

In response to an increasing number of pests and diseases attacking the principle conifer species planted in British commercial forests, together with new threats and opportunities associated with predictions of climate change and how that impacts on species choice, the Sitka spruce Breeding Co-operative has taken the decision to widen its focus and has changed its name accordingly.

The new **'Conifer Breeding Co-operative' (CBC)** intends to consider the best genetic planting material for a number of secondary and emerging conifers. Wisely planted on the appropriate site these previously less-common species can do much to improve the diversity, resilience and appearance of our forests at the local, landscape and national level.

The **CBC** take the view that regardless of species planted the optimum planting stock should be deployed in terms of adaptation to the site and maximising the growth and quality traits which best meet the industry requirements for the species. To that end the CBC intends to work both unilaterally and in partnership with others to identify the best provenances of exotic conifer species to be planted in Britain, establish if selected and improved planting stock is available from elsewhere, and where necessary select superior trees ('Plus Trees') currently growing in good quality stands in Britain to form a landrace and create new seed orchards for future planting stock.

At the moment, contenders for the list of new species are still being considered. However it is most likely to contain Western Hemlock, Western Red Cedar, Douglas Fir, Norway spruce, possibly Noble Fir and Grand Fir, and if demand justifies it, Coast Redwood. There are considerable areas of most of these species planted around Britain and it ought to be possible to select a population of good quality Plus Trees to form a rudimentary breeding population. It is intended that new DNA markers will be used to ensure selected trees are not related; this will be most important for some of the less common species such as Coast Redwood.

The CBC is ready to re-launch itself with these new objectives and is interested in hearing from other parties who may be able to help by identifying good quality stands of alternative species for Seed Stand registration, and selection of Plus Trees.