

A New Deal for Private Forestry in Northern Ireland.

Introduction of a new system of Grants

Introduction

In 1927 a Planting Grant Scheme was introduced for the first time in Northern Ireland to encourage private planting by giving financial assistance.

Over the years the minimum qualifying area was reduced from 5 acres to 2 acres and the assistance increased from £4 per acre to £22 12s. 0d. per acre.

The response was slow at first and up until 1945 the annual area planted under the Scheme seldom exceeded 30 acres.

In 1946, however, 162 acres were planted and by 1953 the acreage had risen to 379 acres. Over the last 4 years the average area planted has been 500 acres. To date a total of 8,000 acres has been planted under the Scheme. Forestry Division N.I. are at present planting 500 acres per annum.

Position in Great Britain

Following the years of felling and devastation of private woodlands during the second world war the Forestry Commission introduced in 1947 a Dedication Scheme which went considerably further than the earlier Planting Grant Schemes. Private owners could obtain in return for the efficient planning and management of their woods,

annual maintenance grants for the whole of their productive area. The Scheme had many legal and management complications and was not considered suitable for Northern Ireland. In Great Britain, however, over 3,000 estates have entered the Scheme which now covers almost 1 million acres.

The annual area planted in Great Britain by private owners is now approximately 30,000 acres compared with approximately 50,000 planted by the Forestry Commission, while in England alone private planting exceeds Forestry Commission planting by 50 per cent.

It is obvious that private forestry in Northern Ireland is falling behind its counterpart in Great Britain and that the time has come to make a new effort to increase the area and efficiency of private forestry.

New Grants for Planting and Maintenance of Woodlands

With effect from 1st October, 1968, the following grants will be available where planting and maintenance has been carried out to the satisfaction of the Ministry:—

- £20 per acre immediately after planting.
- £10 per acre 5 years after planting.
- £5 per acre 10 years after planting.
- £5 per acre 15 years after planting.
- £5 per acre 20 years after planting.

In addition where heavy clearing of scrub has to be undertaken prior to planting a further £10 per acre will be payable, thereby increasing the initial £20 grant to £30 per acre.

The Poplar Planting Grant and the Thinning Grants are now discontinued. No further grants will be paid for the line planting of poplars but where the land is considered more suitable for poplars than for other species the normal grants may be paid for block planting of poplars.

Conclusion

The new Scheme is much more suited to our own conditions than the Forestry Commission's Dedication Scheme and gives private owners approximate parity of treatment with owners in Great Britain.

The grants are payable in the first 20 years of the life of the crop during the time when expenditure is greatest and before much income has been earned from the sale of thinnings.

Owners will now be encouraged not only to plant for the future but to maintain their woods efficiently through the formative years until they reach the production stage.

It is hoped that this encouragement will greatly increase the area of land planted with trees in Northern Ireland and enable private forestry to make a greater contribution to our economy.

Supply of Young Trees

The two Schemes at present in operation for the provision of plants, (a) Young Trees Scheme (minimum 500) and (b) 100 Trees Scheme, will continue as before though the prices and species available may change from year to year.