

A close-up photograph of a pair of hands gently cupping a small evergreen sapling. The sapling has dark green needles and a thin brown trunk, and it is growing out of a mound of dark brown soil. The hands are positioned on either side of the plant, with fingers slightly curled to support it. The background is a plain, light color.

A THRIVING FORESTRY AND TIMBER SECTOR IN A POST-BREXIT WORLD



Confor
Promoting forestry and wood

Shaping the future

We are living through times of great change and uncertainty and this is when strong, visible leadership is needed most.

That's why Confor laid down the key issues for the forestry and timber sector ahead of the EU referendum and why we reacted so quickly to develop those issues further after the vote to leave.

This document builds on that work with recommendations which we believe would create an excellent foundation for forestry and timber to thrive. It is based on input and feedback from members. The sector is worth almost £2 billion annually to the UK and employs over 43,000 people. It already provides an unparalleled combination of economic, environmental and social benefits – but it can deliver much more.

Brexit will have a huge impact, but we must not become consumed by it, or be paralysed by process. The decision to leave the European Union creates challenges, but also provides enormous opportunities as policies and support measures, regulations and trade agreements all change. We need to get stuck in and keep getting stuck in, explaining why backing forestry and timber is good for the country, not just for the countryside.

The success of our sector requires greatly enhanced tree planting and we must address that issue right now, as planting and restocking levels are unacceptably low. That's why delivering new planting and restocking is our first priority. The Scottish Government has set ambitious targets and put actions in place to deliver them – by streamlining the application process and seeking to

remove unnecessary barriers. We hope the UK Government and other devolved administrations will follow suit.

We also recognise that the future shape of policy and funding is open for discussion in a way it has not been for several decades. That's why it is so important to identify what the sector wants and, working with others, promote those objectives at every opportunity.

The recommendations which have emerged from our five work-streams set us on a clear path to discuss how that thriving, post-Brexit future might look. They give us a blueprint for discussion with ministers, officials and other interest groups at UK level and across the devolved administrations.

There is much more to discuss as we move towards formal negotiations on leaving the EU, but Confor will continue to consult, communicate and seek to convince decision-makers at all levels that forestry and timber is a vital part of our rural economy and rural communities – and that it must be treated as such every step of the way.

Stuart Goodall,
Chief Executive, Confor



The five big questions

How do we deliver new planting and restocking in the productive forests which drive the UK timber industry?

1

2

How do we develop a truly integrated rural policy and funding framework?

3

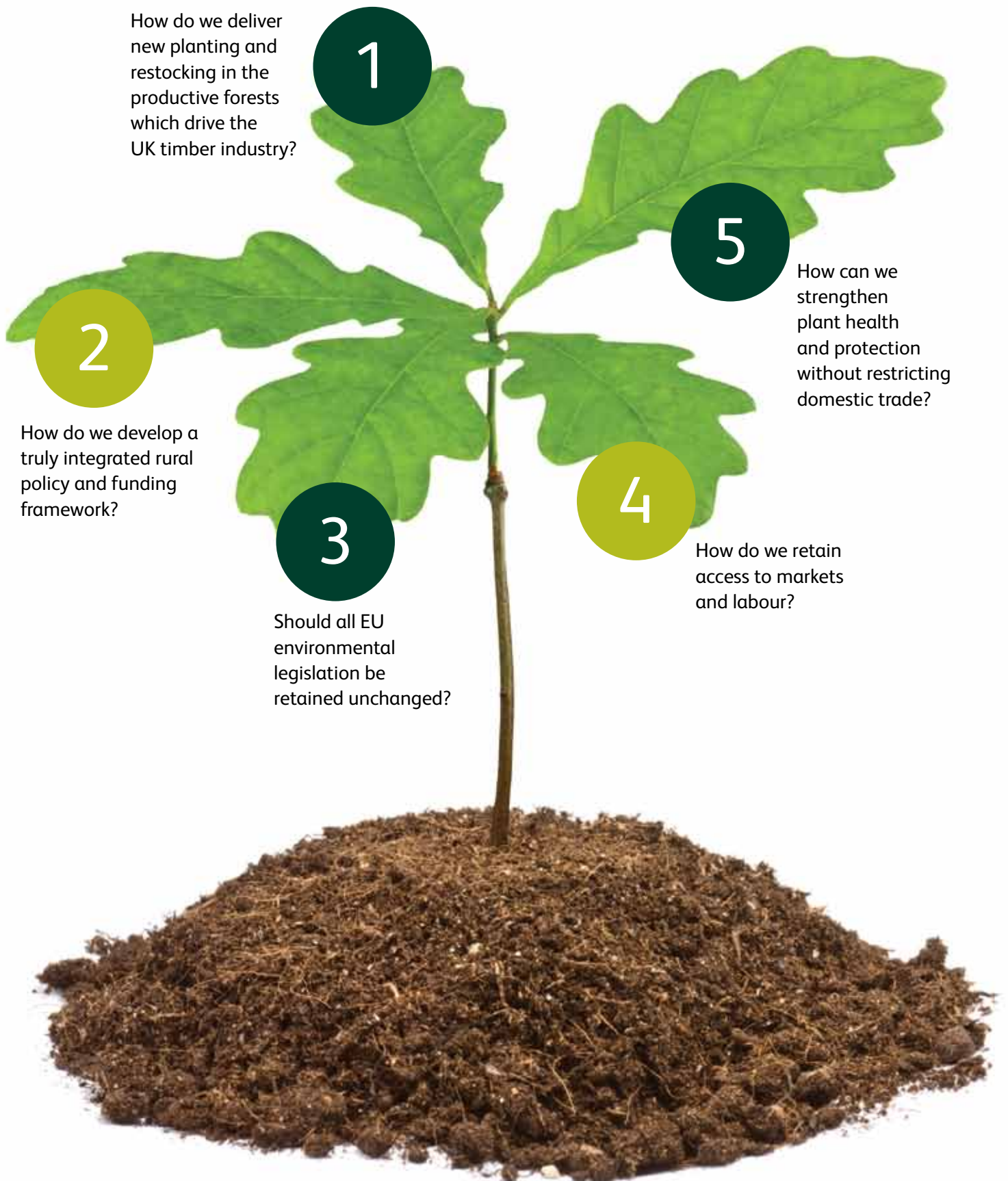
Should all EU environmental legislation be retained unchanged?

5

How can we strengthen plant health and protection without restricting domestic trade?

4

How do we retain access to markets and labour?



Growing a productive future

Policy recommendations to help the forestry and timber sector thrive

1 NEW PLANTING AND RESTOCKING

- **Simplify the application process, and drastically reduce lead-in times by cutting administration:** The current application process needs to be streamlined and made much more systematic. There must be clarity and transparency in the consultation process for new planting schemes.
- **Move towards a presumption in favour of new planting:** New schemes, which comply with the UK Forest Standard and are located in favoured areas, should be fast-tracked. The focus of public consultation should be based on information gathering. The role of Forestry Commission should be as a facilitator to move schemes forward.
- **Consider innovative ways to encourage more tree planting such as linking woodland creation to house building:** Explore the potential to connect new developments with woodland creation, particularly in urban and suburban areas. Any loss of woodland (of all types) must be fully compensated by new woodland planting.

2 RURAL POLICY AND FUNDING

- **Develop an integrated rural land management policy:** There is an urgent need for fully integrated land use policies and to move away from silo thinking by separate forestry, environmental and farming interests. Land use policies must interconnect with local development and planning policies.
- **Simplify rural support mechanisms to focus on outcomes of land management:** The focus of public funding for land management must be the delivery of public good and clearly targeted at achieving agreed

outcomes. Support mechanisms must be robust and transparent, to drive confidence in long-term business planning.

- **Use accepted measurement and valuation methods to support transparent decision-making:** There are always trade-offs to be made when making choices about land management and land use planning. Attempting to decide, for example, whether sheep, native woodland or commercial forestry are the best fit can be challenging. Regulators and planners should be transparent in comparing information for different choices and use techniques like natural capital valuation.





3 ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION

- **Carry out a risk-based revision of Environmental Impact Assessment thresholds:** EIA thresholds must be reconsidered on a risk basis. Large planting schemes in areas of relatively low risk should not require EIAs. Where practical, there should be a move from EIAs towards a wider assessment of benefits from new planting schemes, such as carbon storage, flood mitigation and economics.

- **Make interpretation and implementation of regulations consistent across all rural industries:** Regulatory agencies must work with all land managers fairly, to ensure good practice and minimise negative impact.
- **Review EU Environmental Directives and their impact on sawmills and processors:** This is necessary to ensure Directives are delivering the desired outcomes and not unfairly penalising UK sawmills.

4 TIMBER STANDARDS, TRADE REGULATIONS AND MIGRANT LABOUR

- **Revise the Construction Products Regulation (305/2011/EU):** This sets out EU-wide “mandated characteristics” for certain construction products and is aimed at breaking down technical barriers to trade. Revising this regulation could allow UK forest products to be used more widely in construction.
- **Ensure a post-Brexit immigration system recognises the need for seasonal labour and the temporary employment of foreign nationals in the forestry and timber sector:** Access to a seasonal labour force is essential in many parts of the sector, including nurseries, planting squads and sawmills.
- **Adopt a timber-first policy in procurement contracts, with a preference for domestic production:** There is growing interest in using more timber in construction, from glulam and CLT replacing steel beams, to greater use of timber frame in off-site construction. Valuing embedded carbon in forest products could increase its use.

5 PLANT HEALTH

- **Phytosanitary certificates should be required for all imported material:** Better regulation of all plant material (horticultural products as well as forestry) would limit the chance of new exotic pests and disease entering the UK.
- **Restrict importation of firewood:** This would reduce the risk of pest and disease entering the UK and increase demand for low-grade fuel wood from the UK’s under-managed woods.
- **Achieve consistent levels of new planting to enable nurseries to plan effectively:** Short-term, inconsistent grant schemes lead to yo-yoing in planting. Long-term, consistent support for woodland creation enables nurseries to better plan production, reducing both reliance on imported plants and disease risk.

Confor: Strong leadership

IN
OUT

5 APRIL

Confor opens a poll of the forestry sector ahead of the EU referendum.

21 APRIL

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Forestry debates the EU referendum, with 2 MPs arguing for and 2 against, with 9 MPs and Lords in attendance.

23 JUNE

The UK votes by 52 per cent to 48 per cent to leave the European Union.

14 APRIL

Confor publishes a discussion paper on the key issues for members to consider ahead of the vote, Seeing the EU through the trees.

21 JUNE

Confor poll shows 54 per cent in favour of remaining in the EU and 46 per cent planning to vote Leave.



in ever-changing times

24 JUNE

Confor releases statement, promising to map out what the result means for the forestry and timber sector, and to help them navigate their way through.

1 SEPTEMBER

The 'Impact of Brexit' report is published by the APPGF, with a foreword by the Chair and Vice-Chair and recommendations for action.

1 OCTOBER

A Thriving Forestry and Timber Sector in a post-Brexit World is published, mapping out a clear direction for the industry.

12 JULY

Confor releases its 'Impact of Brexit' paper, examining how the vote might affect the sector in specific areas. The APPG on Forestry discusses the issue at a meeting attended by a wide range of interest groups. Confor calls for urgent reassurance on short-term financial support.



16 SEPTEMBER

Stuart Goodall chairs a discussion at the APF forestry show on the impact of Brexit, with the National Farmers' Union, CLA and Forestry Commission on the panel.

THE DEBATE GOES ON

Email haveyoursay@confor.org.uk. Write to Confor, 59 George Street, Edinburgh, EH2 2JG or call us on 0131 240 1410. Keep up to date: www.confor.org.uk/news/brexit

Confor: promoting forestry and wood is the leading trade body for the sector, serving more than 1600 members across the UK from its head office in Edinburgh.

Confor produces regular documents and video material to stimulate debate about the forestry and timber sector. This is a selection of its documents from 2016:



Our Forests, Our People
A video explaining how the sector works



Animating Forestry
A short film explaining the link between local forests and wood products



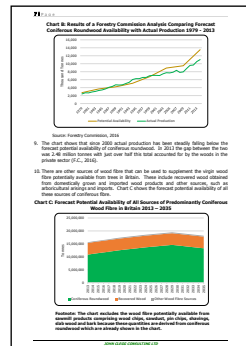
Forestry and Flooding
What role can tree planting play in reducing future flood risks?



Growing A Resilient Scotland
A manifesto to drive up planting in Scotland



Gender & Diversity in Forestry in Scotland
A discussion paper on improving diversity in the sector



Wood fibre availability & demand in Britain 2013 – 2035
A joint report with the UK Forest Products Association and Wood Panel Industries Federation