

# NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME MANUAL



THE DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES & FOOD  
AN ROINN TALMHAÍOCHTA, IASCAIGH AGUS BIA



Since its launch in November 2001, the Forest Service has received regular feedback on the NeighbourWood Scheme from local authorities, community groups, woodland owners and foresters. The Forest Service greatly appreciates this feedback and uses it to further enhance and streamline the scheme as part of its ongoing development.

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The Forest Service supports the Leave No Trace Code of Outdoor Ethics. See [www.leavenotraceireland.org](http://www.leavenotraceireland.org) for details.



## Foreword

As Minister of State with responsibility for forestry, I am delighted to announce the launch of the NeighbourWood Scheme grant package. The Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food operates a number of grant schemes aimed at promoting various types of forestry and woodland activity. However, this scheme is unique, as it is aimed specifically at realising the recreational and wider social benefits that forests can provide.

The NeighbourWood Scheme is all about bringing communities and woodlands together, by helping local authorities and others to create 'close-to-home' woodland amenities in partnership with communities, for local people to use and enjoy. These 'neighbourwoods' vary greatly in size and location, from forests in the countryside and on the outskirts of our villages, towns and cities, to woodlands located in our more built-up areas. Often what sets these forests apart is the level of local enthusiasm and support for their development as a local amenity – neighbourwoods invariably become a focus for real local partnerships involving people from all walks of life intent on enhancing their local area and environment. These neighbourwoods become part of the local identity and 'sense of place', and the benefits they create are enjoyed by local people.

These benefits are numerous and far-reaching. Neighbourwoods provide accessible opportunities for recreation and regular exercise, and offer people contact with the natural world and the changing seasons. They promote health and well-being, and provide a place for family and friends to come together and relax. They provide a venue for a wide range of community and sporting events, and represent an ideal 'outdoor classroom' for local school children to learn about nature and the environment. Neighbourwoods also deliver a wide range of environmental benefits, providing vital habitats for wildlife, removing atmospheric carbon, promoting air quality and improving the visual landscape, to mention just a few.

The NeighbourWood Scheme complements the work of local authorities in providing local amenities, and a host of other initiatives focused on forest and countryside recreation in Ireland, such as Comhairle na Tuaithe, Coillte's recreational activities, Leave No Trace Ireland and the work of the National Trails Office. By involving farmers, recreational users and other relevant stakeholders, these initiatives together have the potential to create a vibrant and expanding outdoor recreation sector in Ireland, realising all of the vital benefits to society and the rural economy that this entails.

Within the context of our national forest policy, forest recreation is a vital component of sustainable forest management, as it represents a major benefit to society. The NeighbourWood Scheme is an important mechanism for fulfilling this role, as it is aimed at delivering amenity woodlands, and all of the benefits they bring, to the very heart of communities and neighbourhoods.

**Mary Wallace, TD**  
Minister of State

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