



BUSINESS PLAN ^{2015/2016}





BUSINESS PLAN

2015/2016

Foreword	3
Introduction	5
Status	5
Vision and Aims	5
Functions	5
Performance Measures	6
Corporate Governance	7
Organisation and Resources	7
Strategic Context	11
Operating environment	11
Scope for forest expansion	11
Managing forests sustainably	11
Plant Health	12
Targets and Objectives	12
Business Priorities for 2015/16	13
Key and Supporting Targets	14
Forest Service Budgets	17
Monitoring and Reporting	18
Appendix 1: Forest Service Standards	19
Appendix 2: Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements	20
Appendix 3: Agency Organisational Senior Structure	21
Appendix 4: Agency Offices	22
Appendix 5: References	23



Foreword

By the Chief Executive



This Business Plan sets out our strategic objectives and associated targets for the 2015/16 business year. This is to deliver the Minister's policy aims for forestry and plant health encapsulated in 9 key targets, and her objective that our Headquarters moves to Fermanagh in 2015. To support this I have set a further 25 targets which are designed to cover the scope of what the Agency does and prepare us for the future. This represents a challenging programme of work in the context of public expenditure constraint impacting my budgets.

Subject to funding arising from a new rural development programme, we will continue to promote forest expansion by providing financial support and by providing advice to landowners. We will also continue to manage the natural capital represented by state forests, testing the evidence base to determine our scope to maintain the supply of timber and other ecosystem services into the long term, developing opportunities for generating renewable energy, and investing in recreation and tourism infrastructure. We will continue to support and regulate private forest owners as they deal with the consequences of tree diseases and plan to regenerate forests after tree felling, and we will seek to deliver our new responsibilities for all aspects of plant health.

We have been encouraged by the success of the investments made by our delivery partners in forest trails and other infrastructure. We will continue to encourage our partners in local government and industry to invest in our forests and deliver customer facing services, and look forward to achieving more during the year.



Malcolm Beatty

Chief Executive



Introduction

Status

Forestry and Plant Health functions are delivered by the Forest Service on behalf of the Department. The Forest Service became an Executive Agency within the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development on 1 April 1998. The Agency is subject to the overall direction of the Minister, who determines the policy framework¹ within which the Agency operates, the level of resources made available each year, and the scope of Agency activities. During 2013, the Agency's functions were extended to include responsibility for all plant health matters. The Minister approves the Business Plan, sets the key performance targets and monitors the Agency's performance.

Vision and Aims

“To promote forestry and enhance plant health for a thriving and sustainable rural economy, community and environment to promote social and economic equality.”

The Minister has affirmed the policy to steadily expand tree cover and to manage woods and forests sustainably. The aim is to increase the area of forest to 12% of land area by the middle of the century, to manage forests to provide a wide range of public and private benefits consistent with national forestry standards², and to safeguard plant health.

Functions

The Forest Service fulfils DARD's legal obligations³ in the areas of forestry, plant health and bee health, reproductive materials and horticulture marketing standards. The Forest Service will seek to apply standards agreed by the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation⁴ to its work on plant protection products and phytosanitary measures.

The key tasks required to deliver the Minister's policies are:

- 1) To promote forest expansion by private landowners and public bodies through advice and grant aid;
- 2) To provide a regulatory framework and administrative process to support the achievement of policy objectives, including inspection programmes to monitor compliance with forestry and plant health legislation, aid scheme rules, seed certification schemes and bee health.

- 3) To maintain the knowledge base needed to inform forestry development and the inspection programme; and
- 4) To manage the Department's forests in consultation with stakeholders so as to:
 - Supply timber and to regenerate and protect areas affected by harvesting, disease and fire, by monitoring forest productivity, by planning harvests, by negotiating sale of forest products, and by investment to improve access and restock forests;
 - Provide public access for recreation, by maintaining and improving facilities and visitor services, increasingly through partnership arrangements with other public authorities, commercial providers, or groups of recreational users;
 - Verify sustainable management performance through a process of independent audit against the UK Woodland Assurance Standard⁵; and
 - Release land from forestry for renewable energy generation and environmental improvement where this is consistent with our sustainable development obligations.

Performance Measures

Measurement criteria are set for the Agencies targets so we can monitor progress and measure success. These will generally be refinements of the following general metrics:

Operational

- New plantations established [hectares]
- Afforestation grant expenditure
- Volume of timber produced for industrial processing [m³]
- Income from forest resources
- Forest visits
- Area of woodland qualifying for UK Forestry Standard [hectares]
- Plant health inspections, samples and surveys

Customer Service

- Performance against prescribed standards of service to the public

Value for money

- Net annual cost of the forestry and plant health programme
- Maintain income and expenditure within agreed limits

Corporate Governance

The Chief Executive is responsible to the Minister for the Agency's operations and performance, and is the Agency Accounting Officer. The Chief Executive is advised by a Management Board comprising his 2 senior Executive Directors and 2 Non-Executive Directors. The latter are a Senior Civil Servant working in another part of the Department of Agriculture and a senior SIB official.

The Chief Executive is also advised by an Audit Risk and Assurance Committee, established as a Committee of the Board, about business risks, internal control and governance of the Agency. The Committee is currently chaired by a member of the Senior Civil Service from the Department for Regional Development and has two additional members without Agency executive functions.

We have a responsibility to ensure that robust procedures are in place to provide for continuity of service in the event of a civil emergency. Our business continuity plan sets out the controls in place and we review the plan regularly to ensure that it provides the necessary assurance that the controls remain effective.

Organisation and Resources

The Agency has a projected baseline of ~250 staff located at the Agency's headquarters in Belfast, in DARD Direct offices and at three main forest offices at Enniskillen, Castlewellan and Garvagh, and in forests. This number reflects the Target Operating Model established for our new HQ in Fermanagh and to deliver our plant health responsibilities. The model shall evolve as we implement more flexible ways of working utilising modern communications technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness. The Agency shall in doing so seek to respond to the challenges of fluctuating staff resources through this period of public sector staff reduction.

Forest Service has established a range of standards for how we deal with customer correspondence and complaints, for forest management, and for safeguarding plant health. These standards are at Appendix 1.

Details of the current senior staff organisational structure and main office locations can be found in Appendices 2 and 3.

In line with wider NICS objectives, the Agency will seek to achieve a reduced level of staff absenteeism and specific targets are included in this Business Plan. Specific action to meet our absenteeism targets will include the strict application of the absence management procedures and action on the prevention and investigation of industrial accidents.

The draft revised framework document sets out the Forest Service aims to enhance plant health

and standards of production, to supply timber and renewable energy, to provide public access to forests and protect forest environments, and to work with partners to deliver public services and promote economic development. The Agency does this to address the priorities set out in the Programme for Government⁶ the DARD Strategic Plan⁷ and the Draft DARD Corporate Plan 2014-16⁸. Together, these actions address the Executive's number one priority – *“a vibrant economy which can transform our society while dealing with the deprivation and poverty which has affected some of our communities for generations”*. Forest Service will

- Help the ... (forest) industry prepare for future market opportunities and economic challenges (DARD Goal 1) - by exploiting forest resources;
- Improve the lives of ... rural dwellers targeting resources where they are most needed (DARD Goal 2) - by providing access to forests;
- Enhance ... plant health ... on an all Ireland basis (DARD Goal 3) - by understanding and managing risk;
- Help deliver improved sustainable environmental outcomes (DARD Goal 4); – by managing forests responsibly, and
- Manage our business and deliver services to our customers in a cost-effective way (DARD Goal 5) – through effective governance.

Forest Service is responsible for delivering statutory services for forestry, plant health, bee health and seed potato certification. It provides official inspection services which aim to balance effective regulation with minimising the regulatory burden on industry and trade. It plays a role in facilitating trade by advising industry on best practice and international standards. It manages forests, and provides advice and financial support to the forest industry.

The strategic aims are:

- Rapid control of plant pest and disease outbreaks;
- Reduced threat from new and emerging plant diseases;
- Improved agricultural and forestry economy;
- Healthier people, plants and environments;
- Increased forest cover;
- Profitable and sustainable forestry and land management; and
- Improved policy making.

These priorities are reflected in the Agency key targets to safeguard plant health status, to plant 100ha of new woodland and invest in forest recreation infrastructure, to earn

over £9million from forestry resources and progress wind-farm development, to relocate our HQ to Enniskillen and safeguard our staff while maintaining productivity by reducing absenteeism and accidents and reviewing our business continuity plans in the light of the HQ move and the NICS early departure scheme for staff. The Agency will continue to seek out opportunities for investment to improve and extend the life of assets in line with the Executive policy on care for the historic estate, and to engage partners in delivering recreation and other services.

This plan also contains supporting targets to provide greater clarity about how the key targets are to be achieved, and to prepare the ground for progress in future years.





Strategic Context

Operating environment

Scope for forest expansion

The changes to the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) in Northern Ireland will be the main factor determining the rate and type of forestry expansion. There is little sign that landowners intend to change land-use from agriculture to forestry and, while they are adjusting to the CAP reforms, we expect the demand for forestry support to remain similar to that of recent years. Consequently, we plan to support new planting through a challenge scheme run on similar lines, and to incorporate support for small scale planting into the Department's new Agri-Environment Scheme. These schemes will open during autumn 2015.

Managing forests sustainably

Our principal obligation is to ensure that forests are managed in a sustainable manner. As evidence of this our forests are certified in accordance with the requirements of the Forest Stewardship Council® using the FSC® accredited Forest Management Standard for the UK (the UK Woodland Assurance Standard/UKWAS). This means, broadly, that forest management complies with all legal obligations and is committed to a rigorous planning process that pays proper attention to the needs of people and public values in the design of forests at all stages of development. Forest Service ensures that forest operations comply with the plans and follow good practice; that forests are properly protected and maintained and that conservation and enhancement of biodiversity are given significant consideration. The Agency encourages community participation and supports community access. The Department is an "Investor in People" employer and we respect the rights of our staff and provide all training and equipment as necessary.

Previous investments created a substantial timber asset which is also used to deliver public access to forests and environmental improvement. Current plans indicate that timber can be supplied at current levels for about 15 years but thereafter supply will decrease sharply. Subject to our obligations to manage forests sustainably, we will market timber to support the timber industry and the rural economy, we will continue to invest in refreshing our recreation and tourism infrastructure, and we will seek to agree terms with our timber customers and recreation delivery partners to realise the benefits of the investments in growing timber and recreation infrastructure.

Work done during 2009 showed that extensive plantations occur in areas which are now considered unsuitable for forestry on grounds of loss of natural habitat⁹ and water quality¹⁰. As these plantations mature we will ensure that replacement plantations remain consistent with our forest policy obligations and, where land would be better under another use, consider

how it can be restored to natural habitat or made available for renewable energy development.

Plant Health

Recent outbreaks of tree diseases illustrate the increased risk faced by foresters and farmers from novel plant pests and diseases. We are working with our partners in the UK Plant Health Service and with DAFM in the south to evaluate the risks should some of the 750 pests and diseases identified as potential threats to us actually be discovered here. For example, Virus X, a disease of mushrooms, has resulted in annual losses of up to £50M to the mushroom industry in GB. Based on experience elsewhere in the UK, a single outbreak of the bacterial disease *Clavibacter michiganensis* subsp. *Sepedonicus* or Ring rot on potatoes is likely to cost a potato farmer about £1/4million. Consequently, we are also working with the Department to resource the plant health effort so that policy and legislation supports our inspection and surveillance programme, and so that we are better able to make risk based decisions about where we should intervene to break disease cycles and support industry.

Targets and Objectives

The Minister has set 9 key targets for the Agency. The business priorities, actions key and supporting targets are shown in a “balanced scorecard” format below to maintain consistency with the department’s approach to business planning. Table 2 shows the net budget allocated to the Agency to deliver the work programme.

The plan assumes that the Department will continue to provide support services, accommodation and ITC, as set out in the Agency’s Framework document¹¹, and that these will continue to be charged on a notional basis.

Business Priorities for 2015-16

Within the context of implementing our strategic aims we have agreed a number of business priorities for this business year. These are to:

- Encourage forest expansion;
- Manage forests using evidence that production and other services are sustainable and cost-effective, to produce an income, to protect forest environments, to promote social use of forests, and to exploit opportunities for renewable energy investment, principally in wind-farms.
- Continue to make investments to improve recreation and tourism infrastructure and support improved partnership working consistent with our Recreation and Social Use Strategy;
- To enhance plant health on an all Ireland basis and help the agri-food industry prepare for future market opportunities and economic challenges.
- Move Forest Service Headquarters to Fermanagh.

To achieve this, the Business Plan sets a number of key and supporting targets. These are set out in the next section.



Table 1 Forest Service Business Plan Balanced Scorecard - Key and Supporting Targets 2015/2016

CUSTOMER QUADRANT				
Link to DARD Strategic Goals	PfG links	Going for Growth links	Key Target	Supporting Target(s)
Goal 1			Deliver a £1m programme of works in forests by 31 March 2016 to underpin investment in forest recreation infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the construction of a new caravan and camping facility at Glenariff Forest Park by 31st December 2015. Agree arrangements for operation of caravan and camping facilities by 17 March 2016
Goals 2 & 4			By 31st December 2015 have approximately 100 Megawatts of wind farm potential under active development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By 30th June 2015 to complete site specific analysis (grid connections, energy output and financial analysis) on the first phase of forests providing approximately 100 Megawatts of capacity By 30th September 2015 say how community participation and benefits can best be integrated into the development of wind energy on the forest estate By 31st December 2015, secure all necessary approvals for phase 1 forests to be taken forward for wind energy development By 31st March 2016, commence development activities¹² on at least three phase two forests.
Goal 2	Level 1 PfG Comm 4		Relocate Forest Service HQ to Co Fermanagh during 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a relocation staff transition plan by 30 June 2015 Complete the relocation project by 30 September 2015 and implement the Agency Target operating Model Review business continuity and develop plans to resource priority work in the face of potential reduced staff resource Capture knowledge and develop training plans

Goal 5			Maintain a safe environment for visitors to forests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a programme of tree inspections across the Forest Service estate by 31 March 2016 Aim for fewer than 5 reportable accidents by the public during 2015/16
Goal 4			Achieve creation of at least 100ha of new woodland under the Rural Development Programme 2014-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transfer existing claims process for Forestry Grant Scheme annual premia onto the DARD Single Application Form.
PROCESSES QUADRANT				
Goal 3		Rec 100	Safeguard Plant health status in the north of Ireland to prevent the establishment and spread of quarantine and new plant pests and diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By 30th September 2015, establish a baseline for compliance with legislation. By 31st December 2015, introduce a real time data collection Smartphone App that will enable citizens to contribute to the safeguarding of plant health. By 31st March 2016 publish a NI Plant Health Risk register and Plant Health Strategy. By 1st October 2015 develop and implement a stakeholder engagement strategy to deliver joint working with DAFM, other DA's and stakeholders.
FINANCE QUADRANT				
Goal 5			Focus our efforts to obtain income of at least £9.35m from forest resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supply at least 400, 000 m3 of timber to industry Complete re-measurement of 500 forest inventory plots to develop forest inventory and production forecasts Complete 1st registration of unregistered forestry land by 31 March 2016

ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING AND GROWTH QUADRANT	
Goal 5	<p>Maintain the days lost per member of staff through sickness to less than 7.5 days by March 2016</p>
Goal 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust application of absence management policies and procedures • Support staff to maintain and improve health and well being • Reportable accident rate 2% • Complete planning reviews for Down and West Fermanagh • Execute memoranda of understanding arrangements for forest recreation and tourism development with at least 3 of the new councils

Forest Service Budgets 2015-16

Table 2

Description	2015/16 Budget Outcome £'000	2014/15 Opening Baseline £'000
Salaries	5,322	3,961
Wages	3,407	4,198
GAE	871	781
Current – Other	3,050	3,010
NIRDP Axis 2 Forest Resource Grant National	477	477
Receipts: Current	-9,420	-8,950
TOTAL FOREST SERVICE OTHER RESOURCE	3,707	3,477
Depreciation	900	788
Impairment	15	15
TOTAL FOREST SERVICE OTHER RESOURCE / DEPRECIATION / IMPAIRMENT	915	803
Recurrent Capital: Plant, Vehicles, Machinery & Roads	1,000	387
Forest Fund (Non EJI Ring Fenced)	1,000	500
Forest Fund (EJI Ring Fenced)	0	2,000
TOTAL FOREST SERVICE CAPITAL	2,000	2,887
NIRDP Axis 2 Forest Expansion Woodland Grant Scheme National	430	420
TOTAL FOREST SERVICE CAPITAL GRANT	430	420
TOTAL FOREST SERVICE DEL	7,052	7,587

DEL = Departmental Expenditure Limit.

Monitoring and Reporting

The Forest Service Management Board will monitor performance against the key targets. If it appears that the achievement of key targets may be at risk due to factors outside of the Agency's control, the Chief Executive will consult with the Department and the Minister about options for remedial action. In these or other circumstances, it may be necessary to review the Business Plan during the year and make changes in policies, and/or priorities. This is particularly so in the current climate as policies at NICS level to reduce staff numbers and adjust budgets are implemented. The Business plan is subject to formal in-year and year-end reviews by the Permanent Secretary and the Department's Senior Finance Director, in discussion with the Agency's Board.

Following the end of the financial year the Chief Executive will publish an Annual Report and Accounts. The Report will review the Agency's activities during the year and will comment specifically on its performance against the key targets set by the Minister.



Appendix 1

Forest Service Standards

Customer Service standards

We will follow the published DARD Customer Service Standards for informing the customer about our programmes and services, taking reasonable steps to make sure that our services and facilities are accessible to everyone. We will seek your views on how our service will be delivered, we will be polite and helpful, act with integrity and discretion and treat you with respect at all times. We will aim to see you and answer telephone calls promptly, and will acknowledge and respond to your correspondence within the Department's target times. If you are unhappy with the quality of service you receive from us please let us know why you are unhappy as quickly as possible. We will fully and fairly investigate your complaint, keep you informed of progress, offer a full explanation of the circumstances and take appropriate action.

Financial control standards

We will aim to lay annual report and accounts before the NI Assembly by 3rd July 2015

We will aim to achieve a financial outturn that is within resource limits in line with the Department's targets that the Provisional Capital and Resource Outturns should be between 98.5% and 100% of the Final Budget.

Forestry Standards

The UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) is the official reference standard for sustainable forest management¹³. We will verify our own sustainable woodland management practice against the UK Woodland Assurance Standard¹⁴, which is an independent certification standard recognised by the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) schemes, and is consistent with UKFS.

Appendix 2

Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements

The Agency has established monitoring and reporting arrangements in place in relation to its Business Plan targets. In the first instance, each target is assigned to a Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) who will have responsibility for ongoing monitoring throughout the year

During the course of the financial year, progress against each Business Plan target will be reported to the Agency Board, both through Directors reports and in overview format. The Agency's Senior Management Team will also oversee the level of progress being made towards the milestones and targets set and will approve corrective actions required, as appropriate, during the course of the year.

Progress with the Forest Service key targets that are included in the DARD Business Plan is reported to DARD for onward reporting to the Departmental Board, Minister and Departmental Assembly Committee. These detailed reports will be produced for the periods ending 30 September, 31 December and 31 March.

Progress will be reported in accordance with the methodology adopted for the Programme for Government (PfG) Commitment reports to the Executive. This on a Red/Amber/Green (RAG) basis as follows:

Green - achieved or on track for delivery;

Green/Amber- level of progress is broadly on track with easily redeemable deviations from plans;

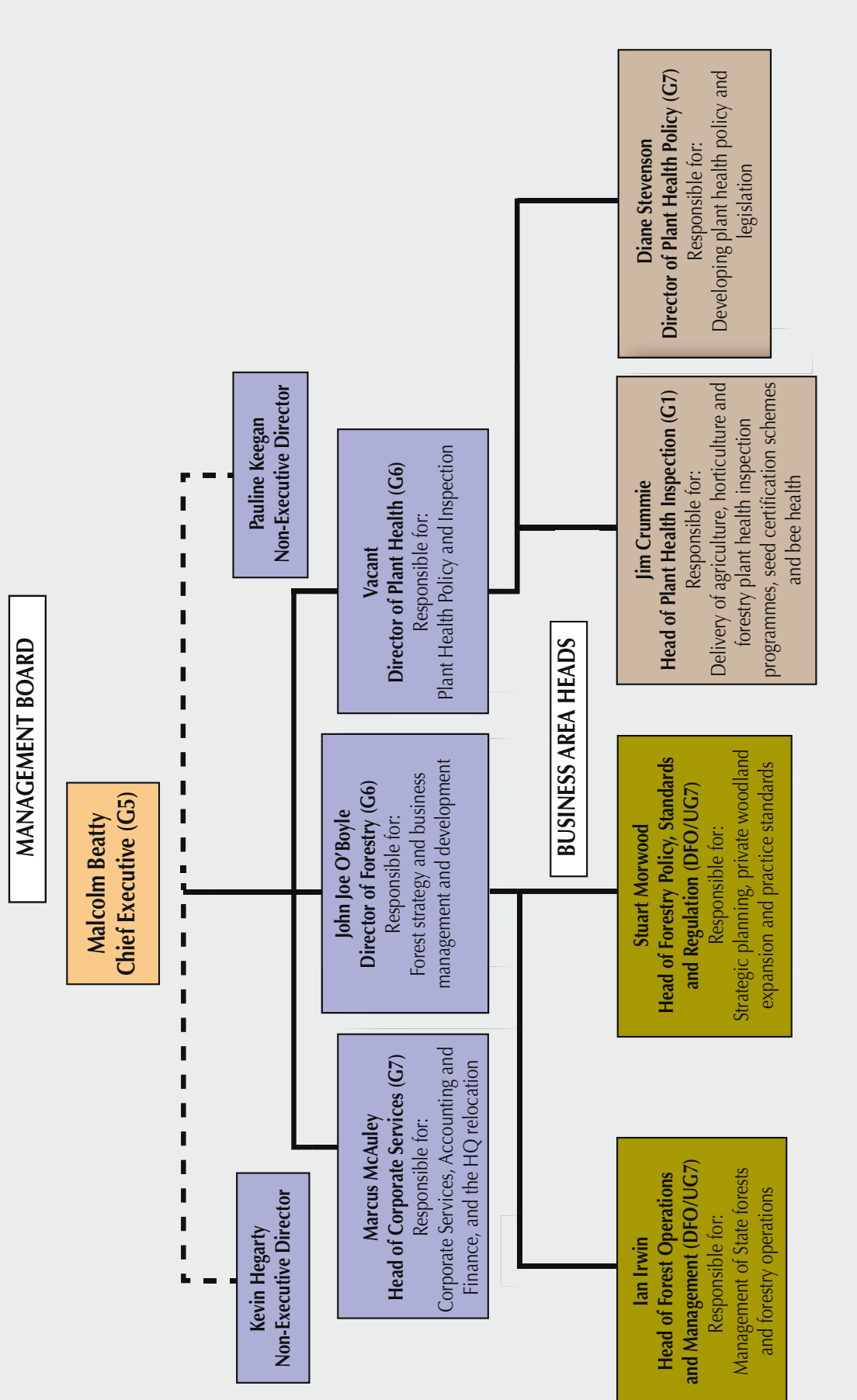
Amber - rate of progress is less than planned; and

Red - not achieved or not expected to be achieved.

The Agency's Annual Report, published in the summer, will provide a summary of achievements under each of the Agency's Business Priorities.

Appendix 3

Agency Organisational Senior Structure



Appendix 4

Agency Offices

Headquarters

Forest Service Customer Services

Dundonald House

Upper Newtownards Road

Ballymiscaw

BELFAST

BT4 3SB

Phone: 028 6634 3165

Fax: 028 6634 3144

e-mail: customer.forests@daer.gov.uk

Inishkeen House

Killyhevlin

ENNISKILLEN

BT74 4EJ

Phone: 028 6634 3032

Fax: 028 6632 4753

The Grange

Castlewellan Forest Park

CASTLEWELLAN

BT31 9BU

Phone: 028 4377 2240

Fax: 028 4377 1762

Forest Office

6 Forest Road

GARVAGH

BT51 5EF

Phone: 028 2955 6003

Fax: 028 2955 7162

NB. Forest Service Headquarters is scheduled to move in September 2015 to:-

Inishkeen House

Killyhevlin

Enniskillen

BT74 4EJ

Should accessible formats such as large type, audio cassette or a language other than English be required, please contact the Customer Services Manager at Forest Service Headquarters and appropriate arrangements will be made as soon as possible.

Forest Service Headquarters

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www.daer.gov.uk/forestry

Appendix 5

References

1. Under review
2. <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/ukfs>
3. Forestry Act (NI) 2010, the Plant Health Act (NI) 1967, the Seeds Act (NI) 1965, the Bees (NI) Order 1980, and secondary legislation made under these and the European Communities Act 1972.
4. <http://www.eppo.int/STANDARDS/standards.htm>
5. <http://ukwas.org.uk>
6. <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/pfg-2011-2015-final-report.pdf>
7. <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/dard-strategic-plan-2020-english-version.pdf> (pp11-18)
8. DA1-14-302904
9. <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/indicative-map-for-woodland-creation-2009.pdf>
10. <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/PDF/FCPG023.pdf>/\$FILE/FCPG023.pdf
11. In revision @ 26th February 2015
12. Development activities include pre-planning investigations and stake holder communications, incorporating lessons learnt from the Phase 1 forests, and appointing relevant consultants to progress this work.
13. <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/ukfs>
14. <http://ukwas.org.uk/>

NOTES



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