

Critics poised to defeat privatisation

The prospect of the (UK) government privatising the Forestry Commission's forests are receding rapidly. An inter-ministerial review group is expected to recommend against it in the near future.

The review is instead believed to recommend dividing the commission's woodlands between commercial forests and those for recreation whose value is primarily as part of Britain's natural heritage. It is expected to propose

creating an executive agency within the commission to manage the commercial forests with greater financial transparency.

Financial Times
28 January 1994

Plant construction could create 150 jobs

Up to 150 jobs will be created during the construction of the IR£40 million Louisiana Pacific timber board plant in Belview, Waterford Harbour, the operation's spokesman confirmed yesterday.

A new joint venture company, Louisiana Pacific Coillte Ireland Ltd., a partnership between the

American giant and the state forestry body, applied for planning permission last week to Kilkenny County Council for construction of a 30,000 square metre factory on a 60 acre site adjacent to Waterford harbour.

Construction is due to start early in the summer, and the plant is set to go into full production with-

in twelve months of this. However, there is a likelihood the plans will be challenged on environmental grounds, as the company incurred a record fine in the US two years ago for breaking the terms of its emission licence.

Cork Examiner
February 4th 1994

Guidelines on tree preservation issued

Local authorities are being urged by the Minister for the Environment, Mr Smith, to take a more active role in preserving trees because of their amenity value as well as the contribution which they make in reducing carbon-dioxide levels in the atmosphere.

Launching National Tree Week in his home town of Roscrea, Co Tipperary, the

Minister announced the publication by his Department of a new set of guidelines on tree preservation for the Republic's 87 planning authorities – many of which have tended to ignore this subject.

Irish Times
7th March 1994

Wood row goes against GATT grain

When the Ohashis, a family living in Yokohama, built their house they chose to use an American-style structure and imported wood from Washington State.

They are among a growing number of Japanese who are choosing North American lumber for their homes rather than the traditional cedar found throughout Japan's mountainous landscape.

The trend has helped to fuel a bustling trade in wood products imported into Japan not only from the American continent

but from as far off as Finland and Sweden.

This trade in wood products has become the focus of a row between the US and Japan that has cast a shadow over the Uruguay Round of trade liberalisation talks under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

The US is unhappy with an offer by Japan to reduce tariffs on wood products that was made last year to conclude the Uruguay Round talks.

The US already imposes export restrictions on its

wood and the Clinton administration has announced a policy to limit logging to protect the environment. As a result North American lumber prices have doubled since 1992.

Japan also has its environment to think about when considering how far it can reduce tariffs. The plantation of trees prevents landslides in Japan's mountainous terrain, ensures clean water and helps prevent global warming, Mr. Wako says.

Financial Times
1st May 1994

Coillte woos pension funds

Irish pension funds are the target of a new IR£29million forestry unit trust which is being set up by Coillte, AIB Investment Managers and Irish Life.

To be known simply as the Irish Forestry Unit Trust (IFUT), the fund already has a value of around IR£29 million and has been formed following the amalgamation of Irish

Life's existing forestry fund with that of AIB Investment Managers.

Business & Finance
10 March 1994

Reprieve for Coolattin Woods

A long drawn out campaign of opposition to the felling of the oak trees at Coolattin Woods near Shillelagh by conservation and action groups has borne fruit.

For the last remaining oak woodland at Tomnafinnogue is being taken into public ownership which means that the trees will not now be axed.

The reprieve comes

just in the nick of time for 323 of the 1,800 oak trees in the 165 acre stretch of woodland.

Wicklow People
18 March 1994

Planting bad land

During a speech to his party's annual Agricultural Conference, Taoiseach, Mr Reynolds was critical of Coillte and other forestry agencies. He said that far too much

good Irish land was being planted in forestry while much bad land remained unused. "Coillte and others are driving the price of land far beyond what can be afforded by farmers and

I would like to see a situation where the bad land is planted to avoid this".

Irish Times
9th May 1994

Coillte rejects policy attack

Coillte, the commercial state forestry company, yesterday hit back at the Taoiseach's criticism of its planting policy, writes Willie Dillon.

It said it fully agreed with Mr Reynolds' view that poor quality land should be used for tree planting in preference to higher quality farmland. But it rejected his claim that the bidding power of Coillte and private forestry developers is pushing land out of the

reach of local farmers.

The Taoiseach said at the weekend he would much prefer to see Coillte and others planting bad land in the first instance, leaving good land for other uses.

And, he added, too much good land was being "bid out of the reach of local farmers" by Coillte and others.

Mr Reynolds' comments were welcomed yesterday by the two main farm bodies, both of which

repeated calls for a clear national policy on how land should be used.

However, Coillte said its whole thrust and policy was that trees should be planted on land which was marginal for agriculture.

The proof of this was in the average IR£600 and acre it paid for land, with the highest ever being less than IR£800 and acre.

Irish Independent
10th May 1994

"Plant some of our bad land"

Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds will have started something with his remark in Kilkenny last Sunday. "In regard to afforestation, I would much prefer Coillte and others to plant some of our bad land in the first instance and leave our good land for other uses. Indeed, I would like to see some of our bad land used for fast-growing trees for

biomass production as a source of alternative energy". Leave aside the biomass for another day. He would much prefer Coillte and others "to plant some of our bad land". Surely we have been hearing for years that much bog-planting leads to instability of trees. To having them blown down in storms. To finding that bad land gives timber of

inferior commercial value. A bit of confusion here, surely, though the Taoiseach will have had to take notice of recent agitation over Meath land, for example, having been bought for afforestation, where farmers claim the acres could be used for better purposes.

Irish Times
14th May 1994

Increase in broadleaf planting urged

The Tree Council of Ireland has asked the Government to increase the level of broadleaf planting to 20 per cent of all new forests because Ireland's broadleaf resources have become

depleted and largely over-mature.

The recommendation is contained in a document drawn up by the council which said there is concern about over-reliance on conifers in the

national afforestation programme and the consequences for landscape values and species diversity.

Irish Times
10th May 1994

Wood pulp prices go higher still

North American and European wood pulp producers are taking advantage of unexpectedly strong paper markets to push through another hefty price increase.

Several companies have notified customers of

a 10 per cent rise in northern bleached softwood kraft pulp, the industry's staple product, bringing the price to US\$560 a tonne.

The latest increase means that pulp prices have soared by more than

40 per cent since the market first came to life last autumn, but they remain far below the peak of US\$840 a tonne reached in the late 1980s.

Financial Times
12th April 1994

Ireland's tallest tree at Curraghmore

Ireland's tallest tree is a Sitka spruce measuring 52.6 metres (172 feet) in height, growing at the Curraghmore Estate, Co. Waterford. The tree believed to be planted in 1835 was measured recently by John McLoughlin, Chief Environmental Officer, Coillte and Dr. Jack Durand, President, Trees for Ireland. This tree which had been the champion for many years lost its lead in 1991 when a Douglas fir tree now mea-

suring 50m (164 feet) at the Powerscourt Estate surpassed it but it has once again regained its lead.

According to Alan Mitchell, a leading British tree export, the tallest tree in Britain is a grand fir, measuring 63 metres (206 feet) at Strone House in Scotland.

Munster Express
22nd April 1994