

# FIRST COMMUNITY FOREST - TWO MILLION TREES

**E**nvironment Secretary David Miliband celebrated a milestone at the Great North Forest on October 20 as he joined local people and partners to plant the Forest's two millionth tree at Herrington Country Park in Sunderland.

The planting marks an important step in the Forest's life so far, from its establishment in 1989 as the first of England's 12 Community Forests.

'This is a huge day for the Great North Forest, and we should congratulate all those involved in creating the fantastically rich landscape we see today', Mr Miliband said. 'The planting of the two millionth tree today is a vivid symbol of this massive achievement. The beauty of the Community Forests is that they are there for local communities, they make nature accessible and they are a part of all our lives'.

The Great North Forest was the first of England's Community Forests and has seen a £22m investment from the public, private and voluntary sectors. It has been recognised by Government as one of the most successful within the Community Forest programme.



David Miliband with Lord Clark at the Great North Forest.

So far it has delivered over 1200 hectares of new woodland; brought over 1300 hectares of existing woodland under more sustainable management; improved 1600 hectares of wildlife habitats; created and improved over 400 kilometres of paths and recreational routes;

and developed a wide range of local recreational facilities.

Councillor Bob Symonds, Leader of Sunderland City Council, one of the partners involved in the Forest, said: 'We are delighted that Herrington Country Park has been chosen for this momentous occasion in

the history of the Great North Forest. Sunderland prides itself on providing residents with open, green spaces and protecting the environment, and we share our partners' commitment to continued tree planting across the region.

'Herrington is the result of a lot of hard work by the council to reclaim a former industrial site and turn it into an award-winning park, and it is testament to the success of all that hard work that it was chosen as a 'gateway' to the Great North Forest and is attracting an ever-increasing number of visitors to enjoy the beautiful landscape and the leisure amenities that it provides'.

Lord Clark, Chairman of the Forestry Commission, said: 'The Great North Forest is a real force for change. It has been at the forefront of regeneration since it was established in 1990. The Forest has helped to secure millions of pounds of new investment for the north east and has created a living legacy for local people to be to be proud of. Today marks an outstanding milestone in the continuing development of the Great North Forest'.

## 'Joined up' approach welcomed

**T**he fantastic wood fuel opportunity that exists in England ... and the vital role of the industry in the revised forestry strategy' were welcomed by Barry Gardiner, MP, Westminster government forestry and procurement policy minister when he met ConFor and Timber Trade Federation representatives at a meeting in October.

'This was an excellent opportunity', continued ConFor chief executive David Crichton, 'to present the minister with a perspective from both the domestic and imported wood sectors. We were keen to highlight the importance of these issues and to present our thinking on them; the minister welcomed the joined up approach.

'In the coming months', Mr Crichton went on, 'the minister will take action on these three policy areas. It is vital that he is

fully briefed by our sector before making decisions which will have a significant impact on the domestic and importing wood using industries'.

John White, chief executive of the TTF added: 'The minister is committed to more effective delivery of the government's timber procurement policy. We expressed our support for the aims of the policy and agreed to work with the minister to better disseminate knowledge of the government's commitment to the public sector, in particular to local government'.

Mr Gardiner stressed the impact of climate change on forests in England and asked ConFor to submit a proposal of action on this topic, including an event to bring together public and private sector experts to identify potential impacts and possible adaptation strategies.

## Millers talk to merchants

**B**SW Timber believes it has a duty and responsibility to train stockists on the basics and characteristic of timber', said the company's marketing manager Bryan Crennell recently: he was announcing the results of its 'Constructive timber training course' in the past year which notched up 230 merchant completions.

The day-long training session enables merchants' staff to brush up their timber knowledge and offer customers 'expert advice and suggestions'; focus is on both hard and softwoods, wood properties and the effect of different added-value processes. The latest success follows a company decision to offer hundreds of additional merchants the chance to sign up for the training over the next 12 months.

'We have had great feedback', Mr Crennell continued, 'and, through our customer relationships, we understand what is required. These are issues which

need to be tackled. We believe that through this type of training, we will motivate and excite about timber products ... helping to increase sales in the long term'.

Accreditation from the Institute of Wood Science (IWS) and the Builders' Merchants' Federation illustrated the 'high standard of the training that we are offering', Mr Crennell concluded. Candidates sit a short test at the end of the day, with those successful given an IWS-approved qualification.

IWS president Geoff Taylor was 'impressed by the standard of training that BSW Timber were offering and wholeheartedly support the scheme'. The company, he added, was setting the industry standard in training with this course by bridging a gap of knowledge that often existed for merchant staff.

BSW Timber, with six sawmills in the UK and one in Latvia, produces over 600 000m<sup>3</sup> of sawn timber a year and is FSC- and Chain of Custody-certified.