Future Forest Podcast Transcript

Episode 1: Welcome to Future Forest

Speakers: Simon Hodgson, CEO of FLS; Trefor Owen, Director of Land Management; Greame Hutton, Director of Business Services

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**Trefor Owen:** We have to, first of all, ensure that our forests, and land, and our habitats and our people and infrastructure can cope with changes that are occurring now, and also importantly in the future as well.

**Graeme Hutton:** We need to play our part alongside the rest of the public sector. It’s no good planting all these trees and then just undoing the benefits.

**Simon Hodgson:** We’ve got a great contribution to make, which is significant because of the scale of the land.

**Meghan Kjartanson:** This is Future Forest, a podcast exploring the environmental stories shaping Scotland and how land management can help create future-ready places equipped for the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis.

**Meghan Kjartanson:** This podcast series will showcase how Forestry and Land Scotland is building resilient and sustainable forests across Scotland that can adapt to change – change in climate, change of land use, and change of lifestyle.

**Meghan Kjartanson:** Staff from across Forestry and Land Scotland and other partners will be sharing their important work in episodes on topics as diverse as peatland restoration, renewable energy generation, timber production, deer management, flood management, tree planting and nursery production. The list of what we are doing is long, and staff from across FLS are playing their part every day.

**Meghan Kjartanson:** We’re going to kick things off by hearing from some of Forestry and Land Scotland’s senior leadership about this important issue– starting with Simon Hodgson, our Chief Executive.

**Simon Hodgson:** I’m Simon Hodgson, Chief Executive, Forestry and Land Scotland.

**Simon Hodgson:** So, why is climate change relevant and important to FLS? Well wemanage, as you know, nearly 10% of Scotland, which is a very large and widely spread area of land, which is not only being impacted by climate change but also we’ve got a great contribution to make, which is significant because of the scale of the land.

**Simon Hodgson:** Climate change projections show that the highest risk ones, the ones that will affect us, the risks to the viability of biodiversity, to soils, the impact of flooding and plant health issues which some of which are very definitely climate-related.

**Simon Hodgson:** So, we’ve got real threats to our responsibilities and a real need to respond and over and above that, we can do more to help Scottish Government meet its targets. Looking at what we do in the way we manage our land, the way we can increase forest and woodland cover will all help Scottish Government meet its targets. Those targets are pretty demanding, so we’ve got a job in front of us.

**Simon Hodgson:** Some will say, well, hasn’t forestry always been about sequestering carbon and protecting the environment? And of course, yes it has, but we are learning more all the time about how to do it better and what sort of management options are going to sequester more carbon and protect the landscape from those sudden floods or soil loss or how we better manage plant health, pests and diseases. So, there is a lot to do, and our objective is to increase our contribution.So, playing our full part in actually to tackle the climate emergency and the associated crises is an opportunity for FLS, but to be honest it’s also a huge priority.

**Trefor Owen:** My name is Trefor Owen and I’m the Director of Land Management for Forestry and Land Scotland. We’re taking action in three main areas, the first is adapting to change, we have to first of all ensure that our forests, and land, and our habitats and our people and infrastructure can cope with changes that are occurring now and also importantly in the future as well.

**Trefor Owen:** The second, is capturing carbon, removing carbon from the atmosphere, locking it up by taking action such as planting trees and increasingly restoring our peatlands, and the third strand of our action is reducing our emission of carbon. So, we’re switching to electric vehicles, generating significant amounts of renewable energy but also reducing emissions from our machinery and from the land that we manage, and we do all these things in ways that work together.

**Trefor Owen:** And at the same time, tackle the biodiversity crisis, because all these issues are linked together. So, for example, if we create more diverse forests to fit the future potential climate those forests will be healthier and they will lock up more carbon and they will be also better habitats for wildlife.

**Trefor Owen:** If we restore our peatlands, and protect the carbon stored in them, the biodiversity that depends on peatlands will be less vulnerable to climatic changes.

**Meghan Kjartanson:** We are already starting to see the impact climate change is having across Scotland, in the forests and land we manage.

**Trefor Owen:** Well we are already seeing more intense rainfall events, resulting in flooding, landslips, and also washing out our roads and culverts. At the same time, sometimes in the same places at different times, we are seeing periods of drought, which effect the establishment of young tress and also habitats. And this can actually result in more wildfires which can also be damaging to habitats.

**Trefor Owen:** We know also that more storms and more storm events are likely to cause damage to our infrastructure, such as power lines and we have to make sure that fallen trees don’t damage vital road, and other utility connections, particularly in rural areas.

**Trefor Owen:** And we also know that pests and diseases are having a significant and increasing impact, accelerated by the changing climate from fungal diseases that affect trees such as larch, pine, and ash and potentially several others in the future. These will affect and are affecting our native woodlands and veteran trees and we should be concerned about potential changes in the future.

**Graeme Hutton:** My name is Graeme Hutton, I’m the Director of Business Services. We’re starting with the areas that we understand best – our own fleet and buildings. We’ve calculated the emissions from these and have recognised the significance of emissions from travel and machinery. That has led us to conclude that moving to electric vehicles is the best place to start.

**Graeme Hutton:** We’re just at the start of our journey on this. We have 20 electric vehicles and are investing in charging infrastructure to provide greater scope and coverage to increase the number of electric vehicles and make best use of these.

**Graeme Hutton:** We are now starting to investigate the emissions from the work of our contractors and suppliers – and the emissions from the land itself (such as when we disturb the ground as we build roads and plant trees). In time, we will have a full picture and can focus on the areas that make the biggest difference.

**Graeme Hutton:** And of course, we are big players in renewable energy generation. We already have over one gigawatt of installed capacity and are working with developers to do more – all of which helps Scotland to decarbonise.

**Graeme Hutton:** To put that in context - one gigawatt is equivalent to one billion watts and can power around 10 million light bulbs, or for Back to the Future fans one fictional flux capacitor in a time-travelling De-Lorean.

**Trefor Owen:** Wellthese podcasts will talk about how we talk about change and we will have episode on how we are planning for a future climate and our response to tree health issues and also habitat restoration and much more.

**Trefor Owen:** We are trying to create more resilient forests and land and also a more resilient organisation, one that can continue to provide benefits to the people of Scotland, even as the climate changes. We are also doing our bit to capture carbon, removing carbon from the atmosphere to help produce Scotland’s net emissions.

**Meghan Kjartanson:** Future Forest podcast is produced by Forestry and Land Scotland, a Scottish Government agency.

**Meghan Kjartanson:** I’m Meghan Kjartanson and I’m a content writer at FLS.

**Meghan Kjartanson:** You can learn more about the topics presented on our website, forestry – and land dot gov dot scot.

**Meghan Kjartanson:** Thank you to our CEO Simon Hodgson, our Director of Land Management Trefor Owen and our Director Business Services, Greame Hutton for being on this episode. And thank you for listening to Future Forest and we hope you join us next time as we look at building resilient forests in hopes of combating the twin crises of nature loss and climate change.

**Meghan Kjartanson:** Our mission is to look after Scotland’s forests and land for the benefits of all, now and for the future.

**Meghan Kjartanson:** Forests and land that Scotland can be proud of.