The National Wood Strategy for England

The National Wood Strategy for England (NWSE) will be created by the England Forest and Wood Based Industry Leadership Group. The group, created and facilitated by Confor, currently comprises industry leaders in the wood supply chain from seed to structure, as well as representation from DEFRA, Forestry Commission and Forestry England.

Tom Barnes, the Managing Director of Vastern Timber and Andy Leitch, the Deputy Chief Executive of Confor will author the Strategy.

The NWSE has a single focus on the planting, growing, harvesting and processing of conifer and broadleaf trees in England for the production of timber and other wood-based products, and where possible, the reuse of wood.

Covering a 40-year period, the strategy will highlight the opportunities for innovation and growth in a sector that can contribute positively to net zero, biodiversity gain, housing and health.

Why is the NWSE necessary now? For far too long productivity in English woodlands has been side-lined as a policy objective. As a result, tree planting targets have been routinely missed, the quality of the establishment of woodland creation has often been poor, and a generation of wood growth has been lost.

As a country, we're currently importing 80% net of our wood products. This is not sustainable in the long term. As construction and other industries continue decarbonising, the World Bank forecasts global timber demand will quadruple by 2050, global competition for timber will intensify and the availability of UK-grown wood is forecast to drop significantly in 2040.

To confront these challenges and realise the many opportunities that stem from a vibrant forestry and wood sector, we must take productivity back up to its rightful place. This has to be one of the key objectives of woodland creation in England, alongside biodiversity gain and carbon sequestration.

The NWSE will outline the necessary steps for increasing the nation's wood production and utilisation. At the same time, it will highlight the benefits of productive forestry and the positive contribution this will make to our country's strategic objectives.

We hope this Strategy will usher in a change of attitude towards growing and harvesting trees for wood production, and the greater utilisation of homegrown wood for added value and low carbon products. We will argue that such a shift in attitude will unblock restrictions, unlock private capital and realise the full potential of our English woodlands and forests, and ultimately drive innovation and growth in wood processing and manufacture in existing and emerging wood-based products.

Following the Confor conference, we will enter a round of rapid consultation with all those who wish to contribute. Consultation will close on the 11th of January. The NWSE will be published on 31st March 2023.

Proposed Content

STRATEGY DOCUMENT STRUCTURE: *The document will include lots of images and graphics. The online version will potentially include embedded videos/animations.*

PAGE 1: FOREWORD

The Forestry Minister and/or a senior industry representative to write a foreword. Briefly highlight England's history in using wood and how we exploited and deforested in the past. Our challenge is to grow the forests of the future that will support not only biodiversity and well-being, but crucially provide the feedstock for a thriving wood-based bio-economy that will continue to play a major part in achieving Net Zero and delivering green jobs.

PAGE 2-4: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PAGE 4-5: INTRODUCTION

- Who is the England Forest and Wood Based Industry Leadership Group (EFWBILG) and why it is well positioned to deliver this strategy.
- One sentence to encapsulate what we want, "a change of attitude amongst policy makers to pro productive forestry, local timber production".
- Summarise the problem(s) - Productivity has been neglected/sidelined. Increasing demand v decreasing supply. Peak timber. Supply chain fragility. Anti productive forestry policy. Loss of productive conifer. Low grade broadleaf planting. Missing planting targets. England generally is not playing its part.
- Highlight the 40 year period that the strategy covers, 2023-2063 – 40 years represents one cycle of productive conifer woodland and the first thinning from a productive broadleaf woodland. 40 years also overlaps peak timber forecast and beyond.
- Highlight the culture of dependence on imported wood products into the UK. Cite recent supply chain fragility resulting from Brexit, Covid, global demand.
- Highlight importance of softwood to the various industries in the UK; construction, paper and packaging, logistics (pallet), animal bedding, horticulture. Mention potential new emerging markets.
- Opportunities for quality hardwoods. Brimstone example.
- Highlight carbon associated with productive forestry and wood processing – hardwood and softwood planting and long-life wood products. Triple win.

PAGE 6-7: ENGLAND'S WOODLAND RESOURCE

- Brief historical context. How did we get here? Past policies. Recent low levels of planting dominated by charitable/community models. Failure to achieve government planting targets.
- Describe trajectory towards declining productivity. A shrinking resource.
- *Use charts to highlight species breakdown and woodland cover in the UK/England? Compare woodland cover to the average European country?*
- *Graph of production forecasts for softwood and hardwood – highlighting future supplies. Highlight peak supply and potentially identify a target sustained annual availability figure for both softwood and hardwood to encourage growth and investment.*
- Poor quality broadleaf - pest damage with no prospect of any productive output other than firewood and biomass.
- Highlight the poor ecological value of our current unmanaged resource (FR report).
- Reducing area of productive conifer in England due to PAWS, open habitats, restructuring, etc. Data/graph?

- Likely deforestation in England.
- Describe the likely outcome if policy and attitude is not changed.

PAGE 6-7: GLOBAL WOODLAND RESOURCE

- *Graphic showing global availability v predicted demand of timber up to 2050*

PAGE 8-10: THE WOOD SECTOR

- Short summary of the benefits of a thriving forestry and wood sector.
- *Include an image of a map of forest cover with current processor and large-scale wood energy businesses. Link to the species requirement for these businesses and market demands.*
- Mention the strategy will cover virgin and recycled wood feedstock, and that roundwood is imported from Scotland.
- *A graphic of the products derived from softwood and hardwoods.*
- List carbon (carbon sequestered, stored in wood products – use from recent Forest Research project) and economic (GVA, jobs scale of industry) data of current industry.
- Mention wood fuel and biomass.

PAGE 11: SUMMARY OF CURRENT ECONOMIC AND NET ZERO STRATEGIES *(The Wood Strategy in context)*

- List organisations that have called for the UK to grow more of its own timber. IPCC, Friends of the Earth, etc.
- Link to Scotland, Wales and NI strategies.
- Highlight one or two objectives of the ETAP this strategy will address.
- Link to - Net Zero, food, housing, health, clean air, energy, biodiversity, recreation.
- Growth/Green Growth strategies?
- Tree planting targets.
- Decarbonising other industries, such as construction and possibly energy.
- *Ideally try and create a single graphic/map to illustrate the connections.*

PAGE 12-15: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FACED BY THE SECTOR

- 80% timber imports. Lack of resilience.
- Failure to achieve planting targets.
- Government policy problems. General negative attitude towards productivity and conifers. A focus only on carbon, biodiversity and native broadleaf.
- 40 year gap in planting productive woodland.
- Quality of planting and maintenance of woodlands in England has been poor.
- *Recently planted areas will yield very little wood/timber in the future (data)?*

- Often also fail to achieve other benefits including biodiversity and carbon sequestration.
- Squirrel and deer damage limiting the success of broadleaf planting.
- Pest, pathogen and mammalian threats.
- Incentives to plant but little incentive to manage for the long term or create productive woodland.
- *Lack of softwood planting. Loss of productive softwood due to PAWS, open space, infrastructure (data)?*
- England is likely to be suffering from DEFORESTATION.
- Regulation (Planning, UKFS +) making it very hard and slow to gain approval for planting. 'Easier to build houses than to plant trees.'
- Lack of funding for tree improvement. Only improved Sitka & pine available.
- Opportunity to plant a more balanced portfolio of species with at least 40% softwoods to sustain economic growth and manufacture.
- Opportunity to improve other species or conifer and broadleaf. Cite FTT work.
- Opportunity to reinstate productivity as a key objective.
- Opportunity to take a landscape/regional scale approach to land use. Acknowledge pressures on a small populated island.
- Acknowledge perceived conflict with food production but offer opportunity to break barriers between ag and forestry. Agroforestry. Soil improvement.
- Opportunity to create a resilient supply of wood/timber for the future.
- Woodland management for productivity and quality.
- Maintaining peak wood supply to encourage further investment and innovation.

PAGE 15-16: STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Changing perceptions and attitudes around productive forestry
2. Securing future wood supplies for an ambitious wood-based bioeconomy.
3. Improving the efficiency and productivity of the domestic wood supply chain.
4. Ensuring a skilled workforce for the future.
5. Developing markets and adding value from homegrown wood production and manufacturing.
6. Removing barriers between forestry and agriculture in England. Supporting an integrated landscape approach.
7. Promoting the contributions of England's forestry and wood-based industries to the UK economy.

PAGE 17-20: ACTION PLAN - THE SUPPORTERS

- The plan will highlight a number of actions that will support the achievement of the strategic priorities. It is anticipated that the actions will be delivered in collaboration with….
- *Graphic showing orgs that are backing this strategy.*
- Demonstrate the broad base of support.
- Ideally we will demonstrate support from seed to building and backing from the government.
- *Graphic showing, 'What it takes to produce long term/construction grade timber' – Value chain from R&D - improving species - seed - nursery - forestry - silviculture - extraction etc . It starts with the seed….*

PAGE 20-30: ACTION PLAN - THE ACTIONS

GOVERNANCE

- To maintain a strong and active England Forest and Wood Based Industry Leadership Group.

TREE PLANTING/WOODLAND COVER

- To increase tree planting rates generally and productive tree planting specifically.
- To achieve 17% woodland cover by 2050 as proposed in the government's 2022 consultation on Environmental Targets.
- To reverse the reduction in the area of productive conifer to an increase of XX ha per year.
- To double carbon and economic contributions by 2045 and treble by 2060 with sufficient rates of planting of productive softwoods and hardwoods.
- To remove the permanency condition for certain types of planting - SRC and SRF.
- To include an expectation of a minimum of 40% productive planting for areas over XX ha in receipt of government subsidies.
- To task Local Authorities to increase productive woodland cover by XX ha per Local Authority.

WOOD USE

- To promote the contribution of England's forestry and wood-based industries to the UK economy.
- To improve the efficiency and productivity of the domestic wood supply.
- To secure future wood supplies for an ambitious wood-based bioeconomy.
- To develop markets and increase the added value from homegrown wood.
- To increase the proportion of timber ending up in long term applications as the most effective way to increase carbon retention in the built environment.
- To have a vision for increased use of domestic timber in construction. From X to Y. *Evidence French policy for 50% of timber in new public building projects. Also see Wood Knowledge Wales.*

- To explore opportunities (including learning from other countries) for future use of wood fibre to further contribute to economic development and climate change mitigation.
- To embed the concept of Buy Local, Burn Local into Government policy for the production and sale of homegrown firewood.
- To embed a wood culture into Government, NGOs and industry psyche, including growing trees for wood and using more wood.
- To agree Grown in Britain accreditation as evidence for Category 1 alongside FSC and PEFC.
- To estimate the level of investment in the private sector planting and processing if regulations were relaxed and incentives to plant productive woodland improved - ambition to be achieved. E.g. £500M investment in processing?

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

- To support tree breeding programmes to increase the productivity of the main alternative species, both softwood and hardwood. (FR, Future Trees Trust, Conifer Co-op and Sitka Spruced).
- To support wood product development. For construction and bio-based products.
- To support research into the eradication of the threat from the non-native Grey Squirrel.
- To support research into landscape scale deer control.

INNOVATION AND INVESTMENT

- To support increased Research & Development and Product Development. *Cite examples including CLT, Brimstone, panels, Tricoya.*

FUTURE SKILLED WORKFORCE

- To develop a future skilled workforce.

LAND USE AND POLICY

- To apply UKFS at the landscape level rather than a compartment level.
- To integrate policy at a landscape and regional scale. Delivering multiple public benefits that include fibre, food, energy, housing, recreation, health, clean air, biodiversity and Climate Change.

CASE STUDIES

A few photos and short descriptions with a link to a separate PDF. Three short films?

- Intro to productive forestry. What does it look like across England. In south - mixed conifer species/broadleaf. Further North towards borders likely to include restructured single species conifer.
- Examples of junk woodland. Underperforming broadleaf with no chance of any wood production and failing to achieve other desired outputs. Highlight the consequences of failure. Not just lack of productivity but also failure to achieve other benefits. We will get more of this if no policy change and action.

- Examples of high quality mixed conifer/mixed conifer and broadleaf woodlands that are delivering wood and all the other benefits. Highlight the many benefits of healthy productive woodland.