



FEATURE

Dr Liz Barron-Majerik MBE,
Director of Lantra Scotland

STEM FORESTRY AMBASSADORS

GUIDING THE FORESTERS OF THE FUTURE

Dr Liz Barron-Majerik MBE, outlines an exciting initiative aiming to utilise the skills and experience of professional foresters to attract the diverse range of new talent the sector needs. Could YOU be a Forestry Ambassador?

Lantra works to ensure that our land-based, aquaculture and environmental conservation sectors attract and support the skilled new entrants they need to support a sustainable workforce - this is vital both to enhance the natural environment and to support rural economies. We achieve this by working in close partnership with government, education partners, workforce development and skills agencies, trade organisations, membership bodies and individual businesses.

Our work has shown that there is significant evidence that we need to improve our communications around how important STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) are to forestry if we are to successfully raise its profile to school leavers and career changers. We all know that scientific and technical skills underpin the successful continued management of our trees and woodlands - unfortunately this isn't yet common knowledge to those outside our sector. Many young people (and their careers advisors) still seem to harbour the misconception that it's all checked shirts and chainsaws!

The STEM Forestry Ambassador scheme aims to utilise the existing skills and knowledge of those already working in the sector to inspire and encourage young people into exploring forestry as a viable professional career. Our goal is to make sure every school in the UK

has access to a professional forester when they need one.

By becoming a Forestry Ambassador you can help showcase an exciting and diverse industry – one which is currently enjoying increased social, political and economic attention due to its ability to deliver against a wide range of objectives including carbon sequestration and climate change mitigation, water quality, biodiversity, recreation, health benefits and many more. You can bring the sector to life through talking about your experiences at careers events, classroom lessons, STEM-focused sessions and workshops for teachers and career influencers. With your help, young people will understand why skills and qualifications in subjects such as sciences, technology, engineering and maths, in addition to many others, are required for rewarding careers in forestry.

STEM Ambassadors make an impact by: **Supporting learning** – help young people to understand the real world applications of their learning.

Illuminating careers – showcasing different careers, providing information on roles and pathways into industry while raising awareness of the skills that are important in the workplace.

Raising aspirations – give young people the opportunity to meet a wide range of inspiring role models, encouraging them as they think about their future.

Volunteers can decide the amount of time they spend on activities, the age groups they would like to work with, the types of activities they would like to be involved with and specifically how they engage with young people, such as using online platforms or in person, when current restrictions are lifted.

Those who have participated in STEM activities find there are many personal benefits to taking part, including:

- Building confidence
- Improved planning and communication skills
- Raising awareness of their organisation and industry to wider audience
- Access to a network of people who are passionate about the development of their sector, providing the opportunity to share ideas, experiences, and resources

Feeling inspired? The process of signing up to the scheme couldn't be easier:

Help inspire the foresters of tomorrow – find out more at stem.org.uk/stem-ambassadors/join-stem-ambassador-programme



Working with Trees and Timber A TOOLKIT FOR FORESTRY CAREERS

Encouraging young people into the forestry sector requires a wide variety of engaging resources. A recently published online toolkit, *Working with Trees and Timber*, has been produced with the aim of helping anyone in the forestry sector speak to young people about a rewarding career in the industry. It signposts and provides easy access to the wide range of resources that have been created to promote the sector and which can be used or adapted in a variety of settings.

The toolkit gives tips on engaging youth at various years of age, outlines the many jobs in the forestry sector, gives an overview of the modern forest and timber industry and pulls together in one convenient location many audio, visual and infographic materials currently available for use. It complements the on-going efforts in the public and private forestry sector to attract more people into the industry (such as the STEM Forestry Ambassador scheme).

Sally York MICFor, Scottish Forestry's Education Policy Advisor, commented:

“Those of us working within the industry are very well aware that we need to inspire and attract more people into forestry. The sector is growing and will continue to do so substantially in the coming years so we need to demonstrate this is a fantastic industry to work in, with jobs for the future. One way to do this is taking part in career events which involve children and young people. The toolkit is there to help anyone in the industry who might be speaking to young people in the future. We hope it gives useful hints and tips, and points speakers to useful resources that are available.”

Working with Trees and Timber has been produced by Scottish Forest & Timber Technologies and Scottish Forestry – download the toolkit at forestry.gov.scot/forests-people/working-with-trees-and-timberworked in forestry for over 35 years.

1. REGISTER ONLINE

Go to stem.org.uk/register and select STEM Ambassador

2. REGISTER ON THE FORESTRY AMBASSADOR SCHEME

On your new profile select 'Forestry Ambassador' on the scheme section under the 'Skills and Qualifications' tab.

If you're happy to, tick the box to share your details with any schemes so you can be contacted about additional training, opportunities and resources

3. CONNECT WITH YOUR LOCAL STEM AMBASSADOR HUB

Once registered you will be automatically linked to your local Hub

4. ONLINE INDUCTION

Find out what to expect as a STEM Ambassador.

5. APPLY FOR A FREE DBS OR PVG CHECK

Essential for working with young people, this will also include an ID check by someone from your local Hub.

6. BEGIN VOLUNTEERING

Once you've received your approved DBS or PVG certificate you're ready to go!

Get started by:

- Signing up for an activity with a school or youth group
- Improving your skills with our free online courses
- Offering an activity to schools and youth groups near you