



Seeing the Wood for the Trees

E News—April 2006

Forestry and Woodlands Partnership—Working for England's most wooded region

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<http://www.seeingthewoodforthetrees.org.uk>

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Introduction

Welcome to the third quarterly 'Seeing the Wood for the Trees' Newsletter. This newsletter will help to point you to the information you need to know to make positive change happen in the South East's forestry and woodland sector. During the last quarter we held the Regional Forestry and Woodlands Conference. 75 delegates were challenged to deliver the framework, stimulated by examples of best practice under each Theme of the Framework. These included opportunities to help deliver sustainable communities, landscape scale approaches, woodfuel and protection of ancient woodland. Delegates went away clear as to Framework priorities and appreciative of the networking opportunities. The conference presentations can be found at <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-6KXM7M> Our website <http://www.seeingthewoodforthetrees.org.uk> also showcases activities which deliver the Framework outcomes, as well as listing current events and relevant resources. We welcome your comments and contributions to this newsletter - please pass on information that you feel others should know about.

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News



St Regis Sudbrook Mill to close

It has been announced that St Regis Pulp mill at Sudbrook, South Wales is to close. It produced a speciality corrugated packaging paper from wood pulp and recycled paper. It has been badly hit by rising energy prices. This will have a severe impact on the market for hardwood in the South East as a large proportion of pulp quality wood travels to Sudbrook. This could lead to a reduction in management of broadleaved woodlands as it becomes more difficult to find markets. Whilst there is hope that this wood would be ideally sold into the fuel wood market, the market has not yet developed sufficiently to use the volumes that currently go to St Regis. For more information on the closure, contact Mike Churchman, Churchmans Marketing Communications, 01628 639404.

Launch of Wealden Ancient Woodland Inventory

The revised Wealden Ancient Woodland Survey was launched on Friday 31st March 2006. The project to document Wealden's ancient woodland, including those under 2ha, has been supported over the last three years by government environmental bodies and NGOs. A net gain of over 2000ha of ancient woodland has been added to the Ancient Woodland Inventory for this area, raising ancient woodland cover from 12% to 14% of the district. The profile of ancient woodland both nationally and within the District has been raised and the survey has provided support to Wealden District Council's planning department in several key planning appeals relating to ancient woodland sites. The work continues nearby, as Mid Sussex District Council has also decided to revise the inventory in its area. For more details contact Sally Westaway, Ancient Woodland Survey Officer, 01580 879960 or s.westaway@highweald.org

Regional Rural Delivery Framework for the South East

This Framework, prepared by the South East Rural Partnership pulls together shared priorities for rural delivery in the region. Each region is now required to have a framework to focus resources and coordinate activity. The South East Rural Partnership is a high level strategic rural body addressing rural issues in the South East. The framework has a whole section of delivery actions for forestry. These reflect the themes and priorities of the Regional Forestry and Woodlands Framework, with extra emphasis on the use of timber in sustainable construction. It will be available shortly on the GOSE website environment and Rural page <http://www.gose.gov.uk>

PAWS for thought - new support for ancient woodland restoration in the Weald

The High Weald area has 7% of England's ancient woodlands. Over a third of this area is classified as plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS) in many different ownerships. The need was identified for specialist management advice and targeted grant assistance for PAWS owners, particularly those outside of existing delivery mechanisms such as SSSI's grant schemes and Forestry Commission land. The High Weald AONB, Woodland Trust and the Forestry Commission are now jointly funding a project officer to provide this advice. Based at the AONB, Mike Chapman's role is to give site specific advice to land owners including the preparation of management plans. For further details, contact Mike Chapman, Plantations on ancient woodland sites Officer, 01580 879964 or m.chapman@highweald.org

Biomass Energy research hotting up

The Forestry Commission and Defra have sponsored research into short rotation forestry as a source of biomass energy. Short rotation forestry involves cultivating fast-growing trees with economically optimum size at 8 to 20 years old. The report considered alder, ash, birch, poplar, sycamore, and three *Eucalyptus* and two southern beech. It recommended that potential would have to be developed alongside a clear code of practice to manage impacts on biodiversity, archaeology, water usage and the landscape. The press release and report can be found at <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/newsrele.nsf/WebPRByCountryLang/E09728F06ED2D7CE8025710000537C7D> The full government response to the Biomass Task Force is due in April 2006. Keep an eye on <http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/acu/energy/biomass-taskforce/index.htm>

Most comprehensive woodland bird survey for 20 years

The Repeat Woodland Bird Survey has been published by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). It establishes a benchmark for woodland bird population research. Both declines and increases occurred across different species. Generally declines were greater in the south and east of Great Britain. The report concludes that a range of factors may be at work. Changes in woodland structure were thought to be one of the key drivers. Wild bird populations are one of the Government's 15 headline indicators of sustainable development. For details see: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/woodlandbirdsurvey>

Public Health Professionals focus on Woodlands

Forestry Commission South East England District attended the 6th South East Public Health Conference in February. Over 250 healthcare professionals and representatives of Primary Care Trusts from across the South East were present. Speaker Jonathan Porritt stated that 'the natural environment was at the heart of sustainable health', and the successful Walking to Health initiative at Havant Thicket and Queens Inclosure was highlighted. For more information please contact: susanna.page@forestry.qsi.gov.uk

Grey Squirrel Policy and Action Statement launched



In January, Forestry Minister Jim Knight announced a Policy Statement which sets out the actions that Forestry Commission England, working with other landowners and managers, will take over the next three years to support effective grey squirrel control. It focuses on targeted management in areas under critical threat. For more details see <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/greysquirrel>

Bleeding Canker of Horse Chestnut

The Forest Research website has been updated with the latest information on this disease - <http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/bleedingcanker>

Cash prize for your best trees

Woodland Heritage and BIHIP are searching for best mature examples of oak, ash, common walnut, sweet chestnut, silver birch, sycamore and wild cherry. They are offering 7-9 prizes of £250 each to anyone who can locate the best mature examples. They hope these trees will become parent material in a programme of improvement of broadleaved trees. For further information and an entry form look on the news section of <http://www.bhip.com>

Funding Opportunities



SITA Environmental Trust - Enriching Nature

This fund will support projects that contribute to biodiversity targets within 10 miles of registered landfill sites. It has two funding levels: Small - for projects up to £25,000 and Large - for projects up to £175,000. The next deadlines for applications is 29th June 2006. See <http://www.sitatrust.org.uk/nature>

England Woodland Grant Scheme



The Woodland Creation Grant reopens for applications in April with a single scoring round closing on 31 August 2006. All the Stewardship elements of the England Woodland Grant Scheme are currently open. For further details see <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs> This page also contains links to the applications forms, claim forms and other guidance notes to help you with your application.

Applications for Harvesting Processing and Marketing Grants closed in November. Three schemes were approved in the South East, two for firewood processing units and one supporting investment in a horse logging business. A second round in the 2 pilot areas (New Forest, Isle of Wight, East Sussex and Kent) is now open, ending 30 April 2006. For further details contact Richard Everett - richard.everett@forestry.gsi.gov.uk, 01580 211123 or see <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-6dzh93>

Policy Consultations



Regional Economic Strategy

The consultation finished on 17th February 2006. The consultation document recognised the importance of the environment to the SE's economy. This was also stressed in the responses from a number of woodland and environmental organisations, which particularly highlighted the need to ensure provision of Green Infrastructure as part of developments. The final version will be presented to Government in Summer 2006. The consultation can be seen at <http://www.seeda.co.uk/res/index.asp>

South East Plan

The draft South East Plan was approved by South East England Regional Assembly members on 1 March 2006. The Plan was submitted to Government on 31 March 2006. The woodland policies went through unchanged. See <http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk>

Recent Publications and Resources



Chilterns Woodland Access Information – The Chilterns Conservation Board has commissioned research comparing visitor expectations of small woods in the Chilterns to national Forest Enterprise research based on visits to large woodland sites. It showed that local woodland users, such as dog walkers, and visitors to large forests have significantly different requirements. The research summary can be obtained from: Annette Venters-Weiss, aweiss@chilternsaonb.org

Making the Grade - a guide to appearance grading UK grown hardwood timber - by Ivor Davies and Guy Watt.

This is a guide to the appearance grading of UK grown hardwood timber, based on the European Standard for appearance grading. This enables a more consistent approach to be taken to the specification and supply of UK hardwoods. The publication (and associated CD) illustrates the full range of timber species and quality available in UK hardwoods. It can be obtained from <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/hardwoods> Forestry Commission Publications, P.O. Box 25, Wetherby, West Yorkshire LS23 7EW; telephone 0870 121 4180 or email forestry@twoten.press.net

Naturally Active

A new website, Naturally Active, <http://www.naturallyactive.org> - has been developed to support those seeking to make more of their woodlands for recreational use and create opportunities for people to lead more active lives. The site contains information and advice on designing and developing ventures. It is focused on the East of England, but is of great relevance to the South East. It was developed by the Forestry Commission, the East of England Development Agency, the East of England Tourist Board and Sport England East.

Land Regeneration and Urban Greenspace Website

The Forestry Commission has launched a website on the use of trees and woodland to regenerate and reclaim brownfield, derelict and contaminated land. It provides up-to-date knowledge and advice as Best Practice Guidance Notes, which will be expanded. See <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/landregeneration> For further information, or to order a pack, contact Danni Sinnott at Forest Research, 01420 526272.

Recent Publications and Resources



Sustainable Energy by Design - Town and Country Planning Association

This is designed for local authority planners and includes principles and case studies relating to planning policy, funding. Energy Supply Companies and most suitable locations for different types of renewable energy. Biomass is mentioned rather than woodfuel in particular - but will be useful when engaging with planners. It examines the scales from individual buildings to neighbourhoods. It can be downloaded from <http://www.tcpa.org.uk/bydesign.htm>

Marketing Guides for Small Woodland Owners

The Small Woods Association has produced two guides in partnership with the Forestry Commission England, Countryside Agency and the England Forest Industries Partnership. One guide is for small woodland owners, the other is focused at makers of woodland products. The booklets are available free of charge from The Small Woods Association, The Old Bakery, Main Road, Pontesbury, Shropshire. SY5 ORR, 01743 792644 or enquiries@smallwoods.org.uk or as a pdf from http://www.smallwoods.org.uk/236_Free-Marketing-Guides.asp

Recent Forestry Commission Information Notes

These include: Selecting the Right Provenance of Oak for Planting in Britain (FCIN077) and Habitat Use by Red and Grey Squirrels: Results of Two Recent Studies and Implications for Management (FCIN077).

These Information Notes can be downloaded from the Forestry Commission's website at <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/publications>. Copies are available, free, from Forestry Commission Publications, P.O. Box 25, Wetherby, West Yorkshire LS23 7EW; telephone 0870 121 4180 forestry@twoten.press.net

Events



16th, 17th and 18th May 2006 - Forestry Commission Woodland Bird Seminars. This event is designed to explore how woodland can be better managed to benefit birds. Each event will have a morning session indoors with a woodland visit in the afternoon.

16th May - Cranleigh and Leith Hill, Surrey

17th May - Tonbridge and Tudeley Woods, Kent

18th May - Northmoor Trust, nr Abingdon, Oxfordshire

For further details and to book a place, contact Heather Pettitt on heather.pettitt@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

7th June 2006 - Joint ICF and FTA Meeting Recreation and Conservation in Protected Landscapes, New Forest. Led by Kevin Penfold (Forestry Commission) and Dougal Driver (Government Office South East). All welcome. For further details contact Richard Coombs on richard.coombs@forestry-consultancy.co.uk

15th June 2006 - Access seminar, High Weald AONB Unit, Flimwell, Kent.

This seminar will examine the South East AONBs Woodlands Programme's work to map and analyse all accessible greenspace above two hectares in the South East. The mapped resource will be used to analyse current levels of accessible greenspace and providing a strategic tool for targeting key areas in the South East. A further exercise will also be examining the quality of access provision. For more details, contact Patrick McKernan, SE Native Woodlands Officer Forestry Commission patrick.mckernan@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

21st June 2006 - Bramble in woodland - bane or benefit Westonbirt Arboretum, British Ecological Society - Forest Ecology Group Meeting. Foresters often regard bramble as a problem weed that can cause significant difficulties for tree establishment, but it is important for wildlife. This meeting of ecologists and forest managers will involve lectures and a site visit. For more information contact Ralph Harmer 01420 526152 or ralph.harmer@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Focus



Signposting - what wood can do

The Surrey Hills AONB Partnership has been working with Surrey Highways department to use wood from local sawmills for wooden signage furniture in the Surrey Hills. This is part of an environmental enhancement programme for country lanes which has included the installation of oak verge posts, direction signs and village gateway signs. Over 1000 pieces have been installed since 2005 and a further £65,000 funding has been secured for 2006/07. This programme has been very well received by local communities as the use of wood helps to enhance the rural character of the area and reduce plastic and reflective metal signs. This contributes to Theme 3 of the Framework - A Stronger Contribution to the Economy. For further information contact Rob Fairbanks Surrey Hills AONB Officer, 01372 220653 or rob.fairbanks@surreycc.gov.uk