



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Climate Change Bill: Woodland Trust

10 June 2021

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Declan McAleer (Chairperson)
Ms Clare Bailey
Mrs Rosemary Barton
Mr John Blair
Mr Maurice Bradley
Mr Harry Harvey
Mr William Irwin
Mr Patsy McGlone

Witnesses:

Mr Paul Armstrong	Woodland Trust
Mr Dave Scott	Woodland Trust

The Chairperson (Mr McAleer): From the Woodland Trust, I welcome, via StarLeaf, Paul Armstrong, the public affairs manager, and Dave Scott, the estate and project manager. I invite you to brief the Committee. Members will then ask questions. Paul and Dave, you are welcome this morning.

Mr Paul Armstrong (Woodland Trust): Good morning. Thank you, Chair and Committee members, for the opportunity to discuss the Climate Change Bill and the role that trees and woods can play to address the climate and nature emergencies.

By way of a quick introduction; the Woodland Trust is a UK-wide conservation charity. We have been operating in Northern Ireland for 25 years. Our work's focus is primarily to create, protect and restore woodland for the benefit of people, climate and nature. Our estate in Northern Ireland totals approximately 650 hectares. That includes two recent acquisitions: one in the Belfast hills and the other at Mourne Park near Kilkeel. Both those acquisitions will go some way to contributing towards Northern Ireland's addressing the climate and nature emergencies.

We work with a wide range of partners on tree planting and woodland creation projects beyond our own estates. Recent examples include our work with NI Water (NIW) to plant one million trees across its estate in Northern Ireland; supporting local councils, such as Belfast City Council and its One Million Trees project, by providing funding from the Woodland Trust's emergency tree fund; a partnership with the Loughs Agency, NI Water and farmers to deliver riparian planting and wet wood creation along the River Faughan; and working with the Belfast Hills Partnership and the Mourne Heritage Trust to create new native woodland and restore ancient woodland. As you can see, partnership is a huge part of what we do. We know that it will become a bigger part of what we do as

we work towards a climate change target in Northern Ireland. When we do that, we also create employment. We create work for others as we contract out all our planting and maintenance work.

Before my colleague Dave and I take questions, I want to cover some of the points in our written evidence. To summarise, it can be broken down into two parts. The first will be our views on a number of elements in the Bill. The second will be the role that trees and woods can play in fulfilling various targets and measures in the Bill.

As mentioned in our submission, there is broad and well-evidenced consensus that the climate is changing. Our position is based on that evidence. We have a climate emergency. We are also facing a nature emergency where changes to the climate are impacting on ecosystems. If those ecosystems collapse, it will exacerbate the climate emergency. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recommends greater protection and restoration of ecosystems in order to meet the mitigation and adaptation objectives of the Paris agreement.

At the Woodland Trust, we talk about the climate emergency and the nature emergency together. They are inextricably linked. Our view is that we do not have the resources to deal with climate change and biodiversity loss separately. That requires a joined-up approach, using solutions that can help with both issues. Planting, restoring and protecting trees and woods is one of the most effective ways in which to do that.

With regard to the net zero target, Lord Deben's advice and his contribution have covered that in far greater detail and in a much more informed way than we could ever do. Reaching net zero will require a wide range of measures, many of which go beyond the role of trees and woods. Our position, therefore, is that we want to see an ambitious target to reduce greenhouse gases as soon as possible. Our role will be to support whatever that target is. We will plant, restore and protect trees in Northern Ireland to help to meet whatever target is decided on.

Trees reduce greenhouse gas emissions, take in carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, store carbon and release oxygen. The carbon is stored until the tree dies or is cut down and either decays or is burned. Some carbon from falling leaves is also stored in the soil, meaning that the entire ecosystem in the woodland, not just tree planting, plays an important role in locking up carbon. That includes roots, leaves, dead wood, surrounding soils and any vegetation nearby.

In our written evidence, we acknowledge the 82% target set by the Climate Change Committee (CCC), and we note that the Climate Change Committee highlighted a 94% reduction as a more ambitious target. We recommend an ambitious target primarily in order to support development of our understanding. Lord Deben touched on knowledge, and the more we know about sequestration, the more it can be encouraged. We encourage the setting of an ambitious target in order to drive further research and development of solutions and our understanding of how we can meet net zero as soon as possible.

Areas of the methodology used by the Climate Change Committee could be refined. In the sphere of woods and trees, we would look at yield-class modelling. That is the number of trees planted and how much carbon they can sequester, and how predictions are made. The Climate Change Committee primarily uses a commercial methodology and we would look at developing that further.

We support the requirement for a climate action plan in the Bill, because it provides the impetus for the overriding objective. We have mentioned that the climate and nature emergencies are linked. We strongly encourage, therefore, the inclusion of the biodiversity targets for that purpose. We are also keen to make sure that we do not have a dash for carbon. We cannot just address the carbon issue or address the climate emergency without making sure that we look after our environment at the same time.

Nature-based solutions and appropriate tree planting can support biodiversity targets as well as improve water, air and soil quality. Those things are included in the targets. It should be noted that we do a lot of outreach work with farmers, focusing on how we can plant trees on farms to improve water, air and soil quality. After I have covered my key points, my colleague Dave can provide more detail on how that has worked out.

Trees will play an important role — they already play an important role — as we tackle the climate and nature emergencies. It should be noted that Northern Ireland has the lowest amount of tree cover in the UK, Ireland and the EU. We are working towards a target of 12% tree cover in Northern Ireland by 2050. That was set in the forestry strategy in 2006. We have consistently fallen short of even that

target. To meet 12% tree cover by 2050, we would have about 2,000 hectares of tree planting a year. At the moment, we are falling very short of that, and, as we miss the target each year, we build it up further.

In 2018-19, we planted 240 hectares of new woodland in Northern Ireland, and, in 2019-2020, we planted 200 hectares. That gives you an idea of how low the levels are by comparison with what would be required if we were to meet 12%. I highlight the fact that the Climate Change Committee has recommended that UK tree cover be between 17% and 19% by 2050; 12% tree cover for Northern Ireland even falls below that. We would like to see an even more ambitious target, but we also need to see a renewed focus on woodland creation to meet the target of 12%.

There are a few things to bear in mind when we consider woodland expansion. We need to make sure that the approach captures both the climate emergency and the biodiversity crisis. We should not create new woods solely to meet emissions reduction targets, and ambitious targets should not result in tree-planting standards being reduced in order to accelerate planting. Increasing tree cover in Northern Ireland will require a mix of approaches, including creating native woodland, as I have discussed; natural regeneration, which is allowing woodlands to regenerate naturally at their own pace; sustainable and commercial plantations; agri-forestry; urban trees and hedges; and individual countryside trees. That mix of tree-planting solutions is used to minimise the risk of any single approach failing. We also have to factor in the longevity of trees and woodland ecosystems and protect our existing woods and trees. It is not good enough to just keep planting more trees; we need to manage our existing stock. One thing to bear in mind is that only 1% of woodland in areas of special scientific interest (ASSIs) in Northern Ireland is in favourable condition and that 61% of it is in unfavourable condition. We need to do more to better manage and protect our woodland, as well as creating new woodland.

I have highlighted the fact that woods and trees are really good for managing climate change and biodiversity loss, but trees require land, and land is a finite resource. We advocate for a land use strategy. I draw your attention to the Scottish Climate Change Act, which made a provision for a land use strategy in Scotland. A land use strategy would help to balance competing priorities. A number of different actions will be required beyond trees and woods. We need peatland restoration, we will have to change how agriculture is carried out, we need renewable energy, and infrastructure needs to go in. Those actions will put different pressures on land, so we need to have a land use strategy for Northern Ireland that is informed by a target from the Climate Change Act and can inform the sectoral plans in the Bill. It is not good enough to just contain land use in a sectoral plan. It is so wide-reaching that it needs to cover everything. We need to make sure that any plans in different sectors talk to one another and that they are underpinned by the same strategy. We will look at that. We encourage looking at ecosystem services. That includes looking at what the land can deliver and what we can enhance in the land to deliver greater carbon sequestration or improve biodiversity. That would talk to how all the different sectors can feed into that.

It is a given that we will need more trees. We will also be in competition with other countries for trees, including the Republic of Ireland. It is really important that the trees that are planted in Northern Ireland are grown in Northern Ireland. We cannot risk importing trees from elsewhere. That means that we need to encourage our local growers. We need more large-scale growers in Northern Ireland. We need to make sure that the trees that we plant are grown in Northern Ireland and that we do not import trees from further afield. If we do that, there is a risk of bringing in diseases, which we have seen with ash dieback, for example. That would set us back rather than move us forward. We should not dash to import trees from further afield. That is a short-term solution, but, in the longer term, we will pay the price with diseases. That would set back our aims for climate change.

That is a quick overview of our position. I welcome any questions from the Committee, which Dave and I will do our best to answer.

The Chairperson (Mr McAleer): Thank you very much, Paul. That was a comprehensive briefing. You mentioned that we need an ambitious target. In your submission, you state that we need to act with radical changes now. Do you believe that the UK CCC recommendation of an 82% reduction by 2050 constitutes the radical change and ambitious targets to which you referred?

Mr Armstrong: In Lord Deben's contribution, he made it clear that 82% will require radical changes. It is not as ambitious as net zero by 2050 or 2045. We are not the experts on what the target should be. We are simply here to tell you how to contribute to whatever that target is. I am not in a position to say whether that is ambitious. I will defer to Lord Deben's advice, as he is the expert in that field.

The Chairperson (Mr McAleer): You referred to the need for more trees and local growers. That topic was raised recently in the Chamber. Mr Wells of the DUP raised the topic of the importance of having indigenous species. Do you agree with that? Do you see it as important that we use indigenous tree species for any replanting?

Mr Armstrong: When the Woodland Trust creates its new woodlands, such as at the new sites that we acquired for woodland creation in the Belfast hills, it creates native woodland. That is the most beneficial woodland for both nature and climate. It is a mix of native species, including broadleaf species and some coniferous species, such as Scots pine. Yes, we talk about native woodland creation, and we encourage that. In our evidence, I highlighted that there is a mix, which is what the Woodland Trust advocates. There is a need for commercial forestry and for that to be done responsibly. As we reduce carbon in buildings by, for example, substituting concrete with timber, we will need to use responsibly sourced and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified timber. The work that the Woodland Trust does, including our work with farmers and our outreach work, all involves planting native species. Beyond its being indigenous, it also needs to be grown and sourced locally. For example, oak is a native species, but importing that species of oak from Holland is not good enough because it risks bringing in disease, so not only does it have to be a native species but it should be grown locally.

The Chairperson (Mr McAleer): You mentioned that we have the lowest tree cover in the EU. Is that primarily due to the destruction or removal of our woodlands and their not being replanted? What is the primary reason for our having the lowest coverage in the EU?

Mr Armstrong: I do not have a clear answer for you on that. Dave, do you have anything on that? Maybe the answer goes quite far back in history.

Mr Dave Scott (Woodland Trust): Yes, it does. Historically, there has been a clearance of woodland across the island of Ireland beyond plantation. You are right: those woodlands were never replaced. That has been marked through history from the time that the first people arrived and started clearing the land for agriculture through to the Industrial Revolution. We have lost the woodland culture on this island. The regeneration of woodland has not happened: it has been all take and no putting back.

The Chairperson (Mr McAleer): Thank you very much. There are a number of members who wish to ask questions.

Mrs Barton: Thank you, Paul and Dave, for your contributions. You spoke about our needing 12% cover by 2050. What percentage of cover do we have at the moment, and what is the breakdown of that cover in indigenous and non-indigenous species?

Mr Scott: The current coverage is sitting in and around 8%. Of that, the native woodland or semi-naturalised woodland makes up in or around 2% or 3%. The bulk of the woodland in Northern Ireland is what we consider to be non-native woodland. The majority of that is commercial forestry, which, as Paul said, has a place for sustainable supply chains. However, we really need to focus on native woodland creation being part of the mix of the 12%.

Mrs Barton: You spoke about the focus on woodland creation. What are you doing, or what do you advise should be done, to try to increase our native species and set up more tree farms to supply them? How could we progress that?

Mr Scott: Locally, we have set ambitious targets. As Lord Deben said, if we set ambitious targets, we have to meet them. We need to demonstrate that there will be a supply chain for locally grown native trees. The Woodland Trust has one million trees that we take from the Republic of Ireland because we simply cannot source them locally on this side of the border. Occasionally, we have to import from GB. That is just the Woodland Trust and does not include all the forestry agents who are working outside our remit. We can demonstrate that the supply chain is there, and we need more local expertise and the likes of Invest NI seeing it as an opportunity for inward investment and future employment through green jobs.

Mrs Barton: You are talking about recruiting people to set up forestry nurseries.

Mr Scott: Yes.

Mrs Barton: My last question is on carbon sequestration: are native species of trees much better than non-native species?

Mr Scott: Yes, by and large. Historically, a native woodland should live for ever. In a commercial woodland, yes, the carbon is locked into the timber that goes off to become a timber product, but our ancient woodlands have been locking and storing carbon for hundreds, if not thousands, of years, and the natural processes of a mixed, diverse native woodland mean that it constantly recycles carbon and draws in more. A single-species commercial woodland, even if left to go to the fullness of its lifetime, will not regenerate in the same way and will not support as much biodiversity as a native woodland.

Mrs Barton: Thank you.

Mr M Bradley: Other than the availability of indigenous trees, what are the main restrictions on increasing woodlands in Northern Ireland, particularly in relation to new plantings? The 12% target for forest cover is not nearly high enough; nor is the UK target of 17%. I would like to see a minimum target of 25% for Northern Ireland. There are other ways of achieving greater tree cover than relying on new forest. Departments across Northern Ireland hold a large swathe of land. Can we not plant more trees along the roadway, in industrial estates, in hospital settings or along rail routes? Instead of cutting roadside verges, can we not let them grow, cutting only at junctions and road ends? Can we not have more trees on roundabouts, which are also excellent sites for wild flower meadows?

I am not a fan of evergreens. I know that they are better suited to certain areas and soils in Northern Ireland and to sustainable forestry. What plans are there for native trees such as the ash, oak, birch, hazel and others? Poor soil, loaded with ammonia and nitrates, has destroyed rather than enhanced them. Do we also need to look at the soil that is flowing in?

The destructive trend in Northern Ireland of straightening and draining waterways, draining away all the natural floodplains and wetlands, is a problem. How do we address that? Every river and waterway flowing through Lough Neagh ends up coming through Coleraine on its way to the Atlantic Ocean. There are many sources of entry to Lough Neagh but only one exit, the Lower Bann. Those are just some of the concerns that I have. I know that we do not have time to address them all.

Mr Armstrong: There may be two sides to this. Dave can talk about our experiences on the ground. Yes, the availability of trees is, as you highlighted, one of the main obstacles, and we need to address that by sourcing our trees locally, but the other obvious one is the availability of land. You touched on identifying different areas of land. We have worked with Belfast City Council on its One Million Trees project, which has identified 250 hectares within the council area for tree planting. It is not purely forest planting, as you highlighted, but areas of green space that are suitable for planting. The project recognises the role that trees play in mitigating flooding and keeping water and air quality higher. That is our work with public bodies. We are also working with NI Water to plant a million trees on its estate. Work is going on, but we always welcome further opportunities to identify more public land for native tree planting.

The other side of that is that we are working with landowners. Our written evidence touches briefly on the work that we are doing in Faughan valley. We work with farmers, planting in wet woods, and that prevents sediment getting into the River Faughan and keeps the water quality high. That tree planting contributes to climate change mitigation by absorbing carbon. We have worked with farmers in the glens of Antrim on farm plans that identify opportunities to plant trees or hedgerows, which are linked corridors of trees, on their land. We are doing work. Our outreach work focuses on identifying opportunities for land outside our own estates. Dave can probably give you examples of the obstacles that those landowners are facing. We can draw up a plan with them, but various steps are required to turn a plan into reality.

Farmers want to do the right thing. Our experience is that they want to improve the environment. It is just that there are things that could be improved to make that happen. Dave can provide a bit more insight into that.

Mr Scott: As Paul says, farmers and other landowners want to do the right thing. In our experience, if we can show the benefits of trees and woods, not just for climate and nature but as part of the working infrastructure of the farming business, farmers are much more inclined to get on board. The majority of the land in Northern Ireland [*Inaudible owing to poor sound quality*] ownership of the agricultural community.

As Paul says, we have been doing really good work in hedgerow creation — those corridors. Riparian planting, certainly in the north-west after the 2017 floods, has really gained traction. Riparian, or riverside, planting not only reduces the levels of nutrients and pollutants entering the watercourse but stabilises the riverside banks. Therefore, the farmer's most important resource, the soil, does not literally wash away.

Also, we are finding that the more attractive the forestry grant schemes become, the more that farmers are coming to us and looking at them. The recent small woodland grant has been a game changer, in that it has enabled us to reduce the block size of an individual woodland to 0.2 hectares. That is a fundable planting scheme now. We can now look at a farm in a more strategic way. We can say, "That 0.2 of a hectare will help with the prevailing wind coming down the glen".

Getting those trees and woods is part of becoming the green infrastructure of the farm. It means that farmers do not see tree planting as taking land away from the farm. Actually, they are introducing another piece of infrastructure, just the same as a laneway, a fence or a cleaning unit. It is all part of the one thing. The big thing is engaging with those farmers. As Lord Deben said earlier, if people do not have good information, how can they make the right informed choices?

Mr Armstrong: The afforestation forum, as part of the Forests for our Future programme, is looking across Departments to identify more public land for tree planting. That is important work. A land use strategy might inform that further as we move forward.

Mr Blair: I thank Paul and Dave for their presentation and for the information that they have provided. I think that they are aware that I look forward to seeing some of their plans for the Belfast hills later today, and I may have more questions.

The Department has announced £200,000 for the water quality improvement strand of the environmental challenge fund. You mentioned a matter that is important to me, namely, community engagement and getting the community involved. You used the word "outreach": what advice can you give to the Committee to encourage the Department to enhance that outreach and help it to grow across sectors and areas?

Mr Scott: It is not for us to tell the Department how to do its business. Going out into communities has been curtailed quite a bit by the current restrictions. However, our experience of outreach work is that physically having people on the ground to walk the land with a landowner and talk through the options is what gets our projects over the line. Having a distant relationship with the landowner does not help us in our work. We could post everything on our website and do a few agricultural shows, which we do, but unless we back that up with boots on the ground, we find that the appetite starts to wane. I go back to my previous point: landowners and those who, potentially, want to create woodland need support, advice and quality information throughout the process. Perhaps the Department could bring in organisations like us, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Ulster Wildlife or the National Trust as part of a partnership approach for climate and nature to do that outreach work and engagement. I am sure that all those organisations would be open to that conversation.

Mr Blair: That is a very useful answer, Dave, thank you. More specifically, are there currently sufficient funding streams to encourage community involvement in any planting programmes that could take place? I am aware of the Forests for Our Future programme, and I am trying to break that down into how much is targeted at getting the community involved in those planting schemes so that the community has ownership of them.

Mr Scott: Yes, more could be done on community planting, especially if we are talking about the public estate as well. It is about getting communities involved in taking ownership of a small woodland and planting, say, in a housing scheme on Housing Executive land. We used to have a scheme for communities and school groups whereby they could get free trees from the Woodland Trust. However, because of import issues and tree supply, we have had to pause that funding stream for Northern Ireland. If that could be replaced by something from central government, that would be very welcome.

Mr Irwin: On the question of incentives to encourage tree planting, you said that the area that was aided was reduced. Do you find that there is a big uptake of the incentive to plant trees?

Mr Scott: Yes, there is. It has meant that different types of farm models are now eligible for tree planting. The average size of a farm in Northern Ireland is relatively small, and the previous forest expansion scheme, which, hopefully, will open up again soon, provided a good grant. The minimum

threshold for that scheme was three hectares. For a small farming unit, that might be too big a leap to take. In the new scheme, landowners can make multiple applications. So, if they want to do 0.2 hectares this year to see how it works, and they like what they see, in five years' time, they could decide to go for a three-hectare block elsewhere on the farm. The small woodland grant really has been a huge benefit. When it opened earlier this year, certainly through the project areas that I was working in, we got a big uptake.

Mr Irwin: Thank you.

Mr McGlone: Thank you, gentlemen, for your time. I have come across a certain issue quite a bit, and it is COVID-related. You will probably have been aware of it over the last 15 months. There has been a huge increase in house adaptations, the consequence of which is that there is a serious demand for wood and the price has gone up. With regard to global markets and before we talk about necessary afforestation, is anyone keeping an eye on the balance between the quantity of wood being cut and afforestation? We talked earlier about plantation. I live in Ballinderry. The name comes from Baile an Doire, which means the "townland of the oak". Apparently, it was covered with oak trees in pre-plantation times, but now there is just farmland and there are few oaks about. I go back to my original question: who is keeping an eye on the science of it all and the demand for wood and timber? Who is trying to balance it out? There is also the question about increased tree planting, and William's point about the incentivisation of farmers to do that, potentially in the context of a climate Bill.

Mr Scott: Re timber production and our use of timber, the UK is one of the biggest importers of timber in the EU. The percentage that we import compared with the percentage that we produce is way out of kilter. The Forestry Commission was set up in the first place after the First World War to help us to be self-sufficient in timber production. The Forestry Commission and our Forest Service, as part of that group of bodies, have looked at the level of timber production and how much we import. That is why we advocate that sustainable forestry for timber production be included and looked at carefully. We do not want to eradicate commercial forestry; we want to increase commercial forestry, but in a sustainable way and not by robbing Peter to pay Paul. That applies to our native woodlands as well. That is why a new forestry strategy, with a land use strategy as part of it, means that we can do our bit for climate and nature. On doing our bit for climate, it also means that we can increase our sustainable timber production locally.

On the question of incentivisation for farmers, currently, if a farmer or landowner who gets the single farm payment decides, off their own bat and at their own expense, to create a woodland on their farm, they will lose their single farm payment for that land. If they go down a grant-funded route, with some form of DAERA grant, for example, or if they are meeting an EU directive such as the water framework directive, they will keep their single farm payment for the next 20 years. We need to do more to incentivise farmers, but we also need to do more so that we do not take away that impetus [*Inaudible owing to poor sound quality.*] We need to see those natural habitats in a farm and as part of the farming model. If they can be seen as part of a working farm, the funding can be seen as "public money for public goods".

Mr McGlone: What about the animals that live in those woodlands? Do you work with the likes of the RSPB, for example, on the introduction of new birds? Is there a collegiate approach to that?

Mr Scott: Yes. The Woodland Trust and all the other major players in Northern Ireland and across the UK work together. We have a forum that gets together regularly. We are always learning from each other. First, we have to create the habitat. If we create the habitat, nature usually brings back better on its own than we can try to do artificially. The most important thing is to create the new habitat, protect the habitat that we have and get the habitat that we have into a favourable condition. Ancient woodland is the most biodiverse habitat on land, and 0.04% of our land cover is made up of ancient woodland. We have a huge amount of work to do to [*Inaudible owing to poor sound quality*] biodiversity crisis.

Mr McGlone: OK. Thanks very much indeed for that.

Mr Harvey: I will be quick. When are we likely to see the impact and benefit of the Forests for our Future schemes?

Mr Scott: Very quickly. It will take a long time before we see the full benefits of the schemes. I do not know whether you are aware of it, but one example of the ecosystem services that are provided by

trees is the Pontbren study that was done in Wales. In that, trees and woods were integrated into the farming model in a catchment-wide approach. After three years, they found that a five-metre shelter belt reduced by 60 times the overland flow in a field. After, I think, five years, the peak flow within that catchment area and the flood risk had reduced by 40%. You get those initial benefits almost straight away from woodland creation.

In addition, the species that woodland supports will change over its lifetime. Younger woodlands will be much more open and will be a bigger draw for butterflies and other invertebrates. Once it starts to develop into a mature woodland, you start to build the species.

The initial planting of the woodland and just having it as a natural habitat has climate and nature benefits pretty much from day one.

Mr Harvey: That is great. Thank you very much. What about incentivising tree planting beyond agriculture? What *[Inaudible owing to poor sound quality]* that?

Mr Scott: Absolutely. The work that we do goes beyond the farming community and involves local schools, community groups and members of the public. If everybody who has a garden planted a native tree in that garden, it would make a great difference to climate and nature.

On incentivisation, the grant systems could be improved, but they are a really good starting point. There is the potential to open them up beyond the agricultural community. At the moment, to avail yourself of those grants, you need a category 1 or category 2 farm business number. Opening up some of the grant schemes to the wider landowning community would be of great benefit. As I mentioned, free trees for schools, communities and the public estate would also make a big difference.

Mr Harvey: Yes, that is what I was thinking. Even if a few people with large gardens planted trees, it would make a difference. Thank you very much.

The Chairperson (Mr McAleer): OK. Paul and Dave, thank you for coming to the Committee. It was very helpful, and we are grateful that you joined us. Sometimes, we veered a bit away from the Climate Change Bill, which is what the session was about, but it was informative and helpful. You will be very welcome back in the future. Thank you.

Mr Armstrong: Thank you.

The Chairperson (Mr McAleer): Take care.