

Shaping forestry policy

Pressure to tackle climate change, the need to design land use policies in advance of leaving the European Common Agricultural Policy, and the devolution of forestry policy, has resulted in a 'summer of consultations' for forestry.

This has given Confor an open door to provide evidence and ideas on how forestry can be the answer to questions on carbon reduction, rural productivity and profitability, sustainable resource use and more. More importantly, it has provided the opportunity to highlight the challenges of grants and regulations, plant health and education required to be overcome to realise these benefits through new woodland creation and better woodland management.

We are not just telling you this to celebrate our hard work on your behalf. When backed up by many individual voices, our corporate voice has far more weight. In every part of the UK, there is an opportunity for you to send in your own response to a consultation which could make a real difference for the UK's forests and wood-using businesses. If you've never responded to a consultation before, we have step-by-step guides on our website to make it easy, so please help us make this the autumn we give trees a voice.

All the guidance, Confor's full responses to completed consultations, as well as to more regional and technical consultations, are available at: www.confor.org.uk/resources/consultations



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NORTHERN IRELAND

Rural policy after Brexit

Northern Ireland has a target to create 1,000 hectares of new woodland a year, however a wide range of factors mean that only about 1,000 hectares (in total) have been planted since 2012. Now you can help to change that. It is vital that you respond to the consultation and ensure DAERA hears of widespread support to grow the trees we need. Visit our website for more information.

HAVE
YOUR
SAY

WALES

Land use after Brexit

This may represent the biggest opportunity in a generation to achieve a step-change in support for forestry and new woodland creation. It is vital that everyone with an interest in forestry in Wales responds to the consultation by 30 October. Visit our website for more information.

HAVE
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Decarbonising Wales

The Welsh Government is consulting on how best to meet its carbon reduction targets. Please let them know that trees must be an important part of the answer, by 4 October. Visit our website for more information.

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across the UK

SCOTLAND

Environment Strategy

Confor highlighted the fact that of the six objectives listed in the draft strategy (climate, waste, biodiversity, habitats, people and nature, global footprint), the first four are already delivered through existing strategies whereas the final two are not. The importance of this strategy is in ensuring that all important areas of environmental work are covered, and that more specific strategies do not conflict with one another. For example, focusing on tree-planting for biodiversity at the expense of production has exacerbated UK reliance on imported timber and therefore increased our global footprint.

Climate Change Bill

Confor welcomed the commitment to the creation of 15,000 hectares of woodland per year, recognising that the interim target of 10,000 hectares has not yet been met. We urged that the separation of 'land use' carbon into agriculture and forestry must not make it difficult for landowners to engage in a mixture of land uses or to understand the carbon footprint of their business.

'Stability and simplicity' - proposals for rural funding during the Brexit transition

Confor supported the stability approach proposed, as in Scotland the current policy framework is working well for forestry.

Scottish Forestry Strategy

The draft Scottish Forestry Strategy was launched on 22 September. See p16 for more information.

Draft Budget

The Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform committee asked for examples of 'the most cost-effective preventative investments in their portfolio and those that contribute most to achieving the Scottish Government's National Outcomes.' Confor highlighted the importance of productive forestry in delivering on a wide range of these environmental, economic and social outcomes.

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ENGLAND

Rural Economy

Confor emphasised that it is misleading to equate the rural economy with food production, as it encompasses a wide range of activities. We outlined the benefits of a far greater role for timber production within the rural economy, and the importance of good connectivity in rural areas.

Draft Clean Air Strategy 2018

Confor supported the government's proposals to reduce pollution from domestic wood burning. We urged the government to support a 'Buy local, burn local' campaign to incentivise woodland management and protect plant health. We also urged that the package of actions to reduce ammonia emissions from farming should include reference to the important role of trees.

'Health and Harmony' - the future for food, farming and the Environment

Confor welcomed proposals for an alternative to Direct Payments which disadvantage forestry; excellence in plant health standards; increased productivity and competitiveness; and the principles of 'public money for public goods' and 'polluter pays'. However, we raised concern that the proposals are framed so as to reinforce a division between farming and other land uses, and an assumption that farming is the only form of productive land use. A new policy framework must make it easy for farmers to integrate forestry and timber production into their business.

Biosecurity after Brexit

Confor highlighted our existing policy positions on plant health in particular: phytosanitary certificates should be required for all imported material, restrictions should be placed on imported firewood, and consistent levels of new planting should be achieved to enable nurseries to plan effectively.

Domestic burning and woodland management

Would your business benefit from policies to use more quality-assured, locally-grown firewood? Make sure you let them know by responding to this consultation by 12 October. Visit our website for more information.

HAVE
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SAY