ABSTRACT
This island has undergone a substantial afforestation programme in the last 40 years. This paper summarizes the results of research undertaken to examine local response to afforestation. The study is set in the Arigna region, an area of 1,256 square miles encompassing parts of counties Roscommon, Leitrim, Sligo and Cavan. Relying both on documentary evidence and in-depth qualitative interviews conducted with local stakeholders, the results suggest more local resistance to afforestation than one might expect. Among the reasons for this resistance is the institutional means by which afforestation has been conducted, the history of land tenure in Ireland, the tree species planted and the aesthetics of the stands once they are established. On the other hand the study also documents the fact that those responsible for afforestation have responded to local concerns, and resistance to planting forests seems to be declining in our study area. We conclude with a discussion of ways in which afforestation might be made more locally acceptable.

INTRODUCTION
In the minds of many observers, afforestation would seem to be an unmitigated good. The benefits society derives from forests are well known and widely acknowledged. One might assume local public support for the creation and maintenance of forests would be particularly likely in Ireland, given that this once largely forested island experienced deforestation of epic proportions over a thousand-year period (OCarroll 2004; Moody and Martin 2001). One hundred years ago, Ireland had only 1.5 percent of its land base in forests (Neeson 1991) while the current figure is only about 10 percent (Forest Service 2003a).

Perceptions about planting forests held by either the general public or by professional foresters and local residents’ reaction to it can turn out to be two very different things, however. In short, local public reactions to afforestation and subsequent forest management in many places in the world have not been universally positive (Thomson 1988). Such response, particularly at the level of the rural community where afforestation and forest management are actually carried out and the impacts are most immediately felt, is a more complex matter than might be immediately obvious. Past and present uses of the lands in question, land tenure history and the evolution of environmental and aesthetic concerns, all play a role (Ni Dhubháin and Wall 1999).

This paper details the results of a case study of local reaction to afforestation and associated forest management efforts in the area surrounding Arigna village in County Roscommon in north-west Ireland. The authors also assembled information on the broader context in which afforestation and public response to afforestation and forest management is located. We believe the results are relevant not only for understanding the response to afforestation and forest management in one place in Ireland but also as a step in building a more general understanding of the role played by historical land use, land tenure history and place-
based environmental/aesthetic values in response to such land use.

Forests and land tenure in Ireland

The imposition of landlord/tenant or plantation system that ultimately resulted in transferring ownership- but not necessarily occupancy- of most land in Ireland from the Celtic/Catholic majority to the Anglo-Norman (protestant) minority was begun in the late 1500s. This Anglo-Norman settlement effort was initially successful but over time Celtic culture and military power reasserted itself (albeit largely under a variety of often competing governing clans in different parts of the island) to the point that only the region around Dublin (known as the Pale) was under control of the English king. It was commonly said that the Anglo-Norman settlers in most of Ireland were “more Irish than the Irish themselves” (Joyce 1924 809). However, this period of the reassertion of Celtic political and cultural control was ended with a vengeance by Oliver Cromwell beginning in 1649 (Moody and Martin 2001). The result of this bloody period was a system of landed estates largely controlled by the Protestant “ascendancy” but largely populated by Catholic tenant farmers, cottiers and agricultural labourers (Hooker 1938). These arrangements, along with the so-called Penal Laws, which forced Catholics to subdivide their land holdings among all male heirs, helped to set the stage for the Great Famine of 1845-52 and massive emigration of native Irish people that went on for more than a century (Kinealy 1997).

Agitation for land reform in the middle 1800s resulted in a land war in the early 1880s and eventually to a series of Land Acts beginning in 1870 and Land Purchase Acts beginning in 1885 (Pomfret 1969). The ultimate result of these Acts was a system in which tenants could purchase the land they occupied using government loans. In the end more than 13 million acres were purchased by occupiers from estates transforming Ireland largely into a country of small land-holders (Pomfret 1969).

All of this history had several implications for forestry. Each period of historical transition seems to have been accompanied by a new round of deforestation. Warfare tends to be hard on forests and the island endured literally centuries of debilitating conflict in which an oft-used tactic was to burn and pillage the territory of one’s enemy both to remove hiding cover and to starve local inhabitants (Joyce 1924). Additionally, the land reform of the early twentieth century set off another round of forest liquidation as timber harvest accelerated when the estates were being liquidated. Land reform (for all its other virtues) also led to the fragmentation of the land base, complicating any attempt at broad scale afforestation (O’Carroll 1984). But as our discussion below will illustrate, perhaps the most significant impact of all this for present-day forestry was what many have described as a “land hunger” on the part of many rural Irish accompanied by a lingering mistrust of “outside” organizations or experts suggesting land use changes including afforestation (Gallagher 1991; Ní Dhubháin and Wall 1999).

By the time Ireland gained independence in 1922, slightly more than 1% of the land area was forested (Neeson 1991). The First World War emphasised the importance of a domestic supply of wood and the fledgling Irish government set out to increase woodland cover by launching an afforestation programme. The government emphasised planting on state lands; private landowners and farmers showed little interest in afforestation. Government policy restricted the price for land used for forestry so as to ensure that good and even marginal agricultural land was retained in agriculture; forestry was restricted to the poorest of soils. This undoubtedly contributed to the perception among many Irish farmers that forestry was only suitable on land that was good for nothing else (Ní Dhubháin and Gardiner 1994).

The limited amount of private afforestation that took place between 1920 and 1980 was by the few estate owners that remained in the country. The lack of interest in afforestation among the majority of private landowners was perhaps not surprising given that they had only recently owned their land, and the produce from the land was needed to feed their large families. The lack of tradition of tree planting arising from the previous land tenure system coupled with the association of trees with the landed gentry contributed to this lack of interest in tree planting (Ní Dhubháin and Wall 1999).
This all changed in the 1980s when planting by the private sector increased dramatically. The catalyst was the availability of generous EU subsidies including an establishment grant and an annual premium paid to compensate the landowner for the loss of production arising from afforestation over a period of 20 years. Approval for grant-aid is subject to a number of criteria: species mixture, site productivity, layout of plantation etc. and afforestation is undertaken in collaboration with an approved forester. The Forest Service consults with relevant bodies regarding the landscape, archaeological and environmental implications of the afforestation proposal.

In 1990 private planting (15,000 ha) in Ireland exceeded state planting (8,000 ha) for the first time (Ní Dhubháin and Wall 1999). At this time a semi-state company, Coillte Teo. (The Irish Forestry Board) was established to take over the management of state forests from the Forest Service. Since then, the Forest Service has continued to be responsible for inter alia national forest policy, the promotion of private forestry, and the administration of planting and other forestry grants.

Forestry in Ireland has witnessed many changes over the past 400 years. Over the past twenty years the forest cover has increased from 4.8% of the total land area in 1983 (328,000 hectares) to a current level of 10% (Forest Service 2003a). As a consequence it was timely to undertake a study examining the social and economic impacts of forestry nationally and at the case study level. The present case study, which focuses on the local response to forest planting, is part of a larger set of studies of the social and economic impacts of changes in forest conditions in Ireland (Ní Dhubháin et al. 2006).

Profile of the case study area

The choice of the Arigna area as a case study was driven by two primary considerations. First, the State began to purchase land for afforestation in this area in the 1960s and consequently the area includes a middle-aged forest cover. In the period 1973 to 1978, a major socio-economic study of County Leitrim (in which a large part of the case study is located) found that the soils in the area were suitable for forestry and outlined the high growth yields that could be achieved (Bulfin 1978). Second, and perhaps more importantly, this area has experienced very strong opposition to forestry development in the past and resistance still exists. The researchers believed that understanding the specific reasons for this resistance and attempting to assess if they have changed over time, and if so why, would be very useful in helping to ensure that future forestry programmes are more responsive to the values of the local communities in which they would be embedded.

Agriculture has always been a pillar of the local economy although its share of employment has fallen dramatically over the past two decades from 42% in 1981 to 14% in 2002 although this figure is much greater than the national share of 6.4% (CSO 1981; CSO, 2002). The dependence on farming activities is even more marked in the centre of the CSA with 36% of the working population still depending on agriculture (Anon 2000).

The forest cover in the CSA is 39,362 ha of which 42% is privately owned while the remainder is owned by Coillte. Afforestation by Coillte started in the area in the late 1960’s and culminated at the end of the 1990’s. Since then Coillte’s rate of afforestation has dramatically fallen and the organisation now focuses on the management of its existing estate. Conifers represented 96.6% of the total forest cover in the area in 2003 and while no detailed figures on species are available it is estimated that Sitka spruce represents about 80% of this coniferous cover.

Much of the 16,532 ha of private forest in the CSA was planted since 1980 when the EU grant-aid for afforestation was introduced. Current figures from the Forest Service show non-farmers are responsible for a high proportion of private planting in the area. This trend contrasts with the rest of Ireland where farmers are by far the main actors in private afforestation. In 1992 non-farmers were responsible for about 50% of the total area planted that year in both Counties Roscommon and Leitrim and in 2000 they were responsible for 42% and 21% of the total areas planted in those counties respectively. Table 1 shows the afforestation rates in a selection of years in Co Leitrim.
A survey of the forestry and timber businesses within the case study area carried out during the field phase of the study (Ní Dhubháin et al. 2006) indicated that the bulk of employment generated by the sector is concentrated “upstream”, at the establishment phase. The relatively large number of afforestation contractors (14) operating in the area reflects the recent expansion of forestry in the region and the assistance that new entrepreneurs gained through local development programmes. Few if any of those afforesting do so themselves and instead hire these establishment contractors who operate both within and outside the case study area. These companies rarely function only in forestry but rather forestry work complements their main income.

A large panel board mill located in area is a major provider of employment in the CSA (66 full-time jobs). However, much of the raw material for this mill comes from outside the CSA. Coillte is also a significant employer. In addition to these businesses a number of small timber users such as woodturners, woodcarvers and furniture makers operate in this area. They essentially rely on the supply of hardwood species for their activity and most of them are self-employed.

### METHODS

In addition to the secondary demographic, economic and forestry data used in the study area profile above, this analysis relies primarily on two sources of data. One was a search of secondary sources of information on the history of forestry and perceptions of forestry in and around the CSA. This included newspaper accounts, published research articles and related material that could lend some contextual understanding and preliminary insights into the history of forestry and reactions to forestry in the CSA. The second source of data was derived from interviews with stakeholders in and around the CSA.

The methods used for collecting primary (interview) data were qualitative and inductive. Current perceptions of forestry in the study area were assessed using semi-structured interviews. The grounded theory method of data collection and analysis was used to gather and analyze interview data in this study (Strauss and Corbin 1998; Charmaz 2000). The process builds an increasingly complex representation of the social phenomena under study through responses to interview questions. In this approach, insights emerge from the data, in contrast to testing data against predetermined hypotheses. Typically, observed patterns emerge early in the data collection and are then tested with additional observations. These patterns form an index into which the recurrent subjects and themes in each interview are allocated. As further interviews are analysed the index is re-used and enriched with each new theme the reader comes across. Data collection is suspended only when patterns stabilize and no novel information is forthcoming from later observations (Charmaz 2000). We chose qualitative methods in order to capture a rich and encompassing range of worldviews concerning forestry and afforestation that could not be captured with a purely quantitative or hypothesis testing approach.

In this study, the categories of interview subjects included: producers- people deriving their living from the land (e.g. farmers and foresters); consumers- people living or using the area but not deriving their incomes from the land (e.g. community members and visitors) and decision makers- people involved in public policy and lobbying (e.g. councillors, officers from administrations, local group representatives, NGOs).

The identification and selection of individuals in each stakeholder category was initially done by using local and regional key informants. These included representatives from organisations such as Teagasc (The Agriculture and Food Development Board), the Forest Service, County Boards and Councils, and locally based rural development
organisations. The initial group of respondents then guided the interviewer to further contacts through chain referrals.

An interview guide was used to aid the interviewer, but the discourse was essentially a co-construction between the interviewer and the interviewee. The interviewer aimed to cover the objectives of the research including: (1) The general perception of interviewee of the rural environment she/he lives in; (2) the role(s) forestry plays in that environment and (3) how, if at all, this role can be optimised or reinforced from the interviewee’s point of view.

Thirty-one persons were interviewed in total: 12 persons in the producer category, 7 in the consumer category and 12 in the decision-maker category. Conducted between February and April 2004, the interviews were held mostly in people’s home or less frequently in their office or in public places (i.e. pubs, coffee shops, etc.) and varied in length from 30 minutes to 3 hours in length. Unless interviewees opposed it, each interview was recorded and subsequently transcribed. Four interviewees did not wish to be recorded and in these cases the interviewer took detailed notes which were then transcribed in an attempt to reproduce the interview as faithfully as possible.

RESULTS

Secondary Sources

Before turning to the results derived from our primary sources (interviews) we will present in narrative form, the results from our search of secondary sources concerning the history of forestry and related matters in the case study area.

In the 1960s the State began to purchase land in the area for afforestation. Emigration from this part of Ireland was high at the time. As the population entered into another phase of the historical population decline begun 120 years previously, people began to now associate tree planting with rural depopulation and the perception developed that “trees replaced people” (Sweeney 1983).

The antipathy towards forestry continued when European Union funding made afforestation attractive to the private sector. This funding was initially targeted at farmers in the disadvantaged areas, which included the counties in the case study area (Ni Dhubháin and Wall 1999). However, uptake of grant-aid by farmers was initially limited primarily due to the long delay in receiving any economic returns from planted forests. At the same time, financial and commercial institutions recognised the potential of forestry (Neeson 1991). The inflation-proof aspect of forestry and the tax-free capital gains on plantation maturity made investing in forestry particularly attractive (Neeson 1991).

All these factors coupled with the availability of grant-aid for forest establishment to non-farmers prompted these institutions to buy and afforest land nationwide. They were particularly attracted to the CSA because of the high growth rates for conifers there (Ni Dhubháin 1995). They hired management companies to undertake the establishment and management of the forests. For some locals the purchase of land was a step too far. Local landowners did not welcome the prospect of a competitor for the land they expected to have an opportunity to buy in order to consolidate their small holdings (Ni Dhubháin 1995). The purchase of land by institutions, which were more often than not based in Dublin, was also reminiscent of the days of the absentee landlord. The opposition culminated in 1987 when machinery that was being used in afforestation within the case study area was damaged (Anon 1987).

Quotes in local newspapers at the time demonstrate the strength of the opposition to forestry: “the issue of present day forestry policy is essentially a question of the survival of Leitrim’s population or their replacement by multi-national trees” (Guckian 1987). People in the area believed that forestry replaced people and was some form of sinister depopulating force (Gallagher 1991). More recently a study by O’Leary et al. (2000) examined the perceptions of forestry among Leitrim’s population. Their main findings were that the majority of those interviewed considered the extent of forest cover in their county to be excessive. They also believed that forestry occupied land that should be used for agriculture. In contrast, Frawley (1998) found that farmers who had afforested land in the region were satisfied with their decision to plant trees.
Interview results

The following is a summary of the results of interviews held with the stakeholders in the CSA.

Forestry and the Community

One consistent theme was an underlying opposition to forestry development in the area. This opposition was shared by the majority of the interviewees, with the exception of the forestry professionals and related to both the existing forest and the potential expansion of the forest cover. A number of reasons were given for this opposition.

One of these is the choice of tree species: “Blanket afforestation is using non-indigenous species that is alien to the people and alien to the landscape.” As noted earlier conifers have dominated the afforestation programme with Sitka spruce most commonly planted. However, it is not a native species (yew is the only native conifer).

Furthermore, afforestation was perceived to bring “isolation” after the trees had grown and “block the view” between neighbours as well as a depopulating agent by a number of interviewees. This perception of isolation was often associated with the representation people have of the landscape they live in. The traditional Irish landscape is perceived by people as an open landscape where one “can see other farms” and “can look over the valley”. The closure of this landscape by forest blocks creates a feeling of isolation whereby people don’t have any more visual contact with their neighbours. A number of interviewees noted that some dwellings had progressively got surrounded by forests and that these were eventually abandoned soon after. Whatever the reasons for this abandonment, in the minds of some of those interviewed it was linked to the forests leading to the perception of forestry as a depopulating agent.

One explanation put forward by foresters to make sense of the opposition to forestry was the absence of a “forest culture” and history in the region. Opposition also seems to be linked to the importance of the corporate sector in the area. As highlighted earlier a substantial proportion of private afforestation in this area has been undertaken by non-farmers.

The area experienced very strong opposition to forestry about 10 years ago. The main reason for that was the introduction of pension schemes from investment companies. Big management companies were buying lands on behalf of those investment companies. Their clients were based everywhere, even in the UK, but very few were from this area.

For people inside the community the involvement of the corporate sector has led to a competition between big investors and local communities to the detriment of the latter. When confronted with notification that afforestation projects are to commence, interviewees reported that local people found it difficult to obtain a local contact in order to put forward their concerns and comments. This was a particularly persistent theme among local residents interviewed.

On the farming community side the opposition to forestry seems to be embedded in the land ownership history as well as in the conflicting nature of land uses between agriculture and forestry. However, despite widespread opposition to additional afforestation, the recent increased participation of farmers in the afforestation programme was generally seen as a positive move. In particular the involvement of farmers in the Farm Partnership Scheme with Coillte was welcomed.

Coillte now works on a leasing system. Farmers are leasing their lands for forestry, it is a partnership between themselves and Coillte. They get a bit of an income every year and then at the final stage they get a lump sum. Forestry now has begun to be seen as a type of farming.

The state afforestation programme in this area was subjected to a lot of opposition from farmers and the general public in the past. However there was general agreement among those interviewed from the professional and public side that Coillte’s consultation process has improved and that the company now considers the views of the local community. The presence of a local Coillte office in the area and the creation of a “social forum” that discusses issues regarding Coillte’s forestry operations seem to be important factors. Now
people can identify a local contact when issues related to forests owned by Coillte arise.

Turning to the subject of employment, the general perception among local residents interviewed was that commercial forestry based on Sitka spruce plantations generates very little employment locally. The foresters interviewed did acknowledge the mechanised nature of the forest work but they also pointed out the difficulty in finding people willing to undertake manual forest operations.

Forestry and the Environment

One reason for local opposition to forestry relates to its visual impact on the landscape. When people were asked to specify the type of forest they objected to, it became evident that they were essentially referring to spruce monocultures. They did not object to broadleaved woodlands. “Blanket planting” was seen as intrusive in the landscape.

We would have some concerns about blanket planting right up the side of the mountains; it has too much interference with the landscape.

The case study includes a number of ‘Areas of High Amenity’ and ‘Areas of Scenic Beauty’ and there is a strong emphasis on developing tourism in this part of Ireland. Further, the natural environment in this area was considered an important asset and one that makes the place attractive to live in.

Another set of concerns about afforestation raised by interviewees concerned the built environment. A traditional and historical feature of the countryside in the vicinity of Arigna is the presence of archaeological features, mainly underground sweat houses which are a type of sauna. Again with reference to the extension of the private estate there was a fear expressed that the archaeological guidelines for afforestation projects may not be applied.

Those interviewed also voiced concerns about the effect additional afforestation may have on open public access to countryside/walking routes. While Coillte currently operates an open access policy in its forests, there is no public access to private forests. However, in the case of official “rights of way” it is Forest Service policy that tree planting may not take place on these access routes (Forest Service, 2003b). Yet, there are many unofficial rights of way used and once the land is afforested both the trees and the fences make access very difficult. Existing routes are considered by the Tourist Board to be of major importance in attracting and developing tourism in the area. A number of forest walks have also been set up in small woodlands and are perceived as socially important mainly for the benefit of the local communities. When asked about the use local people make of forests for recreation purposes it becomes evident that they exclude commercial forestry, which they don’t perceive as being attractive enough.

There was also a concern that as the commercial element of Coillte is emphasised it will be to the detriment of the social element when amenity woodlands are considered. Marked routes and trails were set up at the initiative of local groups or a county council, but their maintenance is the responsibility of the owner of the land they cross. Particularly in the case of private ownership the maintenance sometimes becomes an issue.

The community would install the work but the on-going maintenance may not be clearly defined and that’s a problem with the way-marked routes, with the long distance routes. There is a national problem with the on-going maintenance irrespective of whether they are Coillte lands or private lands.

The perceived impact of forests on fishing was yet another concern. In the past forestry practices undertaken beside rivers and streams have been vigorously accused of causing the decrease in fishing stocks in the area. Under current afforestation guidelines a buffer zone must be maintained beside aquatic zones and forestry operations curtailed in this area, but these were not always maintained in the Arigna area. Trout fishing is an important tourism asset in the region. The decline in this form of tourism has been attributed in part, by both fishermen and tourism organisations, to forestry practices.
Forestry and its Potentialities

One positive theme that emerged concerned the existence of and potential for more development of small scale timber-using businesses based in the CSA. These businesses very often involve only one self-employed person and most of their activity strongly relies on locally available broadleaved timbers. These artisans almost unanimously objected to forestry development that focused only on monoculture Sitka spruce and wanted a more “multi-purpose” style of forest management that included more broadleaves and mixed species.

The species of trees to be planted was another emergent theme. A number of private forest owners in the low land areas of the CSA indicated that they would have preferred to plant deciduous species rather than conifers. The general opinion expressed was that it is more difficult to convince the Forest Service to provide grant aid for broadleaved than for conifer plantations.

I know the argument that Leitrim soils are difficult for growing that sort of trees (i.e. broadleaves). But if you take our plantation as an example, a lot more sites could have been broadleaves. I know a lot of people who would have been in the same situation as me who wanted to plant broadleaved trees but the forestry inspector would have said no.

There was also an acceptance that broadleaves can’t be introduced everywhere because of site constraints. However some argued that broadleaves could be introduced on suitable sites and that this introduction may be of both commercial and ecological benefit in the future if a long-term management approach is adopted. It was also a commonly held opinion among those interviewed that some space should be left for a type of forestry other than the dominant Sitka spruce monoculture. People wanted greater species diversity and in particular more broadleaved species and seemed to object as much to the main species planted in commercial forestry operations as to the objective of that type of forestry.

It almost went too far down a particular road to be able to bring it back again. People got very strongly established. I understand people that are involved in Sitka spruce sites, particularly who put huge investment in harvesting processors. I understand there is a difference between softwood and hardwood and that it involves different machinery. I think the whole idea is to feel that there is a balance.

Finally, one overarching or integrating theme that emerged from the interviews was the perception that forestry has not benefited local communities in the way it was meant to. Forestry is essentially perceived as a business venture rather than as a means to supplement a local and rural economy. In this regard some people suggested that the benefit to the local community from forestry could be increased through forest community projects.

The idea was to set up a community project, to establish a community purchase option and manage the woodland for the direct benefit of the community. Mixing amenity and production on the same site. We brought the idea to the council but they were not interested in it.

No project of this sort has been finalised so far in the CSA. However, a partnership between Coillte and a local community in the CSA has resulted in a Coillte owned woodland being managed for amenity purpose in the vicinity of a village. This has been perceived as a positive move by the locals who initially were strongly opposed to forestry development in this area.

DISCUSSION

Arigna and its surrounds represent a part of Ireland where antagonism towards afforestation and forestry has prevailed for many years. This study found that the level of negative feeling towards forestry in the area has declined but not disappeared. The discussion that now follows will analyze some of the reasons for these dynamics as well as highlight the key causes for the continued negative perceptions of forestry to the extent that they exist. Finally we will also attempt to draw some broader lessons concerning the local acceptability of afforestation and forestry in Ireland and beyond.
Consultation process in solving conflicts

Conflict seems to have decreased in the relationship between Coillte and the local community. The consultation process now used by Coillte seems to have contributed to this improved relationship. In particular, the presence of a local forester, clearly identifiable by stakeholders as the contact person to whom comments and complaints can be lodged, is of key importance. Furthermore the existence of the social forum within Coillte’s organisation has provided a platform for discussion and exchange of views for community and agency representatives. These two initiatives were introduced as part of the process of Coillte receiving certification.

In contrast conflict remains between the local population and private forestry operators. Competition for land in the area increased and this was perceived as unfair competition especially as those investing in forestry were in receipt of grants. Local people resented the fact that these grants, which were initially targeted at rural populations, could be allocated to outside companies and other private forestry operators. This situation seems to have settled with time and was probably helped by the increased participation of local farmers in the afforestation programme either directly or through a partnership approach with Coillte. The key reason for the current tension appears to be the lack of communication between the local population and non-local private forestry operators who are hired by some local landowners to plant trees on private land. Unlike the situation with Coillte, local people find it hard to identify an interlocutor and have no one to consult with when projects commence. It is well documented that lack of consultation can lead to increased conflicts (Hellström and Reunala 1995) and that a more collaborative and participatory approach can help in resolving them (Daniels and Walker 2001). Appelstrand (2002) identifies rationales for public participation and explains that “public participation is relevant in an environmental context because it constitutes a prerequisite for legitimacy, that is, public acceptance of laws, rules and decisions”. The benefits of consultation can be clearly seen in the Arigna case study area.

Land use planning and monitoring

Although relationships are perceived to have improved, interviewees were still not entirely satisfied with the implementation of the forestry planning regulations in the CSA. In short, land use planning was not considered transparent. Despite the protections that the regulations are designed to provide, interviewees registered objections to afforestation on both landscape and archaeological grounds.

One approach being used in other counties may go some way to address these concerns. Forest authorities and local authorities draw up an Indicative Forest Strategy (IFS) for the county. This sets a common land strategy for the county by identifying and recording areas that are suitable for afforestation and areas that are sensitive to it for environmental, aesthetic and/or archaeological reasons. This serves as a common reference document for the various administrations and for the stakeholders.

Monoculture forestry

Objections to the monoculture conifer forests established have been voiced in the case study area for over thirty years. People object on two key grounds: aesthetics and economics. These forests are perceived as foreign and as an isolating agent by local communities. In addition those interviewed indicated that they rarely used this type of forest for recreational purposes. Instead they associated the recreational role of forestry with broadleaved and mixed species forests. The preference for broadleaved forests over coniferous forests was also noted in O’Leary et al.’s (2000) survey of a sample of the Leitrim population.

Another possible contributing reason for the strong dislike for monoculture coniferous forests is that the specific range of products from these forests is not congruent with the well developed timber craft enterprises in the area that rely on local timber. These business owners would like mixed species stands managed over longer rotations and a less intensive type of silvicultural approach. Hyttinen et al. (2000) similarly noted that the move to industrial style forestry can be detrimental to the smaller forest industries - “the adaptation of
forestry to large-scale industry needs (e.g. species selection, diameter restriction) is making the development of new opportunities difficult for small-scale owners as well as small-scale processors”.

**Significance of forestry for the community**

The value of forestry as a source of local employment was hardly ever mentioned by those interviewed. Even when referred to by the interviewer the direct employment benefit from forestry was often contested. Most of those interviewed believed that forestry-linked employment is generated through the processing and timber craft sector. Perhaps more importantly, direct employment is not perceived as the most important benefit associated with forestry even though this is one of the standard criteria used in assessing the socio-economic benefits of the forest sector. Other research (Elands and Wiersum 2001) corroborates this, showing that forestry’s role in rural development is essentially perceived in the context of landscape quality rather than production economics. Elands and O’Leary (2002) advocate that in this circumstance “future forest policy at European level should continue to focus attention on the non-material benefits of forests for rural areas”.

Despite the residual negative attitude towards forestry in the CSA, it seems that over time, as forestry has become part of the landscape, people in the Arigna area have come to view it as a land-use that could and should benefit local communities if afforestation and subsequent forest management is carried out in a way that meshes with local values. As was noted, some took the argument even further and suggested that local communities should take a stronger role in the management of local forests. Indeed if further afforestation development is to succeed in this area, account and use should be made of the proactive attitude of those in the community who feel this way. In particular the recently established Forest Forum should be encouraged and used as an active partner in this process. Applestrand (2002) emphasises the importance of public participation/collaboration in national forest programmes and explain the benefits that can be gained from such an approach: “participation is a pro-active approach to create enhanced understanding of objectives and problems and possible ways to solve them”. In neighbouring countries such as Scotland community participation in forestry issues has been strongly advocated and has given rise to the Rural Development Forestry Network (Jeanrenaud and Jeanrenaud 1997). Furthermore in Wales the national forest strategy “Woodlands for Wales” seeks to provide opportunities for communities to have their say in the management of nearby woodlands. It is important to add that decades of experience in and the literature on public involvement/collaboration clearly indicate that such activities are only maximally effective when the technical experts and the citizens learn from each other (Daniels and Walker 2001). Learning to respect local knowledge and values can be a difficult process for technically trained professionals, but yet it is a vital component of what has come to be called community forestry (Baker and Kusel 2005).

Another lesson here is the role that past and current land tenure and land uses play in receptivity to afforestation and forest management. As Thomson (1988) notes:

Most forestry … initiatives are based either on the premise that rural people will plant trees or that they will preserve and protect trees planted by someone else including the government. However, people will not preserve, protect or plant trees nor allow others to, if doing so is costly to them personally. The rules of land tenure… can make these activities very costly indeed (emphasis added).

We would add that the history of land tenure can also play an important role in all of this.

We can conclude by saying that it is one thing to say that the world needs more forests from the point of view of regional/global environmental considerations or even demand for forest products. It’s quite another to consider the local history, current circumstances and institutional arrangements and land tenure history that create either support or resistance to forestry in a particular place at a particular time. Perhaps the
over-arching lesson from this case study is that foresters and policy makers must come to grips with these considerations if afforestation and forest management are going to be successful in places where they are currently under-developed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank the Council for Forest Research and Development (COFORD) for providing National Development Plan funds for this research.

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