**COVID-19 AND WORKERS IN THE FORESTRY AND WOOD PROCESSING SECTOR IN SCOTLAND**

The Scottish Government has introduced [guidance](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-travel-and-transport/) for travel in and out of Level 3 and 4 areas, and the First Minister has highlighted the potential for that to be strengthened into regulations if it is felt to be required.

Travel (and onsite working) is permissible for the forestry and wood processing industry where necessary, while ensuring compliance with the industry guidance on safe working.

Existing Level 3 and Level 4 guidance on restricting travel contains exemptions for the continuation of essential work-related movements. In the broader guidance there is an expectation that even under Level 4 outdoor working, construction and manufacturing can continue, subject to the extensive safe working guidance that has been prepared by the sector in partnership with the Scottish Government.

In Scotland, the vital role that forestry and the wood processing sector is playing in the current COVID-19 pandemic was highlighted by Rural Economy and Tourism Secretary, Fergus Ewing on Thursday, 26 March.

Mr Ewing commended the important contribution that the sector is making in producing key products, such as pallets, packaging, biomass fuel and face masks, to help keep Scotland - and the UK - safe and well during these unprecedented times.

Mr Ewing said;

“In these challenging and difficult times, it is imperative that essential goods, such as food supplies and medicines, and biomass fuel for hospitals and care homes get to the places where they are needed.  This needs pallet manufacture and woodfuel processing to continue.

“I am immensely proud that Scotland’s forestry and timber processing sectors are working closely together to play their part in fighting the impact of this virus.”

Since then, Confor has secured clarification that agricultural fencing is also an essential product.

Where workers can work from home they should. However, many forestry workers and those working in wood processing sites simply cannot work from home.

It is important that these forestry workers are able to travel to work and to undertake their activities without harassment or obstruction.

The forestry, wood processing and nurseries sector takes its responsibilities seriously during this current outbreak. Further information is available at <http://www.confor.org.uk/covid-19/> (PLEASE CHECK ADDRESS)

Stuart Goodall

Confor

5 November 2020