

FC encouraged to go 'back to roots' to tackle English planting crisis

Confor has called for radical action to end the "overly complex and bureaucratic" approach to woodland creation which threatens to plunge England into deforestation. It wants Forestry Commission England (FCE) to go back to its roots and take full responsibility to turn around the decline in tree planting.

The three-agency system - where FCE, Natural England and the Rural Payments Agency are all involved in approving and funding applications - is simply not working, according to Confor Chief Executive Stuart Goodall.

He said: "The proof of policy failure is the disastrous year for tree planting in 2106 - the worst on record. 2017 looks little better and even the incredibly modest Government target of planting 11 million trees during the 2015-2020 parliamentary term - just 1000ha per year - will not be hit until summer 2027, based on current woeful planting rates."

A critical report on Forestry in England published by Westminster's Environment, Food and Rural Affairs committee in March calls on the Government to "reinstate a one-stop shop for forestry grants on day one of the UK's exit from the European Union".

Confor supports the call, but wants action now. Mr Goodall said: "The solution is to hand full powers for approving and funding new tree planting schemes to the Forestry Commission. It was set up in 1919 to plant trees and before it celebrates its 100th birthday, we need it to go back to its roots - and get trees planted. That includes taking full responsibility for planting targets."

Mr Goodall said Scotland showed that it could be done: "It has a much more straightforward system and has taken further steps to streamline the application process. Its target is 10,000ha of new woodland every year, which it could hit in 2017, compared to England's modest 1000ha."

Confor is calling for the Government to set up a pilot project for the Forestry Commission to take back full powers in the north of England, where there is substantial opportunity for new planting.

His call was supported by Anne-Marie Trevelyan, Vice-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Forestry (APPGF) and Conservative MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed, who said: "There is real potential for planting in the north, including at Doddington, in my constituency. The applicants have outlined an exciting, modern scheme which would see 600,000 trees planted to provide benefits to the economy, environment and local community, which is extremely supportive. However, the application is getting caught up in the kind of pointless, multi-agency bureaucracy which the Confor proposal would resolve."

Chris Davies MP, Chair of the APPGF, and a member of the EFRA committee, said: "We need radical action on planting in England as the current system is clearly not working - and I support Confor's proposal for a simpler and more effective system which hands full powers back to the Forestry Commission."

The EFRA Forestry in England Inquiry can be downloaded from www.confor.org.uk/resources/publications/reference-publications/

CHEVIOT TREES



Confor Westminster conference 2017

Confor is hosting a major policy conference at Westminster on 07 June featuring leading speakers from outside forestry as well as from within the sector.

Lord Deben, Chair of the Committee on Climate Change, will speak at *Planting The Future: How Trees Can Solve 21st Century Problems* about forestry's contribution to meeting climate change mitigation targets. Other contributors include Professor Dieter Helm, Chair of the Natural Capital Committee.

Dr Thérèse Coffey MP, who covers forestry in her role as Under Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, has agreed to give the opening address.

The event also looks at practical actions needed to deliver positive change, with presentations on challenges faced by large planting schemes. Andrew Vaughan of Tilhill will talk about Jerah in Scotland, where 1.3 million trees were planted in 22 weeks in 2015 - almost as many as in England in the whole of 2015. Andy

Howard will discuss the progress of Doddington North, a proposal for the largest productive planting scheme in England for 20 years.

The Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Forestry, Chris Davies MP, will chair a cross-party political panel discussion at the end of the conference.

Stuart Goodall, Chief Executive of Confor, said: "It has been a very busy year for forestry, with Brexit followed by forestry inquiries and debates at Westminster, the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly.

"This enhanced profile has led to growing interest from other sectors in how forestry can help them achieve their economic and environmental objectives, not least in the context of Brexit.

"It is heartening, and vitally important, that speakers like Lord Deben and Professor Helm are keen to engage with us - and we urge our members and the wider forestry community to take part in these big debates."



Confor honours one of industry's leading lights

Tom Bruce-Jones has been named the winner of Confor's Dedicated Service to Forestry Award for 2017 at its annual dinner in Edinburgh.

Mr Bruce-Jones served as Managing Director of the family firm James Jones & Sons Ltd, and is now the company's Chairman, as well as chairing the Stella-Jones joint venture in Canada.

He was the first Chairman of Confor, the first Forestry Commissioner from the wood processing sector and served 11 years as Chairman of Scottish Woodlands Ltd, playing a leading role in the 2005 management buy-out.

Mr Bruce-Jones, who was awarded a CBE for his achievements in the forestry sector, worked in the global pulp and paper industry for 18 years before joining the family firm in 1979.

Stuart Goodall, Confor's Chief Executive, praised his "great achievements" at James Jones & Sons as well as his

significant success in establishing the Stella-Jones joint venture, which has grown in value from 40 million Canadian dollars to more than \$2 billion today (in excess of £1.2 billion).

Mr Bruce-Jones said the growth of Stella-Jones had been an "extraordinary story" and only a fantastic team at JJS had made success possible at home and abroad. He said this success was built upon "a culture of hard work, supreme loyalty and fun".

He was presented with the Dedicated Service award by the Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy, Fergus Ewing, at the Confor dinner.

Mr Bruce-Jones praised Stuart Goodall and Confor for strong leadership and for raising the profile of the sector and thanked Fergus Ewing for his support for, and understanding of, the forestry and timber industry and its long-term nature.

Team grows with lobbying success

We work across four countries, with four different forestry policies and four political systems, and within the uncertain economic and regulatory framework of Brexit. Eleanor Harris (right) has now joined Confor as Policy Researcher, to enable us to build on our growing success in the political sphere. This increased capacity will allow us to improve our knowledge-base, seize opportunities as they arise, and promote shared good practice between different areas of the UK.

Eleanor trained as a historian, completing her PhD at Stirling and then a Postdoctoral fellowship at University of the West of Scotland. She has worked in environmental policy and engagement for the Scottish and European churches, and most recently running the Scottish Environment LINK Species Champions scheme.

Dougal bows out

However, at the same time, it is with regret that we have to say goodbye to Dougal Driver. After 23 years advising Confor and its predecessors, Dougal has hung up his trade association boots to fully focus on driving forward Grown in Britain.



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DATE

Confor's **Planting The Future: How Trees Can Solve 21st Century Problems** conference takes place on 07 June at RICS, Great George Street, Westminster, 10am-3.45pm. Tickets are £72+VAT for Confor members (£96+VAT full price). Email liz@confor.org.uk or call 0131 240 1412 to reserve a place. Early booking is essential.