

PROTECT YOUR ROOTS TO RECLAIM YOUR WOODLAND HERITAGE

Woodland league Statement for the Walks in the Woods June 9th, 2013

*Fallen in Eireann are all our leafy Forests,
The oaks lie buried under a bogland mould.
Only in legend dim are they remembered,
Only in ancient books their fame is told.
But seers who dream of times to come,
Have promised forests will rise,
Where perished these.
And of this desolate land,
It shall be spoken.
In Tirconnell of the territories,
There are trees.*

By Alice Milligan.

" Alice Milligan is the most Irish of living Irish Poets, and therefore the best - It is fitting that this Irish poet is a woman "

Thomas Mc Donagh, 1914

Never before have so many communities walked in their woods for a common purpose, to focus on their forests on the same day. Adding to the more than 50,000 who have signed our petition against the sale of the harvesting rights to speculators.

The Woodland League wish to thank all of the organisers, communities and Individuals who have come together in a show of strength and unity to celebrate Public ownership of their forests.

After all these Public forests were created under a Public afforestation plan using Public funding from State and the European Union, planted and managed by Publicly paid foresters, it is therefore obvious, it is to the Public they belong.

When the Woodland league started this campaign in 2009, we never realised it would go on for so long, it has been an interesting journey, with valuable lessons learned and valuable new support with greater national awareness of our precious Forest natural resource.

Let us build on this awakening of our subdued forest culture, the Irish people are a forest people who have been disconnected from their forests, due to historic and other reasons. One of the earliest names for Ireland is, **Inis na bhfeodhadha**, Island of the sacred trees, we also have a unique alphabet of the trees, called Ogham with ancient laws to protect and revere our forests. Under Bretha Comaithchesa, the Brehon law of neighbourhood, it lists the rights of every Tuath/Community, to the produce from the forest for every person in equal right.

This wonderful forest culture has somehow been forgotten and neglected in our society today, it is especially so in our State Forest Policy, an Industrial model reliant on exotic conifer species .

Let us now demand a full root and branch reform of the current stagnant Forestry Policy that only benefits the few, let us together call for a new community oriented model focused on transforming the unproductive areas identified by the Colm McCarthy valuation of Coillte assets report, amounting to potentially 500,000 acres....." Its forest estate is very fragmented, consisting of 6,500 separate properties of which about half are considered commercial, one quarter potentially commercial with investment and one quarter have no commercial value " (full report attached).

A National Public Works plan to target flooding, biodiversity enhancement, river restoration, local fuelwood production, training, employment, etc, creating viable community woodlands of mainly mixed native species.

Let us not sell the Forests but rather develop and transform them for maximum multiple Public benefits, via genuine sustainable forest management.

With the lowest treecover in the EU, at 11% mostly made up of Plantations of poor quality exotic monocultures and commitment at EU and UN level to reach the EU average of 30% treecover, there is huge potential and no excuse not to do the right thing in this case.

The Woodland league have a Pilot Project proposal to do this, it is on our website under, Alternative Vision for Irish Forestry. It is a common sense plan which if implemented could create thousands of jobs within a short timeframe.

We are actively seeking community and cross party political support to see this implemented as one of the only alternatives to privatisation to be placed in the public domain.

<http://www.woodlandleague.org/documents/WIIPilotProject2011.pdf>

Let us use the natural forest of diverse mixed species working together for the common good, as guidance for renewing our broken communities. Let us **Treevive**, **Treejuvenate**, and **Treestore** our jaded vision less society devoid of soul and spirit.

Let us continue this journey together to protect our roots and build a sustainable, strong and vibrant grassroots movement, under the all embracing native woodland canopy.

Our overall aim is to Restore the relationship between people and their native Woodlands, you are invited to support this restoration, conservation and regeneration of Irelands native woodland resource.

Our aims are summarised by the three R's.....

**Regeneration of the Great Forests of Ireland,
Restoration of the Forest Culture of Ireland,
Reform of State Forestry Policy.**

Please join our mailing list for further updates. thewoodlandleague@gmail.com, and follow us on twitter, facebook, and www.woodlandleague.org