

FORESTRY & TIMBER NEWS

December 2022 Issue 114

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PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

COP27

FOREST MARKET REPORT



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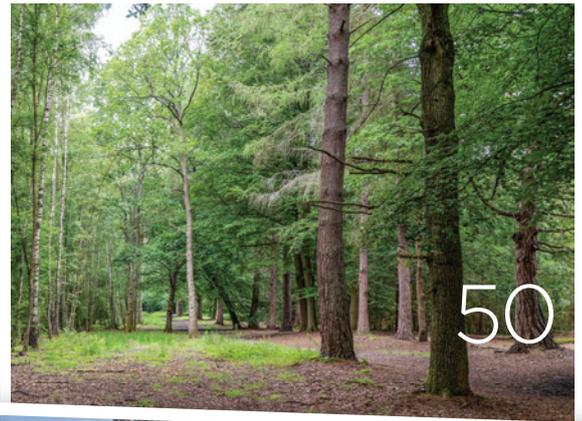
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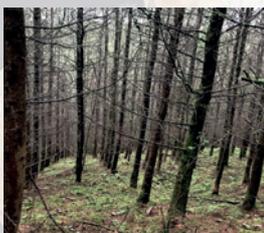
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John Clegg
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Marcus Winnall
Forestry Land Acquisition & Sales Advisor

miketustin@tustins.co.uk • johnclegg@tustins.co.uk • marcuswinnall@tustins.co.uk
Unit 2, Park Farm, Akeman Street, Kirtlington, Oxfordshire, OX5 3JQ

01869 254938

www.tustins.co.uk

Pushing ahead in the new year



STUART GOODALL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE,
CONFOR

Assuming there are no more seismic political shocks between me writing this editorial and you reading it, we have a new UK forestry minister in Trudy Harrison. This is positive as it means we hopefully have a UK minister that will focus on delivering the government's planting target and supporting, rather than undermining, industry.

In recent months we have been reminded that planting more trees and producing more home-grown wood matters beyond our own interests. COP27 in Egypt didn't move the world decisively towards tackling climate change, and here in the UK we have seen signs for some years now that achieving net zero by 2050 is unlikely.

As we report in this issue of *Forestry & Timber News*, a global study presented at COP27 shows that demand for timber is accelerating well ahead of supply resulting in an increasing global 'timber gap'.

As this summer's softwood production forecast demonstrates, the UK will have less wood available in the years running up to 2050 than it is does now – unless something radical changes.

These issues have been capturing the attention of politicians in London and Edinburgh recently. The Westminster Environment Audit Committee has a new

inquiry into the potential global biodiversity impact of increasing timber imports and questioning whether the UK government is doing enough about it – the simple answer is no. In Holyrood, a recent debate on forestry and net zero saw numerous contributions highlighting the need to plant more productive forests and produce more wood.

There is definitely a shift in political understanding of the industry taking place, hopefully a decisive one, towards getting more trees in the ground and planning for greater domestic wood production. This is good news, but as always political support won't be enough in itself.

Politicians are influenced by lobbying from influential organisations, by negative media coverage and by constituents – some of whom don't like productive tree planting or trees being cut down. Experience over the years has shown that the mainstream media won't give our sector the platform needed to raise understanding, though we will keep plugging away.

One strength we do have is the passion and commitment of the people in this industry. If more people working in the sector are prepared to contact their local politicians, then that can make a real difference.

Confor is a membership organisation that promotes sustainable forestry and wood-using businesses. Confor members receive *Forestry and Timber News* for free as part of their membership. For more information on membership, visit www.confor.org.uk/join-us

Past issues and articles can be accessed online at

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For advertising, contact
Dan Rice 01502 725858
daniel.rice@micropress.co.uk
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Stuart Goodall
Chief Executive
T: 0131 240 1416
E: stuartg@confor.org.uk



Andy Leitch
Deputy Chief Executive
M: 07881 510171
E: Andy.leitch@confor.org.uk



Eliza Hibbins-Cline
Membership and Marketing Officer
M: 07918 880285
E: eliza@confor.org.uk



Eleanor O'Neill
Communications Manager
M: 07918 255930
E: eleanor.oneill@confor.org.uk



Caroline Ayre
National manager for England
M: 07500 927482
E: caroline@confor.org.uk



Richard Hunter
Technical and Industry Support Manager
M: 07867 379657
E: richard.hunter@confor.org.uk



Maria Bellissimo
Policy Officer
M: 07884 579215
E: maria@confor.org.uk



Anthony Geddes
National manager for Wales
T: 07494 079305
E: anthony@confor.org.uk



April Armstrong
National Manager for Scotland
M: 07780 190821
E: april.armstrong@confor.org.uk



Confor head office and editorial office
59 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 2JG



0131 240 1410



info@confor.org.uk



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CALLS ON SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY TO SOLVE TIMBER DEMAND

Ahead of COP27 in Egypt, Confor joined with forestry partners from other countries, UN-FAO and Scottish Forestry to commission a report from South African based consultancy Dalberg Advisers.

Stuart Goodall explains the key themes.

A new report released at COP27 highlights a key global challenge in the fight against climate change – ensuring we have the wood fibre we need to achieve net zero without exacerbating the global loss of biodiversity.

The growing role of forest products in climate change mitigation was launched in Sharm El Sheikh at an event organised by the FAO Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-Based Industries, with a panel of speakers including the Director of Energy and Climate Change in the Scottish Government.

Growth in sustainable forestry is recommended via what the report calls ‘nationally determined approaches’ to meet climate driven demand for timber. Dalberg Advisors Principal Mokena Makeka said the report clarified the challenges the world must meet as it pivots away from fossil-fuels.

“If the world doesn’t move to encourage growth in sustainable forest industries through climate policy, we will witness greater problems in the years and decades ahead, problems like increased illegal logging and deforestation activity in places where governance controls are most challenging,” he stated.

“Individual countries must however develop the best policies to suit them. One country might be best suited to growing more sustainable plantations. Another to enhancing productivity of small holders. And in another it might mean a careful increase in natural forest management.”

Nationally determined approaches mirror the language used in climate change negotiations. As the report says, like so much else: “sustainable forestry operations, and therefore policies which will enhance those operations, vary across

the globe... it is sensible to strive for a shared global understanding and agreement of the need to grow sustainable production and supply of wood-based products but seek country-specific approaches towards that goal”.

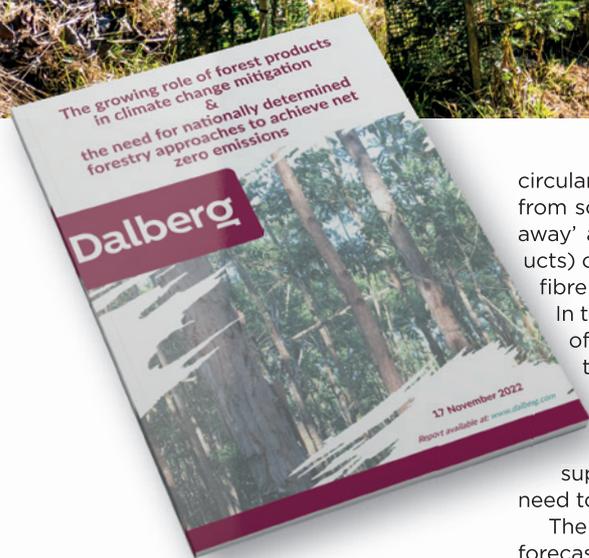
A big part of the climate challenge is being caused by the global growth of cities. They already account for more than 80% of global economic output, consume close to two-thirds of the world’s energy, and account for more than 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions. The global urban population is expected to rise 18% by 2030, and 52% by 2050. This will drive an increase in housing, manufacturing, and energy needs.

The Dalberg research concludes that with global demand increasing at an astonishing rate off the back of urban growth, it’s critical we grow timber and fibre sustainably across the world to meet the accelerating need predicted in the decades ahead.

As we know, forests and the timber they produce can provide emission reduction benefits through carbon sequestration in trees and storage in wood products, especially if that is combined with the substitution of higher embodied energy products like steel and concrete. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has recognised the benefits of trees and timber: “In the long term, a sustainable forest management strategy aimed at maintaining or increasing forest carbon stocks, while producing an annual sustained yield of timber, fibre or energy from the forest, will generate the largest sustained mitigation benefit.”

The OECD, WWF and others have estimated that global demand for wood will increase by between 200% and 400% by 2050, while Confor

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has calculated that if UK consumption increases at the rate it has over the last ten years, consumption here will rise by 78% within the same timeframe.

The Dalberg report highlights an emerging global timber and wood fibre supply gap as the world pivots to climate friendly fibre supplies. This wood 'supply gap' is estimated, by 2050, to be in the range of 3.1 to 4.1 billion cubic metres. This equates to 44% of global consumption of small roundwood.

The report goes on to note that, all else remaining equal, "an additional minimum 33 million ha of highly productive plantation forest would need to be established to supply basic industrial roundwood demand" as estimated by FAO. Other studies that include the full range of products from forests, project that the area of planted forests for timber production would need to increase by 20-40 million ha by 2050 (Korhonen et al., 2021).

There is clearly scope to look at how

circular economy principles (moving away from society's focus on 'take, make, throw away' and maximising the reuse of products) can drive more efficient use of wood fibre and help fill the global supply gap.

In the UK, there is increasing discussion of the circular economy and the Scottish Government, for example, is actively seeking ways to stimulate it.

However, that will only be part of the solution on future wood supply, both here and abroad. And we need to find answers.

The recent UK softwood production forecast shows that our future availability of wood, while growing over the next 10-15 years, will then fall back to current levels by the early 2040s, and then decrease even further by 2050 - the opposite trend from what we and the world needs.

Tree planting had been the obvious saviour, with the Conservative party committing in its 2019 manifesto to plant 30,000 hectares a year across the UK by 2024. Unfortunately, we are yet to hit even half that target with two years to go.

Frustratingly, in the one country that the UK Government has forestry policy responsibility for (England) we have struggled because there was a clear policy signal from the previous forestry minister that wood production wasn't a priority, and indeed that wood producing forests should be removed. It is hoped that the new forestry minister, Trudy Harrison MP, will support a broader approach that includes growing wood production - as without that, planting targets will be missed.

The UK has been a global leader in legislating and introducing public procurement policies that seek to ensure imported wood

products come from legal and sustainably managed sources. However, while we can buy wood with confidence in the UK, we should also be aware that there are many other countries that either lack the political will or the means to do the same.

The facts speak for themselves. Achieving net zero means using more wood, planting more trees and protecting existing forests. Tackling biodiversity loss means we need to protect forests and establish new ones that can buffer valuable older forests and create new habitats.

The Dalberg report ends by noting that a 5% increase in biodiversity-rich and what it calls 'climate-smart' global forest cover would "bode well for the Paris Agreement, increase the likelihood for greater biodiversity, support land degradation neutrality, and help unlock the potential of green livelihoods, which will increasingly rely on sustainable forest economies and products".

The intersection between trees, net zero, biodiversity and meeting our global responsibilities means we have to increase our tree planting, and that must include an expansion of wood producing forests established in accordance with the highest standards for sustainability - which we already have in place in the UK.

The Westminster Environmental Audit Committee is currently undertaking an inquiry into this very matter, and I recently gave evidence to it. We have shared the Dalberg report with the Committee and it is hoped that their report will add weight to the need for quicker and greater action in the UK to increase future wood supply.

Both the committee and the new forestry Minister have a big responsibility on their hands and a big opportunity to be grasped.

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WESTMINSTER IN CHAOS: HERE WE GO AGAIN...

Maria Bellissimo reflects on the Autumn no one saw coming.

When the last FTN issue was published in early October, Liz Truss had been Prime Minister for only a couple of weeks and the nation had just come out of the national mourning period for the death of Her Majesty the Queen.

Confor and the sector were keenly awaiting confirmation that Trudy Harrison MP would be the new Forestry Minister. Even those with the most creative imagination would have struggled to guess what followed. The mini-budget announced by Ms Truss and her Chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng MP, caused a shock to the British economy so severe that the Bank of England had to intervene to avoid the collapse of several pension funds and stabilise the markets.

By 25 October, Ms Truss' rival in the leadership contest was elected Prime Minister in a new, short leadership election that involved - perhaps thankfully - only Conservative MPs rather than a full-blown, lengthy vote by the party's membership. Ms Truss is now the shortest-serving Prime Minister ever.

Mr Sunak immediately set out to appoint a new government that could bring the Conservative Party together: a combination of old safe hands like Michael Gove at the Levelling Up Department and Grant Shapps as Business Secretary, new talent like Kemi Badenoch as International Trade Secretary, and some Truss faithful like Thérèse Coffey at DEFRA.

Jeremy Hunt, who was appointed Chancellor by Ms Truss in an attempt to save her premiership, remains in position and is a key ally of Mr Sunak in attempting to stabilise the economy and bring the cost-of-living crisis under control.

The Autumn Statement, delivered on 17 November by the Chancellor, aimed to do just this with some tax rises and spendings cuts that should reduce public debt to more manageable levels and protect the most vulnerable in society. Balancing the books, unfortunately, requires tough choices to be made and Mr Sunak and Mr Hunt decided to not extend the energy support package for households and businesses beyond April 2023.

This is causing more uncertainty for many in the sector at a time when fear of

a recession and the related slowdown in construction are already heightening concerns. However, some good news came in the shape of a £6 billion fund to improve the energy efficiency of existing housing stock, which might bring some cheer to manufacturers of retrofit and home improvement materials.

Hopefully, this renewed (and very much needed) focus from Government on better, more efficient housing will drive the use of timber in construction and R&D (one public expenditure item that was not cut) into new timber technologies even further and faster.

Friendly faces at DEFRA

Mr Sunak appointed an old acquaintance of the forestry and wood sector, Ms Thérèse Coffey, as the new DEFRA secretary of State. As Forestry Minister a few years back, Ms Coffey was supportive of productive planting and the sector as a whole, so hopefully her appointment will signal a step change in DEFRA's approach to our industry and a fresh look at how to deliver the tree planting targets.

The reappointment of Trudy Harrison, MP for Copeland, as Forestry Minister is also very welcome. As a Cumbrian MP with many great businesses on her constituency's doorstep, we hope she will readily recognise the importance of the sector and support us through the challenges and opportunities of the next year.

Ms Harrison has already visited Euroforest in Penrith and the Confor team are working on organis-

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Rishi Sunak, Ms Truss' rival in the leadership contest has now been elected Prime Minister.



Liz Truss and then Chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng's (far left) mini budget led to her resignation.



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Thérèse Coffey (above left) becomes DEFRA secretary of State and Trudy Harrison (above right), MP for Copeland, is appointed Forestry Minister.



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ing a series of meetings and visits for her and DEFRA officials to showcase the best of the industry and win over their support through what could be challenging times ahead. Let's hope there will be more stability (and not another unhelpful change at the very top of politics) during 2023!

Wales and Scotland focusing on the big questions

Scotland and Wales returned from the summer break with renewed focus on agricultural reform, land use, and net zero targets. The team worked very closely with members to draft the response to the Scottish Government's Land Reform consultation, which precedes the introduction of a Bill at the end of 2023.

Some of the suggested changes represent a clear challenge to achieving the tree planting targets and Confor is grateful for all the help members provided through their contributions and views. This is an important issue on which Confor is keen to work very closely with the Scottish Government; the next steps will be intensifying political engagement in Holyrood to ensure that the wider ramifications of land

“AS FORESTRY MINISTER A FEW YEARS BACK, MS COFFEY WAS SUPPORTIVE OF PRODUCTIVE PLANTING AND THE SECTOR AS A WHOLE, SO HOPEFULLY HER APPOINTMENT WILL SIGNAL A STEP CHANGE IN DEFRA’S APPROACH TO OUR INDUSTRY.”

reform on forestry are clearly understood.

Confor also liaised with several MSPs to provide information ahead of the debate on the contribution of forestry to net zero. The statements made by Ministers Mairi McAllan and Lorna Slater were encouraging in their support for our industry and were mirrored by interventions from MSPs from all sides of the political spectrum. We

look forward to working with supporters old and new in the course of 2023.

In Wales, the focus of both Government and Senedd has been on agricultural reform, with the new Agriculture Bill being widely discussed.

The Government is considering a requirement for farmers to plant 10% of their land with trees as a way to drive sustainability, nature gains, and decarbonisation. There is no denying that, while potentially positive, this is definitely a challenging measure that will need a very open and comprehensive debate involving farmers, foresters, investors and Government to be successful. Further work will be invested with both Plaid and Conservative Senedd members to brief them ahead of the debate covering the Agricultural (Wales) Bill itself.

In an important step towards raising awareness with policymakers of the potential impact of the Bill on the forestry and wood using sector, Confor's National Manager for Wales, Anthony Geddes, was invited to give evidence to the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs committee in October.

Earlier that month, Anthony and myself hosted visits for Cefin Campbell MS and Virginia Crosbie MP with the help of Tilhill, HW Forestry and Williams Homes. The visit with Mr Campbell were particularly productive and got him on farmland with constituents who had decided to plant trees to support and improve their businesses.

He took a strong interest in the commercial opportunity and financial benefit for the farm businesses and, off the back of this, Confor Wales and members are currently developing a series of case studies which will be used as part of an information and engagement program with NFU/FUW, Plaid Cymru and other parties.

Once again, the Confor team would like to thank all members who have contributed to our work through sharing their views, ideas and comments as well as helping us organise and host visits for key political contacts. We look forward to continuing to work together to promote the forestry and wood using sector in 2023.

ANGLESEY MP SEES GROWTH POTENTIAL OF WELSH TIMBER

During October, Anglesey MP Virginia Crosbie joined Confor Wales National Manager, Anthony Geddes, for a visit to a new housing development that uses Welsh-grown timber and the local forest in Pentraeth.

Starting at the Williams Homes (Bala) and Clwyd Alyn site in Pentraeth, where 48 affordable houses and six flats are being built using Welsh timber, wood fibre insulation and frames, the visit aimed to showcase the opportunities that the forestry and timber sector can deliver for Angle-

sey's economic growth.

Williams Homes' Land and Acquisitions Manager, Penny Lofts, led a tour of the site while explaining what makes this development stand out and the many benefits of using timber in construction. The homes, which have solar panels and air source heat pumps, are low carbon and will have low running costs thanks to high energy efficiency.

Anthony talked about all the work Confor is doing to lift barriers to tree planting and secure the long-term supply of do-

mestic timber that is needed to drive up the numbers of timber-based houses. He also discussed the skilled jobs and new manufacturing opportunities that could be created by the expansion of wood use in construction.

The visit then continued at the nearby Pentraeth Forest, well-known for its red squirrel population. Walking around the forest was the perfect setting to explain the important role of managing forests and woodlands plays in the protection of the species.

TIMBER GAP IS HUGE ‘CONUNDRUM’

The growing gap between the global supply and demand for timber is creating a “conundrum” for the UK, Confor’s Chief Executive told a parliamentary committee. **David Lee** reports.

Stuart Goodall told the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) that the UK would need to use 78% more timber by 2050 if demand continues to rise at current rates. This is largely fuelled by the need to use more wood in construction, to help decarbonise the UK’s construction industry and contribute to meeting net zero targets.

Yet the supply of wood is forecast to decline, and the UK - particularly England - has planted almost no large forests targeted at wood production for the last 30 years.

Mr Goodall was speaking to the EAC as part of its inquiry into sustainable timber and deforestation. The inquiry is important to Confor as it picks up on issues repeatedly highlighted by the industry - a lack of domestic timber production against a backdrop of rising global demand, which will inevitably put pressure on fragile forests overseas.

A new report ahead of climate summit COP27 showed that “the gap between timber demand and supply is going to grow significantly at a global level,” Mr Goodall said.

He told the committee: “This rapidly rising demand for timber does raise a concern for us [about] pressure on fragile forests. It’s going to encourage illegal logging; it’s going to have negative habitat implications. And we do want to use more wood because [otherwise] we’re not going to achieve net zero. So, we have this conundrum, which is why this inquiry is extremely important.”

Ian Tubby, of the Forestry Commission, noted that the majority of planting in Eng-



Confor Chairman Stuart Goodall addresses the committee

land over the last three decades had been broadleaf species - although it was very difficult to grow hardwoods like oak to construction standard in the UK because of the damage caused by squirrels.

Mr Goodall supported Mr Tubby’s comments and added: “We have Members who would love to grow quality hardwood but face huge challenges from squirrels and deer. We reckon about 90%+ of the hardwoods we currently produce go to firewood, which is clearly suboptimal, and we would like to see much more hardwood timber going into construction and those kind of markets.”

Mr Tubby stressed that there was a “very important role” for commercial forestry in meeting the UK Government’s target of planting 30,000 hectares of new woodland

annually, while Mr Goodall highlighted the fact that productive planting could be very good for climate and biodiversity as well as local economies.

Nick Phillips of The Woodland Trust called for a “right tree in the right place” approach, accepting that a whole variety of woodland types were needed, including productive planting.

Stuart Goodall said it was important not to see different woodland types as “either or” choices and that a mosaic of planting was needed.

He added the most important approach was to look at “evidence-based planting”, where woods and forests were created to deliver specific policy objectives and outcomes - whether that was to produce wood, protect biodiversity, or a variety of other reasons.

Confor has repeatedly highlighted that these benefits can be delivered simultaneously in modern, mixed-species forests.

After the session, Mr Goodall said: “This is a very significant inquiry which is taking a serious look at future wood supply. It’s crucial to explain to policy-makers that the UK needs to plant far more productive forests, particularly in England, to deliver a very wide range of environmental and economic benefits.

“These benefits will support the UK’s rural economies, its climate change ambitions, and the future of its natural world. Not only that, but there will also be very significant long-term global benefits in terms of protecting fragile forests.

“Confor welcomes the opportunity to continue working with this very important inquiry.”

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT COMMITS TO DELIVERING 10-YEAR STRATEGY

A motion which pledges to deliver Scotland’s 10-year forestry strategy and to meet ambitious tree planting targets has been passed after a debate in the Scottish Parliament.

Confor’s CEO Stuart Goodall welcomed the move, which he said confirmed Scotland’s leadership in the UK forestry and wood sector. However, he urged the Scottish Government to focus on tree planting targets after a slight dip saw the 2021/22 target of 12,000 hectares missed - and said the gap between ambition and delivery must not be allowed to widen.

The parliamentary motion, timed to coincide with COP27 in Egypt, also ac-

knowledged “the essential contribution to net zero that trees, woods and forests make, tackling the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss”.

It noted “the importance of growing and maintaining a resilient forest resource to sustain its economic, social and environmental contribution” and welcomed the achievements made in implementing Scotland’s Forestry Strategy 2019-2029.

The Strategy was originally passed with cross-party support and Mr Goodall said this was crucial to maintaining Scotland’s pre-eminence in UK forestry.

Opening the debate, Scotland’s Environment Minister Màiri McAllan MSP de-

scribed forestry as “a real and growing success story”, highlighting that Scotland had been responsible for 80% of all new UK planting over the last four years.

She said forests were Scotland’s biggest carbon sink and absorbed 14% of its greenhouse gas emissions. It was established conifer forests, with a majority of spruce trees, that absorbed most carbon, she said - and that the carbon benefits were even greater when conifers were harvested and used in construction.

Ms McAllan went on to highlight Scotland’s “technologically advanced sawmills and wood panel manufacturers” as a crucial part of the rural economy.



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CELEBRATE LEADERS, INNOVATORS, AND CHAMPIONS OF THE SECTOR

Nominations for the Confor Awards 2023 are now open to submissions. Our judges are looking for Confor Members, individuals or businesses, with achievements in four categories:

Future Leader

This award is presented to an individual with outstanding skills, who has the potential to be a leader in the forestry and timber sector – someone showing initiative, passion and making a real difference to the sector.

Changing Attitudes

(Sponsored by Scottish Woodlands)

This award is presented to an individual, business or organisation promoting the forestry and wood sector in a positive, impactful way – through personal engagement, campaigning or communication, social media, or other ways.

Innovation & Research

(Sponsored by Forestry & Land Scotland and Forestry Commission)

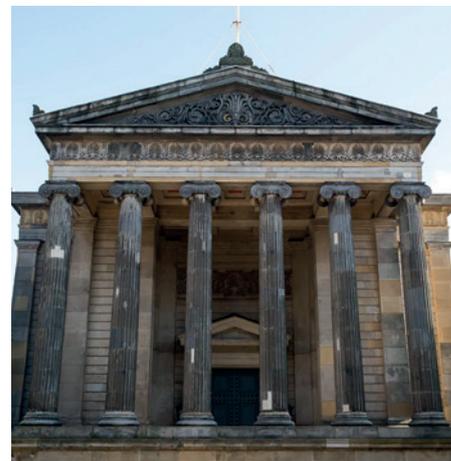
This award is presented to an individual, business or organisation delivering successful innovation and/or research which has clearly demonstrated greater productivity or efficiency in the forestry and wood industry.

Net Zero *(Sponsored by Tilhill)*

This award is presented to an individual, business or organisation making a specific and measurable contribution to the forestry and wood industry's efforts to deliver the UK's net zero ambitions.

Visit <https://bit.ly/3EzYGNF> to submit a nomination or download an entry form to enter by email. All submissions must be received by 9 January 2023.

Winners will be announced at the Confor



Dinner at Surgeons Quarter, Edinburgh, on 28 February 2023. Tickets for the event are available to book on our website or by contacting members@confor.org.uk.

NEW MEMBERS AND A NEW YEAR



Eliza Hibbins-Cline,
Confor Membership
and Marketing
Officer

I can't quite believe we are near to completing 2022! It has been a busy year for Confor, especially with events re-opening after COVID. Looking ahead to what 2023 holds for Members, we are always seeking to improve our benefits for you. If you have any suggestions on what you would like to see from us, feel free to complete our Membership Survey.

The survey is available on the Members Area of our website and can be completed anonymously. Alternatively, you can scan the QR code on this page or email eliza@confor.org.uk for a link.

Did you know that Confor has partnered with Dell? We are proud to be able to offer our Members discounts on laptops, monitors and computer accessories. You could save up to 20%! Make sure to check our Members Area for discount codes and get saving this festive season. They also provide a personal helpline if you encounter any IT issues with your Dell.

You should find a diary enclosed with this FTN, which this year we've brought to

you in partnership with sponsors BSW and Wood for Good. Inside are Confor staff details, the latest pesticide information, forestry contacts and more! If you would like to receive additional copies to share with your colleagues, please get in touch to request.

Thank you to everyone who has paid for their 2022/23 renewals thus far - we value all your support. If you haven't yet received a thank you email or letter from us, please get in touch so I can confirm your membership status.

Note that if you haven't paid by the end of January 2023, your membership will automatically lapse.

The Confor Dinner & Awards is coming up on 28 February. This is a great chance to celebrate forestry together and is expected to be even bigger than last year's sold-out event. Make sure to buy your tickets in advance!

Finally, I'd like to extend a warm welcome to our new Members:

England: **Jack Simons**, Harper Adams University; **Zackery Bartlett**, Voltaire's Wood; **Andrew Dixon**, Chainsaw Training Lake District; **Harry Stone**, Working Woodland Cornwall; **Jamie Brookes**, Landscan UK; **Chris Ramwell**, Student; **Sarah Ellerby**, Nova Pangaea Technologies UK Limited; **Neil Harrison**, Reheat; **Will Swift**, Dunnewoods; **T F Robertson**,

Pilgroves Farm Limited; **Greg Thompson**, Woodland Owner; **Stephen Saunders**, S. A. Saunders; **Charles Robinson**, Robinson Forestry Ltd; **Will Dalton**, Dalfor Ltd; **Sebastian De Bock**, Woodland Owner; **Joe Foster**, **Hannah Hallett**, **Tamara Roberts**, **Joshua Nelson & Sharon Bill**, Derby University; **Jonathan Hammond**, Askham Bryan College; **Andrew Tucker**, Harper Adams.

Scotland: **Daniel Leigh**; **Gary Servant**, Upland Forestry Ltd; **Callum Nicholson**, Nicholson Forest Management; **Bruce Taylor**, Brambletree Management Ltd; **Adam Curd**; **Stephen Lee**, National Tree Improvement Strategy; **Stuart Picken**, McConnachie Land & Forestry Services Ltd.

Wales: **Ian Campbell**, Titan Timber Ltd; **Katy Davies**, Agrecruiting; **Simon Taylor**, S D Taylor; **Liam Morris**, Arborculture..

Contact Eliza on 07918 880285 or email eliza@confor.org.uk



WORK IN PROGRESS: FORESTRY TRAINING SERVICE UK

Confor announces a new training hub to develop and support technical skills.

There is significant interest in recruiting and retaining people in the forestry sector. As a result, a range of new initiatives have been launched.

The majority of these are focused on development of supervisors and managers, but what about the technical staff operating the machinery or planting and managing the woodlands? Various surveys, such as the 2021 Forestry Workforce Skills Survey, have indicated that there is a shortfall of people able to deliver existing and new programmes of work. But so far, the support for new entrants at the practical level is mainly through colleges with little industry wide workplace support.

To address this and put a focus on the learning of technical skills and support for managers supervising this work, a new industry led technical training initiative is underway. It aims to develop a private/public partnership facilitated by Confor to deliver a set of new training and mentoring courses in technical skills: essential to ensure our woodlands and forests are managed safely and efficiently now and in the future.

There has been increasing concern within the forestry sector over recent years about the availability of some types of training. Programmes undertaken tend to focus on minimum requirements for passing the relevant Certificates of Competence, and less so on the training to carry out their work in an efficient, effective manner.

The certificate alone does not mean that the trainee is competent to carry out work tasks on a live worksite.

This is further compounded by a lack of available training in some areas, such as harvesting machinery, and trainers that can deliver in these specialisms.

It has become evident that the forestry sector needs to take the initiative in this area. To facilitate this, Confor has brought together industry leaders from the major public and private sector bodies to look for a way forward. These include Scottish



THE PROJECT HAS BEEN SPLIT INTO THREE PHASES

PHASE 1 is focused on high impact/high demand events. In scope, in this phase is the training and mentoring of operators, supervisors, and managers of forest machinery (including ground preparation machinery) and chainsaws.

The focus is on the training of new operators and supervisors for work and maintaining high levels of competency, as well as supporting new operators through a period of consolidation following the formal training.

PHASE 2 will in part run in parallel with Phase 1, focusing on setting

up the new entity: a Forestry Training Service. This will include agreeing its name and its branding, its operating model, its location, and the first three year business plan.

PHASE 3 will be the development of other learning and development products that the Forestry Training Service might deliver. The focus here will be on training and development to undertake a range of establishment and forest management operations.

Forestry, Forestry Commission, Forest and Land Scotland, Euroforest, BSW, James Jones and Sons, and Gresham House amongst many others.

The project group unanimously agreed to explore viable options for setting up a new initiative, given the working title of: Forestry Training Service UK.

There has been general agreement among the partners that a not-for-profit organisation is most likely to deliver as needed. While the project is proceeding as a public/private sector initiative, it is also clear that leadership and retention of control over both the training and investment from the industry will be important.

The aim of the project is to deliver a comprehensive set of training products, standards, and a delivery structure, that will support the UK workforce (technical and managerial) in forestry so that they are competent to undertake their work in a safe and efficient way.

The intention is that this initiative will not compete with or replace the training already being delivered by training providers around initial Certificates of Competence, instead it will consolidate and develop skills in the sector.

To ensure that the project develops and delivers training and mentoring to standards that meet the needs of the sector it is important that the complex process of developing training and setting up a new business is managed correctly. This is being project managed through Confor, with Richard Hunter chairing the Project Team.

We are already talking to the other key bodies such as Lantra, City and Guilds, HSE and FISA about this work and how it will support the technical staff in the sector.

As the project progresses, we aim to provide regular updates on our website and in *Forestry & Timber News*. Please keep an eye out for further information and progress.

CONFOR GIVES THANKS TO OUTGOING NATIONAL MANAGER FOR ENGLAND

Caroline Ayre, Confor's National Manager for England, will be moving on to a new role at Evolving Forests in 2023. After over 14 years in post at Confor, Caroline has made an incredible contribution to our support for Members and the sector.

Stuart Goodall, Confor Chief Executive, said: "Caroline joined Confor in June 2008 as our first National Manager for England and took on a big challenge. From day one, Caroline threw herself into her work and became a widely known and respected face across the sector, a passionate champion of our Members in England.



"It will be sad to see Caroline leave after so many years working together, but I speak for the whole team when I say we wish her all the best in her next big challenge."

Several Members who have worked closely with Caroline over the years have given their best regards for her new appointment.

Justin Mumford, Director of Consultancy at Nicholsons Lockhart Garrett, commented: "Caroline has been an absolute rock and huge support to all of us in the East of England. Her tenacious lobbying, hard work and deep understanding of the sector has made the industry a much better place."

Phil Argyle of Argyle Woodland Management LLP added: "I will

be sorry to see Caroline go. I've enjoyed working with her over the last few years and feel that Confor has made a good impact over that time. Thanks to Caroline for all her support for the Marches Region, and for all her hard work on behalf of the Members."

Balcombe Estate's Jamie Kirkman said: "In some industries, 14 years would seem a long time, but in forestry it represents only a small proportion of a woodland's rotation. That said, it is enough time to make a difference within that woodland and in her 14 years with Confor, Caroline has done just that.

"Pushing hard for both the organisation and its membership, making changes to policy, promoting forest management as well as woodland creation, cutting red tape, organising events, and keeping us all informed with a smile on her face. We wish her all the best for the future, and I feel sure we will see that beaming smile at our local meetings. Good luck Caroline!"

OBITUARY: TONY WILLIS

Stuart Goodall marks the passing of former Confor Chair.

Everyone at Confor was saddened to hear the news that Tony Willis, the founding Managing Director of Euroforest Limited and former Chair of Confor, had passed away on 1 November 2022.

Tony was a big character who was passionate about the forestry industry, giving valuable time to help improve its representation while also steering the growing success of Euroforest. In 1991, Tony led a management buyout from EFG plc to form the business, bringing together a varied group of shareholders to secure just enough funding to get it off the ground.

Prior to that, Tony had studied forestry in North Wales and had a long and distinguished career in the industry. At Forest Thinnings, he pioneered the large-scale export of small roundwood to Scandinavia in order to find a market for the rapidly expanding UK timber harvest, which had little domestic market at the time, leading to the award of the prestigious Queen's Award for Export Achievement in 1978.

Following a take-over by EFG Harvesting, his success was recognised by a directorship in EFG, which was then followed by the opportunity to lead the management buyout of the harvesting portion of EFG in 1991.

In the words of current Euroforest Man-



aging Director, David Symons: "Tony not only plotted his way through the early days and created the profitable well-funded business which employs so many people today. Quite simply without him there would not have been a Euroforest Limited."

Tony also played an instrumental role in establishing Confor. After serving the industry in various positions (including chairman) in the UK Forest Products Association, he went on to become a Director and Chair of Confor.

As such, Tony received the inaugural Confor Award for Service to Forestry in 2012.

In recognising Tony's contribution to

the industry at the time, I noted that he had shown the same drive, the same vision, in pushing the development of Confor as he had within the businesses he worked, and I acknowledged the great support he had been to me when I took up the role of CEO in 2007.

Following his retirement as Managing Director of Euroforest, Tony was awarded an OBE in 2013 for services to the forestry industry.

Tony's funeral took place on 22 November at St Matthews church, near Liss in Hampshire, with family and friends paying their last respects. It was a sad day but fitting to hear some of those who knew him best sharing their memories of Tony.

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TIMBER! WHY THE UK NEEDS THE WOOD - AND THE TREES

Confor’s first major UK policy conference since 2018 is due to be held in London on Thursday 8 December 2022.

By the time you receive this edition of *Forestry & Timber News*, you may be looking forward to attending *Timber! Why the UK needs the wood - and the trees* at the QEII Centre later this month.

With an ever-increasing demand for wood, globally and in the UK, the forestry and wood-using sector is faced with the challenges of growing domestic supply, unlocking investment and job creation, and helping achieve net zero.

Looking ahead to the conference, leaders from across the industry will be joined by policymakers, media representatives, and the Confor team to discuss the barriers preventing significant progress on these issues.

The agenda will also highlight the work of Confor and its Members in promoting the sector in areas like community engagement and developing the next generation of professionals.

Supporting these key sessions are our conference sponsors: Scottish Woodlands Ltd, Tilhill, and Gresham House.

“Securing future timber supply in the UK is vital, and it’s so important that the public and private sectors work together to ensure that we continue to plant the trees and grow the wood that future generations



Photo credit: www.shutterstock.com/ciktravels.com

will need,” commented Gavin Adkins, Managing Director of Tilhill. “[We have] always been at the forefront of discussions about the future of our industry and we are delighted to sponsor this important event.”

“Gresham House is delighted to support discussions on the future of forestry, especially at this pivotal moment for wider tree planting plans in the UK and the industry as a whole,” added Olly Hughes, Managing Director. “There is an opportunity to make a fundamental difference and plant more productive forests to secure future UK timber supplies and, as importantly, deliver significant economic and environmental

benefits at the same time.”

Ralland Browne, Managing Director, Scottish Woodlands Ltd said: “[We are] very happy to sponsor this significant policy conference, which will examine the current challenges facing our industry, but more importantly, look at how we rise to those challenges and work together to overcome them.

“Part of that approach must be changing public attitudes towards forestry and wood processing - and this has been a key focus for Scottish Woodlands for some time. I very much look forward to contributing to the wide-ranging conference discussions.”

WE’LL BE JOINED BY...

Trudy Harrison MP

Trudy was appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in September 2022 - with forestry and tree planting among her responsibilities. She was previously Minister of State and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport. She was elected Conservative MP for Copeland in Cumbria in 2017.

Lord Deben

Lord Deben set up and runs Sancroft. He is Chairman of the Climate Change Com-



LtoR: Trudy Harrison MP; Lord Deben; Mike Childs and Richard Stanford.

mittee and Valpak Limited and was the UK’s longest-serving Secretary of State for the Environment (1993-97). His 16 years of top-level ministerial experience also include Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries & Food.

Mike Childs

Mike is Head of Science, Policy and Research at Friends of the Earth, where he’s worked for 30+ years. Mike is a co-author of their recent report *Why We Need More Trees in the UK*, which makes the case for a Sector Deal with the forestry industry to ensure investment into sig-

nificant growth in multifunctional forestry.

Richard Stanford

Richard Stanford joined the Forestry Commission as Chief Executive in August 2021. He has a long-standing passion for the environment and countryside. During a 35-year career in the British Army, he served around the world and rose to the rank of Major General. His leadership skills, ambition and expertise are at the forefront as he steers the FC at a pivotal time for nature, people, environment, and economy.

... and more!

Community woodland recognised at nature awards

A group of fantastic people, projects and initiatives have been celebrated as champions for the natural environment at RSPB Scotland's Nature of Scotland Awards 2022.

C o-sponsored by NatureScot, the awards took place at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC) on 17 November and were hosted by wildlife presenter Iolo Williams and radio and tv presenter Arlene Stuart.

The ceremony celebrated 10 individuals and organisations making a difference in their local communities, businesses, and schools to support Scotland's wildlife and special places for nature.

The Forest and Woodland Award, sponsored by Confor, recognises those involved in sustainable forestry and woodland who are going above and beyond standard practice to place nature and wildlife at the heart of their activities.

Stuart Goodall, Confor Chief Executive, presented the award to Bressay Community Woodland Project. He commented: "With detailed standards in place for creating and managing forests, the forestry sector is in a strong position to tackle the twin challenges of climate change and promoting wildlife. Through these awards we want to showcase examples of great practice in planting trees, managing woodlands, enthusing local communities and championing biodiversity.

"From community woodlands like the deserving winners of the Forest and Woodland Award, to productive forests growing



Stuart Goodall (centre) with leaders of Bressay Community Woodland Project.

timber and locking up carbon, modern forestry is a key driver for the continued protection and enhancement of our natural landscape and resources."

The unique initiative on the island of Bressay in Shetland has involved local residents in a historic woodland habitat recreation that will see 3,000 native trees planted when complete. Judges were impressed by the scale of planting, thought to conditions for the young trees, and the benefits of the project for the local community and environment.

Other award categories included Nature and Climate Action, Health and Wellbeing and Business for Nature.

Following the success of the public

vote for Nature Champion of the Decade in 2021, those with an interest in nature were invited to vote for this year's Citizen Science Award, which was given to the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS).

Anne McCall, Director of RSPB Scotland said: "A huge congratulations to all the winners of this year's Nature of Scotland Awards. The time, energy and hard work you put into your projects is testament to Scotland's passion for our wildlife and natural heritage, and our desire to preserve it.

"Now, more than ever, we all must do our bit to look after the nature that makes Scotland so special.

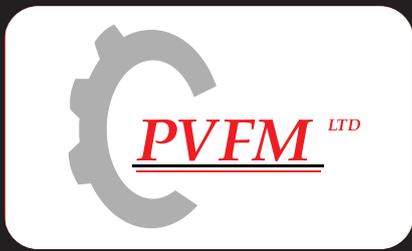
"Thank you to everyone who entered and keep up the good work. I can't wait to see what you have achieved by next year's Awards!"

Mike Cantlay, Chair of NatureScot, added: "Communities, organisations and individuals have the power to inspire and mobilise us towards our shared goal of a nature-rich, net zero Scotland, and this year's Nature of Scotland award winners are the perfect example of that.

"Across education, science, business, health and group projects, these outstanding winners show that Scotland is aiming high to protect its unique habitats and species as we tackle the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss."

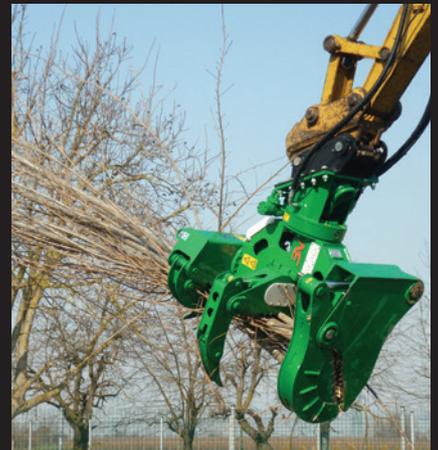


Confor National Manager for Scotland, April Armstrong, joined by Ariane Burgess MSP (Scottish Greens), Norman O'Neill (RTS Forestry), Finlay Carson MSP (Scottish Conservatives), Colin Forsyth MSP (Scottish Labour), Ralland Browne (Scottish Woodlands) & Stuart Pearson (Tilhill).



Paul Vidgen

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BRANCHING OUT

Eleanor O'Neill spoke to Richard Gill, Sales Director at 'one-stop shop' supplier Green-tech Ltd, about the company's roots and future growth.



Green-tech Ltd is the UK's largest professional grade landscaping supplier and has over 28 years' experience of working within the horticultural, forestry and construction sectors.

Well-known among foresters as a source for tree shelters, Green-tech's catalogue branches out over mesh guards, hardwood stakes, irrigation bags and forestry fertilisers.

"We supply around 11 million tree shelters and stakes a year into the forestry and landscape market," said Richard Gill, Green-tech's Sales Director. "Our unique offering is giving the customers an experience that makes their life easier.

"We're a one-stop shop. Instead of going up and down the country to source materials, customers can come here."

Founded in 1994 by husband and wife duo Richard and Rachel Kay, Green-tech

began life as a small supply business, focused on selling landscaping materials to the sports market.

Since then, Green-tech has grown, acquiring a number of brands over the years to help expand the business and operating from their own purpose-built site with large offices, extensive warehousing and distribution facilities in North Yorkshire.

"They started out with a van and a rented property on family land," Richard explained. "The business evolved from that two-person team - looking at it now, we've got over 80 staff and turnover has grown year on year."

Richard himself has been part of the journey for the past 19 years. "I joined as one of the youngest in the company - now I'm one of the oldest. I look after the sales team, which has 34 people, and my colleagues and our customers are still my favourite thing about this industry.

"I love the fact that we deal with very genuine, hard-working and hands-on people. You could be speaking to a business owner who's out there felling trees, driving all the machines, and also managing a team of 50. That's fairly unique."

One of the biggest changes he has seen, particularly concerning tree shelters, is the push towards sustainability.

"Plastic's become controversial over the past couple of years," he explained. "Rightly so for some reasons, but also unfairly from people who don't actually know what purpose tree tubes are serving. They're there to help protect young trees.

"The key thing is getting the message across to end users to actually do the right thing when their tree tubes have served their purpose: take them back off again and recycle the plastic. We often see planting projects that don't have any long-



**Far left: Tubex tree guards in the ground at Old Kilpatrick
Left: Tree shelters on newly planted site
Inset: Richard Gill, Sales Director, Green-tech Ltd
Below: The Green-tech team at their Yorkshire base of operations.**



term plan for removing the tree shelters once they've served their useful purpose.

"In approximately five to 10 years' time, a tree will have become established and grown. The tree tube is essential for this - but then it's important to organise for a contractor to remove and recycle it," Richard said.

"Just write it into the specifications of the project. That's something I've always advocated for. I'm not saying to get rid of plastic altogether. It still has a purpose in our industry. It's just doing the right thing and implementing that aftercare part."

One alternative solution to this problem has been the rise of biodegradable tree tubes from manufacturers like Tubex, NexGen and Rainbow Professional.

"The biodegradable market's been a really interesting one over the last three years and there's been some good products becoming available. The Tubex Na-

ture Shelter has become really popular, really quickly. The NexGen line, which is made from sheep wool, is another great alternative and we've just been given the rights to distribute that.

"We're thankfully seeing a move away from cardboard, as it just doesn't last. It's great to be able to offer our customers a range of viable choices."

Green-tech became a part of leading agronomy-services group Origin Enterprises PLC in 2021 and that has also opened up new market opportunities.

"We've just launched a new range with Origin Fertilisers, who are a part of the group we're owned by," Richard noted, referring to the Nue-Tree Forestry Fertilisers that are intended to provide a complete nutritional package for forestry and woodland schemes. "There's a controlled release fertiliser that you apply at the time of planting to help through the first year,

and another that's suitable for about three or four years after they've been put in the ground."

With such an extensive offering across the board and no shortage of demand for their products, Richard doesn't see things slowing down at Green-tech anytime soon.

"It's been a turbulent year. We came out of Covid and saw a massive bounce but then we've felt the impact of the conflict in Ukraine and now increasing energy costs. It's quite tough at the moment for industries up and down the country.

"That said, for landscaping and forestry, we're really fortunate to be in a business where we're still kept busy even if times are hard. Everyone's talking about carbon offsetting, sustainability or biodiversity - tree planting in particular is at the top of a lot of agendas, and I think it's going to stay that way."



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England's New T-Level: Does it spell the end for forestry in full-time further education?

Richard Hunter summarises the inherent issues of new qualification standards for forestry at English colleges.

There is no denying that forestry is a high-cost course to run. So much so that it is likely to be the first a college will drop if funds are tight, meaning that the sector is not getting the number of new foresters it needs from the yearly pool of graduates.

Even at vocational colleges that offer forestry as part of their Forestry and Arboriculture courses, the curriculum diverges into pathways at Level 3, and many will unfortunately only offer arboriculture as an ongoing option.

It must be remembered that the colleges are businesses, paid by the Department of Education to teach students. If a course has low numbers, it will not be as financially viable as the courses which are filled - in effect 'bums on seats' count.

The current system has plenty of issues but the new system - the T Level - is only going to make matters worse.

The T Level is intended to be the equivalent of three A Levels for vocational subjects. All relevant courses have already been required to make the transfer from the National Diplomas, Advanced Technical Extended Diplomas, and other equivalent qualifications as the first T Level courses started in September 2020.

The criteria for the land-based sector were one of the last to be written and Tree and Woodland Management is only just coming to the end of its writing period.

It is a two-year course, which includes 300 hours of work experience, core cross-cutting knowledge, and industry specific learning. Without a work placement, a student cannot complete the course and I suspect that many colleges will be reluc-

tant to take students on without having one agreed before the term starts.

The danger for them is that a student could be on the course and not get a work placement in time to complete the hours, so the college would not be funded for that student.

Vocational courses should have a heavy emphasis on the practical, but this new qualification will leave forestry and other land-based sectors at a loss in full-time further education (FE). The cross-cutting is very general, intended to cover all land-based industries, and at last reading the exam had a heavy emphasis on agriculture and retail.

Confor has outlined concerns and changes have been made but the crux of the problem lies in the structure of the T Level.

The way in which the courses will be staggered to fit the academic year will mean that work experience must start in September. This leaves employers to take on students who have not yet learned health and safety basics, let alone any forestry skills - not a comforting prospect for many businesses.

And, as already stated, students cannot complete the course without logging all the necessary hours of experience before the summer break.

It is the Government's intention that more skills be taught by the employer, allowing the colleges and potentially sixth form centres to focus on the theory which should bring the learning up to an A Level standard.

However, the delivery is simply not practical, and I suspect colleges will opt

not to recruit students to the land-based T Level given the problems facing it.

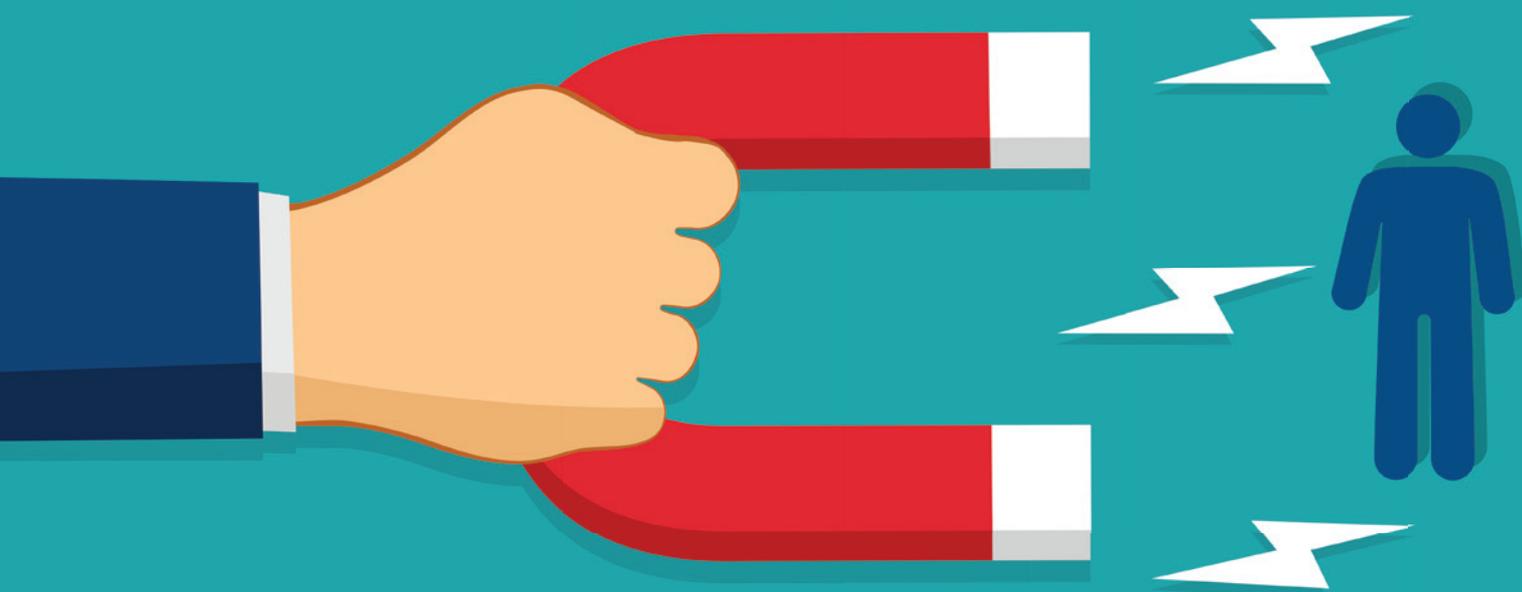
For England, the only light in the dark for FE is the Level 3 apprenticeship. This has recently been upgraded and is well financed via the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATE).

However, the view is that students should have first completed a full-time course to prepare them for apprenticeship - this pre-apprenticeship offering is not currently available. A Level 2 full-time course designed to complement the Level 3 apprenticeship would be the ideal solution.

The T Level only affects England. Higher level education in England is provided by the University of Cumbria at their Ambleside campus as part of the National School of Forestry.

Until now, Confor has been one of the many consultees trying to improve the Tree and Woodland T Level within the scope of what can be changed. However, The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATE) have now asked that City and Guilds (the content writers) consult directly with employers and not trade associations. Therefore, I am seeking Members who would be prepared to join me in a meeting with City and Guilds to discuss the issues the T-Levels have raised. Please contact Richard.hunter@confor.org.uk for further information.

Trends and tribulations in forestry recruitment



With the forestry sector facing unprecedented challenges when it comes to staffing and recruitment, retention is high on the agenda. **Katy Davies**, Operations Director at Agrecruiting Staff, discusses some of the challenges facing businesses.

In an unstable jobs market, candidates continue to be in the driving seat and with a shortfall of staff within the forestry sector, there is a demand for higher salaries and continued remote working.

ACTING FAST TO SECURE THE RIGHT CANDIDATE

Recruiting and retaining the best staff is one of the biggest challenges currently facing the forestry sector.

Ensuring you are getting the right recruitment support is crucial to ensuring that you save time and money in the long run; the average cost of a new hire with a £32k salary can exceed £65k (figures from Agrecruiting Staff, 2022).

In the context of the current jobs market, it's vital that you take the right steps to ensure your recruitment process is simple. A survey run by Agrecruiting Staff in 2022 showed that 70% of candidates would choose another employer over their preferred choice if the recruitment process was too long or complicated.

Working fast to keep candidates updated from day one, being clear on the role,

and communicating what your ideal candidate looks like from the start will ensure your recruitment process runs smoothly and, ultimately, allow you to secure your preferred candidate.

The last 12 months have seen a shift in forestry recruitment processes, driven by candidates wanting to understand their potential employers and company culture better to ensure they make the right choice. Previously formal interview processes are now becoming more casual, with the structure and tone taking a conversational turn.

This less formal approach has several benefits for both applicants and employers: establishing good rapport with candidates early on helps both parties be certain they are the right fit for the role and the business.

GETTING THE JOB SPEC RIGHT

With more and more money being spent on unsuccessful recruitment, it's important to ensure that you get the job specification right first time. Taking a methodical approach can alleviate recruitment issues and reduce long term costs.

Having a solid understanding of the role and the type of candidate you are looking for is a key starting point. Many job specifications will state 'for the right candidate' but it's important to be clear on your interpretation of who that is.

Knowledge of your geographical area and of similar roles in the sector is a great way of establishing how your business can stand out from the crowd. Additionally, considering a relocation package could be beneficial, including research on local schools or major employers for the children and spouses of candidates.

Offering additional training is another benefit for both employers and candidates alike. Upskilling new staff can be seen as a financial risk but for candidates who are keen to thrive within a role, this could be a fantastic long-term investment. Having a structured training plan is a huge benefit to candidates and current employees, meaning that you retain staff long term.

Ensuring senior staff and management are on board with recruitment creates inclusion, leading to smooth onboarding procedures and new staff feeling welcomed.



A survey by Agrecruiting Staff found that in 2022, 40% of candidates said they were disappointed with the onboarding process of their new employers.

Similarly, ensuring that any PPE, vehicle, and electronic equipment are ready within the first weeks makes a lasting impression.

THE SALARY DEBATE

There have been many heated debates over the last 12 months as to whether salaries should be displayed on job adverts and some even suggesting that it should be law in the UK.

Not displaying salaries has often been seen as a cloak and dagger style of recruitment with a growing number of candidates not applying for roles specifically due to wanting more transparency.

There are certainly some valid reasons to add a salary to your job advert, including pay transparency, fairer negotiation, and attracting more diversity.

However, most of these conversations are not specific to roles within niche sectors like forestry. This makes a dramatic difference as jobs within the sector are becoming more dynamic and the lack of active candidates is driving employers to focus on the right fit, rather than skillset. Adding specific salaries to these type of job specifications is incredibly difficult and could alienate certain candidates from applying.

Where these types of roles are con-

cerned, salary brackets are a great way of ensuring you are attracting the right candidate, and additional notes within the job description stating that you are open to application from higher qualified candidates allows employers to select a good fit from a wider pool of candidates.

Transparency within the recruitment process is always encouraged, particularly in the early interview stages, and an open discussion surrounding salaries is vital to ensure both parties are clear from day one.

SOCIAL ADVERTISING

With over half of the world's population now using social media in one form or another, more and more employers are now turning to these platforms to promote their open vacancies. Social media can be a powerful tool for promoting your business if used correctly.

Encouraging staff to share posts and discuss company culture and projects is a great way of getting your vacancy out there.

We've seen the use of images increase in promotional posts over the last 12 months and some businesses are creating promotional videos for hard to fill roles. This can become costly for small employers with little or no budget, but some social-savvy businesses are managing to do this at a fraction of the cost so it's worth exploring.

Figures from Google suggest that 40%

percent of 18- to 24-year-olds are now using social media as their primary search engine, meaning employers seeking younger staff need to be utilising social media to promote their vacancies.

Video is set to continue dominating the algorithms and engagement metrics on social networks. Consistency and branding are key and posting regularly with the use of photos and videos can increase your reach.

Further, in 2023 key word searching is predicted to overrule the use of hashtags. Utilising your social media channels as mini landing pages and displaying your open vacancies here will be crucial.

WHAT COMES NEXT

Throughout 2022, Agrecruiting Staff has seen further increase in new entrants to the forestry sector, including career changers from the military and oil and gas sectors.

With increasing access to social media and an understanding of climate change, young people are now becoming more aware of the job roles available within the land-based sector, including forestry which is being seen as a fantastic vocation.

In 2023, Agrecruiting Staff will continue to promote the wide-ranging roles within forestry both in person at schools, colleges and universities, and virtually through our monthly Q&A sessions, free CV and interview support sessions and on social media.



Be sure about insurance

The nature of the timber industry means there are a number of unique insurance challenges. **Dorothy Pigg**, of rural insurance broker Lycetts, looks at some of the key considerations.

With timber currently commanding a high value, businesses need to be particularly vigilant in the face of burgeoning rural crime.

The soaring costs of oil, gas and electricity, and the desire for alternative sources of fuel, has seen timber yards increasingly targeted by thieves.

From an insurance perspective, insuring stock against theft is an obvious necessity, but there are challenges here, which businesses need to be acutely aware of.

Location liability

Covering the financial loss of sawn timber stolen from yards is a relatively straightforward matter, providing all the security requirements on your policy have been adhered to.

But when timber is stacked in-situ on the roadside it can be much more difficult to find an insurer who is prepared to cover theft, as the risks are considerable.

Business interruption insurance, too, can be difficult to secure to cover all eventualities. It is available when fixed machinery has been damaged in or stolen from yards, but not when mobile machinery has been temporarily stored there.

Likewise, business interruption cover is not available when plant machinery or equipment is located at a forest site and is stolen or damaged.

The price to be paid for diesel

Rising fuel prices and supply shortages have led to a rise in diesel theft. Where companies have no option but to leave vehicles at a felling site, it would seem sensible to make access to fuel tanks difficult.

Though responsible from a security perspective, it can result in vehicles being deliberately damaged by frustrated criminals. A Lycetts client who recently had to leave a vehicle in woodland came back to find it vandalised and severely damaged. The computer system was broken and, because of the prevailing supply chain disruption, it took months for a replacement to arrive.

The client was able to deploy a spare machine, but many contractors are not able to do that, which could have serious financial impacts for them.

Scale up security

Faced with such dangers and risks, and the conditional insurance options, busi-



nesses should endeavour to protect their property by installing rigorous security measures.

Solar or battery-powered security camera systems can be effective in providing protection for yards and may be a requirement of your policy. Ideally, they should blend in with their surroundings, and systems with tell-tale operation lights should be avoided. Motion-activated sensors and alarms should also be considered.

While such tech can capture images of the perpetrators in action, there is no guarantee that it will be sufficient to identify them. Clear security warning signage, on the other hand, may be enough of a deterrent and persuade intruders to choose an 'easier' target with less surveillance.

“NAVIGATING THE INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS AND CONDITIONS, AND UNDERSTANDING THE SCOPE OF COVER AVAILABLE FOR TIMBER OPERATIONS, CAN BE A COMPLEX PROCESS.”

As most timber is collected from the roadside at forest felling sites, open access should be avoided. Where possible, the area should be secured with fencing, and pin codes should be used to open gates. Where finances and practicalities allow, security staff could be deployed.

To enable tracking and tracing, machinery, equipment and vehicles should be marked with identification codes, which should be logged.

Finally, human error should not be overlooked. All too often, keys are left in plain sight, and when one key can often be used for multiple pieces of plant equipment, the potential for loss is considerable. A key safe will go a long way to reducing risk. To enhance security, ensure key holders log each collection and return.

Seek specialist advice

Navigating the insurance requirements and conditions, and understanding the scope of cover available for timber operations, can be a complex process.

Speaking with a specialist who has experience of insuring timber businesses and who has an in-depth knowledge of the insurance considerations will help steer you through what can often seem like a forest of uncertainty.

Lycetts is one of the UK's leading independently operated insurance brokers. They offer expert knowledge and specialist services in amenity use and planning permissions, insuring woodlands for commercial use, and bio-crop production.
www.lycetts.co.uk

Confor's National Manager for Scotland, **April Armstrong**, is continuing to work with the Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime (SPARC) to provide guidance on safeguarding your business against crime.

Protecting your property is essential throughout the year. However, when winter brings shorter hours of daylight and an increased period of darkness, criminals have an additional window of time where they are more likely to go unseen – particularly in rural settings.

In addition, shorter working hours and bad weather may also lead to sites being monitored less frequently and crimes going undetected for longer.

In the past couple of months, there has been an increase in vehicle theft and vehicle break-ins in Scotland. In October and November there have been multiple instances of quad bike/ATV theft as well as cases of van/pick-up theft with hotspots occurring in Lanarkshire and East Lothian.

These instances highlight the importance of protecting your property. In most cases, vehicles were traced and recovered as they had been fitted with trackers. There are also other ways of protecting vehicles and ATVs as outlined by Rural Watch Scotland.

Quick tips to keep vehicles safe

Theft of quad bikes

- Never leave vehicles unsecured or with the keys accessible.
- Vehicles and machinery should be stored in outbuildings and garages if possible.
- Lock and secure all doors for garages and outbuildings.
- Consider ground anchors where suitable (quads).
- Consider property marking vehicles (Selecta DNA or Smart Water).

Van and contents protection

- Avoid parking in dark, secluded areas. Choose well-lit spaces, overlooked by houses, passers-by and covered by CCTV if possible.
- Consider replacing or installing additional locks e.g. slam and dead locks, designed to withstand attack by tools such as grinders and lock picks.
- Similarly, loom guards and door keepers can help protect against door peeling.
- Keep a record of tool serial numbers, and consider forensic asset marking or etching kits, which may help identification of any recovered items.
- Small stand-alone motion sensitive cameras can be easily fitted into the cab or load area.
- Fit a secure van vault in the rear for expensive power tools. They come in a range of different sizes and can be bolted to the vehicle cargo floor.

Reporting crime

If you see any vehicles or person(s) acting suspiciously on your property, please contact Police Scotland on 999 if you believe a crime is being committed at that time, or 101 to pass on information. You can also call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

www.scotland.police.uk/contact-us

Rural Watch and Construction Watch

We also encourage you to sign up to both Rural Watch Scotland and Construction Watch Scotland or any alternatives in your area. These are valuable alert platforms which allow information on criminal activity to be disseminated throughout rural areas and within the construction and trade industries.

Rural Watch Scotland is an extension of the Neighbourhood Watch Scotland movement and a product of SPARC aimed specifically at the Scottish rural community. It aims to bring all the benefits of Neighbourhood Watch to your community irrespective of its location, size or demographics.

Brodies legal helpline: Frequently asked questions

The team from Brodies LLP address some of the common queries they have received from Confor Members in 2022.

As Scotland's largest law firm, and one of the leading firms in the UK, Brodies LLP is the ideal provider of the Confor Members' legal helpline. The firm is highly experienced working with clients in the forestry industry, and regularly offers up support to our members regarding areas of the law including regulatory issues, employment and immigration, health and safety, tax and property, to name a few.

In this edition, Brodies' legal experts outline some of the frequently asked questions they have received this year. For more details, please get in touch with Brodies via the helpline.

Q WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MAIN REGULATORY RISKS FOR THE FORESTRY AND WOOD SECTOR?

In addition to health & safety, there are two key regulatory risks faced by the sector:

- **Wildlife crime.** It is an offence to interfere with, injure or kill protected species like hen harriers, badgers and mountain hares. Individuals who behave in this man-

ner can be prosecuted.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 creates a vicarious liability offence. This means that businesses can be prosecuted for criminal conduct if their employees or agents commit certain wildlife crime offences.

Part of the defence to the vicarious liability offence is to have taken "all reasonable steps and exercised all due diligence" to avoid a wildlife crime offence. This requires a robust wildlife crime compliance system including assessing the risks, designing control measures, producing a wildlife crime compliance policy, and providing compliance training to staff.

- **Environmental.** The main risks are pollution and pesticides. The first step is to understand whether the business must seek a Registration or Licence from SEPA. A Registration or Licence is likely to be required where the activities of the business are likely to have a significant adverse impact on the water environment, or the interests

of other users of the water environment.

It is a criminal offence to breach the terms of a Registration or Licence so compliance with their terms is vital. It is also important to remember that if the business sub-contracts activities that are subject to Registration or Licence, the business should have established processes for reviewing whether a sub-contractor is suitably qualified for the activity, for monitoring the sub-contractor's conduct, and for taking action in the event of a concern.

Q I AM STRUGGLING TO RECRUIT STAFF, HOW DOES A STRETCHED WORKFORCE IMPACT ON MY ABILITY TO MEET MY HEALTH AND SAFETY DUTIES?

Notwithstanding the acute challenges it creates for the sector, an employer's duties are not diluted by the current recruitment crisis. Some of the immediate issues are apparent, such as low staffing leading to unsafe work practices with machinery and





MEET THE TEAM: Ramsay Hall; Kate Donachie; Eilidh Paterson; Gillian Mair and Leigh Gould.

manual handling, but there are also less obvious issues which are just as significant.

The HSE has a current strategic focus on mental wellbeing in the workplace and is asking employers to consider mental wellbeing as important as physical safety. Employers can expect to be challenged on the steps they take to ensure the mental wellbeing of employees.

This can be tricky at the best of times, and low staff levels will compound the difficulty for employers. One of the key control measures identified by HSE is to monitor employees by taking time to speak with them and to consider available data so that issues can be identified. A stretched workforce also makes it difficult for employers to foster an environment where employees feel safe to speak up about mental ill health and stress and to provide a healthy work life balance, but these are also important ways of reducing the risk of mental ill health.

Although it might seem too much to achieve in the context of a tight labour market, making time for mental wellbeing is not just worth doing to avoid HSE sanction, it will also lead to a more productive workforce and lower staff turnover. Taking steps to do this need not be disruptive or time-heavy and incorporating concern for mental health into all strategic and operational decisions will lead to benefits for all aspects of your business.

Q AS AN AGRICULTURAL TENANT, CAN I CARRY OUT TREE PLANTING ON MY LAND, AND IF SO, CAN I PARTICIPATE IN THE CARBON TRADING MARKET?

The Tenant Farming Commissioner discussed this in his 'Interim Guide to Securing Tradeable Carbon Credits in an Agricultural Holdings Situation' which was published earlier this year. The guide highlights that the legislative framework governing agricultural tenancies does not at present allow tenants to carry out large scale planting without landlord consent. Further, for woodland creation on tenanted land to be recognised under the Woodland Carbon Code to facilitate the sale of carbon credits, both landlord and tenant must commit to the delivery of the Code requirements.

If tenant and landlord agree that woodland creation can take place within the framework of the Code, cooperation between them will be key. It is recommended

that the parties enter into a legal agreement setting out the terms of their arrangement, including how the Code requirements will be achieved, each party's ongoing obligations and responsibilities, as well as how any potential future income derived from carbon trading will be shared.

The Scottish Government released its latest consultation on agriculture on 29 August 2022 which proposes further amendments to the agricultural tenancy framework. These proposals include provisions which would allow tenants more freedom to carry out non-agricultural activities on their land (such as tree planting), without landlord permission. If enacted, such provisions may in future allow tenants to carry out larger scale planting and subsequent carbon trading more independently.

Q WHICH EMPLOYMENT, IMMIGRATION AND HR PRACTICES MIGHT CHANGE IN 2023?

There are several proposed changes that may affect Confor Members next year:

- The initial stages of the EU settlement scheme opened to applicants in 2018. As pre-settled status lasts for five years, there will be some EEA and Swiss nationals whose permission will expire in 2023 and who will need to apply for settled status if they want to continue living and working in the UK. Employers should ensure that the appropriate follow up right to work checks are completed for those who require them.
- There has been a consultation on 'making flexible working the default'. The government intends to make the right to request flexible working a 'day one' right and require employers to suggest alternatives if they intend to refuse a request. There are also proposals to allow employees to make two requests in any 12-month period and reduce the deadline for a decision from three months to two.
- Exclusivity clauses restrict workers from taking on additional work with other employers. These are going to be banned where the worker's guaranteed weekly income is less than the lower earnings limit (currently £123).
- The government intends to introduce a new right to one week's unpaid leave per year for employees who are providing or arranging care, extended redundancy protection for women and new parents, and up to 12 weeks' neonatal leave and pay.
- There are proposals to give workers

without a fixed working pattern a right to request a more predictable schedule after 26 weeks' service, provide workers with a right to reasonable notice of work schedules (and compensation for shifts cancelled without reasonable notice), and increase the gap in employment needed to break continuous service from one week to four weeks.

Q WHAT INHERITANCE TAX RELIEFS DO I RECEIVE ON MY FORESTRY BUSINESS?

Inheritance tax is payable at 40% of the value of what you own, when you die. There are three reliefs from inheritance tax for which the value of forestry can qualify:

- **Agricultural property relief (APR).** This applies if it is part of a farm operation and meets all the other requirements. It extends to farm shelter belts, or forestry grown to provide wood for farm fencing. The relief does not cover amenity woodland. APR will not apply to forestry situated outwith the UK or EEA.
- **Business Property Relief (BPR).** This applies to commercially managed forestry if it meets all of the other requirements. You do not have to manage the business directly; you can instruct someone else to do it. HMRC will require a management plan for timber production, budgets and accounts to show it is commercially managed.
- **Woodlands Relief.** There is also a woodlands relief on the value of the timber, but not on the land. This applies after five years of ownership and is actually a deferral rather than a relief, deferring the inheritance tax on death until a later sale of timber. This deferral is not as attractive as BPR, which is claimed in preference if possible.

In terms of other taxes, there is no tax on income from commercial forestry. There is no capital gains tax (CGT) on the timber if managed on a commercial basis (although CGT still applies to the land).

CONFOR MEMBERS FREE LEGAL CONSULTATION

Confor has partnered with law firms Brodies LLP and Atkinson Ritson Solicitors to run a legal clinic for members looking for guidance on key issues that impact forest owners and the forestry sector.

Whether your query is employment law, health & safety, planning, tax or property-related, contact one of our partners for a free initial consultation.

For members based anywhere in the UK
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0131 228 3777
www.brodies.com
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Recruiting foresters from the forces

Confor's **Richard Hunter** recently attended a careers event for service people leaving the Armed Forces.

Around 140 services and their families packed into a hall in Kinloss in October, alongside over 35 employers and a forestry simulator, all for a fair hosted by the Careers Transition Partnership (CTP) - the MoD's official career advisers.

They support members of the Armed Forces as they transition back to 'civvy' life. Thousands leave the forces each year and, though many tend to put down roots near the last base they were posted to, the idea of moving is hardly a foreign one; they are used to packing up and moving on, which is a good sign for forestry employers.

Recruiting new people is a topic constantly on the sector's mind but to effectively inspire new careers, we need to target people at a transitional point in their lives. These service leavers are just that.

Forestry put on a good show at the Kinloss careers event: Glennon Brothers, James Jones & Sons, Tilhill, Scottish School of Forestry and Forest and Land Scotland all made an appearance. Be-

tween us, we covered most of the industry's supply chain and training opportunities.

Listening to both the delegates and their families talk, it was clear that even strangers can quickly find common ground: barracks served at, places they have lived, or (what seems to be the most common gripe) the state of MoD housing. This is all important as in such a tight-knit community, no doubt employers and industries that welcome service leavers get a good reputation compared to those that either don't or are an unknown quantity.

Forestry currently falls into the latter category. Quite a bit of my time was spent myth-busting the concepts attendees held about what we do. Often, people who may otherwise be interested have an image of forestry from the 1960s and no idea about modern practices or the technology we use - hence why the simulator worked so well to get people engaged.

Once you got them talking (which they were happy to do) forestry became an easy sell. Many asked 'what does forestry want with me?', to which the easy answer is: communication skills, people skills, teamwork, ability to work to deadlines, experience working outdoors, able to see a job through etc.

We pointed out those criteria were much the same as many of the other employers advertising at the event, such as

Subsea7, NHS Scotland, Police Scotland, and ADC Energy Ltd. The latter had a very busy stand, and it seems they have made a name for themselves with service leavers in the past. They offer training, good rates of pay and work across the country.

On the face of it, forestry has a similar offering - we just need to ensure people know what we do.

I have found working with the CTP and service leavers is a long process, as to leave the Armed Forces they must give 12 months' notice, and many will only do so when they have decided what they want to go on to. In fact, many of the attendees had not even reached that stage and were simply seeing what was on offer.

The CTP also host online careers sessions, which I regularly attend to give an industry viewpoint. These always end with service leavers contacting me with extra questions and a new desire to know more about forestry.

Another avenue the CTP have is a jobs website that only military personal can access. As a CTP member, Confor is able to post roles on the site and we will be looking to make this service available to Members soon.

Next year the CTP will be hosting more in person events across the UK. If you would like more information or to get involved, please contact Richard.hunter@confor.org.uk.



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Science lesson: Why wood makes us feel good



There is much evidence to suggest that incorporating wood into our built environment can be hugely beneficial to our wellbeing, emotions and productivity. **Andy Leitch**, Director of Wood for Good, highlights the science behind why humans feel good in nature, near trees, and surrounded by wood products.

It is well documented that being in nature can benefit our health and wellbeing and many realised the importance of connecting with nature during the COVID-19 pandemic, when they were confined to their homes and local area.

Just over 40% of those surveyed by Natural England in May 2020 noticed that nature, wildlife, and visiting local green and natural spaces had become more important than ever to their wellbeing since the coronavirus restrictions began.

The use of natural materials like timber in construction therefore improves not only sustainability but also people's health and wellbeing. Thanks to the growing interest within the industry in a phenomenon known as biophilia we now know more about the science behind this.

Biophilia, as defined by Harvard Profes-

or Edward O. Wilson, is an innate tendency to focus on life and lifelike processes that has definite psychological and physiological results or impacts.

Biophilic design involves translating those experiences of nature into built environments.

As one of the green building and real estate industry's foremost thinkers and strategists, Bill Browning has co-produced a paper with colleagues Catie Ryan, from Terrapin Bright Green - founded by Bill - and Claire DeMarco from Catholic University of America, containing evidence as to why humans prefer wood over other materials.

The Nature of Wood: An exploration of the science of biophilic responses to wood summarises insight from research conducted over the last 50 years which

explains why we respond to wood in such a positive way.

The research describes our visual responses to wood, our haptic responses to touching wood and the way it feels, and the smell of wood and its impact on us, as some woods have a very distinctive scent.

Making biophilic design mainstream

Bill, Catie and Claire are working hard to promote a better understanding of biophilia and how biophilic design is for all market segments, for everybody, for all ages.

Their evidence explains why people love being in environments constructed of wood, which is helping to influence architects, builders and contractors that want to make a difference.

KEY FINDINGS

1 WE INNATELY ASSOCIATE WOOD WITH TREES AND NATURE

While there is clear evidence supporting biophilic responses to olfactory and haptic experiences of wood, the predominant sensory factor appears to be the visual experience. One possible explanation for our biophilic response to wood is that the brain makes a series of associations, which is sometimes referred to as semantic processing.

In other words, the brain subconsciously links wood to trees, trees to life and nature and, thus, a biophilic response is triggered.

2 OUR BRAINS PREFER COLLINEAR PATTERNS

Work done by the neuroscience team at the Salk Institute in California examined how we visually process collinear patterns, like those found in the grain in wood.

It showed that our brains find it easier to process collinear patterns, where the lines are moving in roughly the same direction. One set of neurons process the lines in one direction while those moving in another direction are processed by a different set of neurons.

Our brains therefore find it easier to process these patterns and a positive response is generated whenever it takes less effort for the brain.

Similarly, the brain constantly looks for patterns, so when it comes to wood it will find the contours and connect the lines together.

3 WE CAN SPOT A FAKE

Research shows that our brains can recognise non-natural materials owing to the repeating patterns, so we can tell when wood is artificial.

Natural wood also has a different response to light than replicas. It is cellular, meaning the light penetrates the top layer and then gets scattered so if we change the angle at which we view wood, the way it looks changes in a way that no replicas can imitate.

Heizhack



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Market slowdown as we approach spring

I would be pleased to report some positive news in the roundwood market but, with the exception of one segment, we continue to face some significant headwinds.

The traditional engine of demand from the construction sector is very slow with weak requirements for all products associated with building. We have experienced a sharp decline in demand and price for construction grade timber. In response, British and Irish sawmills are seeking any other market sectors that are available to them.

Sawmills have been trying to maximise fencing and pallet production, which in turn has resulted in those markets becoming flooded with product and substantial price erosion has come about as a result. Many have responded by taking time out - as much as a 50% reduction in activity has been reported at some locations and it's expected that the Christmas period will see extended shutdowns.

The Christmas season traditionally brings an increase in demand for pallets and this year is likely to continue the trend, but thereafter the first quarter of 2023 will see this fall away and slower demand is expected.

However, as mentioned at the top of the page, there is one market segment that is bucking the trend: Energy. In re-

sponse to the well-documented issues in the media, demand from both Britain and mainland Europe for biomass and fuelwood continues to increase.

Central Europe has seen a notable portion of the installed biomass capacity mothballed after installation, as roundwood and coproduct prices rose, making the plants uneconomic to run. Much of this capacity is now being recommissioned with resultant increased need for coproducts and fuelwood.

Within the UK, anyone who has installed biomass capacity is, to some extent, insulated from rising energy costs and will be running plants at maximum usage.

What is the result of all this for standing timber values? Small roundwood that had been trending somewhere between half to two-thirds of the value of sawlog is now approaching equal value; in some cases, biomass users are buying standing parcels with significant log element and consuming the whole parcel themselves.

Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that sawlog prices have fallen and industrial roundwood prices have risen to a point approaching parity.

The more traditional users of small roundwood, the panel board sector, are having to follow suit as coproduct volumes fall in line with reduced sawmill op-

eration and imports of finished product reduce due to the higher costs of production in mainland Europe.

The export market for industrial roundwood, which for the last few years has been relatively slow, has seen renewed interest with at least three of the larger operators exporting significant volumes into the Baltics and wider mainland Europe, allowing for much of the remaining windfall from Storm Arwen to have a reasonable market.

What do the next few months hold? We expect export to continue, even if we are currently seeing reduced power usage with unseasonably mild conditions, and UK markets will continue to demand volume.

Sawn timber demand is expected to pick up at some point in early spring with the usual seasonal uptick and the current high finished stocks are worked through. However, next year does hold some significant challenges for all processors with rising costs, notably around labour and energy.

So, in conclusion, how about some positive news: within all the turmoil we are seeing, I would remind readers that compared to long term trends, the price for standing timber remains high and returns to growers for clearfells are still delivering significant value.



Forestry marketplace remains positive despite economic headwinds

Harry Graham and Hugh Williams, Forestry Sales Agents at John Clegg & Co.

Market conditions across Scotland remain finely balanced amongst the largest economic turmoil and uncertainty the country has seen since the global financial crash in 2008. This, combined with considerable political uncertainty and seemingly constant changes in leadership, has seen investor sentiment affected, timber prices fall, and an overall cooling of demand as purchasers take a step back to try to understand what direction markets are heading.

Nevertheless, despite the uncertainty, existing plantations and land for afforestation are still exchanging hands at prices that are high in historical terms. Prices continued to stay strong at the start of 2022 with Monachyle Forest (extending to some 621ha) selling very substantially above the £6.25 million guide price.

This forest, previously purchased for just over £1 million in 2016, emphasises the steep rise in prices we have witnessed across the plantation market. Further sales of West Tullyfergus Wood, an attractive,

high yielding 21-year-old plantation in Perthshire at some £30,000 per stocked hectare and Annieshill woodland in central Scotland (planted in 2000 and high YC), recently placed under offer and guided at £31,000 per stocked hectare continue to show good confidence in existing plantations despite recent dips in timber prices.

More recently, Ericstane Forest has been put to the market. This conifer woodland planted in 1990 benefits from frontage onto the A701, just to the south of the famous Devils Beef Tub, and is within sight of the James Jones mill at Lockerbie. The woodland was guided at some £31,000/stocked hectare and is now under offer.

The forestry funds remain dominant in this market, with relatively few buyers in number. There continues to be significant activity off-market despite generally strong demand and competing offers at closing dates following open market sales. Rising interest rates may lead some buyers, sitting on cash, to seek higher returns, but with inflation well above interest rates, cash in the bank loses money in real terms.

Therefore, an asset like forestry, with timber expected to at least keep track with inflation over the longer term, could

become more attractive, not less, in these difficult times.

Demand for planting land remains strong and is essential if the various UK Governments are to meet their ambitious planting and net zero targets. Changes to the Woodland Carbon Code additionality clause is still to be fully interpreted, but prices seem to have come back from earlier in the year.

We can look ahead to – hopefully – significant new planting in Scotland, England and Wales over the next five to six months. New to the market is Lochurd Farm, near Biggar, 468ha guided at £5.1 million or c. £11,000/ha, with a substantial proportion suitable to plant commercial conifers.

We remain optimistic, but only time and the Forest Research statistics published in 2023 will tell

Natural Capital

A variety of buyers are looking at native woodland and peat restoration as a means of delivering carbon credits. Prices vary substantially, and potential tonnes of carbon sequestration is the key metric. This is equating to prices of £4-9,000/ha typically, with implicit carbon prices in the region of £15/tonne.

The market remains positive in England and Wales. An attractive but challenging wood in Devon, Sweetcombe Wood, sold for just under the guide of £540,000 for 26ha. The opportunities for the felling of

continued on p42

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the large Douglas fir and Sitka spruce appealed to those who were commercially orientated but proved too much for some amenity style buyers who were attracted by the wood's other 'ancient and semi-natural woods' (ASNW) and wet woodland features.

Meanwhile, a woodland that was more obvious in its species characteristics and future options, being an undermanaged ASNW broadleaved woodland near Hornby, resulted in many competitive bids and sold well in excess of the guide, achieving over £200,000 for 14ha. Sales of mixed woodland in Wales show promise with values for broadleaves being typically less than in England, whilst coniferous values can be comparable with prices from Scotland. However, buyers can be very selective.

We were unable to convince a potential woodland owner as to the merits of woodlands in Wales, as they regarded it as "too rainy and too hilly". We cannot see either of those characteristics changing any time within the next millennia, so will be looking for dry and flat sites elsewhere for this buyer.

Mitigating the effects of climate change is now becoming a reality, rather than a hypothetical exercise, and demand for forestry has intensified from new entrants for whom Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) considerations are important. We are having regular conversations with investors who are looking at long-term and large investments in woodlands - over £100m - and converting this desire to a reality remains an exciting challenge, given the state of the land market and the different policies, aspirations and appetites regarding new woodland creation.

This also means there is considerable investment waiting for woodland creation, but little land for planting is available. As a result, when land does become available, there is usually competitive bidding result-



Sweetcombe Wood

ing in a quick closing date, which is escalating values further. However, these are not the only drivers for the upsurge in interest in woodland.

Since the onset of the pandemic, we have seen a variety of buyers enter the market as the recreational and amenity opportunities that woodlands offer holds great appeal. These types of buyers are purchasing woodland for the sense of well-being they give and factors like location and the "look and feel" have become increasingly crucial, making it a much more subjective market than commercial forestry.

We heard reports from forestry colleagues and contractors that new planting undertaken in 2021/22 the early spring of 2022 was struggling with high death rates of young trees. One contractor reported 75% losses in his recently planted trees, rather than his predicted - and budg-

eted for - 10%.

It is good, therefore, to see the Forestry Commission in England highlighting the procedures for extra funding to replace trees that have died due to the summer drought. Application processes vary by grant, but it is encouraging to see that these funding mechanisms, and those that operate them, can be agile.

Overall, despite the economic headwinds, the marketplace for forestry remains positive.

If you wish to discuss woodland sales, please contact Harry Graham (07787 221 422 harry.graham@johnclegg.co.uk) or Hugh Williams (07899 067 478 hugh.williams@johnclegg.co.uk). Harry provides woodland sales and valuations services throughout Scotland, while Hugh undertakes work in Wales and England.

EGGER shares sustainability message

More than 500 people attended an exhibition on climate change, where EGGER employees discussed why the environment is so important to its business.

EGGER took part in the event, at Hexham Library, near its factory in the Northumberland town, to showcase how its operations are always designed with sustainability in mind.

Sarah Dunn, Environmental and Energy Manager and John Paterson, Public Affairs manager, explained why EGGER is committed to a sustainable approach to business.

During the event, the pair explained how EGGER UK is the largest user of recycled material in the wood-based panel industry and is focused on preserving the resource of wood. They also discussed how EGGER UK's forestry company, EGGER Forestry, is dedicated to sustainably sourcing over 400,000 tonnes of timber per year - which grows back in UK forests in just eight days.

Sarah Dunn said: "As the largest private sector employer in Northumberland, it is so important to keep in touch with our local community in Hexham - and

EGGER has always taken this responsibility very seriously.

"It was very rewarding to talk to so many people about why EGGER has sustainable credentials at its very heart - and how we help the UK to achieve its climate change ambitions.

"One of the important points we got across was the carbon 'double whammy' - the fact that trees sequester, or soak up, carbon as they grow, then we get that double benefit by storing carbon in our manufactured products - helping to meet the UK's 'net zero' targets."

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New Forestry Programme gives boost to Irish forest industry

Big increases to grant and premium rates announced under new four-year Forestry Programme

The Irish forest industry appears to have received a major and much needed boost with the announcement on 3 November of the new Forestry Programme for 2023 – 2027 by the Department of Agriculture.

While the new programme is still undergoing public consultation, so hasn't yet been officially launched, and the new rates are being described as 'proposed', the expectation is that it will be in place as outlined for the New Year.

The new programme, which features a couple of new schemes like Forests for Water and Emergent Forests, contains significantly enhanced incentives for landowners who wish to become involved in either commercial or non-commercial forestry.

The headline news in relation to establishment grants is that the mainstream afforestation categories i.e. Sitka spruce, Diverse conifer (Douglas fir, Norway spruce etc.), and Oak/Beech have been increased by 20%. However, the grant for agroforestry has been raised by 50% to €8,555 and, probably just as important, the premium term has been extended from five to 10 years.

For the annual premium payment the news gets even better, as most categories have been increased by an average of 50% and the term for farmers has been extended from 15 to 20 years, a return to what it was prior to 2015. This is a substantial increase in the premium rates by any standard and moves the annual premium for Sitka spruce dominated plantations up to €302/acre and €419 for new Oak forests.

Historically, when rates have been increased in the past following the introduction of a new programme, the amounts involved were usually 15-20%. In theory the scale of these increases should result in re-invigoration of the afforestation programme which dropped to 2,000 hectares in 2021, and will very likely not exceed that in 2022.

New Forestry Programme 2023 -2027

The new Forestry Programme has received a cautious welcome from the industry, who have acknowledged the scale of the rate increases especially to the annual premiums, the agroforestry grant, and the extension of the associated premium term to 10 years.

However, many Irish industry commentators have expressed a view shared by

The Treetop Walk at Avondale Forest Park is a popular new feature of Co. Wicklow



Photo credit: Beyond the Trees

Beyond the Trees – Coillte's new Treetop Walk

Finally, a good news story - forest recreation and leisure in Ireland came of age this summer with the opening of Ireland's first Treetop walk: Beyond the Trees at Avondale Forest Park in Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow.

The first of its kind in Ireland, the walk is 1.4km long and culminates at a viewing tower/slide 38m above ground level. Despite only being open since July, and in a county renowned for its many tourist attractions, Beyond the Trees has become a very popular destination, with large crowds travelling to experience this unique tourist draw.

Located only 40 miles from Dublin it already looks set to become a must see in the years ahead for visitors to the Garden County.

most practitioners: unless the onerous, lengthy and unnecessarily complicated licencing system is overhauled and/or discarded, there will be no major significant increase in afforestation.

From start to finish, an afforestation licence (if granted) can take anything from one to more than two years. In addition, the length of time it takes to acquire a Felling Licence for even first thinning can average two years, and sometimes stretch to three. This has created such negative publicity for forestry in general, and affor-

estation in particular, that it has seriously impacted potential new growers entering the industry.

Potential commercial forestry growers are rightly apprehensive about planting their land if they cannot thin and manage their crops in a timely and silviculturally appropriate manner. Hopefully the government at the highest level will seriously address the licencing issues before the new programme is launched, but we are not holding our breath!

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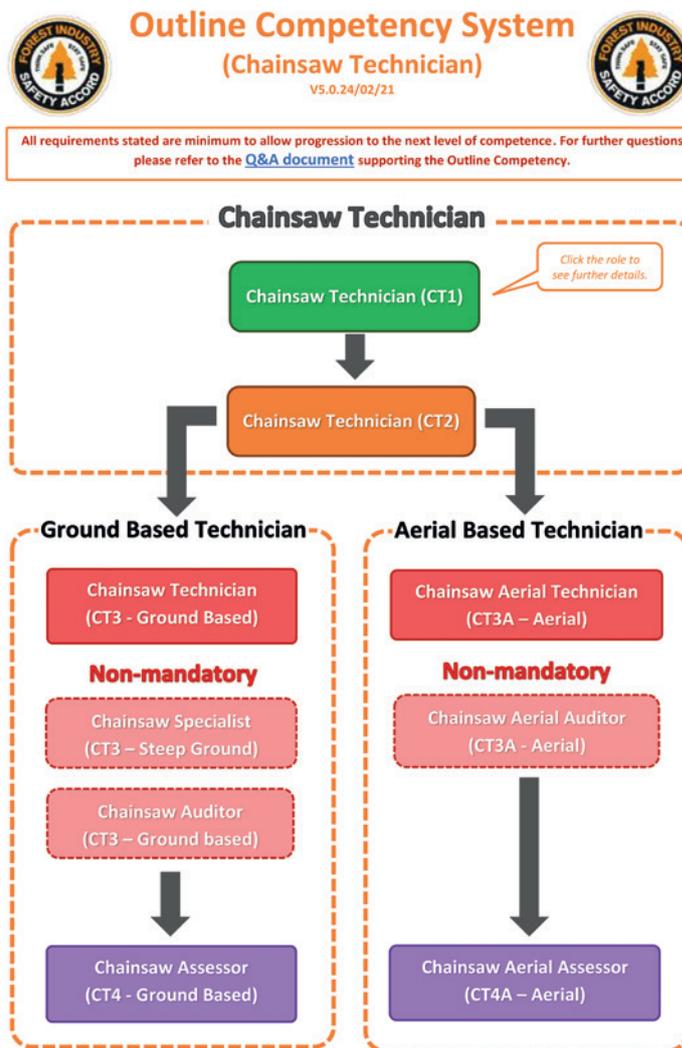
Gillian Clark, CEO of the Forestry Industry Safety Accord (FISA), provides an update on the Accord's plans for the next five years.

FISA Strategy 2023 - 2028 What is the FISA Strategy?

The FISA Strategy is a process of defining our and the industry's health and safety targets for the coming five years. This allows prioritised allocation of resources to attain our strategic goals.

Our Strategy acts as the reference point for the coming five-year period, offering clear outline details of our plans to readers industry wide.

The FISA Strategy links to the Accord and focuses on the need to advance our safety culture, improve behaviours, and to drive continual improvement and change; thus, reflecting the Accord's belief that all fatalities and injuries are preventable.



The 2023-28 FISA Strategy is underpinned by four main priorities:

PRIORITY 1

Reviewing Chainsaw Operations

The review will examine important aspects of chainsaw operations, such as the appropriate planning and development of high-risk exclusion zones and supervision, both before and during works. The review will also deal with the identification and adoption of control measures, competence, behaviour, and culture.

Changes to the way operations are planned and performed will be proposed through reviewing existing factors such as guidance, recommendations, and examples of systems used.

PRIORITY 2

Improving Safety Culture and Wellbeing

Members of FISA, its Working Groups (WG)s, the Steering Group (SG), and the Board of Directors all have a role to play at all levels to encourage a positive, open and collaborative safety culture. FISA's Roles & Responsibilities detail the expectations of these representatives to reflect our core values.

FISA will actively encourage the uptake of improved safety culture in the forestry industry through release of frameworks, advice, examples, and key aspects required for businesses to adopt an effective culture.

PRIORITY 3

Competency Frameworks

The recently published Chainsaw competency framework from FISA will help to ensure that organisations, and those working independently, who directly employ and/or engage chainsaw operatives undertake the necessary checks to ensure these operatives have the desired level of consolidated practice. This should be documented to support their training and skills development.

A Forest Works Manager (FWM) competency framework will also be developed by FISA that recommends a structure for continued professional development (CPD).

PRIORITY 4

Clear Communication on Safety Responsibility

FISA continues to support the forest industry with ongoing provision of clear safety guidance, safety bulletins, and regular e-updates sharing 'in brief' safety items with over 1,800 members and industry contacts.

Provision of new health and safety example templates will be added to the FISA website, helping members to improve their safety management processes.

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FISA Working Group activities

Our Strategic Priorities are seen as the important areas where our industry needs to improve and develop. Accomplishing our Strategic Priorities involves contributions from across our WGs and the majority of topics and guidance generated through the Strategy are direct outcomes from these.

These WGs comprise practitioners and safety experts, plus other experienced industry members, working in task-specific groups to provide ideas, solutions, innovation, and delivery. Through the WGs we support the wider industry with safety information.

There are of course external influences in our key safety topics. Distinct safety challenges have arisen from the removal of diseased ash, Storm Arwen and even with increasing mechanisation – which overall is a good thing, but ensuring the industry is ready to embrace new methods of work safely is important.

Currently there are nine WGs, with over 150 volunteers involved, covering a number of tasks identified by the SG and our membership. These tasks are seen as the important areas where our industry needs to develop.

The FISA website offers further details on the wider listed current tasks and actions within the FISA WGs.

Examples of the specific actions being currently carried out are:

Chainsaw WG

- New guidance on ‘planning chainsaw works’, aimed at helping the FWM in their role.
- As a result of APF and member feedback, the draft of a ‘course outline’ for assisted fell (chainsaw operative) when working with excavator-based tree shear/grapple saw/winch is being developed to



Photo credit: www.shutterstock.com/Mike Byers

Storm damage through a plantation of Scots Pine trees

ensure those involved in these methods of work can gain the relevant competency.

- Engage and coordinate with AFAG and HSE on the suitability of current assisted-fell training provision to ensure that it reflects the needs of the industry.

Forest Works Manager WG

- FWM Competency Framework is now published on the FISA website and we will encourage the industry to support the skills development of our FWMs. FWMs are the kingpin in managing safe sites and we are looking to make relevant CPD events widely available.

Plant & Equipment WG

- Forestry is a unique multi-faceted industry and challenges can be thrown up by this uniqueness. One such quandary is the modification of machinery. The WG is looking at the levels and degrees of modification being undertaken across the industry and offers safety advice and guidance on this topic. This does

not mean ‘banning’, but we will help to show what safety checks and balances are needed, as well as what legislation applies and why.

Learning & Behavioural Change WG

- Continue to share information with the industry on the research work looking at non-technical skills and why we in forestry safety need to look toward these skills within chainsaw work. Non-technical skills are recognised across high-risk industry as the social (interpersonal) and cognitive (thinking) skills necessary, alongside technical know-how, for safe and effective work performance, meaning these skills can affect the working day, and ultimately the safety of the chainsaw operative. FISA will continue to communicate our actions and priorities by regular articles and e-updates. Remember, you can sign up your teams to directly receive FISA e-updates so they will know when new guidance and safety features are released.



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Nadia Barsoum, Senior Forest Ecologist at Forest Research, outlines the potential unleashed by DNA metabarcoding for monitoring of forest mammals.

In Britain, trees and woodlands provide shelter, food resources and nesting and breeding habitat for some 44 native and seven non-native mammal species. A number of these creatures are at significant risk, with populations declining due to habitat loss, excessive predation, disease and/or changing climatic conditions.

The dormouse, hedgehog and red squirrel are notable examples of species in serious decline. Other woodland-dependent mammals, including many of the non-native species, are thriving in current conditions and in some cases have become serious pests.

Deer and grey squirrels are well-known examples, causing significant damage to trees by directly destroying bark, or by negatively impacting ground flora and tree regeneration through high levels of browsing and seed predation.

Why and how do we monitor mammals?

Most of Britain's mammal species are not subject to systematic and long-term monitoring. As a result, we generally lack high quality data on species diversity, abundance and distribution at local and national scales.

This limits our ability to include mammals in assessments of the state of the natural environment, and the absence of baseline data hampers our understanding of the causes and effects of population and range changes.

Keeping track of changes is also vital in assessing the effectiveness of conservation schemes and management measures for woodland mammals. This includes actions such as rewilding and mammal reintroduction, as well as the management of problematic species.

A variety of approaches have been developed to monitor mammals, including the use of trail cameras, trapping, thermal imaging, audio-recording, or counts of physical signs of presence (e.g. tracks, droppings). Many of these methods are cost-efficient for local-scale monitoring and are effective in being reproducible and generating data for mammal abundance estimates.

However, they all have similar limitations and are best suited to particular conditions.

Trail cameras, for example, will have comparatively low detection probabilities in areas of dense understorey than in areas that are sparsely vegetated. Small



Monitoring forest mammals

Can we add DNA metabarcoding to the surveillance toolbox?

mammals are often missed and require additional, specialised camera set-ups which incur costs, can be challenging to implement, and are often vulnerable to damage.

Reliance on physical signs of mammal presence is also imperfect, running the risk of misidentification between species with similar footprints or scat morphology. Like trail cameras, field surveys may also be less effective in areas of dense vegetation cover and are resource-intensive if undertaken across large areas.

Applying a DNA metabarcoding approach

'Next-generation' sequencing of DNA is a pivotal technological breakthrough that allows many species to be rapidly and cost-effectively identified from the DNA contained in a single sample.

In an analysis known as 'metabarcoding', DNA is extracted from the field sample and amplified using primers and the polymerase chain reaction (PCR), sometimes referred to as "molecular photocopying". The order of nucleotides on the DNA fragments is then determined by sequencing and these are matched to sequences logged in reference databases.

Environmental DNA (eDNA) metabarcoding can detect and identify DNA shed by species into the environment and therefore offers particular promise as a rapid,

non-invasive species detection method. Organisms, including mammals, routinely transfer genetic material to their environment via cells released in secretions, excretions or through decomposition.

This DNA can be extracted from an environmental sample (e.g. water, soil, air) to identify the species present. The use of specific primers can restrict the amplified DNA to the focal organisms which, in this case, are mammals. If eDNA samples are collected repeatedly from the same location and processed in the same way, this 'rate of detection' information can be used to estimate mammal abundance through site occupancy modelling.

Until now, eDNA metabarcoding of vertebrates has predominantly been applied in surveys of fish and amphibian communities using water samples. At Forest Research, Nadia Barsoum and Robin Gill are currently exploring the potential to survey the presence of forest mammals using samples from surface soil and woodland ponds.

With funding support from DEFRA's Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment (NCEA) Science Innovation and Transformation Programme, this work will explore the feasibility of a national-scale assessment of forest mammals using eDNA metabarcoding analysis. Using Forest Research's National Forest Inventory as the sampling frame, the long-term goal is to



hazel dormouse, brown long-eared bats and water shrew. Mammal species that were detected only in soil samples included rabbits, moles and the common shrew.

Using a combination of water and soil eDNA samples is therefore recommended to obtain a more complete picture of the full range of mammal species present at a woodland location. For some woodland-associated mammals that tend to occupy the canopy in preference to the forest floor layers, other well-established techniques, such as acoustic monitoring for bats, should be deployed.

Further developments

Overall, eDNA metabarcoding has some clear advantages over traditional mammal monitoring methods, including the scope to use it for mammal surveillance over large areas and across diverse forest terrains at comparatively low cost.

However, it cannot entirely replace other methods, particularly in situations where more detailed information is required about age distribution or sex ratios of different species. There are also some research and development needs to refine approaches.

Further research is planned, for example, to better understand the persistence of mammal eDNA in surface soil layers to ensure that the eDNA that is being sampled reflects contemporary mammalian communities. This will require the influence of contrasting soil types and environmental conditions on rates of DNA degradation to be considered.

Water-based eDNA is widely considered to have very limited persistence, with eDNA signals estimated to disappear within 1-2 days. This general knowledge is based on a much greater experience applying water-based eDNA metabarcoding approaches to assess aquatic vertebrates but needs to be confirmed for adjacent terrestrial mammals.

Ensuring sampling and eDNA analyses methodologies are standardised and repeatable over time is another important task.

Further information

- Forest Research: Metabarcoding <https://bit.ly/3THIHCC>
- Forest Research: Using DNA barcoding and metabarcoding to detect species and improve forest biodiversity monitoring <https://bit.ly/3E4WltQ>

Acknowledgements

This work has been made possible with thanks to: Ben Ditchburn, Jack Forster, Sally Kempson (FR), Hannah Flintham, Hayley Craig (NatureMetrics) and Jenny Williams (Natural England)

Photo credit: Forest Research

Photo credit: Forest Research

build eDNA metabarcoding assessments of forest mammals into the current five yearly monitoring cycle.

Pilot results - Mammal detection by eDNA metabarcoding

Forest Research recently carried out a pilot study which compared presence of mammal species assessed simultaneously by trail cameras and eDNA metabarcoding of woodland soil and pond samples. The results show great promise for large-scale monitoring of forest species for both conservation and management.

Mammals detected using eDNA metabarcoding techniques were also observed on trail cameras strategically placed in the same area. The eDNA metabarcoding approach also detected a number of mammal species not captured by the cameras.

This work has revealed, however, that there are important sampling considerations that must be considered. As might be expected, mammal species captured frequently by trail cameras were detected more frequently using eDNA metabarcoding methods than those which were only rarely sighted. In order to monitor the rarer species, there is a need to factor in exten-

sive and repeated sampling at multiple sampling points to increase the probability of detection.

Seasonality of sampling also needs to be considered with sampling matched to mammal behavioural patterns.

Repeat assessments of mammal occurrence using the trail camera and eDNA metabarcoding approaches indicated general agreement in estimated frequency of presence of mammal species, tending again to be more reliably correlated for the most abundantly present.

For example, grey squirrels were observed on trail cameras to favour foraging on the forest floor over exposed woodland glades. This was reflected in the frequency of grey squirrel eDNA detection in soil samples collected from within the same enclosed woodland areas when compared with nearby woodland glades.

The woodland soil and pond water eDNA samples were highly complementary, detecting many of the same mammal species, but also each uniquely capturing mammals missed by the other. For example, a number of pond-side or tree-dwelling mammal species were only detected in pond water eDNA samples, including the



PROSILVA S5



MAGNI ROTARY HANDLER



FRANGARD



VERTICAL TEC CONCEPTS

PICK OF THE BUNCH AT APF



Andrew Smith,
Forestry Lecturer
at Scottish
School of
Forestry, UHI

The previous FTN came through the door just before I sat down to write this month's article. Aside from reading the features, I usually have a read of my own article in the publication, just to check that it reads okay (especially with my rather limited writing skills).

My oh my, how things can change in such a short space of time! There was me announcing the new Prime Minister, Liz Truss, when in fact, by the time I got my hands on the magazine, she had decided to leave the role. A short 44 days in office -

memorable for all the wrong reasons!

I hope many of you managed to attend the much-anticipated APF 2022, the first since 2018 due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Myself and my colleague Neil Stewart headed south to represent the Scottish School of Forestry and were resident on our stand for the duration of the event. We received lots of interest from prospective students and from past students popping by to say hello.

It was especially encouraging to have so many people from industry asking about our mid-year students and how they could recruit one. If this could be of interest to you and your business, please email me at andrew.j.smith.ic@uhi.ac.uk for further information.

In my spare time, I sit on a committee for a local agricultural show and know how much work goes into organising just that

one-day event. I would like to say a hearty well done and thank you to the organisers of the APF.

It always amazes me how little of the show I get to see when I am there as an exhibitor, but in part that is testament to how busy we were. A brisk walk at the start and finish of the day allowed us to explore a little and make a plan for seeing anyone we wanted to speak to before the curtain came down on Saturday night.

Events like the APF demonstrate just how much variety there is in our industry. Firewood processing equipment, chippers, harvesters, forwarders, sawmills, transport, fencing, insurance, safety equipment - the list goes on! Although a couple of the big brands were absent this year, it was encouraging to see the likes of Pro Silva and Sampo machines being exhibited.

continued on p55



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Unfortunately, APF 2022 was filled with sadness for the team at Jas P Wilson. Their lorry driver, Peter Linton, passed away suddenly on the Saturday morning. Peter, as he was known, was recognised the length and breadth of the country in his immaculate Scania. A real ambassador for the company who will be sorely missed by his family, friends, colleagues and indeed customers.

This month, as opposed to looking at a specific type of machine I am going to round up some of the machines that were highlights for me at the APF. A real mixed bag this month!

MAGNI

It was difficult not to notice the Magni rotary telehandlers reaching for the clouds at the show. Available with lift capacity from 4 to 13 tonnes and lifting heights from 18 to 51m, there must surely be a model for most applications.

Power comes from either Deutz or Volvo engines, depending on the model. Operating pressure is either 270 bar or 350 bar, again depending on the model. The model 6.51 – with a maximum 6 tonne lift and 51 metre height capability – is still capable of 2 tonnes at maximum height. Reach for this model is 34.5 metres but it does weigh in at over 36 tonnes!

Why on earth would you need something with that kind of capabilities? Well, many companies are now using this style of machine, fitted with a felling head, for the take down of dead and dying ash trees. They are cited as being much safer than felling with a chainsaw – especially with the risk of dead branches breaking out of the tree as it is being felled.

WESTTECH

Westtech are well-known for their wood-cracker range of tree shears. You may have noticed several machines fitted with grapple saws as opposed to tree shears, including the Magni machine. The reason for this change, according to the contractors I spoke to, was the unpredictable explosive nature of the diseased ash, with the saw less likely to shatter the stem than a shear.

Westtech produce several models of grapple saw, with the CS 580 and 780 models being designed for excavator mounting and the CS 750 Smart designed for rotary telehandlers. The 580 is designed for smaller excavators, typically in the 14-22 tonne category, and will cut up to 580mm in diameter.

The 780, as the designation suggests, is capable of cutting up to 750mm and should be fitted to a 20-28 tonne excavator. The grip on the 780 will open to 1600mm. The CS 750 Smart will cut up to



Above: Chainsaw carving Bear and the SSF Stand.

750mm in diameter and should be fitted to a 15-25 tonne machine. Interestingly, the CS 750 Smart is less than half the weight of 780 model (980kg versus 2200kg when fitted with full options), to keep it within the lifting capacity of the carrier.

The CS 610 Compact is a lightweight excavator mounted model, with 610mm cutting capacity and weighs in at around 1 tonne, designed for 15-20 tonne machines.

All the Westtech CS models have a continuous 'tiltator' fitted, allowing the head to be rotated so that the tree can be gripped accurately and safely wherever the cut is required to be made.

PROSILVA

The ProSilva range of harvesting machinery was represented by the S5 model, located on the Oakleaf Forestry stand. Some readers may remember the older 810 and 910 models, although few made it into the country. They were squat machines sitting on four large tyres.

Whilst four-wheeled machines are still available, the S5 on display at the APF was a 6-wheeled version, with the common configuration of a bogie axle at the front and the large wheels at the rear.

The S5 is available with a choice of either a Kesla or Logmer crane, offering a reach of up to 11m. Harvester heads from Kesla, Keto, Logmax and Waratah, to name but a few, are suitable for fitting to the machine. A little unusual nowadays, the S5 is hydrostatic.

VERTICAL TEC CONCEPTS

Vertical Tec Concepts were displaying a John Deere tractor fitted with an elevated work platform. Available as either a three-point linkage mounted affair or as a fully

mounted version.

Fully mounted models can range from 20-32m in height, or 15-18m for the three-point linkage version. Both options are fitted with stabilizer legs.

The concept can be fitted to any four-wheel drive tractor (assuming it is over a certain minimum weight), so you are not stuck with one particular brand if it's not your preference. Indeed, you can send your tractor to get fitted up especially.

FRANSgard

Reeds Ltd had a Fransgard GT-250 DDKH road grader on their stand. Designed for mounting on the three-point linkage of a tractor, this grader offers a suitable solution for sorting out those forestry roads.

Fitted with a turntable allowing up to 230° rotation of the blade, a hydraulic cylinder allowing a left or right offset, and finally a cylinder which adjusts the horizontal angle of the blade by +/- 20°, this model will surely be of use to contractors and estates alike.

Optional features include snow blades and rubber cutting edges so they can be used all year round as well.

MERLO

Finally, Merlo, who had a good array of machinery on their stand, including a forestry mulcher and a varied selection of telehandlers.

However, it was the little E-worker that caught my attention! A fully electric compact telehandler capable of lifting 2.5 tonnes. A 9-hour charge time results in an 8-hour run time. Could this be the future? Will we be seeing them working in fire-wood yards in the future? Food for thought perhaps!



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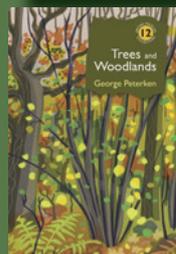
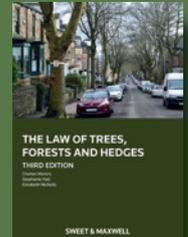
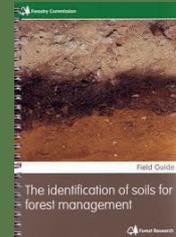


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It's the end of the

A4

as we know it



Eamonn Wall gets behind the wheel of what will likely be the last non-electric version of Audi's smallest estate model.

Due to lack of demand, Audi UK have removed both the Audi A6 Allroad and the A4 Allroad from their price list, so now the most 'country' model you can get your hands on in the UK is the estate version - known in Audi-speak as the Avant.

Throughout the industry, drivers have moved away from traditional estates and

into crossover vehicles or SUVs, which now account for just over 50% of sales. This shift has long since been the case at Audi, where their SUV Q3, Q5 and Q7 ranges are their big sellers.

You can certainly see the attraction, with easy access to boot and seats, good visibility, and improved ground clearance compared to a traditional car.

In the forestry sector, where foresters once drove Skoda Octavia Scouts and land agents Audi A4s, things have changed a lot, in part guided by company car tax benefit-in-kind (BIK) arrangements being updated to express the focus on reducing CO2 emissions. Pick-ups are now standard wear for many foresters as a result.

However, they use a lot more fuel than the Octavia Scout did, so I'm not sure the environment has ben-

efited much from this move.

At the time of writing, electric vehicles are being promoted by the Government with a tiny BIK tax attached - just 1% and increasing slowly. In fact, I met a chap just recently who had swapped his Audi Q7 for a BMW X3 electric. He likes his new car, but it has only rear wheel drive and the batteries are stored under the floor, reducing ground clearance a lot.

The American electric pick-up Rivian has just been released in the States and an SUV sister version is available too. I don't know if these will be available in the UK, but their 300/400-mile range will interest many. Ford have also just launched an electric pick-up, so it seems only a matter of time before we're all driving electric vehicles.

Small, efficient electric vehicles make sense to me if helping reduce your car's impact on the environment is your aim. I have driven a few electric cars and been impressed by their refinement; they are very quiet and accelerate sharply. They are very

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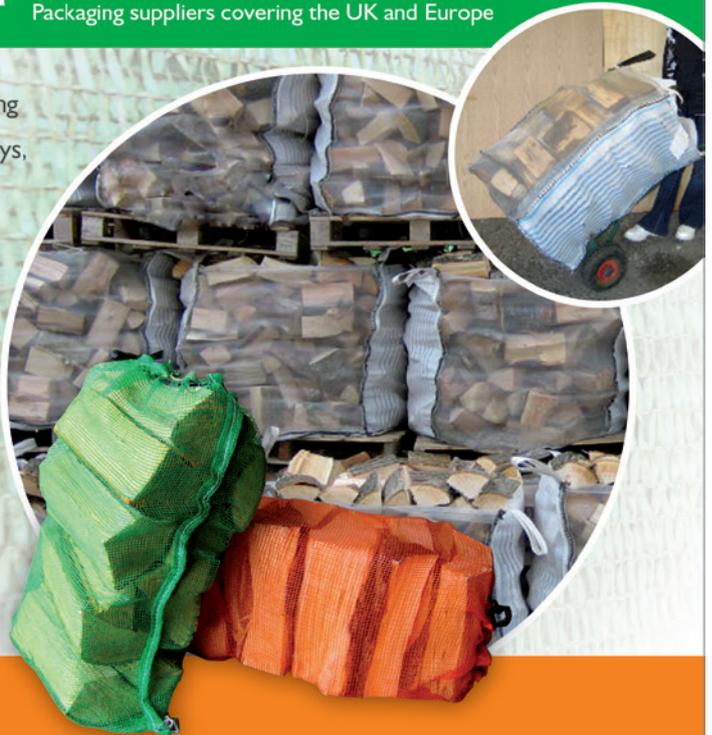
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cheap to maintain and cheap to fuel. However, they are heavy and expensive to build (currently about 50% more in the case of smaller versions).

And that brings us back to what will probably be the last A4 Avant as we know it.

Equipped here with four-wheel drive, the four-cylinder diesel engine pumps out 201bhp and 400 NM of torque. It has coil suspension, which means no air bags to raise it up. Mind you, the A4 has never had that air suspension option but the Allroad did sit a little higher than normal.

Priced at £46,685 with another £675 for the metallic white paint and £995 for the folding towbar, this model is named the 'S Line 40 TDI Quattro S Tronic'... and what a mouthful that is. I don't like Audi's way of badging their cars anymore. What does 40 mean? It appears to relate to the engine in that it is more powerful than the 30, but less so than the 50, with no way of knowing its actual power.

When it first came out a few years ago, this model just looked like a refresh of its predecessor: in fact, it has a whole new body. I used to be a great fan of the A4 Avant but this one is not a good-looking vehicle. I'd go as far as to say it's one of the least good-looking A4s to date.

The interior has not changed much. It's a fussy mixture of layers of controls with a large screen sticking out of the dashboard. I liked the old Audi way of hiding the screen within the dashboard to rise out when you needed it - alas no more.

The car drives well, is quiet and nips along nicely, accelerating from 0-60 mph in 7.6 seconds. The Ad blue tank holds 12 litres, and you can option a larger 24 litre tank for an extra £60! Seems odd, who would want a smaller tank? Wheels are low profile being 19 inches with 245/35 tyres, which are a bit wee for country work, not to mention forest tracks.

The car weighs 1,625kg and has a seven speed S Tronic gearbox. The fuel tank holds 58 litres, and the luggage areas pro-



vide 495 litres in the boot with the seats in place and 1,495 litres with the seats folded down. In my hands, it averaged 41mpg but probably nearer 45mpg would be normal.

When I was driving the car, I thought there was some sort of fault in that when you took your foot off the accelerator and repressed it, there was a pause before the power would kick in. On further examination, it appears the engine cuts out to an idle speed when gliding and restarts when you press the accelerator again.

It seems too far clever for its own good and certainly takes away from the driving experience. Perhaps this action can be turned off?

As the next A4 will no doubt be designed to be electric, this internal combustion engine A4 will be the last to be made this way. I was pleased to try it out but overall disappointed by its looks and drivability. I would certainly opt for an Q3 or Q5 if I wanted a small Audi.

Eamonn Wall is a forestry and aboriginal cultural consultant and Managing Director of Eamonn Wall & Co Woodland Design and Management.

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Photo credit: Susan Cooksley, James Hutton Institute

Storm Arwen-damaged trees given new purpose

Fifty mature trees that were badly damaged during Storm Arwen have been transplanted into the riverbed of a burn in northeast Scotland in an effort to boost natural habitat, particularly for endangered Atlantic salmon.

The mature spruces had been blown and snapped during the winter storms in Forestry and Land Scotland's Scolty Woods outside Banchory. Harvesting teams cut them to size before they were transported to the recently re-meandered Easter Beltie Burn, a tributary of the River Dee.

There they were formed into 15 large woody structures, each made up of between three and six, 8-metre-long trees and their sizable root plates. These have been buried into the bank and stream bed of the Beltie Burn to create habitats for wildlife and further slow down the flow of water during periods of heavy rain.

The project, spearheaded by the Dee Catchment Partnership, brings together the Dee District Salmon Fishery Board, the Cairngorms National Park Authority and Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS).

Commenting on the project, FLS Environment Advisor Philippa Murphy said: "Managing storm damaged trees - and dead wood - is becoming a vital part of our work in Scotland's national forests, both to enhance habitats and promote biodiversity.

"This project is a great example of putting storm damaged trees to good use, to promote biodiversity and mitigate the effects of climate change, by reducing flood risk.

"By adding large woody structures to rivers - and planting new woodlands alongside river banks - we can help to cre-

ate complex and diverse habitats that particularly benefit salmon but also support all the native wildlife, from insects to birds and otters."

Edwin Third, River Operations Manager for the Dee District Salmon Fishery Board, added: "Hundreds of years ago, rivers such as the Dee would all have flowed through wooded landscapes where riverside trees would have been a vital part of the habitat structure, providing shade, shelter and food.

"Nowadays these must be among the rarest habitats in Scotland and with Atlantic salmon in crisis, we urgently need to get them back."

Although storm damage can hinder public access to forests, it is an essential part of the forest ecosystem. Standing trees with broken tops die slowly and provide cracks and rot holes for bats, woodpeckers, pine marten and a host of creepy crawlies.

Fallen deadwood is great for mosses, lichens and fungi and piles are left on the ground can provide shelter and dens for mammals and birds.

Alongside normal harvesting and storm clearance work, forest managers now purposely leave a proportion of windblow and deadwood to create habitats for all kinds of species. This practice is an integral part of modern-day sustainable forest management and a requirement of forest certification.

Philippa explained: "It's all about working with nature to make our forests more natural. The trouble is that dead trees and decaying logs don't look attractive to everybody, but we need to learn to love it!"

Small numbers of *Ips cembrae* found in Pest Free Area

A small number of *Ips cembrae* bark beetles have been intercepted in pheromone lure traps in the west of Scotland conifer bark beetle Pest Free Area (PFA).

Five of the beetles, which affect larch trees, have been caught in three traps: one near Oban, one near Invergarry, and three north east of Fort William.

Scottish Forestry's Tree Health team has carried out ground surveys around each site and no evidence of any breeding populations has been found. Wider surveillance is being carried out, including drone surveys.

Tree health experts believe the beetles could have arrived in these areas assisted by winds and warm temperatures, or potentially transported via timber movement, vehicles or machinery.

The beetles were found in Scotland's conifer bark beetle 'Pest Free Area', which enables the movement of conifer roundwood and bark across the Irish Sea. As a precaution, there will be a temporary cessation of movement of larch to Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland until further surveillance is completed.

James Nott, Head of Scottish Forestry's Tree Health team, said: "These findings in very small numbers demonstrate the effectiveness of the surveillance and monitoring within the Pest Free Area. Although it is good news that no breeding populations have been found, we need to remain vigilant and act swiftly in an ever-changing environment.

"We do not expect the temporary cessation of movement of larch to the Island of Ireland will have an impact on the industry. Quantities in the past have been very low and no larch has been moved at all this year."

In low numbers *Ips cembrae* is not considered a major threat to trees.



Photo credit: Forest Research/Max Blake



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Industry report estimates forest market worth over £200m in 2022

Commercial forestry values have escalated by at least 15% in the past year, according to a report from Tilhill and Goldcrest Land & Forestry Group.

Increasing demand for timber assets, driven by net zero ambitions, contributed to rising prices in a market characterised by fewer, smaller, but higher value sales in 2022, according to the UK Forest Market Report 2022.

The publication has been produced by Tilhill, a leading UK woodland creation, forest management and timber harvesting company, and specialist forestry firm Goldcrest Land & Forestry Group.

It reports that Scotland “spearheaded the charge for economic forestry” with an 84% share of UK commercial forestry sales, while the land available for natural capital projects including native afforestation, peatland restoration and rewilding also trebled over the past year - a sector led by England.

Taking into account a considerable number of off-market sales beyond the £195m monitored by Tilhill and Goldcrest, the report estimated the market was worth well over £200m and continues to offer an exceptional outlook for investors.

Greater awareness of the benefits of broader natural capital increased interest in opportunities offering wetland, islands and other diversity. The focus on nature-based solutions beyond timber revealed far more land suitable for these projects, swelling to £80.7m (from £26.4m in 2021) based on the data monitored.

England accounted for the largest market share with £32.4m of listings for 2,500ha of total land area, followed by Wales (£28.9m for 2,100ha) and Scotland (£19.5m across 2,300ha). These listings averaged, per gross hectare, £13,200 in England and £13,600 in Wales and £8,500 in Scotland.

The report said the incentive to protect and replenish natural capital stocks and the appetite for natural services from carbon removal to biodiversity net gain meant forestry and afforestation offered “ideal entry points for investors looking to enter the land-based sustainable investment space”.

Meanwhile, limited supply and the sale of a handful of premium forests in the south of Scotland saw the average value of commercial forestry rise by an estimat-

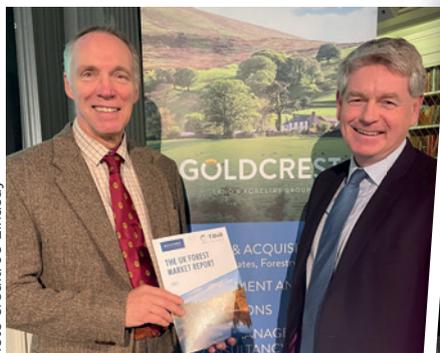


Photo credit: Jo Lindsay



Photo credit: Jo Lindsay



Top left & right: UK Forest Market Report 2022 launch event in Edinburgh

ed 15% over the year. However, the report noted that there were some outliers that achieved sale prices well above this curve.

Xander Mahony, Head of Forestry Investment at Tilhill, wrote: “Commercial forestry values continue to be driven by increasing demand from institutional investors facing constrained supply. This year in particular has seen supply at the bottom end of the historical range.”

He added that yield class was the biggest indicator of per hectare values, demonstrating a market that was willing to pay a premium for the best assets.

The mixed woodland market - driven by amenity and desirability over economics - grew by 81% in value from £10.7m to £19.4m and in size by 760 acres, with increasing demand outstripping supply.

The report found planting land transactions rose by almost a quarter (23%) from £53.1m to £65.3m with an average cost of £16,475 per plantable hectare, up 50% on last year's £11,000. Scotland led the way with 85% of the value of plantable land sold north of the border, as well as a 73% increase in average price to £17,200 per hectare.

Again, a few unique outliers skewed the numbers higher compared to previous years, but the overall trajectory was still upwards.

The total land planted in the UK rose by

4% (13,850ha) with broadleaves overtaking conifers for the first time since 2016. 76% of all new planting - and 93% of total conifer planting - took place in Scotland, though at 10,480ha it was still below annual planting target of 12,000ha.

Fenning Welstead, Partner at Goldcrest Land & Forestry Group, said there needed to be major changes in the generation and use of energy and sourcing raw materials.

“To date we have been tinkering around the edges,” he stated. “A future with much greater emphasis on renewable energy and raw materials will surely have to rely more on trees. Whatever the vicissitudes along the way, the future of human activity will need more timber. We must keep planting.”

Timber was subject to mixed fortunes in 2022, impacted by factors from constrained global supply due to the war in Ukraine and an over-supply of logs in the UK after Storm Arwen forced harvests, to sharp increases in energy demand. However, while the market saw major falls in the price of standing timber, this came after previously steep price inflation and values now equated to those seen just three or four years ago.

Long term demand for timber remained healthy, despite current challenges.

The UK Forest Market Report 2022, 'Timber: The Climate Commodity?' is available for download at <https://bit.ly/3AHHmVT>.

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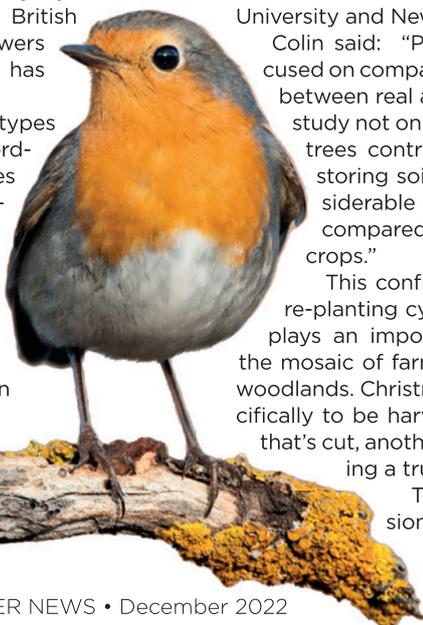


Keep it real this Christmas

New research has shown that real Christmas trees provide a brilliant habitat for wildlife in the UK

The average six-foot Christmas tree will attract a wealth of wildlife over its 10-year growing cycle, a study funded by the British Christmas Tree Growers Association (BCTGA) has found.

Of the 40 different types of birds that were recorded flocking to the trees over a five-month period, 13 were endangered red or amber listed species. Mammals such as bats, mice, red squirrels, deer, foxes and badgers were also found in



grower's plantations.

Unexpectedly, during the night, numerous ground beetles rove under the Christmas trees, while 60 different species of colourful moths fly above them.

Led by researcher Colin Palmer, the study is believed to be the first on UK Christmas trees and surveyed wildlife in 19 plantations from Devon to Yorkshire with assistance from experts at Harper Adams University and Newcastle University.

Colin said: "Previous studies have focused on comparison of carbon footprint between real and plastic trees, but this study not only demonstrated that real trees contribute to healthy, carbon storing soils, but also showed considerable benefits to wildlife when compared to grassland and arable crops."

This confirms that the continuous re-planting cycle with Christmas trees plays an important role for wildlife in the mosaic of farm crops, hedgerows and woodlands. Christmas trees are grown specifically to be harvested and for each one that's cut, another tree is planted, providing a truly sustainable process.

The BCTGA also commissioned a separate survey

conducted by Ipsos to find out how many households bought a real Christmas tree in 2021, and the reasons why. The survey found that more than 8 million real Christmas trees were sold and the main reason for getting a real Christmas tree was the smell and tradition.

Those who had more than one Christmas tree were most likely to buy them from a grower's farm.

Managing Agent Heather Parry said: "We commissioned both the study and the survey to find how important Christmas trees are to the environment and to the consumer. They show that real Christmas trees positively contribute to the environment as well as providing a wonderful habitat for wildlife, and being a popular choice for millions of households in the UK."

Consumers who choose a real Christmas tree as part of festive celebrations ensure growers can keep planting more trees and continue to provide for local wildlife. A freshly cut tree that is well looked after should last up to four weeks.

The BCTGA has 320 retailers, wholesalers and grower members across the UK. You can visit their website (www.bctga.co.uk) to find a Christmas tree seller near you.

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First ever woodland natural flood management guide published

Advice in the new UK Forestry Standard Practice Guide includes how woodland creation can be used to reduce flood risk and how management operations may be modified to minimise their impact on flood flows.

A new UK-wide guide outlining how our forests and woodlands can reduce the damaging effects and financial impact of flooding on vulnerable communities has been published by the Forestry Commission, Natural Resources Wales, Scottish Forestry and Northern Ireland Forest Service.

Woodlands can play a key role in flood mitigation and make an important contribution to reducing downstream flood risk. Tree planting can significantly impact the volume, pathway and timing of surface run-off, slowing and reducing flood peaks.

Management operations such as cultivation, drainage, road construction and harvesting can have the opposite effect if not appropriately managed.

Produced by Forest Research, the new Practice Guide provides advice to landowners, forest and woodland managers, planners, practitioners and flooding authorities on how forests and woodlands can make a positive contribution to natural flood management and play a stronger role in flood mitigation.

Advice includes:

- Identifying whether downstream communities are vulnerable to flooding and, if so, how to modify the design of the wood-

land to enhance flood benefits.

- Amending scale, timing and type of woodland operations to minimise the impact of flood risk and flood run-off.
- Where and how to use leaky dams to slow flood flows.

Applying this guidance will assist land managers and forestry practitioners in meeting the requirements of the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) and will help deliver a more sustainable and integrated approach to managing flood risk, ultimately reducing the damaging effects and financial impacts of future floods on downstream communities.

Richard Stanford, Forestry Commission Chief Executive, said: "Our woodlands and forests play a key role in reducing the peaks in water flow. This helps to protect communities across the UK vulnerable to flooding from their devastating impacts.

"This new Practice Guide will enable the forestry sector to harness the benefits of tree growing to reduce the risk of flooding, while ensuring that management operations do not increase peak flows. It will promote working with natural processes to deliver a more sustainable, catchment-based approach to managing flood risk to benefit communities across the UK."

Dominic Driver, Natural Resources

Wales' Head of Land Stewardship, said: "Helping to prevent flooding is one of the many benefits of planting trees and creating new woodlands, but we also recognise that inappropriate forest management can risk environmental harm and reduce the well-being benefits that we derive from water.

"The UK Forestry Standard helps us ensure sustainable forest management in Wales, and this practice guide will help contribute to that. We will now be integrating this practice guide to our work in managing and regulating forestry activities."

A wide range of organisations are responsible for managing flood risk across the UK and rely on partnership working to help protect affected communities and assets from flooding. Implementing the guidance as described will enable foresters to meet UKFS requirements and guidelines, therefore making a positive contribution to reducing flood flows and the damaging effects of flooding.

By playing a stronger role in flood mitigation, it will also help the forestry sector increase the resilience of downstream communities likely to be impacted by more frequent flooding due to climate change.

The guide is free and can be downloaded from the Forest Research website.



Skills and expertise – help!

Julian outlines some of the learning opportunities and avenues for assistance small woodland owners may utilise.

Many small woodland owners, particularly if new to forestry, need help to look after their patch, at least initially. But where does help come from, as our industry and profession suffers from an acute skills shortage and lack of qualified staff? (Forgive the biblical allusion to the opening verse of Psalm 121.)

This topic is one that concerns us all and one I find particularly troubling having spent the latter part of my career running, amongst other things, a Masters programme on forest protection and conservation at Imperial College. Britain's professional arboriculture and forestry body, the Institute of Chartered Foresters, is urgently pressing the issue by participating in apprenticeships with the Forestry Commission and University of Cumbria, and in other constructive ways to fill the shortfall.

In-service training is now the norm for all employers, but we've all heard of recently trained recruits then being 'poached' by another in the sector desperate for someone competent. The picture is bleak but not, I believe, hopeless and not so for the smaller woodland owner.

Over the last 30 or 40 years, several

organisations have been established or broadened their remit principally to up-skill owners or those getting involved with woodland management: Small Woods Association, Small Woodland Owners Group, local wildlife and conservation groups, the Royal Forestry Society and others. Also, many colleges include technical and practical courses, say, on chainsaw use and maintenance.

Participating in any of these not only confers the skills being taught, but builds networks of contacts and simply learning from others or helping others to learn from your experience. This leads to a further source of help.

Family, friends – in our case sometimes folk from church – are usually more than willing to have a day out in the fresh air. Their labour to help with coppicing, tidying back tracks and rides, cutting firewood and the like is a welcome resource, with two reservations: restrict to use of hand tools, and do a risk assessment, checking insurance liability.

As well as books, there are countless resources in today's digital world with videos on YouTube, ones supporting products

on commercial websites (e.g. grey squirrel control), virtual seminars and events on many forestry websites, and even Woodlands TV (I appear in a few the latter!).

Despite this plethora of resources, as I've often said here before, one of the best ways to learn is to participate in field visits. Many of the organisations already mentioned run such meetings and visits for members and guests from late spring to early autumn.

There are also shows, wholly or partly devoted to forestry, with all sorts of stands and numerous types of kit on display and being demonstrated. Next year, how about going to the Royal Welsh Show (24-27 July) or the Confor Woodland Show in (21-22 September)?

Small woodland owners are a bit more on their own and part of buying or taking on a woodland is willingness to get some basic training and acquire new skills. Most appreciate this, of course, but it's worth reminding ourselves.

And as this is the December issue, allow me to wish you a Happy Christmas and perhaps suggest a New Year's resolution: to acquire at least one new woodland management skill in 2023!



Wessex Silvicultural Group hearing from woodland ecologist, Dr Keith Kirby, about re-wilding during a visit to the Knepp Estate.

Scottish Labour politicians see green jobs and growth

Shadow Scottish Secretary Ian Murray MP and Martin Whitfield, Labour MSP for the South of Scotland, visited Glennon Brothers' Windymains sawmill near Humbie, and Alba Trees nursery near Tranent, both in East Lothian.

Labour wants investment in 400,000 green jobs as part of a Green New Deal and to buy, make and sell more in the UK to boost local supply chains. This will be combined with a net zero and nature test for government policy if Labour is elected at the general election expected by 2024.

The visits offered Labour a chance to see how committing to supporting the UK forest industries in the future can also help deliver more green jobs and growth.

In Scotland alone, forestry and wood processing already support more than 25,000 jobs and contributes around £1 billion every year to the economy. (These figures are seven years old and the numbers are likely to be higher as the industry has enjoyed a period of high growth.)

At Windymains, Scott Shiells, Head of Group Operations for Glennon Brothers, said: "Like other manufacturing businesses, recent years have seen real challenges with the pandemic and war in Ukraine affecting global trade. However, we have continued to make significant investments at Windymains to respond to growing demand for fencing, decking and other timber products.

"It's good to know that what we want is closely aligned with Labour Party goals to grow the green economy and sustainable businesses like Glennon Brothers."

Craig Turner, Chief Executive of Alba Trees, added: "Government tree planting targets are important to our business as they provide the framework in which we operate and plan for future growth. It's great to see political parties recognise the huge public benefits that planting more trees can bring to the economy, society and the environment."

Stuart Goodall, Chief Executive of Confor, accompanied the politicians on the visit, along with Confor's National Manager for Scotland, April Armstrong. He said: "From now until the election, there will be intensive political debate on how best to fix the economy, tackle the climate crisis, and deliver the green jobs of the future.

"As part of meeting ambitious tree planting targets, the UK Government needs to ensure that there is at least no reduction in the availability of wood in future and ideally that supply increases.

"Tree planting plans by the UK and de-



Top left: (LtoR) Ian Murray MP, Craig Turner, April Armstrong, Katherine Sangster, Stuart Goodall and Martin Whitfield MSP. Top right: Ian Murray MP (left) and Martin Whitfield MSP (right) at Windymains sawmill. Above: Craig Turner of Alba Trees demonstrates the work of the nursery to Ian Murray MP and Martin Whitfield MSP

veloped governments are ambitious, but Confor is concerned that delivery - especially at UK level - is not keeping pace. The UK imports 80% of the wood it uses and without action we will see supply reduce as global demand increases, threatening fragile forests overseas and starving the UK of the wood it needs to achieve net zero."

Ian Murray, MP for Edinburgh South, said: "Getting the chance to visit Windymains Timber and Alba Trees in East Lothian was extremely informative and I learned so much from both businesses about the challenges they are facing right now.

"It's good to know that there is a successful forestry and timber processing industry in Scotland that is already contrib-

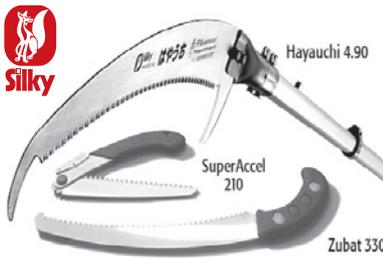
uting to net zero ambitions. Labour looks forward to supporting this sector when we are in government."

Martin Whitfield, MSP for South of Scotland, said: "As a local MSP I am pleased to stand up for East Lothian businesses in the Scottish Parliament and ensure the Scottish Government listens to their concerns and responds to ensure they have all means necessary to secure future success.

"Green jobs across the UK are a priority for the Labour party and I am really pleased to see East Lothian is ahead of the game with industry-leading companies that are continuing to invest and provide good-quality green jobs for the future generations."

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Photo credit: Vastern Timber

One of the AA - 'Absolutely Amazing' - grade oak logs being sawn by Vastern Timber this winter. Planks from this tree will be naturally dried outside for one year per inch of thickness before moving to the kiln. This year's cutting stock came from two well-managed, predominately broadleaf woodlands: one on the West Dean estate near Chichester, and the other on the Yattendon Estate near Newbury.

Want to see your picture here?

Forestry in Pictures is a regular feature in FTN. For every issue, we 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 ftn@confor.org.uk. Please include your name, a short comment text to go with the picture, and an image 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.

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COMING UP IN FEBRUARY 2023 - GET INVOLVED

In February, we will be running a feature on Woodland Management and Business Diversification. Remember that FTN is your magazine - get in touch if you want to suggest editorial or give us feedback on articles we have published in the past. Confor members, send us your company's news updates or pitches for feature articles. Note that our general editorial deadline for the February 2023 FTN is 10 January 2023. If you would like to pitch an article idea, please do so by the end of December 2022.

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