

# ACTION!

## Filming in the forest with Countryfile

With a loyal audience of between seven and eight million tuning in on Sunday nights, the BBC's Countryfile is a highly significant barometer of the rural world.

That's why Confor has been working hard for well over a year to try to increase the forestry content of the programme - suggesting story-lines and highlighting why the sector deserves a strong presence on the show. After a veritable forest of emails and numerous phone calls with BBC researchers, the decision was taken to put together a forestry special. You might have seen it by now, as it was due to go out on 02 April.

Confor assisted the Countryfile team in identifying suitable interviewees for the special across the UK, with detailed logistical work helping to pull together a feature in the Highlands, including filming in Culbin Forest, BSW's Boat of Garten sawmill and timber house builder Makar to show the sophisticated forestry and timber supply chain in Scotland.

In addition, Stuart Goodall was asked to play a central role in a hard-hitting main feature on the planting crisis in England (and Wales) - and the future of the sector, a topic that Confor had been very keen that Countryfile pick up on. That's how Stuart found himself being interviewed on a harvesting site in Kielder Forest, Northumberland, on a very wet and cold March afternoon.

Charlotte Smith, the Countryfile presenter for this particular feature, works very closely with Director James Vale, who wants to ensure he has a wide range of different interview clips - and plenty of GVs, or general views, of the site.

There is no shortage of GV opportunities. Around 500 lorry loads of timber leave Kielder every week, and the filming site was particularly busy on filming day, with a forwarder bringing logs down the hill and stacking them at the side of the road.

However, the activity on the site brings its own challenges, with the Countryfile sound man concerned about too much background noise when Stuart is being interviewed face-to-face by Charlotte.

After interviews carried out in a range of different positions on the forest road, cameraman Jarrod Roberts suggests retreating into a clump of trees.

This proves to be a great idea as it provides shelter from both the rain and the wind.

Jarrod and James constantly review the shots, while researcher Emma Campbell - who has been Confor's main contact-point to set up the programme - is on hand to clarify any background material. She asks Stuart a number of detailed questions to ensure the statistical information is spot-on; luckily he has the answers!



I am delighted Countryfile is addressing the real challenges forestry faces,

**STUART GOODALL**

Forestry Commission personnel - Kevin May, Forest Management Director for the North England District and Graduate Forester Sam Huddleston - are on hand to ensure the filming takes place in the safest of conditions with everyone in hard hats and hi-vis vests, and a safe distance from the forwarder and timber lorries.

After around two and a half hours, James declares himself satisfied and it's all over - for Stuart, at least. The rest of the team still have some further work to do, but Stuart is able to warm up with a welcome cup of tea in the Kielder Forest Cafe.

Reflecting on the experience, Stuart says: "It took a lot of hard work over a long period by Confor to get here - but it was worth the wait, despite the weather! It was a real eye-opener to see the immense professionalism and constant good humour shown by Charlotte Smith and the whole Countryfile team, in very difficult, very wet and very cold, conditions.

"I am delighted Countryfile is addressing the real challenges forestry faces, and looking at what can be done to tackle those challenges. It was also great to see a real understanding of the enormous economic, environmental and social benefits that modern forestry can deliver."



# Look no further

Your excellent February edition of Forestry & Timber News concentrates on the woeful dearth of useful forest planting, especially in England (*Pressure mounts to reverse disastrous planting record*, FTN February 2017 (issue 79), page 6-8).

Look no further than the FC England web page for LIS Advanced, where 67 constraints are listed. We must completely reverse the ‘forest-management-is-bad’ mentality of the media, the public and the quivering officials. Every proposal for forestry work requiring some permission and/or grant must first jump through a hoop: “How will the proposed forest management works contribute to this Nation’s supply of timber?”

This still leaves ample opportunity to add in “preservation of habitat for the Lesser-spotted Jasper tittlewort” and other (more serious) conservation or landscape proposals. All proposals must show how they will fit in with timber production - not the present situation where timber production can end up an afterthought.

“You can make paper out of forests, but you can’t make forests out of paperwork”. One listed constraint is “Rural productivity lagging area” – no wonder!

**Bede Howell**  
Chartered Forester, Worcester

*Editor’s note: there seems to be technical constraints to accessing the FC list of 67 constraints mentioned by the author of this letter. For more information, please contact the editor.*



**The team filming in Kielder.**

**Stuart and Charlotte share a joke before filming.**

Pictures David Lee



**How we reported the news in the February issue**