

# THE SOFTWOOD DILEMMA: RESTOCKING AND NEW PLANTING OF CONIFERS IN THE UK

A close look at the figures in the FC Canopy Cover Report raise serious concerns about the sustainability of UK planting: productive conifer forests are harvested to supply markets with valuable softwood, which is the bread and butter of the UK forestry and timber sector. However, felled areas are reallocated to different land uses or forestry types and are not fully restocked with productive softwood. New planting of conifers is far from sustainable levels and cannot

make up for the loss in restocking. This is a serious threat for future supply of timber in the UK and depresses the sector's enthusiasm for investment.

In this infographic, we use a hypothetical 100 ha forest lot to show worrying trends that become evident from planting figures.

## RESTOCKING

On average across the UK 100 hectares of productive conifers would be made up of approximately 81% Sitka spruce and 19% other conifers. Some of that forest might be planted on deep peat, and some of it might be PAWS. After harvesting, the 100 hectares are not replanted with the same proportion of productive conifers. This happens for a number of reasons, such as environmental or landscape considerations or grant priorities. 10 years after felling, only 51 out of 100 ha have been replanted with equivalent productive conifers. The productive area for softwood has effectively been halved.



**100**  
HECTARES

**51**  
HECTARES

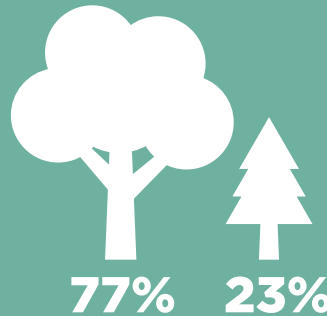
**23**  
HECTARES  
WOODLAND IN  
TRANSITION

**18**  
HECTARES

**8** HECTARES  
OPEN  
GROUND

## NEW PLANTING

However, future supply of softwoods needs to be guaranteed. To what extent is new planting making up for the loss of restocking?



Over the last five years, 52,200ha of NEW forest have been planted, only 12,100 of which are conifers.

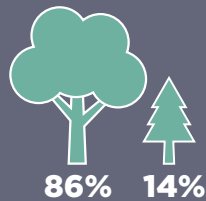
### SCOTLAND



### ENGLAND



### WALES



### N. IRELAND



**SOFTWOOD IS THE TIMBER INDUSTRIES' BREAD AND BUTTER.**

All data sourced from canopy cover report and cover the period 2011-2016.

Exact New Planting data are as follows: UK: 52,200 ha (of which 11,100 conifers); England: 11,600 ha (of which 11,500 conifers); Scotland: 36,500 ha (of which 25,100 conifers); Wales: 2,800 ha (of which 2,400 conifers); Northern Ireland: 1,200 ha (of which no conifers)