

Making up for lost time Musicians from the Massed Bands of the Household Division gather backstage at Cadogan Hall in Chelsea. They returned to the stage in London on Wednesday night for the first time since Nov 2019 with a concert featuring patriotic anthems.



JEFF GILBERT FOR THE TELEGRAPH

Minister to examine origins of trees burnt for energy

Pledge comes after Telegraph revealed ‘green’ power adds to carbon stores

By Olivia Rudgard and Hayley Dixon

A MINISTER has promised to look at how trees burnt for energy in the UK are sourced in the wake of a *Daily Telegraph* investigation.

Lord Goldsmith, minister for the environment, said he planned to “look very closely” at how wood used in industrial biomass burners run by Drax was procured.

In an appearance before MPs on the environment, food and rural affairs committee, he said: “When you’ve got a system as big as Drax then if you get it even slightly wrong in terms of the input that’s going to have big implications.

“I’m not an expert on this, and I probably will never be an expert, but I will be looking in more detail.”

It comes after an investigation linked Drax’s suppliers to logging in some of Europe’s most important forests, including rare habitats which are protected under EU law.

Similar concerns have been raised over the trees used to make pellets in the US and Canada which are then shipped to be burnt in the North Yorkshire power plant.

Drax and its suppliers argue that they abide by the strictest sustainability standards and that all allegations about their supply chains are unfounded.

The energy company receives £2.3million a day in green subsidies from the Government on the basis that the trees are a renewable source because they are replanted.

But the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has

admitted that it does not collect information on where the trees are replanted.

Similarly, “confidential” sustainability reports submitted to Ofgem contain no evidence on where the trees were sourced or how many have been replanted, but they do identify a country.

In response to a Freedom of Information request BEIS said it also held “no information” on how much carbon dioxide is sequestered by the saplings.

Scientists have warned it is much less than that stored in logging forests, creating a “carbon debt” that could take decades if not centuries to pay back as the trees grow.

Lord Goldsmith promised to report back to MPs on his findings.

At the Cop26 climate summit in Glasgow, the peer led UK Government efforts to remove deforestation from supply chains, including a £500million programme to protect rainforests.

During the event earlier this month, he admitted there were “real problems” with the business model, adding: “I don’t think those problems were properly fully understood when the infrastructure which is now there was first developed.”

A Government spokesman said: “We are totally committed to eliminating our contribution to climate change by 2050, which is why we only support biomass which complies with strict sustainability criteria.

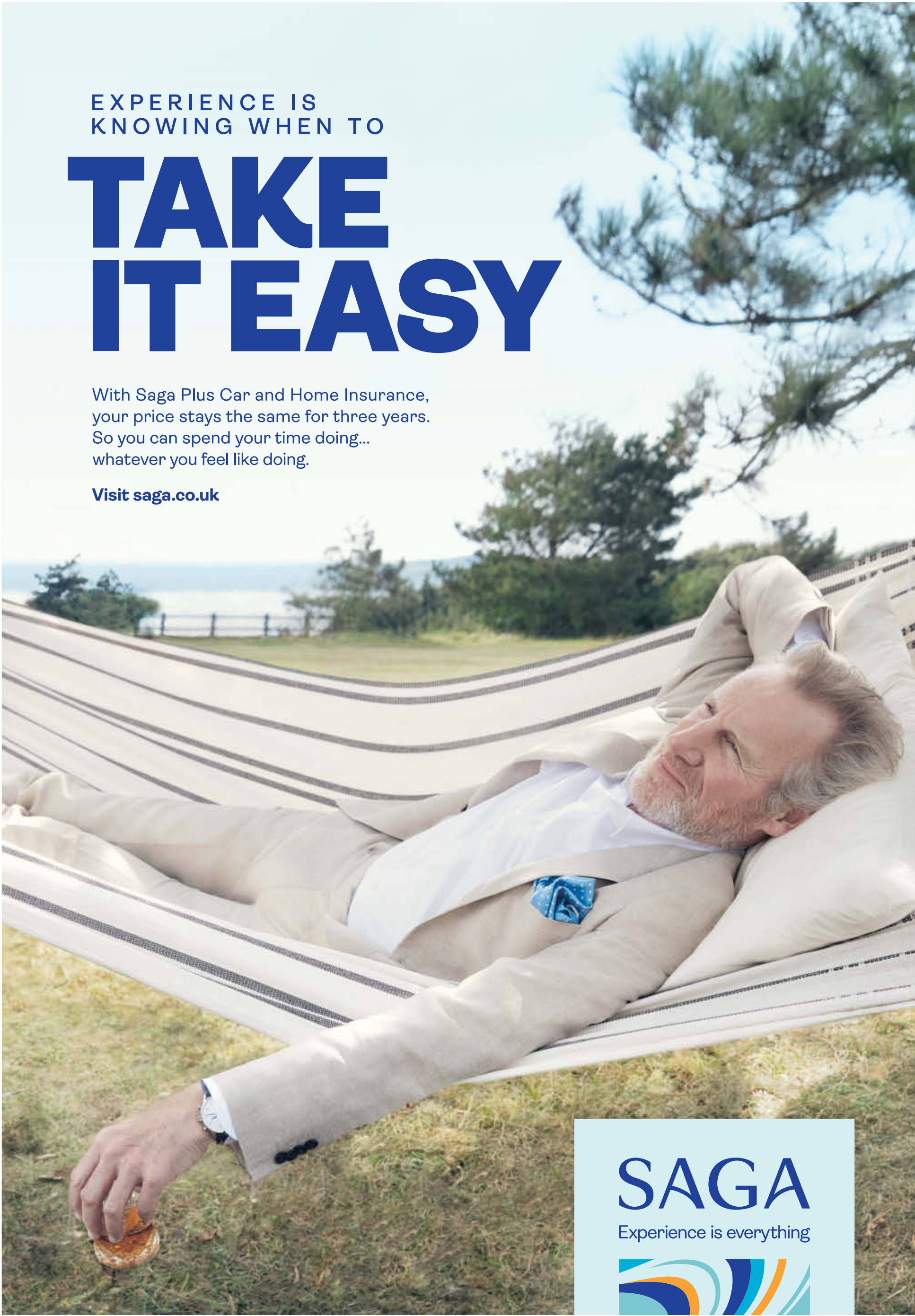
“Our tree planting plans complement our strictly regulated biomass commitments.”

A spokesman for Drax said: “Drax’s world-leading biomass sourcing policy ensures that the biomass we use to generate 12 per cent of Britain’s renewable electricity meets the highest sustainability standards and contributes to healthy, growing forests which support biodiversity and communities.”

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RHS invites fungi into its garden

By Daily Telegraph Reporter

THE Royal Horticultural Society is growing fungi in its gardens for the first time in almost 200 years, as it praises the “unsung hero” of gardening.

Fungi provide food and shelter for animals, help plant roots absorb water and nutrients, and ward off pests and diseases, the RHS told *The Times*.

Only a small proportion of fungi are pathogenic and cause disease in plants or animals, whereas the majority feed on dead organic material and help maintain a healthy ecosystem.

Scientists from the RHS are now growing these saprophytic fungi in a laboratory at its main garden at Wisley, Surrey.

Jassy Drakulic, an RHS pathologist, said that the project aims to change people’s perceptions of fungi and value them “as the natural engineers that they are” rather than viewing them as a threat.

She added: “Fungi are the

unsung heroes of the garden, helping to break down dead and decaying matter, support plant growth and provide a welcome home for invertebrates.

“Their myriad shapes and colour also provide a sense of otherworldliness in a winter garden scene.”

The fungi being employed include oyster mushrooms, coral tooth fungus and tur-

‘Their myriad shapes and colour provide a sense of otherworldliness’

key tail. They were found locally and will be spread on logs and hay bales at RHS Wisley’s wildlife garden next month.

Gardeners are advised to encourage good fungi to grow by placing pieces of dead wood of varying sizes in their gardens. This encourages the growth of mycelium from which mushrooms grow. Poisonous fungi, such as fly agaric, are not being championed by the RHS.

Having a son may keep teen criminals on track

By Charles Hymas HOME AFFAIRS EDITOR

TEENAGE criminals who have a son are more likely to go straight than those who have daughters, a UCL study has found.

It is believed to be the first to prove a causal connection between parenthood and criminality, as well as the influence that an offender can have in encouraging their friends and peers on a criminal course.

The study, based on 2,800

young first-time fathers, compared the impact of fatherhood on the criminality of boys and young men aged 15 to 20. Those who fathered boys were 17 per cent less likely to commit crimes in the first year after the child’s birth than those who had girls, with the difference increasing in the subsequent five years.

While the probability of a boy’s father committing a crime was 12.5 per cent, in the first year after birth, it was 14.75 for those who had girls.

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