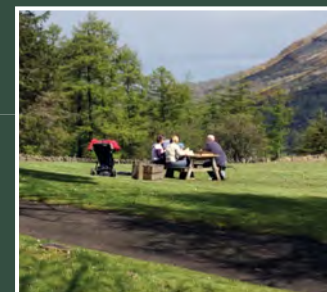
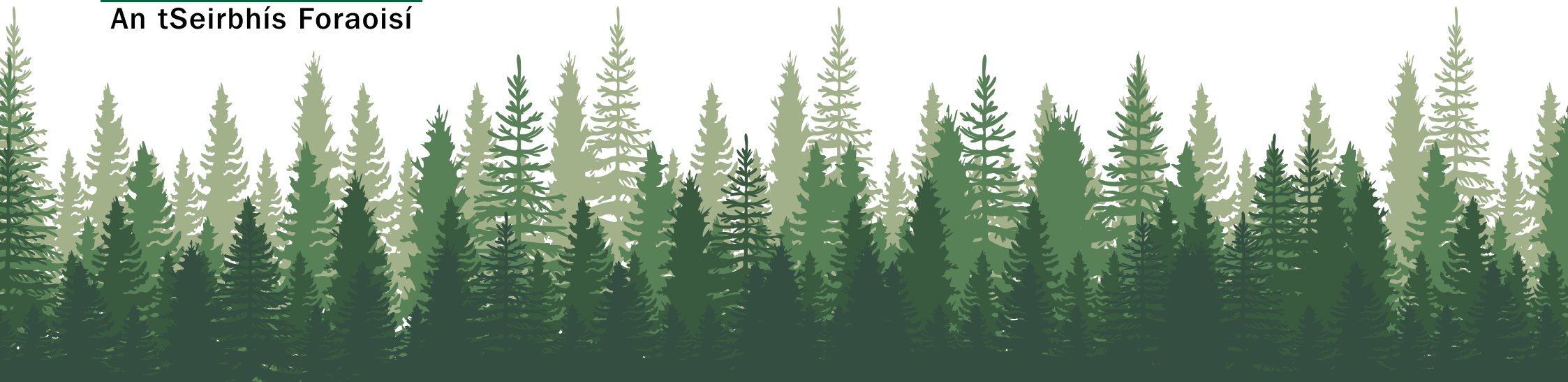


# Business Plan 2024-25



An Agency within the Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**  
[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)

Gníomhaireacht de chuid na Roinne  
**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil  
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

An Agency within the Department of  
**Fairmin, Environment  
an' Kintra Matthers**

***Sustainability at the heart of a  
living, working, active landscape  
valued by everyone.***







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## Introduction

I am pleased to present the Forest Service Business Plan for 2024-25 which has been agreed by our Minister as the priority work areas for the Agency in the year ahead.

Forest Service delivers forestry and plant health programmes aligned with Ministerial priorities. The 2024-25 Business Plan sets out 12 performance targets which contribute directly to the Minister's priorities, in particular those to tackle climate change; protect our natural environment; and build strong, sustainable and diverse rural communities.

At the heart of these programmes is the aim to further increase the area of forests and woodlands in Northern Ireland (NI) from the current 8.5% of land area to 12% by 2050, manage existing forests sustainably and protect the health of our plants and the environment.

In this business year, a key focus of the Agency's work is to contribute to climate mitigation actions to be taken forward under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. Implementing a programme to significantly increase forests and woodlands remains challenging. This business plan will continue to support landowners to establish new woodlands and the development of new forestry



**John Joe O'Boyle**  
*Chief Executive, Forest Service*

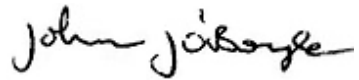
grant schemes to encourage greater landowner interest in creating forests and woodlands. We will also identify the peatland habitat sites for restoration within forest redesign plans.

We will manage our forests in line with UK Forestry Standards, under the Forestry Act (NI) 2010 obligations, and our sustainable forestry provides greater opportunities for people to benefit from enhanced biodiversity, health and wellbeing, recreation and tourism. In 2024-25 we will continue to supply commercial timber from sustainably managed forests to the wood-processing sector, generating over £10M towards the Agency's operational costs, supporting rural jobs and the local economy. Within this business year, we also plan to engage with the onshore wind commercial sector to identify forest areas with potential to contribute to meeting NI renewable energy targets.

Forest Service will also continue to ensure the delivery of the Plant Health legislative requirements within the Windsor Framework (WF) Agreement which introduced the Northern Ireland Plant Health

Label (NIPHL) Scheme for movements of plants for planting, seed potatoes and Used Agriculture and Forestry Machinery from GB to remain in NI.

We will build capacity within the Agency's staff resource, and work with colleagues across the Department, NICS and with external stakeholders, to deliver the targets set out in this Business Plan and take forward our strategic priorities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John Joe O'Boyle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Joe O'Boyle  
Chief Executive, Forest Service





## Purpose & Status

Forest Service is an Executive Agency of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). It is subject to the overall direction of the Minister and delivers the Department's policy and legislative responsibilities in relation to forestry and plant health. Forest Service has operated as an Agency since 1 April 1998 and was further classified as a Non-Financial Public Corporation from 1 April 2020.

The Forest Service Chief Executive is the designated Accounting Officer for the Agency as appointed by the Principal Accounting Officer, DAERA Permanent Secretary, and reports on the Agency's operations and performance to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. The Minister 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 also approves the annual business plan and monitors the Agency's performance against key performance targets.



## Vision & Aims

Forest Service operates in the context of the overall DAERA Vision of “**Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone**” and contributes to the following key departmental priorities for 2024-25.

### DAERA Key Priorities 2024-25



# Responsibilities

Forest Service delivers forestry and plant health functions on behalf of DAERA.

**Our key responsibilities are to:**

1. Expand forest cover in NI.
2. Sustainably manage the Department's forests to produce timber, protect the environment and contribute to climate change mitigation and other ecosystems as well as promoting public access for health, wellbeing and recreational benefits.
3. Operate a regulatory and inspection programme of Official Controls to protect the plant health status of the forestry, horticulture and agriculture sectors.

## Priority Delivery Workstreams





# Targets

The targets set in this business plan have been carefully considered within our budget and resource position for 2024-2025, and how best outcomes can be delivered within the resources available. The Agency is subsidised from DAERA's budget allocation and holds cash reserves from its income-generating activities to protect from market shocks and underpin investment planning to support ongoing programme delivery.

Forest Service Targets for the 2024-25 business year are outlined in the table below. In line with HM Treasury guidance ('Setting Key Targets for Executive Agencies; A Guide'), 5 of the targets have been designated as Key Performance Targets (KPTs).

Forest Service targets 2024-2025	
Target Number	What we are going to do
1	Forest Service will plant 600 hectares of new woodland by grant aiding landowners and on new land acquired on the Forest Estate, by 31 March 2025. <b>Ministerial Priority / KPT / DAERA Level Target</b>
2	Implement effective Plant Health Official Controls required under the Windsor Framework, by 31 March 2025. <b>Ministerial Priority / KPT / DAERA Level Target</b>
3	Develop new forestry grant scheme funding options to support an afforestation programme in line with Climate Action Plan 2023-27 budget period commitments, by 31 March 2025. <b>Ministerial Priority / KPT</b>
4	Hold independent Certification that the management of Forest Service forests meets sustainable Forestry Standards, by 31 March 2025. <b>Ministerial Priority / KPT</b>

Forest Service targets 2024-2025	
Target Number	What we are going to do
5	Supply at least 400,000 cubic metres of timber from sustainably managed DAERA forests to customers, by 31 March 2025.  <b>Ministerial Priority / KPT</b>
6	Open the application period for 2025-26 forestry grant schemes, by 30 September 2024.
7	Update strategic timber availability forecast based on revised sustainable wood production plans, by 31 March 2025.
8	Map and quantify peatland habitat sites for restoration in forest redesign plans, by 31 March 2025.
9	Commence market engagement with onshore wind energy suppliers to assess the potential for forests to contribute to renewable energy generation, by 31 March 2025.
10	Achieve an income of at least £11M from all sources, by 31 March 2025.
11	Publish a Forest Service Employee Engagement Charter and action plan by 31 October 2024.
12	Implement improved service delivery processes by 30 September 2024 including monitoring to ensure that machinery of government deadlines continue to be met.



**To find out more about Forest Service's work visit:**

[www.daera-ni.gov.uk/forest-service](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/forest-service)

**Get updates on X:** @daera\_ni

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