

## More trees please

I have always liked trees. I was brought up on the romance of the English forests – the adventure of Robin Hood in Sherwood, the lovers in Shakespeare's Arden, the beauty of local mixed deciduous tree woods, the walks to see primroses or to retrieve a conker from the forest floor. The landscape looks magnificent when the varied greens of the tree canopy in a wood or the mixed leaves in a coppice or hedgerow punctuate the landscape.

So I welcome the conclusion of the recent Report of the Climate Change Committee that urges us to plant more trees. I am glad the government is pressing ahead anyway with an expanded national forest. I trust also it will find ways to stimulate more tree plantations to deliver the wood we need. It makes little sense to import so much wood from Scandinavia, Canada and elsewhere. It seems particularly absurd to claim it is a green idea to burn so much wood at Drax that has come across the Atlantic in fuel burning ships. We need more faster growing timber for basic uses and for energy, and some good quality slower growing hardwoods for furniture and construction. The heart of English architecture and shipbuilding was always English oak. We could grow more and use more English oak for a variety of enduring purposes.

I am all in favour of a greener policy than we follow in many respects. I want us to get rid of VAT on green products like insulation, heating controls and draught excluders as soon as we are allowed to out of the EU. I am a strong advocate of more fuel efficiency and better home insulation. I want us to keep more green spaces and gaps between settlements. In my own part of the world the pace of housebuilding and the erosion of countryside is too fast. I want a future plan that is gentler on the landscape. I want more food production at home to cut food miles. I want a fishing policy that is kinder to our fish and to local fishermen and women.

The Climate Change Report contains some important figures. It reminds us that the UK has done more than most to cut CO<sub>2</sub> output, now down by 44% from 1990 levels. The UK consumes 7 tonnes of carbon a head a year compared to the EU's 9, China's 10 and the USA's 20. If we carry on with current targets the UK will increase the average global temperature according to their models by 0.005 degrees C by 2070. They want us to go further so the increase the UK contributes is just 0.001 degrees C.

I want to concentrate on greening the landscape and reducing migration levels to cut the pressure of development on our countryside.