



Annual Report 2023

What does Confor do for me?

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



Scotland

- As well as continuing to engage with the forestry agencies on improving the operation of country grant schemes, Confor has developed a training course on stakeholder engagement and is finalising a best practice guide to stakeholder engagement
- We continue to work with Members in Scotland to develop a position on responsible investment in the context of land reform, and link to the work on benefits for local communities. The timetable will be determined by Scottish Government
- Present at the Scottish Game Fair, enabling the team to engage forestry with kids
- Have expanded our work in schools across Scotland to introduce pupils to forestry and the timber industry
- The Scottish Government are currently consulting on the Future of Grant Support for Forestry in Scotland

Wales

- We continue seeking to commission and present evidence on the impact of planting on local jobs and how that can be enhanced
- Developed case studies on integration of forestry into farming
- Arranged the Business Hub at Royal Welsh Show

England

- Arranged Confor Woodland Show 2023, Bath and West Showground
- Sponsored and exhibited at Agroforestry Show 2023, Wiltshire
- Continuing to work with the FC to ensure that new Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) across England take account of the importance that productive forests can play towards biodiversity as well as contributing to critical targets such as net zero
- Worked with stakeholders including politicians across England as we prepare, refine, promote and launch a new National Wood Strategy
- Used regular meetings with FC and Defra to feedback member issues and seek to find resolutions to make improvements that benefit trees, woods and forests on the ground
- Represented the wider industry needs on the Ips Industry group, making sure Industry plays its part in the effective and efficient management of this pest



UK

- Worked with Members to identify and share information on biodiversity monitoring in newly planted productive woodland, and potentially the sharing of biodiversity good practice case studies on the website
- We were present at Ex Military Career Fairs all over UK to promote working in forestry
- Confor Advisory Board Meetings have taken place all over the country and included a range of civil servants and politicians
- Discussions with Confor members – Forestry Commission CEO Richard Stanford, Minister Trudy Harrison, Scottish Forestry Dave Signorini and Alan Hampson
- Developed and continue to grow our regional Confor committees with our active members to ensure Confor can support local priorities, including how we promote and grow the forestry workforce and skills, whilst sharing knowledge, best practice and challenges/barriers in woodland management and creation activities

Northern Ireland

- We continue to build further political support for the industry in Northern Ireland
- Big steps taken in area planted (in NI), though little is productive at this stage



WOOD SUPPLY

- Confor is working with Member sawmills to develop and deliver an effective programme of work to increase the use of home-grown graded C16 sawnwood in new build construction in the UK
- The UK Timber in Construction Working Group – (DEFRA, FC, Confor and other key experts in the Timber and Construction industries) are in the process of creating a policy roadmap to increase the safe use of timber in construction. The work includes the assessment of future timber demand for new house builds; timber frames and other uses (e.g. wood insulation). The end game is decarbonisation in construction and the associated carbon locked up in buildings in the future. DEFRA aims to publish the roadmap by the end of 2023
- National Wood Strategy for England – this wood strategy was commissioned by the Confor chaired, Industry Leadership Group which recognises the requirement for more productive forests to help meet net zero, reduce reliance on timber imports and increase economic growth. The concept of the Strategy has been welcomed by the UK Forestry Minister, Defra and FC and is co-authored by Tom Barnes of Vastern Timber and Andy Leitch of Confor. The strategy is going through draft stages with consultees and should be published later in 2023. It includes actions for Government and the wider sector and links back to the timber in construction roadmap above

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- We have worked with Members to establish how greater or additional benefits for communities can be provided through 'larger' new planting projects, being mindful to manage expectations and focus on what is reasonable

GROWING THE INDUSTRY

- Confor has facilitated the development of National Wood Strategies in England and Wales. Through country ILGs in Scotland, England and Wales, has led the development of strategies and initiatives to increase the use of wood in construction. Once developed, Confor will seek to drive delivery through collaboration where possible
- Confor has worked with Friends of the Earth to explore establishing a partnership across sectors to develop a plan that can be presented to the UK government to drive greater planting as part of increased ambition on planting targets in England



'Over the last year, I have detected a general shift in policy and delivery in England towards a more supportive attitude for the forestry industry'



Stuart
Goodall,
Chief
Executive,
Confor

A Course to Success

INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

- Confor has engaged (and lead where required) proactively with Industry Skills Group to support relevant Skills/Recruitment Action plans, leading on delivery where most impactful



SKILLS AND RECRUITMENT

- Confor has co-ordinated work to establish a viable working model for a National Forestry Technical Training Service
- Confor has been engaged with public sector and other relevant bodies to identify, influence and, where appropriate, develop and deliver short-term wins like career changers – armed forces and running ‘taster days’ for forest machinery
 - Confor continues to develop and support activities with the aim to create a pipeline of recruits through working in and with schools and universities/colleges, making use of an increased network of STEM Ambassadors
 - Confor continued to work with public sector colleagues to initiate industry support mechanisms such as the Woodlands into Management Forestry Innovation Funds



‘Engaging with young people through schools and STEM Networks is the way forward to raising the profile of the forestry industry as a potential career, to create a pipeline of new young people to enter the industry’

Richard Hunter, Technical and Industry Support Manager, Confor



POLITICAL SUCCESS

- Confor continues to identify opportunities to promote the industry’s interests in political circles and seek to facilitate complementary member activity by providing appropriate tools and information for members to engage at all levels
- We have responded on your behalf to consultations on the extension of the Climate Change Agreement scheme, felling license reform under the Agriculture (Wales) Bill, and the Forestry Grant Scheme in Scotland
- Our Chief Executive has given evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee as part of its inquiry into sustainable timber and deforestation
- The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Forestry and Tree Planting has pushed for a Timber Sector Deal and financial support for those seeking a career in forestry
- We have also been involved in Taxation of Environmental Land Management and Ecosystem Service Markets and the Migration Advisory Committee Review of the Shortage Occupation List

MAPPING A COURSE TO NET ZERO

- Confor is underway in mapping an agreed way forward that will unlock investment and provide the means of achieving a positive vision for the industry that will align with net zero



Key Workstreams and Membership

TIMBER TRANSPORT FORUM

The TTF continues to update and disseminate best practice guidance for hauliers, forestry works managers and local authorities, and manages the online Agreed Routes Map for timber haulage

NURSERIES

Tree Production Innovation Fund, Tree Production Capital Grant, Harvesting and Processing Grant and Seed Sourcing Grant all supporting increased diversity and production in domestic tree supply. Over 130k home-grown trees sold last year

FOREST INDUSTRIES EDUCATION & PROVIDENT FUND



15+

applications so far in 2023 – chainsaw courses, college courses and dissertations, conference attendance for students – Confor Policy and ICF Wales, international conference attendance

£14k+

given in awards

SOCIAL SPOTLIGHT



NEW MEMBER BENEFIT IS NOW LIVE



A NEW Membership benefit has been introduced; a Social promotional outlet for Members. This new benefit enables Members to share their stories/projects via the Confor social pages; LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter for free to a key forestry audience. Members simply have to fill out a short form to be part of the new series

'Our Members' support allows the team to push the forestry and wood using industry in the right direction, without the Members' support, the issues can't be tackled'

Eliza Hibbins Cline,
Membership and
Marketing
Manager,
Confor



A NEW STRATEGY



- An update of Confor's Communications Strategy has been developed, learning lessons from past activity and aligning directives with the latest Business Plan
- Significant work has gone into creating a Hub of educational resources that can be utilised by Confor and its Members to engage external audiences
- We are laying the groundwork for exciting projects in 2024, including the expansion of our media network, a fresh approach to social media, and an update of Confor's website

MEDIA COVERAGE



- Confor's comments have been sought on planting statistics, public perceptions of forestry, biodiversity, and the economic impact of the sector
- Our statements have been featured in BBC News, The Scotsman, The Press & Journal, The Daily Record and more
- We've represented your views across industry publications such as Forestry Journal, Timber Trades Journal, and Premier Construction News

SAVE THE DATE

7
DEC

Green Growth: WHY
WOOD IS THE MISSING
LOW-CARBON LINK.
Policy Conference,
London

'The broad spectrum of our audiences - from Members to political leaders - presents a twofold challenge for our communications: presenting a unified message, and making sure the right people see it.'

Eleanor O'Neill,
Communications Manager, Confor



MAKING OUR VOICE HEARD



147.5k+

impressions on
our social media
content

6

successful FTNs
with a readership
of over 1500

25k+

new visitors to the
website
this year

140

stories shared in a
newly designed
E-news

28.7k

E-newsletters sent
so far in 2023

809

new followers
across social
channels

