

Forestry in Wales

Quick Guide

November 2013

Who owns the forests of Wales?

In Wales there are **305,000 hectares of woodland** which account for approximately **10 per cent of the UK total** of 3.13 million hectares.¹ Wales is one of the **least wooded countries in Europe** as woodland covers **only 15 per cent of the land area of Wales** compared to an EU average of 37 per cent.²

Natural Resources Wales (NRW), on behalf of the Welsh Government, manages **37 per cent** of the Welsh woodland which equates to 114,000 hectares. A further **190,000 hectares** are in **private ownership**.³ This woodland is estimated to be made up of 252 million conifer trees, 92 million broadleaf trees and 38 million small wood species.⁴ The area of woodland in Wales has remained **relatively stable over the last 20 years, though there was a 5 per cent increase between 2001 and 2012**.⁵

Of the woodland in Wales **139,000 hectares, or 45 per cent**, is classified as 'certified woodland'.^{6,7}

How much new planting or restocking has taken place in Wales?

As set out above, the amount of woodland in Wales has remained relatively stable over the last 20 years with the majority of new trees planted in Wales being planted to restock felled woodland.

Woodland creation rates in Wales have recently increased, after a long-term decline. In **2012-13, 800 hectares of new broadleaf woodland** and 100 hectares of conifer trees were planted in Wales. This compares to **500 hectares of new broadleaf woodland planted in Wales** in 2005.⁸ In England 2,600 hectares of new broadleaf woodland was planted in 2012-13;⁹ in the same period 1,700 hectares of conifer trees and 5,300 hectares of broadleaf woodland was planted in Scotland and in Northern Ireland 200 hectares of new broadleaf woodland was planted. In 2012, **1,400 hectares of conifer trees and 600 hectares of broadleaf woodland** were re-stocked in Wales.¹⁰

¹ Forestry Commission, *Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking, 2013 Edition*, June 2013 [accessed 28 June 2013]

² Welsh Government, *Woodlands for Wales: The Welsh Assembly Government's Strategy for Woodlands and Trees*, 2009 [accessed 2 July 2013]

³ Welsh Government, *Woodlands for Wales Indicators: Revised June 2012* [accessed 28 June 2013]

⁴ Forestry Commission, *Forestry Statistics 2010: Woodland area and planting - National Inventory of Woodland and Trees (GB)*, [accessed 2 July 2013]

⁵ Forestry Commission, *Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking, 2013 Edition*, June 2013 [accessed 28 June 2013]

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ Certified woodland is that which has been independently audited against the UK Woodland Assurance Standard

⁸ Forestry Commission, *Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking, 2013 Edition*, June 2013 [accessed 28 June 2013]

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ *ibid*

Under the *Plant!* Scheme the previous Welsh Government committed to plant a tree for every child born or adopted in Wales since 1 January 2008. Almost 200,000 trees have been planted in seven locations across Wales since the scheme started.¹¹ The previous Welsh Government estimated that the scheme would lead to the planting of approximately 18 hectares of woodland each year.¹²

In addition on 16 March 2010, the then Minister for Rural Affairs, Elin Jones, announced a commitment to **plant 100,000 hectares of new woodland in Wales by 2020**. This is supported by the **Glastir Woodland Scheme**.¹³ The Scheme offers farmers and landowners in defined areas of Wales the opportunity to receive funding for planting and maintaining new woodland on their land.¹⁴ In a statement in December 2012, Alun Davies, then Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and European Programmes stated that :

There are now 441 signed contracts for the Glastir Woodland Creation scheme committing to planting 1,452ha of new woodland and payments made so far total around £1.8million. The first Glastir Woodland Management contracts are being issued and by the beginning of 2014 I expect there to be around 270 contracts in operation.¹⁵

The Glastir scheme is funded through the Rural Development Plan (RDP). The current RDP runs from 2007-2013 and will be replaced by a new RDP for 2014-2020 following the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in 2013. Between 2010 and March 2013, 2,200 hectares of woodland were created in Wales.¹⁶ In its 2013 report, the Committee on Climate Change stated that rates of woodland creation would need to increase to meet the 2020 target.¹⁷ The **total area of woodland loss** identified in Wales between 1997-98 and 2009-10 was **133 hectares**; of this, 52 hectares was lost due to **quarry developments**, 33 hectares lost due to **golf course developments** and 25 hectares due to **residential buildings**.¹⁸

What is the economic contribution of the forestry sector in Wales?

The Welsh Government's *Woodlands for Wales: Action Plan* published in March 2010 states that the forestry sector in Wales contributes **an estimated £429 million to the national economy and employs nearly 9,000 people**.¹⁹ This estimate is based on the production of timber alone and excludes woodland recreation, tourism, energy generation and timber transport.

The Welsh Government's *Woodlands for Wales Indicators (Revised June 2012)* publication provides a breakdown of employment in the forestry sector. Of the 9141 employees estimated in 2008, 821 were involved in forestry, logging and related services, 1356 in primary processing and 2003 in secondary processing or timber product manufacture. Over half of all employees, 4781, were involved in the manufacture of pulp and paper products. The remainder (331) were employed by timber merchants.²⁰

¹¹ Natural Resources Wales, *Plant! Celebrates fifth birthday*, May 2013 [accessed 1 July 2013]

¹² Welsh Government, *Plant!*, Website, [accessed 2 July 2013]

¹³ Welsh Government, Press release, *Glastir "vital to tackling climate change and creating sustainable food production"*, 16 March 2010, [accessed 2 July 2013]

¹⁴ Welsh Government, *Glastir Woodland*, Website, [accessed 2 July 2013]

¹⁵ Welsh Government, Alun Davies, *Glastir Update*, Cabinet Written Statement, 7 December 2012 [accessed 2 July 2013]

¹⁶ Forestry Commission, *Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking, 2013 Edition*, June 2013 [accessed 28 June 2013]

¹⁷ Committee on Climate Change, *Progress reducing emissions and preparing for climate change in Wales*, January 2013 [accessed 2 July 2013]

¹⁸ Forestry Commission, *National Forest Inventory Woodland Area Statistics: Wales*, March 2011 [accessed 2 July 2013]

¹⁹ Welsh Government, *Woodland for Wales Action Plan 2010-2015*, [accessed 2 July 2013]

²⁰ Forestry Commission, *Woodlands for Wales Indicators – Revised June 2012*, [accessed 12 November 2013]

In 2011 there were **16 saw mills in Wales** down from 27 in 2000. These saw mills in Wales employed 256 people directly and 7 people through contract employment.²¹

An economic impact study of British forestry completed on behalf of Forestry Commission GB in 2004 estimated that **if current trends continue** over the next 20 years the forestry sector in Wales could contribute to **1.2 per cent of Wales' GDP**.²²

How important is woodland to the environment in Wales?

The Welsh Government's '*Woodland for Wales*' strategy states that **much of the native and mixed woodland in Wales is not actively managed** as the income from timber alone is not sufficient to pay for the necessary management work.²³

Around **5 per cent of woodlands in Wales** have been designated for their international and national importance to nature conservation. Only **26 per cent of this designated woodland is in, what is known as, a favourable condition** with another **21 per cent in an unfavourable condition**²⁴ but **showing signs of recovery**.²⁵ The Welsh Government has a target of getting 95 per cent of Welsh woodlands designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) into favourable condition by 2015.²⁶

Woodland and Climate Change

An assessment of the total amount of carbon stored by UK forests estimated that in 2010 **the total store of forest carbon was 893 million tonnes which is an increase from 1990 when it was 803 million tonnes**.²⁷

How are Welsh forests currently managed?

NRW is now responsible for implementing the Welsh Government's policy on woodlands and regulating forest related activities for all forests in Wales. NRW is accountable to the Welsh Government through the Minister for Natural Resources and Food. The **Forestry Commission GB** is responsible for GB-wide activities such as developing Sustainable Forests Standards and representing the views of the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations in issues related to international forestry.

On **1 February 2011** the previous Minister for Rural Affairs, Elin Jones, announced that some **changes would be made** to the way in which the Welsh Government **manages the forest estate in Wales**.²⁸ The previous Minister announced that a **more 'dynamic' approach** to the management of the Government's forest estate would be adopted. The previous Minister stated that this would **allow for the sale of some small areas of woodland** from the estate which could provide greater public benefit in third sector or private ownership however this would **not result in a reduction in the size of the Government's forest estate** as the **Welsh Government intended to purchase some areas of woodland currently in private ownership**. The area of woodland in Wales managed by NRW increased slightly from 115,000 hectares in 2011 to 117,000 hectares in 2013.²⁹

²¹ Forestry Commission, *Forestry Statistics 2012*, Website, [accessed 2 July 2013]

²² Congentsi & PACEC, *The Economic Impact of British Forestry*, January 2004 [accessed 28 February 2011]

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ Sites designated for their importance to nature conservation are assessed according to their condition. If a site is in a favourable condition then its most important features are being protected and are functioning.

²⁶ Welsh Government, *Woodlands for Wales: The Welsh Assembly Government's Strategy for Woodlands and Trees*, 2009 [accessed 2 July 2013]

²⁷ Forestry Commission, *Forestry Statistics 2010- UK Forests and Climate Change*, Website, [accessed 2 July 2013]

²⁸ Welsh Assembly Government, Elin Jones (Minister for Rural Affairs), *Forestry in Wales*, Cabinet Oral Statement, 1 February 2011 [accessed 2 July 2012]

²⁹ Forestry Commission, *Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking, 2013 Edition*, June 2013 [accessed 28 June 2013]

What are the Tree Diseases affecting Welsh forests?

Trees in the UK are under threat from several diseases including ash dieback and *Phytophthora ramorum* which primarily causes fatality in larch trees. Ash dieback disease (*Chalara fraxinea*) was first found in the UK in England in February 2012 in trees imported from the Netherlands.³⁰ It was found in the wider environment³¹ in England in October 2012. The first case of wider environment ash dieback in Wales was found in May 2013.³² As of 11 October 2013 there have been 20 cases of ash dieback in Wales found in recently planted sites and one in the wider environment.³³ There are 19,000 hectares of ash in Wales, which represents 7.3 per cent of the total broadleaved woodlands and the species is important for its timber, firewood, wildlife, biodiversity and landscape benefits.³⁴

The Welsh Government has published a **Chalara Management Plan for Wales**.³⁵ A UK-wide ban on movements of ash plants and seeds into and within Great Britain has been in place since October 2012 to slow the spread and minimise the impact of *Chalara*.³⁶ In June 2013, the Welsh Government published an Interim Advice Note requiring all sightings of ash dieback to be reported on a central database³⁷.

P. ramorum was present in all countries of the UK by 2010 and was particularly prevalent in south Wales and south-west England.³⁸ The total area of larch in Wales is 22,400 hectares, more than half of which is part of the Welsh Government's woodland estate.³⁹ *P. ramorum* was first found in Wales in May 2010 and as of June 2013 there were 6,251 hectares of infected woodland in Wales.⁴⁰ This represents almost a fifth of all the larch in Wales. 1,200 hectares of larch have been felled by NRW since 2010.⁴¹

As of October 2013, the Woodland Trust intends to fell 200 hectares of Wentwood Forest, Newport, in response to the disease.⁴² NRW has pledged £2.3 million for felling and re-planting to reduce the impact of *P. ramorum*.⁴³ NRW has the power to serve statutory Plant Health Notices on woodland owners requiring them to fell infected trees.⁴⁴

³⁰ Forestry Commission, **Ash dieback** [accessed 10 July 2013]

³¹ A 'wider environment' case is one which is found in established trees rather than younger trees on a recently planted site.

³² Natural Resources Wales, **First 'wider environment' Chalara case in Wales**, May 2013 [accessed 07 June 2013]

³³ Forestry Commission, **Ash dieback** [accessed 11 October 13]

³⁴ Forestry Commission, **Common Ash – *fraxinus excelsior***, [accessed 11 October 2013]

³⁵ Welsh Government, **Chalara Management Plan for Wales**, March 2013 [accessed 10 July 2013]

³⁶ Natural Resources Wales, **First 'wider environment' Chalara case in Wales**, May 2013 [accessed 07 June 2013]

³⁷ Welsh Government, Written Statement: **Phytophthora ramorum (Sudden Oak Death)**, 30 June 2013.

³⁸ Forestry Commission, **Phytophthora ramorum outbreak map**, July 2010 [accessed 10 July 2013]

³⁹ Natural Resources Wales, **Phytophthora ramorum**, [accessed 10 July 2013]

⁴⁰ Welsh Government, Written Statement: **Phytophthora ramorum (Sudden Oak Death)**, 30 June 2013.

⁴¹ *ibid*

⁴² Woodland Trust, **200 hectares of Wales' largest ancient forest to be felled due to tree disease**, 04 October 2013 [accessed 11 October 13]

⁴³ Natural Resources Wales, **NRW steps up fight against larch disease**, 24 June 2013 [10 July 2013]

⁴⁴ Natural Resources Wales, **Phytophthora ramorum**, [accessed 10 July 2013]

Further information

For further information on aspects of Forestry in Wales, please contact **Nia Seaton** (nia.seaton@wales.gov.uk),
Research Service.

See also:

- **Natural Resources Wales**
- **Forestry Commission GB**
- **Woodland Trust**

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