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### CONFERENCE NEWS

#### GOVERNMENT CLUELESS ON ILLEGAL TIMBER - LIB DEMS CALL FOR BAN

22 September 2003

The Government has no idea whether timber imported into the UK comes from illegal or unsustainable sources, despite claiming to care for the environment.

In a topical motion to conference today, Protecting the World's Forests, Liberal Democrats will call for a ban on the import of all illegally harvested timber, in a bid to end unsustainable deforestation.

The Government has admitted it could not ensure that illegally logged timber does not enter the UK, as HM Customs and Excise do not record the timber's country of origin.

Norman Baker MP, Liberal Democrat Shadow Environment Secretary, said:

"Deforestation is having a devastating impact on the global climate, as well as destroying the local environment for many people and animals. Yet the Government has failed to take effective action to combat the import of illegally harvested timber.

"Government statistics show the UK importing timber from places such as Vatican City, a country with no natural timber resources. We have no way of knowing if that timber has been legally and sustainably sourced.

"The longer we wait to take action against climate change, the more damage we will do. Legislation to ban the import of illegal timber must be put in place as a matter of urgency."

Sue Doughty MP, LibDem member of the Environmental Audit Committee, said: "Time is running out for forests. What hope is there for a sustainable future when the Government itself is using non-sustainable timber, as it did in the construction of the new Home Office building earlier this year? It is hard to say which is worse - Government actions or Government inaction."

[Click here to read the motion](#)

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