

# ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Confor is working for you all year round. These are just a few highlights from the past year, illustrating the real value of your membership contribution to Confor across the UK.

## England

- The England Forest Industries Leadership Group (ILG), which Confor leads, now has representation along the supply chain and is driving delivery of the National Wood Strategy (NWS). The NWS has helped precipitate initiatives such as the Forestry Commission's Trees to Timber media campaign and a clear government commitment that at least 30% of new planting will be conifer, which could lead to 60-80,000ha of additional productive conifers by 2050.
- The 2024-25 planting figures showed some encouraging signs – total planting was up by and productive conifer planting increased by 58% year-on-year.
- We have set-up an Investors Forum to work with Defra to identify barriers and solutions to encouraging more private sector investment in productive forestry. The plan is to discuss the key findings with Minister Cragh.
- We have re-established the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Forestry with a focus this Parliament on Timber Security.
- Confor has led the sector's response on Business Property Relief and Inheritance Tax changes for woodlands. Working with RFS and CLA we have written to Defra and Treasury ministers and will meet with Treasury officials to propose constructive alternatives.
- Confor responded to major consultations, including the Land Use Framework, Woodland Carbon Code v3, and Defra's Call for Evidence on Encouraging Private Investment in Nature. We co-authored Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) guidance with ICF and RFS, calling for LNRS to recognise productive forestry's role in timber supply, biodiversity, and the rural economy, aligning with UKFS and UKWAS, and addressing unmanaged woodland and threats like deer and grey squirrels.
- Six regional committees have delivered a programme of events and visits, with a new Southern Harvesting & Forest Management Group launching this autumn. Joint committee meetings have promoted best practice in southern England.

## Northern Ireland

- 2024-25 planting figures were encouraging increasing to 500 hectares from 430 hectares the previous year.
- We continue to work with others to push for a refreshed and contemporary forestry strategy.
- We are currently working with members on a response to the 2023-27 Climate Change Action Plan.

## Wales

- We worked closely with Welsh Government on the development of the Welsh Timber Industrial Strategy (TIS) and intend to play a leading role in its implementation to ensure it delivers on the priorities of Confor members.
- As a first step, we have initiated the creation of an Industry Leadership Group for Wales.
- During the consultation on the TIS, we organised two member visits for the Deputy First Minister and Minister for Rural Affairs and Climate Change to ensure he heard directly from our members.
- Planting for 2024-25 was encouragingly up from 640 to 960 hectares, with conifer planting increasing from just 10 hectares to 320 hectares.
- Our National Manager played a leading role in a Ministerial round table to finalise the Sustainable Farming Scheme. Going forward we will represent the sector to work through any issues that arise.
- We are working closely with Welsh Government to represent members' interests in working groups on the Environment Bill (principles, governance and biodiversity targets) and the biodiversity white paper and the Tree and Hedges Welsh Governments subgroup looking at the barriers to tree planting with Welsh Government.
- Working with members we are developing Confor's 2026 Welsh election manifesto which we expect will include securing all party support for the Welsh Timber Industrial strategy and establishing a forestry cross party group in the Senedd.
- We meet regularly with senior managers in NRW and Welsh Government to discuss key opportunities for sector growth and issues affecting delivery of government support for the industry.
- In order to reach a wider audience we are participating in major events such as the Royal Welsh Show, the Spring festival and the Winter fair.
- To help support our members and the wider Welsh forestry sector we have organised a forestry safety day and 'pie and pint' forestry mental health and wellbeing support evenings.
- Confor also ensures that the private sector is involved in events such as the NRW timber liaison day.

## Scotland

- We regularly meet with senior managers of Scottish Forestry and Forestry and Land Scotland to discuss strategic issues and opportunities that impact on the growth of the sector. Positive outcomes from this engagement include FLS increasing their annual timber marketing plan to 3.3M m3 p.a.
- In Scotland, planting fell from a modern-day record of over 15,000 hectares in 2023-24 to 8,470 hectares in 2024-25. Confor worked with Scottish Forestry to pull forward planting in 2023-24 to minimise the impact of the following year's 40% reduction to the budget. The two-year average of nearly 12,000 hectares is higher than previous years, and Confor has asked Scottish Government to put in place multi-year funding to provide industry with greater predictability.
- Following a high profile media and lobbying campaign with Woodland Trust Scotland we secured a 20% increase in the 25/26 woodland creation budget.
- We met quarterly with the Cabinet Secretary and continue to engage with senior politicians on key issues such as woodland creation and promoting productive forestry as a positive land-use.
- We have commenced the development of our manifesto for the 2026 elections. We will be engaging closely with members on this matter in the coming weeks.
- We have arranged a meeting with the Deputy First Minister and a number of member businesses to discuss how to unlock greater private sector investment.
- We continue to support the Scottish Forest and Wood-based Industries Leadership Group and we are playing a key role in the update of Roots for Further Growth strategy.
- We have worked closely with members to respond to numerous government consultations including:
  - Galloway National Park
  - Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill
- To further improve member participation we have created a new Highland Committee. There are now 4 regional committees.
- To address tensions with SEPA around water management in active harvesting sites, we organised an Argyll Forum where SEPA and industry reps openly discussed potential solutions raised in SEPA's report.
- In response to members feedback we positively influenced changes to the Scottish Forestry Water Guidance.
- We continue to support the wider sector such as:
  - Hosting the Hylobius Industry Research Partnership conference
  - Hosting the 3rd annual Lichen identification event
  - Supporting the Forestry Engineering group to host its symposium

## GROWING THE INDUSTRY

- Confor successfully lobbied to be included in the new Climate Change Agreement. Continued participation should save participating sawmills a combined total of £1.5m P.a. Confor is now challenging energy reduction targets proposed by DESNZ as unachievable.
- We are now formal partners of the Confederation of Timber Industries (CTI) alongside the Structural Timber Association and TDUK. As a partnership, we successfully convinced the new Labour Government to adopt the Timber in Construction Roadmap 2025(TiCR). We are now working closely with Defra and other government departments as the TiCR secretariat to deliver key actions including the government ambition to increase productive forestry in England and increase the use of homegrown timber in construction. If successful, we anticipate demand for C16 sawn timber could increase by over 1M m3 and panel board by over 0.5M m3 per annum.
- We are working with carcassing sawmill members to develop a home-grown C16 campaign with the aim of increasing demand, and building the overall market for UK timber. The first stage will be launched in mid-September. If successful, we will focus on additional home-grown wood products.
- Confor is also working with these sawmills to update the Environmental Product Declaration for kiln dried C16, which it is hoped will demonstrate a significant reduction in embodied fossil carbon and complement the C16 marketing campaign.
- As a result of significant effort from the Confor team and others, Confor was delighted to obtain emergency approval from the Chemical Regulation Directorate for the use of Lanzarta for the 2025 season, potentially saving millions of pounds in beat-up costs. We continue to work with partners to press for a more permanent approval.



- We have represented the industry in addressing various certification issues including UKWAS, EUDR, BSL and electronic plant passporting.
- We have played an integral part in ensuring there has been constructive industry input to the forthcoming 50-year softwood availability forecast.
- By working constructively with senior policy officials in the forestry agencies and Forest Research we have ensured a common methodology is adopted to identify future commercial species for productive forestry.
- We continue to ensure Plant Health issues and concerns are aired and acted on promptly. We are active members of various national groups including the Ips Industry Leadership Group.
- Confor is working with local members to update the 'Eskdalemuir report' which provides evidence to support the economic and employment benefits of new productive woodland creation. The updated report will also seek to collect and present evidence on biodiversity benefits.
- Confor is working with partners to help identify mental health issues facing our sector and provide useful tools to help prevent and alleviate these issues.
- We continue to provide active support to key industry initiatives such as UKWAS, FISA, Timber Transport Forum and the Hylobius Industry Research Programme.

## NURSERY PRODUCERS GROUP

Confor supported the European Forest Nurseries Association annual visit this year to the UK which included a visit to Oakover Nursery to look at the latest precision transplanting Plant Tape system.

The NPG continues to provide valuable nursery representation across many areas including;

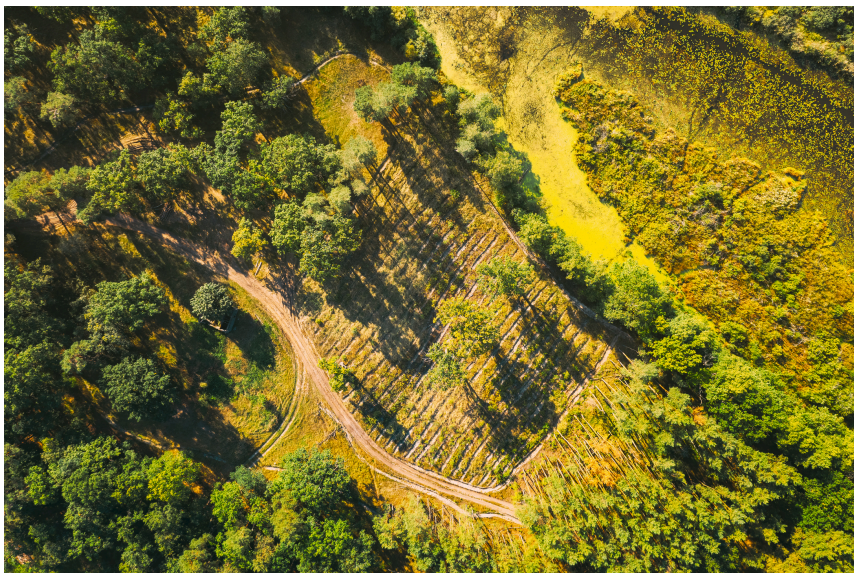
- plant health with Confor now a full member of the Plant Health Alliance
- input into work to determine future productive species selection across the UK

The NPG secured flexibility from Scottish Forestry to source seeds from adjacent zones when there is no availability for the zone in question for woodland creation and restocking. NPG has reaffirmed with FSC UK that NPG nurseries abide by relevant UK pesticide legislation with many nurseries now going further and using Integrated Pest Management to reduce, or even in some cases replace, pesticide control of certain pests.



## FORESTRY TRAINING SERVICE UK

- In an exciting new development, and in response to member feedback, we have created a new company to address market failure in areas of technical training and recruitment.
- The company's operating costs have been underwritten for the next four years by a range of forward-thinking member companies, with additional financial support from the public sector across Great Britain.
- An Operations Director, Melanie McEwen has been recruited, and Melanie will be based at Scottish Rural College in Barony near Dumfries – the hub for FTS's operations across the UK.



## SKILLS AND RECRUITMENT

- Confor is proactively engaged in skills and recruitment across the UK. We chair the Scottish Skills group, are active members in the England Skills Forum chairing the “Attraction and retention” sub-group, and are represented on the steering committee for the England Forestry Sector Skills Plan, ensuring the objectives of the plan are met in the next 5 years.
- Confor hosted 3 taster events for military veterans across England and Scotland, and have secured support to extend the military connect service to link service leavers with veterans already in forestry.
- We have also supported other forestry professionals to promote forestry at careers fairs all over the UK.

## FOREST INDUSTRIES EDUCATION & PROVIDENT FUND

Since 2020 over 70 people have benefitted from an education award, over a third have been women and that proportion is increasing. You can read reports from awardees in FTN with a focus on how the training will help not only their careers but the industry as a whole.

# COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT

## COMMUNICATION SPOTLIGHT



- This year, our Communications Manager had the pleasure of representing Confor in the UK arm of the UN FAO Forest Communicator's Network. Through the group, we have been able to connect and align our messaging with other public and private sector organisations in the forestry industry.
- Members of the Network from overseas also joined us in Edinburgh over the summer and we were able to showcase the Forestry & Wood Hub as a tool to share knowledge and combat misinformation about the industry.
- Now, with the Hub set up and ready to be used by members, we are working to relaunch the Confor website and futureproof our own content for years to come. After that, the plan is to keep expanding our audience and getting the story of trees and timber in front of the people who need to see it.

## MEMBER COMMUNICATION/ENGAGEMENT

- We work with 12 regional committees and technical groups to support members needs and in response to feedback we have introduced two new technical committees; a UK Establishment Group and a South West England Forestry and Timber Group.
- We have introduced quarterly National Manager updates to improve communication of our activities.

## MEDIA COVERAGE

- Confor's comments have been sought on government-led and endorsed timber strategies, the economic value of the forestry and wood-processing sector, planting figures across the UK, industry skills shortages, and land use policies.
- Our statements have been featured in BBC News, Forbes, The Times, The Herald, The Guardian, The Daily Record, Business Matters, Welsh Government News and more.
- Our Chief Executive has again been a guest on BBC Radio 4's Farming Today.
- We've represented your views across industry publications such as Forestry Journal, Timber Trades Journal, Construction News and RIAS Quarterly.



**SAVE THE DATE**

- November 20 2025 Policy Conference 2025, London
- March 11 2026 Confor Dinner & Awards, Edinburgh
- 24-26 September 2026, APF Exhibition, Warwickshire

## MAKING OUR VOICE HEARD



85k+

impressions on  
our social  
media content

6

successful FTNs  
with a readership  
of over 1,500

33k+

new visitors to  
the website  
in the past  
12 months

574

new followers  
across social  
channels

29.8k

e-newsletters  
sent so far in  
2025

150

stories shared  
in e-  
newsletters

