

Options for Forestry 2004 - Political Parties Responses Index

Green Party

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GREEN PARTY RESPONSE TO:

**'OPTIONS FOR FORESTRY IN NORTHERN IRELAND
CONSULTATION PAPER'.**

The Green Party welcomes the opportunity given to the public to comment on the future of our forests. The Green Party supports the conservation and expansion of forests.

The forest planning ideally links the conservation of ancient forests to the sustainable forest management by encouraging working forests that are economically viable, environmentally sustainable, socially and educationally rewarding. We believe this approach would give future forests the best protection.

Forests should be viewed in the context of the wider countryside with links to urban areas.

The environmental benefits of forests in terms of global warming and bio-diversity should have a high priority. The Green Party supports the creation of new forest industries and training for example:

1. Wood fuel used with masonry stoves¹
2. Coppicing for construction, fuel and charcoal
3. Local seed collection
4. Sale of logs at amenity centres
5. Carpentry supplies
6. Training and support for farmers wishing to diversify to forest industries

The 'Greens' call for co-operation and support with and for conservation Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's) such as

Woodland Trust (WT), Conservation Volunteers Northern Ireland (CVNI) & Ulster Wildlife Trust (UWT).

The 'Greens' call on the Forest Service to plant long-term 'Broad Leaf Native Trees' rather than conifer 'Mono-Cultures'.

We are cautious about 'over tourism' interfering with forest industries, livestock and livestock movement. Forests benefit from grazing animals with under stocking to correct balance. Forestry grants should favour native broadleaf trees particularly for smaller landscapes.

Our main suggestion is to make forestry economically viable and ecologically sustainable by designating ancient forests as wilderness, planting new natives trees as managed working forests farms to supply fuels and woodland products².

We would welcome a technical debate on increasing our bio-diversity by introducing non-native fruit trees and useful timbers to reduce the need for wood preservatives.

Response to questions raised:

1. The Forest Service needs to cover a wider remit including better public access to forests and working with the public transport provider – Translink and working with other agencies such as Environmental Heritage Service (EHS) and conservation NGO's. Public visits could be educational and enjoyable emphasising the need for bio-diversity and our past in halting global warming with forestry.

The 'Greens' believe that with training, unemployment could reduce with forestry jobs.

2. The Green Party is cautious about transferring responsibility to local Councils. There is a risk of Rates increases and a reduction in the importance of forests. There is the possible change to unsustainable 'money making' ventures that may result in tree felling.
3. There needs to be a long-term plan for forestry to meet the needs of the rural economy, the environment and urban visitors. We would refer you to review the 'Earth Care Manual³' – a permaculture handbook for Britain and other temperate climates

The Green Party proposes a ban on spraying 'biocides' around ancient forests and to protect floor cover.

4. The 'Greens' regulation is needed to prevent destructive forestry practices and hedgerow removal. We recognise that tree felling is needed for dangerous or diseased trees and overgrown shadow causing trees however, this is still harvesting.

We do not have faith in 'Tree Preservation Orders' or EIS to protect trees adequately and we support the call for a 'Environmental Protection Agency'. More regulation is needed with road and street digging to prevent root damage to healthy trees.

5. We call for research into using willow as 'mopcrops' for slurry and grey water bio-treatment. Harvesting willow for bio-fuels, biogas and social uses for example basket weaving, living domes and living fences. P Salix Alla is useful as a quick return fuel tree (logs). Farmers should be encouraged to see the benefits of certain trees as shelter and forage for livestock as well as acorns for pig feed.

The 'Greens' favour small scale localised rural economies to deter the need to widen minor roads.

6. We are happy with the Forest Service's analysis.

¹ 'Finnish Stoves' - ISBN 9516821685

² 'Traditional Farmland Crafts' Raymond Tabor - ISBN 0713475005

³ 'Earth Care Manual' – Patrick Whitefield - The Permaculture UK website: www.permaculture.co.uk