



*"The key to delivering carbon benefit is active management."  
Caroline Ayre makes the case in Western Morning News.*

## Local woodlands, global difference

Tree planting and management can help beat climate change, says Caroline Ayre

**T**HE high profile given to the climate strike inspired by Swedish schoolgirl Greta Thunberg and the street protests by Extinction Rebellion have brought the issue of climate change to the top of the international news agenda.

Making a difference can seem very daunting and far away, but there is much that we can do locally – especially those of us who have planted (or intend to plant) trees.

Planting and managing trees has been described by experts as “a simple, low-cost option” to remove carbon from the atmosphere and make a significant impact on the damaging impacts of climate change.

Yet the real benefit comes from building with the wood that is harvested from those trees to store carbon – and substituting wood for far less environmentally friendly materials like concrete and steel. It’s all about soaking up (or sequestering) carbon in the growing trees, storing it in wood products and substituting those carbon-rich materials.

A report by Confor – which represents 1,500 forestry and wood-using businesses across the UK – looked at the carbon benefit over 100 years of one of the UK’s largest forests, Eskdalemuir in southern Scotland.

Of the estimated 14.6 million tonnes of carbon benefit, 4.8m tonnes were stored in the forest, 3.3m in harvested wood products (like timber frames for housing, fencing, decking, furniture or pallets) but substitution of mineral materials was by far the highest benefit, at well over 6 million tonnes.

The key to delivering carbon benefits in any forest or woodland, of

whatever size, is active management. If a woodland that has been neglected is brought into management, it can quickly deliver firewood or lower-quality material to make wood chips or pellets for biomass boilers. By continuing to manage that same woodland, you can begin to deliver better quality and higher value products to create those harvested wood products. This is the practice of good silviculture, defined as controlling the growth, composition, health, and quality of forests and woods to meet diverse needs and values.

Better management of forests and woodland is not just about delivering environmental benefit. Management helps to create added-value supply chains and deliver

**Tomorrow: The Brexit social split has alarming resonances with history, says Todd Gray**

economic benefits in your local area – as the wood grows, you can remove the trees not growing so well through the process of ‘thinning’ to deliver firewood or biomass, then provide logs to industry as the stronger trees mature. It’s a long-term business, but with the climate change agenda focused on the benefits of forests and wood, it will remain a very safe and sensible – as well as clean and green – long-term investment.

As part of a recent series of visits to farm-based woodlands in north Devon on behalf of the DR Company, Jez Ralph of Timber Strategies has identified some great examples of good practice in managing new woodlands. Where owners have taken care of their small woodlands

over the first 20 years they are taking out thinnings for firewood now but also pruning trees and ensuring they have a good resource of quality timber growing. For many of these farmers biodiversity and grant income was their first priority but that has not impacted on the quality of their future timber. Those farmers with mixed species planting, have done best. In north Devon alder has done especially well as has Douglas fir, both species with a multitude of possible markets, but species selection should always be site specific and guided by an expert.

Full results of Jez’s research into farm based woodlands will be published on The DR Company website at [drcompany.co.uk/here-for/forestry](http://drcompany.co.uk/here-for/forestry)

So let’s manage our woods based on the three S-words and remember that: Trees sequester (or soak up) carbon as they grow; wood products store carbon; using wood to substitute for other, energy-intensive, high-carbon materials delivers huge environmental benefits. As the UK currently imports 80% of the wood we use to build, the pressure is on to deliver more home-grown timber and not put pressure on valuable global forests.

So let’s think globally, but plant trees and manage woodlands locally to start making a positive difference to our global environmental future, but also our local environment and economy. The two can go hand-in-hand if we manage our woods properly.

■ **Caroline Ayre is national manager for Confor, which promotes forestry and wood. She is based in Devon and a board member of The DR Company.**

CONFOR SOUTH

Week beginning	Confor Activity	
	England	Wales
7 Oct	Confor Northern Technical and Compliance Committee	Independent Environmental Advisory Panel to Dwr Cymru Welsh Water
		NRW forestry visit to Llandegla p.5
	FSC Pesticides meeting	
	Confor Timber Statistics Group	
	UK Plant Health Advisory Forum	
	Biomass Suppliers List Advisory Panel	
	UK Plant Health Advisory Forum	
14 Oct	Cornwall Forest Meeting	Woodland Strategic Advisory Panel
	Tree Charter Board	Lecture to Harper Adams postgraduates
	Nursery Producers' Group p.4	
Visit to Whitney Sawmills		
21 Oct	Safety, Technical and Compliance England & Wales	NRW Estates
		Young Professionals – NRW/ FR
	Woodland Carbon Code Advisory Board	
	Confor Team visit to Iggesund p.4	
Confor Business Planning Day		
28 Oct	Confor Wood Processors meeting	Wales Water Management Forum
	DR Company Board	
	Tree Strategy meeting	
	Member meetings in Forest of Dean	
UKWAS Board of Directors		
4 Nov	Applicants Focus Group	Wood Knowledge Wales Timber Reserve
	Meeting with Forestry England	Bangor University Student Talk
	North Wood Processing Group	Forestry for Wales Working Group
		ICF Wales Regional Conference
		National Forest Business Case
	Hylobius Industry Research Programme	
Expert Group on Timber Trade and Statistics		
11 Nov	ELMS stakeholder engagement group	Rural Payment Wales Stakeholder meeting
	ELMS forestry sector group	Meeting with Clare Pillman, NRW
	Meeting Sue Hayman & David Drew MPs	
Confor team meeting		
18 Nov	BEIS biomass innovation workshop p.8	Greenhouse Gas workshop
	ELMS stakeholder engagement group	NRW Meet the Board event
	Wood for Good	
25 Nov	Confor woodland show debrief	South East Area Statement Meeting
	Forestry Investment Zone steering grp	
	All Party Parliamentary Group p.4	
	Borderlands Conference	
	National Tree Improvement Strategy Steering Group	
	Forest Market Review Launch	
	Speaking at Natural Capital Investment Conference	
Confor Board		
2 Dec	Marches workshop on increased woodland cover	
	England Tree Health Policy Group	
	Forestry Skills Forum	
	Deer Initiative Board	
UK Squirrel Accord Executive Committee		
9 Dec	FC centenary tree planting, Eggesford	ICF Christmas Drinks
	Cornwall Woodmeet	Welsh Land Management Forum
	Devon & Cornwall Committee p.9	

## Biodiversity in working forests: a call for case studies

Confor has been highlighting how forests provide systemic solutions to climate change, the biggest global threat to life on earth. Yet the biggest barrier to increasing planting and timber production is concern that it could be at the expense locally of that life on earth – of biodiversity. Views like ‘native is best’, ‘conifers are barren’ and ‘harvesting destroys wildlife’ gain credence, not because they are backed by robust evidence, but because they have not been challenged with it.

To address this, Confor is preparing a report to explore the value of working forests as habitat, delivering net biodiversity gain; as well as demonstrating the importance to global biodiversity of forests’ carbon capture and sustainable timber production.

This report will have two main evidence-bases:

1. A literature review, summarising the considerable research on biodiversity in planted forests. This will also identify evidence gaps and suggest further research.
2. Case studies from across the industry, providing examples of working forests delivering biodiversity benefits. [This is where I need Confor members’ help!](#)

I am looking to include numerous case studies:

- Some very short – a quote, statistic, or captioned photo; some more extended
- From all parts of the UK
- From all forest types (large, small, conifer, broadleaf, upland, lowland) with timber production as the primary objective
- Fungi, moss, invertebrates, herptiles, ferns, flowers, birds, mammals...

Case studies might include:

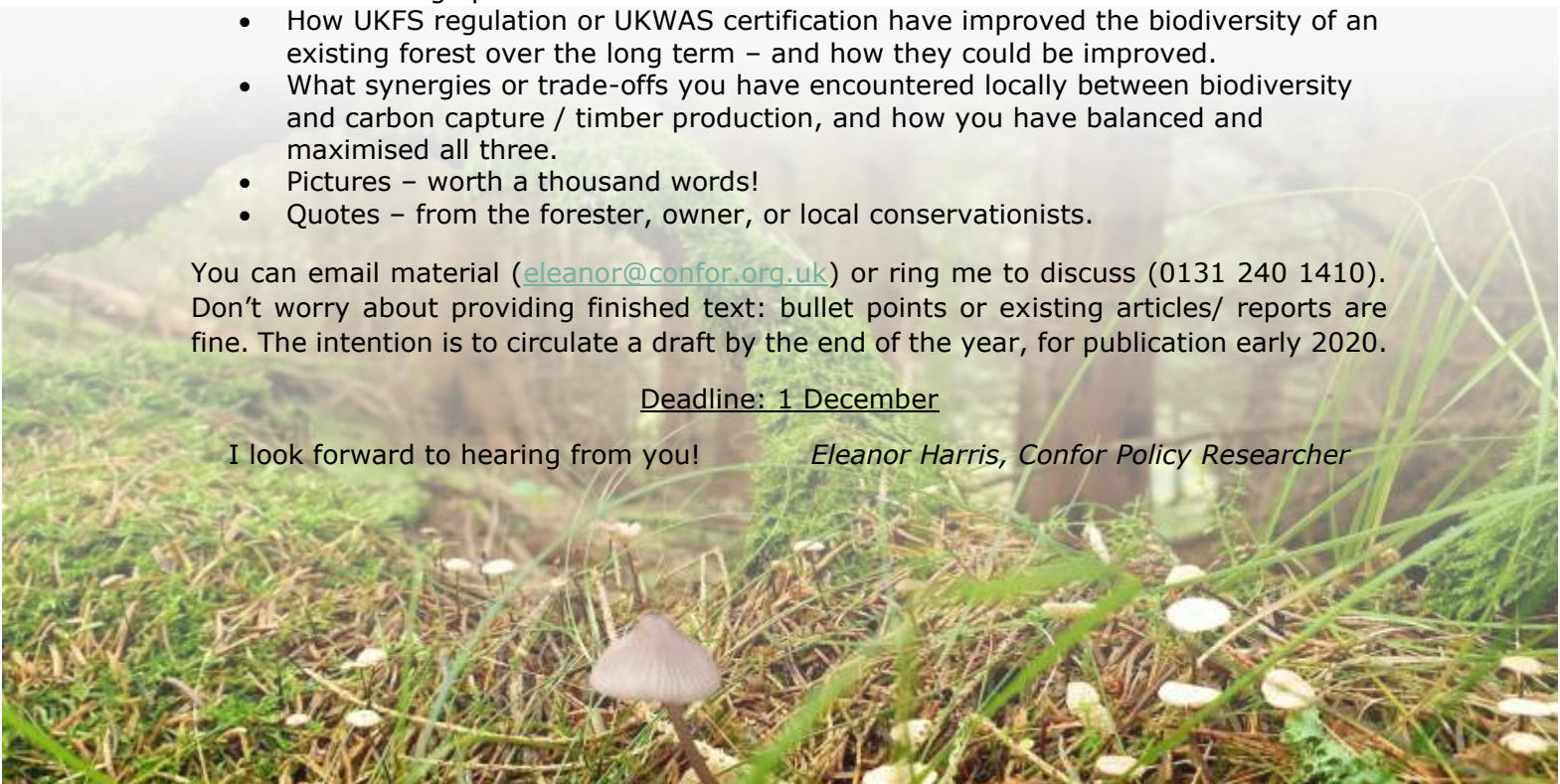
- How the forest sustains habitat for particular species of conservation concern.
- How new woodland creation, or bringing neglected woodland into timber production, delivered net biodiversity gain.
- How timber production (planting, thinning, harvesting) accelerated the natural ecological development of a young forest, through provision of deadwood, light, structural diversity.
- How you have collaborated with local conservation or community organisations, or landscape-scale projects, to deliver biodiversity aims or education.
- How the forest has enhanced adjacent habitats such as freshwater or ancient trees. Are natural habitats within the forest better protected than those in surrounding open land?
- How UKFS regulation or UKWAS certification have improved the biodiversity of an existing forest over the long term – and how they could be improved.
- What synergies or trade-offs you have encountered locally between biodiversity and carbon capture / timber production, and how you have balanced and maximised all three.
- Pictures – worth a thousand words!
- Quotes – from the forester, owner, or local conservationists.

You can email material ([eleanor@confor.org.uk](mailto:eleanor@confor.org.uk)) or ring me to discuss (0131 240 1410). Don’t worry about providing finished text: bullet points or existing articles/ reports are fine. The intention is to circulate a draft by the end of the year, for publication early 2020.

Deadline: 1 December

I look forward to hearing from you!

*Eleanor Harris, Confor Policy Researcher*



## UK news

*Eleanor Harris*

### Tree planting rates must treble

This was the message given by Lord Deben, chair of the UK Committee on Climate Change (CCC), to Simon Clarke MP, Exchequer Secretary. It came in response to a commitment from Treasury to take forward the CCC’s recommendation to review how the transition to a net-zero economy by 2050 can be funded fairly. View the full letter on the [CCC website](#).

### Confor Nursery Producers Group



Wyvale Nurseries in Herefordshire hosted the Confor Nursery Producers Group AGM, surrounded by enough Hawthorn plants to create a 140-mile hedge.



### Forestry Statistics survey

As part of a review of Forestry Statistics, Forest Research are running an [online survey](#) to consult widely on potential changes to the content and format of the release. Please take the opportunity to complete the survey by 31 December.

## Confor visit to Iggesund



The Confor team visited Iggesund paper mill in Workington, to see for themselves the short journey from Sitka to high-quality Folding Box Board. “I’ll never look at a box the same way again!”.

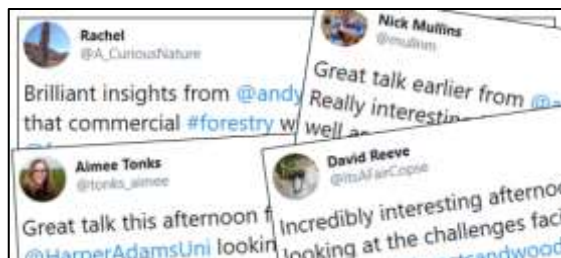
### Outdoor STEM careers

A new resource helps students and teachers navigate the options for working in STEM (Science, Tech, Engineering, Maths) in the outdoors. It includes Confor’s film on forestry and environment. Explore it on the [LANTRA website](#).



### New generation foresters

Andrew Heald spoke to Harper Adams students about woodland management challenges in England and New Generation Plantations around the world.



### Could your MP take a lead?

The Confor-led All-Party Parliamentary Group on Forestry (APPGF) will hold its AGM on 26 November (General Election depending), when the winners of our 2019

Essay and Video Competition will be announced.

The APPGF is seeking a new chair and members, to keep forestry and timber on the agenda in Westminster. Could your MP get involved? Contact them and direct them to the [APPGF Newsletter](#) where all the details are available.

### Confor e-news

This week Confor members and their employees will receive our exclusive e-news. If you are eligible but do not yet receive it contact [stefanie.kaiser@confor.org.uk](mailto:stefanie.kaiser@confor.org.uk).

### Forestry in pictures

Do you have the perfect image to illustrate forestry and timber in the festive season? Send it to [stefanie.kaiser@confor.org.uk](mailto:stefanie.kaiser@confor.org.uk) by 15 November and it might feature in the December *Forestry and Timber News*.

### Plant health

The issues highlighted in Confor's [Plant Health and Brexit](#) policy briefing remain current and we continue to push for stronger controls on:

- imports of pot plants ([Don't Risk It](#))
- imports of firewood (buy local: burn local)
- awareness of the [Plant Health Portal](#) for accessing information and reporting issues.

## WALES NEWS

*Anthony Geddes*

### Confor urges Welsh Government to plant millions more trees

I wrote to the Environment Minister Lesley Griffiths urging her to meet the challenge being laid down by Welsh farmers and landowners. The Glastir Woodland Creation schemes was 10 times over-subscribed in spring and similar levels of applications are expected again in autumn. The Minister has responded to Confor's letter outlining that the Welsh

Government has a strong commitment to meeting its climate change targets. From the letter it is clear that whilst the importance of forestry is acknowledged Confor has more work to do to communicate the important role of tree planting to the public and press upon the Welsh Government the urgency with which it must act. Our [press statement](#) was picked up by the Daily Post.

### Glastir Woodland Creation

The current window for applications for [Glastir Woodland Creation funding](#) closes on 8 November.

### Woodland for Wales Indicators

The next version of this document will be published in early November.

### Confor/ NRW visit to Llandegla

Dominic Driver, Head of Land Stewardship at Natural Resources Wales, joined myself and David Edwards and Simon Miller of Tilhill to visit Llandegla Forest. This was an opportunity to demonstrate the lessons that the public forest estate could draw from a commercial forestry operation. One of these is the successful interaction of 200,000 public visitors with the active forestry operations. Another is the role forestry can play in ensuring high water quality standards: after 24 hours of torrential rain, the drinking water reservoir at the heart of the forest and the leete supplying it showed no sign of diffuse pollution.



## Timber marketing

Confor processor members have been invited to send me their views on NRW timber e-sales by 11 November, prior to a meeting with NRW. See article by Clare Pillman below.

## National Forest Design

Confor are involved in the steering group discussing proposals for a Welsh National Forest. There is little detail yet on budgets and priorities, but the need for productive forestry yielding good quality timber is recognised.

## Land Use Consultation

Confor members have been circulated Confor's response to this consultation, and have commented positively and with some constructive amendments. The final version will be submitted this week, and will be available on the Confor website.

## Forest Welfare Units

We still await the publication of the FISA guidance note. I have been in contact with NRW to ensure that their guidance does not gold-plate HSE requirements. There is still work to be done on tailoring risk assessment documentation to the different ends of forestry operations, and the need to engage with the whole sector has been strongly highlighted.

## Forestry Training and Networking

I have been in contact with Focus on Forestry First and the ICF who are both keen to run events for knowledge transfer in the forestry sector. I would also be interested to hear of members' interest in a December social event.

## New general licenses

From 7 October three new general licenses are in operation for the control of pest birds, and previous licenses are no longer valid. Details of the new licenses are on the [NRW website](#).

## Brexit readiness events

Welsh Government have highlighted some events for businesses in [Wales](#), [South Wales](#), [North Wales](#).

## Natural Resources Wales and a new era for forestry



Clare Pillman, CEO of Natural Resources Wales, describes the changes that are being made to its commercial timber operations

The timber industry is a vital part of the Welsh economy and at Natural Resources Wales (NRW), we are proud to play a key role in supporting it.

We are determined to create the best environment possible and nurture our relationships so that our forestry operations maximise the benefits for the taxpayer, our customers and the industry.

Since I commissioned the Grant Thornton review which was published in February, the project team have been working tirelessly alongside our forestry staff to make the major changes necessary to our commercial timber operations.

Although the last few months have had their challenges, I am pleased to say that we are beginning to make real progress, which has been recognised by Grant Thornton and the Auditor General for Wales.

We've made some key changes to our forestry structure, and from July of this year, the management of our harvesting contracts moved from a single centralised team into place-based, local teams meaning we can provide greater local integration and ownership of our operations. This will also allow us to work more locally with partners and communities to deliver more for the environment, natural resources and people.

The changes to the structure have included two new significant appointments. Sasha Wynn Davies and Dominic Driver joined us in July as Head of Commercial and Head of Land Stewardship. Sasha has taken control of our timber sales and marketing, business

development and procurement; and Dominic is taking the lead for setting and monitoring standards in management of the Welsh Government Woodland Estate. Both Sasha and Dominic bring a wealth of experience to their roles and are focusing on building a closer working relationship with the timber industry.

Our overall governance for our timber sales has seen steady improvements and we've begun a thorough review of our internal processes. New guidance and policy documents have been put in place, and a training package will be rolled out from the end of September providing staff with the right guidance, help and support so that we can ensure we are complying with the correct procedures.

We have also developed new terms and conditions for our standard standing sales and roadside sales contracts, so that they are easier to understand and are more robust for both parties. Contract management training for staff will commence in September and there will be an opportunity for customers to attend training sessions in the near future.

Improvements have also been made to our contracting processes. Going forwards contracts will be sold as Estimated Volumes and we have made a commitment to prioritise informing contract holders when 80% of the contract has been fulfilled. Whilst we have experienced challenges, we have continued to offer timber to the market, offering some 480,000 tonnes this year since April, bringing us back in line with our profile in our published annual sales plan for the year, and I'd like to thank you all for your continued commitment, custom and service.

One of the key things that was important to me was improving our relationship with you. We recognise there is a need for better communications from us, and we've been working hard to improve this.

One of the main things we've put in place is our bimonthly newsletter that's dedicated to the timber industry so we can

keep you updated on the project's progress and relevant news. We've also set up a dedicated timber email address [timber.sales@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk](mailto:timber.sales@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk) as a central enquiry point so we can send important information to you and deal with your enquiries more efficiently.

We now meet regularly with Confor so we can address any concerns that are raised and to discuss progress and the new way in which we are working with the industry. We've also re-established trade days and the trade meeting held in Welshpool in June to take customers through the changes ahead of our new terms and conditions proved invaluable and constructive. We will remain committed to our annual customer liaison day each new year.

While I am pleased of what we have achieved, I know that it will take some time to free ourselves completely of all the issues that in some case pre-date NRW. We still have a lot of work ahead of us, but I'm confident that given time we'll continue to make steady progress.

We value our customers' support and hope we can continue working together so we can make a better future for us, the timber industry and the people of Wales.

## ENGLAND NEWS

*Caroline Ayre*

### Confor welcomes Forest for Cornwall

Proposals by Cornwall Council to create approximately 8,000 hectares new canopy cover by 2030, equating to 2% of Cornwall's land area. See the full story [on our website](#).

Around England, other Local Authority commitments to planting by 2030 include:

- 1.2 million trees in [Surrey](#)
- 1 million trees in [Northumberland](#)

## CONFOR SOUTH

- 375,000 trees in [Essex](#)
- Plans for a forest for [Devon](#)
- The Northern Forest in [Leeds](#)

Done well, with forward planning, professional advice and long-term management, these forests can supply a wide range of natural capital benefits including timber.

### Squirrel Accord photo competition

The UK Squirrel Accord, of which Confor is a partner, recently launched a new website at [squirrelaccord.uk](http://squirrelaccord.uk).

Congratulations to all the winners of their [photo competition](#). This highly commended image is by Wilson Johnston at Montalto Estate.



### State of the UK's Woods and Trees

Woodland Trust have engaged the WCMC & JNCC (World Conservation Monitoring Centre and Joint Nature Conservation Committee) to scope a regular reporting system on the state of the UK woods. Confor has asked to be involved in the steering group and data analysis to ensure that management and production data are included in the reports.

### Consultation: Forestry apprenticeships

A major review of in England will recommend changes to apprenticeships in Agriculture, Environment and Animal Care (including forestry) and set priorities going forwards. [A consultation is now](#)

[open until 4 December](#). Employers, training providers, apprentices and anyone else with an interest in the future of these occupations should respond.

### English forestry on Countryfile



Confor member Andy Howard gave Countryside presenter Charlotte Smith a tour of the new Doddington Moor forest, to see the difference since her first visit in 2017 and discuss how tree planting targets in England can be met. [The episode is online](#) until 25 November.

### Bioenergy feedstocks

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is conducting a feasibility study on increasing sustainable bioenergy feedstocks through an innovation fund to be launched around Spring 2021. This will cover innovations in conventional and short rotation forestry, perennial energy crops (miscanthus and short rotation coppice) and crop residues. Key innovation priorities have been identified, along with appropriate areas of focus, and the next step is to assess the interest and capacity of UK industry to deliver them. If you are involved in these bioenergy feedstock supply chains, you are invited to a [bidder workshop](#) on 18 November in Birmingham.

### Forestry Commissioners sought

Defra and the Forestry Commission are seeking to recruit up to three Non-Executive Commissioners, to help lead its mission to protect and expand England's



forests and woodlands and increase their value to society and the environment. The closing date is 1 November. [More info](#)

## Regional Committees

The Confor England committees' business includes:

- discussion of prices at the market, market conditions and production;
- an update on Confor's activity and an opportunity for members to help guide my priorities as Manager;
- an update from Forestry Commission on grants and regulations
- planning for each region's spring and autumn member events.

All committees are keen to recruit new members and are looking to appoint secretaries. Confor committees can count towards ICF CPD records. If you would like to join, have ideas for members events, or matters you would like to raise, contact myself or your local Chair:

*South West (Devon & Cornwall)*

Francis Fulford

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*South West (Wessex):* Nick Hoare

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*South East:* Jamie Kirkman

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*North:* Oliver Combe

[oliver.combe@timberauctions.co.uk](mailto:oliver.combe@timberauctions.co.uk)

*Marches:* Phil Argyle

[phil@argylewoodland.co.uk](mailto:phil@argylewoodland.co.uk)

## Shared events

Are you a member of NFU or CLA? Caroline would love to hear from you if these organisations are holding regional events where we might collaborate to deliver shared objectives.

## Not yet a member?

Confor is the voice of the forestry and timber sector, and our job is to make sure your voice is heard through our representation in political and technical forums.

For more information, contact Anthony Geddes or Caroline Ayre.

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