“The Department’s General Duty of promoting afforestation and sustainable forestry refers to all forests in Northern Ireland, not only the Department’s forest land. The Department recognises the valuable contribution that forestry makes in achieving its vision of a thriving, sustainable rural community. Through the Forest Service, it aims to ensure the sustainability of forests as an invaluable heritage, expansion of tree cover, [and] management of forests in a way that increases biodiversity, enhances the landscape and assists in improving water quality.”

A Delivery Plan for the Implementation of the Forestry Act (Northern Ireland) 2010

“The Department’s purpose is to support a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone”
Dr. Denis McMahon, Permanent Secretary of the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, 2018.

Northern Ireland Public Opinion of Forestry Surveys, conducted regularly since 2005, have consistently found that almost all respondents believed that forestry was worth supporting, to provide places for wildlife to live and for recreation, and most respondents would like to see more woodland locally.
Public Opinion of Forestry 2019, Northern Ireland

In addition to the many other benefits forests and woodland provide for people, it is Government policy to promote forest expansion to mitigate both climate change and flood risk. Operation of forestry grant schemes (under the Rural Development Programme, Northern Ireland) and Felling Regulations provide opportunities for Forest Service to promote the delivery of ecosystem services from new and regenerated woodland, through the use of appropriate forest design and tree establishment techniques.

Information published on the DAERA website shows the extent of land potentially suitable for afforestation, and where afforestation can be of benefit in terms of flood risk mitigation.
- Indicative map for woodland creation
- Opportunity mapping for woodland creation to reduce flood risk in Northern Ireland
- Quantifying the hydrological effect of woodland creation in the Camowen and Drumragh catchments, Omagh, Northern Ireland

Recent research commissioned by Forest Service and prepared by Forest Research (Opportunity mapping for woodland creation to reduce flood risk) demonstrates how afforestation can also contribute to flood alleviation by identifying priority areas for woodland creation to benefit flood risk management and mitigation. The damaging impact of extreme rainfall and corresponding localised flooding is illustrated by the events in 2010 when the Colebrooke River burst its banks near Lisnaskea, causing considerable damage, and demonstrating the need for action to manage flood risk in the future.

Forestry planning can seek to identify opportunities for woodland expansion to deliver benefits that are complementary to Forest Service forests by contributing to the local landscape character, and increasing connectivity between areas of neighbouring non-Forest Service woodland in the landscape.

Information on the potential contribution of woodland to community development, and its capacity to deliver ecosystem services, is integral to understanding the contribution of sustainable forestry to a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone. Relevant information can be captured from casual inspection of woodland adjacent to Forest Service forests and used to assess its potential. Consideration of non-forestry uses of land adjacent to forests can also be relevant to the Department’s purpose, and may lead to opportunities to realise both environmental and economic benefits.
Opportunity: Identify potential for promoting woodland expansion adjacent to Forest Service forests, where appropriate.

Opportunity: Review the extent of non-Forest Service woodland in the East Fermanagh/East Tyrone Forestry Planning Area, and the range of pressures that could affect its sustainability.

Activity: Assess provision of **ecosystem services** by non-Forest Service woodland adjacent to forests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Landscape improvement through tree planting</td>
<td>- Woodland ecosystem services, benefitting people, the environment, and the economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Baseline information on woodland management</td>
<td>- Landscape scale woodland management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>