



SMALL WOODLAND OWNER  
**PROFESSOR JULIAN EVANS OBE PICFor**

# The future of plantations

In June I had the privilege to join the ten year celebration of 'New Generation Plantations'. This initiative brings together governments, including China and our own Forestry Commission, commercial forestry companies with large plantations such as Mondi, UPM and Stora Enso and major environmental charities, notably WWF. Examples of NGPs can be found across the globe, for example, in Brazil, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, South America and others. It is a remarkable coming together to ensure, in essence, that forest plantations – the engine of future forest products – benefit society and, indeed, the planet. The 10th anniversary meeting, called an 'encounter', included representation from Confor, FSC, IUFRO and others and was opened by Sir Harry Studholme, Chair of the Forestry Commission. It all got me thinking about its relevance to the small woodland owner.

NGP describe themselves as an 'ecosystem of collaboration' and are underpinned by four principles: maintain ecosystem integrity; contribute to economic growth and employment; protect and enhance high conservation values; and have effective processes for stakeholder involvement. These principles are a benchmark against which to judge how all land is managed whoever owns it - after all 'no man is an island'. But what in practice might this mean to the owner of a small woodland?

Rather than attempting to translate these principles into localised application – surely we can all do that? - they provide an excellent reminder that pretty well all woodland is: (a) a component of the landscape in which it lies and hence has numerous ecological linkages; (b) offers 'services' to the environment to a greater or lesser extent in carbon storage, mitigating water runoff, gaseous exchange etc; (c) is of at least some interest to others who are not its owners; and (d) has the capacity, when managed well, to generate wealth. For me the NGP meeting brought home both the fact of multi-purpose forestry and the responsibility or duty to practise it at the local level. I think I can tick most of the boxes, whether running student training days in my wood, developing glades – and this year's fritillary butterflies have been breathtaking, earning income from standing sales and, all the time, recognising it is part of the Hampshire countryside only a mile from where Jane Austen grew up.

Visit the NGP website: you will be inspired. But take a moment to reflect how your management matches up to these ideals. Forgive the homily, but I am sure you get the drift.

There's another message from NGP. Forest plantations are no longer eschewed as second best. They are simply different from natural forest and



increasingly supply the bulk of the world's industrial timber. But with NGP principles in place they can supply wood in perpetuity in ways that enhance and not diminish the wider environment of 'people, planet and prosperity'. With an estimated 250m ha of new plantations needed by 2050, here is the model to adopt.

**A silver washed fritillary enjoying bramble blossom in a glade in a 60-year-old beech plantation. Ringlets, skippers and browns were also present.**

See p6/7.

## RESOURCES

<http://newgenerationplantations.org>



Additional resources are available at [www.confor.org](http://www.confor.org)