



Building resilience within ash woodlands

Ian Short¹ and Jerry Hawe²

Ash trees are now under threat from possibly the single most devastating forest pathogen ever to hit the post glacial woodlands of Ireland. First discovered in Co. Leitrim in October 2012 on imported plant material, ash dieback, *Chalara* or *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, is now steadily developing in the wider environment. This has led authorities in the Republic and Northern Ireland to review their previous eradication policies – we are now moving to the stage of trying to manage the impact of the disease as best we can. Young, single-species stands of ash can be at particular risk and, left untreated, could be at increased risk. This year, Teagasc and the Woodland

Trust in Northern Ireland began collaborating on a new research project aimed at reducing the potential impact of ash dieback on such pole-stage stands. The first trial site has been established within the Woodland Trust's Drumnaph Wood, Co. Derry, part of the Drumnaph Community Nature Reserve.

The 31.9 hectare (ha) reserve comprises a range of important habitats, but fundamentally contains 14.7 ha of ancient woodland. The overall woodland area was extended within the Trust's 'Woods On Your Doorstep' millennium celebration through the planting of an additional 11.8 ha of new native woodland. About 4 ha of this relatively young woodland is



Coupe marked for felling within a conventional thinning.

comprised predominantly of ash. The recent work programme in the wood has had two primary objectives: 1.) Promoting the vigour of the ash

stands through thinning, and; 2.) Diversifying the species composition of the predominantly ash stands through underplanting. Crowded single-species

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stands of young ash can lead to suppression and stress, leaving individual trees weakened and more vulnerable to ash dieback. Conversely, large healthy vigorous individuals are better able to combat disease. The thinning at Drumnaph aims to promote the growth of selected individuals by releasing them from competition. The longer health of these trees can be maintained, the longer we can maintain the ecological integrity

and functions of the woodland. Ultimately the long-term resilience of the woodland lies in achieving a greater degree of species diversity. A group-felling treatment using small coupes, 0.03 – 0.045 ha (approx. 20 – 25 m diameter equivalent) was integrated with in the conventional thinning, designed to provide the space necessary to plant a range of other native tree species such as oak, hazel and birch. As the

site matures the research project will monitor the impact of light conditions and their changing influence over time on the growth of the underplanted trees with the objective of providing management guidelines for such a silvicultural system. Hopefully this work can inform woodland owners regarding the positive options available to secure the most productive future for their ash-dominated woodlands.



Coupe with oak, birch and hazel planted at Drumnaph Community Nature Reserve.

Information Note for members On Grants Mandated to Contractors

An issue has potentially arisen for members where the grant for forest roads is paid directly to the Contractor by way of Grant Mandate.

Because the Contractor has received the Grant through the grant mandating procedure, some contractors have taken the view that the Grant is not income and not liable to VAT in their hands, which is incorrect. The grant and any VAT exemptions only relate to the forest owner on whose property the

road is constructed, not the contractor. The Contractor remains fully liable to Income or Corporation Tax and VAT on the road construction income.

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------|
| Example of correct operation; | |
| Cost of Roadway | €40,000 |
| VAT @ 13.5% = | €5,400 |
| Total | €45,400 |
| Mandated Grant | €44,000 |
| Balance due by Forest Owner | €1,400 |

By way of the above example, the Contractor has sales of €40,000 to be inserted in the Accounts as Sales Income and VAT of €5,400. It makes no difference whether the forest owners pay the Contractor with their own cheque €45,400 and keeps the Grant or mandates the Grant to the Contractor and gives a cheque for €1,400 balance.

The forest owner, if not registered for VAT, may be able to reclaim the VAT using Form VAT 58 under the VAT Refund Scheme for unregistered farmers.

Dermot Byrne

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- Forest No. 462 Newbliss Co. Monaghan 74 acres
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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IRISH TIMBER GROWERS ASSOCIATION



Group Certification for Private Forest Owners

The potential for Group Certification of private forests in Ireland has come a step closer with the news that, following their recent Certification Audits, two Knowledge Transfer Groups are on course to achieve Forest Certification. This is an important first for such Groups in Ireland and will result in making Forest Certification more accessible to timber growers generally. The project was funded by the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and was awarded by e-tender to a consortium of forestry interests.

Forest Certification is a system that verifies forests are managed to a defined best practice and sustainable standard leading to a certificate issued by a recognised independent party. Certification works throughout the forest supply chain with the aim of promoting good practice in the forest and to ensure and verify that timber and non-timber forest products are produced with respect to ecological, social and ethical standards.

It has been recognised that certification of private woodlands will be required in Ireland in the coming years as timber processors source increasing quantities of roundwood from privately owned forests. Ireland exports approximately 80% of our timber products and our export markets for these products require them to be certified. Under the two main international certification schemes,

timber processors can take in a maximum of 30% of uncertified wood in their log supply to be permitted to label their output as certified. In the coming years, many timber processors will be taking in more than this proportion and hence the need for certification. Indeed, within just 7 years it is forecast that the volume of roundwood coming from private forests will exceed the harvest from Coillte.

The objective of the Certification Project was to develop a template for group certification in Ireland which can be employed by private forest owners. The pilot project involved achieving certification for two Knowledge Transfer Groups (KTGs), the North East Forestry Group and the Forest Owners Co-operative Society.

The contract to undertake the pilot project was awarded to a consortium led by Commercial Forestry Services Ltd., in partnership with The Forestry Company, UK Forest Certification Ltd. and the Soil Association Certification Ltd (UK). The key contributors to the project were the two participating KTGs, the North East Forestry Group and the Forest Owners Co-operative Society and Teagasc assisted with knowledge transfer in the project.

A short summary of the experiences of the two Groups in this project is outlined overleaf.



Photograph taken by Willie Allshire at ITGA field day to Balla, Co. Mayo.

LATEST DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**ITGA Field day - Friday
25th May**

**- ITGA Field day and AGM to
Rosscarbery, West Cork.**

We will visit different woodland areas including a recently thinned broadleaved area under the Woodland Improvement Grant Scheme. Willie and Avril Allshire have established a firewood and kindling processing enterprise around their woodlands. Their Caherbeg Free Range Pork business has the oldest commercial Irish herd of free range pigs and they are considering introducing some of this herd into the woodlands on a controlled basis.

Notice is hereby given that the Irish Timber Growers Association Annual General Meeting will take place at 2.15pm in the Celtic Ross Hotel, Rosscarbery, Co. Cork on Friday 25th May 2018. The Agenda and minutes of the 2017 AGM will be mailed out prior to the meeting.

(See full itinerary enclosed with Newsletter)

**ITGA Field day - Friday
21st September**

**- Field day in association with
PEFC Ireland to South West, Co.
Kerry.**

Visit to Curraghmore West, Co. Kerry, a 128 hectare forest planted in 1987 on cutaway bog which, after years of very slow growth following establishment, has now developed into a promising and diverse woodland. We will also look at forest foliage and non-wood forest products in the afternoon which will be hosted by Jim Costello of Forest Produce Ltd.

**ITGA Field day - Friday
12th October**

**- Field day in association with
Western Forestry co-op to North
West region.**



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