Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

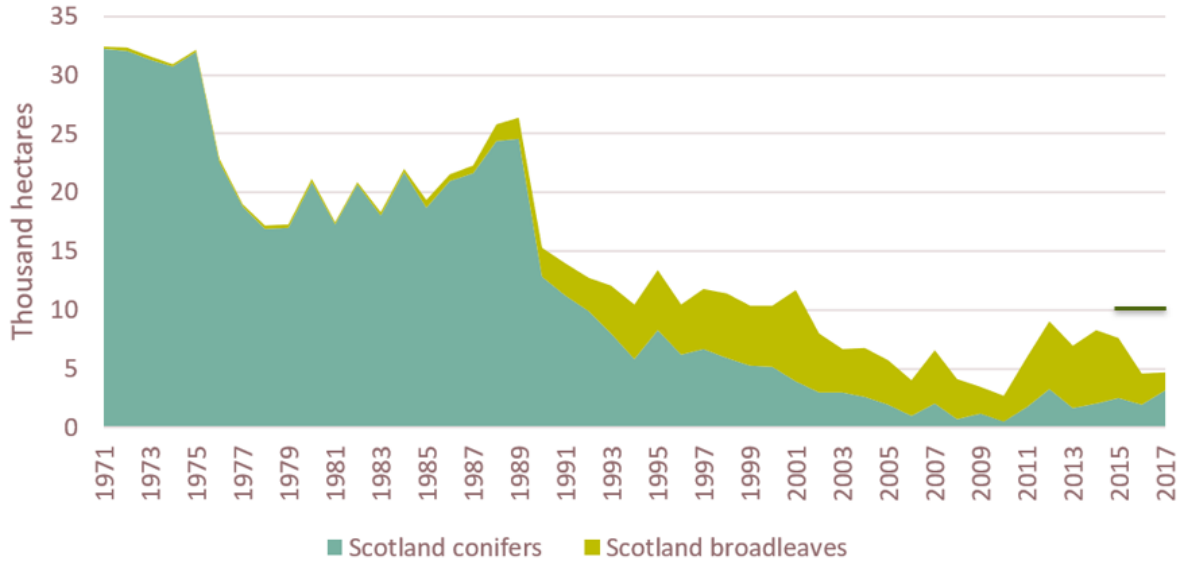
Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill

SUBMISSION FROM Confor: promoting forestry and wood

Confor: Promoting forestry and wood (www.confor.org.uk) is a not-for-profit membership organisation which represents 1500 sustainable forestry and woodusing businesses across the UK. Confor represents the whole forestry and wood supply chain and focuses on strategic issues vital to the success and sustainable future of the sector.

Summary

- Confor welcomes the commitment to a High Ambition scenario including the creation of 15,000 hectares of woodland per year.
- The division of LULUCF (land use, land use change and forestry) into Forestry and other land use must not make it difficult for landowners who engage in a mixture of land uses to calculate the carbon footprint of their business.
- Policy thinking on the 100% decarbonisation of housing stock should take into account embodied carbon and the supply of high quality materials, in particular home-grown timber, required to achieve this target.
- The Climate Change Act should commit to calculating and reducing embodied carbon in buildings and other products.

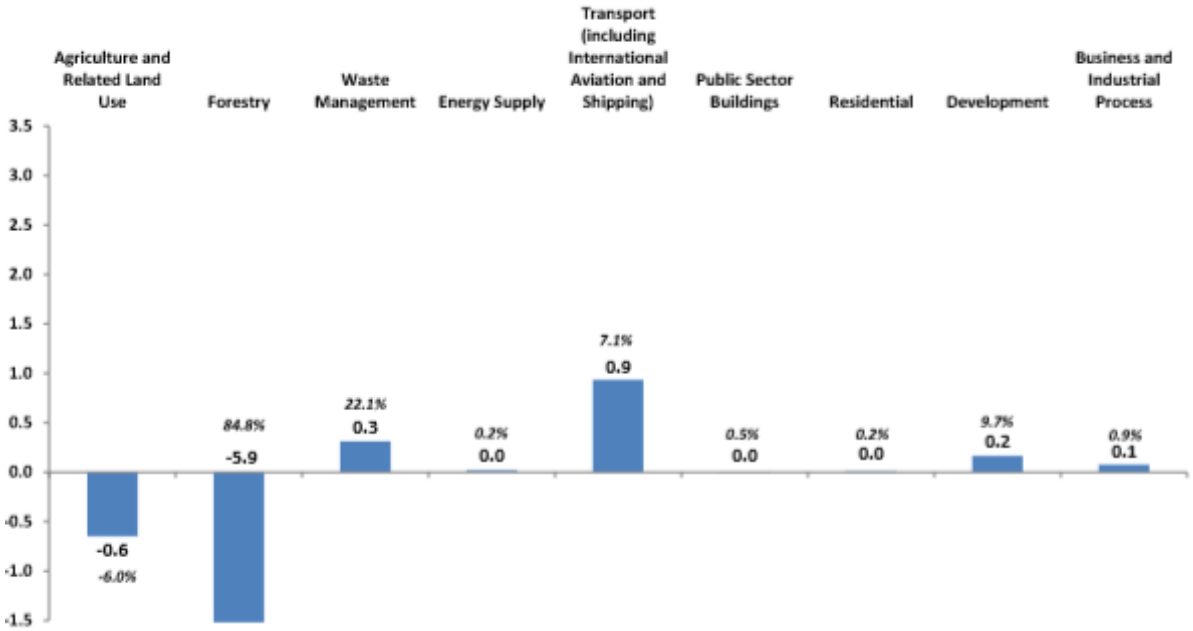


High ambition on Forestry

We welcome Scottish Government's commitment to the Committee on Climate Change's High Ambition scenario which involves increasing woodland creation to 15,000 hectares per year by 2024.

To date, Scottish planting target of 10,000 hectares has not been met (see graph above), despite a recent reverse of the long-term decline of productive forest in particular. Whilst indications are that the current target of 10,000 hectares will be met for the first time this year, there is no room for complacency if this level of planting is to be sustained and increased to 15,000 hectares. This has budgetary implications as the Scottish government supports new woodland creation.

The methodology for modelling emissions from the forestry sector have been developing rapidly, resulting in large changes to inventory data. We are pleased to see that the latest figures on GHG emissions have incorporated this revision, which shows forestry as a far more significant carbon sink than has previously been recognised (see table below).[1]



One reason for this increase is that the new methodology incorporates the carbon storage value of Harvested Wood Products.[2] This is important for measuring the importance of productive forestry in a low-carbon economy. Confor's infographic publication *Eskdalemuir: carbon benefit from forestry and timber* communicates how harvested wood products create carbon benefit.

The division of the LULUCF category into 'Agriculture and related land use' and 'Forestry' is useful so long as it does not make it difficult for landowners who engage in a mixture of forestry and other land uses to calculate the overall carbon footprint of their business, or force them to be categorised as one or other.

[1] https://www.gov.scot/Resource/0053/00536542.pdf

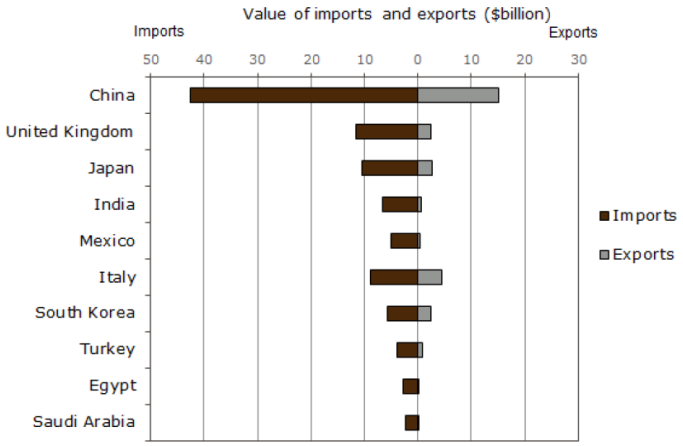
[2] https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/forestry-and-climate-change-mitigation/carbon-accounting/forest-carbon-dynamics-the-carbine-carbon-accounting-model/

Decarbonising housing

Under the high-ambition 90% scenario, 'we would also need to decarbonise buildings completely instead of almost doing so'[3]

Timber and timber products are well suited to low-carbon housing, and we expect demand to rise for home-grown timber, especially if preference is given to environmentally-friendly materials. Given the rising global demands for timber, and therefore rising prices and environmental pressure on global forests, it will be essential that we grow more timber of our own to provide the material we need to achieve this aim.

Figure 9.6 Largest net importers of forest products, 2015



The UK has overtaken Japan to become the second largest net importer of timber in the world. Figures: Forestry Commission

The carbon benefit from the use of Scottish timber in construction is reflected in the Forestry figure as Harvested Wood Products.

Embodied carbon and 'offshored' emissions

Confor's *Eskdalemuir* report calculates that substituting steel, brick and concrete in construction represents the biggest single carbon saving forestry can provide, with every 1m^3 UK conifer used in construction displacing 1.3 tonnes CO_2 which other materials would have emitted. However, this 'embodied carbon' is not included in current carbon accounting.

The Committee on Climate Change note that the reduction in carbon emissions from industry have largely been achieved by the closure of the Ravenscraig steelworks in 1992.[4] Scotland produces little cement due to its lack of limestone and chalk, but its only cement plant was 6th on a recen t list of 'Scotland's top 20 carbon polluters'.[5] As these materials are imported, our carbon emissions are not truly reduced, but merely 'offshored'.

If Scotland genuinely wishes to remain a 'world leader' in tackling carbon emissions, it must lead the way in accounting for this embodied carbon. Carbon cannot be 'offshored' in the long run under global climate change agreements: either responsibility for emissions will be

[3] Sara Grainger, Bill team, evidence to ECCLR committee, http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11612

[4] p.47 https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Reducing-emissions-in-Scotland-2017-Progress-Report-CCC.pdf

[5] https://theferret.scot/companies-climate-pollution-scotland/

passed back to the country importing the products, or pressure to reduce industry emissions in the country of manufacture will result in unavailability of the material.

We would urge the Scottish Government to commit in this bill to incorporate consideration of 'embodied carbon' into our carbon emissions. First, this would give a fairer picture of Scotland's carbon footprint, ensuring its claim to be world leaders on climate. Second, since timber is a growing Scottish industry, whereas steel and cement rely on imports, it would also give Scotland huge potential to demonstrate a significant decrease in carbon emissions while growing both our rural and industrial economies. Third, it would provide economic resilience against unavailability of materials due to global carbon reduction.

Decarbonising industry

There is considerable pressure on the Scottish Government to increase their ambition from a 90 per cent to a zero-carbon, 100 per cent reduction by 2050.[6]

Under the 90 per cent scenario, 'some emissions would remain […] in industry, beyond emission reductions that could be achieved through efficiency.'[7] Exploring the full potential of developing an industrial sector based on organic rather than mineral materials, combined with the potential for producing products which store carbon rather than embody emissions, could be the key to developing an achievable zero-carbon strategy.

The use of timber products as a medium-term carbon store also de-risks the reliance on the development of Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) technology for decarbonising industry. CCS has appeared in carbon reduction strategies over many years despite remaining unproven and prohibitively expensive. So long as the quantity of timber locked up in buildings increases, the carbon store will grow even if individual products are replaced.

Conclusion

It is vital for the achievement of climate change targets that the target of 15,000 hectares new woodland creation per year is maintained and met. In addition, Confor urges that embodied carbon is included in calculations to promote the development of a green industrial sector and reduce the risk of 'offshoring' carbon emissions.

Confor would be happy to give oral evidence as part of this consultation.

[6] See for example the Stop Climate Chaos consultation response.

[7] Sara Grainer to ECCLR committee