

June 2015

PARLIAMENTARIANS AGREE TO PROTECT FUTURE OF FORESTS

- *New All Party Parliamentary Group formed*
- *Call for more planting of trees in UK*
- *MPs urge better public understanding of role of managed forests*

MPs and Lords have established a new group to safeguard and boost the future of the country's forests and the wood processing sector.

The new All Party Parliamentary Group on Forestry (APPGF) has been created to highlight the urgent need for more investment in the forestry and wood-processing sector.

The group will focus on the need for increased levels of sustainable forestry, helping to drive UK support for the wider forestry and wood-processing sector.

At the House of Commons launch event, Stuart Goodall, Chief Executive of group organisers, Confor, set out how forestry and wood processing supports 2.5% of the UK economy and three-quarters of a million jobs. [1]

Confor – a non-government organisation that promotes sustainable forestry and wood production – has urged MPs to call on the government to commit to investing in the sector to enable the planting of more trees to sustain long-term growth and avoid an expected drop off in the availability after 2030.

MPs at the APPGF launch event also discussed how the benefits of planting more trees go above and beyond economic factors. More British planting, MPs claimed, would bring environmental and biodiversity benefits to the UK.

As a result, MPs called for better public education on the role managed forests play and the need to encourage more people to visit the nation's forests.

Chris Davies, Conservative MP for Brecon and Radnorshire, newly elected Chair of the APPGF, said:

“Forestry needs to be placed right at the forefront of the agricultural sector and appreciated much more by the wider community.

“A successful forestry and wood processing sector is a positive not only for the economy, but also for the environment, recreation and health too. There is a long way to go to get this issue higher up the political agenda, but with cross party, cross industry engagement I believe we can give our forestry and wood sectors the attention they deserve.”

In addition to electing Mr Davies as Chair of the APPGF, MPs elected three vice chairs: Labour peer, Lord Clark of Windermere, Conservative Lord Boswell of Aynho and Anne-Marie Trevelyan Conservative MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed.

With proper investment and commitment from the government the forestry sector could deliver an additional 7000 jobs in deprived rural areas and increased planting could mean that by 2050, forestry alone could decrease 10% of the UK's annual greenhouse gases emissions. [2]

Confor have also called for increased domestic production of timber to help address problems of illegal timber highlighted in a recent Early Day Motion signed by almost 40 MPs. [3]

Stuart Goodall from Confor welcomed the formation of the Group:

“The need for increased levels of sustainable forestry and support for the wider forestry and wood processing sector has never been more important. The sector needs a secure long-term supply of timber, and woodlands need to be managed responsibly to protect them from climate change and pests/diseases.

“We welcome MPs calling for better public education and will work with other organisations to make this happen. We also need to ensure that the planned devolution of responsibility for forests doesn't damage our sector.”

Confor's 2014 'Delivering Green Growth Report' sets out three key asks for the government to consider backing which are: to plant more productive forests, stimulate markets for timber and deploy 'wood first' policies in all public building projects, and encourage active forest management to deliver the widest possible range of benefits.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

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[1] Source: Economic Contribution of the Forest Industries, Cebr.

[2] Source: Confor analysis of Forestry Commission data.

[3] <http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2015-16/65>.



About the All Party Parliamentary Group on Forestry (APPGF)

A successful forestry and wood-processing sector is positive for the economy, environment, biodiversity, recreation and health. But its future is under threat unless urgent action is taken. The sector needs a secure supply of timber and woodlands must be managed responsibly. The Group will help tackle both of these issues. The Group is supported by Confor – a non-government organisation that promotes sustainable forestry and wood production. Visit <http://bit.ly/appgforestry> for more information.

About Confor

Confor stands for a vibrant forestry and wood-processing sector which can deliver for the economy, environment and society. Confor supports more tree planting, better management of existing woodlands and a broad range of markets for timber products - if we can deliver these objectives, an enormous range of economic, environmental and social benefits will follow.

Confor is a membership organisation and funded by around 1700 members (companies and individuals) paying different levels of subscription based on the size of the organisation and level of membership benefits required.

Confor represents and supports members by helping build the market for wood and forest products, creating a supportive policy environment, and helping members to become more competitive and successful.