

Business Plan

2016/2017

Forest Service Business Plan 2016/2017

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Foreword

By the Chief Executive



This Business Plan sets out our strategic objectives and associated targets for the 2016/17 business year set in the context of the vision, and strategic outcomes of our new parent Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). This is to deliver the Minister's policy aims for forestry and plant health encapsulated in 6 key targets. To support this I have set a further 17 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 ongoing public expenditure constraint impacting my budgets.

We will promote an increase in the natural capital represented by all forests, by forest expansion supported through the rural development programme, and by investing in state forests. We will deliver a balanced mix of ecosystem services from the natural capital in forests, including timber supply, opportunities for wind energy development, improving the biodiversity of forests and forestry lands, and promoting access to forests. We will do this by further developing our partnerships with industry, local government and charitable bodies, and by regulation.

We assess the threat from plant pests and diseases to forests, productive agriculture and the wider environment as very high. We will seek to reduce that risk by cooperating with the Plant Health Services in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, and by strengthening our knowledge of risk and preparedness to manage outbreaks.

We look forward to a challenging but ultimately rewarding 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 (NI) on 1 April 1998 and this status has been refreshed in the Framework Document setting out the broad framework within which Forest Service will operate. The Agency is subject to the overall direction of the Minister who determines the policy framework within which the Agency operates, the level of resources made available each year, and the scope of Agency activities. The Minister approves the Business Plan, sets the key performance targets and monitors the Agency's performance.

Vision and Aims

Forest Service shares the vision and strategic outcomes of the new Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA):

Vision

“a thriving and sustainable economy, environment and rural community”

Strategic Outcomes

- Sustainable agri-food, fisheries, forestry and industrial sectors (Strategic Outcome 1)
- A clean, healthy environment, benefitting people, nature and the economy (Strategic Outcome 2)
- A thriving rural economy, contributing to prosperity and wellbeing (Strategic Outcome 3)

Delivered by:

- A well led, high performing organisation focussed on outcomes (Strategic Outcome 4)

The policy set out in the 2006 Strategy is 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 standards, and to safeguard plant health.

In delivering the Ministers priorities Forest Service aims to operate within a net funding position by managing costs and maximising income.

Functions

The purpose of Forest Service is set out at section 1 of the [Agency Framework Document](#). This purpose remains consistent with the vision and strategic outcomes of DAERA. Forest Service fulfils DAERA's legal obligations in the areas of forestry, plant and bee health, reproductive materials and horticulture marketing standards. The Forest Service will seek to apply International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures and standards agreed by the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation to its work on plant health, certification 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 primarily through grant aid under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020;
- 2) To promote the arrangements for partnership working on forestry lands by formalising agreements to supply timber, provide access and enhance biodiversity effectively, efficiently and equitably;
- 3) To provide a regulatory framework and administrative process that encourages compliance with forestry, plant and bee health legislation, aid scheme rules and seed certification schemes, monitored and enforced through inspection programmes.
- 4) To protect the productive capacity of agriculture and forestry lands by monitoring the impact of plant health and disease; by working with others to minimise the impact of wild-fire on forests; by monitoring forestry productivity and losses from disease, fire, storms and land-use change; by strengthening our approach to forest planning so that we are better able to predict forest growth and mitigate the effects of changing climate and other external impacts on forestry, and, with our partners in the academic community, to maintain the knowledge base about forestry and plant health; and
- 5) 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;
 - Promote public access for recreation and general health and wellbeing, by maintaining and improving facilities and visitor services, 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 Standard; and
 - Develop plans to release land from forestry for renewable energy generation and environmental improvement where this is consistent with our sustainable development obligations.

Strategic Context

The **Agency 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 within the context of the vision and strategic outcomes set out in the DAERA Strategic Plan. Forest Service will:

- Increase the stock of natural capital in forests and deliver a sustainable programme of forest ecosystem services;
- Safeguard the plant health status of land based productive industries and mitigate new and emerging plant health threats to ecosystem services by 2021 through implementation of the provisions of the new EU Plant health Law and actions to mitigate the most important risks to plant health on the island of Ireland;
- Develop plans for wind energy on the forest estate; and
- Provide innovative, effective and efficient internal and external service delivery with a high performing and flexible workforce.

Forest Service is responsible for delivering statutory services for forestry, plant health, and 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 pests and 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 200ha of new woodland, to supply 400,000m³ of timber to industry and earn over £9 million from forestry resources; to progress wind-farm development, and safeguard our staff while maintaining productivity by reducing absenteeism and accidents. 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 in forests.

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.

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 visitor surveys
- Area of woodland qualifying for UK Forestry Standard [hectares]
- Plant health inspections, sampling, surveys and enforcement.

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, his Head of Corporate Services and 2 Non-Executive Directors. The latter are a Senior Civil Servant working in another part of the Department 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 Non-Executive Board member 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 214 staff [full time equivalents] located at the Agency's headquarters in Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, in DAERA Direct offices and at two main forest offices at 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 better ways of working utilising modern information and communications technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness of a peripatetic workforce. The Agency shall in doing so seek to respond to the challenges of reducing public sector expenditure.

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.

The Department is an “Investor in People” employer and we promote the health and wellbeing of staff and provide all necessary training and equipment.

Details of the current senior staff organisational structure and main office locations can be found in Appendices 3 and 4.

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 staff accidents.

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 shall support new planting and sustainable management of existing woodland through 3 schemes run on similar lines, to complement support for small scale planting under the Department’s new Environmental Farming Scheme. The second tranche of the Forest Expansion Scheme will open in July 2016. The smaller Forest Protection Scheme and the Woodland Investment Grant Scheme remain open.

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® (FSC®) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC) who confirm compliance with the Forest Management Standard (UK Woodland Assurance Standard). This means 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.

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. Subject to our obligations to manage forests sustainably, we will market timber to support the timber industry and the rural economy, 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 habitat and water quality. 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

Outbreaks of tree diseases in recent years 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 the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) in the south to evaluate the risks should some of the 750 pests and diseases identified as the most significant threats to us be discovered here. Our approach is to ensure that policy and legislation supports our inspection and surveillance programme so that we are better able to make risk based decisions about where we should intervene to break disease cycles and support industry.

Outcomes and Targets

The Agency shall seek to achieve the following outcomes:

Financial

- Lower net cost of the forestry programme
- Lower cost services
- Higher income from use of forestry assets

Customer

- Stronger partnership working with industry and delivery partners
- Best wind farm sites brought to the market
- Access to a sustainable supply of high value timber
- Forests contribute to enjoyment of long, healthy, active lives.

Process

- Investment business cases approved
- State forests independently certified by FSC and PEFC as being well managed

Organisational Capacity

- Reduced likelihood of a serious plant pest or disease becoming established
- Target Operating Model delivered
- Improved knowledge of forest condition

These outcomes have clear interrelationships and dependencies. This is shown at appendix 5.

The Minister has set 6 key targets for the Agency. The key and their supporting targets are shown below at Table 1. Some are time bound, some are multi annual, and some are measures likely to be more relevant at the end of the current strategic programme to 2020/21. All targets are signposts for what we aim to achieve during that programme.



Table 1 - Forest Service Business Plan Balanced Scorecard - Key and Supporting Targets 2016/2017

CUSTOMER QUADRANT				
Link to DARD Strategic Outcomes	PfG links	Going for Growth links	Key Target	Supporting Target(s)
SO2	Ind. 29		By 31/3/17 have brought firm proposals to the NI Executive for wind farm development on forestry lands.	
SO2			By 31/3/17 have 200ha of new woodland.	
SO 1+2			Supply at least 400,000 m3 of timber annually to industry.	
PROCESSES QUADRANT				
SO2		Rec 100	Identify priority plant health risks.	<p>By 31.12.2016 publish a revised Generic Plant Health Contingency Plan.</p> <p>By 31.03.2017 publish the Plant Health Register.</p> <p>By 31.12.2017 introduce Plant Health Professional Registration with the Royal Society of Biology and achieve accreditation of the Plant Health Inspection Branch management team by 31.03.2017.</p> <p>By 31.03.2017 Clear legislative backlog as identified in the Plant Health Policy Branch's Directive/Decisions legal work programme dated 23 Feb 2016.</p> <p>By 31.03.2017 complete policy reviews on Chalara Ash Dieback, Fireblight, and <i>Phytophthora Ramorum</i>.</p>

FINANCE QUADRANT	
SO4	<p>Operate within a net funding target of £6m.</p> <p>Achieve an income of at least £9.92m from all sources.</p> <p>Reduce the projected staff cost of the Target Operating Model by £0.1M.</p> <p>Maintain the days lost per member of staff through sickness to less than 7.5 days by March 2016.</p>
ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING AND GROWTH QUADRANT	
SO1	<p>Hold independent certification that the Forest Service management system meets the requirements of a well managed forest.</p> <p>Address Certification Corrective Action Requests.</p> <p>Appoint operating partners for commercial camping and caravanning services.</p> <p>Agree KPI's with recreation delivery partners.</p> <p>Achieve a visitor satisfaction rating of at least 84%.</p> <p>Agree legal arrangements with environmental partners to deliver habitat restoration on forestry lands.</p> <p>Improve the biodiversity of 100ha of ancient or long established woodland by treating invasive alien species.</p> <p>Publish a report on the role of forests in flood mitigation.</p> <p>Report on the potential for habitat restoration in forestry.</p> <p>Analyse the 2015 inventory data.</p>

Table 2 - Net budget allocated to the Agency to deliver the work Programmes

Description	2016/17 Budget Outcome £'000	2015/16 Budget Outcome £'000
Salaries	4,800	5,322
Wages	3,320	3,407
GAE	975	871
Current – Other	3,788	3,050
External Consultancy	30	0
NIRDP Axis 2 Forest Resource Grant National	0	477
RDP 2014-20 Measure 8.1 Historical Forestry Schemes (FWS & FWPS) Resource National	363	0
Receipts: Current	9,920	-9,420
TOTAL FOREST SERVICE OTHER RESOURCE	3,356	3,707
Depreciation	1,115	900
Impairment	0	15
TOTAL FOREST SERVICE OTHER RESOURCE / DEPRECIATION / IMPAIRMENT	1,115	915
Recurrent Capital: Plant, Vehicles, Machinery & Roads	1,400	1,000
Forest Fund (Non EJI Ring Fenced)	0	1,000
Forest Fund (EJI Ring Fenced)	0	0
TOTAL FOREST SERVICE CAPITAL	1,400	2,000
NIRDP Axis 2 Forest Expansion Woodland Grant Scheme National	0	430
RDP 2014-20 Measure 8.1 Historical Forestry Schemes Capital National	445	0
TOTAL FOREST SERVICE CAPITAL GRANT	445	430
TOTAL FOREST SERVICE DEL	6,316	7,052

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 context of creating a new Department (DAERA) and where 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 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 DAERA 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.

The Department's Customer Service Standards are published at:
<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/our-customer-service-standards>

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.

Our complaints procedure is published at:
<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/how-do-i-make-complaint-if-i-am-unhappy-quality-service-i-received>

Financial control standards

We will aim to lay our annual report and accounts before the NI Assembly by 30th June 2017.

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

We will aim to pay for goods and services within 10 days of verified receipt.

Forestry Standards

The UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) is the official reference standard for sustainable forest management. We will verify our own sustainable woodland management practice against the UK Woodland Assurance Standard, 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 DAERA Business Plan is reported to DAERA 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.

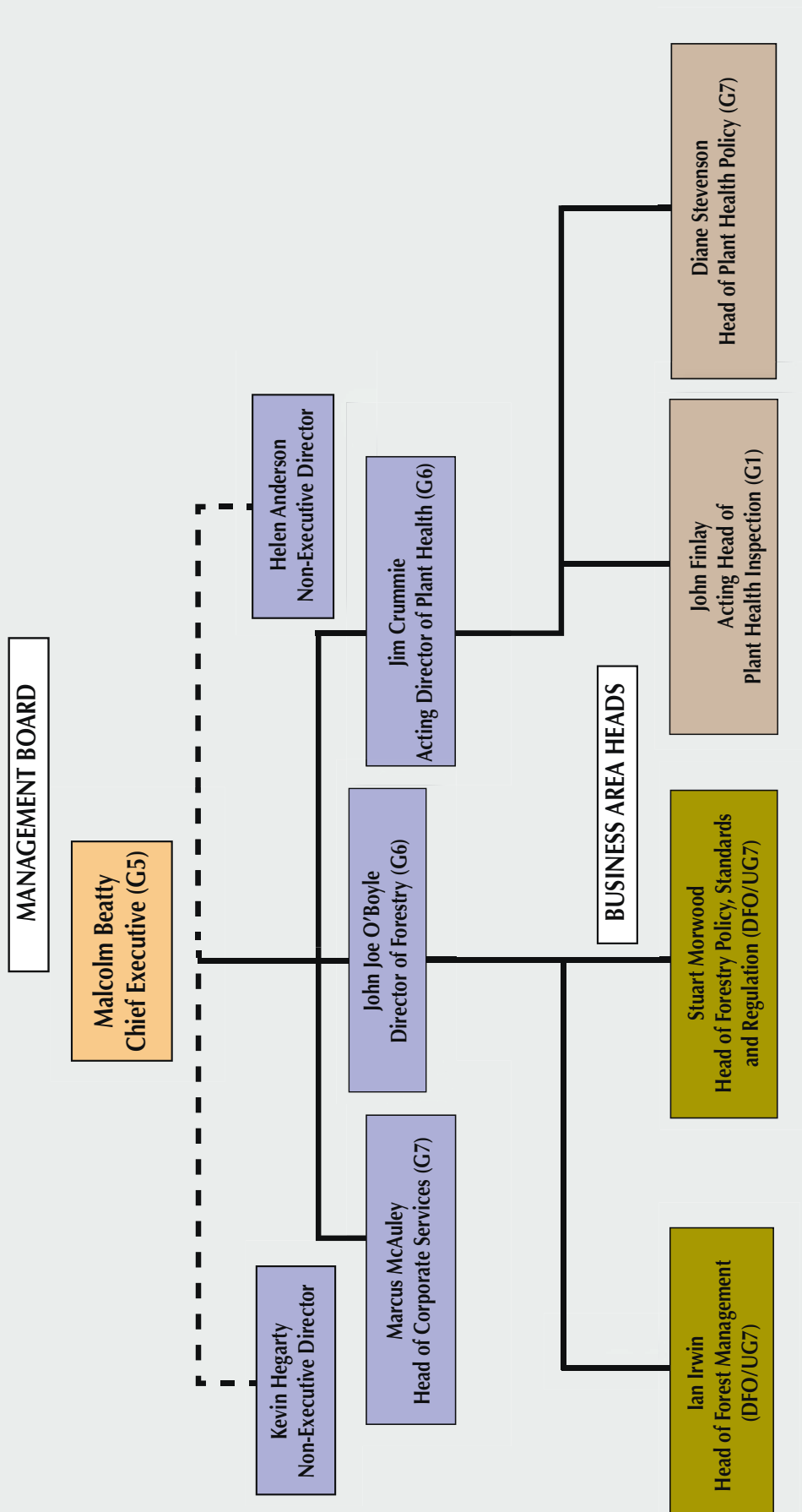
Progress will be reported in accordance with the methodology adopted for the Programme for Government (PfG) Commitment reports to the Executive. This on a Red/Amber/Green (RAG) basis as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 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

Forest Service Headquarters

Inishkeen House
Killyhevlin
ENNISKILLEN
BT74 4EJ

Phone: 028 6634 3165
e-mail: customer.forests@daera-ni.gov.uk

The Grange
Castlewellan Forest Park
CASTLEWELLAN
BT31 9BU
Phone: 028 4377 8664

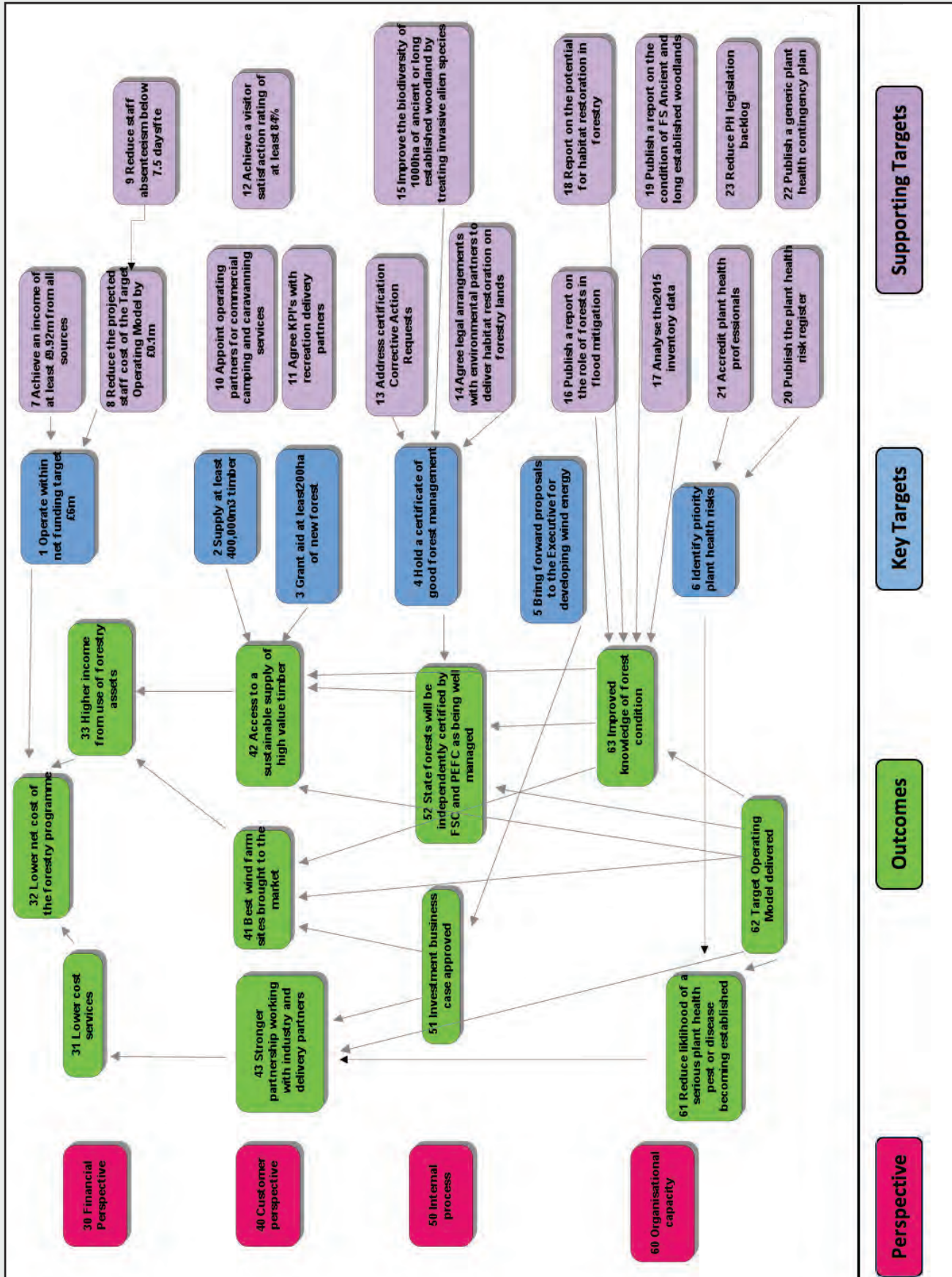
Forest Office
6 Forest Road
GARVAGH
BT51 5EF
Phone: 028 7034 0870

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.

e-mail: customer.forests@daera-ni.gov.uk
web sites: www.nidirect.gov.uk/forests
www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/forestry

Appendix 5

Forest Service Agency Balanced Scorecard FORESTRY 2020 SCORECARD 2016-17





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