National Statistics publication. For more information about National Statistics and the UK Statistics Authority visit www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk.