



WEST MIDLANDS WOODFUEL PROJECT

In a year where cutbacks has been the main headline the West Midlands Woodfuel project assisting 34 forest holders against an end of year target of 48.

has been an outstanding success with over 100 woodland owners and businesses benefiting from Woodfuel management plans and Business Development Plans.

From the outset the initial strategy was to encourage more woodland owners to manage their woodlands and the free Woodfuel Advisory Services have been a key tool to informing woodland owners on the resource that they have and whether it is viable to implement management.

Heartwoods has also played a crucial role for the land based industry in the region assisting west midlands based businesses secure £400,000 of RDPE funding under the Woodland Enterprise Grant for capital investments including firewood processors, woodfuel delivery systems, mobile sawmills and specialist forestry contracting equipment.

The project has also rolled out the woodfuel champion services whereby a panel of consultants are supported (80% of costs) through the project to deliver specialist consultancy for woodland owners. Eligible activity includes timber inventories, woodland management planning, timber marketing. we are currently

Nick Maskery (project manager) said: "It's been an inspiration to be involved with so many interested woodland / forestry stakeholders who can see the benefits of managing their woodlands from recent surge in woodfuel markets". Over the past year the project has provided assistance to 100 woodland owners/businesses who have over 2500 hectares of woodland across the region.

The events programme has supported over 170 people with a number of events over the past 12 months ranging from practical woodland management events to harvesting and processing.

The Year Ahead

This coming year will be a challenging and busy time. Our recent evaluation report highlighted the need to move with the industry in response to new emerging priorities such as the renewable heat incentive and the introduction of the Woodfuel Improvement Grant by the Forestry Commission and the HETAS Solid Biomass Assurance Scheme. The steering group will be looking into how Heartwoods supports West Midlands based stakeholders to ensure that the economic benefits of these schemes are maximised in this region.

We are also putting together a programme of events for the new year and are currently organising a large 'Making Woods Pay' conference on the 22 March 2011 that will be headlined by Sir Ben Gill.

Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) survives spending review 2010

As part of the governments spending review it has emerged that the RHI is to go ahead.

At the moment the tariffs and other details of the incentive are not known but these are likely to be published during December 2010, as part of the government response to the RHI consultation, held earlier this year.

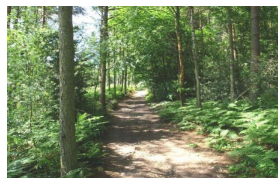
Total funding available to the RHI (not just woodfuel but also other technologies including solar thermal and heat pumps) is £860million.

The RHI will be launched in June 2011.



New £10 million grant scheme to aid under-managed woodlands

One barrier faced by woodland owners trying to bring their woodlands back into management is the lack of access routes and hard standing required to harvest and extract wood products. To address this the Forestry Commission, as part of the English Woodland Grant Scheme, is developing a product that will help owners meet the costs of building tracks and landings. The grant will also provide assistance in other preparatory work required.



To qualify for the grant it will be essential for applicants to already have a woodland management plan in place. Without this grants will not be made available. If you haven't got a management plan in place for your woodland, now is the time to get one. To find out

how Heartwoods can help you with this please contact the Heartwoods office on 01952 435860.

The Woodfuel Woodland Improvement Grant will be available from April 2011.



WOODLAND ENTERPRISE GRANT; CASE STUDY

Three local businessmen collaborate to reinvigorate local woodland

Three enterprising 'woodsmen' in Herefordshire have turned a neglected area of woodland into both a thriving business opportunity and a haven for wildlife.

With 45 years in the world of international timber trade behind him, Edmund Dorman, seized the opportunity of buying the previously unmanaged Ox Lodge Wood; a 10 hectares 100 year old Oak woodland.

Edmund wanted to reinvigorate and protect the woodland, which had been unmanaged for around 50 years, by making a self-supporting, productive and environmentally sustainable woodland for the future.

A close collaboration developed with local wood contractors Paul Powell and Gordon Luther, whose expertise in small woodland work proved invaluable in achieving these objectives.

Paul and Gordon took the opportunity of expanding their well established businesses when Edmund suggested a collaborative venture that

would enhance their business and create a service for woodland owners.

This venture has seen the three successfully obtain part grant funding towards the machinery needed.

In the first year nearly 300 tones of quality wood was produced, as well as cleaning undergrowth and opening water-courses. Wild daffodil, wood anemone and bluebell walks have been reestablished and the woods are now enjoyed by local schools as a nature resource, and local residents for quiet recreation.

Edmund successfully applied for a £6,000 grant towards a multi-purpose timber handling machine. Gordon secured nearly £6000 towards a firewood processor whilst Paul, together with son Tom, secured £13,000 for a mobile sawmill.

"By working and bidding for the grants together we have been able to acquire vital equipment which, individually, would have been beyond any one of us working alone," said Paul Powell.

Gordon said: "We soon realised that to continue to grow we needed modern and more efficient

equipment to compete with the big boys and contacted AWM (Advantage West Midlands) to see if there was any funding available."

AWM put them in touch with Heartwoods, who helped them submit viable business cases.

Nick Maskery of Heartwoods said:

"This is the first time we have helped separate businesses work together like this. It is a win win situation all round for the businesses and the environment."



Edmund Dorman, Gordon Luther and Paul Powell pictured with their new machinery

TIMBER EVENT at PONTRILAS SAWMILL and CERTAINLY WOOD

A very successful event was held in June that provided a look into the process of timber from forest to market.

The day kicked off at Pontrilas Saw Mill and was followed by a tour of Certainly Wood, giving delegates the unique opportunity to see these two flagship businesses.

A family business which started in 1947, Pontrilas Timber has a wealth of experience in manufacturing and the timber trade. A traditional knowledge of the market has been combined with a commit-

ment to continually invest in modern plant and machinery to provide customers with quality products and efficient deliveries.



Pontrilas Sawmill

Certainly Wood was set up by George and Nic Snell just over 4 years ago and are now the largest firewood producers in the UK specializing in premier kiln dried firewood and kindling, selling throughout the UK through a network of retailers and an online store. They now produce over 12,000 tones per year of hardwood firewood. Over 35 people attended the event including representatives from ConFor (Confederation of Forest Industries).



WOODLAND ENTERPRISE GRANT; CASE STUDY

Grant helps woodsman expand wood fuel business

Forester John Weaver has seen demand for firewood soar since he started his business in 2007. It has increased by 40% in the last year alone.

John was successful in securing a WEG of over £3,000 which means he has been able to invest in a firewood processor. This replaces the laborious job of splitting wood by hand. "It used to take an hour and half to fill my trailer, but it now takes just 20 minutes," said John.

John has been a forester for more than 15 years and has all the necessary qualifications. He helps local owners manage their woodlands by felling and thinning their trees. He can also process the timber

for them to sell on, or remove it and sell it himself to local householders, farmers or timber businesses.

His work currently takes him to Wheaton Court Estate, Eaton Woodlands and Stokesay Court,, and he hopes to expand now that he has extra capacity.



John Weaver with his Haiki firewood processor

"I heard of the Heartwoods project through a friend and just went on from there,£ said John. "My work has trebled since getting the right machinery."

Nick Maskery at Heartwoods said; "John is a great example of the work we are trying to do to improve the woodfuel supply chain in the region. It means he is clearing woodland to provide a better environment and supplying much needed fuel to encourage the move away from fossil fuels."

"I would encourage people to get in touch with us to see how we can help."



DOES MONEY GROW ON TREES?

The National Farmers Union launch woodland owner survey to find out

More than 700 farmers and woodland owners in the West Midlands have shown an interest in turning their unmanaged trees into cash.

They responded to a survey of more than 6,000 farms run by the National Farmers Union on behalf of an Advantage West Midlands (AWM) funded initiative. It asked whether they were interested in having a woodfuel business on their land or in installing woodfuel heating systems on their premises.

encourage other businesses to clear their woods and sell on the timber.

Increasing woodfuel use by providing a reliable supply chain will also help meet European and UK targets for reducing CO2 emissions by moving away from unsustainable fossil fuels.

And there's plenty of potential: A staggering 47 per cent of the region's woodlands are unmanaged - the equivalent of nearly 50,000 hectares, or 125,000 acres.

That means there is tremendous potential for selling wood for anything from £100 to £800 a tonne, depending on quality. It can then be used as woodfuel, to provide 'green heat' for home or

business use, or for house building and furniture making.

Timber production already generates £11.3 million a year revenue in the region and some 12,000 people are employed in the supply chain. But there is a lot of room for expansion.

Heartwoods is currently:

- Running a series of events throughout the year include deer impact and management, a visit to a sawmill to learn about timber industry standards, a practical event looking at the timber market, and farm walks to look at sustainable farm woodland management.
- Offering training in skills like pruning, coppicing for fuel and the use of chainsaws
- Offering owners a free visit from an expert to give advice on how to manage their woodlands
- Advising people on capital investments required to start up and expand woodfuel businesses; and
- Nick Maskery of Heartwoods said: "We are hoping to really kick-start the woodfuel business in the West Midlands. I would encourage people

to think about the great opportunities and contact us for information, advice and support."

Clare Greener, NFU senior policy adviser, said: "The survey was funded by the NFU and we were delighted with the response from our

Simon West of the Forestry Commission said: "It's a real shame that thousands of hectares of woodlands in the region are currently unmanaged when they could be put to good use. Managing the woodlands also opens up other opportunities and benefits, including increased biodiversity, recreation and tourism."

members who are progressive businessmen keen to tap into new markets.

"The farming industry is committed to producing great

quality produce but also to helping with the challenges we all face like climate change, preserving resources, cutting emissions and helping to improve biodiversity.

"The survey results show farmers are interested in, and have a wide range of, diversification enterprises on their farms, and are keen to maximise the opportunities on their holdings and deliver business solutions sustainably."

EVENTS

Heartwoods plans to run a full calendar of events throughout 2011. One of our next events will be a [Making Woodlands Pay](#) conference on March 22nd 2011 at the Wyre Forest Discovery Centre.

The event will be hosted by Sir Ben Gill and will focus on topics such as RHI, Timber Markets, Managing Woodlands, West Midlands Woodfuel Project and Climate Change opportunities for rural businesses. The event will also see the launch of the Woodfuel Woodland Improvement Grant by the Forestry Commission.

SMALL WOODS ASSOCIATION

A wide range of events are also offered at the Greenwood Centre by Small Woods Association.

tion. All courses are taught by tutors who have many years experience and are practitioners in the areas that they teach. The courses are suitable for anyone wishing to improve their knowledge to a recognised standard. Current events include:

- Introduction to Social Forestry
- Introduction to Small Woodland Management
- Sustainable Woodland Management
- Hedge Laying
- Horse Logging
- Tool Sharpening
- Woodland Ride Management

Coppicing / Coppice Products

Hurdle Making

Pole Lathe Turning

Woodland Monitoring & Evaluation

To find out more or to book a place on any of these course please contact the Greenwood Centre on 01952 432769 or visit www.greenwoodcentre.org.uk



The Heartwoods Directory provides an updated reference guide for regional woodland services and products. It's free to join. Visit www.heartwoods.co.uk for further information.

www.heartwoods.co.uk



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