

Forest Service,  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine,  
Johnstown Castle Estate,  
Co. Wexford

Our Ref: SEA 09/14

10 October 2014

Dear Sir / Madam

**Re: Strategic Environmental Assessment - Environmental Report - Draft Forestry Programme for the period 2014-2020-The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.**

Thank-you for the email of 10<sup>th</sup> September 2014 enclosing links to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Environmental Report and accompanying documents for the Draft Forestry Programme for the period 2014-2020. The Department of the Environment Northern Ireland (DOE NI) have considered the SEA Environmental Report and our opinions are set out below.

We are pleased to note that transboundary impacts have been considered in the environmental report and acknowledge that the specific location of projects likely to be funded under the Draft Forestry Programme are not known. We are therefore content with the Environmental Report assessment as it relates to Northern Ireland.

We acknowledge that if afforestation is not located and/or carried out sustainably in the future that there is a potential for adverse impacts on designated nature conservation sites, protected and/or sensitive habitats and species and also cultural heritage and archaeology assets in the rural environment. We also note potential interactions with water quality and landscapes in Northern Ireland. We acknowledge that existing safeguards as well as best practice measures and controls adopted by the Forest Service and additional mitigation measures, means that the majority of impacts should be avoided or will be minimised. The Department of the Environment Northern Ireland would be keen to engage in further consultations and information sharing to ensure that environmental assets in Northern Ireland are considered in relation to future proposals and that any potential adverse impacts are avoided or minimised.

For example the Department of the Environment Northern Ireland would be happy to share the information it holds regarding cultural heritage and archaeology assets in Northern Ireland to inform archaeological considerations. The main possible/potential effect on Northern Ireland of implementing the programme from the cultural heritage point of view is that relating to its effects on the water table. Cultural heritage assets in wetland locations, such as crannogs and trackways, depend on their wetland location to preserve organic material such as structural wood, wooden and leather objects etc. New planting in such environments has the potential to

change the water table etc and these effects are likely to be felt where landscapes extend across the border. To minimise adverse effects it would be important to liaise on a transboundary basis.

Please contact the SEA Team at [seateam@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:seateam@doeni.gov.uk) should you have any queries or require clarification.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Hammond". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "M".

Dr Mark Hammond

SEA Co-ordinator

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