

Opening address from Sue Holden Woodland Trust Chief Executive

Community Woodland Network Conference 17th June 2005:

I've been Chief Executive for 4 months now and it's a great pleasure to be here today and find out there are so many woodland groups in existence and attending this conference.

You are part of a growing UK movement of people who believe in conserving and creating woods. The number of people here demonstrates the growing interest. This means more woodland is protected and more people are benefiting from access to local woodland – we can only guess the numbers but I suspect millions of people benefit from the work you are doing.

I have seen a community group's work firsthand when I met Hugh Jenkins and Margaret Anderson at Pepper Wood recently. They gave me a fantastic guided tour and I was so impressed by how much time people spend working at Pepper – it almost sounded like addiction to hard work!

I also met Carol Gammond & Jean Cooper and heard their incredible story of how the community and the WT saved Wassell Wood.

Now we've an exciting programme this afternoon and I can't wait to hear from Ted, Roger & Mike who are covering 3 fascinating topics. But before we get into Paul's update and the presentations, I thought I'd give you a few items of Woodland Trust news.



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Tree For All

Last autumn we launched our T4A campaign. We plan to plant over 12 million trees and want to involve 1m people in this over the next five years we are particularly keen to involve children because tree planting is such a fantastic way to connect children with the nature around them.



Springwatch

You may have seen the Springwatch programmes on BBC2 over the last 3 weeks. The programme builds on our phenology work, recording when natural events occur. Some nights the viewing figures for the programmes have even beaten Big Brother and Celebrity Love Island! Eighty thousand people have recorded some of the most common spring events such as hawthorn flowering.



Wentwood

We've just launched our biggest ever appeal to buy 900 acres of Wentwood, the largest ancient woodland in Wales. Much of the wood is planted with conifer but there are fragments of the ancient woodland left and we know it can be restored with gradual removal of the conifer blanket.



Trafalgar Woods

This year we set up an exciting initiative called Trafalgar Woods to celebrate the bicentenary of Trafalgar. But we are also telling the exciting story of how timber was used in the fleet - 5000 oak trees and 17 other types of timber were used to build the Victory. Working with other landowners we are planting 33 new woods, each named after one of the ships of the fleet. The flagship site in Kent is called Victory Wood



Milton

In Scotland we are fundraising for Milton which adjoins Glen Finglas, which I had the pleasure of visiting last month.



Lobbying

And of course we also continue with our lobbying work promoting how woods can contribute to government agendas such as health and education and we can all play a role letting our local MPs and Council know how important woods are as green spaces within our communities.



So keep up the amazing work you do and continue to share your experiences with others in the network and with the Woodland Trust.

Thank you for coming and enjoy the conference.

