

Scottish Government: Delivering Economic Transformation

The Institute of Chartered Foresters welcomes Scottish Government's development of a National Strategy for economic transformation. The dual climate and nature crises and the economic and social recovery needed from the Covid-19 pandemic will demand a coordinated effort from all sectors, crucially including careful stewardship of Scotland's natural resources. This way we can deliver the transformational change that Scotland needs.

About the Institute

The Institute of Chartered Foresters is the Royal Chartered body for tree professionals in the UK. It represents a huge breadth of membership, and this diversity and range of expertise is one of its greatest strengths. It has around 2,000 members who practise forestry, arboriculture and related disciplines in the private sector, central and local government, research councils, universities and colleges throughout the UK. Around a third of the membership is based in Scotland.

The Institute regulates standards of entry to the profession. It provides support to its members, guidance to professionals in other sectors, information to the general public, and educational advice and training to students and tree professionals seeking to develop their careers.

We are a member of the National Forestry Stakeholder Group for Scotland, the Scottish Forest Timber and Technology Skills Group and the Scottish Forestry Customer Representative Group.

Our Recommendations

The transition away from a fossil-based economy is both a challenge and an opportunity for Scotland. Understanding and deploying the value of Scotland's assets in the context of a net-zero, ecologically challenged world over the next century needs a change in approach. We believe that the opportunity presented by Scotland's land resources, forestry expertise and global climate leadership is significant, and currently under-exploited.

In 2015, the value of forestry to the Scottish Economy was estimated to be £1billion, and the sector was recognised as supporting around 25,000 jobs. Since then, the value of trees, woods, forests and forest products has increased substantially, as global demand for wood, carbon urban woodland and greenspace has grown year on year.

The growth of the bioeconomy and changes in global supply chains will continue to affect all primary industries post-Brexit and post-pandemic. Wood is already a vital replacement for carbon-intensive materials such as petro-chemicals, steel and concrete, and the potential for new wood-based products such as bioplastics, liquid fuels and textiles is expanding rapidly. In addition, new markets for environmental services such as carbon sequestration and biodiversity 'offsets' are also forecast to expand significantly in the next decade. In this climate emergency and biodiversity crisis, trees are often the most tangible, meaningful and cost-

effective way to increase natural capital, which in turn develops economic and social good.

Scotland has the land, growing conditions, infrastructure and expertise to be a global leader in multi-functional forest management and expansion. The doubling of planting rates in the last 10 years, and the scale of capital investment in forestry and forestry-related business is testament to this confidence in its future.

Currently, we believe that the most significant threat to the realisation of this economic potential is a critical shortage of forestry skills^{1,2} both within Scotland and at the UK level. We recognise that skills shortages are not limited to forestry, as high levels of attrition, the loss of key migrant workers and an increase in demand have created shortages right across the land-based sectors. However, the clear opportunity for net-zero growth, and the potential for Scotland to pursue a natural advantage in growing trees, makes the forestry skills shortage particularly acute. Forestry offers a wide range of skilled jobs – often in rural areas where employment is most needed. To help us reach Net Zero and to deliver green and fair prosperity, we need tree professionals who can manage sustainable, multi-purpose woodlands. This includes people at all levels of qualification – tree planters, machine drivers, scientists, forest designers, arboriculturists, plant health specialists and regulators, to name a few of the careers this sector can offer.

The Institute strongly supports Scotland's Forestry Strategy, which is clear on these points, and which highlights the importance of skills development to deliver Scotland's ambitions. We also recognise that there are strong parallels with the needs of other land-based businesses such as agriculture which could be addressed in tandem, and we welcome and support the new Commission for the Land-based Learning Review. We urge the Advisory Council and the strategy development team to engage effectively right across government – particularly with the Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform, with the Chief Forester and with Scottish Forestry. We must also ensure that stronger and more meaningful links are developed between the economic strategy and the implementation of the Forestry Strategy and the Land Use Strategy.

As the representative body for tree experts across the commercial, public and voluntary sectors, the Institute is keen to work with government to develop the economic strategy, to develop an effective implementation plan and to ensure that meaningful links are maintained with related strategies. We can offer our expertise and experience in the development, signposting and promotion of tree-based qualifications and careers and we would welcome a discussion with the Advisory Council about how to achieve this shared ambition. We would also like to offer to convene expert members and stakeholders to provide advice to the panel if that would be helpful.

¹ Lantra and the Scottish Forest and Timber Technologies Skills Group, [A review of the Forestry Workforce in Scotland](#), July 2019

² Forestry Skills Forum, [Forestry Workforce Research \(England and Wales\)](#), August 2021