

# Seeing the Wood for the Trees

## E News



January 2009

South East Forestry and Woodlands Partnership - Working together for England's most wooded region  
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### INTRODUCTION

These are interesting and volatile times, but are there opportunities for the forestry sector? Timber prices are lower again but the falling pound could provide opportunities. However it is the firewood market that seemed to be on everyone's lips as we experienced the coldest spell for almost 20 years. As you will read in this newsletter, requests for funding to the South East Woodland and Timber Fund confirm a surge of interest in all things firewood. Country magazines are full of articles about wood burning stoves and if you haven't had an in depth conversation about flues recently then you are in a minority!



### CONTENTS

- News
- Recent funding awarded under the South East Woodland and Timber Fund (SEWTF)
- Leader Local Action Groups
- Woodfuel
- Funding Opportunities
- Publications and Resources
- Events
- Focus - Marketing



Slogans seen recently include,

- Burn wood not money
- Wood, fuel with a future
- Money to burn...? If not, try logs!
- Green Energy from a woodland near you

It was heartening to hear some members of the coppice industry say that the present recession is an opportunity to review the market and their business. The Rural Development Program for England offers funding to support business development, both through capital investment and business support. This is an opportunity to gain the extra training you were considering, using RDPE funded courses or by contacting [Train to Gain](#), and to seek advice from [Business Link](#) to review how you are running your business and advise of options to develop it further. Each Business Link area has an adviser who specialises in rural businesses; they can also help you complete your RDPE and Leader Expression of Interest and Application Forms.

This newsletter contains articles on:

- New Audit of England's Natural Resources
- The Rural Development Programme England (RDPE)
- The Leader Local Action Groups update
- Gold Award for Mid Sussex Project
- The South East Woodland and Timber Fund (SEWTF)
- Our Focus topic, Marketing - the Blean Experience

Forestry Commission information relevant to the South East, including funding, events, news and policy are all available from the South East England home page - Please bookmark [www.forestry.gov.uk/southeastengland](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/southeastengland), by adding it to My Favourites on your web browser (i.e. Internet Explorer, Firefox, etc.). This and previous editions of the newsletter can be downloaded from the [publications page](#) of the Regional Forestry Framework section of the South East England FC website.

### NEWS

#### New audit for England's Natural Resources

A wide-ranging audit of [England's natural resources](#) - its wildlife, habitats and ecosystems - was launched in July 2008. The two year project will result in the most comprehensive picture ever of our natural environment, the benefits it provides to society, and how it is changing. Using the expertise of people from a wide variety of organisations, it will draw together all the information and research currently collected, and seek to fill in some of the gaps. The results will be used by Government to prioritise work so that the natural environment is enhanced and damage to it, including biodiversity loss, is tackled effectively.

#### Government Policies and Procedures for Sustainable Timber Procurement

From 1st April 2009 all government departments and their executive agencies will be required to only purchase timber and wood products that can be demonstrated to be from legal and sustainable sources. Further information can be found on the [Central Point of Expertise for Timber procurement](#), a facility set up by Defra and managed by Proforest.

## Gold Award for Mid Sussex Project

The Mid Sussex Ancient Woodland Survey has been recognised as the best environmental project in the South of England at a recent awards ceremony. Mid Sussex District Council and its partners were presented with the ‘Green Apple’ Gold award for protecting Ancient Woodland in Mid Sussex. The Green Apple Award is a prominent international award made by The Green Organisation to reward organisations that tackle environmental issues. The last ancient woodland survey was carried out in the 1980’s but it failed to take into account woodland that was less than 5.6 acres in area. In heavily wooded areas such as Mid Sussex, small woodlands make up a significant proportion of the woodland resource, but their omission from the original inventory had the potential to undermine their protection through the planning process.



In 2007, Mid Sussex District Council worked in partnership with Natural England, The High Weald AONB Unit and the Forestry Commission to update the ancient woodland inventory for Mid Sussex. The detailed survey found an additional 607 ancient woodlands not previously identified, adding 4000 acres to the total of ancient woodland known to exist in Mid Sussex. The project has now been rolled out across the whole of the High Weald AONB and across all the local authorities in West Sussex. This means that ancient woodland is now protected across a large part of the South East. For more information contact Alma Howell, MSDC Senior Planning Officer on 01444 477385 or email [AlmaH@midsussex.gov.uk](mailto:AlmaH@midsussex.gov.uk).

## Funding awarded under the second round of the South East Woodland and Timber Fund (SEWTF) for 08/09

Twenty applications were received in the October round of the South East Woodland and Timber Fund. It was pleasing to see the increasing interest in the Fund and it is hoped that awareness of this opportunity will continue to be spread amongst forestry contractors, woodsmen, sawmillers and others who are fundamental to the forestry economy and the management of our valued woodlands. The applicants were competing for the remaining £80,000 of funding made available by SEEDA for this financial year. Of these, the assessment panel approved fourteen projects which requested items including:

2 Cranes and trailers	1 Trailer	5 Firewood processors
1 Sawbenches	2 Log splitters	1 Tractor
1 Forklift	1 Marketing project	



We wish these ventures well and look forward to seeing the benefits to the wider industry, from the SEWTF’s investment, over the years to come.

## Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) LEADER (up to and including £50,000 Grant Funding)

There are now 14 Leader Local Action Groups (LAGs) in various stages of establishment. Most LAGs have signed their contracts with SEEDA and have recruited, or are in the process of recruiting, a project manager. All are accepting Expressions of Interest and some have held assessment panels and approved projects. Most LAGs have a website giving further information to applicants and from which Expression of Interest forms can be downloaded.

### RDPE - Training

The contract between SEEDA and the rbat/Lantra consortium has now been signed and the programme for RDPE Vocational Training is being delivered under the title LandSkills South East. There are a few training providers delivering forestry, business & Marketing and Health & Safety courses; these courses carry between 40% and 70% funding - the funding is given to the training provider to subsidise courses rather than the individual trainees. The providers are finding these courses expensive to run and some are therefore adding an administration fee. To find out your nearest RDPE forestry related training provider see the [RFF Training](#) web page. Lantra have a webpage dedicated to [LandSkills South East](#).

### RDPE - Forestry Element (greater than £50,000 Grant Funding)

SEEDA and the Forestry Commission are jointly administering the forestry element of the funding available through RDPE. In recent months, two RDPE grants have been awarded to two forestry contractors for harvesting equipment and log processors as well as support awarded to the sweet chestnut processing industry and the woodfuel supply chain. Since the last ENews, Jane Hull has taken responsibility for RDPE in the region and Chris Jankiewicz has moved on to work with Leader Groups. Jane is now building on the awareness raising and contacts made by Chris. For further information and contact details, see RDPE in the Funding Opportunities section.

## England’s Trees, Woods and Forests

[The Delivery Plan 2008-2012 for England’s Trees, Woods and Forests](#) was published on December 15th 2008. It identified five aims: Sustainable Resource, Climate Change, Natural Environment, Quality of Life and Business and Markets. For each aim, objectives have been set and for each of these, activities and supporting actions have been identified that will contribute towards the achievement of these aims; partner organisations have been assigned to each action. The Regional Forestry Framework, Seeing the Wood for the Trees, is still very much in line with this revised strategy (it was originally written under the England Forestry Strategy) but will require some updating to fully reflect the climate change aspects of the new strategy.

## South East Plan

The consultation for the amendments to the Regional Spatial Strategy, known as the South East Plan, has now closed. The Forestry Commission and Natural England were amongst those that submitted a response. The Woodlands Policy NRM5 has been renamed NRM7 and amended to remove the reference to certified woodland. The latest information on the consultation is available on the [regional planning pages](#) of the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) website.

## Funding Opportunities

### England Woodland Grant Scheme

The final budgets for the region have been agreed. See the [Regional Grant availability](#) page of the South East England website for current information.

### Defra Bio-energy grant re-open

The fifth round of the Bio-energy Capital Grants Scheme (the scheme that funds woodfuel boilers) re-opened in December (£12M). The guidance notes and application form are available to download from <http://www.bioenergycapitalgrants.org.uk/>. The closing date for applications is 30 April 2009 but applications may be sent in at any time before that date and will be processed as they are received.

### RDPE Forestry Elements

The FC welcomes Expressions of Interest (EOI) for [forestry projects](#) with an anticipated grant requirement of more than £50,000 (grants vary from up to 40% to 50% of eligible project costs). EOI forms can be downloaded from the [SEEDA website](#). For an informal discussion on possible forestry projects contact Jane Hull: email - [southeast.rdpe@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:southeast.rdpe@forestry.gsi.gov.uk), office - 01296 696543 or Mobile: 07747 622783. The FC are keen to ensure the forestry sector benefits from the funding opportunities available, therefore they are available to help guide and support potential forestry projects through the application process. Please get in touch to obtain advice.



### RDPE Leader

In order to check whether you are in a Leader area, you need to enter the postcode of your business address into the SEEDA postcode finder downloadable from their [Leader webpage](#) which will then give you the Leader area, or not, to which you should apply (contact details also on the SEEDA Leader webpage). For forestry related projects requiring grant in excess of £50,000 or outside Leader areas, see RDPE (Forestry Element) above.

### Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) Training Subsidies

The on-line [Lantra Coursefinder](#) is the method suggested by Lantra, of identifying courses. If you have trouble finding funded courses through this facility, please use the map available from the [RFF Training](#) page.

### Woodfuel

For funding available for boiler installations and woodfuel related projects please contact the region's Woodfuel Development Officer [Gillian.Alker@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Gillian.Alker@forestry.gsi.gov.uk) or visit the [Biomass Energy Centre Website](#). Don't forget to check our map for the [location of woodfuel chippers for hire](#). If you have a chipper producing woodfuel grade chip and would like to be added to the map, please contact [gillian.alker@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:gillian.alker@forestry.gsi.gov.uk) for a chipper specification form.

### South East Woodland and Timber Fund (SEWTF)

This fund is available to help improve the management of the South East's woodland by strengthening the supply chain and the range of products available from the region's woodland. It aims to support projects not eligible for funding under RDPE. The next date for applications will be in Spring 2009. For further information on suitable projects for this funding and application forms, please see the [SEWTF website](#). Contact Melanie Wallis on 01420 23337.

## Publications and Resources

The [Technical Development Branch of Forest Research](#) regularly produce reports on new equipment and techniques that are useful to improving the efficiency or effectiveness of woodland management, e.g. Small-scale systems for harvesting woodfuel products. Some of these reports are available to be downloaded and others can be purchased.

The Timber Transport Forum has published a [Timber Transport Toolkit](#). This document is the result of partnership working to share experiences of timber transport planning in order to evolve best practices and inform others.

[On-line chain-saw training](#) from Sparsholt College. Text and videos are used to give information in preparation for the NPTC CS30 courses and assessments.

# Events

## Land Based Advisory Service workshops

Business Link are continuing to run their [programme of complimentary and interactive workshops](#) throughout the South East of England, including such topics as Business diversification and Profiting from alternative energy.

### [Woodfuel Workshops](#) - 27th and 28th February 2009

The Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell

Find out about producing, supplying and using wood fuel at this drop-in event being held over two days. No booking required.

### [Introduction to Woodfuel](#) - 7th March 2009

The Sustainability Centre, East Meon

This course focuses on the benefits of using wood fuel and the opportunities it provides for woodland managers and owners.

### [Ecobuild](#) - 3rd to 5th March 2009 - Earls Court, London

This is the fifth time that this exhibition has been held. Various businesses dependant on the forestry sector will be present, including woodfuel, sawmills and retailers of timber construction materials. Entry to the exhibition is free.

### [Ignition 09](#) - 11th and 12th March 2009 - The Sage, Gateshead

The UK's first dedicated woodfuel exhibition.

### [Ignite Woodfuel Training](#) - 24th-26th March 2009

The Sustainability Centre, East Meon

Ignite is the UK's only integrated woodfuel training course leading to a recognised qualification from Lantra Awards. Over 500 people have benefited from the Ignite course which is delivered by a team of experienced trainers.

### [Free Woodfuel Event](#) - 7th May 2009

Lawrence Copse, West Sussex

This event is aimed to encourage businesses to install woodfuel heating systems at their premises. Come along to this free event to find out the benefits of using wood fuel and the savings your business can make.

### [National Beanpole week](#) - 23rd April - 3rd May 2009.

You can register an event or be the local contact by ringing Richard Thomason of the Small Woods Association on 01538 756138 - or e-mail [groundsforconservation@hotmail.com](mailto:groundsforconservation@hotmail.com) - if you would like to get involved or are already planning an event that can accommodate beanpoles, Richard can help with arrangements.

### [Forestry Funding - Evening Seminars](#)

The Forestry Commission are planning evening seminars, aimed at woodland contractors, to expand the awareness of funding opportunities for equipment and marketing support available in the region. The dates are to be confirmed but will be over the next couple of months. Please see the [FC Industry Events](#) page for further information. The Forestry Commission would be pleased to be invited to talk at meetings of woodland workers. Please contact Jane Hull or Melanie Wallis on 01420 23337.

# Focus

## Marketing

The woodland product dilemma - the challenges for producers wanting to increase their markets:

The Blean Initiative is a partnership project that aims to promote the biodiversity, heritage and potential for recreation of one of the largest ancient woodland complexes in England. It has recognised that woodland management can only be truly sustainable if it is engaged in activities which 'build and support real markets'. They believe that creating a viable and sustainable market for wood and wood based products, can only be achieved through collaborative working between woodsmen, woodland owners and a variety of organisations. They are currently exploring marketing strategies together with the legal and management structures required to set up an inclusive, fair and effective model for the diverse stakeholder groups. For more information please view the [Blean Initiative website](#) or email Liz Humpage at [blean.initiative@canterbury.gov.uk](mailto:blean.initiative@canterbury.gov.uk).

The Blean has issues that all woodland producers will identify with, including:

- Having to compete with cheap (but usually low quality) imports
- Lack of (or not yet identified!) markets
- Limited marketing skills
- Regulation adding costs to, or restricting production
- Difficulty in finding reliable new entrants into the industry
- Low profit margins making it difficult for producers to invest in equipment, training, staff or business development



A survey of producers in the Blean found that the main obstacles to expansion were marketing, premises (challenges include planning permission, finding suitable premises close to work area, cost) and equipment.

[Business pages](#) are being developed on the RFF website which offer some suggestions to help with these obstacles.

If you have any comments on the topics or would like to submit any articles, please send them to:

[southeast.fce@forestry.qsi.gov.uk](mailto:southeast.fce@forestry.qsi.gov.uk).