

*5 January 2021*

## **Confor industry update on Covid-19**

Confor is working with the public forest authorities across the UK to clarify working arrangements for the industry after the latest Covid-19 regulations were announced.

Stuart Goodall, Confor's Chief Executive, has spoken to public bodies across the UK and confirmed the following guidance is appropriate to the industry, as of Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> January:

### **Across the UK**

Confor established during the first lockdown in spring that businesses in the forestry and wood processing sector are supplying essential goods and can therefore continue to operate – this situation has not changed. In accordance with government guidance, staff who can work from home should work from home.

While tree nurseries and tree planting were not considered by governments to be essential to the health and safety of the population, the restrictions announced so far do not mean that such businesses should stop working. Therefore, they can continue, again in accordance with guidance on safe working and staff who can work from home should work from home.

The forestry and wood processing sector has had a good record in Covid safe working and everyone is encouraged to maintain that in the difficult weeks ahead.

### **England**

Forestry Commission England Grants and Licensing – as yet, no change in services has been communicated, though Confor remains in touch with FCE. FCE will aim to minimise changes within the latest restrictions while continuing to keep staff safe and well.

Forestry England has confirmed that it is expecting to continue its forestry, land management and visitor services under the new guidance, though visitor services will focus on enabling local exercise.

### **Scotland**

Scottish Forestry are checking the detail of the Scottish Government's announcement and will also consider the need for any changes/additions to FISA/Manufacturing guidance.

All Forestry and Land Scotland activities will continue to be managed under Scottish Government regulations and guidance. At this time forestry operations can continue.

## **Wales**

Forestry operations are continuing, including harvesting to assist with the supply of wood products and sustaining essential services in the health, food and energy sectors. All forestry sites are subject to strict checks to ensure they are operating within [Government guidelines](#)

Natural Resources Wales remains in close contact with Public Health Wales and will be reviewing procedures daily in order to keep staff, contractors, customers and partners safe.

Felling licence applications and Environment Impact Screening Requests are being processed as normal - with the aim of completing them in the standard timescales. Site visits are not being carried out for these applications unless there is an essential reason. If a site visit is required, NRW will follow guidance on social distancing.

Licensing staff are working from home and can be contacted via email on **[fellinglicence@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk](mailto:fellinglicence@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk)**.

Car parks, trails, play areas and toilets in most of its woodlands and nature reserves are open - but visitor centres and cafés are currently closed. Read the full guidance [here](#)

There is more information about the NRW response to the Covid-19 pandemic on the regulatory side [here](#).

## **Northern Ireland**

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs previous guidance suggests the forestry and wood sector is included in the following category: "Those who cannot work from home, for example, workers in food production, construction, manufacturing, logistics or distribution can continue to go to work. Individuals should work from home unless unable to do so."

The Northern Ireland Executive will meet today (5<sup>th</sup> January) to formalise guidance and agree the necessary legislation - they plan to update the Assembly on Wednesday.

When the guidance/legislation becomes available, Confor will advise of any possible further impacts on the forestry and the wood processing sector.