

An aerial photograph of a forest. The trees are mostly green, but there are several large, prominent trees with orange and yellow foliage, suggesting autumn. The forest is dense and covers the entire background of the image.

GENERAL ELECTION 2024

The Future is Forestry: Working for the wood - and the trees



Forestry and wood are vital for a greener and more prosperous future for the UK.

Planting more trees and using more wood should be at the heart of the UK's ambitions to achieve our shared net zero goal and to create a secure domestic supply chain.

By hitting the 30,000 hectares a year planting target suggested by the independent Climate Change Committee (CCC), the UK will also create almost 40,000 new jobs, mainly in rural areas.

Security of supply is critical for a whole range of materials essential to our economy and our lifestyle, yet we still import over 80% of the wood and wood products we use in our businesses and in our homes.

These imports are under increasing threat as global demand for timber is soaring. Timber security needs to be a core issue in the upcoming election.

This 5-point plan by the forestry industry sets out how to do that, building on The National Wood Strategy for England, published in December 2023. We urge all political parties to work with us to deliver it.

1. Create more forests:

As part of the CCC's target, plant at least 9,000 ha annually in England, including at least 3,000 ha of wood-producing forests, and protect all our existing forests.

2. Create a Timber Security Strategy:

Commit to a future level of sustained domestic wood production that will see the proportion of timber imports to the UK reduce, including from endangered forests overseas.

3. Promote Home-Grown Wood:

Set a target to significantly increase the number of new homes in England built with domestically sourced timber frames by 2030. Utilise government's procurement power to make homegrown wood the material of choice for all government construction and renovation work.

4. Develop a Skills Action Plan:

To ensure these goals are met, implement a skills action plan in partnership with industry, to address workforce needs in the forestry and wood sector, including initiatives to help armed forces veterans enter the industry.

5. Communicate the big messages:

Surveys repeatedly show that people love trees, and wood products, but don't often join up the two. A communications campaign should promote the importance of forests, timber security, and the economic and environmental benefits of the forestry and wood sector.

By adopting Confor's 5-point plan, policymakers can ensure a resilient and sustainable future for the UK's forestry and wood processing industries and the tens of thousands of jobs and the many hundreds of communities that rely on them. This will create green jobs, drive economic growth in rural areas, help us meet our net zero goals and help safeguard our environment for generations.

Representing the Forestry and Wood using industry

Confor is the champion for the UK's forestry and wood industries - promoting sustainable forest management, increased tree planting, and the use of more wood in construction.

Confor works closely with policymakers across the UK to shape legislation and promote economic growth while addressing skills shortages in our sector. We have positive working relationships with environmental organisations, forestry agencies and others with a shared interest in helping our forests and woodlands grow sustainably.

www.confor.org.uk