



CAN'T SEE THE WOOD FOR THE TREES!

John Park says that if the future of Man really is at stake we should help tackle the climate change emergency by using more wood



I don't recall a time when that old saw was more apposite! Tackling the climate emergency is one phrase used in the over-arching climate change message just at present and with The Daily Mail getting in on the act, planting trees was for a few days a daily read presented in part on that most ephemeral of wood products; newsprint.

We are presented to by TV celebrities in programmes to encourage everyone to participate

in a tree-planting bonanza for the sake of the planet and more locally for the sake of the wildlife but in those, and in follow-on interviews that I have seen, the word wood – well, it was timber, actually – has been used once.

There are also now any number of ways you can have a tree planted for you by the various organisations offering to do just that on your behalf for donations and pledges of varying amounts and googling 'plant a tree' returns "about 8,570,000,000 results (0.54 seconds)". I haven't read them all but of the few I have gone into beyond the search result list. I haven't seen wood mentioned anywhere! Perhaps I should try harder.

Cast your minds back a few decades and you may recall the frequent/persistent negative messaging from groups of a certain persuasion to the point where the majority of primary school children were of the belief that it is wrong to cut down trees. Sure, it is wrong to cut down trees inappropriately but as the message spread and the world became more aware of ever-increasing rates of deforestation globally it got to the point where, in certain gatherings, you dare not mention that you were involved in the timber trade because that deforestation was all your fault!

In the *TTJ* February issue last year my title was "What exactly are you dealing in?" The answer in the last sentence was "... when anyone asks what you do for a living tell them you deal in carbon capture, usage and storage!" And from that Talking Timber, this: "And now here's the wood science: wood, depending on tree species, comprises, in varying amounts, cellulose (40-55%), hemicellulose (12-15%), lignin (15-30%) and extractives (2-15%). From that it is determined that wood is, by weight, 50% carbon. That is taken from EN 16449:2014 *Wood and wood-based products – Calculation of the biogenic carbon content of wood and conversion to carbon dioxide*." Commit that European Standard number to memory and make more people aware of it at every opportunity!

In a few short lines it sums up what trees do; it is their primary function because if they didn't do it, they wouldn't

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be trees and that primary function is to produce wood, to be and to grow. Everything after that is secondary and in the case of carbon sequestration (and the consequential production of oxygen) is an adventitious benefit for oxygen-reliant species on the planet, it is not a tree's primary function.

But now it is a primary objective of *Homo sapiens*, the planet's foremost parasite (definition: living on the host body at the host body's expense!), for its own survival. And how satisfying that about the only useful thing *Homo sapiens* can do for the sake of that host body is plant trees!

And it is that primary function of trees, not carbon sequestration, which facilitated the survival and rise of *Homo sapiens* in the first place – the availability of wood! The primary function of trees should also be capitalised on if the future of *Homo sapiens* really is at stake. Help tackle the climate change emergency – use more wood! ■

Below: There are many ways in which you can have a tree planted for you



The Wood Technology Society

A Division of the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining