



PLANTING THE FUTURE

How trees can deliver for our economy,
environment and society



Confor
Promoting forestry and wood

A missed opportunity

“2016 has had the fewest new trees planted on record.”

House of Commons Library, December 2016

“People love trees. Confor and The Woodland Trust both support a policy of ‘the right tree in the right place’. At the moment we seem to be pursuing a policy of almost no trees in no places. Why are we making it so difficult?”

Anne-Marie Trevelyan, MP for Berwick-upon Tweed, 2015-2017, speaking in the Westminster Hall debate on forestry, December 2016

Forestry could create 7,000 new jobs in England, lock up millions more tonnes of carbon and provide the materials to build more high-quality, low-energy homes – but it isn't.

Why? Because attitudes to forestry are stuck in the past, grant schemes are too complicated and the Forestry Commission has lost its focus.

Modern forestry operates to a world-leading sustainability standard that leaves other sectors far behind and produces a natural, versatile and infinitely renewable material. But planting trees is often viewed negatively and government agencies

appear unwilling to recognise the benefits of modern, mixed forestry for people and the environment.

If attitudes are changed and processes are overhauled, then England – the “green and pleasant land” of folklore – will reap the benefits of more wildlife and more jobs, less carbon and less flooding.

**Stuart Goodall,
Chief Executive,
Confor**



What Parliament says about forestry

“Forests and woodlands provide multiple environmental, social and economic benefits to society.”

“The ambition to have 12 % woodland cover – only a third of the EU average – in England by 2060 will not be achieved without fundamental change to the bureaucratic and overly complex delivery system.”

“The creation of new woodland is essential.”

“The Countryside Stewardship scheme is not fit for purpose and is acting as a barrier to new woodland creation.”

“England has one of the lowest levels of woodland cover [in Europe].”

All quotes from the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee report, *Forestry in England: Seeing the wood for the trees*, March 2017



1

PLANT MORE TREES

England should plant more than 5,000 hectares of new woodland each year, including at least 50% of productive species, to help tackle climate change and secure rural jobs.

"If the timber industry is to survive, we need to plant more trees – and fast." Charlotte Smith, Presenter, Countryfile, April 2017

"Meeting the targets for tree planting is critical to ensure that the [land use] sector remains a net carbon sink ...and that carbon budgets are met." Committee on Climate Change, June 2016

Confor's 5-point plan for forestry

2

TAKE THE FORESTRY COMMISSION BACK TO ITS ROOTS

A single agency – the Forestry Commission – should be tasked with meeting planting targets, and dealing with applications and funding. The current system involving three agencies – Natural England, the Rural Payments Agency and Forestry Commission England – is complex and doesn't work.

"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."

Chris Davies, MP for Brecon and Radnorshire, Chair of All-Party Parliamentary Group on Forestry and member of the EFRA committee, 2015-17



3 A MINISTER TO STAND UP FOR FORESTRY

A Defra minister should have forestry in their title and champion the use of home-grown timber in housebuilding.

“The Government and Defra Ministers must provide the [forestry and timber] sector with reassurances that it is championing its needs in discussions on big policy issues such as Brexit, the industrial strategy and housebuilding. Forestry must not be forgotten.”

Neil Parish MP for Tiverton and Honiton and Chair, House of Commons EFRA committee, 2015-17



5 FAIR TREATMENT FOR FORESTRY

Outdated perceptions of productive forestry threaten rural livelihoods and wildlife. As the UK leaves the European Union and rural policy and funding comes under the spotlight, it's important that the environmental, social and economic benefits of modern mixed forestry are better-understood by the UK Government, by its agencies and by politicians.

“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.”

Anne-Marie Trevelyan, MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed and Vice-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Forestry, 2015-17

4 CUT RED TAPE

Learning from Scotland, appoint an independent expert with planning experience to identify the barriers to new planting (which add no environmental and social value, while blocking benefits) – and recommend improvements.

“The application process that farmers and landowners are required to go through to access funding for planting is complex and costly. It can, and does, put people off.” Chris Davies.



A more effective forestry policy will...



1 CREATE RURAL JOBS

Forestry and wood processing employs at least 80,000 people – mainly in rural locations, with few other sources of employment – and contributes £2 billion annually to the UK economy. Working with Defra economists, Confor calculated that forestry and wood processing has the potential to create 7,000 new jobs in England alone by sensible new planting, increased woodland management and stimulating markets.

2 TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

Planting trees soaks up carbon and wood products store carbon. An expert report in 2009 said planting 10,000 hectares of woodland per year would remove between 150,000 and 240,000 tonnes of CO₂ from the atmosphere annually, depending on the type of woodland. Faster-growing conifers soak up carbon more quickly and lock up carbon in buildings.





3 BUILD NEW HOMES

Timber provides warm, attractive and energy-efficient homes to tackle the housing crisis. The UK is near the bottom of the table for using timber frame housing, despite the need for at least 200,000 new homes every year. By invigorating this sector, houses could be built more quickly and cheaply and require far less energy after construction.



4 REDUCE FLOOD RISKS

Several recent reports, including one by Westminster's Environment, Food & Rural Affairs committee, recognise that significant upland tree planting can reduce downstream flood risks as part of natural flood management plans. The benefits were summarised in a Confor report in 2016.

5 PROVIDE PLACES FOR WILDLIFE

Modern, productive forests create habitats for a wide variety of wildlife, including red squirrels, goshawks and white-tailed sea eagles. Biodiversity thrives in a varied landscape and we should plant mixed-species forests that are managed to deliver multiple benefits.





Confor
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Confor: promoting forestry and wood represents more than 1500 businesses across the UK. Its members cover the entire supply chain, from nurseries through to sawmills and beyond.

Confor promotes sustainable forestry and wood-using businesses through political engagement, market promotion and supporting its members' competitiveness.

It produces regular videos and publications on the big issues



**Our Forests,
Our People**
A short film
explaining
how the sector
works



**A Thriving
Forestry and
Timber Sector
in a Post-Brexit
World**



**Gender &
Diversity in
Forestry
in Scotland**

Contact Confor



0131 240 1410



eleanor@confor.org.uk



@forestsandwood



www.confor.org.uk