

Scottish Government debate: Centenary of the 1919 Forestry Act 31 October 2019

Confor is the not-for-profit organisation for sustainable forestry and wood-using businesses in the UK. We have more than 1,500 member companies representing the whole forestry and wood supply chain. Confor focuses on the strategic issues that are vital to the success and sustainable future of the sector. These include helping to build the market for wood and forest products, creating a supportive policy environment and helping members to become more competitive and successful.

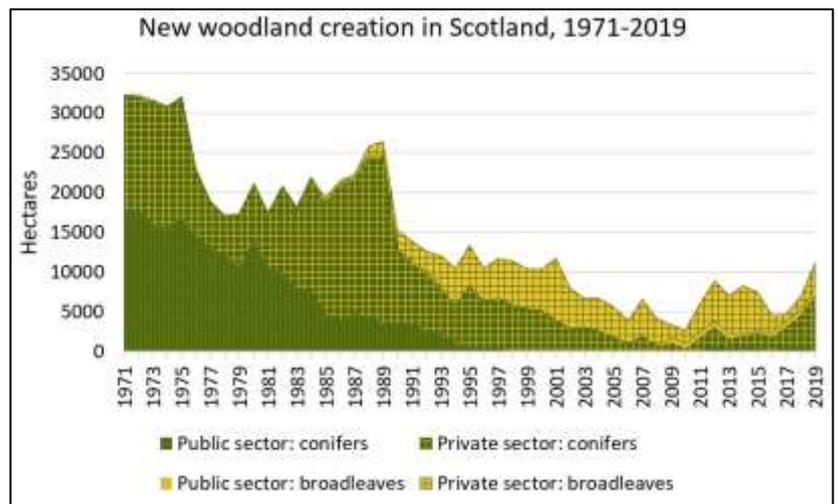
This briefing looks at how Scotland's private forestry sector has contributed towards the growth of the rural economy over the past 100 years by investing in our forests and woodlands. It sets out the numbers of new trees Scotland needs to plant to achieve new zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045 and urges continued Scottish Government support to ensure many more trees are planted over the next 100 years.

Confor supported the establishment of Forestry and Land Scotland through last year's Forestry Act and looks forward to working with them, Scottish Forestry and other organisations who care about protecting and expanding one of Scotland's greatest assets. Confor urges MSPs to support this motion.

Creating sustainable forests

In the past 50 years, Scotland has created 709,000 hectares of new woodland, of which 18% was planted by the Forestry Commission and 81% by the private sector, under government regulation and support. In the past year, 90% of new planting was by the private sector.

From 1997, all 'conifer', ie, productive woodland, has been planted under the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS), to include at least 25% of the area managed primarily for biodiversity objectives, and comprising native broadleaves, open areas and diverse conifer.



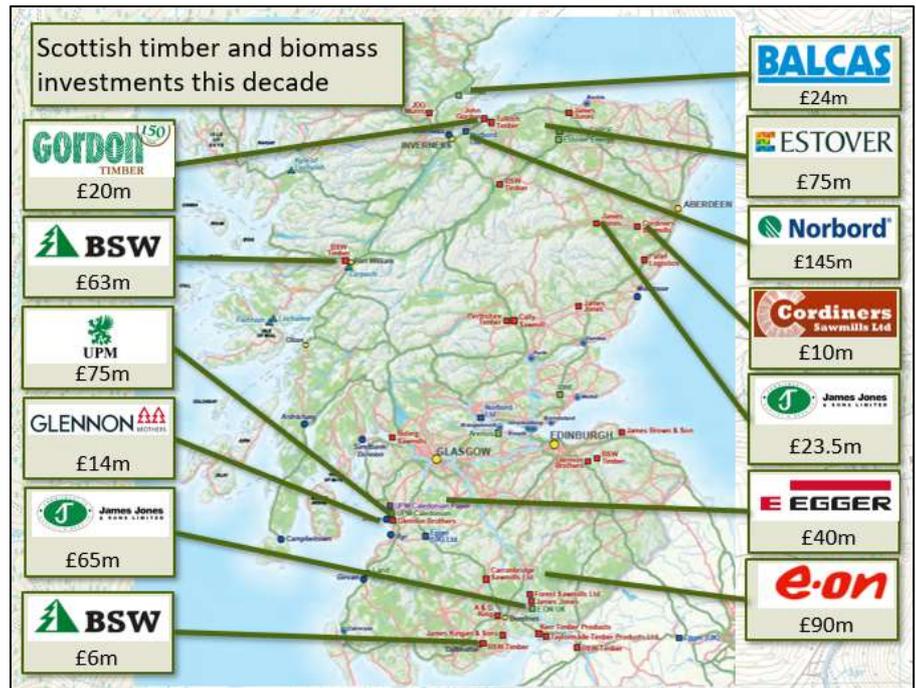
In addition, 82% of timber harvested from UK forests (largely in Scotland) is certified to the international PEFC/FSC sustainability standards under the UK Woodland Assurance Standard. This means the forests are independently audited to ensure delivery of a range of environmental and social benefits agreed by an international coalition of NGO's, governments and foresters, over and above the regulatory requirements of UKFS.¹

¹ [Forestry Statistics 2019](#), Chapter 2: UK-Grown Timber, 44.



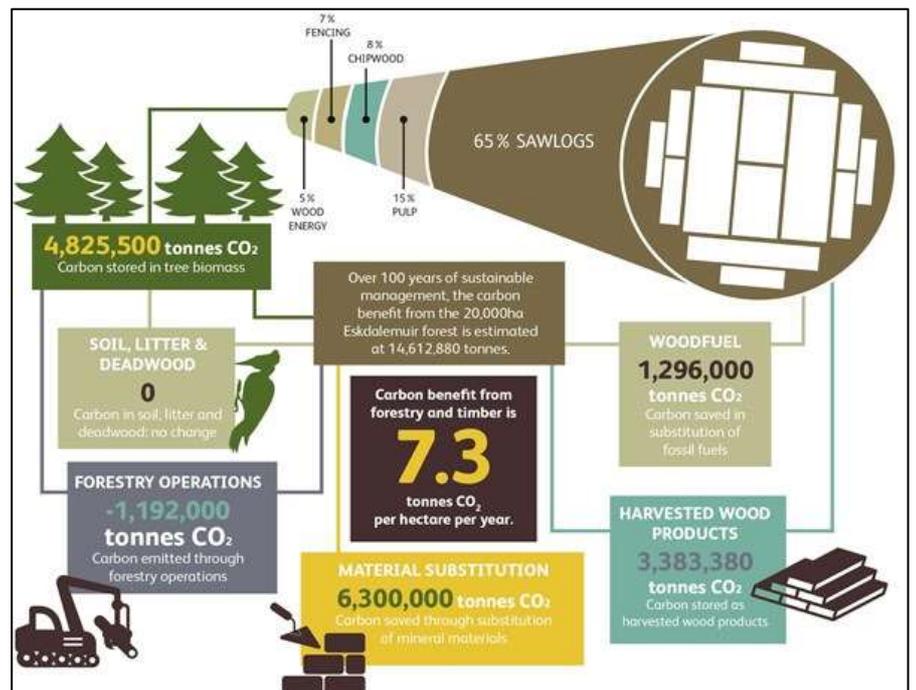
Attracting investment

The large increase in planting in the 1970s and 1980s led to mega investment in wood processing in Scotland to realise the potential of this material, creating one of the most modern wood processing industries in the world. In the past decade alone, over £300m has been invested in the saw- and board- mill sector in Scotland, and a further £300m in biomass. Innovative Scottish timber products such as JJI joists and OSB-based Structural Insulated Panels are transforming low-carbon construction.



Tackling the climate emergency

Timber stored in the growing trees and in the timber products such as houses and furniture are important stores of atmospheric carbon; but the biggest carbon benefit from a forest is the carbon emissions displaced through the substitution of timber for carbon-intensive materials such as concrete, steel and oil. This was demonstrated in a study done for Confor based on Eskdalemuir forest, which showed that almost 50% of the carbon benefit of a forest came from the substitution of woodfuel and timber for fossil fuels and mineral materials.



Protecting global forests

Scottish timber forests also have a vital role in protecting global forests. The UK is the second biggest net importer of timber in the world, after China.² This means that, as global timber consumption grows through global development and the switch from non-renewable materials, and the already significant pressure to exploit intact natural forests increases, the UK risks being complicit in their commercialisation and

² [Forestry Statistics 2019](#), Chapter 9 – International Forestry, 17.

exploitation. By growing more timber at home, Scotland can help protect these forests by providing a sustainable supply of timber in newly created forests which also deliver net biodiversity gain.

Scottish forestry: the next 100 years

Confor's paper [Woodland carbon targets for the UK](#) calls on Scottish Government to meet its target to plant 15,000 hectares per year by 2025, and to build on that ambition to deliver 18,000 hectares per year by 2030. This is as part of an ambition for the whole UK to scale up planting to 40,000 hectares per year. While the Scottish Government has adopted these targets, the rest of the UK continues to lack ambition and to fail to deliver. The Climate Emergency is no respecter of borders, and given the urgency of the situation, Scotland has an important role to play in encouraging and assisting the rest of the UK in meeting those targets.

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