



SMALL WOODLAND OWNER
PROFESSOR JULIAN EVANS OBE FICFor

Brexit and the small woodland owner

No one likes uncertainty. Indeed as one gets older this is felt all the more: traditions, routines and habits are welcome anchors in life. And I think this applies to our woodland management too, whether for large forest or small stands. So how can we best cope with whatever Brexit throws up?

For me the answer goes back to what my professor at Bangor, the late Eric Mobbs, would tell his students in the 1960s: "Strive to pass on your woodland or forest in better shape than how you received it." This applies now as it did then. Invest in the right silviculture and resilience will be built up and, as far as possible, your wood will be Brexit-proofed! But what is the 'right silviculture'?

Everyone will have their own ideas of what is best, but I would like to suggest three underpinning principles of good silviculture (see panel).

These three foundations of good silviculture will ensure successful forests in the future whatever Brexit may lead to. There are, of course, many, many other considerations to bear in mind which UKWAS (woodland assurance) so well entrenches in our thinking. One final thought is the growing recognition that trees, woodlands, and the 'greenscape' generally, is good for human health - mental, physical and spiritual. We made need this all the more as our politicians add to our worries and levels of stress by their failing to unite behind a common Brexit policy. I think I'd better stop!



Sound silvicultural practice is at the heart of resilience and sustainability for small woodland or large forest

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD SILVICULTURE

1 Care for the soil

I've not always got this right in my own patch and it is clear that damage can still impact how trees grow and how weeds proliferate even 20 years later. I am thinking mainly of logging operations in wet weather when soil gets compacted and its structure irreparably (?) damaged. So, don't bring in heavy equipment when the soil is really wet or, if there is no choice, lay brash mats or restrict routes to defined extraction racks and tracks. There is a second point: try to avoid causing soil erosion and, related to this, try to conserve organic matter and the 'protective' layer of dead leaves, twigs, fallen branches and other organic debris on the surface.

2 Focus on quality

If we are at home, my wife and I quite often watch Bargain Hunt at lunchtime. One of the mantras for antiques is, 'Quality sells'. The same is true of our woodlands. In general thin to favour the best quality - particularly important for broadleaved stands, and even consider high pruning to improve future log quality. Of course, in large forests pruning is a luxury unlikely to repay the investment, but for the small woodland owner it is a great way to improve quality of stems. Why not high prune a few trees every few visits, remembering that the best time is when the trees are at small pole stage around the time of a late cleaning or first thinning? And when thinning do remember to favour the pruned trees.

3 Celebrate diversity

While the threats monocultures are at risk from are, I believe, overstated by some, it remains true that variety of species and variety in structure helps increase resilience. With the rising tide of pests and diseases having variety is an insurance against complete devastation, and mixing of sizes and ages may help wind-firmness and even reduce fire risk a little.





Biomass Wood Chippers

- ▶ Class leading chippers producing G30, G50 & G100 fuel
- ▶ Low power requirement
- ▶ 300mm - 860mm capacity infeed diameter
- ▶ 3pt link, chassis mounted or lorry chipper options
- ▶ PTO, electric or engine drive options



FUELWOOD

FTN5-17
Fuelwood (Warwick) Ltd
www.fuelwood.co.
01926 484673