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The Rt Hon Tessa Jowell
House of Commons
London
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Your ref: 01101154
Our ref: MC177020-1/RT

13th April 2010

From Huw Irranca-Davies
Minister for Marine and Natural Environment

Dear Tessa,

Further to my letter of 24 March regarding forestry policy that is part of a Woodland Trust campaign. I am able to respond to your letter of 18 March. The Trust is asking its members to contact parliamentary candidates requesting that the candidates support the Trust's election manifesto.

The Government's forestry policy in England is set out in the Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests which was published in 2007 and is available on the Defra's website at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/forestry/strategy.htm>. The Strategy outlines the Government's vision and priorities for England's tree and woodland resource, in both rural and urban areas, in the years to come.

This has been followed up by a Delivery Plan prepared by the Forestry Commission and Natural England, which can be found on the Forestry Commission's website at <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/website/forestry.nsf/byunique/infd-7dyc7z>. In addition the Government has published several policy documents on particular issues relating to forestry, for example Keepers of Time: A Statement of Policy for England's Ancient and Native Woodlands. This is also available from the Forestry Commission.

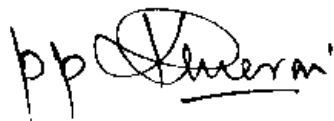
The importance of maintaining our existing woodlands was recognised in the 2002 Sustaining England's Woodlands Review. This review led to our support mechanisms from 2005 placing an increased emphasis on the sustainable management of existing woodland, including the restoration and maintenance of our ancient woodlands. This change of emphasis is one of the main reasons for the decline in new planting.

However, we have recognised the need to reverse this trend and Defra's Climate Plan, published on 31 March, sets out the benefits of woodland and what we need to do to meet

the challenge of achieving a step change in the rate of woodland planting. This includes the creation of a Woodland Carbon Task Force which will be a multi-disciplinary team working to establish the conditions for significant private sector investment in woodland creation, increasing supply and demand for woodfuel and greater uptake in general of sustainable forest management practices.

The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan recognised that planting an additional 10,000 hectares of sustainably managed woodland per year in England for the next fifteen years could absorb 50 MtCO₂ by 2050.

Finally, I should point out that forestry and rural affairs are a devolved matter, which means that the Scottish Executive and the Welsh Assembly Government have their own policies and each country has its own forestry strategy.



HUW IRRANCA-DAVIES

Agreed by the Minister & signed
in his absence.