

# Changing attitudes

## Confor pilots a member communications network

As part of an ongoing campaign to improve public perception and understanding of forestry and wood processing, Confor has teamed up with a small group of active member companies to pilot a communications network.

### Collaborative communications

The network is intended as a means for Confor to amplify stories and key messages about the sector and to share good practice and communications materials. The network is also looking at supporting positive local engagement by businesses.

Improving understanding of modern forestry and the benefits of wood products will help businesses in the sector secure much needed support for their activities, from planting to harvesting and transport, and help to avoid unfounded criticisms and opposition.

### What has been achieved so far: Changing attitudes

A strong set of core messages has been developed that communicate what modern forestry and wood processing is about and which sets out why it is a sector worthy of support. A wide range of high-quality materials have been prepared and are available for members, from videos and an animation to reports and social media.

Confor has established ongoing relationships with a number of news outlets across the UK and we are now a 'go to' organisation for many journalists and media companies including the BBC. There is a website that receives thousands of unique visits every month and our social media is building a wide following, including politicians, media and influencers.

Building on this, we have recently been trialling a mailing campaign with a pilot group of around 10 member companies. Every one or two months, Confor has sent out an e-mail linking a current news item to relevant sector messages that can be amplified by members of the network. Confor also provides additional communications resources such as media content, publications or quotes that the network can use to illustrate the core messages to their audiences.

At a meeting held in February to assess the impact and usefulness of the mailing campaign and the Communications network itself, there was consensus among network members that there is a clear benefit for the sector in working together this way to communicate a positive image to the wider public and beyond, and that it is essential to align communications activities and pool communications resources within the Confor membership to positively brand our sector.



### KEY LINES OF WORK

#### Amplifying messages and sharing good practice

Members of the network, via their own communication channels, utilise stories and messages that Confor provides, supported by high-quality Confor materials, including infographics, video and animation.

#### Embedding forestry business more deeply into local communities

Developing and sharing good practice in positive engagement with local communities by forestry and timber business, helping to prevent future conflict and securing active support.

#### Crisis toolkit to respond to local opposition

The aim will be to assist members with conflict resolution by offering a set of resources to guide them through the process of working with 'vocal locals', opposing politicians or negative media coverage.



We understand that some of our member companies, who are not yet part of the communications network, in particular those with a strong focus on communications and dedicated people, will be interested in being part of this initiative. Building a communications network requires time and resources and we are still tweaking the current structure to ensure that we can see the results we are looking for. We aim to open the network to other interested members soon. If you, or your company, would like to know more and potentially participate in the network please do get in touch!

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