

# Woodfuel Strategy: Suffolk Cluster

Increasing the delivery of woodfuels in a sustainable market



Suffolk County Council has pledged its allegiance to renewables and woodfuel in particular. It has made a commitment to install or replace boilers within school buildings whenever the opportunity arises. This is the result of two initiatives:-

- i) The Anglian Woodland Project remit to bring neglected woodlands back into management with a particular emphasis on new markets for low-grade woodland material.
- ii) Suffolk County Council's Property Services Department's decision to replace six school oil-fired boilers with a more sustainable green alternative.

## objectives

To develop the user/producer woodfuel supply chain in Suffolk.  
To promote the use of woodfuel and provide advice to potential users.  
To advise woodfuel producers and suppliers on technical issues relating to production, quality, delivery and storage, including chip size, moisture content and logistics.  
To provide marketing support to woodfuel companies and woodfuel boiler installers.  
To advise members of Anglia Woodfuels – a user/producer company set up with a Defra Bio-Energy Infrastructure Scheme grant.  
To facilitate information exchange.  
To research woodfuel production and logistics.

The need for more research and development became apparent in the areas of woodfuel delivery, storage and quality control; as was the need for more integrated systems from design and implementation in order to achieve a reliable, efficient and economic package.

## actions

Suffolk County Council's Woodland Officer, Gary Battell's role has been to find a reliable source of quality woodfuel. He has set up communication and liaison networks with a host of partners to enable them to work together. Gary Battell organised the woodfuels display as part of the Suffolk Agricultural Association's ' Fuels of the Future' exhibition at the Suffolk Show and has spoken at two CLA events and two FWAG farm walks.  
Timescale: 18 months from initial discussions with Suffolk County Council's Property Services Dept to the supply of woodchip to commissioned boilers.

## achievements

The profile of woodfuel has been raised. Numbers of enquiries from landowners and rural businesses wanting advice and to replace oil fired boilers with wood burning alternatives is now running at 2-3 per day.  
The woodfuel supply chain is now set up to meet the need for high quality woodchip and pellets.  
The sharing of expertise between the woodfuel industry and potential customers has led to a greater understanding and confidence in the product.  
Four woodfuel boilers have been installed in schools in East Suffolk and much advice has been given to many new projects.  
All installations in the cluster are being supplied with woodfuel by Eastern Woodfuel of nearby Bentwaters Parks Ltd.



## context and continuity

In response to the Biomass Task Force report, the Government asked the FC to prepare a strategy and implementation plan to increase the delivery of woodfuel into a sustainable woodfuel market. It is anticipated this will be published in early 2007. Climate change is an FC corporate priority for 2007 and support for woodfuel is one of the major practical steps it can take to demonstrate its commitment to this issue.

Support for the development of woodfuel is one of FCE's six key communications priorities for 2006-8. An increase in the use of woodfuel has the potential to contribute to the Government's climate change and renewable energy targets, to enhance biodiversity by bringing more woodland into sustainable management and to create economic opportunity in rural areas.

This ties in to Communications Priority 2: To support the development and implementation of a high profile communications plans for FC England's role in woodfuel development in the light of the Government's response to the Gill Report (Biomass Task Force Report).

Government context: The UK's Climate Change Programme; UK Sustainable Development Strategy; UK Renewable Energy targets; Biomass Task Force; The Stern Report; The Energy Review; The Microgeneration Strategy.  
Supports the Regional Forestry Framework 'Woodlands for Life'.

## quotes

"The East Suffolk cluster group has been massively successful. The time is right for renewables. It makes both environmental and economic sense. This has been a case of true partnership working and all partners should be congratulated for their roles in setting up this cluster. They have proved it will only work if every sector of the industry is fully supported."

Gary Battell, Woodland Advisory Officer at Suffolk County Council

## partners

Forestry Commission  
CLA  
Renewables East  
The Deer Initiative  
National Trust  
FWAG  
Suffolk Wildlife Trust  
Boiler installers: Energy Innovations, Ecoenergy Ltd; Wood Energy Ltd  
Woodfuel suppliers: Eastern Woodfuel Ltd; Anglia Woodfuels  
Engineering companies:  
Priden Engineering Ltd; Metal Fix Ltd

## funding

Suffolk County Council: installation of boilers in schools; specialist measuring equipment  
Debach Enterprises Ltd: development of a system for a lorry blown delivery of woodchip and pellets  
Bentwaters Parks / Eastern Woodfuel Ltd: storage, weighbridge and handling equipment  
Anglia Woodfuels Ltd and King Timber Ltd: purchase of the Heizohack chipper and tractor

## lessons learnt

Until critical mass of boiler installations is reached, woodfuel supply companies cannot operate economically. In the interim, this sector of the industry would greatly benefit from grant aid as we cannot afford to lose woodfuel supply entrepreneurs. Woodfuel stores need to be built to sufficient size to make it economically viable for the end-user, as frequent deliveries of small amounts of woodchip can make it a costly fuel. For smaller scale boiler installations, and retrofit installations, pellets may prove the practical and economical alternative.