

## Reaction: Overall support for O'Hara report but concerns also expressed

Jo O'Hara's report has generated a wide response from stakeholders. The following is a cross-section of comments from members of the Forestry Policy Group (FPG).

### IFA

"The publication of the report and establishment of Project Woodland represents progress, but the IFA has reservations, particularly as there is no time frame for the delivery of the recommendations and that the project manager - Colm Hayes - is an internal appointment," said Vincent Nally, chair of the IFA forestry committee.

"The report recognised that the assistant secretary and leadership team within the Department are already stretched, so will Mr Hayes have the time to ensure the project's successful implementation?"

Mr Nally said the sector has one chance to put things right.

"It is vital that the plan is properly re-

sourced. I look forward to working with the minister and all stakeholders to deliver a forestry programme that once again works for farmers."

### Irish Timber Growers Association

"We welcome the report because it is a positive and ambitious document," said Donal Whelan. "It contains significant proposed deliverables, which along with related milestones, will be critical in achieving the recommendations of the Mackinnon review."

### Environmental Pillar

"The focus is on afforestation with little on reforestation, the dominant forestry activity," said Andrew St Leger, CELT and Environmental Pillar representative.

"There is evidence of reforestation licences granted to Coillte for 90% to 95% Sitka spruce. There is an urgent need to restore biodiversity in reforestation, which should include 30% broadleaves as under afforestation rules." He said the report says little about deforestation.

"The EPA *21st Century Deforestation in*

*Ireland* report for the period 2000-2012 showed 7,465ha deforestation.

"This report stated that the high rate of deforestation of broadleaf forests is of concern, particularly in the context of habitat protection legislation, such as the EU Habitats Directive. It identified 52 deforestation events in ancient or long-established woodland."

### The Association of Irish Forestry Consultants (AIFC)

"We strongly support Jo O'Hara's recommendations and Minister Hackett's Project Woodland," said Dermot Houlihan, chair of AIFC.

"The role of the project manager is vital to the project's success. It is crucial that this person is independent of the Forest Service and working full-time on the project. Otherwise, we can have no confidence that the necessary changes will be made."

### BirdWatch Ireland

"We are concerned that there doesn't seem to be a strong emphasis on safeguarding

and restoring biodiversity already impacted by planting on environmentally sensitive sites," said Oonagh Duggan, spokesperson for Birdwatch Ireland.

"Indeed the McKinnon report recommendation to explore more planting on unclosed upland areas was never acceptable."

### Western Forestry Co-op

"We welcome Jo O'Hara's report and are hopeful Project Woodland will deliver a vibrant and efficient forest sector," said Marina Conway.

"We also welcome external input and a full-time project management approach, and believe it is now imperative that all stakeholders get behind this and work together to create a forest future for all."

### None-so-Hardy Nurseries

"The minister's approach to implement the Mackinnon report is welcome," said Teige Ryan.

"We should follow the example in Scotland, where over 10,000ha of new woodlands are planted each year."