

Northern Ireland Habitat Action Plan
Parkland
March 2005

1 Current Status

1.1 Biological Status

- 1.1.1 Defining parkland is not as straightforward as other habitat types as it encompasses a range of vegetation communities and habitat structures that have been strongly influenced by historic land-uses. This habitat is the product of historic land management systems, which represents a vegetation structure rather than being a particular plant community. Typically, this structure consists of large open grown or high forest trees at various densities, in a matrix of grazed grassland, heathland and/or woodland floras (JNCC, 2001). The UK Habitat Action Plan covers this habitat as lowland wood-pasture and parkland. In Northern Ireland, however, this division is not so clear cut.
- 1.1.2 In Great Britain wood-pasture is characterised by a range of features, not all of which are always evident at every site. Considered together, however, these features set current and past wood-pasture aside from woodland that has been and is predominantly managed as coppice or high forest. Guidance on defining wood-pasture has been prepared by the lowland parkland sub-group (Watson, 2002, Goldberg, 2003) and the UK Habitat Action Plan (UK Biodiversity Steering Group, 1995). Features that are considered important in identifying and defining this habitat type include old maps and records, presence of old or veteran trees, and evidence of past or current grazing.
- 1.1.3 There is uncertainty as to whether wood pasture as recognised and defined by the UK Habitat Action Plan occurs in the Northern Ireland. Anderson *et al.*, (2000) state that wood pasture barely exists in Ireland in a recognisable form. However, it is evident from a variety of studies that Northern Ireland supports valuable assemblages of lower plants and invertebrates that are found in old woodland habitats and often associated with wood pasture and parkland habitats.
- 1.1.4 Parklands are designed landscapes associated with significant houses or former sites of such properties. They typically comprise open grown ancient trees set out over pasture or heathland as specimens, clumps, avenues, lines and copses. A boundary feature such as a fence, wall or ditch usually defines the area of the parkland. Within this boundary, there may also be woodland blocks. These may be managed as coppice or high forest and in part, subject to grazing by domestic animals or managed deer herds. Other habitats such as streams, rivers and constructed or natural lakes and ponds are also common features of these landscapes. This mosaic of habitats, the presence of ancient trees and often a long history of management form the basis of the biodiversity interest of this habitat.
- 1.1.5 Parkland, including both wood-pasture and parkland, are rich biotopes for wildlife, including vascular plants, birds, mammals and insects. In particular, parkland in the UK is recognised as being valuable for invertebrates and lower plants (lichens, mosses, liverworts and fungi). This interest is strongly associated with old trees, dead wood and the historical continuity of woodland or tree cover. Parkland is also

recognised as being of interest for bats and birds and is important for historic, cultural, horticultural and landscape reasons. Parkland sites may also be reservoirs of indigenous tree genotypes. For example, a study of trees at Belvoir Park, Belfast, has concluded that they have genetic affinities with sites considered to be native Irish oak woods (Simon *et al.*, 2003).

- 1.1.6 The development of parkland in Northern Ireland is well documented (Reeves-Smyth, 1997). At this time manorial estates included demesnes that were those parts of the estate that were retained and managed by the lord with remaining areas being rented to tenant farmers. The demesnes were managed as manorial home farms. In the mid 17th Century, however, formal features such as tree avenues, ponds and gardens became increasingly common place within the demesne area to emphasise the importance and standing of the owner. These geometric layouts of formal landscape were subsequently replaced in the first half of the 18th Century when ‘naturalistic’ parkland landscapes gained favour. The parkland sites and landscapes in Northern Ireland remaining today were largely established from this time. The creation of new parklands declined following the Great Famine (1845-9) when available labour was reduced and money was less available. Land distribution followed during the late 19th Century and into the 20th Century resulting in the estate system being dismantled as tenants were able to buy their farms. This meant that the demesnes lost rental income and as a result the upkeep of the parkland landscapes could not be so readily achieved. Ultimately large numbers of demesnes and their house were sold for institutional uses or were simply divided up between local landowners. As a result the parkland landscapes and trees were removed and the houses demolished or simply became derelict.
- 1.1.7 The history of parkland development and decline and storm events such as the Big Wind in 1839 has resulted in the loss of very old and veteran trees from the landscape and according to Anderson *et al.*, (2000) trees significantly older than 200 years are rare.
- 1.1.8 Extensive studies of the woodland fauna and lower plant flora in Northern Ireland have not been completed, although a review of the existing data has been undertaken by Anderson, Simms and Nelson (2000). This review indicates that the Northern Irish woodland fauna and lichen flora is impoverished compared to that of the Republic of Ireland and Britain. Comparisons of faunal lists of saproxylic Coleoptera in Britain with the current Irish list show that there is a lower percentage (34% of the British list) of this group of insects recorded from Ireland than that shown by other insect groups. In addition, Northern Ireland only supports approximately 50% of the Irish list of saproxylic Coleoptera. This smaller saproxylic Coleopteran fauna in Northern Ireland is thought likely to arise from a lack of old forest cover, the low level or absence of wood-pasture as a historic land-use and the climate, which excludes many thermophilic species. Despite the overall lower diversity of species within this group, the Coleopteran fauna of old and veteran trees in Northern Ireland does merit protection and conservation (Anderson *et al.*, 2000).
- 1.1.9 Surveys of lichens in parklands in Northern Ireland have been limited, but indicate that those in the west of Northern Ireland do support a valuable oceanic element. For example, Florence Court in County Fermanagh supports parkland and woodland with a rich lichen flora. O’Dare (1990) recorded 145 lichen species, including a high diversity of old woodland indicators.

- 1.1.10 For the purposes of this plan, parkland includes:
- (a) wood-pastures and parklands with old or veteran trees often associated with long-established woodland sites.
 - (b) sites that have been converted to other land uses such as arable farming, commercial forestry and amenity land, but where the surviving trees are of nature conservation interest.
- 1.1.11 The UK Biodiversity Steering Group report estimates that there is between 10,000 ha and 20,000 ha of parkland in the UK.
- 1.1.12 The parkland resource as a habitat type defined by this action plan is not well documented in Northern Ireland. There is a great deal of information on the distribution and extent of historic parks, gardens and demesnes whose boundaries are clearly defined and recorded by the Environment and Heritage Service of the Department of the Environment. The proportion of this resource, however, that would be classified as wood pasture and parkland as defined by this action plan is not fully documented. There are various sources of information for particular sites, but none provide a detailed and accurate assessment of the extent of the habitat resource. This is partly due to difficulties in defining the boundaries of parkland habitats within historic parks, gardens and demesnes and partly due to the recording of this habitat under a variety of categories rather than in a category of its own.
- 1.1.13 The Inventory of Historic Parks and Gardens for Northern Ireland, contains information on approximately 700 sites supporting parkland and historic gardens. In addition there is a draft Register of Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes for Northern Ireland, which lists some 147 of the best sites covering approximately 17,441 ha. These include a wide range of sites in terms of size, date of origin and diversity of habitat present. In addition, the Register also lists supplementary sites. Many of the sites listed in the Inventory of Historic Parks and Gardens may support wood-pasture and/or parkland that would qualify for inclusion in this HAP because they support an assemblage of old or veteran trees. However, not all of the sites listed in the Inventory would be classified as supporting parkland as defined by this HAP. Further research will be required to establish what proportion of these sites qualify as the priority habitat.
- 1.1.14 It is estimated that parkland occupies 1,100 ha in Northern Ireland, with an estimated 1,000 ha in private ownership (EHS unpublished estimate, based on Graham, 1975) and 100 ha occurs within Forest Nature Reserves (Forest Service records). This represents a very small proportion of the total area of sites listed in the Inventory of Historic Parks and Gardens. It should be noted that many of the more open-canopied parkland sites would have been excluded from Graham's survey, so overall, 1,100 ha is likely to be an under-estimate. However, it is likely that the proportion of designed parkland landscapes supporting this priority habitat will be small. Examples of parkland identified in *Recommendations to Government for a Biodiversity Strategy* (NIBG, 2000), include Crom, Florence Court and Castle Coole estates in County Fermanagh, and Belvoir Park and the Lagan Valley Regional Park in Belfast.
- 1.1.15 A number of parkland sites are wholly or partly managed or owned by the Forest Service including Belvoir Park, Cairn Forest in County Down and Pomeroy Forest in County Antrim. The National Trust owns and manages at least five sites which

support good quality parkland habitat. These are Crom, Florence Court, Castle Coole, Castle Ward in County Down and Derrymore in County Armagh. Castle Archdale in County Fermanagh, another good example of this habitat type, is owned and managed by EHS as a Country Park. Many sites in central and local government are managed as amenity areas e.g. Barnetts Park in Belfast, Galgorm Park in Ballymena and Castle Park in Bangor. In addition, many sites remain in private ownership. Ownership details of historic parks, gardens and demesnes are provided in the Inventory of Historic Parks and Gardens.

- 1.1.16 Little information exists about the condition of parkland in Northern Ireland. Many sites are known to have compartments which have low cover of native trees, poor structure and/or lack a characteristic ground flora. The condition of a site needs to consider the management history and potential nature conservation value of that individual site.

1.2 Links with other action plans

- 1.2.1 Parkland may be associated with other habitats such as heathland, acid grassland, meadows, oakwoods and mixed ashwoods which have their own Northern Ireland HAPs. Requirements of these plans will need to be given due regard during implementation of this HAP.
- 1.2.2 Within Northern Ireland, parkland may be important for a number of UK priority species identified as part of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan programme. These include red squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*, common pipistrelle bat *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, song thrush *Turdus philomelos*, spotted flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* and tree sparrow *Passer montanus* (Simonson & Thomas, 1999). The requirements of these species should be taken into account during the implementation of this plan.
- 1.2.3 In addition, several Northern Ireland priority species are associated with parkland. These include several bat species, starling *Sturnus vulgaris* and barn owl *Tyto alba*.

2. Current Factors Affecting the Habitat

- 2.1 A lack of awareness of the importance of old and veteran trees in parkland systems amongst forest managers and the farming community in Northern Ireland has led to the loss of, or damage to, key sites. The main factors that directly or indirectly affect the status and distribution of parkland are considered to be as follows:
- 2.1.1 Under-planting - of parkland with coniferous tree species or natural re-colonisation following cessation of management leading to loss of old veteran trees and loss of habitat for bryophytes, lichens and invertebrates through physiological stress, competition for nutrients and light.
- 2.1.2 Neglect - and loss of traditional tree management expertise, leading to loss of old and veteran trees through disease, collapse and cutting/removal.
- 2.1.3 Lack of replacement planting - producing a skewed age structure that can lead to breaks in the continuity of deadwood and loss of specialist species.

- 2.1.4 The loss of veteran trees - and removal of standing and lying dead timber for the purposes of forestry hygiene and perceived health and safety requirements and/or tidiness, particularly where sites are used for amenity purposes.
- 2.1.5 Damage to trees and roots - from soil compaction arising from trampling by livestock and people, and the storage of equipment, silage etc. under the canopy.
- 2.1.6 Damage to trees and roots - and localised nutrient enrichment resulting from inappropriately sited supplementary feeding stations.
- 2.1.7 Use of fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides - in parkland management for amenity purposes, grassland production or conversion to arable leading to nutrient enrichment and a decline in species diversity.
- 2.1.8 Development - by inappropriate building can cause loss or damage of parkland. Parklands are often favoured for leisure developments, such as new golf courses because of their open landscape value.
- 2.1.9 Inappropriate grazing levels - either under-grazing or over-grazing leading to scrub and bracken encroachment, soil compaction and bark browsing respectively.
- 2.1.10 Disease - such as Sudden Oak death caused by the fungus-like organism *Phytophthora ramorum*, which invades susceptible trees through the bark, killing portions of the tree.
- 2.1.11 Loss of old and veteran trees - due to loss of water as a result of water abstraction, drainage, development, prolonged drought and climate change.
- 2.1.12 Air pollution - causing early death of old and veteran trees derived remotely from cars and/or industry and agro-chemical application.
- 2.1.13 Climate change - potentially resulting in changes in the vegetation communities. Current models indicate a much smaller impact in Ireland than in Britain.

3. Current Action

3.1 Legal status

- 3.1.1 Parkland is a historic land management system rather than a habitat *per se*, and as such, it may sometimes be difficult to deal with under much of the current legislation and policy initiatives. For example, not all areas of parkland qualify as ‘woodland’, because the canopy is open (<20%), and therefore is not eligible for Forest Service woodland planting grants. However, this HAP recognises the importance of parkland for biodiversity in Northern Ireland and identifies mechanisms to ensure that its extent and nature conservation value is enhanced.
- 3.1.2 Statutory site designation does not play a significant role in the conservation of this habitat. Under the *Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985* only one ASSI, Upper Lough Erne (The Crom Estate) was designated for this feature by 31st March 2004, with around 45 ha of the habitat. Further ASSI

declarations under the *Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002* are proposed by 2014, to extend the overall proportion of the resource protected and its geographical coverage.

- 3.1.3 In 2000, the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group (NIBG) made its recommendations to Government (NIBG, 2000). These were largely accepted by the Northern Ireland Executive in 2002, with the publication of the *Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy* (DOE, 2002). *The Regional Development Strategy 2025* (Department of Regional Development (DRD), 2001) is underpinned by the sustainable approach and includes Strategic Planning Guidelines (SPGs) on the protection of the environment which brings together a comprehensive collection of natural heritage and built heritage strategic guidance that includes sustaining and enhancing biodiversity.
- 3.1.4 Regional Planning and Transportation Division within DRD is responsible for co-ordinating the implementation of the *Regional Development Strategy (RDS) for Northern Ireland 2025* (DRD, 2001). The RDS contains a Spatial Development Strategy and related Strategic Planning Guidelines (SPGs). The emphasis in the SPGs is on competitiveness, sustainable development and tackling social exclusion and division. Operational policies to give effect to the SPGs are contained in Planning Policy Statements (PPSs).” Some of these policies have a direct or indirect bearing on the prevention of adverse impacts on priority habitats and species.
- 3.1.5 *PPS2 Planning and Nature Conservation* (DOE, 1997) (under review) contains planning policy for the hierarchy of sites of nature conservation importance. It also addresses trees and woodlands, protection of species and peatlands.
- 3.1.6 PPS2 also refers to the making of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) by Planning Service. The process for making a TPO is set out in the *Planning (Trees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003*, which came into operation on 12th November 2003. TPOs can be made to:
- (a) reinforce a condition of a planning permission, for the preservation of existing trees;
 - (b) protect trees of outstanding natural beauty or of special value to a particular area, even though no direct threat exists to them;
 - (c) ensure the retention of trees, not protected by a condition of a planning permission which are threatened and whose loss would significantly lower amenity, and
 - (d) protect a woodland area of amenity value, by securing the replacement of trees, which have been felled with the Department of the Environment’s consent
- 3.1.7 *PPS8 Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation* (DOE, 2004) sets out the Department’s planning policies for the protection of open space, the provision of new areas of open space in association with residential development and the use of land for sport and outdoor recreation, and advises on the treatment of these issues in development plans.
- 3.1.8 *PPS14 Sustainable Development in the Countryside* is due to be published by the end of 2005.
- 3.1.9 Semi-natural areas, which are likely to be of particular environmental importance, are protected through the *Environmental Impact Assessment (Uncultivated Land and Semi-Natural Areas) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2001*. These regulations, which

came into operation in Northern Ireland in February 2002, are administered by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) and seek to ensure that agricultural development of uncultivated land or semi-natural areas must first be assessed for environmental significance. This would include cases where the land use changes are aimed at restoring or enhancing parkland.

- 3.1.10 The UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS Steering Group, 2000), a voluntary certification standard, requires that valuable semi-natural habitats are being treated in a manner that does not lead to further loss of biodiversity. Forest Service is certified against this standard and is undertaking a survey of its lands to identify valuable semi-natural habitats.
- 3.1.11 *The Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000* require anyone who wishes to carry out a project including afforestation, deforestation, forest road works or forest quarry works that is likely to have significant effects on the environment to obtain consent for the work from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.
- 3.1.12 Forest Service acquisition policy is outlined in *Afforestation – the DANI Statement on Environmental Policy* (DANI, 1993). It states that there should be a presumption against afforestation of botanically rich sites, which have undergone little disturbance for many years.
- 3.1.13 An ‘Options for Forestry’ paper has recently been out to public consultation (DARD, 2004). One of the proposals for consultation is for Forest Service to seek powers to specify the conditions under which tree felling will be permitted. If implemented, this could add to the suite of protections against tree felling already outlined above and result in the use of approved management plans or such mechanisms similar to ‘Felling Licenses’ which are used in other parts of the UK and Ireland.

3.2 Management, research and guidance

- 3.2.1 National forestry policy includes a presumption against clearance of broad-leaved woodland for conversion to other land uses, and in particular seeks to maintain the special interest of ancient semi-natural woodland. In Northern Ireland, Forest Service has responsibility for developing and implementing local forestry policies.
- 3.2.2 The draft Register of Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes is a non-statutory document that lists the best historic sites in Northern Ireland. It is used to guide decisions by planning authorities in relation to *PPS6 Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage* (DOE, 2004). PPS6 states ‘The Department will not normally permit development which would lead to the loss of, or cause harm to, the character, principal components or setting of parks, gardens and demesnes of special historic interest. Where planning permission is granted this will normally be conditional on the recording of any features of interest which will be lost before development commences.’ In assessing proposals for development in or adjacent to parks, gardens and demesnes of special historic interest, particular attention will be paid to the impact of the proposal on:-
- the archaeological, historical or botanical interest of the site
 - the site’s original design concept, overall quality and setting
 - trees and woodland and the site’s contribution to local landscape character

- any buildings or features of character within the site including boundary walls, pathways, garden terraces or water features, and
 - planned historic views of or from the site or buildings within it.
- 3.2.3 Grants for woodland planting, regeneration and other operations, are available from Forest Service. However, parkland is not supported through current forestry grant schemes on the basis that this habitat will never be woodland.
- 3.2.4 DARD, through its Countryside Management Branch (CMB), has developed a series of agri-environment schemes including the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) Scheme (revised in 2000) and the Countryside Management Scheme (CMS). A further revision to both the ESA and CMS have recently been approved under the current Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (2000-2006). Their objective is to protect and enhance semi-natural habitats such as parkland by encouraging more sensitive management practices. Both schemes have similar management provisions, are voluntary and apply to the whole farm.
- 3.2.5 The designation of ESAs commenced in 1988 and today there are five ESAs in Northern Ireland. DARD has determined a number of priority habitats which, if they occur on the farm, must be brought under agreement and managed according to relevant prescriptions determined by DARD. Under the original ESA scheme, there are over 2,695 ha of woodland/scrub. Under new ESA agreements there are currently 54 ha of woodland and 98 ha of scrub.
- 3.2.6 The Habitat Improvement Scheme (HIS) aims to help farmers protect, enhance and establish habitats which are considered to have major conservation value. This is achieved by taking land out of agricultural production or by entering into a 10 year agreement which involves extensive grazing based on non-application of fertilizers and pesticides to the land. No new applications for the HIS are being accepted as the scheme closed in mid-1999. The scheme has been replaced by the Countryside Management Scheme (CMS).
- 3.2.7 The CMS, launched in 1999 was developed with the primary aim to maintain and enhance biodiversity and is open to all farmers and landowners outside ESAs. Where funding is limited, entry into the scheme is competitive, being based on who can offer the greatest environmental benefits. DARD can provide grant aid for parkland sites that are over 3.0 ha in size with a minimum of two mature trees per hectare, are recorded on the Historic Park Inventory or have a documented historic planting plan and are currently used for agricultural production. Payments are made for the appropriate management of permanent pasture and tree surgery. This payment includes a requirement for a five-year site-specific management plan to be drawn up for scheme participants detailing the management required. The site management plan is developed in conjunction with advice from EHS. Parkland that is under-sown and used for arable production may not be eligible for this scheme.
- 3.2.8 DARD has developed the Entry Level Countryside Management Scheme (ELCMS) which is due to open mid 2005. ELCMS has been designed to be easily accessible and to deliver a range of basic agri-environment improvements. Participants in the scheme will be required to undertake a field boundary management module, one of 3 possible water quality modules and one of 5 further biodiversity modules. The scheme will complement the existing agri-environment programme.

- 3.2.9 Within agri-environment schemes, 975 ha of ‘Parkland’ is managed under CMS and ESA agreements (31st March, 2004). ‘Parkland’ is defined in these schemes as areas of scattered trees which are < 150 years old. Continued reviews of agri-environment schemes may permit ‘fine-tuning’ of habitat definitions to correspond with delivering targets listed in Habitat and Species Action Plans where appropriate.
- 3.2.10 The introduction of Good Farming Practice (GFP), which is applicable to all farmers receiving Less Favoured Area (LFA) compensatory payments and those who enter any of the agri-environment schemes, provides a level of protection for parkland. Farmers must comply with a list of verifiable standards in relation to GFP and adhere to the Codes of Good Agricultural Practice (COGAP). These standards and codes apply to the whole farm and are compatible with the need to safeguard the environment and maintain the countryside through sustainable farming. Over 70% of Northern Ireland is classified as LFA.
- 3.2.11 The Management of Sensitive Sites scheme (MOSS) was launched in 2002 by EHS. It is a voluntary scheme designed to ensure the positive management of the site features, such as parkland, within ASSIs. Under the scheme, landowners can receive payment for carrying out conservation work within the framework of a written agreement. MOSS covers issues such as dumping, grazing, and the removal of plants, even dead ones, only with the permission of EHS, control of invasive species, application of fertilisers and the prevention of damaging activities relevant to parkland. One-off payments for works such as fencing and scrub clearance to assist grazing can be made.
- 3.2.12 At 31st March 2004, no parkland management grants were available to non-participants of agri-environment schemes. This highlights a need for future funding to prevent loss of parkland because of lack of positive management.
- 3.2.13 The Rivers Agency, as the statutory Drainage and Flood protection Authority for Northern Ireland are responsible for maintaining the effective drainage function of designated watercourses under the *Drainage (Northern Ireland) Order 1973*. All drainage and flood defense proposals are subject to the *Drainage (Environmental Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1991*, as amended, which require an assessment at planning stage of the environmental impact of the proposed works. Rivers Agency also consult with EHS on their annual programme of drainage maintenance, where this may have an impact on designated sites of nature conservation importance. This includes both localised operations such as the maintenance of outfalls for field drains and more significant river maintenance work. All of these operations can have adverse effects on parkland.
- 3.2.14 An ‘Ancient Woodland Inventory’ of Northern Ireland by the Woodland Trust, with funding from EHS and the Heritage Lottery Fund is due for completion in 2007. The aim of the project is to identify and classify ancient and long-established woodland over 0.5 ha. ‘Ancient’ woodland is classified as land continuously wooded since at least c1600 AD. ‘Long-established’ woodland is classified as land continuously wooded since the 1830s but which became wooded after 1600. This is the default category for surviving woodlands shown on the Ordnance Survey (OS) First Edition 6” to 1 mile maps. Physical features, such as pollards, ancient trees, walls, banks, ditches, evidence of other land use, species and woodland type will be recorded. A

similar survey has been undertaken in Great Britain. A Native Woodland Inventory is also being prepared in the Republic of Ireland by the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government where the minimum size of woodland being assessed is 1 ha.

- 3.2.15 A biodiversity audit undertaken by Forest Service (2002–2005) should assist in identifying areas of parkland within their estate. EHS also holds information from surveys in AONBs, statutory protected sites and SLNCIs.
- 3.2.16 Other relevant information is gathered through specialist biological recording groups, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), universities and other government bodies. Biological records are stored in the Museum and Galleries of Northern Ireland (MAGNI) at the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR). CEDaR was established in 1995 in partnership with EHS, MAGNI and the biological recording community. At 31st March 2004, over 1.4 million records were held by CEDaR and there are developments underway to make these records more accessible through the Internet. This will be achieved through the National Biodiversity Network, a union of organisations throughout the UK working together to create an information network of biological data providing an accessible data source for biodiversity information.
- 3.2.17 Woodland management advice is available through Forest Service - Private Woodland Branch, EHS - Regional Operations staff and the MOSS team, DARD - CMB and NGOs such as the Woodland Trust, CVNI, the Ulster Wildlife Trust (UWT) and the National Trust (NT). The experience of woodland managers is also developed and promoted through organisations such as the Forestry and Timber Association, Society of Irish Foresters, Royal Forestry Society, the Institute of Chartered Foresters and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.
- 3.2.18 There is a wealth of general guidance and information on management of ancient woodland and preparing parkland inventories. This includes the publication of the *Veteran Trees: A guide to good management* (Read, 2000). The Ancient Tree Forum, an association of land managers, ecologists and arboriculturalists, provides advice and organises site meetings and other events allowing exchange of experience and expertise. Other voluntary organisations and the commercial sector also provide advice and information including the British Lichen Society, which has prepared a management guide for lichens in parkland habitats.
- 3.2.19 The Veteran Trees Initiative in England provides general information on tree management and is developing a methodology for recording veteran trees, which is applicable to Northern Ireland.
- 3.2.20 Detailed surveys of old and veteran trees on a Northern Ireland-wide basis have not been undertaken. In 1999 the Tree Council for Ireland established the Tree Register for Ireland (TROI). This database of remarkable trees in Ireland continues to be updated. In addition surveys of particular sites have been commissioned that have focussed on one or more particular aspects of ancient trees. At Belvoir Park for example, 269 old and veteran trees have been identified (Simon *et al.*, 2003). Surveys of lichens have been undertaken at a number of sites including The Argory, County Tyrone, (O'Dare, 1989), Castle Caldwell, County Fermanagh (Harding, 1988) and Gosford Forest Park, County Armagh (Cullen & Fox, 2003). In addition, a review of

the deadwood invertebrate interest of old and veteran trees in Northern Ireland has also been undertaken (Anderson *et al.*, 2000).

- 3.2.21 The Woodland Trust initiative ‘Woods on Your Doorstep’ funded by the Millennium Commission (1996-2001), has resulted in the creation and management of 51 new community woods covering 210 ha across Northern Ireland. The majority of these woodlands were created using local provenance native trees. Based on the experiences of this initiative, both in Northern Ireland and Britain, a series of guides on the creation and management of native woodlands in the urban environment was produced.
- 3.2.22 The current Woodland Trust initiative ‘Tree for All’ aims to plant 12 million trees throughout the UK between September 2004 and 2009.
- 3.2.23 Conservation Volunteers, Northern Ireland (CVNI) has been involved in planting trees using volunteers for over 20 years. In October 2002, they launched an importance initiative to help restore Northern Ireland’s woodland heritage entitled *Trees of Our Future*. Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and EHS, *Trees of Our Future* encourages planting local provenance native trees. The aim is to enhance biodiversity and provide people with an understanding of why planting native trees is important.
- 3.2.24 In 2003, a forum was established to ensure that the management of native woodlands is co-ordinated and appropriately supported. This forum is known as the Northern Ireland Native Woodland Group (NINWG). A programme to enhance and extend native broad-leaved woodland in Northern Ireland is currently being developed in partnership between EHS, Forest Service and the NINWG.
- 3.2.25 Appointment of Local Biodiversity Officers by many District Councils in Northern Ireland will result in the development of Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs). These plans will encourage, co-ordinate and inform local biodiversity action.

4. Action Plan Targets

- 4.1 Maintain the current area of parkland in Northern Ireland.
- 4.2 Maintain condition, where favourable, of the existing resource.
- 4.3 By 2010, achieve favourable condition of as much as is practical of parkland within ASSIs.
- 4.4 Achieve favourable condition in 50% of the total resource of parkland by 2010.
- 4.5 Restore 25% of former parkland by 2015.

5. Proposed Action with Lead Agencies

5.1 Policy and legislation

- 5.1.1 Encourage the development of forestry/landscape strategies to provide a context for and to promote expansion and positive management of parkland.
(ACTION: EHS, DARD, Forest Service, Planning Service, District Councils)
- 5.1.2 By 2006, develop a framework for the management of parkland across the range of variation in Northern Ireland.
(ACTION: EHS, DARD, Forest Service)
- 5.1.3 By 2005, initiate discussions with other government departments to ensure appropriate consultation mechanisms exist for proposed changes in land-use.
(ACTION: DARD, EHS, Forest Service)
- 5.1.4 By 2006, review *Planning Policy Statement 2 (PPS2) – Planning and Nature Conservation*, to include policies relating to the conservation of priority habitat and species.
(ACTION: Planning Service, EHS)
- 5.1.5 By 2006, produce *Planning Policy Statement (PPS15) on Planning and Flood Risk*. This includes an objective to promote an integrated sustainable approach to the management of development and flood risk that, among other matters, will contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the biodiversity of Northern Ireland.
(ACTION: Planning Service, EHS)
- 5.1.6 By 2005, produce *Planning Policy Statement (PPS14) on Sustainable Development in the Countryside* which includes objectives to minimise the impact of housing development on the environmental resources of habitat, water quality and biodiversity of the rural area, thereby contributing to the conservation of biodiversity in Northern Ireland.
(ACTION: DRD, EHS, Planning Service)
- 5.1.7 By 2007, review the effectiveness of agri-environment schemes, Woodland Grant Scheme, MOSS, GFP and other woodland initiatives to ensure the delivery of the targets in this plan.
(ACTION: DARD, Forest Service, EHS)
- 5.1.8 By 2007, ensure that agri-environment scheme prescriptions relevant/appropriate to parkland are contributing to maintaining and enhancing the habitat across Northern Ireland.
(ACTION: DARD, EHS)
- 5.1.9 By 2005, produce a Planning Policy Statement (PPS) on *Sustainable Development in the Countryside* to incorporate the conservation of parkland.
(ACTION: Department of Regional Development (DRD), Planning Service, EHS)

- 5.1.10 Ensure that important parkland sites not already identified are recognised and, where appropriate, site protection policies are included in Development Plans and other strategic plans including Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs).
(ACTION: Planning Service, EHS, DARD, District Councils, Forest Service)
- 5.1.11 By 2006, review and develop policies to ensure development activities, regulated activities and infrastructure maintenance work (including timing) is sensitive to the requirements of parkland and individual veteran trees. The siting and maintenance of power lines, road signs etc. should also be taken into account.
(ACTION: Northern Ireland Electricity, Roads Service, Rivers Agency, Water Service, Planning Service, Statutory Undertakers, District Councils, EHS, DETI)
- 5.1.12 By 2006, encourage planting of local provenance native trees and encourage their planting in the restoration and expansion of parkland.
(ACTION: Forest Service, DARD, EHS)
- 5.1.13 By 2006, encourage planting of native species in preference to non-native species except where this conflicts with historic parkland planting regimes.
(ACTION: Forest Service, DARD, EHS)
- 5.1.14 By 2006, agree standards and definitions for the restoration of parkland.
(ACTION: Forest Service, EHS, DARD)
- 5.1.15 Seek to encourage positive environmental change through the reformed Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), for example, by reviewing livestock support mechanisms and promoting sustainable agricultural management of parkland.
(ACTION: DARD, EHS)
- 5.1.16 By 2007, ensure parkland is adequately protected through the CAP.
(ACTION: DARD, EHS)
- 5.1.17 By 2006, ensure that all farmers receiving agri-environment scheme payments and LFA Compensatory Allowance Payments are complying with GFP.
(ACTION: DARD, EHS)
- 5.1.18 Ensure that the delivery of this action plan is fully compatible with relevant aspects of forest policy.
(ACTION: EHS, Forest Service)
- 5.2 Site safeguard and management**
- 5.2.1 By 2008, produce conservation objectives for all statutory designated parkland including cSACs, ASSIs, NNRs.
(ACTION: EHS)
- 5.2.2 By 2010, review the coverage of parkland within both the ASSI and NNR series, and notify further sites as necessary to fill significant gaps in the range of variation throughout Northern Ireland.
(ACTION: EHS)

- 5.2.3 By 2006, prioritise areas, timescales and targets, based on designation status to identify appropriate areas (i.e. avoiding other priority habitats) for restoration of parkland.
(ACTION: EHS, Forest Service, DARD)
- 5.2.4 By 2007, target positive management through MOSS, agri-environment schemes, restoration, the LBAP process and grant aid for biodiversity to secure favourable management of parkland sites (including SLNCIs) prioritised in 5.2.3, according to agreed timescales.
(ACTION: EHS, Forest Service, DARD)
- 5.2.5 By 2006, develop and promote the use of long-term management plans (20 years +) by parkland owners, aimed at achieving favourable condition of all important examples of this habitat.
(ACTION: Forest Service, EHS, DARD).
- 5.2.6 By 2006, promote and implement the management and restoration of parkland owned or part funded by government.
(ACTION: Forest Service, DARD, EHS, District Councils)
- 5.2.7 By 2006, contribute to the implementation of relevant priority Species Action Plans, through the integration of management requirements and advice, in conjunction with relevant steering groups such as the Northern Ireland Native Woodland Group and the Northern Ireland Red Squirrel Forum.
(ACTION: EHS, Forest Service, DARD)
- 5.2.8 Identify further examples of wet woodland as SLNCIs for consideration for adoption into appropriate Development Plans.
(ACTION: EHS, Planning Service)
- 5.2.9 By 2006, consider amending the criteria for grant-aiding woodland management to further the protection of parkland.
(ACTION: Forest Service, EHS, DARD)

5.3 Advisory

- 5.3.1 By 2005, review all relevant guidelines and advisory material on woodland management and restoration practices, and the establishment of new native woodland.
(ACTION: DARD, Forest Service, EHS)
- 5.3.2 By 2006, provide information to landowners and occupiers on the status, conservation, and cultural importance of parkland through the production, promotion and dissemination of literature.
(ACTION: EHS, DARD, Forest Service)
- 5.3.3 By 2005, provide advice to landowners, government agencies and NGOs on the selection of suitable provenances and seed origins for planting.
(ACTION: EHS, DARD)

- 5.3.4 By 2005, promote awareness of the EIA Regulations by contacting representatives of farmers, land agents, the legal profession and other relevant organisations.
(ACTION: Forest Service, EHS, DARD, Planning Service)
- 5.3.5 By 2006, provide advice to land owners about suitable management, including grazing regimes appropriate to the geographical distribution and ecological variation found in parkland.
(ACTION: DARD, Forest Service, EHS)
- 5.3.6 By 2006, encourage applications from potential partners to obtain funding to bring areas of parkland into favourable management.
(ACTION: EHS, DARD, Forest Service, District Councils)
- 5.3.7 By 2010, develop demonstration sites including Belvoir Park Forest and Castlewella to reflect the range of ecological variation and applied management techniques throughout Northern Ireland's parkland resource.
(ACTION: EHS, Forest Service, DARD)
- 5.3.8 By 2008, inform all owners of land included in the Ancient Woodland Inventory of the nature conservation value of this habitat.
(ACTION: EHS, DARD, Forest Service)
- 5.3.9 By 2008, develop management skills associated with parkland trees by providing training.
(ACTION: EHS, Forest Service, DARD)
- 5.3.10 Encourage parkland managers and owners to liaise with initiatives in the Republic of Ireland and Britain, such as the Ancient Tree Forum and the Veteran Trees Initiative to exchange experiences of tree and habitat management.
(ACTION: EHS, Forest Service)

5.4 International

- 5.4.1 Further develop links with the Republic of Ireland and other European and international organisations such as the European Forestry Institute, the European Environment Agency and the European Centre for Nature Conservation and promote the awareness of, and exchange of data and information relating to experience gained in research, management techniques, education and conservation strategies for the conservation of parkland.
(ACTION: EHS, DARD)

5.5 Monitoring and research

- 5.5.1 By 2006, set standards for assessing favourable condition of parkland throughout Northern Ireland.
(ACTION: EHS, DARD, Forest Service)
- 5.5.2 By 2008, initiate a programme to monitor the extent and condition of the parkland resource.
(ACTION: EHS, DARD)

- 5.5.3 By 2007, complete an Ancient Woodland Inventory which will identify and provide baseline information on parkland sites.
(ACTION: EHS)
- 5.5.4 By 2008, produce an inventory of parkland and restoration projects in Northern Ireland.
(ACTION: EHS, Forest Service, DARD)
- 5.5.5 By 2006, initiate a programme to establish the effectiveness of government funded schemes and management methods in achieving the targets of this plan.
(ACTION: DARD, EHS, Forest Service)
- 5.5.6 By 2005, establish surveillance and monitoring programmes to assess the condition of the parklands within designated sites to aid site management.
(ACTION: EHS)
- 5.5.7 By 2006, commission applied research to help develop beneficial and practical management techniques for the enhancement and restoration of parkland and populations of associated characteristic species.
(ACTION: DARD, EHS, Forest Service)
- 5.5.8 By 2006, commission further research on genetic variation within tree species across the island of Ireland.
(ACTION: EHS, DARD, Forest Service)
- 5.5.9 By 2006, encourage the dissemination and use of existing research and commission new research where necessary, to improve the understanding of parkland diversity, particularly in relation to other priority habitats with which it commonly occurs and for a range of taxa for which little information currently exists.
(ACTION: EHS, DARD, Academic Partners)
- 5.5.10 By 2008, monitor parkland restoration sites so that management resources can be focused on areas most likely to show a positive response.
(ACTION: EHS, Forest Service)
- 5.5.11 Encourage access throughout Britain and Ireland to the records held at CEDaR by contributing to the National Biodiversity Network www-based catalogue of survey information.
(ACTION: EHS)
- 5.5.12 By 2005, establish surveillance and monitoring programmes for recording the health of trees and the incidences of disease such as Sudden Oak death.
(ACTION: DARD, Forest Service, EHS)
- 5.5.13 By 2015, review the requirement for further research on the effects of pollution and climate changes on parkland, and promote research needs accordingly.
(ACTION: EHS)
- 5.5.14 By 2006, carry out a pilot survey of old and veteran trees and their associated flora and fauna in selected parkland sites across Northern Ireland.
(ACTION: EHS, DARD)

5.5.15 By 2010, encourage research into the cultural heritage of key parkland sites to determine the origins of the oldest trees in Northern Ireland and their genetic relationship to native Irish genotypes.
(ACTION: EHS, DARD)

5.5.16 By 2010, undertake dendrochronological research on living and felled trees at key sites.
(ACTION: EHS)

5.6 Communications and publicity

5.6.1 By 2005, devise a strategy for ensuring effective distribution of existing advisory material to parkland managers and, if gaps are identified, produce and disseminate appropriate material to fill these.
(ACTION: EHS, Forest Service, DARD)

5.6.2 By 2006, promote the conservation of parkland through the scientific press and popular media. Emphasise the irreplaceability of veteran trees and the importance of continuity of habitat and cultural value.
(ACTION: EHS, Forest Service, DARD)

5.6.3 By 2006, facilitate production of a simple web-page, an attractive booklet and CD-ROM for the public and schools, which explains the conservation importance of native woodlands in Northern Ireland including parkland.
(ACTION: EHS, Department of Education, Forest Service)

5.6.4 By 2006, aim to achieve a minimum of 200 school groups attending woodland education programmes each academic year.
(ACTION: EHS, Forest Service)

5.6.5 By 2006, encourage appropriate access as well as interpretative and educational provisions on key parkland sites to increase enjoyment and public awareness of their biodiversity.
(ACTION: EHS, DARD, Forest Service, District Councils)

6. Costings

6.1 A table showing the global costs for this and other HAPs is available on the EHS/Biodiversity web page.

7. References

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List of Useful Acronyms

ASSI	Area of Special Scientific Interest
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
CEDaR	Centre for Environmental Data and Recording
CMD	Countryside Management Division
CMS	Countryside Management Scheme
DARD	Department of Agricultural and Rural Development
DCAL	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
DETI	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Industry
DOE	Department of the Environment
DRD	Department for Regional Development
EHS	Environment and Heritage Service
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Area
ESCRs	Earth Science Conservation Review Site
HAP	Habitat Action Plan
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
MAGNI	The National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland
NIBG	Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group
NICS	Northern Ireland Countryside Survey
NNR	National Nature Reserve
PPG	Planning Policy Guideline
PPS	Planning Policy Statement
RA	Rivers Agency
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SAP	Species Action Plan
SLNCI	Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance
SoCC	Species of Conservation Concern
SPA	Special Protection Area
WFD	Water Framework Directive
WWT	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust