

**IMPACT INVESTOR KBI GLOBAL INVESTORS COMMITS TO NATIVE WOODLANDS PROJECT
AS PART OF THREE-YEAR CLIMATE ACTION PROGRAMME TO REDUCE IMPACT OF BUSINESS TRAVEL**

Specialist asset management boutique KBI Global Investors ('KBIGI') has funded the planting of approximately 6,000 trees as part of its climate action programme – an initiative which sees the Dublin-based asset manager working with Natural Capital Partners and Green Belt. The project is enabled by the Irish Woodland Environmental Fund ('WEF') which was established by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) in 2019 as a vehicle to enable participating businesses such as KBIGI to provide incentives for landowners to plant new native woodlands. Over time, the newly planted forest will sequester carbon dioxide and provide significant environmental benefits including biodiversity gains.

Commenting on its commitment, Sean Hawkshaw, Chief Executive Officer, KBI Global Investors said:

"We are an Irish based investment firm with a predominantly international client base; as such the team travels a lot. We are very aware of our own responsibility to the environment and committed to mitigating the carbon impact of our air travel – and helping to develop more native woodlands in Ireland is a key part of this initiative. The 2.25ha [i.e. hectare] site outside Castlerea in County Roscommon has been converted from livestock use and has been replanted with Oak, Scots Pine [which has been growing in Ireland since the Ice Age and native to the country], Birch, Whitethorn and Hazel; this has very tangible and long lasting benefits for the local environment in terms of biodiversity, water quality and sustainability and will sequester more than 400 tonnes of carbon dioxide [tCO₂] over its lifetime."

"Forests act as carbon sinks, absorbing carbon from the atmosphere, and retaining it for generations. We are delighted to be part of this project with our forestry partners, and of course the landowner, in the creation of a tangible environmental asset that will be part of the landscape for generations to come. This is entirely consistent and aligned with our responsible investment approach which is implemented in our client portfolios – particularly across our Natural Resource equity strategies. We have been managing these portfolios for almost 20 years now and the focus is on identifying the companies that provide solutions to sustainability challenges related to the provision of food, energy, water and the mitigation of and adaptation to the impacts of climate change."

WEF – background

In May the Irish Government declared a climate and biodiversity emergency; *Climate Action Plan 2019*ⁱ, published not long after, and which represents a call to action across Government and Civil Society to tackle climate change, underlined the importance of ensuring that the burdens borne in the transition to a low carbon future are seen to be fair and that every group is seen to be making an appropriate and fair level of effort. Forestry-related actions feature prominently in the Plan, aimed at tackling both climate change and falling biodiversity.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's new Woodland Environmental Fund, referred to in the Plan, exemplifies the role forestry can play in addressing these dual challenges. Native woodlands established under this initiative are perhaps the most complex and biodiverse habitats in the country. As well as representing reservoirs of biodiversity, they deliver other important ecosystem services, such as water and soil protection, wider habitat linkage and carbon sequestration. The WEF also provides the ideal vehicle for collaboration between Government and the business community, combining resources and expertise to get behind the national effort to plant 1.5 million native trees each year and increase forest cover in Ireland from 11% to 18%ⁱⁱ.

The WEF pays an annual premium to the landowner per hectare, each year for 15 years, on the condition that the land is planted with native Irish species, with an additional once off top up payment per ha financed by businesses like KBIGI.

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KBIGI has announced that it will continue to address its travel-related carbon emissions via this and other projects.

– ENDS –

Journalists seeking further information should contact:

Gordon Puckey
Phoenix Financial PR
+44 7799 767 468
gordon@phoenixfinancialpr.co.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS

References: ⁱ <https://www.teagasc.ie/media/website/publications/2019/climate-action-plan.pdf>
ⁱⁱ <https://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2019/0917/1076425-ireland-forestry-22-million-trees-a-year/>
ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.teagasc.ie/media/website/publications/2019/climate-action-plan.pdf>
^{iv} <https://www.origingreen.ie/news-and-reports/woodland-environmental-fund/>

1. About KBI Global Investors ('KBIGI')

Established in 1980, KBI Global Investors is a specialist institutional asset management boutique, offering a range of Global Equities and Natural Resources strategies. The firm manages assets for a broad range of clients – public and corporate pension schemes, sub-advisory investors, foundations and endowments, wealth managers, private banks and investment intermediaries included. KBIGI enjoys a global client base and today holds mandates in the UK, Europe, North America and Asia as well as for some of Ireland's largest and best-known corporations. Part of Amundi, the firm is headquartered in Dublin, with additional offices in Boston, Massachusetts.

KBIGI boasts a track record of delivering consistent and outstanding risk-adjusted investment performance over the longer term, its highly experienced investment team today managing €11.5bn. (This is the combined AUM of KBI Global Investors Ltd and KBI Global Investors (North America) Ltd as at 30th September 2019).

The firm is headed by CEO Sean Hawkshaw, with members of the KBIGI team holding 12.5% of the equity in the firm.

www.kbiglobalinvestors.com

2. KBI Global Investors and Natural Resource strategies

One of the firm's principal goals is to be first to market with value-adding investment themes of the future. In the late 1990s, KBIGI was amongst the earliest investors to recognise the inherent source of alpha (the active return on an investment) from investing in companies providing solutions to sustainability challenges related to the provision of food, energy, water and the mitigation of and adaptation to the impacts of climate change.

Having identified a compelling clear need for investment in companies providing solutions to the global shortages of clean water and energy, the firm first launched strategies in these areas in 2000. Building up its team and intellectual capital in these themes, KBIGI added a climate change strategy in 2007, a sustainable impact agribusiness (food) strategy in 2008 and a sustainable impact infrastructure strategy in 2017.

From 2018 onwards, KBIGI has been reporting on the extent to which its Natural Resource portfolios contribute to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This significant initiative involves the detailed classification of all revenues of the companies held in each portfolio, determining whether the activity from which those revenues arise is contributing, positively or negatively, to one or more of the SDGs.

3. Woodland Environmental Fund('WEF')

The Woodland Environmental Fund was established by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The concept of attracting private sector finance into programmes to reforest Ireland's native woodlands was initially put together by Natural Capital Partners on behalf of Microsoft, and this led to a large scale native woodland reforestation programme across Ireland.

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The overarching aim is to expand Ireland's native woodlands, by enabling business to provide additional incentives to encourage landowners to establish new native woodlands that they may not have otherwise planted. The national goal is to plant 1.5 million native trees each year. The Department covers the cost of woodland establishment and pays a premium to the woodland owner each year for 15 years. Individual businesses participating in the Woodland Environmental Fund provide a one-off top up payment to the landowner upon establishment of the woodland.

[www.wef@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:wef@agriculture.gov.ie)

4. Ireland and Forestry

Ireland has the lowest forest cover of all European countries – approximately 11% compared to a European average of well over 30%. These forests are mostly man made and the Government's plan is to raise the national forest cover to 18% by 2046. Since 1991, most tree planting has been carried out by farmers, with the assistance of grant aid.

<https://www.teagasc.ie/media/website/publications/2019/climate-action-plan.pdf>

<https://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2019/0917/1076425-ireland-forestry-22-million-trees-a-year/>

5. About Natural Capital Partners

Natural Capital Partners is harnessing the power of business to create a more sustainable world. With more than 300 clients in 34 countries and a network of partners providing the highest quality projects, Natural Capital Partners delivers solutions to make real change possible – reducing carbon emissions, generating renewable energy, building resilience in supply chains, conserving forests and biodiversity, and improving health and livelihoods.

www.naturalcapitalpartners.com

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