

# What makes a professional?



asks **Stuart Glen**  
of the Institute  
of Chartered  
Foresters



We find ourselves in a dynamic time for forestry. The sector is burgeoning, which brings a heightened public profile and places forestry professionals well and truly in the spotlight, including their behavior and attitude. So what makes a professional?

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a professional as:

**professional** (*noun*) **1.** a person engaged or qualified in a profession **2.** a person engaged in a specific activity, especially a sport, as a main paid occupation rather than as a pastime **3.** a person competent or skilled in a particular activity.

But a professional is more than a dictionary definition. Professionalism is about attitude and conduct – a moral compass if you like – and one that is becoming ever more prominent in a modern forestry sector. In many ways it's no longer enough to have skills and knowledge – a professional must also be able to demonstrate that they can apply it ethically to the situations they face.

The sector is supported by its professional body, the Institute of Chartered Foresters. As a profession-

al organisation constituted under a Royal Charter, the Institute sets standards of education, competence and ethics for its members. It places a strong emphasis on the integrity and competence of its members, and therefore requires them to conduct themselves in accordance with a Code of Conduct.

The Code should be considered central to the professional life of a forestry professional not only as a source of ethical guidance, but also as a guide to principles of good practice. The six professional and ethical standards that Institute members must abide by are:

- Act with integrity
- Always provide a high standard of service
- Treat others with respect
- Take responsibility
- Act in a way that promotes trust in the profession
- Have regard for sustainability throughout your work.

Of course you don't need to be a Chartered Forester to abide by these principles but the role of a Chartered Institute is to ensure that its members follow this Code thereby providing assurance to the general public. Most people recognise that to be a chartered member of a professional body means that the individual is subject to scrutiny regarding their behaviour and that failure to maintain standards can result in a disciplinary process. A Chartered Forester is no different, with an obligation to demonstrate a commitment to follow a Code of Conduct and undertake Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities. Our members' commitment to lifelong learning is a vital element in improving professionalism within our sector. Meaningful CPD should be high quality, challenging and serve as an outlet to improve professional competence.

Members of the Institute of Chartered Foresters may be found working in the private sector, the public sector, non-government bodies and academia. Our members work in every aspect of forestry including forest management, harvesting, operations, policy, research and urban forestry (see figure one). What all members have in common is their professionalism.

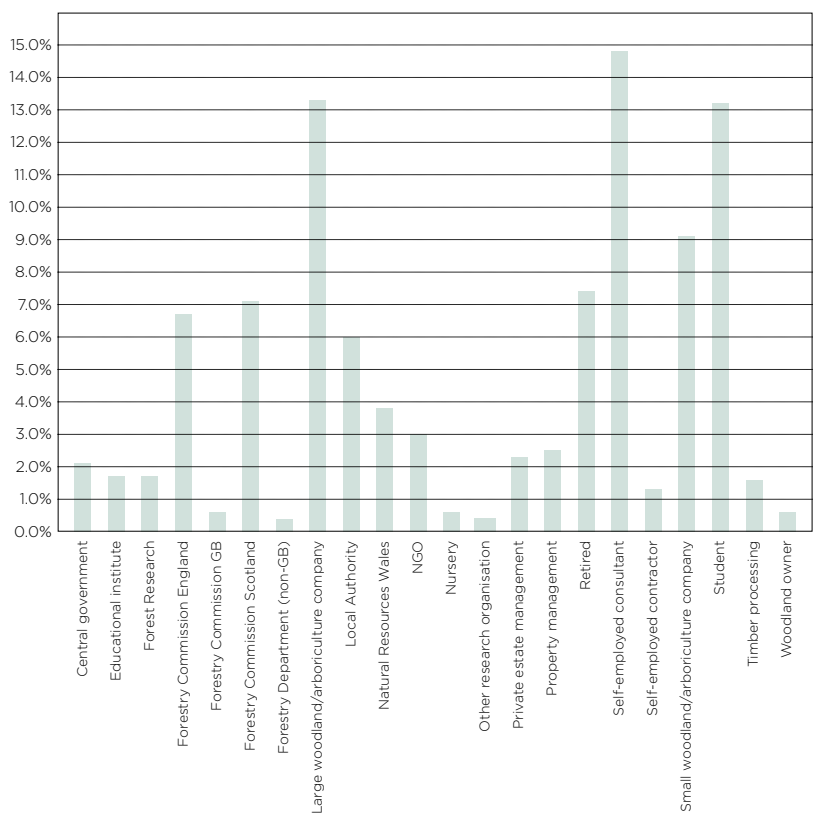
Professionals stand apart because their relationship with their peers, clients and society, in general, is based on implicit trust. This notion of trust crops up time and again when considering professionalism. We believe Chartered Forester status should be a goal for all in the forestry industry who wish parity with other professionals.

## Benefits to employers

Savills and Tilhill Forestry are just two of many who encourage staff to engage with the Institute and plan a route to chartered status. Many employers pay membership subscription fees, support staff with time in lieu for chartered status applications and place chartered status at the heart of staff's per-

Figure one

A breakdown of Institute of Chartered Foresters membership by employment category. Figures correct at 20 March 2017.





Each year the Institute runs workshops to help applicants understand the chartered process. © Rich Dyson Photography



**Peter Topham MICFor, Forest Manager, Savills:**

"I work for Savills and chartership is the level of professionalism they expect. It is a great way to consolidate my knowledge and to demonstrate my competence to Savills with regard to career development. Being chartered allows me to demonstrate to clients the standard they can expect. This is particularly valuable for tender submissions. ICF membership also sits well with our RICS colleagues when we provide holistic estate management for clients."



**Peter Whitfield FICFor, Tilhill Forestry's Timber Operation Director and Fellow of the Institute commented:**

"Membership has provided a framework for me to gauge and guide aspects of the professionalism required in the many roles I have had the privilege to hold in my career. For me, it provides evidence of my trusted professional status and has been a key element in allowing me to take on duties beyond my job at Tilhill Forestry."

sonal development plans. It makes perfect business sense. The benefits of employees that have been awarded Chartered Forester status are obvious, and employers are only too happy to trade on this badge of professionalism.

Our most recent membership survey found that nearly two-thirds of respondents (aged 25-34 year old) who had already obtained chartered status earned in excess of £35,000. By comparison, 89% of respondents who were not chartered earned less than £35,000. Chartered status, quite simply, results in an ability to earn more money and faster career progression. Which is perhaps why membership of the Institute of Chartered Foresters is greater than at any point in our 90-year history. Current membership stands in excess of 1700 members.

Whatever your role in the sector, if you believe yourself or your staff to be professional then the pursuit of Chartered Forester status is one of the best means to demonstrate this. As Member Services Director for the Institute of Chartered Foresters, my role is to ensure members get the most from their membership and support those individuals who wish to present for chartered status. If I can assist you in any way, then please feel free to contact me.

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