

# **Growing improved Broadleaves - A Forest Policy perspective**

**Future Trees Trust – Inaugural Irish Supporters’ Day  
7<sup>th</sup> October 2016**

Stuart Morwood

Head of Policy, Regulation and Development, Forest Service of  
Northern Ireland

# Forest policy

- Government intervenes in forestry as a result of market failure and to secure its policy objectives.
- The Northern Ireland Forest Strategy (2006) re-stated policy as the sustainable management of existing woods and forests, and a steady expansion of tree cover to increase the many diverse benefits that forests provide.
- The Forest Strategy included a long-term aim of increasing woodland cover from 6% of land area in 2006 to 12% by 2056 to increase the supply of these benefits.

# Legislation

- The Forestry Act (Northern Ireland) 2010 gave the Department powers to implement this policy.
- It widened the role of the Department from developing afforestation, supplying timber, and the maintenance of growing trees by making explicit our role in protection of the environment, biodiversity, climate change and social and recreational use.
- It re-introduced powers controlling the felling of trees and provided new powers to enter into most of the common forms of legal agreements with others.
- It created a public right of pedestrian access for recreation to most of the Department's forests.

## Policy outcomes – Forest Cover

Date	Percentage forest cover	Area (ha)
1917	1.4% (Ireland)	118,000
1940	1% (Northern Ireland)	17,000
1959	2%	30,000
1975	4%	59,000
2006	6%	86,000
2015	8%	112,000



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**

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

## Forest Type and Ownership

<b>Forest Type and Ownership</b>	<b>Area (hectares)</b>	<b>Percentage forest area</b>
<b>Conifers</b>		
State owned	<b>56,000</b>	<b>50%</b>
Non state owned	<b>11,000</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Broadleaves</b>		
State owned	<b>6,000</b>	<b>5%</b>
Non state owned	<b>39,000</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Total</b>		
State owned	<b>62,000</b>	<b>56%</b>
Non state owned	<b>50,000</b>	<b>44%</b>



# What the public /woodland growers tell us

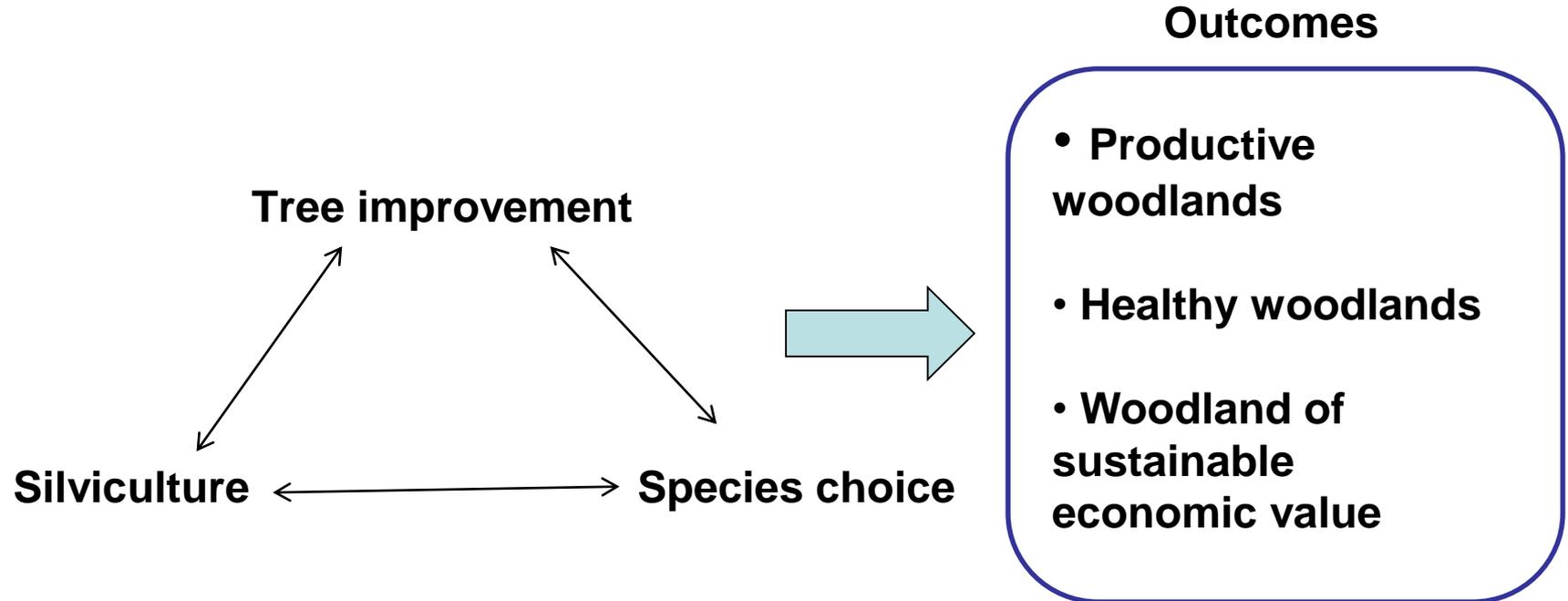
## Public

- There is good support for forestry / forest expansion, the main reasons being given were to provide places for wildlife to live, places for recreation and for families to play.
- A base line survey to provide information about public visits to Forest Service woodland in 2014 ,estimate of 4.7 million day visits annually and a total annual spend of £76 million .

## Growers

- Good productivity & tree form , fine branches and high wood quality.
- Provide a legacy for future generations ( must be resistant to pests/ disease &invasive exotics, adaptable to future climate change predictions)

# Role of Tree Improvement



# Broadleaf Tree Improvement - Policy Needs

## Goal :

Tree improvement must increase the value of broadleaf woodland ownership through modern genetic tree improvement technology.

## Objective:

To carefully define the range of traits for improvement with priorities given their relative importance.

## Strategy:

A detailed document specifying the experimental design, timing and implementation of all components of the tree improvement process.



# Broadleaf Tree Improvement – Challenges/Opportunities

Breeding programme strategy should take account of :

- Need to ensure improved varieties are widely adapted and retain diversity.
- Predicted climate change, potential pests/diseases and invasive species.
- Demand for a wide range of ecosystem services from woodland.
- Land availability for broadleaf tree planting.
- New genomic technologies to accelerate breeding but based on properly designed long-term experiments.
- Need to coordinate and integrate tree breeding at a national and international level and to engage closer co-operation with other researchers (plant physiology, climatology, pathology and wood technology).
- Need to engage with land managers/owners to gain support for funding the establishment and long-term maintenance of trials while shorter term research funding (i.e. pump priming) supports the increasingly complex breeding technology.