

FRIENDS OF THE SCOTSMAN /

Wood you believe timber has big role to play in cutting carbon emissions?

One beneficial side-effect of lockdown has been a reduction in global carbon emissions. This has resulted in better air quality, clearer water and a return of wildlife to some urban areas. These unexpected benefits have inspired optimism for a greener future.

Last year, the UK Government set an ambitious target to reach net-zero emissions by 2050 whilst Scotland's net-zero target is 2045. Recovery from lockdown presents a unique opportunity for us to "build back better" and return to a more sustainable way of life for future generations.

The construction, operation, and maintenance of buildings account for a hefty 45 per cent of total UK carbon emissions, so the construction industry has a responsibility to find ways to reduce and offset its carbon footprint. Forestry and wood-based industries can play a pivotal role in doing this.

That's why the UK timber industry launched a new campaign this week, Wood CO2s less, to showcase the key role timber can play in helping reduce CO2 in the atmosphere and contribute to slowing down climate change.

Using timber contributes to reducing CO2 in three simple ways:

- Trees capture harmful CO2 from our atmosphere and store it as carbon;
- Replanting and replenishing sustainably managed forests means they



Industry campaigns to showcase how greater use of products in building can help slow climate change, writes **Sarah Virgo**

continue to capture CO2 and promote biodiversity;

• Substituting wood for more CO2 intensive materials means carbon is stored for at least the lifetime of the building, often longer when we use recovered wood for 'second life' products.

It isn't feasible for all sectors of the economy to become carbon neutral by 2045/2050, but wood products present a major opportunity for the construction industry. Wood CO2s less encourages legislators, planners, local authorities, developers, architects and contractors to consider using wood first to meet carbon targets.

This sentiment was echoed recently by the Committee on Climate Change. For the UK to reach net-zero by 2050, it must (among other measures) prioritise tree planting and rapidly scale up the amount of wood used in construction.

Scotland is already forging the path to sustainable construction with most new homes (around 85 per cent) constructed using wood. This is significantly more than England, where

almost 80 per cent of new homes are built from brick and block. However, Scotland must continue investing in its timber and forestry industries to help not just Scotland but the wider UK reach net-zero targets.

To harness the power and potential of timber as a low-carbon solution, we must continue investing in research, training, and education. Positive examples are the Construction Scotland Innovation Centre and Edinburgh Napier University's Centre for Offsite Construction and Innovative Structures. Napier's work includes research to increase carbon storage potential of new wood-rich products to support improved building performance and efficiency.

The UK must invest further in education and training on how wood use can add environmental and financial value to the construction sector. Only by upskilling workers to use modern methods of construction, such as timber, and encouraging a shift in culture, will we see the carbon footprint of a building being considered as important as any other element of building design.



↑ While it isn't feasible for all sectors of the economy to become carbon neutral

Scottish and UK government policy must reflect a conscious commitment to support the increased use of timber and assist in removing financial and cultural barriers. In February, France said all new state-financed public buildings must contain at least 50 per cent wood or other organic material. Canada has a 'Green Construction through Wood'

programme to incentivise mass timber building. In Wales, a wood encouragement policy known as Home Grown Homes was established in 2017 to support the use of wood in construction.

Now Wood CO2s less is ready to press home the positive message of wood's low-carbon contribution to a green recovery.

by 2045/2050, wood products will present a major opportunity for the UK's construction industry

With the world turned upside down by Covid-19, we must harness this opportunity to fast-track our path to net-zero. But it will take a bold push from policy-makers to champion forestry and an increased use of wood throughout our construction industry. Sarah Virgo is campaign manager, Wood for Good, a joint venture

between Confor and Swedish Wood, and the UK timber industry's campaign to promote wood use in design and construction. Wood CO2s less was developed by Wood for Good for the timber industry. It promotes the message that wood from sustainably managed forests instead of other materials is a good way to reduce CO2 emissions. www.woodforgood.com/co2



Read all about it! Trust publishes moorland conservation success stories

Productive countryside and communities can go together, says GWCT's Dr Dave Parish

While many of Scotland's wildlife and nature reserves were closed through lockdown, conservation work continued on private land. Despite that, the men and women working hard to make our moorland thrive are often overlooked. Their untold stories are celebrated in a new publication from the leading conservation charity the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT).

These case studies in the collection showcase what has been achieved in Scotland with passion, hard work and expertise. As many threatened species decline across the UK, these are tales of thriving populations of curlew, black grouse and birds of prey. Despite bucking the trend, these success stories are often overlooked.

Among these moorland managers is Edinglassie headkeeper Alex Jenkins, who has helped to transform the Upper Donside estate into a home for curlew and mountain hares. "It's a success story for us" says Alex, when asked about the population of much-loved 'blue hares'. He puts their numbers down to two factors – good habitat and predator control – and fits in with the wider picture in North-east Scotland where they are thriving despite range contraction elsewhere.

On Deeside, Andrew Farquharson and his gamekeeper Allan Shand are working to recover numbers of golden eagles and capercaillie. This hasn't happened overnight. Thirty years ago they decided to fence off a large area of ancient woodland, keeping deer away from the young Scots pines

and allowing heather to flourish – all to the benefit of the caper. In total they have protected over 200 hectares of native woodland and plenty of birdlife is reaping the rewards of good management, with stable numbers of red-listed black grouse, a growing population of brown hares and birds of prey including merlin, goshawks, red kites and a resident pair of golden eagles.

It isn't just birdlife that is thriving. In Perthshire, reduced grazing has seen native plants reappear for the first time in decades, along with the insects they support, all thanks to Sir John Kemp-Welch and his former head keeper, Ronnie Kippen. They moved to drastically reduce the number of sheep and worked with the GWCT to devise a habitat

improvement plan. Moving the flock off the hill completely in the winter has allowed heather and other plants to recover. Ronnie marvels at the difference it has made, recalling that "in the past, having deer and sheep on the hill in winter meant there was virtually no cotton grass, whereas now if you lie in the corries it is so prolific, its white tips look like driven snow".

Every conservationist in this collection tells their own success story. There are also examples from south of the Border, where Neville Gill has made his corner of Northumberland a haven for black grouse, Tom Orde-Powlett is helping waders to thrive in Wensleydale and Geoff Eyre is restoring Derbyshire's precious heather moors. You can also read how James Mawle is improving both land and

river on his North Yorkshire family farm. Roy Burrows' impressive conservation effort on the Summerstone Estate and the work done by George Winn-Darley has attracted 16 birds of prey species to the North York Moors.

This series of case studies was written by Joe Dimpleby, who is keen to break the stereotypical view of our uplands: "The stories of these conservationists show that, with the right approach, it is possible to combine thriving local communities with a productive countryside and the preservation of our precious heather moorland and its biodiversity."

To read about these success stories, a limited number of copies are available online for £3.99 at <https://www.gwctshop.org.uk/collections/whats-new/products/moorland>

conservationists – the untold story. Moorland conservationists featured in the document are:

Alex Jenkins – mountain hares thriving in Upper Donside.

Tom Orde-Powlett – determined not to see Wensleydale's waders disappear.

Geoff Eyre – helping restore the Peak District.

Andrew Farquharson – delivering conservation on Deeside.

James Mawle – reversing the fortunes of the river on his Yorkshire Dales farm.

Neville Gill – helping rare black grouse in their Northumberland stronghold.

Sir John Kemp-Welch and Ronnie Kippen – working wonders for waders in Perthshire.

George Winn-Darley – making wildlife accessible on the North York Moors.

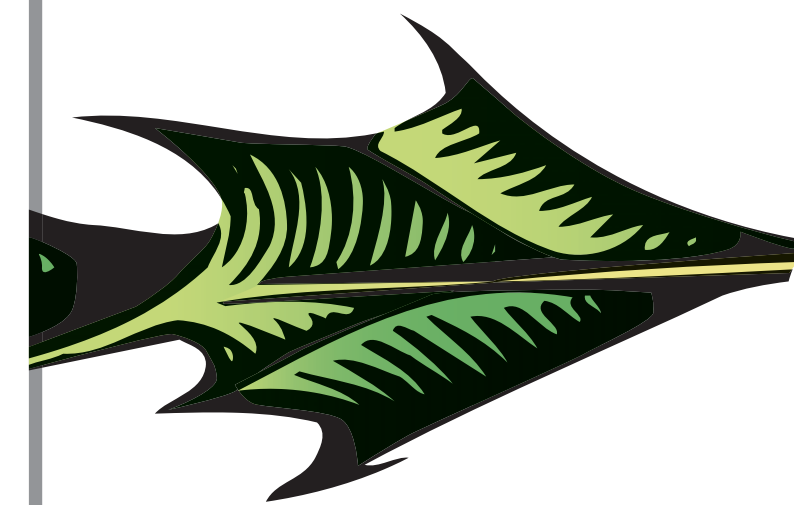
Roy Burrows – leading a big-scale restoration project in Nidderdale.

Dr Dave Parish, head of Scottish Lowland Research, Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust



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