

## MRS Plenary briefing

Tuesday 16 June 2009

### Debate on Forestry

#### 1. Motion for debate

##### NDM4239 Carwyn Jones (Bridgend)-

To propose that the National Assembly for Wales:

Welcomes the Welsh Assembly Government's *Woodlands for Wales* strategy and supports its direction and vision to increase the social, economic and environmental benefits delivered through the sustainable management of woodlands and trees.

#### 2. Introduction

Woodlands in Wales are a valuable and renewable natural resource that contribute to improving the environment, successful economy, quality of life and health of communities.

Forestry and woodlands deliver a variety of benefits for Wales. They contribute towards mitigating the effects of climate change through carbon sequestration.<sup>1</sup> Trees also essential play an essential role in reducing soil erosion by wind and water whilst providing a canopy of shade to moderate temperatures. The Wood from trees can also be used as a carbon neutral energy source for wood fuel or as a raw material for construction and manufacturing. Woodlands if managed effectively can support the economy of local communities and the growth of Welsh forest industries. The effective management of tree varieties support and promote the biodiversity of woodlands, as well a provide places of relaxation and recreation. Further information on Forestry is also available in the Members' Research Service [Topic Brief on Forestry](#).<sup>2</sup>

#### 3. Key documents / information (underlined text denotes hyperlink to document)

##### 3.1 Overview of the Forestry Commission Wales

The Forestry Commission Wales (FCW) acts as the Welsh Assembly Government's (Welsh government's) Department of Forestry.<sup>3</sup> The Forestry Commission Wales is responsible for managing 38 per cent of Welsh woodlands/forestry that is publicly owned by the Welsh government.<sup>4</sup> The Forestry Commission in Wales receives its core funding from the Welsh government, but also generates some of their income from their national forest estate through **timber production** and other activities.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As trees develop they extract the atmospheric carbon which is then converted and stored as carbon in their roots, branches and leaves.

<sup>2</sup> Members' Research Service, [Forestry Topic Brief](#), September 2008

<sup>3</sup> [Forestry](#), Environment and Country Section of the Welsh government website accessed on 05 June 2009

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> [About Forestry Commission Wales](#) section of the Forestry Commission Wales website accessed on 05 June 2009

The role of the FCW includes:

- Advising on the development of Forestry policy and implement policy on their behalf. (FCW provide an **advisory role** to the Welsh government).
- encouraging **sustainable woodland management** within the private sector
- administering **grants and regulatory work**, including licensing for felling and replanting.

The FCW is accountable for their activities to the Welsh government and are directed by Welsh Ministers through FCW's Board of Commissioners and through the **National Committee for Wales**<sup>6</sup>.

The FCW also work closely with other UK Government departments including the Department for Rural Affairs (DEFRA) as well as various other external partners and organisations to assist them in the delivery of Welsh forestry policy.

In 2005 the **Woodland Strategy Advisory Panel** was formed. This panel provides an advisory role to the Welsh Ministers and Forestry Commissioners on the development and implementation of forestry policy and in particular the *Woodlands for Wales Strategy*. (See section 3.3)

Its key functions include:

- Advising on the implementation of the *Woodland for Wales Strategy* by all partner organisations based on a thorough understanding of current activity and policies.
- Advising on specific issues that the [National Committee](#) assign to the Panel.
- Horizon scanning to enable the Strategy (and FCW as the government department responsible for forestry policy development and the organisation with the primary responsibility for strategy delivery) to respond to new issues and agendas.<sup>7</sup>

In May 2009, the FCW published its first Corporate Plan, ***Our Purpose and Direction***<sup>8</sup> which sets out the commission's objectives for the next three years (2009-2012). In the Corporate Plan, the FCW outline their key challenges and priorities for the next three years and how they intend to meet their objectives in line with Welsh government's vision for woodlands in Wales.

The Corporate Plan is organised based on four corporate themes and these include: responding to climate change, woodlands for people, developing a competitive and integrated forest sector and improving environmental quality. Supporting each of the corporate themes are a series of ten corporate programmes that focus on the delivery of actions required to meet the corporate themes over the next three years.

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<sup>6</sup> The purpose of the [National Committee for Wales](#) is to give strategic direction to all of the Forestry Commission's activities in Wales on behalf of the Welsh Ministers.

<sup>7</sup> [Woodland Strategy Advisory Panel](#) section of the Forestry Commission Wales website accessed on 05 June 2009

<sup>8</sup> Forestry Commission Wales, [Our Purpose and Direction 2009-2012 Corporate Plan](#), May 2009

### 3.2 Forestry statistics

The Forestry Commission publishes woodland and forestry statistics annually. The latest woodland and forestry national statistics were released on 25 September 2008. This statistical release includes data on woodland area, planting, timber, trade, environment, recreation, employment and finance and prices for the UK. Some of the key statistics outlined in the statistical release for 2008 include:

- The total woodland area in the UK in 2008 was 2.8 million hectares and 285,000 hectares of woodland in Wales. In Wales **106,000 hectares** of woodland are publicly owned.<sup>9</sup>
- During 2008 (up until 31 March 2008), about **200 hectares of new woodland** was planted in Wales out of a total of 7.5 thousand hectares of new woodland in the UK.<sup>10</sup>
- In relation to wood production and deliveries of UK grown softwood, about 9.2 million green tonnes of UK timber were delivered to primary wood processors and others in 2007. (A breakdown of these figures for Wales is not available).<sup>11</sup>

According to Statistics quoted by the FCW:

- Woodlands represent just 14 per cent of the total land area of Wales. **38 per cent** of these woodlands are publicly owned and are managed by the Forestry Commission Wales. Apart from woodlands there are approximately over 15 million other trees in Wales.<sup>12</sup>
- Woodlands are a natural resource that have a multitude of functions. Woodlands are also a key recreational and leisure attraction with approximately **12 million day visits** made to UK woodlands each year. This figure has remained relatively static since 1994.<sup>13</sup>
- Welsh woodlands supply in excess of a million tonnes of timber each year.<sup>14</sup>

### 3.3 Welsh government's Woodlands for Wales Strategy

The One Wales agreement includes a commitment to providing support for indigenous woodlands and the creation of a Welsh National Forest of native trees.<sup>15</sup>

The **Woodlands for Wales Strategy**<sup>16</sup> is the Welsh government's key forestry strategy that provides a 50 year plan for developing and better managing Welsh woodlands and trees for maximum benefit. This strategy was first published in 2001 and was recently revised in March 2009, following a public consultation.

<sup>9</sup> Forestry Commission, [Forestry Facts and Figures 2008- A summary of statistics about woodland and forestry](#), 2008

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, page 6

<sup>11</sup> [Forestry Statistics 2008](#) section of the Forestry Commission website accessed on 08 June 2009

<sup>12</sup> Forestry Commission Wales, [Better Woodlands for a Better Wales, Corporate Plan 2005/06-2007/08](#)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, [One Wales: A progressive agenda for the government of Wales](#), June 2007, page 30-31

<sup>16</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, [Woodlands for Wales: The Welsh Assembly Government's Strategy for Woodlands and Trees](#), March 2009

Although the strategy has been revised and subject to public consultation, the vision for woodlands in Wales has remained the same as the original strategy which was published in 2001. This vision is:

That Wales will be known for its high quality woodlands that enhance the landscape, are appropriate to local conditions and have a diverse mixture of species and habitats.<sup>17</sup>

The Strategy outlines the Welsh government's priorities with Welsh woodlands and trees forming the foundations for the delivery of this strategy. The strategy focuses on four key themes:

- **Responding to climate Change-** the strategy outlines how it plans to help reduce greenhouse emissions.
- **Woodlands for local people-** this strategy theme focuses on increasing Welsh woodlands for the enjoyment of people as places of recreation and learning.
- **A competitive and integrated forest sector-** the strategy establishes plans on developing innovative skilled industries and maintaining timber production as a renewable resource.
- **Environmental quality-** this focuses on the development of woodland and trees in terms of biodiversity, heritage and the general landscapes to reduce the burden on the environment.<sup>18</sup>

The strategic themes of the strategy are supported by 20 high level outcomes which cover the strategy's overarching foundation of Welsh woodlands and trees as well as the other four strategic themes outlined above. The 20 strategic outcomes through which delivery of the strategy will focus are as follows:

The strategic outcomes for Welsh woodlands and trees are-

- More woodlands and trees are managed sustainably.
- Woodland ecosystems are healthy and resilient.
- Woodlands are better adapted to deliver a full range of benefits.
- Woodland cover in Wales increases.
- The management of woodland and trees is more closely related to that of other land uses.
- Urban woodlands and trees deliver a full range of benefits.<sup>19</sup>

The strategic outcome for responding to climate change is-

- Welsh woodlands contribute to reducing the carbon foot print of Wales.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, page 8

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, page 8

<sup>19</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, [Woodlands for Wales –the strategy for woodlands and trees summary leaflet](#), 2009 page 3

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, page 5

The strategic outcomes for woodlands for people are-

- More communities benefit from woodlands and trees.
- More people enjoy the life-long learning benefits of woodlands and their products.
- More people live healthier lives as a result of their use and enjoyment of woodlands.
- More people benefits from woodland related enterprises.<sup>21</sup>

The strategic outcomes for a competitive and integrated forest sector are:

- More Welsh grown timber is used in Wales.
- The forest sector is better integrated a more competitive, supporting the Welsh economy.
- Increased use of timber as a key renewable resource.
- A thriving, skilled workforce in the forestry sector.<sup>22</sup>

The strategic outcomes for environmental quality are:

- Woodland management achieves high standards of environmental stewardship.
- Woodlands and trees of special conservation value are in favourable management
- Woodland biodiversity is supported and native woodland is in favourable management.
- Woodlands and trees make a positive contribution to the special landscape character of Wales and to site of heritage and cultural importance.
- New and existing trees and woodland contribute to water and soil management.<sup>23</sup>

Links to the Welsh Assembly Government *Woodlands for Wales Strategy* along with other associated documents are shown below:

*Woodlands for Wales Strategy*:

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/drah/publications/090324woodlandsforwalesstrategyen.pdf>

*Woodlands for Wales Strategy*- Executive Summary/Summary leaflet:

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/drah/publications/090324wfwsummaryen.pdf>

*Woodlands for Wales* public consultation summary report:

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/drah/publications/090324wfwconsultationssummaryen.pdf>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid page 7

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, page 9

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, page 11

### 3.4 Other relevant Welsh government policies and strategies

Welsh Assembly Government, [Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007-2013](#), 2008

Welsh Assembly Government, [One Wales: One Planet, Sustainable Development Scheme, Part 2](#), May 2009

Welsh Assembly Government, [Environment Strategy for Wales](#), 2006

Welsh Assembly Government, [Environment Strategy Action Plan 2008-2011](#), October 2008

Welsh Assembly Government, [Farming, Food and Countryside: Building a Secure Future-A new Strategy for Farming](#), May 2009

Welsh Assembly Government, [Renewable Energy Route Map for Wales-Consultation for the way forward to a leaner, greener and cleaner Wales](#), 2008

Welsh Assembly Government, [Policy Statement for the National Parks and National Park Authorities in Wales](#), March 2007

Welsh Assembly Government, [Walking and Cycling Strategy for Wales](#), December 2003

Welsh Assembly Government, [Walking and Cycling Action Plan 2009-2013](#), December 2008

Welsh Assembly Government, [Climbing Higher- a Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity](#), January 2005

### 3.5 Plant initiative

The Plant initiative has been developed as part of the Welsh government One Wales commitment to the creation of a Welsh National Forest of native trees by **planting a tree for every child born or adopted in Wales since 1 January 2008**. For every tree planted, every parent will receive a certificate confirming that a tree has been planted for their child. This project was launched by the First Minister, Rhodri Morgan on 18 December 2007 and is delivered by the Woodland Trust on behalf of the Welsh government.<sup>24</sup>

Further information on the Plant initiative is available at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/forestry/plantatree/?lang=en>

### 3.6 Better Woodlands for Wales scheme

The **Better Woodlands for Wales Scheme** is a Welsh government scheme that offers grants that focus on supporting effective good quality woodland management projects in Wales. This scheme is operated by the FCW on behalf of the Welsh government. Any grant aid is based upon the submission and approval of a long-term **Management Plan** that must meet the minimum standards set out under the Woodland Assurance Scheme.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Plant a Tree for Every Child section of the Environment and Countryside section of the Welsh Assembly Government website: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/forestry/plantatree/?lang=en> accessed on 28 April 2009

<sup>25</sup> [Better Woodlands for Wales](#) section of the Forestry Commission website accessed on 08 June 2009

The FCW has approved Management Planners that assist applicants in identifying any works required to any woodlands and the steps required and help produce and submit a management plan for assessment.<sup>26</sup> Management plans are then assessed by **specialist assessors**.

Some of the grant funding under the Better Woodlands for Wales scheme is funded under Axis 2 of the Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007-2013. This includes funding for **woodland establishment, Plan Preparation Grant and Woodland Improvement Grants**.<sup>27</sup> This is funding provided by the Welsh government and the European Union.

### 3.7 Legislative Framework

Various elements of forestry policy cut across a variety of primary UK legislation. Some examples of relevant legislation include: (Please note this is not an exhaustive list of all relevant legislation)

- The *Agriculture Act 1967* (and subsequent amendments)<sup>28</sup>
- The *Climate Change Act 2008*<sup>29</sup>
- The *Countryside Act 1968* (and subsequent amendments)<sup>30</sup>
- The *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000* (and subsequent amendments)<sup>31</sup>
- The *Farmland and Rural Development Act 1988* (and subsequent amendments)<sup>32</sup>
- The *Forestry Act 1967* (and subsequent amendments)<sup>33</sup>

'Agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development' features as Field 1 of Schedule 5 to the *Government of Wales Act 2006*<sup>34</sup>. This allows the National Assembly for Wales to seek Measure-making powers in this area. At present, there are currently **no Matters inserted into this Field**.

## 4. Relevant cabinet statements, oral and written questions, Plenary debates and Welsh government press releases

### 4.1 Relevant cabinet statements

Welsh Assembly Government, Rhodri Morgan (First Minister), [Statement on the 'One Wales' Delivery Plan](#) Cabinet Oral Statement, 08 April 2008

Welsh Assembly Government, Elin Jones (Minister for Rural Affairs), [Land Use and Climate Change](#), Cabinet Oral Statement, 27 January 2009

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> [Agriculture Act 1967 Chapter 22](#)

<sup>29</sup> [Climate Change Act 2008, Chapter 27](#)

<sup>30</sup> [Countryside Act 1968, Chapter 41](#)

<sup>31</sup> [Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, Chapter 37](#)

<sup>32</sup> [Farmland and Rural Development Act 1988, Chapter 16](#)

<sup>33</sup> [Forestry Act 1967, Chapter 10](#)

<sup>34</sup> [Government of Wales Act, Chapter 32](#)



Welsh Assembly Government, Jane Davidson (Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing), [Bio-energy Action Plan Consultation](#), Cabinet Oral Statement, 27 January 2009

Welsh Assembly Government, Elin Jones (Minister for Rural Affairs), [Launch of Woodland Strategy](#), Cabinet Written Statement, 31 March 2009

Welsh Assembly Government, Elin Jones (Minister for Rural Affairs), [Wales Rural Development Plan: Axis 2 Review](#), Cabinet Oral Statement, 05 May 2009

#### 4.2 *Relevant Oral and Written Questions* (with links provided to the questions and answers)

**Nicholas Bourne AM:** Will the Minister make a statement on the impact that the development of wind farms on forested land will have on the forests and their access by the public? (WAQ50851)

**The Minister for Rural Affairs (Elin Jones):** There will be limited impact on public access to forested land caused by the development of wind-farms, apart from the period of their construction where developers will need to introduce restrictions in order to ensure public safety.

On land managed by Forestry Commission Wales on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government the impact on the forest recreation infrastructure will be mitigated through the terms of the agreement that developers will sign in order to carry out the work, and by the requirements of the planning process.

It is expected that following the period of construction on this land the public will be able to access the area in the same way as before, apart from some necessary restrictions in the immediate vicinity of the facilities.

In some locations public access to areas of the woodland may be improved by the construction of new access points and also by the availability of funds for use by the local community under the development agreement.

The impact on public access on privately owned forestry land will be assessed as part of the normal planning process and access arrangements will be agreed between the land owner and the developer.

WAQ50851, [Nicholas Bourne to Elin Jones \(Minister for Rural Affairs\)](#), p4, 23 January 2008

**Janice Gregory AM:** Will the Minister give a progress report on what the Welsh Assembly Government is doing to enhance the social and economic wellbeing of rural communities by encouraging more diverse groups of people to visit the Welsh countryside? (OAQ(3)0201(RAF))

**The Minister for Rural Affairs (Elin Jones):** The Assembly Government is supporting a range of actions to secure wider access to the countryside by different groups and to deliver social and economic benefits. This includes work under the rural development plan, the coastal access improvement programme, and Forestry Commission schemes such as Cydcoed and Tir Coed.



OAQ(3)0201(RAF), [Janice Gregory to Elin Jones \(Minister for Rural Affairs\)](#), RoP, p15, 30 January 2008

**Mick Bates AM:** How much money will be invested in the new Wood Energy Business Scheme (WEBS 2)? (WAQ51110)

**The Minister for Rural Affairs (Elin Jones):** The Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) has invited Forestry Commission Wales to submit a formal Expression of Interest (EOI) to provide a broad outline of the project proposals, including its objectives, likely overall targets and the level of funding required. The current level of Convergence funding being proposed is £6.8 million.

If the EOI is approved then FC Wales will submit a detailed project plan and any additional funding required will be sought from the private sector and Welsh Assembly Government for elements of the scheme that are not eligible for support under the European Rural Development Fund, Rural Development Plan or the Better Woodlands for Wales Scheme.

WAQ51110, [Mick Bates to Elin Jones \(Minister for Rural Affairs\)](#), P 6, 6 February 2008

**Mick Bates AM:** Will the Minister make a statement on the future of the Wood Energy Business Scheme? (WAQ51111)

**The Minister for Rural Affairs (Elin Jones):** The current Wood Energy Business Scheme (WEBS) ends on 31 March 2008, however the Forestry Commission Wales is currently working with the Welsh Assembly Government to develop a WEBS 2 scheme. Subject to the required funding being available, its aim will be to provide support to the emerging wood-fuel sector which is broader in its scope than the original scheme.

The proposal is to assess the entire wood supply chain from the selection of sites for new tree planting or the restoration and conversion of existing woodlands through to simple wood-chip processing and the production of value-added fuels such as pellets. A key objective will be to encourage the development of the wood supply chain and under management of the currently under-utilised woodland resource. The Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) has invited FC Wales to submit a formal Expression of Interest (EOI) to provide a broad outline of the proposal. If the EOI is approved then FC Wales will be invited to submit a detailed project plan.

WAQ51111, [Mick Bates to Elin Jones \(Minister for Rural Affairs\)](#), P 6-7, 6 February 2008

**Mick Bates AM:** When will the Wood Energy Business Scheme (WEBS2) commence? (WAQ51112)

**The Minister for Rural Affairs (Elin Jones):** No date has been set to begin a second Wood Energy Business Scheme as proposals for such a scheme are still being developed.

WAQ51112, [Mick Bates to Elin Jones \(Minister for Rural Affairs\)](#), p 7, 6 February 2008

**Nicholas Bourne AM:** Will the Minister make a statement on the use of Forestry Commission land for wind farm developments? (WAQ51326)

**The Minister for Rural Affairs (Elin Jones):** Following the publication of the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy for the development of renewable energy; Technical Advice Note 8 (TAN8) Forestry Commission Wales (FCW) was directed to manage the opportunity created by the TAN by offering the 'exclusive right to develop' on Assembly woodland.

FC Wales manages over half the land within the SSAs and this land is attractive to developers because it is: under a single owner and manager; has an existing road network; is at higher altitudes with a favourable wind regime; is at a scale to absorb large developments with less environmental and landscape impact than on open land and is remote from communities.

This land is owned by the Welsh Ministers who have the power to dispose of it under section 39(2) of the *Forestry Act 1967* and an arrangement under section 83 of the *Government of Wales Act 2006* (previously section 41 of the *GOWA 1998*) enables the Commissioners to act on their behalf.

The Forestry Commissioners approved it use as long as it did not involve large scale tree felling. To satisfy the Minister's and the Commissioner's duty to maintain the woodland, the bidders have proposed the use of the most advanced technology and 'keyhole' felling of small areas to enable the turbines to work efficiently above the nearby tree canopy. This could mean the felling of around 500 hectares of woodland if all the proposed developments go ahead. This is less than 0.5% of the total estate of around 110,000 hectares and around a third of the annual area felled and re-stocked each year by FC Wales as part of its usual forest operations.

FCW is managing a two stage procurement process to select the companies to be awarded an option to develop and then a lease, subject to the award of planning consent. The process tested bidders against a set of criteria covering their technical expertise and past experience, financial capabilities, the amount of energy generation and the income and additional community benefits they offered.

The award of the option does not mean that a single turbine will be built but merely gives the company the exclusive right to seek planning consent. A lease for an initial 25 year period will only be given if planning consent is granted and it will require the developer to remove the turbines and infrastructure to one metre below ground level at the end of its term - so the long-term visual impact on the landscape will be minimal.

Subject to planning approval the programme offers WAG a significant potential income once the option agreements are signed and further income based on a royalty fee for the amount of electricity generated each year following construction of the wind-farms.

The programme also offers the opportunity, following construction of the wind-farms, to generate significant income for community-based projects in the areas close to the developments.

Such benefits could include support for the construction of a community facility; lump sum or annual payments for community use and a commitment from the developer to use local labour, contractors

and services wherever possible. These benefits will be negotiated with, and channelled through a regulated and properly constituted body to support sustainable community development.

Although there is no requirement for a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the programme, Detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to describe their possible impact will be submitted as part of the planning application for each development and FCW will assist the developer in this regard by supplying the environmental information it holds.

In October 2007 I agreed to the disposal of the land required to enable the selected companies to submit their planning applications and following intensive discussion we expect to announce the signing of the option agreements shortly. The successful developers will then be in a position to submit a planning application to the relevant planning authority.

WAQ51326, [Nicholas Bourne to Elin Jones \(Minister for Rural Affairs\)](#), p12, 26 February 2008

**Mike German AM:** How many hectares of Planted Ancient Woodland Sites on the National Assembly Woodland estate are scheduled to be clear-felled over the next three years, according to the relevant Forest Design Plan? (WAQ52604)

**The Minister for Rural Affairs (Elin Jones):**

Financial year ending 31 March	Total Area (hectares)
2009	383
2010	62
2011	261
<b>Total</b>	<b>705</b>

**Source: Forestry Commission Forest Design Plans**

Recent research suggests that in some cases, clearfelling and then replanting or allowing an ancient site to regenerate naturally is the best option to re-create the native woodland which would have previously existed. Clearfelling of Western Hemlock also continues, in line with best practice, as such a prolific species will stifle the regeneration of any native woodland.

WAQ52604, [Mike German to Elin Jones \(Minister for Rural Affairs\)](#), p 2, 22 October 2008

**Mike German AM:** How many hectares of Planted Ancient Woodland Sites on the National Assembly Woodland estate have been replanted with conifers over the last three years? (WAQ52605)

**The Minister for Rural Affairs (Elin Jones):**

Financial year	Total Area
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ending 31 March	(hectares)
2006	23
2007	12
2008	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>

Source: Forestry Commission's Sub-compartment database

There are a small number of sites where a conifer species is the best species for the site.

WAQ52605, [Mike German to Elin Jones \(Minister for Rural Affairs\)](#), p3, 22 October 2008

**Mike German AM:** How many hectares of Planted Ancient Woodland Sites on the National Assembly Woodland estate are scheduled to be replanted with conifers over the next three years, according to the relevant Forest Design Plan? (WAQ52606)

**The Minister for Rural Affairs (Elin Jones):**

Financial Year ending 31 March	Area to be planted (hectares)	Area to regenerate naturally (hectares)
2009	0.0	0.1
2010	0.0	0
2011	1.8	25.4
Total	1.8	25.6

Source: Forestry Commission Forest Design Plans

There are a small number of sites where a conifer species is the best species for the site.

WAQ52606, [Mike German to Elin Jones \(Minister for Rural Affairs\)](#), p3, 22 October 2008

**Mike German AM:** How many hectares of Planted Ancient Woodland Sites on the National Assembly Woodland estate have been clear-felled over the last three years? (WAQ52607)

**The Minister for Rural Affairs (Elin Jones):** We do not collate this information as standard, and such information is very difficult to glean from historical records from our management tool, the sub-compartment database without large resource input.

We can estimate the area of clearfelling on PAWS sites as follows: Almost all sites which are clearfelled will be restocked. The main reasons for not restocking would be environmental (eg riparian zones).

Financial year ending 31 March	Total area restocked (hectares)
2006	145
2007	73
2008	115
Total	334

Source: Forestry Commission's sub-compartment database

WAQ52607, [Mike German to Elin Jones \(Minister for Rural Affairs\)](#), p3-4, 22 October 2008

**Mick Bates AM:** Does the Welsh Assembly Government have any plans to develop a biomass grant scheme similar to the Bio-energy Capital Grants Scheme run by the UK Department of Energy and Climate Change? (WAQ53293)

**The Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing (Jane Davidson):** The Welsh Assembly Government has a number of initiatives to help develop bioenergy applications in Wales:

In December 2008, the Minister for Finance and Public Service Delivery announced the First Tranche of 19 Strategic Capital Investment Funding projects. The Forestry Commission's Wood Energy for Schools and Hospitals initiative will be incorporated into some of the 19 projects, where appropriate. The same approach will be taken when the Second Tranche of SCIF takes place.

The Forestry Commission is currently working with the Departmental sponsors of the 19 SCIF projects to assess the potential for including wood energy technology.

The Wood Energy Business Scheme ran from March 2004 to March 2008 and succeeded in its aim of establishing numerous small to medium scale wood fuelled installations across Wales in the Objective 1 and Objective 2 (Powys) areas. Up to 50 % funding was available to applicants for the capital costs of purchasing and installing wood fuelled boilers, and associated infrastructure.

Forestry Commission Wales is in the process of developing a successor programme—WEBS 2. This builds upon the experience and track record of WEBS 1 and is made up of 2 inter-related strands. One strand seeks funding through EU Structural Funds (Convergence and Competitiveness) to support eligible private sector SME projects and the second strand seeks Rural Development Plan (RDP) funds for eligible wood fuel supply chain activities. A decision on the provision of EU Structural Funds is expected shortly.

We also have schemes to encourage Anaerobic Digestion as the preferred method to manage food waste. We have announced additional funding over the next three years for local authorities to set up new services to separately collect and treat food waste from households in Wales: £2M for procurement support will be provided each year from 2009/10 to 2011/12, and an additional £20M in the third year for capital support.

Anaerobic Digestion is also being promoted for biodegradable waste from commercial and industrial sources such as food and drink manufacture and catering, with the Assembly Government providing funding to WRAP to run an Anaerobic Digestion Capital Grant Competition.

A Consultation on a Bioenergy Action Plan for Wales will be published this month.

WAQ53293, [Mick Bates to Jane Davidson \(Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing\)](#), p2, 12 February 2009

**Darren Millar AM:** Will the Minister please state what was (a) the total value of grants made under Wood Knowledge Wales over the last 3 years and (b) the total amount paid out on behalf of Wood Knowledge Wales? (WAQ53840)

**The Minister for Rural Affairs (Elin Jones):** Wood Knowledge Wales (WKW) is the knowledge transfer initiative run by the Wales Forest Business Partnership (WFBP). Although in receipt of public funds through Forestry Commission Wales, the Partnership is an industry led group of business and organisations involved in forestry with a belief that collaborative working will strengthen business competitiveness and the whole forestry sector.

The total value of grant committed under Wood Knowledge Wales is £28,500 for the support of five initiatives, with £23,000 being taken up over the last three years.

The WKW progress report for 2008/2009 has yet to be presented to the WFBP Leadership Group but I understand that at this stage no further funding commitments have been made. The focus will now be to support companies in obtaining larger grants for research and development from external sources as the research fund available to WKW is not guaranteed beyond 2009.

The WKW progress report for 07/08 shows that this initiative has attracted a further £143,000 into the development of Welsh based timber projects. This current year's report is likely to show a further increase to this amount.

WAQ53840, [Darren Millar to Elin Jones \(Minister for Rural Affairs\)](#), p3, 2 April 2009

**Chris Franks AM:** Will the Minister make a statement on biodiversity in the Heads of the Valleys? OAQ(30)0829(ESH)

**The Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing (Jane Davidson):** The Heads of the Valleys contain a number of important conservation sites, including the Cwm Clydach woodlands and the Blaen Cynon special areas of conservation. Biodiversity is being supported through the Welsh Assembly Government's environment and woodland strategies and through the implementation of local biodiversity action plans.

OAQ(30)0829(ESH), [Chris Franks to Jane Davidson \(Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing\)](#), RoP, p32-33, 13 May 2009

**Ann Jones AM:** Will the First Minister make a statement on the Welsh Assembly Government's Plant! project? OAQ(3)1994(FM)

**The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan):** There are now three Plant! sites in Wales, and work is going on to identify further suitable locations. Some 38,000 certificates have been sent to new parents to signify the planting of a native broadleaf tree for every child born or adopted in Wales since the project's launch.

OAQ(3)1994(FM), [Ann Jones to Rhodri Morgan \(First Minister\)](#), RoP, p20, 19 May 2009

#### 4.3 Relevant Press Releases

Welsh Assembly Government Press Release, [Forests must change to meet challenges ahead](#), 1 May 2008

Welsh Assembly Government Press Release, [Caring for the Environment, Farming with Care](#), 9 May 2008

Welsh Assembly Government Press Release, [Major change to land management schemes announced](#), 5 May 2009

Welsh Assembly Government Press Release, [Minister sees benefit of woodland management during tour](#), 7 May 2009

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