FOREST SERVICE
An tSeirbhís Foraoisí

Annual Report
2025 - 2026

An Agency within the Department of
Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Gníomhaireacht de chuid na Roinne
Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe

An Agency wi'in the Depairtment o
Fairmin, Environment an' Kintra Matthers

Forest Service Agency

Annual Report and Accounts 2025-26

for the year ended

31 March 2026

Laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly under section 11(3) (c) of the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001

by the

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

on

25 June 2026

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Performance Report

Chief Executives perspective on performance

I am pleased to present the Forest Service Annual Report and Accounts for the year end 31 March 2026. The report details the performance in respect of targets and measures set out in the 2025-26 Forest Service Business Plan, and the Agency's financial statements.

In the 2025–26 year, Forest Service fully achieved 4 out of the 6 key targets and considerable progress was made in taking forward workstreams relating to the remaining 2 key targets.

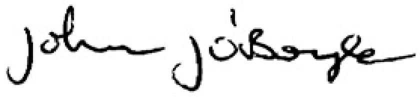
During 2025-26 the Agency made significant contributions towards the delivery of the draft Climate Action Plan (CAP), required under the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 emissions targets. In this business year, Forest Service verified 304 hectares (ha) of new woodland created, which although falls significantly short of the 2025-26 business plan target of 600ha, nevertheless it makes a valuable contribution to overall afforestation aims. This brings the total area of new woodland established to approximately 2,600 hectares, equating to an estimated 5.2 million trees, planted since 2020. In this business year, we commissioned the development of a NI Tree Planting Action Plan, in co-design with key stakeholders, to further increase the annual level of afforestation to meet current and subsequent climate action plans. We also continued our focus on developing the potential for Forest Service forests to contribute to Northern Ireland's capacity to generate renewable electricity.

Over the business year, importantly, Forest Service maintained its independent certification, demonstrating that its forest management planning and on-the-ground operations continue to comply with the UK Woodland Assurance Standard. Retaining this accreditation provides assurance that Forest Service woodlands are managed on a sustainable basis, allowing timber and wood products from the sector to be recognised as derived from sustainable sources to retailers and consumers. Supplying timber to the market on a sustainable basis remains a priority for the Agency, with 412,889 cubic metres of timber supplied in 2025-26, generating income of £11.5M.

During the 2025-26 business year, the implementation of effective plant health legislation and official controls as required under the Windsor Framework, remained a core aspect of Forest Service's work. This focused on protecting the plant health status of our agriculture, forestry, and horticulture sectors and reducing risks of the introduction of pests and diseases in the wider environment. We continued to engage with colleagues from across the UK and the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine Ireland to develop plant health policy and legislation and on important matters of contingency planning, horizon scanning for new and emerging threats to NI plant health. Forest Service in collaboration with Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), took forward a new single portal inspection unit (SPIU) to deliver Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) controls on regulated goods arriving in Northern Ireland. I recognise the considerable effort made by staff in Forest Service and DAERA's Veterinary Service and Animal Health Group (VSAGH) to provide and undertake the training required for the delivery of official controls through a SPIU.

The Agency continued to experience resource pressures during the year and building our capability and capacity remains at the forefront of the Agency's priorities. It is for this reason that I established a Resource Capacity and Capability Committee in 2025-26 and welcome the progress made to address staff resourcing and engagement issues.

I wish to acknowledge and I greatly appreciate my staff for the considerable effort and commitment they have brought to delivering the performance set out in the Forest Service Annual Report and Accounts 2025-26. I remain confident that with this commitment and continued focus, the Agency is well placed to meet future challenges and deliver its priority workstreams and the needs of Northern Ireland citizens.



John Joe O’Boyle
Chief Executive

25 June 2026

Non – Executive Board Member Report

Two new Non-Executive Directors were appointed to the Forest Service Management Board (FSMB) at the beginning of the financial year, Shireen Chambers and Maynard Mawhinney.

The on-going challenges of resourcing the Forest Service and the need to recruit qualified staff is being addressed through the establishment of a Resource, Capacity & Capability Committee with Shireen Chambers as Chair. The role of this Committee, on behalf of the FSMB, is to ensure that all aspects of Forest Service strategic workforce planning, including staffing levels, skill sets, future priorities and, are managed effectively. The Committee will consider how best to manage the priority resourcing requirements across Forest Service, both current and future, against the backdrop of significant recruitment challenges, increased demands for professional and technical skills and knowledge and affordability. This will require taking an Agency-wide view of resourcing issues within the context of the Department's and Forest Service's business priorities, sectoral capacity issues and future NICS resourcing constraints. The Committee has considered proposals for bespoke strategic recruitment such as new apprenticeships grades and graduate trainee forester grades and will continue to develop these and other recruitment options. The Committee reports to the Forest Service Management Board on a regular basis.

The challenges of the 2024-25 storms continue to be worked through in terms of clearance, salvage, making safe and bringing to market affected trees. Encouraging progress has been made with 412,889 cubic metres of timber sold in 2025-26 from prioritised areas impacted by the storm.

The Forest Service annual target to create 600 hectares of new woodland remains challenging with Forest Service verifying 304 hectares (ha) of new woodland created. Although this falls significantly short of the 600ha target, it nevertheless makes a valuable contribution to overall afforestation aims. Both the Audit Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC) and the FSMB have been active in monitoring and challenging progress against the new woodland target with comprehensive briefing being furnished which has provided assurance to the Non-Executive Directors and the FSMB. Forest Service has commissioned work to address this challenge and is developing a Tree Planting Action Plan in co-design with key stakeholders. Engagement with key stakeholders is continuing with the objective of launching the Tree Planting Action Plan by the summer of 2026.

The Agency facilitated mechanical restoration operations across areas of degraded peatland, contributing to their restoration and consequential biodiversity gains. Delivery included positive partnership working with Ulster Forest Service's Plant Health Division continues to provide Official Controls on plants and plant products entering Northern Ireland under the Windsor Framework Agreement. The FSMB, including its Non-Executive Directors, held its meeting in November 2025 at Belfast Port and it was gratifying to recognise the operation of the new inspection units at both Belfast and Larne ports enabling the achievement of a very high rate of compliance checks.

Forest Service continues to deliver its programmes of work using resources from the DAERA budget and as agreed by the Department of Finance and allocated in accordance with the Minister's priorities. In addition, as a Non- Financial Public Corporation, the Forest Service may hold financial reserves, the purpose of which is to shield it from any sudden downtown in the market and for future planned investment. As Non-Executive Members we have supported the FSMB determination to establish and maintain a reserves utilisation plan, which has now been prepared and will reviewed on an annual basis. Non-Executive Members will contribute to monitoring of this in their roles as ARAC and FSMB Members.

Overview

Agency Purpose & Structure

Forest Service is an Executive Agency of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). It is subject to the overall direction of the Minister and delivers the Department's policy and legislative responsibilities for forestry and plant health. The Forest Service Chief Executive is the designated Accounting Officer for the Agency, as appointed by the Principal Accounting Officer, DAERA Permanent Secretary, and reports on the Agency's operations and performance to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

The Minister determines the policy framework within which the Agency operates and approves its key targets and Annual Business Plan. The Minister also agrees the level of resource made available, the scope of the agency's activities and monitors delivery performance. Forest Service continues to operate under Windsor Framework (Implementation) Regulations, which places several of the responsibilities of the Department under the direction and control of the Secretary of State, rather than the DAERA Minister.

Forest Service has operated as an Agency since 1 April 1998 and was further classified as a Non-Financial Public Corporation from 1 April 2020. A Framework Document sets out the context within which the Agency operates, its role, relationship and accountability to the Department and the Minister. Throughout the business year, the Agency has operated through 7 divisions.

Performance Summary

The 2025-26 Forest Service Annual Report reflects the Agency's delivery of 11 targets set in the 2025-26 Agency Business Plan. Within each target below, it is set out which were Key Priority Targets. The Forest Service Management Board (FSMB) monitored the performance of the Agency and progress on achievement of Key Targets throughout the year. The extent of achievement was validated by independent Internal Audit.

This following table reports the Agency's performance on the 11 Key Targets in the 2025-26 Business Plan.

Forest Service Target Number	Target Measure and Description
1 KPT	Create 600 hectares of new woodland by:- - supporting landowners to plant new woodland through our forestry grant schemes; and - acquiring land for afforestation on public forest estate.
Result: Not Achieved **Explanation for Result**: Forest Service verified 304ha of new woodland achieved, which although falls well short of the 2025-26 business plan target of 600ha, makes a valuable contribution to overall afforestation aims. In the business year, forestry grant schemes experienced a lower demand and uptake than in previous years mainly due to competing land use choices.	
2 KPT	Bring forward proposals for Ministerial approval to support forestry grant schemes for the period 2026–32.
Result: Achieved **Explanation for Result**: Options to support forestry grant schemes for the period 2026-32 were prepared and presented for Ministerial agreement to proceed to seek business case approval through required processes.	
3	Ensure that the sustainable management of Forest Service forests meets UK Forestry Standards.
Result: Achieved **Explanation for Result**: Independent Certification was maintained throughout 2025-26 and verified through independent Soil Association audit against the UK Woodland Assurance Standard.	
4 KPT	Carry out peatland restoration works on 400 hectares of Forest Service estate.
Result: Achieved **Explanation for Result**: Mechanical restoration works carried out on 409 hectares within the Forest Service estate in 2025-26.	
5 KPT	Launch a competitive procurement process for potential renewable energy generation on identified forest areas that ensures that the potential for Forest Service forests to contribute to meeting Northern Ireland's targets for 80% renewable electricity generated by 2030 is fully explored.

Forest Service Target Number	Target Measure and Description
Result: Not Achieved **Explanation for Result**: The Forestry Act (NI) 2010 requires the Department's forests to be managed sustainably. The significant damage caused by Storm Ewoyn in 2025 necessitated a full review of forest management and harvesting plans across the forest estate. This was essential to underpin future sustainability and subsequently determine the forest areas with potential that could be made available for windfarm development. The outputs from this work were key components necessary for development of a business case to support the launch of a competitive procurement process in 2025-26 for the development of forests for renewable energy generation.	
6	Supply at least 400,000 cubic metres of timber from sustainably managed DAERA forests to customers, by the 31 March 2026.
Result: Achieved **Explanation for Result**: Total volume of timber sold to customers by the end of March 2026 was 412,889 cubic metres.	
7	Achieve an income of at least £11M from all sources.
Result: Achieved **Explanation for Result**: Total Operating income to 31 March 2026, £13.0M.	
8 **KPT**	Operate an effective programme of Plant Health Official Controls to protect the plant health status of Northern Ireland.
Result: Achieved **Explanation for Result**: An effective programme of Plant Health Official Controls operated to protect plant health and ensured that appropriate import checks were undertaken, through physical and documentary inspections.	
9 **KPT**	Support ministers to introduce two new Plant Health Statutory Instruments, through Westminster parliamentary processes, to consolidate the regulatory framework.
Result: Achieved **Explanation for Result**: During the year two proposed Plant Health Statutory Instruments were consolidated into one. The draft legislation was forwarded to Defra on 30 March 2026 in line with Westminster Parliamentary processes and business plan target, with laying date scheduled for mid-2026.	
10	Build resource capacity and capability to deliver ongoing, new and emerging work priorities.
Result: Substantially Achieved **Explanation for Result**: The target is considered substantially achieved by Forest Service establishing a Resourcing Capacity & Capability Sub-Committee of its Management Board which secured the advancement of Bespoke Forestry Recruitment and Training Options for professional and forestry recruitment. These include new Apprenticeship and Graduate Trainee Forester grades, which supersede the Pilot Bursary scheme element.	

Forest Service Target Number	Target Measure and Description
11	Implement a Forest Service Employee Engagement Action Plan in collaboration with staff to improve employee engagement

Result: Partially Achieved

Explanation for Result: Forest Service launched the Departmental Capacity and Capability Plan (renamed to DAERA People Plan) in December 2025. Furthermore, NICS People Strategy updates have been provided to the Forest Service Resource Capacity & Capability Committee and Forest Service Management Board.

However, Employee Engagement Index (EEI) in the NICS People Survey was not measurable by 31 March 2026 as the latest results were available in September 2025. The next available results are planned to be September 2027 (beyond 2025-26 business year).

Forest Service held two planned all-staff engagement events to improve staff engagement, one in December 2025 and the second event in April 2026, which had to be rescheduled from the initial planned date in March 2026.

Performance Review

Non-Financial Performance Review

Create Forests

Financial support through forestry grants remained a key enabler of woodland creation and sustainable management. During the year, £2.7M in grant funding was issued to 1,007 landowners, supporting both new woodland establishment and the regeneration of existing forest areas.

Progress continued during the year in expanding Northern Ireland's woodland resource. A total of 304 hectares of new woodland was established. This included delivery through forestry grant schemes alongside on land acquired by Forest Service. In addition, a further 98 hectares was verified in 2025-26 as having been established under non-forestry grant aid programmes, reflecting a broader contribution to afforestation objectives. Additionally, grant assistance was given to support the replanting of 106 hectares of harvested woodland, contributing to enhanced species diversity, resilience, and wider environmental benefits.

Since the launch of the Forests for Our Future Programme in March 2020 to the end of the 2025–26 reporting period, approximately 2,600 Hectares of new woodland has been created, equating to approximately 5.2 million trees.

Supply Timber

In 2025-26 Forest Service sold 412,889 cubic metres of timber from its sustainably managed forests against a Key Target of 400,000 cubic metres using established supply arrangements.

Following catastrophic damage to our forests in 2024 and 2025 from a number of storms including Storms Darragh and Éowyn, timber sales in the 2025-26 business year have focused on clearing these severely impacted areas. This has resulted in previous harvesting plans being substituted to allow for timber recovery through timber sales from wind impacted crops using existing supply contracts with the local wood processing industry. Since the storm, revised harvesting plans have resulted in approximately 980 hectares being brought to market.

Forest Service is audited annually by an independent certification body to provide assurance of sustainable forest management. In the UK, certification bodies use the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) to assess the management of Forest Service forests against the requirements of both the Forest Stewardship Council® FSC® C084232, and the Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). Forest Service maintain certification under FSC® (Licence code: FSC-C084232) and PEFC (Licence code: PEFC/16-40-1924) allowing wood products derived from Forest Service forests to be marketed as coming from sustainably managed forests.

Contribute to NI Priority Climate Actions

During 2025-26, in addition to supporting the creation of new woodland in Northern Ireland, the Agency facilitated mechanical restoration operations across 409 hectares of degraded peatland on the Forest Service estate, contributing to their restoration and consequential biodiversity gains. Works at Ballypatrick, Slieveanorra, Davagh and other forests included removal of self-seeded conifers and rhododendron in addition to drain blocking, using techniques such as wave dams & zippering. Delivery was achieved through partnership working with Ulster Wildlife, with part funding from the Department's Environment Fund, together with works carried out by Forest Service on several sites. Environmental screening has been completed in Creggan Forest to facilitate further bog works in 2026-27.

Manage Sustainable & Resilient Forests

Forest Service maintained its UKWAS certification in 2025-26 for sustainable forest management planning and practices, through an independent audit undertaken by Soil Association in February 2026. This certification is recognised by Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) (Licence code: FSC-C084232) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC).

Compliance with sustainable forest management is tested in the following areas:

- legal compliance;
- management planning;
- woodland operations;
- natural, historical and cultural environment; and
- people, communities and workers.

The audit process assesses performance against the requirements of the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS), which underpins the principles of sustainable forest ecosystem services as set out in the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS).

Maintaining certification under FSC® and PEFC and with assured 'chain of custody' certification components allow wood products derived from Forest Service forests to be marketed by wood processors under the logos of the FSC® and PEFC. This provides assurance to retailers and consumers that the wood products are derived from responsibly managed forests.

Wind Energy

The need to decarbonise Northern Ireland's energy sector is central to the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022. It places lead responsibility on the Department for the Economy (DfE) and requires commitment from other Departments to work collaboratively for its delivery under section 52 of the Act. The Forestry Act (NI) 2010 enables Forest Service to contribute to meeting this need through the development of suitable forest areas for renewable electricity generation, provided it has due regard to its General Duty under the Act of 'promoting afforestation and sustainable forestry'.

A market engagement exercise was undertaken in March 2025, and it identified a significant proportion of the forest estate as being of interest for the development of future wind energy generation projects. In the 2025-26 business year, Forest Service has worked to assess the suitability of the identified forests in the context of its statutory sustainable forestry obligations.

A Strategic Outline Case (SOC) has been prepared within the business year to seek DoF agreement to undertake the business case assessment for developing available forest areas for wind energy generation. Continuation of the necessary assessment and approval processes will continue in the 2026-27 business year, which subject to approvals being obtained will enable progression of a competitive wind energy market procurement exercise.

Protect Plant Health

Forest Service has key responsibilities in safeguarding the high plant health status of Northern Ireland, which includes 23 protected zones free of specific pests and diseases which occur elsewhere in Europe. This is achieved through regulatory inspections, laboratory and field testing, developing policy, updating legislation, research, contingency planning and horizon scanning. This ensures that our valuable sectors of agriculture, horticulture, forestry and the wider environment are shielded, as far as possible, from damaging plant health pests and diseases.

In the 2025-26 business year Forest Service and DAERA considered options of how best to meet the 24/7 staffing requirements for Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) controls on regulated goods arriving in Northern Ireland. A new staffing model was prepared to undertake the required documentary and physical checks for plant, animal and related products in a Single Portal Inspection Unit (SPIU) within DAERA's Veterinary Service and Animal Health Group (VSAGH). The staff were trained in the delivery of official controls across the plant and animal health product range, enabling joint inspections with improved efficiency and resilience through the more streamlined staffing model. Forest Service retains the role as Competent Authority for Plant Health. The new staffing model is fully operational from 6 May 2026.

Throughout the 2025-26 business year, an effective programme of Plant Health Official Controls continued to be delivered by Forest Service staff through a fully populated 24/7 operational rota at seaports of entry. Targets for documentary and physical checks were achieved with 99% and 91% recorded respectively for all Northern Ireland Plant Health Label (NIPHL) consignments.

Throughout the business year, Forest Service also supported Ministers to prepare two new Plant Health Statutory Instruments (SI), for laying through Westminster parliamentary processes. This involved approval being granted by Ministers for the two SI to be consolidated into one SI, which streamlined timelines and provided a more efficient mechanism through which to establish the Plant Health regulatory framework. The draft legislation, led by Forest Service, was forwarded to Defra in March 2026, in line with agreed timelines for laying in Westminster in June 2026.

Support Economic Growth

Timber sales generated £11.5M in income, an increase of £0.2M on the previous year. This reflects strong and sustained demand for timber from sustainably managed forests.

This demand supports skilled jobs across harvesting, haulage and wood processing. Timber products associated with the housing, construction and DIY markets store carbon providing environmental benefits of lower-carbon alternatives to more energy-intensive materials.

Co-products from timber processing further supports renewable energy generation with wood fibre by-products, such as wood chips and sawdust, used for heat and electricity generation both industrially and domestically, supporting economic growth.

The Agency's sustainably managed woodlands provide a reliable supply of raw materials, underpinning the local timber sector and supporting the production of value-added goods. This assurance of future timber supplies enables businesses to invest in more efficient and innovative processes, strengthening the transition towards low-carbon, sustainable materials.

Financial Performance Review

In accordance with Consolidated Budgeting Guidance 2025-26, and afforded under the Non-Financial Public Corporation classification, Forest Service maintains cash reserves generated from trading activity revenue streams. These reserves shield our capacity to undertake sustainable forestry and plant health programmes, including from potential market volatility and underpin delivery of business priorities. As at 31 March 2026 reserves stand at £41.1M (£35M cash, £6.1M cash accrual).

Net Operating Deficit

The Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure shows the net cost of the Agency's operations. The net operating deficit for 2025-26 was £14.5M (2024-25: net operating deficit £9.3M). The movement between 2024-25 and 2025-26 of £5.2M is predominantly due to a biological asset valuation decrease of £18.2M in 2025-26 compared to a biological asset valuation decrease of £15.1M in 2024-25.

Payment to Suppliers

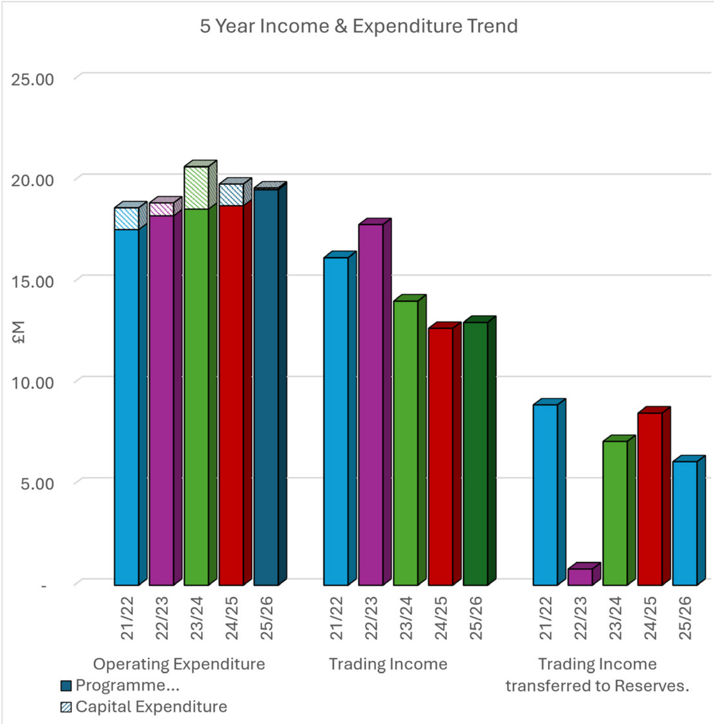
The Agency is committed to the prompt payment of bills for goods and services received in accordance with the Confederation of British Industry's Prompt Payers Code and British Standard BS 7890- Achieving Good Payment Performance in Commercial Transactions. Unless otherwise stated in the contract, payment is due within 30 days of the goods or services, or on presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand, whichever is later. During the year, 97.9% of bills were paid within this Standard (2024-25: 96.2%). From 1 December 2008, the Agency has operated the NICS policy of seeking to pay for goods and services within 10 days. This is in accordance with the Supporting Businesses: Prompt Payment of Invoices initiative within the Northern Ireland Civil Service. During the year, 92% of bills were paid within the 10 day target (2024-25: 91.4%). The Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998, which came into effect from 1 October 1998, enables suppliers to charge interest on overdue debts. The Agency made no payments during the year in respect of such claims.

Political and Charitable Donations

The Agency made no political or charitable donations during the year (2024-25: NIL).

Long Term Income & Expenditure Trend

The chart below illustrates the Forest Service Income and Expenditure for Forestry and Plant Health programmes over the last 5 financial years. In 2025-26 Forest Service received £26.5M (2024-25: £29.1M) Operating Income in total. This included £13.5M (2024-25: £16.4M) in DAERA funding towards meeting operating costs with a further £13M (2024-25: £12.7M) generated from contracts with customers. Further details can be found in note 2 of the Accounts.



Operating Expenditure and Trading Income figures include Grant Income and Expenditure on an accruals basis.
Operating Expenditure excludes Non cash and Notional Costs as well as revaluation adjustments.

Forestry Performance Tables

The following tables provide statistical data on forestry performance during 2025-26.

Forest Service Statistical Summary 2025-26

	Units	2025-26	2024-25
Total area managed	Hectares	74,997	74,964
Forest Estate Additions	Hectares	35	57
Forest Estate Reductions	Hectares	2	-
Forested Area	Hectares	62,181	62,137
Timber Sales	Cubic metres		
• Roadside		31,785	35,040
• Standing		381,104	368,929
New planting	Hectares	36	75
Replanting	Hectares	531	637
Fire damage	Hectares	141	-
Visitors to charged recreation areas	Thousands	317	288
Visits to caravan / camping long stay sites	Thousands	21	21
Average staff numbers	Full time equivalent persons		
• Industrial		68.9	76.0
• Non-industrial		102.6	109.5

Record of Timber Harvested from Forest Service Woodlands During 2025-26

Standing Volume (m3)	Roadside Volume (m3)	Total
350,848	20,492	371,340

Note: All figures represent volume dispatched from forests.

Breakdown of Sales: Agreed for April 2025 to March 2026

Volumes to 7cm top diameter to nearest cubic metre areas in hectares

FOREST SERVICE	VOLUME BY SPECIES			THINNINGS			CLEARFELL			TOTAL VOLUME
	Spruce	Other Conifers	Hard-woods	Area	Volume	Vol. per hectare	Area	Volume	Vol. per hectare	
STANDING SALES										
	367,345	13,125	634	0	0	0	724	381,104	526	381,104
ROADSIDE SALES										
	29,295	2,000	490	42	360	9	72	31,425	436	31,785
ALL SALES										
TOTAL	**396,640**	**15,125**	**1,124**	**42**	**360**	**9**	**796**	**412,529**	**518**	**412,889**

Average Prices For Coniferous Timber Sold at Roadside

Average Volumes Per Tree in m³ over bark	(a) 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 (b) 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025		
	Volume m³	Total Price (Exc VAT) £	Average Price £/m³
Less than 0.075	(a) - (b) -	- -	- -
0.075 - 0.124	(a) - (b) 788	- 18,895	- 23.98
0.125 - 0.174	(a) - (b) 1,778	- 51,185	- 28.79
0.175 - 0.224	(a) 1,215 (b) 5,707	36,228 153,502	29.82 26.90
0.225 - 0.274	(a) - (b) 2,473	- 73,445	- 29.70
0.275 - 0.424	(a) 4,857 (b) 1,484	151,042 52,320	31.10 35.26
0.425 - 0.499	(a) 4,733 (b) 150	164,051 4,991	34.66 33.27
0.500 - 0.599	(a) 8,478 (b) 8,774	310,761 329,030	36.65 37.63
0.600 - 0.699	(a) 6,223 (b) 4,511	234,433 186,426	37.67 41.33
0.700 - 0.799	(a) - (b) 1,177	- 44,140	- 37.50
0.800 - 0.899	(a) 4,163 (b) -	165,154 -	39.67 -
0.900 - 0.999	(a) - (b) 1,525	- 60,176	- 39.81
1.000 and over	(a) 276 (b) 5,559	11,531 229,119	41.78 41.22
Total	**(a) 29,945** **(b) 33,926**	**1,073,200** **1,203,229**	**35.84** **34.12**

Average Prices for Coniferous Timber Sold Standing

Average Volumes Per Tree in m³ over bark	Volume m³	Total Price (Exc VAT) £	Average Price £/m³
	(a) 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 (b) 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025		
Less than 0.075	(a) - (b) -	- -	- -
0.075 - 0.124	(a) - (b) -	- -	- -
0.125 - 0.174	(a) 2,027 (b) -	60,028 -	29.61 -
0.175 - 0.224	(a) 4,831 (b) 2,452	72,477 36,786	15.00 15.00
0.225 - 0.274	(a) 3,093 (b) 5,586	91,149 102,689	29.47 18.38
0.275 - 0.424	(a) 25,541 (b) 47,850	583,739 1,137,188	22.85 23.77
0.425 - 0.499	(a) 22,203 (b) 17,758	592,803 502,178	26.70 28.28
0.500 - 0.599	(a) 38,504 (b) 53,341	1,120,889 1,618,944	29.11 30.35
0.600 - 0.699	(a) 91,519 (b) 87,424	2,856,833 2,749,793	31.22 31.45
0.700 - 0.799	(a) 44,061 (b) 40,790	1,436,334 1,309,983	32.60 32.12
0.800 - 0.899	(a) 51,015 (b) 64,892	1,684,386 2,090,983	33.02 32.21
0.900 - 0.999	(a) 27,518 (b) 1,942	924,261 63,701	33.59 32.80
1.000 and over	(a) 72,738 (b) 40,724	2,460,802 1,319,859	33.83 32.41
Total	**(a) 383,050** **(b) 362,759**	**11,883,701** **10,932,104**	**31.02** **30.13**

Health & Safety

Forest Service is committed to ensuring the health and safety of all its employees, contractors, visitors, neighbours, members of the public and partner organisations who use the forest estate.

Regular Health & Safety reports are provided by the Forest Service Health and Safety Committee to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) for scrutiny and, reporting to the Forest Service Management Board. These updates include a review of incidents and near misses, progress against internal Health & Safety audit findings and Health & Safety communications issued across the Agency. In addition, the Forest Service Health & Safety Officer engages with DAERA's Health & Safety Co-ordination Branch and operational delivery partners throughout the year to share information and practice to minimise risk of accidents to staff, contractors and the public.

Risk of occupational or public injuries from Forest Service operations in the Agency managed forests is mitigated through maintaining staff competencies, risk assessments and compliance with best practice guidance. Forest Service retains corporate membership of the Forest Industry Safety Accord (FISA), supporting and adopting the work of FISA through participation in its working groups and implementing agreed forest industry standards that are formulated.

The following table sets out the incidence of reportable and non-reportable accidents for all staff and others in the last 5 years.

Accident trends over the last 5 years

Person/Group	Accident Category	21-22 (Per 100 Employees)	22-23 (Per 100 Employees)	23-24 (Per 100 Employees)	24-25 (Per 100 Employees)	25-26 (Per 100 Employees)
Staff	Reportable	2 (1.0)	- (-)	- (-)	2 (1.1)	2 (1.2)
	Non reportable	2 (1.0)	4 (2.0)	2 (1.0)	2 (1.1)	- (-)
Public	Reportable	-	-	-	-	-
	Non reportable	6	5	-	5	5
	Operating partner incidents	10	10	-	2	6
Contractors (Direct) FS Works manager [FWM]	Reportable	-	-	-	-	1
	Non reportable	-	-	-	-	-
Contractors (Indirect) FS is NOT FWM	Reportable (FS not FWM)	1	-	-	-	-
	Non reportable (FS not FWM	-	1	-	-	-
	Operating partner incidents	-	-	-	-	-
ALL	Near miss/ Unsafe acts	1 Staff 1 Contractor 2 Public	4 Staff 5 Contractor 7 Public	3 Staff 1 Contractor 2 Public	3 Staff 1 Contractor 2 Public	1 Staff 4 Public

Risk

Forest Service operates a Risk Register through which the key risks impacting on the Agency's activity and programmes including achievement of its objectives and Key Targets are assessed, monitored and mitigated. It is reviewed regularly by the Forest Service Governance Committee and the Forest Service Management Board's Audit and Risk Assurance Sub-Committee (ARAC) and comprises of the following:

- An evaluation of the Key Risks in terms of 'Likelihood' of occurrence and 'Impact' in the event of occurrence;
- An overall rating of the risk as a consequence of 'Impact' and 'Likelihood';
- A list of the controls in place to manage the risks identified;
- Mitigating actions and progress made on mitigating actions;
- Progression on implementation of any related Internal Audit recommendations; and
- Designation of the officer responsible for managing the risk and reporting progress on mitigating actions identified to improve control.

Key risks monitored on the Forest Service 2025-26 Risk Register were associated with:

- Achieving the 2025-26 Business Plan afforestation target i.e. that Forest Service will plant 600 hectares of new woodland by grant aiding landowners and on new land acquired on the forest estate;
- Implementing effective Plant Health Official Controls including under the Windsor Framework;
- Bringing forward proposals for ministerial approval to support forestry grant schemes for the period 2026-32;
- Promoting sustainable forestry and meet the requirements of the Forestry Act (NI) 2010;
- Providing the potential timber supply to the Northern Ireland wood using industries from Forest Service sustainably managed forests;
- Carrying out mechanical restoration works on 400 hectares of peatland on the Forest Service estate;
- Exploring the potential for the Forest Service estate to contribute to Northern Ireland's renewable electricity commitments;
- Securing income to contribute to expenditure budget;
- Having inadequate staff resources to deliver work to meet existing statutory responsibilities and current business plan targets/business priorities;
- Insufficient ability to strategically manage sectoral capacity deficits resulting in inadequate staff resources to deliver ongoing, new and emerging work priorities; and
- Providing duty of care to Forest Service staff, contractors and visitors to our forests.

Future Plans

The Forest Service annual Business Plans set specific Key Targets and Supplementary Measures for business years. These targets are aligned with the priorities of the Minister, Programme for Government, and the Department.

The 2026-27 Forest Service Business Plan will prioritise the forestry and plant health activity to be taken forward in the following Priority Work Areas that are set in line with DAERA's strategic priorities and those of the wider NI Executive:

Forest Service's Priority Workstreams are to:

Create Forests- Establish forestry grants to support afforestation and help mitigate climate change;

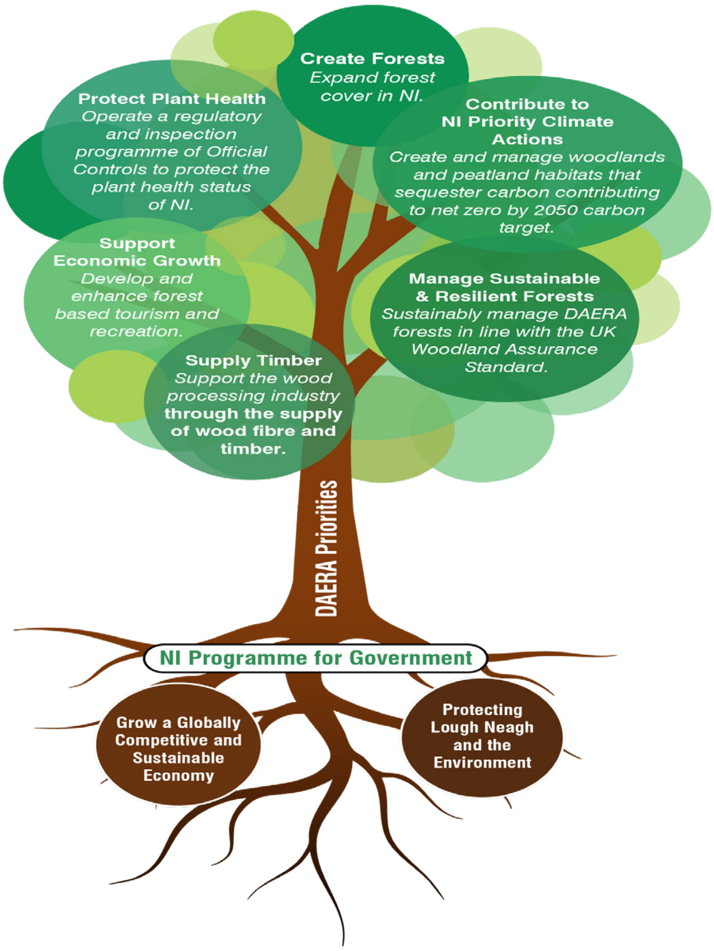
Protect Plant Health- Protect the wider plant health status of Northern Ireland;

Supply Timber- Produce wood fibre and supply timber to industry;

Contribute to NI Priority Climate Actions- Contribute to the UK 2050 net-zero carbon target;

Support Economic Growth- Develop and enhance forest-based tourism and recreation and support the wood processing industry; and

Manage Sustainable and Resilient Forests- Manage our forests in line with sustainable forestry guidance and standards.



Sustainability Report

This sustainability report has been prepared in accordance with NI's Sustainability Reporting Guidance 2025-26, which is aligned with HMT sustainability reporting guidance and the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) recommendations.

All information included in this sustainability report conforms to the normal public sector financial year of 1 April to 31 March. NI's Sustainability Reporting Guidance 2025-26 was issued to NICS departments mid-year, i.e. departments were unaware of the information they were expected to collect at the start of the 2025-26 financial year. This may have led to omissions in data reporting, this will be explained to the reader where relevant.

The organisational boundary used in this sustainability report is the core department. The information disclosed in this report relates to the estate that the department occupies. It also includes the environmental impact from a building that is rented by the department. In cases where a building is shared by two or more departments, the data is proportioned by the floor space utilised by the tenant. For example, if a department rents 50% of the floor space of a building, the department will report 50% of the emissions associated with that building.

Policy roles: This report follows NI's Sustainability Reporting Guidance 2025–26. DAERA is the policy holder and will update the guidance over time. This Department acts as its own policy administrator, coordinating data collection, assurance and preparation of this report.

Data Validation

The data provided on Emissions Scope 1 (fuel burned) and 2 (purchased electricity) is not audited but is checked against previous figures and outlying figures reviewed. The data for department owned transport is automated through Global Positing Systems (GPS) for approximately two thirds of Forest Services fleet vehicles. The mileage for the non-GPS vehicles is based on the average miles per annum (last known mileage and age). The data provided on travel claims using vehicles not owned by the Agency is sourced from AccountNI; any claims made via AccountNI is supported by receipts and checked by line management before approval. The paper printed data is fully validated and audited."

In order to report the greenhouse gas emissions associated with activities, 'activity' data such as distance travelled, or tonnes of waste disposed has been converted into carbon emissions. The greenhouse gas conversion factors used in this report were published by the UK Government and can be found via the following link: Government conversion factors for company reporting of greenhouse gas emissions- GOV.UK

Governance

Forest Service Board's Oversight of Climate-Related Issues

The Forest Service Board is responsible for oversight of climate-related issues falling within the Agency's programmes and for ensuring proper governance on climate issues. It does this through oversight of the Forest Service Risk Register as a standard item on Board agendas, six times per year, following scrutiny through its Sub-Committee, ARAC.

The Forest Service ARAC meets four times per financial year. In particular ARAC consider climate-related risks, which specifically relate to planting & afforestation targets, peatland restoration and sustainability forestry requirements.

Forest Service Management's Role in Accessing and Managing Climate-Related Issues

Senior management Heads of Division within Forest Service play a key role in managing and addressing climate-related matters. They are responsible for managing mitigation measures and ensuring that when required, relevant issues are escalated to the Board and considered through established governance structures, including quarterly Governance and ARAC meetings.

Forest Service management addressed and delivered climate-related issues through several key sustainability outcomes such as:

- New woodlands created;
- Forests Sustainably managed in line with the UK Forestry Standard providing economic, environmental and social benefits;
- Protected designated sites, other natural habitats and enhancing biodiversity. Maintaining healthy, structurally diverse forests preserves natural habitats, supporting terrestrial species vulnerable to shifting climatic zones; and
- Maintaining a supply of timber from sustainably managed forests.

Emissions

Emissions Scope 1 (fuel burned) and 2 (purchased electricity)

Please note that fuel consumed may include fuel that departments have purchased and stored, i.e. the fuel has not been burned in the reporting period. This is due to the information being sourced from fuel invoices.

The data in table 1 below relates to buildings that Forest Service own. Data in Table 1 does not include Forest Service Headquarters, Inishkeen House, which Forest Service partly occupy. This building is owned by Department of Finance, who are unable to supply the Table 1 statistics in time for the 2025-26 Annual Report and Accounts.

Table 1: Energy emissions, consumption and cost for fuel burned and purchased electricity in 2025-26 for Forest Service

Standing Volume (m3)	Scope 1 (fuel burned)	Scope 2 (purchased electricity)
Emissions (kg CO2e)	16,177	59,878
Consumption (kWh Gross CV)	339,785	338,291
Net Cost (£millions)	£0.02	£0.08

Source of data: DAERA Estate Sustainability & Energy Efficiency

Emissions Scope 1 (Department owned transport)

Table 2: Mileage and emissions by department owned vehicle type in 2025-26

Vehicle size/ type	Fuel type	Mileage 2025-26	Kg CO2e 2025-26
4x4	Diesel	13,362 miles	13,362 x 0.32145 = 4,295 kg CO2e
Van Class II (1.305 to 1.74 tonnes)	Diesel	16,363 miles	16,363 x 0.30996 = 5,072 kg CO2e
Van Class III (1.74 to 3.5 tonnes)	Diesel	19,675 miles	19,675 x 0.44598 = 8,775 kg CO2e
HGV Articulate (All Atics)	Diesel	30,461 miles	30,461 x 1.37656 = 41,931 kg CO2e
HGV Rigid (>3.5 – 7.5 tonnes)	Diesel	6,933 miles	6,933 x 0.80632 = 5,590 kg CO2e

Source of data: DAERA Estate Sustainability & Energy Efficiency

Emissions Scope 3 (Fuel burned due to business travel via staff owned transport)

Please note vehicle size and vehicle fuel type are unknown for the data in Table 3.

Table 3: Mileage and emissions from vehicles not owned by department in 2025-26

Year	Mileage	Kg CO2e
2025-26	431,897	116,007.45

Source of data: Account NI

Emissions Scope 3 – Business travel using public transport that is claimed back

Please note there is no known record of mileage associated with public transport claims, only costs as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Expenses claimed for public transport used for official business travel (excludes staff commuting to their regular place of work)

Year	Bus (Cost, £)	Rail (Cost, £)	Taxi (Cost, £)
2025-26	4.6	182.02	81.04

Source of data: Account NI.

Emissions Scope 3 - Business travel that is booked via Travel Desk43

Table 5: Air and rail travel booked by Travel Desk

Air and rail travel booked by Travel Desk on behalf of Forest Service is included in DAERA's Sustainability Report within its Annual report and Accounts.

Table 6: Hotel stay booked by Travel Desk or equivalent

Hotel stays booked by Travel Desk on behalf of Forest Service is included in DAERA's Sustainability Report within its Annual report and Accounts.

Table 7: Car hire booked by Travel Desk or equivalent

Car Hire booked by Travel Desk on behalf of Forest Service is included in DAERA's Sustainability Report within its Annual report and Accounts.

Paper printed

Table 8: Paper printed by year

Year	Paper Printed (pages)
2023-24	98,990
2024-25	93,142
2025-26	108,817

Source of data: IT Assist

Due to new hybrid working policy, staff are now required to be in the office two days per week which will have contributed to increased printing costs.

Responsible disposal of ICT waste

In the specification of the "Framework for disposal services for IT equipment, electronic and electrical equipment", suppliers must have BS EN ISO 14001; 2015- Environmental Management System accreditation (or equivalent) before being appointed to the framework.
The framework specification also requires the following from suppliers.
"All equipment that is not resold must be dismantled and recycled/disposed in accordance with the relevant legislation including, but not limited to:

- the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive.
- BS EN ISO 14001: 2015.
- the Environmental Protection Act 1990; and
- the Hazardous Waste Regulations.

Source of data: IT Assist

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- the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive.
- BS EN ISO 14001: 2015.
- the Environmental Protection Act 1990; and
- the Hazardous Waste Regulations.

Source of data: IT Assist

Sustainable procurement

The Scoring Social Value policy approved by the Executive, mandated that from June 2022, tenders must include a minimum of 10 percent of the total award criteria to social value. On 5 December 2024 DoF secured Executive approval for a revised PPN (Procurement Policy Note) 01/21- Social Value in Procurement. This came into effect on 24 February 2025 and strengthened and broadened the theme 'Delivering Net Zero' to 'Delivering Climate Action'.

For information on the meaning of Social Value: the Public Procurement Policy Statement which was approved by the NI Executive on the 5th of June 2025 states "Social Value means economic, environmental and social benefits in support of the Programme for Government". The DoF Social Value Strategy document 2025-2027 states, "Social Value refers to wider financial and non-financial impacts on the wellbeing of individuals, communities and the environment. It incorporates ethical and sustainable supply chains, community benefits and wealth building, job and skills creation and efforts to combat climate change".

The Procurement Policy Note (PPN) 01/21 – Scoring Social Value has been revised to Procurement Policy Note (PPN) 01/21- Social Value in Procurement and came into effect on 24 February 2025.

Single use plastics

DAERA, in partnership with DoF, has removed all unnecessary single-use plastic (SUP) from the Government estate and a ban on the use of unnecessary SUP across the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) estate, is now in place.

Accountability Report

Management Board / Structure

The Management Board comprises senior Executive Members of the Agency and Non-Executive Board Members (NEBMs).

During 2025-26 the Board members were:

John Joe O'Boyle	Chief Executive
Frank Irvine	Corporate Governance & Finance
Damian Larkin	Corporate Governance & Finance
Fiona Johnston	CE Office, Co-ordination, Resource Capacity and Capability
Dr Charmaine Beer	Plant Health Division
John Joe Cassidy	Forestry Management and Inspection
Maynard Mawhinney	Non-Executive Member
Shireen Chambers	Non-Executive Member
Brendon McMaster	Non-Executive Member

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for achieving the aims, objectives and targets set out in the Business Plan with each Executive Member having ownership and responsibility for achieving objectives and targets allocated within their management control.

Conflict of Interests

There are no company directorships or other significant interests held by Management Board members which conflict with their management responsibilities. All Members of the Agency's Board have completed Declaration of Interests. Board members are invited to declare any conflicts of interest as a standard agenda item at each Board meeting. No interests have been declared in year.

Accounts Direction

The Forest Service Accounts for the Financial Year ending 31 March 2026 have been prepared in accordance with the accounts direction issued by the Department of Finance in accordance with Section 11(1) and (2) of the Government Resources and Accounts Act (NI) 2001 and is consistent with the accounting principles and disclosure requirements of the 2025-26 Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) issued by the Department of Finance.

Pension Liabilities

Further details in relation to the pension schemes are given in the Remuneration Report and in notes to the accounts.

Auditors' Remuneration

The financial statements are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland. As head of the Northern Ireland Audit Office who is wholly independent and reports findings to the Assembly.

The audit of the financial statements for 2025-26 resulted in an audit fee of £21,100 (2024- 25: £20,800) and is included in Operating Expenditure – Non-Cash items in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure. The auditors did not provide any non-audit services in year.

Security of Personal Data

Forest Service is committed to the safeguarding of personal data and has set in place appropriate measures to ensure its security including nomination of Information Asset Owners (IAOs). The Data Protection Act 2018, which updated data protection laws in the UK, is a national law which complements the EU's General Data Protection Regulation which has been in operation since May 2018. IAOs are trained and supported in managing our information assets, with specific reference to their responsibilities as set out in the Information Asset Owner handbook. Forest Service is required to maintain a register of any personal data assets held, identifying the purpose and legal bases for the processing of that personal data. The Agency is also required to inform its stakeholders about their rights and processing of their personal data through publicly available Privacy Notices and regularly review the security of those personal data assets under its control. IAOs ensure that retention and disposal schedules are implemented in a timely fashion in order to ensure that personal data is kept only for as long as is necessary. All Forest Service staff are advised of their personal responsibilities for ensuring the confidentiality, integrity and availability of personal data. Forest Service identified no security breaches in 2025-26.

Complaints Handling

Forest Service is committed to providing the highest possible standards of service to all its customers and implements the Department's core standards of service that customers can expect to receive. Central to these is the facility for customers to lodge formal complaints on matters of dissatisfaction. In line with the DAERA complaints procedures, we report on complaints received and our handling of them to the Department.

Forest Service received and responded to thirteen customer complaints in 2025-26.

Public Access To information

The main online vehicle for communicating with the public is the 'Forests' section on the NI Direct website: www.nidirect.gov.uk/forests Other Forest Service business information is accessible at: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/forestry

Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 give everyone the right to access government information and place a statutory duty on government to make certain information publicly available as a matter of course. A total of 26 (2024-25:14) 'Requests for Information', falling within the terms of this legislation, were received within the period of this report.

Statement of Accounting Officers Responsibilities

Under the Government Resources and Accounts Act (NI) 2001 (GRAANI), DoF has directed Forest Service to prepare for each financial year a statement of accounts in the form and on the basis set out in the Accounts Direction. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of Forest Service and of the income and expenditure, Statement of Financial Position and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts as the Accounting Officer, I am required to comply with the requirements of the FReM and in particular to:

- observe the Accounts Direction issued by the Department of Finance (DoF), including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;

- ensure that the Agency has in place appropriate and reliable systems and procedures to carry out the consolidation process;

- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;

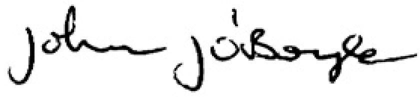
- state whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the accounts;

- prepare the accounts on a going concern basis; and

- confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and take personal responsibility for the annual report and accounts and the judgments required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

The Accounting Officer of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs has designated myself, as Accounting Officer for Forest Service. The responsibilities of the Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and for safeguarding the Agency's assets, are set out in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland, published by HM Treasury.

As Accounting Officer, I have taken all the steps that I ought to have taken to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that NI Audit Office are aware of that information. So far as I am aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are unaware.



John Joe O'Boyle
Chief Executive
25 June 2026

Governance Statement

Governance Framework

Under the terms of the Agency Framework Document, as the Agency's Chief Executive and designated Accounting Officer, I am directly responsible to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, and the Department's Accounting Officer, for the Agency's operations and performance. The Minister determines the policy framework within which the Forest Service operates and the scope of its activities. The Minister also determines the resources to be made available to the Agency, agrees Key Targets and approves its Business Plan and monitors performance. The Minister does not normally become involved in the day-to-day operation of the Agency or in managing risk. However, I am expected to consult on the handling of operational matters with the potential to be of significant public or NI Executive concern, including the nature, scale, and likelihood of risks occurring in relation to contentious or controversial matters.

Budget Position and Authority

The Budget Act (Northern Ireland) 2026, which received Royal Assent on 20 March 2026, together with the Northern Ireland Spring Supplementary Estimates 2025-26 which were agreed by the Assembly on 23 February 2026, provide the statutory authority for the Executive's final 2025-26 expenditure plans. The Budget Act (Northern Ireland) 2026 also provides a Vote on Account to authorise expenditure by departments and other bodies into the early months of the 2026-27 financial year.

Governance Structures

Forest Service Management Board (FSMB)

Over the year I was supported by the FSMB that is comprised of four Forest Service Executive Members, including my role as CEO, and two Non-Executive Member during 2025-26. Members are fully involved in the monitoring of Agency performance, financial, resource, and risk management and provide a challenge function where appropriate.

The core purpose of the FSMB is to provide me with Agency level strategic support and leadership for the organisation's operational, administrative and financial management functions within the parameters of policy and targets set by the Minister. Its primary function is therefore to set the Agency's business agenda and ensure that the organisation delivers its strategic goals and operational targets.

The FSMB is also responsible for the assessment and management of the risks associated with delivery of the Agency's functions. It is the role of FSMB members to communicate the vision, role, direction and priorities of Forest Service to staff and other stakeholders and to ensure effective allocation and management of its staff and financial resources.

Members support me in my Accounting Officer role in the operation of sound corporate governance and risk management procedures, and secure and protect the resources under their control. The FSMB maintains a transparent system of its directions, considerations, decisions and controls.

FSMB met six times during the year, as required by Terms of Reference.

Attendance details of members are summarised in the following table:

During 2025-26 the Board members were:

Name	Number of meetings attended
John Joe O'Boyle (Chair)	6
Maynard Mawhinney (Non- Executive)	6
Shireen Chambers (Non- Executive)	6
Dr Charmaine Beer	5
Frank Irvine	5
Fiona Johnston	5
John Joe Cassidy	5
Brandon McMaster (to 25 June 2025)	2
Damian Larkin (to 26 September 2025)	1

The Board receives reports from its two Sub-Committees, as set out below.

- Forest Service Audit & Risk Assurance Committee
- Resource Capacity and Capability Sub-Committee

Forest Service Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (FS ARAC)

Forest Service Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (FS ARAC) supports me in my responsibilities for stewardship of Agency resources by reviewing the comprehensiveness and integrity of the arrangements and processes for meeting the Agency's risk management, governance and Accounting Officer's assurance needs. FS ARAC contributes to the overall Forest Service process for ensuring that governance, risk management and internal controls operate effectively by forming a consolidated view of the governance and assurance processes within the Forest Service.

Maynard Mawhinney chaired the FS ARAC in 2025-26 (Brandon McMaster FS ARAC chair to 25 June 2025) and is also a Non-Executive Member of the FSMB. The other committee members during the year were Mr Mark Hammond (NI Environment Agency) and Mr Steve Harper (Strategic Investment Board (SIB)).
FS ARAC met on five occasions in 2025-26, which is one more than the frequency as stipulated in the terms of reference. At each meeting, the committee reviewed the Forest Service Corporate Risk Register, Audit Implementation Plan updates, progress reports from Internal Audit and other reports as required or requested.

Attendance details of members are summarised in the following table:

Name	Number of Meetings Attended
Maynard Mawhinney (Non-Executive Chair)	5
Steve Harper	5
Mark Hammond	3
Brandon McMaster (Non-Executive Chair to 25 June 2025)	2

Key findings considered by FS ARAC in 2025-26

- The Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) certified the 2024-25 financial statements with an unqualified audit opinion without modification. There were no priority one recommendations in relation to regularity and the internal control environment.
- The satisfactory audit opinion presented by Internal Audit in the 2025-26 Annual Opinion and Report.
- Satisfactory reports from the Governance Committee relating to the Agency's risk management, the Audit Implementation Plan, Stewardship Reporting and overall governance.
- Recommendations on a more structured approach to the review of the Risk Register to include:
- Regular "deep dive" analysis of key risks,
- Enhanced reporting (e.g. "at a glance" risk movement indicators)
- Cybersecurity as an emerging and increasingly important risk, recognising the need for specialist expertise (in both cyber security & Finance) among members.
- Significant operational risks and pressures included:
- Impact of storm events (Storm Éowyn and subsequent events) on forestry assets and operations;

and

- Ongoing Health & Safety risks, including incidents under investigation

Forest Service Resource Capacity & Capability Committee

Forest Service Resource Capacity & Capability Committee supports me in ensuring that all aspects of FS strategic workforce planning, including resourcing gaps and future capacity requirements to deliver priority workstreams, and available financial resources, are managed effectively.

During the year the focus of this committee was addressing the vacancy situation, in particular outstanding professional and technical posts.

Shireen Chambers chaired the committee in 2025-26 and is also a Non-Executive Member of the FSMB. The committee met on 4 occasions in 2025-26 as stipulated in their terms of reference. At each meeting, it reviews strategic resourcing, bespoke forestry recruitment and training, employee engagement and development, and alignment with wider NICS/DAERA priorities.

Attendance details of members are summarised in the following table:

Name	Number of Meetings Attended
Shireen Chambers (Non-Executive Chair)	4
John Joe O'Boyle	3
Fiona Johnston	4
Charmaine Beer	3
Sean McCollum	2
John Joe Cassidy	1
Frank Irvine	2

The Board also receives reports from the Forest Service Corporate Governance and Finance Committees.

Corporate Governance Committee

The committee is chaired by the Head of the Corporate Governance & Finance Division. Membership consists of Executive Members of the FSMB and senior managers. Attendees are required to report on the controls in place to ensure proper governance of their work programmes including management of key risks to the delivery of outcomes. The committee met on 4 occasions in 2025-26.

Attendance details of members are summarised in the following table:

Name	Number of Meetings Attended
Damian Larkin (Chair to November 2025)	2
Frank Irvine (Chair from November 2025)	2 (1 as chair)
John Joe O'Boyle	4 (1 as chair)
Fiona Johnston	4
John Joe Cassidy	4
Charmaine Beer	3
Colin Reilly	2
Brendan Mulholland	2
Sean McCollum	2
Aoife Smith	2
Claire Roulston	1
Ben Searle	1

Finance Committee

The principal role of this committee is to advise the FSMB on financial management associated with its strategic and operational activities. The committee may also convene to consider other pressing financial management matters such to:

- Conduct an annual review of all fees and charges,
- Monitor, report and manage debt levels in compliance with applicable contractual agreements and NICS standards, including the review of ongoing debt management processes,

• Investigate and consider financial management matters at the request of the FSMB.
The Finance Committee met on 4 occasions in 2025-26.

Attendance details of members are summarised in the following table:

Name	Number of Meetings Attended
Frank Irvine (Chair)	4
John Joe Cassidy	4
Paul Clenaghan	2
Charmaine Beer	2
Colin Reilly	1

The Forest Service Management Board's performance

The Forest Service Management Board conducted an annual review of its performance in line with "Corporate governance in central government Departments: Code of good practice NI (2025)".

This states that, 'The Board should ensure that arrangements are in place to enable it to discharge its responsibilities effectively, including a formal and rigorous annual evaluation of the board's performance and that of its committees, and of individual board members' (para 4.1).

The FSMB carried out its annual formal review of effectiveness based upon confidential individual questionnaires completed by all members for review collectively by the Forest Service Management Board. I have noted the opinion in the Internal Auditors Annual Opinion and Report on Forest Service. The overall conclusion of the audit report is that internal control arrangements are satisfactory.

The FSMB received assurance from the work of Soil Association who audit our management performance against the requirements of the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS). Soil Association confirmed that there is sufficient evidence that forests are sustainably managed for products manufactured from our timber to continue to be labelled with the Forest Stewardship Council® FSC or Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC) logos. As a result, Forest Service forests maintain certification under the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) FSC® C084232.

Raising a Concern

During 2025-26, the Agency continued to operate the DAERA Raising a Concern Policy.

The purpose of the policy is to outline the procedures for reporting and investigating disclosures about potential wrongdoing which might be taking place within the Department/Agency. The policy includes advice on how to manage disclosures raised internally by staff, third parties or externally by members of the public. I am committed to addressing 'Raising A Concern' disclosures and will not tolerate any malpractice, abuse or wrongdoing. This policy invites those who may have a concern in relation to any activity within the Agency to come forward and voice those concerns in confidence to an appropriate person.

During 2025-26, the Agency monitored and recorded all instances of concerns raised under the policy. Forest Service investigates and addresses all incidents raised and in cases of suspected fraud an investigation by the Department of Finance (DoF) Fraud Investigation Service is required.
Information on Raising A Concern disclosures is provided at each ARAC meeting for scrutiny and recommendation as appropriate.

During 2025-26, one concern was received in relation to Agency activity and reported to FS ARAC (2024-25: One).

Quality of the data used by the Forest Service Management Board

I rely on the FS ARAC to assure the FSMB that the Agency's activities are appropriate in light of both known and emerging risks and to ensure that information on risk and control is brought to my attention, as considered necessary, to assist me in identifying priorities for action. I am further assured by the professional competence of audit personnel, including Soil Association and by their systems and processes, that the correct level and quality of data is available and considered. Written reports are provided to each FSMB meeting covering progress against targets, internal controls, and resource and risk management to inform FSMB discussion and decision making.

Disclosure of information

I have taken all reasonable steps to make myself aware of any information relevant to audit and to establish that the Agency's auditors are aware of that information.

Data Handling

Executive Board Members governance statements provide me with assurance that sound records management practices are in place that ensure the appropriate creation, maintenance, and disposal of important information held in paper and electronic formats. Information and information system assets are carefully controlled with restricted access provided as appropriate to undertake tasks. The NICS information management systems provide full audit functionality to minimise and track information risk.

Risk Management

The nature of risks managed by the Agency relate to its activity and programmes, achievement of in-year targets, the long-term sustainability of the forest resource and how it is used, the prevention of plant pest introduction and management of any plant disease outbreaks.

The FSMB leads the risk management process supported by its Governance Committee and assured by FS ARAC. A risk register underpins the Agency's approach to identification and management of risks and is routinely reviewed by the Governance Committee and scrutinised by ARAC. Ownership of individual risks rests with Executive Board Members who ensure that staff are able to manage risk in a way appropriate to their authority and duties. Risks that are escalated to the Department's risk register are monitored by the FSMB and reported via the Department's risk management structures.

The Agency manages direct risks to staff, contractors and the public. It adopts a duty of care to forest users and has procedures for defining safety arrangements for the protection of users in the vicinity of forestry operations.

The main business risks within the Forest Service risk profile are:

- inability to manage forests sustainably in compliance with Forestry Standards;
- entry and spread of serious plant disease;
- the impact of market shocks within the NI timber market; and

- loss of productivity of plantations due to pests and disease, storm damage and fire.

The immediate risks to delivery of the Agency business plan are included in the Agency's Risk Register and where appropriate, on the Department's Corporate Risk Register.

Business risk is managed at a strategic level and in response to emergencies through the implementation of contingency planning processes, longer-term timber supply contracts, and sharing knowledge about the growing stock with major customers.

The Agency's emergency fire plan and contingency plan for Plant Health has been refreshed and recognised within the Department's Major Emergency Response Plans.

During the year, the work of the Agency focused on risks relating to Business Plan targets, health and safety of visitors and staff, diseases affecting crops and trees, those affecting timber sales, and stewardship of financial resources and assets including grant funding.

Corporate Governance

Forest Service Executive Board Members are responsible for providing me with a signed Stewardship Report, one at the end of Quarter two and at year end. Those reports acknowledge their responsibility for ensuring that objectives for which they are responsible are clearly defined and that all members of staff within their commands are aware of their objectives relevant to their work. In addition, they acknowledge their Forest Service Annual Report 2025-26 responsibility for developing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance of achievement of these objectives. They provide me with specific details of actions taken in various areas of control.

I, in turn have supplied the DAERA Principal Accounting Officer with bi-annual Agency level Stewardship Reports which report on the governance arrangements in place and that these are being applied appropriately and robustly.

The Agency uses the service provided by DAERA Internal Audit, which operates to standards defined in the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. The terms of reference given to Internal Audit is focused on 'principal risks' identified along with a range of corporate governance issues. Their annual report includes an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Agency's system of corporate governance, risk management, and internal control processes, together with recommendations for improvement.

In summary, my review of the effectiveness of the Agency's systems of internal control relies upon the Executive members of the Forest Service Management Board providing Stewardship Reports, and the governance role provided to the FSMB, the Audit Risk and Assurance Committee, and other supporting Forest Service Committees, the Northern Ireland Audit Office, Internal Audit and the Soil Association.

In overall terms, I am satisfied that the Agency's internal control systems provide reasonable assurance that all risks relating to the achievement of our policies, aims and objectives are being managed effectively.
I am content that the Agency is in compliance with the principles of good governance set out in 'Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments: Code of Good Practice NI (February 2025)'. The following arrangements are in place:

- I have two Non-Executive members to support the Executive members on the Agency Management Board and I have access to DAERA central support in leadership, expertise, and guidance.

- My Corporate Governance & Finance Executive Board Member is responsible for finance, governance and accountability processes generally. This member supervises professionally qualified accountants and draws on the Department as necessary in bringing in finance guidance and expertise to the FSMB.

As such, I am satisfied that the FSMB with its support structures, provides collective strategic and operational leadership and controls appropriate to the Agency.

Remuneration Report

Remuneration Policy

The pay remit for the Northern Ireland Civil Service, including senior civil servants (SCS), is normally approved by the Minister of Finance. Following approval of the 2025-26 Budget in the Assembly, on 19th May 2025, in which the Finance Minister outlined the overarching approach to public sector pay, the NI public sector pay policy guidance was published on 27 May 2025 in FD (DoF) 04/25.

Annual NICS pay awards are made in the context of the wider public sector pay policy. The 2024 pay award, due from 1 August 2024, was paid in April 2025 for weekly paid staff and May 2025 for monthly paid staff. The 2025 pay award, due from 1 August 2025, was paid in August for weekly paid staff and September 2025 for monthly paid staff.

The pay of NICS staff is based on a system of pay scales for each grade, including SCS, containing a number of pay points from minimum to maximum, allowing progression towards the maximum based on performance and other eligibility criteria.

Service Contracts

The Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999 requires Civil Service appointments to be made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The Recruitment Code published by the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland specifies the circumstances when appointments may be made by exception to merit.

Unless otherwise stated, the officials covered by this report hold appointments that are open-ended. Early termination, other than for misconduct, would result in consideration of the individual receiving compensation as set out in the Civil Service Compensation Scheme.

Sickness Absence

Annual sickness absence figures can be found in the "Sickness Absence in the Northern Ireland Civil Service 2024-25" report at
https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/sickness-absence-northern-ireland-civil-service-202425

The 2025-26 sickness absence data is not currently available and will be published later this year.

Employment, training and advancement of disabled persons

The NICS is a lead partner of Employers for Disability NI (EFDNI) and is an accredited Disability Positive employer.
The NICS delivers an annual programme of communications and training on disability awareness and has policies in place to support inclusive workplaces. A review of the NICS reasonable adjustment policy and processes for in-work support, and for its recruitment selection and onboarding processes to deliver improvements was progressed in 2025 and will conclude in 2026-27. Colleagues with lived experience and external independent advocates have been stakeholders in the reasonable adjustment policy review.

The NICS is committed to the employment of Disabled people and offers work experience through its Work Experience Scheme for Disabled People, it has also participated in the previous two phases of the Department for Communities JobStart Scheme which aims to improve the employability and long-term employment prospects of those who face additional barriers to employment. The Civil Service will participate in phase three of the scheme during 2026-27 offering paid work placements to eligible benefit claimants aged 16-65 to address barriers to economic participation.

In order to encourage job applications from Disabled people, positive action advertising and targeted advertising alongside a programme of outreach are used. The NICS operates a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) which ensures a guaranteed number of Disabled applicants who meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria for the role they have applied for, are offered an interview. Further information can be found on the "Information for Disabled applicants" section of the NICS recruit website.

All selection panel members complete mandatory recruitment and selection training, and appointments to the NICS are made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition, adhering to the Recruitment Code.

Learning & Development

The NICS recognises the importance of having skilled and engaged employees and continues to invest in learning and development.

Development and delivery of generic staff training is centralised in NICSHR[1]. Training is delivered using a variety of learning delivery channels (including classroom delivery, on-line, and virtual classrooms), providing flexible access to learning. Coherent learning pathways are aligned to both corporate need and the NICS People Strategy 2025-30.

NICSHR L&D contributes to the delivery of the Strategy's three priorities:

- Skills and Capacity – Building capability and future-ready skills
- Experience and Environment – Creating inclusive, high-quality working environments
- Leadership and Inclusion – Developing leaders who collaborate and innovate

A portfolio of learning products is developed in consultation with customers and subject experts internally and externally, accessible by staff through the LInKS learning management system icon on all NICS desktops. The themes covered in our portfolio of training are:

- Policy and Government
- Leadership & Management
- Collaborative & Collective Working
- Innovation, Improvement & Transformation
- Health & Wellbeing
- Digital Skills Development

Application of Business Appointment Rules (BARs)

The NICS Standards of Conduct Policy, (Section 8 and Annexes 4) sets out the rules on the acceptance of outside business appointments, employment or self-employment for staff after they leave the NI Civil Service, including procedures to make staff aware of these rules and provides that the Permanent Secretary of the Department is responsible for the effective operation of the Business Appointment Rules within their Department. Further detail is available in the NICS Standards of Conduct Policy.

In compliance with Business Appointment rules, the Department is transparent in the advice given to individual applications for senior staff, including special advisors. Advice regarding specific business appointments has been published on the DAERA website Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

1 NICSHR is the NICS' centralised human resources operational delivery function, falling under the responsibility of the Department of Finance

Employee Consultation and Trade Union Relationships

The Department of Finance (DOF) is responsible for the NICS Trade Union Arrangements Policy. People & Organisational Development within DOF consults and/or negotiates with the NICS recognised trade unions on matters such as pay, promotion, and annual leave which are relevant across the NICS. Local issues relevant only to a particular office or area of work is handled by local managers, and branch trade union representatives, through agreed Local Whitley procedures/constitutions. Each department will have their own Departmental Whitley structure, to consider matters unique to individual departments and their agencies across business areas. Business areas may also have a Whitley arrangement in place dealing with issues specific to that business area.

Employee Engagement

The NICS People Survey is now conducted every other year. The 2025 survey results can be accessed at https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/nics-people-survey-results. The next survey is scheduled for 2027.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The NICS values and welcomes diversity and is committed to creating a truly inclusive workplace for all. As part of this commitment, leadership and inclusion is a key pillar within the new five-year NICS People Strategy 2025-30 which launched in April 2025. The strategy was developed with a range of stakeholders including NICS staff networks and through its delivery the NICS aims to foster a culture of leadership, inclusivity and diversity that will help drive better outcomes for its workforce and the public it serves.

The NICS Diversity Champions Network comprises senior colleagues as designated Diversity Champions for each of the nine NICS departments, as well as four thematic leads for gender, race and ethnicity, disability and LGBTQ+. The network works in partnership with the NICS corporate HR function, People and Organisational Development and the seven NICS staff networks (LGBTQ+, Women, Disability, Race & Ethnicity, Cancer Support, Carers and Students), to develop and deliver actions to help promote and embed equality, diversity and inclusion across the Service.

Equality is a cornerstone consideration in the development and review of all HR policies which determine how staff are recruited and appointed, their terms and conditions, how they are managed and developed, assessed, recognised and rewarded. Further information is available in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. A strategic HR policy renewal programme is underway as part of the new People Strategy to modernise NICS people policies, ensuring they are user-centric and have a positive impact on employee experience.
As part of the NICS' efforts to ensure equality of opportunity, the NICS continually conducts comprehensive reviews into the composition of its workforce and recruitment activity, publishing a wide range of data. The statistics are available on the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)'s website.

The NICS continues to meet its statutory obligations under the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998, which includes submission of an annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return and a tri-annual Article 55 Review to the Equality Commission for NI (ECNI), both of which assess the composition of the NICS workforce and the composition of applicants and appointees. Although not a statutory requirement, the NICS also conducts a similar formal review of the gender profile of its workforce. The findings from both tri-annual reviews are published in the NICS Workforce Review. The next review was submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in 2025 and will be published in 2026.

The NICS uses the findings of all the equality monitoring and analysis to inform its programme of targeted outreach activity to address any areas of under-representation.

As a public authority, the NICS has due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 in carrying out its functions. Further information on the department's equality scheme is available on its website Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

Salary and pension entitlements

The following sections provide details of the remuneration and pension interests of the most senior Management of the Forest Service.

Official's remuneration (including salary) and pension entitlements [Audited]

	2025-26				2024-25			
	Salary £000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £1,000)	Pension benefits (to nearest £1,000)	Total £000	Salary	Benefits in kind (to nearest £1,000)	Pension benefits (to nearest £1,000)	Total £000
Mr JJ O'Boyle (Chief Executive)	90–95	-	108	200-205	85-90	-	103	190-195
Dr C Beer (Executive Member)	70-75	-	101	170-175	15-20 (65-70 FYE)	-	6	20-25
Mr F Irvine (Executive Member) (Sept 25 – Mar 26)	30-35 (55–60 FYE)	-	21	50-55 (80–85 FYE)	-	-	-	-
Mr D Larkin (Executive Member) (April 25 – Sept 25)	30-35 (60-65 FYE)	-	16	45–50 (75-80 FYE)	60-65	-	24	80-85
Ms F Johnston (Executive Member)	60-65	-	21	80-85	60-65	-	43	100-105
Mr JJ Cassidy (Executive Member) (April 25 – Sept 25)	30-35 (60-65 FYE)	-	26	55-60	55-60	-	54	105-110
Mr J Crummie Executive Member	-	-	-	-	30-35 (60-65 FYE)	-	207	235-240
Mr M Fairgrieve (Executive Member)	-	-	-	-	25-30 (55-60 FYE)	-	34	60-65
Mr B McMaster (Non-Executive Member) (Mar 25-25 June 2025)	0-5	-	-	0-5	5-10	-	-	5-10

	2025-26				2024-25			
	Salary £000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £1,000)	Pension benefits (to nearest £1,000)	Total £000	Salary	Benefits in kind (to nearest £1,000)	Pension benefits (to nearest £1,000)	Total £000
Mr M Mawhinney (Non-Executive Member) (June 25 – Mar 26)	5-10	-	-	5-10	-	-	-	-
Ms S Chambers (Non-Executive Member) (June 25 – Mar 26)	5-10	-	-	5-10	-	-	-	-

**Bonus payments are not applicable to departments but may be applicable to other organisations.*
***The value of pension benefits accrued during the year is calculated as (the real increase in pension multiplied by 20) plus (the real increase in any lump sum) less (the contributions made by the individual). The real increases exclude increases due to inflation and any increase or decrease due to a transfer of pension rights.*

Salary

'Salary' includes gross salary; overtime; reserved rights to London weighting or London allowances; recruitment and retention allowances; private office allowances and any other allowance to the extent that it is subject to UK taxation and any severance or ex gratia payments. This report is based on accrued payments made by Forest Service and thus recorded in these accounts.

Benefits in kind

The monetary value of benefits in kind covers any benefits provided by the employer and treated by HM Revenue and Customs as a taxable emolument.

Pay Ratios [Audited]

Forest Service is required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest paid Board Member in their organisation and the lower quartile, median and upper quartile remuneration of the organisation's workforce.

The banded remuneration of the highest-paid Board Member in Forest Service in the financial year 2025-26 was £90K-£95K (2024-25, £85K- £90K).

The relationship between the mid-point of this band and the remuneration of the organisation's workforce is disclosed below.

2025-26	25th Percentile	Median	75th Percentile
Remuneration	27,986	30,978	40,110
Ratio	3.47	3.13	2.42

2024-25	25th Percentile	Median	75th Percentile
Remuneration	26,659	29,509	38,208
Ratio	3.33:1	3.0:1	2.33:1

Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance-related pay, and benefits- in-kind. It does not include severance payments, employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions.

The values for the salary component of remuneration for the 25th percentile, median and 75th percentile were £27,986 (2024-25, £26,659), £30,978 (2024-25, £29,509) and £40,110 (2024-25, £38,208) respectively. In 2025-26 NIL (2024-25: NIL) employees received remuneration in excess of the highest-paid Board Member.

Remuneration ranged from £25,796 to £94,332 (2024-25 £8,885 to £89,112).

Percentage Change in Remuneration

The percentage changes in respect of Forest Service are shown in the following table.

Percentage change for:	Mean Average Salary		Percentage Change
	2025-26	2024-25	
Average employee salary and allowance	35,467	33,272	7.0%
Highest paid director's salary and allowances	7%	4%	3%

Percentage movements from last year are due to a combination of annual incremental pay increases; pay scale progressions; and changes in staff composition and grades.

The calculation for the highest paid director is based on the mid-point of the band within which their remuneration fell in each year.

Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Pension Schemes

Pension benefits are provided through the Northern Ireland Civil Service pension schemes which are administered by Civil Service Pensions (CSP).

The alpha pension scheme was initially introduced for new entrants from 1 April 2015. The alpha scheme and all previous scheme arrangements are unfunded with the cost of benefits met by monies voted each year. The majority of members of the Classic, Premium, Classic Plus and Nuvos pension arrangements (collectively known as the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland) [PCSPS(NI)]) also moved to alpha from that date. Transitional protection measures introduced alongside these reforms meant any members who on 1 April 2012 were within 10 years of their normal pension age remained in their previous scheme arrangement (full protection) and those who were between 13.5 years and 10 years of their normal pension age were given a choice between moving to alpha on 1 April 2015 or at a later date determined by their age (tapered protection).

McCloud Judgment and 2015 Remedy

In 2018, the Court of Appeal found that the transitional protections put in place back in 2015 that allowed older workers to remain in their original scheme, were discriminatory on the basis of age. As a result, steps

have been taken by the Department of Finance to remedy this discrimination.
The Department has now made regulations which remedy the discrimination by:

- ensuring all active members are treated equally for future service as members of the reformed alpha scheme only from 1 April 2022, and

- providing each eligible member with options to have their pension entitlements for the period when the discrimination existed between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 (the Remedy Period) retrospectively calculated under either the current (reformed) scheme rules, or the older (pre-reform) legacy rules which existed before 2015.

This means that all active NICS Pension Scheme members are in the same pension scheme, alpha, from 1 April 2022 onwards, regardless of age. This removes the discrimination going forwards in providing equal pension provision for all scheme members.

The Department is now implementing the second part of the remedy, which addresses the discrimination which was incurred by affected members between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022.

Eligible members with relevant service between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 (the Remedy Period) will now be entitled to a choice of alternative pension benefits in relation to that period. i.e. calculated under the preformed PCSPS(NI) 'Classic', 'Premium' or 'Nuvos' rules or alternatively calculated under the reformed alpha rules. As part of this 'retrospective' remedy most active members will now receive a choice about their Remedy Period benefits at the point of retirement. This is known as the Deferred Choice Underpin (DCU). For those members who already have pension benefits in payment in relation to the Remedy Period, they will receive an Immediate Choice. There are a significant number of Immediate Choice Remediable Service Statement (RSS) packs to issue. This process involves complex calculations to provide members with individually tailored statements. Due to the complexity of the calculations and some prolonged work to finalise policy elements of the remedy, not all Immediate Choice packs have been able to be issued by the original regulatory timeline of 31 March 2025. The Scheme Manager has invoked the discretion allowed by the remedy legislation and has extended the timeline for issuing Immediate Choice RSS packs to 31 March 2027. The Pensions Regulator has been notified of this extension. Our priority remains to provide members with all the accurate information they need to make a choice. It can be noted that other Public Service Pension Schemes are also in a similar position. Further information on the remedy will be included in the NICS pension scheme accounts which, once published, are available at DoF Annual Reports and Accounts.

As part of the remedy involved rolling back all remediable service into the relevant legacy PCSPS(NI) arrangement for the 7-Year Remedy Period, the value of pension benefits for the 2025-26 pension disclosures for affected members continue to be based on the rolled back position.

Alpha

Alpha is a 'Career Average Revalued Earnings' (CARE) arrangement in which members accrue pension benefits at a percentage rate of annual pensionable earnings throughout the period of scheme membership. The current accrual rate is 2.32%.

From 1 April 2015, all new entrants joining the NICS can choose between membership of alpha or joining a 'money purchase' stakeholder arrangement with a significant employer contribution (Partnership Pension Account).

Information on the PCSPS(NI) – Closed Scheme

Staff in post prior to 30 July 2007 were eligible to be in one of three statutory based 'final salary' legacy defined benefit arrangements (Classic, Premium and Classic Plus). From April 2011, pensions payable under these arrangements have been reviewed annually in line with changes in the cost of living. New entrants who joined on or after 1 October 2002 and before 30 July 2007 will have chosen between membership of Premium or joining the Partnership Pension Account.

New entrants who joined on or after 30 July 2007 were eligible for membership of the legacy PCSPS(NI) Nuvos arrangement or they could have opted for a Partnership Pension Account. Nuvos was also a CARE arrangement in which members accrued pension benefits at a percentage rate of annual pensionable earnings throughout the period of scheme membership. The rate of accrual was 2.3%.
Benefits in Classic accrued at the rate of 1/80th of pensionable salary for each year of service. In addition, a lump sum equivalent to three years' pension is payable on retirement. For Premium, benefits accrued at the rate of 1/60th of final pensionable earnings for each year of service. Unlike Classic, there is no automatic lump sum (but members may give up (commute) some of their pension to provide a lump sum). Classic Plus is essentially a variation of Premium, but with benefits in respect of service before 1 October 2002 calculated broadly as per Classic.

Partnership Pension Account

The Partnership Pension Account is a stakeholder pension arrangement. The employer makes a basic contribution of between 8% and 14.75% (depending on the age of the member) into a stakeholder pension product chosen by the employee. The employee does not have to contribute but where they do make contributions, the employer will match these up to a limit of 3% of pensionable salary (in addition to the employer's basic contribution). Employers also contribute a further 0.5% of pensionable salary to cover the cost of centrally provided risk benefit cover (death in service and ill health retirement).

Annual Benefit Statements

Active members of the pension scheme will receive an Annual Benefit Statement. The accrued pension quoted is the pension the member is entitled to receive when they reach their scheme pension age, or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the scheme if they are at or over pension age. The normal scheme pension age in alpha is linked to the member's State Pension Age but cannot be before age 65. The Scheme Pension age is 60 for any pension accrued in the legacy Classic, Premium, and Classic Plus arrangements and 65 for any benefits accrued in Nuvos. Further details about the NICS pension schemes can be found at the website Civil Service Pensions (NI).

Pension Increases

All pension benefits are reviewed annually in line with changes in the cost of living. Any applicable increases are applied from April and are determined by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) figure for the preceding September. The CPI in September 2025 was 3.8% and HM Treasury has announced that public service pensions will be increased accordingly from April 2026.

Employee Contribution Rates

Percentage rates for employee contributions were revised for all members from 1 July 2025 as a result of the Northern Ireland Civil Service Pension Scheme: Consultation on Scheme Yield / Member Contributions as shown below*:

Annualised Rate of Pensionable Earnings (Salary Bands) 1 April 2025 to 31 August 2025		Contribution rates – All members from 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025	*Contribution rates – All members from 1 July 2025
From	**To**		
£0	£27,091.99	4.6%	4.65%
£27,092.00	£61,645.99	5.45%	5.65%
£61,646.00	£165,793.99	7.35%	7.55%
£165,794.00 and above		8.05%	8.25%

Salary bands were also updated from 1 September 2025 as follows:

Annualised Rate of Pensionable Earnings (Salary Bands) 1 September 2025 onwards		Contribution rates – All members
From	**To**	
£0	£28,716.99	4.65%
£28,717.00	£65,343.99	5.65%
£65,344.00	£175,740.99	7.55%
£175,741.00 and above		8.25%

Cash Equivalent Transfer Values [Audited]

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies.

The CETV figures, and from 2003-04 the other pension details, include the value of any pension benefit in another scheme or arrangement which the individual has transferred to the NICS pension arrangements. They also include any additional pension benefit accrued to the member as a result of their purchasing additional years of pension service in the scheme at their own cost.

CETVs are calculated in accordance with The Occupational Pension Schemes (Transfer Values) Regulations 1996 (as amended).

HM Treasury provides the assumptions for discount rates for calculating CETVs payable from the public service pension schemes. On 27 April 2023, HM Treasury published guidance on the basis for setting the discount rates for calculating cash equivalent transfer values payable by public service pension schemes. In their guidance of 27 April 2023, HM Treasury advised that, with immediate effect, the discount rate adopted for calculating CETVs should be in line with the new SCAPE discount rate of 1.7% above CPI inflation, superseding the previous SCAPE discount rate of 2.4% above CPI inflation. All else being the same, a lower SCAPE discount rate leads to higher CETVs. The HM Treasury Guidance of 27 April 2023 can be found at Basis for setting the discount rates for calculating cash equivalent transfer values payable by public service pension schemes- GOV.UK. As at the year-end there have been no further changes to the SCAPE discount rate of 1.7% above CPI inflation since the HM Treasury guidance was published.

Real increase in CETV

This reflects the increase in CETV that is funded by the employer. It does not include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period (which therefore disregards the effect of any changes in factors).

Officials	Accrued pension at pension age as at 31/03/26 £000	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at pension age £000	CETV at 31/03/26 £000	CETV at 31/03/25 £000	Real increase in CETV £000
Mr. John Joe O'Boyle	55 - 60 plus lump sum of 140 - 145	5 - 7.5 plus lump sum of 7.5 - 10	1091	991	90
Dr. Charmaine Beer	20 - 25	5 - 7.5	356	256	82
Mr. Frank Irvine	15 – 20	0 - 2.5	178	159	12
Mr. Damian Larkin	20 - 25	0 - 2.5	272	93	9
Mr. John Cassidy	25 - 30 plus lump sum of 70 - 75	0 – 2.5 plus lump sum of 0 – 2.5	674	615	24
Ms. Fiona Johnston	20 - 25	0 - 2.5	431	396	12

Compensation for loss of office [Audited]

No compensation payments were made or due to any of the senior management of Forest Service under Civil Service Compensation Scheme (NI) (CSCS (NI) in the year ending 31 March 2026 or 31 March 2025.

Staff Costs [Audited]

Staff costs comprise:

2025-26	Permanent Staff £000	Temporary Staff £000	2025-26 Total £000	2024-25 Total £000
Wages & Salaries	7,011	457	**7,468**	**7,427**
Social Security Costs	916	-	**916**	**726**
Other Pension Costs	2,178	-	**2,178**	**2,071**
Total Staff Costs	**10,105**	**457**	**10,562**	**10,224**

Of which:

Charged to Administration	Nil	Nil
Charged to Programme	10,562	10,224

The Northern Ireland Civil Service main pension schemes are unfunded multi-employer defined benefit schemes but Forest Service is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities.

The Public Service Pensions Act (NI) 2014 provides the legal framework for regular actuarial valuations of the public service pension schemes to measure the costs of the benefits being provided. These valuations inform the future contribution rates to be paid into the schemes by employers every four years following the scheme valuation. The Act also provides for the establishment of an employer cost cap mechanism to ensure that the costs of the pension schemes remain sustainable in future.

The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) is responsible for carrying out scheme valuations. The Actuary reviews employer contributions every four years following the scheme valuation. The 2020 scheme valuation was completed by GAD in October 2023. The outcome of this valuation was used to set the level of contributions for employers from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2027.

The Cost Cap Mechanism (CCM) is a measure of scheme costs and determines whether member costs or scheme benefits require adjustment to maintain costs within a set corridor. Reforms were made to the CCM which was applied to the 2020 scheme valuations and included the introduction of a reformed-scheme-only cost control mechanism which assesses just the costs relating to reformed schemes (alpha for the NICS) and introduced an economic check. Prior to the cost control mechanism reforms, legacy scheme (PCSPS(NI) costs associated with active members were also captured in the mechanism. The reformed-scheme-only design and the economic check were applied to the 2020 scheme valuations for the devolved public sector pension schemes, including the NICS pension scheme. The 2020 scheme valuation outcome was that the core cost cap cost of the scheme lies within the 3% cost cap corridor. As there is no breach of the cost control mechanism, there is no requirement for the Department of Finance to consult on changes to the scheme. Further information can be found on the Department of Finance website https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-civil-service-pension-scheme-valuations.

For 2025-26, employers' contributions of £2,178,299 were payable to the NICS pension arrangements at a flat rate of 34.25% of pensionable pay, for all salaries (2024-25 £2,070,792 at 34.25%).
Employees can opt to open a partnership pension account, a stakeholder pension with an employer contribution. Employers' contributions of £NIL (2024-25 £NIL) were paid to one or more of the panel of two

appointed stakeholder pension providers.

Employer contributions are age-related and range from 8% to 14.75% (2024-25, 8% to 14.75%) of pensionable pay.

The partnership pension account offers the member the opportunity of having a ‘free’ pension. The employer will pay the age-related contribution and if the member does contribute, the employer will pay an additional amount to match member contributions up to 3% of pensionable earnings.

Employer contributions of £NIL,0.5% (2024-25 £NIL, 0.5%) of pensionable pay, were payable to the NICS Pension schemes to cover the cost of the future provision of lump sum benefits on death in service and ill health retirement of these employees. Contributions due to the partnership pension providers at the reporting period date were £NIL. Contributions prepaid at that date were £NIL.

Forest Service had no early retirements on ill health grounds in 2025-26 (2024-25: NIL).

Average Number of Persons Employed [Audited]

The average number of full-time equivalent persons employed during the year was as follows:

	2025 - 26			2024 - 25
	Permanent staff	Others	Total	Total
Industrial	68.9	-	68.9	75.95
Non - Industrial	94.3	8.3	102.6	109.53
Total	**163.2**	**8.3**	**171.5**	**185.45**

Staff Turnover

Staff turnover rates for 2025-26 are shown below. The Agency continues to monitor turnover rates and support initiatives to maintain a healthy level of turnover. When available, the annual Civil Service People Survey, coupled with other research, helps us to understand our people’s experience of working in the Agency and take appropriate action to improve effectiveness, including where turnover could potentially become problematic.

Agency Turnover Rate		General Turnover Rate	
Turnover Rate	Turnover %	Turnover Rate	Turnover %
0.086	8.6%	0.065	6.5%

Civil Service HR guidance defines Agency Turnover as staff leaving the Civil Service or a particular department, and General Turnover as staff living leaving the Civil Service as a whole. Turnover includes permanent and temporary staff, and those who left the NICS whilst on career break.

Staff composition (Male, Female - SCS, Board Members and employees)

The Forest Service Management Board comprises the Chief Executive (male), three Executive Members (1 male and 2 female) and two non-Executive Member (1 male and 1 female). Staff composition at 31 March 2026 (including temporary promotion arrangements) is as per the table below.

	G5	G6	G7	DP	SO	EO1	EO2	AO	AA	IND	TOTAL
Female	-	1	4	3	8	7	10	5	-	4	**42**
Male	1	-	5	4	11	32	8	3	2	78	**144**
Total	**1**	**1**	**9**	**7**	**19**	**39**	**18**	**8**	**2**	**82**	**186**

Workforce Planning & Development

Forest Service is a multidisciplinary organisation with a dedicated workforce drawn from forestry, agriculture, industrial and administrative disciplines.

Forest Service staff are civil servants and are covered by all NICS Human Resource (HR) policies. The Management Board monitors HR issues, supported by a DAERA NICS HR Business partner who provides workforce statistics to the agency. Forest Service utilises the NICS Performance Management System whereby individual Personal Performance Agreements and Personal Development Plans are constructed, to enable staff to contribute to the achievement of the Agency's business objectives and staff performance reviewed in-year and at year end.

Forest Service maintains a Recruitment and Resourcing Plan and established a Resource Capacity and Capability Committee (Resource Committee) in August 2025 to ensure strategic workforce planning is in place and to advise on the deployment of the Agency staff resource against priority business objectives. This has included ongoing reprioritising of work, developing and launching a number of bespoke external substantive competitions, internal temporary promotions and seeking bespoke and innovative solutions to deal with sectoral capacity and recruitment challenges.

Training needs are identified and managed within the Forest Service Corporate Training Plan which include industry-based health and safety and operational courses for professional and technical staff, provided by external providers. Other skills training is available to all staff from the NICS Centre of Applied Learning. Forest Service has undertaken a programme of work which focuses on priority areas and activities to improve employee engagement including the ongoing implementation of the Employee Engagement Charter and Action Plan, supported by an Engagement Implementation Group. In this business year, training and events have taken place to support career resilience, staff development, health and well-being and Agency priorities and values. The NICS People Survey includes an Employee Engagement Index and full survey results can be accessed at https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/nics-people-survey-results. The next NICS People Survey is due to take place in 2027.

Communication channels are in place with staff through team briefings, circulars, intranet updates and the new engagement newsletter 'Leaflet' which has had two editions to share staff stories and successes. There are also well-established arrangements for consultation with representatives of the trade unions (both non-industrial and industrial via the Joint Industrial Council and NI Public Service Alliance) on all significant developments likely to impact on staff.

Expenditure on consultancy

The Agency had no external consultancy expenditure during the year.

Off-payroll engagements

The Agency had no off-payroll engagements during the year

Regularity of Expenditure [Audited]

As Forest Service's Accounting Officer, I am content that the expenditure and income of my Agency have been applied to the purposes intended by the NI Assembly. Furthermore, I am content that the Agency's transactions are within the scope of the authorities that govern them, and that there are no material weaknesses in the design and implementation of the Agency's internal controls to prevent and detect fraud.

Fees and Charges [Audited]

The Agency is required to review the services that it provides and supply a Memorandum Trading Account (MTA) detailing forecast income and expenditure in support of the charging proposals for schemes/services. The main activities that attract charges are timber sales, recreation, both commercial and non-commercial and Plant Health Inspections.

The financial objective of Commercial Recreation and Plant Health Inspection is full cost recovery. However, in the case of Non-Commercial Recreation, 100% recovery cannot realistically be achieved in the foreseeable future and the short-term objective is to recover at the maximum level that the market will bear.

The financial objective of timber sales is the sale of approximately 400,000 cubic metres annually to the timber industry at market value through the arrangement of Long-Term Contracts, Tender Sales, or Negotiated Sales.

A breakdown of the income and expenditure for each activity can be found at Note 3 to the Financial Statements.

Losses and Special payments [Audited]

	2025-26 £000	Number of cases	2024-25 £000	Number of cases
Losses				
Forest Fires	1,089	7	-	-
Fraud / Theft / Vandalism	-	-	1	1
	1,089	**7**	**1**	**1**

Special Payments [Audited]

There were Compensation payments amounting to £127,500 paid during the year ended 31 March 2026. (2024-25: £NIL).

John Joe O'Boyle
Chief Executive
25 June 2026

Forest Service
The Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Northern Ireland Assembly

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Forest Service for the year ended 31 March 2026 under the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001. The financial statements comprise: the Statements of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Financial Position, Cash Flows, Changes in Taxpayers' Equity; and the related notes including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in the preparation of the Forest Service financial statements is applicable law and UK adopted international accounting standards as interpreted and adapted by the Government Financial Reporting Manual.

I have also audited the information in the Accountability Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

In my opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the Forest Service's affairs as at 31 March 2026 and of its net operating deficit for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001 and Department of Finance directions issued thereunder.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects the income and expenditure recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs)(UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements and Regularity of Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom'. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my certificate.

My staff and I are independent of the Forest Service in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.
I believe that the audit evidence obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinions.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that the Forest Service's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.
Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Forest Service's ability to

continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Accounting Officer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this certificate.

Other Information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report other than the financial statements, the parts of the Accountability Report described in that report as having been audited and my audit certificate and report. The Accounting Officer is responsible for the other information included in the annual report. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my certificate I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with Department of Finance directions made under the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001; and
- the information given in the Performance Report and Accountability Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

Matters on which I report by exception

In light of the knowledge and understanding of the Forest Service and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Performance Report and Accountability Report.

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records; or

- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by the Government Financial Reporting Manual are not made or parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report to be audited is not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or

- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or

- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with the Department of Finance's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer Responsibilities, the Accounting Officer is responsible for:

- maintaining proper accounting records;

- the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view;

- ensuring such internal controls are in place as deemed necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements to be free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error;

- ensuring the annual report, which includes the Remunerations and Staff Report, is prepared in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework; and

- assessing the Forest Service's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by the Forest Service will not continue to be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulation, including fraud.

My procedures included:

- obtaining an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the Forest Service through discussion with management and application of extensive public sector accountability knowledge. The key laws and regulations I considered included the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001;
- making enquiries of management and those charged with governance on Forest Service's compliance with laws and regulations;
- making enquiries of internal audit, management and those charged with governance as to susceptibility to irregularity and fraud, their assessment of the risk of material misstatement due to fraud and irregularity, and their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud and irregularity;
- completing risk assessment procedures to assess the susceptibility of Forest Service's financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur. This included, but was not limited to, an engagement director led engagement team discussion on fraud to identify particular areas, transaction streams and business practices that may be susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. As part of this discussion, I identified potential for fraud in the following areas: revenue recognition, expenditure recognition, posting of unusual journals and significant or unusual transactions;
- engagement director oversight to ensure the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework throughout the audit;
- engagement director oversight to ensure the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework throughout the audit;
- documenting and evaluating the design and implementation of internal controls in place to mitigate risk of material misstatement due to fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations;
- designing audit procedures to address specific laws and regulations which the engagement team considered to have a direct material effect on the financial statements in terms of misstatement and irregularity, including fraud. These audit procedures included, but were not limited to, reading board and committee minutes, and agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation and approvals as appropriate.
- addressing the risk of fraud as a result of management override of controls by:
    - performing analytical procedures to identify unusual or unexpected relationships or movements;
    - testing journal entries to identify potential anomalies, and inappropriate or unauthorised adjustments;
    - assessing whether judgements and other assumptions made in determining accounting estimates were indicative of potential bias; and

- investigating significant or unusual transactions made outside of the normal course of business; and

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my certificate.

In addition, I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the income and expenditure recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.

Dorinnia Carville
Comptroller and Auditor General
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
BELFAST
BT7 1EU
1 July 2026

Financial Statements

Financial Statements

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE NET EXPENDITURE
For the year ended 31 March 2026

This account summarises the expenditure and income generated and consumed on an accruals basis. It also includes other comprehensive income and expenditure, which include changes to the values of non-current assets and other financial instruments that cannot yet be recognised as income or expenditure.

	Note	2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000
Operating Income			
Resource funding from DAERA	2	(11,101)	(16,040)
Capital grants from DAERA	2	(2,409)	(368)
Operating Income	2	(12,984)	(12,688)
EU Income	2	-	-
		(26,494)	**(29,096)**
Operating Expenditure			
Staff Costs	4	10,562	10,224
Grants	4	2,687	2,468
Other Operating Expenditure	4	6,296	6,050
Non-Cash Items	4	4,080	4,530
Revaluation	4	17,363	15,097
Total Operating (Income)/Expenditure		**40,988**	**38,369**
Net deficit/(surplus) for the year		**14,494**	**9,273**
All income and expenditure is derived from continuing operations.			
Other Comprehensive Net Expenditure			
Items that will not be reclassified to net operating costs:			
Net (gain)/loss on revaluation of Property, Plant & Equipment	7.1	22,041	4,190
Net (gain) / loss on revaluation of Right of Use assets	7.1	1,471	488
Net (gain)/loss on revaluation of Intangible assets	8	-	(37)
Comprehensive Net (Surplus)/Expenditure for year		**38,006**	**13,914**

The notes on pages 67 to 95 form part of these accounts.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
as at 31 March 2026

This statement presents the financial position of Forest Service. It comprises three main components: assets owned or controlled; liabilities owed to other bodies; and equity, the remaining value of the entity.

	Note	2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000
Non-current assets:			
Heritage assets	6	597	597
Property, plant and equipment	7	142,149	166,013
Intangible assets	8	593	597
Biological assets	10	369,003	387,231
Net Investment in Finance Lease	21	204	212
Right of Use Assets	7	8,772	10,259
Total non-current assets		**521,318**	**564,909**
Current assets:			
Assets classified as held for sale	11	5,414	4,113
Inventories	14	31	36
Trade and other receivables	15	9,345	11,058
Cash and cash equivalents	16	35,017	26,458
Total current assets		**49,807**	**41,665**
Total assets		**571,125**	**606,574**
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	17	(1,601)	(1,528)
Provisions	18	(1,118)	(1,710)
Total current liabilities		**(2,719)**	**(3,238)**
Total assets less current liabilities		**568,406**	**603,336**
Total assets less total liabilities		**568,406**	**603,336**
Taxpayers' equity and other reserves:			
General fund		482,333	493,207
Revaluation reserve		86,073	110,129
Total equity		**568,406**	**603,336**

John Joe O'Boyle, Accounting Officer
25 June 2026

The notes on pages 67 to 95 form part of these accounts.

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
For the year ended 31 March 2026

The Statement of Cash Flows shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Agency during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Agency generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of service costs and the extent to which these operations are funded by way of income from the recipients of services provided by the Agency. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash inflows and outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Agency's future public service delivery.

	Note	2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net operating deficit		(14,494)	(9,273)
Adjustments for non-cash transactions	4	21,444	19,581
(Increase) / Decrease in trade and other receivables	15	1,710	(1,258)
(Increase) / Decrease in Inventories	14	5	1
Increase in trade and other payables	17	73	(929)
Use of provisions	18	(131)	(20)
Bad debt provisions provided for/(released) in year	4	3	46
Less movements in receivables relating to items not passing through the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure		7	7
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities		**8,617**	**8,155**
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of non-financial assets	7	(74)	(1,070)
Proceeds from disposal of non-financial assets	7	16	79
Net cash (outflow) / inflow from investing activities		**(58)**	**(991)**
Cash flows from financing activities			
Funding from parent department		-	-
Net cash inflow from financing activities		**-**	**-**
Net increase / (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the period after adjustments for receipts and payments to the Consolidated Fund		**8,559**	**7,164**
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	16	**26,458**	**19,294**
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	16	**35,017**	**26,458**

The notes on pages 67 to 95 form part of these accounts.

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN TAXPAYERS' EQUITY
for the year ending 31 March 2026

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by Forest Service, analysed into 'general fund reserves' (i.e. those reserves that reflect a contribution from the Consolidated Fund). The Revaluation Reserve reflects the change in asset values that have not been recognised as income or expenditure. The General Fund represents the total assets less liabilities of an Agency, to the extent that the total is not represented by other reserves and financing items.

	Note	General Fund £000	Revaluation Reserve £000	Taxpayers Equity £000
Balance at 31 March 2024		**498,999**	**115,297**	**614,296**
Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the Year - Net surplus	SOCNE	(9,273)	-	(9,273)
Adjustments for non-cash transactions	7.2,8.2	-	(4,641)	(4,641)
Non-cash charges - other notional costs	5	2,933	-	2,933
Non-cash charges - auditor's remuneration	5	21	-	21
Transfers between reserves		527	(527)	-
Balance at 31 March 2025		**493,207**	**110,129**	**603,336**
Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the Year - Net surplus	SOCNE	(14,494)	-	(14,494)
Non-Cash Adjustments	7.1, 8.1	-	(23,512)	(23,512)
Non-cash charges - other notional costs	5	3,055	-	3,055
Non-cash charges - auditor's remuneration	5	21	-	21
Transfers between reserves		544	(544)	-
Balance at 31 March 2026		**482,333**	**86,073**	**568,406**

The notes on pages 67 to 95 form part of these accounts.

NOTES TO THE AGENCY'S ACCOUNTS

1 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounts direction issued by the Department of Finance in accordance with Section 11(1) and (2) of the Government Resources and Accounts Act (NI) 2001 and shall be consistent with the accounting principles and disclosure requirements of the 2025-26 Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) issued by the Department of Finance. The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS's) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Forest Service for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The particular policies adopted by the Forest Service are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material to the accounts.

1.1 Accounting Convention

These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention, modified to account for the revaluation of property, plant and equipment, intangible assets, biological assets and certain financial assets and liabilities.

1.2a Funding

Funding has been received from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and is accounted for through the Statement of Comprehensive Income to cover operating expenditure. Any income that Forest Service has received during the year that is not required to cover operating or capital expenditure can be held as Reserves.

1.2b Public Corporation Dividend

Forest Service pays a dividend to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, reflecting the expected rate of return on funding provided. This is disclosed in the Statement of Comprehensive Income. The dividend rate has been agreed with DoF and is currently set at zero percent whilst Forest Service are loss-making. If Forest Service makes a surplus before revaluation gains and funding from DAERA, HMT's real rate of 3.5 percent will apply.

	2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000
Operating Income before DAERA Subsidy	12,984	12,688
Operating expenditure before revaluation	(23,625)	(23,272)
Net operating Surplus/(Expenditure)	**(10,641)**	**(10,584)**

1.3 Property, plant and equipment

Capitalisation

Expenditure on property, plant and equipment of over £5,000 is capitalised. Within DAERA the grouping of computer equipment in respect of items falling below this threshold has also been undertaken.
On initial recognition property, plant and equipment and intangible assets are measured at cost including any expenditure, such as installation, directly attributable to bringing them into working condition. Items classified as "under construction" are recognised in the Statement of Financial Position to the extent that money has been paid or a liability has been incurred.

Subsequent expenditure on an asset that meets the criteria in compliance with IAS 16 is capitalised; otherwise it is expensed.

Valuation

Buildings have been valued with regards to International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as applied to the United Kingdom public sector and in accordance with HM Treasury guidance, International Valuation Standards and the requirements of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors Valuation Standards. Professional revaluations of buildings are undertaken every five years, with the valuations used in these accounts provided by Land & Property Services (LPS) as at 1 April 2025. Building values are restated annually, between professional valuations, using indices provided by LPS.

Properties surplus to requirements are valued on the basis of open market value less any material, directly attributable, selling costs.

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) collate and analyse market activity to support calculation of the biological and land asset portfolio value for the financial statements of Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS). VOA share this market data with LPS and LPS have used the information as the basis to arrive at the Fair Value of the Forest Service land and the biological asset that represents the forest crops thereon.
It is emphasised that this is an informal apportionment produced solely for the purposes of depreciation accounting and does not represent a formal valuation of the separate elements of the asset. The figures detailed should not be relied upon for any other purpose (RICS UK National Supplement 2017, UK VPGA 1.10).

The valuations have been undertaken having regard to International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as applied to the United Kingdom public sector and in accordance with HM Treasury guidance, International Valuation Standards and the requirements of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Global Standards.

The value of trees grown for commercial purposes is included in non-current assets on a fair value basis less estimated selling costs. The comparative method of valuation, based on market-based evidence, has been used to support assessment of value. Revaluations are directly charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

For property occupied but not owned or leased by Forest Service a notional charge for accommodation costs is included in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

Assets under construction are carried at cost.

Plant, Machinery and IT assets are capitalised at their cost of acquisition and installation and are restated to current value annually with reference to indices compiled by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Depreciation

Depreciation is charged on a straight-line basis, to write off the cost or valuation, less estimated residual value, where relevant, of each asset over its estimated useful live. The useful lives, which are reviewed regularly, and are aligned with the parent department's policy are:

Plant, machinery, equipment and computers	3 – 40 years
Motor vehicles	5 – 15 years
Buildings	10 – 75 years

Land at Baronscourt has been handed back to its owner in stages up to the year 2024.

Heritage Assets will be maintained in perpetuity and consequently have not been depreciated.

Assets under construction are not depreciated until they are commissioned.

1.4 Intangible Assets

Intangible assets are valued initially at cost and subsequently at fair value using the revaluation model.

Land Rights

Land rights are valued every 5 years by a professional valuer. The valuation of land rights used in these accounts were provided by the Land and Property Services (LPS) as at 1 April 2024 and have been valued with regards to International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as applied to the United Kingdom public sector and in accordance with HM Treasury guidance, International Valuation Standards and the requirements of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors Valuation Standards. There is no in-year amortisation charge as the life span is land-based and therefore assumed to be infinite.

Software Licences

Purchased computer software licenses are capitalised as intangible assets where expenditure of £5,000 or more is incurred. In addition, similar licenses falling below this threshold, which when grouped exceed the threshold, are also capitalised. The value of the capitalised licenses is restated at fair value at the Statement of Financial Position date in accordance with the movement in the Retail Price Index (RPI). Software licenses are amortised over their expected useful life, which can be from 1 to 7 years, depending on the license.

Developed Software

Developed Software is a combination of automated digital data collection facilities including that used for vehicle and inspection management as well as independently commissioned reports on the usage of the forests. These are amortised over the expected useful life of the asset, which can be from 1 to 15 years.

1.5 Biological Assets

Biological assets include all forested areas where there is potential to recover timber, regardless of whether timber production is a primary objective, excluding natural reserves. The extent of forest area is maintained

on an electronic database.
The fair value of biological assets is derived from the market-based evidence from the sales value of woodlands and forests in GB collated and analysed by the Valuation Office Agency and LPS.

Revaluations are charged directly to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, with timber held for sale disclosed as a current asset.

1.6 Heritage Assets

Forest Service replaced the walkway in Glenariff Forest Park reflecting its historical value in providing access to and recreational use of the forest. This is included in the Statement of Financial Position as a Heritage Asset.

Heritage assets are operational and are recorded at historical cost. Heritage assets are maintained in perpetuity and consequently are not depreciated.

1.7 Non-Current Assets reclassified as Current Assets held for Sale

Forest Service classifies a non-current asset as held for sale where its value is expected to be realised principally through a sale transaction rather than through continuing use. In order to meet this definition, IFRS 5 requires that the asset must be immediately available for sale in its current condition and that its sale is highly probable. A sale is regarded as highly probable where an active plan is in place to find a buyer for the asset through appropriate marketing at a reasonable price and the sale is considered likely to be concluded within one year. Non-current assets that are held for sale are valued on the basis of open market value less any material directly attributable selling costs and are reclassified as current assets held for sale. Current assets held for sale are regularly reviewed to ascertain whether they continue to meet the above criteria. Where a current asset held for sale no longer meets the criteria, the asset is reclassified as a non-current asset.

1.8 Inventories

Consumable materials and supplies are stated at the lower of cost and net realisable value. Net realisable value is based on estimated selling prices, less further costs to be incurred to completion and disposal.

1.9 Contingent Liabilities

In addition to contingent liabilities disclosed in accordance with IAS 37, Forest Service discloses for Assembly reporting and accountability purposes certain statutory and non-statutory contingent liabilities where the likelihood of a transfer of economic benefit is remote, but which have been reported to the Assembly in accordance with the requirements of Managing Public Money Northern Ireland.

Where the time value of money is material, contingent liabilities, which are required to be disclosed under IAS 37 are stated at discounted amounts and the amount reported to the Assembly separately noted. Contingent liabilities that are not required to be disclosed by IAS 37 are stated at the amounts reported to the Assembly.

1.10 Provisions

Forest Service provides for present legal and constructive obligations, which are of an uncertain timing, or amount at the Statement of Financial Position date, on the basis of the best estimate of the expenditure required to settle the obligation. Where the effect of the time value of money is significant, the estimated cash flows are discounted using the real rate set by HM Treasury.

Legal claims and other provisions are provided for at the full assessed amount in each case.

1.11 Revenue recognition

In line with IFRS 15, Forest Service recognises its income as either Revenue from contracts with customers or other operating income. Revenue from contracts with customers is income that relates directly to operating activities of Forest Service and comprises fees and charges to be recovered for services provided to external customers for the sale of timber. It includes the agencies accruing resources. Other operating income is income received form the European Union under the Common Agricultural Policy for Peace and Reconciliation and other EU initiatives.

1.12 Grants payable and EU funding

Grants payable to individuals and bodies are accounted for as they are approved for payment. No provision is made in the financial statements for grant offers made but not yet approved for payment.

In 2025-26 years, forestry grant schemes for the creation of new woodland, the restocking of previously felled areas and the management of existing mature and semi-mature woodlands were co-funded by the European Agricultural Fund (EAF). From 1 Jan 2024, EU funding was no longer available and was replaced with national funding.

If grants are subsequently recovered because of the failure to fulfil the conditions of the relevant woodland grant scheme, the amount of co-financing may be repayable to the EU.

1.13 Administration and Programme Income and Expenditure

The Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure shows only programme income and expenditure. The classification of expenditure and income as administration or as programme follows the definition of administration costs set out in the Consolidated Budgeting Guidance issued by HM Treasury and adopted by the Department of Finance for Northern Ireland.

All of the Agency's income and expenditure relates directly to service delivery and as such is designated as programme.

1.14 Employee Benefits including Pension Costs

Pensions

Past and present employees are covered by the provisions of the Principal Civil Service Pension Schemes (PCSPS)[NI]. The defined benefit schemes are unfunded and are non-contributory except in respect of dependants' benefits. Forest Service recognises the expected cost of these elements on a systematic and rational basis over the period during which it benefits from employees' services by payment to the PCSPS(NI) of amounts calculated on an accruing basis. Liability for payment of future benefits is a charge on the PCSPS(NI). In respect of the defined contribution schemes, the Agency recognises the contributions payable for the year.

Short-term employee benefits

Under the requirements of IAS 19 Employee Benefits, staff costs must be recorded as an expense as soon as the organisation is obligated to pay them. This includes the cost of any untaken leave that has been earned at the year end. This cost has been derived by using a specific report run from HR Connect which calculates the year-end balance using actual leave balances on the system.

1.15 Functional Currency / Foreign Exchange / Roundings

The functional currency is Sterling and, except where otherwise stated, figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand pounds.

Transactions which are denominated in a foreign currency are translated into sterling at the exchange rate ruling on the date of each transaction. Balances at the year end are restated using the exchange rate on 31 March, as provided by Account NI, and any exchange gain or loss is treated as income or expenditure.

1.16 Value Added Tax

The Forest Service is registered for VAT. In order to comply with government accounting regulations and normal commercial practice, income and expenditure shown in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure is net of VAT.

Any VAT due to or from HM Revenue and Customs at the year end is included in the accounts as a receivable or payable in the Statement of Financial Position. Irrecoverable VAT is charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure in the year in which it is occurred.

1.17 Taxation

No taxation is chargeable on the financial results of Forest Service.

1.18 Financial Instruments

A financial instrument is defined as any contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity.

A financial instrument is recognised when, and only when, the entity becomes a party to the contractual provisions of the instrument. A previously recognised financial asset is de-recognised when, and only when, either the contractual rights to the cash flows from that asset expire, or the entity transfers the asset such that the transfer qualified for de-recognition. A financial liability is de-recognised when, and only when, it is extinguished.

Forest Service has financial instruments in the form of trade receivables and payables and cash and cash equivalents.

In accordance with “IFRS 9 Financial Instruments” trade receivables, cash and other receivables are classified as ‘loans and receivables’. Loans and receivables are initially measured at fair value and are subsequently measured at amortised cost less any expected loss.

Forest Service assesses at each Statement of Financial Position date whether there is any objective evidence that a financial asset or group of financial assets classified as loans and receivables is impaired. With the adoption of IFRS 9 the Agency has moved to an expected credit loss model based on historical write off projected forward.

Forest Service measures the amount of the loss as the difference between the carrying amount of the asset and the present value of estimated future cash flows from the asset discounted at the effective interest rate of the instrument at initial recognition.

Impairment losses are assessed individually for financial assets that are individually significant and individually or collectively for assets that are not individually significant. In making collective assessment of impairment, financial assets are grouped into portfolios on the basis of similar risk characteristics. Future cash flows from these portfolios are estimated on the basis of the contractual cash flows and historical loss experience for assets with similar risk characteristics.

Impairment losses are recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure and the carrying amount of the financial asset or group of financial assets reduced by establishing an allowance for impairment losses. If in a subsequent period the amount of the impairment loss reduces and the reduction can be ascribed to an event after the impairment was recognised, the previously recognised loss is reversed by adjusting the allowance.

When a financial asset is deemed unrecoverable the amount of the asset is reduced directly and the impairment loss is recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure to the extent that a provision was not previously recognised.

Financial liabilities are initially measured at fair value, net of transaction costs. They are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

1.19 Related Party Transactions

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs is regarded as a related party. During the year, Forest Service has had various material transactions with DAERA.

In addition, Forest Service has had a small number of transactions with other government departments and other central government bodies. Most of these transactions have been with Northern Ireland Departments, their Executive Agencies and Arm's Length Bodies.

In terms of related party interests of the Agency's officials, in the interests of transparency the Agency considers it necessary that its top managerial officials and members of the Forest Service Management Board (FSMB) declare all of the following:-

i) Any interests in Forest Service other than through the normal relationship of employee / employer, e.g. receipt of grants for woodland expansion;

ii) Any interest in any body with which Forest Service has dealings including membership of Boards of those bodies even when such membership is part of the officer's job; and

iii) Any such interest held by a close family member.

1.20 Segmental Reporting

Under IFRS 8, Forest Service has one operating segment whose results are regularly reviewed by the Accounting Officer to make decisions about resources to be allocated to the segment and assess its performance. The operating aim of Forest Service is to promote forestry and enhance plant health for a thriving and sustainable rural economy, community and environment to promote social and economic equality.

1.21 Critical accounting estimates and key adjustments

As a result of the uncertainties inherent in all business activities, many items in financial statements cannot be measured with precision but can only be estimated. Where estimates have been required in order to prepare these financial statements in conformity with FReM, management have used judgements based on the latest available, reliable information. Management continually review estimates to take account of any changes in the circumstances on which the estimate was based or as a result of new information or more experience.

Land and Timber and Buildings have been valued by an external advisor and have been undertaken having regard to International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and International Valuation Standards and the requirements of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors Valuation – Global Standards 2017. These include estimates of growth, sales price and costs. Forest service have made an estimation of the useful economic lives of property, plant and equipment and Intangible assets. Management believes that the assigned values and useful lives, as well as the underlying assumptions, are reasonable. These estimates are discussed in notes 1.3 to 1.5 above.

1.22 Accounting standards, interpretations and amendments to published standards adopted in the year ended 31 March 2026

Management has reviewed new accounting standards that have been issued but are not yet effective and have not been early adopted for these accounts. Based on this review, management does not expect the adoption of these standards to have a material impact on the Group's financial statements at the time they become effective.

1.23 Impending application of newly issued accounting standards not yet effective

Management has reviewed new accounting standards that have been issued but are not yet effective and have not been early adopted for these accounts. Based on this review, management does not expect the adoption of these standards to have a material impact on the Group's financial statements at the time they become effective.

IFRS 18

IFRS 18 will replace IAS 1 Presentation of Financial Statements and is effective for annual reporting periods beginning on or after the 1 January 2027 in the private sector. The impact of IFRS 18 on the public sector is still being assessed and a decision has not yet been taken on an implementation date for public sector bodies through the FReM.

IFRS 19

IFRS 19 allows eligible subsidiaries to apply IFRS Accounting Standards with reduced disclosure requirements and is effective for annual reporting periods beginning on or after the 1 January 2027 in the private sector. The impact of IFRS 19 on the public sector is still being assessed and a decision has not yet been taken on an implementation date through the FReM.

Non-investment asset valuations

In December 2023 Treasury released an exposure draft on potential changes to make to valuing and accounting for non-investment assets (e.g. PPE, intangible assets). The following changes to the valuation and accounting of non-investment assets to be included in the 2025-26 FReM for mandatory implementation:

References to assets being held for their 'service potential' and the terms 'specialised/non-specialised' assets are being removed from the FReM. Non-investment assets are instead described as assets held for their 'operational capacity'. This change has no impact on the valuation basis of non-investment assets, which remains Existing Use Value (EUV).

An adaption to IAS 16 will be introduced to withdraw the requirement to revalue an asset where its fair value materially differs from its carrying value. Assets are now valued using one of the following processes:

- A quinquennial revaluation supplemented by annual indexation.
- A rolling programme of valuations over a 5-year cycle, with annual indexation applied to assets during the 4 intervening years.
- For non-property assets only, appropriate indices.
- In rare circumstances where an index is not available, a quinquennial revaluation supplemented by a desktop revaluation in year 3.

Management consider that these newly issued standards are unlikely to have a significant impact on the accounts in the period of initial recognition.

2. INCOME

	2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000
Revenue within the scope of IR35		
Timber sales	11,462	11,264
Other forest products	19	46
Recreation	877	818
Rentals	548	464
Other activities	78	96
	12,984	**12,688**
Other Operating Income		
EU Income	-	-
	-	**-**

Income from DAERA

From 1 April 2020 the Forest Service was reclassified as a Public Corporation and received funding from DAERA in year as follows:

	2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000
Capital Funding	2,409	368
Departmental Subsidy	11,101	16,040
Funding to cover costs so that trading income can be allocated to reserves*	-	-
	13,510	**16,408**
Total Income	**26,494**	**29,096**

3. BUSINESS ACTIVITIES ATTRACTING FEES AND CHARGES

The purpose of this note is to provide fees and charges information.
i) Commercial Recreation encompasses camping and caravanning, as well as game shooting.

ii) Non-Commercial Recreation refers to visits to all of our forests. Parking charges are only levied at four Forest Parks.

iii) The financial objective of Commercial Recreation is full cost recovery. In the case of Non-Commercial Recreation, 100% recovery cannot realistically be achieved in the foreseeable future and the short term objective is to recover at the maximum level that the market will bear.

iv) Plant Health Inspection Branch charge fees for Potato Growing Crop and Tuber Inspections. These relate to costs for inspections carried out under the Seed Potato Certification Scheme.

v) Timber sales refers to the sale of timber from the forest estate to customers, through the arrangement of long-term contracts, tender sales or negotiated sales.

	2025-26			2024-25		
	Income £000	Cost £000	Surplus/ (Deficit) £000	Income £000	Cost £000	Surplus/ (Deficit) £000
Timber Sales	11,462	1,592	9,870	11,264	1,498	9,766
Commercial Recreation	493	423	70	437	369	68
Non-Commercial Recreation	374	984	(610)	377	918	(541)
Potato Growing Crop and Tuber Inspections	34	63	(29)	34	62	(28)
Total	**12,363**	**3,062**	**9,301**	**12,112**	**2,847**	**9,265**

4. Programme Costs

	Note	2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000
Grant Payments			
National element		2,718	2,468
EU element		(31)	-
		2,687	**2,468**
Staff Costs			
Wages and Salaries		7,468	7,427
Social Security Costs		916	726
Other Pension Costs		2,178	2,071
		10,562	**10,224**
Other Expenditure			
Contracted out services		3,087	3,200
Road Materials		707	465
Plants and horticultural consumables		533	492
Fuel costs		249	283
Equipment costs		309	345
Accommodation costs		391	304
Other costs		154	189
Staff related costs		324	294
Professional costs		238	143
Office Services		126	149
Rentals under operating leases		160	170
Non-capital purchases		18	16
		6,296	**6,050**
Non-cash items:			
Transfer of Land to DAERA		-	-
Depreciation	7	1,366	1,438
Amortisation	8	3	13
Liability provisions provided for / (released in year) in year	18	(461)	145
(Profit) / Loss on Disposal		93	(66)
Finance Lease Receivable	21	-	-
Bad debts written off		-	-
Bad debts provided for / (released in year)		3	46
Notional charges	5	3,076	2,954
		4,080	**4,530**
Other non-cash items:			
Revaluation - Timber	12	16,928	15,061
Revaluation - Other assets	7,12	435	36
		17,363	**15,097**
Total Programme Costs		**40,988**	**38,369**

Grant Payments

The total of grant payments for 2025-26 included £14,257 paid to public bodies (2024-25: £Nil) and £2,673,381 (2024-25: £2,467,630) paid to private sector recipients.

Growing Timber Revaluation

Included within Programme Costs is the movement in the fair value of the biological growing timber asset, which is explained in more detail at Note 10.

Staff Costs

Further analysis of staff costs is located in the Staff Report within the Accountability Report.

5. NOTIONAL COSTS

	2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000
Services provided by parent department:		
Central Support	2,394	2,280
	2,394	**2,280**
Services Provided by other Departments:		
DoF Accommodation	360	310
NICS HR	130	122
Departmental Solicitor's Office	-	42
Account NI	46	50
IT Assist	125	129
Auditor's remuneration and expenses	21	21
	682	**674**
Total Notional Costs	**3,076**	**2,954**

Notional Costs

Notional Costs relate to services received for which no actual payment is made. They are included in the accounts so as to reflect the full economic cost of provision.

6. HERITAGE ASSETS

6.1 2025-26

	Heritage Assets £000
Cost or Valuation	
At 1 April 2025	597
Disposals	-
At 31 March 2026	**597**
Carrying amount at 31 March 2026	**597**
Carrying amount at 31 March 2025	**597**

The Agency holds Glenariff Walkway as a heritage asset. The asset is recorded at historical cost and is maintained in perpetuity, and consequently is not depreciated.

6.2 2024-25

	Heritage Assets £000
Cost or Valuation	
At 1 April 2024	597
Disposals	-
At 31 March 2025	**597**
Carrying amount at 31 March 2025	**597**
Carrying amount at 31 March 2024	**597**

7. PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

7.1 2025-26

	Land £000	Buildings £000	Plant and Machininery £000	Information Technology £000	Assets under Construction £000	Total £000
Cost or Valuation						
At 1 April 2025	153,293	13,068	8,371	894	-	175,626
Additions	-	-	66	6	2	74
Disposals	-	(1,894)	(123)	(592)	-	(2,609)
Reclassifications and transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluations through SoCNE	(419)	-	-	-	-	(419)
Revaluations through Reserves	(22,383)	307	313	2	-	(21,761)
At 31 March 2026	**130,491**	**11,481**	**8,627**	**310**	**2**	**150,912**
Depreciation						
At 1 April 2025	-	3,758	5,199	657	-	9,614
Charge in year		848	478	40	-	1,366
Disposals	-	(1,803)	(123)	(571)	-	(2,497)
Revaluations through SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluations through Reserves	-	77	202	1	-	280
At 31 March 2026	**-**	**2,880**	**5,756**	**127**	**-**	**8,763**
Carrying amount at 31 March 2026	**130,491**	**8,601**	**2,872**	**183**	**2**	**142,149**
Carrying amount at 31 March 2025	**153,294**	**9,310**	**3,172**	**237**	**-**	**166,013**
Asset financing:						
Owned	130,491	8,601	2,872	183	2	142,149
Finance leased	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carrying amount at 31 March 2026	**130,491**	**8,601**	**2,872**	**183**	**2**	**142,149**

Forest Service land is valued annually by Land Property Services (LPS). The comparative method of valuation, based on market-based evidence, has been used to support assessment of value. Research has been undertaken into comparative capital value transactions to enable valuation of the forest estate. The most appropriate market-based evidence is the sale of woodland and forests in excess of 50 hectares. However, there is no such market of any significance in Northern Ireland as over 90% of coniferous forest of this size sits within the ownership of the public sector.

There is a significant forest and woodland market in Great Britain and the UK and in previous years, the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) collated and analysed market activity to support calculation of the biological and land asset portfolio value for the financial statements of Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS). Since the 2023/24 financial year, FLS have engaged Strutt & Parker to carry out this data interpretation function and these outputs are now shared with LPS, annually and the data is used to arrive at the Fair Value of the client portfolio as detailed herein. LPS has not been made aware of any change in methodology or calculation techniques employed by the current supplier that may account for the difference in the valuation figures arrived at this year in comparison to 2023-24.

The combined value of land and timber on the Forest Service estate at 31 March 2026 of £508.3m has decreased by £41.8m (7.6%) on the 2025 value of £550.1m. Within this combined value the timber has been valued at £369m (note 10), a decrease of £18.2m (4.7%) on the 2025 value of £387.2m and the Land at £139.3m, a 14.4% decrease of £23.6m on 2025 value of £162.9m.

Forest Service buildings were valued as at 1 April 2025 on an existing use basis by LPS. Properties surplus to requirements are valued on the basis of open market value less any material, directly attributable, selling costs.

Plant, Machinery and IT assets are capitalised at their cost of acquisition and installation and are restated to current value annually with reference to indices compiled by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

As required by IFRS 16, in 2025-26, right-of-use assets have been disclosed separately on the Statement of Financial Position. Therefore right-of-use land assets have been split out from land in 7.1 and are shown separately in 7.1a below. This has also been done for 2024-25 prior year comparatives within 7.2a below.

There were right of use assets with £8.8m net book value at 31 March 2026. These are disclosed separately below:

7.1a RIGHT OF USE ASSETS

Quantitative disclosures around right-of-use assets

2025-26

	Land £000	Total £000
Cost or Valuation		
At 1 April 2025	10,259	10,259
Additions - new leases	-	-
Revaluations	(16)	(16)
Revaluations through reserves	(1,471)	(1,471)
Impairment/impairment reversals	-	-
Disposals	-	-
Remeasurement – existing leases	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-
At 31 March 2026	**8,772**	**8,772**
Depreciation		
At 1 April 2024	-	-
Depreciation charged in year	-	-
Impairment/impairment reversal	-	-
Disposals	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-
At 31 March 2026	**-**	**-**
NBV 31 March 2026	**8,772**	**8,772**
NBV 31 March 2025	**10,259**	**10,259**

7.2 2024-25

	Land £000	Buildings £000	Plant and Machininery £000	Information Technology £000	Assets under Construction £000	Total £000
Cost or Valuation						
At 1 April 2024	158,501	12,559	8,331	878	-	180,269
Additions	700	26	274	70	-	1,070
Disposals	-	-	(410)	(68)	-	(478)
Reclassifications and transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluations through SoCNE	(30)	(13)	1	-	-	(42)
Revaluations through Reserves	(5,877)	496	175	14	-	(5,192)
At 31 March 2025	**153,294**	**13,068**	**8,371**	**894**	**-**	**175,627**
Depreciation						
At 1 April 2024	-	3,974	5,011	670	-	9,655
Charge in year	-	913	480	45	-	1,438
Disposals	-	-	(397)	(68)	-	(465)
Revaluations through SoCNE	-	(12)	-	-	-	(12)
Revaluations through Reserves	-	(1,117)	105	10	-	(1,002)
At 31 March 2025	**-**	**3,758**	**5,199**	**657**	**-**	**9,614**
Carrying amount at 31 March 2025	**153,294**	**9,310**	**3,172**	**237**	**-**	**166,013**
Carrying amount at 31 March 2024	**169,254**	**8,585**	**3,320**	**208**	**-**	**181,367**
Asset financing:						
Owned	153,294	9,310	3,172	237	-	166,013
Finance leased	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carrying amount at 31 March 2025	**153,294**	**9,310**	**3,172**	**237**	**-**	**166,013**

7.2a RIGHT OF USE ASSETS

Quantitative disclosures around right-of-use assets

2024-25

	Land £000	Total £000
Cost or Valuation		
At 1 April 2024	10,753	10,753
Additions - new leases	-	-
Revaluations through SoCNE	(6)	(6)
Revaluations through reserves	(488)	(488)
Impairment/impairment reversals	-	-
Disposals	-	-
Remeasurement – existing leases	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-
At 31 March 2025	**10,259**	**10,259**
Depreciation		
At 1 April 2024	-	-
Depreciation charged in year	-	-
Impairment/impairment reversal	-	-
Disposals	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-
At 31 March 2025	**-**	**-**
NBV 31 March 2025	**10,259**	**10,259**

8. INTANGIBLE ASSETS

8.1 2025 - 26

	Land Rights £000	Software Licenses £000	Developed Software £000	Total £000
Cost or Valuation				
At 1 April 2025	591	19	55	665
Disposals	-	(17)	(40)	(57)
Revaluations through reserves	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2026	**591**	**2**	**15**	**608**
Amortisation				
At 1 April 2025	-	15	53	68
Charge in year	-	1	2	3
Disposals	-	(16)	(40)	(56)
Revaluations through reserves	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2026	**-**	**-**	**15**	**15**
Carrying amount at 31 March 2026	**591**	**2**	**-**	**593**
Carrying amount at 31 March 2025	**591**	**4**	**2**	**597**

Land Rights held by the Forest Service relate to shooting, turbary rights and wayleaves. They are valued at 5-yearly intervals by the Land and Property Services (LPS), the latest being at 1 April 2024.

8.2 2024 - 25

	Land Rights £000	Software Licenses £000	Developed Software £000	Total £000
Cost or Valuation				
At 1 April 2024	554	61	54	669
Disposals	-	(43)	-	(43)
Revaluations through reserves	37	1	1	39
At 31 March 2025	**591**	**19**	**55**	**665**
Amortisation				
At 1 April 2024	-	49	47	96
Charge in year	-	8	5	13
Disposals	-	(43)	-	(43)
Revaluations through reserves	-	1	1	2
At 31 March 2025	**-**	**15**	**53**	**68**
Carrying amount at 31 March 2025	**591**	**4**	**2**	**597**
Carrying amount at 31 March 2024	**554**	**12**	**7**	**573**

9. DONATED ASSETS

Any assets donated to the Agency have a value below £5,000 and as this is below the threshold they are not capitalised.
There were no donated assets during 2025-26 (2024-25: NIL).

10. BIOLOGICAL ASSETS

	Note	2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000
Value at 1 April		387,231	403,402
Movement in timber valuation			
Transfer to assets held for sale	11	(5,414)	(4,113)
Timber removals		(12,981)	(9,388)
Timber lost to fire		(1,089)	-
Price / Growth increment		1,256	(2,670)
Carrying amount at 31 March		**369,003**	**387,231**
Movement in timber valuation:			
Revaluation adjustment credited to Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure	4	(16,928)	(15,061)
In year movement in assets held for sale	11	(1,301)	(1,110)
Movement in timber valuation		**(18,229)**	**(16,171)**

Growing timber is valued as per note 1.5. Timber lost to fire and disease is also valued on the same basis.

Timber identified as having been allocated under contract and removed from the estate database being available for sale in 2025-26 is valued at the expected sales price. Timber removals in year are valued at the sales price achieved.

The revaluation movement, except for the movement in the asset held for sale value, is taken directly to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

11. CURRENT ASSETS - ASSETS CLASSIFIED AS HELD FOR SALE

	Note	2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000
Land		-	-
Timber			
Opening balance		4,113	3,003
Additions		5,414	4,113
Disposals		(4,113)	(3,003)
Carrying amount at 31 March	10	**5,414**	**4,113**

There are no assets surplus to requirements as at 31 March 2026.

Assets held for sale include timber allocated for sale under contract which has been removed from the forest estate database and not therefore valued as part of the non-current timber asset per note 10. This timber held for sale at year end will be sold in the following financial year and therefore is disclosed as a current asset held for sale valued at the expected sales price.

12. REVALUATIONS

	Note	2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000
Property, plant & equipment	4,7	419	30
Right of use assets	7.1	16	6
Growing timber revaluation	4,10	16,928	15,061
Total Revaluation credit charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure	4	**17,363**	**15,097**

13. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

As the cash requirements of Forest Service are met through the Estimate process, financial instruments play a more limited role in creating and managing risk than would apply to a non-public sector body. The majority of financial instruments relate to contracts to buy non-financial items in line with the Agency's expected purchase and usage requirements, and the Agency is therefore exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

14. INVENTORIES

	2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000
Stock	31	36
Balance at 31 March	**31**	**36**

15. TRADE RECEIVABLES AND OTHER CURRENT ASSETS

	2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Trade receivables	2,514	2,347
Other receivables	6,065	8,544
Prepayments and accrued income	752	153
Net Investment in Finance lease	14	14
Total receivables at 31 March	**9,345**	**11,058**

16. CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

	2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000
Balance at 1 April	26,458	19,294
Net change in cash and cash equivalent balances	8,559	7,164
Balance at 31 March	**35,017**	**26,458**
The following balances as at 31 March were held at:		
Commercial banks and cash in hand	35,017	26,458
Balance at 31 March	**35,017**	**26,458**

17. TRADE PAYABLES AND OTHER CURRENT LIABILITIES

	2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Trade payables	29	33
Taxation & Social Security	5	5
Other payables	26	26
Accruals and deferred income	1,375	1,325
VAT	166	139
Total payables at 31 March	**1,601**	**1,528**

18. PROVISIONS FOR LIABILITIES AND CHARGES

2025-26

	Legal Claims £000	Total £000
Balance at 1 April 2025	1,710	1,710
Provided in the year	432	432
Provisions utilised in the year	(131)	(131)
Provisions not required written back	(893)	(893)
Balance at 31 March 2026	**1,118**	**1,118**
Analysis of expected timing of discounted cash flows		
Not later than one year	1,118	1,118
Later than one year and not later than five years		-
Later than five years		-
Balance at 31 March 2026	**1,118**	**1,118**

2024-25

	Legal Claims £000	Total £000
Balance at 1 April 2024	1,585	1,585
Provided in the year	222	222
Provisions utilised in the year	(20)	(20)
Provisions not required written back	(77)	(77)
Total payables at 31 March 2025	**1,710**	**1,710**
Analysis of expected timing of discounted cash flows		
Not later than one year	1,710	1,710
Later than one year and not later than five years	-	-
Later than five years	-	-
Balance at 31 March 2025	**1,710**	**1,710**

Legal Claims

This represents public liability, employer liability, contract and compensation claims and dilapidations as advised by the business areas within the Department.

Public liability claims include personal injury claims. Employer liability claims include legal costs that will have to be borne by the Department and relate to accidents or injury caused due to faults in the fabric of a departmental building and other damages including fair employment and industrial tribunal cases.

Provision has been made for various legal claims against the Agency. The provision reflects all known claims where legal advice indicates that the claim will be successful, and the amount of the claim can be reliably estimated. The amount recognised as a provision is the best estimate of the expenditure required to settle the present obligation at the balance sheet date. It is assumed that all legal claims will be settled within 12 months.
Legal claims where the legal advice is that the claims are either not probable, or the liability cannot be estimated reliably, are disclosed as contingent liabilities in Note 22.

19. GRANT COMMITMENTS

The agency has entered into non-cancellable contracts (which are not leases or PFI and other service concession arrangement contracts) for grants for the creation and management of woodlands which are payable annually in arrears, so long as specific objectives and criteria are met. All forestry grant schemes are 100% nationally funded and are as follows:

	2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000
EU Grant Schemes		
Not later than one year	-	-
Later than one year and not later than five years	-	-
Later than five years	-	-
	-	**-**
National Grant Schemes		
Not later than one year	2,577	2,636
Later than one year and not later than five years	3,583	4,010
Later than five years	2,633	3,545
	8,793	**10,191**
Total EU/National Grant Schemes		
Not later than one year	2,577	2,636
Later than one year and not later than five years	3,583	4,010
Later than five years	2,633	3,545
Present value of obligations	**8,793**	**10,191**

20. CAPITAL COMMITMENTS

There are no contracted capital commitments at 31 March 2026 (2024-25: NIL).

21. COMMITMENTS UNDER LEASES

Right of Use Assets

Total future minimum lease payments are given in the table below for each of the following periods:

	2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000
Land		
Not later than one year	2	2
Later than one year and not later than five years	8	8
Later than five years	159	161
	169	**171**

During 2021/22, The Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs entered into a lease arrangement (DAERA as Lessor) with a Local Council in respect to Castlewellan Forest Park for a number of right-of-use assets- property, plant and equipment. The lease is made up of four phases with phase 1 of the lease commencing on 01 January 2022 and lasting until 31 December 2045. Phase 2 commenced on 01 April 2022.

The following table sets out a maturity analysis of lease receivables, showing the undiscounted lease payments to be received after the reporting date.

	2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000
The following table summarises the components of the net investment in Leases:		
Future Minimum Lease Payment Receivable	302	316
Gross lease receivables	302	316
Unearned Finance Income	(84)	(97)
Net Investment in leases	**218**	**219**

Maturities of Forest Service gross lease receivables subsequent to 31 March 2026 are as follows:	**£000**
2026	**14**
2027 to 2030	**58**
2031 and thereafter	**230**
	302

22. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES DISCLOSED UNDER IAS 37

The following contingent liabilities existed at 31 March 2026:

Public Liability Claims

The Agency has one ongoing public liability claim at 31 March 2026. Due to the serious prejudice that would be caused to the Agency's position in relation to these claims with other parties, full disclosure is not possible.

Public Sector Pensions – Injury to Feelings Claims

The Department of Finance (DoF) is a named Respondent in a class action affecting employers across the public sector and is managing claims on behalf of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Departments. This is an extremely complex case with potential implications for the NICS and wider public sector. However, given the complexities, the cases are still at an early stage of proceedings and until there is further clarity on potential scope and impact, a reliable estimate of liability cannot be provided.

The Court of Appeal (CoA) judgement from 17 June 2019 (PSNI v Agnew) determined that claims for Holiday Pay shortfall can extend as far back as 1998. However, the PSNI appealed the CoA judgement to the Supreme Court. The hearing was held in December 2022 and the judgement delivered on 4 October 2023. The 2024-25 Holiday Pay provision has been estimated by HR and covers the period from November 1998 to 31 March 2020.

There are still some significant elements if uncertainty around this estimate for a number of reasons:

1. Lack of accessible data for years previous to 2011; and

2. Ongoing negotiations with Trade Union and their legal representatives.

23. RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

Forest Service is an Executive Agency of DAERA. DAERA is regarded as a related party. During the year, the Forest Service has had various material transactions with DAERA and with other entities for which DAERA is regarded as the parent Department. In addition, Forest Service has had a small number of transactions with other government departments and other central government bodies. Most of these transactions have been with Northern Ireland Departments, their Executive Agencies and Arms Length Bodies.
No board member, key manager or other related party has undertaken any material transactions with Forest Service during the year.

24. THIRD-PARTY ASSETS

Forest Service has no third-party assets as at 31 March 2026 (31 March 2025: NIL).

25. EVENTS AFTER THE REPORTING PERIOD

There have been no material events after the reporting period.

DATE OF AUTHORISATION FOR ISSUE

The Accounting Officer authorised these financial statements for issue on 1 July 2026.

FOREST SERVICE
An tSeirbhís Foraoisí

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An Agency within the Department of
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www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Gníomhaireacht de chuid na Roinne
Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe

An Agency wi'in the Depairtment o
Fairmin, Environment an' Kintra Matthers

26.27.053