

**Royal Forestry Society**

**Widening Engagement and Diversity  
in Forestry and Forest Science**

**Workshop Report**

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ROYAL FORESTRY SOCIETY



## Suggested Citation:

Wilson, E. R., B. Ambrose-Oji and E. J. S. Ferranti. 2017. Widening engagement and diversity in forestry and forest science. Workshop Report. Royal Forestry Society, Banbury, Oxon. 19 pp.

## Keywords:

Forestry profession, diversity, equality, inclusion, widening engagement

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## Acknowledgements:

The Royal Forestry Society (RFS) is grateful to the Biochemical Society for its generous financial support through their “*Diversity in Science*” Programme. Among those individuals we wish to thank for their assistance and support are Gabriele Butkute (Biochemical Society), Deanne Brettle (Birmingham Institute of Forest Research, University of Birmingham) and Dr Sophie Churchill (Workshop Chair and President, Royal Forestry Society). We also thank colleagues at the RFS, including Karen Jones, Dawn Dewhurst, Zoe Knight and Adam Todd. We are especially grateful to all the participants at our workshop, which took place at the University of Birmingham on 25 May 2016; their time and contribution to the discussion sessions was invaluable.



## Future Foresters

This report was prepared as an output from the project titled *“Future Foresters – Embracing Diversity in the Science and Practice of Forestry”*.

Future Foresters is a major programme of the Royal Forestry Society. Primary objectives are to promote training and careers in forestry, and to ensure the future workforce can meet the diverse social, economic and environmental challenges of the 21st century. The Future Foresters programme aims to engage and enthuse people from all backgrounds to enter the forestry sector and support them through their learning and development. We are working closely with employers, colleges and universities to promote forestry as an excellent career choice for young people and those considering an alternative career.

*The RFS Future Foresters programme is supported by The Prince's Countryside Fund*



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## Executive Summary

- The forestry sector in Britain is currently experiencing a period of growth and transformation in response to many environmental, social and economic pressures. The impacts of climate change and the threat of invasive pests and diseases are stimulating more diverse and adaptive management approaches aimed at enhancing the resilience of the forestry sector.
- The traditional stereotype and perception of a forestry professional has been a white, middle-aged male rooted in traditional practices, and not necessarily engaged with latest technology and scientific advances.
- A dynamic and progressive forestry sector needs a highly skilled and innovative workforce. To attract talented individuals and compete with other professional fields, it is essential for forestry to actively promote and engage with a more diverse community. We need to harness the creativity of forestry professionals and others from non-traditional backgrounds in order to bring forestry to the heart of an increasingly diverse society.
- Diversity is a fact of life in our communities and workplaces. Britain is a multi-cultural, multi-faith, liberal society. Forestry needs to embrace diversity to be recognised as progressive and inclusive profession and sector.
- Diversity is not only an issue when dealing with employees but also when dealing with clients. Evidence shows that major influences linked to engagement with forestry include awareness, perceptions and personal affinity. A workforce that reflects wider society is more able to project inclusive values and facilitate wider engagement.
- Much of the focus for recent debate has been gender. The Forestry Commission in Scotland, for example, has been notable for the increase in women now occupying key professional forester roles. However, the initiatives related to diversity need to widen across job roles and embrace ethnicity, disability, age, faith and sexual orientation.
- At every opportunity the forestry sector needs to demonstrate its commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion. This will require clear and explicit statements of policy supported by active engagement with society to seek out and engage with future forestry professionals from a wide range of backgrounds.
- Diversity comes with challenges for the forestry sector in Britain. The forestry sector is characterised by a large number of small companies and organisations (i.e., small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)). Many of these businesses have a small number of employees and there may be concerns about adopting specific targets and strategies related to diversity, equality and inclusion. There is a need to work collaboratively and collectively to enable the sector to be seen as an attractive career option for a more diverse pool of entrants.
- Greater recognition is required of the many associated professions allied to the practice of sustainable forestry in Britain. Research, education, conservation and urban forestry are all significant areas of activity in addition to traditional roles in woodland management. Recognising diverse job roles and opportunities should promote forestry and forest science to a wider range of people.
- Role models play an important part promoting diversity and encouraging new entrants to enter the sector from non-traditional backgrounds and communities. For example, more women in senior roles sends a positive message that challenges stereotypes and embraces inclusiveness.
- Trust and openness among employees and colleagues is essential. Organisational cultures need to ensure that all employees can be heard and their contributions valued.

## Introduction

The forestry sector in Britain is currently experiencing a period of growth and transformation in response to complex environmental, social and economic issues. The predicted impacts of climate change and the threats to forest health from invasive pests and diseases are stimulating more diverse and adaptive management approaches. There is wide recognition that planning for the long term requires us to enhance the resilience of forests and woodlands in Britain, while also ensuring that our forest resources deliver multiple ecosystem services. The forestry sector supports a wide range of jobs and businesses in both rural and urban settings, and benefits society through the provision of accessible greenspace for recreation, health and well-being (Box 1).

Despite the success of forestry in recent decades, the forestry workforce continues to be perceived as one characterised by stereotypes, dominated by male machinery operators wearing hardhats and wielding chainsaws, and as being a “man’s world”. As a result, the sector is poorly promoted as a career option for women or other groups or communities in society (i.e., Leslie et al. 2006). Perpetuation of a stereotype only serves to limit the sector’s ability to attract talented individuals from throughout society. To be acknowledged as a modern and attractive field in which to work requires the forestry sector to challenge public perceptions and address the issues of widening engagement and diversity. Recognition that forestry comprises a range of job roles and specialisms presents an opportunity to embrace a diverse workforce, one that more accurately reflects mainstream British society.

In response to concerns about the future of forestry and the forestry professions, the Royal Forestry Society launched a programme called *Future Foresters*. This was formally initiated in January 2016, with core funding for three years coming from the Prince’s Countryside Fund and individual members of the Royal Forestry Society.

Key objectives of the programme are:

- **To strengthen the pipeline of skilled people** entering forestry, to ensure we have a workforce that can meet the challenges of the 21st century.
- **To expand and up-skill the workforce** to bring more woods into active management on a large scale.
- **To engage and enthuse people** from all backgrounds to enter the forestry sector and support them through their learning and development.

Central to the success of the *Future Foresters* Programme is the need to reach out to a new and more diverse audience, and to promote the message that forestry is a dynamic and progressive sector with excellent career progression opportunities both in traditional rural and urban settings.

The RFS project “*Future Foresters – Embracing Diversity in the Science and Practice of Forestry*” was devised to examine the issue of diversity in the forestry workforce, and to explore ways of widening engagement in forestry careers. This is essential in order to

achieve our wider objective of nurturing the next generation of forestry professionals who must be capable of responding to the complex environmental challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

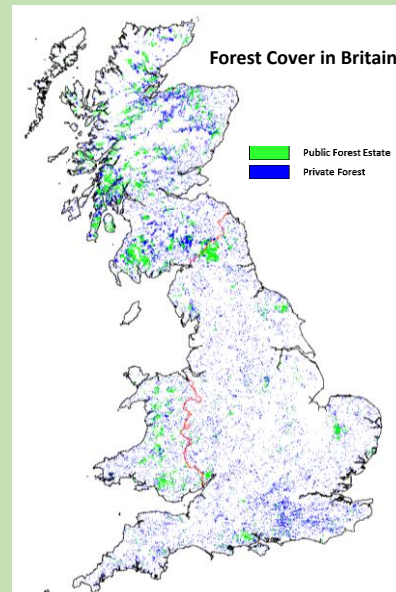
The key element of the project was a workshop held on 25 May 2016 at the Birmingham Institute of Forest Research, University of Birmingham. A small group of delegates were invited to represent a range of views from the forestry sector, including early career professionals, employers and other stakeholders. The workshop had the following objectives:

- Bring people together to discuss issues, barriers and challenges
- Seek new opportunities and solutions for the forestry sector
- Agree a direction of travel, actions and future priorities to widen engagement and diversity among forestry professionals

## Forestry: A Sector in Transition

Forestry is an area of professional activity primarily concerned with the sustainable management and conservation of forest resources. It is a multi-disciplinary bioscience rooted in plant and ecological sciences, but also relates to a range of other disciplines associated with land management and natural resources conservation (Bullard et al. 2014, Leslie et al. 2006). Like many other professions, forestry is in a state of perpetual development due to changes in economic, social and environmental priorities, and in response to scientific and technical developments that influence professional practice.

### Box 1: The Forestry Sector in Britain 2016



- UK woodland area 3.16 M ha (2016)
- 13% land area in the UK
  - 10% in England
  - 15% in Wales
  - 18% in Scotland
  - 8% in Northern Ireland
- 1.35 M ha certified as sustainably managed
- 238 projects registered under the Woodland Carbon Code (2016)
  - 16,000 ha of woodland
  - 5.8 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> sequestered
- New Planting - 6,000 ha (2015-16)
- 10.8 million green tonnes of UK roundwood (softwood and hardwood) harvested in 2015
  - Rising to 18 million green tonnes by 2027
- Over one half of the UK population visited woodland in the last few years
- Jobs (2014) – 16,000 in forestry and 27,000 in primary wood processing
- Gross Value Added (GVA) (2014) - £1.97 billion
  - Primary wood processing - £1.39 billion
  - Forestry - £0.58 billion
- The UK was the third largest net importer (imports less exports) of forest products in 2014, behind China and Japan
- Wood products imports (2015) - £7.5 billion
  - Sawnwood - 6.3 million m<sup>3</sup>
  - Wood-based panels - 3.2 million m<sup>3</sup>
  - Wood pellets – 6.5 million tonnes
  - Paper - 5.9 million tonnes

Source: Forestry Statistics 2016 (Forestry Commission)

In recent decades, there has been a notable shift in the focus and direction of forestry (Figure 1). It is no longer only about harvesting a timber crop, it is also about understanding trees and timber in the wider ecological and economic context, and where the complexity of forested landscapes is more effectively embraced in management planning. Modern forestry plans involve the integration of many forest values and multiple objectives, requiring greater engagement than before with the public and stakeholders.

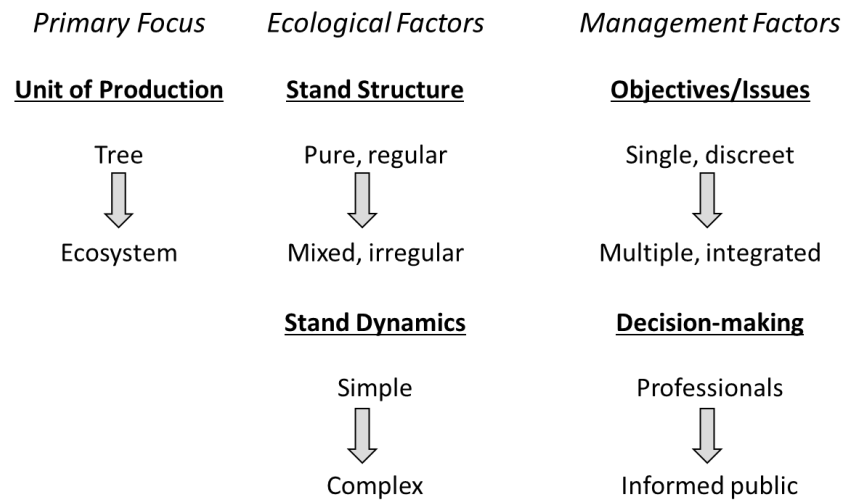


Figure 1. Summary of trends in the development of five major technical and professional dimensions of forestry. This highlights the inter-disciplinary nature of forestry, rooted in biosciences, but drawing on a wider range of environmental and social sciences to support decision making by an informed public.

Forestry is also a sector (and professional discipline) that increasingly works across traditional urban-rural boundaries, with urban forests and greening projects becoming more prevalent in recent decades. These are particularly associated with the provision of greenspace, environmental improvement, place regeneration and public health.

Several important issues are influencing the practice of forestry at the present time. These include:

- **Climate change** – forestry has a key role in helping society adapt over the course of the present century to predicted changes in temperature and other climate variables
- **Resilience** – the need to modify and diversify our management systems in response to threats to forests from climate change, invasive pests and diseases
- **Forest production** – sustaining a vibrant forest products sector that is efficient and competitive in an international marketplace, working to reduce UK reliance on imported forest products
- **Natural environment and conservation** – recognising the importance of woodlands for biodiversity and wildlife habitat
- **Human health and well-being** – providing “nature-based solutions” to community and individual level needs for recreation and leisure facilities in natural settings to promote physical and psychological well-being.



## Current Status of the Forestry Workforce

Although forests cover 13% of the land area in the UK, the forestry workforce is relatively small, compared with many other industrial sectors. In recent decades, the workforce has comprised 17,400, 15,800 and 16,500 employees, in 1990, 2000 and 2010, respectively (Eurostat 2010). The number of employees working in forestry has remained relatively stable since 2010 (Forestry Commission 2016). Most people working in the sector are self-employed or work for small companies and organisations. The Forestry Commission and a small number of other businesses can be considered large employers. The wider forestry sector includes those employed in primary wood processing, which in 2016 accounted for an additional 27,000 employees (Forestry Commission 2016).

Three characteristics of the forestry workforce in the UK illustrate some of the key trends and issues for the workforce. These include the levels of educational attainment (Figure 2), gender (Figure 3) and age distribution (Figure 4):

- **Education.** In terms of educational attainment, there has been a trend within the forestry workforce towards higher levels of academic qualifications (Figure 2). In 1990, over 50% of the forestry workforce had no qualifications beyond secondary education. This contrasts with the situation in 2010 where over 70% of the workforce has completed further or higher education. In terms of higher education, there has been a 100% increase in the proportion of the workforce with university-level qualifications (from 16% in 1990 to 32% in 2010).
- **Age.** The age profile of the forestry workforce has changed over the 1990-2010 period (Figure 3). Most significant has been the increase in proportion of workers 50+ years of age, from 17% of the workforce in 1990 to 33% of the workforce in 2010. The likelihood that many professionals will retire within the next 15 years creates opportunities for increased levels of recruitment to meet current and future priorities for the forestry sector.
- **Gender.** Over the period 1990 to 2010 there has been relatively little change in the proportion of women working in the forestry sector; in 1990 only 13% of the workforce were women, compared with 16% in 2010 (Figure 4). The impression that forestry is a “man’s world” still holds true for the vast majority of roles in the sector.
- **Diversity.** Data provided by the Forestry Commission provides a snap-shot of the situation for one of the major forestry employers in the UK, specifically in terms of gender, disability, ethnicity and age (Table 1). Key findings include:
  - 34% of the staff are women
  - 3% of staff have a recognised disability
  - 1% of staff are of Black, Asian or Minority Ethnicity (BAME)
  - 68% of staff are aged over 40 years
- **Forestry Commission.** In terms of career progression to higher paybands, the Forestry Commission staff survey (2015) shows relatively small differences (percent basis) in terms of gender and ethnicity, but still a significant disparity in terms of disability (Table 2).

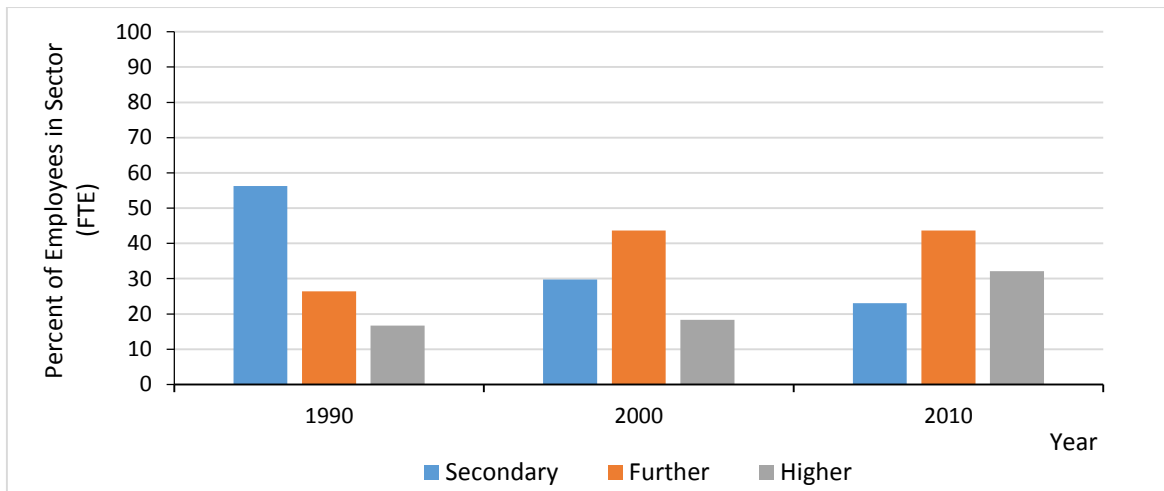


Figure 2. Employment by educational attainment in forestry for 1990, 2000 and 2010. Source: UK Forest Sector Workforce, Eurostat Labour Force Survey, 1990-2010.

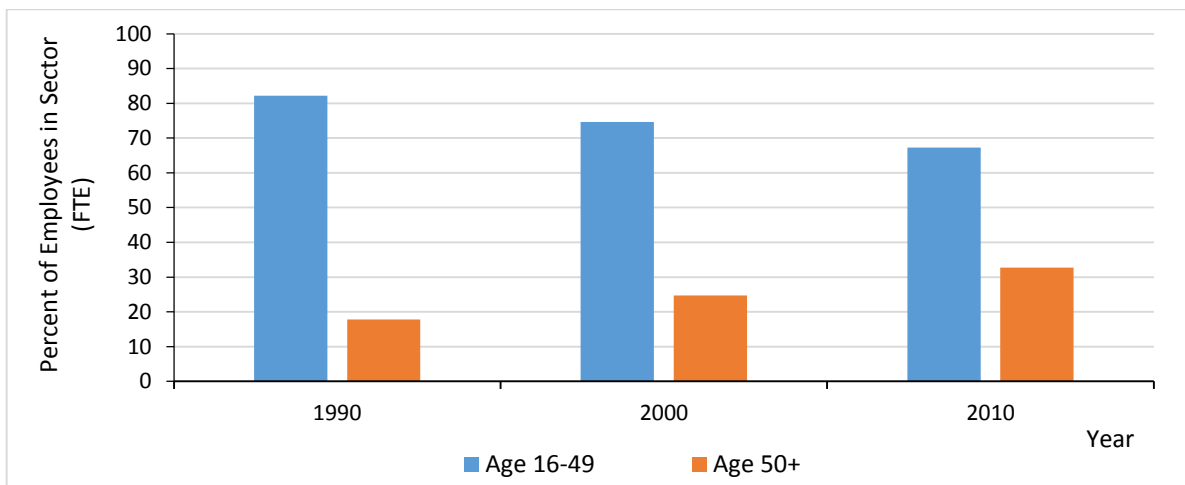


Figure 3. Employment by age group in forestry for 1990, 2000 and 2010. Source: UK Forest Sector Workforce, Eurostat Labour Force Survey, 1990-2010.

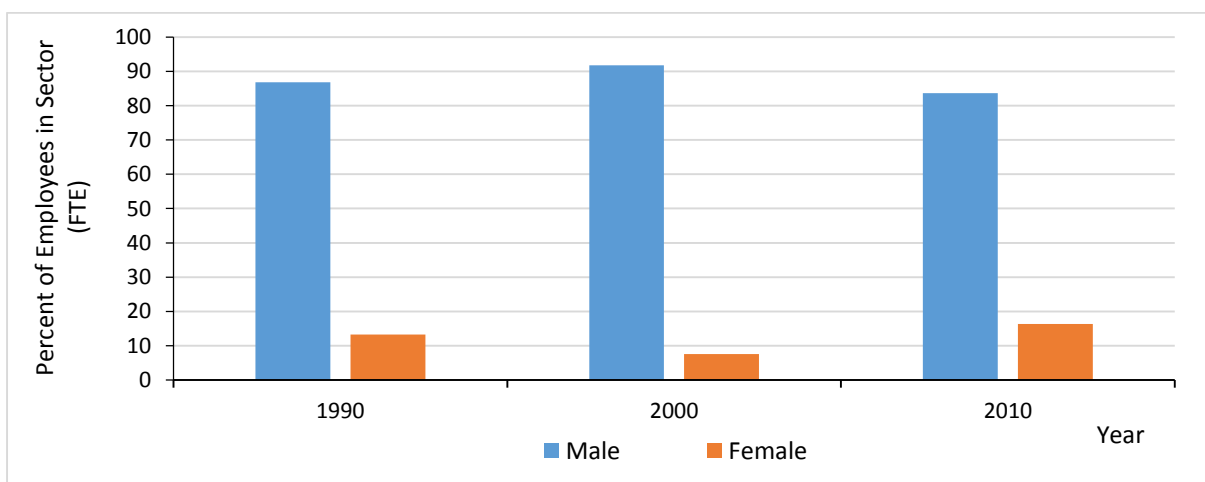


Figure 4. Employment by gender in forestry for 1990, 2000 and 2010. Source: UK Forest Sector Workforce, Eurostat Labour Force Survey, 1990-2010.

Table 1. Distribution of staff in the Forestry Commission by protected characteristic, 2015<sup>1</sup>.

Category	Qualifier	Number in Category	Percent of Category
Gender	Female	873	34
	Male	1727	66
Disability	Disabled	76	3
	Non-Disabled	2524	97
Ethnicity	BAME <sup>2</sup>	22	1
	White Other	101	4
	White British	2469	95
Age	39 yrs or less	843	32
	40 yrs or more	1757	68

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> includes Forestry Commission/Forest Enterprise and Forest Research in England and Scotland, 2600 employees in total at 31 March 2015.

<sup>2</sup> BAME: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicity

Table 2. Distribution of staff in the Forestry Commission by protected characteristic and payband, 2015<sup>1</sup>.

Category	Qualifier	Senior Paybands <sup>2</sup>	Middle Paybands <sup>3</sup>	Other Paybands <sup>4</sup>	Contractors and Office Holders <sup>5</sup>
Gender	Female	1	9	88	2
	Male	1	12	85	2
Disability	Disabled	1	5	89	5
	Non-Disabled	1	12	86	2
Ethnicity	BAME <sup>5</sup>	-	14	86	-
	White Other	-	7	92	1
	White British	1	12	86	1
Age	39 yrs or less	<1	4	95	1
	40 yrs or more	1	15	82	2

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> includes Forestry Commission/Forest Enterprise and Forest Research in England and Scotland, 2600 employees in total at 31 March 2015.

<sup>2</sup> includes Commissioners, paybands SSG1A, SSG1, SSG2

<sup>3</sup> includes paybands PB1, PB2, PB3

<sup>4</sup> includes paybands PB4, PB5, PB5(Op), PB6A, PB6(Op), PB6B and PB7

<sup>5</sup> BAME: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicity

Overall, these statistics for the forestry sector chart a gradual progression to higher levels of educational attainment, but an aging workforce where relatively little change has taken place in terms of gender parity over a period of 20 years. In an organisation with progressive policies and monitoring of human resources, such as the Forestry Commission, positive steps forward in terms of diversity, equality and inclusion can be demonstrated, especially in terms of the proportion of women and BAME staff attaining middle and higher grades.

## Workshop: Widening Engagement and Diversity in Forestry and Forest Science

The workshop was designed to be interactive, and provide a space where a wide range of views could be presented and discussed. The event included plenary presentations, small group discussions and a feedback session (Box 2).

### Box 2:

#### Workshop: Widening Engagement and Diversity in Forestry and Forest Science

The workshop was designed to gather evidence and perspectives on engagement and diversity from a small group of professionals working within the forestry sector. The event was chaired by Dr Sophie Churchill, who provided a context for the issues related to diversity, equality and inclusion (a). Sophie introduced a series of formal presentations, and later facilitated the group discussions where delegates reflected on the issues, barriers, challenges and opportunities for the sector (b). Each group organised their ideas in the form of a “thought tree” which were brought back for a final plenary discussion (c).



a. Formal presentations and plenary discussion.



b. Group discussion and information gathering.



c. Sharing ideas and feedback.

## **Keynote Presentations: Perspectives on Engagement and Diversity**

Two speakers were invited to share their perspectives as formal presentations on widening engagement and diversity at the workshop. These helped set the scene for later discussion and provided a summary of recent research and progressive initiatives that might be adopted from other sectors.

### **Presentation 1. Attracting the Least and Less Likely: Widening Engagement and Diversity in the Forestry Profession, by Dr Bianca Ambrose-Oji**

Key points:

- Forest Research has delivered a number of research outputs on the issue of engagement and diversity in the forestry sector since 2009.
- Drivers for this work include the introduction of the Equality Act 2010 (Box 3) and recruitment trends in the forestry sector.
- The broad reach of this research includes work on the following topics:
  - Public participation in forestry (e.g., Morris et al 2011, Ambrose-Oji et al. 2011)
  - Differential uptake of forestry recreation offer (e.g., Morris et al 2011)
  - Forestry education and career paths (e.g., Ambrose-Oji 2010)
  - Recruitment into forestry profession (e.g., Ambrose-Oji 2010)
- Evidence from recent research identifies the influencers on career choice and pathway.
  - In terms of awareness, key influencers include:
    - Individual – finding and selecting forestry as a route forward
    - Parents – who consider job security, progression, professional status
    - Peer group – primarily friends
    - Educators – including teachers and career counsellors
    - Perception – wider factors, such as news and media, projection of the forestry sector
  - There a widely held perception that forestry is a dirty profession characterised as:
    - Uncomfortable
    - Physical
    - Low status/low pay
  - People make choices about careers by identifying an affinity with a profession. This is influenced by:
    - Roles within forestry – recognising specific jobs and opportunities
    - Values – recognising that the sector represents similar values to their own
    - Aspiration – identifying opportunities to progress and “make a difference”

Box 3:

What is the Equality Act 2010?

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination (unfair treatment) and helps achieve equal opportunities in the workplace and in wider society. The Act brings together and replaces previous equality legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. It simplifies, updates and strengthens the law in relation to equality and diversity.

The Equality Act protects people from discrimination because of certain 'protected characteristics'. It also promotes equality of opportunity to prevent discrimination arising. The nine protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex; sexual orientation. The Equality Act applies to England, Wales and Scotland but not Northern Ireland, where the DDA still applies.

- Further details : [www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance)

- There are recognised (generalised) drivers for young people from specific ethnic groups, currently under-represented in the forestry:
  - Asian and Asian British
    - Overtly aspirational – traditional focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM), law and medicine disciplines
    - Influenced by community status
    - Parents and peers are very influential in career choices
    - Does the face fit the job and the organisation?
  - Black and Black British
    - Values led – social benefits important - traditional law, business and caring professions
    - Do the values of the job and organisation fit the person?
  - Chinese
    - Strategic drivers to choices
- Focus groups and interviews with young people from the BAME community identified that many of their key drivers and influences were not strongly aligned with a career in the forestry sector.
- Similarly, among people with disabilities there are concerns that they might be unable to do a job in the forestry sector or not “fit in” with others, or be supported by employers.
- Strategies for widening engagement should include the following considerations:
  - A need to increase “brand awareness” of forestry employers and the sector as a whole
  - Widen appeal of the sector by reflecting other’s:
    - Values
    - Aspirations (career paths)
    - Faces
  - Provide range of opportunities for informal engagement
    - Volunteering
    - Outreach
    - Work experience

## Presentation 2. A Perspective on Widening Engagement and Diversity in Geography, by Dr Emma Ferranti

### Key Points:

- This presentation provided an overview of the barriers that women encounter in academic careers, and some of the positive strategies being adopted to address the recognised gender gap that is known to widen over the course of a career.
- The widening gender disparity between men and women is referred to as “career leaks” where a lower proportion of women occupy the most senior levels in the “academic pipeline” in most disciplines.
  - The primary reasons identified for leaks include marriage, and career breaks for maternity leave/raising children.
  - Short term contracts are a feature of early career academic roles (i.e., postdoctoral fellowships, research associates), but these discriminate against women wishing to take maternity leave.
- The Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) works to further and support equality and diversity for staff and students in higher education institutions throughout the UK.
- Established the Athena SWAN Charter in 2005 to encourage and recognise commitment to advancing the careers of women in STEM employment in higher education and research.
- In May 2015 the charter was expanded to include:
  - Arts, humanities, social sciences, business and law
  - Professional and support roles, and for trans staff and students.
- Now recognises work to address gender equality more broadly, and not just barriers to progression that affect women.
- Specifically the Athena SWAN Charter outlines a series of policies that work to:
  - Recognise the talents of all
  - Advance gender equality
  - Recognise disciplinary differences
  - Tackle the gender pay gap
  - Remove obstacles to sustainable careers
  - Address short-term contract issues
  - Tackle discrimination against trans-gender people
  - Demonstrate commitment at senior levels in the institution
  - Make necessary structural and cultural changes
  - Consider intersectionality
- For any academic institution to be recognised as a charter member, there must be adherence to a range of strategies and guidelines that include:
  - Increasing the number of women applying for academic jobs by ensuring gender sensitivity and neutrality in the **recruitment process**
  - Supporting and advancing women’s careers through improvements to the induction process, active support for female **progression and promotion**

- Cultivating a family-friendly **workplace culture and organisation** by ensuring good gender balance in seminars and committees, holding activities within core hours, holding social events and promoting university equality and diversity policies.
- A key feature of any strategy related to gender is the depth to which it is embraced as part of the culture of the organisation. Examples of specific actions include:
  - Information sessions, events and knowledge sharing as part of a department's routine activity
  - Specific wording related to diversity, equality and inclusion in job adverts that welcomes and strongly encourages applications from candidates representing diverse groups or under-represented communities.
  - Support and mentoring for individual colleagues from an early stage in their career
  - Professional development and review process that recognises and values the contribution of individuals
  - Facilitating flexible working arrangements (e.g., remote, part-time) to allow colleagues to balance work and family commitments
  - Recognition across the organisation that good 'Athena SWAN' actions benefit the whole workforce and create a more inclusive work environment

## Highlights from Group Discussions

Feedback from the group discussions brought forward a wide range of opinions and perspectives. Generally speaking, there was optimism among the delegates that forestry offered a rewarding career, and that the sector has recently been working to address some of the issues associated with diversity, equality and inclusion (e.g., FAO, 2014, FSC 2016, Harris 2016). However, there were challenges that were perhaps unique to the forestry sector, linked to the large number of small enterprises and organisations, the rural distribution of many jobs and public perceptions.

A summary of key points of discussion is as follows:

- The forestry sector in Britain is currently experiencing a period of growth and transformation in response to many environmental, social and economic pressures. The impacts of climate change and the threat of invasive pests and diseases are stimulating more diverse and adaptive management approaches aimed at enhancing the resilience of the forestry sector.
- The traditional stereotype and perception of a forestry professional has been a white, middle-aged male rooted in traditional practices, and not necessarily engaged with latest technology and scientific advances.
- A dynamic and progressive forestry sector needs a highly skilled and innovative workforce. To attract talented individuals and compete with other professional fields, it is essential for forestry to actively promote and engage with a more diverse community. We need to harness the creativity of forestry professionals and others



from non-traditional backgrounds in order to bring forestry to the heart of an increasingly diverse society.

- Diversity is a fact of life in our communities and workplaces (Economist 2016). Britain is a multi-cultural, multi-faith, liberal society. Forestry needs to embrace diversity to be recognised as progressive and inclusive profession and sector.
- Other professions have taken action to address diversity, equality and inclusions issues and established policies and guidelines for best practice. A good example is engineering, also strongly identified as a male-dominated profession. Work led by the Royal Academy of Engineering has resulted in a toolkit designed to give companies practical advice, tools and inspiration to improve diversity and inclusion in their workforce (Royal Academy of Engineering 2016). The Academy established a high-level Diversity Leadership Group (DLG) which has championed the toolkit. As well as seventeen case studies from engineering organisations tackling diversity and inclusion, it contains diversity statistics, a business case for diversity and inclusion in engineering, guidance on specific initiatives, useful resources and sources of information (Box 4).
- Diversity is not only an issue when dealing with employees but also when dealing with clients. A workforce that reflects wider society is more able to project inclusive values and facilitate wider engagement (e.g., Economist 2016).
- Evidence shows that major influences linked to engagement with forestry as a career include awareness, perceptions and personal affinity. For example, many people perceive forestry as a job located in remote and rural settings, and it is not widely appreciated that a significant amount of forestry activity now takes places in urban and peri-urban settings (e.g., Cowan 2009).

#### Box 4.

##### Tips for Good Practice in Promoting Diversity and Inclusion

(adapted from Royal Academy of Engineering)

- **Transparent Career Progression** - Make a range of development activities available to all employees.
- **Diversity Monitoring** - Collect and analyse diversity-related data where possible to identify areas of progress or concern.
- **Employee Networks** – These may be a useful approach for strengthening a diversity and inclusive workplace culture, and sharing experience/best practice.
- **Flexible Working** - Legislation now states that “employees can apply for flexible working if they’ve worked continuously for the same employer for the last 26 weeks.” Furthermore, it is best practice to ensure that all employees are aware of the policy.
- **Job Advertising** - Carefully consider the language used in job adverts and descriptions, i.e., gender neutral terms.
- **Mentoring** - Mentoring schemes are in place within many organisations, however, results are mixed and schemes are often abandoned. Review and consider approaches that increase the likelihood of success.
- **Recruitment and Selection** - Arrange training for all staff involved in recruitment and selection which covers the process, how to ensure fairness, consistency and objectivity and how to avoid bias.
- **Respect at Work Training** - Ensure all employees are aware of what is meant by acceptable/unacceptable behaviour, bullying, harassment and discrimination.
- **Role of Leadership** - Help leaders and employees understand what is expected of them and how this impacts on the organisation’s wider strategy, to increasing engagement and accountability.
- Further details: [www.raeng.org.uk/policy/diversity-in-engineering/diversity-and-inclusion-toolkit/tips-for-good-practice](http://www.raeng.org.uk/policy/diversity-in-engineering/diversity-and-inclusion-toolkit/tips-for-good-practice)

- Much of the focus for recent debate has been gender. The Forestry Commission in Scotland, for example, has been notable for supporting the training and development of women in forestry. In June 2015, for the first time, four of the senior leaders in Scottish public sector forestry were women, i.e. within the Forestry Commission and the Scottish Government. The Forestry Commission Scotland also allocated significant resources for training women foresters as new entrants to the sector. However, diversity initiatives need to widen across job roles to embrace ethnicity, disability, age, faith and sexual orientation.
- At every opportunity the forestry sector needs to demonstrate its commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion. This will require clear and explicit statements of policy supported by active engagement with society to seek out and engage with future forestry professionals from a wide range of backgrounds.
- Diversity comes with challenges for the forestry sector in Britain. The forestry sector is characterised by a large number of small companies and organisations (i.e., small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)). Many of these businesses have a small number of employees and there may be concerns about adopting specific targets and strategies related to diversity, equality and inclusion. There is a need to work collaboratively and collectively to enable the sector to be seen as an attractive career option for a more diverse pool of entrants.
- Greater recognition is required of the many associated professions allied to the practice of sustainable forestry in Britain. Research, education, conservation and urban forestry are all significant areas of activity in addition to traditional roles in woodland management. Raising awareness of diverse job roles and opportunities should promote forestry and forest science to a wider range of people of different backgrounds, interests, and abilities.
- Role models play an important part in promoting diversity and encouraging new entrants to enter the sector from non-traditional backgrounds of communities. For example, more women in senior roles sends a positive message that challenges stereotypes and embraces inclusiveness. In the same way, more employees of visible minorities or with different abilities also sends a message of inclusiveness.
- Trust and openness among employees and colleagues is essential. Organisational cultures need to ensure that all employees can be heard and their contributions valued. Managers have a key role here, to make sure that the lines of communication are open, and a spirit of co-operation and tolerance exists in the workplace.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Diversity, equality and inclusion are major issues across British society at the present time. Often the focus of public debate is on the challenges and inequalities that society faces. It is perhaps less often recognised that widening engagement and diversity represents a tremendous opportunity for any sector or profession. Opening the doors, so to speak, brings new ideas, creativity and people who reflect the values and aspirations of the whole

community, not just a relatively narrow constituency. This in turn contributes to competitiveness and enhanced recognition of the sector's relevance to society.

This workshop provided an opportunity for delegates to talk openly and freely about the direction they see the forestry sector heading over the next few years. Often it is easier for foresters and forestry sector professionals to focus on the technical issues associated with economics, climate change adaptation and ecological resilience of our forest resources. This workshop turned the spotlight back on ourselves. A clear and strong message from the exercise was that we all want the forestry sector to be seen in a positive light but also that we want our sector to reflect the aspirations and composition of our increasingly diverse society.

However, achieving wider engagement is likely to be a medium to long term ambition. Significant strides forward have been made in terms of attracting women into the forestry sector, but more work is required for the forestry sector to reflect the increasing diversity in British society. Legislation and regulations alone will not bring about real and lasting change. There is a need for deeper engagement with the issues so that more diverse groups of people enter and progress within the sector.

Due to the relatively small size of most businesses and organisations, there is a need for the sector to work collaboratively to address engagement and diversity objectives. Specific areas where this can be delivered include:

1. Promotion of forestry in terms of excellent career prospects and diverse opportunities. This requires challenging the stereotypes and perceptions, and projecting the forestry workforce as dynamic, highly-skilled, science-led and progressive. Forestry should be recognised as a sector that embraces and promotes talented and creative individuals, and where individuals can "make a difference".
2. Widen the appeal of forestry by understanding the perspective of diverse groups in society. This requires us to reflect diverse values and aspirations in terms of career paths and objectives. Seeing people we can relate to in specific job roles helps others appreciate what might be possible for themselves.
3. We can encourage people from diverse backgrounds to consider forestry as a career by providing opportunities for informal engagement through such initiatives as volunteering, outreach and work experience. This should include rural, peri-urban and urban settings.
4. Future research in the area of engagement and diversity should embrace not only the real and perceived barriers to participation in forestry careers, but also the values and aspirations of visitors, clients and users of our forests.
5. Working patterns are changing throughout society. Strides towards greater engagement, equality and inclusion can be achieved through adaptations to the workplace culture of organisations and throughout the sector. This would include inclusive employment policies, programmes to raise awareness of diversity issues and adaptations to working patterns. For example, facilitating and supporting part-

time and flexible working arrangements for staff with childcare, caring and other commitments directly addresses some of the barriers for women. Leaders play a vital role in setting expectations, applying workplace policies and sustaining an inclusive organisational culture.

6. To achieve the levels of success seen in some other professions in terms of gender balance and diversity requires leadership and appropriate levels of support and mentoring. There is a role for professional organisations and societies to work closely with employers to create a diverse and inclusive workforce for the future, one that views forestry as a “career of choice”. Establishing guidelines for the sector would provide a framework for increasing diversity and inclusion.

## Workshop Presentations

- Ambrose-Oji, B. 2016. *Attracting the least and less likely: widening engagement and diversity in the forestry profession*. Workshop Presentation: Future Foresters – Embracing Diversity in the Science and Practice of Forestry. Royal Forestry Society. Held at Birmingham Institute of Forest Research, University of Birmingham. 25 May 2016.
- Ferranti, E. J. S. 2016. *A perspective on widening engagement and diversity in geography*. Workshop Presentation: Future Foresters – Embracing Diversity in the Science and Practice of Forestry. Royal Forestry Society. Held at Birmingham Institute of Forest Research, University of Birmingham. 25 May 2016.
- Wilson, E. R. 2016. *Widening engagement and diversity in forestry and forest sciences*. Workshop Presentation: Future Foresters – Embracing Diversity in the Science and Practice of Forestry. Royal Forestry Society. Held at Birmingham Institute of Forest Research, University of Birmingham. 25 May 2016.

## Relevant Websites

- **UK Government – Equality Act 2010 Guidance and Legislation –**
  - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>
  - <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>
- **Forestry Commission – Equality and Diversity Webpages -**  
<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-7kgdxa>
- **Royal Society of Biology – Equality and Diversity Webpages -**  
<https://www.rsb.org.uk/policy/policy-issues/equality-diversity>
- **Royal Academy of Engineering – Diversity in Engineering -**  
<http://www.raeng.org.uk/policy/diversity-in-engineering>
- **Athena SWAN Charter – Equality Challenge Unit –** <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan/>

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- Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). 2014. Women in forestry: challenges and opportunities. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, Rome. 11 pp. URL: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3924e.pdf>
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- Morris, J., E. O'Brien, B. Ambrose-Oji, A. Lawrence, C. Carter and A. Peace. 2011. Access for all? Barriers to accessing woodlands and forests in Britain. *Local Environment*. 16(4): 375-396
- Royal Academy of Engineering (RAEng). 2016. Diversity programme report. Royal Academy of Engineering, London. 52 pp. URL: <http://www.raeng.org.uk/publications/reports/diversity-programme-report>

## Organisations and Participants Attending the Workshop

- Royal Forestry Society: Sophie Churchill, Adam Todd, Ted Wilson
- Birmingham Institute of Forest Research, University of Birmingham: Emma Ferranti
- Birmingham School of Architecture and Design, Birmingham City University: Niall Williams
- Forestry Commission England: Steve Fowkes
- Forest Research: Bianca Ambrose-Oji
- Glendale Managed Services Ltd: Adrian Wickham
- Green Light Trust: Tom Brown
- Institute of Chartered Foresters: Marcus Sangster
- Lockhart Garratt Ltd: James Broom
- National School of Forestry, University of Cumbria: Mark Tomlinson
- Newton Rigg College: Shelagh Todd, Martyn Davies, Richard Hunter
- Pryor and Rickett Silviculture Ltd: Kiera Tedd
- Scottish School of Forestry, University of the Highlands and Islands: Sarah Pohlschieder
- Silvanus Trust: Alice Goodenough
- The Environment Partnership (TEP): Jonathan Smith
- Tir Coed: Ffion Farnell

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

- BAME – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicity
- FCE – Forestry Commission England
- FCS – Forestry Commission Scotland
- RFS – Royal Forestry Society
- SME – Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
- STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics group of academic disciplines

## Appendix: Workshop Programme



### Widening Engagement and Diversity in Forestry and Forest Science

#### WORKSHOP

1030-1515, Wednesday, 25 May 2016

Board Room (Room 220), Law Building (R1 on campus map),  
Edgbaston Campus, University of Birmingham, Birmingham

#### Programme for the Day

Timing	Element	Speaker/Facilitator
1030-1100	Coffee, Reception	
1100-1110	Welcome and Overview	Dr Sophie Churchill, President, Royal Forestry Society
1110-1125	Opening activity: Why are we here?	Whole group
1125-1140	RFS Future Foresters Programme + Video: "Forestry Careers in 60 Seconds" (ICF)	Ted Wilson – Education Manager, Royal Forestry Society
1140-1155	Widening Engagement and Diversity Perspective 1	Dr Bianca Ambrose-Oji – Senior Social Scientist, Forest Research
1155-1210	Widening Engagement and Diversity Perspective 2	Dr Emma Ferranti – BIFoR Interdisciplinary Leadership Fellow, University of Birmingham
1210-1245	Questions, group discussion and issues arising	Whole group
1245-1320	Buffet Lunch	
1320-1355	Group Discussion 1 – Focus analysis of key issues and barriers	Facilitators: keynote speakers
1355-1430	Group Discussion 2 – Focus on strategies and priorities for future action	Facilitators: keynote speakers
1430-1445	Coffee	
1445-1515	Plenary Discussion and Agreed Messages/ Actions for RFS and others. 'How can we have more of what is good?'	Facilitated by Dr Sophie Churchill
1515	Close	

*The Royal Forestry Society is grateful for support from the Biochemical Society and the Birmingham Institute of Forest Research (BIFoR), University of Birmingham*





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