



**FORESTRY; Good for Business, Good for the Planet,
Good for the Future**

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Sir William Worsley, Forestry Commission Chair



Sir William Worsley was appointed as the Forestry Commission Chair in 2020. He owns and manages woodland in North Yorkshire. He was the Government's National Tree Champion from 2018-2020 and was Chairman of the National Forest Company from 2016-2020. He is President of the Yorkshire Agricultural Society and Chairman of Hovingham Estate. He is also Chairman of the Howardian Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee.

He served on the Independent Panel on Forestry, which reported on the future of English forestry in July 2012, and was a member of the Forestry Commission's Advisory Panel. He is a former member of the North York Moors National Park Authority.

He is a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and of the Royal Agricultural Societies and a former President of the CLA.

Mark Bridgeman, CLA President



Mark was elected President of the CLA in November 2019. Prior to that he served two years as Deputy President and Chair of the Board of the CLA and two years as Vice President and Chair of the National Policy Committee. Mark has been actively involved in the CLA for ten years.

For the last 14 years he has managed the Fallodon Estate in Northumberland. It consists of an in-hand farm, let farms, woodland and biomass, residential housing, a self-catering tourism business and housing development. He also sits on the board of two London listed Investment Trusts and two charities.

Oliver Combe, Manager, Timber Auctions Ltd



Oliver is a woodland owner and manager who specialises in the sale of standing and felled timber. He has 30 years of experience in both upland and lowland forestry including spells as a timber buyer and sawn timber salesman for a major UK sawmilling company.

Since 2010 he has lived in Yorkshire, dividing his time between a Christmas tree growing business and running Timber Auctions. He is also the chair of Confor's North England region which gives him a direct contact with the challenges of creating productive woodlands in the North of England.

Oliver has a particular interest in maximising the productive potential of woodlands through better tree breeding, intensive silviculture and effective marketing of products.

Niel Nicholson, Director, Nicholsons (Plants, Forestry, Landscaping)



Neil Nicholson has a BSc in Ecological Science with Honours in Forestry from Edinburgh University. His first role was with Tilhill as contracts manager and then with the Forestry Commission as Forestry officer. In 1992 he joined the family business which had 2 employees at the time. He now runs the business with his wife, Liz, who is the MD, whilst he is the FD.

The business now has a turnover of around £10m with 150 employees covering Plants; Trees and Hedging Nursery, Forestry; Consultancy, Management and Tree Surgery and Landscaping; Garden Design, Build and Garden Maintenance.

Professor Gideon Henderson, DEFRA Chief Scientific Adviser



Professor Gideon Henderson became Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser in October 2019 and is a Professor of Earth Sciences at the Department of Earth Sciences, University of Oxford. He is also a Senior Research Fellow at University College, Oxford and an Adjunct Associate Research Scientist at the Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University.

In 2013, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. His research uses geochemistry to understand surface earth processes, particularly those relating to climate, the ocean, and the carbon cycle.

Vicky Fletcher, General Manager of the Mottisfont and South West Hampshire Portfolio, National Trust



Vicky Fletcher is an experienced Environmental Manager within the public and charitable sectors, and also a member of South East Forestry and Woodlands Advisory Committee.

Until July 2020 Vicky was the Environment and Heritage Group Manager at Oxfordshire County Council, leading on the council's Climate Emergency strategy, sustainability, natural environment services including natural capital, countryside projects, landscape and biodiversity planning, and trees and woodlands.

Vicky is currently working for the National Trust as General Manager of the Mottisfont and South West Hampshire portfolio which includes Mottisfont Abbey – a much visited heritage property - and over 2,000 ha of land including woodlands, farmland, countryside sites and a range of important habitats nationally and internationally designated for biodiversity.

Charlie Burrell, Owner, Knepp Castle Estate



Charlie is the owner of Knepp Castle, a 3,500 acre estate that has been in the Burrell family for 220 years, Charlie is the inspiration behind the Knepp Wildland Project. Having run Knepp home farm for 20 years, Charlie had a dramatic change of heart after a visit to the Oostvaardersplassen project in Holland in the 1990s and saw the potential for a similar "rewilding" project at home in Sussex.

All 3,200 acres of the Knepp Estate are now devoted to a process-led rewilding project involving free-roaming herds of cattle, horses, pigs and deer as drivers of habitat creation. Since 2001, when it began, numerous Red Data species have colonised Knepp and populations of common species are rocketing.

Knepp Wildland is now a breeding hotspot for nightingales and turtle doves, (the most likely species to go extinct in the UK by 2020) and has the largest breeding colony of purple emperor butterflies in the UK. The grazing animals provide 35 tons of organic, pasture-fed meat per annum - a lucrative, low-carbon source of income for the Estate – and wildlife tourism, including African-style safaris, is another key part of the business.

Sarah-Jane Chimbwandira, Surrey Wildlife Trust



Sarah Jane has worked for Surrey Wildlife Trust for over 11 years, latterly as Director of Biodiversity, before becoming CEO in February 2019. She has brought a wealth of successful partnerships and projects experience to her role – she was the co-founder and Director of the Surrey Nature Partnership, co-authored the 'Natural Capital Investment Plan for Surrey' and is a Trustee of the Surrey Hills Society and Ecosystems Knowledge Network.

During 2019, SWT's 60th anniversary year, Sarah Jane refocused on the core mission to increase biodiversity and engage people in the natural environment. She is leading SWT's new 5 year strategy 'Restoring Surrey's Nature' to create a living landscape with connective hedgerows, rivers, nature reserves and green spaces across Surrey and wants to seize the opportunity to secure a strong zero carbon, nature based recovery. When she has time to relax, Sarah Jane enjoys walking, dressmaking and providing a taxi service to her 3 teenage boys!

David Robertson, Director of Investment and Business Development, Scottish Woodlands



David heads the Investment Division of Scottish Woodlands. Day-to-day he liaises with professional advisors, agents and a variety of other partners to find, place, and secure a range of forestry and land subjects on behalf of private, corporate and institutional clients.

With over 30 years of experience in the industry, and 25 in management roles across Scotland he applies his practical knowledge of the forest industry and the backing of a network of local forest managers to ensure investors get the best results to meet their overall objectives.

Steph Rhodes, Forestry Commission Delivery Director for England Tree Planting Programme



Steph took up the role of Delivery Director for the England tree planting programme in September 2020, after leading the Policy and Strategy team for the past 5 years.

She has worked for the Forestry Commission in a variety of roles covering research, policy and delivery, and worked in forest management in France before this.