

Branching out; new scheme to help forestry skills to grow

Forests and woodlands provide a wide range of career opportunities which require highly specialised skills such as tree felling, pruning, coppicing, wood chipping and re-planting.

The two year pilot is funded by the Welsh Government with support from the European Social Fund. It's key to the delivery of the [Employability Plan](#) and is designed to fulfil the skills and recruitment needs identified by the forestry sector through:

- Supporting up to 30 new forestry jobs
- Encouraging and supporting farm diversification
- Increasing skills that drive sustainable timber resource
- Creating a network of employer links.

These job creation opportunities play a crucial role in preparing the sector given the current uncertainties concerning Brexit, and take advantage of the green growth opportunities outlined in the [Woodland and Trees Strategy for Wales](#).

Eager to shine a light on the profession and its possible career pathways, Eluned Morgan wants to encourage more learners over 16 to aspire to be foresters

Launching the pilot at the Royal Welsh Winter Fair today, she said:

“This investment in forestry skills and employment support is crucial if we want people to recognise forest and woodland management as a viable career pathway.

“We rely on the forestry industry to sustainably manage our woodlands and provide us with renewable resources, and that would not be possible without the right skills in place.”

Coleg Sir Gâr, well-established experts in the forestry skills sector, will be delivering the apprenticeship programme which will be rolled out across South, Mid and West Wales.

David Davies, Curriculum Head of Land-Based Studies at Coleg Sir Gar, said:

“The industry really needs workers with the right skills and with more incentives like this we can really encourage more people to become foresters.

“We will be supporting the apprentices to complete their studies at

Level 2 and 3 in Trees and Timber, Land-based Engineering and Environmental Conservation, equipping them with the skills they need to further their careers in the forestry industry.”

Minister for Environment, Hannah Blythyn, said:

“Our woodlands provide renewable resources which are vital to key Welsh industries and we must ensure they are managed correctly.

“Back in June I published an updated woodlands and trees strategy which set out the kind of woodland we want. The specialist skills and knowledge of the sector are essential to its delivery.”