

Frequently asked Questions for Forestry Training Service UK



Governance and Purpose.

1. Why do we need a FTSUK?

In recent years, many discussions and reports cite industry concerns about where our next machine operators and expert chainsaw operators will come from and where are all the trainers? In addition, concerns have been raised about how many of our technical staff are inexperienced and require upskilling. Finally, who is going to make this happen and where is the money coming from?

Over a period of many years, access to operator training, high quality short course skills and supervisory forestry training has diminished to a point where it is considered that in certain key areas the situation is one of market failure. Examples of this would be machine operator training and training in the areas of site H&S management. The result of this is that it has created a recruitment and development inertia as companies question how they can support new recruits and new entrants in turn feel unsupported and are leaving the industry as a result. The impact is further exacerbated where college and university courses are finding it challenging to adequately prepare students for a modern forest industry. A shortage of managers, supervisors and operators creates an unstable employment market where unfilled vacancies drive salary expectations upwards as knowledge and skills head downwards.

As we move into a period of industry expansion through increasing afforested area and rapidly expanding scope for the sector and, as we develop and evolve solutions for climate change mitigation and resilience, we must develop solutions to support existing people as well as develop and support new people entering our industry from less traditional routes. Reports predict a requirement for 20% - 70% increase in numbers across the UK sector between 2017 and 2030.

These concerns have also been highlighted in a number of different initiatives convened across the UK that have reviewed the issue of recruitment, training and retention of the workforce in forestry *inter alia*: A Review of the Future of the Workforce in Forestry in Scotland, Forestry Skills Forum in England and Wales and the Finding Forestry report funded by Forestry Commission, all of which have identified the need for more people to come into forestry and the requirement for a UK training hub or centre coordinating and facilitating access to essential forestry skills, supervisor training and machine operator skills to meet the expanding requirement of the sector.

FTSUK will act as this hub and facilitator, to provide training, connect training demand to provision, to source funding, identify and provide a range of physical centres and identify and fill gaps where training is required and not currently available. It will not compete with existing businesses or organisations providing similar services but will work alongside and utilise those training providers and organisations to build a sustainable business that can provide a range of quality training and development solutions for the sector.

What kind of company is the FTSUK?

FTSUK has been established by Confor: Confederation of Forest Industries (UK) with the financial support of key companies in the industry and public forestry bodies to improve workforce development across UK forestry. FTSUK is an independent, not for profit company, established as a subsidiary business to Confor. It has its own Management Board, Directors and Industry Skills Board in place.

Finance

How will the FTS be funded and governed?

FTSUK is underwritten by around twenty leading private sector forestry businesses, many of whom are Confor members. Funding is supplemented by contributions from public sector bodies where activities align with their policy and operational needs.

The business plan and budget is overseen by the Management Board.

A Forestry Industry Skills Board (FISB) supports and advises the FTSUK Operations Director to identify and resolve strategic technical training issues for the UK wood supply chain.

This provides a robust framework to manage the business effectively, and to ensure FTSUK focuses only where intervention is required, bridging gaps in training provision and aligning learning with industry needs.

FTSUK Operational Model

What is the staffing model for FTSUK?

The current Business plan accounts for 1.5 permanent staff; an Operations Director and a part-time post in support. Currently only an Operations Director is employed full time. FTSUK will always be a small, focussed team, facilitating and coordinating work utilising the industry skills board for technical support and external training providers to develop and deliver training.

Will the FTS have employed, permanent staff who will deliver the training?

It is intended that most of the technical training will be carried out by existing training companies and/or if there is market failure, new training initiatives supported by the FTSUK. There is also an intention to use experienced front-line staff from across the funding companies to support CPD events for specific topics.

Will the FTSUK operate across the whole of GB/UK?

At present, the aim is to operate across the UK. However, in the first year or two we will focus in the geographic areas within the UK where there is greatest need for intervention.

Will the FTS have a physical training location?

The first hub has been established at SRUC Barony near Dumfries. Strategically, it is well placed geographically and currently hosts education and training activity in forestry activities.

The plan is to operate a hub and spoke model. When training demand has been evaluated and as development and delivery evolves FTSUK will identify other suitable training venues across GB.

Working with Training Providers

Will the FTS compete with/undermine existing training providers?

In short, no. The aim of the FTS will be to increase demand for training activity. Where there is market failure we will aim to develop a sustainable and viable training resource to match demand. Eventually, it is envisaged that the FTS may produce its own standard that training companies will be expected to comply with for specific technical training.

How will the FTS work with existing training providers?

FTSUK is likely to invite existing training providers to be part of an FTSUK 'call off framework'. Those training providers will then be in a position to tender for work to develop and deliver training where there is a need identified by industry building a sustainable network of businesses that can provide a range of quality training and development solutions for the sector.

What the FTSUK will deliver

What will be the scope/remit of the FTSUK?

The Forest Industry Skills Board(FISB) will:

- Regularly review and identify technical training gaps and market failure in areas impacting on the safe and efficient management of forest operations.
- Support the Operations Director develop and resource training materials/events.
- Help identify and develop additional activities relating to skills and recruitment that may be developed and delivered by FTS UK on behalf of the sector.

Initial priorities identified for development of training are forest machine operation, chainsaw skills, environmental awareness, forest works management and leadership.

Work has started to develop fit for purpose approaches to this training supporting the sector to build a skilled workforce in these key areas.

Requests from industry for specific short course training are being received by FTSUK and work has begun to develop training to address those gaps which have been identified.

In addition, FTSUK is working with partners to increase opportunities for new entrants to gain experience and qualifications to help secure a first step into the industry.

When will the FTS begin organising training?

Spring/early summer of 2026.

Measuring Success

How will the performance of the FTSUK be judged, what does success look like?

Ultimately, success will be measured by the continued support of the main funders.

They will be looking for evidence that FTSUK has addressed market failure in the key areas of technical training identified by the Skills Board, such as greater numbers of well-trained operatives in the supply chain.

Success would also result in a self-financing training hub that acts a gateway for technical training and recruitment for the domestic forest industry.

How can I find out further information about the FTS?

Contact info@ftsuk.org.uk or Melanie McEwen Operations Director on 07761203901 and at melanie.mcewen@ftsuk.org.uk

Updated February 2026 - older versions of questions and answers have been archived.

Change Log

FAQ	Change	Date
Format	FAQ's divided into sections: • Governance and Set Up • Operational Model • Working with Training Providers • Finance • What the FTSUK will deliver • Measuring Success • Confor Members Order of previous questions changed to fit.	24.2.26
What kind of company is FTSUK?	New question added	24.2.26
What is the staffing model for FTSUK?	New question added	24.2.26
How will the FTS work with existing training providers?	New question added	24.2.26
How will the FTS be funded and governed?	Answer updated	24.2.26
What will be the scope/remit of the FTS?	Original scope archived. Updated position statement.	24.2.26
Will the FTS have a physical training location?	Answer updated.	24.2.26
Will the FTS have employed, permanent staff who will deliver the training?	Answer updated.	24.2.26
What is the staffing model for FTSUK?	New question added.	24.2.26
Confor and impact?	Answer archived not relevant to current status.	
Contact Information	Updated	24.2.26