

FORESTRY & TIMBER NEWS

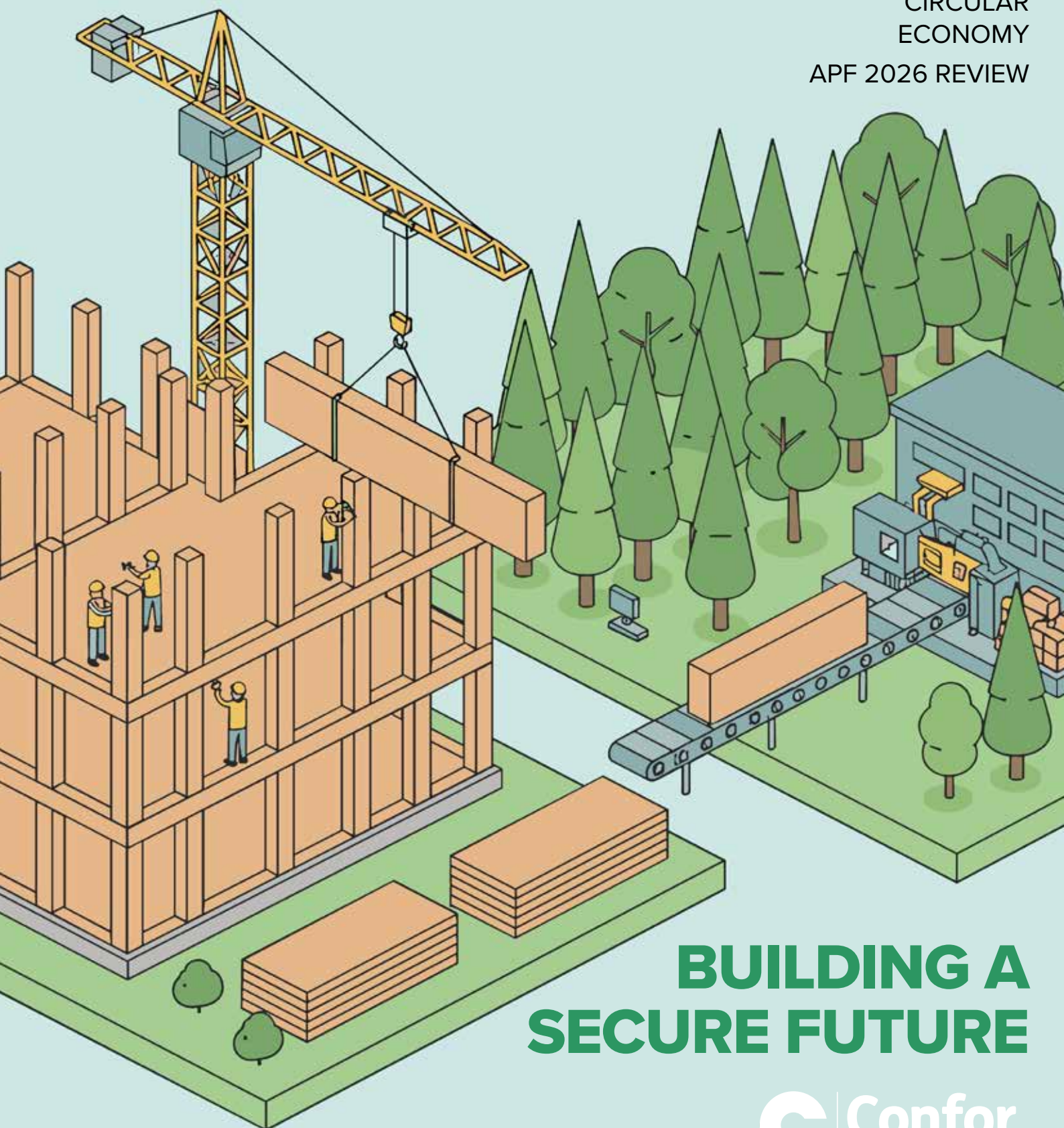
October / November 2026 Issue 137

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CIRCULAR
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APF 2026 REVIEW



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Success breeds success... and more work



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When I began working for Confor around 20 years ago, the industry would meet every few years or so with the minister of the day. Now we meet ministers from across the UK every few months.

From a reactive position of defending members' interests, we are now actively promoting member interests, from growing markets to increasing business productivity.

The issues we've put on the table, including timber security, getting more homegrown timber into house building/maintenance, and a new skills training company are all attracting political and financial support.

We are finalising plans to invest some of our financial reserves in improving the productivity of our principal tree species, directly supporting members' businesses.

Often on our own, but also crucially

with other bodies in the sector, we're setting the agenda.

Of course, there's still more to do and we'll continue to work with partners on vital issues like grey squirrels and deer, but I'm proud that the Confor team is doing so much with so little – the workload feels like it has tripled in 20 years, growing far faster than Confor's resources.

And speaking frankly, the team is doing what it does from a position of relative weakness when compared with the huge budgets and entrenched political position that other sectors and interest groups have.

That said, the momentum is with us, and your support guides us and motivates us.

Thank you.

And if you can persuade someone you know to become a member, we'll be able to do that bit more!

Confor is a membership organisation that promotes sustainable forestry and wood-using businesses. Confor members receive *Forestry and Timber News* for free as part of their membership. For more information on membership, visit www.confor.org.uk/join-us

Past issues and articles can be accessed online at www.confor.org.uk/news/ftn-magazine

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Good access.

Sporting rights owned and included.
Freehold.

Guide price £95,000



BRYN EITHINOG

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Dyfed

171.96 Acres / 69.59 Ha

Well established second rotation Sitka spruce p2011, 2017/18/19/26. Smaller elements of Douglas fir and Scots pine also performing well. Significant areas of c.1900 mature oak. Excellent investment opportunity.

Sporting rights owned and included.

Good access. Freehold.

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WEATHERMORE COPSE

Four Marks, Hampshire

31.81 acres / 12.87 ha

Diverse mixed woodland including productive mid-rotation and younger conifers of mixed ages. Impressive stand of mature beech.

Some mixed broadleaves. An appealing landscape with both commercial and amenity value. Good internal network of rides and tracks.

Sporting rights owned and included.
Freehold.

Guide price £240,000



COD BECK WOOD

Osmotherley, North Yorkshire

209.78 Acres / 84.89 Ha

Substantial commercial forestry plantation thought to have been planted in the late 1940s or early 1950s includes Japanese larch, Sitka spruce, Douglas fir with attractive stands of oak and other mixed broadleaves.

Good access. Freehold.

Sporting rights owned and included.

Guide price £1,050,000



CLOUGHTON SAWMILL WOOD with consent for a luxury lodge development

Scarborough, North Yorkshire

83.07 Acres / 33.62 Ha

A rare opportunity to purchase a mature woodland estate with consent for 15 holiday lodges with a sea view in the North York Moors National Park.

Good access. Freehold.

Sporting rights owned and included.

Guide price £1,500,000



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WHAT IS THE BIOECONOMY? WE ARE THE BIOECONOMY



Paul Brannen, author and Forestry Commission Non-Executive Commissioner, explains wood's central role in the emerging bioeconomy and questions why we don't talk about it more.

If you are reading this, then - whether you realise it or not - you probably work in the UK's bioeconomy. This bioeconomy is the fourth largest in Europe by value added, generates approximately £325 billion in output, and supports 6.4 million jobs.

Bioeconomy is not a word you hear much in the UK, as opposed to the European Union where, late last year, the Commission launched its third bioeconomy strategy. According to the EU, the bioeconomy is "the sustainable production, use, and conversion of biological resources to create food,

materials, products, energy, and services while supporting a circular, climate-neutral, and competitive economy". These biogenic resources can be sourced from the forest, the farm, the sea or the laboratory.

I was one of the members of the European Parliament who were alarmed that the EU's first bioeconomy strategy in 2012 did not mention wood in construction as an important and well-developed example of the bioeconomy. After lobbying, this omission was addressed and when the second strategy appeared in 2018, the first

specific example of the bioeconomy cited was timber.

The UK economy is on the same trajectory as the EU's - from fossil to biogenic - but oddly, the UK does not have a bioeconomy strategy. A draft was prepared under the last government and is still visible online with 'Withdrawn' stamped across every page.

This state of affairs is somewhat worrying, as the journey to 2050 and net zero carbon emissions was always going to be difficult. But without a 'map' it will be the more so. There is a DEFRA Bioeconomy Working Group but that's like using a teaspoon to dig a foundation, given the size of the UK's bioeconomy and its potential for growth.

In my experience, talk of the bioeconomy in any national context defaults to a discussion about the newest and most innovative potential products. This is combined with a tendency to ignore or forget well-established and time-proven biogenic products such as timber in construction. The pictures used to illustrate the bioeconomy tend to be of scientists in white coats inventing new products in the laboratory. Not of construction workers erecting timber buildings.

A recent report from the London School of Economics and the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change, titled 'The UK's bioeconomy: a case for building growth, resilience and sustainability', makes several important recommendations including the need to

MAKAR's latest timber home stores 35 tonnes of carbon.



“In the bio dependent economy, opportunities are hidden within larger firms and supply chains. Investors may understand food manufacturing, chemicals or construction, but rarely see bioeconomy related transition opportunities as a coherent investment theme.”

make the bioeconomy visible:

The report concludes that the UK's bioeconomy needs better coordination which would “turn scattered strengths into a coherent strategy for growth that supports nature, strengthens resilience and enables the UK to lead internationally”.

Part of the problem is of our own creation. The forestry and wood sector - a significant (the largest?) component of the UK bioeconomy - has singularly failed to articulate the existence and

importance of the bioeconomy and the fact that we are a key part of it.

Timber and wood-based products have been substituting for fossil fuel based materials for decades, in that a timber-framed building is by definition not a steel-framed building. The current shift by the UK's major housebuilders from brick and block to timber frames can reduce embodied emissions by approximately 20%, according to BioComposites Centre at Bangor University.

At the same time, all the structural timber used delivers a long-term carbon removal. Building an additional 40,000 timber framed homes between now and 2030 will deliver a significant reduction in construction emissions and store 200,000 tonnes of CO₂e. So let's call this what it is: 'A significant contribution to delivering the bioeconomy'.

We could do much more if we weren't hamstrung by the post-Grenfell 'ban' on building above 18 metres in timber, driven by misguided safety concerns.

While Europe and the rest of the world steadily increase the number and height of the mass timber buildings they are erecting, the UK is lagging behind. This is problematic because mass timber buildings (CLT, glulam, LVL) deliver significant substitution and carbon storage figures sending a clear signal to politicians and decision makers of the importance of timber construction in delivering the bioeconomy at scale.

But it's not only timber construction that puts wood at the heart of the bioeconomy. Research by Nova Pangea on Teesside (funded by British Airways) to develop sustainable aviation fuel has identified Sitka Spruce as the number one feedstock of choice. The research considered a range of raw materials from both the farm and the forest, and it was the much-maligned Sitka that topped the preference list.

In Sweden and Finland - the two giants of European forestry - research on using wood fibre to produce textiles is well advanced. Launching the EU's third bioeconomy strategy in November 2025, the Swedish Environment Commissioner Jessika Roswall wore a Metsä dress made from wood fibre.

And one of my favourite unexpected items on the list of 'what wood offers the bioeconomy' is... bioplastics made from wood residues.

Another key component of the bioeconomy, not to be ignored, is wood for energy. It is not the bioeconomy's poster child. In fact, it's quite the opposite. But, love it or hate it, Drax and Co are also part of the bioeconomy, as the wood pellets they consume are substituting for fossil fuels.

Wood is now the most important biogenic material in Europe and will be for the foreseeable future. It is the number one sustainable feedstock, underpinning our transition from a fossil fuel economy to a bioeconomy. And we can only expect others to acknowledge this if we first acknowledge it ourselves and SHOUT ABOUT IT!

SHORT TERM OPPORTUNITIES AND LONG TERM THREATS

Andy Leitch, Confor Deputy Chief Executive, reviews the opportunities for growth and threats of greatly reduced timber output predicted by the 2026 50-year softwood availability forecast.

As previously reported, the Confor Advisory Board has brought together a working group of industry experts, chaired by Joint MD of James Jones and Sons David Leslie, to analyse the 50-year softwood availability forecast report and understand the issues and opportunities it presents.

Additionally, we are assessing how best to communicate the findings and leverage the results to lobby for aspects of the industry's wood supply and growth ambitions over the period.

Key takeaways from the 50-year GB softwood availability forecast

Over the 50-year period, softwood availability in GB drops from 19.1M m3obs (over bark standing) to 11.3M m3obs, a range of 7.8M m3obs. For information, we currently harvest approximately 12M m3obs per annum.

For the first 15-20 years, availability is approximately 5M m3obs higher than is currently being harvested. This offers

genuine opportunities for investment in additional wood processing capacity across the supply chain and possibly emerging markets for timber.

However, by the 2070s there is a dramatic drop in availability to less than we harvest now. This issue will have to be addressed promptly to ensure sustained annual timber yields to provide the timber security required for increased wood processing capacity.

There is over 100M m3obs categorised as "overdue" in the period. Overdue timber includes standing timber that falls out of the felling assumption modelled in the forecast, for example standing Sitka spruce with a dbh greater than 32cm.

The forecast accounts for a certain level of thinning activity in the period that equates to around 0.8M m3obs per annum and, though it does not account for future woodland creation activity, it does factor in restructuring of forests to achieve current UKFS standards and current changes in species composition.

Factors impacting on long term timber supplies

Analysis of the background data from the forecast reveals a significant anticipated reduction of net stocked area of conifer over the period, with approximately 75% of that area being Sitka spruce.

Further revisions to long-term forest plans could further reduce the productive potential of UK forests, and any further reduction in the maximum area of a single species permitted by the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) could result in additional loss of productivity.

In addition, continued poor performance of woodland creation against government targets will delay mitigation of the forecast reduction in future timber supplies.

Another consideration is how and when the "overdue" timber will be harvested. If left standing too long, it could be susceptible to windblow.

Future demand and processing capacity

The group then discussed a realistic growth rate for the industry within the 50-year period, accounting for predicted future demand for wood products, opportunities for growth and any potential threats to current players in the supply chain.

Subsequently, a projected conservative level of wood processing capacity in the sector by the 2070s is 16M m3obs per annum against a current usage of around 12M m3obs in the current poor market conditions.

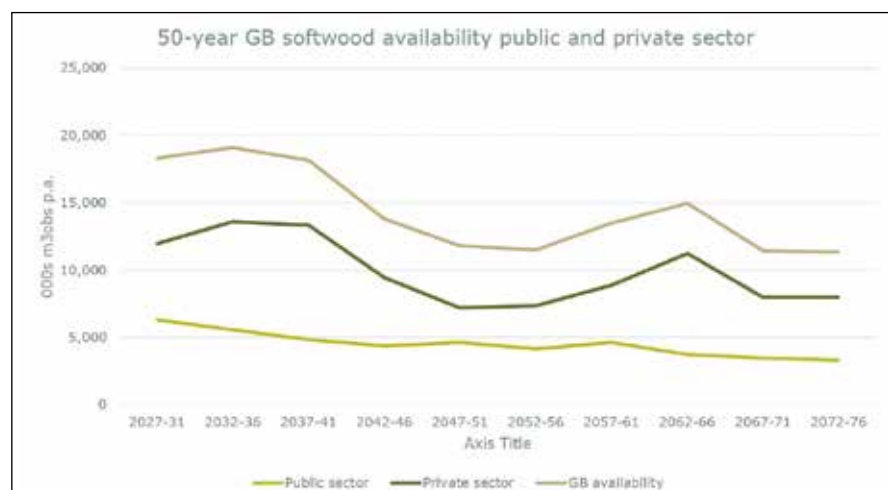
Some of the factors identified that will drive increased future demand for homegrown wood products include; incremental growth in demand across the supply chain, moderate success in further increasing market share of UKC16 and OSB into the construction market (new build and repair, maintenance and improvement) and potential emerging markets such as sustainable aviation fuel.

Consideration was also given to the potential negative impact on overall demand of homegrown fibre with the loss of RoCs and RHI beginning in the next few years.

Future supply against predicted industry demand for homegrown fibre

Comparing the 16M m3obs predicted future industry demand by 2076, against the published forecast softwood availability, highlights that there could

continued on p13





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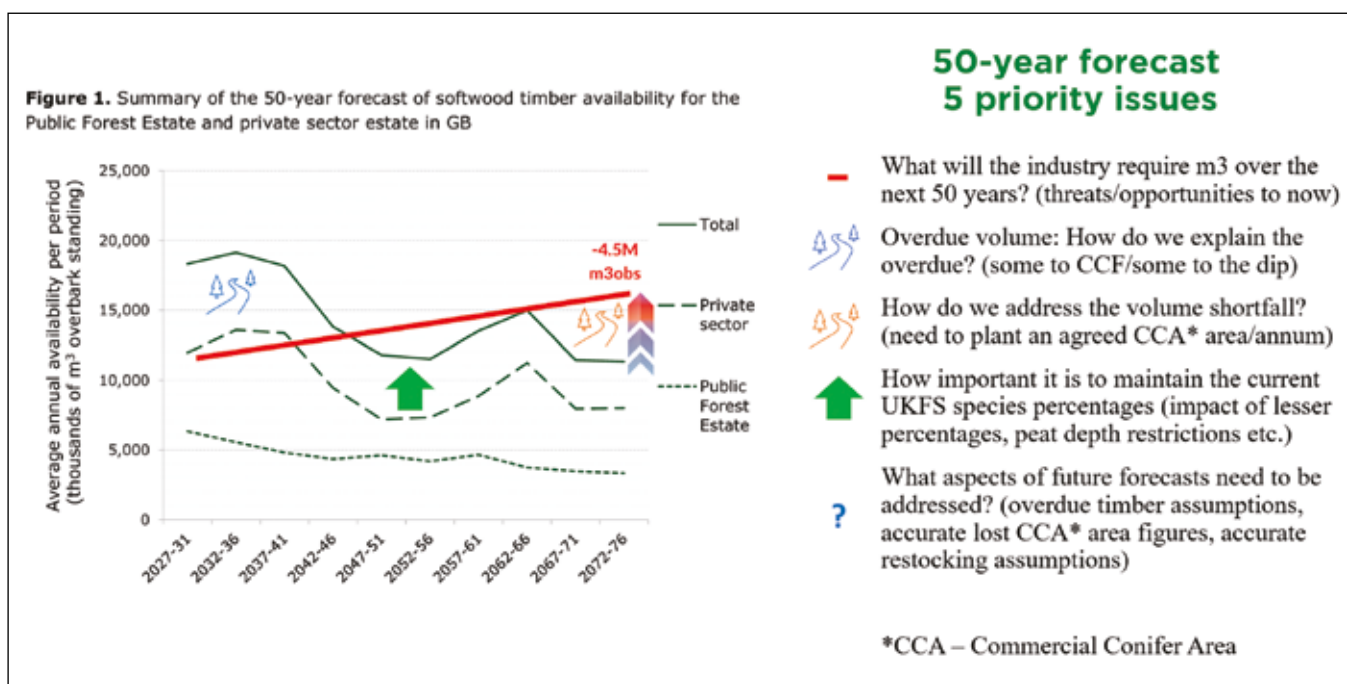
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continued from p10

be a shortfall of at least 4.5M m3obs p.a. of supply against industry demand by the end of the period. This suggests that there would be even greater reliance on imported timber against a backdrop of increased global demand in wood products.

The Group agreed adopting practical initiatives to fill that supply gap should be a strategic priority of both the public and private sector. The group surmised that this could be achieved by:

- Exploring how the productivity of the existing forest estate could be increased. This may include revisiting current and future restructuring plans with an aim at retaining productive areas of conifer where practicable.
- Invest in tree replacement initiatives that will increase productivity of a select number of key productive species within the next 10-15 years.
- Plant improved stock where possible.
- Working with Forest Research (FR), run models to illustrate the total net stocked area of productive conifer required to deliver the 16M m3obs predicted industry demand by the late 2070s, accounting for age class distribution and species breakdown.
- To ensure that any future loss of productive woodland is balanced with reciprocal productive compensatory planting.
- Focus future woodland creation targets to include a specific target to achieve the required level of net

stocked area at country level as indicated by the FR models.

Next Steps

Moving forward the working group has identified the following next steps:

- Work with the public sector to request FR run a model to assess the net stocked area and average yields to achieve a target annual yield e.g. 16M m3obs per annum.
- Follow-up with FR to clarify the main factors impacting the predicted reduction in net stocked area of productive conifer over the 50-year period.
- Ask for more detail of “overdue” material to determine “oversize” volume.
- Propose a collaborative R&D programme, including improved tree breeding programmes, that will increase future wood production and market penetration to mitigate the reduction in long-term supplies.
- Develop and share industry messages regarding the opportunities and challenges arising from the 50-year forecast. Emerging messages to date include:
 - Overall, the industry accepts the findings of the forecast. However, work to improve the scope and future accuracy of the forecast will be required, particularly to include current and future technological improvements.
 - It is anticipated that the actual

volume available will be less than published in forecast because harvesting of the overdue material will be delayed or not happen at all in some places, and there will be less thinning than assumed.

- The risks associated with delayed felling of overdue timber should be assessed, particularly in terms of windblow, to develop contingency plans.

- There is sufficient additional fibre available in the first 15-20 years to merit investment in wood processing capacity.

- There is sufficient fibre available to further penetrate construction-based markets such as UK C16 and OSB.

- It could take three to five years to bring any new facilities online.

- Urgent action is required by government and industry to assure sustained longer-term timber supplies to meet anticipated increased demand.

- Industry is willing to invest in projects to increase market penetration and increased timber production.

50-year Hardwood Availability Forecast

Forest Research has started work on a 50-year hardwood availability forecast. The exercise is being supported by a reference group that is populated with experienced industry representatives, including Tom Barnes and John Bruce. Confor will report on progress in the coming months.

More than 30 MPs back timber security plea

Confor Chief Executive **Stuart Goodall** provides an update on 'Timber Security is National Security', the campaign targeting UK ministers to raise awareness of and support for the industry.

With the support of Confor members, over 130 MPs and active Peers were briefed on the campaign, which is an incredible achievement. Many wrote to the Defra Secretary of State, Dame Angela Eagle and questions were raised at Westminster.

In response, Ms Eagle confirmed that she recognised timber security was important for economic and national resilience and that action needed to be taken to monitor and reduce the UK's reliance on timber imports.

That said, the Secretary of State did not commit to taking new action and so Confor has gone one step further and asked supportive politicians to sign a letter to the Prime Minister, calling on him to take further action. Again, members have come to Confor's assistance.

Given that many of the interested politicians have formal positions in Government, and therefore are unable to sign such a letter, it is remarkable that over 30 Parliamentarians have now publicly backed the call for the Prime Minister to act on UK timber security.

The cross-party letter to Downing Street will warn

that Britain's reliance on imported timber poses a growing risk to national security, housing delivery and economic resilience. It will urge the UK Government to take urgent action to strengthen Britain's timber security, as a national campaign calling for greater investment in domestic forestry and wood processing continues to gather political and public support.

The Parliamentarians will argue that strengthening domestic timber production would help deliver the Government's ambitions for housing, economic growth, industrial investment and the transition to a lower carbon economy, stating that: "Timber security is not solely a forestry issue. It is a housing issue. It is an industrial strategy issue. It is a resilience issue. And increasingly, it is a national security issue."

It will conclude by challenging the Government to decide whether Britain should continue accepting its dependence on imported timber or take

action to strengthen its resilience for the decades ahead.

The letter is to be sent from the Chairs of Confor's All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Forestry and Timber Security, and the Wood Panel Industry Federation's APPG on the Wood Panel Industry.

**“
Timber security is increasingly a national security issue.”**

Confor's campaign has demonstrated that the issue resonates well beyond the forestry sector. We have seen support from MPs across political parties, engagement from businesses and communities, and hundreds of people taking action to make their voices heard.

The measures to be set out in the letter will be practical, achievable steps that would strengthen the UK's economic security, support British manufacturing and create jobs while delivering environmental benefits.

Once it has been sent, Confor will call on the Government to respond positively to the proposals and work with Parliamentarians and industry to develop a long-term approach to securing the UK's timber supply.

On behalf of the Confor team, I would like to sincerely thank the hundreds of members who have supported this campaign – without you, we would not have been able to achieve what we have, and what we'll keep pushing for.



Defra Secretary of State,
Dame Angela Eagle

Confor action delivers extra funding for failed tree plantings

The Extra Payment for Replanting under Eligible Criteria (EPREC) fund provides support to help sustain trees and woodland planted in 2025 to 2026 that have died due to the prolonged period of hot and dry weather.

This funding is a direct result of Confor collaboration with Forestry Commission in response to member concerns.

John Bruce, Confor National

Manager for England, stated: "This year's EPREC is a welcome response to the concerns raised by members, and we appreciate the Forestry Commission sharing details in advance so that we could give members earlier notice."

EPREC only supports plant replacement for trees planted under specific grant schemes in England. You will be invited to apply if you're an agreement holder who has claimed

for trees planted in the 2025 to 2026 planting season under the following schemes:

- England Woodland Creation Offer
- Urban Tree Challenge Fund
- Local Authority Treescapes Fund

To be eligible, tree failure rates must be at least 25% due to the hot and dry weather. Applications are open until 15 November and all claims must be complete and submitted by 31 March 2027.



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Constructive conversations around the future of Scottish Forestry

Industry leaders have engaged with Scottish Government over concerns around potential plans to fold Scottish Forestry into a national environmental body.

In the Programme for Government (PfG) 2026-2031 released in September, Scottish Government announced its intention to bring SEPA, NatureScot and Zero Waste Scotland together under a single, national environmental organisation, with Scottish Forestry also being considered for the merger.

This was outlined as a route to “remove unnecessary barriers and make our environmental interventions more impactful”.

Confor, Woodland Trust Scotland and the Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF), as well as the wider industry, immediately expressed concern over the plans. In a joint letter to cabinet secretaries, the leaders of these organisations stated: “We are particularly concerned that any merger could result in the loss of essential forestry expertise from within the government, which would be fundamentally damaging to woodland creation in Scotland.”

Commenting on the PfG, Stuart Goodall, Confor Chief Executive, elaborated: “Confor understands Scottish Government’s attempt to rationalise the number of public bodies, and we share its desire to make it easier to expand forestry, which is critical for economic and jobs growth, climate change action and a low carbon construction sector.

“However, we are concerned about some specific unintended consequences which we know will arise from the proposals around Scottish Forestry and the environment agencies, and we will seek to work with the Government to explore alternative arrangements which will not damage the sector and lead to disinvestment in woodland creation and production of Scottish timber products.”

Comparisons have been drawn between Scottish Government’s plan and the similar restructuring that saw Forestry Commission Wales folded into Natural Resources Wales in 2013, resulting in a significant loss of institutional forestry expertise as many staff left.

Since the merger, Wales has consistently fallen significantly short of its woodland creation ambitions, achieving



Confor’s Stuart Goodall gives evidence to Scottish Government.

less than 20% of its planting target, where Scotland consistently exceeds 70%.

ICF Executive Director Louise Simpson added: “Now is the time to invest in forestry expertise, not risk losing it. We are seeking clear assurances that Scotland’s forestry capability will be protected and strengthened through any reform.”

Woodland Trust Scotland Policy and Advocacy Manager Simon Ritchie said: “The forestry sector is critical to both the economic and environmental wellbeing of Scotland. As its regulator and grant funder, Scottish Forestry’s role is hugely important. Any reorganisation must be a conducted with extreme care.”

In early October, forestry chiefs met with Gillian Martin MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action & Rural Affairs, and Jim Fairlie MSP, Minister for Agriculture, Marine & the Islands, to discuss the issue in a “genuinely constructive and robust exchange, not a tick-box exercise”, as described in a joint statement.

“The three organisations - Confor, ICF and Woodland Trust Scotland - made clear that we do not support the inclusion of Scottish Forestry within a wider environmental super-agency and reflected the concerns that many across the sector have raised about that approach.

“The Cabinet Secretary was honest in saying that she was still to make up her mind, and wanted to test our thinking as well as consider alternative approaches. We made clear that we remain keen to engage constructively in that process, but that at the end of the day we would argue the case for an outcome that we believed would best enable delivery of shared objectives for woodland creation and net zero, the economy and the environment.”

Jim Fairlie MSP also commented on the meeting at a recent event in Edinburgh, co-hosted by Confor and Brodies LLP.

“What matters most is achieving the best long-term outcome and ensuring that any future arrangements protect and build upon the progress already being made across Scotland’s forestry sector,” he said. “In the meantime, Scottish Forestry will continue developing forestry strategy and this government remains fully committed to its objectives.”

A major issue for Scottish Government is any potential impact of a merger on business investment. In response to a request from ministers, Confor has surveyed members asking for their urgent feedback on how changes to the status of Scottish Forestry could affect upcoming investment decisions. The results of the survey will be shared with Scottish Government.

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Minister joins launch of new economic development strategy for forestry

The Scottish Forest and Wood-based Industries (SFWI) Leadership Group has published a national strategy for the advancement of the sector in Scotland.

Minister for Agriculture, Marine and the Islands Jim Fairlie MSP joined members of the Scottish Forest and Wood-based Industries (SFWI) Leadership Group at their recent launch of an updated strategy for 2025-2035: *'A National Wood Strategy - Delivering for Scotland'*.

The document, authored by Guy Watt and Confor's Andy Leitch, sets out the sector's ambitions to increase its contributions to Scotland's economic and climate change targets, working in partnership with the Scottish Government and its agencies.

The strategy highlights 35 proposed collaborative actions that will help the ILG address its six strategic priorities and achieve its overall ambition.

Guy Watt, co-author and Chair of the SFWI Industry Leadership Group (ILG), said: "The strategy covers all Scotland's sources of wood fibre from Scotland's forests, from imported wood fibre and from reusing and recycling wood fibre. It has been developed by representatives of companies in the private sector from across the wood-chain."

The objective of the SFWI ILG is to identify ways in which the forest industry in Scotland, working with

the Scottish Government, can boost sectoral growth and the economy as a whole, in a way that is aligned with Scotland's Economic Strategy. The Group is comprised of 23 representatives from companies across the wood chain, including many Confor members, Scottish Forestry, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, South of Scotland Enterprise, and Skills Development Scotland.

The ILG considers there are a wide range of exciting opportunities for the domestic forest industry to grow over the next 15 years as the forecast wood fibre availability in Scotland increases. These new opportunities are for increased processing and downstream manufacturing of and adding value to wood-based products in Scotland. As a result, the contributions to the growth of the Scottish economy will also increase significantly particularly in the rural economy.

Jim Fairlie MSP commented: "This document marks the next phase in driving forward the development of inclusive and sustainable growth in Scotland's Forest and Wood-based Industries. I commend the sector for its progress and ambition and welcome

this strategy as a platform for further growth, innovation and economic impact by 2035."

The Strategy also highlights the important contribution the sector makes to reaching climate change targets associated with fast grown conifers capturing carbon from the atmosphere quickly and the positive impact when using wood products instead of using other products with higher embodied energy.

The ILG also recognises that trees, woods and forests are also an important part of Scotland's ecosystem and biodiversity and can provide habitats for a range of Scotland's unique flora and fauna. They also provide the backdrop for a range of recreational and tourist opportunities in both rural and urban areas.

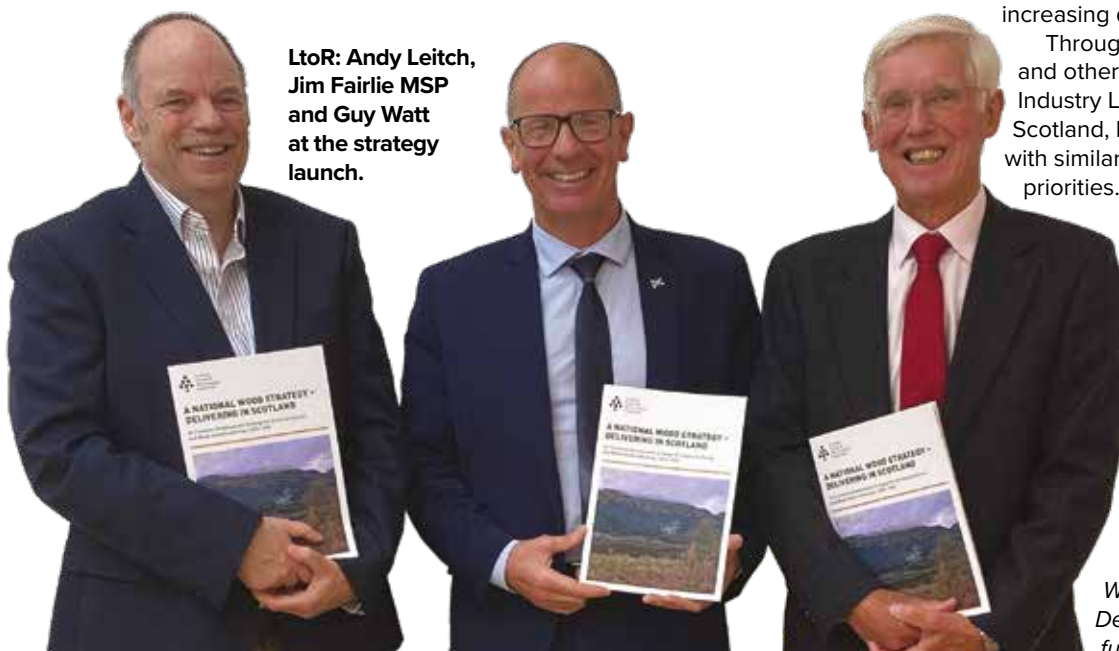
Additionally, the Group notes a longer-term threat to the future of the sector in that, by 2070, the availability of coniferous roundwood is forecast to fall well below forecast demand and current production. There is therefore a need to increase softwood availability by planting more coniferous woodlands and increasing the productivity of existing ones to prevent job losses and increasing dependence on imports.

Through the work of Confor, and others, there are now active Industry Leadership Groups in Scotland, England and Wales, all with similar ambitions and strategic priorities.

In the coming months, Andy Leitch will be working with these ILGs to identify where they can effectively work together to deliver their collective goals avoiding duplication and making efficient use of the resources available.

Read *'A National Wood Strategy - Delivering for Scotland'* in full: <https://bit.ly/4dNQzQ7>

LtoR: Andy Leitch, Jim Fairlie MSP and Guy Watt at the strategy launch.



No time for missed opportunities

The actions we can take now to ensure thriving forest and wood industries in the future will be the topic of Confor's annual policy conference in London this December.

Large-scale planting by past generations laid the basis for the development of what is now a £6.4 billion UK forestry and wood processing industry.

As these forests are harvested and restructured to meet modern sustainability standards, there is a growing appreciation of the increasing range of economic and environmental benefits delivered by the industry – from building badly needed new homes to climate mitigation and sustainable economic growth.

With increased availability of timber over the next 20 to 30 years – and a greater focus on timber security – the short-term prospects for the industry look positive.

With increased availability of timber over the next 20-30 years – and a greater focus on timber security – the short-term prospects for the industry look positive.

However, in order to avoid a damaging future decline in supply and demand for wood fibre, action needs to be taken now to increase woodland creation and the productivity of the forest resource to protect the industry from tree to mill 50 years from now.

Join Confor for 'Timber Security & Growing the Forest-Based Industries' on 3 December 2026, taking place at Surveyors House, the headquarters of the Royal Institution of Chartered



Surveyors (RICS) in Westminster, to discuss the state of play and how industry and government can work

together to grow a stable timber market.

Andy Leitch, Confor Deputy Chief Executive, will discuss the latest '50-year Forecast of Softwood Timber Availability' and the driving factors behind UK supply, examining how challenges may be addressed to create a successful future for forestry and timber processing.

Andrew Orriss, Interim CEO at the Structural Timber Association, will be looking at pragmatic ways to grow the structural timber market and increasing opportunities for homegrown products. New markets are also on the agenda, with Land Energy's Hugh Montgomery speaking about bioenergy and emergent innovations like sustainable aviation fuel.

Attendees will hear about alternative timber species and how any evolutions in forest planning and planting must be met by industry with infrastructure investment and processing adaptations.

An expert panel will be exploring how the true value of productive forests and timber should be communicated to modern audiences at every level, getting the vital messages right for policymakers, community stakeholders, investors and future workers.

The conference is kindly sponsored by Gresham House, Scottish Woodlands Ltd and True North Real Asset Partners.

Book your tickets now: <https://bit.ly/ConforPC>

MEMBER UPDATE

Review and renew



Eliza Marrison,
Membership
& Marketing
Manager

It was so wonderful to see lots of Confor members at APF 2026 last month. I hope the upgraded coffee and cakes in our refreshed Member Hub were a nice treat for you after walking around the showground all day!

It is currently renewals period and

invoices are now overdue so if you haven't yet paid, please do so! To the majority that have paid up and continue to support the team and industry through Confor, thank you. Your loyalty is very much appreciated, and each penny goes into pushing forward!

The team is excited to continue throughout 2026 and into 2027, working on your behalf. If you have any queries regarding membership, please contact myself at eliza@confor.org.uk. I'd be more than happy to help.

Upcoming is the Policy Conference in London on 3 December 2026. There is still time to purchase your ticket if the topics on the agenda are of interest to you.

A warm welcome to our newest members:

England: Agrovista UK Ltd; iTerra; Severn Gorge Countryside Trust; Mr M Cole; Mr B Middleton-Gaish; Mr J Turner; Mr C Wilmoth.

Scotland: Dr E Harris.

Wales: Natural Resources Wales; Mt N Petts.

The need for “political courage”

Forecast softwood production, potential of carbon markets, judicial reviews, timber for house building and the future of Scottish Forestry were all on the agenda for a conference hosted by Confor and Brodies LLP.



At a recent event hosted by Confor and Brodies LLP, delegates heard from industry leaders and politicians about the challenges and opportunities facing the forestry sector.

‘Shaping Scotland’s Rural Renewal: Forestry, Timber and the Road Ahead’ began with an address by Jim Fairlie MSP, Minister for Agriculture, Marine and the Islands who told the audience the timber sector was a vital industry which remained central to Scotland’s future.

He said: “Scotland demonstrates real leadership in this sector, and we should be ambitious about building on that. But investment, innovation and leadership rely on one thing: confidence.”

Building on this theme Mr Fairlie also discussed the woodland creation target of 18,000 hectares annually by 2029-30, noting that this was an ambitious target that would require confidence, partnership and effective delivery to achieve.

David Leslie, Joint Managing Director of James Jones & Sons Ltd, followed with a presentation on the 50-year timber outlook.

He noted that under current projections, there is a surplus of timber available now but a shortfall of approximately three million cubic metres is anticipated by 2050.

“We’ve got too much wood at the moment, and we’ve got too little in the future,” he emphasised. “We’ve got to see how we can spread that wood forward, to try and keep woods standing

against winds, rain, everything coming against us.

“Some of those woods can be kept for long-term continuous cover, to actualise opportunity for the industry and the environment. Others, we’ve got to harvest tirelessly to get maximum value out of it.”

A panel discussion between Andy Leitch, Deputy Chief Executive of Confor, Ian Robinson, Managing Director of Scottish Woodlands Limited and Dr Kate Palmer, National Manager for Scotland & Northern Ireland and Policy Manager at Confor, went further into the issue.

Andy highlighted opportunities within the English market given the practicalities of having that scale of housebuilding on Scotland’s doorstep. He did however add a note of caution, advising on the practicality that three-quarters of a cubic

metre of C16 used in buildings would require three to four metres of standing timber.

Ian agreed: “To get 6,000 hectares of productive conifer, you’ve got another 4,000 hectares of something else, which has to be included as part of the landscape. You automatically need more land than what you think.”

Niall McLean, Partner and Solicitor Advocate at Brodies LLP, reflected on some of the regulatory challenges and changes ahead. Considering the impact of statutory appeals and judicial reviews, he acknowledged that the main issue for the sector is delay and whilst courts have improved timescales these challenges still impacted the ability to progress projects.

Niall also considered the potential merger of Scottish Forestry and highlighted that if there is any uncertainty or delay caused by the process then there could be a risk of a “freezing effect” where more challenges are raised as a result of decisions not being made in accordance with statutory timescales.

The final panel invited Jamie Langan MSP, Andrew Baxter MSP, Donald Mackinnon MSP and Stuart Goodall, Chief Executive of Confor, to consider the future for forestry and timber in Scotland. The panellists broadly agreed on the need for political courage, and for plans to extend beyond the five-year parliamentary term and give the sector the confidence it needs to make investments and progress long-term projects.

Stuart said: “I’ve been pushing very hard for the concept of a timber industrial strategy because we’re looking, and the minister recognised it, we’re looking at confidence, we’re looking at people making decisions which are going to realise outcomes in 40 years’ time or 80 years’ time.”

The last word came from Graeme Leith, Partner and Head of the Rural Business and Natural Capital sector at Brodies LLP, who noted that there was an “opportunity for a successful and productive forestry sector but also significant challenges which would require innovative and practical solutions.”



Jim Fairlie MSP (left) and David Leslie.

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A STUNNING SUCCESS

Ian Millward, APF Exhibition Secretary, reflects on how the show's 50th year went and thanks the people who made it happen.

Well, the weather gods were smiling on us. Who would have believed that we would be handing out SPF protection to our Team and having to damp down the dust on the tracks twice a day?

APF 2026 was a stunning success. A fitting tribute for our 50th anniversary. We have been overwhelmed by the congratulations and positive comments from exhibitors, visitors and on social media. Huge credit goes to our APF Team for their hard work and smiling faces, which make the APF Demo so special.

Many exhibitors told me they attend many shows but the APF has a special friendly aura about it that makes it their favourite event.

We had record crowds through the gate and our traffic system coped well despite Warwickshire City Council deciding to close one of our access routes without letting us know!

You may have noticed we had a new ticket system this year, both for online and on the gate sales, which worked faultlessly as did the Wi-Fi connections. Many thanks to TICKETsrv for their help. It meant we could track how many visitors were on site at any one time and how many people with advance tickets were still to arrive.

A big thanks to our Electrical contractors, Excell and security company, Minimal Risk. They are very much part of our APF Team, and it is a pleasure to work with such professionals.

We had great TV and radio coverage by the BBC and APF 2026 will feature in an upcoming episode of TV programme *Escape To The Country*.

Thanks to Eleanor O'Neill and Micropress for editing and producing our 50th anniversary booklet. Thanks also to Forestry Journal and Essential Arb, our media partners. Their help with our graphic design, show promotion and compiling the show catalogue was invaluable.

Many exhibitors reported excellent sales, which is what we are all about. It was the reason the show started way back in 1976.

A big thank you to John Bruce, Eleanor and the whole of the Confor team. The Confor stand was a very

welcoming place and the decent coffee was certainly appreciated. John put hours of work into the detail of the stand and probably aged a few years in the process - not helped by me teasing him that the marquee that had just been erected was much smaller than he had ordered!

On Day One, just as he thought his worries were over and he was looking forward to his bacon roll at the Confor breakfast, he found out that the caterer had got his dates mixed up and hadn't planned to deliver until Friday. Fortunately, no-one starved and the bacon and venison sausages, sponsored by Rhizocore Technologies, duly arrived.

Our 50th anniversary display looked great, thanks to Eleanor's design skills, and drew much praise. A lot of attention was focused on Kieran Anders' 1976 Timberjack skidder. Kieran told me it still is in active daily use. Many thanks Kieran for lending it to us. It contrasted perfectly with the 2026 John Deere and Komatsu harvesters. I wonder which machine will still be working in another 50 years?

It was a happy coincidence that the John Deere harvester had been bought by Neil Powell of Powell Forestry whose father Alan was a long-term member of the APF Team and was the APF Chairman featured in a photograph of the 1976 show.

As it was our 50th birthday we had invited all our old staff to the show, and it was lovely to see many of them again.



Photo credit: Jack Haugh / Forestry Journal

A couple of them had been present at Longleat. I was a little nervous about cutting a cake with a chainsaw in full view of everyone, including the Chairs of Confor and the Forestry Commission, but it went well and didn't end up as trifle!

The celebratory BBQ sponsored by John Deere went really well, with all 120 venison burgers being eaten. I am pleased to say I grabbed the very last

one. It was a lovely event to stage after the Confor AGM and allowed everyone to socialise. Something I am sure we will repeat in the future.

While we were at the show, I had a number of emails from companies wanting to book for 2028 so we must be doing something right.

The weather held during break down and as I write this, Mat Box and his takedown crew have almost cleared the site. There is one lonely fridge in the middle of the field, but we have traced the owner. Sadly, it was not full of beer.

By trying to thank people you inevitably forget someone. If I have missed anyone out, I apologise. All our Team, contractors and event organisers did a superb job. A special thanks must go to all our sponsors for supporting us. We had a record number of sponsors this year and it enabled us to put on the vast array of events and competitions which

make the show what it is.

Numbers through the gate were so good that we ran out of catalogues. If you missed out, there is a link to a digital version in the 'Useful Documents' area of our Visitor section on the APF website.

The APF Team have a debrief meeting in November to chew over what we did right and how we can improve. We then go into hibernation until February when we start all over again with the planning for APF 2028. If anyone has any ideas for new events or features, however left field, please let me know. I promise we will consider them.

APF 2028 will also be my swansong. I will be standing down as Exhibition Secretary after 44 years - parole at last!

The dates are 21-23 September 2028. Let's make it a good one!

The APF Team hope you all had a great show and look forward to welcoming you back in 2028.





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Taking action now for tomorrow

Eleanor O'Neill shares highlights from the 'Talking Forestry' seminar programme at APF 2026.

“People just don't associate our work environment with productivity.”

This statement from Peter Coles, Forestry Commission Area Director for the South-East and London, framed much of Thursday morning's conversation around 'Trust, transparency and the public perception of forestry'.

The session opened the 'Talking Forestry' programme, taking place in the Confor seminar tent at APF 2026, sponsored by Tilhill Forestry. The seminar schedule was assembled in collaboration with Forest Research, Forestry Commission and Forestry England to encompass the biggest topics of debate across the industry.

Peter pointed out that to improve public perceptions, it falls on our shoulders to connect the dots for people between cutting down trees to environmentally friendly products. He bemoaned the figure from Forest Research's Public Opinion of Forestry 2025 that 41% of people in the UK believe trees should not be felled under

any circumstances.

“The interactions people have with forests are about recreation and tranquillity,” he stated. “How we frame that intervention is critical.”

Paul Brannen, Forestry Commissioner and former MEP, agreed: “Without a doubt we've got a problem... 85% of the UK population is urban-based, and that has consequences.

“We need people in urban environments to have a better understanding of rural land use.”

None of these concerns were new to the audience of forestry workers, several of whom shared their own stories of local opposition to carrying out their jobs.

As Rebecca Smith, the session's moderator and author of 'Rural: The Lives of the Working-Class Countryside', pointed out: “This is an echo chamber. We all know this in this room. We need to get the message out there.”

Paul suggested different ways to start the conversation, particularly with young, diverse audiences who could become

the future forestry workforce. He pointed to a university course in Canada that saw a sharp increase in applications after swapping 'forestry' in the title for 'climate change'.

The sentiment was echoed by Baroness Barbara Young of Old Scone, Chair of the Forestry Commission. In a refreshingly frank back-and-forth with Richard Stanford, FC Chief Executive, she conceded that important forestry work “involves things that people don't think are good – cutting down a tree, killing a squirrel, shooting a deer.”

A self-declared champion for ancient woodlands and biodiversity, Baroness Young reassured listeners: “I don't want to go back to creating the woodlands of 400 years ago, because they wouldn't be resilient for the future.”

She asked that both sides of the debate – conservationists and productive planters – move closer to the middle as co-conspirators; cunning enough to protect what we have and still create more.

Richard agreed, underlining that

>>

“we’ve got to make use of what we’ve got”.

He said: “We are very worried about creating unmanaged woodlands for the future. What we plant today must be meeting future ambitions.

“What we’re really talking about is resilience. The nation needs to be resilient. Part of that is timber. Part of that is flood defences, part of that is water quality... Resilience is everything and trees are like a magic wand.”

The future was also on the minds of Friday’s first panel, who were tasked with considering how forestry may look in 50 years.

David Edwards, Knowledge Exchange and Impact Coordinator, Forest Research, highlighted the recent work his team had done to identify and shortlist resilient tree species for woodland creation in Scotland, and ongoing research for similar lists in England and Wales.

Practicality dominated much of the conversation, and there was significant acknowledgement of the complex criteria that dictate what trees work where.

Mark Broadmeadow, Head of Climate Change at Forestry Commission, stated: “I can’t see us going far past the species we have tried in the past and 40 years ago may have discarded in favour of Sitka... we don’t need to go to the wild and wacky.”

However, he did ask attendees to consider that if the foresters of the past generation were faced with today’s environment, they likely wouldn’t make the same choices now.

“What our forests will look like and what I hope they look like are very different,” said Eleanor Tew, Head of Forest Planning, Forestry England. “I don’t think forests are going to look very different in 20-30 years because we’re not changing on the scale we need... but instead of five species dominating 80% of our forests, it would be nice to see 10.”

Rob MacKenna, General Manager at James Jones and Sons Ltd, added a processor’s perspective: “Not only do we need to look at that climatic environment of what we can use in the UK, but we also need to look at the processing infrastructure.

“At the moment we’re being told, as sawmillers, that all builders want is white wood.”

Another consideration for expanding species choice is, of course, tree health and reducing the risk of catastrophic losses due to pests and diseases. Lisa Brooks, Operating Officer (Forest Services), Forestry Commission, noted



as much during a session on the biggest concerns for tree protection.

“When a pest or disease lands on our shores that has the potential to wipe out one of the major species in Britain’s tree landscape, it can be devastating to the sector and to our environment,” she said. “People still talk about Dutch elm for that reason.”

In conversation with Max Blake, Head of Entomology at Forest Research, and Annabel Narayanan, Director of Action Oak, the trio pointed to the threats that haven’t reached Britain’s forests yet but may become headaches in the near future.

All agreed vigilance and early intervention are paramount, and Lisa highlighted the function of TreeAlert, the

national online platform for reporting tree pests and diseases.

“The reason we set up Tree Alert is because there is a gap in our surveillance system of plant health. We had to create a way for the eyes and ears on the ground who are interacting with their trees to report their concerns.”

Far from being a liability to environmental health, however, James Ramskir-Gardiner, FC National Agroforestry Advisor, extolled the benefits trees can bring to the rural landscape and farms in particular.

“I would argue that one of the biggest changes trees can make to the farm is resilience. If we’re talking about soil health, trees are great at holding soil together,” he pointed out. “Shelter belts



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are something we've done for yonks and are working really well now."

James conceded it can be a hard sell to the uninitiated and discussed the point with Rebecca Wilson, writer and fifth-generation farmer.

She argued: "We're not entirely against changing land use, but the farming system has to fit within any new purpose... we don't have masses of room on the farm to dedicate to swathes of timber. It's good, arable land and to give up the income from that production feels slightly criminal.

"The mindset change from seeing a tree in a field as something a bit annoying to wanting rows and rows of them on your land is a difficult thing."

Conversations came full circle back to communication issues in Friday's final panel on skills and new talent entering the sector. The need to step beyond existing audiences and increase visibility of careers in forestry was the headline conclusion.

"Awareness of the sector in the first place, beyond the sector itself, is a struggle to see. It almost exists in a parallel universe," said Melanie McEwan,



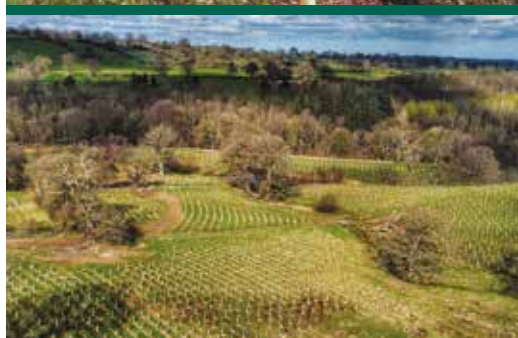
Operations Director of Forestry Training Service UK. "The other challenge I think is the perception of the sector and the understanding of what really are the opportunities within it."

Louise Simpson, ICF Executive Director, agreed that we need to be better about articulating what "forestry careers" actually are, since plenty of outdated perception exist there too.

"There's harvesting and marketing, there's the environmental sector, there's

our scientists, our academics, there's policy makers. It's a really interesting sector to work in. I think we've got to be much better about saying what we mean."

David Bole, FC Head of Sector Capacity and Green Economy, pointed to the current census of the forestry workforce that aims to create a snapshot of the existing scale and make-up of the forestry workforce to inform future policy.



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Skills and celebrations

All the competitions at APF 2026 were well-attended and attracted good crowds.

Congratulations to husband-and-wife climbers Dan and Emma Whelan, who took the men's and women's titles respectively in the Husqvarna World 25m Pole Climbing Championships.

George Gilder won the UK Forwarder Driving Competition with an 11-second lead over Sean Cuddy.

Chris Wood retained his crown in the A W Jenkinson European Chainsaw Carving, narrowly beating Pete Bowsher, who was champion of the first ever competition in 2006 and was also competing this year against his son, Sam Bowsher, who placed fourth.

The winch racing event went very well, with many thanks to Toby Allen, who put a lot of work into making it happen. Thanks are also due to Sion Jinkinson at Treadlight Forestry and to Portable Winch Company for the capstan winch demo area.

James Mousley and Henry Melton teamed up to win the Solidur, Teufelberger and Treeworker Speed Tree Climbing Championships.

Richard Court Forestry Engineering Ltd and Coombes Forestry Ltd were deserved joint winners of the Alan Cobb trophy for the best stand. Visitors coming in through the south entrance were treated to a great display of working forest machinery and the forwarder driving course was an exciting spectacle to watch.

The following events and competitions took place at APF 2026:

- The Husqvarna World 25m Pole Climbing Championships
- A W Jenkinson European Chainsaw Carving Competition
- The British Open Fencing Championships sponsored by McVeigh Parker
- UK Forwarder Driving Competition
- The APF Speed Tree Climbing Championships
- The UK Lumberjack Championships
- The World 'Log to leg' Pole Lathe Turning Championships

A full list of results can be found in the Useful Documents of the Events & Competitions section of www.apfexhibition.co.uk.



Clockwise from top: British Open Fencing Championships winners; Husqvarna World 25m Pole Climbing challenger; Jack Coombes & Richard Court receiving Alan Cobb Memorial Trophy. UK Forwarder Driver Driving runner-up Sean Cuddy; Chris Wood with 'Horsea'.



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Global Machinery Solutions launch new woodchipper

Global Machinery Solutions launched the new-generation 12XCT-diesel woodchipper at APF 2026 - Bandit's first tracked diesel woodchipper that can be towed on a trailer.

Visitors to their stand were among the first to see the new 12XCT-diesel, which has been developed in response to demand for a tracked diesel machine that combines the convenience of road-towing.

Edward Baker, Managing Director of Global Machinery Solutions, said: "Our customers have been asking us for a towable tracked diesel chipper, and we've worked closely with Bandit to make that happen."

"The 12XCT-diesel brings together the access and manoeuvrability of a tracked diesel chipper with the practicality of being able to tow the complete machine and trailer at under 3,500kg. It's what our customers have been asking us to develop, and we're delighted to be launching it at APF."

New-generation Bandit range

The 12XCT-diesel was launched alongside the new Bandit 12XC petrol trailed woodchipper, which provides



an entry-level solution for customers operating in the 12-inch market.

Both machines form part of a wider new generation of Bandit woodchippers, that include new features and multiple wheeled, tracked

and crane-feed configurations options.

These include a three-piece safety bar, a wider hopper for easier feeding, 270-degree chip discharge from the top of the machine, and a chip breaker on 15-inch machines.



Origin Green-tech unveils new tree planting guide

Origin Green-tech launched its new Rural Tree Planting brochure at APF, bringing together a range of planting stock, tree protection and sundry products for tree planting and woodland creation projects.

The catalogue provides a practical guide to the products and expertise available from Origin Green-tech; from trees, hedging and shrubs to tree protection, staking, mulching, fertilisers and ground protection.

A key part of their offer is the British Hardwood Tree Nursery (BHT) range of high-quality, British-grown trees, hedging and shrubs for forestry, farming, estates and landscaping projects. With more than three decades of experience, BHT has built a strong reputation for quality, UK provenance and plant health.

With the new planting season approaching, Origin Green-tech has launched its 2026-27 pre-order drive,

encouraging customers to secure their plants and protection requirements early for autumn and winter planting.

This includes a comprehensive range of bare root and cell-grown broadleaf trees, conifers, hedging and shrubs, alongside tree protection, stakes, mulch matting and other planting essentials.

Origin Green-tech is also committed to highlighting the importance of selecting tree protection according to the risks presented by each site. The height of protection required is determined by the animals that need to be excluded, rather than simply the height of the plant.

Together, the businesses provide customers with access to a broad range of products and specialist expertise, from high-quality planting stock through to tree protection, ground reinforcement, wildflower establishment, soils and growing media and wider environmental solutions.

Following the recent transition from Green-tech to Origin Green-tech, APF provided an opportunity for customers and industry contacts to meet the team under its new identity and discover more about the wider business and its specialist brands.

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NEW METHODS, NEW MINDS

Students from UHI Inverness share lessons learned from a visit to the BE-ST campus in Hamilton as part of their Innovation Week engagement with the industry.

We were invited to visit the Better Environment – Smarter Transformation (BE-ST) campus in May as part of our innovation week. This included attending and presenting at the ICF National Conference 2026: Innovation for a Resilient Tomorrow, which the BE-ST visit naturally complimented.

BE-ST strives to accelerate the transition to zero carbon by exploring new ways the built environment sector can use sustainable materials like timber. By using more timber in construction, the carbon sequestered during growth can effectively be ‘locked in’, while providing for an essential human need.

The visit was hosted by Louise Rogers, Impact Manager for BE-ST, who was highly knowledgeable and passionate about timber engineering and

made the visit engaging and educational.

We began with a discussion of the recently announced ‘Trust UK C16’ campaign which aims to promote the use of UK grown C16 timber as opposed to imported C24 or more carbon intensive alternatives. Imported C24 is widely used for joists in places where UK grown C16 could suite. While the reasons for this may be complex, from a timber grower’s perspective the benefits from a shift to UK grown are clear.

The campaign is a positive step to reduce emissions, reduce importation and promote diversification of other species than spruce for construction. However, BE-ST is driven by the current timber markets and therefore has a focus on how to continue to and expand upon the use of Sitka spruce in the built environment. This includes research and

production on mass timber products like cross-laminated timber (CLT) and glued-laminated timber (glulam/GLT).

All timber used in these processes are graded to C16. These are exciting technologies, widely used in Europe, that could effectively use UK grown timber in place of more carbon intensive alternatives like steel. BE-ST’s glulam and cross-laminated-timbers product make, in our opinion, attractive architectural features.

Although spruce was the focus, BE-ST are still experimenting with other species. We were shown glulam that had been constructed for the use of ceiling beams, made from Scottish-grown Douglas fir. The timber had visible live knots throughout and wasn’t the highest quality timber but was suitable for its purpose through the engineering process.

It was encouraging to see that steps were being made to identify and create uses for other productive species that can grow well in parts of Scotland. A common theme of the trip was the conflict between the need to diversify commercial forestry species, and the difficulty marketing those alternative species at point of harvest. As such it would be heartening to see greater emphasis placed on developing products from a greater range of species.

Building more timber homes and retrofitting existing properties was

>>



Steve Fowkes won a monkey puzzle tree from Barcham Trees, and it will be planted in the RFS arboretum at Hockeridge Woods.

another major talking point, and the building's exterior showed nice examples of using timber as alternatives to block and render. The National Retrofit Centre showcased how we can use existing assets to help achieve net zero emissions through retrofitting.

Although much of the trip, including the visit to BE-ST, focused on innovation and adoption of new technologies, Louise pointed out that in the face of a climate emergency we should consider pursuing the low hanging fruit first. Promoting greater UK-wide adoption of the basic timber framing approach commonly used in Scotland could be a relatively simple positive change.

Overall, the visit to BE-ST was the perfect end to our innovation week as we were shown what is possible now, what can be possible in the future and what is needed going forward. For many of us, the visit helped to strengthen our knowledge about the timber market, processing, timber engineering and what is involved in the built environment.

We would like to thank the Forest Industries Education and Provident Fund for supporting our visit, and both BE-ST and Louise for taking the time to give us a tour and share how they are continuing to drive innovation.



Above left: Simon Place won the AW Jenkinson goody bag – and keeps finding more things in the bag each time he looks! Above right: Geoff Adams won the OKO off-road tyre sealant.

A WIN FOR THE FUND

APF 2026 saw the return of the raffle for the Forest Industries Education and Provident Fund (FIEPF). We were extremely grateful to the exhibitors who offered prizes, and indeed those visitors who took part to raise additional funds for FIEPF.

Prizes included:

- Dewalt 54V 50cm Chainsaw
- Oak and Scottish Pine trees from Alba Trees
- 25l drum of OKO off-road tyre sealant
- Climate resilient 1.8m tree from Barcham Trees
- Hi-Viz Solidur chainsaw trousers
- Free chainsaw course at Merrist Wood

- Helly Hansen BOA boots from Agrovista
 - M13 'Imp' Neck Knife from BMC Bladeworks
 - LED work lights pack from Adamesh
 - Tall Trees & Small Woods books from RSFS
 - Goody bag from AW Jenkinson
- Winners were drawn in the Confor tent on Saturday afternoon by John Bruce, Confor's England National Manager. Several were able to collect their prizes while still at the show, others were sent on later. A fuller round up with more pictures will be shared in the next FTN but for now: Many thanks again to the generous APF exhibitors who donated prizes.

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PUTTING THE POTENTIAL FOR HOMEGROWN TIMBER ON DISPLAY

Collaborative research delving into how adoption of English-grown timber in construction may be increased inspired a tactile installation at the V&A London.



Photo credit: dRMM / Thomas Adank

A pioneering research initiative has demonstrated that England's underutilised deciduous broadleaf forests could play a transformative role in delivering low-carbon buildings, supporting biodiversity, and strengthening domestic supply chains.

The three-year Building from England's Woodlands (BFEW) project, funded by the Forestry Commission's Woods into Management Forestry Innovation Fund, brought together leading experts from forestry, wood science, timber manufacturing, architecture, and construction to explore how English-grown timber can be used more effectively in modern building systems.

Led by the New Model Institute for Technology and Engineering (NMITE), and including Edinburgh Napier University, Built Environment – Smarter Transformation (BE-ST), Ecosystems Technologies, and dRMM Architects, the project concluded that, when appropriately selected and specified, English hardwoods can play a significant role in structural applications.

The findings challenge long-standing perceptions about the suitability of homegrown timber for construction. A key innovation emerging from the research is the development of hybrid engineered timber products that optimally combine hardwood and softwood within the same structural element.

"One of the greatest successes of this project has been bringing together expertise from across the forestry, manufacturing and construction sectors to solve shared challenges," said

Professor Robert Hairstans, Director of the Centre of Advanced Timber Technology at NMITE and Head of the Centre for Offsite Construction & Innovative Structures at Edinburgh Napier University.

“The structural testing has given us greater confidence in the capabilities of English hardwoods, while the collaborative approach has helped turn research findings into real-world applications. This demonstrates how innovation, when supported by strong partnerships, can unlock new opportunities for sustainable construction and healthier, more resilient forests.”

Testing showed that hybrid cross-laminated timber (CLT) and glued-laminated timber (glulam) products met all required strength and durability criteria using existing manufacturing methods. The use of hardwood in key structural zones also enabled material savings of approximately 10–15%, creating opportunities for lighter, more efficient building systems.

Additionally, the project included real-world demonstration such as the “Building from Forests” display at the Victoria and Albert (V&A) Museum in London, which has been shortlisted for the 2026 Wood Awards.

“ Innovation in timber construction is not just a technical challenge but a cultural opportunity.”

The installation has brought the research to life through material samples, data visualisations, prototype components and architectural models. These sit alongside a lightweight timber barrel vault, demonstrating how the recipes can be used in structural form.

“For architects, this research opens up exciting new possibilities. Rather than designing around a limited palette of imported materials, we can begin to design with the characteristics and diversity of our local forests in mind,” explained Finbar Charleson, Research Lead, dRMM.

“The V&A exhibition helped translate complex research into a tangible experience, demonstrating that innovation in timber construction is not just a technical challenge but a cultural opportunity.”

continued on p40



Photo credit: dRMM / Thomas Adank





continued from p39

opportunity to rethink how we build, source materials and connect people with the landscapes around them.”

‘dRMM: Building from Forests’ forms the fifth iteration of the V&A’s Make Good: Rethinking Material Futures programme. Conceived as an exploration of the potential of natural and renewable materials in design and architecture, the programme, supported by designer and furniture maker John Makepeace OBE, provides a platform for people from different disciplines to showcase their knowledge and thinking.

BE-ST developed and constructed the main timber structure, while dRMM produced a series of models to help communicate the research and design approach. Highland Heritage Woodworks fabricated the display tables and knuckles. A specialist boat rigger designed a rope system using Dyneema that supports the timber vault so that it appears to float, without mechanical fixings or visible structural support. Evolving Forests produced the display’s video content, adding context around woodland management, material processes and the broader research landscape.

‘Building from Forests’ is on in the furniture gallery at the V&A Museum, South Kensington until 30 October 2026.

Beyond construction, the BFEW project highlights wider environmental, economic, and social benefits. Greater use of English timber could reduce embodied carbon, increase long-term



carbon storage in buildings, support more resilient and biodiverse forests, and strengthen rural economies through local manufacturing and value-added processing.

David Bole FICFor, Head of Green Economy & Skills, Forestry Commission, commented: “England’s woodlands are a national asset with the potential to play a vital role in addressing the climate emergency. The Building from England’s Woodlands project has demonstrated that homegrown timber, including a diverse range of hardwood species, can be used safely and effectively in modern construction.

“By unlocking the potential of our forests, we can reduce reliance on imported and carbon-intensive materials, support healthier and more resilient woodlands, and create new opportunities for sustainable growth across the forestry, manufacturing and construction sectors.”

The research also aligns with the UK Government’s Timber in Construction Roadmap and wider Net Zero ambitions, providing evidence that homegrown timber can contribute meaningfully to decarbonising the built environment as well as diversifying productive forestry.

“The Building from England’s Woodlands project demonstrates that the opportunity is not simply to use more timber, but to create higher-value manufacturing pathways that make better use of the resources available within our forests,” said Louise Rogers, BE-ST Impact Manager. “By developing and testing hybrid engineered timber products, we have shown how English hardwoods can be integrated into modern manufacturing processes to create efficient, high-performance construction systems.

“This work directly supports the ambitions of the Timber in Construction Roadmap by providing evidence that innovation, domestic manufacturing capability and supply chain collaboration can help accelerate the transition to a lower-carbon built environment.”

The findings mark an important step towards a future where forests, manufacturing, and construction work together to create sustainable buildings while supporting healthier landscapes and stronger local economies. With continued investment in research, commercialisation, and skills development, England’s woodlands could become a cornerstone of a lower-carbon, more resilient built environment for generations to come.

Laboratory tests reveal treated timber was not fit for purpose

A recount from the Wood Protection Association of an instance of incorrect wood treatment causing potential reputational damage.

After doing extensive research into using treated wood for a garden landscaping project, a DIY buyer placed an order for 15 lengths of regularised 47 x 150 x 3.6 C16 incised spruce joists UC4 green treated, which they found advertised on the website of a well-known builders' merchant. When the joists arrived, there was no sign of surface incising, so the buyer queried what had been supplied.

The merchants' staff were adamant that UC4 treated joists had definitely been supplied. The buyer remained sceptical and, when he crosscut one of the joists, there was little visible evidence of preservative penetration. At that point he sent samples of the crosscut joist to the Wood Protection Association (WPA) office and asked for our opinion on treatment quality.

“

If the buyer had not persisted, failure after a few years would have been inevitable.”

We explained that a visual inspection could not establish if the treatment complied with a UC4 specification and that laboratory testing was the only certain way to find out. The buyer then commissioned an analytical report from a university laboratory with wood science expertise.

That report found preservative penetration and copper concentrations consistent with those in the wood preservation standard BS8417 for wood joists used for a dry internal application.

The Laboratory Report was sent to the merchant, who eventually acknowledged they had made a mistake, apologised and agreed to resupply the buyer with UC4 treated pine joists with documented verification



NEW GUIDE TO BUYING AND SELLING PRESERVATIVE TREATED WOOD

Preservative pre-treatment makes wood highly durable. However, while one piece of treated wood may look very much like any other, it must never be assumed the level of treatment is suitable for every application. British Standards require that treatment strength and depth is tailored to the end use of wood.

The WPA has launched a new guide designed to help merchants buy and sell the right product for the job. You can get a copy by emailing contact@thewpa.org.uk.

and reimburse the cost of laboratory analysis.

If the buyer had not persisted in his belief that he had been sold treated

wood that wasn't fit for purpose and proceeded to install the joists as a soil retaining structure, then failure after a few years would have been inevitable. The blame would most likely be placed on the ineffectiveness of the preservative treatment and damage the reputation of wood for outdoor applications.

Had the merchant been better informed about selling wood that was correctly treated, identified for its end use, and compliant with British wood preservation standards, then the additional cost, reputational consequences, customer inconvenience and dissatisfaction could have been avoided.

This case is a classic example of why the WPA continues to place raising supply chain knowledge at the heart of our strategy to grow demand for correctly treated and used preservative treated wood.

C16 collaboration strengthens case for UK timber

The Trust UK C16 Timber campaign – a landmark collaboration between the UK's three largest sawmillers – continues to gather pace as industry support and engagement strengthens across the construction and design community.

Spearheaded by BSW Timber, Glennon Brothers and James Jones & Sons, and in partnership with Confor and TDUK, the campaign has worked closely with construction industry bodies such as RIBA and IStructE. The collaboration champions the role of UK grown C16 timber, highlighting how domestic supply can help reduce the UK's reliance on imported materials.

Recent months have seen a significant expansion in outreach activity, with industry advocates Peter Smith, Architect at Roderick James Architects; Louise Rogers, Impact Manager at BE-ST; and Mark Kirk, Technical Director at Paramount Structures, all now lending support.

The campaign delivered a well attended webinar in conjunction with IStructE, providing structural engineers



with clear, practical insight into the performance and reliability of UK C16 timber. This was followed by a successful CPD session at the Timber Design Conference, where architects and specifiers explored how UK timber can support low carbon construction and resilient supply chains.

The campaign also engaged directly with designers, contractors and clients

at Futurebuild, and will return again next year as interest in decarbonising the build environment gathers momentum.

To support the communication of key messages, the campaign has released a new video explaining how C16 timber supports the UK economy, environment and rural jobs. Available on Confor's YouTube channel, the video is already being shared across industry networks and will form part of upcoming educational activity.

Collaboration remains central to the campaign's progress. Working with RIBA, the campaign is preparing to host a major industry roundtable next month, bringing together leading voices from architecture, engineering and construction.

Looking ahead, the campaign will also support an upcoming IStructE industry briefing, entitled Strengthening the UK Economy: Why C16 Timber Matters, which will bring together engineers, policymakers and industry leaders to explore how greater use of UK timber can support national economic resilience and environmental goals.

Industry leaders visit James Jones & Sons' new Durham sawmill

James Jones & Sons welcomed senior representatives from the Forestry Commission and Bellway Homes to its new Durham sawmill in September to showcase the potential for greater use of UK timber in housebuilding.

Richard Stanford, Chief Executive of the Forestry Commission, and Tony Atkin, Group Production Managing Director at Bellway Homes, visited the site as commissioning of the new sawmill continues.

The visit provided an opportunity to see first-hand the scale of James Jones & Sons' investment in primary wood processing, as well as to discuss the important role UK-grown and processed softwood can play in supporting the future needs of the construction sector.

Bellway has itself recently made a significant investment in timber frame



housebuilding capacity through its new state-of-the-art Bellway Home Space manufacturing facility near Mansfield. The housebuilder is targeting substantial growth in timber frame construction over the next three to five years.

Discussions at Durham focused on the potential to increase the use of productive softwood grown and processed in the UK and the importance of ensuring the domestic timber industry

can provide the quality, consistency and performance required by major housebuilders.

The visit was one of the first hosted at the new Durham sawmill and provided a valuable opportunity to discuss how investment, collaboration and a strong domestic timber supply chain can support the continued growth of timber construction in the UK.

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SLUGGISH DEMAND, RISING COSTS, HIGH STOCKS

Oliver Combe, Timber Auctions, looks at market trends in the UK and beyond, and explains why falling confidence has led to restructuring.

The last 18 months have seen very difficult trading conditions for the UK timber supply chain. Low levels of end user demand and business confidence, together with increasingly competitive import prices whilst global volatility pushes more imported timber into the UK, further suppress demand for homegrown timber.

This has led to a steady decline in demand from the peaks of 2019 through to 2021 to the point where the summer of 2026 has been characterized by high roadside stocks, full yards and rapidly escalating costs.

Sluggish demand

It is important to understand that these pressure factors impact right through the supply chain from those cutting

the wood in the forest through to those selling the timber in the builders-merchants yard. For the private sector falling demand and increasing costs are a lethal combination.

The falling demand is fuelled by a number of factors:

- Lower consumer confidence
- Lower construction activity
- Lower manufacturing activity
- Lower investment levels

Across Europe both new build construction activity and RMI (renewal, maintenance and improvement) are down. In Holland a shortfall of 40% on planned versus actual new house builds is reported whilst in the UK there is a reported drop of 10% in RMI Activity and an 8% drop in new build starts.

During August there has been some price stability and patches of demand

on the sport market but as we approach the seasonal autumn slowdown, the producers will have to choose whether to cut prices to shift volume or cut production to maintain prices.

The pine timber market appears to remain over-supplied relative to demand in both Finland and Sweden, whereas spruce prices are stable due to ongoing supply challenges, even in a time of reduced demand.

High costs

Increasing costs are an interesting topic because we have direct inflation costs increases that are easy to see such as fuel and oil, spare parts, labour and interest rates.

Freight costs are also steadily rising, driven by the rapidly increasing prices of fuel, increased shipping costs due to the conflict in the Red Sea, regional issues such as driver shortages in Europe, rail track maintenance in Germany, and issues with container availability.

Increased freight costs put further pressure on the selling prices whilst logistic bottlenecks limit the ability to move sold material and further increase stocks.

Additionally, there is considerable "grey inflation" indirectly impacting business costs, such as knock on effects from the Employment Rights Act 2025, increased insurance costs, environmental compliance requirements, and delays caused by regulation and consultation processing.

Static or falling end product prices, high stocks and increasing costs (both direct and indirect) have led to huge pressure throughout the supply chain, with harvesting and haulage contractors becoming very exposed to the real pain.

High stocks and confidence falling

The overall result has been lower levels of demand for wood products, which has led to a buildup in stock, which has filtered right back to the forest and

serious pressure on profit margins.

Sawn stock levels at all processors appear to be higher than desired, which is showing through in spot market “offers” and increased competition from suppliers to win sport market requirements.

In the UK, the builders’ merchants appear to have followed a policy of destocking and have pushed the responsibility for holding stock back to their suppliers.

Credit concerns following the failure of the National Timber Group in late 2025 have made primary producers very careful with managing their customers, resulting in further buildup of stock.

High stock levels going into the winter seasonal downturn in demand is not a healthy situation as working capital is tied up in stock that will be, at best, slow to move. The market is currently short of confidence.

For those in the forest it has been a really tough year; stock of all products has been slow to move, costs have increased, and weather conditions have allowed consistently high production.

The conventional approach of increasing production and working harder to lower costs has possibly contributed to the stock build.

We have to hope that as we go into winter, we will see colder weather and demand for biomass will improve, sawmill production restrictions will lead to reduced supply of sawmill co-products, and the board mills will increase demand for small roundwood.

In the last few market cycles, it has been the lowest value products that have led the stabilization and eventually market recovery.

There are some positive signs in the market. Environmental factors push demand towards low carbon materials like wood and net zero measures are punishing concrete and steel producers.

Even with underperformance in the construction sector, timber has the opportunity to increase its market share.

Restructuring

The UK is not alone experiencing very challenging conditions in the timber markets over the last 18 months.

Europe, the Baltics, Scandinavia and North America are all going through unprecedented challenges due to increased global volatility.

It is reported that mills are operating at a loss, though conditions have slightly improved since the first six months of the year.

Felling approvals appear to be falling in Scandinavia and the Baltics whilst in central Europe the declining availability of quality spruce sawlogs following a series of major storms and wildfires, coupled with insect and beetle damage, appears to be compounding. This is not sustainable and if log prices will not fall due to supply issues, then the only option will be to reduce production levels.

Central European wood processors are increasingly looking to purchase businesses in areas with plentiful raw

material supply so they can transfer production from areas of high cost and low availability to those with lower costs and higher availability.

The UK is also going through a period of restructuring.

BSW closed the Carlisle sawmill and transferred production to Dalbeattie and Fort William, creating disruption to the previously very competitive Borders saw log market.

New capacity is coming online at James Jones Durham mill and A&J Scott’s Alnwick sawmill, which will increase competition for sawlog material in North England and up into Central Scotland.

There should be a seasonal upturn in demand for biomass and energy which should be further assisted by the steadily increasing prices of gas, electricity and heating oil in the UK.

The firewood market has been characterized by high production levels due to dry weather and accelerated felling of diseased ash, steadily building stocks, and a period of oversupply in the third quarter of 2026.

With heating oil at around £1.10 per litre in October 2026 (from 60p per litre in October 2025), wood fuel looks like a very cost-effective option and demand must increase this winter.

The key effort must be to increase communication up and down the supply chain and work to manage production wherever possible to make what is likely to be a difficult winter manageable for all sectors of the supply chain.





Extraction in racks.

CONNECTING BIOMASS WITH PEATLAND RESTORATION

A recent Land Energy project provides an example of how whole-tree harvesting for renewable energy can support a wider environmental objective.

Forestry and environmental restoration do not have to be competing priorities. Recovering timber for productive use can create value from an existing resource while helping prepare the landscape for its next purpose.

A recent project secured by Land Energy through a Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) timber sale demonstrates this connection. Covering approximately

113 hectares, the project involves whole-tree harvesting on a site with particularly soft ground conditions. The longer-term plan is for FLS to return the area to peatland, making tree clearance an important step towards its future restoration.

Land Energy is responsible for harvesting the trees and recovering the biomass, while FLS will take the site forward for peatland restoration.

Specialist machinery for challenging ground

The soft peat presents significant challenges for harvesting and extraction. Machinery selection and working methods are therefore critical to recovering the material efficiently while minimising ground disturbance.

For felling, Land Energy is using a specialised Kobelco SK130 excavator fitted with extra-wide double tracks, giving the machine an overall width of approximately 3.8 metres. The wider tracks distribute the machine's weight over a larger surface area, helping reduce ground pressure when operating on soft peat.

“

How the harvesting operation is carried out is just as important as the material recovered.”

Fitted with tree shears, the excavator can fell trees and lay them out in racks within its working reach of approximately 10 metres, allowing material to be

positioned for subsequent extraction.

A Komatsu forwarder fitted with wide tyres and flotation tracks is being used to extract the whole-tree material. These features help distribute the machine's load across the soft ground, while available brash matting supports machine movements and helps reduce unnecessary travel across the site.

This combination of machinery has been selected specifically for the conditions. With peatland restoration

“Forestry and environmental restoration do not have to be competing priorities.”

planned and how the harvesting operation is carried out is just as important as the material recovered. The objective is to work safely and efficiently while minimising disturbance as far as practically possible.

Finding value in the whole tree

This is a whole-tree harvesting operation, rather than simply the recovery of brash or residues left after conventional timber harvesting. The aim is to recover the tree material and direct it towards a productive use in the biomass supply chain.

Not all timber is suitable for higher-value conventional markets. Lower-grade timber and smaller trees can be particularly difficult to market when challenging terrain increases harvesting and extraction costs.

Having an established outlet for whole-tree biomass can make a significant difference. Without a market for the recovered material, clearing difficult sites like this could become considerably more expensive, with fewer opportunities to offset operational costs.

A viable biomass market helps strengthen the commercial case for harvesting by providing a destination for material that might otherwise have limited value. While this does not remove the challenges of working on soft ground, it can make the overall operation more commercially viable and support better use of the available resource.

Connecting commercial and environmental objectives

The project demonstrates how timber recovery, renewable energy and peatland restoration can form part of a wider land-management strategy.

Land Energy's role is to harvest the trees and recover the biomass for productive use. FLS will then progress the site towards its longer-term restoration objective.

Specialist machinery, carefully planned extraction methods and a market for lower-grade timber all contribute to making this approach possible.

For Land Energy, this reflects its commitment to 'Real Environmental Gain' - looking beyond the immediate operation to understand how responsible resource recovery can support wider environmental objectives.

By connecting whole-tree harvesting with biomass demand and planned peatland restoration, the project shows how commercial resource recovery and environmental priorities can work alongside each other - creating value from timber today while helping prepare the landscape for tomorrow.

INCREASING DEVELOPMENT OF A TWO-TIER PLANTATION MARKET

Simon Hart FICFor, Head of Forestry, and **Cameron Bland**, Associate Director, share the perspective on Scotland's forest market from John Clegg & Co.

We are increasingly seeing the development of a two-tier plantation market in Scotland. With current macro-economic pressures and weak timber prices the two-tiered market is only likely to become more pronounced.

While high-quality spruce in the south continues to attract buyers, other assets are struggling to find traction.

Rising interest rates, worries on the level of global debt and increasing fuel prices all make investors nervous. Forests should be a hedge against inflation, and long-term trends of rising timber demand may lead to real increases in value. However, timber prices have now been flat for a few years and margins are getting

squeezed. This is exacerbated in the north where the felling of even decent stands can struggle to meet replanting costs.

In contrast, the south of Scotland remains stable, with active investment across various price points. For instance, Isles Forest near Dalbeattie (guided £7mn or £21K/ha for 20 yr old high YC spruce), close to BSW, has recently gone under offer. Nether Stewarton near Peebles (£1.75mn, 16yr old spruce at £19K/ha) has just gone to closing date.

New to the market is the impressive Westwater near Langholm, a significant first-rotation forest guided at £10m (£22k/ha for 18-year-old high YC spruce); its sale will be a key indicator



of current market appetite.

Moving away from the south and buyers have a lot more choice at present, though turnover is slow. A notable exception was Kirnan near Lochgilphead, a 60ha second-rotation 13-year-old spruce woodland guided at £13k/ha, which recently sold above its guide price.

Travel further north and guide prices are much reduced. Coille a Bowen is now under offer, guided at less than £10K/ha for 40-year-old spruce/lodgepole mix. The wind farm option may have been more attractive than the trees. Fasach in the heart of the Flow country has gone to closing with a guide of below £5K/ha for 40-year-old trees. This deep peat site is not to be replanted post felling.

The nearby Forsinain Forest is probably a better site and remains available with a guide of £8k/ha for



Forsinain Forest: 179ha spruce at £1.25 million, available through John Clegg & Co.



Easter Eurach: 108ha native woodland, guided at £350,000 and now under offer.

40-year-old trees. It contains over 60,000m³ timber and is guided at £1.25mn.

Rosal Wood, near the north coast, mainly contains 60-year-old pine and is under offer at below the £3K/ha guide price. These all add up to pretty meagre returns over many years.

With the passage of time, we are starting to see more native woods come to the market, both with and without carbon. The 1,480ha Far Ralia in the Cairngorms remains for sale despite a large price reduction. Now guided at £8K/stocked ha it includes a lot of carbon credits. Easter Eurach, 100ha near Lochgilphead, recently went under offer at £6K/planted ha or £3K/ha throughout, but with no carbon.

The planting land market has become somewhat

fossilised in Scotland, with buyers concerned about gaining approval and possible judicial reviews even once approved. Some recent sales have taken place at agricultural values as buyers aim to limit possible losses if approval is

not gained and land needs to be resold.

Some ground on the open market, with planting approval, has been acquired by farmers for sheep grazing, making the Scottish Government's commitments to planting up to 18,000ha per year a distant possibility. Significant planting programmes will only resume when the economics of forestry are palpably better than the current land use; it seems we are not in that situation at present.

To conclude; Caution prevails. While buyers remain active, their preference is heavily skewed toward spruce in the south of the country. In this climate, precise and realistic pricing is critical for a successful transaction.



Simon Hart and Cameron Bland.

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Getting timber moving: Are your access arrangements ready for the road ahead?



Simon Boendermaker, Associate at Brodies LLP, covers some of the legal questions that may arise around access rights for timber transport.

This summer, it was announced that a further £900,000 of government funding has been committed to new projects to protect “fragile rural roads” in Scotland. Once again, it highlighted the importance of effective transport schemes to the timber industry, which is worth an estimated £1.1 billion annually to the Scottish economy.

By investing in new projects to upgrade and strengthen existing routes, the Scottish Government aims to address the issues faced by the industry – as well as the challenges that can be posed to other users of routes designated for timber haulage.

Approximately six million tonnes of timber are harvested in Scotland each year and transport by road forms an essential part of the supply chain process, with over 96% of movement by volume being carried out by HGVs. Given this, it is unsurprising that the condition and availability of public roads are key considerations for the timber sector.

Alongside public investment, the Timber Transport Forum (TTF) brings together the timber industry, local authorities and community organisations to promote voluntary measures to improve timber transport. In addition to promoting best practice, the TTF also maintains an Agreed Routes Map, which has been developed by timber transport groups and local authorities in an effort to identify the most suitable routes for timber haulage based on their capacity to sustain timber transport.

While the condition and capacity of

the public road network is a crucial aspect of the timber haulage process, it is increasingly common that sites will not have direct access from the public road network, meaning that part of the access has to be taken over private roads. In practice, obtaining a route from the forest gate to the nearest public road can raise a range of legal and practical issues, some of which are often overlooked.

One of the most common obstacles relates to the adequacy of access rights. Many titles contain rights that were granted decades ago, often before the onset of modern timber harvesting operations. A right of access that is sufficient for forestry workers, agricultural vehicles or occasional domestic use may not necessarily extend to intensive timber haulage, for example.



Clear communication with neighbours and a thorough understanding of the legal position is crucial.”

Depending on the age of the deeds that created these rights, timber haulage could be seen as an intensification of the burden on the property where the access road is located and, therefore, not within the scope of the title rights.

The scope of a servitude right is always highly dependent on the wording of the title and the circumstances surrounding its creation. Difficulties can arise where an access route requires widening, strengthening, drainage improvements or other upgrades to accommodate modern operations.

Even where there is an established right to use a road, this does not automatically mean there is a corresponding right to upgrade, alter or improve it. Forestry operators should therefore carefully review title documentation to ensure that the necessary rights exist and identify

any potential constraints.

In addition to any potential issues around the right to upgrade and improve the road, it is also important to understand what the maintenance position is in terms of the title. Where private roads go through land that is predominantly used for agriculture, for example, neighbouring landowners may only need to contribute towards maintenance to a standard sufficient for agricultural use, rather than a forestry standard.

Clear communication with neighbours and a thorough understanding of the legal position is crucial. Reviewing maintenance obligations, establishing practical arrangements for repairs and engaging with other users at an early stage can help minimise disputes and ensure that access remains available when it is needed most.

As forestry operations continue to expand and evolve, careful consideration of private access rights is becoming just as important as understanding the public road network that ultimately connects Scotland's forests to market.

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Timber, remediation and responsibility:

Lessons from recent Building Safety Act cases



Ben Wilson, Trainee Solicitor, and **Ashley Pigott**, Partner, Michelmores LLP, consider recent tribunal decisions involving timber components in residential buildings and what they may mean for industry participants.

The Building Safety Act 2022 (BSA) has introduced new mechanisms for the remediation of fire safety defects and the allocation of responsibility for remedial works. Against that backdrop, several recent First-tier Tribunal (FTT) and Upper Tribunal (UT) decisions have involved timber elements including balcony decking, timber cladding, balcony flooring, and timber-framed façades.

As recognised by the UK Government's *Timber in Construction Roadmap 2025*, timber continues to play an important role in residential construction. However, recent tribunal decisions demonstrate that, once timber components become associated with fire safety concerns, the principal disputes are increasingly centred on remediation, responsibility and cost allocation rather than on the identification of defects themselves.

Timber as a trigger for remediation

Recent Building Safety Act decisions suggest that timber components are increasingly becoming the focus of remediation proceedings. In *Zampetti v Fairhold Athena Ltd* [2025], timber decking on three types of balcony was identified as a 'relevant defect'. Leaseholders sought a Remediation Order against the landlord, whilst the landlord pursued a Remediation Contribution Order against the developer.

Once timber elements are identified as part of a wider building safety

issue, the key issues become who will undertake remedial works and who will bear the associated costs.

Allocating responsibility for remediation

In *Holy v Brentford Lock Island Residents' Association* [2026], the Tribunal was asked to determine whether a management company's repairing covenant required it to repair and/or replace timber balcony flooring with non-combustible materials.

The Upper Tribunal found that the management company was responsible because the balcony flooring, as an external feature, did not fall within the definition of 'the demised premises'. However, the Tribunal declined to determine on the information available whether the comprehensive replacement of all balcony flooring, including those parts which were not in disrepair, would still fall within the scope of the management company's covenant.

The decision highlights the importance of allocating responsibility for repair and replacement obligations at an early stage, and ensuring those obligations are properly understood during the acquisition of residential assets.

Who will bear the cost of remedial works?

The decision of the Upper Tribunal in *Almacantar* [2025] demonstrates that building owners cannot assume they will be able to recover the cost of remedial works for timber elements.

The case concerned the landlord's application to recover costs associated with replacing a 1960s façade incorporating a timber frame. The Upper Tribunal upheld the First-tier Tribunal's conclusion that certain leaseholders were protected from contributing towards those costs by paragraph 8 of Schedule 8 to the Building Safety Act.

Most significantly, the case confirmed that the cladding protections contained within paragraph 8 are not confined to the Act's "relevant defect" regime. Consequently, building owners and landlords may face limits on recovering remediation costs even where the relevant building was constructed long before the period usually subject to

Building Safety Act claims.

Potential height threshold for the use of timber elements

In March 2026, the Government launched a consultation on proposed changes to Approved Document B, including a proposal that buildings above 11 metres incorporating combustible structural elements could no longer rely solely upon the guidance within Approved Document B to demonstrate compliance.

The consultation reflects an attempt to balance the environmental and construction benefits offered by timber with the need to maintain appropriate fire safety standards, particularly in higher-risk buildings.

The consultation nevertheless recognised timber's continued role in low-rise construction and stated that it could continue to be used safely where there was "sufficient consideration of fire safety, structural safety and durability". The outcome of the consultation is expected to be published in March 2027.

Practical implications for the timber industry

For developers, designers, contractors and investors, the decisions highlight the importance of:

- maintaining clear records of design decisions and fire safety assessments;
- ensuring responsibility for repair, replacement and remediation obligations is clearly allocated through contractual and management arrangements, and carefully considered as part of due diligence exercises when acquiring or investing in residential property assets;
- recognising the potentially significant cost consequences that may arise if remediation works become necessary;
- monitoring future developments in both Building Safety Act case law and the wider regulatory landscape.

In the post-Grenfell regulatory landscape, understanding and managing these risks has become increasingly important for all stakeholders in residential developments.

michelmores

OK... why are there so many deer?

WildTrackPro CEO

Oli Smith examines the role of recreational stalking and how its popularity has impacted deer control.

Deer stalking is routinely described as one of the fastest-growing field sports in the UK. There are certainly more stalkers, more syndicates, more guided outings, and more commercial stalking arrangements than there were a generation ago.

That raises an obvious question: If there are more people than ever pursuing deer, where have all these deer come from?

This was not the situation 30 years ago. Deer were largely cryptic, woodland-bound animals. Their current visibility - in open farmland, peri-urban edges, road networks and gardens - represents a marked shift, not just in numbers, but in behaviour and distribution.

To understand why, we need to step away from comforting assumptions and look at what has actually changed.

What can we actually prove?

Before going any further, it's important to be clear about what is known, what is estimated, and what is no longer seriously disputed.

As set out in another article in this series, the UK does not have a national deer census. The frequently quoted figure of "around two million deer" is an estimate, not a count, and its precision has been challenged on the basis that it relies on partial datasets and extrapolation, rather than systematic enumeration.

That same article sets out how government departments, Forestry Commission communications, and wider sector commentary have consistently framed a long-term increase from approximately 450,000 deer in the mid-1970s to current estimates in the region of two million, often accompanied by the claim that this represents the highest deer abundance for around a millennium.

Whether one accepts the upper estimate, a lower bound, something in between, or a much higher number (as the WildTrackPro data would suggest) is largely immaterial to the management question.

The absolute number is uncertain; the direction of travel is not.

Woodland condition, regeneration failure, browsing pressure, collision data and escalating management guidance all have the same result. Whatever the true headline number, deer populations have expanded to a point where their effects are now widely visible and institutionally acknowledged.

That is the baseline from which the rest of this discussion proceeds.

Recreational stalking is not "traditional"

One persistent myth in UK deer discourse is that recreational stalking is a long-established, largely unchanged tradition.

Modern recreational stalking (with the exception of Highland stalking) as a widespread, access-based activity is relatively recent. Its rapid expansion dates largely from the mid-to-late 1990s,

following changes in firearms legislation and wider shooting culture. As handgun ownership collapsed, rifle ownership expanded, and deer stalking became the primary legal and socially acceptable outlet for many displaced shooters.

From that point onward, the recreational stalking population grew steadily. Syndicates multiplied. Leasing became competitive. Access to deer, once a management tool, became a commodity.

This change mattered far more than is usually acknowledged.

What changed was not just who stalked — but how pressure was applied

Historically, many estates and forestry operations employed professional stalkers whose job was simple: apply continuous, outcome-led predation pressure across the woodland resource.

That model declined rapidly.

In many cases, professional stalkers were made redundant as recreational stalking turned what had been a management cost into an income stream. Stalking moved from the balance sheet's expenditure column to its revenue column.

continued on p55



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Elsewhere, professional stalkers were displaced as recreational syndicates and guided operations secured long leases through financial leverage rather than management need.

Recreational stalking, even at scale, rarely replicates that structure. It is often intermittent, convenience-timed, edge-focused and constrained by access patterns. Woodland interiors - where deer actually live, breed and shelter - frequently experience far less consistent pressure than headline participation figures suggest.

Misaligned incentives: when availability becomes an asset

As stalking became commercialised, incentives shifted.

Guided stalking operations need reliable encounter rates. Beginners need visible deer. Trophy-led narratives - whether explicit or implied - depend on age structure and animal availability. Leasing arrangements reward access, not outcomes.

None of this requires bad faith. It is simply how systems behave when incentives are not aligned with ecological objectives.

The result is that population control becomes incidental rather than central. Effort is expended, but not necessarily where or how it matters most. At landscape scale, that distinction is decisive.

Other explanations... and why they fall short

Climate change, woodland expansion,



predator absence and land-use change are all frequently cited as explanations for rising deer numbers.

In short:

- These act as enabling or amplifying factors.
- None explain the scale or speed of population growth on its own.
- All still require effective predation pressure to prevent overabundance.

When exponential growth is poorly

understood, people reach for novel explanations. The fundamentals are far less exciting and far more robust.

Pressure fell below what was required, and the system responded accordingly.

So where does that leave us?

Taken together, a consistent picture emerges. We have:

- uncertain absolute numbers;
- clear and worsening impacts;
- a larger stalking community;
- but fragmented, inconsistent and often misaligned pressure.

That combination is not paradoxical. It is exactly what you would expect when participation is mistaken for management.

The uncomfortable conclusion is this: The recreational stalking experiment has failed.

Recreational stalkers absolutely have a role. In many contexts, they are essential. But without continuous, outcome-driven predation pressure applied where deer actually live, numbers will continue to accumulate quietly until impacts become unavoidable.

The deer did not appear from nowhere. We simply stopped managing them properly and convinced ourselves that we were.



A PRACTICAL RARITY

Eamonn Wall decides if we UK drivers should talk about the Subaru Crosstrek more.

Subaru has been building cars in Japan since 1954 and currently has a range of four cars in the UK: the Forester, Outback, Crosstrek and electric Solterra. The newest Outback is not coming to the UK, but an electric Outback is due to arrive shortly. For now, the Crosstrek is the cheapest way into the brand, and it replaced the similar previous model called the XV.

Compared to the XV, the new Crosstrek features a 10% stiffer chassis, upgraded technology and enhanced safety features, still combined with Subaru's All-wheel drive system and a mild hybrid 2-litre petrol engine. It is available in two trim levels, Limited and Touring, priced at £34,290 and £36,290 respectively.

The Crosstrek is a tough hatchback with a good 220mm ground clearance. The boot is not very large at 315 litres but expands to 922 litres with the rear 60/40 seats folded nicely flat. The useful permanent 4WD system has been revised with a faster response time, more agile handling, and better control both on and off road. Driver selectable X-MODE with Hill Descent Control maximises wheel control on slippery surfaces and steep inclines.

The more expensive Touring model gets an even fancier system. Both models feature Start Assist, which briefly

holds the vehicle while the driver pulls away from stop on a steep hill. This feature is found on most modern cars these days and is very useful to aid smooth take offs on hills.

Subaru says that the exterior is designed around utility and sportiness. The Crosstrek refreshed exterior features black plastic wheel arch cladding and revised front grille and compact headlights. Limited models get 17-inch wheels and Touring 18-inch. More supportive front seat design increases comfort and minimises fatigue. I certainly found them very comfortable and the perforated leather was welcome in the summer heatwave.

The interior dash design is very similar to the Outback's, featuring a large screen surrounded by buttons. The reversing camera comes up on the screen, another handy piece of technology that I find makes parking and trailer work so much easier. There are separate buttons near the gear lever for the heated seats and plenty of buttons on the steering wheel. The speedometer and rev counter are nicely designed with white dials and lettering.

Crosstrek is powered by the brand's unique 2-litre 4-cylinder boxer engine, meaning the cylinders lie flat horizontally opposed, just like on a Porsche. It now comes as a mildly hybrid e-Boxer unit featuring a small electric battery. The



engine produces 136bhp and 182 NM torque, enough to reach 60 mph in 10.6 seconds and I certainly found it fast enough.

The gearbox is automatic with a continuous variable transmission which Subaru call Lineartronic CVT. The Touring model also features a manual mode with steering wheel paddle shifters that allow the driver to control the transmission via eight pre-set ratios. For most of the time it drives like a normal automatic car.

The steering is good and features the brand's dual-pinion electronic power steering rack. The chassis/body has been enhanced with 10% higher torsional rigidity using a full inner frame with stronger welding techniques and additional structural adhesive. These updates deliver a quieter cabin and smoother ride. The steering has a good feel, and the handling is also very good. That constant 4WD helps to ensure a feeling of solidness. The all-round spring suspension is tough and works well.

Standard is the new Eyesight Driver Assist Technology, which uses a new





stereo camera to identify bicycles and pedestrians at intersections sooner and, when necessary, alerts and applies braking to avoid collisions. Other features include Reverse Automatic braking and Blind-Spot Detection with Lane Change Assist and Rear Cross-Traffic Alert.

Crosstrek comes with a 3-year/60,000-mile warranty. Additionally, the traction battery is

covered by an 8-year/100,000-mile warranty. Service intervals are 12,000 miles or one year.

In addition to all the features on the Limited model, such as auto rain sensing wipers, roof rails and a leather wrapped three-spoke steering wheel, the Touring model gains 18-inch wheels, high beam assist, power sunroof, synthetic leather seat trim, sat nav, auto dimming rear view mirror, illuminated vanity mirrors, paddle

shifters, and X-Mode with HDC.

The updated e-Boxer engine certainly helps with the fuel consumption and in my hands averaged 40.3 mpg which is good for a 4WD vehicle. I liked the Crosstrek. Its reasonable ground clearance and tough suspension make it a good country worker and, if you don't need an estate car, then this makes for an ideal work horse.

I did find the whine out of the air con fan a bit annoying though, and the engine does not have the old boxer growl from previous Subarus of my youth. My first two company cars were Subaru Leone estates, a 1.6 DL and then a 1.8 GL. Both tough and very practical.

The Crosstrek is 4,495mm long, 1,800mm wide and 1,600mm high. It weighs 1,597kg and can tow a 1,270kg braked trailer. It is not a common sight on our roads, but you do see one occasionally. Perhaps a well-kept secret.

Eamonn Wall FICFor is a tree and woodland consultant and Director of Forestry Investment Syndicates at Eamonn Wall & Co.



Partnership and collaboration at Aviemore Conference

Fiona Angier reports on the key messages from the recent Timber Transport Forum and ROADEX conference in Scotland.

Timber Transport Forum (TTF) and ROADEX Network brought together industry, public sector and supply chain partners to share experiences, promote innovation and build a more resilient timber transport network at their joint conference held in Aviemore on 8 October.

Simon Oldham, TTF Chair, welcomed attendees from across northern Europe with common interests in shared

infrastructure and the challenges of running timber on rural road networks. The themes of partnership and collaboration ran through the presentations.

Jim Fairlie, Scottish Minister for Agriculture, Marine and the Islands, opened the conference with a recorded message emphasising the pioneering work the sector has achieved over the last two decades. He also highlighted the importance of investing in a resilient rural infrastructure, mentioning TimberLINK, the Scottish Timber Transport Fund (STTF) and the NetZero Timhaul Project pilot.

Dr William Clark gave an overview of 20 years of the STTF and its focus on modal shift and decarbonising timber transport, alongside the critical liaison

role of the regional transport officers. The STTF has supported 435 projects with £69m of awards providing a £128m of spend on Scottish roads.

Per Otto Aursand, Chair of the ROADEX Network, and James England, South of Scotland Timber Transport Group Project Officer, gave overviews and history of their respective groups. Core messages of drainage, fragility, proactive maintenance, resilient lifelines and the importance of cooperation ran through both.

Gravel roads were the focus of the ROADEX presentations and covered test methods and standards (Annele Matintupa); the effects of heavy vehicle tyres and axles (Petri Varin); and maintenance and lifecycle costs of roads through winter and drainage

Simon Oldham (centre), with the four Regional Timber Transport Group Project Officers: (L-R) Simon Stuart, Claire Glaister, James England and Frank MacCulloch.

impacts (Timo Saarenketo).

Road Doctor Survey Vans with ground penetrating radar, laser scanners, lidar and 3D accelerometer were regularly used for road safety and monitoring. Axle and tyre configurations, axle weights, and tyre pressures have varying impacts on the surface and subgrade of roads. Shifting to proactive than reactive road maintenance, focusing on shorter road sections and again drainage all help prevent issues and reduce overall maintenance costs.

Claire Glaister, Timber Transport Group Project Officer for Grampian and Stirling & Tayside, focused on the many stakeholders involved in transporting timber and the many different perspectives held as to how that should happen. Shared solutions and engagement are vital with recent TTF publications and guides on transporting timber on public roads, updated FAQs all providing shared good practice.

Frank MacCulloch, Highlands Timber Transport Group Project Officer, covered developments in mesh road reinforcement over peat, tyre pressure controls and bridge development. Sea transport of timber out of the Highlands has also been a huge success with seven fixed and three floating piers.

Decarbonisation of timber haulage was covered by Des Phelan of Coillte and Daniel Noreland of Skogforsk. Key takeaways from the Irish project are the need for pan-industry collaboration with policymakers; the transition must be financially feasible as well as data led with a forest industry heat map helping to link up infrastructure priorities.

Lessons are being shared across Scotland with the NetZero TimHaul project and Sweden's TREE project. Daniel reiterated that electrified road freight transport requires a system transformation covering infrastructure, logistics and policy – alongside cultural and behavioural change. He also noted this change is similar to earlier moves from horse to diesel!

The Timber Transport Partnering Charter was also relaunched at the conference.

Thanks to PortRail Group for their sponsorship of the notebooks and pens for attendees. Copies of all the presentations and TTF publications can be found at www.timbertransportforum.org.uk.

Autumn Budget delays fuel duty increase for red diesel

Chancellor John Healey announced an extension of the 3.7p per litre reduction in red diesel duty until 1 July 2027 as part of the 2026 Autumn Budget.

Confor has worked closely with members and HMRC to ensure that supplies of red diesel were not disrupted to forestry businesses when new tax regulations were announced in April 2022, removing the entitlement to use red diesel from most sectors.

The current Amended Fuel Duty rates were published in May 2026.

The 5p per litre hike in fuel duty, which had been planned for the start of next year, will also now come into force in July 2027 and will be updated in line with the Retail Prices Index (RPI).

From 1 April 2028, fuel duty rates will be updated annually in line with RPI.

The Chancellor said: "Earlier this year, the Government extended the 5p cut to fuel duty and slashed red diesel to its lowest rate in over 20 years.

"With the war in the Middle East still driving high fuel prices, I am extending these tax cuts for motorists through the winter and spring to July, supporting households, hauliers, and farmers.

"And for anyone who relies on their car for their work, from care workers to engineers, I am increasing the higher mileage rate from 25p to 35p per mile, and making permanent the increase to the standard mileage rate introduced earlier this year."

The Budget also confirmed that the £1 annual Vehicle Excise Duty rate for most Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) will continue until 30 June 2027, a measure the Treasury says will save around £600 for a typical HGV.

Another notable announcement from Chancellor Healey was the Your First Home scheme, an equity loan programme for first-time buyers reportedly worth £4.7 billion. Part of the funding for this measure was noted to be sourced from DEFRA, through "an updated delivery pathway for the Woodland Carbon Purchase Fund".

The mentioned Fund was first set to be explored in late 2025, suggesting an offer of £250 million in upfront payments to landowners to plant woodlands and thereby tackle one of the major barriers to tree planting by providing financial certainty.

No cut to this funding has been announced at time of writing, but details are expected to emerge as we move into November.





Lloyd Jones & Harry Humble.

Funding awarded to create 600,000-tree woodland



Greencroft Park.

Greencroft Forest Park in County Durham is set to be England's largest new productive and mixed woodland in over 40 years, following recent High Court dismissal of legal challenges.

The North East Community Forest has provided funding to True North Real Asset Partners Limited to transform former agricultural land on the historic Greencroft estate into a landmark tree-planting initiative, creating over 290 hectares of mixed productive woodland and maintaining the forest for the next 15 years.

Greencroft Forest Park will comprise 600,000 individual trees, across nearly 300 hectares, and 31 different species, contributing significantly to local and national tree-planting targets and delivering a range of ecological, economic, and community benefits.

To create this diverse, productive forest, broadleaf and coniferous species will be planted. Oak will make up the largest share of native and naturalised

broadleaves, along with birch, willow, hornbeam, and others, all planted for biodiversity gains and future timber use.

Sustainability is central to the scheme, with 198 hectares dedicated to productive conifer planting. Sitka spruce, Scots pine and yew will feature among the conifer species, with Sitka spruce making up the largest single species at 60% of the forest planting.

The 45 hectares of broadleaf areas will provide additional habitat and biodiversity benefits, while the 46 hectares of open ground will create valuable space for grassland, wildflowers and associated species, helping to support a wider range of wildlife. Together, these habitats will complement the productive woodland, strengthening the scheme's contribution to biodiversity, landscape connectivity and wider ecosystem benefits.

The forest will produce more than 110,000 tonnes of sustainably homegrown timber by 2046, supporting the UK's growing demand for sustainably sourced timber in industries such as housebuilding and construction.

It is expected to sequester over 67,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide in its first 100 years, making it a valuable asset in combating climate change. Beyond

carbon storage, productive forests like Greencroft also help with flood mitigation, improving local resilience to extreme weather events.

The funding will also guarantee the expansion and improvement of public access paths around the forest site. A total of 5.7km of all-ability access paths suitable for wheelchair and pushchair use will be created and linked to existing public rights of way across the site. Public information boards will also be created and installed at the woodland entrance to enhance the visitor experience and engagement with the forest.

Harry Humble, Chief Executive of True North, said: "We are delighted to have secured support and funding from the North East Community Forest and that forest planting can finally get underway. It is a historic moment for the county.

"This has been a complex, costly and time-consuming development, and we are excited to finally get trees into the ground and create a forest that local people can enjoy for decades to come."

Tree planting started in October and will be completed within the current planting season, which ends on 30 April 2027. True North is confident that all the trees will be in the ground before Christmas 2026.

A 10-strong team of forestry experts from Juniper Forestry in Chopwell will begin planting saplings by hand, with approximately 16,000 trees planted each day. The saplings will be approximately 20-40 cm tall, with most sourced from local supplier Trees Please in Corbridge.

Living Woods CIC has been engaged to work with the NECF Team to deliver community planting and aftercare sessions, providing residents, schools, community groups, and volunteers with opportunities to help establish and care for the new woodland.

Lloyd Jones, Forest Manager, North East Community Forest, said: "We are proud to be supporting this project, which will help to build sustainable resources for future generations while enriching the environment for the current community. By balancing productive timber resources with native habitats and community spaces, this new project will help create a diverse, environmentally resilient resource for the local area."

The project was assessed and approved by the Forestry Commission to ensure it met the UK Forestry Standard. The Forestry Commission also provided the initial funding for the project via the Woodland Creation Planning Grant, which supports the preparation of woodland creation design plans.



Niall Collins TD pictured with Mike Glennon, Pat Glennon, Tree Council of Ireland President Felicity Gaffney, and children from Ballybrown National School.

Irish minister launches Glennon Brothers National Tree Day

Niall Collins TD, Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine with special responsibility for Forestry, Farm Safety and Horticulture, joined pupils at Ballybrown National School, Co. Limerick, to plant a Scots Pine ahead of Glennon Brothers National Tree Day 2026 on 1 October.

An initiative of the Tree Council of Ireland, National Tree Day encourages primary school children across Ireland to get outside, plant a tree and discover the important role trees and forests play in our lives. This year, schools can claim one of 2,000 free Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*; Irish: An Giúis) saplings thanks to the support of Glennon Brothers.

Minister Niall Collins commented: "National Tree Day gives children a practical way to learn about the importance of trees, forests and the natural environment. By planting and caring for a Scots Pine, pupils can see first-hand how trees support biodiversity, capture carbon and provide a renewable natural resource.

"It is also an opportunity to build understanding of sustainable forestry and how home-grown timber can continue to store carbon when it is used in timber products and buildings. I commend the Tree Council of Ireland and Glennon Brothers for helping schools across the country turn that

learning into action."

This year's theme, 'Planting for the Planet', will help children explore how trees support wildlife and biodiversity, capture and store carbon, and provide a renewable natural resource that can be transformed into timber products used to build our homes and communities.

Glennon Brothers Joint Managing Director Pat Glennon said: "National Tree Day gives children the opportunity to do something practical and positive for the environment. Planting and caring for a tree helps bring to life the importance of trees and forests and the role they can play for generations to come.

"As a family business with a long connection to timber and forestry, we are proud to support an initiative that encourages children to get outdoors, learn and develop an appreciation of trees from an early age."

Mike Glennon, Glennon Brothers Joint Managing Director, added: "Glennon Brothers is a third-generation family business. Our message is 'Irish timber for Irish homes, from forest to front door'.

"Growing trees capture carbon, forests are renewed through replanting, and timber can continue to store carbon during the lifecycle of the products and buildings in which it is used. For every tree harvested, four new trees are planted."



Image courtesy of Mike Bolan.

FORESTRY SKILLS INITIATIVE OPENS CAREER PATHWAYS

Forestry Training Service UK has supported a cohort of new entrants into forestry through an introductory training programme, delivered with the support of Foresight Group and SRUC Barony.

Six new entrants took their first steps into forestry careers thanks to a practical training programme funded by Foresight Group and delivered by Forestry Training Service UK (FTSUK) in partnership with SRUC Barony. Support from South of Scotland Enterprise, local partners and forestry businesses provided a rich and varied experience of the forestry sector and what it has to offer.

With investment from Foresight, the programme brought together people from different backgrounds with a desire to find a way to start a career in forestry, work outdoors and make a positive contribution to the environment.

Through hands-on training, industry visits and recognised qualifications, participants gained an insight into the wide range of opportunities available across the forestry sector.

Murray Aitchison, Asset Manager at Foresight, commented: "Through this programme, we've seen how targeted investment in skills training can help open doors for people from a wide range of backgrounds and create pathways into forestry careers. We're proud to have supported an initiative that is helping participants to progress into employment and further education; building the next generation of forestry professionals."

Forestry plays a vital role in supporting rural communities, providing sustainable timber for a vital wood processing sector, helping tackle climate change, enhancing biodiversity and creating rewarding long-term careers. The South of Scotland and North of England are at the heart of one of the UK's most important forestry regions and can offer opportunities across woodland creation, forest management, harvesting, haulage and wood processing to grow our pool of rural talent.

Melanie McEwen, Operations Director of FTSUK, said: "Forestry offers people the chance to build rewarding careers while contributing to something much bigger, from creating resilient forests to supporting the rural economy and helping meet environmental goals.

"What has been most inspiring about this programme is seeing participants grow in confidence, discover where their interests lie and begin to find their place within the sector. The enthusiasm shown by both participants and employers demonstrates just how much opportunity exists within modern forestry."

Participants spoke positively about both the skills they gained and the people they met along the way. Jenna from Central Scotland said: "My main takeaway is how interesting and passionate all of the professionals we have met are about each area of the sector.



Image courtesy of MJ McEwen.

“This has ignited my determination to find my own niche in the sector, be an advocate for women in forestry and learn and carry out sustainable forestry wherever I can.”

The programme has already helped participants progress towards their goals. One participant has secured employment as a tree surveyor, another has continued into further forestry education at SRUC, and two are working in planting teams establishing the forests of the future. Others are exploring specialist training and employment opportunities across the sector with ongoing support from FTSUK.

Davy McCracken, Deputy Head of SRUC’s School of Natural & Social Science, emphasised: “By delivering practical, industry-led training at SRUC’s Barony Campus we’ve helped a cohort of new entrants gain the core skills, confidence and industry connections they need to step straight into forestry roles. It’s a clear demonstration of how targeted collaboration can address skills shortages while supporting the integrated land-use that Scotland’s rural economy requires.”

Following the success of the programme, FTSUK is exploring opportunities to repeat the programme in southwest Scotland and work with partners to expand delivery and create more pathways for people to enter forestry careers across the UK.

Sustainable Forestry Skills Programme celebrates fifth successful cohort of trainees

Tilhill Forestry and Foresight Group have announced that the Foresight Sustainable Forestry Skills Training Programme successfully completed an intensive four-week programme for its fifth cohort at Coleg Cambria Llysfas.

Four participants undertook a packed timetable designed to give them practical, industry-relevant skills and recognised qualifications. Training included PA1 and PA6 pesticide application, tractor driving, Emergency First Aid at Work with a forestry-specific element, woodchipper operation and ATV (All-Terrain Vehicle) training.

Participants were also provided with essential PPE, including equipment required to work safely in forestry environments.

The training was provided by Tilhill Forestry along with different departments across the college, as well as external trainers and assessors. This programme is the result of a longstanding collaboration between Tilhill and Foresight, as well as between Tilhill and the college, and has provided a pathway into the sector for aspiring forestry workers.

Elin Roberts, Head of Coleg Cambria Llysfas, said: “Reaching a fifth cohort is a fantastic milestone and reflects the strength and longevity of this partnership. Forestry is an important and evolving industry which needs skilled, confident people with the practical experience and qualifications to make an immediate impact.

“Working closely with Tilhill, Foresight and industry specialists enables us to provide exactly that, bringing education and employers together and creating opportunities for people from



communities across Wales.

“We congratulate the participants on completing what is a demanding programme and wish them every success for the future.”

Iwan Parry, Regional Manager for Wales and Marches at Tilhill Forestry, said: “We are thrilled that this partnership with Foresight and Llysfas continues to provide future generations of forestry professionals with the skills and experience needed to drive the sector forward.

“Forests are an essential part of Welsh ecosystems and the economy, so it is hugely important that those within the industry are equipped to face the opportunities presented by the sector.

“We would like to congratulate the latest cohort and look forward to seeing their progression.”

Murray Aitchison, Portfolio Manager at Foresight Group, added: “It’s great to see four more participants gain new forestry skills. We at Foresight believe the forestry can have a positive economic impact on the UK and by investing in this skills-building we can take a meaningful step towards building a UK-based sustainable timber industry.”



A life rooted in trees and seeds

With much sadness, we announce the recent passing of Dr Andrew George Gordon. Harry Frew remembers him on behalf of the Confor Nursery Producers' Group.

Andy was known to many people in the forestry sector for his life's work in trees. From nursery to seed supply, to worldwide tree consultancy, to working for EFNA in Europe, and latterly for consultancy with the Woodland Trust and the National Trust – to list but some of his work.

Aside from his family – Fiona, Robert, Duncan and their families – trees were Andy's life.

Andy's career started at Aberdeen University, completing two degrees. He spent three years in Canada on a Post Doctoral fellowship, studying the germination of cereal crops for malting. He then briefly worked for distillers and the whisky industry, but soon decided the whisky trade was not for him.

He joined the Forestry Commission in 1970, from where he started his journey into tree seeds.

He became the Principal Seeds Officer at Alice Holt, and remained with the FC until 1981, all that time being involved in what became his real interest - Forest Tree Seeds.

In the early 80s Andy moved to the Nursery Division of the Economic Forestry Group (EFG). He was soon promoted to Sales Director and grew their seed business for five years.

At this point Andy realised his true passion was tree seeds and in 1986 he and his wife Fiona set up their own business – Forestart, the first commercial private sector seed business in the UK.

Forestart blossomed under Andy's leadership. Andy and Fiona grew the business from small beginnings to one moving from strength to strength and one latterly supplying 75% of the UK's tree seed.

They sold the business in 1998. Under its current ownership, Forestart remains the foremost forestry seed supplier in the UK – a tribute to Andy's vision those many years ago.

On top of his day job at Forestart, Andy was sought after to manage a multitude



of UK and international consultancy posts, involving working all over the world in China, Honduras and Nigeria to name a few. He travelled extensively, always learning and reporting back.

Andy's seed expertise was highly respected, and he was invited to chair the Tree and Shrub seed group of the Federation International du Commerce des Semences for 12 years between 1988 to 2000. This being the international body overseeing the seed trade globally, it was a position of considerable recognition.

Andy represented the UK on the European Forest Nursery Association (EFNA) for 35 years. For seven of those he held the Presidency on behalf of the UK, and for 30 years he was Secretary. Andy contributed immensely to the operation, the activities and the success of EFNA over the years.

His multilingual skills were invaluable, and during his time with EFNA he spent much time in Brussels negotiating and promoting European forestry and wrestling with the bureaucracy of the EC/EU.

“Many of his publications are still used today for reference, and some as the bible of seeds and nursery practice.”

After his retirement from EFNA, Andy of course maintained his interest in trees. He worked as a part-time contractor with the Woodland Trust and also with the National Trust in the UK, monitoring and recording trees and in particular working with veteran trees.

He was retained to conduct Nursery audits on behalf of both the Forestry Commission and the Woodland Trust – poacher turned gamekeeper some nurseries thought! Andy knew his way through the nursery audit trail and always kept nurseries on their toes.

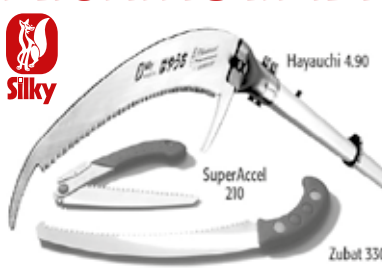
During his life and career, Andy managed to find the time to author and co-author approximately 30 publications. Many of these are still used today for reference, and some as the bible of seeds and nursery practice.

Andy and Fiona finally moved away from the Shrewsbury area to be closer to the family and lived at Moreton Morrell, near Warwick. Andy enjoyed his final years there in the beautiful countryside, surrounded by family.

He died peacefully, after a short illness.

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Ioram, a small new-build cottage in the Scottish Highlands by Baillie Baillie, is the recipient of this year's RIAS Timber Award, supported by the Confederation of Timber Industries (CTI).

Locally grown and processed Douglas Fir was used for all timber structural elements, wall linings, and details. Offcuts were used to make mortised doors and kitchen cabinetry, with almost no waste.

Judges noted that the house embraced homegrown timber "in a way that is honest, where a crack along the grain or a knot adds to its character as a natural material and the whole home's deep connection to its setting".

The RIAS & CTI Timber Award encourages the innovative and creative use of timber in new buildings in Scotland, promoting the use of homegrown timber, with added consideration given to thoughtful and appropriate use of different species.

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Photos should relate to forestry and timber and be of high-quality (minimum resolution 300dpi). Exceptional pictures might be considered for the front cover of a future FTN issue.

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In our December 2026 / January 2027 issue we will be focusing on Professional Services and Policy & Political Engagement. Remember that FTN is your magazine – get in touch if you want to suggest editorial or give us feedback on articles we have published in the past. Confor members, send us your company's news updates or pitches for feature articles.

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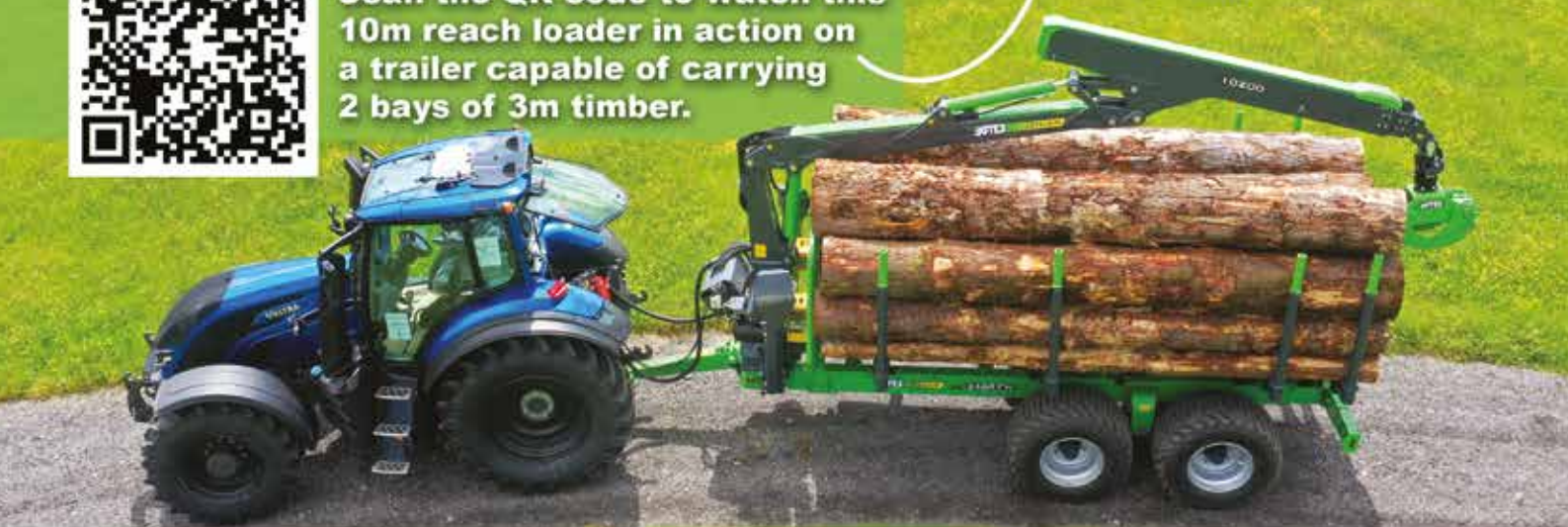
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