

FORESTRY & TIMBER NEWS

April / May 2025 Issue 128

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CAREER
DEVELOPMENT

SKILLS & TRAINING

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FROM THE
GROUND
UP





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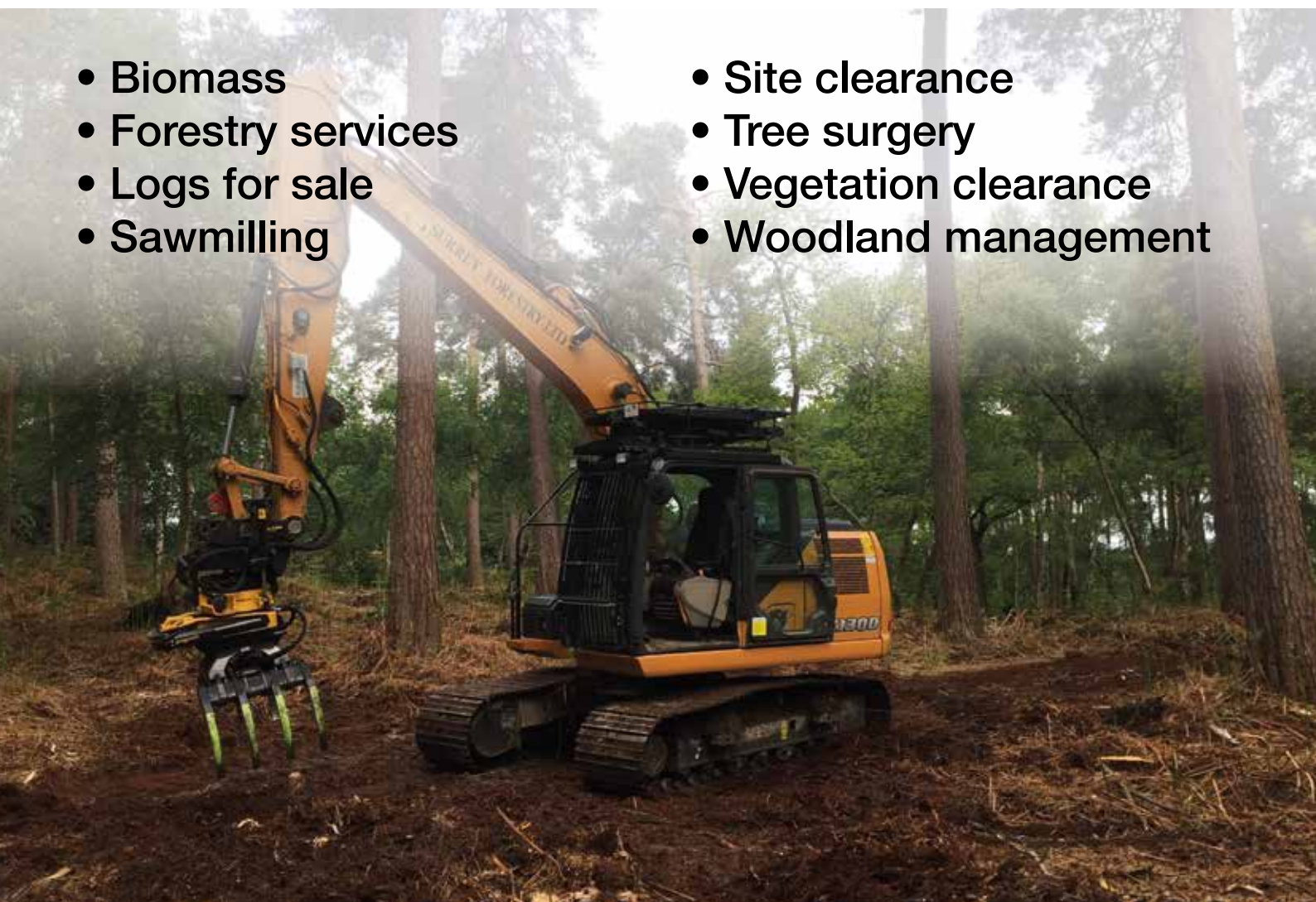
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Shoring up supplies



STUART GOODALL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE,
CONFOR

In February, I warned, tongue-in-cheek, about Storm Donald wreaking havoc. Little did I know the tariff storm that was brewing in the President's head!

I'm writing this a week after Trump unveiled his list of tariffs in the manner of a gameshow host, with the penguins of the Heard and McDonald Islands feeling particularly hard done by – perhaps when Trump said “Drill, baby drill” his trade advisers thought he'd said “krill”.

And just as I finished writing, Trump pressed the 90-day pause button and global stock markets began to recover some of the trillions that had previously been wiped off shares.

Panic over? I don't think so, and not just because Trump is still at loggerheads with China. This is a President who has decided to circumvent the traditional rules of US government, and grab for himself the apparent power to make truly massive decisions at the stroke of a pen. And what decisions?

In the first Trump presidency, there were senior people around him determined to keep ‘The Donald’ within tight guard rails. Now there is no such check, only acolytes.

What does this mean for our industry? Only time will tell.

For now, the US has no tariffs on most timber products and so it may be that Trump's decisions on Canadian timber imports and subsequent impacts on the UK economy are the most significant.

Trump has targeted Canadian timber and may ramp that up further. Would that pull more European timber into the US and would Canadian companies look to export more to other markets, like the UK?

A slowdown in UK economic growth would be expected to hit demand for home-grown timber - just as I've heard reports of increased demand for domestic pallets and fencing.

More questions than answers, but what is becoming clear is Keir Starmer's determination to build domestic supply chains in the face of faltering globalisation. With 81% of UK wood product consumption from imports, it was no surprise to hear UK forestry Minister Mary Creagh talk recently about the need to increase domestic wood production.

That is a commonsense response to uncertain times.

The curse “May you live in interesting times” keeps coming to mind these days. And Donald Trump has only served 1/16th of his second term in office – assuming he doesn't somehow wangle a third!

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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Situated on fertile mineral soils wrapping around a gently sloping hill, the property includes a valley, watercourse, some low-lying areas and a pond.

Good access. Freehold.

Guide price £1,200,000



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Nr Lampeter, Ceredigion

26.20 Acres / 10.60 Ha

Principally p2005 Sitka spruce plantation on a highly productive, flat, sheltered and watered site. Estimates of YC 24-28 could be possible on this site. Felling licence expires July 2025.

Proven access from felling of previous Sitka spruce crop.

Sporting rights owned and included.

Freehold.

Guide price £200,000



AMERSIDELAW FOREST

Chillingham, Nr Wooler, Northumberland

391.06 Acres / 158.25 Ha

A large, well-managed commercial forest entering a new rotation in good condition. This forest, with its stunning location and all of its productive ingredients, is an extremely attractive forestry investment and includes a forest lodge and wild swimming pond.

Sporting rights owned and included in the sale.

Freehold.

Guide price £2,600,000



BICTON WOOD WEST

Callington, Cornwall

94.67 Acres / 38.31 Ha

Classic lowland ex-FC peninsula woodland. A productive commercial woodland that is advanced in restructuring and remains capable of producing further timber income.

A technically excellent site for growing commercial timber.

Good access.

Freehold.

Sporting rights owned and included.

Guide price £485,000



MAESCOCH PLANTATION

Llanfihangel-ar-arth, Carmarthenshire

45.72 Acres / 18.50 Ha

A compact commercial woodland with plenty of timber approaching maturity.

Mainly p1993 and p1998 Sitka spruce and some mixed broadleaves.

Small pond and a watercourse.

Sporting rights owned and included.

Freehold.

Guide price £360,000



BELL COPPICE

Far Forest, Cleobury Mortimer, Shropshire

203.45 Acres / 82.33 Ha

A premier productive well-managed Oak woodland.

Timber ready to harvest.

Good access.

Sporting rights owned and included

Guide price £1,575,000



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The roads less travelled

With an ever-widening skills gap causing concern for the future of forestry, encouraging untraditional routes into the sector is important for bringing a diversity of experience into the workforce. **Eleanor O'Neill** spoke to workers whose career paths started off outside the industry to find out why forestry inspired a change.



Leona Baillie

*Trees & Woodland
Adviser, Loch Lomond
& The Trossachs
National Park*

What was your career background before your current role?

My career path has been a meandering one, starting out with a Zoology degree and working in natural history media. When I had enough of London, I ended up editing technical documents for the oil & gas industry in Aberdeen. I gained experience and skills, but grew increasingly uncomfortable with that industry.

I wanted to do something that would benefit the environment and give me job satisfaction. I took a huge leap of faith to re-train - studying an MSc in Environmental Management. There were mentions of forestry in the course, but it was only when I chose my dissertation project that I got my first real glimpse of the industry, processing and analysing timber samples at the Forest Research Northern Research Station.

A short-term contract at FR came up and when I later saw a permanent role at SAC Consulting, I knew this could be a career direction with lots of possibilities.

Why did forestry appeal to you?

When I decided to change career, I had a clear aim to do something that felt worthwhile in the fight against the climate and nature crises. I love that forestry can do this in very tangible ways. There's also such diversity of jobs within the sector and there's opportunity to work with and learn from people with different specialisms.

I've always enjoyed a mix of practical and desk-based work. Maybe if I'd known about forestry when I was a teenager, I'd have taken this path sooner... but I wouldn't have the varied experience that has shaped me as a person.

How were you able to transfer skills and experience?

Something that I think career changers in particular can offer is the ability and motivation to learn. It takes guts, determination and adaptability. Being new to the industry means being open minded, rather than fixed on ideas of how things have always been done.

Both my previous "careers" were about communication – visual and written. The skills I honed as an editor have been useful ever since. From everyday emails to reports, grant applications, guidance notes for farmers, podcasts and videos, I've applied those principles.

What new things have you learned from the industry?

A decade ago, I knew nothing about

forestry, oblivious to this vast and essential industry. I've learned about the vital role that timber production has in our lives, as well as mitigating climate change. I've also learned so much about woodland ecosystems, and the crucial work needed to restore native habitats.

I always loved nature, but I only realise now that there will always be more to learn.

Do you think working in forestry has had a positive impact on your career?

I set out to "save the world just a little bit" and found more possibilities than I could ever imagine.

I was given a chance as a trainee because of my transferrable skills and life experience, even though I had no formal forestry training. The hiring manager saw my potential – you can teach someone about trees, but you can't teach the right attitude and real-world experience.

I would urge everyone hiring for forestry jobs to consider career changers. I've met lots of foresters who've moved from other industries, and they tend to be highly motivated, adaptable and keen to learn.





Adam Curd *Cawdor Forestry Limited*

What was your career background before your current role?

I was in the Royal Air Force for about 22 years, serving up here at RAF Lossiemouth for several, and in many other places in the UK and overseas. I joined as a pilot, and flew the Tornado for most of my career, with a short spell flying Lightning II, including from the new British aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth.

I spent most of my career in the RAF 'hands-on', in flying roles, but broadened into management and leadership as my experience grew. I had the honour of being in command of No.17 Squadron, RAF, a joint unit with RAF and Royal Navy personnel, based in the United States.

Why did forestry appeal to you?

Forestry was the 'other thing' I wanted to do when I was young. My friends and I spent a lot of time out in the woods as kids, and I strongly considered joining the Forestry Commission, although in what capacity I'm not sure I knew.

The things that appealed when I was younger still appealed when I was leaving the Service – working in a natural environment and being outside in the Scottish countryside. From my time in the Service, I was also drawn to once again working in a good team, solving problems, and getting things done.

How were you able to transfer skills and experience?

I imagine that learning how to present your transferable skills is a challenge for anyone changing careers – it certainly is for Service-leavers. All industries have a language and ways of their own, and understanding how to communicate experience acquired in Service can be tricky - I hadn't written a CV for 25 years!

My hope was to gain credible qualifications within the forestry sector to anchor my previous experience and

demonstrate intent, which was why I chose to complete an HND in Forestry with the Scottish School of Forestry. Before that, I had taken part in a Rural Experience Week with High Ground, a charity supporting Service-leavers and veterans in transitioning to the rural sector.

One of the presentations was from Confor, offering short Forestry Machine Experience courses, which I was lucky to attend and gain fantastic insight into forestry in the north of Scotland.

What new things have you learned from the industry?

As a newcomer to the industry, having only recently completed the first year of my HND, I'm still consolidating my core knowledge. Many things such as health and safety are not new, but the way they are applied in practical forestry situations is.

Aside from technical knowledge, I have enjoyed gaining a much better understanding of the rural economy – an environment I've lived in for many years but not worked within.

Do you think working in forestry has had a positive impact on your career?

Undoubtedly positive. As a career changer, I chose to undertake training and qualification partly to learn more about the sector before seeking employment, so that I could make a more educated decisions and gain practical experience. Joining the forestry sector has allowed me to start a whole new career.



Catherine Noble *Regulatory Woodland Officer, Natural Resources Wales*

What was your career background before starting in forestry?

Having dropped out of a degree programme with little direction, I worked a series of positions in customer

service, tourism and administration. I began developing a career in business administration before questioning what other options there might be and eventually pursuing my career in forestry.

Why did forestry appeal to you?

As a teenager I worked for an outdoor pursuits company and enjoyed engaging with the natural environment that North Wales has to offer. I would spend a lot of time walking and climbing in the FC woodlands near my home and began to wonder about its management.

Before I went to university to study Linguistics, I checked out internships and entry level positions with FC and I was tempted to apply, however the pressure to continue on a mainstream, academic path was too great. Later on in life I found the Forestry degree offered at Bangor whilst looking for courses in Business Administration and saw it as another chance to do what I felt I should have. I applied and never looked back.

How were you able to transfer skills and experience?

Most of my skills were "soft skills", more appropriately termed "core skills". I had a highly-tuned set of skills in customer service, people management, writing, influencing and problem solving from my previous career.

I was pleased to find that working in forestry is all about working with people at all levels, and so those skills were essential. As my career has progressed, I have found that some of those skills seem to be lacking in forestry, and I would encourage all entrants to the industry to value their core skills just as they would their technical skills.

What new things have you learned from the industry?

Aside from my technical forestry knowledge, I've learned a lot about industry regulation, broader countryside management issues and just how in-demand and under pressure our finite land resources are; I view the landscape in an entirely new light.

Do you think working in forestry has had a positive impact on your career?

Certainly, forestry has become my calling, and I hope it will be my lifelong vocation. It's given me clarity about the direction of my career, and I hope I can make a positive impact whilst I'm here.



Emerging success

Louise Simpson, Executive Director of the Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF), spoke to Eleanor O'Neill about the ICF Emerging Leader Programme being recognised for Building Industry Resilience at the recent Confor Dinner & Awards 2025.

How do you feel about winning the award?

We are absolutely thrilled! This award is a testament to our hard work and dedication in making the Emerging Leader Programme a valuable asset for the entire sector. It recognises our commitment to upskilling the industry at all levels.

Have you learned anything new from the development of the Programme?

Launching this programme required the support and collaboration of many individuals within the sector. Their trust in the ICF was crucial. This experience has shown me that when we create something that clearly benefits the sector and addresses a genuine need, the community will go above and beyond to help. Seeing sector leaders volunteer their time to interview candidates was truly inspiring.

Your award is for 'building industry resilience' – how do you see the industry changing for the future?

The message about the skills shortage is resonating, and we are witnessing a strong push for funding, programmes, and a genuine desire to upskill and

attract new entrants into the sector. With continued support, we will be well-prepared to face future challenges.

What has been the biggest achievement for the Programme so far?

The benefits of this programme will unfold over many years. Already, our Emerging Leaders are finding their voices, stepping up, and leading initiatives. However, the greatest achievement is the network they have created.

Our Emerging Leaders embody the diverse nature of the Forestry and Arboriculture sector. Their camaraderie, curiosity about each other's work, and shared values of generous collaboration are truly remarkable. I believe their collective contributions will be transformative for the sector.

What does the future hold?

How could we not aim for funding for round three? The journey continues!

MEMBER UPDATE

Make sure your voice is heard



Eliza Hibbins-Cline,
Membership &
Marketing Manager

I hope 2025 is proving to be a successful year for you and your business!

As we look forward to Confor activity in the year ahead, the Royal Welsh

Show is coming up in July, which I hope to see many of you at. We will be doing something slightly different than previous years so definitely pop in to see the team at the Confor tent!

Your National Managers regularly share updates on engagement with committees, local communities and governments. Please keep an eye on your inbox for important communications around consultation responses and events.

As always, we welcome your thoughts and ideas on how we can improve your membership experience. Get in touch! eliza@confor.org.uk

A welcome to our newest members:

England

- Mr N Keeble
- Mr P Kendrew
- Mr S Mayston
- The Timber Pallet & Packaging Confederation (TIMCON)
- Herdvyck Ltd
- Ms L Beck

Scotland

- Mr S Smith
- Mr P Jankiewicz
- Saor Forestry Ltd
- Mr D Taylor
- Ms W Rapa



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Call for greater cooperation

The need for foresters and farmers to cooperate and communicate for better decisions on future land use was the prevailing topic of the Spring 2025 meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Forestry and Timber Security. Reporting by **David Lee**.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Forestry and Timber Security met in Westminster on Tuesday 25 March. The event, hosted with support from Euroforest and Scottish Woodlands, included a panel discussion on 'Farmers and foresters working together – what does that look like?'.

The panel had a wide range of voices, including David Edwards, Deputy CEO of the Food and Farming Commission, who made it clear that, though there is a strong appetite among farmers to plant trees, it's at a modest agroforestry level, with a focus on environmental benefits.

Larger commercial schemes involving farmers needed to be looked at a more landscape level and he believes the forestry industry should be playing a much more significant role in the UK Government's land use consultation, which opened at the end of January.

He said: "Forestry is massively under-represented - and maybe that's on us (farming interests) as well as the forestry side."

Hywel Lloyd of Labour Coast and Country, who worked for two ministers in low-carbon and rural affairs roles in previous Labour governments, said there was still a stereotypical view of commercial forestry as heavily industrial without clear local roots. With forestry and timber businesses being more visible in communities, he said "there's a need to build better relationships."

He urged the forestry industry to focus on a "pull" approach - explaining the positive economic and environmental benefits it had to offer and pulling in groups who hadn't traditionally understood or engaged with commercial forestry.

"Show how forestry can benefit them - so the conversation continues when you leave the room," he concluded.

Jillian Kennedy, Forest Manager with Scottish Woodlands Ltd, described her farming background (her father is the most recent past President of the National Farmers Union of Scotland) and said she was an "accidental forester". From her perspective, challenges faced by farmers and foresters are often very



Clockwise from top: Members of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Forestry and Tree Planting (LtR): Lord Colgrain, Lord Duncan, Stuart Goodall (Confor CEO), Angus MacDonald MP (Inverness, Skye and West Ross-shire), Ben Lake MP (Ceredigion and Preseli), Lord Roborough; Forestry Commission Chief Executive Richard Stanford and Forestry and farming panellists: David Edwards, Food & Farming Commission; Hywel Lloyd, Labour Coast and Country; Jillian Kennedy, Scottish Woodlands Ltd; Anthony Geddes, Euroforest Silviculture.

similar - such as carrying out carbon audits - and there is a lot of common ground.

As an active member of the Scottish Association of Young Farmers' Clubs, she believes the younger generation is more open to working together and to taking on fresh ideas.

Anthony Geddes, Head of Investment at Euroforest Silviculture, referred to "historical barriers at regulatory level" making it difficult for farmers and

foresters to create successful, large-scale commercial woodland creation schemes.

He added that better engagement from foresters can often be as simple as subscribing to farming publications or just taking the time to talk to working farmers.

Speaking later on how trees can deliver Government policies and help keep people on the land, Forestry Commission Chief Executive Richard

>>

Stanford said: “I always say I’m not in the business of trees, but behavioural change.”

He urged the forestry industry to talk less to itself, and engage more with different sectors, including the farming community. He also described how the Forestry Commission and Natural England had moved on from a historically difficult relationship over woodland creation to develop a joint approach.

In terms of benefits for farmers, he cited an example of a farmer describing how trees had “de-risked a risky farming business” and said woodland creation could offer multiple benefits for livestock

and for water and flood management. One significant challenge is how to turn the health, water and other benefits of forestry into cash through natural capital accounting.

Stuart Goodall, Chief Executive of Confor, said farmers face a number of significant challenges, such as pressure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, uncertainty over future subsidies, falling meat consumption, and questions over trade agreements and exports. Against that backdrop, forestry is a real opportunity which could provide a strong long-term income stream, a chance for ‘carbon insetting’, shelter belts for animals (improving health and resilience)

and much more.

Additionally, with the need to grow more timber to address rising global demand and tackle the very real issue of timber security, Stuart said there was a “win-win” scenario for foresters and farmers.

Ben Lake MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Forestry and Timber Security, added: “The need for food and for wood fibre is often portrayed as an irreconcilable conflict, which it need not be. Foresters and farmers can work together to increase woodland cover and timber supply in the UK, while also supporting British agriculture.”

Laying the groundwork

Policy & Public Affairs Officer **Jon Garson** rounds up Confor’s recent activity in the political sphere.

Since our last update, the political scene has been dominated by economic issues with the Chancellor giving a substantial Spring Statement outlining an increasingly challenging fiscal situation, the concerns over US tariff intentions, and a looming trade war between the two largest economies on the planet.

While these topics have rightly generated significant government (and media) attention, Confor has continued to focus on making progress on key issues for the sector and actively engaging key ministers in Westminster, Scotland and Wales.

Following a series of engagements with Mary Creagh MP (*pictured right*) following her appointment as Forestry Minister, we were pleased to see these efforts bear fruit with a recommitment to the Timber in Construction Roadmap announced at the recent Timber in Construction Summit in London.

We will continue to work with the Minister and government to ensure this success produces tangible results in terms of increased productive planting and use of domestic timber in construction projects.

We also engaged constructively with the Minister on the impact of the changes to inheritance tax. In a joint letter with the Royal Forestry Society and the Country Land and

Business Association, we highlighted the concerns of the sector regarding implications of the changes to the sector and to rural communities. (See *p14*.)

Confor has been actively participating in the significant consultation process around land use reform in England. In addition to developing a formal submission, we have worked with members to ensure that our perspective was presented at consultation workshops held across the country.

Also, following the independent review of Defra’s regulatory landscape by Dan Corey, Confor has engaged Defra on the regulatory and process challenges facing the sector.

In Scotland, during our scheduled quarterly meeting with the Cabinet Secretary Mairi Gougeon, we discussed a range of issues, including outlining our concerns over the proposal to establish a new National Park. The Cabinet Secretary was clear that once she receives the report from NatureScot, the official reporting agency, she will engage with Confor and our members prior to any official decision.

Holyrood has a number of interesting Bills at various stages, including the Land

Reform Bill where we are working with stakeholders to address aspects that could have a negative impact on the sector and our ability to attract investment. There is also the Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill, with particular focus on the substantial deer management provisions.

In Wales, the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs Huw Irranca Davies has enjoyed several site visits with members and has agreed to attend a number of Confor events.

This engagement has strengthened recognition for the sector and Confor is playing an active part in the Ministerial roundtable on the development of the Sustainable Farming Scheme, as well as involvement with the Welsh Timber Industry Strategy.

As we move forward, we are cognisant that we are in election cycle for Scotland and Wales. We are working with partner organisations to collaborate on issues we want to see be part of the election campaign. The core of these efforts will be engaging members in establishing Confor’s asks for 2026.

We will be releasing discussion documents for both countries to kickstart a dialogue amongst members on a solid policy base for Confor to engage parties and candidates in the lead-up to the elections for Holyrood and the Senedd.





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Joint letter to UK government on consequences of IHT changes

Confor, CLA and RFS jointly addressed Mary Creagh CBE MP in a letter raising concerns about the cumulative unintended consequences of changes to Inheritance Tax reliefs for family-owned woodlands.

On 13 March, Confor joined with the Royal Forestry Society (RFS) and the Country Land and Business Association (CLA) to share concerns about the proposed changes to Inheritance Tax (IHT) outlined in the Autumn Budget.

Key points included economic impact, environmental concerns and policy consequences.

We have asked the Minister for a meeting to discuss these issues, and to present some solutions.

Unintended consequences outlined in letter to Mary Creagh CBE MP

1. The risk of fragmentation of woodland due to land sales necessary to pay IHT. The need to finance IHT charges will mean small blocks of woodland being sold off to generate cash. Such small blocks are unlikely to have the economies of scale to allow adequate woodland management. Smaller woods are more likely to be unmanaged, much less rich in wildlife, absorb less carbon and therefore provide less benefit to the public and the economy. Fragmentation of ownership could therefore worsen the already worrying position with over 40% of woodlands in England being unmanaged, and thereby not providing the multiple public goods to the extent which well-managed woods can. Fragmentation also makes the landscape scale management of damaging pests like grey squirrels and deer and various tree diseases, much more difficult.

2. An increased need to fell woodland early to generate income to pay IHT, including woodlands managed on a continuous cover basis for timber and conservation. The consequence of this is damaging to

our carbon storage, timber quality and other ecosystem services like soil and water management and nature recovery. There is also a social impact from losing larger trees from our communities and the landscape.

3. The discouragement of planting and investment in existing woodland improvement especially where it further adds to the woodland value. This is especially true for trees which take multiple generations to grow timber for example valuable native hardwoods like oak. Imposing IHT charges on the value of woodland not only negates any future financial timber value but also importantly discourages planting for environmental objectives as there would be a direct tax disincentive. We believe this move would be contrary to key government objectives, including 30by30 enshrined in the Environmental Improvement Plan and some of the climatic and environmental

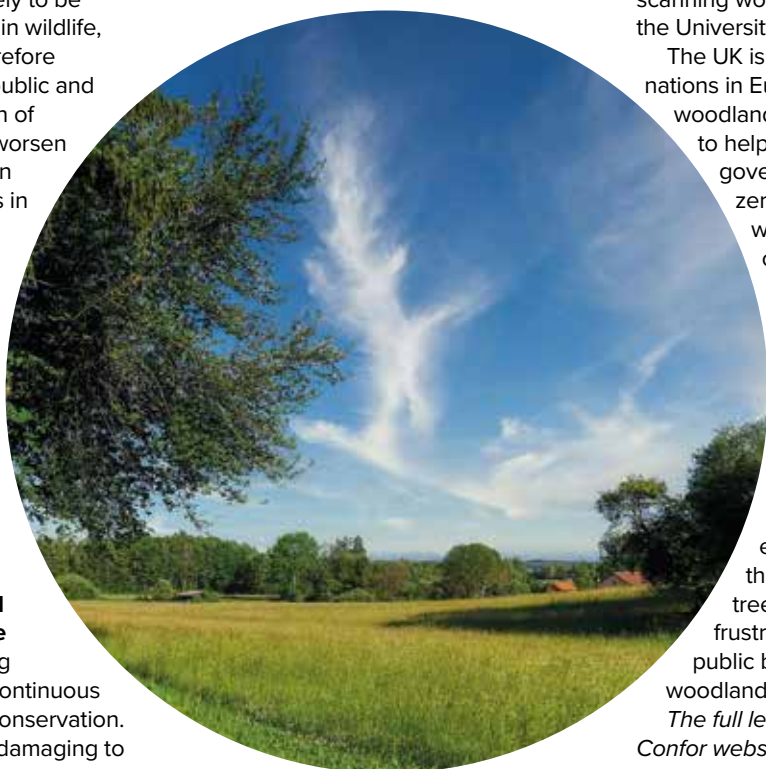
improvements proposed in the Land Use Framework.

4. The erosion or destruction of the already fragile financial incentive to grow quality hardwoods like oak (or large conifers) for timber. Growing such timber is a long-term activity needing multi-generational planning and confidence. This would be a backward step in terms of the Government's Timber in Construction Roadmap, which sets out how we will use more timber and indeed growing and using more home-grown timber in the built environment.

5. The resilience of our woodlands, already threatened due to under management, could be further compromised, making them more vulnerable to climate change, pests and diseases and potentially pushing them towards ecosystem collapse – a major threat identified in forestry horizon scanning work by Forestry England and the University of Cambridge.

The UK is one of the least wooded nations in Europe, meaning our existing woodland cover plays a vital role to help achieve numerous government objectives from net zero to supporting health and wellbeing. Family woodland owners are custodians of our precious woodland resource and importantly, manage it for the long-term through multi-generational businesses. We are concerned that the proposed changes to IHT reliefs will disincentivise the management of existing woodlands, erode the case for planting more trees on private land and frustrate the delivery of the many public benefits we derive from woodlands.

The full letter is available on the Confor website: <https://bit.ly/IHTLetter>.





Emergency Authorisation has been granted for the use of Lanzarta to protect against *Hylobius abietis* (large pine weevil) damage in forest woodland settings.

Emergency Authorisation of Lanzarta will enable its sale between 15th April and 13th August 2025 and permits trees to be treated once per season in a forestry setting between 15th April and 30th September 2025.

Lanzarta has a residual activity and binds to bark to prevent rain wash off. It has a positive toxicological and environmental profile for non-target organisms and only affects insect pests that physically feed on treated plants.

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Lauren Barker MBPR, IFMH, FQA
Technical Account Manager - Forestry

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Building continued success with veterans

Creating a pipeline from military service to the forestry and timber industry has been a key strategy in remedying expected shortages in people seeking out jobs within the sector. Confor's **Richard Hunter** joined the latest group of veterans interested in coming aboard as they discovered what career opportunities await.

With widespread buy-in and support from the industry, Confor's fourth year of organising events for military veterans interested in forestry careers has gotten off to a strong start.

In March, we welcomed the latest cohort on a three-day introductory tour of the sector in South Scotland, aiming to cover the range of careers available in forestry via a mixture of site visits, presentations and networking.

Day one brought us to Durmlanrigg

Castle, where we were kindly hosted by The Buccleuch Estate and discussed the range of forestry techniques, and the skills needed to carry them out. A key factor that was highlighted here was 'initiative', advising the delegates to be proactive and contact forestry businesses rather than wait for a formal role to be advertised on the internet.

After lunch the delegates travelled to Griskin Forest where Forestry and Land Scotland showcased the planting of steep slopes and a mounding

operation in progress. The group took part in a quick site check to ensure the number of mounds per ha was correct; in their words unveiling the site through practical application, thus understanding that you need to see the site in the round and not just one mound!

Everyone that we had met so far had mentioned the impact of deer, so our last stop was very topical: Ae larder. Here we had an interesting discussion about the variation between civilian and military thermal scopes and drones

before a practical observation of a deer carcass being prepped for chilling.

Day two started back in Ae Forest on a Tilhill Forestry harvesting site watching a straightforward forwarder and harvester combo in operation. There were lots of questions for the Forest Works Manager about how the site worked and the highlights of the role, which was encouraging.

While it was a glorious day on the hill, we then took our leave to see the round wood processed by James Jones & Sons at Lockerbie. It was here that the pieces fell into place for many of the delegates; all the effort that goes into growing trees then resulting in high quality timber that can be used in thousands of ways.

We rounded the day off with a walk though Auchenroddan Forest and a more detailed discussion around UKFS, UKWAS and species choice, as well as answering questions on many other topics.

Day three was held at the Komatsu HQ near Carlisle but started with an overview of grants and regulations from the Forestry Commission. What followed was a tour of the workshop and use of a forwarder simulator. Finally, the networking lunch invited in local foresters from companies such as Euroforest and Savills so connections could be made and business cards exchanged.

There were several recurring themes over the course of the event, such as the skills gaps the sector needs to fill to futureproof itself. Effective communicators, people managers and problem solvers need only bring life experience to the table, something that seemed encouraging to the attendees.

Of course, the opportunity to bring your dog to work wasn't lost on several



of the delegates either.

Confor extends a big thank you to all who dedicated time and resources to get involved. Once again, the industry stepped up and answered the call – without such support, these types of events would not be successful.

Proof of success

Even in the short time since the March event, there have been some exciting developments.

Of those that attended, one has been offered work experience to begin after he transitions out of service. Another has submitted an application to join the Forestry Commission Development Woodland Officer Programme, which is tied to the Level 6 Forestry Apprenticeship hosted by University of Cumbria.

As a military veteran he is entitled to a face-to-face interview which, considering previous years have had hundreds of applications, gives him a massive boost. Hopefully the knowledge picked up on the taster event will lend him an extra advantage during the interview itself.

A third is actively looking for work in their local area having already

undertaken chainsaw qualifications as part of their transition package. Confor hopes to connect him with suitable employers and two more have since been in touch about similar opportunities.

Crucially, another bonus has come from a delegate who is still serving. His current role is in the garrison-based transition team, which now has a connection for Confor to share information about forestry careers directly with the approximate 3,000 personnel on base.

The Career Transition Partnership (CTP) is the official Ministry of Defence organisation that support veterans with training and careers advice. However, while we have worked with them in the past, they tend to favour large national organisations like HM Prison and Probation Service or major supermarket chains.

Smaller businesses are often a hard sell in comparison, and there is a lack of understanding in how to interact with or support them. Having an advocate in the barracks themselves, therefore, is a huge win and will hopefully lead to further successes with future events like this.





Deputy First Minister sees breadth of Welsh forestry and timber industry

Wales Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs Huw Irranca-Davies MS made visits to a tree nursery and major sawmill to discuss the importance of the Timber Industrial Strategy.

Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, visited the BSW Sawmill in Newbridge on Wye and Maelor Tree Nursery, Bronington, last month.

The Newbridge sawmill has an annual input of 210,000m³ of roundwood and produces 150,000m³ of sawn timber each year. During the tour, discussions with the Deputy First Minister included opportunities within the Welsh forestry and wood sector along with looking at timber availability, restocking, the Welsh Government Woodland Estate and future timber supply.

For businesses like BSW to expand and invest they need consistency and long-term commitments from Welsh Government, and this has been made clear to the minister.

At Maelor tree nursery, which sits in the Welsh borders, Mr Irranca-Davies learned about the significant investment put into the nursery, what is it capable of in meeting the planting demands of Wales and the UK, its role in species diversification, and the research and development undertaken on site.

Discussions included:

- The importance of the Welsh Timber Industry Strategy Consultation.
- The need to support NRW and the



WGWE in meeting their restocking targets.

- Woodland creation timelines and their contracts along with the associated barriers in the system.
- The growth, productivity and output difference between improved SS and other commercial crops.

These visits took place against the backdrop of the consultation on Wales's first Timber Industrial Strategy. There is real potential for Wales to increase and add value to the home-grown supply of timber, and therefore opportunity for foresters, timber processors and manufacturers in Wales to contribute to a 'wood economy'.

Mr Irranca-Davies stressed that engagement from the sector is crucial. Confor welcomed the consultation and has submitted a response on behalf of industry, acknowledging Welsh Government's ambition in having a focused strategy on timber production.

By doing so, not only do we contribute positively to Net Zero ambitions, but there are significant opportunities for green growth and high-quality jobs in the rural economy.

Welsh Government has also recently started the Trees and Hedgerows Stakeholder Delivery Group, looking into barriers to tree planting, starting with the Sustainable Farming Scheme, establishing accountability for planting targets.

The Deputy First Minister is interested, engaged and sees the positives in our industry. Confor Wales intends to build on this relationship with Welsh Government and the Senedd to gain further support and growth for forestry and timber.

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Shaping the future of professional foresters

Paul Armstrong, Head of Apprenticeships and Employer Skills at the University of Cumbria, reflects on the potential of degree apprenticeships to shape professional development

There is no hiding from the need to train more forestry professionals to deliver national targets for increased woodland coverage. Not only do we need to train to build capacity for growth, but we are also facing the prospect of an ageing workforce, with many experienced professionals planning for retirement and taking decades of accumulated knowledge and skills with them.

The 2023/24 Forest Skills Transition Plan sets clear and ambitious targets to address the skills gap, including developing the Professional Forester Degree Apprenticeship. The University of Cumbria's National School of Forestry is committed to contributing to meeting the skills gap by developing and running a successful degree apprenticeship programme.

More and more people are aware of the Professional Forester Degree Apprenticeship, but many are still

unaware of how it works and whether it is worth considering.

Below are some frequently asked questions to help explain what's involved and how apprenticeships could benefit your forestry team.

How does the apprenticeship help upskilling?

For those already involved in forestry and not professionally trained, organisations can sponsor them on the course alongside their day job, with time set aside for training and development. This allows individuals with the talent and motivation to upskill whilst continuing to earn a salary, breaking down the barriers to degree-level learning.

For those not already in the business, apprenticeships offer college leavers and career changers the chance to train in a professional role via a degree without the costs associated with undergraduate study.

Who is the forestry apprenticeship designed for?

It is designed to train a range of people to the professional forestry standard, with the option to be professionally recognised by the ICF. We collaborate with a diverse group of employers who are training professionals in various settings, including woodland and forestry policy, consultancy, commercial forestry, and national bodies championing conservation and rewilding. Our learners are employed with some of the leading forestry companies, local authorities, and not-for-profit charitable bodies. We are also seeing more private estates looking to grow their own talent and reduce the reliance on buying-in expertise.

How is the apprenticeship funded?

For many who are committed to training and development, apprenticeships can still seem complex and too difficult. Currently, the government will fund between 95% and 100% of the training, with the maximum contribution being 5% of the fee for the entirety of the programme. This means if the fee is £22,000, employers only need to pay £1,100 if they are non-levy payers.

So why invest? What is your return on investment?

You will be training apprentices to a professional standard, but through the lens of your organisation, applying their learning to your professional needs, organisational culture and ethos.

Investment in training and a commitment to upskilling typically reduce staff turnover and absences and generate greater loyalty.

If you are upskilling those already in the business, you can reduce the costs associated with traditional hiring and training, making it an efficient form of workforce planning.

Our apprentices learn quickly and





apply academic knowledge in the workplace to be productive.

Apprentices often bring new ideas and fresh perspectives to help businesses innovate and drive improvements, which improves performance.

Even when you recruit someone new to the business, by the time they are trained, they have spent three years shaping their professional knowledge with you, understand your organisation, and are naturally able to develop quickly and in line with your values and objectives.

How do I balance my staff's work with their study time?

Apprentices spend about 20% of their time learning and developing, of which the majority is with us on week-long residential modules, where we cover a defined professional topic; such as Silviculture, Woodland Utilisation and Processing, Forest Health and Protection, or People and Forests.

The remaining 80% is spent back in the business, balancing the day job with supervised learning. The focus is on applying their classroom knowledge through applied skills, completing academic assignments and building a professional portfolio for end-point assessment (to complete their apprenticeship).

For smaller organisations with less scope of practice, apprentices may

need to spend a little time in different settings to experience applied learning. We have a range of professionals willing to support this where required. However, most people can do this through their organisation and/or their client base or partners supporting the range of settings to gain the required experience.

How do employers manage in-work supervision

Applying the learning in the right job role is key for the apprenticeship to work, and with that will come effective line management. Understandably, not all line managers will be experts in all aspects of forestry, so employers we work with usually identify a range of mentors within the organisation and, where appropriate, with partners or other supporting professionals.

From a learning and development perspective, supervision at the degree apprenticeship level is more akin to guidance, mentoring, and support rather than day-to-day supervision. This could be done by creating mini projects that are aligned to the modules to shape experience and provide context, data, or examples for assignments and portfolio development.

Is it right for my organisation?

We fully recognise that each organisation has different motivations, approaches and challenges. With us,

there is no hard sell; we work with employers using the apprenticeship to train the next generation of professional foresters. Our focus is on breaking down the barriers to engagement and helping organisations make informed decisions with confidence, and we support every step of the way. That is why we have a Qualification Achievement Rate of over 80% and an Ofsted Good rating at the last inspection (April 2024). So, you'll be in good hands if you decide to explore an apprenticeship for your organisation.

I am a forestry business employee who wants to progress

We often speak to people who want to do the programme but are unsure if their employer will support them. All organisations are different, but the key question is "Is there a skills need in the business?". Employers are more likely to sponsor you if you need to upskill to support the business's future.

If you think there is a need, contact us to discuss the idea and gather facts to provide evidence to your manager. They will need to agree on the business case, and to do this, they will need insights and information. We are happy to help provide information, advice, and guidance to shape decision-making.

Find out more <https://www.cumbria.ac.uk/professional-forester/>

Conserving the colour of the rainforest

There are hundreds of lichen and bryophyte species native to the UK, in a variety of diverse habitats.

Building on similar workshops provided by Confor in Scotland, this event on the Coed Felinrhyd National Nature Reserve focused on teaching key indicators of quality rainforest and management options to enhance associated biodiversity within a productive woodland context.

The training session was led by representatives from Plantlife, the global voice for wild plants and fungi. Sabine Nouvet, Rainforest Advisor for Wales, and Adam Thorogood, Rainforest Coordinator, led participants through identifying several species of lichen and bryophyte which only grow in temperate rainforest, some of which have globally important populations in Welsh woodlands.

Tips for recognising potential biodiversity “hotspots” were also shared, ensuring attendees could go back to their woodlands equipped with the basic skills to read subtle nuances of green carpets of moss and shaggy lichen tree trunks, picking out those

with greater species diversity.

Apart from being one of England and Wales’s richest sites for rainforest lichens and bryophytes, Coed Felinrhyd is also a working Plantation on Ancient Woodlands Site (PAWS). Opportunities to discuss the value, risk, and applicability of phased conifer removal, fell-to-waste, and restocking choices were all discussed in the context of rainforest ecosystems as well as productive woodland management.

By the end of the day, it was clear that the group felt more confident in identifying key indicator species or at least recognising areas of higher interest. They also reported a greater understanding of the complex role fallen deadwood plays in rainforest ecosystems.

All agreed that further training, especially on the role of dying and dead trees would be worthwhile to the wider forestry, farming, and contracting community. To register interest in further rainforest and deadwood training courses, contact Sabine (sabine.nouvet@plantlife.org.uk).

This workshop was funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund and



Daniell Trust, with access to the reserve granted by the Woodland Trust.

Access Plantlife’s Interactive Management Toolkit: <https://bit.ly/LichenKit>.

Forestry careers in the classroom

Confor’s John Bruce recently visited the University of Derby to chat forestry careers. Lecturer Laura McLennan shares the value of such engagement.

Where do you see yourself in five years’ time? The question everyone hates and never (usually) has a good answer for. It does not matter where you are in your career journey, reflection on your career to date and thoughts on where you are going are often pushed to the side.

At the University of Derby, we are challenging this. From the first year on their programme, Environmental Science and Sustainability students are encouraged to consider their existing skill sets, working likes/dislikes, and the career paths they may be interested in pursuing.

By identifying potential careers early on, we are encouraging students to consider the skills they need to build and how they are going to do it. This makes for engaged and proactive students who find value in both the theory and practical skills they are developing.

To date students have been introduced to the forestry sector via the last two APF Exhibitions, subject specific careers fairs, and more recently informational interviews.

What is an informational interview?

An informational interview is an opportunity for students to ask questions about an individual’s career to date. The aim is to gather information about a career that you cannot glean from looking at a company website.

Groups of Environmental Science and Sustainability students were matched with an employment sector that they wanted to know more about. They then had 15 minutes to interview

an employer, in this case John Bruce, National Manager at Confor.

Student Charlie Brumby said: “The exercise in interviewing an employee at Confor allowed me to understand the role of a job from an inside perspective. It gave me a chance to ask questions about employment and if there are any opportunities I can partake in.

“In all, it was a fulfilling experience, and I now have a broader grasp of what sustainable forestry entails. I will be keeping a keen eye on the company’s future. Thank you to Confor for taking time to speak to us.”

Forestry at Derby

We have seen a steady increase in students interested in forestry related careers within the last few years. To reflect this, we are increasing the forestry content in our programmes. Amongst other things, planning is currently underway to build a small coppice on campus.

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Strategic plan launched to build resilience in Scotland's forests

Rural Affairs Secretary Mairi Gougeon has said “doing nothing is not an option” when it comes to securing the future of Scotland's forests from the effects of climate change.

With recent examples of violent storms, increasing temperatures, droughts, wildfires and more tree pests and diseases, a new ‘Routemap to Resilience for Scotland's Forests and Woodlands’ has been published by Scottish Forestry which will provide the direction needed for building resilient forests.

The routemap, the first of its kind in the UK, outlines a number of key actions to help the nation's woodlands resist, adapt, respond and recover from the various current climate related threats.

Ms Gougeon said: “Over the past few years we have had plenty of evidence that the global effects of climate change are increasing the frequency of extreme weather events.

“In Scotland we are seeing hotter drier summers, warmer wetter winters and vicious storms with damaging winds. We need to future proof our forest and woodlands against this.

“Doing nothing is not an option and I am pleased that much work has already taken place to counter this and make our forests more resilient. But we can and must do more.

“The routemap provides a strategic and comprehensive action plan with

clear work to be undertaken to boost our forests for the future.”

A steering group, led by Scottish Forestry, has coordinated the work to produce the routemap. The membership included cross-sector representation including Confor representatives, Scottish Environment LINK members, industry groups and organisations, Forest Research, Forestry and Land Scotland, and independent forest management experts.

Andy Leitch, Deputy Chief Executive of Confor, commented: “Confor endorses the ambitions of the action plan and welcomes the partnership approach with the private sector to ensure the future productivity of our forests and future timber security.

“Overall, we support this collaborative approach and are happy to be named participants against the actions and outcomes of the plan”

Actions in the plan are wide ranging and include using scenario planning, use of new technologies like AI, eDNA and satellite data, more use of ‘smart silviculture’ and better monitoring and surveillance for ecosystems.

Forest Research's CEO, James Pendlebury, said: “Forest Research is supporting the routemap by providing the scientific evidence base and expert advice needed to help make our trees, woodland and forests more resilient to climate change and all its associated impacts.”

The plan is to prioritise work on the following three areas to help Scotland's forests and woodlands cope with climate change:

- **Forest planning:** introduce numerous measures to help reduce future risks and threats.
- **Species choice and silviculture:** choosing and growing tree species that will thrive well into the future; and
- **Knowledge exchange:** sharing best practice, training and publishing more resources.

Helen Sellars, Head of Sustainable Forest Management at Scottish Forestry, said: “There is no one magic prescription that can instantly make our forests and woodland resilient to climate change. We need to act now as this precious natural asset is being put under increasing pressure from a number of threats.

“We need to be smarter in forest planning, get the right trees growing and make sure we take advantage and share the all the latest knowledge of creating resilient forests. This routemap will provide a blueprint to achieve all this.”

The resilience actions cover both immediate and long-term priorities over the next 10 years.

Ensuring seed availability, tree improvement programmes, developing silvicultural knowledge, the co-ordination of genetic resources, and a list of tree species for the future are all on the agenda, as well as knowledge workshops where Scotland can learn from other countries.

Vice Convener of the Woodlands Group with the Scottish Environment Link, Andrew Weatherall, added:

“We welcome this routemap and the collaborative cross-sector approach being taken. Importantly it identifies the actions necessary to increase resilience to climate change, and the growing number of pests and diseases in our trees, woods and forests. This is vital, so they can continue to provide biodiversity habitat, climate adaptation and mitigation, public access to nature and domestic timber supply.”



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Views from the sky and ground

The advancement of education for Confor members and their employees is a key objective of the Forest Industries Education & Provident Fund. Hear from the latest successful applicants gaining new skills and qualifications.

The Forest Industries Education and Provident Fund (FIEPF) was established as a charity in 1997 to provide educational grants and hardship assistance to Confor members and their employees. Since 2020, over 70 people have benefitted from an education award.

Some of the most recent awardees share how support from the Education Fund has furthered their careers.

Michael Mauchline *Murdoch Wood*

Grant Murdoch of Murdoch Wood received funding from the Forest Industries Education Fund back in 2021; and recently received funding for employee Michael Mauchline to take a Lantra Tree Felling over 380mm course with Ringlink in Alford.

"I was a sole trader and had not long committed to making tree work my full-time career after working previously as a project manager and rural business consultant. The Fund helped me attend a dismantling and rigging course, an aspect of tree work that I wanted to learn to carry out safely and efficiently. As with all courses I learned a lot and it gave me more confidence to carry out more complex tree work, take on bigger jobs and develop the business.

"Shortly after the course, we became a limited company and employed our first staff member, utilising the skills learnt from the course and passing on knowledge to the new employee. Fast forward to 2025 and we are now a team of four that carry out tree work for domestic and commercial customers, mostly in Tayside. We were also successful in making it onto a FLS framework for the next four years.

"We have two younger team members that are 23 years old who decided to get into tree work despite being trained in other professions. It has been great to help them develop their skills and see how much you can learn in a short space of time when you have good training, opportunities to practice, and are surrounded by a good and experienced team."

Michael was keen to further develop his skills and gaining confidence in felling larger trees was high up his list. After completing his course, he said: "The large tree felling course was a great few days of learning; the location that was used for it couldn't have been better as there were trees suitable for teaching all aspects of large felling.

"The instructor's extensive knowledge and experience meant he was able to correct our techniques and rapidly improve our skills. The course has improved my skills massively and will help me throughout my career."

Duncan Winton *Trees and Timber*

Over the past few years, I have become increasingly interested in the potential of using drones, or unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), in forestry. My role as a forestry professional – transitioning from working predominantly as a contractor to working more and more as a consultant – has led to GIS becoming an ever more important tool in my day-to-day activities.

Currently this is where I see a UAS being most useful to me, in the production of orthomosaics to be able to accurately map, remap and survey areas of woodland quickly and accurately. This process will enable



me to monitor and assess windthrow, crop stress, and management activity such as spot spraying, as well as be a means of inspecting or measuring linear, 2-dimensional and even 3-dimensional features such as fence lines, forest roads, clearfell coupes, waterbodies, and stands of trees. Worth noting that this list is by no means exhaustive.

After some initial research into relevant qualifications for someone intending to use UAS commercially, I decided to gain the A2 Certificate of Competency qualification which permits the holder to operate a UAS weighing up to 2kg within 50m of uninvolved people, and the General Visual Line of Sight (VLOS) Certificate qualification which allows the holder to apply to the Civil Aviation Authority for an Operational Authorisation to operate



UAS in the Specific Category.

I undertook my training with RUAS in Newport who are Commercial UAS Service, Training & Equipment providers, with a wealth of experience and expertise from operating in the sector for over a decade. I applied to the Education Fund for a grant towards the cost of the training and was very pleased that the trustees were supportive of my plans.

The two-day RUAS course is front-loaded with a significant amount of online learning, and I was surprised by the volume of information that we needed to cover. The theoretical elements of the course covered aviation law, procedures and regulation, meteorology, airmanship, flight planning, assessment, and record keeping, and

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About the Forest Industries Education and Provident Fund

The Education Fund supports career development for Confor members. Applicants can be individuals or companies, they must present clear reasons for doing the course, show how it will further their careers, and provide some background information.

Applicants can be at any stage in their careers and can pursue a wide range of training including attendance at conferences, participation on specialist courses (e.g. ecology, tree health, timber technologies, GIS) or management skills or practical training (e.g. chainsaw, drones, mechanical).

Trustees are also interested in requests to co-fund with other bodies as this may broaden the scope of training opportunities available.

Awards can only be offered prior to training. It generally takes about three weeks to process an application, with offers of up to £1,000 per application. For more details and an application form, visit the Confor website.

The Provident Fund is available in cases of hardship, for example long-term illness, personal injury or death. It has more flexibility, and all applications are treated in confidence by the Trustees.

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continued from p27

the practical training ensured students could control the drone, perform a series of manoeuvres competently and understood how to react in an emergency.

Much of the site assessment, flight, and emergency planning will come naturally to someone with experience of forestry operations but the technical, aviation-specific information is still sinking in for me, along with a seemingly endless list of three letter acronyms! My thanks go to the Education Fund for its generous support of this new endeavour for me and my business.

Rosie Cranmer *Scottish Woodlands*

With a background in land surveying and mapping, I joined the forestry industry in 2022. Working in GIS and mapping support, I was slowly introduced to forestry through my position in day-to-day support, but as tasks got more specialised, I felt that my lack of forestry knowledge held me back.

With an enthusiasm to learn more, I began researching courses that could

The prize draw at this year's Confor Dinner & Awards raised over £500 for the Fund thanks to the kind donations of attendees. The winner was John Kirkby of PEFC UK, who has received a voucher for an overnight stay at the Ten Hill Place Hotel, Edinburgh.

The trustees hope he enjoys his stay, extend thanks to Confor for organising the draw, and are grateful for the contribution.



fill in the gaps. I discovered a course that was aimed at individuals like myself who work in the industry but do not have any formal qualifications in forestry. I began the application with the support of my employer and the Fund awarded me the course fee.

In September 2023, I enrolled on the Professional Development Award (PDA) in Forestry, based at the Scottish School of Forestry, Inverness. The course covered four modules: Forest Science, Woodland Establishment, Forest Mensuration and Thinning Control, and Employment, Health and Safety Legislation. The modules were taught

through distance learning, but there were six in-person field days as part of the course.

Since completing my learning, I have started a new job as a Forest Planner. The PDA in Forestry gave me the knowledge and confidence to apply for this position.

The Education Fund grant has enabled me to further my education through an additional qualification, gain valuable practical experience, and meet like-minded forestry professionals. The experience has set me up for the future, and I will continue to build my career based on this.

Funding for green skills development in Wales

The Welsh Government has developed a package of flexible training funding to help businesses build new skills. All approved training courses will attract a 50% contribution towards the total eligible costs.

The Flexible Skills Programme is designed to provide funding support to Wales-based businesses that wish to address skills gaps and upskill their workforce, and to help develop an agile workforce for the Forestry and

Timber Supply Chain in Wales.

There is no requirement to use any particular training company – the applicant may select any certified training provider giving due consideration to quality, cost and overall value for money.

The training undertaken must be either accredited or align with a widely recognised industry standard and be transferable in nature.

This can include face-to-face or

online training in areas such as:

- Woodland and tree preparation maintenance and management
- Large Machinery training i.e. Harvesters, Forwarders, Telescopic Handlers
- Timber Processing/technology
- Forestry and Timber Management Training

To explore eligibility and find out more, search 'Business Wales Flexible Skills Programme'.



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Powering Scotland's Green Future with the Investing for Impact Hub

Edinburgh Napier University's Professor Wendy Wu touches on the outcomes and future potential from the last Impact Investment Symposium, focused on driving green finance and sustainable development.

As Scotland and the world grapple with the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and rural economic renewal, the forestry and timber sectors stand at a pivotal crossroads, where nature-based solutions meet sustainable economic opportunity.

In November 2024, more than 80 global change-makers convened at the Impact Investment Symposium, co-hosted by Edinburgh Napier University and Greenbank Investments, and proudly co-sponsored by CGI and Greenbank Investments. The event marked a defining moment for Scotland's green future, with keynote speaker Dr. David Brand, Executive Chair of New Forests, setting the tone for bold action and collaborative vision.

Coinciding with this landmark gathering was the official launch of the Investing for Impact Hub, a catalytic platform uniting innovation, academia, policy, and finance to accelerate Scotland's transition toward a greener, more resilient future.

The Hub is chaired by leading

investor Paul Atkinson, with Mary Jane Brouwers, Co-Chair and Entrepreneur-in-Residence appointed and supported by the Royal Society of Edinburgh, playing a central role in its strategic direction.

At a Critical Juncture

We stand at a moment of urgency and opportunity. Forests are not only natural carbon sinks and havens for biodiversity but also anchors for rural livelihoods and community regeneration. Yet, to unlock their full potential, coordinated and scalable action is imperative driven by evidence, strategy, and shared ambition.

To answer this call, Dr. Helen Mackay, Chief Forester for Scotland, has been spearheading the formation of a dedicated advisory group, Future Foresters, ensuring the next generation of forestry leaders is empowered to meet this moment.

A Blueprint for Collaborative Impact

The Investing for Impact Hub represents a bold step forward. By aligning the capabilities of modern universities, the

strategic intent of government policy, and the catalytic capital of private investors and philanthropists, the Hub is set to transform how Scotland approaches sustainability and economic regeneration.

We advocate strategic co-investment. Through measurable environmental, social, and economic returns, the Hub redefines what responsible investment can look like in practice.

Scotland's Legacy of Innovation

With a rich legacy of innovation, Scotland's forestry sector is poised to lead again—but it cannot do so alone. The Investing for Impact Hub and the Symposium are more than just initiatives; they are a clarion call for systemic change.

The time is now. The need has never been more urgent.

We invite visionary investors, change-driven philanthropists, and forward-thinking policymakers to join us. Together, let us build a Scotland where flourishing forests and thriving communities are not just aspirations, but shared achievements.



Mining for talent



Woodknowledge Wales has launched Forest Nation World, a video game initiative to get school age learners to grow trees and build with timber in a virtual world.

There is a real challenge in attracting young people into our industry. In fact, this has become an emerging threat to ambitions to build new homes and retrofit existing buildings.

Woodknowledge Wales has adopted a new approach to introducing young people to the fantastic careers that can be found in forestry and sustainable construction, via the wonderful world of Minecraft.

Minecraft is what's known as a 'sandbox' video game where players explore, build, and survive in a blocky, pixelated world. A player can gather resources, craft tools, and create almost anything that they can imagine. They can play on their own or with friends to create, explore or solve challenges.

It's highly possible that you know someone who has played the game since 1 in 8 people on the planet have reportedly given it a go.

Creating and piloting Forest Nation World

Woodknowledge Wales and some of its members spent time researching Minecraft and have decided to create Forest Nation World, an immersive environment for young people to explore, learn and create within the platform. Players in this online environment within Minecraft can "grow" trees and then use resources (such as Spruce timber) to design and construct sustainable buildings.

The ambition is for Forest Nation World to provide an engaging platform for young people to learn about the forest industries. This aligns The Hwb, Welsh Government's online portal for schools, with a host of Minecraft resources to be used in the classroom such as the living sustainably scheme of work.

Two Woodknowledge Wales members are already piloting this

approach: PYC Group (Welshpool) and Hiraeth Architecture (Cardiff). Both companies are working with young people to recreate sustainable timber buildings in Minecraft, buildings that also exist in the "real" world.

Rob Thomas, Director at Hiraeth Architecture, said: "We have an aging workforce across the timber and construction industries and a skills gap increasing year on year. Engaging young people in developing an understanding of trees, carbon and timber construction as fundamental to mitigating climate change is essential if we are to change this course. Hopefully ideas like this can serve as inspiration and mobilise a new generation"

Jasper Meade, Director at PYC Group, added: "PYC has worked at careers events with local schools to help promote what future there can be working in the construction industry. In particular, our field of expertise which is high performance timber frame housing.

"Having seen the potential with Minecraft, we feel that the idea of using Minecraft to engage young learners in the exploration of forestry, timber processing and building along with all the associated expertise such as engineering, design and manufacture will really get students excited and help them understand the potential in this world of work."

Growing Forest Nation World

Woodknowledge Wales are looking for more businesses to get involved by working with young people, engaging them in the task of growing trees and forests, and designing and building timber buildings in Minecraft.

Resources are available to support contacting local schools and creating a project that aligns with learning objectives. For more information, please contact Business Development & Delivery Advisor James Moxey (james.moxey@woodknowledgewales.co.uk).

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Trees and Timber Learner sweeps Lantra Scotland's ALBAS 2025

Over 200 finalists, event supporters, employers, training providers and industry leaders, including Jim Fairlie MSP, attended a glittering awards ceremony for the Lantra Scotland ALBAS

Scotland's top land-based and aquaculture trainees were celebrated at Lantra Scotland's ALBAS (Awards for Land-based and Aquaculture Skills) at the Crieff Hydro Hotel in Perthshire.

Industry awards were made for agriculture, aquaculture, equine, game and wildlife, horticulture, land-based engineering, trees and timber and veterinary nursing.

The evening's highlights included Stewart Smith, Apprentice Craftsperson with Forestry & Land Scotland (FLS), receiving the much-coveted Overall Winner Award, the highest accolade of the night.

"Receiving this award was a great achievement and it is a testament not just to the work I do, but the support and teaching I have received from my colleagues at FLS," he said.

Stewart, from Cromarty in the Highlands, is doing an SVQ in Trees & Timber through the Scottish School of Forestry UHI Inverness while doing his apprenticeship at FLS.

"I pursued an apprenticeship because I saw it as a great way to get into the industry and start a career in forestry. I graduated with a Bachelor of Science in veterinary bioscience from the University of Glasgow, but during the degree I decided that that wasn't the career pathway that I wanted to follow.

"After moving out of the city and back to my hometown of Rosemarkie, I decided to begin looking at



other options for me and finally found this apprenticeship. Luckily, one of the areas taking on apprentices was the Black Isle, so I applied."

Stewart was also awarded Trees and Timber Learner of the Year and the



Trees and Timber Winner Stewart Smith with Andy Leitch of Confor.



Modern Apprentice of the Year Award. He is keen to keep the momentum going and is planning for the future.

"I'm looking to stay in forestry and hopefully with FLS," he explained. "I am committed to living on the Black Isle, which might limit my options for jobs after the apprenticeship, but I am staying hopeful and am currently looking into some mensuration and tariffing courses that will hopefully steer my career towards survey work."

FLS were well-represented across the awards with several other winners having come through their apprenticeship programmes.

The Tam Tod Trophy went to FLS gamekeeping apprentice Murray Henderson, who also won the Game and Wildlife industry award. The Tam Tod Trophy is made in association with Countryside Learning Scotland to an outstanding young learner and was created in memory of the late Tam Tod, described as a well-loved gamekeeper, ghillie and lifelong friend of the countryside.

Other prizes on the night included the Lantra Mentor Award for most inspirational tutor, won by Marc Pickering, who works for FLS in Lochgilphead, the Anna Murray Partnership Working Award, the School Pupil Award NPA Skills for Work, and individual awards for Higher Education.

The winners and runners-



LtoR: Mentor of the Year Award Winner Marc Pickering with Tracey McEwan of Tarff Valley. Game and Wildlife Winner Murray Henderson with Sarah-Jane Laing of Scottish Land and Estates.

up for ALBAS 2025 were chosen by an independent judging panel made up of influential figures from across the land-based and aquaculture sector, including FLS Work-Based Learning Manager Emma Staniforth.

She commented: "Hearing the stories and learning journeys from the nominees is extremely inspiring and highlights the talent that is coming through the industry. The nominees' commitment to learning whilst they work shines through when you ask them about their experiences. The passion for what they do is evident by the smiles on their faces and the look in their eyes when they talk to you."

"The ALBAS are important as they give recognition to both the learner for the hard work, commitment and passion

that they invest in their chosen industry and to their employer for the dedication and investment they have given.

"It enables others in the industry to see and hear about apprenticeships and learning opportunities and hopefully gives them reason to offer this to others. The awards give a louder voice to industry when trying to attract more talent."

Emma is a Lantra Scotland industry champion and former overall winner of Lantra's learner of the year awards.

"Being an ALBAS winner was fantastic for me," she said. "It opened up opportunities to meet others across my industry and see how they were working in forestry. I was able to visit private estates and meet people from across different sectors all willing to

share their experiences with me.

"I attended various events as a representative of forestry and of Lantra and it gave me a voice to try and inspire other people into this field of work. I have since gone on to work with apprentices and learners and now, having the privilege to be a judge, I can give back to others and hopefully give them a chance to experience the wider sector."

Dr Liz Barron-Majerik MBE MICFor, Scotland Director, Lantra, added: "It is a privilege to be part of the ALBAS and to help put the spotlight on some of the incredible people in Scotland's land-based and aquaculture sector, while also encouraging employers to look ahead at their future workforce."

"Everyone who was nominated for our awards should be proud of that achievement, but with the standard of entries continuing to get better each year, it means that our winners tonight are quite simply the best of the best from our sector. As well as being important to Scotland's rural economy, they also play a vital role in their local communities and in caring for the environment."

Confor was a supporter of this year's ALBAS, alongside SRUC, Salmon Scotland, Scottish Land and Estates, Tarff Valley, Borders Machinery Ring, Horticultural Trades Association, NatureScot Peatland ACTION, Ringlink, SAOS, SQA, BAGMA, Equido Horsemanship, Bakkafrost Scotland and Andy Murray.

Getting skills out of the woods

Two years ago, Maydencroft Limited started offering solutions to the rural sector skills gap through their Green Skills Training Academy. Eleanor O'Neill spoke to Tom Williams and David Cook about how putting skills at the core of the business benefits the industry as a whole.

With a commitment to doing work that stands the test of time, Maydencroft Limited is an ambitious business offering a range of specialist consultancy and contracting services across the rural sector.

"I founded Maydencroft in 2007," said Managing Director Tom Williams. "From that humble start, we now employ 160 permanent employees and extensive network and subcontractors across the UK, not just in forestry but in a whole variety of rural services."

From the very beginning, the company's ethos has been as much about creating a sustainable workforce and strengthening the rural economy as it has for supporting landscape development and nature restoration.

Tom recalled: "I was really excited about the push for apprenticeships that came with the coalition government in 2010. We embraced bringing on as many young people and people new to the industry as we could - then that led to a huge training need within the business."

"The obvious thing for us to do was set up some form of internal academy but at our size it wasn't practical to have that as a pure cost exercise. We're not big enough and it's really unheard of to do that in our industry. The best way to proceed was to work out a way it could stand on its own two feet, not necessarily as a big profit centre for us, but to fulfil the needs of our business and also upskill others within the industry."

"That's where the idea for the Green Skills Training Academy came from."

The Academy was launched in 2023 with the aim of increasing employability for new candidates within the green sector and addressing the skill shortage within the industry. Its scope is far-reaching beyond Maydencroft itself, delivering accredited courses for the sector from training centres in Hertfordshire and Berkshire.

Part of its pledge is to create 100 new jobs and give many more people the opportunity to start rural careers, therefore establishing a skilled green workforce for the future. One of the key programmes to deliver on this goal has been the four-week Green Skills Bootcamp courses.

"In simple terms, the bootcamps bring in people who might be finding it difficult to get work and give them a start in the





land management sector,” said David Cook, Head of the Green Skills Training Academy. “Each cohort gets classroom learning, training on technical skills, and structured work experience with our employment partners.

“It’s important they get the opportunity to apply the skills they’re learning and to follow through with employability support. We help build portfolios, add to CVs, and all learners are offered a genuine job interview with us or our partners at the end, which is incredible.

“About 60-70% of people coming through the bootcamps get a job within

a six-month period. We’ve been really fortunate to employ personnel from that group ourselves at Maydenscroft and it’s really lovely to get that moment of closing the circle.”

Tom explained how having the Academy as a functioning arm of the wider business brings its own benefits.

He said: “Ultimately, it achieves our goals of ensuring we have well-structured methods for identifying, updating and renewing the training requirements of our own employees. And we can be proactive with that by asking our people directly what their needs are and then running it through the Academy.”

“It’s a unique organisation in the sense that it’s been wholly driven by trying to give control back to the green skills sector,” David added. “There’s a genuine sense of finding talented people and creating opportunities for them, which marks Maydenscroft as a really progressive employer as well.”

By 2030, the Academy hopes to have given back 10,000 green skills to the rural economy, bridging the gap in current expertise shortages, and to be delivering 30 new environmental courses through partnerships with industry leaders.

David continued: “We want to offer a real quality service that’s industry-focused and keeps up with current practices. We’re always developing that range of qualifications. We have everything for the kind of technical competencies teams might need like brushcutters, woodchippers, chainsaws, and health and safety provision.

“We also do bespoke programmes and are looking into the refined things that Maydenscroft and others need that no one is providing yet. Things like

ecology awareness for rural workers and different sectors, developing knowledge of soil science, and other unique problems that we see emerging.

“Additionally, there’s apprenticeships and elements of further postgraduate study for our teams. Beyond that we are building partnerships with the Greater London Authority, local colleges, and large organisations like Forestry Commission.”

As an example of the latter, the Academy recently developed and delivered woodland creation and management courses to serve as part of the national drive to support the training requirements of people working in forestry and arboriculture in England. The majority of trainees were funded by the Forestry Commission Forestry and Arboriculture Training Fund.

Participants noted that the upskilling initiative fed into better understanding of and confidence in their work. The passion and knowledge of the instructors is clear in the feedback and the course content was designed to be as relevant to the needs of the cohorts as possible.

“I like the way that we have been and are continuing to be nimble,” Tom commented. “We’ve got loads of training that we’ve informally provided for our teams because the courses don’t exist. So, if we need to write them ourselves anyway, why not deliver the material to the wider industry? Why not have it accredited?”

“We’ve been running for two years, and we’ve created seven or eight Lantra approved courses. That’s brilliant.”

That momentum is set to continue with eyes on the Academy’s 2030 goals.

“We are definitely thinking about how we might offer blended models, so remote, hybrid, asynchronous parts of our courses, just trying to increase access and opportunity,” David noted. “That’s high on the agenda, along with expanding the range of programmes and strengthening our employability support even further.

“To that end, we’re going to continue to develop our partnerships with all sorts of organisations and agencies. One thing we’re currently looking at is working with the prison service to design skills bootcamps within their grounds that can support employability on release.

“It all weaves back to seeing potential and building a structured pathway to develop careers. There’s a lot of good people doing good work out there. We can improve the learning opportunities in the sector and continue to be a really progressive trainer and employer.”



New emergency authorisation for Lanzarta targets large pine weevil

The withdrawal of treatment options in recent seasons had left some newly planted woodlands dangerously exposed to feeding damage of adult *Hylobius* weevil, that can lead to high levels of losses on reforestation plantings.

The Emergency Authorisation (EA), applied for on behalf of the industry by Confor, enables the sale of Lanzarta between 15 April and 13 August 2025. It permits trees to be treated with Lanzarta once per season in the forest between 15 April and 30 September, with knapsack application treatment of planted saplings or natural regeneration.

Protecting saplings with Lanzarta, containing chlorantraniliprole, through the crucial early years can significantly reduce restocking costs and time, as well as create a more consistent woodland stand.

Syngenta Technical Manager, Sean Loakes, highlighted that *Hylobius* has become an increasing challenge in UK forests. "Weevil larvae develop rapidly in the decaying stumps of cleared woodland, where emerging and migrating adults can feed voraciously on replanted or natural regeneration saplings. Climatic change has favoured the pests' development," he warned.

Sean pointed out the quick drying SC liquid formulation of Lanzarta is easy and precise to use. The product quickly and strongly binds onto the tree bark, to prevent wash off by rain and provide long lasting protection against pests feeding on the bark.

The active ingredient in Lanzarta was inspired by a naturally occurring diamide insecticide from the *Ryania* plant. Importantly it only affects insect pests that physically feed on treated plants, which quickly stops further damage and leads to their death. Lanzarta has a positive toxicological and environmental profile for non-target organisms



and biodiversity in woodland.

Sean added that research and industry best practice has shown the most effective timing to target adult *Hylobius* activity has been a one or two spray strategy in April to June and late summer to early autumn, depending on risk identified by insect activity and historic experience of damage.

Trials have shown that the effective prevention of *Hylobius* damage for the early years of forest establishment gives time for the natural background pest population to diminish, along with enabling trees to establish sufficiently to better withstand later damage.

Sitka spruce, the predominant conifer well suited to UK conditions, is especially susceptible to *Hylobius* feeding damage on young saplings. Around 35 million sitka trees have been planted each year across the UK, making it the country's third largest single crop area - after



wheat and barley. Sitka accounts for an estimated 50% of the entire £2bn UK forestry industry trade.

Forest advisors advocate integrated *Hylobius* cultural measures, such as extending fallow periods before replanting, manipulating ground cover and reducing food sources for larvae, can be beneficial when used in combination with Lanzarta to further reduce the impact of the pest.

"Further trials are ongoing with Forest Research, independent advisors, forest nurseries and reforestation projects across Europe, to refine Lanzarta application techniques and timing in practice," Sean advised.

Under the terms of the EA, distributors must record where customers have purchased and used Lanzarta. All product supplied under the EA must be used during the authorised application period. Lanzarta will be available from nationwide distributors, Agrigem and Agrovista.

	Lanzarta	Water volume	Number of trees treated
Forest treatment	45 ml	15 litres	750
Knapsack application	60 ml	20 litres	1000
<i>Lanzarta recommended application rate for forest treatments. Apply 20 ml of spray mix per tree. Maximum annual application rate 180 ml Lanzarta per ha</i>			



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UK first for Scottish Forestry development programme

Scottish Forestry is the first public sector organisation in the UK to be officially accredited by the Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF) for its development programme for new recruits.

Since 2022, the WOODS programme has supported Woodland Officers in developing skills and knowledge to be competent and confident in their roles.

Welcoming the ICF accreditation on the UN's International Day of Forests, Paul Lowe, CEO of Scottish

Forestry, said: "We are all very proud to be awarded this accreditation and especially since we are the first public sector organisation in the UK to receive it – that's fantastic."

"It's a strong endorsement of our ongoing investment into staff development and supports our activities in relation to woodland creation across Scotland."

The accreditation will benefit staff who will earn points towards their Professional Membership of the ICF.

Another wider benefit is that accreditation will strengthen Scottish Forestry's ability to attract new woodland officers in the future, knowing that there is a prestigious development programme waiting for them.

Ron Wilson, Assistant Woodland Officer with Scottish Forestry, has been undertaking the learning and development. He added: "Being part of the WOODS programme is a really enjoyable and a beneficial experience for me. The teaching and knowledge exchange is superb and it's good to

meet colleagues from across Scottish Forestry who are on a similar journey but have different levels of knowledge and experience."

"It's supplementing my on-the-job training and helping to consolidate my forestry knowledge. The learning sessions covering ground preparation, stocking density, forests and water, and forest soils have been the highlight so far. I'm looking forward to learning more as the course goes on."

Louise Simpson, ICF Executive Director, added: "I am delighted that the Institute is able to formally recognise the professional development opportunities afforded to staff of Scottish Forestry through this newly Institute-accredited graduate programme."

"As we continue to address the ongoing skills shortage in the sector, it is vital that the Institute continues to offer flexible routes to chartered status, and acknowledging the vocational skills and training offered by respected, rigorous in-house forestry graduate schemes is a significant part of this."

Virtual work experience programme launched

The Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF) and Forestry Commission have announced the launch of the Sustainable Careers in Forestry: Virtual Work Experience (VWEX) programme.

This new virtual forestry work experience programme is available on the immersive online careers platform, Springpod. Free for students to sign up, it helps young people explore career opportunities through both virtual work experience and university taster courses.

The programme invites young

people to explore the diverse range of green opportunities available in a sector that is key to creating a sustainable and resilient future. From tree planting and forest management to conservation and utilisation, the VWEX programme includes practical skills and insights into the forestry sector, as well as information on career pathways.

Designed for students aged 13-23, the launch of this free programme aims to address the skills shortage in the forestry sector, highlighting career prospects, and attracting the next

generation of foresters.

Dr Rob Hawkins, ICF Senior Education & Outreach Officer, led on the development of this programme. Speaking on its launch, Rob said: "Launching a virtual work experience programme is a really exciting opportunity to showcase the breadth of careers that are available in forestry."

The programme has been welcomed by organisations across the sector, including the Woodland Trust who have contributed additional funding to support further promotions.

Community engagement in the spotlight at meeting of UK Tree Planting Taskforce

Efforts to promote meaningful engagement with local communities on new woodland creation projects were centre stage at the second UK Tree Planting Taskforce meeting.

Each of the four nations believes that a key ingredient to successful woodland expansion is ensuring that communities feel engaged and are able to have a voice in proposals that might affect the land where they live.

The UK Tree Planting Taskforce was set up to strengthen collaborative working across the UK and to help get millions more trees in the ground.

Chairing the Taskforce's meeting, Rural Affairs Secretary of the Scottish Government Mairi Gougeon said: "In Scotland we have seen positive steps forward in community engagement by government agencies and the private sector, but I think we can also all acknowledge that there is scope for further improvement.

"I believe that engagement needs to be constructive and based on mutual respect. Landowners need to increase their transparency about how the land will be used and government needs to better demonstrate their decision-making process.

"The value of community input, and the local knowledge and expertise it brings, must be fully recognised. Communities' concerns about planting schemes must be heard and addressed where appropriate."

During the meeting, all four countries agreed that there were many great examples of good practice in community engagement and each country could learn from each other on what has worked well.

Amanda Bryan, one of Confor's delivery partners for the Stakeholder Engagement Training (Scotland) programme, delivered a presentation on the development and successes of the training. Confor Chief Executive Stuart Goodall also drew attention to the 'Good Practice Guidance for Woodland Creation Proposals' published by Confor last year.



Photo credit: Simon Mayson

Andrew Muir, Northern Ireland's Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, welcomed the community engagement focus of the second meeting of the Taskforce. He said: "The involvement of local communities and the wider public is essential for us to help achieve our tree planting ambitions. I am fully committed to meaningful engagement with local communities to help deliver my department's priorities, including its tree planting objectives.

"While recent stakeholder engagement indicates overall support for woodland creation it also recognises the many diverse opinions on preferred woodland types and suitable areas for new woodlands. We

must all work collaboratively to ensure everyone understands the benefits that woodlands can bring to our economy, biodiversity and public wellbeing."

The UK has around 13% tree cover, with the European average being over 40%. The UK Tree Planting Taskforce is looking at how new woodland can be created in the optimal way, with the help of many external organisations and industry.

The UK's forests and woodlands are key drivers for fighting climate change by sequestering harmful CO₂ emissions from the atmosphere. This natural green powerhouse also provides abundant habitats for boosting biodiversity, as well as creating a better quality

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environment for healthier lifestyles.

Wales Deputy First Minister Huw Irranca-Davies commented: “In Wales, we are committed to tackling the nature emergency. Through transparent and inclusive engagement, we aim to meet our climate and biodiversity targets and making sure new woodlands enhance community wellbeing and reflect local priorities.

“Trees bring huge benefits to communities right across Wales. This underlies our commitment to the National Forest for Wales and the work we’re doing with communities across Wales to preserve and create

woodlands for future generations to enjoy and cherish as part of Wales’s natural legacy.”

Defra Forestry Minister Mary Creagh added: “The Government was elected on a mandate to protect and restore nature, and this Tree Planting Taskforce was created to oversee the planting of millions of trees across our four nations.

“Trees shade our cities, improve our health and help reduce NHS costs.

“We need to work together to ensure everyone - from landowners to local communities – reaps the rewards of woodland creation and can contribute to it.”

The UK’s forests are also crucial in supporting the UK’s economy and supporting thousands of jobs, many in the more rural areas. Timber is in huge demand in the UK and there is a need to import less as this can have negative consequences on the UK’s carbon footprint.

The UK Tree Planting Taskforce rotates the chairing amongst the countries, with Scotland hosting this most recent meeting. It is reflective of the devolved nature of forestry in the UK and provides a platform for oversight, sharing best practice and identifying barriers on tree-planting in each nation.

England’s non-woodland trees freely mapped for first time

England’s non-woodland trees have been mapped for first time, revealing these trees make up nearly third of our nation’s tree cover.

Using one of the very latest methods of laser detection and satellite imagery, the country’s top tree scientists at the UK Government’s Forest Research agency built a comprehensive picture of non-woodland trees across England.

By providing a better national picture, the groundbreaking map will allow conservation groups and local authorities to target tree planting efforts more accurately. The map can pinpoint lone trees that could be connected to nearby wooded areas to create better habitat for wildlife in support of the Government’s manifesto commitment to expand nature-rich habitats and help achieve our legal target to increase England’s woodland canopy to 16.5%.

Forestry Minister Mary Creagh said: “Our precious street trees improve air quality, mark the changing seasons and provide us with peace, shade and joy. Their value simply cannot be overstated.

“This groundbreaking new tree census will not only help us better understand our current tree canopy cover, but allow us to identify areas where we can create more nature rich habitats for wildlife and people to enjoy as part of our Plan for Change.”

Trees outside woodlands (TOW) are



defined as single trees in urban and rural areas. They play an important role in storing carbon, regulating temperatures, and mitigating against the impacts of climate change, such as flooding and over-heating of our towns and cities.

Sir William Worsley, Chair of Forestry Commission said: “This has been a real endeavour by the team - the results are spectacular and will be invaluable to us as we strive to meet our legal target to increase tree planting cover.

“The map fills critical data gaps about our national tree assets, helping us understand this natural resource and the benefits it brings, including carbon storage. Many people - from citizens to governments – will use the map to make evidence-based decisions to improve management

and protection of our trees.”

The map is fully automated thanks to its use of spatial datasets and can be updated regularly to capture changes in tree canopy cover.

Freddie Hunter, Head of Remote Sensing at Forest Research, said:

“This is an exciting moment. By using a combination of aerial and satellite technology, we have been able to locate and measure all TOW for the first time. By combining the National Forest Inventory woodland map and the TOW map we have a complete picture of tree canopy in England.

“We used laser technology mounted on planes and images of the Earth’s surface captured by satellites to identify tree canopy cover across the breadth of the country. This will be vital in informing future tree-planting and monitoring.”

ARB Show returns with focus on education and careers

The UK's biggest arboriculture-focused trade show continues to grow, with evolving activities and attractions for both the industry and the public.

The ARB Show, the flagship industry event of The Arboricultural Association, will be returning to Tetbury on 16-17 May, mixing education, entertainment, innovations and technology.

This year will see some incredible demonstrations showcasing the advancements in arboriculture and the tools, equipment and techniques that can revolutionise tree care, making it efficient and safer.

There'll be plenty on offer from a wide range of exhibitors who are experts in a huge range of products and services, displaying the latest equipment available in every market from decay detection technology, soil decompaction and enrichment to new climbing kit and almost every type of chipper and arb accessory you could imagine.

Careers and Education Hub

A welcome addition to the ARB Show last year was the careers hub, which was created a space to inspire, motivate and support public awareness, education, and careers in arboriculture. The team have developed a new and improved careers and education hub, expanding on this success.

This year visitors will have the chance to hear from industry professionals and urban tree enthusiasts offering valuable insights on the wide range of job opportunities and supporting educational courses available within arboriculture. The lineup will also feature a new immersive VR learning experience with Callum Throw from Arb Innovators.

Aspiring arborists can get involved with the Kid's Climbing tree, returning on both days with the Great Big Tree Climbing Company teaching children how to enter a tree's canopy using ropes, knots and karabiners, whilst being securely attached in a harness at all times. Each child will be given a free small tree to plant after their climb.



Photos: Maisey Hammond



Evolution of arb

This special exhibit will be expanding to celebrate the past, present and future of arb. Anyone is invited to contribute to this area which showcases the advancements and changes in equipment and technology through the years.

Since the first edition ARB Show has always been the event to launch the tools, equipment and techniques that can revolutionise tree care, making it efficient and safer. As well as being as being the place to demonstrate how rapidly innovations can evolve.

The majority of these changes are led by, and impossible without the vision of forward-thinking arborists. So, as

well as celebrating technical milestones this is a chance to highlight some of the people behind the scenes whose contributions have changed the way we work.

Captivating competitions

In addition to these new features, familiar favourites including The ARB Show Open Climbing Competition, sponsored by Petzl, will be showcasing just some of the many technical skills involved in being a professional arborist.

Other arb delights making their return include the activity arena, home of the popular Knot Tying and Throwline Competitions sponsored by Lantra.

Building inclusive pathways into industry

Scotland-based employment and training organisation VERG has launched the Get Into Forestry programme; an employer-led initiative designed to attract, train, and retain new entrants into the forestry and timber sector.

The forestry sector in the UK is facing a pivotal moment. With an ageing workforce, evolving sustainability goals, and a rising demand for timber, there's a growing need to bring new talent into the industry.

Get Into Forestry offers an innovative, zero-cost route for employers to recruit and develop the next generation of forestry workers. But this is not just another training scheme. It's a comprehensive, tailored programme grounded in real-world employer needs and it's already making waves in communities and companies alike.

Designed by employers, for employers

Unlike many "off-the-shelf" recruitment and training pathways, Get Into Forestry is fully employer-led. This means the programme works closely with forestry businesses from the outset to identify recruitment and workforce gaps, and then builds a tailored training pipeline to address them.

"Employers are at the heart of this model," said Peter Loudon, Programme Manager at VERG. "We don't just train people and hope they'll find work. We create a process that directly supports a company's recruitment and retention goals."

The process begins with promotional outreach to build awareness and interest in forestry careers, particularly among individuals who may not have previously considered the sector. Once interest is generated, candidates are invited to participate in a

structured Information and Selection Day.

Participants then undergo robust pre-screening that includes both technical and behavioural assessments, such as DISC personality profiling. This ensures not only aptitude but alignment with the demands and culture of the forestry workplace.

Practical, work-ready training

Following selection, participants begin a bespoke training journey, which can be tailored to the employer's specific operational needs. Modules may include:

- Chainsaw training
- Woodchipper operation
- Brush cutter and strimmer use
- Emergency First Aid at Work in



Forestry (EFAWF)

Importantly, each programme includes two weeks of structured work experience within a real forestry environment. This gives candidates a true understanding of the day-to-day demands of the job and gives employers a chance to see their future workforce in action before committing to employment.

"We know that people have preconceptions about the sector," Peter explained. "But once they're out there, seeing the variety of the work, the satisfaction of being outdoors, and the opportunities for development; it changes perspectives. That's why the work experience element is so important."

De-risking recruitment

At a time when recruitment costs can be high and retention uncertain, Get Into Forestry helps remove financial and administrative barriers to hiring. Because the programme is supported by local authority and employability partners, the training and onboarding process comes at no direct cost to the employer.

Furthermore, where employers are ready to offer positions following work experience, VERG helps navigate the landscape of local Employer Recruitment Incentives (ERIs), often securing wage subsidies or other supports to reduce the financial risk of bringing someone new on board.



Peter continued: “Smaller businesses especially can really benefit. We take the hassle out of the recruitment process and help employers tap into funding they might not know existed. It means they can focus on growing their teams and meeting demand.”

Supporting retention and sector sustainability

In a sector where skills shortages and high turnover can create challenges, Get Into Forestry isn't just about filling vacancies. It's about long-term sustainability. By giving

participants meaningful, realistic experiences and aligning them with the right employer from the start, the programme supports better retention and job satisfaction.

Employers are also supported after the initial placement. VERG offers post-hire follow-up to ensure new recruits settle in well, providing both the employer and the employee with a smoother transition.

“The forestry industry has a bright future, but we need to make sure we're planting the seeds now,” Peter said. “This is about building pathways into the industry that are inclusive, responsive, and sustainable. We want to work hand in hand with employers who care about developing people, growing their businesses, and contributing to the sector's future.”

Join the movement

VERG is currently seeking new employer partners to get involved in the Get Into Forestry programme. Whether you're a contractor looking for entry-level chainsaw operatives or a larger business needing a bespoke training and recruitment pipeline, the team at VERG can build a solution around your needs. To learn more or express your interest, contact peter.louden@verg-scotland.com.

NEWS & UPDATES

FSC UK supports training and advice for small woodland owners

Based in Shropshire and Powys, the Small Woods Association is a charity dedicated to supporting small woodland owners and managers in sustainable woodland management.

FSC UK provided funding to support a woodland advisor, Alice Brawley, to undertake advisory visits with small woodland managers/owners to tackle practical challenges in relation to sustainable woodland management in small woodlands.

The project had two main aims:

- Provision of a free advisory and training service to tackle practical challenges in relation to sustainable woodland management in small woodlands.
- Promotion of the benefits of certification and the role of the UK Forestry Standard and the UK Woodland Assurance Standard to small woodland

owners and managers.

Over the course of the project, 130 individuals received advice and training through a combination of one-to-one site visits/ remote calls, and workshops held within a forest operation.

The workshops were held in a variety of woodland settings across Wales and Scotland. Whilst each workshop had a different theme dependant on location, training in sustainable woodland management was central to each event.

The final training day in the series was conducted in an agricultural environment in Wales rather than a woodland setting, in recognition of the need for farmers to receive much-needed guidance and support for increasing tree cover on their land and managing their woodlands in preparation for the upcoming Sustainable Farming Scheme.

As the project progressed, it became clear that existing woodland management plan templates, designed for large, mainly productive woodlands, were overly complex for the needs of small woodland managers. A simplified woodland management plan specific to small woodlands was created and has been made available to both members and non-members of SWA.

This project highlighted the need for a free/low-cost advisory and training service specifically tailored towards small woodland owners and managers. It also demonstrated how such a service can effectively contribute to the long-term sustainable management of small woodlands (which make up the majority of woodland area across the UK), providing small woodland owners with the confidence and knowledge to effectively manage their woodlands.

Learning by doing: A novel approach to training in Continuous Cover Forestry

The establishment of a new training site for Continuous Cover Forestry at Darnaway Forest in Scotland presents an opportunity for hands-on learning mirroring silviculture training initiatives already widespread across Europe.

The future of forestry in the UK is looking greener and more diverse as the emphasis pivots towards multi-functionality and resilience of woodland resources. With this shift comes a growing requirement for new skills and training in silviculture.

Recently, a partnership of UK and European foresters has established a training facility at Darnaway Forest, Morayshire, Scotland, with a specific focus on Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF). This site joins an international collaboration, the Integrate Network, which employs a common training methodology and plot design. The first of its type in the UK, the key feature is a forest plot known as a marteloscope.

CCF is an increasingly popular approach to sustainable forest management that maintains a permanent forest canopy by selectively harvesting individual or small groups of trees. The aim is to foster biodiversity and enhance ecosystem resilience, while sustaining a continuous supply of high-quality timber.

However, there is a well-recognised skills gap that limits the application of CCF in the UK compared with many European countries. Tree marking, a critical skill for CCF management, is a new skill for many foresters, and needs to be honed by formal learning and practical experience.

Integration and Collaboration

The Integrate Network was initiated in 2016 by the German Federal Ministry for Food and Agriculture and the Czech Ministry of Agriculture. Since 2022, the network has become a Multi-Donor Trust Fund with 12 member countries.

The core activity has been the creation of the marteloscope network;

to date, over 260 sites in 27 countries. Each marteloscope is managed by a local team that deliver their own training events. Members of the network include forest owner groups, government agencies, companies and educational institutions.

Originating from the French term “martelage” (meaning “hammering,” the traditional method of marking trees), a marteloscope is a specially prepared forest plot ranging in size between 0.25 and 1 ha. Every tree is numbered, measured, and its timber and biodiversity values are estimated and recorded in software.

Participants use this information to simulate tree marking exercises on tablet computers or mobile phones, instantly analysing the impact of their tree selections on both potential financial returns and biodiversity impacts. This interactive approach fosters valuable discussions and peer-to-peer learning in the forest.

The Scottish project, called Integrate Darnaway, has established two martelosopes in Darnaway Forest. These plots, Darnaway 1 (0.25 ha) and Darnaway 2 (0.5 ha), represent different forest development stages and species compositions. The two plots are numbered 257 and 258 and add the UK to the Integrate Network map.

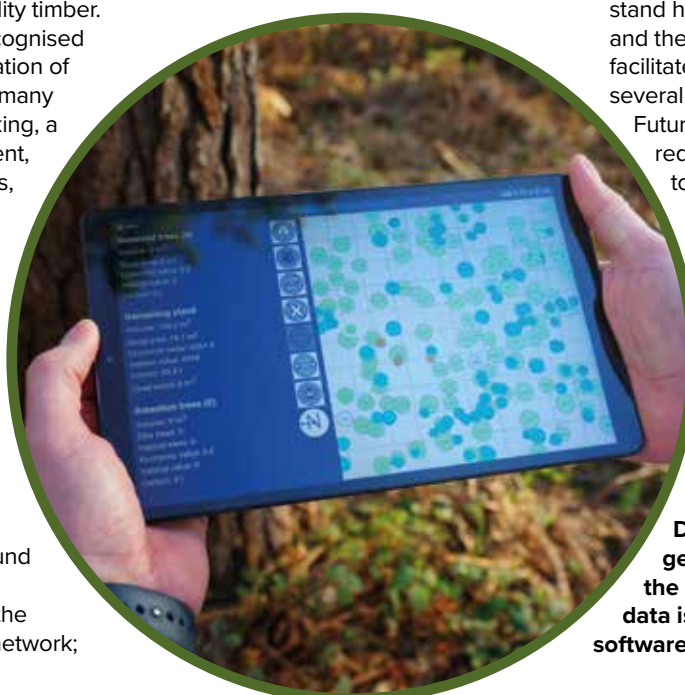
Each marteloscope offers its own opportunities and challenges for training. Darnaway 1 is located in a Douglas fir plantation in the early stages of transformation to CCF. This is typical of many forest stands in the region. A key silvicultural issue is stand stability, so early selection of good quality and stable trees links strongly with enhanced forest resilience in our rapidly changing climate.

Darnaway 2 addresses a wider range of economic and environmental issues, being located in a mature Scots pine plantation that is developing a more complex forest structure. This stand has been thinned several times, and the basal area is low enough to facilitate the natural regeneration of several conifer and broadleaf species.

Future management of this stand will require careful selection of trees to retain and remove, to balance long-term timber production with biodiversity conservation.

Darnaway Forest has been involved in training foresters for many decades and the new martelosopes allow that long tradition to continue with some of the latest teaching and learning methodologies.

Decisions and results are generated in real time using the tablet computers. Marteloscope data is processed using the I+ software. Photo: E. R. Wilson





The Integrate Darnaway inventory team. Photo: Joachim Boehm

Team Approach

An important element of the Darnaway project has been the contribution of student foresters from the UHI Scottish School of Forestry (SSF). This is one of the first times that a student group has helped establish a marteloscope.

Following a training session at SSF, students worked in small teams to complete the layout and mapping, tree measurements and a survey of microhabitat features. Each tree was assessed in terms of potential product assortment (green/red sawlogs, pallet, chip/pulp, residue) and up to 34 specific tree microhabitats, using a field guide prepared by ecologists working with the Integrate Network.

Sharon Rodhouse, an inventory expert, contributed to the training and supervision of the fieldwork.

Following fieldwork, data was checked and processed by the Integrate Network secretariat. Economic analysis has been made possible with product values from local sawmills. The final dataset was uploaded to the Integrate Network server and is available now for use in training exercises. From summer 2025, training events will be rolled out for a wide range of user groups.

Funding for the Darnaway martelosopes was generously provided by Vastern Timber Ltd., who supported the inventory training, site set-up and data analysis; and Scottish Forestry Trust, who are providing a grant for the purchase of tablet computers and course delivery.

Course Delivery

An important feature of the marteloscope approach is the use of tablet computers.

Site data is downloaded from the Integrate Network server onto tablets equipped with bespoke “I+” software. This technology allows users to conduct interactive and virtual tree marking exercises, explore different management options and meet a range of forest management objectives. The trainer can amend prescriptions within the software to meet the needs of individual groups, from novice to advanced tree markers.

From an educational perspective, martelosopes provide a unique problem-based learning (PBL) experience. The tablet technology helps to streamline lesson planning and course delivery.

The martelosopes are located 300 m apart and surrounded by forest stands at different stages of transformation to CCF. Together, Darnaway 1 and 2 provide a platform for training and technical discussions, using the outputs generated by the “I+” software.

Different training configurations are possible using martelosopes and the surrounding forest. A major co-benefit of the project is an emphasis on evidence-based practice. New ideas and scenarios can be tested, stimulating discussions around silviculture, forest management and conservation.

A training hub for CCF

The Darnaway martelosopes have completed the first phase of development and are ready for use as “outdoor classrooms”. The next step is to run several practice workshops and refine the use of the martelosopes in formal CCF training courses and workshops. Training will then roll-out to student foresters, professional

foresters, ecologists and other groups or organisations interested in CCF.

Ultimately, we plan to use these martelosopes for “train the trainer” events and extend the Integrate Network to other regions in the UK and a wider range of woodland types.

By providing a dedicated space for forest-based training, the Integrate Darnaway project will inspire greater confidence among early-career and established professional foresters, and woodland ecologists who wish to adopt CCF principles. Managing for both economic productivity and rich biodiversity ensures a more sustainable and resilient future for our woodlands.

Further Information

- **Integrate Network**
www.integratenetwork.org
- **Darnaway Forest**
www.morayestates.co.uk/woodland
- **Silviculture Research International**
www.silviculture.org.uk/marteloscope

Authors

Edward Wilson is principal of Silviculture Academy and teaches silviculture at universities in Aberdeen, Dublin and Toronto. Ben Clinch is head forester with Moray Estates and responsible for woodlands at Darnaway Estate, Morayshire, and Doune Estate, Stirlingshire. Tom Warren was Impact Manager with BE-ST, Blantyre. Andreas Schuck and Sergey Zudin are senior researcher and software developer, respectively, with the European Forest Institute, Bonn, Germany.

Legal matters

Celebrating 50 years of the HSE

A focus on health and safety in the tree and forestry sector from **Emma Dyson**, Associate at Brodies LLP.

With the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2025, it is an opportune moment to reflect on its significant contributions to workplace safety.

Tree and forestry sector

According to the HSE's annual reports, the tree and forestry sector still has one of the highest rates of fatal injuries to workers among all industry sectors. That is not surprising given workers face high-risk activities daily such as operating heavy machinery, working at heights, and handling dangerous tools.

Since its inception, HSE's involvement in the tree and forestry sector has led to significant improvements in safety standards. Its proactive approach in regulation, guidance, and training has helped in reducing the number of accidents and fatalities.

The HSE has produced a number of good practice guidance manuals which address, amongst other things, activities congruent to the sector such as working from height, working near power lines and cables, the use of excavators in tree work and winches in directional felling. The guidance aims to provide workers and employers in the industry with a go-to place for information on how to carry out these tasks safely and a reminder of their legal obligations to do so.

Collaboration

The HSE's primary route of liaison with the industry is through the Arboriculture and Forestry Advisory Group (AFAG), a key working group of the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee (AIAC). AFAG provides authoritative guidance widely accepted as good industry practice and is used as a standard for

training and assessment of competence, assessing risks, establishing safe systems of work, and management and monitoring of work activities on-site.

Importantly, AFAG is the method through which those carrying out this type of work and involved in the industry can influence HSE's policies and published guidance through engaging in discussions, meetings and consultations, showing a mutual collaboration between both parties to improve safety standards in the industry.

The HSE has also funded several research projects relevant to the tree work/forestry industry, often in conjunction with the Forestry Commission. Some examples of such include:

- A study comparing the output and costs of MEWPs with manual climbing for accessing trees particularly in urban areas or diseased trees. The study showed that MEWPs can be more efficient and safer in many scenarios;
- A project focused on the noise levels produced by mobile woodchippers and the exposure risks to operators. The findings highlighted the need for better noise control measures and the use of hearing protection to prevent long-term hearing damage. As a result, there has been an increased emphasis on noise

management in forestry operations;

- A study that provided detailed guidelines on the safe use of top-handled chainsaws, addressing common risks such as kickback and improper handling. The recommendations have been incorporated into training programs, reducing the incidence of chainsaw-related injuries; and
- Studies into the current rigging and dismantling practices in arboriculture and research on work access and positioning techniques emphasised the importance of using dual-rope systems and reliable anchor points to ensure climber safety.

Looking ahead

The HSE's proactive approach, in collaboration with AFAG, has significantly reduced accidents and fatalities in the tree and forestry sector. Since the 1970s, the number of fatalities in the sector has halved.

As we look to the future, the HSE's 10-year strategy, 'Protecting People and Places', launched in 2022, aims to build on its strong foundations and address current and future challenges. This strategy emphasises the importance of adapting to new technologies in the industry such as (i) drones and remote sensing to analyse forestry areas; (ii) AI and big data analysis to monitor climate models, and (iii) robotics and automation for planting trees and harvesting timber.

These technologies are making forestry operations more efficient, sustainable, and responsive to environmental challenges but also require the HSE to address the unique and new risks they also might pose. The HSE's continued dedication to collaboration and innovation will be crucial in meeting the evolving challenges of workplace safety and public health in the tree and forestry sector.



Branching out into Law

Laurence Platt, Graduate Solicitor Apprentice at Michelmores LLP, shares his career change journey.

I was eight years into a career practicing as a rural chartered surveyor for a large estate when I made a decision that would significantly alter the next phase of my life.

Whilst I had always enjoyed my work, the matters that consistently drew my interest were those that focused on legal arguments; boundary disputes, drafting tenancies and the like. Digging into an esoteric area of law and finding that single silver bullet that would give you the advantage over an adversary was deliciously invigorating. I had considered looking for opportunities to retrain but always persuaded myself out of it, usually due to the cost. It was always just a pipe dream.

As a surveyor, I would often interact with solicitors, sending instructions and seeking professional advice. I attended a CPD event hosted by the Agricultural Team at Michelmores, where I met lawyers who had previously practiced as rural surveyors and had made the leap that I was otherwise too timid to. This inspired me and I remember telling my wife that evening "I am going to do it! I want to be a solicitor!".

Thinking on what the job may actually entail, I realised that my image of practicing lawyers was heavily influenced by Netflix, so I decided that I needed to do some actual research before diving in.

I spoke to a solicitor I had met at Michelmores and asked about the prospect of doing some work experience. They kindly invited me to shadow the Agricultural Team for a week. They treated me like a member of the team, invited me to client meetings and even took me out for lunch! I knew from the end of the very first day that my desire to retrain as a solicitor had evolved from being a pipe dream to an absolute necessity.

Although I was certain this was the right move for me, I still had to overcome the financial impediments to retraining. The early careers team at Michelmores explained to

me that a new apprenticeship scheme had just emerged in the legal sector, which was open to those with and without law degrees. Dubious, I thought there had to be a catch, but learning that I would be paid throughout the entire apprenticeship and would be given the time I needed to study, I realised this was a golden ticket opportunity. I just had to ensure that I was Charlie Bucket!

I decided to apply for the apprenticeship scheme and, though generally ill-advised, I only applied to Michelmores, as I was absolutely sure they were the firm I wanted to work at. The nature of the work was interesting, diverse and at the cutting edge of the legal sphere. Everyone worked extremely hard, but they all pulled together, assisted each other, and were always willing to support a colleague to go the extra mile for their clients.

The application process was challenging. It involved multiple interviews and the fabled assessment day; two half days of interviews, strengths tests and a debate over an article with a partner.

Now here I sit, one year on and entering my third placement in the firm. I wish I had done it sooner.

Whilst it is true that the apprenticeship is no cake walk, you will be surprised how entrenched law is with other careers. Some areas like dispute resolution are vastly different, but when you begin to study the subject, you

may realise you already know more that you thought you did. If you are looking to branch out into law, don't be disillusioned by thoughts that you aren't capable - you might surprise yourself.

For those of you interested in a career change, my one piece of advice to you is try before you buy. Get some work experience, reach out to firms and see if they will allow you to shadow a team, even apply for mini-pupillage opportunities. I have generally found that as a sector, solicitors are a very affable and approachable lot.

Not only will this bulk up your CV, but it will allow you to gain a true impression of if this is the career for you. It may additionally narrow down the firms you are considering applying to.

I chose Michelmores because of the culture and because they have one of the most recognised Agricultural Teams in the country. They provide advice on everything from partnership disputes to emerging natural capital markets. I may have hung up my wellies for a pair of brogues, but I am still in touch with my roots, just now in a different capacity.

For those interested in apprenticeship opportunities at Michelmores please contact gradrecruitment@michelmores.com.

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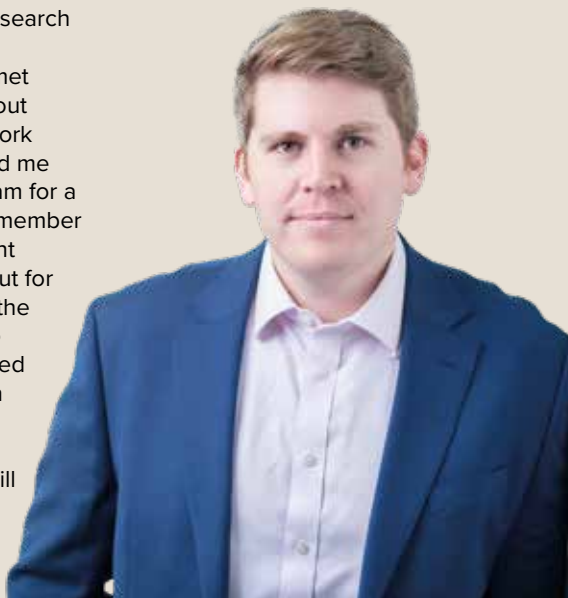
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Demand disparities from the Highlands to Borders

Simon Hart FICFor FRICS, Head of Forestry in Scotland for John Clegg & Co, summarises some of the recent significant land sales and valuations impacting the Scottish forest market.

The forestry market remains active but there is an increasing spread of prices between the prime properties and those that are less attractive to the market.

The John Clegg & Co analysis of the UK plantation market shows £100mn of open market sales in 2024. We calculate average prices are down some 10% from 2023 to £19,000/stocked hectare. That year was also down from the post Covid-19 peak of the market, now a distant memory, when we had rampant demand, high timber prices and near zero interest rates.

However, every year a different population of woodlands is sold, and these can skew year on year

fluctuations. We believe like for like properties have probably only edged down slightly over the last year. As usual, commercial investment activity was heavily weighted to Scotland and this article concentrates on activity north of the border.

Woodlands

A significant recent sale was of Norwood Forest near Hawick. A prime Scottish Borders productive forest, well roaded and into the second rotation. With an average age of 19 years this very high yield class, spruce-dominated property was guided at £19mn but is understood to have sold for above that figure equating to some £24,000/stocked ha.

As usual with property, location is everything and it is interesting to compare Norwood with Sciberscross not far from Brora in the north of Scotland - 280 miles further to the north! With a comparable size, but only about 660 stocked hectares, Sciberscross is 35 years old and a good example of self-thinning Sitka/lodgepole plantation with a yield class c.16. It is guided at

£8.5mn i.e. £11,000/stocked hectare or less than half the price of Norwood.

Values in the north can be more volatile than those in south Scotland, fluctuating in response to timber prices. For example, if net returns are say £35/Tonne on a site in the north, a £5/T reduction in returns (which could come from increased working costs or haulage, or lower timber prices) represents a 14% loss of income. In the south of Scotland where returns might be say £55/t, this £5 reduction is only a 9% loss of income. Lower returns also mean reduced underlying land values.

For poor sites in the north e.g. where there is a lot of pine and a low log percentage, net returns can be so low that little value can be attributed to the land value at the end of a rotation. On the poorest sites it can be difficult to justify the costs of restocking with a productive crop. We are seeing some woodlands bought by charities who will clear the current timber crop and then return the site to a non-timberland use with no economic production. Unwelcome news for processors and rural jobs.



In the southern half of Scotland, demand for good quality properties of all ages remains strong. Dalmally Wood in Argyll is a high yield class primarily second rotation spruce woodland with good access and an average age of 8 years. It sold for some £11,000/stocked ha. Dunter Law in the Borders was broadly similar but sold for £13,000/

stocked ha, reflecting the south of Scotland premium.

With high values for young woods, this clearly infers a reasonable value being attributed to the land element.

Despite a steady level of demand, some properties are taking time to find a buyer. These include the massive Griffin plantation near Aberfeldy (available for over a year) and the Caledonian Portfolio of sixteen properties extending to 2,600ha (launched in September 2024).

Where properties contain lower yield class crops, invariably pine, average values are much lower than for spruce woods. Reres, a 70ha Scots pine wood near St Andrews, sold for £11,000/stocked ha but had an average age approaching one hundred years.

Arntilly Wood in Aberdeenshire has recently come to the market. Again, dominated by Scots pine, with an average age of some 60 years, this wood is guided at £14,000/stocked ha.

More woods are coming to the market as we enter spring. These include a portfolio of small to mid-sized woods in Aberdeenshire, owned by Forestry and Land Scotland and available through John Clegg & Co, ideal for the private investor.

Inheritance Tax

There has been much written about the 2024 Autumn budget and the proposed changes to Business Property Relief and hence the IHT treatment of forestry (along with other assets such as farmland) meaning the application of an IHT tax rate of 20% on assets over £1million (previously zero).

We have now had six months of market activity since that budget, and it is not possible to discern a material

difference to values following the proposed changes. Theoretically some funds might have been tempted away from forestry, but the tax changes mean that other funds might be drawn to forestry.

It seems too neat that the net effect is zero, but that seems to be the evidence thus far.

Planting Land and Natural Capital

Land suitable for planting remains in demand, but at lower prices than recent years. Open market transactions are very rare but where we are involved, prices for plantable spruce ground have fallen below £10,000/ha, even in the south of Scotland.

This is down from a peak of £15,000 or more in 2022/23. However, we believe there is often a significant premium on underlying hill farm values. Nevertheless, potential sellers, aware of recent higher prices, can have unrealistic price expectations. Thus, making the Scottish Government's 18,000ha annual planting target even more unlikely to be met (regardless of the fact there is insufficient grant funding available to meet the Government's own target).

Natural capital was very much on everyone's lips a few years ago. There were several active buyers and values for traditional Scottish sporting estates rose rapidly (doubling or trebling in only a few years). Some of that heat has dissipated, there is more choice, properties are taking longer to sell, and values have fallen.

One substantial purchase that recently bucked that trend was the Oxygen Conservation purchase of Dorbrack Estate in Speyside. Oxygen is understood to have paid some £30mn for this 6,000ha estate; with perhaps half of the estate having woodland creation or peatland restoration potential. This suggests that land with native woodland potential for carbon is selling for about £5,000/ha.

We believe the long-term fundamentals back this market and increasingly sophisticated mechanisms will be developed to monetise the natural capital values of woodlands.

Conclusion

In summary, the market continues to remain active and there is a satisfactory level of transactions from investors in both productive forestry and natural capital properties. As ever though, setting a guide price at the correct level is critical to a smooth and efficient sale.



Unprecedented times for the global timber market



Oliver Combe,
Timber Auctions,
explains the
factors making
2025 an unusual
year for timber.

As we ended 2024 and began to move into 2025, it appeared that the green shoots of recovery were tentatively emerging in the global timber market.

- Production levels had found a new balance with demand.
- Harvesting volumes were roughly in line with demand.
- Governments were looking to stimulate construction to counter weak economic growth.
- Net zero policies were looking positive for the use of wood products.

- USA prices for construction timber were starting to creep up again.

In Western Europe the market appeared to have bottomed out and businesses were adjusting to the new demand levels. This led to a number of business closures and restructuring, the most recent being the closure of Zeigler Group and subsequent sale of the assets to Kronospan and Rettenmaier, as well as HS Timber's purchase of Vika Timber in Latvia.

- Supplies of whitewood in Europe appeared to be tightening.
- Swedish spruce sawlogs reached 1,000SEK for the first time.
- Scandinavian mills experiencing reduced whitewood supplies.
- 31% reduction in storm damaged timber in Germany.
- Swiss sawmills struggling with raw material shortages.

In the UK demand for industrial small roundwood has been strong over the

last six months. Pallet wood has also seen good demand recently whilst sawlog prices have started to creep up on the back of limited availability. The windblow from Storm Arwen is now largely cleared up and starting to impact on supply in east and central Scotland.

The realisation that supplies of prime whitewood in Western Europe were declining for the first time since the 1960s had forced sawmills to start to increase prices for spring 2025 deliveries. This is never easy in a stable market but with slim margins, roundwood prices creeping up, and increasing operating costs, there was no choice.

As spring showed slight increases in demand there was increasing optimism that modest price increases would be achieved for Q2 2025 deliveries.

There were however some dark clouds on the horizon as the full extent of Storm Eowyn's impact became known with reports of 4 million m³ of trees being windblown in Ireland, alongside the impact of Storm Darragh on the forests of Wales and England.

This has meant a substantial increase in local availability of timber. Though there will be some export of material it will also have an impact on trade from the west of Scotland to Ireland.

2025 is not proving to be a normal year. President Trump's rapidly escalating trade war with (initially) Canada, Mexico and China, then Europe, and now the whole world has thrown global trade patterns into disarray.

Timber is a globally traded commodity, and the USA is one of the main global consumers with supplies from Europe and Scandinavia being increasingly significant, so any disruption to this trade will have implications closer to home.

Whether the trade war stimulates demand or knocks the USA into recession is unknown, but it has given global trading confidence a significant dent. There does appear to be a process of realignment of trading relationships; how this will impact on timber trade is as yet unknown.

Timber prices in the UK are





determined by import prices, so whilst there is currently a desire by the Scandinavian and Baltic producers to increase prices, they are having to make small incremental gains on a monthly basis.

At the same time demand from the construction sector is lagging behind expectations and whilst the government has pledged to substantially increase housebuilding, this has yet to translate into activity.

The usual spring uplift in demand has been helped by good weather. However, lack of confidence in the merchanting sector has meant buyers are trying to keep stock levels down.

In summary, whilst there is a realisation by processors that timber prices have to increase, lack of market confidence is keeping buying activity to the minimum and resulting in modest incremental price gains.

For the grower this means that roundwood prices may see local changes due to local supply and demand patterns. Any increases in prices will be hard won and are increasingly countered by increase harvesting and haulage costs.

£ per tonne delivered to Customers in Wales, Central and South England (March 2025)

Product	Lower Price	Upper Price	Trend
Log 16 (Spruce Df)*	£80	£90	↑
Bar 14	£70	£90	=
SRW	£60	£75	↑
Fencing	£75	£85	=
H Wood Firewood	£90	£120	=

**Certified timber £4 to 5/t premium.*

These prices are for guidance purposes only and are based on historic market information.

£ per tonne delivered to Customers in North England and Scotland (March 25)

Product	Lower Price	Upper Price	Trend
Log 16 - SS*	£85	£90	↑
Log 16 – MC**	£78	£84	↑
Bar/Pallet 14	£75	£80	↑
SRW***	£65	£75	↑
Fencing	£80	£88	=
H Wood Firewood****	£100	£120	=

**North prices have probably uplifted about 10% in the last year across the board.*

***Certified timber £4 to 5/t premium.*

****Strong seasonal demand in winter 24/25.*

*****Prices flat for last six months.*

These prices are for guidance purposes only and are based on historic market information.



Yet another Audi

Eamonn Wall details the annoyances of the Audi A5 that may impact sales of an otherwise good diesel option.

The Audi model range used to be easy to understand with A4, A6 and A8 models. Then came along all the SUVs: Q3, Q5, and Q7. Additional fast back models were added to these, plus smaller A1 and A2 models and the large sporty A7 saloon, and the Q8 fast back SUV. The model range was then expanded with additional all new pure electric models, known as E-tron with the Q4 E-tron being the least expensive Audi EV.

It is a complicated range to understand and the engine sizes attached to the rears do not make much sense, apart from being larger as the engines get larger (35, 40, 45, 50 etc).

The original A4 and A6 have now been replaced by electric models, but Audi have just brought out a new model featuring petrol and diesel versions

only. This new model is available as saloon and estate (Avant in Audi speak) and is known as the Audi A5. Of course there was a previous A5 which is no longer available.

This test drive is of the diesel Avant version of the new A5. In size it sits between the old A5 and A6, and it looks much like them too. It comes with four-cylinder engines with either 150bhp petrol or 201bhp diesel. Quattro 4WD is available on the diesel model, but the one I tested just had front wheel drive.

A sporty petrol S5 version is also available. The petrol versions cost from £44,065, whilst the diesel reviewed here costs £47,800 and £49,275 if fitted with Quattro 4WD.

With the mild hybrid engine providing an easy 50mpg it does remind you that for high mileage drivers a good diesel



still warrants consideration. Compared to petrol it produces much less CO₂. Obviously, the comparison with pure electric is a complex one. However, we do plan to test drive the new Audi Q4 EV soon.

The engine is fairly complex as it allows for pure electric driving at very



low speeds and the engine drops to idle revs whenever it can. It has the seven speed S Tronic automatic gearbox which works well. Standard tyres are 235/45 R18 with 323mm brake discs up front and 300mm at the rear.

The car drives well, has good handling and good brakes. It is also

quiet, 0-60mph acceleration is 7.7 seconds with a 149mph top speed just in case you visit Germany. The fuel tank holds 60 litres, and you can almost reach 700 miles on a tank full. Service intervals are every two years or 19,000 miles - whichever comes first. The warranty is only three years or 60,000

miles. AdBlue is required and that tank holds 20 litres.

Interestingly the engine oil capacity is 5.5 litres while the engine cooling system is 18.7 litres, not that one really needs to know this information.

It is a low hung vehicle, and you notice that getting in and out is more of an effort compared to the higher raised vehicles that most of us drive these days. It comes in at 4,829mm length and only 1,424mm height. It is also a heavy car at 1,835kg. The boot is a good size at 448 litres extending to 1,396 litres when the seats folded down.

The interior is a new design for Audi and based on screens with multiple choices for configuration. Gone are the days you could jump into any car and instantly know where all the dials and switches were located.

This Audi dashboard is certainly not one I liked very much. I never managed to find the master switch for the lights. The chap collecting the car showed me its location on the door among the window switches - weird or what? The door handle itself is behind the door switches and a long way away when the door is open, which I found annoying.

The A5 is thus a good car for long journeys; it is quiet, very economical and handles well. Its low-slung nature, annoying interior design and slightly bland exterior design however may well keep sales subdued.

Eamonn Wall FICFor is a tree and woodland consultant and Director with Eamonn Wall & Co.



Rooting the Future Forest

In 2024, Sir Harry Studholme delivered a presentation at the University of Exeter as part of the 'Valuing Treescapes Conference'. Replicated in part here, he shared his perspective on the evolution of woodland management, discussions around forestry, and what change, good and bad, means for the future.

If you climb to the top of Exeter University and look southwest, you will see a solitary beech tree standing in farmland, on a high ridge, silhouetted against the horizon. This is a sentinel, an outlier, of the forest hidden below the ridge: the Perridge Forest, whose woods have been my home all my life.

My children grew up under its protective branches, and I sprinkled the ashes of my father and grandparents to rest in its soil. For over 60 years I have watched and learnt from this forest. For the last 35 years it has been my turn in the family to care for it, harvest its surplus and farm the land that borders and threads through the woods, while looking to its survival for future generations.

The changing forest

The mix of trees – gnarly oaks, feathery birches and elegant Douglas firs – make a frame, but they are only one element of a complex, multi-sensory, multi-layered place of intertwined relationships. Gossamer thin subterranean tendrils of

fungi link with the roots of the trees and mine a soil churned by worms and alive with numberless invisible microbes.

Above ground, insects buzz and flutter among the flowers, snakes weave through mosses, while deer peep shyly from thickets and hunting hawks ride the thermals above the treetops.

To use the mundane language of ecosystem services, the forest supports a diversity of plants, insects, amphibians, reptiles and mammals, along with 10 or so red-listed bird species. Clean, pure water washes out of the hills into the headwaters of two rivulets, which run into the river Exe. The forest landscape provides a backdrop to the homes of 20

or so people and the workplaces of 20 or so more. Around 2,000 cubic meters of timber are cut each year, for building and making. This is less than a years' growth, so, hundreds of tonnes of carbon dioxide are sequestered in the remaining wood.

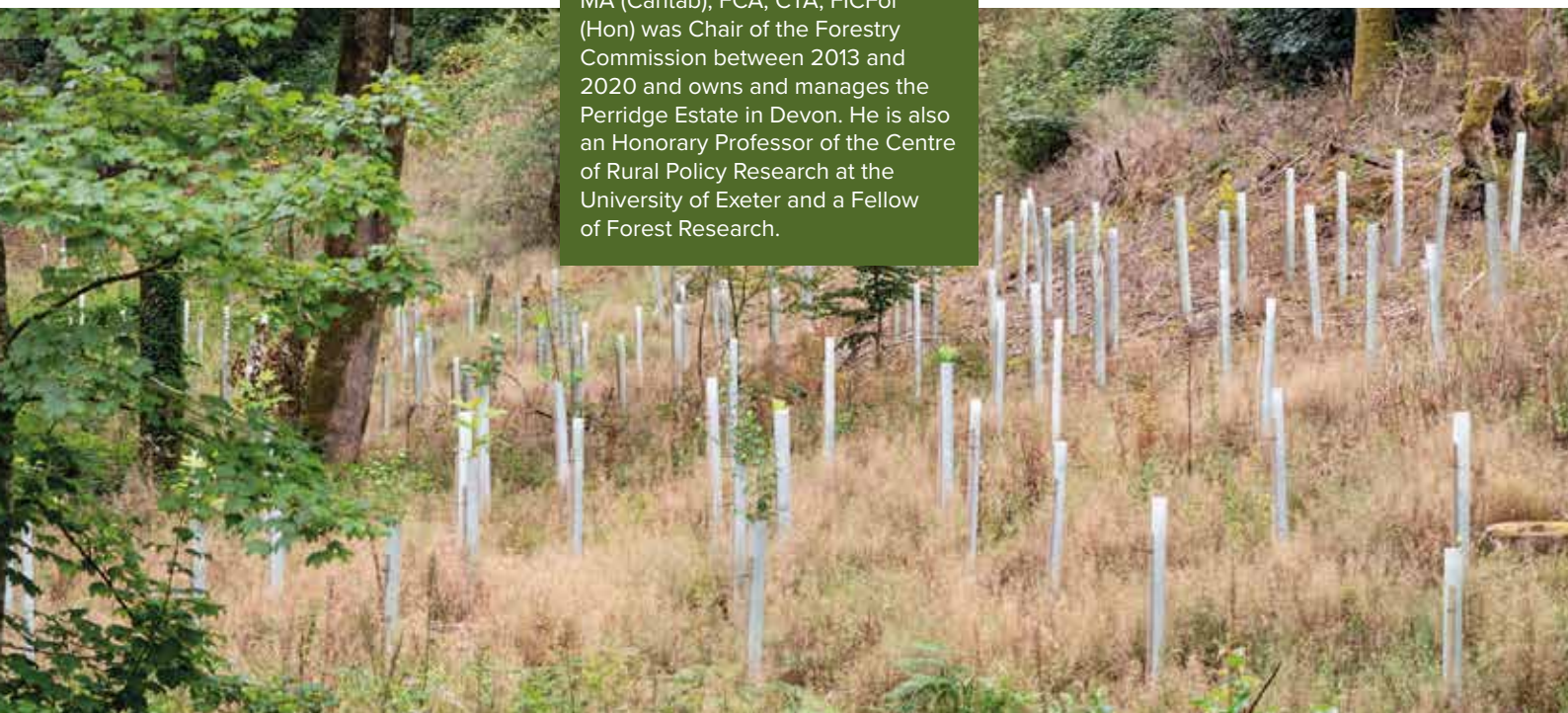
This seems an eternal idyl, but dig deeper and this forest, like every forest in these islands, is threatened: by disease, by a changing climate and by society's disconnection from the productive landscape.

When all our mature elms succumbed to Dutch elm disease during the 1970s, we thought it an anomaly. But now ash, which occupies 11% of the Perridge Forest, is dying. The other blights elsewhere in Britain have mostly left us alone, for now, but they are creeping closer. Globalisation has given plant pathogens unprecedented travel opportunities.

Rapid climate change over decades is stressful to a forest environment, adapted to change over millennia. The symptoms are gradual and subtle. Happily, the wildfires and insect plagues



Sir Harry Studholme Bt. DL, MA (Cantab), FCA, CTA, FICFor (Hon) was Chair of the Forestry Commission between 2013 and 2020 and owns and manages the Perridge Estate in Devon. He is also an Honorary Professor of the Centre of Rural Policy Research at the University of Exeter and a Fellow of Forest Research.





devastating forest landscapes around the world are not yet so severe in Britain, but we won't escape forever. Ips typographus has already breached the border. Longer and more frequent droughts, higher rainfall and more severe storms are inevitable.

This would be less concerning if the ice ages of the last million years or so had not simplified our flora. We have relatively few native tree species in these islands. The exact number, somewhere between 32 and 85, depends on how many rarities, thorns and hybrids you include.

More worrying is that we only have 10 or so forest dominants, like oak, ash, beech and elm that provide the height and structure of a forest. There is a possibility that by the end of the century we could have lost nearly half our dominant, forest-defining, native species.

Worrying yes – but there is much we could do, but to do it we will have to change our thinking, our stories and our forest language. This will not be comfortable. To quote from a great Italian novel on the experience of revolutionary change: “Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga com'è bisogna che tutto cambi”, which translated means: “if we want everything to stay as it is, everything must change”.

Forestry is a long-term business

I hardly need say: trees are a long-term business. The Perridge Forest is still recovering from the devastation of World War II. It has taken three generations and three quarters of a century of care and investment to regrow as a productive forest. The oaks my grandfather planted

to replace trees requisitioned for the First World War are not yet mature. Decisions we take now will matter in 50 or 100 years' time.

I wonder though: have policy makers and NGOs fully grasped what climate projections mean for managing forests?

Planting is a precious moment, deciding the future of a sapling and a plot of land for potentially centuries. We know our climate is likely to warm, within a generation or so, by one, perhaps even two or three degrees. Should we think harder, before choosing to plant woods of native broadleaves, that thrived in a one degree colder past?

In England, such 'semi-natural' woods already overwhelmingly dominate our forest. They cover more of the country than they did when my grandfather was planting oaks in the 1920s and deer and grey squirrels were rare; animals which are common now and whose nibbling and gnawing means that few new native woods will grow into tall trees or sequester much carbon dioxide.

The policies are well-meaning, but do not good intentions pave a road to hell? Knowledgeable forest voices, often clumsy, quiet and complex, tend to be drowned out by sophisticated, self-confident and simplistic rhetoric, in the echo chamber of social media. Language has become emotive, discussion difficult.

“Do you manage a commercial forest?” I am asked, the word “commercial” dripping with overtones of scorn. Am I wrong to be proud of being part of an ancient, indigenous tradition growing the wood from which civilisation was crafted?

“Do you grow conifers?” I am asked, the word “conifer” reeking of disapproval. Yet conifers are wholly of this place. They are the ancient trees. Some were growing in these islands 300 million years ago, 200 million years before the angiosperm hardwoods. They supply almost all of the wood we use. So why, unlike elsewhere in the world, don't we celebrate pines, cedars, junipers, spruces, firs, and yews, for the beautiful trees they are, essential to our future?

Enthralling, eloquent ideas like ‘temperate rainforest’ or ‘re-wild’ evoke heart-warming longing for an idealised past. Leaving aside whether that past existed, does this siren language block our ears to practicalities over how we adapt to the future?

The need for new thinking

As Einstein once said: “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” But we innately prefer the familiar. Is it any surprise that thinking differently about forests is hard?

Our forests have expanded in area nearly every year of the last century, more than doubling over the period. There are 45 trees in Britain for every person. In England, broadleaved woods cover 980,000 ha, nearly 50% more than the total woodland of 1900. So, reduction in woodland biodiversity is probably not from lack of woods but from how we look after them.

The law already protects trees. Tree Preservation Orders and felling licences are just the latest generation of tree protection legislation dating from 1482. >>

That is, if you exclude the 1217 Charter of the Forests. The planning system has a strong presumption against developing forested land, especially 'Ancient Woodland', so, areas lost to new building are a minute fraction of new development. Are we sure more law would outweigh the consequences of discouraging care for trees?

Britain's 'Ancient Woodland' is, as is elegantly described in the books of Oliver Rackham, man-made. Our most ancient trees are yews, possibly planted with intention in holy sites, or former oak pollards, given their squat shape and longer life by regular cutting in their youth. The twisted shapes of now rebadged rainforests were sought-after timber for 18th century shipwrights. The flora and fauna of ancient woodland are a consequence of millennia of human management.

People arrived here before the trees. These islands had been tundra and ice for tens of millennia, when a few hardy, nomadic hunters chased migrating herds of reindeer to take advantage of a summer flush of grass, as the Holocene began 12,000 years ago. These hunters were followed by pioneer trees, resilient Scots pine and light-seeded birch. The forest was, from its beginning, entangled in human lives.

In time other tree species came to displace the pines and birch. Some blowing in on the wind, others hitching lifts with birds and animals. About 7,000 years ago farmers began to reshape Britain's forest, pushing back its boundaries with stone axes and domesticated livestock, and changing its species composition. Later, imported technologies of first bronze and then iron made the axes sharper, and the felling faster, so that by the time the Romans chronicled their invasion, the English landscape was largely deforested and the woods that remained valued resources.

A village beside the Perridge Forest is called Dunchideock, Celtic for 'fort in a wood'. The eroded ramparts of a hill fort still stand majestically in the forest today. They were topped by a wooden palisade, when, in about 49 AD, Vespasian, the future Roman Emperor, invaded with his 2nd Augusta legion. He built the fort of Exe Chester and went no further west. Looking out towards Dartmoor, his legionaries would have seen the wooded hills of Perridge, in which a village of indomitable, unconquered Britons were probably cutting trees for building, making and burning.

Over the two thousand years since



Vespasian, our woods continued to be managed, for much of that time grazed as wood pasture. The trees were pollarded or coppiced to provide firewood and timber in sizes that could be easily cut and carried by a man. A few 'standards' were left to grow tall, but only, as mechanisation made handling of larger timbers easier, after the industrial revolution, would the high forests in fashion today, come to dominate the landscape. And our entanglement continues.

We stand on wooden floors, sit at wooden tables and read from books and LCD screens made from wood pulp. We bring trees into our gardens and our towns. Whether we see it or not the forest is everywhere, and we are part of it.

Homo sapiens arrived in Europe around 40 or 50 thousand years ago. Since then, our forest's ecology has been evolving with us, changing everywhere all of the time, even if at a pace too slow for us hasty humans to see. This should not be news.

Good forest management works with nature to encourage her natural surplus. It breaks the canopy's photosynthetic monopoly, mimicking natural disturbance to let sunlight through, to warm and enliven the plants and creatures of the understory. Through increasing complexity, forests can be made more resilient to storms and diseases, like the current plague of ash dieback.

Forests face man-made threats. Unintended maybe, but we bear a responsibility and should not turn our back. Trees march to the beat of a different drum to ourselves, so, this is careful, patient work, but we should not despair. We can do things nature cannot. We can move seeds and saplings in a day, over distances that trees might take hundreds or thousands of years to travel. We can plan, think, and research on timetables impossible to forests by themselves, helping them develop resilience to disease or storm or fire.

We have practical expertise in adapting forests to face the future.

In the Perridge Forest we try to work with the grain of nature, thinning our woods carefully, to regulate the light that reaches the understory, to encourage regeneration and biodiversity. We cautiously introduce species, from America or Eurasia, whose relatives were here before the ice ages. We reinforce species, already in the forest, by planting saplings with genetics from further south.

We look to create a more biodiverse and resilient woodland, storing carbon both in its trees and in the timber that leaves the forest, and able to survive the uncertainties of the next few centuries. I will not live to see if we succeeded, but my children and grandchildren may.

A version of this article was first published in the Quarterly Journal of Forestry, 119(1): 42-47.

Lantra announces appointment of Nick Juba as next CEO

Nick Juba will be stepping up as Lantra CEO from June, bringing a wealth of experience as a Director, Chief Executive and Non-Executive Director.

Starting his career at the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority before progressing to become a consultant to the European Commission, Nick then worked in the Higher Education sector, leading the University of the Arts Awarding Body where he drove a successful growth strategy.

He has since held Chief Executive positions in Further Education and is currently Director of Learning for Capita Group Plc, overseeing the delivery of all shore-based education and training for the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines.

Chair of the Lantra Board of Trustees, Dr David Llewellyn, said: "We are delighted that Nick Juba will be joining Lantra at an exciting time for the organisation.

"Lantra is working hard to support skills development and training in the land-based and environment sector, and to invest in activities that will help policy makers recognise the vital role that these industries play in the national economy. We are certain that Nick will

play an important part in these activities as well as in Lantra's wider connections with the land-based industries across the UK.

"We would also like to pay tribute to our current CEO Marcus Potter, who will be retiring later this year when

Nick takes on his new post. Marcus has made an enormous contribution to Lantra, and our partners, over the last decade and we wish him all the very best in his forthcoming retirement."

Commenting on his appointment, Nick added: "I have spent the last 25 years working to improve outcomes for learners across further, higher and technical education and I care passionately about the role skills play in supporting individuals, communities and businesses to achieve their goals.

"I am both excited and humbled by the opportunity to join Lantra and to support the land-based and environment sectors to flourish in a time of policy, environmental and technological change.

"I hope to meet as many of you as possible in my first few months in post and to work in partnership to deliver the skills we need for the success of our local, regional and national economies."

Lantra continues to work proactively with the land-based and environment sector to ensure that skills needs are met through the development of high-quality training and qualifications.



Clare Pillman retires as Chief Executive of NRW

Clare Pillman joined NRW as Chief Executive in 2018 during a testing time in its history and has led the organisation through the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, the major storms of 2020, and the declaration of the climate and nature emergencies.

Her leadership was pivotal in shaping NRW's Corporate Plan, published in 2023, which set out a vision for Wales in 2030 as a land where nature and people thrive together.

Announcing her retirement last month, she said: "It was my love for the landscape and nature of my homeland that

led me to NRW. I saw the problems that threaten them – loss of habitat for birds and wildlife, threats to communities from rising sea and river levels, and the difficulty of making a living from the land – and wanted to help.

"I will always love the Welsh environment - but the time is right now to hand NRW over. I have reached, at 60, the age at which I always presumed I would move on. A period of ill health has reinforced my belief that seven years at the helm is long enough. Deciding when to retire is never easy, but I can do so knowing that NRW will continue its vital work.

"I have been so proud to work with expert, passionate colleagues who give everything to serve the people and land of Wales.

It has been the privilege my life to work with them over the last seven years. I wish NRW, my successor and everyone they work with to improve our precious natural environment every success."

NRW Chair Sir David Henshaw responded: "As Clare announces her retirement, I want to thank her for seven years' service. Clare's unwavering dedication and leadership have been instrumental in steering NRW and we will continue to see the benefits of her work into our future.

"On behalf of the Board and the entire organisation, I extend our deepest gratitude to Clare for her remarkable contributions and wish her health and happiness in her retirement."

Clare has now stepped down and, in the interim, Ceri Davies, Executive Director for Evidence, Policy and Permitting will continue in the role of acting CEO.



Dr Bianca Ambrose-Oji appointed new Chief Scientist at Forest Research

Forest Research (FR) has confirmed that Dr Bianca Ambrose-Oji, currently Head of its Society and Environment Research Group, will succeed Professor Chris Quine FRSE as Chief Scientist, following Professor Quine's decision to retire from the role at the end of April 2025.

Dr Ambrose-Oji will take up the role at the beginning of June 2025. She holds a Master's degree in Forestry from the University of Oxford and a doctorate in Tropical Forestry and Environmental Sociology from Imperial College, University of London.

Joining FR in October 2008, her career spans more than 30 years as a social forester, including time as an action researcher, consultant, practitioner, professional trainer and as a university lecturer.

She has experience working in the UK, Europe, Africa and Asia. Recent research includes co-leading FR's Woodland Creation and Expansion research programme, and she held a five-year visiting professorship at the University of Wageningen, the term concluding in 2023.

Professor James Pendlebury, Chief Executive at Forest Research, said: "I'm delighted to announce that FR's new



Chief Scientist is Dr Bianca Ambrose-Oji.

"While Bianca is a qualified forester with considerable international experience, she's probably best known for her research in the field of social science. She has an impressive publication record and international reputation for her work and was recently a Visiting Professor at the University of Wageningen.

"Bianca is FR's first-ever woman Chief Scientist or Director of Research. She brings passion, energy and a focus on science quality to her new role which will

be pivotal in helping us meet forestry's future challenges successfully."

Dr Bianca Ambrose-Oji commented on her appointment: "I'm excited to take up the post of Chief Scientist at Forest Research. It's a real honour, and it feels like a call to action.

"Action to support Forest Research's ongoing remit to provide the applied science that can mitigate some of the threats facing our forests, woodlands and treescapes. Action to support individual scientists, science groups and research services to navigate the potential, as well as the challenges, associated with new technologies, artificial intelligence, smart data and other innovations, that are now driving change across the full range of forest sciences undertaken by Forest Research.

"I look forward to working with my colleagues and with the wider forestry sector on this journey. I'll do my best to support the advancement of knowledge and the delivery of impactful science and evidence."

FR is Great Britain's principal agency for tree-related research and internationally renowned for the provision of evidence and scientific services in support of sustainable forestry.

RFS opens Viking Bursary for applications

The Royal Forestry Society (RFS) is welcoming applications for its respected Viking Bursary, an award for students in higher education to study any aspect of forestry which benefits the practical management and resilience of woodlands.

The bursary will fund all costs directly associated with the project, including travel, accommodation and equipment.

In most years the RFS makes one award of up to a total value of £2,000, but on some occasions will make more than one award. For applications of an exceptional standard, awards of a higher value may be granted.

Recipients will be invited to submit an article sharing their findings that will be published by the RFS on its website, with an extract and link in the Quarterly Journal of Forestry.

All applications must be submitted

by Thursday 1 May. Applications will be reviewed by RFS HQ and then shortlisted by the RFS Yorkshire Division Committee.

Previous bursary recipients include William Hagan Brown (2023). Based at the University of Plymouth and conducting research at the Birmingham Institute of Forest Research Free-Air Carbon Enrichment (BIFoR FACE) facility, William used the award to help fund his research on the impact of climate change on the forest canopy temperatures.

Last year's award went to two students. Emily Grace, a PhD student at the University of Birmingham, studied how viruses that infect bacteria, named bacteriophages, can influence bacterial tree diseases, particularly Acute Oak Decline (AOD).

Andrea Rabbai, also from the University of Birmingham, used the



bursary to support his work studying the implications of drought on forest stands. His research involves analysing water use efficiency (WUE) using carbon isotopes in tree rings. He and his colleagues hope to gain insights into how trees in complex mixtures recover from drought stress.

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Government set to plant first National Forest in 30 years

A new National Forest of is set to be established in the West of England, encompassing existing woodlands and 20 million new trees.

The creation of a new national forest stretching from the Cotswolds to the Mendips has been announced by government. The Western Forest will see 20 million trees planted across the West of England in the coming decades, creating at least 2,500 hectares of new woodland.

The forest will serve over 2.5 million residents, bringing trees and woodlands closer to where people live, including in urban centres such as Bristol, Gloucester and Swindon.

Sharing the news, Nature Minister Mary Creagh said: “The Government was elected on a mandate to plant three new national forests this parliament, as part of our commitment to reach net zero and drive sustainable growth under the Government’s Plan for Change.

“We will plant 20 million trees in the Western Forest to bring nature closer to people, prevent flooding and support wildlife.”

The Western Forest will be spearheaded by the Forest of Avon, one of England’s Community Forests supported by up to £7.5 million of government funding over five years

alongside accelerating tree-planting in local areas.

The project will work to revitalise existing woodlands and other important habitats to create a forest network for people and wildlife at a truly landscape scale.

Alex Stone, Chief Executive of Forest of Avon, England’s Community Forests, commented: “The Forest of Avon is thrilled to have led a wonderfully diverse and engaged partnership to bring the Western Forest to life. This is about resource, funding and expertise coming directly to landowners, partners and communities, planting millions of trees in the right places.

“Together, we will enhance landscapes for all to enjoy, improving the lives of our 2.5 million residents and visitors to the region.

“Encompassing two of England’s Community Forests and working alongside the National Forest Company and Defra, the Western Forest will enhance, connect and improve our urban and rural landscapes, support investment into the region, create jobs

“We will plant 20 million trees in the Western Forest to bring nature closer to people, prevent flooding and support wildlife.”

and skills opportunities and bring the endless benefits we get back from planting and caring for our trees. It is a very exciting time for this region, and we look forward to helping shape what the Western Forest will become.”

The new national forest will help the drive to net zero while promoting economic growth and creating jobs in Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and across the West of England, as part of the Government’s Plan for Change. It will also help government meet nature and legal environment targets including halting the decline of species and protecting 30% of land for nature by 2030.

The National Forest Company, who manage the National Forest, will provide expertise and mentorship to the Western Forest project team. Chief Executive John Everitt OBE said: “The National Forest Company is delighted to see the announcement of the Western Forest as the first of the government’s new national forest commitments.

“This initiative builds on the success of the National Forest in the Midlands, where planting more than 9.8 million trees has transformed the landscape, benefitting wildlife, communities and the economy.

“The Western Forest was selected because of its ability to demonstrate a similar scale of ambition, with trees and woods supporting growth and farming while enhancing nature’s recovery and access to green space.”





Neglected coppice showing freshly cut stump in foreground with rudimentary protection.

Restoring neglected hazel coppice



Julian Evans gives an overview of the action needed to rescue poorly maintained hazel coppice from collapse

The National Coppice Federation has completed a survey of how much coppice exists in England. They matched up their data with the FC's inventory information. It is premature to report results, but many readers will be familiar with neglected coppice - including the widespread hazel coppice - so what are the possibilities of restoring it and bringing it back into rotation?

Restoration is worthwhile in that demand for hazel products such as gads and spars for pegging thatch, hedging stakes to strengthen hedge-laying, and hurdles for enclosures and screening continues apace. Shortage of skilled workers is a problem, but so are imports of hazel products from eastern Europe and even substitution of them by plastic.

Any encouragement of coppicing will surely be a benefit for this reason quite apart from increased wildlife value and biodiversity and maintaining traditional crafts.

Neglected hazel is easy to recognise. Old, collapsing clumps invariably have a wide range of sizes - large thick stems mixing with thin ones - and often some dead stems too. Instead of uniform sizes all of the same age from the last

coppice, which is the calling card of a well-run coppice yielding the products sought, there is great variety and little of value. However, all is not lost.

Even 50 years of neglect is not the end and hazel coppice has a remarkable capacity to recover, though it may take a couple of rotations for full restoration.

There are really only two ingredients to restoration: (a) cutting everything back to ground level and then (b) preventing browsing by rabbits, hares and especially the ubiquitous deer species. Winter is the best time so that the coppice shoots that emerge have a full season to grow, and some may grow 2m or more.

Cut stems right back to ground level with either hand tools or a chainsaw, and leaving a sloping cut to help shed water. What you cut will be suitable for firewood and there may be some pole and stick material worth salvaging.

Although burning branchwood was traditional to leave a clean site, too many fire sites is now frowned upon and instead branches can be used for 'dead fencing' to keep deer out. At intervals along the fence line drive in a few 1-1.5m tall sticks and pile the trimmings

and branches over them to create the desired barrier that's tall enough and wide enough to deter deer.

Alternatively, for small scale coppicing a little fence around each stump, as pictured, will usually be enough to deflect the deer's interest.

The other practice of piling branches over the stump itself will keep deer off but will usually mean that shoots are anything but straight as they 'struggle' (forgive the anthropomorphism) to make their way upwards.

One final job will be to make good any gaps in the coppice where neglect has led to fewer live stumps. Either plant new hazel or try layering an adjacent shoot. The latter is an art, but basically a tall shoot, about 'thumb-thick' at the base, is partially cut through at a steep angle to allow it to bend down without breaking and then, near the far end, pegging a short (20 cm) section of it to give good ground contact - think of a drawn out loop and a half of a Loch Ness monster!

If the underside bark of the section in ground contact is scraped the callous tissue that develops should aid rooting. The object is to have a live shoot drawing nourishment from the old stump while it grows its new roots.

I've barely begun to give sufficient detail, but if this short piece encourages you consider this restoration work, then all to the good. And, by the time this issue of FTN is published, the National Coppice Federation survey results should be public, so do keep an eye out for them.



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Natural Resources Wales (NRW) have turned to horse logging as part of its work to improve biodiversity and habitat connectivity in the ecologically sensitive area of Coedwig Dyfi, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) near Ceinws.

This traditional method of moving felled trees minimises soil compaction and reduces the risk of silt pollution in nearby streams.

Under the careful guidance of a specialist horse logger, Gypsy Cobs Bill and Little Ron have shifted carefully felled beech trees with the aim of lightening the canopy and enhancing plant diversity on the forest floor.

This work is part of the Welsh Government-funded Nature Networks Programme, which supports the management of ecological networks across Wales, including habitat restoration and woodland thinning.

Want to see your picture here?

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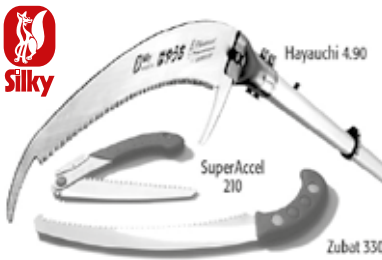
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COMING UP IN JUNE / JULY 25 – GET INVOLVED

In our June/July issue we will be focusing on Innovation & Technology and Woodfuel. Remember that FTN is your magazine – get in touch if you want to suggest editorial or give us feedback on articles we have published in the past. Confor members, send us your company's news updates or pitches for feature articles.

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