

Pocket-lint

We need to plant more trees if UK is to hit Net Zero by 2050

07 April 2020



The co-founder of Forest Carbon has said that we need to hugely increase the amount of land that is available to plant trees on if we are to meet the governments ambitions of being Net Zero by 2050.

"We need to triple the rate of woodland creation in the UK between now and 2050," explained Stephen Prior in an interview for the Pocket-lint podcast. "We need to triple it very quickly to achieve net zero by 2050."

Forest Carbon, co-founded by Prior in 2006, has planted over 9 million trees in 172 new woodlands in the UK with partners include Microsoft, Foster + Partners, Nominet, and Pocket-lint.

"Whatever part we can play in getting that to happen, I think is our objective. We've accounted for about 7 per cent of all woodland creation in the UK so far. So we're definitely punching above our weight and the longer and the more we can do, the better."

9 million trees

While those 9 million trees account for around a couple of million tonnes worth of carbon capture from the atmosphere planting trees has plenty of other benefits too like flood mitigation, for example Prior explains Pocket-lint.

"Benefits starts to accrue quite quickly on the site. Once you put a fence up and keep livestock out of an area you get biodiversity starting to come back quite quickly. Some of these projects in the future will be sustainable timber. Some of them are community woodland projects with footpaths and things through them so they all do something different or more than one thing."

Forest Carbon plants its trees on land that is part of the voluntary carbon standard called the Woodland Carbon Code. The initiative ensures that each tree planted contributes to delivering real and additional carbon offsets. It also ensures that there is no double counting - once an offset is registered to a buyer, it cannot be claimed by anyone else going forward.

And while it's still mostly a case of picking up a shovel and digging a hole, Prior acknowledges that things are getting more technical.

"Yeah, it's becoming more technological. I mean at the moment there's still a lot of the locations where we do plant trees, there's no replacement for people getting out there on a quad bike with shovels, because you just can't get machinery to the site, but it is possible."

Planting with drones

In Spain, reforestation efforts are being sped up using drones that first survey an area of land before using the drones to drop around 10,000 "smart seeds" that contain elements such as ecological fertilizers, pesticides, and even solid water polymers in a canister to be scattered. According to the CO2 Revolution, the company behind the technology, it would be possible to plant 100,000 tree seeds in around 5 hours.

As for getting involved, it doesn't have to be just big business who offsets their carbon according to Prior.

"You don't need to be a big business. If you know your carbon footprint then you can come to us and say, 'our carbon footprint is X can we offset that?'"

Offsetting your carbon

It's something more of us are already doing according to the co-founder. Forest Carbon has set up the Carbon Club designed for small businesses, families and individuals who want to offset either a one-off event like a flight or do something on a more regular monthly basis.

"We calculate that the average family uses around 20 tonnes per year, which is around £17 per month," explains Prior.

But as Prior explains at the start of our interview, for the government to achieve its carbon offsetting goals, we need to plant more trees, and whether we use technology or not, that's not going to happen unless we put those trees in the ground sooner rather than later.

Source: <https://www.pocket-lint.com/gadgets/news/151756-plant-more-trees-net-zero-2050>