

# Building a Greener Future

A FORESTRY AND TIMBER MANIFESTO FOR SCOTLAND

CONFOR SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ELECTION MANIFESTO 2021



# A 21st century success story

**Stuart Goodall**, Chief Executive of Confor

Forestry and wood processing is a 21st century Scottish success story. Increased tree planting has attracted hundreds of millions of pounds in investment – and is sequestering carbon, providing thousands of jobs and creating more places for people and wildlife. In the year of COP26, of green recovery from the pandemic and a renewed focus on nature, Scotland's forestry and wood processing sector is elevating the triple bottom line to a new 'triple top line'.

Back in the 1990s, the industry signed up to detailed standards for managing forests. This partnership between government, environmental NGOs, access groups, industry and many more, was ground-breaking. The standards embedded the triple bottom line in everything the sector does – providing a balance between economic, environmental and social outcomes.

In 2021, we have the opportunity to take trees and timber to the top of the 'balance sheet' – to a triple top line that delivers for a Green Recovery, for Net Zero and for Nature.

And our sector is ready to deliver.

Scotland has its Forestry Strategy, and is planting 80% of new woodland created across the whole of the UK – in diverse, modern forests with a wide range of tree species that lock up tens of thousands of tonnes of carbon every year.

The forestry and timber industry contributes £1 billion to Scotland's economy every year – and supports over 25,000 jobs. It has grown since that value was last calculated in 2015, offering a wide range of skilled and often hi-tech, well-paid jobs from the south-west to the Highlands, mainly in



rural areas where employment is most needed.

Scotland is the only part of the UK to have set wood use targets, a vital step to decarbonise construction by substituting 'carbon-heavy' building materials like concrete and steel with low-energy wood, a material that locks away carbon and which can be easily reused and recycled. Wood enables us, as President Joe Biden has said, to 'build back better'.

And the good news doesn't end there.

Modern productive forests are also designed to deliver for wildlife and for people. Confor's analysis of available evidence has shown there is no trade-off between providing wildlife with a home and people with the wood they need to build their home. And our forests and woodlands are more popular than ever with the public, who have found solace in them during the Covid-19 lockdowns.

If we plant more trees, manage our woods well, and use more home-grown timber, the Scottish forestry and wood industry will continue to thrive – and so will Scotland's economy, environment and people. We need to secure future timber supplies for sustainable homes (and much more) and we must support our growing industry with investment in skills, timber transport and innovation. If we do that, Scotland's 21st century success story can write its next positive chapter.

# Tree planting and wood use: ambitious, but achievable targets

To lock in wide-ranging economic and environmental benefits, Scotland must continue to increase tree planting rates – and push up the use of home-grown wood in construction.

By 2016, new planting had dipped below 5,000 hectares annually, threatening a future ‘timber supply gap’ that would have seen thousands of jobs lost in the coming years and decades, so a review of barriers to new planting was established under former Chief Planner Jim Mackinnon. His recommendations were accepted in full – and the impacts have kicked in strongly, with 11,000 hectares of new woodland planted in each of the last two years. There are very positive indications that the 2020-21 target of 12,000 hectares will be met.

There is a strong ambition to go further. In line with Climate Change Committee recommendations, the target of 15,000 hectares of new woodland creation every year by 2025 was pushed up to 18,000 hectares in the Scottish Government’s Programme for Government in September 2020. This is an ambitious, but achievable, target and Confor suggests this could rise to 20,000 hectares of new woodland annually by 2030.



## WOOD USE IN CONSTRUCTION

Scotland is also leading the way in setting ambitious targets for wood use in construction – based on the increase in timber being harvested from our forests. With domestic and global markets for timber looking strong throughout the 2020s, it is vital that Scotland continues to set stretch targets, replacing materials like concrete and steel with wood – and pushing towards its net zero target by 2045.

Confor believes the target of using 3 million cubic metres of timber annually by 2031-2 is very much within grasp – and that by monitoring progress towards this target regularly, the aim should be to hit the 3 million cubic metre mark by 2030 at the latest.

2018	2021-22	2026-27	2031-32
2.2m m <sup>3</sup>	2.6m m <sup>3</sup>	2.8m m <sup>3</sup>	3.0m m <sup>3</sup>

What has been planted over the last decade? (in hectares)

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
6,020	9,030	7,040	8,330	7,560	4,630	4,760	7,140	11,210	11,050

What are Confor’s targets for the next decade?

2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
12,000	13,500	15,000	16,500	18,000	18,500	19,000	19,500	20,000	20,000

### CASE STUDY

# BSW Timber

BSW is the largest sawmiller of British timber and employs more than 900 people across Scotland. It has seven sawmills in the UK and four in Scotland – Fort William in the western Highlands (right), Boat of Garten near Aviemore, Dalbeattie in the south-west, and Petersmuir in East Lothian. Its head office is in Earlston, in the Borders.



All our mills take logs from forests in their area and we work with spruce, Douglas fir, Scots pine, Western red cedar and smaller amounts of other species from Scottish forests. We work hard to minimise the transport impacts by moving the timber as short a distance as we can.

We are constantly investing in our mills to ensure we have the latest technology to make a wide range of products - mainly timber for all aspects of the construction market, as well as fencing and landscaping products.

BSW supplies a wide range of builders and building merchants across Scotland and our focus is constantly on innovation, with products like IRO Timber, a decorative decking and cladding product, which was featured in TV's DIY SOS and Love Your Garden with Alan Titchmarsh.

The real challenge is timber supply. There is a huge market out there because people are increasingly aware that wood is the most sustainable material available and delivers enormous carbon benefits, as well as rural jobs and growth. There are many more questions from our customers – and our supply chain – about the carbon benefits of timber. It's important to tell that positive story in the year of COP26.

The demand for timber is enormous, and increasing – but it is very difficult to get the timber that we need, and that other timber processors need. It's in short supply and prices are going up.

It's vital that the public and private sectors work together to get timber out of the forests, in an environmentally friendly way, to supply the market demand and support the rural economy. That requires continued investment in timber transport.

In the longer-term, we need to keep up the momentum on planting rates – which was helped by the Mackinnon Review in 2016 – to ensure that long-term supply.

We also need to ensure we have the necessary skills, showing people that this is a diverse and growing industry. Our own apprenticeship scheme is really popular, but we must do more to sell the whole sector.

There are huge opportunities for our industry and the potential of forestry and wood in Scotland is only limited by the amount of timber available. We are working hard on innovation and technology to add value to our products, but ultimately there is a massive market for wood out there – and we need the wood to satisfy it.



## CASE STUDY

# Alexanders Timber Design

Alexanders Timber Design Ltd is part of Glennon Brothers and makes around 1800 timber frame units for sustainable new homes each year. The full service of timber frame and roof truss estimating, design, manufacture and delivery is carried out in Troon, Ayrshire – beside Glennon Brothers sawmill.

There is a high demand for timber-framed homes in Scotland, where approximately 85 % of all new build housing is timber frame construction.

Alexanders is expanding operations in 2021 by introducing a third production shift – literally working round the clock to cope with demand! This should push up annual output by 40 % to around 2500 timber frame units annually and create 25 new jobs, meaning almost 250 people will be directly employed at Troon in sawmilling and timber frame operations.

About a third of the wood we use is brought in by boat, mainly from Argyll, to the Port of Troon. Within a few weeks of delivery, some of those logs will be part of a timber frame house being built in Scotland, locking up carbon. It's an amazing environmental story.

The vast majority of wood we use for timber frames is spruce and is grown in Scotland. We do also use imported timbers, as this material is required for some lintels and roof trusses.

Glennon Brothers' mill cuts logs into sections for timber frames. The sawn timber is dried, graded, machined and treated, then used to make timber frame panels. Leftover material is turned into wood chips and used in a Combined Heat and Power plant on site. You need a lot of heat to

dry wood and it's great we create that heat and generate enough electricity to run the sawmill using leftover chipwood. We utilise 100 % of the log – nothing is wasted!

Most of our timber frame kits are made for large housebuilders. We also supply timber frames for the Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Supply Programme.

We have provided high-quality timber frames for offices and public buildings, but our largest market is timber frame homes. We must keep planting forests to meet demand and avoid the need to import more timber. Theoretically, there is enough biological timber out there, but it's been hellish to source wood over the last year, although prices are high and you would think timber would come to the market.

A 'timber gap' is forecast in the 2030s because of the lack of planting in the 1990s. To avoid a longer period of challenge, we must keep up the planting momentum now.

Forestry and wood is a positive economic and environmental story for Scotland. It provides sustainable timber-framed homes for Scottish people, offers secure local employment and locks up carbon in the wood. It's a great story. We should shout louder about it.

### CASE STUDY

# Larriston Planting Scheme

Eddie Addis, Regional Manager, Tilhill, led one of Scotland's largest modern planting projects at Larriston, near Newcastleton in the Scottish Borders in 2016 and 2017.



We planted 560 hectares of forestry (about 1100 acres) at Larriston, about 100 hectares in the first planting season and the rest the following year.

It was a long, complex process beginning in late 2012. The upland site was of relatively poor quality and significant capital investment was needed in the land and farm buildings. With poor lamb prices and uncertainty over future subsidies, the farmer decided it was time to sell.

As well as whole-farm sales, we have seen more farmers embracing smaller-scale forestry in recent years. There has been a change of mindset in the farming community, with more interest in planting on land that isn't delivering much to the business – or putting in shelter belts for animals. Many farmers see things are changing and want to get ahead of the curve.

At Larriston, we planted around 1.3 million trees; the majority were productive species, largely sitka spruce, but we also planted Scots pine, Western red cedar, birch and aspen.

The productive planting will support the forestry industry and wider rural economy for many decades, but Larriston also offered a range of other benefits, which were factored into the application and planning process. These included creating a large area of new native woodland, improving

water quality and reducing downstream flood risk, protecting habitats for otters and barn owls, creating new habitats and preserving historic buildings.

Completion of the initial planting works saw an end to the largest spike in employment activity, but the next five years will still see significant maintenance, providing local employment and supporting the rural economy. More work is needed with the start of thinning (taking some trees out for use as firewood to allow others to grow longer and stronger) in around 15 years.

We are also working on a 320-hectare area of blanket bog above the planting site, where we are looking at removing 16km of drains to re-wet the site for peatland restoration.

A Scottish Forestry natural capital survey estimated that up to 145,000 tonnes of carbon would be removed at Larriston over 50 years. There is growing interest in the carbon value of planting sites.

When people think of productive forestry, they often don't see the effort put into protecting and enhancing landscapes and biodiversity, carbon benefits and more. This hard work ensures these sites make a long-term contribution to Scotland's economy and environment. That is certainly the case with Larriston.

BUILDING ON SUCCESS:

# OUR FIVE-POINT PLAN FOR FORESTRY

## 1 HIT PLANTING TARGETS

We ask all parties to commit to supporting, with funding and political will, the target of 18,000 hectares of new planting by 2024-5. As set out in the Forestry Strategy, adopted by the Scottish Parliament in 2019, 60% of the trees planted should be productive species to provide wood, reduce carbon impacts and support wildlife.

## 2 INCREASE WOOD USE IN CONSTRUCTION

The target for increasing the amount of wood used in construction to 3 million cubic metres annually by 2031-2 should be seen as a minimum target and annually reviewed, with the aim of reaching 3 million cubic metres by 2030 at the latest.

## 3 INVEST IN SKILLS

Confor recognises recent positive work in industry apprenticeships and efforts to fill skills shortages – but with a growing forest area and an ageing workforce, the public and private sectors need to increase investment in skills and training. Training more forest management professionals and forest machine operators is vital to delivering the green recovery.

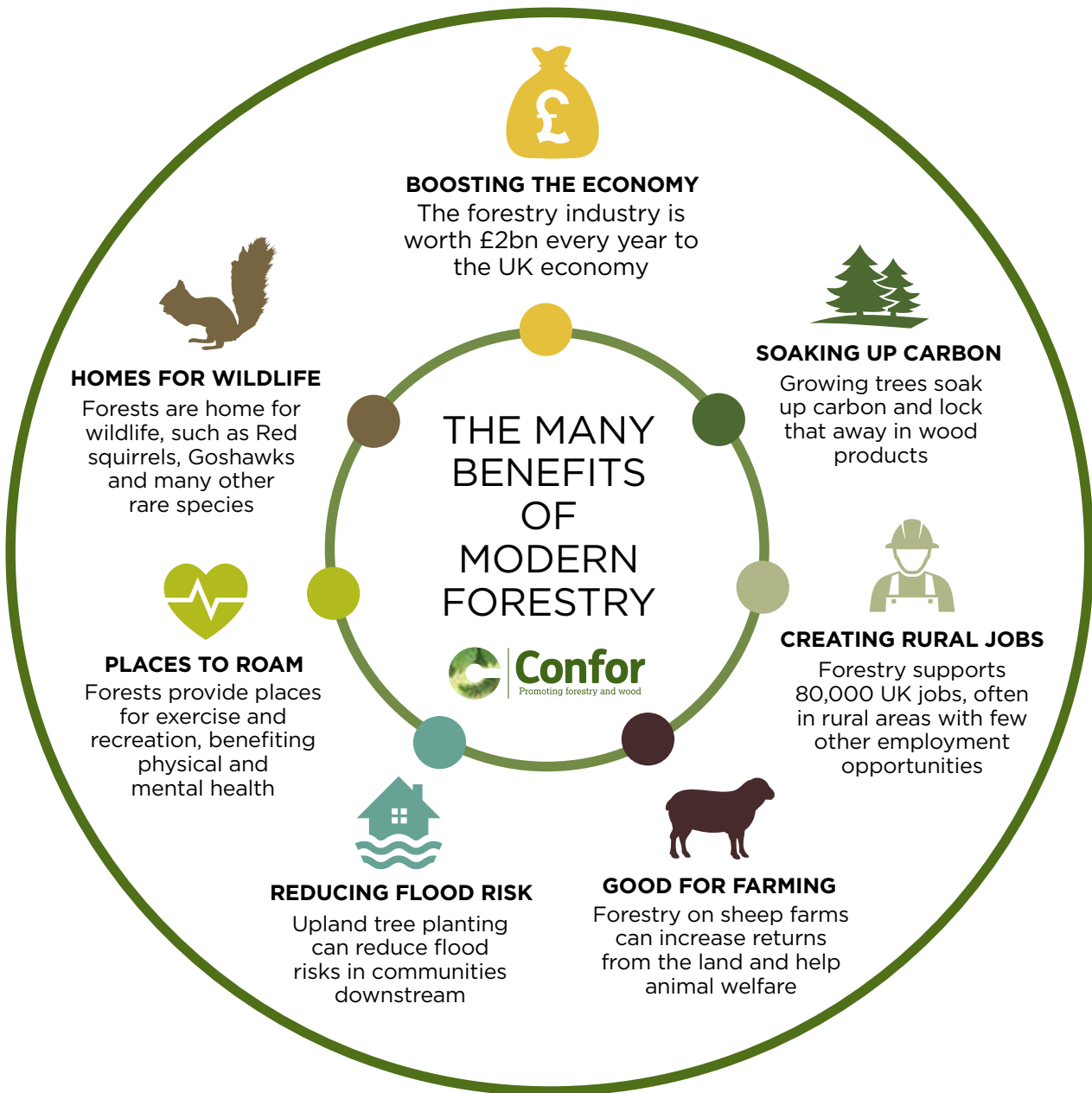
## 4 CONTINUE TO SUPPORT TIMBER TRANSPORT

The Strategic Timber Transport Fund has been vital in creating forest roads, and improving local roads, to ensure timber is moved safely in our rural communities, and an increasing amount is transported off-road. Confor asks for current levels of support to be maintained over the five-year term of the new Parliament, for this vital activity.

## 5 CREATE A FOREST AND TIMBER INNOVATION HUB

Confor supports the creation of a Scottish Forest and Timber Technologies innovation hub. The hub would collaborate with Scotland's innovation centres, to create, coordinate and direct work aimed at innovating and commercialising low-carbon, wood-based products to add value to the economic contribution of Scotland's forests.

# THE BENEFITS OF MODERN FORESTRY



Confor is the voice of the forestry and wood-using industry and represents businesses from all along the supply chain – from nurseries growing young trees through companies designing, planting, managing and harvesting forests, to wood processors and users.

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