

HOUSE OF LORDS EUROPEAN UNION COMMITTEE SUB-COMMITTEE D (ENVIRONMENT AND AGRICULTURE)

‘INQUIRY INTO THE ADAPTATION OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY TO CLIMATE CHANGE: THE EU POLICY RESPONSE’

Supplementary Memorandum: EU Woodland

Forestry and woodland statistics

A number of statistics exist which describe the extent and type of woodland in the UK and Europe. Statistics of land use cover are rarely exact. Most use a variety of census or sampling techniques, maps and aerial photographs or remote sensing data to arrive at estimates. Almost all have degrees of error and many are under a programme of refinement and review.

Figures used in this paper for comparison with other European and global forest resources are drawn from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UNFAO) Global Forest Resource Assessment 2005 and earlier UNFAO reports.

Other figures are from the Forestry Commissions published statistics (which in some cases are directly comparable to UNFAO figures) and from the National Inventory of Woodland and Trees (NIWT).

Comparisons are based on a number of standard definitions.

Headline statistics

The following headline statistics are drawn from the various tables in the appended document (references can be found at the end of the paper)

- The UK is one of the least wooded areas of Europe, with just 11.7per cent woodland cover compared to around 37per cent for EU – 27 (44 per cent for Europe as a whole).
- Northern Ireland has just 6.5per cent, followed by England at 8.7per cent. The next lowest is the Republic of Ireland with 9.7per cent (this excludes ‘micro-states’ such as Malta, Monaco and Andorra).
- France and Greece have more than double the woodland cover of the UK; Spain more than three times
- Of the approx 2.8 million ha of woodland in the UK around 1 million is estimated to be native woodland – about 37per cent of total woodland cover woodland or 4per cent of the land area of the UK
- Around 30per cent of UK woodland is owned by the Forestry Commission and Forest Service Northern Ireland
- World forest cover is around 30 per cent

Woodland cover in the UK

The area of woodland in the UK at 31 March 2009 is estimated to be 2.84 million hectares. This represents (in rounded percentages) 12 per cent of the total land area in the UK, 9 per cent in England, 17 per cent in Scotland, 14 per cent in Wales and 7 per cent in Northern Ireland.¹

Of the total woodland cover, around 1.3 million hectares (47per cent) is in Scotland, 1.1 million hectares (40per cent) in England, 0.3 million hectares (10per cent) in Wales and 0.1 million hectares (3per cent) in Northern Ireland².

Table 1. Area of woodland by forest type and owner ³ FC= Forestry Commission, FS = Forest Service Northern Ireland

Type and ownership	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	UK
	000's ha				
Conifers					
FC/ FS woodland	146	418	91	56	710
Non-FC/ FS ²	219	624	65	10	918
Total conifer	365	1 042	156	66	1628
Broadleaves					
FC/ FS woodland	55	29	14	6	104
Non-FC/ FS	709	271	114	16	1110
Total B/L	764	300	128	22	1 213
Total all					
FC/ FS woodland	201	447	105	61	814
Non-FC/ FS woodland	928	894	179	26	2027
Total	1128	1341	284	88	2841

Around 1.2 million hectares is broadleaved, both native and non-native tree species. There is no single definitive figure for native woodland. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) gives the native woodland area as 1,058,721 ha, lower than the total broadleaved figure.

Designations, protection and certification

A small proportion of UK woodland is protected by designations – Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) in Northern Ireland, National Nature Reserves (NNRs), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protected areas (SPAs). No national statistics are collected for this and figures are drawn from a report on protected forest areas in the UK produced by Simon Pryor and George Peterken in 2001⁴

Table 4. Area of woodland under statutory protection⁵

Type of protection	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	UK
	000's ha				
SAC	24	22	1	0	47
SPA	--	--	1	--	--
NNR	9	19	1	0	30
SSSI	80	38	9	2	129

The total certified woodland area in the UK is 1.28 million hectares, including all Forestry Commission/ Forest Service woodland. Overall, 45 per cent of the UK woodland area is certified.

Comparing UK woodland cover with the rest of Europe and beyond

Total world woodland or forest cover is around 30per cent of land area.

Table 5. World forest cover

Country	Forest area (million ha)	Total land area (million ha)	Forest as per cent of land area
Europe			
United Kingdom	3	24	12
Total EU-27	156	419	37
Non-EU	37	152	25
Russian Federation	809	1 689	48
Total Europe	1 002	2 261	44
Asia	571	3 087	19
North & Central America	706	2 144	33
South America	832	1 743	48
Africa	635	2 968	21
Oceania	206	849	24
World	3 952	13 053	30

The UK is one of the least wooded parts of Europe. Only the Netherlands at 10.8per cent and Denmark at 11.8per cent are equal or lower than the UK as a whole (excluding microstates). Within the UK, Northern Ireland at 6.4per cent and England at 8.6per cent are the two bottom countries amongst the EU 27 states. Wales and Scotland are 13.7per cent and 17.2per cent respectively, i.e. above the UK average.

For comparison France and Greece both have slightly less than 30per cent woodland cover and Spain has almost 36per cent cover; three times that of the UK and almost five times that of Northern Ireland. Average woodland cover for the whole of Europe is over 44per cent. This puts Europe above, but the UK below, the global average.

There does not appear to be comparable figures for trees outside woodland. However the UK is unusual in the number of individual trees in the countryside, largely due to our history of enclosure by hedgerows – leading to large numbers of trees in these linear features - and our parklands and pasture woodlands.

Table 6. Comparison of UK woodland cover with a selection of other European countries

Country	Land area					Inland water	Total area
	Forest		Other wooded land	Other land			
				Total	with tree cover		
	1000 ha	per cent of land area	1000 ha	1000 ha	1000 ha	1000 ha	1000 ha
United Kingdom	2,845	11.8	20	21,223	24	203	24,291
England		8.6					
Scotland		17.2					
Wales		13.7					
Northern Ireland		6.4					
Rep. Ireland	669	9.7	41	6,179	-	138	7,027
Netherlands	365	10.8	0	3,023	0	765	4,153
Denmark	500	11.8	136	3,607	-	66	4,309
Hungary	1,976	21.5	0	7,235	95	92	9,303
Belgium	667	22.0	27	2,334	-	25	3,053
France	15,554	28.3	1,708	37,748	269	140	55,150
Greece	3,752	29.1	2,780	6,358	-	306	13,196
Poland	9,192	30.0	-	21,437	-	640	31,269
Switzerland	1,221	30.9	67	2,667	-	174	4,129
Germany	11,076	31.7	-	23,819	-	808	35,703
Bulgaria	3,625	32.8	27	7,411	-	36	11,099
Italy	9,979	33.9	1,047	18,385	-	723	30,134
Czech Rep	2,648	34.3	0	5,080	96	159	7,887
Spain	17,915	35.9	10,299	21,730	-	655	50,599
Portugal	3,783	41.3	84	5,283	-	48	9,198
Austria	3,862	46.7	118	4,293	-	113	8,386
Sweden	27,528	66.9	3,257	10,377	1,353	3,834	44,996
Finland	22,500	73.9	802	7,145	177	3,367	33,814
Total Europe	1,001,394	44.3	100,925	1,157,788	8,044	37,611	2,297,719

¹ [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/area09.pdf/\\$FILE/area09.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/area09.pdf/$FILE/area09.pdf)

² <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/website/forstats2008.nsf/LUContents/061E41873F94CC788025735D0034F33B>

³ Forestry Statistics 2009 – Woodland area and planting, area of woodland 2009, downloaded at: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/website/forstats2009.nsf/LUContents/061E41873F94CC788025735D0034F33B>

⁴ Pryor, S. and Peterken G. (2001) Protected forest areas in the UK – a report prepared for WWF and the Forestry Commission by the Oxford Forestry Institute, downloaded at: [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/ProtectedForest_AreaReport.pdf/\\$FILE/ProtectedForest_AreaReport.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/ProtectedForest_AreaReport.pdf/$FILE/ProtectedForest_AreaReport.pdf)

⁵ Forestry statistics 2009, Environment, Forest Protected areas, downloaded at:
<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/website/forstats2009.nsf/0/5BE8AF80C23249928025734C00490AA6>