

Speech by **Environment Minister Dr Thérèse Coffey MP.**
CTI Parliamentary Reception, 7 February 2018, London

Good afternoon and I would like to thank David Hopkins for inviting me to this event.

This government has great ambitions for forestry because of how important it is socially, environmentally and economically.

Forestry and woodland creation, and its sustainable management, offer a wide range of benefits - reduced flood risk, improved soil, better water quality and the supply of timber. As a nation we need to plant more trees.

We remain committed to our ambition to plant at least 11 million trees during this Parliament and a further million trees in urban areas.

Our 25 Year Plan establishes what we will do to improve the environment within a generation. The plan therefore recognises the important contribution that well managed forests and woodlands make to our environment.

A number of recent developments support our ambitions on large-scale planting: We know people can set up large scale planting projects through Countryside Stewardship. I had the pleasure of visiting the Lowther Estate in December, where 213,000 trees are due to be planted this winter, funded through Countryside Stewardship.

I was also delighted that the largest forest to be planted in this country in over 30 years at Doddington North Moor finally got the green light and the first of over 600,000 trees will be planted this March. I know the Doddington project has been offered support from Defra's Woodland Carbon Fund and I'm told the details should be agreed very soon.

These two forests will have a mixture of broadleaf and conifer planting, recognising the UK Forestry Standard.

The Government was also happy to back the Northern Forest, which will see 50 million trees planted for communities along the M62 corridor over the next 25 years – truly a green heart for the Northern Powerhouse. This long-term project is led by the Woodland Trust and Community Forests and we are kick-starting that with a Defra funding contribution for this ambitious project.

We want England to benefit from significantly increased woodland cover and we stand by our shared aspiration to achieve 12% woodland cover by 2060. We can only do that with the help of the private sector.

In relation to our woodland creation grants, you will all be aware that we have made significant changes through the Countryside Stewardship scheme and the Woodland Carbon Fund.

I know that the sector has welcomed these changes, and we continue to work with the industry to review the schemes we have in place, to encourage more planting, and we are increasingly confident that these improvements will result in more applications.

Our ambitions are not just to plant more trees but to bring more woodland into active management and exploit the commercial opportunities of domestically grown timber. We want to improve markets for hardwood timber, which will help bring more undermanaged woodlands into production.

We will continue to promote the market opportunities for timber.

The 25 YEP and the Clean Growth Strategy both clearly state our support for more home-grown timber in construction. We will work with the sector to identify avenues to allow for an increase demand for British-grown wood in new build and refurbishment projects.

The timber supply chain is a key part of the manufacturing and construction industries in the UK. We will continue to explore how we can do more to support British forestry and timber processing businesses through our construction and infrastructure projects. The supply and manufacture of timber and timber products contribute billions of pounds to the economy, with the sector directly employing tens of thousands of skilled workers. Just last year, I saw the great contribution that timber makes to our economy first-hand in a visit to a Premier Forest Products site in Doncaster.

Looking ahead, to when we leave the EU, the Withdrawal Bill will make sure the whole body of European environmental law continues to have effect in UK law.

This means bringing into UK law two regulations that the UK timber sector played a great role in shaping: the European Union Timber Regulation and the Forest Law Environment Governance and Trade Regulation.

I want to thank your industry for your continued commitment to a responsible and sustainable trade in timber.

And we remain firmly committed to halting illegal logging, combating deforestation, and enhancing sustainability too.

In conclusion, we are fully committed to our manifesto commitments, including the planting of 11 million trees, and will continue to monitor and adapt as necessary to achieve our ambitions, including working with the industry to increase the volume of domestically used timber used in construction.