

The Natural Capital Values of Ireland's Native Woodland

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This document summarises a report entitled *The Natural Capital Value of Native Woodland in Ireland* by Craig Bullock and Jerry Hawe, commissioned by Woodlands of Ireland (www.woodlandsofireland.com/publications)

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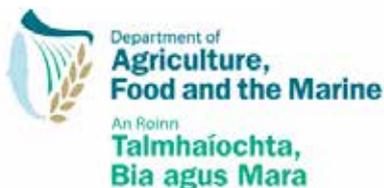
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Executive Summary

Native forest once covered most of Ireland. Today only about 100,000 hectares of this lost forest remain, equal to approximately 1.2% of land area. At present, native woodlands form 14% of our total forest cover - the rest is made up mostly of exotic conifer plantations. Native woodlands are generally much richer in natural capital than exotic plantations.

Ireland's native woodlands are not just a natural asset, but a natural capital asset that provides a range of benefits in the form of ecosystem goods and services. This report quantifies, for the first time, the economic value of the natural capital of Ireland's native woodlands.

Failure to include natural capital values in national accounting systems incurs high but hitherto invisible costs. It is often said that nature is priceless, and that is true in some respects. But if we fail to price natural capital and ecosystem goods and services, we will continue to treat critically important aspects of nature as if they were worthless.

This failure is now being addressed by the European Union: the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy requires Member States to integrate these values into national accounting and reporting systems by the end of this decade. This requirement is recognised in Ireland's 2nd National Biodiversity Plan (NPWS, 2011). Accounting for natural assets will present substantial economic opportunities. This report was commissioned to contribute to the development of a national accounting process for natural capital values.

In this report it is demonstrated that Ireland's existing area of native woodland has an economic value of at least €100 million and possibly €143 million/yr. Some key values include amenity use, which is worth at least €35 million/yr, while woodland-related domestic and international tourism expenditure brings in €50 million/yr, and carbon sequestration is worth up to €8 million/yr.

These baseline estimates have principally been derived by proportionately relating the area of native woodland to estimates of the public goods value of the total forest area in Ireland. However,

native woodland has a premium in that it typically provides a higher output of public goods compared to equivalent areas of plantation forest comprised of exotic conifer species.

The values established in this study are very significant, but are only a fraction of the benefits that could be realised through an expansion of native woodland to, and beyond, the targets envisaged in the National Biodiversity Plan. The report quantifies the value of expanding native woodland, through new woodland creation and the restoration of existing woodland under three scenarios. Expanding current native woodland cover from 14% to 25%, 50% and 100% of current total forest cover could yield up to €274, €436 and €650 million respectively.

For example, an expansion to 25% of the current total forest cover would result in at least the following annual scale of ecosystem service benefits and values:

Amenity (non-market value)	€65 million per year
Tourism expenditure	€60 m / year
Health	€4 m / year
Biodiversity utility value	€60 m / year
Water quality, flood and erosion control	€3 m / year
Carbon storage and sequestration	€45 m year
Timber and wood fuel	€37 m / year
Total	€274 million per year

Some of these economic benefits are market values; others are public goods. There is a relationship and overlap between the two: the public good of amenity contributes to tourism income, and to savings on the public health budget.

This report reveals that the natural capital value of Ireland's native woodland resource is depleted, and that efforts to augment it are faltering due to funding problems. The Native Woodland Scheme (NWS) has created c.1,500 hectares of new native woodland since 2001. However the conservation



element of the NWS, which has contributed to the management of c.2,500 hectares of existing woodland and is the scheme's cornerstone, is currently suspended. A realistic expansion target of 2,500 hectares/yr should be set now, increasing to 5,000 hectares/yr when resources allow. Continuous, uninterrupted public funding linked to payments for ecosystem services (PES) is recommended, as it is vital to achieve targets and maintain confidence amongst landowners and the forest sector.

A strategic, targeted expansion of native woodlands would maximise all its inherent values and provide valuable ecosystem services in terms of habitat, landscape, protection of water quality, flood mitigation and erosion control. In addition, to realise the full amenity, tourism, health and biodiversity utility benefits from publicly-funded initiatives such as the NWS, it is necessary to promote public amenity use, particularly in areas close to urban centres or where there are few alternative rural amenities.

Furthermore, these benefits are entirely compatible with a prosperous timber sector. At present, this element of the native forestry sector has a modest value of €2-3 million/yr, but it could be worth twenty times this sum given the strong and growing demand for quality, indigenous timber and renewable energy.

To realise the true economic value of Ireland's native woodland potential, with all the associated social benefits, consistent and targeted stimulus funding is required. Natural capital requires investment if it is to maximise the 'interest' it produces in terms of ecosystem goods and services, just as financial capital requires investment in order to expand. In challenging economic times, investment in the natural capital of native woodlands would represent a courageous and productive strategy for the future.

The Natural Capital Value of Ireland's Native Woodland

Objectives

Ireland is one of the least forested countries in Europe. Just under 11% of the land area is forest, most of which comprises exotic conifer species (Forest Service, 2007). Just over one per cent of the total land area of the Republic still supports native woodland that once covered most of Ireland, except for its bogs, lakes, rivers and hill tops (Rackham, 2003).

This report strongly makes the case that the protection and expansion of Ireland's remaining area of native woodland is of critical economic importance. It demonstrates that this woodland holds multiple and often hitherto unrecognised economic values due to the services it supplies in the form of, for example, biodiversity, amenity and carbon sequestration, in addition to being potentially a productive timber resource. The report describes and quantifies these economic values. It describes the various measures and forestry projects that have been introduced to protect and enhance the area of native woodland. It broadly evaluates its economic contribution to date and outlines how this could be further improved. It also quantifies the economic consequences of further loss in native woodland cover, the benefits of protecting existing areas and the additional significant benefits that would arise from expanding native woodland area.

The status of Ireland's native woodlands

The area of forest cover in Ireland has increased substantially in recent years, but remains low relative to other European countries. It is mainly a homogeneous resource, comprised primarily of non-native conifer plantations focused almost exclusively on commercial timber production, albeit occasionally ameliorated by attractive parklands, remnants of old estates and visitor facilities. Within this total area of forest, some modest pockets of native woodland remain, comprised mainly of deciduous, broadleaf species. The distinctiveness of this woodland is evident from any visit, particularly in spring or autumn when its varied colour, abundant ground flora, wildlife and birdsong is most apparent. Unlike exotic conifer plantations, native woodlands have a distinctive and complex biodiversity that has developed since the advent of the

Post-glacial period some 13,000 years ago.

Unfortunately, the opportunity to visit native woodland, and consequently Irish people's familiarity with this native resource, is limited by its scarcity. Estimates by the National Forest Inventory (NFI) put the total area of broadleaf woodland at 152,000 hectares (ha), a proportion of which are non-native broadleaf plantations (Forest Service, 2007). The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) estimate a figure of 100,000 ha of native woodland based on the completed National Survey of Native Woodlands (Perrin *et al.*, 2008). This is equivalent to 14% of the current total forest area. However, most native woodlands have been modified by past management and the presence of non-native species.

Only a fraction (around 20,000 ha) comprises 'ancient woodland' or 'old growth forest' dating from before 1650 AD and this is the category that is most rich in flora and fauna (Perrin and Daly, 2010)

A National Survey of Native Woodlands was initiated in 2003 (Higgins, 2004). The survey generated a database for 1,320 sites. It reported the presence of four main types of woodland. Much of this area has been heavily modified and most woodlands are highly fragmented and are less than five ha in size. Fortunately, some connectivity is provided by Ireland's 300,000km of hedgerow. This network consists mainly of native tree and shrub species.

Strictly speaking very little of the remaining woodland can be described as purely native, but rather as 'semi-natural'. Semi-natural woodland is dominated by native trees and shrubs but also includes non-native trees and shrubs that have been introduced by people. They are also modified by human intervention, especially management and felling, so that natural evolutionary processes are interrupted and altered. Three of Ireland's six National Parks, Killarney, Glenveagh and Wicklow, contain substantial areas of native semi-natural woodland. On a county basis, County Cork has the largest area of native woodland and County Waterford the highest density. The National Survey of Native Woodlands noted that 25% of forest stands contain three or more tree species, although only 5% contain five or more species. The NFI estimated that 40% of native forest is publicly owned,

Box 1: Environmental Accounts

Conventional measures of economic development such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) present a partial and selective estimate of a country's wealth and its citizens' well-being. Rather perversely, GDP treats expenditure to clean up environmental damage as a contribution to economic growth. Environmental accounting is used to adjust measures of GDP or to complement these measures. It provides a more balanced description of well-being and of the sustainability of current paths to development. The circumstances by which Ireland descended from the Celtic Tiger Era to the current financial malaise are a timely reminder of the cost of failing to build sustainability and environmental accounting into our economic growth and development.

New economic frameworks, based on the UN System of Environmental and Economics Accounts (SEEA), present a more accurate or comprehensive picture of well-being by accounting for natural capital assets and the balance between environmental protection and degradation. In these accounting systems, natural capital is recognised as a stock and ecosystem services as a flow. Material, energy and waste flows can also be estimated. An acknowledged challenge is presented by the difficulty of quantifying many ecosystem services in monetary terms, including many social and environmental benefits, e.g. biodiversity. In particular, there is a need to integrate output from the disciplines of biology, geography and economics, along with the incorporation of remote sensing data to gauge gains and losses of natural capital.

The UN accounting system has been further progressed by the EEA to include information on ecosystem integrity and ecosystem services at a spatial level. This system has selected a number of approaches by which to measure ecosystem integrity. The approaches relevant to forests include:

- Structure and morphology of the landscape, including potential connectivity
- Fragmentation of ecosystems and landscapes
- Water stress based on stocks, flows and abstractions
- Water quality including the ability to assimilate waste
- Biodiversity as measured by monitoring of species and habitat

Based on these and other indices, the EEA arrived at four classes of ecosystem health:

- Homeostasis (no change)
- Resilient state
- Reversible process (degradation)
- Irreversible change

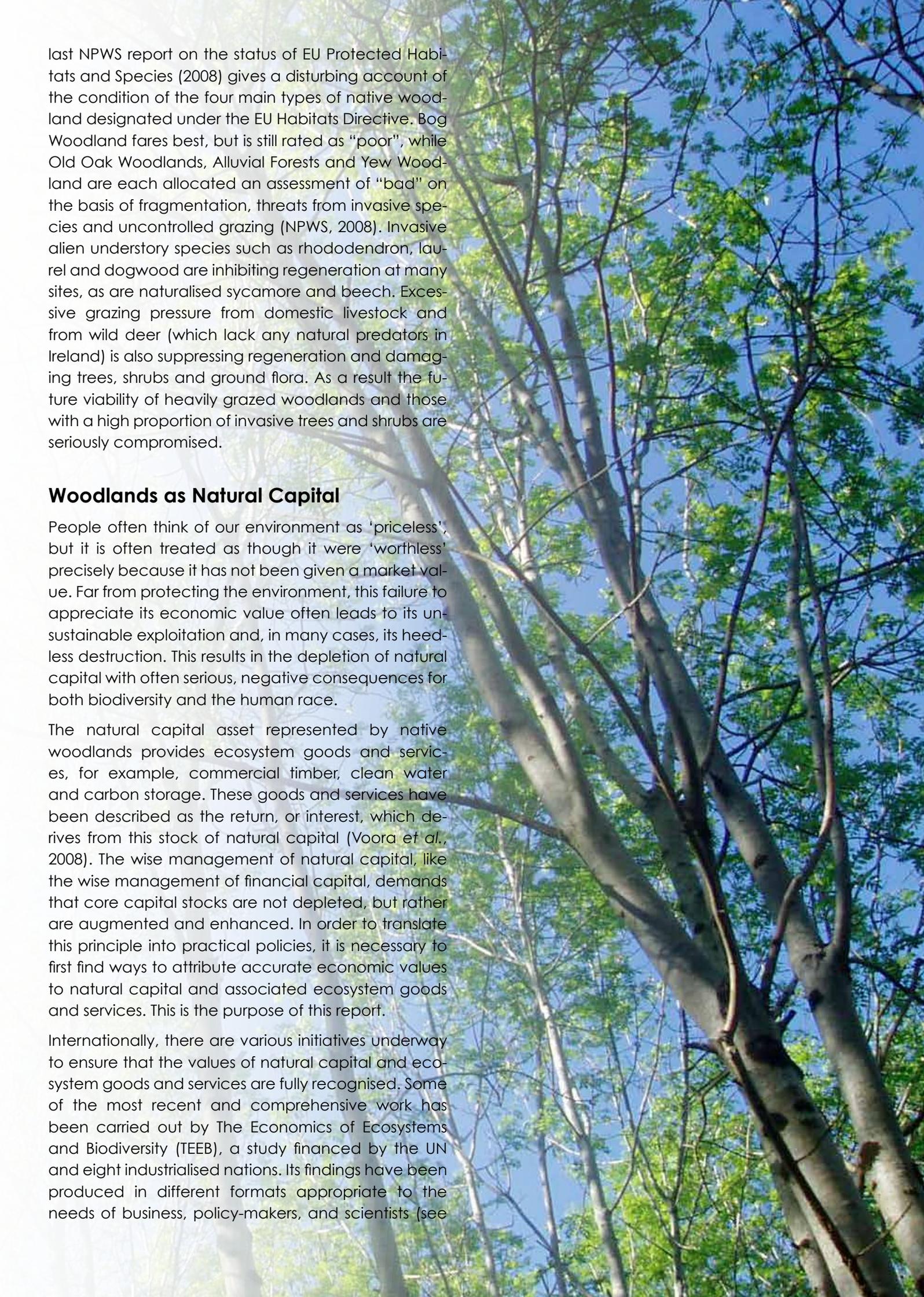
Much of Ireland's native woodland falls within the third and fourth of these classes with some woodland capable of restoration but with much former wildlife and flora having already been lost (NPWS, 2008).

while grant-aided privately owned native woodland makes up 19% and private (other) 41%.

'Old' woodland sites - present on the first Ordnance Survey (OS) maps of 1830-1844 - amounting to 27,000 ha have been identified on the Coillte estate (Garrett, 2001; O'Sullivan, 2004). These, along with other sites owned privately or by NPWS, are described as being of higher conservation value than more recently established woodlands, including new commercial plantations. However, 'ancient' woodland is very rare. The NPWS inventory of long-established and ancient woodlands identifies 481 ancient woodlands in the Republic of Ireland (Perrin *et al.*, 2008). Although all these sites are likely to have been managed and/

or exploited at some time in the past, they contain communities of animals and plants that are associated with the original forest cover.

Around 11,000 ha of native woodlands are protected by statutory designations, mainly as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and as National Heritage Areas (NHAs). The latter currently lack full legal protection. In addition, these and many other sites are vulnerable to under-management and invasive plants or deer. For example, the National Survey of Native Woodlands describes an old oak-dominated woodland at the much-visited Kylemore Abbey in County Galway which is so infested by rhododendron that it can no longer be classified as native woodland. The



last NPWS report on the status of EU Protected Habitats and Species (2008) gives a disturbing account of the condition of the four main types of native woodland designated under the EU Habitats Directive. Bog Woodland fares best, but is still rated as “poor”, while Old Oak Woodlands, Alluvial Forests and Yew Woodland are each allocated an assessment of “bad” on the basis of fragmentation, threats from invasive species and uncontrolled grazing (NPWS, 2008). Invasive alien understory species such as rhododendron, laurel and dogwood are inhibiting regeneration at many sites, as are naturalised sycamore and beech. Excessive grazing pressure from domestic livestock and from wild deer (which lack any natural predators in Ireland) is also suppressing regeneration and damaging trees, shrubs and ground flora. As a result the future viability of heavily grazed woodlands and those with a high proportion of invasive trees and shrubs are seriously compromised.

Woodlands as Natural Capital

People often think of our environment as ‘priceless’, but it is often treated as though it were ‘worthless’ precisely because it has not been given a market value. Far from protecting the environment, this failure to appreciate its economic value often leads to its unsustainable exploitation and, in many cases, its heedless destruction. This results in the depletion of natural capital with often serious, negative consequences for both biodiversity and the human race.

The natural capital asset represented by native woodlands provides ecosystem goods and services, for example, commercial timber, clean water and carbon storage. These goods and services have been described as the return, or interest, which derives from this stock of natural capital (Voora *et al.*, 2008). The wise management of natural capital, like the wise management of financial capital, demands that core capital stocks are not depleted, but rather are augmented and enhanced. In order to translate this principle into practical policies, it is necessary to first find ways to attribute accurate economic values to natural capital and associated ecosystem goods and services. This is the purpose of this report.

Internationally, there are various initiatives underway to ensure that the values of natural capital and ecosystem goods and services are fully recognised. Some of the most recent and comprehensive work has been carried out by The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB), a study financed by the UN and eight industrialised nations. Its findings have been produced in different formats appropriate to the needs of business, policy-makers, and scientists (see

www.teebweb.org and <http://bankofnationalcapital.com>). The TEEB studies are an advance, in structure and detail, on the pioneering research carried out for the UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA). A text-book has also been produced on the theory and practice of natural capital valuation, the augmentation of natural capital through ecological restoration, and its application for the benefit of business and society in general (Milton and Blignaut, 2008).

These initiatives represent a major paradigm shift in the perception of our relationship with the environment. However, like many ground-breaking ideas, once it is communicated and understood, the arguments seem logical and self-evident.

Ecosystem services

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA, 2005) identified four main classes of ecosystem services:

- ❑ Supporting services (soil formation, nutrient cycling etc.) that underpin other ecosystem services
- ❑ Regulating services (climate regulation, flood protection, water purification, etc.) that protect the quality of the environment
- ❑ Provisioning services (ecosystem goods) that supply products such as food or raw materials
- ❑ Cultural services (recreational, educational, aesthetic, health and well-being, spiritual, etc.), some of which have direct economic value, while others have indirect economic value through the social benefits they bring.

These categories are not set in stone, but rather are being subjected to a rapid process of refinement, as one would expect in a new field of study. Many of their benefits are clear, though often unaccounted for by the markets. Others are obscured due to lack of knowledge of ecosystem functions, for example, of species relationships or soil microbial populations, or of the space or time over which ecosystems function. Natural capital may contribute external benefits - in economic language externalities - at a downstream location or to another population group, far from the ecosystem where the capital has been generated. Conversely, losses of natural capital can impose adverse impacts on distant locations or communities. The implications of ecosystem loss are generally not appreciated in the short term and longer term benefits may be discounted by conventional accounting procedures. These uncertainties often provide tacit justification for policy inaction. A pertinent example is the role of forests and peatlands in climate change mitigation where the value of the regulating service of carbon storage or sequestration they provide

will only be fully realised in the decades to come.

Therefore, a mismatch between our awareness of natural capital's value and its use, or between this use and its social costs and benefits, often results in mismanagement of environmental resources.

Some environmental economists and scientists distinguish a further valuation category, i.e. option value. This refers to the value of protecting a resource or future use or natural capital that has not yet been recognised – for example, a plant that holds the undiscovered cure to a disease. Clearly, an option value is hard to quantify, but it should be acknowledged, not least as a reminder that the extinction of an apparently insignificant species today may have significant costs in the future.

An understanding of the valuation of natural capital and ecosystem services is critical to policy development and land use decision-making and planning. It is also essential to any comprehensive economic assessment of national and sectoral resources. A full cost-benefit analysis must identify all the streams of private and social benefits and costs, including the public good benefits to wider society. Without them, we cannot accurately measure trade-offs between competing land uses, nor make well informed decisions on the best use of investment capital.

Many native woodlands have survived only because they are located either on land of little agricultural value or are located on estates that have had a relatively stable management history and a cultural tradition of appreciating native trees. Conservation policy has struggled to protect even those relatively small woodland areas that are of highest biodiversity value, since they require ongoing injections of finance for proper management. However, an ability to accurately value natural capital and ecosystem services demonstrates that investment in woodland, on all types of land (from fertile to very infertile) brings a return that rivals, or can exceed, that from other land uses.

Ecosystem Service Types

The key ecosystem services provided by native woodlands include:

1. Supporting services

Supporting services have biodiversity as their bedrock, and involve ecosystem functions like soil formation and nutrient cycling. They are distinct from the other three ecosystem services described later, because they are at a remove from contributing directly to human well-being. But they are nonetheless very valuable, because they are the *sine qua non* for those other services. Ancient woodlands, with their exceptional biodiversity,

including remnant populations of specialist fauna and flora, contribute very significant supporting services.

2. Regulating services

Forests regulate water quality and the volume of water run-off. They also protect against soil erosion and stabilise riverbanks. Carbon sequestration is of increasing value given the need to mitigate emissions in climate change strategies.

3. Provisioning services

The provisioning services of native woodlands provide us with ecosystem goods: not only timber, wood products and wood fuel, but also wild foods such as berries, mushrooms and venison. These are valued and utilised in many other European states and have considerable potential in Ireland too. An additional provisioning service, much utilised in Ireland, is the forage and shelter forests accord to farm animals, realising a significant benefit in reduced agricultural input costs.

4. Cultural services

Woodlands make an important contribution to landscape quality. Their presence is valued for amenity use, providing physical and mental well-being, aesthetic and spiritual pleasure, and opportunities for the appreciation of birds and other wildlife. Ancient woodlands, in particular, also provide historical landscape value as they often contain archaeological features and evidence of past agriculture and settlement.

In some parts of the world various ecosystem services, for example regional climatic modification, water storage and erosion control, are recognised and accounted for, due to their very significant value. For Ireland, this report identifies and quantifies some of the principal economic benefits of native woodland using the example of Brackloon Wood in County Mayo. The ecosystem services benefits of native woodland are typically rather different from, and generally more complex than, those of commercial forest, which contains a relatively limited range of tree species and ages. However, the value of native woodland ecosystem services is, at present, restricted by the small area that remains. Consequently, the report describes and evaluates not only the current level of services provided, but also the much more substantial level of economic returns that could flow from continued rehabilitation of the native woodland resource and from an active policy of native woodland expansion.





Case Study: Brackloon Wood, Co. Mayo

Brackloon Wood is a good example of how natural capital - augmented and created through research and native woodland restoration - can contribute ecosystem service benefits. It also demonstrates the economic and social benefits that can potentially be realised by a policy of significant native woodland expansion nationally, in parallel with strategies that seek to develop wider amenity, tourism and biodiversity objectives.

Brackloon Wood is located 7 km southwest of Westport, Co. Mayo. This 74 ha woodland comprises remnants of oak and birch with ground flora species characteristic of ancient native woodland, but was until recently, underplanted and fragmented with non-native conifers, planted in the 1950s (Cunningham, 2005). Commencing in 1999, the woodland was restored over a 5-year period. Today, it comprises a rich mix of native trees and shrubs including sessile oak, downy birch, ash, willow and rowan, with an understorey of holly and hazel. The site is designated as an SAC under the EU Habitats Directive.

The woodland is popular for amenity use that is regularly used by locals and tourists alike. The perception of the woodland as a valuable amenity resource locally has increased appreciably in recent years as a result of research, management and educational initiatives (Little *et al.*, 2001).

Restoration

Prior to restoration, Brackloon Wood was in a depleted state, with fragmented stands of ancient woodland areas underplanted with non-native conifers, with invasive rhododendron expanding rapidly. In common with most long-established native woodland in Ireland, active management is necessary to ensure its long-term survival.

The primary objective behind the restoration of Brackloon Wood was to establish a reserve for woodland biodiversity. The wood was restored in the late 1990s at a cost of around €200,000. This rehabilitation project acted as a forerunner for the Forest Service Native Woodland Scheme*. All non-native conifers were removed along with non-native sycamore and some beech. A large-scale clearance programme of rhododendron was also undertaken. Approximately 10,000 one-year old locally-sourced oak seedlings were planted in order to connect areas of mature old oak woodland with areas cleared of conifers. Ash was also planted locally, while natural regeneration of birch and willow proved to be quite prolific.

* <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/forestry/grantandpremiumschemes/2012/NativeWoodlandEstablishmentScheme.pdf>

As a result of management that has been applied to date, the wood has developed into a mixed-age woodland, dominated by deciduous species. Its rich floral community typical of long-established or ancient woodland will expand and be safeguarded.

The Owenwee River runs adjacent to the wood and supports trout and salmon. In addition, Freshwater Pearl Mussel, an endangered listed species under the Habitats Directive, is also resident in the river. Hence the woodland plays an important regulating ecosystem service role in maintaining water quality along its boundary. In addition, the woodland is a permanent carbon store.

The woodland also provides cultural ecosystem services of amenity value and is a popular destination, mainly for local people from the Westport area. A primary school is located beside the woodland, which is used as an education resource for field studies.

Though Brackloon is managed for biodiversity and amenity, it also has potential for some limited future provisioning service values, including sustainable timber production. Future thinnings may be used for firewood, an end-use that is carbon neutral. The newly-planted oak and ash, and the regenerating birch provides the basis for quality hardwood production, using continuous cover silviculture. The birch thinnings

also supply a wood product and will also continue to provide a return as firewood. Therefore management also allows for future wood production at a local scale at specific locations in the wood.

The Option Value of Woodland Expansion

At present, Brackloon as an amenity resource is largely used by people living locally. However, the wood could make a significant contribution to the integrated development of facilities for sustainable tourism at a regional scale. Potentially, Brackloon Wood could act as a core area or hub for a significant expansion of native woodland locally, co-incident with providing a corresponding range of valuable ecosystem services. An increase in native woodland to 30% of the land area locally would not only create a more forested landscape but could provide significant ecosystem service dividends. It would represent a strategic approach towards habitat connectivity. In describing a strategy for woodland expansion in the UK, Peterken (2002) outlines the benefits of ancient and large old woodlands in providing core areas for biodiversity. This involves the creation and expansion of a mosaic of woodland and other habitats, with open areas containing wooded heath, wetlands and semi-natural grassland.

Brackloon Wood is well placed to provide a core bi-

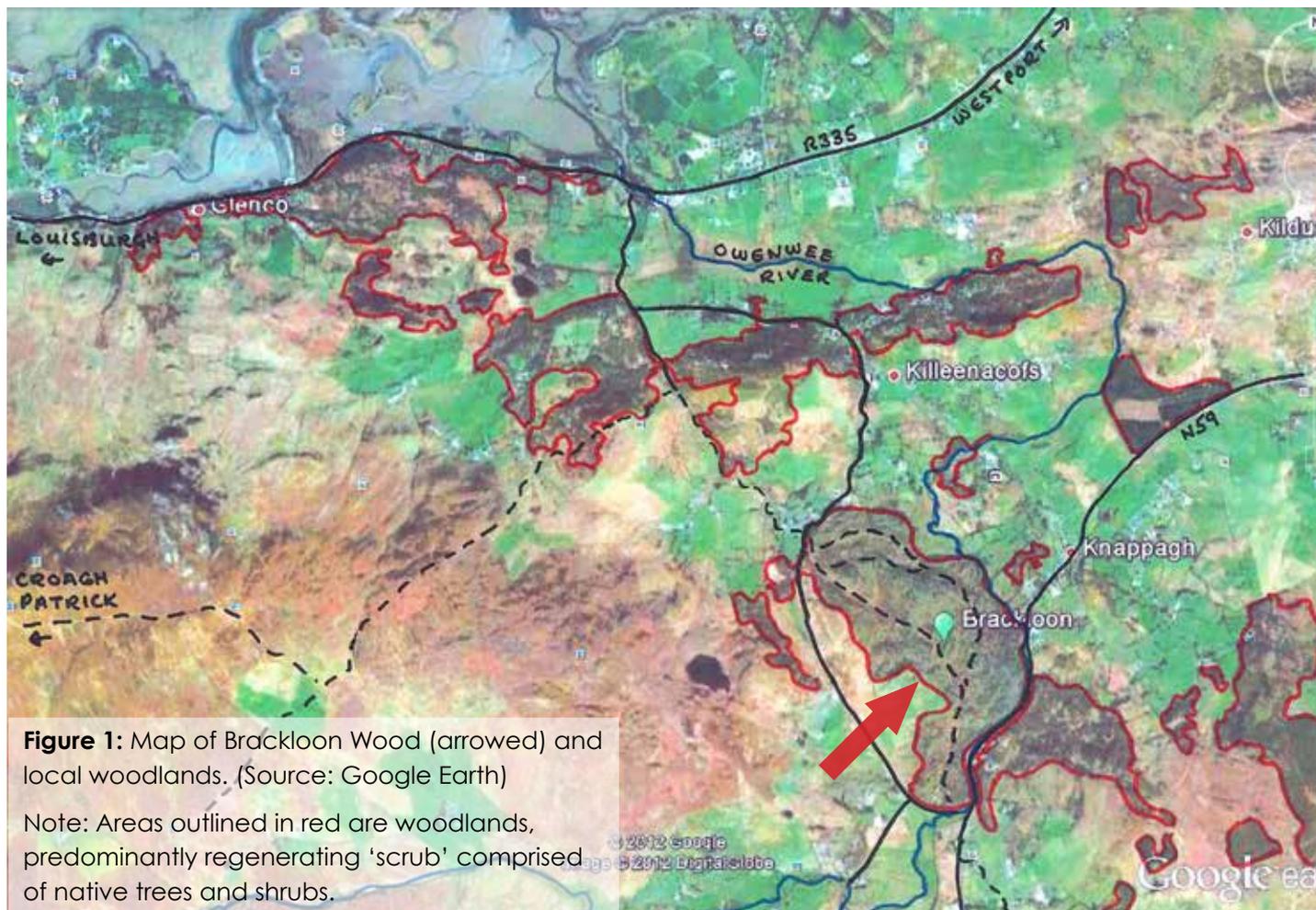


Figure 1: Map of Brackloon Wood (arrowed) and local woodlands. (Source: Google Earth)
Note: Areas outlined in red are woodlands, predominantly regenerating 'scrub' comprised of native trees and shrubs.



odiversity hub for a woodland expansion project. In recent years, significant areas of new woodland and scrub have become established on lands adjoining the wood. There is potential to target support for a network of woodlands in the area, integrated physically and spatially. Biodiversity would gain tremendously from this connectivity at a landscape scale.

The existing wooded areas in the vicinity (circled in red on the map, Figure 1) currently accounts for approximately 20% of the area to the northeast, between Brackloon Wood and the R336 Louisburgh to Westport road. The Owenwee River meanders through areas of improved, and marginal grazing land, and existing woodland (Figure 1). Expansion of the riparian woodland area along its entire length would further protect and enhance water quality and further enhance the river's angling potential.

Croagh Patrick is a major visitor destination and the Western Way walking route passes beside Brackloon Wood and provides one of the most attractive routes to the summit ridge. Indeed, the entire area of West Mayo is very popular for tourism and amenity. The recently developed Great Western Greenway has attracted a lot of publicity and considerable numbers of cycling/walking visitors. It has had the effect of reinforcing Mayo's rapidly developing reputation for activity tourism. In addition, a recently designated cycle route runs alongside Brackloon Wood and links into the Croagh Patrick Loop.

In 2009, 800,000 foreign visitors went hiking in Ireland. Their total spend was €183 million. Around 25% of all walking visitors and holidaymakers spent their time in the West of Ireland. Tourism and local community amenity could benefit significantly from a coordinated strategy of woodland expansion and the provision of recreational facilities, including interpretative signage and guided walks.

Brackloon Wood not only has the capacity to act as a core forest area for woodland biodiversity, but could also act as a hub for a major expansion of amenity tourism. This could be initiated with a modest investment to promote awareness of its location, along with directional and interpretative signage, picnic facilities and publicised links to adjacent cycle and walking trails. Ultimately, amenity expansion could result in significant dividends in terms of biodiversity, tourism, amenity, angling, water quality and landscape values. There is no reason why similar projects that deliver similar ecosystem services cannot be developed elsewhere in Ireland around core native woodland areas.

Box 2: Summary of Recommendations

1. Implement the commitment in the EU Biodiversity Strategy to integrate natural capital and ecosystem goods and services valuation into all national accounting indicators by 2020.
2. Expand native forest cover from the current 14% of the country's forest estate, to 25% (Scenario A - 160,000 ha) to 50% (Scenario B - 325,000 ha), and finally, to 100% (Scenario C - 650,000 ha). This would entail an initial native woodland afforestation target of 2,500 ha/yr., increasing to 5,000 ha/yr., as resources allow.
3. Evaluate the costs and benefits of strategically expanding native woodland cover to Scenario D, in particularly appropriate regions, i.e. to 30% of the land area on a catchment basis, in order to optimise woodland cover at a landscape scale.
4. Regarding 2 & 3 above, focus on targeting woodland to maximise benefits, i.e. create woodlands close to populated areas to increase public access, and therefore maximise amenity value; focus on planting beside rivers, streams and lakes to minimise flood damage and erosion, and to enhance and protect water quality; maximise biodiversity by planting adjacent to existing old native woodlands.
5. Actively promote forest activities to further increase amenity and health values.
6. In order to achieve these targets, restore the Conservation Element of the Native Woodlands Scheme. Provide and maintain consistent, carefully targeted stimulus funding to restore private forest investor confidence using the Native Woodland Scheme and payments for ecosystem services, the latter under the Rural Development Programme.
7. Conduct further research to more accurately quantify the value of the natural capital and ecosystem goods and services provided by native woodlands, especially in the field of amenity valuation.
8. Promote awareness of natural capital accounting, starting with this report, to maximise its impact on public opinion and policy makers.

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