

6.4 Mixed ash woodland – no grazing

Semi-Natural broadleaf woodland is a scarce resource in Northern Ireland (NI), covering only 2% of the country. There is just under 3,500ha of mixed ash wood in NI. Mixed ash woods are dominated by ash, but oak, hazel, birch, elm, holly and other trees can occur in large numbers. Typical plants include bluebells, wood anemone, primrose, wild garlic with a large number of mosses and lichens. Mixed ash woods are an important landscape feature and provide a habitat for insects, birds and mammals.

Mixed ash woods occur mainly on the base-rich Basalt of County Antrim and Limestone of County Fermanagh with small pockets within Co. Armagh, Co. Down and the Sperrins.

No grazing option applies to areas, which have been subject to prolonged grazing, used for over-wintering of livestock and where there is little natural regeneration.

Management of sites

- Livestock must be excluded throughout the year
- Ungrazed mixed ash woodland cannot be claimed as forage area for IACS.
- Ungrazed mixed ash woodlands are not eligible for any Forest Service grant scheme.
- New fencing or repairs to existing fencing may be necessary and can be funded under essential enhancement plan. Required fencing must be erected as soon as possible.
- Retain deadwood, as it is valuable habitat for woodland invertebrates. Individual windblown trees should be left where they lie. Living trees should not be cut down without the prior written consent of DARD.
- The spread of invasive non-native species such as laurel and rhododendron and scrub encroachment must be undertaken if required. See Scrub Control Management Plan Number 10.3 for further guidance.
- Retain and enhance important features, such as old vehicular tracks, natural open space and existing ponds. Cut overhanging branches to keep tracks clear and increase open areas.

The following activities are not permitted in the mixed ash woodland – no grazing option

- Cultivation, ploughing and drainage.

- Application of fertiliser, slurry, farmyard manure, lime and pesticides. Herbicides may only be applied to control noxious weeds by the use of spot spray and requires the written permission of DARD.
- Supplementary feeding sites, temporary silage clamps and storage of big bale silage or hay.
- Dumping of rubbish, machinery, rubble and all other materials. Existing dumps or eyesores, which will be identified on the farm map, must be removed within one year.
- Tree management must not be carried out between 1 March and 31 August.

**Information sheets are provided for
participants in the
Environmentally Sensitive Areas and
Countryside Management Schemes**

