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Students fund new ten-year relationship between Bangor University and Woodland Heritage

by James Walmsley, Senior Lecturer in Forestry, Bangor University and Woodland Heritage Trustee



Photo © James Walmsley

A group of Bangor University students and alumni at the Woodland Heritage Field Weekend, 2012

Woodland Heritage has been a fantastic supporter of Bangor University for much of this century, providing financial assistance to many forestry students, as well as over £800,000 of funding for a string of important research projects focused on Acute Oak Decline.

Woodland Heritage has also provided invaluable mentoring, advice and assistance for students, alumni and staff, as well as guidance to prospective students and partners. This relationship is also of great benefit to Woodland Heritage: by working with Bangor University, it is able to meet many of its charitable objects, support and inspire the next generation of foresters, and deliver high quality research into tree pests and diseases.

There is, nonetheless, a tension between the long-term business of protecting, managing, conserving and creating forests and woodlands, which is at the heart of everything

that Woodland Heritage does, and the short-term and unpredictable income from the annual renewal of membership on which the charity relies.

Recognising this tension, James Walmsley, Woodland Heritage Trustee and Senior Lecturer at Bangor University, came up with a plan to address this in relation to Bangor University's partnership with the charity: finding a way to fund a ten-year Premium Corporate Membership.

Clearly well out of the ordinary, there was no way such a membership could be funded by the University itself: it would create an impossible precedent given the huge number of partner organisations and charities that are associated with the University. So James approached the Bangor Forestry Students' Association (BFSA) committee and put the idea to them. The response from Peter Roe, BFSA President 2019-2020, on behalf of the committee was hugely positive:

"BFSA recognises the support that Bangor University students and alumni have received from Woodland

Heritage over many years, including Garthwaite bursaries, subsidised places on the excellent Woodland to Workshop course, financial support for attendees of the SelectFor Irregular Silviculture training, and more. In particular, it's highly likely that the International Forestry Students' Association's highly successful conference, the Northern European Regional Meeting 2019, organised by BFSA, may not have happened without the incredible support and guidance of the Chief Executive, Guy Corbett-Marshall.

"BFSA is delighted to be in a position to contribute £1250 towards this ten-year membership. The committee all agree it's an excellent investment in our wonderful relationship with Woodland Heritage."

Ken McNamara, a part-time distance learning student on the Bangor University MSc Forestry programme, had (in early 2020) made a very generous donation to the University of several thousand pounds, to be used to support the forestry programmes. So, James approached Ken, proposing that part of his donation be used to fund the remaining £1250 of the ten-year membership.

Ken responded:

"I think the proposition represents fantastic value and a really effective way to use part of my donation. It will clearly generate benefits for many years to come for my fellow forestry students and for forestry at Bangor University in general. I love it!"

And for Woodland Heritage, Guy Corbett-Marshall: "Working with the staff and students at Bangor University is always most rewarding, so it is wonderful that this new membership relationship will guarantee that continuing for another decade at least. We have achieved a lot together already to benefit forestry in such diverse ways long into the future, and now have the foundations in place to carry that momentum forward throughout the 2020s."

Professor James McDonald, who leads research into Acute Oak Decline at Bangor University, commented:

"We are incredibly grateful to Woodland Heritage for their unwavering support for our efforts to understand the causes of Oak decline, which will hopefully inform management practices. This long-term collaboration has been fundamental in maintaining continuity within our research team, in training the next generation of forest pathologists, and enabling us to react more quickly to new challenges and scientific developments."

Reflecting on this new relationship between BFSA, Bangor University and Woodland Heritage: a membership



Photo © James Walmsley

Woodland Heritage trustee and Bangor University alumnus Geraint Richards, MVO FICFor, with forestry students in Bangor, early 2020



BFSA members and alumni from the forestry programmes at Bangor regularly attend the Woodland to Workshop course. This image, from 2010, features Graham Taylor (first on left), James Walmsley (third from left), Martin Price (second from right) and Andrew Pickup (first on right)



This photo, from 2010, features James Walmsley (top left), Andrew Pickup (top right) and Martin Price (third from right below)

that runs up until 2029, James Walmsley said: "At a time when there is so much uncertainty and budgets are generally so short-term, it's fantastic to formalise this long-term connection between Woodland Heritage and the University. The next generation of foresters will face many exciting challenges during their careers and this partnership will ensure that they are able to continue learning from the invaluable experience of the members and partners of Woodland Heritage."