

Report on Sustainability and Biodiversity in Sustainable Forestry Management for case involving the DPP vs Sioned Jones.

18-02-2020

**Introduction.**

Ireland and the EU have declared a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency and it is now widely accepted that sustainably managed forests can contribute significantly to Climate mitigation with Biodiversity restoration and conservation benefits.

The framework and idea for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) comes from the Forest Principles adopted at the Rio Earth summit 1992, which formed part of the Declaration on the Environment signed up to by 156 Nations including Ireland. This was swiftly followed in 1993 by The Convention on Biological Diversity.

Biological diversity underpins ecosystem functioning and ecosystem services essential for human well-being. It provides for food security, human health, the provision of clean air and water, it contributes to local livelihoods, and economic development. It is also a central component of many belief systems, world views and identities. Yet despite it’s fundamental importance, biodiversity continues to be lost.

“***We, the undersigned, senior members of our world’s scientific community, hereby warn all humanity of what lies ahead. A great change in our stewardship of the earth and life on it is required if vast misery is to be avoided and our planet is not to be irretrievably mutilated.”***

This statement was signed by 58 of our world’s most prestigious scientific academies in 1993, at the Rio Earth Summit Convention on Biodiversity. The UN Rio Summit was a response to a new consciousness of ecology throughout the world and was endorsed by 170 nations including Ireland in addition to half of all living Nobel Laureates and 1600 leading scientists.

Threats to our global home listed by the signatories included deforestation, loss of topsoil, acidification, acid rain, shortages of water and loss of biodiversity, leading to and compounding climate change.

In other words, a global Climate and Biodiversity Emergency was declared way back in 1993 which was not understood by most signatory countries including Ireland. However, some countries, NGO’s, communities and citizens did hear this wake-up call and started to act, “***Think Globally and Act locally***”, under Agenda 21, the blueprint for Sustainable Development which was the message from Rio in 1992, which is still relevant today.

It is against this backdrop and a lack of concerted global action, that the parties, including Ireland, to the Convention on Biological Diversity, in 2010 in Nagoya, Japan, adopted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011- 2020 with the purpose of inspiring broad- based action in support of biodiversity over the next decade by all countries and stakeholders. In recognition of the urgent need for Action, the United Nations General Assembly has also declared 2011 - 2020 as the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity. This Strategic Plan included the Aichi set of targets to measure progress during this 10 year rescue plan for biodiversity under the heading “Living in harmony with Nature”. <https://www.bing.com/search?q=Aichi+Targets&src=IE-SearchBox&FORM=IESR4S&pc=EUPP>\_

# **Aichi Biodiversity Targets**

* [Strategic Goal A](https://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/#GoalA): Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society
* [Strategic Goal B](https://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/#GoalB): Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use
* [Strategic Goal C](https://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/#GoalC): To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity
* [Strategic Goal D](https://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/#GoalD): Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services
* [Strategic Goal E](https://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/#GoalE): Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building
* The UN recently warned that one million plant and animal species are threatened with extinction, while [60 per cent of the world’s large animals have disappeared since the 1970s](https://globenewswire.com/news-release/2018/10/30/1638781/0/en/60-per-cent-of-wildlife-worldwide-has-been-lost.html). In Ireland, [one-third of our wild bee species are threatened with extinction](http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Summary-note-on-Irelands-bees.pdf) and [60 per cent of our 202](https://greennews.ie/campaign-launched-help-identify-breeding-lapwing/) most commonly occurring birds are now on conservation lists. More than 190 scientists call on the EU’s Environment Council to account for the full climate impacts and emissions from land use, land use change and f**orestry** in the LULUCF Regulation:<https://goo.gl/zLdHrB>

**The Role and Responsibility of the Citizen to achieve Sustainable Development**.

The citizen is placed at the centre of these International sustainability treaties as it was recognised that the objectives could never be achieved if it was only the responsibility of the State and Corporate world.

The Rio Principles for Sustainable Development highlight the important role which the citizen has to play in partnership with the State in order to create a sustainable future for all life on this planet.

There are 27 Sustainable Development Principles associated with the 1992, Rio Declaration on the Environment. <https://www.jus.uio.no/lm/environmental.development.rio.declaration.1992/4.html>

**Principle 1.**

Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.

**Principle 4.**

In order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it.

**Principle 10.**

Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.

All of society would need to be mobilised and supported with the information necessary to make the right decisions for our collective environment.

**Principle 15.**

In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.

**What is Sustainability ?**

We hear this word bandied about so often, it has almost been rendered meaningless, such that almost every development/business/ land use, claims to be sustainable these days. However the true measure of sustainability, must be compatible with the Principles of the 1992 Rio Declaration, which is implicit, in stating, it means **Sustainability of the Earth’s Ecosystem**.

According to the Rio Declaration on the Environment, sustainability is identified with conservation of the planetary ecosystem as a perpetual source of natural resources for Man, so that there will be sufficient natural resources for future generations. This means sustainable management by man must also ensure a sustainable planetary ecosystem, it is about the balancing of man made systems and ecosystems.

“ ***Sustainability is a modern term in place of justice. Justice is a Greek value which has been neglected in modern Western states, where the idea of power has become dominant. According to Cicero’s classical definition borrowed from Plato, Justice is, suum cuique tribuere, in words to take only ones due, with social harmony and environmental good order as the end result. According to this modern conception of justice, sustainable development is the obligation not only of the State but all kinds of organisations and the citizens too. Sustainability does not only concern the harmonisation of public policies, but requires the members of society to be brought into line with those policies. To put it more clearly, sustainability is identical to the Just World, because in that analysis only a Just World will be sustainable*** ”. ( Decleris, The Law of Sustainable Development, 1997 )

**Climate change Mitigation and Biodiversity benefits of Native Broadleaves and conifer species.**

(The following is an extract from an article by Ted Cooke, co founder of The Woodland League, titled, CREATING SPACE FOR NATURE TO FUNCTION, 2009)

*The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that between five and seven million acres of soil are lost annually, but that our earth’s soils must feed an additional 90 million humans annually!*

*On 16 August 2008, one month’s rain fell in Northern Ireland in 12hours- phenomena likely to be repeated for several years in Ireland. Valuable clay content and plant nutrients are leached and soils lose their water-holding capacity and become acidified.Research published in July 2007 (Coford-National Council for Forest Research and Development) - though not under Irish conditions because we can no longer ‘wait on decades of experiment’ - demonstrated that*

*native trees help to buffer rising acidity by releasing neutralising molecules of calcium,magnesium and potassium into the shallower upland soils. Zero exotic conifer afforestation of our highland moors seems our safest option.*

*For ‘acid-sensitive areas’ Coford recommends Sessile Oak (our deep-rooting Climax Tree of the Hillside) and Downy Birch (our trusted soil improver that raises pH of acid soils) and Rowan(Mountain Ash).*

*The Scots Pine, being high in associated rare insects and companionable with Birch, and European Larch (although not native to post-glacial Ireland but deciduous), is capable of reducing Ireland’s progressively sour soil chemistry.*

*Earlier research (2003) by Woodland botanists Daniel Kelly etc. investigated restoring Irish Oak woods on former Upland Blanket Sitka plantations and found that Sessile Oak, Birch with Holly and Rowan were their chosen species to ‘mend our hills and repair our streams, their pH and their insect and aquatic life” . In 1996, 63 studied upland salmonoid watercourses were found to be at the limits of their pH tolerance due primarily to inappropriate blanket plantation forestry. (Kelly, Quinn 1996).*

*In support of our theme that our native trees and woodlands, with their deeply penetrating heart-roots, can evapo-transpire c. 38% of rainwater back into the atmosphere (during the growing season) and store (capture) moisture in the deep litter (during the dormant*

*season) , we profiled the associated volume of insect species-*

*Oak 284 Willow 266 Birch 229*

*Hawthorn 149 Aspen 97 Scots Pine 91*

*Alder 90 Hazel 83 Rowan 28*

*Sycamore 15 Horse Chestnut 4 (D.A.N.I. 2000)*

*In a Woodland Trust publication of 2001 we discover that in one acre*

*of native woodland there are:*

*Bacteria 4 tons*

*Fungi 1.5 tons*

*Field Plants 0.5 tons*

*Earthworms 500lbs*

*Protozoa 340lbs*

*Slugs*

*and snails 90lbs*

*Spiders 50lbs*

*Beetles 9lbs*

*and all busy building themselves from carbon and sustaining local biodiversity.*

This is the context by which Sioned Jones actions need to be considered and we believe Sioned, by removing low value exotic conifers and replanting the area with mixed native broadleaves, at her own expense, acted to protect biodiversity, soil and water, prevent landslides and flooding, create habitats for bees and other threatened species. And, in so doing ensured that the public forest area above her and her neighbours homes was fulfilling the States commitments to Sustainable Forest Management and the Rio Declaration on the Environment and Biodiversity, and therefore protecting the wider community and local environment.

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