

# Martin Bishop, 1956-2018

The death of Martin Bishop in a flying accident on 10 June 2018 has left an enormous gap in the forestry and wood processing community in Wales – and far beyond.

**T**ributes poured in after Martin was sadly killed with his friend Roderick Weaver in the accident near Raglan, Monmouthshire. Everyone recognised his tireless work for the forestry sector, which was having a real impact at the highest levels of the Welsh Government.

Lesley Griffiths, Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs in the Welsh Government and Hannah Blythyn, Minister for Environment, both praised Martin as, “a passionate advocate for the forestry sector”.

Similar sentiments were expressed by senior officials in Welsh Government, the Chair and Chief Executive of Natural Resources Wales and politicians from all parties.

Mike Har-



vey, Chair of Confor Wales, said: “Martin was tireless in his advocacy of forestry. He had that very personable quality of being able to speak his mind and challenge others without causing offence. The enthusiasm he had for forestry was driven by the vision he had for Wales; that of developing its huge potential as a grower and producer of home-grown timber.

“I pay tribute to Martin and the difference he has made in getting forestry more widely recognised and understood by policy-makers. It is important we do not lose that legacy.”

Stuart Goodall, Confor’s Chief Executive, spoke at Martin’s funeral, describing him as, “someone you could instantly connect with – and instantly think of as a friend. Colleagues in Confor sought his advice, which he always gave willingly, and everyone gravitated to him.

“I knew that Martin would do a great job at Confor, but I was still surprised how he threw himself into the role, with a determination to make a positive difference. The impact he had on behalf of our sector is remarkable.”

Martin’s original ambition was to be an underwater welder on oil rigs, but he took a forestry job until he got his diving qualification – and never left.

In 1995, he joined Chantler Timber as a timber buyer, and in 2001, moved to A J Charlton and Sons in Somerset, where he stayed for 13 years. He joined Confor in 2014.

Martin commanded respect from those he met and worked with and grew Confor’s membership in Wales based on that respect. He had a rich life outside work, with many interests and many friends.

Martin and his wife Angela were welcoming hosts. Their home near Abergavenny was effectively an open house and their hospitality was always warm and generous.

Martin’s family highlighted his love of adventure sports, his commitment to his local community and said: “Martin died doing something he loved and will be sorely missed by all.”

We will miss Martin deeply. The world is a poorer place without him.

## David Charlton

A J Charltons & Sons Ltd

Martin was hungry for knowledge and whilst he had already achieved a degree in renewable energy he wanted to progress his knowledge further so embarked on a timber technology degree course which of course he achieved.

He was happy to share his knowledge and so if anyone in our company had a technical question it was Martin that they would go to. His love and enthusiasm for timber and the timber industry always shone through. He was well-liked and respected by our family and work colleagues alike, totally dedicated to his job and any task he undertook.

## Maureen Weaver

South Wales Gliding Club

Martin took up gliding after many years as a hang-glider pilot. He was enticed by the fact that a pilot can go much further in gliders than hang gliders. In 2009 he

flew his first cross-country flight from Usk in Monmouthshire to an airfield near Stratford-on-Avon.

He was quickly recognised as a man of many skills and organised work parties to cut down trees, move stumps, weld broken pieces of kit, build fences and generally keep the place in order. When others failed, his superior strength and knowledge frequently saved the day. He had astonishingly large, dangerous-looking kit which he brought to the club to make short work of any job.

He was never daunted by any project. On one dreary November day, he organised 20 people to build a fence across an entire field and no-one was allowed home until it was finished, an hour after dark.

He became Winch Master at the club. Martin made sure the winch was always maintained to the highest standard, and if some part of it broke, he would make sure it was fixed before the next flying day,

even when that meant repairing it in the dark.

One of Martin’s characteristics was that he always looked for the best in people, even when the best was hard to find. The club will miss his cheerful presence enormously.

## Simon Thomas AM

Shadow Minister for Energy, Climate Change and Rural Affairs, Welsh Assembly  
I first got to know Martin at the Confor stand at the Royal Welsh Show where there was always a warm welcome and plenty of advice. Our working relationship developed when I became Plaid Cymru’s shadow minister for climate change, energy and rural affairs as we shared a joint interest in promoting forestry and woodland. This work intensified following the vote to leave the EU and the real need to identify initiatives that Wales could own and pioneer. This culminated in establishing a Cross Party Group on



(Clockwise from above left)  
**Martin with his wife Angela; with Rebecca Evans AM at the Confor stand at the Royal Welsh Show; and with his glider**  
 (picture Maureen Weaver)

Woodlands, Forestry and Timber recently. Trees don't have voices, but Martin gave them a voice in our democratic debates, and our understanding of a joined-up rural economy and environment was enriched by his contribution and direct persuasion.

### Geraint Richards

SW Forestry and Woodland Advisory Committee/Woodland Heritage  
 Martin Bishop was one of the best men I have had the privilege of knowing. His career pathway gave him a very special set of skills: how many other people started 'in the woods' on machinery, then became an expert timber buyer (hardwoods and softwoods) before ending up in an advocacy role? He knew the forest industry inside out but, more than that, Martin was a thinker, constantly applying what he had learned for the good of the sector, about which he cared so passionately.

When Martin spoke it was always worth

listening. Above all, however, he was just about the nicest man you could meet, always there for anyone who needed him. With his practical background, he could happily talk for hours to the operative in the woods, yet that sharp mind and warm personality meant he could also be sent to meetings with senior sector leaders and politicians. He represented Confor at a plant health and biosecurity meeting at Highgrove, which The Prince of Wales attended; having helped organise the meeting, Martin was just the sort of person I wanted around that table.

A good man, a fair man, a funny man – one of the best.

### David Sulman

Executive Director of the UK Forest Products Association  
 We were all shocked and saddened to hear of Martin's untimely death. Martin was very well known in the UK forestry and forest products sector and we had

the pleasure of working closely with him during his time as Chairman of the UKFPA Southern & Western England Regional Group.

### Gary Newman

Woodknowledge Wales  
 Martin and I had a shared mission to develop productive forestry in Wales, Martin on forestry and me on timber construction. Martin had the tougher job, tirelessly promoting the benefits of forestry on all sorts of Welsh Government committees from climate change to pest and disease control. Martin had a real knack of being absolutely clear and consistent about the opportunity, never ducking areas of conflict, whilst at the same time being universally liked and respected by everyone. Martin had a huge positive impact on the forest sector in Wales and it is beholden on myself and others to ensure the work he started endures for the long term. He would expect nothing less.