

FORESTRY & TIMBER NEWS

October/November 2023 Issue 119

CONFOR WOODLAND SHOW REVIEW



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One voice among many



STUART GOODALL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE,
CONFOR

One of the big challenges for Confor, and by extension the sector, is the sheer influence that politicians and officials have on forestry policy and practice.

The following is not an exhaustive list - regulation on planting and felling, the provision (or not) of grants, how those grants are targeted and their effectiveness, the UK Forestry Standard, the scale of publicly owned forest and the significance of how that is managed, the priorities for forest research, even the operation of carbon trading.

It is not surprising that politicians and especially officials are subject to lobbying from powerful environmental NGOs, local groups, vocal individuals and many more.

As an ex-civil servant, I am very aware that when officials operate in this and other sectors, they are supposed to inform and guide politicians to make evidence-based policy decisions. With so much happening in forestry so quickly, and so much lobbying from so many interests, the danger is that good practice is falling by the wayside.

Generally speaking, it feels like officials are increasingly seeking to rely on their own views and judgement, and on how they can navigate a middle ground between the various forces being exerted on them (and politicians) by stakeholders. Policy objectives and targets are being lost sight of and/or constantly changed, and evidence

cannot be commissioned or produced quickly enough to have the relevance it should have.

The threats from this trend towards uncertainty and rapid change are clear. Industry wants confidence and certainty if it is to invest, whether that is a sole trader with a harvesting machine or chainsaw, a forestry company considering taking on new staff or a mill looking to invest millions or even tens of millions in machinery. For woodland owners, understanding what should be planted/replanted is becoming a harder and harder decision to make.

Personally, I cannot see regulators compensating for this trend by relaxing their control when, generally speaking, their instincts are to increase it - they believe they can effect positive change and powerful NGOs actively support greater regulation as they are confident in their ability to shape it.

Given all of this, and for the future benefit of the sector, Confor needs to increasingly mobilise members to be visible and vocal, and we need to keep building our influence with political parties, not least as we see the potential for change in Westminster and Holyrood.

That will be hard, as other voices are far more powerful than ours, but by doing what we can and applying the lessons we learn, we are and will make a valuable and important difference.

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

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For advertising, contact Dan Rice 01502 725858 daniel.rice@micropress.co.uk
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Stuart Goodall
Chief Executive
T: 0131 240 1416
E: stuartg@confor.org.uk



Andy Leitch
Deputy Chief Executive
M: 07881 510171
E: Andy.leitch@confor.org.uk



Eliza Hibbins-Cline
Membership and Marketing Manager
M: 07918 880285
E: eliza@confor.org.uk



Eleanor O'Neill
Communications Manager
M: 07918 255930
E: eleanor.oneill@confor.org.uk



Richard Hunter
Technical and Industry Support Manager
M: 07867 379657
E: richard.hunter@confor.org.uk



John Bruce
National Manager for England
M: 07884 579215
E: john.bruce@confor.org.uk



April Armstrong
National Manager for Scotland
M: 07780 190821
E: april.armstrong@confor.org.uk



Confor head office and editorial office
59 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 2JG



0131 240 1410



info@confor.org.uk



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Putting forestry and wood on the political agenda

Following Confor's attendance at the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool, Chief Executive Stuart Goodall reflects on the value of face-to-face engagement at such events - to help explain where the forestry and wood industry fits into the policy landscape.

The forestry and wood industry is extremely well-placed to take advantage of the economic agenda outlined by the Labour Party, according to Confor's Chief Executive, as he reflected on the autumn 2023 party political conferences.

Stuart Goodall said member businesses were uniquely placed to provide green jobs, supply timber for the homes of the future and deliver on local supply chains - what Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves has described as 'securonomics'.

"When Rachel Reeves talks about 'securonomics', she is highlighting that the UK needs to produce many more of the resources it needs in future at home - and create the domestic supply chains to do so," Stuart said.

"At the Labour conference in early October, we explained to Labour politicians from across Great Britain how our industry can support this - and why timber security must be added to food security and energy security as a national priority."

Hundreds of delegates who visited the Confor stand at the Labour conference in Liverpool over four days were struck by the fact that the UK imports 81% of the wood it uses - and the vital need to grow more of the wood it consumes.

This will not only help create jobs in the rural economy, but also reduce pressure on fragile forests overseas as global demand for timber soars.

"Keir Starmer talked about building 1.5 million new homes in his conference speech, and to do that sustainably, we need more home-grown wood," said Stuart.



Stuart Goodall with Baroness Hayman, leader of Labour's Defra team in the House of Lords.



Toby Perkins MP (right), Shadow Rural Affairs Minister (with responsibility for forestry) with Stuart.

art. "By planting more wood-producing forests and using more home-grown wood, our industry can deliver the green homes - and the green jobs and green prosperity - that Labour has promised."

He went on to emphasise that Confor had worked to get senior Labour figures to help them understand the full potential of forestry and wood in growing the rural economy, at the same time as helping to tackle the climate emergency, and supporting biodiversity.

Among those who stopped by the Confor stand were Steve Reed MP, Shadow Environment Secretary, and Toby Perkins MP, Shadow Rural Affairs Minister, who has responsibility for forestry.

Baroness Hayman, who leads on Food, Environment and Rural Affairs for Labour in the House of Lords, and Emma Hardy, a Shadow Environment Minister, also met the team in the Confor kitchen - designed to draw attention to the wide range of different products in everyone's home that are made from wood.

Reflecting on the Conservative conference held the week before the Labour



Stuart Goodall (left) with Steve Reed MP, Shadow Environment Secretary at the Labour Party Conference.

event, Stuart noted a lack of announcements with similar resonance for forestry and timber, but highlighted the positive work of UK Forestry Minister Trudy Harrison.

“A thriving UK forestry and wood industry can deliver all parties’ policy agendas,” he said. “And that means that Confor will continue to work closely and constructively with Trudy Harrison on the upcoming publication of a National Wood Strategy for England and a Sector Deal.

“We have made great progress since Trudy Harrison came into post and I would like to thank her for her support for productive forestry and the greater use of home-grown wood. It’s also good to hear Labour outlining a green prosperity agenda that chimes perfectly with Confor’s agenda to support sustainable forestry and wood-using businesses.”

Stuart continued: “The challenge we now face is to ensure that whichever party is in power following the next election, there is a strong platform for forestry and timber to work with.

“Face-to-face engagement with politicians from all parties is vital and we will continue this at a reception hosted by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Forestry and Tree Planting on November 13th - and at our annual policy conference in London on December 7th.” [see Page 13].

Confor’s presence at the Labour Party Conference was kindly sponsored by James Jones & Sons Ltd, whose joint Managing Director David Leslie attended the event.

The team was able to meet with Liz Twist MP, whose Blaydon constituency includes a James Jones & Sons (Pallets & Packaging) Ltd site.

The focus of the Labour Party conference was not just on England, with meetings also held with senior politicians from Scotland and Wales.

Anas Sarwar MSP, Scottish Labour leader, and his Deputy Jackie Baillie, both visited the stand and spoke to Confor CEO Stuart Goodall.

The Confor team also met Martin Whitfield, a regional list MSP from the South of Scotland, who last year visited two Confor member sites in East Lothian - Alba Trees and Glennon Brothers sawmill at Windymains, Humbie.

They also spoke to former Cabinet Minister Douglas Alexander, Labour’s candidate for East Lothian, who was very knowledgeable about the forestry and wood industry and keen to know more about how the industry’s ambitions can align with Labour’s economic and environmental goals.

Lee Waters MS, Labour’s Deputy Minister for Climate Change in Wales, also



Anas Sarwar MSP - Labour leader in Scotland.



Stuart welcomes Douglas Alexander and Martin Whitfield to the Confor stand.

dropped into the Confor kitchen. He has been a supportive figure for forestry and wood in Wales and has a broad understanding of what it can deliver for both the environment of Wales, and its rural economy.

“It was great to see interest in forestry and wood from Labour politicians from across Britain,” said Stuart Goodall. “It’s really important that we work with politicians from all parties, across the whole of the UK, to get across our key messages.”

As well as meeting politicians from the UK Parliament, Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly, the Confor team also met dozens of councillors from all parts of the UK to discuss forestry and wood issues in their area - offering up some important perspectives from many different regions.



Lee Waters MP (left) the Welsh Government's Deputy Climate Change Minister with Stuart & Rachael Clamp, a member of the Confor team at Liverpool.

Labour grows in confidence

With several important by-elections and the end of conference season there has been a lot of activity on the political front. Confor Policy & Public Affairs Officer **Jon Garson** reflects on the impact of recent events with a general election on the horizon.

With several important by-elections book-ending the conference season there has been a lot of activity on the political front since our last update, and much to reflect on with a general election on the horizon.

While the election is required by law to be held by January 2025, all the smart money is that we will face an earlier election in the autumn of 2024. While dates are unclear, rumours are that the Prime Minister will call an election as soon as he can trumpet success on his 5 key pledges. Of particular importance is his commitment to meeting the goal of halving inflation, which is not likely to happen until later in autumn.

In this context, the recent series of by-elections are particularly interesting. In 2023, we have witnessed no fewer than seven - West Lancashire; Uxbridge and Ruislip; Selby and Ainsty; Somerton and Frome; Rutherglen and Hamilton West; Tamworth; and Mid-Bedfordshire.

In terms of these by-elections, the political truism has proved largely correct - governing parties don't do well in mid-term. Labour held West Lancashire, and the Liberal Democrats won Somerton and Frome in their traditionally strong south-west territory following the resignation of Conservative MP David Warburton amid allegations about his personal life.

The one area of hope for the Conservatives was Uxbridge and South Ruislip, formerly held by ex-Prime Minister Boris Johnson. This was the only by-election held for the Conservatives and some in the party have pointed to this result as a sign that there is hope for the next election. The holding of this seat has created a narrative that this result represented a voter revolt over environmental and climate goals and objectives. Indeed, many commentators saw this result as the rationale behind Rishi Sunak pushing back several timeframes for actions intended to help reach net zero and

provide potential clear blue water between party agendas for the general election.

What this analysis fails to address is that while there was a real voter revolt, this was focused on a specific local issue, the expansion of London's Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ). This was an initiative that was only intended as a mechanism to address local air quality and was not simply part of a wider environmental agenda.

When looking at the result, it is also worth noting that Labour still delivered a 6.3% swing in its favour and would have won the seat if this swing was 7.6%. The victory was by a margin of just 495 votes.

After taking Rutherglen & Hamilton West from the SNP immediately before its party conference, Labour carried the momentum forward into Tamworth and Mid-Bedfordshire, with two seismic victories - shocking enough to be the thing of nightmares for the Conservatives.

What happened was unprecedented and signifies far more than the usual mid-term blues. Swings of 23.9% and 20.5% respectively turned two Conservative seats with majorities of 19,634 and 24,664 to Labour. The swing in Tamworth was the second highest in post-war by-election history. No government has previously lost such a safe seat.

The victory in Rutherglen and Hamilton West has been seen as a sign that Labour could win more seats than expected in Scotland. Even after the by-election win, they only have two, but the continued challenges faced by the post-Nicola Sturgeon SNP has led to suggestions that Labour could go well beyond 20 seats in Scotland - which could have a big impact on the UK electoral arithmetic.

Somerton and Frome was also interesting given that the Conservative's vote dropped from 55.8% to 26.2% and interestingly the Labour vote dropped from 12.9% to 2.6% while Liberal Democrats saw an upswing from 26.2% to 54.6%. This does suggest that there was an element of tacti-

cal voting in this seat, focused on an anti-Conservative vote.

In short, the recent run of by-elections support what virtually every opinion poll is saying, that we are likely to see a change in government with Labour winning the next general election. It is of course worthy of note that as is usually the case, by-election turnout was low, around the mid 30-40% range.

However, that cannot hide the fact that these results paint a worrying picture for the governing Conservatives. Polls are showing that if current trends continue Labour will form a majority government with a significant mandate for their agenda potentially even larger than Tony Blair's 1997 landslide. Things could change in the coming months if inflation falls as forecast, cost-of-living pressures recede and progress is made against Government's objectives more generally, but it would be fair to say that at this time, it looks like Labour's election to lose.

In recent months Labour has focused on targeting the importance of economic growth and jobs within an overarching policy of fiscal responsibility and tight control of public finances. Its manifesto for 2024 could be relatively short, with far fewer targets and promises than in 2019.

This creates an additional challenge to get forestry and wood priorities included in the manifesto. With this in mind, Confor has begun a targeted political engagement strategy to ensure all parties are aware of the important issues facing our sector and how the government can be proactive in assisting our growth and the positive role we can play in areas such as green economic growth, rural employment, climate change and biodiversity.

Confor's attendance at the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool marked the beginning of a focused campaign to work with members in telling the story of the industry and highlighting its importance to politicians and communities across the UK.

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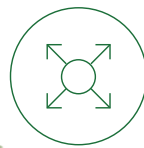
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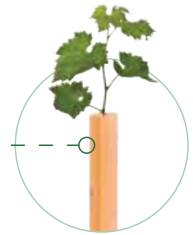
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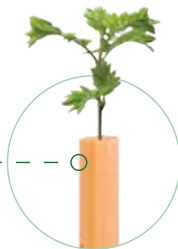
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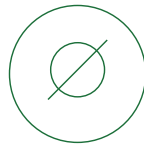


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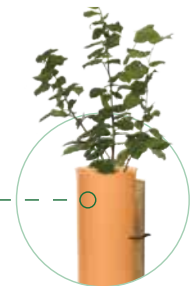
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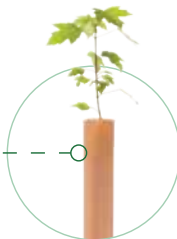
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Mairi Gougeon MSP sees benefits of afforestation at Fordie Estate

Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, **Mairi Gougeon**, paid a visit to Foresight Sustainable Forestry's mixed afforestation and forestry site in Scotland.

During a tour of Fordie Estate, Mairi Gougeon MSP viewed how a holistic sustainable approach to forestry, afforestation and land management can benefit communities and provide significant employment opportunities and economic benefits in Scotland.

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands was accompanied by representatives from Confor and Scottish Forestry while learning about the 2,150-hectare site, owned by Foresight Sustainable Forestry (FSF).

She commented: "My visit to Fordie Estate offered a valuable insight into modern, sustainable forestry practices, and FSF's positive focus on enhancing biodiversity and community engagement.

"I was also pleased to hear that the company is committed to helping Scotland

meet its world leading climate change targets and producing the wood products we need to meet society's increasing demand for timber.

"Woodland creation is very much a partnership where government, the forestry sector, landowners and communities all work together in order to achieve our goals in tackling climate change and nature loss."

Scotland is battling to meet its target of planting 15,000 hectares of new woodland each year (rising to 18,000 hectares per annum by 2025). FSF's woodland creation schemes in Scotland represent 22% of the annual planting target and c.40% of the planting that was achieved last year, making the company a key player in the implementation of government strategy.

Shared commitment

Robert Guest, FSF Managing Director, said:

"It is a great honour to welcome Cabinet Secretary Mairi Gougeon to our Fordie Estate. Mairi's genuine interest in sustainable forestry resonates with our shared commitment to achieve Scotland's environmental and economic goals in a way which benefits the country's communities and economy.

"We are committed to playing a significant role in achieving Scotland's tree planting targets in a progressive sustainable way. It's our ambition that the holistic approach we are taking at Fordie, focussed on delivering a broad range of natural services from a diversified rural business, can provide useful lessons and inspiration to others."

FSF currently has more than 50 forestry and afforestation projects in Scotland, representing around 85% of the fund's assets in the UK by value. The fund's afforestation programme across the UK is anticipated to create 700 rural work opportunities in the planting stage and 35 long term full time equivalent jobs. To support this, FSF expanded its forestry skills training programme earlier in the year.

Ms Gougeon also had the opportunity to hear more about the challenges associated with meeting Scotland's planting targets, including a constructive discussion about how to reduce some of the barriers that those pursuing woodland creation schemes currently face.

Areas such as securing permission and grants for planting, securing carbon credits under the Woodland Carbon Code's current rules, and finding practical metrics for monitoring biodiversity are just some of the nuances and complexities involved.

Stuart Goodall, Confor Chief Executive, commented: "Creating new working forests is about more than just producing the wood we need for a low carbon future. It's about providing places for wildlife and for people and helping Scotland's rural communities to diversify. At Fordie, FSF have embraced mixed land use, and consulted with the local community on how to expand the area of modern sustainable forestry on the estate.

"Scotland has fallen behind in its tree planting aspirations and Confor is committed to working with Mairi Gougeon to get planting back on track. If we don't, then Scotland will almost certainly miss its net zero target for 2045."



Cabinet Secretary Mairi Gougeon is pictured on a visit to Fordie Estate, Comrie, Perthshire, with Robert Guest, co-founder of Foresight Sustainable Forestry (left) and Stuart Goodall, Chief Executive of Confor.

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Book now for policy conference

An industry blueprint for a new National Wood Strategy for England is among the planned presentations at Confor's annual policy conference in London.

This year's event is called *Green Growth: Why Wood is the Missing Low-Carbon Link* and will take place once more at the QEII Centre at Westminster on Thursday December 7th. After Confor CEO Stuart Goodall sets the scene, he will join Forestry Minister Trudy Harrison MP in conversation about a range of issues, including the new National Wood Strategy, a Sector Deal and how to increase productive planting and domestic timber use.

The Labour Party has been invited to provide a senior spokesperson to outline how forestry and wood fits into its Green Prosperity agenda, while Dr Niki Rust will

highlight the Climate Change Committee's constant focus on the role of trees and wood in achieving net zero.

Bella Murfin, Defra's Co-Lead on Trees, will respond to the presentation on the National Wood Strategy, led by Tom Barnes, while a session including Sam Hart from BE:ST (Built Environment, Sustainable Transformation) and circular economy expert Dr Eilidh Forster will make the detailed case for a greater use of wood and a higher policy profile for forestry and wood in party manifestos for the next election.

The final panel of the day will feature a range of industry speakers to set out the industry's big ambitions and the specific actions needed from the UK Government to realise those ambitions.

Stuart Goodall, Confor Chief Executive, said: "We have had two reports by cross-party parliamentary committees at Westminster making it clear that Government



needs to pursue policies that deliver a long-term and sustainable future timber supply in the UK. We cannot simply keep going on importing more and more of the wood we use.

"By doing this, we can rise to our ambitions to create the low-carbon economy of the future and help meet the UK's environmental ambitions. The National

Wood Strategy and a Sector Deal are crucial building blocks in ensuring that wood is at the heart of that low-carbon future."

The conference is kindly sponsored by Scottish Woodlands Ltd, Tilhill and Gresham House. Tickets are available to purchase on the Confor website or by emailing eliza@confor.org.uk

- Trudy Harrison MP will also speak at a reception hosted by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Tree Planting at the Houses of Parliament on Tuesday November 13th, which will discuss the Environmental Audit Committee's ongoing inquiry into timber and sustainability, and an interim update on the National Wood Strategy for England. Email eliza@confor.org.uk to reserve a place.

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Scottish Highlands**

57.83 Ha (142.89 Acres)

Offers Over £800,000



**East Wood
Scottish Highlands**

31.29Ha (77.32 Acres)

Offers Over £275,000

A warm welcome to our new team member

Jon Garson has joined Confor in the role of Policy and Public Affairs Officer. He has recently returned to the UK from Canada, where he worked for several years at a senior level in the British Columbia Chamber of Commerce, advancing the public policy objectives of the organisation's members.

Since 2016, Jon has headed his own consultancy, Orca Strategies, advising associations on policy, public affairs and government consultations.

Stuart Goodall, Confor Chief Executive, said: "We are delighted to add Jon's expertise to the Confor team. He has already brought a new perspective and fresh insight into our policy and public affairs activities.

"As a General Election is expected within the next year and Labour is well placed to form the next Government, it is more important than ever for Confor to step up its advocacy role as the voice of the forestry and timber industry in the UK. Our objective remains to promote the potential of our sector to deliver economic growth and jobs and make a significant contribution to achieving net zero through increased tree planting and the use of home-grown wood.

"Jon's role will be instrumental in helping to achieve that goal."

Speaking on his new appointment, Jon commented: "Forestry and wood hold a unique position in the UK's economic and

political environment. There is so much potential for the sector to be a best-in-class example for green job creation, home-grown industry and boosting the rural economy.

"Engaging policymakers in our story with a strong drive to supporting Confor's members is key. This is a new challenge for me, and I look forward to getting stuck in."

Jon is based in the Edinburgh head office and has invited Members to get in touch with any queries (Jon.Garson@confor.org.uk).



Book now to guarantee a spot at APF 2024

More than 100 exhibitors have already secured their place at APF 2024, returning to the Ragley Estate, Warwickshire on 19-21 September.

The APF Exhibition is the UK's largest forestry, woodland, arboriculture, firewood, fencing, trees and timber trade show. APF 2022 was a huge success with over 300 exhibitors and 23,000 visitors attending, some from as far afield as Japan and the USA.

Similar numbers are expected for the upcoming 2024 show and booking forms are now available at www.apfexhibition.co.uk.

Confor members benefit from a 10% discount off standard site fees. This is a big saving of £250 on a 15m frontage static site or £470 off a 40m demo site.

Demand is already high for space and Exhibition Secretary Ian Millward has urged Confor members to book early to secure a prime site and benefit from the great discounts.

He said: "It is fantastic to already have over 100 exhibitors booked in for next year, 12 months ahead of the event. It emphasises that the APF show is still regarded to be the best place to sell machinery and equipment into the arb, forestry and fencing sectors and we look forward to seeing all our 2022 exhibitors return."

MEMBER UPDATE

ALWAYS HAPPY TO HEAR FROM YOU



Eliza Hibbins-Cline,
Membership &
Marketing Manager

As you will be aware, Membership renewals for 2023/24 are underway. Thank you to those who have already paid their subscription for the next year. If you haven't arranged payment yet, I would kindly prompt you to do so at your nearest convenience to avoid your Confor Membership being lapsed. If you have any queries, please let me know.

Enclosed with this issue, you should have received your 2024 diary. We have purposely sent you the diary an FTN issue earlier this year. This is down to you: you spoke, and we listened.

Feedback on any and all of your membership benefits is always welcome as it helps us improve. If you wish to make a comment or suggestion, please do so by scanning the QR code or accessing our Member Survey through the Members Area of the website. If you didn't receive your diary, please contact me directly.

I hope you have had a chance to read our Annual Report for 2023, which demonstrates what the Confor team has done for the industry this year. A summary of this can be read on page 18. If you would like a copy of the full report, let me know.

The last couple of months have been busy for Confor with events. To those who attended the Agroforestry Show, it was great to see some of you there in the sunshine! Our bi-yearly Confor Woodland Show was also a great chance to catch up with more Members. We hope your boots

have dried off from a wet show!

Although the weather was not on our side, smiles and good conversations were had. If you have feedback for us regards to the show, please email members@confor.org.uk.

What's next for Confor you may be asking? Well, we have the Policy Conference in Westminster upcoming in December - I hope to see some of you there. Tickets are available via our website and I would encourage you to sign up sooner rather than later due to the success of the event last year.

Contact

Eliza on
07918 880285
or email
eliza@confor.org.uk



Eliza Hibbins-Cline, along with the Confor team, took a look back at some of our key achievements and outcomes in the past year.

Confor is working for you all year round. These are just a few highlights from 2023, illustrating the real value of your membership.

Wood supply

The UK Timber in Construction Working Group (comprising Defra, Forestry Commission, Confor and experts in the timber and construction industries) is 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 i.e. timber frames as well as other uses like 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.

Additionally, 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 National Wood Strategy for England was also commissioned by the Confor chaired Industry Leadership Group (ILG) 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 before the end of the year. It includes actions for Government and the wider sector and links back to the timber in construction roadmap above.

Growing the Industry

Confor has facilitated the development of National Wood Strategies in England and Wales. Through national ILGs in Scotland, England and Wales, we have 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

A YEAR IN REVIEW: WHAT DOES CONFOR DO FOR YOU?

be presented to the UK government to drive greater planting as part of increased ambition on planting targets in England.

Mapping a course to Net Zero

Achieving net zero by 2050 (2045 in Scotland) will have an enormous impact on industries, including forestry and wood processing. It is expected that industries will produce sector net zero roadmaps and that, done properly, these roadmaps can provide the means for industry to chart the best path forward.

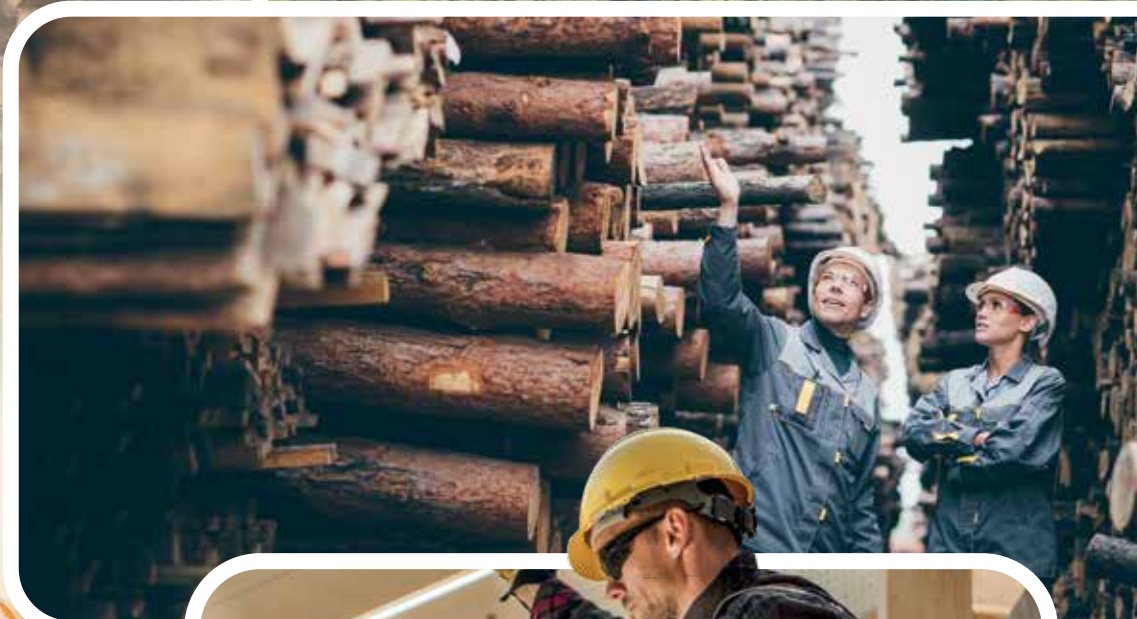
Confor is underway in mapping an agreed way forward that will unlock investment and provide the means of achieving a positive vision for the industry that will align with the net zero goal.

Political success

Confor continues to identify opportunities to promote the industry's interests in polit-

continued on p18







“CONFOR CONTINUES TO IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES TO PROMOTE THE INDUSTRY’S INTERESTS IN POLITICAL CIRCLES.”



continued from p16

ical circles and to support complementary Member activity by providing appropriate tools and information for engagement 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 additionally gave 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.

Skills & recruitment

Confor has co-ordinated work to establish a viable working model for a National Forestry Technical Training Service.

We work with public sector colleagues and other relevant bodies to initiate industry support mechanisms such as the Woodlands into Management Forestry Innovation Funds and, where appropriate,

develop and deliver short-term wins like ‘taster days’ for potential career changers.

Confor continues to develop and support activities with the aim to create a pipeline of recruits through working in



Confor Chair Lord Ian Duncan led the 2023 Annual General Meeting, held online on Wednesday 27 September.

It was confirmed that the required quorum of at least 20 Members were either in attendance or had allocated their vote to a proxy.

Chief Executive Stuart Goodall first shared a presentation on the progress of Confor’s objectives as outlined in the organisation’s business plan. He additionally updated Members on other activities and achievements throughout the year and took a look ahead to goals for 2024.

Kirstin Donaldson, Head of Finance and Company Secretary, then talked through the audit report and accounts for the year ending 31 December 2022. On behalf of the Board, Lord Duncan proposed that the audited accounts submitted to the meeting and the reports of the Directors and Auditors thereon be adopted. This resolution was approved.

Finally, Lord Duncan proposed that Greaves West & Ayre, Chartered Accountants, be appointed as auditors and this motion was also carried.

We would like to thank all those who attended and contributed.

and with schools and universities/colleges, making use of an increased network of STEM Ambassadors.

The full ‘Annual Report 2023: What does Confor do for me?’ was shared with Members along with subscription invoices for 2023/24. A digital copy may be requested by emailing FTN@confor.org.uk.



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MEMBER PROFILE

Vastern Timber is one of the largest hardwood sawmills in the UK. Located across two sites in Wiltshire, the business has specialised in the cutting, drying and machining of British timber for over 100 years. At its helm today is Managing Director Tom Barnes.

"I am very proud of our family business," he said. "I'm very proud to be fourth generation in a 120-year-old business - it's actually quite rare in this country. There's actually very few of them. And I'm very proud to say that we have moved with the times. We're more innovative. Someone who saw the business 20 years ago wouldn't recognise it now.

"But I'll be even prouder if I can hand it on to the fifth generation in a good state," he continued. "You know, maybe it's an age thing, but I'm going to hit half a century next year. I'm starting to think about what I'll leave behind. What is my legacy gonna be?"

"I hope it is a very healthy family business. Still cutting British wood but doing really cool things with it. And I would also like to think that I have contributed to the bigger picture and to moving the whole industry up."

Earlier this year, Tom was awarded the Changing Attitudes Award as part of the annual Confor Dinner & Awards 2023, in recognition of his work promoting greater understanding and awareness of the sector.

"It's a bit emotive that word 'attitudes', isn't it? I think that we're all starting to acknowledge that we need to change things, whether that is attitudes, or policy, or just the way we work together. We all know in the industry that unless you plan it, plant it, manage it for timber, you're not going to get timber out the other end.

"I personally believe that it's incumbent on all of us to try and make the changes to make that happen. And I guess I'm driven to step out of my daily work life and do what I can. Getting out there, getting into the mix and talking to people. Some stuff lands, some stuff doesn't."

Tom has been the driving force behind Wood for the Trees, a series of films on forest management and resilient woodlands with over 60,000 views on YouTube. This project in particular was highlighted by the Changing Attitudes judges.

"That came about from the belief that our industry is too polarised," Tom explained. "We still have the environmentalists on one side and the commercial processors on the other. It's better than it used to be but it's very easy to

shout from your side and say that we need more trees for timber, while the other side shouts about nature recovery.

"It's all very plausible and true.

But the hard work and

the productive work is the messy bit in the middle. So, there has to be some diplomacy - everyone has to accept they're not going to get everything they want.

"The point of the film series was me as the commercial guy to get together with Charly [Le Marchant], who describes herself as more on the environmental side, and



CHANGING FOR THE SAKE OF TOMORROW

Eleanor O'Neill caught up with Tom Barnes, Managing Director of Vastern Timber, at the Confor Woodland Show to discuss changing attitudes and the landscape for homegrown timber.



Tom Barnes



© Vastern Timber

Hens Wood Larch



Tom accepting award from Trudy Harrison MP

do a project where we can tackle some issues, talk to people in the know, and just try to dig around in that messy middle.”

Tom has also been working closely with Confor and others in the industry to develop a National Wood Strategy for England. The Strategy will outline the necessary steps for increasing wood productivity in

Britain, as well as illustrating how growth in the sector can contribute positively to net zero, biodiversity gain, housing and health.

He said: “I always find myself kind of at the front, saying my piece, and I think when you get a reputation for being vocal and willing to take part, you get invited to do more things.

“The National Wood Strategy was a case of me believing, again, that we collectively have to take advantage of the current situation. We have a supportive Forestry Minister, we have a statutory planting target, there are official bodies like the Environmental Audit Committee doing all sorts of reports.

“Lots of stuff was coming together and it felt like there was an opportunity to move things on. I thought Confor ought to take the lead role in that and then somehow also volunteered myself.

“It’s been great to have that involvement and hopefully when we deliver it in the next couple of months, there will be a positive outcome. I think it’s not so much the final report we put out but it’s about having a focal point that generates conversations and energises things. A roadmap that’s got general consensus.

“So, for me, the next step is to get this published and get as much buy in as we can.”

Tom Barnes will be one of the speakers at Confor’s upcoming policy conference, ‘Green Growth: Why wood is the missing low carbon link’. Book your tickets online and join us in London on 7 December 2023.



Royal Wootton Bassett Sawmill

© Vastern Timber



Industry frustration at 'premature' publication of latest UK Forestry Standard

Confor has written to the lead minister on the UK Forestry Standard to express its deep frustration with what it sees as the premature publication of the new edition of the UKFS on 3 October.

The new version of the UKFS includes a major change to reduce the maximum single species allocation in a forest management unit from 75 per cent to 65 per cent.

Following representations from members along the supply chain and across the UK, Confor had sought progress on a range of actions intended to scope out and mitigate the impacts of the change to avoid unnecessary damage to members, including nurseries and some existing forests.

Stuart Goodall, Confor's Chief Executive said: "Based on correspondence that Confor had received from the project board overseeing the review of the UKFS, we had expected that further collaborative work would have been undertaken before the countdown to implementation was implemented.

"Based on what we have heard from both nurseries and managers of existing forests, we have real concerns that needed further discussion and exploration and in the correspondence we received we were told that officials were keen to have those further discussions as well, which would include the timescale for implementation. We were therefore surprised when publication took place at the start of October.

As a result of its concerns, Confor has written to Mairi Gougeon MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands for the Scottish Government.

[Ms Gougeon is the lead minister on the UKFS across the four UK administrations].

The letter, from Mr Goodall, begins: "I am writing to express the deep frustration, and in some cases anger, felt by nursery, forestry and wood processing businesses who have sought to work constructively with officials leading on the revision of the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) and who now feel let down."

He says it was the "clear understanding" of Confor and member businesses that the UKFS would not be published before further discussions on the concerns expressed by the industry on "a small number of key actions".

Disappointed

This meant the industry was surprised and disappointed by publication, which kick-started a 12-month transition period to allow guidance to be updated, to give users time to become familiar with the new edition, and to permit draft woodland plans to be finalised.

Mr Goodall said the nursery sector could be particularly badly affected by the suddenness of publication.

He explained: "As anyone in the industry is well aware, nurseries need to know what species they should stock additional supplies of well in advance of planting - because they need to secure the seed, plant it out and grow the young trees ready for woodland owners to use. The premature publication of the UKFS will truncate that process unnecessarily and is likely to mean that when a forest owner is newly required to plant more alternative tree species the

nurseries will not have the stock. Additionally, the nurseries will have stock that will now no longer be required - the challenges facing nurseries of matching supply and demand is challenging enough as it is without creating an additional, potentially significant problem."

Confor had presented a range of targeted actions to both scope out and mitigate the impact of the change and to move the industry forward in terms of promoting increased resilience to outbreaks of pests and disease linked to climate change - the driver of the change to the UKFS.

For months, Confor has been repeatedly asking to see the evidence on the threat to the UK forest that officials have been basing their policy on, but this has still not been shared.

"Confor recognises that threats are potentially increasing, but wants all action to be based on evidence and proper consultation," said Mr Goodall. "That's why we have written to the minister."

While a reply to the letter has not yet been received, Confor continues to press for progress on the actions agreed with officials and a first meeting has taken place between officials on the UKFS board and Confor.





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Working group to be established for Asulox use

Richard Hunter reports on the discussions around the future of Asulox for bracken control in Scotland

Following the Scottish and Welsh ministers' decision not to approve Asulox for bracken control earlier this year, a roundtable meeting was held by MSPs Mairi Gougeon and Lorna Slater to discuss the implications for Scotland. The roundtable consisted of a variety of interested parties including agriculture, ENGOs and Confor for forestry.

The lateness of the decision not to allow Asulox was heavily criticised, and the financial implications clearly stated for all those who rely on either applying or having it applied. The spread of bracken was noted, particularly its impact on the natural environment and historic environment. Other control methods were discussed but it was clearly highlighted that they don't work in every situation.

There was a lot of discussion about further research into control methods for difficult to access locations, plus an intention to gather an up-to-date picture on the full extent of bracken spread.

The manufacturer of Asulam (UPL) stated that they are actively progressing towards gaining UK and EU approval. Following the EFSA conclusion, they are looking at research to overturn the endocrine



disruptor conclusion. This is a long-term project filling gaps in evidence required by different chemical regulators. Asulam is used round the world and is seen as a strong market.

Three actions were taken from the meeting:

1. Establishment of a small working group to continue engagement and lead on next

2. Updated guidance for all land managers to be in place for the 2024 season via support of the UK Bracken Strategic Framework.

3. To ensure that the decision is on the 2024 Asulox Emergency Application is communication to stakeholders earlier in the year.

Scottish Woodlands strengthens senior team

Scottish Woodlands have strengthened their senior team with the appointment of five new Regional Managers. The new managers are Charlotte Cavey-Wilcox (South-East), Oli Hands (North-East), Gareth Owens (England & Wales), Ben Taylor (North-West) and Neil White (Central).

Ian Robinson, Managing Director of Scottish Woodlands Ltd, said: "I'm delighted to see these great forestry leaders promoted. They have worked extremely hard to be appointed regional managers, and have the talent and drive to help the company achieve even greater success."

Charlotte, who has been with the firm since 2002, said: "I've always loved working with clients to create new woodlands. I'm really interested in wildlife monitoring, and recording what we find in forests. I love pointing out that

you do find great biodiversity in conifer forests - so I can indulge my passion at the same time as doing my job!"

Her team has two large woodland creation schemes which should start planting this year - Whitlaw, near Lauder and Albierigg, near Canonbie, Dumfries & Galloway. Alongside smaller schemes, Charlotte said the team hopes to plant around 1000 hectares this season.

Charlotte, based at the Melrose office, is the firm's first female regional manager. She added: "I love mentoring junior staff coming into the business and although I might be the first woman in my role, I definitely won't be the last."

Oli Hands, who joined Scottish Woodlands Ltd in summer 2022, said: "I love the variety of work and the places we get to visit, including the Glen Dye Moor project in Aberdeenshire, as well as Brewdog's Lost Forest, near Aviemore - both ambitious natural capital projects involving large-scale peatland restoration and native

woodland establishment.

Gareth Owen, who has worked with the company for 15 years, described some of the major new woodland creation projects he and his team were working on. These include 12 projects in North-East England for a major landowner, totalling around 2,000 hectares (the largest cluster of new woodland creation projects in England) as well as a 200-hectare woodland creation scheme in South Wales.

Neil White, who joined Scottish Woodlands Ltd in January 2017, won the Future Forestry Leader at the Confor Awards earlier this year. His team is working on a wide range of projects including Coulshill, near Auchterarder, the largest new commercial forest in Scotland for ten years, as well as a range of natural capital and carbon-based schemes.

Ben Taylor, has been with the company for 12 years, said: "Alongside the management of commercial forestry, native woodland expansion and habitat restoration projects form a significant part of our work in the northwest."



Charlotte Cavey-Wilcox



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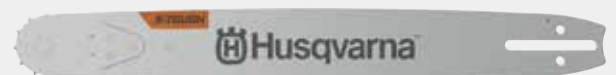
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Inaugural agroforestry event reports huge success

The UK's first ever Agroforestry Show saw "the beginning of change" with consensus across around 1,200 delegates that trees are key to ensuring food production while tackling climate change and biodiversity loss.



Delegates on the farm walk

More than a thousand people backed a 'win-win' future of farming with trees for climate and farm resilience at a groundbreaking event held in September.

The show, organised by the Soil Association and Woodland Trust, saw farmers, foresters, researchers, environmentalists, and policy makers sharing insights and advice on how to help farm businesses benefit from trees.

Eastbrook Farm in Wiltshire hosted two days of workshops and talks covering how combining trees with livestock or crops can help both arable and pastoral farms to protect livestock, crops, soils, rivers, biodiversity, and climate.

Speaking during the closing session, forester Ruth Pybus of Broadleaf Wales highlighted how the two sectors were finding common ground. She said: "It's been a brilliant opportunity - I've loved meeting farmers who are feeling positive about having trees on their farm. It's the same conversation I have with people who are new to owning woodland. You're going to get fantastic biodiversity, you're going to do things that are great for carbon, and for air quality - but it's more than just all those brilliant things, it's also a good resource."

Practical opportunities

Essex farmer George Young, who farms livestock organically and started planting trees in an agroforestry system two years ago, commented: "The show has been fantastic. The big thing for me was just how many practical opportunities there were for planting trees and so many different ideas. It's a sign that there's more interest in agroforestry and I'm excited by how broad the term has become and that it's being accepted as the right approach."

"I think we're going to see a big upsurge of different planting styles in the next few years when people see what agroforestry can mean and realise that it can fit into their style of farming. It genuinely feels like the beginning of proper change."

After a recap on current, limited funding options in a session with policymakers, many also called for the investment and policy changes needed to help farmers

make this long-term commitment. There were particular concerns for tenant farmers.

Although none were able to give details of any new schemes to boost uptake, representatives from all four UK governments were positive about supporting agroforestry to help deliver benefits for both food production and the environment.

Soil Association Chief Executive Helen Browning said: "The extraordinary number of people here has shown there's a real thirst for knowledge on agroforestry from both the traditional forestry and farming sectors. Farming with trees is clearly going to be a huge part of our futures, and never has that been more evident than this week where we've experienced 30-degree heat in September."

"If our farms are going to be resilient to face the future with happy and healthy animals and crops that grow well then trees are going to be a big part of that, as well as being very useful for reaching our environmental goals. It's a win-win."

"We have gone beyond a consensus that trees are a good thing, into the practical detail of how to do it. So, it is no longer about the 'why' or 'whether' but into the 'how' we do it - whether that's knocking down the barriers such as tenure and policy, or into the specifics of how, together, we crack on with it successfully in a cost-effective way."

Woodland Trust Chief Executive Dr Darren Moorcroft closed the show by saying he hoped all had left "inspired and energised" by the fact that agroforestry is the future and that "the UK now needs to reach the tipping point to take us from a really powerful set of early adopters into a mainstream conversation".



Photo credit: Pete Williams

Soil Association's Helen Browning: "a thirst for knowledge on agroforestry."



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NEW KOMATSU FOREST HQ UNVEILED IN CARLISLE

One Friday in the September sunshine marked a milestone for Komatsu Forest UK as Managing Director Stephen Bellas and his team opened their brand-new facility near Carlisle Airport.

The impressive state-of-the-art building, purpose built by Cubby Construction and representing a £4 million investment, is both large and modern and blends well with its surroundings.

The opening event on 8 September was very well attended, and the Komatsu Forest team were on hand to show people around and answer any questions.

Guests were treated to a tour of the premises, starting at the front of the building, which holds the large entrance, parts reception, training room, large open plan air-conditioned office, staff canteen, toilets, and meeting room, spread over two floors.

Out in the workshops, the main service bay can easily house three machines at the



same time. It is equipped with an automated lubrication delivery system for servicing and a three-exhaust fume extraction system, so machines can be running inside without putting engineers' health at risk.

A 10-tonne lifting capacity overhead

crane can access the whole workshop for any heavy lifting that's required.

The fabrication workshop is equipped with cutting and welding equipment for additional guarding and repairs and the spare parts warehouse holds the automat-





ed parts delivery system, which will hold 80% of Komatsu's spare parts, with a storage area for the larger components.

After a lunch of fish and chips, the official opening ceremony of the facility was led by the Mayor of Carlisle, Abdul Harid, and Japanese Consul General Tadashii Fujiwara, who cut the ribbon and unveiled a new commemorative plaque.

Mayor Harid said: "It is a huge boost for the local area and for Carlisle. For Komatsu, the second-largest manufacturer in the world, to come to Carlisle is truly an honour and a privilege."

Cumberland council officials and executives from KF One, Komatsu Forest's production plant in Umeå, Sweden, were also in attendance. This was an important event, not just for Komatsu Forest UK, but for the local Cumbrian community as it shows Komatsu's commitment to supporting the local economy and securing employment in the industry.

Evening festivities

Guests were piped into a beautifully laid out marquee at The Garden at Eden, near Carlisle Airport, which boasted panoramic views of the surrounding fells and floodlit water garden. The 300 guests were treated to drinks and canapes before being served a delicious four-course meal with entertainment between courses from local young drama students.



The meal was followed by Scottish band Highway, who played an eclectic mix of new and old songs to get everyone up on the dance floor well into the small hours.

This was a perfectly executed day from start to finish with exceptional hospitality from Stephen and all the team at Komatsu, fine dining with a great mix of people. It will be fondly remembered for a long time to come.

Article and photos kindly shared by Rab Easton, Forest Machine Magazine.



The first electric truck of a Scottish Forestry funded trial to decarbonise timber transport has arrived at its destination.

Scotlog Sales Ltd of Inverness have taken delivery of a new 44 tonne Volvo FM rigid and drag unit to their site in Inverness. Believed to be the first of its kind in the UK, fitted with a specialist Metsatek timber body and Ecco bolsters, the Volvo Truck and Bus (Scotland) supplied truck will further enhance the low carbon supply chain of roundwood delivered into Norbord Inverness.

Deliveries of round timber are shipped in from the forests of the West coast and North of Scotland and will now be hauled from the Port of Inverness to the West Fraser Norbord site at Dalcross with the 666hp electric truck. The truck was trialled quayside in early October and will soon become a familiar sight on the A96.

The Scottish Government recognises that transport is the largest contributor to Scottish greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for 26% of all emissions in 2020. Scottish Forestry has awarded £452,000



Electric timber truck hits the road in the Highlands of Scotland

towards a three-year trial which will test the use of state-of-the-art electric timber wagons to transport timber.

Announcing the funding package earlier in the year, Rural Affairs Secretary Mairi Gougeon said: "Forestry is vital to helping Scotland achieve its net zero target by 2045. Around 7.6 million tonnes of harmful CO2 is taken out of the atmosphere from Scotland's trees each year and the timber used in houses and other timber products

lock away carbon for its lifetime.

"The forestry sector is innovative and always using new technology to increase its business efficiencies. I welcome this new trial and look forward to hearing more about the findings as we drive closer to Net Zero."

As part of the project, which is the first of its kind in the UK, two Scottish timber companies, James Jones & Sons Ltd and Scotlog, are partnering with the Volvo Group and Cleaner EV to undertake the demonstrator project.

Around 7 million tonnes of wood are harvested from Scotland's forests each year and transported to sawmills, board manufacturers and other processors, mostly on 44 tonne diesel lorries. The forestry sector, whilst inherently green, is keen to use modern technology to tackle timber transport issues as part of its overall efforts to decarbonise and reach net zero.

A key element of the three-year trial is that all the partners involved are committed to sharing their experiences of running the electric lorries with others in the timber and rural haulage sectors.

Creel Maritime Ltd consultants, who

are managing the project, will monitor the use of the lorries and arrange knowledge exchange opportunities over the course of the following three years.

Neil Stoddart, Director of Creel Maritime added: "In terms of road haulage, the timber industry is pretty advanced in looking for solutions to decarbonise. For example, we are reducing diesel lorry miles on many projects and opting for transport by sea.

"This is a very exciting project but there are big challenges in running HGV lorries on electric power, mainly on cost grounds and infrastructure. This three-year trial will look into all these aspects and I'm keen to share as much detail on this with the industry."

In addition to a wide-ranging programme of decarbonisation for other modes of transport, including a target of 20% reduction in car kilometres driven, the Scottish Government is working with the road haulage industry to remove the need for new petrol and diesel heavy vehicles by 2035. This is in advance of the UK government's decision to cease the sale of new petrol and diesel heavy goods vehicles by 2040.





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CPL offer one of the largest ranges of access equipment for the arborist sector from grounds and park maintenance up to large forestry projects.

Such a vast sector deserves a variety of solutions to ensure safety and efficiency. Therefore, CPL dedicate design and manufacturing resources to ensure there is an option for all interventions.

A firm favourite has always been the Type approved Pick-up mounted platform manufactured by CPL. The 4x4 Isuzu D-Max and Toyota Hilux base vehicles make sure the operator can gain access no matter the terrain and the 360° boom rotation system ensures access to everything.

With accessory options fitted inhouse from equipment and PPE lockers, cages to protect beacons and company livery/ chapter markings, CPL offer a full turnkey solution making the purchase process straight forward and stress free. Therefore, the units are a popular choice and why Arborists now see the Klubb Group as a major commercial vehicle supplier within the sector. This has been cemented with the design of the ATAT (All terrain arb truck) specifically developed for tree surgeons/ forestry and improved with customer feedback meaning that CPL now offer this as a drop side and waste disposal unit with mesh sides.

Working closely with the Italian design experts AlmaCrawler, as the UK dealer, has ensured that CPL now have a solution for every aspect of green maintenance. Although spider lifts have been a firm favourite within the arborist sector for some time, the B1890 and B1570 Almac designs are somewhat different. These units are a combination of both a self-propelled wheeled platform and stabilised tracked platforms. The one-of-a-kind Spiderboom technology allows the platform to be moved without stowing. This makes multiple tree/ shrubbery maintenance more efficient which in turn saves time and money.

Almac have also sold their scissor lift products into some of the biggest nurseries in the world. High performance lifts such as the BIBBI 870 EVO mini scissor can move across rough terrain and can overcome slopes up to 20° longitudinally and 15° laterally.

New for 2023 is the Dinolift dealership. The Finnish based company manufacture trailer-mounted MEWP's, DINO lightweight 4x4 and DINO spiders. Within the range are electric options for sensitive environments, and all Dino's have 360 degree continuous boom rotation as standard.

There is a great range of solutions available through CPL from Palfinger Platforms. The 3.5t chassis options range from 20m to an impressive 28m. For the larger forestry projects there are some superb telescopic booms reaching all the way up to 90m but generally the 28m to 48m selection are the most favoured due to their versatility.

CPL have also designed a 20m articulated boom mounted on a 3.5t Iveco Daily. This model has a front fitted basket allowing for precise access to trees overhanging building roofs. The CPL 20m Chassis mount also has a high load capacity: the articulating aerial platforms are designed to carry users (2-person basket) as well as equipment, making them ideal for work where tools and equipment need to be transported to the working height.

With an internal Customer Support team, CPL can offer UK wide maintenance and support to all businesses using access equipment. The engineering team have had extensive training on not only CPL manufactured products, but all types of equipment. There is also a vast stock of spare parts available for next day delivery within one of the five facilities based in Kettering, Northamptonshire.



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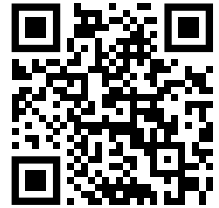


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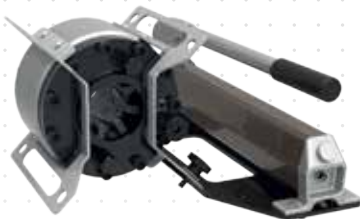
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Despite the weather's best efforts, the Confor Woodland Show succeeded in bringing together voices from the world of forestry and wood to learn, connect, and welcome the event back to the industry calendar.

It was a wet and muddy two days at the Confor Woodland Show but that didn't stop hundreds of visitors from braving the elements and making the event a success.

Held this year at the Bath & West Showground in Shepton Mallet, the Show returned for the first time in four years on 21-22 September and drew an audience from across the British Isles.

Exhibitors ranged from machinery manufacturers and forest management ser-

vices to specialised distributors and new innovators.

"It was brilliant to see so many areas of the forest and wood industries represented at the Show," said Eleanor O'Neill, Communications Manager at Confor. "It really goes to show how varied and wide-reaching our work and the work of our Members is."

"The conversations being had, even if they took place as people hid from the weather, were insightful, educational, and above all forged new connections between

the professionals there. I hope everyone who attended, exhibitor, visitor or speaker, found great value in the event."

Quality on display

Among the exhibitor displays, one definitely stood out in B. Price Mus-Max Specialist Ltd's area. The Mus-Max Wood Terminator 8 has been painted pink and blue to help raise awareness and money for Cancer Research and Young Lives vs Cancer.

continued on p34





Wood-Mizer also demonstrated the capabilities of their battery-powered LT15 Wide sawmill, released earlier this year as an alternative to diesel and petrol reliant machinery.

At the other end of the Showground, Forest Research invited attendees to take part in 'The Great Forest Carbon Challenge', which tested their skills at manag-

ing a woodland for carbon benefits.

In short, there was a buzz of activity everywhere you looked, thanks to the efforts of our 90 exhibitors.

- Jas P Wilson celebrated their 25th anniversary of manufacturing Botex Machinery by showcasing new upgrades and features alongside a huge mix of other machines.
- CPL demonstrated a range of access

platforms and vehicle conversions, including the Dino 220RXT II, a specialised piece of equipment designed specifically for arborists with extraordinary reach and spider boom stability.

- A. W. Jenkinson's team were in the marquee, talking all things clearance, forwarding and chipping.

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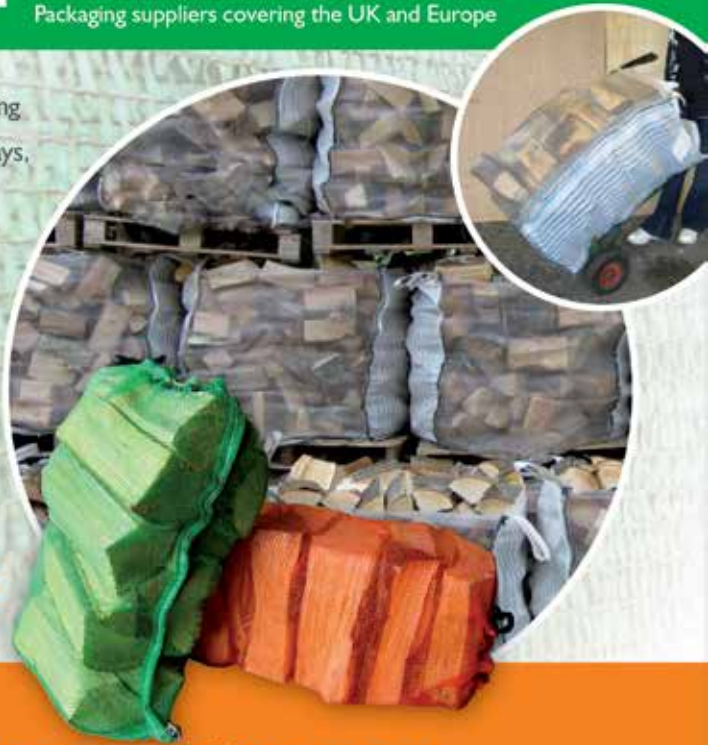
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continued from p34

- Euroforest thanked their clients and customers in the region for coming out to see them and enjoyed meeting many new people interested in their available services in South England.
- British Horse Loggers had several of their brilliant, well-trained horses doing demonstrations in the woodland area of the Show throughout the two days.
- Access Platform Sales had their technical experts on hand to show off a range of powerful Hinowa machines, such as a TPX1800 tracked forklift and a HS701 mini dumper.
- Tubex were on hand to share the latest on their Collection & Recycling Programme as well as providing a sneak peek of some upcoming independent research into soil biodegradability.
- NNZ were showcasing innovative firewood packaging solutions that addressed presentation and transportation requirements.
- Plus so much more!



Even if they didn't have a stand, many professionals from around the industry were able to make connections at the Show. Nicholas Allison from Biomass Connect, for one, reported that he had some great conversations with small and medium-sized arboriculture and forestry company owners who are already taking advantage of opportunities presented by the emerging biomass industry.

The Forest Workers Zone invited people working in the practical side of the industry to gather for information, advice and networking. Experts held demonstrations on best practice skills such as chainsaw maintenance and a thought-provoking roundtable discussion on diversity in the sector's workforce considered the shifting landscape.

Anyone who tired of shop talk also had the chance to try their hands at archery, axe-throwing, or to watch the daily chainsaw speed carving exhibitions from Will Lee and Ant Beetlestone.

Many visitors chose to spend their time in the Confor tent, engaging with our exciting range of talks and presentations.

Open for discussion

Confor welcomed leading industry voices to its tent

Hugh Williams of John Clegg & Co kicked us off with an overview of the forest sales market in England and Wales over breakfast on Thursday. He pointed to the "unexpected factors" that can drive the price and level of interest in a forest sale.

One example was a woodland in Wales that saw multiple potential buyers walk away due to the conditions surrounding the carbon capture of the site. As 100 years' of credits had already been sold, any ongoing profit would go to the original owner, rather than the new buyers who would still have to manage the woodland as required by that carbon agreement.

Hugh also invited his colleague, ESG & Sustainability Lead Jonty Rawcliffe, to comment on the potential of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) to become a concern of woodland values.

"BNG becomes mandatory in November [in England] and it's essentially that when any major development takes place where habitat gets destroyed, that needs to be offset with a net gain of at least 10%. Woodland will play quite a key part within that," he said.

"The market itself is still emerging. In terms of a landowner perspective and investment moving forward within environmental markets, depending on the scale of what you're looking to go into, BNG may not be the most profitable method of doing that. We would maybe look more so at UK grants or carbon credits but it is an al-

ternative that will potentially impact on the value of an overall woodland."

Pierre Talpe, Director of Rainbow Professional Ltd, and Dougal Driver, GEO of Grown in Britain, then delivered a collaborative presentation on certified products from British woodlands, including the Rainbow Terra.

Their latest tree shelter is fabricated from UK wood and a plant-based and biodegradable resin from Northern Europe. It is soil-certified and the circularity of its lifespan ("wood protecting wood") is a major factor in Rainbow Professional's pursuit of Grown in Britain status.

"We believe that what's ahead of us in terms of moving away from plastics is quite a big challenge," Pierre explained. "We have tried to have a focus on using the right materials and adhering to all the right standards to finally be able to develop a product that has a fully clean conscience.

"We have a real opportunity by using waste materials to actually develop a product that is near carbon zero. How great would it be if we can move to a planting scheme where you can actually start contributing from day one and have almost no impact from your planting works? The moment your tree's in the ground, it can start doing something from the environment."

The afternoon started with a bustling seminar tent, full of attendees keen to hear about the progress of the National Wood Strategy for England. Chaired by Andy Howard of CSX Carbon, Confor's John

continued on p38

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CONFOR WOODLAND SHOW

Bruce, the Forestry Commission's Ian Tubby, and Tom Barnes from Vastern Timber made up a panel of experts to discuss the need for the Strategy and what it hopes to address.

Tom, who is co-authoring the Strategy with Confor's Andy Leitch, explained: "I felt that we are effectively sleepwalking into a situation where supplies of timber are going to start dropping off. As a sawmiller, I can't see what I'm going to be cutting in the future.

"I was sort of putting pressure on the industry to step up and say 'we need a way forward, we need to understand what we need to do'. And then somehow volunteered myself to do it in the same breath. So I've been working very closely with John and with Andy Leitch to try to make this as collaborative as possible.

"We've spoken to NGOs, to people in the carbon market, and obviously people in the industry. There's been quite a lot of dialogue with Forestry Commission and the Defra team to try and pull together a consensus."

Much of the discussion centred around the competing priorities of new woodlands and how a focus on timber production may impact other outcomes.

"I think there really is a big opportunity



for forestry to demonstrate that if you're producing timber sustainably, then you are getting the biodiversity and the amenity value, the better water, the cleaner air - almost as a byproduct of that timber production. There is absolutely an opportunity to present that case to government," said Ian.

However, he also pointed to the required balance in forestry messaging. "The sector as a whole has maybe been a bit guilty in the past of trying to sell the message that all woodlands can provide all benefits to all people.

"Actually, if you're planting a woodland where the primary objective is timber production, you're probably not maximising for biodiversity and, similarly, if you're real-

ly promoting biodiversity, you're probably not doing all you could for timber production.

"As part of the Strategy, there's a great opportunity to illustrate that woodland creation and woodland management can really increase that natural capital value. But the degree to which particular ecosystem it services us ultimately up to the landowner."

John added: "Ultimately, we have to have clear targets. For example, in woodland creation at the moment, we really want to see targets for timber production as well and then it's measurable and can be held to account along with everything else."

continued on p40

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John Bruce,
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Photo credit: Forestry Journal

The day rounded off with talks from Professor Rob MacKenzie, Birmingham Institute of Forest Research (BIFoR), on the research being done into what impact the predicted levels of CO2 in 2050 will have on broadleaf woodlands, and from Forest Research's Ruben Manso on how the ancestry of a Sitka spruce can indicate its resilience against disease and adverse weather.

After another breakfast event sponsored by the manufacturers of Aspen Fuel, Anglo American Oil Company, the Forestry Commission led a presentation on forestry's role in nature recovery.

Mark Stevenson, Head of Nature Recovery in the Policy Advice Team, described the practice as "managing land, water and sea for environmental outcomes". As an example, Nick Hoare, Chair of the Confor Woodland Show and owner of Stourhead (Western) Estate, shared his experiences in managing a continuous cover conifer stand within his woodland.

The biodiversity benefits of the system were reported by Butterfly Conservation in a previous issue (FTN February 2023).

Finally, Robert Matthews from Forest Research brought the seminars to a close

with a talk on the carbon options for woodland creation. He said: "In some scenarios, there can be short-term emissions of CO2 but long-term benefits. Somehow we have to reconcile that interventions in woodland management might have negative impacts now, but will deliver positively in the future. There's a dilemma and a trade-off, always, between the short-term and long-term goals."

A huge thanks to all our presenters and panellists who did a wonderful job keeping our guests engaged and encouraging new perspectives.

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A resilient market, but lower prices are the new reality



John Clegg & Co's **Simon Hart** FICFor FRICS and **Hugh Williams** FICFor report on the current forest markets across Britain

The forestry market remains resilient, but macro-economic factors mean that values are lower than the recent past.

Changes to the economic picture are well documented, with interest rates forecast to remain relatively high for a few years at least. If you can make 5% in the bank with no risk, forestry at 1-2% IRR looks like a difficult sell. Capital values have definitely fallen.

Scotland

Prices and transaction numbers are both down. One of the big talking points this year has been the failure of two very large woodlands to sell; Glen Shira in Argyll and Griffin in Perthshire, extending to over 6,000ha, dominated by spruce with a combined guide price of some £160 million. Individual lots range from £19K/ha (all Scottish figures are per stocked hectare) for 21-year-old crops to £37K/ha for 35-year-old crops (the latter including some wind farm income).



Where seller's expectations and buyer's reality meet, deals are happening. Wester Thomaston, a high YC, 5-year-old spruce crop in central Scotland found a buyer at c.£12k/ha.

Ledard, similar location, but average

15-year-old trees sold for some £16K/ha. The two Cleish woods, north of Edinburgh, at 20-25 years, probably sold for £20-22K/ha.

It will be interesting to see how the 260ha of conifers at FLS Peel Forest sells. This good spruce site, literally on the Scotland/England border, average 20 years old with a guide of some £18K/ha.

Plantation prices are clearly down and that translates to lower land values. The heady days of planting land at £15K/ha have clearly passed (for the time being). John Clegg & Co with Strutt and Parker recently sold a property in Aberdeenshire with plantable land at some £10K/ha.

Productive plantation values have fluctuated significantly in the last few years: up a lot and then down a bit. Interest rates and timber prices are the key drivers, but for a long-term investment, is the commercial market overly influenced by short-term changes in timber price?

Demand for established amenity type woodlands is less widespread in Scotland than England. Stronvar has a beautiful location and a guide price of less than £5K/ha for 60ha of young, mixed, largely non-productive woodland. It will be interesting to see market appetite for such a property because those chasing the carbon dollar are creating a lot of this type of woodland in Scotland.

The new UK Forestry Standard requirement of "no more than 65% any one species" (we think this actually means Sitka) will affect the productivity of most upland forests which currently meet the widely accepted 75% limit. On many sites, with limited species choice, 10% will have to be converted to something less productive, and arguable less suited to the site; perhaps thereby reducing resilience.

With current species choice, the 65% requirement will reduce values.

England

In England, the market for woodland is better described as 'markets', reflecting the different values for the many types of woodlands - the small, the medium and the large, and then compounded by different species.

The fundamentals of woodland value - access, boundaries, condition, diseases, externalities, and financial options for the

continued on p45



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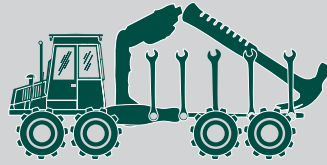
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wood - remain true. However, some of these factors are more subjective, such as the appeal of a woodland with a stream and a pleasant view, so there can be significant variation in the values of woodlands that appear similar. Small woods can attract high £/acre prices, albeit that this premium declines as the woodland size increases.

The small 2.5-acre Scrap Wood in Surrey attracted great interest and secured a price of over £21,000/acre. This for a woodland of c.15 year's old, unthinned broadleaves and no public access. A slightly larger 14-acre woodland in Yorkshire, comprising largely of silver birch regeneration, also caught the eye of many buyers. Its rugged location, opportunity for improvement and ample wildlife (hares, deer) added to its appeal, and it sold for £8,500/acre.

Larger woodlands are still being placed on the market, such as Sandford Woods (Berkshire) and Felthorpe Woods (Norfolk). Although different in form, scale and price, the former being 104 acres (guide price £1m) of mixed woodland (including a total of 274 acres of sporting rights in this and the adjoining wood) and the latter 160 acres (guide at £1.2m) of commercial conifer in Norfolk, both provide potential for immediate returns from the quality timber.

“THE FUNDAMENTALS OF WOODLAND VALUE – ACCESS, BOUNDARIES, CONDITION, DISEASES, EXTERNALITIES, AND FINANCIAL OPTIONS FOR THE WOOD – REMAIN TRUE.”

Wales

The fundamentals and complexities of woodland value also applies to Wales. In addition, policy changes are making an impact on woodlands - even if they were perhaps not the intended aim of the policy. The changes in council tax in Wales, where rates for second homes increased to a maximum of 300% (from 100%) has impacted on those who have second homes set within or including woodlands, and who now find the pool of potential buyers become more selective.

Whilst the number of the woodland owners in this situation is small, it is leading to interesting discussions on how their woodlands are managed. For example, the second home may have enabled the woodland to be managed over long weekends and holidays.

At a larger scale is the controversial Sustainable Farming Scheme, whereby 10% of a farm holding will be required to be “woodland” in order to obtain baseline 5-year payments from 2025. Note that

there are other elements that have to be met, such as a farm biosecurity plan and regular soil analysis, in order to be eligible for the payment. Some would regard this as a regulatory “stick”, in addition to the grant based “carrots” to achieve the goals of the Welsh Government.

This policy is aimed to contribute to the Welsh Government's target of planting an additional 180,000 hectares by 2050 - this is equivalent to 10% of Welsh farmland. There is much debate on this 10% requirement, and this is likely to continue. The details of the policy are not complete. However, might those who are short of their 10% - subject to eligibility - buy existing woodland elsewhere in Wales and add this to their holding to reach the required percentage?

As ever, the devil will be in the detail. One last change is also affecting those looking at buying/selling/managing woodland in Wales - the new 20mph speed limits mean that it can take a little longer to get to them!

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UC016G
UC015G
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UC006G
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Wildlife crime: Preparing for change



Tony Convery, Senior Solicitor, and **Caoimhe Hunter Blair**, a Solicitor specialising in litigation, from Brodies LLP fill us in on expected changes to wildlife crime law in Scotland.

Wildlife crime continues to be a key risk for rural businesses, including those operating in the forestry sector. With changes to legislation on the horizon in Scotland, now is the time for rural businesses to ensure they have a compliance framework in place to manage wildlife crime risk.

WHAT IS WILDLIFE CRIME?

Wildlife crime involves the injury to, or interference with, protected animals or plants, or their habitats.

Under wildlife crime legislation, in certain circumstances, employers and businesses can be held criminally responsible for the conduct of their employees or contractors; this is known as 'vicarious liability'.

Wildlife crime can also lead to other consequences. For example, in early 2023, an estate in Angus had its ability to access general licences restricted because of suspected wildlife crimes against birds, and alleged trapping offences.

WHAT DOES A WILDLIFE CRIME INVESTIGATION INVOLVE?

Wildlife crime is usually investigated by specialist officers from Police Scotland's wildlife crime team. Common steps include attending sites (including, in certain circumstances, without notice), seizing evidence, and carrying out interviews with witnesses and suspects.

At the conclusion of any investigation the police may submit a report to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service – the Scottish public prosecutor, or Crown). The Crown decides whether or not a prosecution should take place.

The maximum penalties for certain wildlife crime offences were increased in 2020, with serious offences now attracting sentences of up to five years' imprisonment and/or unlimited fines. Enforcement action is a real risk. For example, in 2022, an Aberdeen company director was convicted of authorising the destruction of badger setts and fined more than £9,000.

WHAT COMPLIANCE STEPS CAN BE TAKEN?

To mitigate the risk of enforcement action, rural businesses should have in place a



Red Deer and Sea Eagle, two of the many protected species in Scotland.

compliance framework including:

1. a wildlife crime risk assessment, which records the activities of the business, the related risks, and steps taken to address those risks;
2. a wildlife crime policy outlining the business' expectations relating to wildlife crime;
3. training of staff on wildlife crime;
4. a process for instructing and implementing the advice of experts such as ecologists.

As well as reducing the risk of being held vicariously liable for wildlife crime, having a compliance framework in place will put businesses in a good position to respond to future changes in the law.

WHAT CHANGES ARE ANTICIPATED?

The Scottish Government has just finished consulting on a variety of changes to wild-

life crime law. The proposals include a ban on the use of snares and cable restraints, and an expansion of the powers of the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA).

SSPCA inspectors already have powers to investigate animal welfare offences, such as causing an animal unnecessary suffering. The Scottish Government is proposing to increase those powers so that, while investigating animal welfare offences, SSPCA inspectors can also search for, examine and seize evidence in connection with specified wildlife crime offences.

The Scottish Government intends that Police Scotland should retain 'primacy' over wildlife crime investigations, but that there should be enhanced partnership working between agencies. If, as proposed, SSPCA's powers are expanded in the area of wildlife crime, it will provide the potential to increase the number, and complexity, of wildlife crime investigations in years to come.

When these anticipated changes are viewed alongside other recent legislative developments, it is clear that rural businesses, including in the forestry sector, will need to have a clear focus on compliance in the coming period.

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Green-tech holds forestry workshop

Green-tech recently held the first of several Forestry Workshops, exclusive to Green-tech's customers, at the Tubex Manufacturing Site in Aberdare, Wales.

The day included a tour of the facility where visitors witnessed the whole spectrum of the production process from the arrival of the raw materials, through to processing finishing and dispatch.

A presentation that followed explained the working partnership between Green-tech and Tubex, a brand of Berry Global, and how the Aberdare site is at the forefront of full circularity in tree shelter manufacture. They support this with their Collection and Recycling Scheme, which ensures responsible disposal of tree shelters, and closes the loop to increase the usage of recycled materials.

Green-tech is an official Tubex partner and the largest distributor of their products. Green-tech's premises in North Yorkshire was recently announced as an Official Tubex Collection & Recycling Programme Drop-off Hub.

The Green-tech delegates were also



given a detailed overview of the new Tubex Nature™ Tree Shelter and the recent upgrades were explained.

Green-tech's Sales Director Richard Gill commented: "The day was a huge success. 21 of our customers joined us for an informative and interesting day at the Tubex manufacturing site. It was fascinating to see the scale of the operation and the process of recycling shelters and production of new tubes.

"It provided a great opportunity to bring all parties today - the manufacturer, us as the intermediary, and the end user.

We rounded off the day with a private dining experience which was enjoyed by all."

Tubex's Pete Stevens added: "It was great to host Green-tech and some of their customers. We have a close working relationship with Green-tech, so we enjoyed showing them our facilities and explaining our planned developments.

"It's always nice for us to actually meet the end user and I was proud to see how impressed they were and to have the opportunity to answer their questions regarding our planned R&D and to take away their feedback which was incredibly useful."



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Remains of Sycamore Gap tree moved to secret location

The awful story of the sudden felling of one of Britain's most iconic trees has badly affected anyone with a love of the outdoors.

The 50-foot sycamore tree, which stood in the historic gap beside Hadrian's Wall, was so famous that its remains have had to be stored in a secret location for fear of bounty-hunters.

After standing in the 'Sycamore Gap' of north Northumberland for nearly 200 years, locals woke on 28th September to find that the beloved tree had been removed, in an act of apparently deliberate destruction.

Following the initial outcry, with visitors making a pilgrimage to the site from far and wide to stare in disbelief at where the tree stood, the sycamore was cut up and removed from the site.

Its remnants are now being held at a secret location because of fears it will fall victim to trophy hunters, like the Berlin Wall, the National Trust has said.

Police have reportedly caught several individuals attempting to take pieces of the wood, while several requests to claim it for purposes such as making artworks have also been made.

Kim McGuinness, the Northumbria police and crime commissioner, likened the incident to "stealing joy".

The lone sycamore was a 'must see' for thousands of visitors to the area each

year and was regarded by many in Northumberland and the north east of England as an emblem of the region. Situated in a dramatic dip in the landscape, it became a favourite spot for photographers and walkers alike.

Since news of its felling broke, the National Trust, which owns the site, and Northumberland National Park have received thousands of tributes, messages and suggestions for the site and the felled tree.

Andrew Poad, the site's General Manager for the National Trust said: "We've been amazed and inspired by the offers of help and good wishes we've received from here in Northumberland, around the UK, and even from overseas. It's clear that this tree captured the imaginations of so many people who visited, and that it held a special - and often poignant - place in many people's hearts."

Yet Jane Gibson, chair of the Hadrian's Wall Partnership, revealed that not everyone's intentions were benign. She told *The Sunday Times*: "The wood from the tree has been taken away and stored for safe-keeping at a secure location. There were concerns people were taking pieces of it for mementoes, like what happened with the Berlin Wall, when people would take a piece as a keepsake. It is now being safely stored as we work on potential future uses for the timber."

Mr Poad said the tree had to be removed in large sections to preserve the world-famous monument of Hadrian's Wall, and to make the site safe again for visitors. He explained: "We've explored every option for moving the tree and while it isn't possible to lift it in one go, as the tree is multi-stemmed with a large crown, we have aimed to keep the trunk in as large sections as possible, to give us flexibility on what the tree becomes in future."

The Northumberland National Park Authority said the site was its most-photographed spot and in late 2016 it was crowned English Tree of the Year in the Woodland Trust's awards. It became famous after featuring in the 1991 film *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* starring Kevin Costner - leading some to give to the nickname the Robin Hood Tree.

Mike Innerdale, the National Trust's Regional Director for the North of England, said: "In many ways, this hardy sycamore, that withstood the elements for so many years, was a symbol of nature's resilience. Sadly, that resilience is being worn away as nature in the UK becomes increasingly fragile and fragmented.

"The outpouring we've seen shows just how important the connection is between people and nature in its many forms, and as we consider plans for this special tree, and this very special place, we'll also look to harness that support for trees, landscapes and nature all across the country, and use the sycamore as a symbol of recovery."

Two men have been arrested and bailed by Northumbria Police in connection with the incident.

"IN MANY WAYS, THIS HARDY SYCAMORE, THAT WITHSTOOD THE ELEMENTS FOR SO MANY YEARS, WAS A SYMBOL OF NATURE'S RESILIENCE."

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ADAPTING FORESTS AND WOODLANDS TO THE CHANGING CLIMATE

The changing climate is a substantial threat to the future of our forests and woodlands. As conditions change and more frequent extreme weather events impact them, past practices need to be reconsidered by landowners and managers. Climate change researcher **Gail Atkinson** answers six of the questions frequently asked of Forest Research.



The main climate change risks to forests and woodlands in the UK are windthrow, flooding, wildfire, unseasonal frost, increasing frequency and severity of drought and more pests and disease outbreaks. Owners and managers are urged to take action now by building on their management plan and assessing these risks to their forest or woodland, given the long timescale of forestry.

The risk assessment may also identify opportunities, such as increased tree growth rates from longer growing seasons. Appropriate adaptation measures then need to be put in place to increase resilience and these will

need to be reviewed as conditions change and guidance evolves.

Climate change adaptation guidance and resources from Forest Research including factsheets and case studies can supplement local knowledge to help decision making, as there is no single adaptation 'recipe' to follow; each site has unique characteristics and management objectives.

How can you decide which adaptation measures to take?

The UKFS Practice Guide '*Adapting forest and woodland management to the changing climate*' (Forest Research, 2022) includes a five-step adaptation framework to help forest and woodland managers assess climate change risks and select appropriate adaptation measures. These suggest actions such as increasing species diversity and adapting infrastructure, and summarises which adaptation measures may be appropriate for different risks.

Combine your local site knowledge with information from decision support tools listed in the Guide.

What are the possible costs of undertaking adaptive measures to reduce risks?

The cost of implementing adaptation measures differ from site to site, and this cannot yet be easily quantified, although Forest Research's economists are interested in helping improve information and methods of assessment. We advise landowners and managers to review the climate change risks, the potential short- and long-term implications and weigh up the adaptation costs against those that might be incurred if the action was

Staple Hill in Gloucestershire



Photo credit: Sarah Gibson Photography

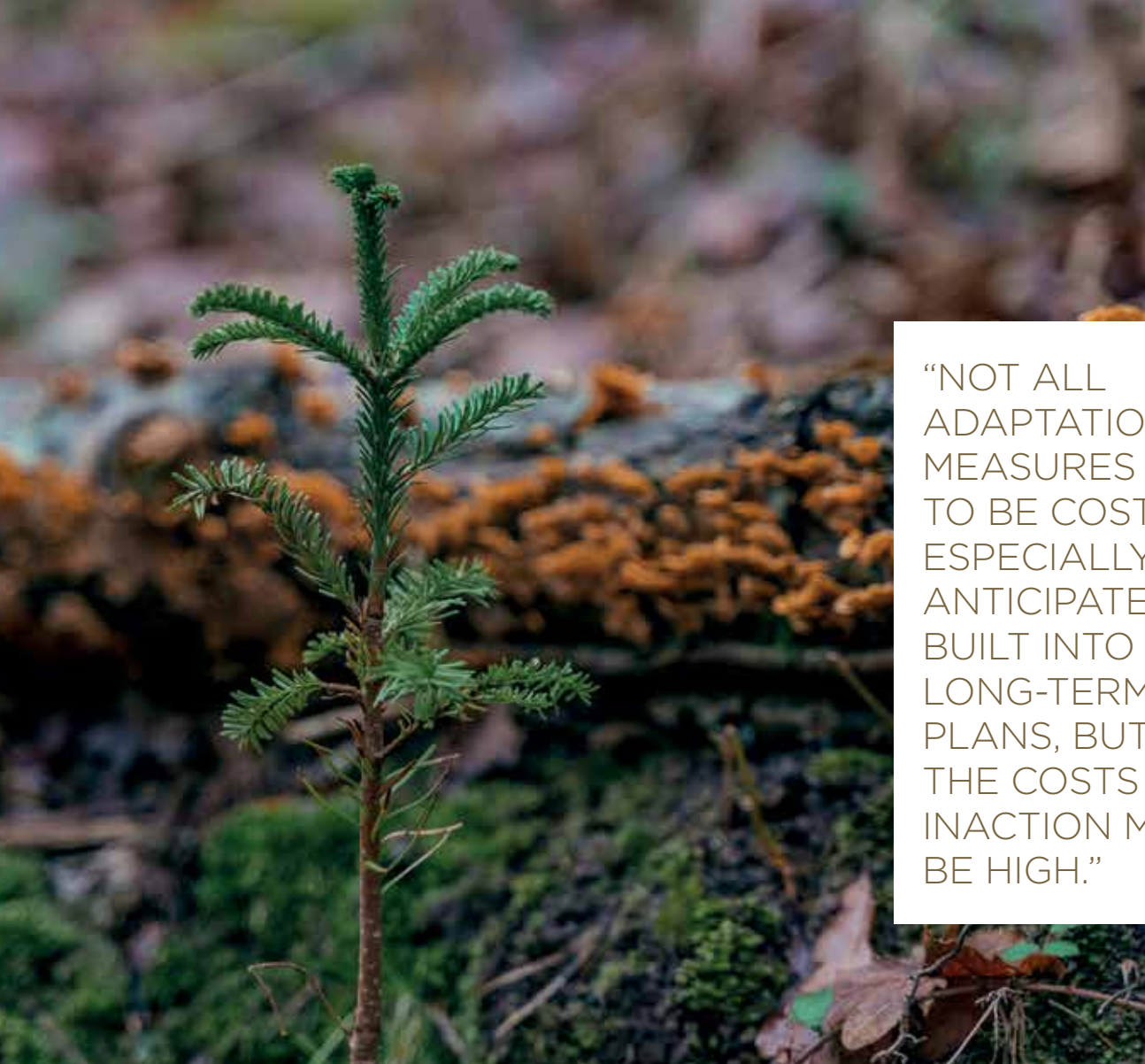


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“NOT ALL ADAPTATION MEASURES NEED TO BE COSTLY, ESPECIALLY WHEN ANTICIPATED AND BUILT INTO LONG-TERM PLANS, BUT THE COSTS OF INACTION MAY BE HIGH.”



Photo credit: Rob Waugh

not taken (including financial consequences and social and environmental implications).

Not all adaptation measures need to be costly, especially when anticipated and built into long-term plans, but the costs of inaction may be high. UKFS guidance states that for ecosystem services such as timber production, wildlife habitat provision and flood risk reduction to continue in the future, it is essential to assess risk and consider how best to adapt woodlands to the changing climate.

Which tree species will be resilient in the changing climate?

Various different adaptation measures may be necessary to build woodland resilience, and these may include species diversification. Species selection will be influenced by a wide range of factors, such as the manage-

Windthrow following Storm Arwen at John Muir Country Park nr Dunbar, Scotland.

ment objectives, local site conditions and the latest pest and disease information, as well as climate change risks. To help inform species choice, use the Forest Research Ecological Site Classification (ESC) tool which takes site and general soil information for a particular location, considers six climatic and soil variables and provides information on suitability for over 50 tree species, and takes into account projected climate change.

The output table will suggest which factors, such as soil moisture availability, may limit future growth under a future climate. You can access ESC free of charge online at www.forestresearch.gov.uk/esc. It is important that outputs from ESC are verified by local site assessment and supplemented by local knowledge (including pest and disease susceptibility). Research trials are ongoing and tree species guidance will continue to evolve.

What is the ideal species mix when moving from a monoculture to a mixed species stand?

Tree species choice should firstly be driven by local climatic conditions and soil properties. Climate change risks, UKFS requirements and management objectives for the site also need to be considered.

The Forest Development Types framework, available as an option in the ESC tool, offers a structured way of preparing a long-term vision for a forest that will contain a mixture of compatible species resilient to future threats. Flashcards for over 60 Forest Development Types and an accompanying guide to the design and management of diverse forests in Britain are available on the Forest Research website.

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FOREST RESEARCH

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What impact will climate change have on tree health?

Climate change is impacting pest and disease outbreaks in two main ways. Warmer temperatures and milder winters are increasing the ability of some pests and pathogens to survive over winter and for some insect pests to have more generations each year. In addition, increasing stress on trees from extreme weather events such as drought, windthrow and waterlogging can predispose trees to pest and pathogen attack.

Careful species and provenance selection, appropriate establishment and management approaches and planting a more diverse range of species and active woodland management should promote resilience. These should be combined with good biosecurity in forest operations and regular monitoring of tree health. Use TreeAlert to report any tree pests and diseases concerns (<https://treealert.forestresearch.gov.uk>) and Observatree for the latest advice (<https://www.observatree.org.uk>).

The occurrence and impact of forest pests and pathogens that damage trees



Wildfire adaptation measure: Fire road in Mamhead Woods in Devon.

Photo credit: John Waller

are likely to continue to increase, and therefore contingency planning as an adaptation measure is particularly important.

Will woodlands adapt to the changing climate without any intervention?

Genetic adaptation to the changing climate could occur naturally over time in genetically diverse tree populations where regeneration succeeds (for example, where herbivore pressure allows). However, climate change is already altering tree growth and the ecological functioning of some of our woodlands, as well as increasing the likelihood of damage and tree loss.

Seed production, regeneration, tree establishment, growth and mortality are all being affected, so more rapid adaptation may be needed in some locations. It is important to assess site conditions and risks to establish what actions need to be taken now. Long-term plans are essential to ensure continued woodland function and the provision of ecosystem services, even if no intervention is required at present.

For the latest climate change adaptation guidance and resources including a new suite of climate change factsheets and case study videos, visit www.forestresearch.gov.uk/climatechangehub.



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Since the COVID pandemic, we have all become familiar with using lateral flow tests as a quick & easy way of testing for the virus. Similar tests are also available for testing plants/trees for pathogens.

Pocket Diagnostic are the UK leaders in producing plant health rapid lateral flow tests which are unrivalled in terms of sensitivity and reliability. They offer a simple & rapid test specifically for *Phytophthora spp.*, Potato Virus Y (PVY), *Erwinia amylovora* (Fireblight) and *Ralstonia solanacearum* (Bacterial Wilt, Brown Rot). In just 10 minutes you can confirm whether a tree/host plant is positive or negative for the pathogen.

Phytophthora (name derived from the Greek 'plant destroyer') species are microscopic, fungus-like organisms. After honey fungus, *Phytophthora* root rot is arguably the most common cause of root and stem base decay of a wide range of trees, shrubs & plants. The species causing root and stem base decay are found within the soil, where they may survive for many years in the absence of a host plant. The organism attacks the root system and reduces the root area available for water and nutrient uptake and therefore above-ground symptoms often mimic water/environmental stress.

There are a number of different *Phytophthora* species, all causing very similar symptoms. Potato seed, herbaceous perennials, bedding plants, soft fruits, pot plants and even bulbs can also be affected, in addition to woody plants. There are often no definitive above-ground signs of infection – particularly in the early stages - so taking samples for laboratory testing has been critical for detection and management. Consequently, the availability of a rapid & accurate field test for *Phytophthora* is a very useful tool indeed.

An early diagnosis allows you to take action and save time, money, and TREES.

The test involves simply gathering a sample of living material from the plant i.e. leaf, phloem tissue, stem or root:

- Add to the buffer solution provided (which also includes several ball bearings to macerate the tissue)
- Shake vigorously for approximately a couple of minutes
- Allow the solution to settle and add 2 drops of the liquid onto your test strip. Result displayed within 10 minutes.

· Only one test per plant will be conclusive if the correct testing procedure is followed.

The most important advantages of all Profit margins are being squeezed across all industries for a variety of well-documented reasons. As a result, streamlined and cost-effective processes and procedures are sought to assist in achieving healthy profit margins. It is in this area where rapid tests could benefit those looking to reduce the cost of plant disease management and streamline their activities with the introduction of an easy-to-use and efficient testing tool.

In-field decision making

Because rapid tests produce in-field results in minutes, management strategies can be implemented faster than if a sample was sent to the lab. This quick decision making could be a clear advantage when attempting to maintain yield.

Lower cost per sample

Because a rapid test eliminates the need to send every sample to the lab, the cost per sample can be reduced. For example, if you need to test 10 samples, the cost of laboratory testing could reach the £100s. Testing 10 samples with a rapid test could cost less than £100.

Rapid Lateral flow tests for:

- ✓ Phytophthora
- ✓ Potato Virus Y
- ✓ Erwinia Amylovora
- ✓ Ralstonia Solanacearum



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All about Autumn

Julian Evans looks at the work that comes with the changing of seasons.

Every woodland owner or manager knows - or should know - that the autumn and winter are when most forestry work is done. And having carried out a heavy thinning of 66-year-old beech in my own patch, I am reviewing what needs to be done as the days shorten, temperatures drop and, perhaps, storms threaten.

I won't be thinning again for at least a decade, so it is a good time to invest in improvement operations, repairs, fencing, and even promoting regeneration as the thinning undertaken has begun the transition from even-aged monoculture to continuous cover forestry (CCF). With that in mind, rather like those gardening articles in the press with their never-ending list of jobs, what needs doing or at least thinking about in a wood with the arrival of autumn?

First, and most obviously, is to have a good walk round. Once leaves have fallen, sight lines are better, tops of trees seen more readily, and new plantings distinguished more easily from the weed growth as the latter dies down. Fence lines and boundaries are less impenetrable for inspection of edge trees, rotting posts, and even breaches - by man or animal!

Also, on an autumn walk litter or rubbish is easier to spot, obstacles or hazards are usually more obvious and, generally, health and safety issues are more evident. All this will generate a list of estate's matters needing attention in addition to annual operations such as hedge trimming, checking over gates, locks and access generally.

Secondly, autumn is a good time to consider silvicultural matters including the fact that it's the best time to plant trees. By silviculture I mean not only tending operations like marking a thinning or high prun-



Well-tended and cleaned stand of young oak trees in Bentley Wood, Hampshire.

ing, but ones too often neglected or simply not considered such as stumping back, singling, respacing, and cleaning.

These establishment phase operations all help ensure that the trees you are wanting to grow, for whatever purpose, are given the best possible chance to succeed. They are ones to consider alongside protection, weeding, and beating-up i.e. replacing failures in first year or two. Let's look at each of these.

- **Stumping back:** This is cutting back to ground level trees that are poorly formed or growing unexpectedly slowly. It is confined to broadleaved species that coppice and the idea is that a 2-, 3- or 4-year-old

tree will, when cut back, throw a vigorous straight stem on its now well-established root system. I have only seen it carried out a few times, but is well worth considering for oak or walnut to improve stem quality. The downside is the need to continue weeding and protection from browsing for a bit longer.

- **Singling:** Again this is mostly confined to broadleaved trees and is the removal of forks and heavy side branches usually just after the weeding phase. For example, when trees emerge from tree shelters, they often seem to lose apical dominance and some singling of stems with secateurs is worthwhile.

- **Respacing:** Dense regeneration can be helped and access improved by a deliberate very early thinning out. This respacing can sometimes be done mechanically or at the same time as cleaning (below). The broad aim of both it and cleaning are, ideally, to secure about 2,000 stems per hectare to work with as the stand develops, though I appreciate this is a higher stocking than some minima permitted for grant aid.

- **Cleaning:** A woefully neglected operation which is arguably amongst the most important to secure the future of the desired stand. After weeding has ceased successful establishment is jeopardised if woody growth from willows, birches, climbers like clematis, rhododendron etc are not kept in check. It is expensive to carry out with little or no income, but a valuable investment to ensure that all the work in site preparation, planting or regeneration, weed control and protection is not wasted.

Apologies to readers for whom all this is familiar, but we have many new entrants to our profession perhaps less au fait with the basics of good silviculture.

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All the best conversations happen around a kitchen table - and that's what happened when Confor took the forestry and wood message to the Labour Party conference in Liverpool.

A mock-up of a kitchen was the starting-point to chat about how many wood products are to be found in everyone's home - and where that wood comes from.

Many of Labour's Shadow (Kitchen) Cabinet popped by to talk timber, as the feature at the front of this magazine shows.

Emma Hardy MP, a member of Labour's team shadowing Defra (Department of Food, Environment & Rural Affairs) ministers is pictured (right), chatting with Confor's Rachael Clamp in the kitchen.

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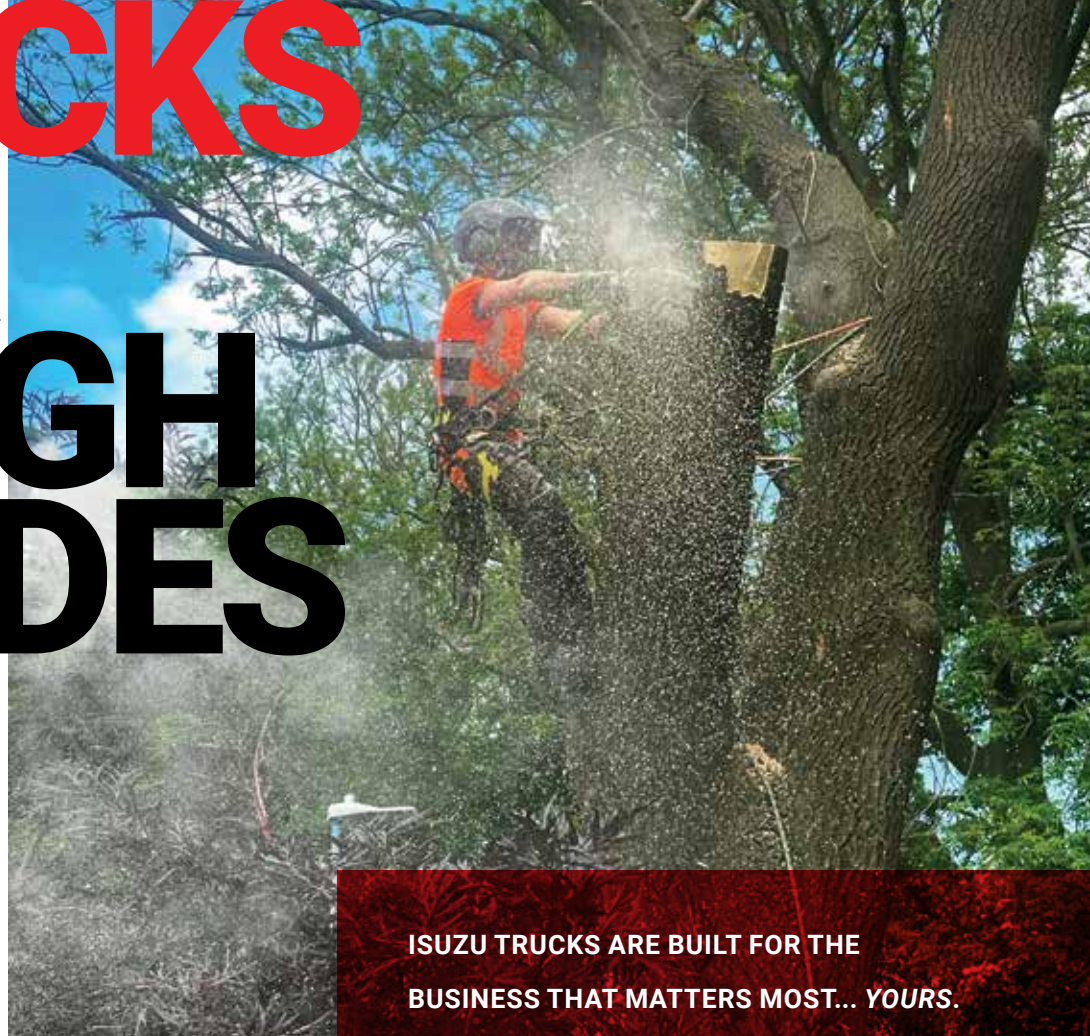
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