

## Ireland's Woodland Environmental Fund (WEF)

### Location

**Country:** Ireland

**Scale:** Local

**Region:** PES measure applicable through the State, where site requirements (silvicultural & environmental) met

### Compensated /improved ecosystem services

- Protection & enhancement of water quality & associated aquatic ecosystems
- Native woodland biodiversity on-site
- Habitat connectivity at a landscape scale
- Carbon sequestration
- Soil protection
- Visual landscape enhancement
- Source of sustainable wood & non-wood products & services for landowner
- Amenity & environmental education for visiting public

### Management

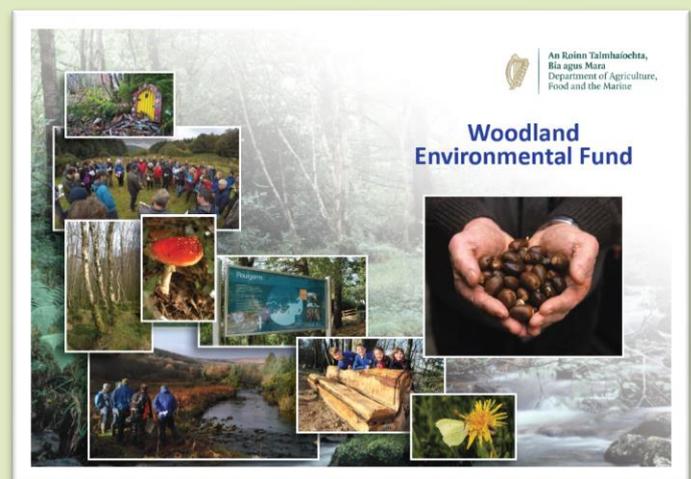
Measure entitled the 'Woodland Environmental Fund' (WEF), released in September 2018 following the mid-term review of Ireland's Forestry Programme 2014-2020 (see DAFM Press Release at [www.agriculture.gov.ie/press/pressreleases/2018/september/title,120645,en.html](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/press/pressreleases/2018/september/title,120645,en.html)).

In summary, the WEF encourages businesses, public bodies & other entities to contribute a once-off 1,000€ per hectare payment to augment existing grant & premium payments under the Native Woodland Establishment Scheme (NWS Est.), to encourage farmers & other landowners to enter the scheme & to create new native woodland, following clear ecological criteria regarding woodland type, planting material, minimum site inputs & future management under continuous cover forestry.

In this way, under an agreement with the landowner, the contributing entity can report on the ecosystem services delivered by the emerging native woodland for a period of 15 years, to demonstrate its corporate social responsibility & commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The process involves the input of a 'natural capital facilitator' (NCF), who compiles a profile of the ecosystem services a project is likely to deliver as it develops, & matches that with a potential contributor with a particular requirement / preference regarding location, scale, & type of ecosystem services involved. This introduces considerable flexibility, allowing a range of possible match-ups, from a local business wishing to demonstrate its green credentials by supporting a local project, to a multi-national corporation wishing to offset (e.g.) the carbon impact of a particular building / activity.

The landowner benefits from additional financial payment & also (via the NCF's report) gains a deeper understanding of the environmental role of his / her woodland. Meanwhile, the State advances its national afforestation programme & the expansion of the area under native woodland, itself a threatened habitat.



The WEF is based on NWS Est., which itself is subject to a range of terms & conditions. As woodland realised under this initiative is considered 'afforestation', an afforestation licence is required from the DAFM under the Forestry Act 2014 (commenced under S.I. 191 / 2017).

## Stakeholders

### **Sellers or service providers:**

- Private landowners, mainly private farmers, who decide to engage with NWS Est. & to put their application forward for consideration under the WEF, to avail of the additional payment.

### **Buyers & beneficiaries of services:**

- In addition to the State (via the DAFM & in keeping with State Aid Rules) in relation to the basic NWS Est. grant & premium, the buyers & beneficiaries of the services are those businesses, public bodies & other entities that decide to engage in the WEF & to contribute €1,000 / ha to projects that match their preferences / requirements. Pending developments, the DAFM is not in a position to name individual contributors at this time. However, a pilot scheme that resulted in the establishment of almost 140 ha on new native woodland was undertaken in 2017 & 2018, involving Microsoft, the Natural Capital Partners & Green Belt Ltd., a private forestry company.

### **Knowledge providers:**

- The Natural Capital Facilitator, who assesses potential projects, draws up a profile regarding the likely eco-system services likely to be provided as the woodland develops, & matches that project to a potential contributor, based on its own preferences / requirements regarding location, scale, ecosystem;
- Registered Forester, the professional forester who works with the landowner to develop the NWS Establishment application. The involvement of a Registered Forester is mandatory in this regard. DAFM-Forestry retains a list of Registered Foresters, who must meet various criteria in order to be listed as such (including completion of a bespoke Native Woodland Training Course held jointly with scheme partner Woodland of Ireland.);
- Woodlands of Ireland, an eNGO who works closely with the DAFM in the development & implementation of the NWS Establishment (alongside other native woodland stakeholders). WofI undertakes training of foresters & ecologists jointly with DAFM, & produces various technical resources in support of native woodland creation & management.

### **Donors – funding agencies or sponsors:**

- The Natural Capital Facilitator, who assesses potential projects, draws up a profile regarding the likely eco-system services likely to be provided as the woodland develops, & matches that project to a potential contributor, based on its own preferences / requirements regarding location, scale, ecosystem.

### **Intermediaries:**

- A key intermediary is the Natural Capital Facilitator, who assesses potential projects, draws up a profile regarding the likely eco-system services likely to be provided as the woodland develops, & matches that project to a potential contributor, based on its own preferences / requirements regarding location, scale, ecosystem. The DAFM is maintaining a register of NCFs, & particular criteria must be met by individuals wishing to be listed as such.

## Timeline

**Establishment year:** WEF established in September 2018, building on experiences of previous Microsoft / NCPs / Green Belt project, which itself commenced in 2017.

**Time horizon:** WEF to run on a pilot basis for the remainder of the current Forestry Programme 2014-2020, its future continuation to be considered as part of the design of the next Forestry Programme, based on initial success. If successful & continued into the next Programme, WEF has the potential to develop into a medium- to long-term initiative (i.e. 10+ years).

**Status of PES:** WEF is currently active, & the DAFM is receiving applications from landowners, potential contributors, & individuals wishing to be listed as Natural Capital Facilitators. For details, see [www.agriculture.gov.ie/forests-service/grants-and-premium-schemes-2014-2020](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/forests-service/grants-and-premium-schemes-2014-2020)

### **Availability of economic data**

Financial commitment from contributor under WEF is €1,000 / ha as a once-off payment to the landowner upon verification by DAFM that the new native woodland have been planted according to the conditions of the afforestation licence & the terms & conditions of NWS Est. & conditions.

Payment under NWS Est. is up to €6,220 / ha (incl. fencing allowance) plus annual premium of up to €680 / ha / year for 15 years.

Financial commitment to NWS Est. under current 2014-2020 Forestry Programme is €16.5 million.

### **References / Source of information**

For details on the WEF, see [www.agriculture.gov.ie/forests-service/grants-and-premium-schemes-2014-2020](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/forests-service/grants-and-premium-schemes-2014-2020)

Contact person: Karl Coggins, Assistant Principal, Forestry Division, DAFM, Johnstown Castle Estate, Co. Wexford, Ireland, [karl.coggins@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:karl.coggins@agriculture.gov.ie) / tel. 053-916 5521.