

FEARS OVER FOREST FELLING

COILLTE, the national forestry agency, has been urged to abandon its plans to fell a section of a popular forest on the Southside.

Coillte recently advertised its clear felling plans for the coming year in a number of forests on the Southside including Ballyedmonduff, located at the south eastern side of Ticknock Mountain.

As a result of this notice, members of the Dublin Mountains Initiative (DMI) met a representative of Coillte in order to view details of the proposed felling.

DMI say that it will not greatly affect the amenity value or recreational usage of the Dublin Mountains which are regularly used for recreational purposes.

For example, the area affected in Carrickgollan (the Lead Mines – a very popular walking area) is an area of three hectares in a total forested area of about 90 hectares.

However, they are concerned about plans to cut down forestry at Ballyedmonduff, immediately below the summit of Three Rock Mountain.

This area is a prominent part of the skyline viewed from South Dublin and is also a popular walking area.

DMI chairman Mark d'Alton said: "We feel strongly that there has been enough felling

by **JAMIE DEASY**

on Three Rock in the last 12 months. If at all possible, this fell should be deferred for a considerable period. We will be talking to Coillte about this, as soon as possible."

Mr d'Alton explained that Coillte inherited a forest stock which was nearly all planted in the 1950s and that is reaching maturity at the same time.

He said that in areas where there is high amenity usage or where the forest is of high aesthetic value due to its location then clear felling should be a last resort.

"In the long term we would hope to see minimal felling in such areas and the planting of native forests where possible," he said. "The benefits of outdoor recreation are immense and the State needs to put a proper value on this."

Other parts of the Dublin Mountains where Coillte intend to clear fell include Cruagh, Seahan, Carrickgollogan (the Lead Mines), Featherbed, Slievethoul, Crooksling, Glencullen and Tibradden.

Fine Gael Dublin South West Senator, Brian Hayes, has called for an investigation into the clear fell plans and

said that Coillte and the local authorities involved to urgently address the issue.

"It is essential that a long term strategy for forest recreation in the Dublin Mountains is implemented and made a priority," he said.

"In areas that are popular for amenity usage or provide high aesthetic value due to its location clear felling should be a last resort. This should not come down to financial gain but rather the value of the land to the public trying to escape a congested city."

Senator Hayes urged the State to encourage the public to make use of such a valuable resource and promote the health benefits of recreational activities such as cycling and walking.

In response, Coillte stated: "We have invested significant resources in developing a comprehensive recreation policy for the county and engaged with all interested parties in developing facilities

"We appreciate that clear fell areas can look very unsightly but replanting takes place a short time after as areas are cleared. In the meantime, the remaining vegetation left on site provides great environmental benefits by returning nutrients back to the soil."

Referring specifically to

the Ballyedmonduff area, they said: "Aside from the needs of the timber industry, this plantation has reached maturity and without manage-

ment the trees could become unstable and susceptible to being blown down or simply falling down. This would obviously represent a major

health and safety hazard for forest users."

They added that it is Coillte policy to consult with all the relevant stakeholders

and that a management plan has been developed following that process for all forests in the South Dublin and Wicklow areas.