

Farm Woodland News



**Farm
Advisory
Service**

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Welcome to the Spring Edition of Farm Woodland News.

In November 2017 the Forestry Commission had one of their busiest application rounds for small-scale harvesting and processing machinery grants. So in response to that we decided to go small-scale in this edition – looking at what small-scale machinery is out there, and hearing from a small-scale timber harvesting contractor about how to make your small-scale woods work for you.

Our other theme is on paperwork for the RHI (Renewable Heat Incentive). Some recipients of the RHI have been audited recently, with incorrect paperwork being a recurring theme, so we have an article for you on what paper-work you need and in what circumstances. As usual we have the species focus and timber market update. And make sure you don't miss the FGS Update. Thank you to all the contributors, and enjoy the read.

Malcolm Young
SAC Consulting

The UK Woodland Carbon Code has recently been upgraded, with version 2 launched on 8 March 2018. Existing documents can continue to be used until 8 June 2018, after which the new templates and documents for submissions after that date must be used. More information can be found here: <https://www.forestry.gov.uk/carboncode>

A new form of control of grey squirrels is being trialled. The United Kingdom Squirrel Accord commissioned the government's Animal and Plant Health Agency in 2017 to create and trial an immune-contraceptive vaccine which will control the fertility of grey squirrels. Laboratory trials have given



good results and field trials are to follow. The vaccine is delivered through a paste located in grey-only feed hoppers. If successful the control could cause a dramatic fall, and reversal, in grey squirrel populations.

Making Small Scale Work for You

KF Forestry is a division of Kingdom Farming LLP who currently manage approximately 8000 acres in Fife.

The standing hardwood to fuelwood market has never been more lucrative. Rising oil and gas costs have caused a steady rise in demand for quality firewood by producers supplying domestic markets looking to alternative, sustainable ways to heat their homes.

Therefore, the management and thinning of a hardwood stand is essential to improve the quality of the saw logs that will ultimately be produced.

With the more favourable fuelwood market, stands can now be thinned with the output from these operations being sold on. These often generate enough income to cover the costs of the thinning operations and in the cases of exceptional quality, or of a particularly sought-after species, return a profit.

Use of small-scale harvesting machinery have helped woodland owners see returns on their standing timber through harvesting and thinning efficiency, always minimising the impact to retained woodland and surrounding grounds. In order to complete these works a variety of specialised machinery can be used depending on what is required:



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In order for a job to work well it needs to work well for the woodland owner. However, what works well is very dependent on the specific site. In some cases, you may have a high volume of timber but a two-kilometre extraction route, this would impact the profitability of the site significantly. And in another case, you may have a good quality stand of timber whether it be thinning or clear fell with a short extraction route creating profitable job for both client and contractor.

- Operation of compact harvesting and extraction machinery. Designed with economy, minimal damage to retained crop and minimal ground disturbance is a priority.
- Extraction of timber from sites in which larger machines would require substantial racks to be cut in order to move product to the landing.
- 14-ton excavator with Kesla harvesting head is as versatile as it is productive and pairs excellently with the compact forwarder.
- The small footprint Novotny 511 forwarder is ideal for ecologically sensitive sites, urban forestry, areas where ground damage is a concern and in first and second thinnings where crop spacing would prove restrictive for larger machines.
- Combined with a traditional tractor, trailer crane and winch, timber can be extracted from terrain that is

inaccessible to other operators with larger equipment.

For cost effective harvesting for smaller stands:

- Motor manual harvesting helps woodland owners to realise the value in areas of forestry that would have previously been considered uneconomical due to their size and potentially low yield.
- It is proving easier than ever to market timber and realise potential value, due to the expanding biomass, chip and saw log markets.
- Low fuel, operating and haulage costs are essential to maximise a return on your stand. Small scale harvesting contractors can harvest and market your round timber as cost effectively as is possible.

First and second thinnings:

- Thinning of plantation woodland is essential to improve the quality and development of the remaining trees and thus to maximise economic returns on initial investment.
- Traditionally, first thinnings are an overhead that is necessary in the successful management of a wood, with felled trees being left in the wood to breakdown. Now with an increasing demand for biomass, chip-wood and saw logs it is possible to

finance these operations, by capitalising on the felled timber and in some cases returning a profit.

- It is essential that the thinning operations are done in a way that minimises the felling of trees out with the scope of the management plan and that retained stock is protected from damage that would affect the quality of the mature crop.
- The versatile 14-ton excavator based harvester and Novotny forwarder make for an effective duo meaning less damage to the ground and root systems and less scratching of retained stock during harvesting and loading.

Small-scale harvesting machinery can be effectively used for carrying out small scale clear fell and thinning operations right through to larger sites. Many contractors can offer different payment options including pro rata, day or tonne rate, fixed price or 'for timber'. In order for a contractor to price a job well for woodland owners there are certain site-specific factors which have to be taken into consideration, for example:

- total volume of yield
- species and quality of timber
- total area
- length of extraction
- density of crop





BSL number of their supplier. However, users wishing to produce their own fuel will need to prove their fuel meets both criteria. For woody biomass, evidence and paperwork for the carbon criteria are not usually a problem; land criteria can appear to be more so. It should be pointed out that evidence is only required if/when you are audited, however it is critical that all the evidence is in place at all times, as failure to produce evidence could result in a compliance notice.

The first choice is whether to report directly to Ofgem (only for those in the non-domestic RHI) or register on the BSL. If you report directly to Ofgem you need to calculate and report your carbon every quarter using a rather complex piece of software, but it's free.

The simpler option of registering on the BSL carries a fee (£25-£150 a year depending on timber source and tonnages), but only requires a relatively simple update once a year. If your basic supply chain does not change then this is a simple declaration that nothing has changed.

The next option depends on where you get your timber. If it's all coming from your own woodlands – any woodland where you have a right to harvest timber, through ownership, tenancy or otherwise, and is no more than 50 miles from the sub-1MW boiler – then you can set yourself up as a “self-supplier”. This requires no evidence for either carbon or land criteria, simply evidence that you have the legal right to take the timber e.g. deed plan, management plan (a felling licence is required though, although not necessarily at the time of applying to BSL).

A quick note on plans: Long Term Forest Plans (LTFP) are generally for forest areas

of over 100ha and, when approved, come with felling approval for the first 10 years; a separate felling licence is not required.

Woodland Management Plans (WMP) are typically for woods of less than 100ha but do not come with felling approval. Although the Forestry Commission approves the WMP, it must be accompanied by a felling licence.

If you are purchasing any timber (even if topping up your own timber from your own woodland), you are then classed as a “producer-trader”. This requires evidence of both the carbon and the land criteria. Depending on whether you report directly to Ofgem or register on the BSL the process is different, however the evidence required is the same for both.

Land Criteria

The land criteria are aimed to ensure that all biomass fuels are socially and environmentally sustainable. On a broad level they are the same whether it is timber from the UK or palm oil from far less regulated regions of the world. In effect for most woody material this means that all of it has to be legal (and be able to prove this) and at least 70% of that from provably sustainable sources.

Understandably there is some confusion over the requirements to meet and evidence the RHI land criteria. It is beyond the scope of this short note to explain all the different permutations, details and complexities involved, but we will try and cover some of the most likely situations.



Among the farming community are many biomass boiler owners who have decided to produce their own woodfuel. A sensible choice as they have both the space to store raw material (roundwood) and space for the woodfuel product (chip or firewood).

For those claiming the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI), it is important to make sure that everything in their supply chain fits the RHI sustainability criteria, and probably more importantly you have suitable evidence to prove it. This applies to both those who are just now applying for the RHI and those already long registered.

In order to claim the RHI for biomass installations, you have to prove that your fuel meets the minimum carbon footprint and something ambiguously named the “Land Criteria”. For users buying their woodfuel from an RHI approved supplier registered on the Biomass Suppliers List (BSL), the supplier has already done this, therefore the user simply states the

The simplest route to RHI compliance would be to buy 100% UK timber that has full FSC / PEFC / Grown-in-Britain (GiB) Certification, as certification covers both the legality and the sustainability; or an approved LTFP. However this is not always possible, especially if you want to take advantage of local timber from a small scale operation.

In reality UK timber is sustainably managed regardless whether it has certification or not. By law UK forestry and licencing is carried out to the UK Forestry Standard which is the UK sustainability standard, therefore any tree felled with a felling licence or under a LTFP has been granted and judged against this. In the UK there is only a very small proportion of illegally felled timber, low enough to discount it.

Under the rules of the RHI a felling licence alone is not necessarily acceptable as evidence of sustainability; sustainability can only be proved by it coming from

woodland with certification or a Forestry Commission approved management plan – either a LTFP or a WMP.

Therefore if considering buying timber you need to make sure it can meet these evidentiary requirements before you buy it; if it's fully FSC / PEFC / GiB certified, or has a LTFP, then the reference number is all you need. If not, you must be able to obtain the Felling Licence number and the WMP approval number.

Remember you are only able to use a maximum of 30% of your woodfuel that is only covered by a felling licence only; the rest has to have certification, or LTFP, or felling licence and WMP, approval numbers.

As a side note, woodland owners wishing to sell timber into the woodfuel market would be wise to get a management plan done to increase their likely market. Below is a list of examples of the evidence required for the RHI woodfuel criteria:

Carbon Criteria Evidence

Proof required	Suggested evidence
Distance from woodland to processing site	All delivery notes / invoices with woodland location on it; (grid reference or name that can be found on a map). For BSL, typical or average distance is fine but err on the high side; for direct reporting needs to calculate average for that particular quarters woodfuel.
Moisture content of raw material and dried product (only if forced drying)	A log book recording the results of your own moisture tests; any lab test results.
Delivery distance (only if supplying to others)	All delivery notes to customers with customer address.

Land Criteria Evidence

Proof required	Suggested evidence
Location of woodland	As per carbon criteria.
Legality	Felling licence number or FC approved LTFP number or any FSC/ PEFC/GiB certification.
Sustainability	Felling licence number which has 5-10 years duration – for up to 30% of timber; FC approved LTFP number or WMP number or FSC/PEFC Chain-of-Custody certificate number (“Controlled Wood” or “FSC Mix” certification may not be sufficient by themselves).

Timber Delivery Notes

The delivery note or invoice for purchased timber is almost the only evidence you need, as long as it shows the correct details as outlined above.

We would suggest you contact your supplier before ordering to ensure as much of the following detail as possible is on the invoices or delivery notes.

- Timber supplier name and address
- Timber supplier FSC/PEFC/GiB number (if relevant)
- Weight
- Confirmation that that particular delivery is from FSC/PEFC certified sources
- Woodland location (woodland name to match that on the felling licence/management plan/FSC/PEFC certificate may do)
- If not FSC/PEFC/GiB certified, then felling licence and WMP number, or LTFP number

Remember that only up to 30% of your wood-fuel supply documentary evidence can rely on a felling licence alone. Further guidance can be found here: <https://biomass-suppliers-list.service.gov.uk/documents-and-guidance>



Species Focus



Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) is ubiquitous throughout the country, and arguments continue to persist about its nativeness in Scotland. Long regarded as a non-native tree by many, recent research by the University of Stirling suggests that the DNA of sampled trees throughout Britain is unique to the country (it differs significantly from European beech DNA), indicating that the beech could be regarded as native.

Beech is easily recognised by its silver bark and smooth-edged oval leaves. Its buds are long, slender and pointed. The seed casings are distinctive, measuring approximately 15mm long and covered in bristles, splitting open on ripening in a manner not dissimilar to a peeling banana. The seed itself is actually a nut, and has a curious three-angled shape.

Tolerant of a wide range of site conditions, the tree is probably most often associated with shelter belts or field boundaries, where it typically has deep crowns (sometimes shaped by the prevailing wind) and relatively short, stubby stems. However, grown in more sheltered places, with deep, fertile, moist soils, and at a high stocking density, beech can grow valuable timber. Wander around any lowland estate and you will find extensive areas of woodland where the overstorey is beech, often being filled up with sycamore regeneration; these stands were once highly productive timber plantations which have since fallen into neglect.

The main reason for the lack of beech natural regeneration is due to low success rate of seed. Beech mast years (when trees seed heavily) occur only once every ten years or so, and an enormous proportion of the seed is subject to fungal attack and predation by birds, mammals and insects, resulting in as little as 1% of the seed drop actually germinating. Add to that deer pressure, and late spring and early autumn frosts.

However, as a shade tolerant tree beech can be planted under the existing canopy (with tubes to protect from mammal browsing). Planted in groups this way, old beech woods can slowly be brought back into production. Beech also establishes well in the open. Either way it should be planted at a high density (the Forestry Grant Scheme specifies a density of 3,200 stems/ha), as this will encourage the growth of tall, straight stems. Beech responds well to thinning, putting on significant and valuable gains in girth but to maintain stem form the temptation to thin too early must be avoided. Beech's bark is thin and rapid over-thinning can cause scorching of the bark. Thinnings will make excellent firewood when dried. Its strong and straight grain, even texture and ease to turn and steam is valued by the furniture industry and niche construction industry.

Under stress the trees can suffer beech bark disease, identifiable by white 'wooly' patches on the bark which is a wax excreted by the insect *Cryptococcus fagisuga*. The insects inject the fungus *Nectria coccinea* which can kill the bark around the feeding area of the insects.

Thin slices of beech were at one time used to write on, giving the species an association with wisdom and knowledge. This appears to be corroborated by the Swedish word 'Bok' means both book and beech, and the similarity between the German word 'buch' for book and 'buche' for beech. Early leaves can be eaten, as can the nuts – but not too many as the high tannin content can lead to stomach upsets. The nuts can also be used as an alternative to coffee.

Small Scale Machinery

John Farquhar,
SAC Consulting



Under the Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) Harvesting and Processing Grant, certain pieces of machinery suitable for farm scale woodland management and timber processing are available, namely firewood processors, mobile sawmills, forestry trailers and forestry winches. Often these bits of kit are not economic at the scale of some smaller operations, however with a grant rate of 40% it could be worth considering. This piece aims to give an introduction to the choice of equipment and a brief outline of the grant process.

Grant eligibility

The grant is aimed at smaller scale woodland businesses. Eligible businesses must be considered a "micro enterprise" (fewer than 10 people, annual turnover less than EUR 2 million) and not produce more than 5,000 tonnes of timber a year. But it is also aimed at business which will use the equipment enough to justify funding from the public purse. Therefore you must use the primary processing or harvesting machinery purchased for at least 500 hours per year. Information on the grant can be found at <https://www.ruralpayments.org/publicsite/futures/topics/all-schemes/forestry-grant-scheme/harvesting-and-processing/#61506>

Firewood processors

These range from simple splitters to fully automated processors. Under the grant scheme these are considered primary processing equipment and will need to be used 500 hours a year, which is very likely to rule out all the less frequently used equipment such as splitters. We will therefore take a look at full processors which both cross-cut and split the firewood. However, as these machines will produce 1-2 dry tonnes of fire wood an hour, you need to have a sizeable firewood market to be eligible for

the grant. Firewood processors of all designs work best on straight, unbranched long length timber, so these expensive machines are less likely to justify their price when used on short uneven timber i.e. timber that is not from plantation forestry.

How to cut the log - chainsaw, circular saw or knife?

The most common types of processors have either a chainsaw blade or circular saw to cross cut the wood. Less commonly guillotines or knives are used - each has its own advantages:

- Chainsaw blade – can be maintained by the operator, forgiving on stones and metal, can do very large diameter wood, daily sharpening, slower cutting, complex hydraulics, high kerf (width of cut) and hence more wastage.
- Circular saw – low kerf, faster cutting, only need to sharpen every few months to a year, most small scale machines are limited to less than 40cm diameter timber, stones and metal are very expensive on the blade, will usually need to send away blades for maintenance, most models need to wait for saw to stop before getting access to jammed logs (which they will do) and therefore can be slower in some circumstances.
- Guillotine or knives - very low maintenance, zero kerf, very high output, less prone to jamming, only for small diameter timber less than 20cm, expensive, produce rougher looking logs, need consistent smaller diameter wood.

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Once the timber has been cross-cut, it will then need to be split. Conventionally this is done with a hydraulic ram pushing the cut log against a splitting wedge (knife), see figure 1.

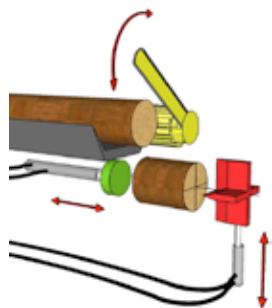


Figure 1: Splitting control

The knife can have a single blade which will split the log in two (2-way), 2 blades in a cross which will split the log in four (4-way) and multiple blades (6, 8, 10-way etc.) for more powerful processors. The larger the diameter of timber the machine handles, the more blades the knife will need to keep the firewood at an acceptable diameter. However as soon as there is more than one log diameter, the height of the knife needs to be adjusted to ensure it splits from the centre of the log. For reasonably consistent diameter timber this is not too much of a problem, the height is adjusted once to match the timber. Otherwise, adjustments will be required every time the log diameter changes. On basic machines this is done manually by lifting and locking the knife, more sophisticated machines have a hydraulic ram to quickly adjust the height as the log is fed onto the knife.

Guillotine processors such as the Bilke S3 work differently, the guillotine which does the cross-cutting is actually a rotating blade which incorporates the splitting knife.

In order to get the most out of any processor, and to get it anywhere near its potential output, a log deck is essential, see figure 2. The log deck holds a stack of timber and allows it to be fed onto the processor quickly.

They range from simple trestles which require the operator to roll the logs into the feed deck, to fully automated hydraulic feeders which integrate with the processor. Log decks are eligible for grant funding.



Figure 2: log deck

Whilst kindling machines are in principle eligible for the grant, the 500 hour minimum usage would mean that with even the smaller machines you would need to sell 30,000 – 50,000 nets a year. This means they are only realistically in the range of kindling wholesalers.

Small scale sawmills / peeler-pointers

Small scale sawmills are counted as primary processing equipment and therefore need to be used for at least 500 hours a year - likely eliminating smaller scale kit such as chainsaw mills, leaving a choice between circular saw or bandsaw mills. The ability to move the mill around to take it to a customer's site does allow you to diversify into rental, and most types of saw have mobile versions. Circular sawmills are cheaper, while bandsaws can cope with bigger logs, cut slightly straighter and have less kerf.

Circular swing blade sawmills – such as the Lucas mill. These are very portable by having a relatively small circular saw, which moves through 90 degrees rather than having to turn the log. This saves on all the heavy equipment required to rotate a large log. Typically these mills can only dimension timber to about 6-10 inches.

Circular sawmill – such as the Liamet mills. Not as portable but usually larger cutting dimensions than swing blade types.

Bandsaw – arguably the most common type of small scale sawmill due to the ability to take very large high value logs with the minimum wastage.

More information on small scale sawmilling is available from the Association of Scottish Hardwood Sawmillers (ASHS) <http://www.ashs.co.uk>

Peeler pointers – such as those by Neuhauser and Posch for producing round fence posts, see figure 3. Whilst not specifically named in the grant guidance, it is likely that peeler-pointers would be eligible in principle, but with production at about 50-100 posts an hour, the 500 hour utilisation rule of the grant would require production sufficient for 5-10 miles of fencing, making it suitable only for wholesalers or fencing contractors. Peeler pointers are especially useful for using the smaller 4-6 inch diameter timber, which is very slow when put through firewood processors. These are especially suitable if you have access to large amounts of pine, as pine takes preservative treatments best. It is important to remember that all softwood species need to be treated before use - most sawmills offer this service, but check before buying a peeler pointer. Peeling is done by a worm drive rotating the post along a grinding disc. The only significant choice when it comes to peeler-pointers is whether to have a circular saw on it to do the pointing rather than using the grinding disc. The circular saw does give the option of producing a half-round post by rip-sawing them in half.



Figure 3: Post Peeler-pointer

Forestry winches

One of the most useful tools in the wood is a forestry winch on a tractor suitably adapted for forestry. It can fetch timber from un-driveable places, skid (drag timber longer distances behind a moving tractor) timber to a point where a lorry or trailer can get it, aid in directional felling of trees, get the tractor out when it's stuck and some can even act as a mini skyline.

The 500 hours rule means this is only for forestry contractors working in the woods 1-2 days a week or hauling out about 1,500 tonnes a year. The choices when it comes to winches are as follows:

Pull capacity For skidding purposes there are few tractors capable of working in the woods, large enough to skid much more than a couple of tonnes of timber, therefore one would possibly think a 2-3 tonne winch would be fine. However a 2 tonne winch can't skid 2 tonnes of timber, the drag is too great.

Depending on ground conditions and the state of the timber, typically a winch can skid about half its pull capacity, therefore a 4 tonne winch should be enough. In reality most woodland contractors' winches are well over 6.5 tonnes.

Clutch/brake control To control the winching operation (stopping and starting) a clutch is used. This can be engaged manually on a lever via a rope (manual control) or hydraulically via an electric actuator (electrohydraulic control). The brake is usually either a ratchet type cog or a belt/disk brake, either of which can be manually or electrohydraulically controlled. Electrohydraulic control allows for more sensitive control of the clutch.

With the brake type the ratchet is either on or off; there is no capacity for slip therefore it is aggressive and harsh, but robust. Disk/belt/brake brakes have less aggressive, more forgiving braking. Hydraulic control also allows for wireless remote control, which can be very useful for one person operation.

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Hydraulically assisted spooling out.

As standard on most winches you simply disengage the clutch and brake, then walk the line out to the tree. Sounds simple enough, but after doing this all day it can get very tiring. Therefore this could be a wise option for high usage.

Number of drums. There are winches available with two independent drums. Whilst these are very expensive they do have a number of advantages.

It is possible to run two dragging operations side by side (one line being hauled out and connected, the other hauling in), collect two loads on the skidding route, and you have massive pulling power when required if both drums are used together.

Forestry trailers

For moving larger quantities of timber in the woods you need a forestry trailer with a forestry loader/grab. They should be sized to match the timber, tractor and likely terrain they are to be used in. It is unlikely that a 15 tonne trailer will be able to get very far in a wet hillside woodland when fully laden with hardwood.

Carrying capacity. It should be noted that most trailers do not actually fit their rated load capacity with softwoods. The capacity of the trailer is usually limited by the terrain and ground conditions.

If predominantly working on firm, relatively level woodland with a good brash covering, the larger 12-15 tonne trailers may suit, but generally a 10 tonne trailer would be a useful all-rounder for most larger operations.

Driven wheels. Most trailers over 6 tonne capacity have the option for the trailer wheels to be driven, most commonly via a "drive" wheel which grips the tyres, see figure 4.

A less common option is full hydraulic hubs which give a significant amount of extra drive. In wet woodlands driven wheels are almost essential.



Figure 4: trailer drive wheel

Steering drawbar. A steering draw bar which is hydraulically operated greatly increases the trailer's ability to "track" in the same tyre tracks as the tractor, and therefore reduce the risk of accidentally scraping trees.

Loader capacity/reach. The most difficult choice for any forestry trailer is the loader selection. As a very general rule hardwoods require higher lift capacity, with shorter reach loaders; softwoods can be handled by longer reach loaders (with lift capacity compromised). However for larger trailers anything less than 7m reach and maximum lift capacity of 1.5 tonnes will compromise the productivity of the trailer.

Training

Certain conditions relating to the grant could be important when considering the financial case - specifically those relating to training. It is a requirement that the applicant should have training qualifications for using the grant funded equipment.

For basic equipment like firewood processors, peeler pointers, small sawmills, it could be a simple certificate of competence from a 1 day training course. However for harvesting and forwarding equipment such as winches and forestry trailers, full Forestry Machine Operators (FMO) certificates are expected, and the not inconsiderable costs of these (which cannot be covered by the grant) should be taken into account.

Timber Market Report - March 2018

Matt Cope *RTS*

The UK timber market continues its upward trajectory in terms of the prices paid for all round wood products produced from the forest; from sawlogs through pallet wood to small round wood for woodbased panel and biomass. Owners are receiving improving returns for their standing timber.

Since the previous timber market report in the last edition of FWN, further factors have begun to influence prices paid by round wood users. These factors namely relate to limits on supply. Sawmills in particular report difficulties in securing sufficient round timber to maintain full production.

Availability of timber to domestic sawmills is being limited on a number of fronts. Firstly, through increased competition from Irish sawmills who are keen to benefit from the availability of good quality sawlog material in the west of Scotland at what are relatively attractive prices given the strength of the Euro against the Pound. The well developed infrastructure makes the transport of thousands of tonnes across the Irish Sea a straight forward option. Secondly, the major, long-term investors who tend to own many thousands of hectares of productive forestry take a differing view to the current high market prices. Major investors, pension funds being a good example, are taking the view that as income budgets are being achieved through lower sale volumes they can reduce the overall volume that they put to market.

One other significant change which will help to sustain the current prices to some degree is the reducing competition from imports in terms of price and availability. At the same time as our domestic mills are seeing limitations in supply, there are greater issues in parts of Europe. The logging industry across the Baltic states is in crisis due to unseasonably warm and wet weather severely restricting activity in forests which are normally harvested in frozen conditions.

Log prices and sawn timber prices have seen significant increases here and are projected to rise further.

The increasing European prices are being passed on to the UK in terms of imports and should therefore enable domestic sawmills to increase the sale price of their sawn timber. We are seeing some limited evidence of this so far however the value of sawn timber against domestic sawlogs has yet to reach a sustainable level.

In order to ease domestic round wood supplies, through industry lobbying, the Forestry Commission have relaxed the restrictions applicable to clear felling operations within approved Long Term Forest Plans. Effectively, the Forestry Commission are allowing access to felling coupes in the second 5 year period up to 2 years early. Those with qualifying Long Term Forest Plans should have now received a letter informing them of this.

Looking to the future, it is projected that, in the medium term, there will be a steadying of prices paid for standing timber as sawn timber prices increase to reflect a proportion of the previous increases in round wood prices. With increasing comfort around post-Brexit trading conditions and the duration of any transitional arrangements, may come some limited rebalancing of the exchange rate. The current restrictions and supply issues in the Baltic states will take time to clear given the seasonality of the harvesting programme. However, assuming a return to normality in terms of weather, both owners and sawmills will be endeavouring to make up for lost time. All in all, a very positive story for woodland owners tinged with a touch of caution given the number of external, one-off factors at play in the market place.

www.rtsforestry.co.uk

Competition

Last edition's question was: Near Melville Castle, Dalkeith, there exists a 450 year old sweet chestnut. Who planted it and what for?

Congratulations go to Christobel Johnson, who wins a selection of 12 native trees and a copy of the book *Heritage Trees of Scotland*, kindly donated by the Institute of Chartered Foresters. The answer was: The tree was planted by Seigneur David Rizzio, Italian lover of Queen Marie Stuart, as a token of his love.

This edition's question is: A ship surgeon was given the seeds of a tree for dessert, but instead of eating them the surgeon pocketed them and grew them on. What tree did the seeds come from and who normally eats this tree-seed dessert?

Please email or post your answer, by 30 June 2018 to the address below. All correct answers will be entered into a lucky draw for the prize.

Email: tracey.mcintosh@sac.co.uk

Tracey McIntosh
15 Hay Street
Elgin
IV30 1NQ