

25th January, 2019

David Rutley MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State,
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Nobel House, 17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

Superwood conference, Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Forestry Investment Zones

Dear Minister,

We all participated in the Superwood conference held in Newcastle last month and wanted to update you on the outcomes from the day. Your message at the start of the event was much appreciated and set a positive tone which was maintained throughout.

One of the main outcomes was widespread support for the Forestry Investment Zone (FIZ) project to be extended from the east Cumbria pilot in both Northumberland and further south, as part of the Northern Forest project. You can read specific comments made about FIZs at the conference [here](#). There is clear cross-party political support to move ahead with FIZs (there are Labour and Conservative signatories to this letter) and cross-sectoral support, too.

The Woodland Trust, Confor and Friends of the Earth have different primary objectives but all support expanding our woodland resource for the many benefits it provides, including a significant increase in productive forestry - to supply our domestic industry, reduce timber imports and make a real impact on climate change targets. Confor and Friends of the Earth are both making climate change the focus of campaigning efforts for 2019, with a call for a step change in tree planting from the current low levels.

An expansion of the FIZ programme can play an important part in delivering this step change and I hope you will support our cross-party, cross-sectoral efforts to identify more FIZ areas throughout 2019. We believe a series of FIZs can help to stimulate new planting and deliver wide-ranging positive benefits to our economy, our environment and our rural communities.

Should you require more background on Superwood, Confor has created an event page [here](#) with a conference summary, presentations, photographs, delegate feedback and more. We would be pleased to meet with you and discuss the proposals in this letter further.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Brannen MEP, North East England
Peter Jackson, Leader, Northumberland County Council
Beccy Speight, Chief Executive, The Woodland Trust
Mike Childs, Head of Science, Policy and Research, Friends of the Earth
Stuart Goodall, Chief Executive, Confor: promoting forestry and wood
Simon Hart, Business Development Manager, EGGER