

Cutting wood miles? Let's make use of the government's enthusiasm for more trees.

I asked some questions to pursue the issue of increased UK timber production. I was aware of the government plans to promote the planting of many more trees as part of its climate change policies. The net zero carbon target now drives much of government policy. The interest in this within government is intensified by the long run up to the World Climate Change conference, COP 26 which the UK will host at Glasgow in November.

Whilst in general terms the answers show continuing commitment to more tree planting, they are short on detail. The pace of change is also slow. There is a big opportunity to expand woodland areas rapidly, and to encourage timber growth in sustainable woodlands. The owners can then harvest the timber and replace the trees on a defined growing cycle. The UK's warmer climate allows faster growth than Scandinavia and Canada where much of our timber currently comes from. The UK has substantial need of imported timber at the moment for construction, furniture and other purposes. We even import the wood to burn in the Drax power station. I will continue to press for faster action.

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to encourage the use of UK-produced timber to reduce wood miles. (142750)

Tabled on: 25 January 2021

Answer:

Rebecca Pow:

This spring we will publish a new England Tree Strategy, setting out plans to increase tree planting in line with our manifesto commitments, and to increase the management of existing woodlands. These actions will provide more domestic timber now and, in the future, reducing our reliance on imports. To drive sustainable investment into UK woodlands we also want to see the expansion and use of the Grown in Britain Certification mark throughout the supply chain, reducing the carbon footprint of the construction industry.

The answer was submitted on 02 Feb 2021 at 17:45.

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will work with Drax power station and UK forestry to source UK biomass to replace imports. (142751)

Tabled on: 25 January 2021

Answer:

Rebecca Pow:

Our woodlands provide habitats, capture carbon and provide sustainable sources of fibre and fuel. We are seeking to increase planting across the UK in this parliament, and to bring more woodlands into management. This will increase the domestic supply of wood for a range of markets.

We are also developing a Biomass Strategy for publication in 2022 and will issue a call for evidence shortly. As part of the strategy we will review the amount of sustainable biomass available in the UK, and how this could be best utilised across the economy to achieve net zero.

The answer was submitted on 02 Feb 2021 at 17:30.