

Forestry Commission launches ground-breaking apprenticeship programme for the forestry sector

A first-of-its-kind apprenticeship initiative to foster a growing, highly skilled and more diverse workforce within the forestry sector has been opened today (Wednesday 6 April).

The Development Woodland Officer programme offers a three-year, paid development opportunity for passionate individuals looking to kickstart their careers in forestry. Jointly led by the Forestry Commission, the University of Cumbria and the Institute of Chartered Foresters, the programme marks the first time that a degree-level forestry apprenticeship has been offered in the UK.

The initiative aims to grow, upskill, and diversify the forestry sector workforce. Expanding long-term workforce capacity will help to deliver the Government's tree planting and woodland creation ambitions over the coming years as we build back greener.

Development Woodland Officers will benefit from academic studies in forestry management at the University of Cumbria, practical experience in Forestry Commission area teams across England, and nine months of wider sector placements to further build their skills and experience, enhancing future employment prospects.

Upon completion of the programme, successful graduates will earn a Professional Forester Apprenticeship (equivalent to Level 6), a BSc (Hons) in Forest Management and the potential to gain Chartered Forester status with the Institute of Chartered Foresters.

Forestry Commission Chief Executive, Richard Stanford said:

This new programme offers an exciting career pathway into the forestry sector for people from all backgrounds and abilities.

It offers the unique opportunity to gain hands-on experience, a BSc (Hons) and the potential to gain Chartered Forester status with the Institute of Chartered Foresters. The Forestry Commission apprentices will be paid and will gain all these qualifications, with zero tuition fees and no need for a student loan.

We are looking for ambitious, driven individuals who are eager to support our plans to expand, protect and improve our nation's vital forests, woods and trees to give us a resilient future for generations to come.

University of Cumbria Vice Chancellor, Professor Julie Mennell said:

The University of Cumbria is proud of the collaborative role it plays with partners to upskill workforce teams in existing and emerging industries to address higher-level skills and sector needs.

We are delighted to be working with the Forestry Commission to offer this new pathway into forestry.

Executive Director, Institute of Chartered Foresters, Shireen Chambers MBE FICFor said:

The Institute has been part of the developing Trailblazer group since its inception, and we are delighted to see the launch of this exciting degree apprenticeship in forestry. We hope this will inspire a new generation of forestry professionals and encourage those already in the industry who want to learn while working, providing much needed new skills into our growing sector.

Today's announcement follows the publication of the England Trees Action Plan, which set out [plans to treble tree planting rates in England during this Parliament](#), funded through an expected £500 million from the Nature for Climate Fund. It also forms part of wider Government action to create new green jobs across the country, including through the [£6 million Trees Call to Action Fund](#), the landmark National Apprenticeships drive and the multi-billion-pound Plan for Jobs – putting the UK at the forefront of a green recovery.

Up to 45 Development Woodland Officer positions will be created over the next three years, with the first cohort of 15 Officers starting in September this year.

Apply now via the [Civil Service Jobs Portal](#).

The Forestry Commission are also interested in working with partners within the sector to develop the offer on an ongoing basis. If you would like to find out more about the Development Woodland Officer programme or the Professional Forester Apprenticeship, are considering offering apprenticeship positions or would like to offer support with work placements, please contact: DW0enquiries@forestrycommission.gov.uk

Top marks for Dstl's engineering apprentices

News story

The first cohort of scientists to work as Dstl apprentices while studying for a degree have all graduated – with first class bachelors in engineering (BEng).



All 3 received top marks for the qualification attained during 4 years while they earned money, gained experience and progressed on their career paths.

The trio are now working in cyber for the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) – 2 are based in Salisbury and 1 has just started a secondment in the US.

Team Leader Chris said:

We are all extremely proud to see our apprentices receive outstanding degrees which are testament to their hard work, dedication and passion for science.

They are rolling off the apprenticeships and they are world class. We want to make sure we keep them. They are fantastic.

They have set the bar extremely high for those currently doing their degrees and shown that you don't have to choose between a top degree and an apprenticeship.

We support our apprentices both in terms career development and academic achievement. It's win win.

The group studied on a 6-week block release at Aston University in Birmingham when COVID-19 rules allowed. They studied Embedded Electronics Systems Design and Development degrees.

George said:

I was sceptical about paying an enormous amount of money to go to university and this was a chance to learn on the job, embed myself in a career and get a really good qualification

I think it works really well doing an apprenticeship and a degree as you get to apply what you are learning and that keeps you enthusiastic and improves your academic performance.

I would highly recommend the Dstl apprenticeship scheme and advise anyone on it to make the most of it – it is a fantastic opportunity.

He went on to say he was allowed time to study at work and found advice from people in the same field invaluable.

Josh said:

When I was looking at jobs before the course and I used to joke 'how are you supposed to be a fresh graduate and have 3 years of work experience?' Now I have 4 years.

I had the choice of going to university full-time or doing this apprenticeship and I think I definitely made the right decision and don't feel I've missed out on much – maybe I've sacrificed Freshers' Week for a 4-year head start in my career.

One of the best things about doing an apprenticeship with Dstl is the support they give you. We were given a reasonable period of time for our studies while people we knew elsewhere had to work every weekend to find the time.

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Funding for energy efficiency upgrades will slash fuel bills for 20,000 social housing properties

- 20,000 social housing properties across England will receive energy efficiency upgrades as government announces £179 million cash boost

- funding for 69 projects will help cut fuel bills for social housing tenants and deliver warmer homes
- upgrades will support around 9,000 green energy sector jobs and deliver emissions savings equivalent to taking up to 6,000 cars off the road in any given year

Tens of thousands of social housing tenants across England will have their energy bills cut and homes made warmer as the government makes £179 million available to improve energy efficiency.

The funding announced today (Monday, 7 February) will see 20,000 social housing properties with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of D or lower receive upgrades to improve their energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions. This includes fitting external wall and roof insulation, energy efficient doors and windows, heat pumps and solar panels.

Upgrades are expected to be completed by the end of March 2023, supporting thousands of lower income and more vulnerable households.

The cash boost forms part of the government's £3.8 billion Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund which will bring a significant amount of the social housing stock currently below EPC C up to a higher standard.

It has already supported 2,100 households through a demonstrator scheme, delivering warmer homes, reducing fuel bills, tackling fuel poverty and supporting green jobs.

Minister for Business and Energy Lord Callanan said:

The UK has a strong track record in improving the energy performance of its homes and this funding will continue that as we deliver huge benefits for social housing residents – ensuring they keep more of their cash.

The £3.8 billion we're investing through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund is helping drive down energy bills for thousands, targeting help to those who need it most by making their homes warmer, more comfortable and greener.

Today's announcement sets out the 69 projects that have been allocated the financial support in the first wave, with funding allocated to local authorities who, together with social housing providers, will deliver them.

Around 9,000 jobs in the green energy sector will be generated as a result, with the funding expected to deliver carbon emissions savings equivalent to taking up to 6,000 cars off the road in any given year.

Huge progress is already being made to increase the energy efficiency of UK homes. In 2008, just 9% had an Energy Performance of C or above, however it is now at 46% and rising, with the social housing sector up from 18% in 2008

to around 66%. Energy efficiency improvements are one of the most effective ways to save money on energy bills at a time of rising global gas prices.

The SHDF Wave 1 funding builds on the success of a £61 million demonstrator project launched in October 2020, which improved the energy efficiency of thousands of social homes – cutting bills for tenants and supporting around 1,200 jobs.

Delivery of Wave 1 funding is designed to encourage social housing providers to improve the least energy-efficient homes first and ensure that heat loss prevention measures, such as insulation, are installed effectively and to a rigorous performance standard. It will also ensure energy efficiency measures installed are chosen in a way that minimises the potential for them having to be replaced in the future.

National Housing Federation Chief Executive Kate Henderson said:

We warmly welcome the announcement of the first Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund recipients. Alongside helping us to achieve our crucial net zero target, this will mean warmer, more comfortable homes for social housing residents, and importantly help to protect them from rising energy bills.

Housing associations are committed to working with government to upgrade the nation's social housing stock, and this fund will play a vital role in this.

Tracy Harrison, Chief Executive of Northern Housing Consortium:

Readying our homes to achieve net zero is a key priority for Northern Housing Consortium members, and we therefore welcome the news that Wave 1 of SHDF funding will support the retrofitting of approximately 7,800 Northern homes.

We urgently need to build on this and look forward to continuing to work with the government to improve the energy efficiency of homes in the North.

The funding is part of the £6.6 billion the government is investing this parliament to decarbonise buildings, of which over £2 billion is aimed specifically at lower-income households, helping to reach our world-leading climate ambitions, whilst saving people money on their energy bills.

It also follows the government's announcement last week of a £9.1 billion package of support to help households with rising energy bills. This includes a £200 discount on household energy bills this Autumn for domestic electricity customers in Great Britain, which will be paid back automatically over the next 5 years.

There will also be a £150 non-repayable rebate in Council Tax bills for all households in Bands A to D in England and £144 million of discretionary funding for local authorities to support households who need support but are not eligible for the Council Tax rebate.

These new measures are on top of the existing £12 billion support the government is providing for the cost of living this financial year and next. This includes reducing the Universal Credit taper rate, raising the National Living Wage, freezing alcohol and fuel duties and providing targeted help with energy bills.

The SHDF is a £3.8 billion government commitment over a 10-year period to improve the energy performance of socially rented homes. Today's announcement marks the projects that have been successful in their bids for the first wave of funding.

Regional spread of SHDF Wave 1 funding:

- London, £23,708,238
- Southwest, £5,024,842
- Southeast, £8,608,446
- East of England, £27,323,006
- West Midlands, £23,208,418
- East Midlands, £ 27,760,477
- Northeast, £14,177,002
- Northwest, £26,309,473
- Yorkshire and the Humber, £22,573,272

In the [Heat and Buildings Strategy](#) and [Net Zero Strategy](#), it was announced that £800 million has been committed for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund as part of the 2021 Spending Review process across the next 3 years.

This brings the total committed funding for the SHDF and associated demonstrator to just over £1 billion so far representing a significant investment that will drive the decarbonisation agenda across this important sector on the pathway to net zero.

The SHDF Wave 2 competition will launch in the next financial year, with more details on Wave 2 being made available over the coming months. We encourage those considering applying to begin preparing now.

The Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) will continue to be funded under the name Social Housing Retrofit Accelerator, with our new partner, Turner and Townsend. This service will provide technical support for social housing landlords interested in accessing SHDF funding, including project development, bid compilation and technical advice.

National Apprenticeship Week 2022: Building the future with apprenticeships

The 'Build the Future' theme returns for its second year, with over 1,200 events taking place across England to showcase the benefits of apprenticeships.

The week aims to celebrate and promote the fantastic benefits which apprenticeships offer both learners and employers, spotlighting businesses who are investing in this life-changing education route.

Secretary of State for Education, Nadhim Zahawi, said:

Apprenticeships offer people of all ages the chance to earn while they learn and build a successful career, while also delivering the skilled workforce this country needs to build back stronger.

National Apprenticeship Week is a fantastic opportunity to celebrate and recognise the achievements of apprentices, their employers and training providers.

It is great to see so many events and activities happening across the country which I hope will inspire even more people to start their apprenticeship journey.

Apprentices are leading the charge in building back stronger from the pandemic with over 40% more people starting apprenticeships in the first quarter of 2021/22 than in the same period 2020/21, which is up again from pre-pandemic levels in 2019.

From delivering life-saving care in hospitals, to helping us deliver the skilled workforce this country needs, apprentices are a cornerstone of the government's plans to level up the country, with over 5 million people starting apprenticeships since May 2010.

Industry Talent Specialist for Channel 4, Laura Boswell, said:

Apprentices have had an amazing impact across our business and bring a fresh perspective to everything we do here at Channel 4. They really challenge the status quo, and we empower them to do just that!

Annie Cook, the NHS Career development coordinator at NHS Cromer Hospital Norfolk, commented:

Apprenticeships are a real win-win for businesses, large and small.

The business, the organisation, and our managers here know the value that someone who has gone through an apprenticeship brings.

Jannah, a software engineering degree apprentice at KPMG, said:

My apprenticeship allows me to combine my skills and passion for creativity in the digital sector and I get to earn whilst I learn on the job.

I look forward to talking with businesses, apprentices and training providers as part of the National Apprenticeship Week celebrations.

[Hundreds of virtual and in-person events](#) will take place throughout National Apprenticeship Week, giving potential learners and employers the chance to find out more about the brilliant benefits apprenticeships offer.

For more information about apprenticeships visit [apprenticeships.gov.uk](https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk) and follow [Apprenticeships Twitter](#) and [Apprenticeships LinkedIn](#) for regular updates.

To find out about which government training and employment schemes could be right for you, use the links below:

Training and employment schemes such as apprenticeships play a key part in the government's [Plan for Jobs](#), and are designed to protect, support, and create jobs.

The government is committed to supporting apprenticeships through innovation and increased funding. In September 2021 a new [online service](#) launched to make it easier for large employers that pay the Apprenticeship Levy to spend their funds, and for other employers to [review and apply for funding](#). Government funding for apprenticeships is set to increase by £170 million to £2.7 billion in 2024-25.

[Green shipping boost as Maritime Minister announces plans to explore shore power](#)

- vessels could one day plug into onshore power sources while berthed, lowering emissions
- Maritime Minister Robert Courts launches call for evidence to gather

information on shore power's benefits for the shipping sector

- follows the UK's commitment to decarbonising the maritime sector through its Transport Decarbonisation Plan

Maritime Minister Robert Courts will today (7 February 2022) accelerate the UK's ambitions to deliver a greener, more sustainable future for the shipping industry with plans to explore the rollout of emissions-cutting shore power at UK ports.

Shore power will be vital to decarbonising the maritime sector and improving air quality for local communities.

Currently, berthed vessels must run their onboard diesel engines to power lighting, galleys, air-conditioning and other amenities. It's the equivalent of a car or van idling while parked, emitting polluting fumes into the air around ports and contributing to greenhouse gas emissions.

With shore power, vessels will be able to turn off their engines and plug into onshore power sources when berthed, reducing carbon emissions, noise and air pollution.

Launching a [call for evidence on shore power](#) during his keynote speech at the annual UK Chamber of Shipping (UKCoS) Dinner today, the Maritime Minister will also outline how, as well as vital environmental benefits, stimulating the innovation of new green technologies will continue the revival of the UK's shipbuilding industry, bringing private investment, creating jobs and revitalising coastal communities.

Maritime Minister Robert Courts said:

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges this generation faces, and we will continue to lead international efforts to decarbonise the maritime sector.

Shore power will end the outdated practice of ships keeping their engines running while anchored in port, reducing the poisonous fumes entering the air and ensuring we meet our net zero 2050 goals.

Mark Simmonds, Director of Policy and External Affairs for the British Ports Association, said:

The ports industry has a key role to play in supporting the decarbonisation of shipping and shore power will be an important part of that.

This call for evidence is a step forward and will help us all better understand the current barriers to delivering more shore power to ships.

We look forward to sharing the sector's experiences so far and exploring how industry and government can work together to lower emissions in ports.

Tim Morris, CEO at the UK Major Ports Group, said:

Shore power has the potential to play a positive part in the future of zero emission maritime, although it is an area that currently faces some significant challenges.

The call for evidence is, therefore, an important step in finding the right, viable ways that industry, government and networks can work together to support the wider deployment of shore power where it is an appropriate solution.

Already leading the charge on key decarbonisation technologies such as zero-emissions vehicles, the UK became one of the few nations in the world to have a dedicated [Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition](#), which pledged £23 million in 2021 to fund over 55 decarbonisation projects.

This was joined by commitments made at COP26, in which the UK launched the [Clydebank Declaration](#), a coalition of 22 countries keen to develop green shipping corridors.