

Mike Hedges AM
Chair of Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

15 October 2018

Dear Mike,

Many thanks for the opportunity to provide evidence to the CCERA Committee on the Welsh Government draft Budget 2019-20. If possible we will also send feedback on the detailed budget once it is published on the 24th.

We are pleased to see the inclusion of decarbonisation as a key priority for cross-government working; however, we are concerned that funding for woodland creation makes no appearance in the draft. Woodland creation underpins both carbon sequestration in trees and a low-carbon economy based on timber, and we would expect to see Welsh Government putting tree-planting front and centre of its decarbonisation programme.

A series of high-profile recent expert reports including the Committee on Climate Change,¹ Royal Society and Royal Academy of Engineering² and IPCC³ gave urgent priority to rapid afforestation for carbon capture in the face of dangerous climate change. There has also been widespread commitment to woodland creation from Welsh government including in the decarbonisation and *Woodlands for Wales* strategies, backed up by broad cross-party agreement demonstrated in the CCERA *Branching Out* report and more recently Confor's cross-party group on forestry and timber.

Confor has urged for some time, and there has been growing recognition in the Assembly, that forestry and timber should be considered as an issue of cross-departmental importance, not just an environmental or rural issue. A recent constructive meeting of the forestry and timber sector with officials from the housing and economy departments demonstrated the growing interest in the timber supply chain across government.

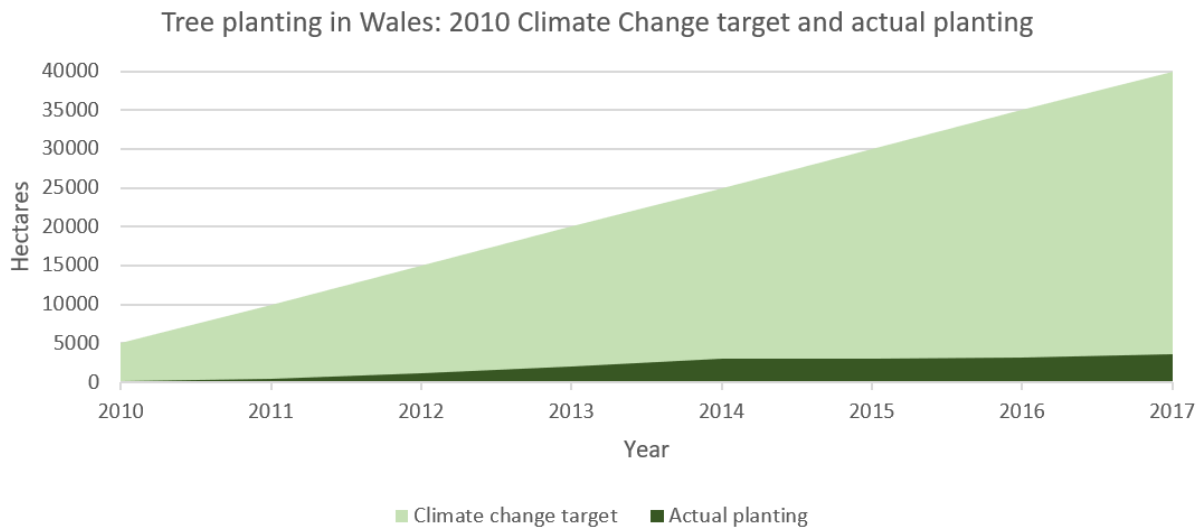
Woodland creation in Wales is way off target. Two planting seasons after *Branching Out* quoted Confor's evidence that Wales was 31,800 hectares behind its planting target, targets have continued to be missed and Wales is now 39,600 hectares behind the 40,000 hectares it should have planted (see updated graph, below).

This failure represents a massive missed opportunity for decarbonisation. Confor's report *Eskdalemuir: carbon benefit from forestry and timber* calculated that a productive forest planted under the UK Forestry standard would provide carbon benefit of 7.3tCO₂ per hectare per year, averaged over the long term, with approximately a third of the benefit in the standing forest, a third in stored wood

¹ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/reducing-uk-emissions-2018-progress-report-to-parliament/>

² <https://royalsociety.org/~media/policy/projects/greenhouse-gas-removal/royal-society-greenhouse-gas-removal-executive-summary-2018.pdf>

³ http://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15_faq.pdf



products, and a third in the material substitution of carbon-emitting materials.⁴ For comparison, the UK's carbon emissions are around 6.5tCO₂ per person per year. This means that woodland creation since 2010 should have been providing something like the equivalent of a Carbon Neutral Caerphilly, but instead is achieving more like a Carbon Neutral Bryngwran, or less, given how little of the woodland created will produce useable timber.⁵

There is a series of compelling reasons for the Welsh Government to take special measures to ensure woodland creation has the budget support it requires:

- the extreme urgency of tackling climate change;
- the mounting evidence that forestry on a large scale is not merely a cost-effective but a profitable solution;⁶
- the catalogue of failure in Welsh woodland creation over past years and decades;
- the uncertainty in Welsh rural funding in the short term due to the shift from CAP to a post-Brexit scheme.

To deliver the 2019 woodland creation target of 2000 hectares, a budget of around £8m is required. This is less than 5% of the decarbonisation spending announced.

If there is any further information you require please do not hesitate to contact us.

Best wishes,

Eleanor Harris

Policy Researcher, Confor

⁴ <http://www.confor.org.uk/news/latest-news/eskdalemuir-carbon-report/>

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_localities_in_Wales_by_population

⁶ For more information on the economic benefits of forestry for the landowner and wider society, see: <http://www.confor.org.uk/media/247024/farm-forestry-business-case-june-2018.pdf>