

**INDICATORS OF SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY
NORTHERN IRELAND WORKSHOP
Greenmount College Antrim – 8 June 2001**

Participants:

Pat Hunter-Blair	Forest Service
Jim Sutherland	Forest Service
Clare Foley	Environment & Heritage Service
Mike Meharg	Environment & Heritage Service
Bob Davidson	Environment & Heritage Service
John Bragg	Woodland Trust
John Griffin	Forest Service
Declan Coulter	Forest Service
Stan Milner	Forest Service
Stuart Morwood	Forest Service
Hazel Patterson	DARD Economics & Statistics
Simon Gillam	Forestry Commission (GB)
Paul Smith	Forestry Commission (GB)

The purpose of this workshop was to develop a Northern Ireland (NI) perspective to inform the development of UK Indicators of Sustainable Forestry. Pat Hunter-Blair outlined the background and international policy context, and Simon Gillam described the current process of indicator development, including the outcomes of a UK workshop held on 16 May.

The indicators were discussed under three headings:

- Social (led by Paul Smith)
- General and Timber/Economic (led by Jim Sutherland)
- Environmental (led by Pat Hunter-Blair)

Social

- Environment & Heritage Service (EHS) run customer satisfaction surveys at several of their sites.
- There has been recent research by George Hutchinson into valuing recreation as part of non-market benefits.
- NI is not currently in the UKDVS consortium for Day Visits research (the last involvement was in 1992). Mike Meharg expressed an EHS interest in future UKDVS work and Simon Gillam agreed to put him in touch with the UKDVS consortium.
- Could accurately estimate area of public woodland in NI with open access. Private woodland information is of poor quality at this point in time, but will be improved in the near future.
- Also confirmed importance of proximity and access by public transport (social exclusion). Note that forest visits in NI are a high % of all countryside visits. Visits by school parties are important component (could count this in training or recreation).
- View that G3 (split between locals – day trips – holidaymakers) is not an important indicator, especially for untypical subset of sites.

- Visitor satisfaction could be a good additional indicator.
- G4 (recreation facilities) would be better summarised into an indicator showing the number of sites with recreational infrastructure, and then possibly made into a component of G2 or **G1**.
- Could have negative indicators related to visitors; including arson, removal of timber, fly-tipping.

- For Employment, can provide figures for FS and estimate for private sector. No multiplier studies have been done for NI (but note that UK/GB study that is about to be completed includes estimates for NI). G5 – there is no FS-run employment survey for NI – but FS statistics are available.
- For accidents, could give measure of total reported to HSE.
- G7,G8,G9 Best measure of training would be extent of certification of competency. Possibly consider students entering the industry in relation to those studying.
- For Heritage, desirable to include all known monuments in I1, not just SAM. NI has baseline statistics available on all monuments, scheduled and non-scheduled
- Can include ancient trees. Inclusive concept of “historic environment”. The state of the historic environment and monuments (I2) is more important than the number of sites. Landscape character is important, and closely connected with trees.

General and Timber/Economic

- For A1 (forest area), note that NI private woodland area is based on WGS only. As in GB, no record of deforestation, or of woodland creation outside WGS. Estimate from NI CS2000 sample data is much higher (about 120,000 ha total). NI will also be included in Land Cover Map for CS2000, to be completed later in 2001. NICS 2000 figure for woodland cover varies substantially from FS figures. This needs to be resolved.
- Private woodland area can potentially be split between conifers and broadleaves from several sources – Countryside Survey, OS mapping. Same problems as above.
- For woodland creation (including non-WGS), NI CS2000 is potential source. The NI sample size is 4% - much larger % than for GB CS2000.
- View that A8 (total planting by species) is not an important stand-alone indicator; it just contributes to the changes in A3 (total area by species).
- For A9 (loss of woodland), note that losses to development could be recorded by EHS, as they are notified for comment if > 1ha. Agreed that woodland loss is very important, but needs more work, and there are resource implications for monitoring. For historic data on woodland loss, could analyse old maps which are being digitised. It was felt to be important to know what woodland is being replaced by. The use of aerial photography in GIS will assist in this in the future
- Possible additional indicator of how far timber travels to wood processing and use.
- Amongst non-timber forest products, fishing might be important (or is this part of “other game”?).

Environmental

- For NI, “long established” (before 1830) is corresponding category to “ancient”, as it relates to period before reliable records. Should not be zero – Pat Hunter-Blair can provide an estimate to include in D1. EHS / FS have agreed a working figure for AWS – we will inform FC
- D2 (native woodland areas) will be required for BAP monitoring, so should be included. Needs further work on definitions.
- It is not clear how the categories in D3 (protected areas) relate to UK designations; some fine tuning for NI is necessary. Simon Gillam said that work on this has been done more recently as follow-up to Forest Resources Assessment. The consensus was that this would be a desirable indicator, as it is a measure of government effort to protect sites, although it may not change much over time once all the relevant areas have been designated.
- Agreed that D4 (HAP habitats) is important. Note that there are 3 woodland HAPs in NI. Questioned how to define if other HAP areas are “within woodland” (note that this is not “within FS estate”). What is important is the interaction between woodland and other habitats, to monitor any possible adverse effect from woodland management. It was suggested that HAPs could be tied in with archaeological sites, which could be considered as another “habitat”. The amount of restored habitats should be considered in the middle section of the table in D4
- For D5 (birds and other species), desirable to show differences between countries. Note that many of bird species are not present in NI (this is also true for other groups of organisms). Need to establish what species within SAPs are being reported. NI supplement to breeding birds survey on EHS website, www.nics.gov.uk/ehs.
- Note that data for D6 (vegetation indicators) were not collected in NI CS2000.
- For D7 (use of local stock), comment that it is more important for restoration and extension than for creation of new woodlands. Agreed that protection of gene pool is important for sustainable forestry. Question as to how much the native gene pool has changed. Note possibility of DNA fingerprinting of stock, which is already occurring in N Ireland.
- Comments in D8 (seed stands) also apply to NI. Clarify that “expanded” means that it is now about more than timber quality.
- For D9 (area of natural regeneration), desirable to separate out native (or broadleaves). Note that data only cover natural regeneration assisted by WGS – NI CS2000 can give a rough estimate of total natural regeneration for private woodlands.
- In discussion of D10, noted that CS2000 had shown large area of change from conifer to broadleaved/mixed. One explanation is that when fell and restock with Sitka, beech and willow infill temporarily. For this period, diversity increases. Also we agreed that the understorey is very important for diversity, so a “tree-only” index is not sensible.
- Agreed that D13 (edge/area ratio) was not important national indicator; may be important locally. In NI there are many small woodlands, so may want more non-edge areas for the species that require non-edge.
- Agreed that D14 (connectivity) was of greater local than national importance. Also note that it contributes to landscape as well as environment.
- For C16 (forest management) agreed with approach outlined. Other categories that can be added to the “managed” list are pre-1988 areas that have come under WIG or Management Grant, and also traditional estates with management plans. Plans need not be formal documents; they just have to be “fit for purpose” for the owner.
- It was commented that methods of ground preparation may be desirable indicator, in part because of possible impact on ancient monuments.