



# Annual Report 2024

What does Confor do for me?



# Actions in the UK

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

## England

- The National Wood Strategy was published in November 2023. The implementation of many of the themes has commenced and The Industry Leadership Group has identified how and where further progress can be made
- The National Manager for England, John Bruce has supported over 50 individual members this year with a range of forestry topics and technical matters
- We held a successful member open day hosted by the National Forest as part of the East Regional Committee with over 20 participants
- We have been representing Members on several Government forums, taking forward Members points and concerns and bringing his expertise to bear. For example, John Bruce sits on the IPS industry group (which is a critical group for the UK)
- Confor in partnership with the STA and the TDUK are providing the secretariat for the Implementation of the Timber in Construction Roadmap. We also lead on the Timber supply theme. This work should result in greater demand for homegrown wood products in construction
- The APF in September 2024 is a key date for celebrating the great work of the sector, and provides an opportunity to network with old colleagues

## Scotland

- Confor has developed a training course on stakeholder engagement which has run throughout the year with more dates to be released in Autumn 2024; due to the level of success the other locations received
- In December 2023 we joined the Cabinet Secretary, Mairi Gougeon, at Scotland's Forestry Summit to discuss how the Woodland Creation process in Scotland could be improved. The results of the summit were positive, however not a week later we were all blindsided by a 41% reduction to funding. We returned in the new year full steam ahead to take advantage of the remaining funding for 2023/24 and achieved a record-breaking year delivering 15,000 hectares of new woodland creation. Confor have been there every step of the way advocating for necessary support to provide a successful forestry and timber industry in Scotland. We have worked tirelessly to advocate for the necessity of the forestry budget and continued to work closely with Scottish Forestry to provide feedback and improve the woodland creation process. We continue to have regular liaison meeting with Scottish Forestry and The Cabinet Secretary
- Confor has represented its members and private sector forestry at over 40+ different industry groups, advisory boards, working groups and steering groups in Scotland this year and we will continue to do so into 2024/25
- We have represented the Confor membership in 10+ Scottish government and industry consultation responses in the past 12 months, a record number to hit the industry
- We delivered 7 Industry Leadership Group Scottish Forestry and Timber Technologies eventing events – a great way to network and find out more about innovation in the sector

## Wales

- Supporting members and advising NRW with new felling licence changes and new felling licence application form
- Representing our industry through the Welsh Timber Industry Strategy Working Group and Senedd evidence paper on farming connect and how to support landowners
- Present at the Ministerial Round Table for the Sustainable Farming Scheme headed by Huw Irranca-Davies, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Climate change
- Confor is a Member of the subgroup - Carbon Sequestration Evidence Review Panel
- We were present at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show - Confor tent supporting the Welsh timber Industry through our Business Hub

## Northern Ireland

- We continue to build further political support for the industry in Northern Ireland
- We continue to work with Forest Service to ensure a timeous grant system to support new woodland creation





## WOOD SUPPLY

In the last 12 months:

- We worked closely with the public forestry agencies to increase volume being offered through marketing plans
- We gained agreement with the regulators to bring forward the 50-year wood fibre availability forecast, and ensured significant industry representation on working group
- In response to the National Wood Strategy, Forestry Commission have agreed to aim for 30% conifer in future woodland creation in England
- We are working closely with regulators to identify additional conifer and broadleaf species with the greatest productive potential to help with species diversification without significantly impacting on future wood supplies
- We are working proactively with Welsh government and others to develop and publish a Timber Industrial Strategy
- We have developed routine high level meetings with the forest agencies to discuss and address strategic issues impacting on future wood supplies

## GROWING THE INDUSTRY

- Confor has established a subsidiary business; Forestry Training Service UK Ltd. This will aim to address market failure in the provision of technical training in specific areas critical to securing sustainable wood supply to the market
- We are working closely with the major sawmills to increase the market share of home grown C16 graded timber
- We are working with the sector to minimise the impact of the European Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) when it is introduced
- We have responded positively to support the sector address a number of emerging challenges including the potential loss of chemicals for weevil control

‘Confor works with Members, taking the initiative, that we can have real impact, supporting the industry to be successful if we work as one voice’

Stuart Goodall,  
Chief Executive, Confor





# A Course to Success

## INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

- We have supported the sector in developing and/or addressing emerging issues and opportunities such as, trying to get full access to new yield models, exploring better use of harvester head data and various certification issues
- Confor continues to provide secretariat services to important industry initiatives such as FISA and UKWAS



## SKILLS AND RECRUITMENT

- Confor is proactively engaged in skills and recruitment across the UK. We chair the Scottish Skills group, are active members of the England Skills Forum chairing the “attraction and retention” sub-group. We are also working closely with FC in the development of the Forestry Sector Skills Plan and the Forest Works Manager qualification
- Confor hosted four taster events for military veterans across England and Scotland. We also supported in extending the military connect service to link service leavers with veterans already in forestry
- Confor attended careers fairs all over the UK, promoting forestry as a future career

## FOREST INDUSTRIES EDUCATION & PROVIDENT FUND

The Trustees continue to receive a wide range of applications from members wanting to further their education and training. Recent awards have been given for vegetation fire management; drone flying qualification; tree climbing to facilitate seed collection; chainsaw courses; MSc, and similar, modules and dissertations; and home and international conference attendance. Look out for reports from awardees in FTN sharing their reasons and aspirations for undertaking the training and how it will help the industry as a whole.

## POLITICAL PROGRESS

- Confor has raised the level of UK ministerial understanding of, and engagement with, the industry that has helped deliver a Roadmap to increase the use of wood in construction and launched a National Wood Strategy for England. We will seek to maintain and build further support for the industry with the new Labour Government
- In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland Confor has also secured increased ministerial awareness and understanding of the industry and we are seeking to leverage that to protect financial support for woodland creation in Scotland, the development of an industry strategy in Wales and the re-opening of grants for planting in Northern Ireland
- We are now rolling out a plan of significantly increased interaction with elected officials to secure greater ‘backbench’ support to promote the industry’s interests across the UK. This includes more visits to member sites and meetings in Parliaments
- We are also supporting and encouraging members to engage directly with local politicians on key industry issues by providing guidance and resources, and there was a particular focus around the cuts to the woodland planting scheme budget in Scotland and during the 2024 UK General Election
- During the UK General Election all major parties committed to increase planting. Labour also committed to the creation of a Tree Planting Task Force to drive up planting across the UK, which we expect to be part of



# Key Workstreams and Membership

## TIMBER TRANSPORT FORUM

- The TTF continues to update and disseminate best practice guidance for hauliers, forestry works managers and local authorities, and manages the online Agreed Routes Map for timber haulage
- We have carried out a recruitment process and engaged a new Executive Officer for the Timber Transport Forum
- We lobbied hard to ensure the continuance of the Strategic Timber Transport Scheme in Scotland and participated in the STTS evaluation panel

## MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

- The online Member's Area has been a focus of 2024. Content has been increased with a NEW Committee section which enables Members to read minutes and see details on recent meetings from across the whole UK. Educational resources have also been added to the Members Area, with a political engagement in the pipeline. This enables our Members to get more involved in consultations, regional issues etc
- We also have a NEW Member notebook being released soon; a modernised replacement from the Members diary kindly sponsored by Members
- Re-introduced quarterly National Manager Updates

MEMBERS ONLY

'With Confor, the industry can have a productive future. The more Members, the stronger the voice!'

Eliza Hibbins Cline,  
Membership and  
Marketing Manager,  
Confor



## MAPPING A COURSE TO NET ZERO

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



## A NEW STRATEGY

This year we are delighted to announce the long-awaited launch of the Fact About Forestry Hub, an educational resource for the industry as a whole to use in stakeholder engagement and communications activities.

The Hub, hosted on its own, specially designed microsite, is home to key messages, case studies and multimedia content aimed at demystifying forestry for members of the public and tackling common misconceptions about productive planting.

This project will hopefully fill a need for Members trying to convey the benefits of forestry to curious and sceptical audiences alike. All information on the Hub will be publicly available from launch. We look forward to hearing your thoughts.

## MEDIA COVERAGE



- Confor's comments have been sought on the economic impact of the sector, shifts in political power, planting figures across the UK, and the need for government funding
- Our statements have been featured in BBC News, The Scotsman, The Press & Journal, The Herald, The Guardian and more
- Our National Managers and Chief Executive have made numerous tv and radio appearances this year, including on BBC Scotland, BBC Wales Today, ITV's Representing Border and Farming Today
- We've represented your views across industry publications such as Forestry Journal, Timber Trades Journal and Structural Timber

## MAKING OUR VOICE HEARD



**108.7k+** impressions on our social media content

**6** successful FTNs with a readership of over 1500

**38k+** new visitors to the website this year

**677** new followers across social channels

**30.3k** e-newsletters sent so far in 2024

**150+** stories shared in e-newsletters



**SAVE THE DATE** 5 DEC

**Green Growth:  
Through Forestry  
and Wood 2024  
London**

**SAVE THE DATE** 19 FEB

**Confor Dinner  
and Awards  
2025  
Edinburgh**