



South East Woodland News

January 2010

Wight Heat

by Gillian Alker, Woodfuel Co-ordinator, FC



Parkhurst Prison on the Isle of Wight is about to fire up the island's first woodchip boiler. This 200kW system will use in the region of 200 tonnes of good quality woodchip from local sustainable sources each year. The woodchip will be supplied by local company, Wood End Enterprises, which is owned by the actor and local woodland owner Geoff Hughes. Geoff who has starred in Keeping up Appearances and Coronation Street invested in the island's first biomass chipper at about the same time as the boiler was being installed. The company has also recently invested in a wood splitter and storage barn, which was supported by the Isle of Wight Economic Partnership using funding from the Rural Development Programme for England.

Carol Flux, from the Isle of Wight Economic Partnership said:

"It's good to see that the supply chain is coming together. However, we recognise that there is still further work to be done, and we will be concentrating our efforts on co-ordinating the industry further."

Wood End Enterprises Biomass Consultant Danny Horne said:

"It has been a steep learning curve. Woodchip for biomass is not just any old woodchip, as moisture content and chip quality need to be rigorously monitored. Potential customers can now have confidence in the supply chain but need support from local planners. This could be a real opportunity to reduce the island's carbon footprint and bring local woodlands back into management."

Wood End Enterprises will source some of the wood they supply to the prison from the Forestry Commission-owned woodland at Parkhurst Forest. The Forestry Commission recently appointed a new woodland officer Michael Pittock, who is based on the island. His role has been crucial in helping co-ordinate the management of both privately and publicly-owned woods, including those which will generate the wood for the prisons boiler. The woodland management benefits are already starting to become evident.

Michael said:

"A key part of woodfuel on the island is that the developing woodfuel market will help to ensure that woodland management can continue by making the whole operation much more economical. This will have massive benefits for biodiversity in the future. The work that has already been completed may help to ensure the survival of the nationally-scarce Pearl Bordered Fritillary Butterfly, which on the Isle of Wight is now solely restricted to Parkhurst Forest."

Editorial - Jonathan Rau FC

If only we had a crystal ball to see the future, climate change, elections, interest rates, pensions the list could go on

We live in an uncertain world. One thing is for certain, woodlands and forest will play an ever-increasing role in providing environmental, social and economic benefits.

To ensure that these benefits are realised and the resource is both effectively managed and protected it is vital that woodland managers and owners understand their woodlands and forests and plan their management. To manage efficiently and meet new demands and markets, contractors and owners need appropriate machinery for harvesting and processing, and for many woodlands this also means improvements to rides and tracks to allow access.

Above all we need to communicate and learn from one another. The Royal Forestry Society Excellence in Forestry Awards are focussing on the South East region in 2010 and provide an opportunity to both reward and share good practice in woodland and forestry management.

IN THIS ISSUE Signs of Life, Funding for forestry, Infrastructure, It's all in the planning, Fuel for the future, RFS Excellence in Forestry Awards 2010

Signs of Life

by Alan Betts, FC



Otters (*Lutra lutra*) are making a comeback. Even in the south east there are signs that otters are moving from the west and can be found in a few selected rivers of Hampshire and Surrey. Until the 1950s otters were found throughout England but their population crashed probably because of pesticide pollution. Hunting was banned in 1978 and they were given increased protection in 1981.

Woodland along rivers can be particularly beneficial habitat and the Forestry Commission has recently announced a trial grant for woodland management in specific Surrey river catchments between Godalming and Farnham and to the south west of Dorking. The grant will pay for management agreed by the Surrey Wildlife Trust and could even include the construction of artificial Holts.

Natural holts are usually found within the river side roots of large trees particularly oak and ash.

Adult otters can roam large distances away from rivers and it appears that one main cause of their slow expansion of range is due to road casualties. There are even reports of otters following clean water and healthy fish stocks into city centres.

The main signs of otter presence are their droppings, known as spraints. These are left in prominent places such as ledges under bridges and on logs and boulders.

Footprints are found on muddy banks, with five toes and a faint sign of webbing the clues to successful identification.



Otter tracks

For further information contact Chris Matcham of Surrey Wildlife Trust on 01483795457 or Richard Edwards, Forestry Commission Woodland Officer for Surrey on 01420 23337 or 01483 326222



Funding for Forestry

by Jane Hull, FC



Do you want to invest in improving the economic value of your woodland or add value to your woodland produce? Funding is now available for capital investment in your forestry business through the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE).

The Balcombe Estate in West Sussex is one woodland estate and business that has benefited from RDPE funding in helping them respond to developing markets for their softwood thinnings and sawmill co-products. They had been hampered by a lack of storage space for quality chip, plus they had a growing demand for traditional logs. They have been able to build a new storage building that stores 8-12 weeks supply of woodchip. They have also invested in a crane fed chipper that produces high quality chip, a log splitter, a firewood processor and a 2nd hand forestry tractor.

A good number of other businesses around the region have also received RDPE grants, supporting investments in the following types of projects:

- Small scale harvesting head on an forestry tractor for managing small woodlands economically
- Firewood processors to improve the efficiency and safety of firewood business
- Mobile sawbenches to add value to timber at source
- Infrastructure for the expansion of a business making sweet chestnut paling fencing.
- Storage building for a sawmill producing kiln dried timber from the region

Grants generally support up to 40-50% of the proposed investment costs and there are two routes to getting funding. There are 14 LEADER groups in specific areas across the region which deal with projects requesting grant funding up to £50,000. The areas and contact details of the groups can be seen at <http://www.seeda.co.uk/rdpe/Leader>. For those outside LEADER areas, and those requesting funding above £50,000, the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) will administer the applications. See <http://www.seeda.co.uk/rdpe> and click on 'Funding through SEEDA'

This funding is competitive, so whilst most woodland owners and forestry businesses will be eligible for funding, all applications are submitted to a decision making panel and funding cannot be assumed. The Forestry Commission is keen to help businesses access this funding,.

For more details on eligibility and the application process see:

www.forestry.gov.uk/segrants

or contact Mike Habbergham, Rural Development Grants Manager, mike.habbergham@forestry.gsi.gov.uk 01296 696543



Infrastructure - Forest Tracks

by Patrick Stephens, FC



Woods in the south east provide a wide range of benefits including a renewable timber resource, wildlife refuges, sporting opportunities, places for quiet enjoyment and much more. Without regular management many of these benefits will be lost with the general deterioration of the woodland habitat that long term neglect causes.

It does not matter how good the timber is or how much is available, a poor network of tracks and rides will put off woodland contractors and management companies. This is due to the extra cost of harvesting the timber, much of which is low grade and does not attract much value. With a poor track network at best contractors will charge to fell and extract the timber, at worst no one will offer to do the work at all.

Enhanced grants are now being offered by the Forestry Commission to help improve the infrastructure within woodland. We recognise that without serviceable tracks and loading areas much of the work we promote to improve wildlife habitat for endangered species and other benefits will not happen if the land is inaccessible to modern woodland machinery.

Once created a regularly maintained network of green and hard tracks, loading bays and timber drying areas will service the woodland for a very long time. Management can then regularly take place providing the correct habitats for woodland species to flourish and unlocking new sources of timber to produce renewable energy for the future.

Speak to your local Forestry Commission advisor to arrange a free visit to see if your infrastructure is fit for purpose.



It's all in the planning!

We all use planning to organise the structure of our daily lives so the consequences of not planning properly should be obvious. Woodland management is not an exception

A woodland management plan (WMP) is an important tool if you want the objectives for your woodland to be met in a sustainable manner, both economically and environmentally, and ensure that the woodland resource is not inadvertently damaged.

WMP's are also a prerequisite for a number of grants, those which support management and others that can fund infrastructure and equipment purchase for both existing or new woodland businesses.

The English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) has a minimum grant of £1000 to support the production of WMP's and a template has been developed to simplify/standardise the procedure.

An added advantage of using this template is that, once approved, the plan comes with felling permission (up to 10 years) so there is no need to subsequently apply for a felling licence. An approved plan also meets the requirements for woodland certification in England.

To access the template and for more guidance on woodland management planning please go to www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs



Picture: Bedgebury Pinetum

Wood Fuel for the future

by Matthew Woodcock, FC

The Forestry Commission is working with a range of partners to re-establish wood as a renewable source of fuel. In the South East, England's most wooded Region, we have three major sites where wood has been used to heat facilities for several years:

Bedgebury Pinetum:

This exemplar visitor centre has allowed many more visitors to enjoy the Pinetum and Forest. It is heated with wood harvested from the ancient coppice woodlands surrounding it.

We are currently installing a district heating network which will provide heat for our local offices, houses and nursery.

Queen Elizabeth Country Park:

This popular visitor centre is now heated with woodfuel supplied from the local woodland by the FC. This project has given the Hampshire County Council confidence to explore whether wood can be used to heat other Council managed buildings and assess the fuel resource available from their own woods.

Interpretation sponsored by the FC explains to visitors how the system works and the environmental, social and economic benefits.

Wilton Park:

Provides opportunities for burial and remembrance in a native woodland setting.

Wood traditionally provided most of the nation's fuel up to the industrial revolution. The Forestry Commission in the south east is currently working with woodland owners, managers and partners to establish the use of an additional 500,000 tonnes wood per year derived from currently undermanaged woods as sustainable fuel.

RFS Excellence in Forestry Awards 2010



Why do we need a forestry competition?

To raise the profile and understanding of forestry. To promote the active management of woodlands and focus on examples of how that has been done.

After a few fallow years, the RFS forestry awards were resurrected in 2009; refocused, updated, streamlined and designed to match the broader remit that the forestry and woodland management is expected to cover in the 21st Century - but still based on the maxims of best practice.

What are the classes in the new competition?

There are five classes:

- **The Duke of Cornwall's Award** recognises multipurpose forestry - woodlands managed for a number of objectives such as timber production, recreation, public access and biodiversity.
- **The Community Forestry Award** celebrates initiatives providing a local amenity and the difference they make to local people
- **The Schools Award** takes a flexible approach to learning about trees and woodlands. Schools do not need to have woodlands or trees on their land to enter. It is open to all ages. It could, for instance, involve a project looking at trees, at specific wood products or at design using wood.
- **The Farm Woodland Award** is open to properties where agricultural land produces the majority of income but where woodlands are an important element of the business plan too.
- **The RFS Silviculture Award** recognises excellence in woodlands where the main aim is growing quality timber. It is open to broadleaf, mixed and coniferous plantations.

Entries close at noon Tuesday 9th March 2010

How does it work?

The country has been divided into the administrative regions used by the Forestry Commission, and the competition will move to a different region each year. The 2009 pilot year in Yorkshire and the North East was a huge success.

For 2010 the competition moves to the FCs South East England and London regions. This takes in the counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, East Sussex, West Sussex and Greater London, south of the Thames.

The awards are to be presented at the Weald Wood Fair at Bentley on Friday, 17th September 2010.

Who can enter?

The competition is open to all - individuals, companies, schools Local Authorities, NGOS and voluntary groups - except Forest Enterprise holdings.

Entry Fees

To enter the Schools Award is free. The other four awards do have entry fees, and these are; £50 for the Farm Woodlands and Community Forestry Awards, and £100 for the Duke of Cornwall's Award and the RFS Silviculture Award

Prizes

The first prize in each class is £1000 and the second prize is £500.

What Next?

For further details of the 2010 competition and entry forms please visit the RFS website at www.rfs.org.uk or contact the RFS competition Co-ordinator, Trefor Thompson
Tel: 01824 704230 (Office hours)
email: rfscompetition@boyns.net



Events

Ecobuild

is back at London's Earls Court
Tuesday 2nd – Thursday 4th March 2010
The biggest event in the world for sustainable design, construction and the built environment.

www.ecobuild.co.uk

In Touch with Timber 2010

Conference and exhibition 18th May 2010
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre,
Westminster

www.trada.co.uk

One day courses at the Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell

- 29 January 2010 - Charcoal making
- 11 February 2010 - Emergency First Aid at work
- 19 February 2010 - Woodland Archaeology
- 11 March 2010 - Introduction to Tree Climbing
- 18 March 2010 - Practical Woodland Management using hand tools

For further details

www.woodnet.org.uk

Hampshire Wood Fair

Queen Elizabeth Country Park
11th July 2010

A one day show, based in the QE Forest with plenty of opportunities for suitable demonstrations of craft and machinery.
<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/qecp>

Contact us...

To subscribe to this free newsletter:
please call 01420 23337 or email us at
southeast.fce@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Forestry Commission

South East England Regional Office
Alice Holt
Wrecclesham
Farnham
Surrey
GU10 4LF