



Tone of Voice Guide

In this document, we will explore what Confor would recommend in terms of the correct tone to use towards various audiences, using various channels, and to discuss various topics.

FOR MEMBERS:

Overall:

The aim of members when communicating is to be clear and concise, using words and language that will communicate their needs to an audience that is made up of people. Language must, therefore, be human, and understandable to the person on the street.

These guidelines include any media such as print, online, or when spoken if interviews are taking place.

Note on interviews in person – use language that is appropriate for the audience the outlet is primarily read by. Your language will be different if you were speaking to the audience of the Daily Mail, compared to The Telegraph, for example. Further help can be requested through communications teams, or in-house teams at Confor.

In essence, any communication must be:

- **Factual**
Emotion must be taken out of any answer
- **Firm, but not rude or abrupt**
Nature, the environment, and industry can evoke strong emotions in people, and whilst this is something to be aware of, members must remain professional in their response to any queries – even if upset is being caused
 - With regard to upset directed at the member or their team, please do be firm to say that abuse is not tolerated and stop communication if it is going too far
- **Backed up with facts**
Where there are sources to back up a statement, refer to them as if an answer is given elsewhere, credibility is therefore boosted
- **Examples if you have them relating to regional or national figures that are available**
Any figures that are available from Confor will be in the FAQs document, along with being broken down into other assets you can use
- **Answer the original question that is put to the member or organisation**
This can be either set out in the first few lines of a response with an explanation afterwards, or with a preamble/explanation followed by the response – the key is that the question is actually answered in no uncertain terms
- **Focused**
Focused on the matter at hand if engaging
Focused on the benefits to managed modern forestry if being informative
Focused on the benefits to the individual, local community, town, region, country, industry and environment
- **Not exclusively corporate speak**
No one talks like this on a day to day basis, even in the corporate world
In some instances facts and figures need to be explicitly explained which may need set wording, but further guidance can be requested from in-house communications teams, or from Confor directly
- **Tailored to the different audiences that will ask you questions and challenge you**
Not all audiences are the same, therefore you won't approach them in the same way
You wouldn't speak to your friend at the pub in the same way you'd speak to your grandmother, for example. Be mindful of differences in audience

'Style to be good must be clear. Clearness is secured by using words that are current and ordinary.'

Aristotle





SOCIAL MEDIA:

When engaging in social media communications, for members the approach should be keeping in line with the above – in language that is understandable by the person on the street. However, there are some differences when it comes to social media engagement specifically.

- **Be sure to be authentic with this avenue, especially when it comes to replying and engaging**
Social media is a place online where you can be authentic, and indeed you are encouraged to be authentic in how you communicate.
- **However, remember that there will be different audiences within the platforms that you use**
Therefore response will be different depending on who you are engaging with. Keep it human, but be mindful that if you are participating in an online discussion with a specific group of people – for example a group that are monitoring a local consultation, you will need to address issues specific to that group of people
 - If it is to do with a giving of evidence at a committee in government, the response will equally be different, perhaps more formal and more focused around stats and figures
 - If it is to do with a local council group, the benefits to local communities may be what you are focused on working with and
- **Remember to offer to help with any further questions**
This shows openness and willing to help, and is simply a nice and polite thing to do

FOR SNIPPETS OF INFORMATION WHEN REQUESTED:

When information is requested, be sure to bear in mind the audience that the request has come from. Overarching themes to keep at the forefront of your mind.

- **Factual**
As above, any snippets of info should be based on fact, with no opportunity for the language to be misconstrued
- **Answer the question that is asked**
This answer can be given in no uncertain terms either before or after an explanation
- **Look to espouse the benefits that will affect the local area in all their forms if you can and if they aren't overwhelming**
This is in line with the 'Focused' section of the Overall tips – if there is a question regarding a specific area, focus on the benefits that modern managed forestry will bring.
- **Address any concerns head on, provide solutions or the reason why a concern may not be as well founded as the requester may believe it to be**
Any concerns can be addressed by focusing on the benefits also, as above
- **Polite and to the point**
Information requests are simply that – information. Any information needs to be given succinctly and with any sources that are available
An information request is not the time for in-depth discussion, unless further requests are given
- **Offer to help with any further questions**
Finish out the information request with an offer of help, this shows a willing to listen, and a willing to help find information that may alleviate any concerns that a requestor may have

