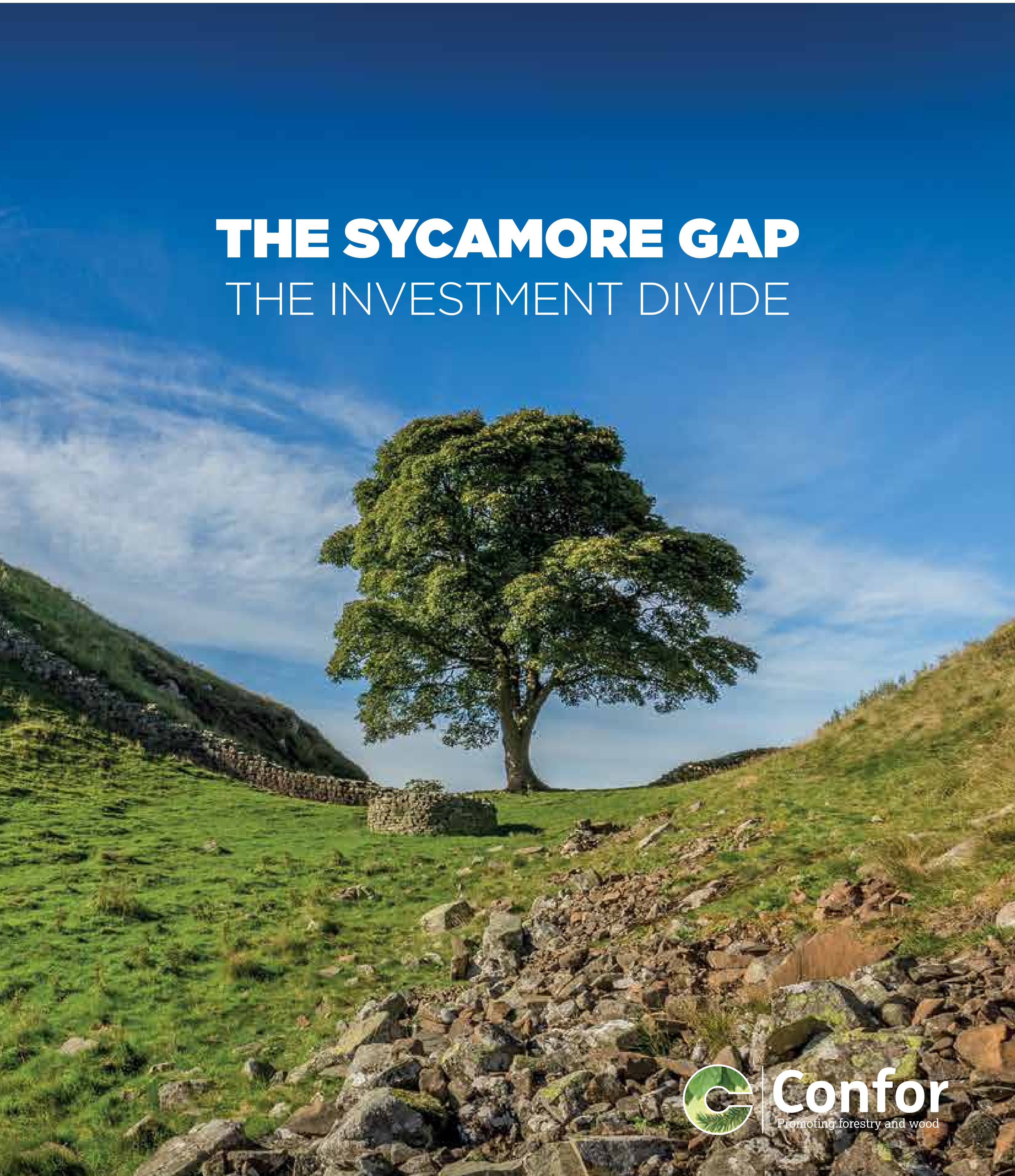
FORESTRY & TIMBER NEWS

February 2018 Issue 85

THE SYCAMORE GAP
THE INVESTMENT DIVIDE



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FEATURES

Trees get the popular vote but challenges to planting remain

STUART GOODALL CHIEF EXECUTIVE, CONFOR

Planting trees is set to become even more popular. And not just street trees or trees in schools, but large woodlands, even new forests.

We have climate change to 'thank' for that, and the scale of governmental ambition.

At Kyoto and then Paris, rich, developed countries (the US Government less so) agreed to shoulder the greatest burden of reducing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, especially carbon.

Initially everything went well, and emissions dropped across the UK, though an examination of the figures shows that much was due to de-industrialisation. In agriculture, significant reduction took place as CAP reform led to sharp falls in live-stock numbers.

Progress has been made, for example in decarbonising electricity – think wind farms, but there hasn't been enough change in behaviour or in the 'infrastructure' of industry, energy generation or in driving energy efficiency. Too much has occurred through unconnected events that would have happened anyway.

It may still take some time to develop a critical mass, but more and more politicians and commentators are examining the underlying trend and looking forward to the next step-change required to keep the UK on track to meet its commitments.

The low-hanging fruit has been secured and the fortuitous developments are unlikely to be repeated at scale – in fact we're seeking to rebalance the economy in favour of manufacturing. Meeting our targets will be eye-wateringly painful - no gas, virtually no oil, near energy-free houses, all cars using renewable electricity, emission slashed in farming, etc, etc.

Governments are also talking again about Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS), though without any sense of a solution. Nevertheless, it allows them, on paper, to help fill the widening gap between projected reductions from current policy and what's required.

The Committee on Climate Change, set up to advise the UK and devolved governments on progress with targets and to assess their future plans, has been touring the UK. The conclusion is that the gap is widening between what's required and the reductions expected to be delivered by current policies and plans.

CCS is unproven and expensive. Tree planting is very cheap in comparison and a well-proven 'technology'. It also yields a myriad of other benefits. And then there's the carbon locked up in our home-grown wood products – set to be recognised formally in future carbon balances.

I expect that we will have more and more attention placed on tree planting (and wood production) in the years to come. However, I'm not convinced we yet have the administrative tools and processes to respond, meaning there's a danger that as people come knocking we will (frustratingly) see their attention turn elsewhere.

That can't be allowed to happen, and Confor will fight to ensure that it does not.

The Sycamore Gap

A North-South investment divide

Headlines about a new northern forest in England, announced in Defra's recent 25-Year Environment Plan, don't address some of the long-term challenges and risks for forestry investors. **Andrew Heald** (Confor) and **Jason Sinden** (FIM) raise an important issue.

The south of Scotland and the north of England both have good road access, suitable soils, a range of mills and timber processors. However, whilst large-scale investors are confidently starting new planting schemes in Scotland, south of Hadrian's Wall thing are a little different. The recent announcement of approval for Lowther Estate's 'Jack's Wood' and for Doddington (see FTN December 2017) are hopefully signs of significant change in forestry creation in England.

Woodland creation schemes in Scotland this year are heading for 250ha, with an average size of 35ha for productive schemes. Schemes the size of Doddington (268ha net) are significant in Scotland but certainly wouldn't attract front page news coverage in the *Daily Telegraph*.

It is not just the size of the creation schemes that differ it is a question of who is doing the planting. The big difference is that large-scale investors are currently only operating in Scotland; availability of suitable land is crucial but so is the risk and uncertainty with gaining planting approval.

Forest managers in Scotland are better able to judge which schemes will be successful and which will be quickly approved. Time is money, and the longer an approval takes, the poorer the rate of return. Mike Tustin of John Clegg and Co said that "There is simply more bureaucracy in forestry in England than in Scotland; bureaucracy costs times and money and no one is willing to pay for it."

Jason Sinden added "What we need is greater certainty, we are happy to work with open areas and broadleaves but it is the 'unknowns' and dealing with the personal opinions of regulators which makes investing unattractive. The grant money is there and local Forestry Commission England staff are generally supportive but it is still a huge risk to purchase land in England and then try to get permission to plant."

Andy Howard of Doddington thinks that one of the challenges in England is the number of Government agencies that need to work together to approve an application; Andy said "One of the key lessons from Doddington was to get FC England, Natural England and the Rural Payments Agency to all agree with each other, before we started having conversations with them."

A single agency approach should work well, but in Wales the benefit of a single regulator in NRW has also failed to deliver significant new planting, due partly to a complex scoring system which prioritises new woodland near towns, which often have high costs related to public access and are less attractive to timber production.

Lack of familiarity with woodland creation and with modern forestry in general is clearly an issue, with many stakeholders assuming that 'commercial forestry' means 100% Sitka Spruce. As new schemes come forward and as older forests are felled and restocked, then (as in Scotland) resistance slowly softens.

One of the challenges identified by investment

"We need to be able to give forestry investors a clear risk assessment of the likelihood of success, that is impossible with the current application process in England.

Bruce Richardson,
Head of Investment and Property at Tilhill

The investor's reality

"We would love to invest in new planting schemes in the north of England and the current grant schemes are very attractive, but the uncertainty of whether we would get approval for a large-scale commercial project is just too high."

Jason Sinden

The Government's ambition

Quotes from the 25-Year Environment Plan

"We will do this [increase nature] by increasing woodland in England in line with our aspiration of 12% cover by 2060: this would involve planting 180,000ha by the end of 2042."

"Actions we will take: Designing a new woodland creation grant scheme, involving landowners, farmers and key forestry stakeholders in the process. We want landowners to plant trees on their marginal land, while encouraging agroforestry".

and forest managers that I have spoken to is the lack of track record in England and Wales. It is difficult to convince an investor that the "numbers stack-up" when so many of the numbers are uncertain. Investors will always want as much certainly as possible and to minimise risk. Currently, an investor is far more likely to invest in new planting in Scotland rather than anywhere else, because of the greater certainty in getting approval and simply the time frame from application to planting. There will always be a need for 'guinea pigs' like Doddington and Lowther and then hopefully systems will improve; however, being the guinea pig can be uncomfortable and expensive.

Individuals like Andy Howard of Doddington are typical of the people driving new planting in England; they are passionate and committed, want to plant trees and have the confidence and determination to see it through. The larger institutional investors have a different attitude to risk and are more 'foot-loose', and so are willing to consider a wide range of locations; often these locations are in Scotland.

"We will encourage larger-scale woodland and forest creation, and direct commercial investment in new productive planting towards Forestry Investment Zones."

"We want our continuing promotion of large scale woodland creation to give investors the confidence to renew and expand wood-processing capacity, thereby securing the supply of current wood products and stimulating further innovation with new products such as cross-laminated timber used in construction."

Brexit of course add another layer of complexity, particularly around multi-year grant payments but also in terms of Defra priorities. The recent announcements of funding for new woodland related to HS2, the continued Woodland Carbon Funding and the reference to 'large-scale afforestation' in the 25-Year Plan, are all very welcome. However, the long-term support and possible annual payments is uncertain, and the current renewed interest and concern around wader decline is likely to have a significant negative impact in parts of England.

Michael Gove has assured farmers and land managers that he will guarantee support payments to 2024. If you started the approval process for a large scheme this spring it would probably take two to three years to get approval, so if planting started in 2021 there would only be three years of assured grant support. It is also worth considering that the lead-in time for a nursery to produce healthy young trees, is also around four years. A promise from Defra of a new 'woodland creation grant scheme' is very welcome but the forestry sector needs to know what it is and how it will work, as soon as possible.

There is currently enthusiasm, interest and government support for new planting in England but the mechanism to approve and deliver those new woodlands is not fit for purpose, this was clearly identified by the EFRA Committee in January 2016. Until that mechanism is replaced and greatly improved then we are unlikely to see a significant increase in new planting. Jack's Wood at Lowther and Doddington are great achievements but in total are only about 500ha, a long way short of the latest England target 7500ha per year.

Jason Sinden is Head of Investment at FIM, the largest investors in commercial forestry in the UK with approximately £900m in assets

#25YEP - what's in it for forestry? See p11.

Is land designation a barrier to forestry investment?

Northern Ireland, England and Wales have significant upland areas designated for landscape – either National Parks (shown in yellow) or AONBs (shown in orange) . Scotland has far fewer, although it does have National Scenic Areas

Westminster speakers reinforce planting call

Momentum must be maintained on productive planting in England to create a long-term sustainable industry and reduce reliance on imports, a Westminster Hall debate on forestry in England heard.

Chris Davies MP, Chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Forestry, said it was crucial to build on the Lowther and Doddington approvals, highlighting the 80,000 UK jobs supported by the forestry and timber industry, and its £2bn annual economic value to the economy.

Noting that the UK had 'overtaken' Japan to be the second-largest net importer of wood products after China, Mr Davies said: "This demonstrates why it is so important that this parliament sends a strong signal to the UK Government that we must plant more trees now to ensure a sustainable supply of domestic timber in future."

The debate was arranged to address the Government's response to the inquiry by the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee. It featured contributions from nine MPs and a reply by the minister responsible for forestry, Dr Thérèse Coffey. She confirmed the Government had "reset the clock" on its 2015-2020 target of planting 11m trees and the target would now run from the June 2017 election to 2022. She was confident the target would be met and passed.

EFRA committee chairman Neil Parish MP renewed calls for a "one-stop shop" for forestry grants and advice, with several other speakers repeating this message - a key recommendation in the initial EFRA committee report.

Confor Chief Executive Stuart Goodall, who attended the debate, said: "It's vital the profile of forestry and timber is kept high at Westminster and that the Government is repeatedly pressed to act on the big issues, including planting, managing woodland and using more home-grown wood.

"In the debate, it was heartening to see every speaker mention the need for more productive planting or use of home-grown wood. There is much work to be done, but Confor's central policy requests - more productive planting, a simpler application system, more actively managed woods and the use of more home-grown timber - are now supported by MPs from all parties."

Massive planting scheme gets underway at Doddington

ALBA TREES

Ground preparation works for the largest planting scheme in England in a generation will start later this month.

The first of around 650,000 trees are expected to go into the ground in late March at Doddington North Moor, near Wooler, Northumberland, according to project manager Andy Howard.

After confirmation the scheme had been approved on 30 November last year, Mr Howard said: "I'm delighted to have secured the go ahead for the project. Well-designed new forests are fantastic assets for local people and wider society, and hopefully starting to plant trees at Doddington and the lessons learnt from the application process will encourage others to take that important step."

Mr Howard acknowledged the "unstinting positive backing" from Confor throughout the process, and praised the local community and MP Anne-Marie Trevelyan. He added: "I'm also grateful to the Natural England and Forestry Commission staff at local level who ultimately found a way for us to come together to find a solution."

Stuart Goodall, Chief Executive of Confor, welcomed the "fantastic news", which came soon after the Lowther Estate planting scheme, near Penrith, Cumbria, was approved.

Lowther will see 213,000 trees planted on a 170ha, with 120ha of productive conifers and most of the remainder productive broadleaves.

Doddington, near Wooler, is twice the size at 354ha, with 268ha to be planted - 42% conifers (the majority sitka), 20% native broadleaves and 13% mixed Scots pine and native broadleaf. Some 10% is open ground and 15% managed priority habitat.

At January's Westminster Hall debate on forestry in England, Dr Thérèse Coffey, the minister responsible for forestry, said she was delighted Doddington had finally been approved – and described her visit to Lowther. She said: "I had the pleasure of visiting Lowther and planting the first of 213,000 trees, a rich mix of broadleaf corridors and softwood plantations. It is truly impressive."

Common countryside vision takes root

A Command Paper on post-Brexit support for the UK's rural areas must reflect growing support for a common approach to the future of our countryside, according to Confor's Chief Executive Stuart Goodall.

Mr Goodall said he was pleased that core elements of Confor's Common Countryside Policy (CCP) paper are at the heart of the debate on what future support looks like – including treating all land uses fairly and a requirement to show positive environmental outcomes to receive subsidy.

He welcomed Michael Gove's positive language in his speech to the Oxford Farming Conference (OFC) on post-Brexit support – and the consensual approach from different groups to a sustainable future. Minette Batters, Deputy President of the National Farmers Union, has said she sees the chance for enhanced tree planting on farms – although not on prime agricultural land.

Mr Goodall said: "I'm very pleased the debate is moving in the direction outlined in our CCP paper, with a clear understanding that there is the potential to plant more trees and benefit from well-managed forests and woodland as part of a thriving rural countryside.

"I support Michael Gove's belief that, post-Brexit, we can do things differently, and more sustainably, in rural areas. There is scope for our land to deliver more for society and for the environment. Mr Gove's OFC speech recognised that, with specific mention of planting more trees as part of a new direction - away from the Common Agricultural Policy and towards a broader approach.

"It is vital the Command Paper in the spring continues down that path and recognizes all parties can benefit from a new way of working - farmers, foresters, local communities and wider society."

Mr Goodall has already stressed the importance of a consensual approach involving all rural interests, at Confor's Westminster conference, *Towards A Common Countryside Policy*, in late 2017.

The event featured senior speakers from organisations in the land use sector - NFU, CLA, The Woodland Trust, WWF-UK and Confor. Minette Batters of the NFU agreed "a shared ambition" was vital to shape a positive rural future.

She joined a debate with Stuart Goodall, Mark Tufnell (CLA), Will Ashley-Cantello (WWF-UK) and Beccy Speight (Woodland Trust) to identify common ground in future rural policy and funding structures.

A number of key themes emerged throughout the discussion, including:

- Strong political leadership is needed to design future policy fit for all of our countryside - supported by strong leadership inside Defra and government agencies.
- Strong leadership and guidance is also needed from rural interest groups. Each will have specific interests, but stronger results could be delivered by finding areas of common ground;
- Government reports relevant to future rural policy such as the 25-Year Environment Plan, Clean Growth Strategy and legislation shaping a post-Brtexit future – must be well-aligned.
- Future rural funding must follow positive outcomes for the countryside, rather than the input-based system of CAP.
- A positive trade deal after Brexit is fundamental to a thriving future countryside;
- Only productive, prosperous rural businesses can deliver the range of positive outcomes to make our countryside more sustainable;
- A new system must be based on long-term agreements, or contracts, to move away from the stop-start system of constant new CAP deals;
- We need to start making progress on new policy now, not wait for a perfect solution, which risks carrying over the problems of CAP into a new era.

> "
> A 'shared ambition' vital to shape a positive rural future
> **Minette Batters, NFU**

Stuart Goodall said: "It was great to debate the future with such a diverse range of organisations - and it was very clear that there is more that unites different rural interests than divides us. I am heartened by the desire to collaborate to come up with a future system to suit the whole of our countryside."

AWARDS

RFS Excellence in Forestry

Deadline 31 March 2018

"It's only through ensuring high quality woodland management and talking about it to a wider world that we will help people distinguish between excellence and exploitation in forestry," siad Royal Forestry Society Co-ordinator Rachel Thomas, launching the Excellence in Forestry 2018 Awards. In 2018 the awards are being held across the West of England from Cheshire in the North West to Cornwall in the South West. There are five categories: Resilient Multipurpose (Duke of Cornwall's Award), Silviculture, Small and Farm Woodland, Community Woodland and an Education and Learning Award.
www.rfs.org.uk/awards

Scottish Finest Woods

Deadline 31 March 2018

Scotland's Finest Woods Awards has opened its 2018 competition to find the woods and forests contributing most to the health and wealth of communities. There are seven awards in four categories – Quality Timber, New Native Woods, Community Woodlands and the Schools Award – with striking trophies and almost £7,000 of prize money. Winners are honoured at an annual Awards presentation at the Royal Highland Show in June. money. Winners are honoured at an annual Awards presentation at the Royal Highland Show in June.
www.sfwa.co.uk

Theresa May launches the 25-Year Environment Plan

#25YEP – what's in it for forestry?

DEFRA published *A Green Future: Our 25-Year Plan to Improve the Environment* in January – so what does it mean for forestry businesses? asks **Caroline Harrison**

At the heart of #25YEP is the government's promise not just to arrest the decline of England's natural resources but to enhance them: to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than it found it.

For the forestry and timber sector, the plan sits alongside the Clean Growth Strategy to set a framework for policy for the foreseeable future and, effectively, replace the 2013 Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement.

The #25YEP plan lacks detail, but it is intended to be read as a blueprint setting the direction of travel for future government policy and strategies, along with a new system of governance and a suite of metrics to measure and report on performance. To deliver on its ambitions, it will need strong actions, and Confor will hold the government to account against its promises.

A natural capital approach permeates the plan, attempting to put together an over-arching mechanism to capture the value of natural assets. It is anticipated that natural capital accounting will play a significant role in the metrics that the plan has proposed to measure performance, and will therefore become one of the main tools to hold the government to account.

Confor will continue to represent members' interests and work with government on key areas within the plan.

We have put forward nominations for the proposed Tree Champion. We will work with government to identify Forestry Investment Zones to deliver large-scale planting and business support, learning from the Woodland Enterprise Zone being piloted in North Devon. We will work with government to use more wood in construction in England and to recognise and measure timber locked up in construction as a vital medium-term carbon sink.

We will continue to input into the development of a new grant scheme to support large-scale productive woodland creation and woodland management. Finally, we will continue to input into the Tree Health Resilience Plan and promote the phasing out of firewood imports from abroad, both to reduce the threat to biosecurity and to stimulate woodland management through a market for locally-produced wood fuel.

The aim is to leave the environment in a "better state than we found it" and Confor believes that a vibrant forestry and timber sector is key to realising that, supporting government in its move towards clean and green growth.

Specific trees, woodlands and forestry elements included in #25YEP

- Supporting the development of a new Northern Forest.
- Designing a new woodland creation grant scheme, involving landowners, foresters and farmers.
- Identifying suitable areas for large scale woodland creation, and promoting Forestry Investment Zones to attract investors.
- Supporting community forests.
- Strengthening domestic carbon offset mechanisms to encourage more businesses to offset emissions in a cost-effective way, through planting trees.
- Increased protection of existing trees and forests.
- Publishing a Tree Health Resilience Plan in 2018.
- Developing new public/private partnership models of investment for research, including plant and tree health.
- Working with industry to place biosecurity at the centre of buying practices – including encouraging the development of a bio-secure supply chain for woodland creation.
- Working with industry to support Grown in Britain to increase the amount of home grown timber used in England in construction.
- Protecting and enhancing the Public Forest Estate.
- Appointing a national Tree Champion to promote trees and forests, help drive a step change in tree planting and encourage joined-up thinking on tree issues.

Other highlights for businesses to note

- Expanding the use of natural flood management solutions.
- Designing and delivering a new environmental land management system. Details have been promised in a command paper in Spring 2018.
- Embedding an 'environmental net gain' principle for development, including housing and infrastructure.
- Consulting on setting up a new independent body to hold government to account and a new set of environmental principles to underpin policy-making.

Scottish Forestry Bill amended

Since it was introduced in May 2017, we have been scrutinising the first draft of the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Bill. As of 14 December, this has been replaced with a significantly amended second draft.

The Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee (RECC) had the role of amending the bill. A huge number of amendments were brought forward, 136, demonstrating the importance the Scottish Parliament places on getting forestry legislation right. Of these, 36 were withdrawn, 11 were rejected, and 89 accepted.

Confor met with all the major parties before the debate, and provided detailed written evidence on every amendment, which was widely referred to in the discussion.

What's new in the bill?

A key amendment for Confor was that the Scottish forestry strategy must address 'the production and supply of timber and other forest products'. Another was that there should be a post in the Scottish Government with the title of Chief Forester. This was a proposal originally made by Confor, to ensure that forestry expertise is protected and promoted within the new organisation.

There were also a series of important government amendments adjusting various points in the legislation, including clarifying that 'forested land' does not include land with no trees on it, and changing the infamous definition 'felling means intentionally killing a tree' to 'felling includes intentionally killing a tree'.

What happens next?

The revised bill will be discussed by the full parliament, when further amendments may be brought before a final bill is agreed. Some amendments which were withdrawn following discussion will be developed and new wording brought at the next debate. Two key items in this category are:

- **Content of the forestry strategy**: Three amendments on afforestation, native woodland and communities were withdrawn in response to the Cabinet Secretary's assurance that he would work with proposers 'to capture the intentions of those amendments, and in particular the important objective of increasing the area of native woodland.' Confor will press for a commitment to afforestation to be included, and that any reference to native woodland is part of an expansion of forestry overall, and is not at the expense of productive capacity.
- **Frequency of revision of the forestry strategy**: while it was agreed that there should be a *report* on the strategy every three years, there were conflicting proposals on how it should be *revised*, withdrawn pending further discussion. Confor will press for revision every ten years.

Because this bill involves completing the devolution of forestry, the legislation must also be approved in Westminster. This stage is likely to be a formality.

More importantly, the English, Scottish and Welsh governments are discussing how UK-wide issues (such as the UK Forestry Standard, Plant Health, Forest Research) should be structured post-devolution, and how private and public sectors will relate. Confor is closely engaged in these discussions which will affect the whole UK.

Forestry in Wales a 'top priority'

In the December issue of FTN issue (p10) we reported our meeting with the new Welsh Environment minister, Hannah Blythyn. The minister referred to this meeting at the debate on forestry held in the Welsh Assembly on 13 December, saying that 'improving and expanding the woodlands of Wales would be amongst my top priorities'.

The debate was a discussion of the *Branching Out* report, in which the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee strongly criticised the Welsh government's record on forestry, using evidence provided by Confor.

Less than 10,000ha of new woodland has been created in Wales in the past 20 years, and the estimated area of productive conifer has decreased by 18,000ha since 2001.

Confor sent all AMs an infographic on the multiple benefits of forestry for Wales (available on our website), which was widely referred to in the debate.

Simon Thomas AM spoke passionately about the need to tackle the 'underwooded' state of Wales, after visiting a sawmill had demonstrated to him the real benefits of timber production. In the new year, he asked a series of parliamentary questions on behalf of Confor, ensuring forestry is kept high on the government's agenda.

There is no better way to tell the forestry and timber story than to invite your local representatives to visit your businesses. Please don't hesitate to contact us to help.

The Welsh government was challenged on forestry again on 19 December, when the highly-respected UK Climate Change Committee advised that Wales needs to create 4,000ha new woodland per year to meet its legislated target of an 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050.

Confor manager Martin Bishop followed up all this activity by organising a visit for the minister on 18 January to Teifi Timber sawmill. A new Confor member in west Wales, Teifi Timber is a family business in its seventh generation, which has recently invested £2.5m to upgrade its facilities and continue to be an important employer in a rural area. However, its future relies on having trees to harvest. It was encouraging to hear the minister reiterate her commitment to ensure that these begin to be planted.

FOREST INVESTMENT CONFERENCE

May 1-2, 2018 • Convene Conference Center, New York City, US

RISI and **DANA** are please to announce this event is heading back to **New York City**.

RISI and DANA have combined forces to bring together the most compelling conference for the financial community and those engaged in tracking companies and assets or who own and manage timberlands. The Investment conference will broaden its horizons this year focusing not just on the North American investment trends and opportunities, but on the Global forest products and timberland investment market.

2-DAY CONFERENCE PROGRAM

The two day conference will take an in-depth look at timberland investments around the globe and how these opportunities will unfold in the near future.

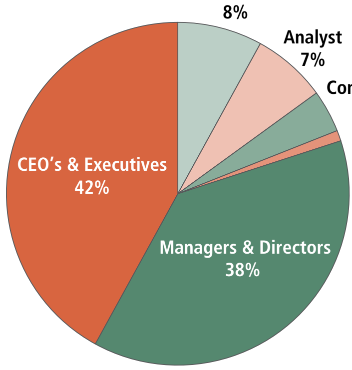
2016's Event Attracted over

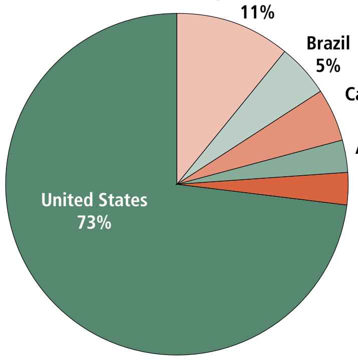
151 Delegates from **20** Countries

98 Companies

42% CEO's, VP, High level Executives

38% Managers & Directors





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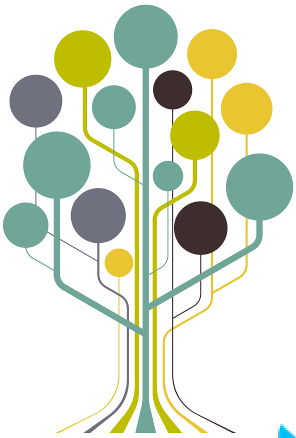

THE FTN GUIDE TO DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

Like it or not, understanding digital communication and social media is increasingly essential for modern business promotion and campaigning. In this issue, we introduce FTN's new series of guidance articles to help our members get the most out of the tools available with a look at Twitter by **Hester McQueen** (**@TheICF**) and **Confor** (**@forestsandwood**)

All you need to know about **Twitter**

#1 What is Twitter?

Twitter is an online social media platform for individuals to communicate and interact on. Messages are limited to 140 characters and can include images and videos. You can access it from your computer, smartphone or tablet.

#2 What is a hashtag?

A hashtag is a word/phrase preceded by a #, used on Twitter to gather tweets on specific topics. You can search the term or click the hashtag to see other tweets that have used the same hashtag. Specially useful to create discussions around an event or to search for tweets on specific topics.

#3 Build relationships on Twitter

Think of tweets as conversations. You can send a direct tweet to someone if you have something interesting to share: eg @username "this is my message". Use hashtags and @username to target Twitter users or find relevant Twitter accounts or tweets. It is worth following relevant accounts as their news will go in your home timeline. Many individuals/companies will share and comment on your content in return if you're sharing their Twitter posts – this is one way to help build a Twitter relationship.

Tipps to get started

Create your account, define what topic you are interested or what people you want to reach. Identify people who actively tweet in your field of interest or who have a good followership you want to reach yourself. Filter information by topic hashtags. More in FTN web resources.

People to follow:

@AndyHeald: just follow him and you will see

@Benjaminjmiller: machine operator with large followership

@AGTforester: Andy Turnbull - Forester with Bidwells

@localwoodswork: Partnership working to support and grow woodland social enterprise

Watch out for recommended Twitter accounts in our 2018 FTN issues.

#4 How Twitter can help your business

Through an active Twitter presence or even structured campaigns, your business or brand can benefit in multiple ways

- Connect with costumers and build relationships
- Understand your competitors
- Market new products or promote events
- Create meaningful traffic for your website
- Create brand awareness or raise your personal profile as thought leader
- Build a digital audience
- Stay informed on markets, innovation, news or costumer demand

#5 Efficient Twitter campaigns require planning

Posting a series of individual posts on an ad hoc basis is not the most resource-efficient way of using Twitter for a marketing campaign, especially for companies with limited resources. There are many tools that can help you manage your time more efficiently, such as Hootsuite where you can schedule posts in advance.

Planning is essential if you want to run a successful Twitter campaign and this can take time to do well.

The first thing you need to do is to consider the pool of content that you already have. You can usually reuse old content. Re-purposing content is vital in this day and age, but keep in mind that it has to be high-quality and on-brand before you can re-publish it.

Keep in mind that Twitter posts should be visually appealing and engaging, so don't make them all text-based. Fill your Twitter wall with images, facts or even intriguing questions for your Twitter followers to engage with.

Make sure that you are engaging by being active on social media – pay attention to who likes and comments your posts and reply back. This helps to promote and humanise your brand.

How do you know if your campaign is a success? Set yourself goals and take a step back and assess your progress compared to your original goals.

Why I use Twitter

@AndyHoward1

Andy Howard, Pennine Biomass

To engage with a wide range of people within the industry and perhaps more importantly from the media, Government, NGOs and general interested public. For me it's all about trying to get out the message about forestry as it is nowadays, and challenging the pre-conceptions many people have.

My tipp for new users... Be interesting. Eloquently stand your ground and maintain your point under discussion without being dismissive or angry, and use pictures or links regularly to make sure your timeline is about your message rather than being about you.

@eleanormharris

Eleanor M Harris, Confor

Twitter is an important way for me to develop a voice in the sector. The short length forces me to formulate what I want to say without rambling. Unlike face-to-face interaction, I don't need to worry about my manner, tone or confidence affecting my message, which for a slightly awkward female academic is a bonus.

My tipp for new users... Most Twitter users are either mainly 'readers' or 'speakers'. I'm a 'speaker', so my three key tips are:

- Always be kind, generous and respectful – even if they aren't.
- Write your own tweets and retweet sparingly – or your feed looks like someone else's.
- Use good images.

@forestmachineoj

Rab Easton,
Forest Machine Magazine

I have come to find that Twitter is an excellent format to keep followers updated on current forestry issues and a good place to find the latest information affecting worldwide forestry.

My tipp for new users... Keep text factually accurate, interesting – ideally with some humour.

FTN WEB RESOURCES

Read a 2014 FTN article on how to join the forestry and timber community on Twitter, by Stefanie Kaiser and Andrew Heald

Links to useful Twitter resources and beginners guides

www.confor.org.uk/ftnweb

Forestry on Twitter

Recent highlights from the world of trees and timber on social media

An eclectic selection brought to you by **@andyheald** and **@eleanormharris**

FTN WEB RESOURCES

All links to tweets can be found at **www.confor.org.uk/ftnweb**

Stirring it up

Tim Mack and Mark Crichton Maitland of Elderslie Estates believe that taking forestry beyond the woodland gate is the way forward.

Tim Mack and Mark Crichton Maitland have been forestry professionals and close friends for the best part of 40 years and their latest collaboration is breathing new life into the Elderslie Estates woodlands at Houston in near Glasgow.

Both Mark and Tim were infected by forestry at Cirencester by the inspirational John Josephi, the much loved and long serving forestry lecturer and protégé of the great Cyril Hart. The enthusiasm they took from those days continues, and the fact that Mark and Tim have remained close friends and shot and stalked together for virtually every year since has only enhanced it.

After Cirencester they professionally went their separate ways. Mark became a land agent in Scotland and then Herefordshire, before becoming a full-time forestry consultant in the 1980s, while Tim went to Merrist Wood and became an arboricultural contractor in the south east of England, then moving to Kintyre as a forestry contractor. At some stage during Mark's move south and Tim's move north they met in a pub on Hadrian's Wall and swapped north/south forestry knowledge over several pints of beer.

"We know each other so well", says Mark, "that we hardly need to discuss things. We went on a really good boys' stalking holiday in the far north a couple of years ago and hardly spoke for two weeks, other than to say, 'I agree, take the second stag from the right' or 'I don't mind if I do have a drop more'."

Elderslie Estates extend to around 1600ha, a little over 400 of which are forestry. It is a good example of a diversified working estate; it doesn't have a big house or a big shoot or big mountains, but it does have a respectable portfolio of residential property, a fair amount of commercial property, farming – both let and in hand – and forestry, some woodcock shooting and is home to a pack of foxhounds. It has been factored by Chris Addison-Scott of Galbraith for over 30 years. Chris is only the fourth factor since 1905. "We really value first class advice and continuity is really important, you need to know where the bodies are buried" says Mark.

The land is rolling lowland hill country, a bit like North Devon but with lots more wind and rain. There are three tiers of forestry: Sitka in the upland hills, a conifer–hardwood mix in the middle hills and mostly hardwood in the lowlands.

Advocates of change

"It's time that we rethink what we do with our land, and Brexit and the future shape of the forest products market will be a powerful determinant in that process. Forestry has to be taken out of its woodland box and properly integrated into the land use mix."

It's evident that the pair of them like to stir things up. And that's what the sector needs these days. They have been pushing the Forestry Commission, politicians and the farming lobby to take forestry outside of woodlands into the farms and have been challenging the sector to use alien species in different ways (some of them currently banned or deemed unrealistic for use in this country).

Above, Tim Mack in 12 month *Eucalyptus glaucesens* at Elderslie and, right, Mark Crichton Maitand

Mark says that we live in what he calls the 'post-agricultural landscape'. Traditionally, the estate consisted of small family worked dairy farms, but they are all history now. As tenants have retired and the land has come back in hand, the challenge is what best to do with it.

Creating more resilient and diverse woodlands

Current silvicultural options are really becoming too limited. "What we need are new silvicultural approaches and more integrated and efficient landuse strategies", Tim stresses. "With Brexit and the end of the current grant harvesting, land owners will be forced to think outside the box."

At Elderslie, Sitka has been the banker for nearly a hundred years; high yield class, usually non-thin and normally succumbing to windblow every 30-40 years. "That has been all well and good, but I have felt for many years that perhaps we could do something better. I think we are now on the cusp of doing something better, although we are slightly groping in the murk still", says Tim

Monocrop rotations are not good for plant health and we are increasingly seeing issues like progressive butt rot in the conifers ruling out NS and SS on some sites after about four rotations. We all know the plant health issues with larch and ash, add the spruce ones and suddenly you have lost four important weapons in your armoury.

> "Maybe we are on to something, or maybe we are just a couple of dinosaurs mumbling in our beards about going back to the future.

Mark believes that we need to go back to old fashioned and rather out of date forestry, such as practiced by Cyril Hart. There are lots of species out there that have been all but forgotten but which have a role to play.

"Not only do we need to look at alternative conifers, but we also need to look at spruce and other conifer mixtures, using species like western hemlock, noble fir or Pacific silver fir (*Abies amabilis*). There is an opportunity here to try something quite radical, like a Sitka/*A amabilis* row mixture and there is certainly scope for selection and shelterwood systems. Tim and I have constant arguments over whether to thin or not to thin. Historically we always got caught out by windblow, but nothing ventured, nothing gained, and we have started thinning again where we can and wait to see if this is another case of hubris and will the wind blow it all over. What has made the option possible are good harvesting contractors, markets for thinning products for biomass and Tim's excellent timber marketing that has meant we can thin at break-even at worst."

Going back to thinning has allowed them to create a more mixed and structurally more resilient forest in the middle hillls, whereas the hardwoods of the lowlands have been their experimenting ground to explore a transition towards a semi-natural woodland.

It is a difficult job to move towards a forest with multiple canopy layers, but it increases the resilience to strong winds. They recognise that the conditions in Scotland don't necessarily favour European-style silviculture approaches but with commitment and the right people on the ground it can be done.

"For future resilience, we also need to up our game on forest products", adds Tim. "With an increasing cost base resulting from the requirements of long-term forest plans (excellent, but what was wrong with Dedication) and the unfortunate need to duplicate standards by having to comply with FC requirements and FSC certification, not to mention the whole supervisory and management apparatus, we need a greater volume of more valuable product to sell.

"Maybe we are on to something," says Tim "or maybe we are just a couple of dinosaurs mumbling in our beards about going back to the future. And we don't always agree with each other. Actually, it was the third stag from the right, not the second that was shootable."

www.elderslie.org

James Jones invests £7m in new I-Joist line

As part of a continuing investment programme at its JJI-Joist plant in Forres, James Jones & Sons Ltd announced in January that a contract had been placed with US-based Globe Machine Manufacturing Co. to supply and install a new high-speed, automated I-Joist assembly line. The total project investment will be almost £7m. The new investment follows on from the £4.5m project to install the new finger-jointing line at the Forres site in 2015

Speaking about the investment, Angus Macfarlane, General Manager of James Jones & Sons' Timber Systems Division commented: "The UK housing market is set for a sustained period of growth and, as the UK market leader for timber I-Joists, it's important that we are able to meet the demands of the market and ensure that we remain at the forefront of engineered timber manufacturing in the UK.

"The new line will be one of the most advanced in the market place and will allow us to offer customers specification flexibility and product innovation.

"We anticipate that we will see JJI-Joists coming off the new line in Q4 2018"

Tom Bruce-Jones, Joint MD of James Jones & Sons, put the investment in the context of the overall James Jones business, saying: "We will continue to invest in our business where we see market growth and opportunities, whether it's in sawn timber, engineered timber or our pallet and packaging operations. In the next five years we have committed to a capital expenditure programme of £50m across the company to make sure that we continue our drive to be the most efficient producer of the highest quality timber products in the UK."

www.jamesjones.co.uk

New directors for Maelor Forest Nurseries

Originally from a farming background, **Mark O' Neill** (left) – operations director – spent 20 years in large scale cropping and project management in the UK, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. **Richard Parsons** (centre) – commercial director – graduated in Business Studies and worked in advertising and recruitment, before retaining in forestry, and gaining an MSc in Environmental Forestry from Bangor. Before joining Maelor in 2014, Richard was Head of Plant & Seed Supply at the Forestry Commission.

Imam Sayyed (right) – production director – graduated with a BSc in Forestry from Dapoli, India and then worked as a Forestry Research Officer/Forest Manager at Suryodhaya Foundation, India. He completed an MSc in Environmental Forestry from Bangor and went on to join Maelor in 2008

New Confor position on plant health and Brexit

In response to widespread concern from our members, Confor has produced a new briefing on plant health, in the context of our exit from the EU.

The briefing covers the risk posed by the imports of live plant material and firewood, and proposes a policy framework to mitigate these risks.

The briefing has been published on our website, a news release has been sent out widely and it has been sent to relevant contacts in the public sector.

Please make use of it, for example sending it to your MP or promoting it on social media, to spread awareness of how threats to plant health can be effectively tackled.

Picture: green spruce aphid (FC)

UKWAS update

After a review and revision period lasting three years, UKWAS 4 has overcome a major hurdle and just before Christmas was fully approved by FSC International, with no further changes required to the standard. UKWAS 4 has now been passed to PEFC International for their endorsement. PEFC consultants have already reviewed the standard, and UKWAS4 will now be forwarded to the PEFC membership for a vote. If everything goes to plan, it is hoped that UKWAS 4 will have full approval later in the spring. The final stage of the process will be for FSC and PEFC to agree an effective date, which is normally three months after the approval date. A great deal of thanks is owed to the UKWAS Steering Group, for all their patience and understanding throughout the very lengthy review and approval process.

NEW MEMBERS

Agri Forest Ltd Peebleshire
Miss Karen Batten Gwynedd
Miss Sarah Ellis Gwynedd
Mr Benjamin Allen Gwynedd
Mr Christopher Thompson South East London
Mr Ormungandr Melchizedek Perthshire
Pentiddy Woods Cornwall
Sidbury Manor Estate Devon

UPCOMING EVENTS IN SCOTLAND

Regional meetings Scotland
North East: Deeside, 07 March
South: Lockerbie, 15 March
Mid: Blantyre, 22 March

Woodland Creation Essential workshops
Lanark: 01 March
Dumfries: 08 March
Inverness: 13 March
Perth: 15 March
Aberdeen: 20 March

Timber Transport Conference
Inverness, 23 March
Online booking now open
Sponsored by Volvo

All details at **www.confor.org.uk/resources/events**

Small and pretty meets big and strong

Do forest stereotypes still exist? How do they affect the way we manage forests? Should we blur the boundaries between established forest types?

Broadleaved = recreation + traditional craft + conservation
Conifer = large + monotonous + mass production + income source
Do and should forest managers alter these equations?

We asked our members.

Design to facilitate meaningful thinning

James Brown
New Woods Forestry Ltd, East Anglia

I have finished a Forest Management BSc and am now working with "small-scale, broadleaved amenity forestry". I already witness forest management companies designing small, productive broadleaved woodland. We are all aware of the right tree and right place ethos. Perhaps more focus is needed on the specific design and species mixtures. The design needs to facilitate future thinning that is economic and avoids the premature removal of secondary species. Clump planting of varying yield classes should therefore be avoided and new planting or replanting has to be frequently monitored.

For 'small amenity' woodlands to become 'commercial', timely thinning interventions are essential both in terms of nurturing the crop and improving conditions for the end harvest. The habit of retaining mature timber for amenity reasons renders plantations non commercial.

My current employer has a large portfolio of broadleaved and mixed woodlands, in East Anglia. We are able to manage this client base geographically, holistically and profitably across multiple ownerships. Many small broadleaved woodlands can become one productive forest, just geographically spread. They have to be managed to which ever silvicultural system that best suits and in response to market forces.

My time at university gave me a good grounding in forestry in the UK. However, there was a focus on upland Sitka growing and from my experience I would suggest that there is a lack of broadleaved management being taught to current forest management students.

> "Small, broadleaved forestry need not be just for amenity. Surely the difference between 'small-scale broadleaved forestry' and 'large-scale softwood production forests' is the very different sites that each is suitable for. It is not merely a matter of objectives but rather of site limitations and suitability.
>
> **Esmond Harris**
> Woodland owner, Suffolk

Broadleaved forests redesigned for market-orientated harvesting

Malcolm Carrington
MSC - Natural Building Materials

The quicker we get back to commercial forestry and coppicing the better. Commercial activity brings a discipline that casual, amenity, recreational woodlands lack. Get rid of the subsidies and let the produce determine the market and the market determine the produce. Am I mad? It's an equation, a balance, and over the last 50 years we have lost that balance. The difference being made up with grants, subsidies, special status, etc.

After a diverse career in forestry, I built a new business repairing and restoring historic buildings, but using many of my earlier skills which became apparent when repairing with wattle and daub and timber framing. I have now developed a new building block, totally sustainable, low carbon, for fast build called BETTABLOK and have a UK patent.

To make BETTABLOK work I need various timber components. These we will produce ourselves but there is a feedback down the line. I need sustainable British produced timber and coppice products. To do this properly, woodlands (broadleaved) need to be redesigned so that harvesting can be carried out without driving over-dressed stumps. This would allow the crops to be grown closer, straighter with a denser volume. The regular coppicing would enhance the flora and fauna and bring vigour to our woodlands. We can produce new strains and develop new techniques because the future is based on sustainability, breathability and viability.

Forestry, woodlands, coppice and now breathable buildings is my life's passion. I hope others agree and put our woodlands back in their proper perspective, at the heart of our communities, being relevant, healthy and exciting.

Making a living from small woodlands

Toby Allen
Sat It With Wood

Over the last couple of years I have invested considerable time researching ways to bring more small woodland into management, and I've spoken to people up and down the country to hear their opinions. Looking from my window there are lots of small woodlands, few are managed, and to me this is a wasted resource. Historically, woodland provided for society in different ways, and as we have changed the way we use and procure wood, the motivation for harvesting timber from these woods has ceased. The main product coming from these woods will be firewood, and as we all know the cost of housing in the countryside is higher than someone can earn cutting low value timber.

The time has come for an honest conversation about what we do with these parcels of woodland, and how they can once again provide for society. It's also time to have a think about who will work in these woods, where will they live and how will they earn a sustainable wage? The emergence of the green wood crafts culture could be an exciting opportunity, people can mix high value craft items with firewood sales. Likewise working in a small woodland is an ideal training ground for a start-up business or someone wanting to gain experience. But the conditions need to be right for them to be able to afford to continue managing the woodlands, doing it for the love of it eventually gives way to the practicalities of earning a decent wage.

We like to think of the multiple benefits of British forestry, and a woodland can have multiple uses too. Between management interventions it can be used for many different things; a venue for courses or activities, a glamping enterprise or off-road cycling, a loading bay can even be rented out as a yard to a local business, and in some cases provide a housing solution for local workers. Can innovative thinking make owning a small woodland financially productive?

Productive management compatible with natural capital

Graeme McVittie
FICFor
Senior Conservation Officer – Woodlands,
Exmoor National Park Authority

Most of the 600 ha woodlands managed by Exmoor National Park Authority on and around Exmoor owe their very existence to centuries of productive management and in most cases their special qualities are dependent on a continuation of this intervention. And yet there developed a belief that non-intervention and a reliance on natural processes alone would deliver these outcomes. There are certainly some features which will benefit from non-intervention regimes but there is now clear evidence to show how managed woods strengthen natural and cultural capital better than unmanaged woods.

See Exmoor case study, p30

>>

Semi-natural woodlands can be more productive

Dr. Peter Perry
West Cornwall

Forestry Commission

Many large commercial forests have been managed in recent years to better embrace other functions and continuous cover systems are increasingly popular. It's also worth remembering that large scale 'commercial', conifer or broadleaved, doesn't necessarily mean visually unattractive – it's partly a matter of perception.

Depending on landscape scale, there are surely limits to how far this blurring can go: If you need to harvest Xm^3/ha or Xm^3 in total to make a commercial woodland operation viable then it's very difficult to get around this. Conversely, if wildlife conservation, visual aesthetics and education are your main objectives then the introduction of a commercial imperative may well be counter-productive and undesirable.

Surely in these circumstances the best way forward is to proceed 'on all fronts', admitting that many different types and combinations of forestry can contribute validly in what we in the sector know (and the general public perhaps does not realise) is still a national 'recovery' situation, the UK remaining one of Europe's least forested nations.

Along with the realisation that many of our existing semi-natural woodlands are unmanaged has come an increasing appreciation that, although often relatively small, they can contain individual/pockets high value trees. Buoyant woodchip and fire log demands continue to provide useful markets, greatly improving the economics of necessary thinning operations. In addition, the many recent refinements/additions to techniques/equipment for harvesting, extraction and small-scale processing allow value-adding closer to the woodland, reducing the need to transport large volumes of uniform produce long distances.

In terms of the future we surely still have a lot to learn especially in the areas of continuity of forestry policy, woodland scale, and continued attention to genetics, particularly in the hardwood sector.

Whilst a range of tree/woodland benefits can be certainly be gained from small plantings as we know, it takes scale - large woodlands – to properly achieve the volumes and timber quality necessary for the commercial function. It also, of course, requires continuity of forestry policy and determination to achieve an agreed national plan.

Time for a new approach in Wales

Adrian Farey
Director, Elwy Working Woods

It must be 20 years since we cut into our hillside, overlooking the river Elwy, to create space for our sawmill and all the necessary sheds and workshops that go with it. There is a strong economic argument for a different, more traditional type of forestry and timber industry.

We need a reliable supply of well grown properly thinned and brashed larch, Douglas fir, Western red cedar, oak, ash and Sweet chestnut to name the more obvious species. These could, if appropriate, be either mixed or in small compartments in the same plantation. We feel that with ever increasing threat from disease, the mixed woodland provides more resilience and crucially though often set aside as irrelevant, a woodland that all can enjoy for a multitude of reasons.

It is argued that growing timber for longer than the usual 50 years or so is uneconomic and maximising profit is after all the subtitle of the modern forestry bible; but fortunately for us in Wales, we have other things to consider.

We think it's time not only for a new approach but to bring the spotlight to play on the softwood industry. It is assumed without question that because there is a big demand for cheap timber then we must supply. However, if we look at agriculture for example, it is generally acknowledged that the scramble to produce cheap food has proved disastrous for the rural economy and catastrophic for the environment. I'm not saying that softwood forestry has plumbed the same depths but it is following the same path.

It is the case as far as home grown timber is concerned, that yield, ease of processing, and ability to absorb preservative treatment are the over-riding criteria when it comes to deciding which timbers are made available for general use and not the

natural qualities of the timber.

Sitka spruce, for example, is a poor performer in comparison with almost all other softwoods grown in the UK, in things like shear strength, bending strength, compressive strength, stiffness and durability, yet somehow, a dip in that magic potion Tanalith E makes it suitable for just about anything.

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>> # A broad range of forest types

Peter Donnelly

Retired Forester NDFr,
former APF chairman, Exmoor

Forest/woodland management covers so many variations that a classification into "broadleaved, amenity versus commercial conifer" is too simplistic. There would appear, to me to be:

- **'Sporting' woodlands**, where management facilitates (frequently large-scale commercial) game shooting.
- **Amenity woodlands**, frequently in public ownership; where management facilitates community recreational use.
- **'Conservation' woodlands**, frequently managed by charitable bodies; where the management objective is to perpetuate their perception of 'conservation', or 'traditional' management methods.
- **Small woodlands**, mainly, but not necessarily broadleaved, occupied by recreational or hobby owners, where a financial return is of less importance than the pleasure of owning woodland and/or practising 'conservation' or 'traditional management'.
- **Neglected broadleaved woodlands**, where the owner either cannot afford to, or does not wish to, carry out management.
- **Neglected coniferous plantations**, probably P50/70; frequently on sites and in locations which are now uneconomic to manage using 21st-century techniques and machinery.
- **Managed estate woodlands**, usually mixed species; where economic management procedures can be followed.
- **Commercial coniferous plantations**, which are of sufficient size to facilitate 21st-century management procedures. Some of these can be also in locations where access, particularly road access is extremely difficult and costly.

This broad range of forests and woodlands, coupled with the diversity of management objectives does present enormous problems. Even the various interpretations of 'conservation' will affect any management proposals for adjoining, or adjacent, small woodlands, whilst the concept of 'traditional' as employed by many conservation bodies, as well as many of the small woodland owners, is yet another pebble in the pool!

A place for both

Peter Topham

Savills

I don't see why there should be a dichotomy, there is a place for both. The biggest challenge is getting trees in the ground and increasing forest area. High land prices and the threats from grey squirrels are the issues I face in the south West of England. I cannot see either of those getting any better in the near future. The UKFS works for both and any Forest Management Unit should be aiming to achieve a selection of woodlands which are both semi natural and productive, amenity and commercial. These then provide the many multiple benefits of woodlands on economic, environmental and social grounds.

Protect productive feedstock base

Len Yull FICfor

Retired forester and former

As a grumpy octogenarian, I am tired of colleagues who are constantly apologising for the plantations we developed in the 60/70/80s, on the production from which the current timber processing industry depends. In those days we were penalised for having too much open space, and were required to adhere closely to well defined 'Objects of Management'.

Today, Objects of Management appear to be maximising return on capital employed (which can be achieved by doing the bare minimum and selling a property into an overheated and often uninformed market), mitigating tax liabilities, or developing forests which each satisfy the requirements of every individual, which is impossible.

The constraints on forest planners and managers have reached a stage akin to requiring a high tech facility such as NASA to devote 30% of its effort to basket weaving!

In my view, a significant degree of specialisation is not only possible, but essential if we are to counter the current serious erosion of the productive feedstock base being caused by well meaning but ill-considered policies.

Garden at heart of the forest

Donald McPhillimy

Woodland manager
(community, farm and urban woodlands)

The Finnish example:

- Three species dominate - Scots pine, Norway spruce and silver birch
- All native woodland
- Soils and climate poorer than Scotland
- High biodiversity
- Room for hunting, recreation, summer houses and saunas
- Multi billion pound forest industry.

Where's the common ground?

Simon MacGillivray NDF MICFor

Chartered Forester, Glasgow

Where can we find areas of compatibility between both camps?

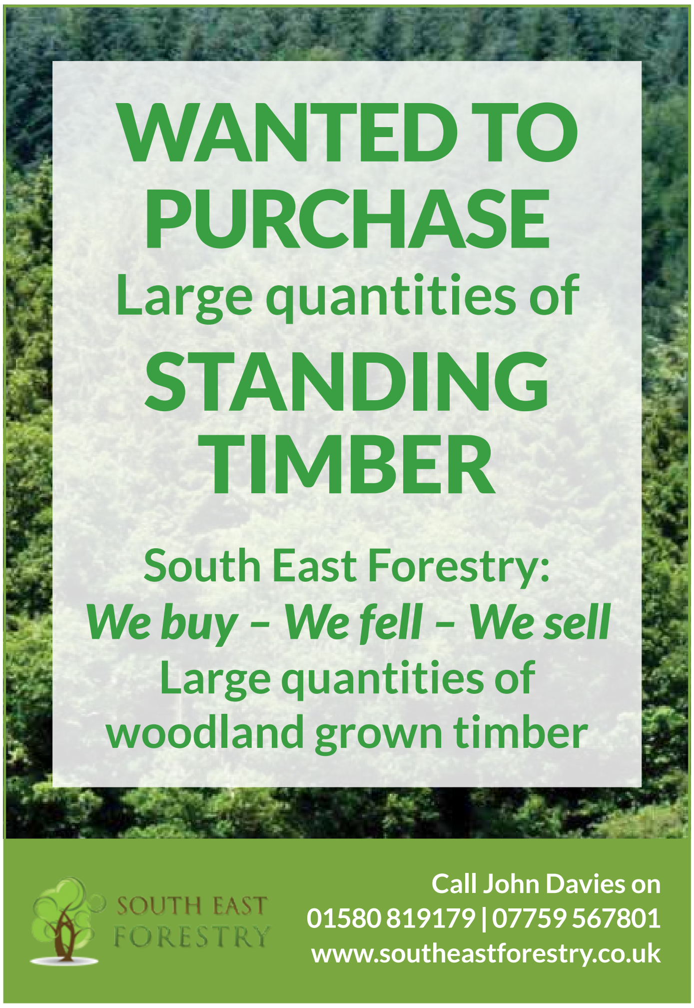
In central Scotland one estate is planting circa 8.00ha with broadleaves, primarily oak and sycamore. I'm sure visions of tubes and maximum spacing are flashing before many people, but the stocking density is 4444/ha and the estate has a long history of growing quality oak so this is a commercial, small broadleaved woodland!

I am aware of two large new planting projects being developed in Scotland and nearing approval.

One has over 500ha net planted area of which approximately 80% is commercial conifer and 20% native. The other has over 300ha net planted area of which 55% is commercial conifer and 45% native. Both of these also comprise large areas of designed open ground.

I think the old distinction between native and productive is out-dated. The two are very much integrated in modern planting projects.

There are three basic fundamentals of whatever you plant, good silviculture, good access and good management, size really does not matter.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Fur, feather, fin and forestry

Ralph Peters, Head of Estate Management and Professional, Bidwells, on the future of woodland and game management

It is a fact of life that on many mixed rural estates in Scotland sporting and forestry enterprises often experience somewhat strained relations.

Whether the sporting be for deer or winged game and the forestry productive or amenity, my own experiences over the last (nearly) 20 years in estate management have shown it can be difficult to reconcile the two. There are many well-known sporting estates delivering exciting stalking and shooting but where trees are utilised and managed purely for sport they are seldom, if ever, commercial in nature and tend to be managed at cost. Equally, truly commercial forestry offers little or nothing in the way of sporting value and in fact sporting interests may be seen as detrimental to the management of the timber. It is hard to make money from sporting enterprises and this is not becoming any easier with such things as the reintroduction of Shooting Rates. Good-quality, well managed production forests on the other hand can provide sound long-term investment.

However, ‘sporting’ activities on Scottish estates are a traditional and necessary part of the rural fabric, whether this be for deer management, rural employment or conservation - often all three. Shooting plays a major part in the rural economy and frequently helps justify the significant investment made by owners in conservation management. It is at the core of many estates and the knock-on environmental benefits to the property itself and beyond help justify the effort (and expense). However, as it becomes increasingly difficult to generate any profit from sportings so estate owners need their other enterprises such as forestry to produce good levels of income. To do this, productive forests must be properly managed and this is often seen as being to the detriment of the sportings.

Clashes between the two are regular occurrences. In recent weeks, I have heard and dealt with three issues. I have been told the story of replanting by an estate forestry department taking place adjacent to a pheasant drive thus disturbing the birds and making the drive unviable on that occasion. A stalking tenant is concerned on another property because recent clear-felling has drastically altered the roe stalking he rents. Thirdly, a gamekeeper needs to plan for a future adjustment to the pheasant shoot under his control but is struggling to do so because of the constraints on changes to forestry that can be made as a result of the estate’s Long-Term Forest Plan. This same keeper has the difficult task of managing a large herd of fallow deer to meet sporting expectations but also controlling them to reduce damage to young plantations. Undoubtedly some issues between the two enterprises can be resolved through better communication but this is not always the case without careful and thoughtful management. Forestry is not something to turn on and off at a whim so prior planning is always needed. On an estate its impact needs to be considered on the whole, not just the woodland area being worked on.

A serious issue at present for all rural properties in Scotland is the reintroduction of Shooting Rates by the Scottish Government. Apart from the much-publicised errors made in calculating rateable values, a major bone of contention has arisen as a result of the allocation of standard forestry level rates at £5 per hectare whether major productive forestry (with little if any sporting value) or amenity/sporting woodland. For a commercial forestry investor, sporting is often of zero interest. Given the theoretical choice of having or not having deer, the pure investment decision would clearly be to have none. On a sporting estate, this is not the case as deer populations are managed and seen as a sporting asset to possibly compliment winged game shooting. In such cases, deer stalking is an important estate enterprise. Mixed estates are more complicated, but essentially deer in forestry and grazing on agricultural crops are a nuisance - but they may still be a sporting asset. A mixed estate might have several large productive forestry plantations, created as an investment with no sporting value as well as a series of smaller, possibly mixed species or native, woods planted for amenity and sporting purposes. These

> “ As it becomes increasingly difficult to generate any profit from sportings, estate owners need their other enterprises such as forestry to produce good levels of income.

>>

> A mixed estate might have several large productive forestry plantations, created as an investment with no sporting value as well as a series of smallerwoods planted for amenity and sporting purposes.

>> smaller areas can have high sporting but low timber values. We would argue that it is wrong to charge sporting rates on the obviously commercial plantations and by doing so investment in commercial forestry, which plays such a significant part in the Scottish rural economy, is likely to suffer. For sporting rates to be applied across all forestry based on all woodland having the same sporting value is clearly wrong and Bidwells is actively working with the forestry industry in Scotland, including ConFor, to seek a review of this.

The above does not paint a very optimistic picture for sporting and forestry enterprises working well together but, on an estate level when there is good communication and a bit of give and take on both sides, it is certainly possible to have both valuable timber and viable sporting enterprises. It also occurs to me that the sporting industry could learn something from forestry.

It is difficult to look into current rural affairs without encountering articles on the intense pressure sporting and, in particular, driven grouse estates find themselves under at present. Never have sporting management practices been under such scrutiny. Undoubtedly grouse shooting plays an important part in tourism, income, employment and residency in remote areas as well as conservation. There is, however, a real risk that the industry may be perceived in a similar way to the single-minded pursuit of largely monoculture investment commercial forestry which was encouraged 30+ years ago. The forestry industry recognised this issue and accepted it as a problem, resulting in the setting up of the UK Forest Standards – putting in place rules under which forests must be managed to encourage diversity of woodland types.

Sporting estates are waking up to this issue and excellent initiatives like Wildlife Estates Scotland and the good work of the Association of Deer Management Groups are beginning to address the matter, but more still needs to be done by the shooting industry to self-regulate and improve its public image. If not addressed, it may not be long before licensing of grouse moors will be put in place by the Scottish Government (this is being examined by a government-appointed independent group at present and The National Council of the SNP voted late last year to bring in the licensing of grouse moors as policy) with, we suspect, inevitable trickle down to all sporting enterprises following thereafter.

www.bidwells.co.uk

Forest management and diversification at Exmoor

by **Graeme McVittie FICFor**, Senior Conservation Officer – Woodlands, Exmoor National Park Authority

Exmoor National Park Authority own and manage 600ha of woodland on Exmoor. We are now firmly of the view that to sustainably deliver our increasingly complex conservation, access, landscape, natural capital, water management etc objectives we must generate and strengthen income streams from timber sales. ENPA Members have recently approved a Timber Income Strategy and we see no contradiction in pursuing National Park Purposes and enhancing the special qualities of Exmoor's woodlands through active intervention and sustainable wood production. We direct several hundred metres of firewood into local markets each year, have recently sold a significant volume of quality oak to a local timber framing company and use our own softwood and hardwood for gates, bridges, waymarking and fencing.

One example where we demonstrate combining access, landscape, conservation and timber production is Moor Wood on North Hill above Minehead. Moor Wood at 16ha forms a visible backdrop to Minehead and one of the few sites that might be classed as 'urban fringe'. It is highly valued locally and well used being Open Access and served with a good network of paths, tracks and rides.

Moor Wood is a long established plantation having formed part of the estate of Dunster Castle. Existing stands of Douglas fir, Sitka spruce and Scots pine date from the earlier phases of planting. Some areas were felled during WW2 for military training and timber and not replanted until the 1950s. Stands were damaged by storms in the early 1990s and replanted with broadleaves and conifer including larch. By 2010 there are at least thee distinct phases of plantation. In 2010 stands of p50 and p90 larch were felled as a preventative measure against *Phytophthora ramorum*.

This pre-emptive larch removal released further areas for restocking with coast redwood and western red cedar and opened up stands which begun to regenerate naturally with a range of conifer and broadleaf species. The result is a diverse mix of broadleaf and conifer with a wide age range spanning almost 150 years. In 2016 we formally adopted a CCF plan and intend to supply all ENPA in-house requirements from this and other woods on North Hill.

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A guide to pruning broadleaves

Woodland Consultant **Eamonn Wall** has been planting and pruning broadleaved trees for over 25 years. Here he summarises his advice on how best to prune.

1 Why prune?

From a forestry point of view, the aim of growing trees is usually to produce timber as the primary objective. When growing broadleaved trees the aim is usually to maximise the quality of the timber being grown by producing a straight bole without any branches and with minimum 6m length. Branches create knots, therefore reduce the quality of the timber.

A woodland containing pruned trees looks so much better and inspiring compared to an unpruned wood. It keeps woods open and makes them more enticing for visitors. However, when creating tree belts to hide industrial buildings we refrain from pruning as the greater concentration of branches enhances the screening benefits of the wood in this specific situation.

3 When to prune?

We start pruning in year three or four and then again in years five or six, and seven and eight. It really depends on how well the trees are growing and the species that has been planted. Over time the amount of pruning required by the crop reduces.

It is generally considered that, apart from just before coming into leaf and just before leaf fall, trees can be pruned all year round. Cherry should only be pruned in July to reduce risk of infection from silver leaf disease.

Winter is usually considered the best time to prune as the trees are leafless and it is easier to spot which branches need removal. Additionally, the ground vegetation is down so it is easier to move about the wood, and winter is often a generally nicer time in the woods with few insects to annoy you.

Above right, oak in need of formative pruning and, below, It is important to cut the tube so that you can prune the branch off near the main stem.

2 Be aware of dead branches

It is important to remove the side branches when they are still alive as this allows the tree to cover over the pruning wound with bark as soon as possible whilst minimising the impact of the branch knot in the timber of the tree. If the branches being pruned are dead then the knot within the timber will also be dead and may downgrade the value of the timber. It will also compromise the tree's ability to bark over (or occlude) the pruning wound.

4 Methods and tools

It is certainly easier and quicker to prune off smaller branches than larger ones. Smaller pruning wounds also heal much quicker, reducing the possibility of decay or entry of unwanted tree pests or diseases. So it is best to start early.

Early, ie formative pruning, is best carried out using loppers, which is a fast and easy way to single leading shoots and remove small side branches. However, if the pruning has been delayed, some branches may be too large for the loppers and a small pruning saw can be used on the odd occasion as required. A small foldable pruning saw is ideal for this work.

There are many variations of loppers available, some with telescopic arms. Weight is important if you are going to be pruning for several hours. There are two types of blades: 'side by side' where one blade passes by the other, and the type we prefer, the 'anvil' where one blade meets the other. The advantage of the anvil arrangement is that you do not get carried away trying to cut through branches too large which easily happens with side by side blades causing the blades to get stuck or bent by a branch.

As the trees become larger, the branches to be removed obviously get larger too and a point comes when the lopper is being used less and the pruning saw more. When this happens it is best to switch to a larger pruning saw which has a larger pruning blade (eg 350mm) than the folding saw (eg 150mm). A longer blade

is much quicker to use and can be kept in a sheath or protective pouch attached to your waist belt.

As the pruning proceeds the branches to be pruned are higher up the tree and a high or long handled pruner will then be required, perhaps one with an extendable handle. Pruning with loppers and hand saws will reach about 2.5m up the tree, whilst a high pruner will add another 2.5m.

For all pruning it is important to cut the branch off as close as you can get to the bole of the tree without cutting through the ridge or raised bark that often exists at the joint of the branch and the main bole of the tree. This is known as the branch bark ridge and is more obvious in some species than others. It is also important not to leave branch stubs (or small lengths of branch) which will decay back into the main bole downgrading the quality of the timber. By pruning close to the main bole it allows the tree to bark over (occlude) the pruning wound as soon as possible.

Pruning too many branches in one go is also not a good idea as it reduces the leaf cover, slowing the tree's growth. My top tip for formative pruning is to always look up into the crown as the best thing you can do for a tree is to single twin leading shoots. It is easy for the pruner to remove side branches and forget to look up!

Above left: Pruning saws; the foldable one is handy when using loppers in the early years. Above: Using loppers with anvil blades

5 What species to prune?

In a mixed stand of trees we usually prune the oak, beech, cherry, sycamore and (until recently) the ash. Birch is almost self pruning, as its side branches die off very quickly. Alder can be pruned but take a lot of work to do so. Lime has a more heavily branching habit and require much pruning to keep them growing as a single bole.

Ash dieback is a sad affair and it now seems pointless to put effort into pruning them if they are going to die. It is such a shame as ash were always one of the faster and straighter growing trees in a mixed stand, and also one of the easiest to prune too. They usually required just one or two prunes to single out twin leaders, where the central bud had been damaged or broken causing the two side buds to form into two leading shoots. We rarely prune rowan or willow.

Pruning of conifers is not so common, apart from the singling of double leaders.

Above right, an oak in need of pruning and, below, successfully pruned

6 Pruning intensity

When trees in a woodland are very young, it is hard to know which ones will make it to the final crop. So in order to provide the best crop from which to promote the best ones to grow on, it is important to carry out formative pruning of all the timber trees. Though not all trees will require formative pruning all trees will require side branch pruning, and once this carries on up the tree as high pruning you are starting to invest a lot of time. For this reason we then restrict high pruning to the better trees.

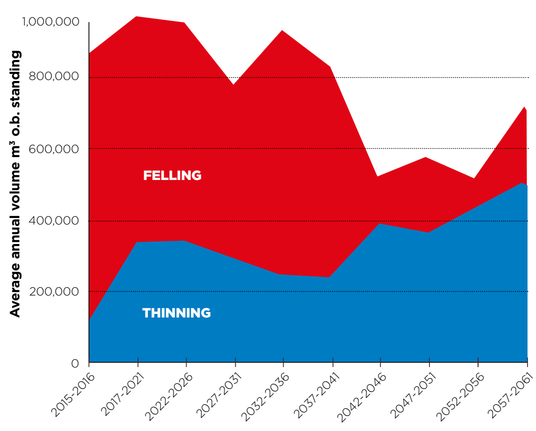
We also find that before high pruning creates a 6m branch free bole, thinning has taken place thus removing the poorer stems whilst promoting the better ones. Sometimes good stems will be thinned out to give space to promote other good stems. This of course reduces the number of trees requiring pruning. A well growing mixed broadleaved woodland could well be thinned three times and pruned four or five times by age 20.

High pruning is usually carried out in lifts, perhaps removing 1m to 2m of side branches from the bole in one go or lift.

The resilience of the Welsh forest industry

Robert South looks at the future of an industry which is to become his professional home for decades to come

Stepping back from my day job as a forest manager based in Wales, with specific responsibilities for harvesting and marketing, there is no doubt that the industry is important to Wales. It offers an annual value of £528m to our economy (Woodland for Wales Indicators), mainly in rural areas, 11,000 people in employment and generates 1.4m tonnes of softwood timber per annum, of which only 52% is from the public estate with the remaining 48% from the private sector.



Average annual timber availability for all conifers – thinning and felling
Source: Natural Resources Wales

Resilience in the context of change

Addressing resilience is a key priority in our industry, Described best as a system's ability to persist and maintain function during a period of change. Yet government seem less willing to consider and address the resilience of the industry itself. What are these changes in our system? To name but a few:

- Changes in the political landscape.
- Changes in the rural funding structure, following Brexit.
- The impact of increased regulation.
- Climate change affecting species selection, and growth rates.
- The risk of a pest or disease affecting timber stock.
- Changes in local, national and global product demand.

Industry threat #1: Timber availability

As it stands today, we have a little under 30 years – one rotation of improved stock spruce - to address this issue; can we solve the puzzle? Well yes.

We know from experience the effects of policy change, such as the Broadleaf Policy in 1985, or the removal of tax concessions in 1989. These have been a key driver in the demise of commercial planting, as is why we find ourselves looking at a bleak future. Our ability to influence change within our industry is limited and dependant on the change we are dealing with, changes in product demand is reacted to rather than influenced. Climate change, pests and diseases are a global issue that requires global intervention to solve. At local and governmental level, we can influence how money is spent and how regulations are approved and enforced.

> If we want to achieve something great we need to shout about it and educate the masses

Ecosystem services

As part of the *Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2016*, looking to our future is what we are all supposed to be doing. As planting in Wales currently stands, we are miles behind our target, with every planting scheme becoming a challenge to get approved. And the regulator expecting foresters to address every concern raised, from any stakeholder, however spurious it may be. Yet in the fashionable term of the day, *Ecosystem Services* which the governments and regulators seem to love, it is overlooked in the context of a large plantation, with the concept being bent to favour poorer species selection offering little in the way of a resilient industry for the future.

The ecosystem services provided by large spruce plantations is larger than most give them credit for, such as:

- Provisioning services, including offering a usable product with no waste, energy production, employment and financial security.
- Regulating services, including carbon sequestration, embedding carbon, nutrient cycling, air purification, noise reduction and water management.
- Cultural and supporting services, such as biogeochemical processes essential to life and high biodiversity value around forest edges and open rides; I think we can all agree that Coed Y Brenin and Llandegla are beautiful places.

In addition, the UK has not seen any significant planting since the post war mass planting, and lack of education of the public leads to them being scared of change and as a result objecting. As an industry the marketing of what we do is terrible, if we want to achieve something great we need to shout about it and educate the masses.

Let us be the generation that changes the attitudes of the masses and builds a resilient economy without subsidy, drives for lower carbon, cleaner air, better policies, skilled jobs and a brighter future.

Robert South, an Msc Forestry student at Forester and Bangor University DL, is a recipient of the Confor Education and Provident Fund.

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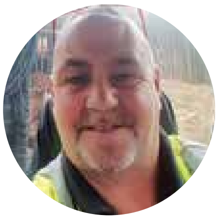

In the first of a regular series, **Rab Easton** looks at moving timber from forest to roadside

LOW IMPACT FORWARDERS

Small diameter round wood is currently in very high demand and one of the reasons for this is the increase in popularity of domestic and commercial biomass boilers that are used for heating and generating electricity. The small round wood market had seen a severe downturn in the 1990s and early 2000s with the paper and chipboard industries using increasingly more recycled products.

This is great news for the forest industry as thinning, when undertaken properly, mimics the natural selection process that would occur naturally and helps to maintain healthy, resilient forests that are able to lock up carbon from the atmosphere and store it as woody biomass

Forest owners and management companies are now able to undertake profitable thinning operations, creating a regular income and vastly increasing the capital value of the final crop.

The harvesting of the timber is relatively straightforward with smaller scale harvesters but greater thought needs to be taken on the equipment for the removal of the processed wood from the forest to roadside. A wheeled or tracked smaller scale low impact forwarder type extraction vehicle is ideal for thinning operation; this is a cost effective extraction method with a light footprint causing minimal damage to the soil structures and remaining crop. There is a good selection of smaller scale forwarders available to cope with most conditions but it is worth factoring in the type of sites that you will be mainly working before deciding on a particular type of machine; ground conditions (eg flat, steep, rocky), soil conditions (eg wet, peaty, dry, depth of ploughing), extraction distances and crop spacing.

Purpose-built Mini 8WD Forwarders

The smallest of this type of machine is the eight -wheel-drive mini forwarders ranging from 2.5–3 tonne payload. There are a few types of this size machine available; the Alstor 833/840 and Kinetic 8x8 are two of them. I have had the opportunity to spend time operating the Alstor 833.

Although only a small machine with a payload of 2.5 tonnes, this size of machine is extremely versatile and useful with an overall width of 1.49m. I was loading 3.7m logs and 3m chipwood on a wet mature stand of Norway Spruce with some windblown trees throughout. It was able to manoeuvre around the existing crop with ease without leaving a mark on the ground. The farma crane had the extending dipper boom with 4.2m reach (3.8 with fixed dipper boom) and could lift 350kg at full reach. The crane mounted winch was handy for accessing out of reach timber. The ROPS, FOPS and OPS cabin was well designed, quiet, and much roomier than expected and had great all round vision

These machines are usually around 20hp with three-cylinder engines and average around 5 tonne fully loaded. They can be fitted with band tracks to further reduce ground pressure and are capable of speeds up to 25km/hr. Fuel consumption of 2-3m^3/ltr can be expected and in reasonable conditions 2-300m^3 per week is achievable.

This sized equipment is ideally suited for smaller sized first and silvicultural thinning (3.7 logs, 3m chip/bio, pallet wood and fencing are the optimum sizes, longer length logs would be detrimental to the life of the machine), footpath clearances, smaller windblown tree clearances, use on parks, golf courses and other sensitive sites, railway line clearance

Above: Alstor 833
Left: Vimek 610SE
Below: Malwa 560F

and areas with limited access. Although they have great climbing ability, deep ploughing and obstacle laden ground can cause some problems due to the lower ground clearance.

They are easily moved between sites and can be transported on a trailer behind a large or 4WD vehicle; they are relatively inexpensive to run and maintain with a price tag that won't break the bank.

6WD Midi Forwarders

There is again a good selection of models by different machine manufacturers; the ones that I have seen and tried out are the Vimek 610SE and Malwa 560F.

The Vimek 610SE is a 5 tonne capacity forwarder that weighs 4.7 tonne when empty. It has a 68hp engine with a choice of Mowi 5.2m or 6.5m reach cranes with 400kg lift at full reach. The rear wheels can be engaged or disengaged and are driven by a cage roller drive hydraulically operated between the wheels. It is available in either 1.9 or 2.0m widths which makes it very manoeuvrable in tightly spaced crops and has 400mm ground clearance. It is restricted to 22km/hr so as to comply with Swedish law.

The Malwa 560F has a slightly larger capacity of 5.5 tonnes and can be used in conjunction with a purpose built trailer which increases the load to 9 tonnes, ideal for poor access blocks that have to be extracted through fields for timber truck ac- >>

Novotny LVS511

>> cess. There is a choice of Cranab cranes with 6.1 or 8m reach and ground clearance is 400mm with an overall width of 1.95. The Malwa has a 75hp three-cylinder engine and can achieve speeds of 20km/hr. Again, rear drive can be engaged or disengaged and it is directly driven through bogies and hubs.

8WD Midi Forwarders

I have again had dealings with two types of these, Entracon EF45 and Novotny LVS511, but there are many more makes and models available. The eight-wheel drive models have the benefit of slightly more ground clearance due to a higher front differential. It is a much smoother ride for the operator on rougher terrain due to the oscillation of the front bogies which causes less driver fatigue and can result in a longer working day. Band tracks can be fitted to both front and rear wheels which can greatly decrease ground pressure on soft and sensitive sites.

The Entracon has four hydraulic motors for driving the wheels at speeds up to 22km/hr, a 5.5 tonne capacity, a width of 1.8m and are fitted with a choice of cranes giving a reach up to 6.5m.

The Novotny is driven through the bogie axles at speeds of up to 18km/hr, 5 tonne capacity, 1.860m wide and have the options of Moheda, Mowi, Cranab and Kesla loaders. Some models have the option of rotating cabins.

This size machines are capable of working in all types of thinning and smaller clearfells and are capable of handling and carrying 4.9m logs. All models I have seen have good all round vision with well laid out comfortable safety cabs and good access for servicing and repairs

Tracked Midi Forwarders

I have only seen this type of equipment being demonstrated at forestry fairs and as it is specialised there is not as much choice.

One of these is the Swiss Tracked Forwarder, a cleverly engineered machine with triple acting rear bogie tracks and double acting front bogie tracks for a smoother ride over rougher forestry terrain. It has a 75hp engine with 4.5 tonne load capacity. The ground clearance is a lot less than the others at 200mm but due to the reduced weight in the tracks >>


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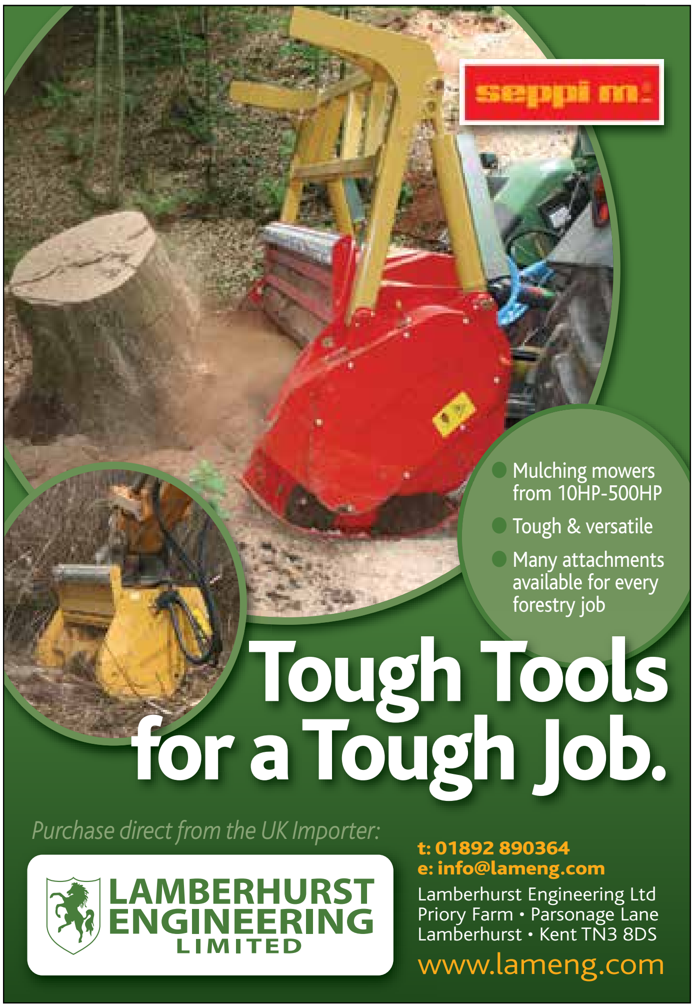
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>> compared to the wheeled models with bogies and hubs keeping it lower improves the stability. The travelling speed of this machine is 14km/hr which is quite a reduction on longer hauling distances but for wet, boggy, peaty thinnings or clearfells these ultra low ground pressure tracked forwarders certainly are the answer.

All of the above types of machines have earned their place in today's forestry and it is down to owners and operator's preference, budget, type and volume of work as to what fits your requirements.

Most of the machines that I have seen are generally well built and fit for the purpose that they were intended. They are well designed with a lot of thought having gone in to servicing and repairs. Some manufacturers have shunned complicated systems and have opted to fit simpler components which are easier for the operators to understand and are of help in keeping expensive breakdown time to a minimum.

A couple of points worth mentioning is instead of haggling over the price of a machine why not try and negotiate an extended deal on servicing and warranty which could be a bigger benefit to you in the long run. Also make sure that the mechanical, electrical and hydraulic components used in your machine are commercially used which are quick and easy to obtain at a reasonable cost.

Swiss Tracked Forwarder

Rab Easton is the editor of the bi-monthly Forest Machine Magazine. He is a second generation logger with over 40 years of hands on experience in timber harvesting. Rab's magazine is available both in print and online and he is very active on Twitter and Facebook.

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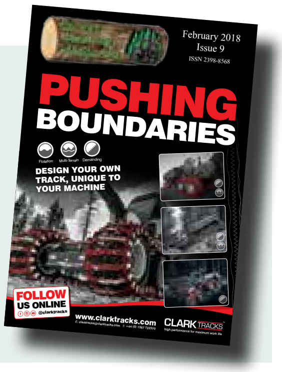


Oak logs highlight of hardwood auction

Messrs Newland Rennie: 30th Annual Hardwood Timber Auction at Cirencester was again well attended with lots from most areas of England and the predominant species being oak, which again met a flying trade, the top price of logs breaking the auction record for the third year running. The morning started with a well-received talk given by John Weir on the Climate Change and Woodland Composition.

Keith Spencer took the rostrum for the afternoon auction of some 48 lots. Bidding was solid throughout apart from firewood parcels, which made up nearly all of the 10% volume unsold. Trade on oak logs was the day's highlight. Forest Enterprise again entered the largest number but there was an entry of 11 lots from private growers and estates.

Standing sales

Just five lots of mixed broadleaf on offer. Top price was £38.13 per m^3 for a primarily Beech Stand (27 cum dbh) at Mundford, Thetford (lot 5) purchased by Mendip who also bought a similar lot at Cranwich, Thetford for a similar figure of £38.08 per m^3.

Logs

By contrast, in the log section there were some 20 lots all in very strong demand.

The top price was £242.35 per m^3 for great logs from Red Lodge, Wiltshire (lot 16) a well-known wood for a fine oak. It was purchased by Pontrilas, which substantially exceeded last year,s record of £233 per m^3 for Salcey logs.

Two lots of oak logs from Northampton achieved £235 and £240 pcm respectively, also purchased by Pontrilas, and a lot from Westacre Estate, Norfolk made £225 per m^3 purchased by Bowlby.

The overall average for oak logs was an outstanding figure of about £150 per m^3. New Forest oak made £160 per m^3 purchased by Soffee.

Other species were in a minority with the New Forest beech logs achieving £50 per m^3 purchased by Soffee. Westacre Estate sweet chestnut made £75 per m^3 for 2 cum lengths.

Firewood

This experienced an unenthusiastic response with a number of lots failing to sell. However, two lots of beech from Miserden Estate made £28 and £42 per m^3 respectively.

Softwood

Seven lots of mature Douglas and European larch sold well. The standing parcels of DF in Mortimer (51 dbh) made £52 per tonne (lot 41) and in Thetford £50 per m^3. They were sold to Woodgate and Somerscale, respectively.

Well-presented felled European Larch in Hawksmoor, Staffordshire made £85 per m^3, (lot 45) sold to Capricorn and £80 pcm for Cannock European Larch, also sold to the same buyer. Finally, Somerscale purchased Grizedale felled Douglas Fir (2.6m) for £60 per m^3.

SAVE THE DATE

Next year's sale is again scheduled for Thursday 29 November 2018. Enquiries to John Jenkins or Keith Spencer of Newland Rennie, 87 Monnow Street, Monmouth, NP25 3EW. 01600 712916.

Availability of supply will be theme for 2018

TIMBER AUCTIONS MARKET REPORT

Oliver Combe
Timber Auctions

Supply, supply

The steady improvement of the market through the first half of 2017 really escalated in the last three months. Processors with full order books are looking to maximise throughput in their plants; for this they need raw material. At the same time, there appears to be less timber being offered to the market right across the UK.

Whilst the age structure of the forest estate should mean that future availability of material increases as you travel north, there are other more subtle factors at play which influence supply regionally.

In England, the great storm of 1987 caused huge damage to forests throughout the South of England. Although this was all restocked, most of it was with broadleaves and often there has been limited maintenance after planting. Increasing affluence has increased amenity value of woodlands and reduced the commercial emphasis in management decisions, sporting and conservation objectives have been increasingly imported. When coupled with 'habitat restoration' and 'native broadleaved policy', the end result is that we have seen many highly productive conifer woodlands deconiferised and are now facing a serious reduction in productivity from woodlands at a time when demand is increasing.

In addition, much of the new woodland created over the last 30 years is of little economic value so maybe we are now heading into a supply trough in the South. Higher prices will bring some marginal woodlands back into management but there are now very few commercial woodlands which are not in active management.

In Wales, the north of England and south Scotland the supply situation should be better but how much productive capacity have we lost to restructuring, habitat restoration, PAWS restoration, wind farms and access restrictions?

Demand is very strong across all sectors, stocks are very low and there is still latent capacity in the harvesting and haulage sectors, what is missing is the timber to cut.

There just does not seem to have been quite as much timber coming to the market as there should have been in the second half of 2017 but historically when the market has improved the volume has appeared pretty quickly. In this instance, the early bird in 2018 will catch the worm!

In central and north Scotland where recently supply has been much stronger through 2017 the demand is also very strong although there continues to be a shortage of supply on the east coast and prices continue to move upwards.

The net result of the increased demand and constrained supply in the second half of 2017 has been a noticeable increase in timber prices. Standing, roadside and delivered prices have now passed the peaks of 2008, 2012 and 2015 and are still heading upwards. Prices are now at levels last seen in the mid to last 1990's.

Whereas £40 per tonne standing used to benchmark price to achieve for a spruce clearfell it looks like in 2018, £50per tonne will become the new £40.

Standing, roadside and delivered prices have now passed the peaks of 2008, 2012 and 2015 and are still heading upwards.

Whilst rapidly increasing prices are good for the grower they do also cause problems in the supply chain. The recent news that James Callender of Falkirk has gone into administration with the loss of 89 jobs is sad news for the industry.

Other processors have had their margins

£ per tonne delivered to customers in Wales, central and south England

Product	*Lower price*	*Upper price*	*Trend*
Log 18	£67.50	£72.50	↑
Bar 14	£50.00	£60.00	↑
SRW	£40.00	£50.00	↑
Fencing	£50.00	£55.00	↑
H Wood firewood	£50.00	£55.00	↑

£ per tonne delivered to customers in north England and Scotland

Product	*Lower price*	*Upper price*	*Trend*
Log 18	£67.50	£72.50	↑
Bar / pallet 14	£50.00	£60.00	↑
SRW	£40.00	£50.00	↑
Fencing	£50.00	£55.00	↑
H Wood firewood	£50.00	£55.00	↑

These prices are for guidance purposes only and are based on historic market information.

HARDWOODS

Sawlogs

The winter 2017/18 season has been dominated by the continued strong demand and prices for oak which are now moving into uncharted territory. A Timber Auctions sale of roadside oak sawlogs in December provided an interesting benchmark. Two parcels realised £7 and £8 per hoppus foot at roadside, similar parcels on the same estate marketed in late 2015 had achieved £5.25 per hoppus foot which was a good price at the time. So in two years the price has increased by £2 per hoppus foot or 40%.Other agents report similarly strong prices with exceptional parcels up around the £10 per hoppus foot at roadside level. The Ash felling season has started and offered prices look similar to or slightly better than last season, there is some interest in beech for export as well as some of the more decorative hardwood species.

Firewood

Firewood prices have firmed up in the second half of 2017, helped by domestic energy prices creeping up and the cold snap in November and December. There appears to be less stock about than in the last few years and there has been an increase in calls looking for firewood. Whilst there has been some natural selection occurring in the firewood processing sector which has removed inefficient processors there has also been serious investment development of some of the more progressive operations and they have become excellent local markets. In most areas, processor-sized firewood is now around £50 to £55 per tonne at roadside.

and profitability severely squeezed whilst they have been fighting hard to restrict raw material prices they have also been trying to increase their end product prices and are now getting price increases through. The market has resisted this but recent months have seen a number of modest price increases pushed though and the realisation that there will have to be more to ensure continuity of supply.

2018 looks like it will get off to a flying start and despite the uncertainty over Brexit and the impact of the Trump administration on the wider world it appears that the scene is set for a strong standing timber market in 2018.

GLOBAL TRENDS

The global economy continues to grow and timber consumption has continued to increase throughout 2017. Prices in the key markets - USA, China and Asia - continue to improve alongside steady increases in volume requirement. Increasing demand is putting new strains on established supply chains; Asia, as well as the USA, continue to be major pull factors and are drawing supplies away from historic markets. This is creating disruption to supply volumes and leading to price increases.

Exports from Europe and Scandinavia have grown sharply over the last 12 months whilst Finland has focused on Asia; Sweden has really grasped the opportunities available in the USA.

Most sawmills now have strong order books both from domestic and export markets and are in a strong position to improve their profitability after some tough years. Whilst these mills will not abandon the UK they will not dump timber on the UK market or give it away now there are better alternatives elsewhere, freight rates to Asia and China are frightingly low so it is now very easy to send containers of timber to the markets that will pay the best prices, if the UK does not compete with these prices it will lose the supply.

The warning that the Swedish sawmillers gave to the market in spring 2017 of reduced supply and increased prices were correct and are now having an impact.

The improved market conditions have now started to filter down to roundwood prices. In Finland log prices increased by 1% in November 2017, in Europe sawlog prices have risen steadily over the last six months whilst globally saw prices have increased in most regions during the second half of 2017.

Historically, when demand starts to increase it can take a while for the supply chain to react to the increased activity levels and increase production which leads to availability constraints on a rising market. Once increased prices filter down the supply chain and stumpage prices increase volume availability improves and gradually the market comes back into balance. This can however, be a lengthy process – not only do felling plans have to be approved and marketed but also the infrastructure has to gear up which requires extra men, machines and infrastructure.

TIMBER AUCTIONS

Timber Auctions will be holding scheduled online timber tender and auction sales throughout 2018, all sales will be advertised on **www.timberauctions.co.uk**
If you wish to discuss parcels of timber you would like to discuss or for further information contact Oliver Combe on 07771 958975, oliver.combe@timberauctions.co.uk for free independent marketing advice

Shortages push prices higher from north to south

TIMBER MARKET REPORT
Harry Stevens
Timber Buying Director,
Tilhill Forestry

Recent months have seen a period of increased prices for all products driven largely by a shortage of standing timber coming to the market. Prices have increased in all geographical regions from the south of England to north Scotland.

Figures indicate that whilst the national production forecast shows an increase in biological availability, actual harvest for the last few years rather than increasing in line with availability forecasts, has indeed reduced.

This has many causes, certainly it is one matter the standing trees being on the hillside, and another turning them into loads going over the weighbridge. Regulatory hurdles have a delaying effect on forests being harvested, restructuring of even aged forest complexes pulls forward an element of timber, but largely delays felling coupes from being harvested, the requirement to maintain the adjacency criteria, ie neighbouring coups being a limiting factor.

Anecdotal evidence shows that, for example, where a forest complex may have been planted over a period of a few years, long-term planning will result in the harvest being spread over a period of 20 years.

Sawlog market

Delivered sawlog prices have continued to rise over the last three months. This is in response to the short bought ahead position of most sawmills. This situation is particularly acute in south Scotland where sawmills have had to take production out due to insufficient material to cut.

This price upswing is unusual as previously sawlog prices have increased after sawn prices have increased. However, on this occasion sawlog prices have risen before increases in sawn prices.

Demand for sawn product is reasonably strong reflecting a reduction in imported material particularly from the Baltics. Sawn fencing and palletwood have not risen in price to the same extent as construction material.

This upward raw material cost, has dramatically impacted on sawmills profitability, and a medium sized sawmill in central Scotland has gone in to administration presumably at least partly in response to this situation.

Roundwood market

For the majority of 2017 the small roundwood market was largely in balance, and prices had dipped as buyers were able to refrain from marginal purchasing. The last quarter has seen this trend reverse dramatically as increased capacity in the panel board and biomass markets has seen demand increase strongly.

Several processors have found their bought ahead inventory inadequate, and have entered the market strongly and prices have moved upwards.

With sawmills taking additional time out, poor weather, increased consumption and low stock, the Christmas holiday was a challenging period for many processors. Some sites have taken production shuts and there have been imports of roundwood and co-products from Ireland and the Baltics.

Standing market

From the growers perspective the last six months has a steady increase in the price paid for standing timber. This is particularly pronounced in south Scotland north England and Wales, but all areas have seen upward movement.

As ever quality sells well, particularly where there is a high log content, but with strong demand for small roundwood all parcels are receiving considerable attention.

The market is undoubtedly in an upward spike which is unsustainable for processors. Businesses are taking a short term position of one where although current processing is loss making, the alternative which is taking capacity out either short term or long term is even less palatable. At some point if the current position prevails they will have to take the alternative position of reducing capacity.

Now is a good time to sell standing timber.

www.tilhill.com

The Austrian collective *holzbau_kunst* brings together the forestry, construction and design sectors to promote modern timber buildings. **Stefanie Kaiser** reports.

In June last year, I reported on the collective of small forest owners (*Waldverband*) in Vorarlberg, a small mountainous region in West Austria. *Waldverband* itself is a member of *holzbau_kunst*, a network which brings together all sectors with an interest in promoting the use of timber in construction.

Vorarlberg receives about 30,000 international visitors a year, mostly architects and students but also representatives of forward-thinking municipalities who are interested in promoting timber buildings in their villages and towns. What attracts them?

Holistic concept + joining of forces = success

The region prides itself of being one of the pioneers of the modern timber building scene.

Their concept is simple:

- Architecture
- Craft
- Innovation
- Ecology

However, it takes more than just buzzwords and a good concept for market success. How did timber houses in Vorarlberg make the step from niche lifestyle products to preference option for local planners and public contractors? Why do mayors in rural villages crave to get their town halls, social housings, school gyms and even waste processing facilities built in the latest timber fashion?

Vorarlberg´s success in timber housing lies in the fact that the whole supply chain has come together

with one common goal: to create demand for modern timber buildings.

It takes a visionary

Dr. Matthias Ammann (above), originally a solicitor, used to manage the carpenters guild in Vorarlberg from within the Chamber of Commerce. It was from this position, that he started an impressive marketing cruzade to promote the use of timber in modern buildings – he brought to life the collective *holzbau_kunst*. A professional "organization / collective manager", as he calls himself, he is also involved in strategic planning, marketing and project management for Timber Construction Europe, Vorarlberg Tourism, Timber Construction Austria, among other projects. He also owns a rare breed of mountain sheep, plays in a band and claims to have cooking skills.

holzbau_

Success factors at a glance

- The realisation of everyone in the supply chain that they have a common business interest
- The openness and courage of politicians and planners in small municipalities allowed for new architecture concepts to take root
- The well-known regional pride in Vorarlberg is a big motivator to strive for excellence in sustainability
- Pre-existing organisation of subsector in collectives
- A traditional timber building trade that could be inspired to use their skills in innovative ways
- A traditional wood culture that could be recovered using "back to the roots" marketing
- Passionate people who drive the campaign

All pictures courtesy Vorarlberger holtbau_kunst/ Holzbaupreis

A charming man with a sense of humour that makes every conversation enjoyable, he has used his people skills and management talent to bring the stakeholders of the timber construction supply chain together – one by one and holding their hand whenever support was needed.

From Trees to Timber Homes - how to get everyone to pull in the same direction

It all started in the 70ies, when a bunch of innovative architects tried to break with entrenched traditions and experimented with new concepts for building with timber. However, in Vorarlberg, it was the carpenters who presented the first important barrier to this kind of evolution. Carpentry is an old trade, and it was hard to find craftsmen who would be willing to execute the 'crazy' ideas those architects suggested. They argued that timber had to be used in very specific ways in construction projects. They were right that at this point; a lot had to be learnt by trial and error. But carpenters were the key people in the supply chain that needed to be brought on board, if modern timber buildings were ever to take off as a trend. In the 80ies, pioneer architects managed to convince the younger and more risk-friendly carpenters to rebel against the 'establishment' and carry out their unconventional designs.

Matthias had come across examples of modern timber constructions and loved the idea of re-inventing the tradition of building with wood. He presented his vision to the carpenters in a very straight-forward way: if timber buildings become more common, there will be more business for carpenters, and they will become the centerpieces of >>

_kunst or The Art of Working Together

Actvities

- Lobbying
- Stand at trade show Messestand (see overleaf)
- Annual lobbying event for politicians and architects
- Biennial timber award *Holzbaupreis*
- Highly advertised 'Open House' events targeted at general public
- Advertising in newspapers, Internet, social media, neighbouring countries

>> the value chain.

After a lot of brainstorming on the carpenters' side, the first wood awards (*Holzbaupreis*) were brought into being in 1997. Builders and architects were invited to submit information and pictures of their existing timber buildings. The awards provided the perfect stage for a budding trend, and the collective *holzbau_kunst* was founded, initially funded by carpenter firms through membership fees.

At the same time, Matthias began to personally lobby to bring wood suppliers on board, too. Working downstream, he talked to collectives and individuals in the processing sector, the wholesale sector for construction materials, and further downstream, the collective of landowners (*Waldverband*, see FTN June 2017).

"It was important to get the whole supply chain committed before launching a powerful marketing campaign". Matthias stressed that it was crucial to target different companies or individuals in a way that was relevant to them, but using the main argument that more timber building means more business/market for everybody.

Shortly after the first *Holzbaupreis*, Matthias and his carpenters were confronted with a new barrier. They realised that something had to be done to make construction rules / laws more timber-friendly. This was something that had to be addressed at a National level. He therefore organised a promotional tour to each of the other regions in Austria, where he presented the Vorarlberger concept to the carpenter guilds. Some years later, each region had its own *Holzbaupreis*.

Regional resource

Promoting the use of timber helps to consolidate demand for timber. However, at the moment, the regional timber resource doesn't lack a market; only 20% of wood from the region stays there, the rest is fed into larger National or international markets.

holzbau_kunst aims to increasingly focus on lobbying for an increased use of regional timber for regional timber buildings. In particular, to help the network of small sawmills to survive in the future.

www.holzbau_kunst.at

From Forest to Home:

Annual holzbau_kunst trade show stand

Timber construction award winner 2017

Starting with freshly felled fir trees the tour around and through the stand (left) shows the visitor the evolution from tree, to raw sawmill products, to finished components of modern timber houses to neatly fitted windows. Along the circuit, additional information on the timber-to-home process is provided and emphasised with further sensorial inputs (smell, touch) to deepen the experience.

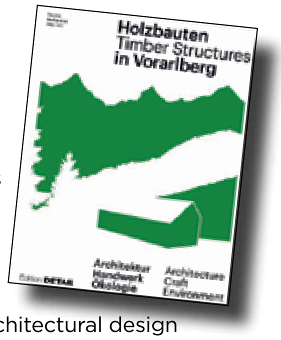
Visit the stand at com:bau 08-11 March 2018, Dornbirn, Austria

www.combau.messedornbirn.at

Funding sources

- Carpenters: €100 000 (Firms pay a membership fee to *holzbau_kunst*, €700-3500 per year)
- Timber and construction material wholesale: €80,000 (Percentage of sales to carpenters who are members of *holzbau_kunst*)
- Regional government: €30,000 (from commerce and agriculture budget)
- Regional forest owner collective: €15,000 – 20,000 (€0.03/m^3 of timber sold)
- Regional bank sponsorship: €20,000 (bank with focus on rural clients, incl foresters, sawmills, but also carpenters and other traders)
- Regional collective of small sawmills: €7000
- Architects: €350 individual membership fee
- Plus project sponsorships

Timber structures in Vorarlberg



In Vorarlberg, you can find a 610,000m^3 volume of pine, spruce and hardwood that has made the region renowned for its exemplary tradition of timber construction. Vorarlberg has been setting standards worldwide in the architectural design and hand-crafted quality of wooden buildings. Their use of wood is characterised by an inspired innovative creativity. Projects from Vorarlberg are bold: multiple storeys, prefabrication, urban housing, industrial buildings are all matters of course and reveal an impressively wide-ranging vision of 'traditional' timber construction.

English/German

SBN: 978-3-95553-381-6

€39.99 plus shipping

https://shop.detail.de/eu_e/holzbauten-in-vorarlberg.html

Wood for Good

Dawn of a new age for timber

Christiane Lellig on the work of Wood for Good, the timber industry's campaign to promote use of wood in design and construction

For some, it's the dawn of the timber age. Shortlists for all major architecture awards are featuring timber buildings and the awards keep coming. The prestigious Stirling Prize went to Hastings Pier, a community-led timber building that showcases the versatility of wood as a design and construction material. Wood building solutions are more common than ever; and yet we need to keep talking about the opportunity this presents for future housing – and for the timber sector.

Factory made affordable quality homes

The need for more affordable housing is greater than ever and the sustainable solution now makes good economic sense over 'traditional' build.

The timber industry is central to modern methods of construction; speeding up housing delivery with the development of new technical solutions that can increase the quality of homes as well as their affordability. As offsite construction moves into the mainstream, pressure is mounting to get it right. Whether the solution is flatpack or volumetric, the wider benefits of using timber systems are being recognised both in commercial property development as well as in social housing. Now is the time to get them built. Together with partner organisations, we will help promote quality solutions to architects and social and affordable housing developers. Engineered timber will be a key theme for 2018. In a joint project with leading architects we will help to move the discussion on from initial interest to lessons learned, challenges encountered, and future solutions required.

New markets for millennials and baby boomers

A new generation of young professionals are looking for attractive private rental schemes that accommodate a trendy lifestyle; universities use high quality student accommodation as part of their USP and more and more downsizers are interested in 'Retirement for Rent'. This emerging 'Build to Rent' sector requires appealing high-quality materials that are low-maintenance and cost-efficient; a clear case for timber, from structural solutions to joinery and decorative surfaces, from homegrown spruce to tropical merbau. Wood for Good will engage with key players in this emerging market and provide the arguments for using wood.

Hannibal Road Gardens

The Right to Build – a call for beautiful design

Since 2016, all local authorities in England have a legal duty to create Right to Build demand registers for people in their area who want to commission their own home. Local authorities must also grant planning permission for sufficient 'shovel ready' plots to meet the demand within three years. The timber industry is well positioned to provide the choice and type of sustainable housing models this market is looking for. Wood for Good has teamed up with NaCSBA and the Right to Build Taskforce to deliver a range of regional custom build events to advance this market.

Health and wellbeing

The focus on health, wellbeing and biophilia is becoming increasingly important. This doesn't come as a surprise, given the statistics of allergies and mental health illnesses. As a natural material, wood offers many benefits and meets the requirements of a healthy building material. We will continue to push the message out about the various health benefits of wood products.

More on the Modern Timber House in the UK

Building on the highly successful launch of Peter Wilson's book, 'The Modern Timber House in the UK,' we are planning a series of exhibitions and presentations showcasing a broad range of structural timber solutions and their application in different settings.

Awarding timber excellence

Timber excellence should be awarded. Wood for Good supports the Housing Design Awards, RIAS awards and the Wood Awards, and helps promote industry awards such as the Structural Timber Awards and Offsite Awards.

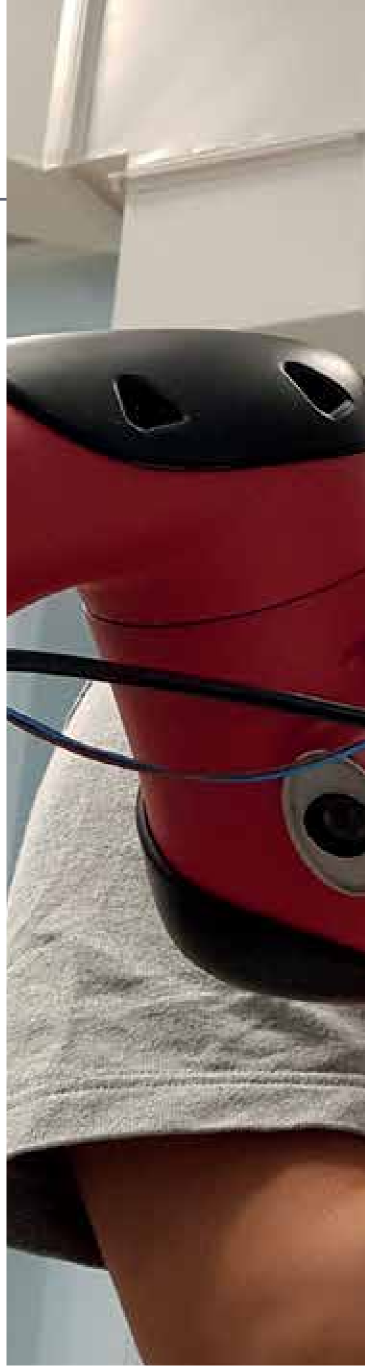
Christiane Lellig is Campaign Director, Wood for Good.
Wood for Good is co-owned by Confor and Swedish Wood; and funded by timber businesses and organisations.
@wood_for_good

RESOURCES

For more information and to receive the Wood for Good newsletter, contact Christiane.lellig@woodforgood.com or 020 7291 5374
www.woodforgood.com

The imitation game

Are robots going to solve future workforce shortages in nurseries? asks **Aran Sena**



Above right: the author trains the robot workforce
Below: te human workforce

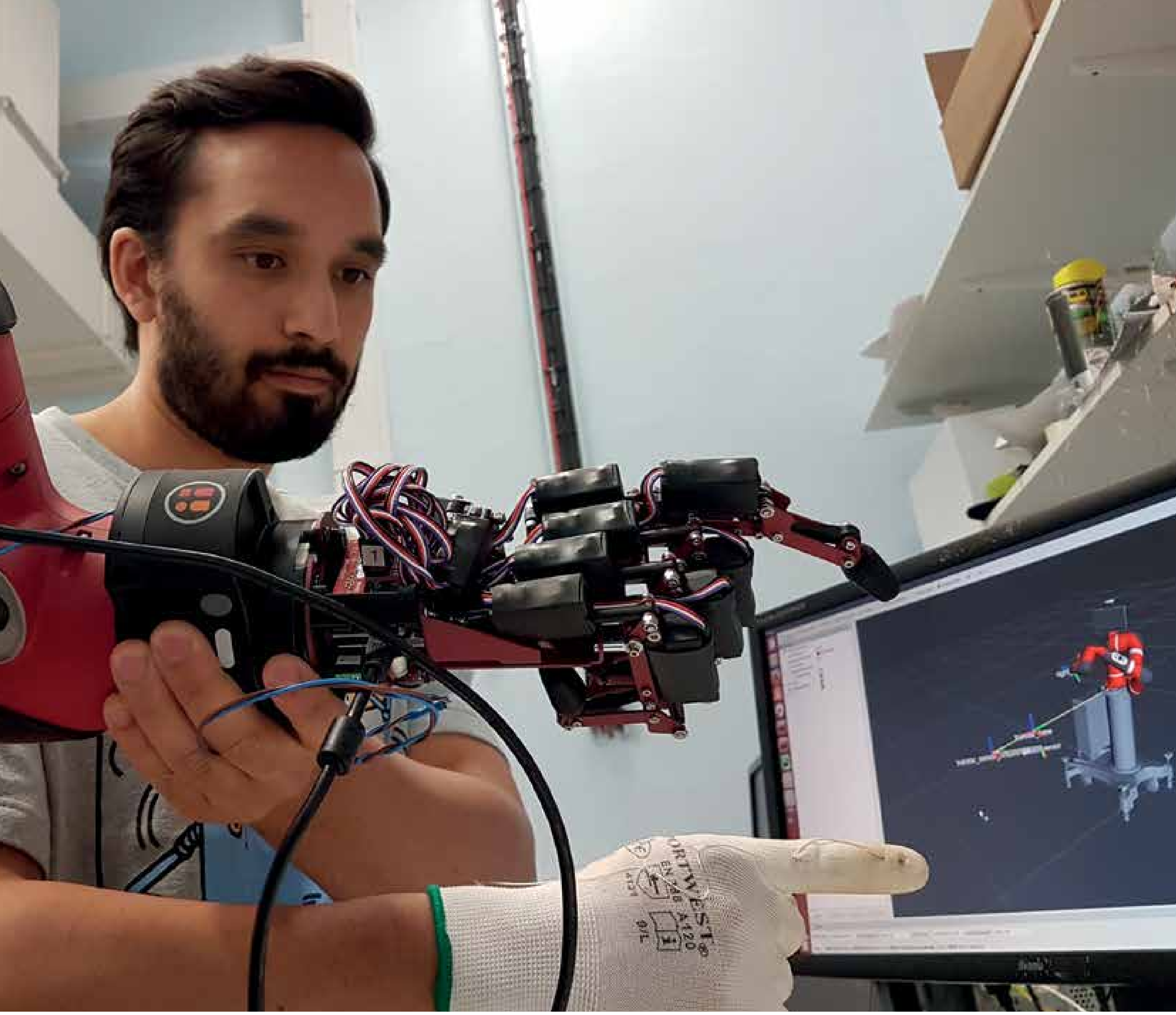
We've long been aware of the labour and skills shortage growers are having to deal with. A survey in the ornamentals sector two years ago reported 72% of businesses unable to fill vacancies. And according to the NFU, labour supply problems have worsened since last year's EU referendum. The combination of fewer people wanting a career in horticulture and our heavy dependence on a migratory workforce means labour security is now a significant risk to the industry's long-term success.

One answer is greater levels of automation using robotics – provided we can overcome some of the unique technical challenges the industry presents. Some forms of automation, such as self-driving tractors are more than a pipe-dream, but when it comes to handling the crops themselves, progress in robotic manipulation has been much slower.

When you work with plants, you do so without having to think about the way you manipulate your hand. But it's the very nature of plant material that makes grasping it with a robotic 'hand' so difficult. The variation in plant 'architecture' – length of the stalk, number of leaves, root structure – between different species as well as individuals of the same species, the motion of a plant during handling due to its light weight and flexibility, and the relatively fragile nature of the tissues all contribute to making plant material an extremely challenging target for robotics. Robots work best in environments with a high degree of certainty – knowing exactly where to find a machine component or how hard it can press against a surface – but it's rarely so clear-cut with plants.

Thanks to my sponsorship through the AHDB, I am linked to a number of growers who act as industry advisors for my project. These growers help me to see the kinds of tasks involved in horticultural and agricultural production, and to better understand the current limitations to automation. These visits highlighted both the diversity of tasks and the issues growers face in implementing further automation. A common challenge across industries for automation was the complex handling of plant material needed during grading.

An example of this was seen at J&A Growers, who produce bareroot trees and hedging in Warwickshire, producing approximately 10 million plants annually. The trees and hedging are produced in a



largely mechanised manner up until they must be packed for shipping, at which point there is a bottleneck requiring manual intervention. Each plant sold must be graded, which involves teams of workers grading piles of tree seedlings by stem length and checking for any damage. At first glance, the task looks simple - the worker pulls a stalk from the pile, compares it against a rule and then places it in the appropriate pile, all done without a second thought by the experienced team; however observing the task with the view of automation reveals this task demands advanced visual inspection to pick out one stem from all the others in the pile in front of them, together with a high degree of dexterity to extract that stem from the pile and judge its grade.

Already a relatively efficient operation, J&A Growers are interested in automation for their business due to long-term labour security concerns as a matter of ensuring they have the resource to do the job in the future.

The barrier to automation for J&A Growers is not

>>

Jamie Dewhurst (J&A Growers)
10m plants graded annually using casual labour
14 people do approx 120,000 per day
Cost is approx £10.70 per 1000
Annual cost of grading labour is approx £110k
Turnover of approx £1.1m

>> actually the technological capability, as large-scale purpose-built machinery does in fact exist to perform this exact grading task, it is instead a question of economics. The purpose-built systems would present a very large capital expense for the business, only to be left sitting idle for the majority of the year when not in harvesting season. Additionally, the systems must be configured for particular varieties of plants, with any change in product requiring reconfiguration by specialists. Finally, many of these systems must still be manually loaded!

An alternative to a purpose-built system with a fixed set of functions is a general purpose robot that can be readily reprogrammed to new tasks. Traditionally such general purpose robots required advanced specialist knowledge of robotics to deploy as well as extensive safety systems; however a new generation of so-called 'collaborative' robots could offer some of the solutions to these kinds of operations. Collaborative robots are designed to be inherently safe to work alongside people, by limiting their weight and speed and including impact-absorbing springs into their joints. Because they don't need to work behind safety guards they take up a lot less room. They are also designed so that people without a programing background can quickly and easily set them up to undertake simple tasks and reconfigure them later to do a different job. These advances have already brought automation to many low volume, high variety tasks in various industries outside of agriculture. By having robot systems which can be easily reprogrammed by non-experts, this could open the door for a flexible robotic workforce that could seasonally move between growers and industries.

While collaborative robots are very effective at repetitive simple pick-and-place tasks, the complexity of handling plants has so far limited their application in agriculture. One promising approach I am now researching is called 'Learning from Demonstration'. In this, the grower would show the robot the task they want automated while the robot monitors their actions. These actions might be the grower physically guiding the robot through the motions of what it should do, or it can be a more advanced interaction where the robot observes the grower through its vision system and through connected sensors embedded in a 'smart glove' worn by the grower.

Career development for robots

While imitation learning presents a promising mechanism for how to go about transferring human skills to a robot, an important question that is central to my research is whether people such as growers who have no expertise in robotics or programing are able to give demonstrations successfully to such a system. This is a key aspect as the robot is not simply performing a record and playback of the observed actions, but actively trying to develop a model of the task to form an understanding of what it should do. Taking this learning approach allows the robot to perform more robustly when faced with uncertain situations (eg if a tray is moved accidentally by a worker, can the robot still perform the task?); however this places more responsibility on the teacher.

There is therefore a need to be able to identify good teachers if we're going to exploit this type of robotic learning. I have conducted initial research with volunteers from J&A Growers to try to better understand how those who are not robotics experts interact with robot systems. In my project's next stage I'll be further developing my prototype system using a commercially available industrial collaborative robot – a Rethink Robotics' Sawyer robot – with which I hope to conduct trials next summer at J&A Growers, as well as my other industry advisors Kernock Park Plants and Greenyard Flowers.

Meanwhile, I'm always interested to see horticultural and agricultural tasks that could benefit from the kind of approach I'm taking in this project so if you struggle with a production bottleneck due to lack of practical automation options, it would be great to hear from you.

Sorting tree stalks by length

CONTACT

Aran Sena is an AHDB-sponsored PhD student at the Robot Learning Laboratory, King's College London: **www.aransena.com**

Robot Learning Lab homepage: **https://nms.kcl.ac.uk/rll/**

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Better, safer timber haulage

Gillian Clark, CEO UK FISA, introduces a new campaign for the timber transport sector

Throughout 2018, FTN will host a series of articles by people directly involved in timber haulage – with a focus on areas where we believe there is room for continued improvement in the way we move timber.

Haulage companies and their drivers and vehicles are an indispensable link in the UK timber supply chain. With harvests forecast to rise by 25 per cent in the next decade, the sector will continue to grow.

Timber hauliers are a breed apart. Their drivers often work in remote, challenging terrain on roads not designed for heavy traffic, in conditions far removed from mainstream haulage. They carry a low-margin raw material in a market where haulage costs can make or break the viability of a harvest.

The Timber Transport Forum helped draw up the *Road Haulage Roundwood Code of Practice* and continues to develop good practice in many areas:

- Log loading and security;
- Finding the most appropriate routes;
- Engaging with communities and local authorities;
- Introducing lower impact lorries, and improving forest road management and maintenance;
- Setting out responsibilities for all parties.

Why do we need a campaign?

The forest industry relies on significant trust between all links in the supply chain. It needs hauliers to do the job reliably, responsibly and safely - with minimal supervision and at a good price.

However, an expanding sector with strong competition and tight margins creates risks - that the less scrupulous will cut corners and take chances with safety.

This might mean speeding, convoying or ignoring agreed routes and traffic management plans. Some might flout contract conditions, overload lorries or strap timber on poorly.

A lack of training or preparation might not just impact on costs. It can have dangerous and sometimes devastating consequences, bringing the forest industry into conflict with communities and regulators.

FISA's Forest Haulage Working Group has just revised and reprinted the *Forest Haulage Safety Manual* and has a very clear message: timber hauliers must demonstrate and communicate that they take their responsibilities seriously.

However, this requires a quid pro quo from the industry. If no-one is focused on quality and good practice, there is little incentive for improvement.

Why invest in training, vehicle tracking and tyre pressure control if this means increased costs and puts contracts in jeopardy? Why drive at 15mph or refuse to use unsafe roads if competitors race through mud and turn in ditches?

Everyone must be involved in pushing up quality standards – drivers, haulage managers, landowners, harvesting managers, timber processors, forest road managers and local authorities.

Timber buyers must recognise quality and safety when tendering haulage contracts. Landowners and harvesting contractors must provide safe, properly-maintained forest roads and well-presented timber.

Quality timber haulage needs continued investment and good management; it can't be the whipping boy of the supply chain, used to squeeze out another 50p per tonne.

So, look out for thought-provoking articles about how we ensure future haulage services are reliable, sustainable and safe.

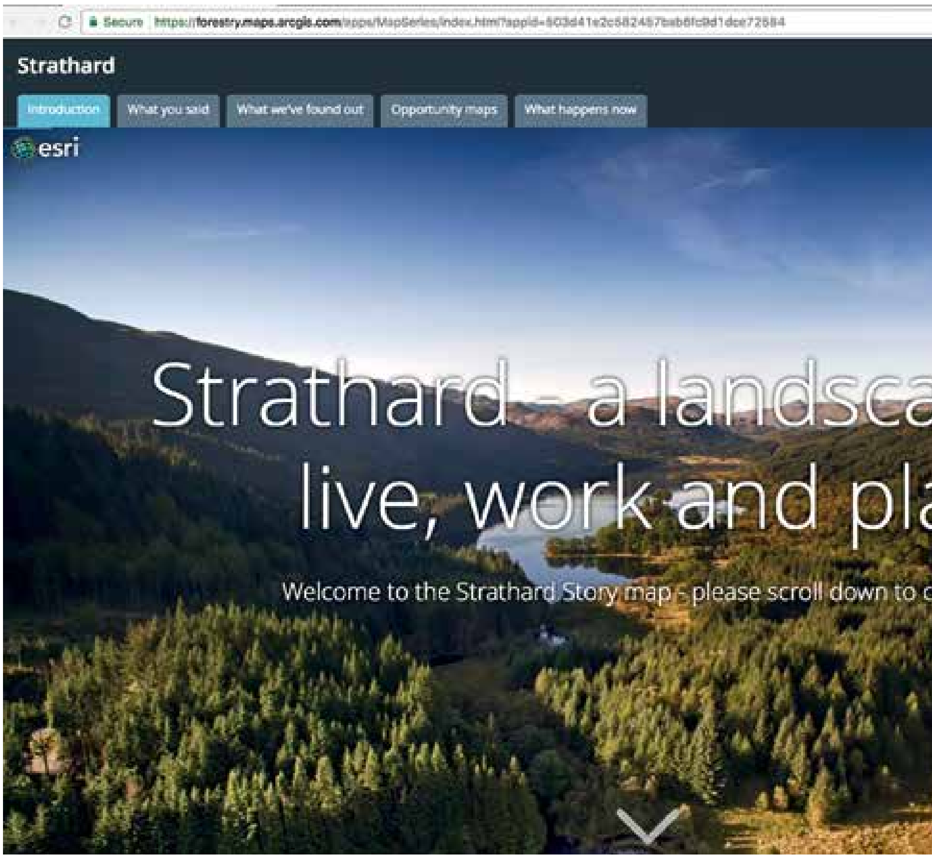
We will distribute the articles as a printed brochure via weighbridges to stimulate discussion and ideas. Please let us know what you think. Happy haulage!

www.ukfisa.com

FTN WEB RESOURCES

Download the *Forest Haulage Safety Manual* **www.confor.org.uk**

Story Map – harnessing the power of maps



The Strathard Initiative is a good example of how good stakeholder management can bring landscape managers and communities together. **Chloe Bellamy** and **Andrew Rattey** of Forest Research talk about their experience of using a new visualisation tool to aid community engagement.

The Strathard Initiative is a collaborative project that is developing and trialling more effective and sustainable water and land management decisions in a rural area of western Scotland. It was established by the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, who had been encouraged by the government to look for opportunities to improve joint working between public bodies, land managers and communities whilst implementing an 'ecosystems approach' to land management.

Boiled down to its core principles, an ecosystems approach must involve everyone with an interest in the local natural environment, whilst taking into account the multiple benefits it provides and considering the role of ecosystem functions and condition. Forest Research's role in the project has been to help collect and analyse the varied information needed to develop the project's plans and to co-design surveys and other approaches to consult with local stakeholders. **www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/strathard**

How does stakeholder engagement contribute to successful land management?

The degree of success of stakeholder engagement will have a huge role in determining the overall impact of any project aiming to improve the way a landscape is managed. The people living, working and visiting the area should be involved from the start, in order to pinpoint the priority issues that the project should aim to tackle and to build a shared understanding of their values and opinions.

The process should be iterative to enable stakeholders to feedback ideas at each stage. This is essential for improving understanding and gaining trust, which in turn can enable local people to feed into the decision making process. Tapping into local knowledge provides a more nuanced, accurate reflection of the regional context, informing the de-

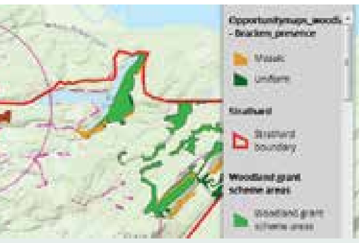
The Strathard Story Map was part of a set of stakeholder engagement activities

- Local events
- A film
- Twitter account @StrathardLand
- Surveys
- An interactive 'MapMe' mapping survey
- In depth interviews with local people
- A Community Partnership Project webpage
- Community e-newsletter
- Guided Forest Tours
- A community mapping workshop

Story Map resource requirements

Story Maps are a feasible means of communication in a wide variety of cases. All you need are the fundamental ingredients: a) a story to tell, b) moderate to high quality imagery to use and c) accompanying data to visualise.

To develop a Story Map you need an Esri software licence and ArcGIS online account. The cost of the software licence may be prohibitive for some organisations or



individuals. However, there is a reduced fee for charities.

In terms of the time and skills input, once the required maps, images and text had been assembled, it took one of our spatial analysts with no prior experience of the tool roughly two days to pull together the first draft. It was then improved iteratively as feedback came through from project partners.

If you would like to find out more about our use of interactive mapping or have an idea of how you can collaborate with us, please get in touch!

velopment of more bespoke management strategies that are most likely to be accepted and effective.

Visualisation tools: why use them?

In contrast to traditional methods of presentation, such as written reports and PowerPoint slides, using interactive maps and visualisations in the Strathard Initiative enabled us to share our work in a format that was accessible over the internet, visually engaging, and easy to follow.

There are a number of visualisation tools available; we used ESRI Story Maps. It allowed us to capture and hold people's attention, by taking the viewer on a journey that covered all aspects of the project, from its inception and aspirations, to the data collection, analysis and map making phases.

The user had control of their experience, choosing whether they interact with a map to reveal additional information or not. They could also decide how long they spent on each section, which helped us cater for people with varied interests. We took care to include imagery which connected to the study area and the people that live there, a decision which we felt contributed to the sense of local ownership and involvement in the project.
https://storymaps.arcgis.com/en

The Strathard Story Map

We used the Strathard Story Map to provide a reminder of the project aims and to update the local community on our progress and future plans. We were able to communicate the information we had collected and how we had mapped, analysed and interpreted these data to inform the decision making process. The service also allowed local people to formulate their views and feed into the process in their own time and at their own pace.

Initial feedback has been positive, with the clear presentation and easy to use layout singled out for praise. By incorporating all stages of the project we created a comprehensive resource that the local community could access at any time with ease. This is believed to be one of the main strengths of the approach for this project.

The link to the Strathard Story Map is publically accessible and we have used it to raise the profile of the project and to broadcast our approach and findings more widely. The Story Map also provides an easily digestible overview to anyone considering a similar project elsewhere.

Why not take a look? **http://arcg.is/2AbY7dq**

What do Confor members think?

Andy Howard, Doddington project
This tool looks brilliant! I found throughout the Doddington project that engaging with stakeholders as early and informatively as possible produced hugely positive results.

By providing them with information and explanations of rational as early as possible we were able to engage with them and find a resolution to their concerns in a timely manner. The use of maps, designs and images in this from an early stage was vital, as more often than not these stakeholders would not be 'forestry literate', and hence found having something they could look at and relate to much easier to understand.

I would envisage a tool like this would therefore be hugely beneficial in combination with public meetings. It would enable the stakeholders to review and understand the proposals in their own time, and hopefully lead to more informed comment and conversations through the consultation process.

Jerry Langford CEnv, Policy Lead Wales
These are good examples of opportunity maps – illustrating the point that we need different opportunity maps for different purposes.It enables opportunity maps to be presented in the context of the work done to derive them. An issue might be good computer and internet access of rural users.

Andrew Vaughan, Tilhill Forestry
This seems very useful as a tool for making key site data publicly available for consultation and as a record of progression. It could allow stakeholders to get caught up on and monitor progress, potentially reducing the need for ongoing stakeholder face to face contact, as projects develop.

It probably needs high quality photos and map work to set up, and provides a record of site map data and stakeholder views and is useful for landscape-wide projects. Cost might be limitation and it would need to be a significant project to justify. Perhaps this style of output should be a goal for the FCS Public Register.

Potential applications for interactive maps and visualistion tools in the forestry sector

- To illustrate potential future scenarios and consult the community on forest design plans or operations
- To advertise a forestry service/company/product
- To provide an engaging overview of an event
- To influence local perceptions of forestry operations
- To provide information on forestry-related issues

PROFESSOR JULIAN EVANS OBE FICFor

Myxomatosis woodlands

The late David Fourt, forester and scientist with Forest Research and expert on forest soils, would often remark on or point out 'myxomatosis woodlands'. There was a large bank of scrub next to the A31 near its junction with the M3 which he would highlight as an example. And as one looks round and you become alert to what to look for, such woods, usually small in extent, are quite common.

Indeed it was David, more than anyone else who made one really look at a woodland and ask what its history is. How had its present condition arisen? What factors influenced how the wood had developed? These questions are crucial for those managing a small woodland, of whatever complexion, as past history underpins present decision making. So let's use the example of myxomatosis woodlands as an illustration.

In the mid-1950s the scourge of myxomatosis killed over 99% of the rabbit population across many parts of Britain. Overnight as it were, browsing pressure on regeneration and regrowth disappeared and any patch of open land not under the plough or the hoof started to re-vegetate or 'scrub-up' to use a disparaging term. Papers in the *Journal of Ecology* in the 1960s record studies showing the impact of this cessation of rabbit pressure. On light acid soils, seedlings of gorse, bracken, heathers, birch and Scots pine began growing and on chalky soils hawthorn, buckthorn, hazel, ash, birch, sallow and sycamore were more typical. Many such areas, when not taken into cultivation or development, are now woodlands. And on both types of soil it was not long before jays and squirrels start sowing acorns and the occasional oak began to show.

So what to look for if you think you may have such a patch of myxomatosis woodland?

"The scourge of myxomatosis has been a blessing to biodiversity rather than the contrary – an early example of 're-wilding'

The most obvious question is, 'Where is the patch?' Usually they will be odd shaped areas outside a field boundary – whether a hedgerow or fence, or on land that got 'cut off' by development such as a road bypass or neglected corner of a housing estate.

Secondly, is the patch small, say less than a couple of hectares (five acres) and with no signs of being woodland in the past, principally no large, old tree stumps?

The third question is what species are present and how are they arranged? Both the presence of any exotic – a spruce, fir or larch for example – or signs of planting in rows rules out regeneration post-myxomatosis. Such woods are typically patchy, simply a hotch-potch to our orderly way of thinking.

Similarly, and fourthly, are there any large trees present? While much new regeneration after myxomatosis occurred in existing woodland, for an area of open ground that 'scrubbed-up' there will be no big trees and none over 60 years old. And very often the number of trees will be exceedingly few as dense gorse, patches of bramble, hazel, or hawthorn will have impaired tree regeneration. So if this begins to describe your small woodland, consider it as a gift from myxomatosis – a free good.

Such myxomatosis woodlands are even highlighted in interpretative signage eg the National Trust's West Runton Woods, or explain woodlands on land known to have been open in living memory such as Sparrow Wood between Petts Wood and Orpington in Kent which I would pass on the way to school.

Much more can be said about the impact of the near extermination of rabbits on our country's ecology, but one surprise concerns the ground flora, other than the woody shrubs we've been discussing. Dog's Mercury can colonise quickly, primroses can appear, and even long lost orchids 'return'. All in all the scourge of myxomatosis has been a blessing to biodiversity rather than the contrary – an early example of 're-wilding'.

What if rabbit numbers plummeted once more, would we again seen a swathe of new woods? Probably not. The explosion of all six deer species now resident, but especially the wretched muntjac, has brought a browsing pressure that not only limits natural regeneration but also decimates the understory of many woodlands. The loss of nesting sites is one cause of the decline in woodland birds. Deer are very much a mixed blessing.

PESTICIDES NOTEBOOK
COLIN PALMER

Glyphosate – a short term fix

Glyphosate has become a core tool for assisting the successful establishment of forest transplants – but we very nearly lost it!

Despite the success of the populist European Citizens Initiative which drew some 1.4 million votes supporting a ban on glyphosate and triggering a debate in the European parliament, eventually a reasonably acceptable compromise on the future of glyphosate was reached.

After all the deliberation and obfuscation, on 27 November 2017 the European Commission granted glyphosate a five year reprieve, but some 10 years shorter than the usual 15 year renewal period. Glyphosate products will therefore be with us at least until December 2022.

The favourable outcome was in doubt until the day of decision, as had Germany continued to abstain, then approval would have been refused. Fortunately, it appears that the failure of the Green Party to enter a coalition government with Mrs Merkel, freed the hand of the German Agriculture Minister to vote for renewal, this just tipping the balance to a positive result.

The UK did vote for renewal, despite some reportedly very unhelpful remarks from our Minister for the Environment. Agriculture Minister, George Eustace, though, has continued to be supportive, and UK support was essential to counter the adverse votes from Italy and France.

France continues to fiercely oppose the use of glyphosate and President Macron has vowed to ban the product in France within three years – or sooner if alternatives are found. This, though, is probably unlikely, and judging on past experience, even if French use was banned, there would be enough helpful loopholes to facilitate continued use by French farmers and foresters.

Somewhat incredibly there are currently some 302 glyphosate products approved for use in UK forests and forest nurseries, and if these are to remain on the UK market, then each manufacturer or supplier will have to submit a renewal application before 15 March 2018. Hopefully most will have already prepared their dossiers, but inevitably there will be some fallout, and therefore a reduced number of products available for use.

We understand that Monsanto will be supporting most of its popular products including Roundup ProActive – but some of the more marginal products may not be renewed as, for example, Monsanto has to submit over 560 product applications over the 28 EC member states.

Once the EC Central Zone member state nominated to assess the core dossier has completed the evaluation, then each member state will grant national approvals. These will include the conditions of authorisation, which will have to take account of the Commission's provisions to ensure that home/garden use is safe, and that biodiversity is not harmed. This may cause a little of a dilemma for those states who voted against renewal – Belgium, Greece, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Luxemburg, Malta and Austria as they HAVE to renew use of the product, although they may impose restrictions on its use.

So what was all the fuss about?

It was all triggered by the decision by the flawed IARC assessment on glyphosate to categorise it as a "probable carcinogen", putting it in the same category as high temperature fat frying and hairdressing. Even the IARC, though, didn't classify glyphosate as a "known carcinogen" which includes alcohol, tobacco, the birth pill and diesel engine exhaust. So, where was the Citizens Initiative to ban these dangers to public health?

The IARC, however, was pretty isolated in its view, as the parent body the World Health Organisation, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the European Food Safety Authority, Health Canada and all the major regulatory bodies consider that "glyphosate is unlikely to be carcinogenic".

But what will happen in five years' time?

Well, there will be increased impetus to look at alternative methods of weed control, but all the likely front runners such as steam, hot water and organic acids will only burn off the top growth, and are unlikely to provide long term vegetation control.

Hopefully, in 2022 good science will prevail over politics - but don't bank on it...

MEMBER SERVICES
Pesticides helpline

Pesticides helpline 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: branchline@xln.co.uk

Growing the homegrown message

Measuring success when dealing with an intangible asset such as goodwill is not easy. Yet Grown in Britain has attempted to quantify its 2017 success through its first-ever Annual Review, available on the campaign's website. Its best year to date, the campaign saw 35 new licence-holders come on board and 11 new supporting partners, importantly including key trade federations in end-user markets and their wood-using members.

Booming on social media

The regular Grown in Britain Tweetchats, held monthly, are now netting around 10,500 impressions and almost 90 engagements on every occasion, whatever the topic. Grown in Britain Week's Thunderclap saw the campaign utilising the multiplying effect of social media to reach a massive 2.5 million Twitter impressions on 12 October, taking the Grown in Britain to a wider audience than ever before. Two TV engagements and radio interviews, including with a specialist digital radio station listened to by jobbing builders, and over 80 press articles and items, ensured the campaign grew its awareness in every sphere.

Homegrown timber meets modern design

Moving into 2018, Grown in Britain has launched its first regular e-newsletter, and is continuing with its series of e-postcards, which are changing perceptions on the uses of British timber. "Architects and designers are used to seeing magnificent timber creations made from imported cross-laminated and glulam timber, but the same and better effects can be achieved using native and British-grown species," says campaign CEO Dougal Driver. "Demonstrating that British timber can be the force behind excellent design, and demonstrating all the additional benefits such as social value returned to communities, is exactly the message we'll continue to get across throughout 2018."

Working with joiners

Grown in Britain is also looking ahead to new ways of interfacing with the joinery market through its partnership with the British Woodworking Federation. The aim for 2018 is to enhance and extend the use of British-grown timber by BWF members, underlining the opportunity it provides to promote British-made joinery.

www.growninbritain.org

@growninbritain

See also timber in construction, p46

GiB Hero 2017

The year was crowned with the launch of the Tree Charter poles, made from Grown in Britain-sourced oak, erected across Britain, and by the awarding of the campaign's annual 'Hero' award to Sally Spencer, Contributing Editor at Timber Trades Journal. Sally Spencer has been a keen supporter of the British-grown timber industry, researching and interviewing for the magazine's regular British timber features and giving the sector a voice in a market dominated by imports. The award was presented on 14 December at a special gathering in London. The Hero trophy was produced from a piece of British Ash, chosen for its special colouring, created by designer-maker and Grown in Britain licence-holder Alice Blogg.

Sally Spencer, TTJ, receiving her award from GiB's Dougal Driver; inset: Alice Blogg making the GiB Hero Trophy

GDPR – the Big Bad Wolf?

Martin Sloan of Brodies Solicitors answers key questions on the General Data Protection Regulation.(GDPR)

Unless you've been hibernating for the past year, you'll know about (or will at least have heard of) the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Coming into force from May 2018, GDPR is the biggest shake-up of data protection law in 20 years. It applies to all EU-based organisations that process personal data (regardless of where the processing takes place), as well as non-EU bodies who offer goods or services to individuals in the EU, or monitor their behaviour.

Does it affect the forestry industry?

Yes. GDPR applies to any organisation that processes personal data. Personal data is any information capable of identifying a living individual. There is no general exemption for SMEs or charitable bodies.

Organisations in the forestry sector are likely to hold the personal data of employees, contractors and contractor staff, consultants and third party landowners. Some organisations in the sector may also collect personal data relating to forest users and members of the public, and those that lease sporting rights will also hold personal data on sporting tenants.

What's changing?

For organisations that already have a good handle on data protection law, GDPR should be a case of evolution, not revolution. For those organisations that have not taken data protection seriously, compliance will be more challenging. *(See panel, What's changing)*

What should we be doing to prepare?

GDPR should not be viewed as the 'big bad wolf', but as an opportunity for organisations in every sector to evaluate their approach to data protection and take advantage of the enhanced customer and employee relationship benefits that GDPR compliance will bring.

GDPR comes into force on 25 May 2018. There are no grandfathering provisions in relation to existing processing activities. This means that processes and procedures, policies, data capture forms and privacy notices and contracts should all be reviewed and updated in time for GDPR coming into force.

As a first step to prepare, organisations should review their existing processing activities by carrying out a data mapping exercise to identify what personal data the organisation processes. The organisation should then audit their current practices and procedures against the requirements of GDPR.

What's changing

TRANSPARENCY Organisations must provide more information to individuals at the point of collection to explain in more detail how that data will be used, how long it will be retained and, if it is to be stored outside the EEA, where it is to be held and how it is to be safeguarded. Separate notices may be required for different groups of individuals.

ACCOUNTABILITY Organisations will have to be able to demonstrate to privacy regulators that they are complying with GDPR on an ongoing basis. The accountability obligations include a requirement to keep detailed records of data processing activities.

CONSENT The requirements for 'consent' are tightened so that 'clear affirmative action' will be required for consent to be established. The days of pre-ticked boxes will finally come to an end. Where possible, look to rely upon a legal basis for processing other than consent (for example legitimate interests or the performance of a contract).

ACCESS AND DATA SUBJECT RIGHTS The rules allowing individuals to access their personal data and to obtain information about how that data is being used are being strengthened and the timescale for responding is being shortened. Where processing is carried out on the basis of consent, it should be easy for individuals to withdraw that consent.

PRIVACY BY DESIGN AND DEFAULT Organisations will be obliged to 'hardwire' privacy considerations into their day-to-day operations and projects through measures such as minimising the amount of data held and activating privacy-friendly settings in

DATA PROCESSORS Organisations that process data on behalf of another organisation will have direct obligations in relation to that processing (including data security). Contracts will need to include a number of mandatory clauses.

BREACH NOTIFICATIONS There are express statutory obligations to notify privacy regulators and affected individuals in the event of a data privacy breach where there is risk of harm to individuals.

ENFORCEMENT AND SANCTIONS The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) will have increased powers to fine organisations for contraventions of data protection law, including for administrative breaches. The ICO will also have new rights of access and audit, and the ability to issue orders to suspend processing.

FTN WEB RESOURCES

Find links to:

Preparing for GDPR - 12 Steps to take now

ICO guidance and helpline for SMEs

Brodies GDPR Hub

www.confor.org

MEMBER SERVICES

Legal helpline

Members can get 30 minutes of free legal advice from our associated specialist solicitors Brodies LLP and Atkinson Ritson. This is meant as a first guidance and does not constitute a full client-solicitor relationship

England and Wales: Atkinson Ritson Solicitors, **www.atkinsonritson.co.uk**
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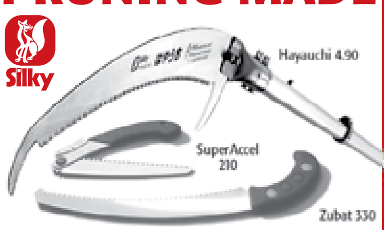

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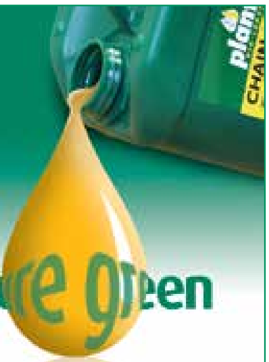

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A fine machine from Volvo

Eamonn Wall puts Volvo V90 Cross Country through its paces

Large estate cars have long been the speciality of Volvo and their first 4x4 version XC70 remains a familiar sight on the roads today, despite the popularity of SUVs. Volvo's own SUVs – the new XC90 and XC60 – have generated much of Volvo sales over the past years and will soon be joined by the smaller XC40.

However, Volvo recently replaced the long serving V70 estate car with the larger and sleeker V90, and here we test the V90 Cross Country with its slightly raised suspension (by 65mm) and 4WD.

The V90 Cross Country is a large car on the outside, but perhaps not as large on the inside as you would expect. Its interior design very much follows the one first introduced on the new XC90 and has since been rolled out on all new models. It's a lovely interior which complements the good-looking exterior with its sloping back door, unlike the upright door of all Volvo estates before it.

All models come with eight-speed automatic gearboxes combined with two-litre diesel engines, either producing 187bhp (D4) or 235bhp (D5), and automatic 4WD. A petrol version is also available.

It is certainly a very comfortable car, accelerates briskly (0-60mph in 7.2 seconds) and has good brakes. It handles well but of course its ground clearance is not in the same league as a pick-up or Discovery. My time with the D5 saw an average of 36mpg with a 60-litre fuel tank. Being a large car, it weighs 1848 tonnes, but can tow 2500 tonnes.

Prices start at £40,350 for the D4, £44,150 for the D5 tested here and £49,700 for the T6 petrol, to which a huge range of extras can be added. Volvo offers a Pro upgrade which combines many extras into a reduced price package of £3000 and includes many useful options such as heated washer nozzles, puddle lights, footwell illumination, heated windscreen, headlight cleaning system and more.

Yes indeed, the V90 Cross Country is a fine machine, easy to drive, comfortable to live with, speedy, good looking and practical.

Eamonn Wall is a Director and Forestry and Arboricultural Consultant with Eamonn Wall and Co.

FORESTRY IN PICTURES

In the thick of it

Holly trees that are thought to be among the tallest and most ancient in the UK in The Thicks, a dense, tangled woodland close to the Forestry Commission's Rendlesham Forest in Suffolk. A path leads through The Thicks to Staverton Park, an awe-inspiring landscape of gnarled, monumental pollarded oaks, described by Oliver Rackham as a place of "Tolkienesque wonder and beauty".

Photo: Simon Tooth

Want to see your picture here?

Forestry in Pictures is a new regular feature in FTN. For every issue, we will select the most impacting photograph sent by a reader. If you have a photo you would like to see published here, please send your file to Stefanie.kaiser@confor.org before 11 March 2018. Please include your name, brief description of yourself and the picture and a credit.

Photos should relate to forestry and timber and be of high-quality (minimum resolution 300dpi).

Exceptional pictures might be considered for the front cover of a future FTN issue.

By submitting a picture to Forestry in Pictures you give Confor permission to use the file for non-commercial purposes in Forestry and Timber News or the Confor website. Photos will always be credited.

COMING UP IN APRIL – GET INVOLVED

In April we will run our usual annual feature on Careers Development and will include a series of articles on Biosecurity. If you would like to suggest an article or news item for these topics, please contact the editor by the end of February.

We encourage members to inform us on what is going in their businesses or raise interesting points to be discussed in future editions of Forestry and Timber News. Please do get in touch – we offer member profiles and publish news from our members on dedicated pages.

Don't forget that your opinion counts. If you would like to comment on any of the articles published in this issue, please don't hesitate to send a letter to the editor.

A reminder that additional information and downloads on topics and articles throughout this issue is available online. FTN web resources is accessible from the Confor homepage or directly via **www.confor.org.uk/FTNweb**
Watch out for the mouse icon in this magazine!


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