

FORESTRY & TIMBER NEWS



February 2016 Issue 73

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With its six priorities firmly in its sights, Confor has hit the new year running, says **Stuart Goodall**

Six for 2016

Each year Confor produces a Business Plan for the year ahead, and 2016's can be found on our website.

It identifies six priorities for Confor, with priority 2: Promoting markets largely being delivered through our roles in Wood for Good and Grown in Britain:

1. Securing wood supply in the short and longer term;
2. Promoting markets for wood products and supporting woodland management;
3. Changing attitudes towards the sector amongst politicians, civil servants, environmental NGOs and the public;
4. Protecting sector interests during change to the business energy tax environment;
5. Driving fundamental improvement to the operation of forest and chain-of-custody certification;
6. Promoting the industry's interests as the Forestry Commission splits apart.

We have hit the ground running this year, explaining to politicians and civil servants how tree planting can help mitigate flooding. On 2 February our all party group at Westminster will meet to debate this issue further, and we have joined with The Woodland Trust to write to Secretary of State, Liz Truss, asking for a meeting.

The vice-chair of our group, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, MP has made increased tree planting one of her resolutions for the year, and called on the Government to plant 200m trees by 2020. Tree planting is now being quoted by politicians as part of the solution.

I'm also excited about the launch of our new video which will provide an overview of the sector, highlighting modern forestry practice and linking wood products back to the forest. This will be followed by shorter videos and an animation. Confor's website receives around 10,000 unique visits a month, which means it's a valuable tool to spread awareness and understanding of the sector.

In terms of future wood supply I'm heartened to hear that new applications in Scotland have moved into line with the government's own aspiration to plant 60% productive forests and the £1m Fund that minister Rory Stewart announced had been protected through Confor lobbying is stimulating large planting applications in England.

2016 will also be a year of change for the Forestry Commission as ministers decide how to deliver full devolution of forestry to Scotland. This will have ramifications across the UK, not least because it also raises issues around Forest Research. Confor is working on these topics to develop robust, evidenced based points to make on behalf of the sector to governments north and south of the border.

At Confor we aim to produce results and not just make a noise. That isn't easy to achieve within the political sphere, but the organisation can point to a track record of achievements. With your support we intend to build on this and do even more to help you be successful in 2016 and beyond.

CONFOR CONTACTS

Confor head office and editorial office
59 George Street,
Edinburgh EH2 2JG

0131 240 1410

info@confor.org.uk

www.confor.org.uk

For the latest news of forestry and wood sign up to #forestandwood on twitter



Caroline Harrison
National manager for England and regional director
M: 07500 927482
E: caroline.harrison@confor.org.uk



Jamie Farquhar
National manager for Scotland
M: 07817 374906
E: jamie.farquhar@confor.org.uk



Andrew Heald
National representative for N. Ireland
M: 07771 844653
E: andrew.heald@confor.org.uk



Martin Bishop
National manager for Wales
Rheolwr Genedlaethol i Gymru
M: 07876 029482
E: martin.bishop@confor.org.uk

Communications and editorial FTN
While Stefanie Kaiser is on maternity leave, please contact **James Thomson**
T: 0131 240 1420 E: james@confor.org.uk
or **Simon Tooth** T: 01502 725838
E: simontooth@micropress.co.uk

We want to hear from you
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Three books, two woods and one polecat

Confor puts case for planting as floods bring

Confor has stepped up its activity following the devastating floods across the UK – to ensure that a significant increase in tree planting in upland areas is seen as a key part of the long-term strategy to reduce future flood risks.

MPs were due to discuss the issue at a special meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Forestry (APPGF) on 2 February with Confor’s Technical Director Andrew Heald and Tom Nisbet of Forest Research explaining the science behind the issue to the Group.

Mr Heald has produced a new paper on forestry and flooding, which was presented to MPs at the APPGF and which draws heavily on Mr Nisbet’s well-received report from November 2014, *The Role of Productive Woodlands in Water Management*.

Austin Brady of The Woodland Trust also spoke, building on Confor’s increasing cooperation with the UK’s largest woodland conservation charity on issues of mutual interest. The two organisations have already requested a joint meeting with Environment Secretary Liz Truss to discuss the role of tree planting in reducing flood risks - building on the joint call for far greater ambition in creating new forests and woodland during the lifetime of this parliament.

The Secretary of State has often mentioned planting 11 million trees in England by the end of the current parliament in 2020. However, this barely maintains the current low levels of planting at 2,500 hectares per year, half the government’s stated aspiration in 2013 of 5,000 ha per annum. Confor and The Woodland Trust have proposed 7000 ha of woodland every year until 2020 (around 15 million trees per year), rising to 10,000 ha per year when the next Government is elected in 2020.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan, vice-chair of the APPGF, suggested during a House of Commons debate in December that a target of 200 million trees was achievable - as part of a rapidly-en-

hanced planting programme in river catchments to tackle future flood risks.

Stuart Goodall, Chief Executive of Confor, said: “We have worked hard to ensure the role of tree planting in reducing flood risks is on the agenda - and we are heartened by the comments of MPs like Anne-Marie Trevelyan and mainstream media coverage in places like Channel 4 News.

“However, it is really important that we keep up the pressure and that’s why we are producing a new report, taking the debate to MPs at Westminster and talking up the role of trees at every possible opportunity. We have been involved in arranging further coverage of the issue which will appear in newspapers, magazines and television - and at conferences over the coming weeks.”

Mr Heald, who spoke at a major conference in London on the topic in January, said: “One of the key messages is that planting trees in upland areas can have an impact on water retention and downstream flows within a year - it is not simply a long-term solution. In addition, it is without question the best long-term solution as part of wider natural flood management programmes. It is also very cost-effective compared to heavily-engineered flood mitigation projects.

“And by planting trees, we do not just help reduce flood risks - we contribute towards a strategic timber supply to serve a booming sector, help to reduce carbon emissions, encourage wildlife and offer a far wider range of recreational opportunities.”

The introduction to the new report says: “The UK’s uplands are unique in Europe in that they are largely treeless, as a result of many hundreds of years of clearance. Many people enjoy these open spaces, but they are very poor at retaining water, particularly during heavy rainfall events. We have engineered our landscapes – through measures like improved drainage and stream and river straightening - to move the water downhill



as quickly as possible, increasing the peak flow of water.

“There is now considerable interest in planting more trees in our uplands to strategically slow the flow of water and reduce the impact of downstream flooding – as part of a package of long-term measures to alleviate the risks from further flooding events.”

Case studies

The report also contains case studies where natural flood management has had a positive impact in England, Scotland and Wales. It calls for the UK Government and its National Flood Resilience Review (NFRR), headed by Oliver Letwin MP, to recognise the role that tree planting can play in reducing flood risks and to include it in a package of measures in the final NFRR report.

It also says that the next steps should be to identify upland river catchments where tree

How do trees help reduce flood risks?

1 Trees “use” more water than grass or other short vegetation, pulling more water from the ground and releasing it into the atmosphere via needles or leaves.

2 Tree roots are much larger and deeper than grass roots, so they open up the soil structure and allow water to percolate into the soil much more quickly and deeply. This means for any given area of land, the soil under trees can store much more water than the same area under grass.

3 When rain falls into woodland, it takes longer to reach the ground because it is intercepted by hundreds of branches, leaves and needles. This slows down the time it takes for water to reach the soil, reducing the storm effect. In the right weather conditions, water may even evaporate from the trees without reaching the ground.

4 Trees and woody debris along streams and river banks can also slow down the flow water reaching a stream, and slow down the speed of the stream reaching a river.

5 In lowland rivers silt can reduce their capacity during floods. Much of this silt is soil and small stones washed into streams from fields. By planting trees, we can protect the soil and reduce the chance of erosion. Also, trees and their roots are great at intercepting material already moving in the water.

6 Much of the UK’s flood plains are cleared of trees, and many are also built on. However allowing rivers to flood into wooded areas will significantly reduce the speed and potential impact of that river further downstream. Woodland is great at retaining flood water, allowing it to soak into the ground and slowly dissipate.



devastation



One of the iconic images of the December floods: the collapsed Tadcaster Bridge. (Picture: Mtaylor848)

planting could be most beneficial, and to examine which financial mechanisms could be employed to ensure planting takes place quickly and effectively.

"The forestry sector needs to stress very forcibly that tree planting can have a far quicker impact than its critics suggest - and that it is very cost-effective compared to highly-engineered and highly expensive solutions which have proved insufficient in the face of very heavy rainfall," said Mr Heald. "We have to go back to the source of the problem - and that involves greatly enhanced tree planting in the uplands."

Confor's country managers have also been ensuring the issue is on the political agenda. Scotland manager Jamie Farquhar has written to Forestry Minister Aileen McLeod calling for tree planting to be seen as part of the long-term strategy in Scotland, and the issue will be discussed at a major forestry conference in Edinburgh in March (see opposite page - assuming this is on page 4 and the conference story on page 5 as agreed). Confor has also facilitated coverage of forestry's contribution to alleviating flooding on BBC Scotland's Landward programme.

Wales Manager Martin Bishop has been in regular contact with the Minister for Natural Resources Carl Sargeant, as well as the Welsh Government and its agencies, to discuss the issue.

As well as political and media engagement, Mr Heald urged Confor members to engage in online conversations about the issue, especially on Twitter, which is providing an increasingly fertile debating space for those with an interest in forestry. Follow Confor @forestsandwood and Andrew Heald @andyheald

There is also a petition before Parliament on making tree planting a priority to reduce flooding. Confor members are encouraged to sign: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/117136>

Conference puts forestry in spotlight ahead of elections

SAVE THE DATE
22 March 2016

A major conference in Edinburgh will highlight the £1bn contribution of forestry to Scotland's economy - on 22 March 2016, just weeks before elections to the Scottish Parliament.

Confor has organised the event - *Forestry and Timber: Scotland's Hidden Success Story* - with The Scotsman Conferences to build on the excellent and wide-ranging coverage of the Forestry Commission Scotland report in late 2015. The report showed the sector is now worth £1bn in Scotland, and that job numbers increased significantly through the recession.

"The very positive figures in the report came as no surprise to those of us in the industry, but they were a wake-up call for others in terms of how much the forestry and timber sector can achieve" said Confor Chief Executive Stuart Goodall. "For many policy-makers in Scotland, forestry still is a hidden success story - and it's time we shouted more loudly about its enormous contribution to the economy, the environment and to people's lives.

"This event is a timely opportunity to showcase the sector, its achievements to date and its potential to do much more. Our 2014 event with Scotsman Conferences was excellent and we believe this one can be even better - there has been a great response from across the sector and beyond showing a real appetite for debate on all the big issues."

Expert speakers from across the sector will

address a range of key issues, including: how to ensure planting targets are met in Scotland; building sustainable forestry supply chains in rural communities; forestry and flooding; innovation and added value; the future of the Forestry Commission; and how forestry interacts with local communities. The event will conclude with a political panel discussion.

Confirmed speakers include: Jo O'Hara, Head of Forestry Commission Scotland; Prof Sean Smith, Director of the Institute for Sustainable Construction at Edinburgh Napier University; Fergus Tickell, Argyll Timber Transport Group; and Amanda Bryan, forestry consultant and current chair of FCS.

Mr Goodall, who will also speak, thanked event sponsors Bidwells, Scottish Woodlands and Tilhill, saying: "It is tremendous that successful forestry businesses recognise the importance of these high-level discussions, which bring together people from across our sector and beyond - to take the message to politicians that forestry and timber is delivering for Scotland and can continue to do so."

For full details of the event, go to:

www.scotsmanconferences.com/viewconference.aspx?id=68

Confor has negotiated a special £49 rate for members (full price £120). Contact Liz Hughson, liz@confor.org.uk or 0131 240 1412.

Confor moves to curb timber theft

Timber theft is an issue of real concern for law-abiding businesses in the forestry and timber sector. It puts legitimate businesses at a commercial disadvantage and has no place in a mature, responsible industry.

At various times recently the issue has been raised with Confor and, after considering options for action, it has been decided that Confor will seek to develop an industry-wide system based on linking information on the despatch of timber to the receiver of the load. This system would need to take account of the (currently) different systems employed, e.g. mobile despatching with pin codes by the public sector and paper-based systems in the private sector.

The system would require co-ordination along the supply chain, from the forest to the mill, and involvement of the public sector. With its breadth of membership Confor is uniquely placed to co-ordinate any such action and to press the public sector to participate.

The system also needs to offer a cost-effective solution to a problem whose importance varies across the UK - effective take-up is vital.

The development of the proposed system will take place through Confor's Technical Committee, currently chaired by Peter Whitfield of Tilhill Forestry, with the aim of delivering a model that will be ready to be rolled out late in 2016.

Sector benefits from planning grant fund

It is understood that a number of applications for large new planting schemes are being submitted under the recently announced Woodland Creation Planning Grant (WCPG). The grant supports the preparation of plans to design multi-purpose woodlands in England with a significant productive component, that

show the potential to benefit the forestry sector in the long-term through the provision of timber or other wood products.

Confor lobbied hard for the £1m Fund from which this grant will be paid and we urge the sector in England to take advantage of it. If the Fund is all spent, and spent effectively, then it will be far easier for Confor to lobby for further funding.

Details of the WCPG can be found at www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/BEEH-A4LGDE. The closing date of the Fund is 15 February 2016.

Private sector perspective on the future of FC

In summer 2015, UK and Scottish ministers agreed that officials would work jointly to complete the devolution arrangements for the management of forestry in Scotland by agreeing a transfer of Forestry Commissioners' powers and duties as they relate to Scotland, to Scottish Ministers. Civil service officials are currently looking at these points and in particular legislation, financial implications and the remaining cross-border FC functions.

In order to inform its input to this process Confor commissioned a rapid analysis of the issues that could arise for the private sector from the final dismantling of the Forestry Commission, these included Forest Research, the National Inventory and Plant Health. This analysis was discussed by the Board and, following that, a further document was prepared developing a position that Confor could take on behalf of the private sector – feeding into governmental decision-making north and south of the border (the final decisions will impact on all four countries of the UK).

This document was circulated to the chairs of Confor committees before Christmas and was to be considered by the Board at an extraordinary meeting on 27 January.

Engagement

Confor also requested that the Scottish Forestry Trust host a meeting of UK industry, research funders and research providers to explore how the sector can better engage with setting the future research agenda post-full devolution of the FC, including the potential for greater, co-ordinated sector funding. This was scheduled for 25 January.

Fifteen specific issues, grouped into three broad categories, have been identified regarding the break-up of the FC in England and Scotland:

- Main topics to be retained cross-border within a UK/GB organisational structure;
- Key activities to be provided/retained at the UK/GB level;
- FC key functions and roles that can be devolved to England and Scotland either in full or with a means of effective coordination at the UK/GB level.

The main topics identified were Forest Research (FR), Inventory (IFOS)/Statistics and Plant Health. There has been support from members for FR to be retained at the UK/GB level. Plans are already well underway for an 'FR Plus' organisation to be operational by April 2016. This will include the transfer of IFOS/Statistics from FC GB corporate services to FR. This appears a sensible move and is one the private sector should support as an effective means to retain this important topic operating at the required UK/GB level.

The wider issue of industry engagement with FR (funding and direction of research) was to be considered, within the context of forest related

research as a whole, at the 25 January meeting.

Plant Health is not part of the process that is creating an extended FR and the future for Plant Health is unclear. FR already has most of the skills and knowledge required such as tree protection, entomology, forest pathology, detection, diagnostics, monitoring and regulatory work. Other associated matters including pesticide research and approval, forest resilience, climate change and advisory support are also within FR's current expertise.

There are potential options for how Plant Health is delivered in future. It appears as if the general shift, intentional or otherwise, is towards overall individual Country Plant Health Officers where a UK CPHO (who, in practice, would also be the England CPHO) would lead and coordinate Plant Health matters across and between devolved countries/administrations/governments.

At present there are FC country PHOs and FC's GB Plant Health Cross-Border Service carries out vital coordination working across the whole forestry sector including collaboratively with FR. In addition, FC GB this year set up the GB and NI Tree Health Advisory Group.

There are key activities that make sense to be retained at the UK level, in particular the UK Forest Standard. Other activities would also benefit from some form of structured cross-border cooperation and/or collaboration. These include the UK Woodland Carbon Code, the UK Timber Haulage Codes, the FC library, the FC GB Plant Health portal and International Issues.

Confor has raised concern about the impact on staff levels and competency from the loss of a distinct Forestry Commission in England and Scotland, and is exploring options for how there could be a form of continued cross-border cooperation on key issues.

Publicly owned estate

An area of significant public and sector interest is the publicly owned forest estate. It is not expected that plans regarding the Public Forest Estate (PFE) in England or the National Forest Estate (NFE) in Scotland will change as a result of this process, though Scotland could look to the NFE to manage all its public land holdings. In England, the current Government's Manifesto commits to public forests and woodlands being 'kept in trust for the nation'. It may be that legislative change driven by the Scottish Minister's summer announcement creates an opportunity for the Westminster Government to legislate to create a new 'Public Forest Estate Management Organisation'. Confor has proposed that the private sector could have a major role to play in enabling FEE and FES to be more cost effective.

It is expected that officials will report to ministers by end-March and that any ministerial decision will wait until after the devolved elections in May.

IN BRIEF

RFS aids forestry study

A new £2,000 Viking Bursary and up to four funded Studentships of £1,850 each are being launched by the Royal Forestry Society (RFS) under its Future Foresters programme for 2016. They are open to full and part time students enrolled in forestry or allied courses. In addition, the Randle Travel Bursary is once again offered to RFS members of any age involved in independent study outside the United Kingdom. Up to four £300 Randle bursaries are being offered.

📄 www.rfs.org.uk/learning/bursaries/

Scotland's finest

With applications accepted up until 31 March 2016, organisers of Scotland's Finest Woods Awards are reminding businesses, schools, land owners, foresters, communities and individuals that their wood could be a winner. The Awards are an annual recognition and celebration of those who use, promote, own or manage Scotland's woods and forests to deliver economic, environmental and social benefits.

📄 www.sfw.co.uk

Call to graduates

Tilhill Forestry is on the hunt for candidates interested in joining its graduate programmes. Recent forestry graduates, or those studying for a degree in forestry or related subjects, will be ideally placed to join the three-year programme. Successful applicants are assigned to a district office or business stream where they learn every aspect of that area, including shadowing experienced colleagues. They may then move around the country and across business streams, enabling them to build up their knowledge. 📄 www.tilhill.com

RASE and RFS join forces for award

The Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE) and the Royal Forestry Society (RFS) have joined forces to launch a new Small and Farm Woodlands Excellence Award. The new award is one of five categories in the Excellence in Forestry Awards which this year are open to entries from across the north of England. 📄 www.rfs.org.uk

Trust student winner

The Scottish Forestry Trust has announced the winner of the Scottish Woodlands Ltd Student Excellence Award for 2015. It is Stuart Fraser, formerly of the University of Aberdeen and now carrying out post-doctoral research at the University of Pretoria. His thesis "Inter and intra specific variation in susceptibility to *Dothistroma* needle blight within pine species used in British forestry" was successfully completed during 2015.

Industry unites in call for trees, woods and people charter

Confor is among more than 40 organisations that have signed up to a campaign being led by the Woodland Trust to celebrate the value of our trees and woods and secure their future by creating a new Charter for Trees, Woods and People.

The new charter will be launched in November 2017, which marks 800 years since Henry III signed the original Charter of the Forest. This influential charter protected and restored the rights of people to access and use the Royal Forests.

In a statement, the campaign organisers said that “our nation’s woods and trees are facing unprecedented pressures from development, pests and diseases and climate change. They risk being neglected, undervalued and forgotten. Now is the time to create a new charter, a broader charter that recognises the importance of trees in our society, celebrates their enormous contribution to our lives, and acts now so that future generations can benefit from them too”.

The coalition’s ambition is that the principles set out in the 2017 charter will articulate the relationship between people and trees in the UK in the 21st century. The charter will provide guidance and inspiration for policy, practice, innovation and enjoyment. Redefining the everyday benefits that we all gain from woods and trees in our lives, for everyone, from Government to businesses, communities and individuals.

Local groups, clubs, councils and committees will be encouraged to take part by bringing people together to celebrate the woods and trees at the heart of their communities and help feed ideas and stories into the building of the charter. The 48 Charter steering group organisations are also looking to recruit local ‘Charter Champions’ who will ensure their community is represented in this ambitious project, able to seize this unique opportunity to define the future for woods and trees in the UK and make their voices heard.

Guidance and information will be provided during the campaign to inspire and support local activities, and to help people create a lasting legacy in communities across the UK. Funding will be available for local events, activities and projects that reconnect people and trees. Anyone involved will be part of a UK-wide network of groups leading local events and will represent communities in this UK wide conversation about the future of woods and trees.



Beccy Speight, Woodland Trust CEO (above) said: “Our collective ambition is for a charter that puts trees back at the heart of our lives, communities and decision making – where they belong. The charter will provide guidance and inspiration to allow us all to appreciate, preserve and celebrate our trees and woods for what they do for us in so many different ways. Inspired by something that happened 800 years ago, there is no better time than now to shine the spotlight again on the benefits that trees and woods bring to us all today and to future generations.”

📄 <https://treecharter.uk/>

Developing a wider skills base

Andrew Heald is leading Confor’s participation in the Scottish Forest Industry Forest and Timber Technologies Skills Group. The group is focussed on tackling the issues around attracting new entrants to the industry, and in developing and strengthening a wider skill base. It builds on an important scoping study that was launched in December 2015. The study was tasked to:

- Investigate current training provision by all providers, across all levels, over the forest and timber sector
- Conduct a skills needs assessment across the forest and timber sector

- Identify routes to employment for students at all levels, over the sector
- Identify barriers to current training provision for large and small employers and to students.

The next meeting of the group is in February in Edinburgh, and will review the progress of a number of smaller working groups. Of particular concern was the availability and skills of machinery operators, particularly forwarder and harvester drivers.

It’s been pleasing to see co-operation between a number of machinery distributors, harvesting and forest management companies and the colleges. This will hopefully enable students to have access to modern machinery in “real forestry” under the supervision of skilled trainers, to develop our much needed operators of the future.

A daughter for Stef

I am very pleased to report that our editor, Stef Kaiser has given birth to a healthy daughter, Frieda Liliwen, writes Confor Chief Executive Stuart Goodall. Mother and baby are doing well, and Stef is intending to return to her role as editor of FTN and communications manager in July. The date for Frieda to join Confor is yet to be agreed.

I am also pleased to report that we have secured very able cover for Stef’s maternity leave in the form of James Thomson, who will edit FTN until Stef’s return.

Confor is generating significant additional media interest in the sector and is being very active in promoting the sector, in particular to politicians. This is creating additional work, alongside the production of new video and animation, and an upgraded website. It is vital, therefore, that we have high quality cover for Stef.

James has relevant experience in website management, social media, feature writing and email marketing, and has quickly become integrated into the Confor team. His email address is: james@confor.org.uk

A native of Cambridgeshire, James’s experience includes spells with West Coast Energy and Rockingham Forest Trust. We all look forward to working with him in the coming months.



Stef writes: “This ‘peaceful white Lily’ never screams and never poos. Just grows and contemplates the world with curiosity. Plans to publish a forestry-themed picture of this new addition to the Confor team failed; born on 28 December at only 36 weeks, this little creature was still too weak to properly hug a Sitka tree in the inclement Scottish winter weather. A February trip to the snow-covered conifer forests of Austria will hopefully kindle a lifelong passion for nature and the outdoors.”

Showcasing industry to a wider audience

Confor has produced a short film on the importance of forestry and timber – part of a suite of new materials designed to better explain the sector and its work to a wider audience.

Our Forests, Our People shows how the sector works and its economic, environmental and social significance to communities and the UK as a whole. It includes contributions from a range of businesses and will be a central feature of the new Confor website, which will go live in the spring.

Confor's Chief Executive Stuart Goodall said of the video: "It is vital that we have a visual means to communicate what the forestry and timber sector and its people are about. The video does this, and also tackles a range of misunderstanding and misperceptions.

"For some time now, Confor has been taking a lead in ensuring that the forestry and timber sector shouts louder about its achievements - through political engagement, media coverage, conferences and events, high-quality publications and now through video material.

"This video – and the animation and shorter videos which will follow over the next few months – will anchor the new Confor website, which is a well-used gateway to our sector with around 10,000 unique visits every month."

The video project was led by Confor's Communications Manager Stefanie Kaiser, who is now on maternity leave after giving birth to her second daughter, with production by Edinburgh-based Heehaw. The APF Exhibition company provided welcome financial support.

Mr Goodall added: "The video is an excellent resource and we really hope our members and the wider sector make good use of it and share its contents with a wider audience – it is there for all to use. The forestry and timber sector has a great story to tell, but we need to tell it more effectively. This video and the other materials we are working on will really help."



Two stills from the Confor film available on YouTube

Confor is currently working on a short animation (of around two minutes) which explains very simply that wood is all around us and links that back to the forest. It explains how the everyday products we take for granted are made, and the benefits that forests and wood deliver.

After that, a series of short videos – looking

at subjects including forestry & the economy, forestry & the environment, forestry & people and forestry & climate change – will be produced to complement the main video.

The video can be found on the Confor website and a direct link is here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=XM5AA-6DTIA

Maintaining the profile of timber in construction

Wood for Good, the partnership between Confor and Swedish Wood has had a productive year promoting the use of timber in construction throughout Britain. With articles and commentary in the press and trade journals, Wood for Good actively informs decision makers on the many benefits of specifying and using timber in construction. Our 'Build with Carbon' campaign received a 'highly commended' in the 2 Degrees Champions Award for sustainable businesses.

2015 saw the completion of a series of Wood for Good sponsored CPD events on timber frame construction, delivered by BMTRADA to engineers and architects in various locations around England. In March, we hosted a seminar at the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation

to over 50 architects, focusing on the carbon benefits of timber in construction and highlighting the work we commissioned to develop life cycle analysis data on the embodied carbon in construction timber. We are continuing to improve the technical data on the environmental footprint of construction timber products with EPDs (Environmental Products Declarations). This data is currently being used to prepare an EPD for UK Sawmillers' kiln dried timber.

A half day seminar in London in October on modern timber construction methods was a taster for the new 2016 Campaign which will focus on how modern timber construction can help meet the housing challenge faced by the country. An illustrated book on the Modern Timber House has been commissioned from architect and author Peter Wilson and a series of national conferences will support its launch. A further series of related CPD events is already being planned.

Wood for Good and Forestry Commission Scotland jointly fund the RIAS award for the

Best use of Timber in a Building. Stuart Goodall joined the RIAS judging panel earlier this year, visiting various timber buildings across Scotland. The winner was The University of Edinburgh's Arcadia Nursery designed by Malcolm Fraser Architects, built of Cross Laminated Timber. Case studies of all the shortlisted buildings are available on the Wood for Good website.

Wood for Good also co-sponsors the Wood Awards. Included in the prizes this year were wonderful buildings including the BSKyB Centre in London, which is a large four-storey building designed by Arup Associate and constructed of engineered timber, and a simple yet elegant fishing hut, designed by Niall McLaughlin Architects.

Building on the success of Wood for Good's work, our Campaign Manager, Dave Hopkins, has landed a new position as Director of the Timber Trade Federation. As a result, one of our first jobs in 2016 is to recruit a new campaign manager to take forward the work of selling the wonders of wood.

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“We want to see all our homegrown timber supplies branded as Grown in Britain”

Steve Cook of wood using giant Willmott Dixon at the November Confor Conference at RICS as he urged more land owners and processing businesses to sign up

NEWS

Conference will tackle how timber transport engages with society

The Timber Transport Forum will be holding its national conference at Battleby Conference Centre near Perth on 10 March 2016.

The Scottish Government’s Minister responsible for forestry, Dr Aileen MacLeod MSP, has agreed to open the conference.

One theme of the day will be how timber transport engages with society. Nearly 11m tonnes of roundwood comes out of Britain’s forests each year so timber lorries are now a major interface between the forest industries and the rural public.

A recent study on the economic contribution of forestry to Scotland suggests that timber transport creates 1200 full time jobs in Scotland alone and is worth around £50m/year to the Scottish economy. It is vital that we retain the support of society for forestry and for all parts of the timber supply chain. Those involved in timber transport, need to engage positively.

The conference will be hearing from Forestry Commissioner Amanda Bryan on consulting with communities and from Forestry Commission Scotland on the practicalities of managing

the public relations of timber transport.

Other topics will include the opportunities for sharing access infrastructure with other land-use sectors such as renewable energy and the power grid managers. The Forum will be launching new guidance covering the rules around stacking and loading direct from rural roads and hearing about FISA’s driver safety guide and other outputs from their road haulage working group.

📄 www.timbertransportforum.org.uk



UKWAS revised standard consultation now imminent

The review process of UKWAS (UK Woodland Assurance Standard) is nearing its final stages. The second round of public consultation closed at the end of November 2015, with about 25 responses from a range of consultees, stakeholders and industry.

The feedback was reviewed by the UKWAS Steering Group in December and the Review Group is making final adjustments to the draft standard during January.

The revised standard will then go for a final 30 day public consultation in mid-February, with the final version being sent to the inter-

national offices of PEFC and FSC for review and approval in late-April. It is hoped to get the revised standard formally “signed-off” by November 2016.

One of the main changes is in the layout, with all formal requirements now in the main body of the text. A version of the draft standard, showing only the requirements was on display at the Confor Woodland Show in September, and attracted mainly positive comments.

Productive forestry interests are well represented in the revision process, with Ewan McIntosh of Tilhill, Stuart Wilkie of Scottish Woodlands and Andrew Heald of Confor all participating in the review group.

You can read more about the UKWAS revision process, including the current draft standard, at 📄 <http://ukwas.org.uk/article/ukwas-4-draft-for-consultation>

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Taking the long view

Using past research experiments to guide future forestry

Victoria Stokes and Suzanne Martin
of Forest Research report

Forest Research has a long history of field research and has conducted thousands of experiments throughout Britain in the past century. The experiments cover a wide range of topics – species mixtures, nutrition, ground preparation, stability and exposure, timber quality, spacing, thinning, native woodlands and natural regeneration. They also include a large number of species and provenance trials of current forestry species as well as lesser known species that may have the potential to be grown in Britain to provide timber and other goods and services.

Over the decades a considerable resource of ‘long-term experiments’ has developed – largely a result of some of the experiments being retained in an inactive state for demonstration purposes after the active period of research had completed. This has given researchers of later generations the opportunity to return to them and to investigate the longer-term changes, for example in the growth rates of tree species and the impacts of the tested treatments. Much of the value of the experiments arises from the long-term nature of forestry and the relatively slow rate of forest processes. Some of the experiments are, for example, proving invaluable for studying the long-term ecological or environmental changes in woodland ecosystems.

What may not have been anticipated by the original researchers is the enormous potential for re-using the long-term experiments to address future forest management questions – such as those around the effects of climate change on the growth rates of different tree species, on the timber properties of ‘alternative species’, and how we can manage woodlands to store carbon. Although the world has changed substantially in the decades since the first experiments were established, Forest Research is now unlocking the potential of this network of past experiments to provide answers to the enduring, re-emerging and new questions of 21st century forest management.

Forest Research has recently reviewed its long-term experiment resource to identify those studies that will be prioritised for on-going maintenance and to consider the best ways to ensure they benefit future generations. Almost 400 experiments across Great Britain are being retained for potential future use. Selected to provide a wide geographical coverage of species and research topics, these experiments also have a robust statistical design and de-

tailed records on past management and early growth responses. Forest Research has also been sharing information about the experiments with other researchers and making use of the network of plots to actively address current research priorities in forestry and to provide advice to forest managers.

One such piece of research that has been especially valuable revisited a series of provenance trials of European silver fir (*Abies alba* (Mill.)) planted between 1966 and 1970. Analysis of both new and old data from the trials revealed that this previously dismissed species grows well across a range of British sites, achieving mean General Yield Class of 14–22 m³ ha⁻¹ year⁻¹. Forty-six years after the trials were established the results showed that the species is highly adaptable and all of the many provenances trialled were suitable for growing in Britain. Those from Calabria in Italy performed particularly well and are recommended as the first choice of origin for future planting in Britain. The high shade tolerance of the species and its ability to establish under a canopy also makes it a valuable species for under-planting in continuous cover conditions where it may increase stand structural and

Forest Research is now unlocking the potential of this network of past experiments to provide answers to the enduring, re-emerging and new questions of 21st century forest management.

species diversity. To better understand its potential for use as timber, Forest Research in collaboration with Napier University, is now using material from the best performing provenances to determine the strength and stiffness of structural length logs of Silver fir.

Research is also ongoing at three long-term experiments trialling hybrid spruce (“*Picea lutzii*” White spruce x Sitka spruce) planted in 1987, and a series of experiments on Low’s fir (*Abies concolor* subsp. *lowiana*) planted in 1968. The work is funded by Forest Enterprise England who are searching the long-term evidence to understand whether these species may be suited to future growing conditions given our changing climate. The presence of experiments such as these means that data can be provided



quickly, removing the need to plant costly new trials (Fig 1).

Some of the experiments are significant at a global scale. A study exploring the effects of growing species in mixtures at Gisburn Forest, Lancashire (established in 1955 and is now in its second rotation), is probably the best-known forest mixtures experiment in the world (Fig. 2). Recent analysis of the 20-year second rotation



Fig 1: *Picea lutzii* (above left) and *Pinus peuce* (above right) planted in 1968 and 1970 growing at a species trial site in Sutherland.



Fig 2: Norway spruce and Scots pine growing in mixture at the Gisburn experiment.

growth data carried out by Forest Research has demonstrated that, due to improved soil nutrient conditions, mixed stands of certain species (Sitka spruce/Scots pine; Norway spruce/Scots pine; and Norway spruce/common alder) can have higher productivity than pure plots of the same species. This has important implications for forest management, demonstrating the potential use of mixed species stands for increased

productivity and carbon capture, as well as a range of other benefits such as habitat diversification, adaptation to climate change, and improved visual attractiveness.

Carbon storage

The long-term experiments are also helping us to better understand how to best manage forests to store carbon. In one study comparing

the long-term effects of different harvesting regimes on the carbon and nutrient stocks in trees and soils, we have been able to use the longest second rotation experiment exploring this topic in Europe. In this work, the impacts of brash removal are being compared with conventional (stem-only) harvesting. Analysis has shown that although above ground biomass was reduced, brash removal resulted in higher concentrations of total carbon and nitrogen in the soil compared to conventional harvesting on peaty gley soils. However, the situation was not clear cut, as brash removal also caused an increase in soil acidity, leading to a long-term reduction in potassium and phosphate levels. This indicates that brash removal is appropriate only on certain site and soil types. In another piece of research, analysis of long-term experiment data has demonstrated that the application of herbicides in the early years of tree establishment can have a long-lasting beneficial effect on the growth, yield and carbon sequestration of Sitka spruce stands in Britain. On certain site types this may be a cost-effective way to increase carbon storage in the forest.

We are fortunate that our predecessors understood the potential value and importance of long-term data in forestry and managed to retain the current resource through difficult times. Indeed, the maintenance and preservation of the experiments has often been carried out with minimal resources when funding for this type of resource has not been considered a priority. The long-term experiments now receive funding from the Forestry Commission. This has enabled Forest Research to pursue an active project managing the network of experiment sites. This includes work inspecting experiments that have not been visited in recent years and accurate GIS mapping of sites. The network is also expanding with new experiments being incorporated where it is anticipated that they could be of future value. We hope that this unique resource will enable and promote collaboration with other research teams and organisations, and help us to realise the value of the experiments in addressing the challenges of contemporary forestry.

Further information

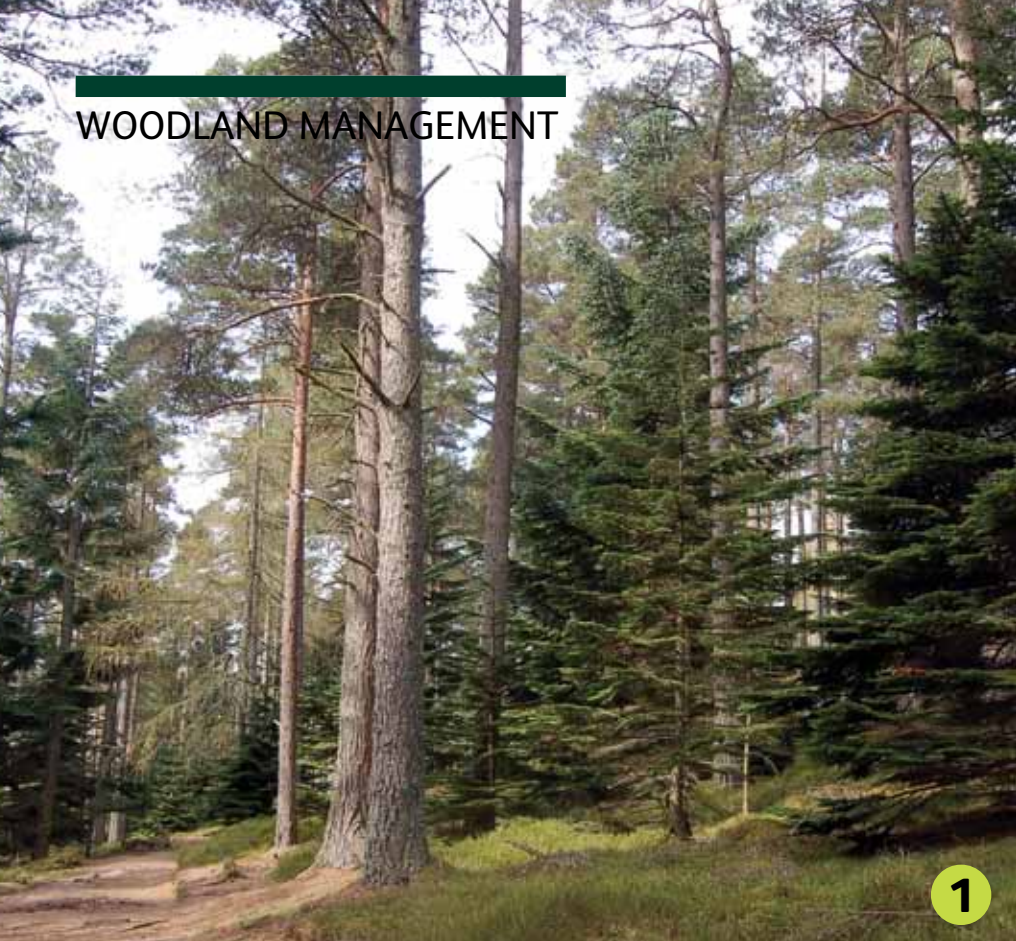
Forest Research long-term experiments: <http://bit.ly/ltextperiments>

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Making sense of mixtures

Dr. Scott McG. Wilson sets out some key issues to be considered when establishing and managing mixed-species stands of trees in Britain

Silvicultural record of mixtures

While a commonplace element of productively-managed temperate forests across Continental Europe and North America, mixed-species stands represent a minority of the current British forest resource, particularly in terms of more recent upland coniferous plantations. However we have an established record of creating and managing mixed-species stands across a wide spectrum of contexts, including longer-established “policy” woodlands on private estates, Forestry Commission plantations on better sites from the period 1920-1960, nursing mixtures with Sitka spruce on upland sites, “new native woodlands” created since 1985 and many plantings over recent centuries within the urban woodland and amenity forestry contexts.

Reasons to deploy mixtures

Deployment of mixed-species stands over the past three decades has concentrated on habitat restoration projects, emulating National Vegetation Classification (NVC) native woodland communities. However there are now cogent reasons to consider judicious expansion of the use of mixtures within productive plantations, taking proper account of site conditions through application of the principles of Ecological Site Classification (ESC). These rationales centre on

the need to improve the resilience of our plantation forests to future threats from climatic change and novel pests and diseases. While much research remains to be done, there is already good evidence that cultivation of a wider range of well-selected species within productive stands can reduce the risks of total stand failure due to biotic or abiotic damage. There are also important advantages to mixtures in terms of the facilitation of alternative silvicultural systems, improvement of landscape amenity and preservation of soil fertility.

Functional categories of mixtures

While some examples are multi-functional, mixtures can be grouped into five functional categories, which identify the primary reason why a mixed-species composition has been selected for deployment:

Ecosystem emulation - this category covers species mixtures designed to emulate natural forest communities. One example is restoration of British native woodland communities based on National Vegetation Classification (NVC), but also relevant are mixed plantations modelled on natural forest communities from Continental Europe (e.g. spruce-fir-beech), North America (e.g. spruce-fir-hemlock) or pre-glacial Britain.

Ecological enhancement - this category includes mixtures designed primarily to benefit aspects of site ecology other than the stand of trees directly. An important example is inclusion of “site improving species” (e.g. birch, aspen and alder), within stands of evergreen conifers, in order to preserve/ enhance rotational soil fertility, biomass productivity and faunal biodiversity.

Facilitation - this category covers mixtures de-

signed primarily to increase the productivity of principle crop species by enhancing climatic shelter or access to soil nutrients through “facilitation effects”. Sitka spruce-lodgepole pine “nursing mixtures” were the traditional example, but another employs birch to shelter sensitive conifers (e.g. red cedar) establishing on exposed sites.

Insurance - this category covers mixtures designed specifically to enhance stand resilience by adding extra species to provide an alternative final crop, if the principle species fails due to climate or disease. Examples include Sitka spruce with western hemlock on upland sites or Corsican pine with Atlas cedar/ silver fir on lowland sites.

Silvicultural enrichment - this category covers mixtures designed positively to develop new silvicultural, amenity and timber marketing opportunities through creation of more diverse and productive stands, often created by enrichment planting. The most common examples are mixtures of valuable conifer and hardwood species, usually managed using continuous-cover forestry (CCF) systems on favourable sites.

Species composition of mixtures

Alongside their functional category, mixtures can be classified in terms of overall tree species composition. Ideally, species to be used within silviculturally compatible mixtures should be selected using natural “analogues” - British native woodlands or natural temperate forests from Europe or North America. Formation of more artificial “future species groups” or “future stand development types” may be relevant under climate change and was envisaged by Professor



3



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- 1 Mixed stand of Scots pine and silver firs, Glen Dye, Aberdeenshire
- 2 Mixed stand of Douglas fir and red cedar, Forest of Dean
- 3 Mixed stand of pine, Atlas cedar and Abies firs, Mt. Ventoux, France
- 4 Mixed stand of Sitka spruce and Douglas fir, Balnacoul, Moray
- 5 Mixed coniferous stand, Stourhead Western Estate, Wilts
- 6 Mixed stand of Sitka spruce and noble fir, Penllyn Forest, N. Wales
- 7 Mixed stand of Sitka spruce and western hemlock, St. Gwyddno Forest, S. Wales



4



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7

THE SIX KEY COMPOSITIONAL TYPES OF MIXTURES

“Pseudo-boreal” mixtures - these are relevant to drier British upland conditions, primarily in northern Scotland, and include native pine, birch and aspen woodlands (NVC W17, W18). With *Dothistroma* impacts on pine, it may be necessary to include more resistant substitute conifers (e.g. Norway/ Serbian spruces or Macedonian pine).

“Upland Pacific conifer” mixtures - these are relevant throughout the wetter British uplands and are modelled on simpler natural stand types of coastal British Columbia and Alaska. Productive “insurance” mixtures, managed on clear-fell/ restock systems, may combine familiar Sitka spruce with western hemlock, Pacific silver or noble firs.

“Midslope conifer-hardwood” mixtures - these are relevant to midslope brown-earth sites in northern and western Britain (including better ex-larch sites), and are modelled on Norway spruce-European silver fir- beech stand types of montane central Europe. Compatible species (e.g. oak, sycamore, Douglas fir or cedars) may be added.

“Foothill conifer” mixtures - these are relevant to moister areas of Britain on lower

slopes and valley bottoms with better soils. They are modelled on diverse and productive Pacific Northwest stands, including Sitka spruce, Douglas fir, grand fir, redwoods and red cedars. Silviculture usually tends toward continuous-cover forestry.

“Lowland hardwood” mixtures - these are relevant to much of lowland Britain with brown earth or surface-water gley soils, and include the native oak/ ash woodland communities (NVC W8, W10). Plantations may need to embrace additional or “ash-substitute” hardwoods - e.g. sycamore, hornbeam, sweet chestnut, walnut, cherry - and a minority component of valuable/ specialist conifers - e.g. Douglas fir, cedars.

“Pseudo-Mediterranean” mixtures - these are applicable to those dry lowland areas of Britain with acidic sandy or lime-rich soils, including heathland and coastal sand-dune forests. Pine species (potentially including Corsican pine where *Dothistroma* can be managed) can be combined with other Mediterranean conifers such as Atlas cedar and various silver firs. Evergreen oak species may also become relevant.

Mark Anderson in *The Selection of Tree Species* (Anderson, 1961). Here, systematic consideration must be given to ascertaining compatibility of chosen species’ site requirements, silvicultural traits and shade tolerances. The six key compositional types are outlined in the panel.

Establishment and management

A perception held by some foresters is that “managing mixtures is complex”. However, this

is not invariably the case - while some examples will involve transitioning to continuous-cover forestry (CCF) systems, others remain suitable for clear-fell/ restock working. Mixed-species composition can be approached by acceptance of mixed natural regeneration or enrichment underplanting of mature crops - it need not involve stand replacement. Managing mixtures may appear more complex than simplified management of first rotation, even-aged single-

species stands, but this reflects the silvicultural immaturity of the latter. We must accept that as our forests mature ecologically and silviculturally into subsequent rotations, we will have to “raise our game” towards Continental standards of silviculture - it’s an essential part of developing resilience. We will need to alter some adverse “directions of recent travel” in British forestry - reversing pernicious declines in higher-level silvicultural education and skilled recruitment and “calling time” on increasing size and weight of forest machinery, in favour of skilled motor manual and low-impact mechanised techniques. Given the palatability of alternative tree species and costs for fencing, we must now have some robust discussions with estate management and policy colleagues as to real actions to limit deer densities. But we can be confident that we can make sense of mixtures and, indeed, make them work for us!

Dr. Scott McG. Wilson MICFor is an independent forestry consultant and author, based in Aberdeen, with specific interests in use of alternative species and silvicultural systems.

For more information and references about upland mixtures for Britain see:

🔗 www.scottishforestrytrust.org.uk/projects/re-evaluating-rotational-upland-sitka-spruce-mixtures-2014.asp

🔗 www.charteredforesters.org/resources/download-library/cat_view/33-presentations-and-event-resources/36-regional-events/69-2015-regional-events/73-north-scotland-upland-conifer-mixtures/

The importance of expanding Scotland's commercial forest area

by **Andrew D Cameron**,
University of Aberdeen

World demand for timber is rising at around 3% per year driven by increasing population, rapid industrialisation of countries such as China, India, Russia and Brazil, increasing demand for “low carbon” timber in construction and its use as a “carbon-neutral” fuel. The capacity of the world's forests to supply wood is not unlimited. Currently, around one third of the world's industrial timber comes from plantation forests yet these comprise only 5% of the total global forest area. By 2050 the proportion of timber coming from plantation forests is predicted to decline to less than one quarter of world demand (Figure 1).

The shortfall in timber supply from plantation forests will inevitably come from natural and semi-natural forests, many of which are already under severe pressure from human activity. However, expanding the area of plantation forests to meet a larger proportion of future global roundwood demand is likely to attract criticism from the environmental lobby where plantation forestry is often seen as having a negative impact on the environment in spite of environmental safeguards followed in many countries through certification programmes. Ironically, pressure from environmental groups in limiting the expansion of commercial plantation forests may result in further damage and loss of the world's remaining indigenous forests.

The UK imports most of its timber and timber products (80% in 2013 costing £6.7 billion) and is currently the world's third biggest importer of timber and timber products. Given its dependency on imported timber and with the possibility of a future global wood deficit, it is surprising that expansion of the commercial forest area is not

a priority. In reality, timber production will actually decline in Britain in the coming decades and this decline will be more pronounced in Scotland (Figure 2)—a consequence of a dramatic decline in new planting since the end of the 1980s (decreasing by 82% by 2010) and pressures for more planting of unproductive broadleaves, which now comprise a significant proportion of new planting (Figure 3).

To make things worse, the area of productive conifer forest in Scotland is actually shrinking by more than five and a half thousand hectares per year over the last five years; a consequence of windfarm developments (although why it is

demand in an uncertain future global market jeopardising an industry worth £1.7 billion GVA annually to the Scottish economy and employing over 40,000 people.

Conserving biodiversity

If we are genuinely concerned about conserving the biodiversity of what is left of the world's natural and semi-natural forests, then we must grow more of our own wood. Expanding the forest area would have many environmental benefits from sequestering carbon as part of our commitment to limiting the effects of climate change (Stern 2007) to slowing down water flow into river catchments reducing the risk of catastrophic flooding (FAO 2008). So, why are we not doing it? Studies have shown that there is plenty of suitable land available for forestry in Scotland that would have practically no effect on agricultural production or to the wider environment (Towers et al. 2006). The problem is the shortage of suitable land on the open market, tenanted land where tenants are less likely to invest in long-term projects such as forestry on land that they do not own, and lifestyle choices based around the ‘farming tradition’ or shooting estates where alternative land uses are not considered. Land availability in Scotland is also complicated by proposed changes to land reform (Land Reform Bill) that will technically give the right for communities to buy land that is deemed neglected or abandoned or where the land is considered to be preventing sustainable development within the community. What effect this legislation will have on afforestation is unclear. More land may become available for tree planting through by-outs or land owners may take the opportunity to plant land as a commercial investment that may negate the threat of the right to buy. Communities who buy land to plant trees are unlikely to do so at the scale and with the commercial imperative

Continued on p18



Figure 3. Average annual area of new planting and restocking in Scotland between 2009 and 2014 (Forestry Commission 2014)

seen fit to destroy a valuable sustainable commercial resource when so much of Scotland is bare land is beyond comprehension), removal of commercial trees from ancient woodland sites, and a grant system that favours planting of non-productive broadleaves. This is not a criticism of important environmental restoration projects, it is the lack of investment in expanding the commercial forest area to address growing timber

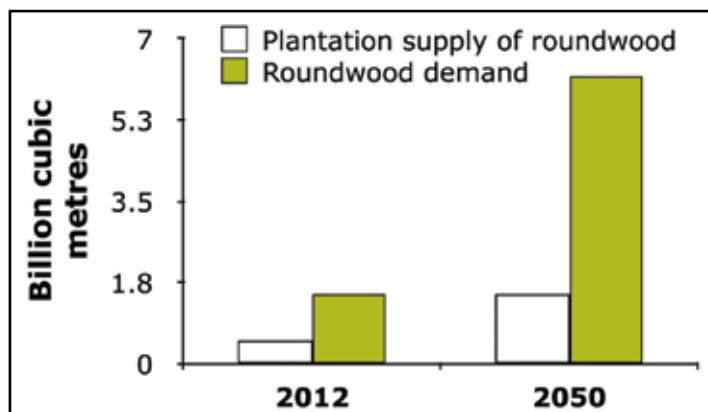


Figure 1. Global demand and plantation supply of roundwood in 2012 and 2050 (Indufor 2012)

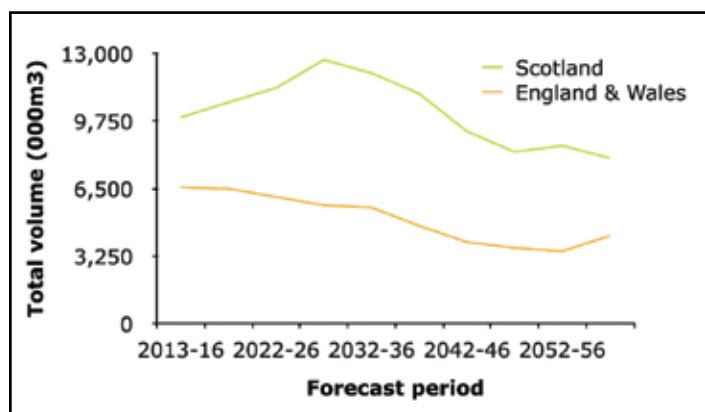


Figure 2. Fifty-year forecast of softwood availability in Scotland and in England & Wales (Forestry Commission 2014)

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Continued from p16

needed to significantly increase timber production, and these initiatives may only add to the already growing number of 'hobby' forests. The issue of land ownership will undoubtedly continue into the future; however, we should perhaps be deliberating less about who owns the land and more on getting land owners to plant trees on it. It is more important to the national economy how the land is used rather than who owns it even if we accept that there are issues with the current pattern of ownership that need to be resolved. Land owners will come and go, but forested land will continue to generate wealth and employment in perpetuity.

Incentives

A key obstacle to forest expansion is the long timescales involved in achieving returns from forestry investments, and for this reason financial incentives have been used to encourage tree planting; however, planting grants on their own will not encourage landowners to plant trees at any meaningful scale. A more compelling incentive is needed and the obvious option is through tax relief. The Schedule D tax system was used to support afforestation programmes particularly during the 1970s and 1980s; however, it ended in 1988 in part as a consequence of its perceived misuse by wealthy individuals to 'avoid' tax. What is often, and sometimes conveniently, overlooked is that tax relief financed a sizable part of the commercial forest resource in Scotland that today supports a vibrant processing sector and associated forest management services, and has generated wealth and created employment particularly in rural areas.

Bringing back tax relief to support tree planting will likely be greeted with scepticism particularly since 'tax avoidance' has become highly politicised. It is important to emphasise that people do not grow rich planting new areas of forest since the resulting investment will only begin to produce income after at least two decades with the real possibility that the landowner may never see any meaningful return. Creating new areas of forest is primarily an altruistic activity and tax relief for tree planting should be viewed entirely differently from the 'tax avoidance' currently depicted in the media that benefits companies and wealthy individuals with no obvious benefit to wider society.

Creating new areas of forest is primarily an altruistic activity

Forestry currently has certain benefits under Income Tax, Capital Gains Tax and Inheritance Tax; however, these taxes primarily benefit buyers and sellers of established forests, who may see forests as financial investments rather than sources of timber production, but do not incentivise the creation of new forests. Concern over using tax relief to support new planting goes back to the 1970s and 1980s when limited at-

tention was given to the environment. Today, there is a sophisticated system of checks to ensure the planting is of the highest environmental standards so that the mistakes of the past will not be repeated. A return of tax relief would also mean less reliance on public money.

Convincing politicians of the merits of forest expansion using tax relief will be difficult. Financial incentives that may be seen to favour the 'rich' or an activity that may be construed as a 'tax shelter' will undoubtedly become politicised in spite of the obvious longer-term benefits that will accrue to the nation in terms of balance of payments and employment. There is also the issue over who controls the various taxes. Promoting significant expansion of the commercial forest area is less likely to become a priority in England and so it is highly doubtful that UK-wide legislation would be passed primarily for the benefit of Scotland even if it could be argued that tax relief for forest expansion here would build on an already successful sustainable industry to create wealth and employment.

The devolution of forestry gave power to Holyrood over a substantial proportion of the forest area in Britain (18% c.f. 12% UK average) and so, on a per capita basis, the forestry industry is more important to the Scottish economy than elsewhere in the UK (7m m³ annual production in Scotland equating to 55% of UK softwood production). Unfortunately, the increasing importance of the commercial forestry sector to the Scottish economy has not changed the primary focus of Forestry Commission Scotland where recreation and the environment remain priority objectives and expansion of the commercial forest resource is largely seen as being "aspirational". Given its dominant position within the forestry sector, it is vital that Forestry Commission Scotland refocuses its objectives from predominately social and environmental issues to supporting the future economy, balance of payments, and employment through a major expansion of the commercial forest area. This is the time for our state-owned forest organisation to show leadership and vision for the future economic benefit of the nation.

✉ a.d.cameron@abdn.ac.uk

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Agroforestry: farming with trees

Mike Strachan argues for an integrated approach to forestry and farming



An integrated approach to land use is crucial if we want to continue to feed ourselves, reduce production costs, improve efficiency and work towards reducing the impact of climate change. From the time that man domesticated wild animals and developed hand tools, woodlands have been seen as an important resource for shelter, grazing and timber products. These three basic elements have held true for thousands of years, but this integrated approach has been lost in the past 60+ years. Why have we lost these skills and what can be done to address the balance? Do we really understand what agroforestry is?

Farming practice has advanced significantly in the last 60 years – bigger more efficient machinery, less labour, improved crops and livestock and greater productivity from the land, but at what cost? Field-side trees that provided an element of shelter and landscape features have been removed, prime arable land has standing water and flooding issues through an increase in compaction pans, and diffuse pollution from surface water run off continues to cause significant problems.

What is agroforestry?

Agroforestry can take many forms, and is perhaps a word not fully understood. Or is it possibly the wrong word? Agriculture and forestry can, and do mesh together, but this is not always appreciated, so perhaps a key to understanding the concept of agroforestry is to think about what are the benefits of trees on a farm.

- Many farms have shelterbelts. A shelterbelt provides shelter and warmth to livestock and crops. A shelterbelt strategically placed can also intercept surface water run-off, help to reduce diffuse pollution issues and protect land below it. A shelterbelt can help to reduce wind borne soil erosion. Timber from a shelterbelt can provide an income and a cheap fuel. A shelterbelt is a form of agroforestry. There is a benefit from it to the farmer.
- Individual trees in fields are often a sign of historic boundaries, others represent older livestock management methods and traditions. How many people have witnessed livestock under the shade of the tree on hot days, windy days, and cold days? Individual trees are providing benefits, they are a form of agroforestry.
- Hedges provide shelter and can also be used

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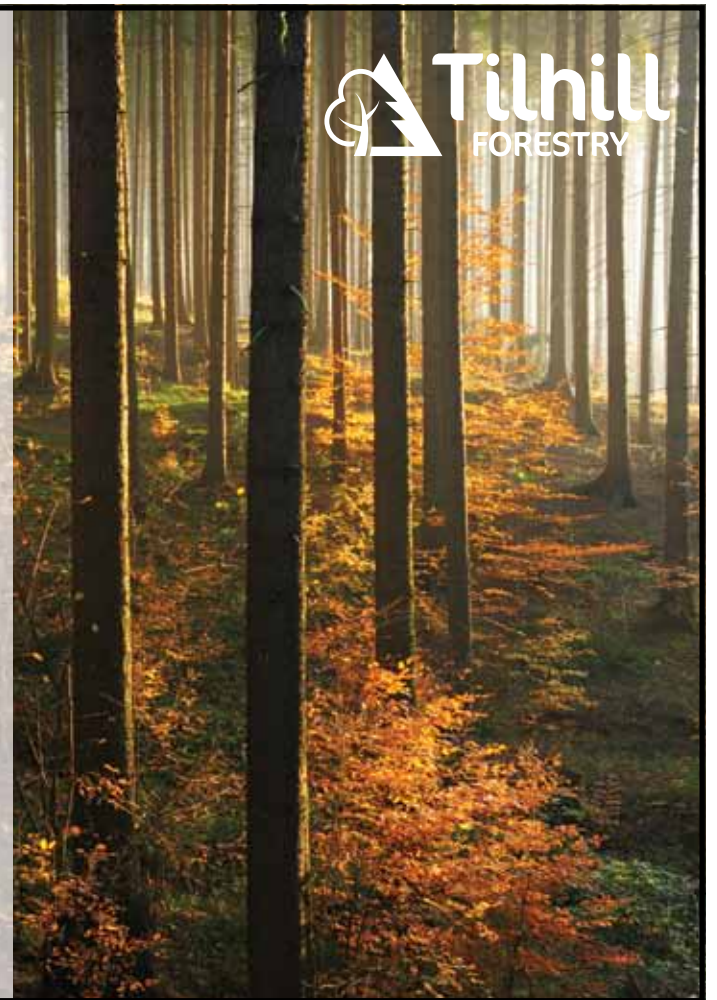
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WOODLAND MANAGEMENT

Continued from p18

to intercept surface water run off – they are a form of agroforestry

- Woodlands that are open for grazing are agroforestry. In 2013 there was over 21,000ha of these claimed by farmers in Scotland

Farming and forestry are often regarded as two separate land uses with competing priorities, and as such tension between these exist. However, there is probably more integration than we realise. It is the owner of the neighbouring forest who has the foxes causing the problems and it is the farmer who has let his stock into the woods. This tension will always be there but through an educated approach, this could be reduced. During the pre-consultation on the new Scottish Rural Development Programme, a recurring theme was that an integrated approach to land use would be of significant benefit, and to consider this further the Woodland Expansion Advisory Group (WEAG) was formed to consider optimal use of land. One recommendation to come from this was support for agroforestry measures, (in this instance this relates to wide-spaced trees in a field) but with a focus on grazing rather than arable crops.

Wider issues

Conducting a review of farming practice and the whole farm approach could identify opportunities for change, such as optimising productivity rather than maximising productivity. What are the true returns on running 1200 high-maintenance sheep compared to 800 hardier varieties? Hardier sheep enjoy the natural shelter provided by trees, and there is an opportunity to potentially increase woodland cover in appropriate places to increase this. High maintenance sheep require housing, supplementary feeds etc. It could therefore be argued that hardier sheep require less input and that when total costs are compared, the returns per head are higher for hardier sheep. There are also the significant woodland benefits as previously mentioned.

In many parts of Europe and less so in the UK, trees are often grown in combination with crops where 'alleys' of crops typically either 12m or 24m in width are managed with a 2-3m wide 'woodland' strip between the alleys. The trees provide shelter, shade, nutrients (from leaf fall) and a second crop to the land. Despite perceptions, the tree roots go very deep so competition for nutrients etc is negligible. The crops do most of their growth from early spring through to early summer when they effectively start to ripen rather than growing. From early summer through to late autumn, the trees achieve their maximum growth potential. What this means is that the area of land has an extended growing season supporting two crops. In Europe it has been shown that where a field of cereals has a value of 1/ha, through



the use of trees, the productivity of the land can increase to 1.6/ha. Early trials in the UK indicate at least a 1.3/ha increase.

Possible returns

A farmer outside Peterborough established linear orchards on prime agricultural (class 1) land. The fruit trees have a dual purpose. The prime purpose is to reduce wind-induced soil erosion that is a significant problem. The secondary purpose is to produce an alternative crop. Alleys for cereal production are 24m wide (two passes of a combine harvester) with a 3m 'tree zone'. This equates to a 5% loss of arable land on the areas established. The gross area of orchard is 1ha, with 1200 fruit trees established.

The fruit production from this site will be about 30 tonnes by about year seven that will be sold through the farm shop, converted into fruit juice, cider etc. Farm gate prices for apples in Scotland (for sale to cider producers) are about 30p/kg. Using this example, the gross return/ha is £9000, significantly more than wheat, but with the benefits of shelter and reduced soil loss.

The use of woodlands for shelter/grazing can reduce costs. By extending the outdoor grazing for cattle by one week will save approx £12/head of cattle/week in housing costs. On a cold day in an open field, if the core temperature of a cow drops by about two degrees it will cost about £5/day for supplementary feeding. Woodlands are generally warmer environments with a warmer micro climate.

The majority of farms are not on gas mains and rely on oil for heating. By installing a log boiler capable of taking 750mm long logs, sourced from their own woodlands, heating costs could reduce by about 75%.

Establishment

Shelterbelt and woodland establishment is generally straightforward and follows basic principles. Cultivate the site to ensure that trees planted go into a compaction-free environment, protect the trees using individual tree protection, or a livestock exclusion fence, keep the trees weed-free and prune side branches on selected trees for quality.

Establishing wide-spaced trees in fields that will provide future long-term shelter and shade and allow grazing from the day of planting does require a more robust approach. The current best advice is to use 50mm square weldmesh cut from a 900mm high roll to form cages that are 450mm in diameter. The cages need to be supported by two 75mm fence posts and the tree will also require either a rabbit spiral or vole guard.

The future?

The new Rural Development plan has a number of forestry options available, but the two key ones that will be of interest for farmers will be **Small or Farm woodland**: this will be available for those wanting to establish woodlands that are a minimum of 0.25ha in size with a maximum gross accumulated area of 10ha/business. This option would allow for the creation of well designed shelterbelts.

Agroforestry: this will allow for open woodlands to be established with either 200 trees /ha (approximately 7m x7m spacing) or 400 trees/ha (approximately 5m x 5m spacing).

However if you want to plant more than 10ha, then there are other options available

If you want to increase the productivity of your land and want more land to farm, don't rush out and buy land, think in three dimensions and look up, not sideways.

Mike Strachan is the Policy and Development Officer for the Forestry Commission in Perth and Argyll Conservancy. He is also the current Chair of the UK wide Farm Woodland Forum and the Scotland representative on the European Agroforestry Federation.



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The forestry sector and the winter blues

Timber Auctions market report by Oliver Combe



There is strong evidence from Scandinavia and North America that the length of daylight hours, weather conditions and other environmental factors can lead to a mood disorder which is known as SAD in humans: "Seasonal affective disorder (SAD), also known as winter depression, winter blues, or seasonal depression, is a mood disorder subset in which people who have normal mental health throughout most of the year experience depressive symptoms in the winter".

After 20 years I have now come to the conclusion that the timber industry also suffers from a mood disorder during winter.

Seasonal affective demand syndrome (SADS), also known as winter slowdown, winter market slump or seasonal slowdown is a market disorder in which forestry businesses that have normal trading activity throughout most of the year experience depressive symptoms in the winter.

Forestry businesses affected by SADS typically exhibit lack of energy, difficulty in confirming raw material requirements, are slow to commit to purchase prices, withdraw from communications and in extreme cases exhibit pessimistic feelings of hopelessness during the winter months.

The winter of 2015 /16 has seen an especially high incidence of severe SADS in Scotland and the North of England amongst larger scale processors, although businesses of all scales are

showing unusually strong symptoms.

A consultation with patients has been carried out to see why 2015/16 winter has been such a bad year for SADS and a number of common themes have emerged (see panel below).

These themes have meant that after the market highs of 2014 we have seen a steady decline in the market in winter 2015 a brief rally in spring 2015, and then decline again in winter 2016.

A common pattern of reduced prices and levels of demand during winter, a brief flurry of activity in the spring and then a period of stability in the summer is emerging.

The slowdown in the winter of 2015/16 has been particularly severe, especially in Scotland and has had a strong impact on the industry.

The net result of the slowdown has been adjustment to operations right through the supply chain.

Processors have to:

- 1 Reduce their raw material prices to allow them to counter the reduced prices of imported finished products whilst maintain adequate supplies.
- 2 Reduce their activity levels to reflect the level of the market.
- 3 Work harder to chase and win orders.
- 4 Manage stock levels very carefully.

The supply chain has to:

- 1 Learn to work with lower prices.
- 2 Scale back activity to match lower levels of demand whilst retaining latent capacity of men and machines.
- 3 Work hard to match stock with customer requirement.
- 4 Manage production carefully to match customer requirements.

The growers have to:

- 1 Adapt to lower price levels.
- 2 Identify which operations have become unviable at the new price levels.
- 3 Adjust work programmes and operational plans to suit the new levels.
- 4 Be aware of opportunities and move quickly to exploit them.
- 5 Maintain contacts with all market sectors.

On a positive note we should now be through the worst of the winter slowdown and there are positive signs for the forestry industry:

- The pound is falling against the euro
- The days are getting longer
- The land is drying out slowly!
- Easter is early this year
- The UK economy is performing relatively well
- Demand for pallet wood has held up well
- Demand for small roundwood remain strong
- The firewood market remains strong.

The need to run your woodlands on a commercial basis remains just as strong as ever and active management through thinning, felling and restocking a clear statement of commercial intent.

Whilst the market conditions are currently challenging, the prices particularly for lower grade hardwood and softwood material are still good. New markets and increased capacity for this material continues to emerge and offer an excellent opportunity for owners to bring woodlands into management.

If you wish to discuss parcels of timber you would like to discuss or for further information please contact Oliver Combe on 07771 958975, oliver.combe@timberauctions.co.uk for free independent marketing advice.

WHAT'S FUELLING SADS

Global themes

The strong pound has made imported timber relatively cheaper than domestically produced timber and has put serious downward pressure on prices.

Slowing world demand has meant processors have high stocks and have been looking to dump material into markets with any signs of positive activity.

Contraction of traditional markets due to economic slowdown and domestic conflict has pushed more volume towards the UK.

Domestic themes

Austerity measures have reduced domestic demand from infrastructure and civil engineering projects.

Faltering house building – new housing starts to June 2015 were estimated at 33, 280 a 15 % reduction on the figure for March 2015 quarter of 38,860.

Mild winter weather has reduced the demand for domestic firewood leading to high stocks.

Low oil prices have encouraged to homeowners to use their central heating more and have meant that wood is no longer seen as a cheap fuel.

Very wet weather and flooding has reduced demand from the fencing and construction sectors.



A faltering in new house starts is contributing to SADS

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The role will involve working closely with associated A.W. Jenkinson group interests with the opportunity to progress into the wider management of our progressive business. Salary will be commensurate with experience and ability. A full UK driving licence will be required and a company car will be provided.

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Additional to the above position, we are also seeking to strengthen our wood purchasing department through the recruitment of a suitably qualified and experienced individual wishing to develop a career in all areas of wood purchasing. The ideal candidate will be self-motivated, have excellent communication and interpersonal skills with a solid grounding and understanding of the forest and wood products industry.

The role will involve working closely with senior management in support of all areas of woodfibre and round timber procurement. The Company offers excellent prospects for career development for the right candidate. Salary will be commensurate with experience and ability and a company vehicle will be provided.

Applications for both positions should arrive no later than 19th February 2016 in writing or by email enclosing a copy of your CV and stating which position you are applying for. Please address to: Richard Palmer, Commercial Director, A.W. Jenkinson Forest Products, Clifton Moor, Clifton, Penrith, CA10 2EY. Email: richard.palmer@awjenkinson.co.uk

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Uncertainty and volatility set to continue

Timber market report
by **Peter Whitfield**
Timber Operations
Director Tihill Forestry



To quote George Osborne from his recent statement: "Last year was the worst for global growth since the crash and this year opens with a dangerous cocktail of new threats". He cites slower growth in China, the recessions in Brazil and Russia, turbulence in the Middle East and the drop in commodity prices that has seen a two-thirds drop in the cost of crude oil, as potential hazards to the UK. You could add interest rates to this mix, but the threat of a rise is going to be tempered by the performance of the economy.

A further factor for the UK has to be the fact that our growth is almost entirely dependent on consumers and UK consumers are inclined to spend rather than save. One cannot believe there is much substance to an economy that is based on consumer spending.

The likelihood of a Brexit is also being factored into exchange rate and economic forecasts, and again depending where you look the odds are shortening or lengthening.

Early January's economic turmoil led to a significant weakening of Sterling against the Euro and that is always the silver lining for the timber industry when there is an economic downturn forecast. We need to see the exchange rate fall below €1.30 to the £ for timber imports to be-

Sawmills are generally carrying high finished goods stocks and it is not rushing out of the yards as the new year commences.

come less competitive.

Reducing oil prices continue to have a positive impact on operating costs and with crude oil prices in the low \$30/barrel level and looking to stay there for a while this is one element of good news.

The World Bank said in early January that it had revised its forecast for the global economy to expand by 2.9% this year. Just last summer, it was predicting 3.3%.

So however you look at it we certainly have a cocktail being shaken up; whether it is toxic for the timber industry or not is hard to tell, but what seems clear is that we will continue to live in uncertain times and volatility in the market will continue and that is never a good thing for us.

We have come through some of the toughest 12 months of trading that we have seen for some time and it is unclear that there is going to be any significant uplift looking ahead into 2016. Carcassing demand is still flat for domestic processors whilst fencing demand seems to be trending into a more usual uplift in spring demand. What is evident is that sawmills are generally carrying high finished goods stocks and it is not rushing out of the yards as the new year commences.

Demand for small roundwood in board, paper and biomass has remained constant and indeed has underpinned most of the continued buoyancy in the standing sales market. As mentioned previously this is driven by different sets of drivers to simply exchange rates as is the case for carcassing.

On a different note for the second year in a row, the skills deficit topped the list of future threats firms perceive to the UK's competitiveness in CBI survey. It goes on to highlight that further restrictions on skilled migration would hamper business activity, with 29% of companies affected reporting they would fail to meet customer demand if they were unable to get the right person, in the right place at the right time. We know this has been a major issue facing the forestry industry for some time and downturns, as we are experiencing now, lead to further loss of skilled operators from forestry to other areas that are more buoyant such as construction and civils projects. Once lost we know it is hard to get them back. So the outlook for 2016 remains very uncertain and whatever lies ahead is sure to be challenging, but then we foresters all love a challenge!

FC calls for industry to take part in surveys

Confor is backing a call for businesses across the forest and timber industries to take part in three annual statistical surveys by the Forestry Commission.

The surveys are: the Private Sector Softwood Removals Survey, the Sawmill Survey, and the Survey of Round Fencing Manufacturers. The information from them, together with data from other sources, is used to produce statistics to monitor the state of the timber industry and the balance between supply and demand.

The surveys, which can be completed online via the Forestry Commission website, are conducted with the support of the sector-wide Expert Group on Timber and Trade Statistics.

Stuart Goodall, Chief Executive of Confor,

also strongly encouraged businesses to complete the surveys. "Our forestry and timber industries are a tremendous success story, not just in business terms, but also for the wider social and environmental benefits they provide.

"That success is partly underpinned by data gathering and analysis so that policy and investment decisions can be based on the most accurate and up-to-date information possible. Therefore the information obtained in these surveys is an essential ingredient for ensuring that business and government can work together to continue to maximise that success into the future."

Further information, and links to the online survey questionnaires, are available at www.forestry.gov.uk/timbersurveys



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Scaling up by scaling down

Duncan Ireland on the importance of choosing appropriate machinery for small woodland management

Small woodlands throughout the UK with difficult access and terrain are frequently under-managed. Bringing these individually small but numerous woodlands into management would provide a host of economic, environmental and social benefits. Forest Research has been tasked by Forestry Commission England and FC Scotland to provide targeted technical support to help achieve this aim.

Increased demand for timber products over recent years has raised prices to improve the economics of harvesting these woodlands and this is set to continue. However, increasing the amount of small scale woodland under management will only be possible by expanding the capacity of small and medium scale harvesting resources.

In addition to published reports to help selection of machinery appropriate for harvesting in small, frequently undermanaged woodland, the Forestry Commission will be holding demonstrations of small and medium scale harvesting and extraction systems in northern England and central Scotland in early 2016.

Potential financial support

New EU Rural Development Programme (RDP) measures from 2015 include capital support to forestry businesses to improve their harvesting capabilities by encouraging investment in appropriately scaled machinery. This is available in both England and Scotland, through different schemes with similar aims but with some differences in rules and eligibilities.

In England the Forestry Commission has an aspirational aim to strengthen the contracting sector to harvest a further 500,000 – 750,000 tonnes of predominantly broadleaved timber from private woodlands in the years to 2020.

The new RDP funds here are aimed at forestry harvesting contractors working in England, wishing to upgrade or re-equip in order to develop and expand their capability for harvesting more difficult, predominantly smaller broadleaved woodlands. These new measures are offered via the Farming and Forestry Productivity Scheme and Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Fund.

In Scotland the Harvesting and Processing option of the Forestry Grant Scheme under the new SRDP can also offer financial support for investment in small and mini scale purpose built forestry machinery. The aim is to help bring woodlands into management and to promote the economic and sustainable production of timber and timber products through primary processing. *(There is a maximum scale to both these operations for it to fit within the funding eligibility criteria.)*

Selecting the right equipment

For the last twenty years the Forestry Commission's Technical Development branch has been promoting the use of appropriate types and scales of machinery, linked to site and crop conditions. So while this is not a new message, improved markets and finances to bring neglected woodlands into management make this increasingly relevant.

Matching the scale of machinery to site and crop has benefits for the economics of harvesting and minimises the impact of harvesting operations, preventing ground disturbance and potential for damage to the remaining crop trees. Reducing harvesting impact from early thinning can help avoid the access problems that can arise in the future, if ground damage is done.

Large scale forest machinery has developed in sophistication to maximise outputs, reduce costs and improve operator ergonomics. Yet, if the scale of the machine is inappropriate, the result can be damaging to both the site and the remaining trees following extraction.

Size classes for forestry harvesting machinery can be broadly classified by the weight of the prime mover into: large scale >12 tonnes, medium scale (6-12 tonne), small scale (3-6 tonne) and mini scale <2.5 tonne. These classes, in turn, tend to reflect load carrying capacity. Site and crop constraints limit machine suitability, either because conditions are beyond the operational capacity of the machine or because using the machine would be inefficient, uneconomic, damaging to the environment or dangerous to operators. Factors which limit the use of forestry harvesting machinery include:

- Slope
- Ground roughness
- Ground condition

- Access network and distance
- Tree size and produce size.

Further information can be found in *Forestry Commission Job Report: Small and medium harvesting and extraction machinery: a guide to site suitability*.

In some circumstances specific silvicultural systems can affect form and stocking density of the standing trees to the extent that they influence machine suitability. Examples include mature coppice and naturally regenerated, unspaced crops where close tree spacing restricts mechanised harvester head access to the stems to be felled. Buttressing, stem sweep and branch coarseness can all limit the suitability of machine options for harvesting, and in some cases motor manual felling may be the only economic option.

Choosing the appropriate scale of machinery for forest operations is a significant factor in achieving management objectives. Small scale machinery is either purpose-built or adapted agricultural machinery, and in both cases the reduction in size and perhaps sophistication can bring operational compromises.

Correctly adapted agricultural machinery can be well suited to managing small woodlands, as well as being economically attractive. However, care must be taken to safeguard operator ergonomics and safety and consider the durability of equipment which is adapted for forestry use. Initial placement cost (i.e. the cost of transporting machinery to site) has a considerable effect on overall economics. If small scale machinery can be transported to site on a trailer, without the need for a low loader then the savings can make a significant difference to the cost of small scale harvesting.

Continued on p28



Selecting appropriate machinery scale for the operation results in minimal impact to the site and a job well done

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MACHINERY FOCUS

Continued from p26

To sustain a business, the running costs of all scales of machinery have to be related to work programmes and anticipated unit costs based on likely productivity and value of timber produced. Acceptable operational costs are also influenced by management objectives. Harvesting economics is a complex issue and all costs including haulage, access and site amelioration have to be considered.

Health and Safety

All machinery used in forestry must have safety features appropriate to the work undertaken. Examples are: Roll Over Protection Structures (ROPS) to protect the operator from machine roll over, Falling Object Protection Structures (FOPS) to protect them from falling and penetrating objects and Operator Protection Structures (OPS) from events such as chain-shot. Additional guarding will often be required around the engine compartment, belly plate and radiator, plus deflector bars around the cab and mesh or other window protection.

A number of ergonomic factors need to be considered such as access and egress from the cab, plus the environment of the cab including noise and vibration levels. The layout of the controls for the unit and any ancillary-attached equipment (loader) should be carefully considered and provision made for adequate lighting around the machine for working in winter conditions and under the tree canopy. Modifications to machinery should only be carried out with the approval of the manufacturer and by appropriately qualified specialists.

Safe use of small scale machinery and appropriate training is essential. Some small scale machinery requires additional skills and physical effort from the operator e.g. chocking winch systems and assisting with loading produce. Careful use of manual handling techniques and tools is important to safeguard ergonomics and operator health. Further information can be found in *Forestry Commission Job Report 131: Small and mini harvesting and extraction machinery: a guide to their selection for safety*.

Further published information sources

TDJR131: *Small and mini harvesting and extraction machinery: a guide to their selection for safety*

TDJR150: *Small and medium harvesting and extraction machinery: a guide to site suitability*

Demonstration events

Forestry Commission England and Forestry Commission Scotland with FR's Technical Development branch will be organising field demonstrations of small and medium scale equipment at Falkland Estate, Fife on 25 and 26 February and Barningham Estate, Richmond on 17 and 18 March 2016. These events are aimed at those wishing to know more about selecting appropriate machinery for small scale harvesting. Further details are given on the events page of the Forest Research website:

www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/events

Drones: the next generation

Due to their size, weight, agility and functionality, drones (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) are being put to great use in many areas of our lives. As this technology becomes more advanced and costs fall, day-to-day uses of UAVs are developing rapidly.

They are already being operated by the military for surveillance in dangerous war zones. Estate agents use them to plot boundaries and to provide aerial images of high-end properties for prospective buyers, scientists use them for atmospheric research, whilst sporting events, especially skiing and base jumping, find the UAV appropriate to capture moments at angles that have been traditionally inaccessible for film production. They are also being used in feature films, producing high-definition shots in locations where using traditional methods and equipment would be difficult.

All these benefits are being recognised in the field of forestry and agriculture. Drones take aerial pictures using true colour, multispectral and thermal images to monitor and map areas. This produces data with the capability to improve yield and to plan interventions in problem areas.

Progress is moving swiftly and second generation drones are being investigated at the National Centre for Precision Farming at Harper Adams University. These drones will be more than just capable of taking images, they will, "... find solutions that will improve people's lives and provide positive technological solutions to modern day issues" according to the 2015 UAE Drones for Good Award.

Lauren Fletcher, a former NASA engineer, is CEO of BioCarbon Engineering. He and his team are using UAVs to plant a billion trees a year. Michael Godfrey, an agricultural science student at the University of Queensland, in Australia, has developed a flying vehicle that spreads a beneficial bug that is able to kill other



unwanted bugs.

Suddenly, drones have wider, more commercial uses. The ability of drones to target smaller areas means that they are able to re-seed where the crop has failed to emerge. They can also be used apply spot applications of chemicals and fertilisers. Being able to target precise areas, especially when the ground is inaccessible or non-viable, means increased yield and control.

This technology could be easily transferred to wooded areas enabling monitoring and early warning systems for pests and diseases using high-definition images. As in agriculture, they can be used for spot applications and re-seeding. Used sensitively, wildlife studies can be carried out with unobtrusive drones, on animals in their own habitat in frequently inaccessible areas.

It's all possible and the second generation of drones are being explored now at the National Centre for Precision Farming, where in collaboration with BASIS Registration, Harper Adams run courses in UAV use.

Forestry at Harper Adams – a growing sector

Harper Adams University has widespread recognition as the UK centre of excellence for teaching and learning in agriculture, agricultural engineering, agri-food and land management sectors and forestry is now well represented at postgraduate level.

The Forestry Management programmes operate at Postgraduate Certificate, Diploma and Masters level and are particularly relevant to students who need a part-time, modular block pattern to their forestry studies. Week-long 'immersion' modules give students the opportunity to plan and undertake their forestry learning alongside work and other commitments. Forestry Programme Co-ordinator Jim Waterson MICFor MRICS says: "Our forestry programmes are proving successful and attractive to people with busy lives needing to

fit their forestry development alongside their day job. This was a key decision in the design of the programmes and responded to comment and opinion received at the planning stages.

"We have also been highly effective in our mission to involve senior forestry industry personnel in our teaching at postgraduate level – this gives our students access to experienced forestry professionals who operate at the highest level in modern forest management and a great insight into the realities of real-world forest and woodland management."

For more information about postgraduate forestry courses at Harper Adams see: <http://harper-adams.ac.uk/postgraduate/201045/forestry-management>

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Smaller scale forest machinery

Mike Strachan looks at machinery operations on a smaller scale



The 1980s saw a significant change in not just the type of machinery being used in forests, but in forest management practices. During the late 1970s purpose-built forwarders based initially on a dump truck chassis started to appear and replace the County skidders, Highland Bears etc that were common place in woodlands. A number of years later in the 1980s closure of the deep mining industry helped to seal the demise of many small-scale sawmilling ventures, small-scale timber operations and also small-scale broadleaf woodland management. Attitudes have changed and there is now an increased interest in managing small woodlands, but with improved health and safety and associated regulations – are there suitable machinery options that will not require a second and third mortgage?

Before deciding on what machine is best for

you, it is worth considering what else the machine can do for you? For example a purpose built machine has one sole purpose and could prove both expensive and restrictive if required to multi task. If you only have a small volume of timber to manage every year, is it worth the investment? Small sized tractors are available that also have three-point linkage and PTO and so are more versatile. But are they strong enough to cope with rough woodland terrain, and do they comply with best practice on both rolling and falling protection for the operator.

There are people that have acted on impulse when buying machinery and regretted it. It has not been versatile enough, its capabilities and outputs were not as good as the promotion suggested and it has fallen below the standards required by the forestry industry. Seek advice before acting, go and view machines in operation and attend demonstration events to gather information.

This article is not an endorsement of any particular machine and neither is it an endorsement of its compliance with best practice or health and safety requirements.

Under £15,000

Within this price range there are a number of options that could be of interest.

Scottrac easy loading mini forwarder (below) is a pedestrian controlled vehicle capable of replicating the terrain abilities of a horse.

RIKO produce alpine tractors starting within this price range, but bear in mind the operator safety for both falling and roll over protection. They do manufacture a small Forestry adapted version, that might be worth considering as it can be used for other work on the property. There are other Manufacturers to consider.

ATC adapted self loading trailers are an option, but this can put a serious strain on the ATC.

There are a number of manufacturers of three-point linkage winches starting from about £1500. They also make a and sell a range of self loading trailers starting from about £6000.

Second hand tractors? Need to make sure that they have belly plate protection, protected wheel valves, multi-ply tyres etc.



Under £50,000

A basic Valtra tractor starts at under £50,000. The advantage of a Valtra tractor over other makes, is that the drivers seat and controls are reversible as standard. This allows for ease of operating self loading trailers from within the cab etc. This is an option with other makes, but could take the cost over £50,000.

Second hand County tractors etc are still available as are other second hand machines. They will have had a hard life and remember that spare parts are becoming harder to get.

Larger capacity (8 tonne +) self-loading trailers start at over £15,000 so fall into this category. However it is worth bearing in mind, that the bigger the carrying capacity, the more HP from the tractor is required, the more the weight increases and there could be a need for secondary hydraulic oil tanks to ensure sufficient oil supply.

Small scale purpose built mini forestry machinery such as the OXTRAC and ALLSTOR are available but be careful to ensure full falling and rollover protection. It is also worth remembering that these might not be road legal.

Grant support

Forestry Commission Scotland can provide support for harvesting and processing machinery and this is capped at a maximum of 40% of cost with a maximum grant of £35,000. The grant will only support purchase and not lease or hire purchase agreements.

The grant is based on actual costs and quotes should be submitted with the application form. The grant WILL NOT support the purchase of wood chippers, tractors or second hand equipment. Nor will it support replacement of equipment on a like for like basis.

There are a number of other conditions so if you are interested go to:

www.ruralpayments.org/allschemes/forestrygrantscheme/harvestingandprocessinggrant

Mike Strachan is the Policy and Development Officer for the Forestry Commission in Perth and Argyll Conservancy. He is also the current Chair of the UK wide Farm Woodland Forum and the Scotland representative on the European Agroforestry Federation.

£50,000 +

If you are considering Tractor and Trailer + winch combinations then start planning for about £75,000. Bear in mind that you will also need to have a significant work programme to ensure that the returns from output ensure that a financial return on investment can be achieved.

Small scale purpose built forwarders such as the VIMEK start at about the £70,000 mark, but remember they only have one purpose and will need a dedicated work programme. Their carrying capacity starts at about 5 tonne. Large purpose built machines capable of 18 tonne + capacity are available but these are really for the serious commercial contractors. *Below: Novotny forwarder*



ENGLAND

Caroline Harrison, Confor national manager for England
01837 82222/07500 927482
caroline.harrison@confor.org.uk



£1m fund for new planting is open - get your applications in or lose it

Confor has welcomed the launch of a £1m fund by the UK Government to support forestry planting in England. The fund was confirmed in a letter from Chancellor George Osborne to Confor Chief Executive Stuart Goodall last month - and publicly announced by Forestry Minister Rory Stewart at Confor's Westminster conference three weeks ago.

The money is there to fund the survey work and preparation work that goes into producing a good productive woodland scheme. There is up to £30k available per scheme. If you are considering a scheme or even thinking about it in the next couple of years please make an application. We need projects in the pipeline to prove that there is interest from investors in new productive woodland. It is vital for the industry that we take advantage of this opportunity before the deadline on the 15th February.

Celebrating 23 lifetime woodsmen and foresters

2015 was an extraordinary year of celebrations around the country as 23 of some of the UK's most experienced woodsmen and foresters received Royal Forestry Society (RFS) awards for careers which have totalled well over 830 years. They include three people who have received awards for more than 50-years' service: David Peacock, from Settrington Estate, Yorkshire; Philip Read from Sotterley Estate, East Anglia and Brian Reece, Lydney Park Estate, Gloucestershire.

Others to have received awards were, 40-years: Stephen Bridges, Hertfordshire County Council; Tim Day, Bathurst Estate, Gloucestershire; Bill Dowson, Shotley Hall, County Durham; Brian Heath, Cowdray Estate, West Sussex; Alan Kavangh, Hutton Ambo Estate, Yorkshire; James Mitchell, Parham

Estate, West Sussex; David Mortimer, Dodworth Estate, Yorkshire; Jeffery Nicholls, Curwen Woods Estate, Lancashire

30-years: Simon Apps, Cowdray Estate, West Sussex; Steven Harrison, Lydney Park Estate, Gloucestershire; Kerry Hill, Cowdray Estate, West Sussex; Donald Macdonald, Cowdray Estate, West Sussex; Stuart McDonough, Healey Estate, Northumberland; Richard Pepper, Cowdray Estate, West Sussex; George Ruddick, Welbeck Estate, Nottinghamshire; George Wargent, Alscote Estate, Warwickshire; Mark Worthington, Welbeck Estate, Nottinghamshire.

Further details on all those who received awards can be found at www.rfs.org.uk/awards/rfs-long-service-award/2015/

Woodland Social Enterprises

Expressions of interest are now being accepted for Making Local Woods Work, an exciting pilot project supporting woodland-based social enterprises across the UK. The project is being led by the Plunkett Foundation in partnership with a number of organisations, including the Forestry Commission.

The project will work with 50 woodland social enterprises across the UK over the next three years. It will provide them with a range of support tailored to their individual needs; all 50 will receive four days of specialist support, and there will be some additional support available for 30 of these, which is likely to take the form of a further 12 days of support per group. In addition, a series of training and networking events will be organised to help anyone interested in woodland social enterprise (not just the 50 pilots) to achieve their ambitions.

The project is seeking applications from groups who are looking to undertake new activity that will help to bring a range of benefits for local people, bring woodlands into active management and generate trading income. For more information on the project, to check deadlines and to fill out the online expression of interest form, go to www.plunkett.co.uk/woodlands

WALES

Martin Bishop, Confor national manager for Wales
tel 07876 029482
martin.bishop@confor.org.uk



Timber marketing Strategy

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) conducted a public consultation on their proposed timber marketing strategy (TMS) for 2016-21. We have been advised in advance on some of the more important outcomes. These have yet to be finalised and may be subject to change.

The proposal thus far is to reduce the number of sites that are harvested at a loss, in particular those sites where the return on the timber sales does not cover the costs incurred, such as harvesting, civil engineering and the cost of restocking the site afterwards.

Initially NRW considered simply reducing the level of annual timber production for the period of the 2016-21 Plan to around 700,000m³OBS/year which represented the volume from "economic sites". After discussions with Confor and others NRW now intend to continue to offer most of the volume envisaged in the published forecast to the market for at least the 2016-17 period but with a proviso that, if the offers for the products do not at least cover the costs of harvesting, NRW will reserve the right to not award the timber contract.

NRW say "their intention for the period 2016-21 is to probably change the approach in the TMS so that they review the approach and rationale for open market sales and Long Term Contracts so that the production levels follow the current market demand and ability to pay."

The changing approach will be explained fully within an Interim Marketing Statement 2016/17 published in March 2016, with a full 5 year TMS 2016 - 2021 published in 2017 which will seek to balance the needs for flexibility to accommodate the outcomes of the sector and a very challenging financial settlement for departments. Details and full report are available from the Confor website: http://confor.org.uk/Upload/Documents/24_NRWmarketingplanupdatejan2016.pdf

Minister visits Kronospan

Minister for Natural Resources Carl Sargeant along with Matthew Quinn, Director for Environment and Sustainable Development and Bill Macdonald head of Land Use & Sustainable Forest Management visited Kronospan at Chirk in January. The minister and his advisors were shown around the site, looking at the MDF and sawmill lines and the log yard and were given an insight into wood processing at a very large scale. A few members of the Confor Wales committee and executives from Kronospan then had an opportunity to speak with the minister to discuss industry concerns over the low level of commercial planting in Wales in recent years.

The minister emphasised his support for the whole forestry sector including the commercial management of woodlands.

Continued on p35



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Benjamin Crisford, East Sussex
BSW Timber Ltd, Berwickshire
Dominic North, Cumbria
Duchy Sawmills, Cornwall
Jason Smith, Manchester
Joe Oliver, Cumbria
Neil Dooley, Cumbria
Timothy Van-Rees, Powys
Tommy Lee, Essex

KEY EVENTS in 2016

Confor March conference
Forestry and timber: Scotland's hidden success story 22 March 2016
National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh

ICF National Conference 2016
The Timber Supply Chain – Dynamics and Opportunities 27 April 2016, Newcastle

APF 2016
15 September 2016, Ragley Estate
www.apfexhibition.co.uk

Grown in Britain week 2016
10-16 October 2016, various locations
www.growninbritain.org

More info on www.confor.org (news and events)

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COUNTRY NEWS

Continued from p32

Farming Connect courses – first online application window for 2016 opens

Farmers and foresters can now apply online for up to 80% funding for accredited training courses available through Farming Connect's new lifelong learning and development programme. The new programme is being delivered by Lantra Wales on behalf of Farming Connect. Director of Lantra Wales, Kevin Thomas, said he was optimistic that the new programme will transform both the personal and business skills of many farmers and foresters in Wales. More details are available on the 'Skills and Mentoring' pages of the Farming Connect website: <http://businesswales.gov.wales/farmingconnect/>

Royal Welsh Show July 18-21 2016

Details and application forms for both the RWS Woodlands competition and the RWS chainsaw felling competition will be out soon, anyone can enter so please get involved. Judges for the woodland competition are also required.

Glastir Woodlands Update

Welsh Government and NRW are working in partnership to deliver Glastir Woodlands. The teams are now in place and will liaise with stakeholders to deliver the Welsh Government Woodland Programme.

Glastir Woodland Creation: 90 Expressions of Interest were received, 84 customers have been selected to submit a GWC Plan. 51 plans for 161ha of planting have been received, 29 plans have been approved and first contracts are now being offered. WG are issuing claim forms to customers on confirmation of an approved plan.

Glastir Woodland Restoration: 67 Expressions of Interest were received. 59 customers were selected to submit a Forest Management Plan for 396ha of restocking.

No firm details set yet but WG assure us that the Glastir woodlands programme that has been launched will continue through 2017.

Lle Glastir Woodland Creation Opportunities map update: The Lle map web link is: <http://lle.gov.wales/apps/woodlandopportunities>.

Some members report difficulty with this so please let us know if you do so we can tell WG.

SCOTLAND

Jamie Farquhar, Confor national manager for Scotland
07817 374906
jamie.farquhar@confor.org.uk



£1bn GVA and 25,000 jobs

These are the headlines of what the forest industry is worth to the Scottish economy, as the report commissioned by Forestry Commission revealed before Christmas in an update to their 2008 figures. The report uses data from 2012/13 and can be downloaded at <http://scotland.forestry.gov.uk/supporting-forest-industries/economic-contribution-report>

Forest Infrastructure and Harvesting & Processing grants

The closing date for the next round of these options of FGS is 31 March 2016. For 2017 onwards the closing date for annual rounds will be 31 January. See details at www.ruralpayments.org/publicsite/futures/topics/all-schemes/forestry-grant-scheme/

SRDP

We had expressed concern that the November clearing round for FGS applications had been cancelled, and also that a seemingly onerous

new condition was appearing in the letters of comfort issued to those who were successful in the October round. FCS have subsequently amended the wording. That there has been an IT "technical issue" which has precluded any FGS (Forestry Grant Scheme) applications during the first half of January has not helped matters. And for an as yet unidentified reason, FCS have recently stopped issuing letters of comfort, which is holding up work on some schemes.

Restock (restructuring) grant under FGS

When the FGS guidance on Restructuring Regeneration grant was launched onto the website, the eligibility criteria were at odds to the agreement the Customer Reps group had agreed. There had been a lot of discussion over the EU regulations, the rate of grant, the grant pot size, and how best it could be spent. Alas the published website information was very different, difficult to understand and open to varying interpretations within the Private sector as well as FCS. Tim Liddon took this up with FCS supported by some constructive ideas, and as a result the guidance has been simplified. It is still not ideal but now it is the 20 year restock plan that triggers eligibility not the 10 year approval. However each claim needs to have minimum of 10% species diversity which may or may not be appropriate for the particular site. You can amalgamate up to three years felling to create the claim and achieve compliance but in an uncertain and changing market this too could be challenging and risky. It is likely that in many cases restructuring grant will be left on the table. But look on the bright side - there is a restock grant in Scotland that some people will be able to take advantage of.

Forest Enterprise Scotland restructuring

We are grateful to Simon Hodge, Chief Executive of FES for the following information.

The restructuring taking place now in FES and evolving over the next couple of months is built around three delivery functions – Land Management, Estate Development and Community & Visitor Services, supported by Business Services and Corporate Support.

Land Management - Trevor Owen has been

Continued on p37

Draft Budget for Forestry 2016/17

(Figures in £m)

Level 3	2015-16 Budget	2016-17 Draft Budget
Woodland Grants	36.0	36.0
Policy, Regulation, Admin	5.1	4.8
Programme Costs	21.0	18.5
Forest Enterprise	21.7	21.7
Depreciation	0.1	0.1
EU Income	(19.8)	(19.8)
Total	64.1	61.3

The good news is that woodland grants remain at the previous level of £36m, of which about £30m is predicated on new woodland creation. FCS's Forestry Development Programme has been cut by some £2.3m, and we are in discussion with FCS to understand exactly what this will mean.

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COUNTRY NEWS

>> Continued from p35

appointed to the new position of Head of Land Management. Trevor comes to Scotland from Natural Resources Wales, and was previously Director of FC Wales. District Managers and Area Operations Managers are expected to be part of his team, as will Jo Ellis - Head of Planning and Environment; Mike Green - Harvesting and Marketing Officer; Morvern Bridges - Country Civil Engineer; and Bruce Sewell - Forest Management Officer.

Estate Development is headed by Michael Ansell. From January, when Laurie Tyson takes partial retirement, Michael will be directly supported by Mary Lindsay - Estates Specialists and Policy; Suilven Pielou - Renewables; Jim Higgins - Land Agency; Donald McLellan - Acquisitions and Disposals, and Mike Southworth - Estates Administration and Finance.

Community and Visitor Services is headed by Alan Stevenson. Alan is supported by Phil Whitfield - Head of Design and Interpretation Services; Julie McMorran - Recreation Civil Engineer; Craig Miller - Head of Communities; and Rebecca Carr - National Forest Land Scheme.

Business Services is headed by Brent Meakin. Brent's team will evolve with the process of devolution - moving the essential services out of the GB teams and establishing them in Scotland. At the outset it includes Donna Hutchinson - Head of Finance and Procurement; Ian Hood - Country Mechanical Engineer; and Colin Pielou - Buildings and Capital Works Manager. Rosetta Forbes, Human Resources Business Partner links closely to Brent's team, and Brent is currently recruiting a Head of Digital Services to lead on establishing the IT function.

Corporate Support enables FC/FE to deal with Ministers and correspondents, looks after 'internal governance' and is leading the Organisation Development Programme. It is headed by Michael Hymers and supported by Ewan Reid, Sylvi Kerr and Rhondda Salmond.

Land Reform Bill – latest

The Scottish Government has responded to the RACCEC (Rural Affairs, Climate Change & Environment committee) report on Stage 1 of the bill, in which RACCEC had expressed concern about the intention to reintroduce sporting rates. It seems that SG are determined to press ahead with the reintroduction regardless, despite RACCEC and representations from most land management bodies. We will continue to argue for deer shot in woodlands for control purposes to be treated differently from those shot for sport.

Rural crime

Confor has joined the Scottish Partnership against Rural Crime (SPARC) led by Police Scotland. The process of establishing regional groups has begun, and if any members are interested in becoming involved, please let me know. It would also be helpful if members can report on any serious/ongoing crime issues in their forests.

PLANTING



Nurseries: We need to know what to sow!

Despite falling timber prices, threats posed by imported disease and austerity from a fragile economic climate, the future of UK forestry looks brighter this year than it has in recent memory.

The swing in grant focus, aimed at more actively supporting planting of commercial woodland is a welcome concept. With a productive forest industry powered by investment in a core timber crop finally being recognised as vital to the future of a healthy forest sector.

This long awaited shift in mentality sends a positive signal to processors, agents and investors and demonstrates that messages are getting through to government.

Despite this, at the nursery we still find ourselves looking forward with uncertainty. Sudden shifts in grant emphasis or knee jerk reaction to new disease, for example, continue to influence demand for forest plants. Even with long term plans in place, managers tailor planting to exploit funding opportunities with the knowledge that change is always on the horizon.

With finite resources available, increased demand for one species almost invariably means a drop in demand for another as focus shifts. Consequently, to offset the current demand for commercial species, a decline in requirement for native stock is predicted in 2016 and nurseries may find they have surplus broadleaves whilst conifers remain unavailable until growing stock comes on line. This represents a considerable business risk to nurseries who are left with the quandary; what do we sow in the spring? This determines what stock is available not only 2016/2017 but also 2018 and 2019.

Changing policies and trends naturally result in changing targets but a general doubt over what might be coming next, coupled with administrative difficulties in getting schemes approved, means that nurseries do not have enough certainty to invest in sowing sufficient stock to meet the needs of the industry.

The continued political support for commercial forestry in the UK remains encouraging and moves towards the use of UK-grown stock are welcomed by all indigenous growers who are ready to gear up and sow the plants that the industry requires. Before this can happen we need to look further forwards and decide on what the forest sector needs to deliver over a generation not just the tenure of a single politician.

Please do not hesitate to contact us as a group on npg@confor.org.uk; comments, questions and advice all welcome!
For more info about the Confor Nursery Producers' Group, read 'About us' on www.confor.org.uk

PLANT HEALTH

Keep it clean, FC urges

'Keeping it clean' will be an important theme of Forestry Commission England's communications about pests and diseases this year.

Andy Hall, head of Forestry Commission England's Tree Health Unit, explained, "Excellent work is already being done across the country to reduce the risks of introducing and spreading pests and diseases.

"However, we tree professionals recognise that we run the greatest risk of all groups of inadvertently spreading pests and diseases on our vehicles, equipment and clothing, and that we must be seen taking the lead to reduce this risk of giving them an easy ride."

"We have identified a demand from fellow tree professionals for easy to understand, handy advice as to how we can each do our bit to minimise that risk. We will therefore be rolling out a number of resources during the year to help us all embed good biosecurity practice into our workaday routines in a practicable and reasonable way."

Among the resources will be:

- pocket-sized 'Z-card' guides setting out practical steps which users can take, tailored to the needs of three key high-risk groups - foresters and forestry workers, arborists and landscapers;
- Dashboard stickers to help people "think kit, think transport and think trees" when they are out and about;
- an on-line e-learning package designed to raise awareness and knowledge of biosecurity issues and measures; and
- continuing the commission's well received programme of regional tree health events where woodland managers can get advice directly from experts.

Mr Hall added: "Protecting the nation's natural environment, including woodland, is a government priority, and our 'Keep it Clean' programme will be a key practical expression of that policy."

Biosecurity advice is already available on the Forestry Commission's website at www.forestry.gov.uk/biosecurity, and information about individual pests and diseases of concern is available at www.forestry.gov.uk/pestsand-diseases.

Xylella guide

The UK Plant Health Services has prepared a guide *Xylella fastidiosa: Implications for the nursery trade*.

The guide is intended for growers, retailers, landscapers, garden designers, traders and anyone involved in importing plants, including from within the EU.

It can be downloaded at: www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/plant/PlantHealth/PlantDiseases/Xylellafastidiosa-implications-for-the-nursery-trade

Saying it with wood



Confor members **Toby and Aly Allen** run Say it with wood, the Herefordshire-based timber business. Here Toby describes the company's varied interests

The core of our business is cutting naturally durable timber (around 70% sweet chestnut) and making it into fencing, garden furniture and landscape projects. We also operate a mobile sawmill, do contract work, and sell firewood. Alongside this Aly and I write, give talks and organise courses and events. Aly is a trustee of the SWA too.

It's a wonderfully varied business and our strength is that we span the full range of products made from resistant timber. One of our teams can be making agricultural fencing stakes, while another is working on bespoke cleft gates, with the fitting team installing anything a customer can think of – from cleft post and rail fencing, to the arches at the public en-

trance to the APF and last year's Confor show.

Because we are carrying out all the processes from felling through to retail it gives us full control over the quality of the things we make, making sure each project is using the most appropriate timber. Our strong belief is that our customers deserve the best we can give them and we are always pushing to make improvements when possible.

The challenges our business faces are finding the right people to join the team, the uncertainties of future supply of timber and fluctuating prices. These issues make it hard to plan for the future. Even though we pay well for quality chestnut, sadly we have seen several good stands go for woodchip because the biomass industry is paid subsidy to burn it while we can only charge what the market will stand for fencing. This year's dive in prices for roadside firewood also has an effect, especially when the standing price was agreed at last year's peak.

Finding staff who can consistently work to a high standard is always a challenge, and luckily we have some brilliant people on our team, which in my opinion is our greatest asset. In order to concentrate on our core staff rather than bringing in casual fallers we recently took the gamble to invest in an eight-ton excavator with a stroke harvesting head, the conversion being done by Forest Machine Services. So far

The forest industry has been good to us, which is why we believe that putting something back is important.



Harvesting and, above, Aly with 'little Val'



it has performed very well, the head is nimble enough to fit round most of the coppice stools (the rest being felled by hand). The main advantage is that one team can be working one site at a time, rather than trying to run several sites at once with casual fallers who may not be up to the correct standard or simply using us as cheap training. Apart from a complete change in methodology, up to now the main drawback is I am missing my usual winter felling 'workout' so have to go to the gym.

We initially grade the chestnut at stump to either 6m poles or 1.8m stake wood, the low quality being cut to 2.5m and sold roadside as firewood. Aly runs the main processing yard where the 6m poles are delivered, before being re-graded on the cutting out table into whatever our customers have asked for. This is probably the most important part of the whole operation. Then it is split, cleft, peeled, pointed, dressed, mortised, milled, sawn, joined, etc, using a variety of devices and techniques. Some of these are age-old skills while other processes are done using machines designed or adapted for our needs. Customers and visitors are always welcome to the yard by appointment, and it is certainly worth a visit if you are in the area.

The forest industry has been good to us, which is why we believe that putting something back is important. Without the people with the skills and experience to bring timber to roadside the rest of the industry cannot function and the contracting sector is often taken for granted by managers/agents/owners. In the last few years we have helped organise networking and training events for forestry workers, something Confor supported at the last Woodland Show at Longleat. Being a part of the practical action that can improve the industry is the main reason Aly and I joined Confor. A healthy industry is good for us all.

We are always looking for standing timber or work in our area, let us know if you have any.

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Anand Punja (*below left*) has been appointed as FSC Regional Director for Europe from 1 January 2016. Over the past five years Anand has led on sustainability issues at the Timber Trade Federation in the UK, working with members and key stakeholders to provide an overarching strategic framework for the TTF's work in this area. The predominant focus of his work at the TTF has been on Responsible Timber Procurement and Supply Chain Management, in particular EUTR. Given the improvements the UK timber industry has made in the responsible sourcing of timber, his work increasingly focused on the role that timber can play in delivering a low carbon built environment.



A Northumberland forestry graduate who left home to study in Aberdeen has returned to her roots – landing a job at Hexham-based EGGER Forest Management. **Katherine Evans-Smith** (*above right*) graduated from Aberdeen University earlier this year, and won a national award for the best forest management plan that she produced as part of her course.

Now the 27-year-old will be putting what she learned into practice, working at EGGER – with another local manager Dave Robson from Prudhoe – as a forest manager helping farmers and landowners across the North East to maximise the value of their woodland assets.



Tilhill Forestry has strengthened its board of directors with the appointment of **Tim Liddon** (*above left*) as Forestry Director and **Jason Sinden** (*above right*) as Investment & Property Director with effect from 1 December 2015. Both new directors bring with them a wealth of experience and knowledge from both within Tilhill Forestry and from the forest industry in general.

Tim Liddon will reinforce and extend the forestry expertise on the board and will be responsible for all the company's forestry operations. For the last seven years Tim has been the company's regional manager in Scotland.

Tilhill says Jason Sinden's appointment signifies the importance the company places on investment in forest property for both its forestry clients and the business of Tilhill Forestry itself. He has a track record in commercial forestry and woodland creation with over 25 years of industry experience. He joined Tilhill Forestry in 2005.



Spray Operator Certification

With the spraying season soon to be upon us it seems prudent to review the current certification requirements for spray operators, and those training for certification.

The UK National Action Plan for Pesticides published in 2013 to implement the 2009 EC pesticide directive requires everyone, to have a PA1 and, (for knapsack spraying) PA6 certificate, by 26 November 2015. This includes those born before 31 December 1964 ("grandfathers") who should by now have gained the equivalent Level 2 City & Guilds award.

There are, however, different approaches in the industry with regard to the training of trainee spray operators who have no certification. Many organisations opt for full certification prior to spraying, while others allow uncertified operators to apply sprays under supervision as part of the training process.

So what are the rules if the latter course is followed?

Section 8.14 of the UK National Action Plan for Pesticides states "It is now a statutory requirement for professional end users to hold an accredited certificate (unless they are working under the direct supervision of someone who holds one; i.e. they are being trained)".

This confirms the statement in the current Pesticide Code of Practice* which states "If you need to have a certificate of competence to do your job, but you do not have one yet, you must be supervised by a person who has the necessary certificate".

The 'yet', is the critical word, and in no way should supervised spraying be seen as a means of avoiding certification, and it is strongly recommended that trainees are booked onto a PA6 certificate assessment prior to gaining in field experience.

The supervising certificate holder must be in voice and sight contact of the trainee(s), and I would suggest that ideally this would mean that this is achieved on a 1:1 basis, although it should also be practicable to supervise two trainees. The supervisor must be able to see the person(s) doing all parts of the job, including:

- preparing and mixing the pesticide;
- filling equipment and making sure the dose levels are correct (calibrating);
- applying the pesticide; and
- cleaning equipment and disposing of washings, leftover pesticides and the containers.

It should be noted that all trainees must be able to demonstrate an acceptable level of competence prior to commencing any field

work. This can be managed by splitting the certification process into two parts - gaining PA1 initially, and then PA6 shortly after gaining field experience. This has the additional advantage of understanding the environmental and safety aspects of the task before spraying but using the field experience to make the PA6 element more relevant.

Finally, PA1 & PA6 qualifications are for life and do not need to be renewed. However, City & Guilds do recommend staff undertaking a "refresher" every three to five years, and at least one trainer is now developing such refresher courses. Details from Colin Palmer via the Confor Pesticides Helpline.

** A revised edition of the Pesticide Code of Practice is expected early in 2016 to take account of the latest EC regulations. A full review of significant changes will be reported in a future edition of FTN*

Operator Certification Rabbits & Rats

26 November 2015 is also a key date for those applying Phostoxin / Talunex for rabbit control, or rodenticides for rat control. A City & Guilds Level 2 award is now required for both of these operations, so any persons wishing to use the materials should contact the relevant training providers.

Training for users of Talunex Aluminium Phosphide through HFM Ltd, tel: 01677 424542.

Hylobius update

We currently have access to three hylobius insecticides for top up spraying. Forester, which has a full label, and Gazelle SG and Alert which have offlabel approvals.

However, Alert has now been commercially withdrawn and stocks in merchants stores will soon be depleted. There is, though, no current "use up" date for product in the forestry spray stores so any remaining stocks may continue to be used for weevil control.

MEMBER SERVICES PESTICIDES HELPLINE



If you haven't used the service to date, be assured it is a free service operated by Confor's crop protection adviser Colin Palmer on behalf of Confor members. Colin can be contacted 8am to 8pm Mondays to Fridays on 01531 633500 (leave a message if necessary) or by email to: forestry@branchline.demon.co.uk



Three books, two woods and one polecat

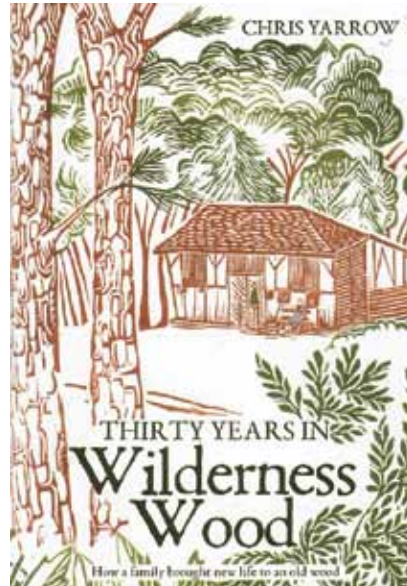
Since Christmas I've been reading Chris Yarrow's splendid book, *Thirty Years in Wilderness Wood*. It relates the story of how he and his wife, Anne, bought a 61 acre wood in Hadlow Down, Sussex, and over the years it became their life's work. In this issue of *FTN* focussing on diversifying management, what Chris and Anne achieved is an exemplar of what can be done.

The evidence of their success is that after all the usual battles with planning they received permission to build their own house in the wood. They were able to demonstrate that Wilderness Wood was indeed their principal livelihood. Chris, a chartered forester, writes with an engaging style and the book, published in September 2015, can be obtained from the publisher, Matador, or directly from Chris by emailing yarrow@hmill.plus.com or by phoning 01825 831972.

Also published last year was my own, *Getting started in your own wood* which is an introductory account of how to care for a small wood. It is published by Permanent Publications and is a beginner's guide. It was a much revised version of *Badgers, Beeches and Blisters* and, importantly, Will Rolls wrote two new chapters covering pest and diseases and growing wood fuel and the delights of wood burning stoves.

The third book has been a surprise. When I wrote about trees in the Bible two years ago, *God's Trees: Trees, forests and wood in the Bible* published by DayOne, I never expected it to sell so well nor for it to be a finalist in The People's Book Prize for non-fiction. Forgive me for this self-publicity, but there is more. Not only was it reprinted after just 18 months, but it generated numerous requests from church and non-church groups to give talks. In 2015 alone I gave 28 presentations all over the country ranging from cathedral services to prayer breakfasts and U3As to science societies. I have been used to giving an occasional talk about the joys and vicissitudes of owning a small woodland but nothing to match the demand for *God's Trees*. There is now a dedicated website to handle this interest www.godstrees.org.uk or if any reader would like to make contact direct do phone on 01256 381154.

The two woods are Chris and Anne's Wilderness Wood and my own, Northdown Plantation in Hampshire. Theirs is twice the size of mine but what impressed me about Wilderness Wood is just what can be done when it is managed full-time. We cut firewood each year and thin every seven or eight for the main produce. We promote wildlife by leaving dead wood, snags, opening glades and enhancing structure by developing understorey and 'edge effect' along rides and tracks. And the wood is used



for occasional teaching, special visits, and enjoyment by family and friends, but this is a far cry from Chris and Anne's dedicated efforts. In particular they took the step of opening Wilderness Wood to visitors for school parties, for picnics and BBQs, for events, for fungal forays and other wildlife activities and much more. They grew Christmas trees as their pension, or they were supposed to be, they sold bean and pea sticks, and moss to the floristry trade, they coppiced chestnut, thinned pine stands and sold

timber and they suffered massively from the great storm of October 1987. They created play areas, built a barn, turned 'woody things' for sale, and developed rides, campsites and small car parks. It really is all there and I commend *Thirty Years in Wilderness Wood* to anyone wondering how to diversify.

The polecat arrived as result of mid-winter grey squirrel control. I began some early trapping to look at sexes and to assess the likely scale of the grey squirrel assault in 2016. It wasn't very successful only catching five over the Christmas and New Year period; two females and three males. There was probably too much other food in this mild of early winters to tempt the squirrels to search for the bait put out. On almost the last of my daily rounds to check the cages one was sprung. I lifted up the black polythene and there looking straight at me, unflinching and very unsquirrel-like was a polecat. At least that was my first thought and from its size, its darkish brown fur and somewhat fluffy tail, and the white ring-like circle on its face and white trims on tops of the ears I am fairly sure of the identification. I opened the trap door and, after a bit of goading, it departed with a snarly hiss and scampered off in a dead straight line. It is the first time I have been so close to a polecat. A check on-line with wildlife organisations revealed that polecats are steadily spreading from their stronghold in Wales including now into central southern England.



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