



Environment and Sustainability Committee

E&S(4)-02-14 paper 3

Inquiry into Sustainable Land Management : Response from Confor

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the consultation.

Unfortunately staff time is very limited, please find below some general ideas, if you would like further detail for any of the points made, please contact Kath McNulty, National Manager for Wales by email:

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Confor: promoting forestry and wood is a membership organisation that promotes sustainable forestry and low-carbon businesses. Confor represents and supports members by helping build the market for wood and forest products, creating a supportive policy environment, and helping members to become more competitive and successful.

Confor position

The challenge to live more sustainably must involve an increased use of wood and wood products if Wales is to have any hope of meeting its carbon reduction targets. Demand for wood is rising with low carbon building and renewable energy. However, Wales' supply is constrained with approximately 90,000 ha of woodland not being managed. This lack of management has a dramatically damaging effect on biodiversity which benefits from sustainable woodland management. Tackling lack of management would help address supply chain restraints, transform biodiversity and support the development of a low carbon economy using a domestic renewable resource in place of imported wood.

In addition, Wales' timber supply is reducing as the trees harvested today were planted in the 60s and 70s and are not being replaced with species which will yield usable, quality timber in 2050. Land owners must be encouraged to plant conifers, without which the industry will decline over the next 20–40 years as the future crop of timber will simply not be there. The uplands of Wales are well suited to growing conifers, as identified by the Land Use and Climate Change Working Group and have the potential to grow valuable timber and revenue in the future.

The Welsh Government's target – 100,000 ha of new woodland by 2030, is behind schedule. Glastir Woodland Creation has been under-achieving and the grant rates favour the planting of native broadleaves which will sustain heavy damage caused by grey squirrels and will rely on continual public funding for their management.

100,000 ha is a large area of land; for a forestry comparison, Natural Resources Wales manages 127,000 ha (Woodlands for Wales). An ambitious target is useful to focus the mind and drive action, unfortunately 100,000 ha of new woodland by 2030 is unachievable, the Welsh Government has not committed to driving this priority; the planting map has discouraged owners from engaging, the Glastir Woodland Creation grant rates has encouraged the planting of marginal field corners or small woods alone. There is land in upland Wales which would benefit from being planted with productive mixed woodland which would provide green jobs, carbon sequestration, landscape diversity and longer term: recreational opportunities, timber for construction, wood for biomass and an income to the landowner. Confor proposes that at least 60% of new planting is of productive conifers. We now need a more realistic target with a grant scheme which will encourage the planting of larger areas with tree mixes which will yield useable timber in the future as well as refocus our attention to increasing the productive potential of existing woodlands.

Please refer to the following documents for additional evidence:

WG Woodland Strategy: Woodlands for Wales

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/wwstrategy>

Growing a Thousand New Forestry Jobs in Wales

http://www.confor.org.uk/Upload/Documents/24_Growing1000newforestryjobsinWalesEnglishJuly2013.pdf

Centre for Alternative Technology Zero Carbon Britain Report

<http://zerocarbonbritain.com/>



Barriers

<p>What do we want sustainable land management in Wales to look like and what outcomes do we want to deliver in the short, medium and longer term?</p>	<p>What are the barriers preventing us from delivering these outcomes now?</p>	<p>How do we overcome these challenges?</p>	<p>What are the main policy drivers and how can these be shaped to overcome these challenges?</p>
<p>A renewed woodland creation target with appropriate support mechanisms for new woodland of which at least 60% is productive conifers, planted and managed for timber and other products, together with a focus on increasing the productive potential of existing</p>	<p>Barriers to woodland creation in general</p>		
	<p>High value of agricultural land compared to forestry land, maintained artificially high by single farm payment</p>	<p>Reduce the single farm payment or make it conditional on tree planting</p>	<p>Agricultural subsidies</p>
	<p>Glastir scheme is limited by the traffic light map</p>	<p>Change the map; presumption should be that landowners can plant trees on their land, some areas may require consultation with WG /NRW if particularly</p>	<p>EU grant schemes have driven forest policy. The WG can use domestic money to initiate priorities.</p>

<p>woodlands. Pests (grey squirrel and deer) are managed and under control. Disease outbreaks are managed effectively and with a sense of urgency using best research knowledge.</p> <p>Outcomes</p> <p>Short term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More existing woodlands are managed - 3,000 ha new woodland are planted per year of which 1,800 ha are productive conifers <p>Medium term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Timber processing capacity in Wales is increased <p>Long term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainable supply of well managed timber and 		valuable for non-tree habitats	
	Scheme administration has created uncertainties and delays, for example insecurity around income foregone payments, down time for the traffic lights map	Empower front line staff to make quick decisions, improve communications with stakeholders	Streamline Glastir administration
	Perception by farmers that their woodlands are not worth anything, seen as a waste of land, reluctant to plant additional woodland on productive land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Perceptions can be changed through advocacy though this will take a long time. b) farmers keep the single farm payment on the new wood c) use the single farm payment as leverage to “buy” woodland planting 	
	Barriers to productive conifer woodland creation		
	Glastir mixed woodland grant rate is poor in comparison to rate for “native” broadleaves	Increase the grant rate for mixed woodland to the native broadleaf rate	Glastir; rates can be changed.
	Negative perception of conifers by general public,	Changing perceptions is a slow process, initiatives	

<p>forest products,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The people of Wales value the forests and the sustainable products they produce. - Increased wealth creation through Welsh wood processing industries based on an expanding resource and timber harvest 	<p>politicians and decision makers</p>	<p>such as Grown in Britain, Wood for Good, as well as work by organisations such as Confor, Small Woods Association, Royal Forestry Society all have a role to play.</p>	
	<p>Uncertainty about long term wood availability. Over reliance on commodity products.</p>	<p>Encourage innovation by more active WG support of R&D for product development.</p>	

Additional questions:

How we define the key ecosystems and ecosystem services in a way that makes sense for Wales?

Expanded and managed and productive forest area. Growing timber harvest.

How we develop a baseline from which to measure progress? This includes how we collect, coordinate and use data to support sustainable land management in Wales.

We already have this information.

What incentives we can provide land managers to develop sustainable practices, and in particular, any new sources of investment we can attract to support these?

Improve Glastir as outlined above

How we ensure that our sustainable land management policies maintain vibrant rural communities and attract new entrants into the land-based sector?

By ensuring the land yields products and services capable of creating jobs and increased rural prosperity. Forests and timber are very capable of doing this.

The most appropriate geographical scale(s) at which we should be delivering sustainable land management policies and practices in Wales?

If there are key actions we can take to deliver short-term 'quick wins' and the actions we should be taking for the long-term?

Pro-actively encourage the use of Welsh manufactured timber products in public sector contracts.

good examples of sustainable land management.

Llandegla forest

Farm woodland near Abergele

Confor

6 September 2013