

## National Forestry Forum January 2014

### A Selection of Woodland Activity undertaken in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

#### Social Enterprise

Eight members of the AONB Family are collaborating in a project led by the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) to promote woodland social enterprises. The report of the pilot work funded by DEFRA can be viewed on

<http://www.landscapesforlifeconference.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Social-Forestry-Pilot-Report-FINAL-Oct-2013.pdf>

#### Key messages

1. Woodlands are critical landscape elements in most AONBs and are in need of active management to secure sustainable futures,
2. Local people and social enterprises can play an important role in 'unlocking' active management of woodland resources, and
3. AONB partnerships<sup>1</sup> are well placed to be "trusted brokers" negotiating agreements between landowners, contractors and the community to secure sustainable management solutions.

The NAAONB sits on the management group of the newly formed **Woodland Enterprise Network** which is working together to secure funding from Big Lottery

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<sup>1</sup> AONB partnerships, with a lower case p, is the generic term used by the NAAONB to refer to AONB Partnerships, Conservation Boards and any other organisation recognised as the lead governance body for an AONB.

**The National Association for  
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

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## **Kent Downs AONB**

### **Woodfuel Pathfinder**

This is a joint initiative with the Forestry Commission, now in its third year, which will continue into 2015. It aims to explore a range of public sector actions which would help the wood heat industry evolve towards a fully self-supporting industry delivering

- carbon lean sustainably sourced heat to local heat users, substituting for heating oil,
- market driven management of Kent's woods
- enhanced biodiversity through re-establishment of traditional woodland practices such as coppicing
- secure local jobs, and
- maintenance of Kent's landscape character.

To date the project has

- provided support to over 130 woods and wood users resulting in 40 detailed feasibility studies,
- supported a range of heat users including factories, animal parks, schools, churches, sports centres, small and large private houses, castles, mansions and visitor attractions, and
- influenced around 2 MW of installed capacity in/near the Kent Downs AONB requiring c. 1,000 t of woodfuel per annum.

The project is a partnership between the Forestry Commission, as part of the Defra's Woodland Carbon Taskforce and Kent County Council. The project has been funded twice via the EU ERDF Interreg programme (originally by [www.MULTIFOR.eu](http://www.MULTIFOR.eu) and currently by ADAFOR).

### **B&Q Good Woods**

The Kent Downs AONB Partnership was the Network Partner for this project that advises owners without FC management plans and helps them get started using the Sylva Foundation's MyForest web tool. A local network consisting of Countryside Management Partnerships has delivered on-the-ground support to 40 woodland owners covering 1,200 ha of woodland.

### **Kent Woodland Employment Scheme (KWES)**

This is a new charity that aims to get ex-servicemen and ex-offenders actively involved in coppice management. The ADAFOR Interreg project is also currently providing (limited) support for prospective forestry apprentices and has recently carried out some research on current provision.

### **Game management**

The AONB Partnership produced a guide for game managers in partnership with the Game Conservancy Trust to help managers conserve and enhance woodlands.

### **Ash dieback**

The AONB Partnership has organised two events on Chalara which is already badly affecting woods in East Kent. Guidance for woodland managers, tree officers and the general public is being prepared. As this disease will spread westwards, the aim is for this guidance to have relevance well beyond Kent. This is a joint initiative with the FC, Kent County Council, Kent Highway Services and the Arboricultural Association.

### **Dorset AONB**

The Dorset AONB Partnership has

- chaired for the Dorset Woodlink Partnership and produced the Dorset Trees, Woods and Forest Strategy,
- undertaken an attitudinal survey of woodland owners looking at bringing small scale woodlands back into positive management,
- undertaken research into woodfuel supply and demand in the county,
- supported the development of woodland demonstration sites in both the east and west of the AONB,
- developed and tested a methodology to locate new woodland planting that increases habitat connectivity through the EU CORDIALE project and has embedded this approach in the Catchment Based Approach for the Frome and Piddle Catchments,
- funded, through the South Dorset Ridgeway Landscape Partnership, a comprehensive Forest School Programme  
<http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/our-work/farming-a-land-management/woodlink>.

### **Blackdown Hills AONB**

#### **Wood fuel from Hedges**

The Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership and the Tamar Valley AONB Partnership have evaluated the potential for wood fuel to be harvested from hedges

#### **Working our Woodlands**

The Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership has

- encouraged owners of small woods to work co-operatively in particular re applications for EWGS,

- helped to consolidate the Blackdowns and East Devon Woodland Association (now some 130 members) as a hub for contractors and woodland owners which continues to offer advisory service to woodland owners
- established a quality assurance scheme for wood fuel being sold by Woodland Association members, and
- established the annual Blackdowns Wood Fair - a celebration of 'all things wood' - now in its 4th year

### **Woodbiz woodlands**

The Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership has

- worked with 6 saw mills helping them source more local timber,
- worked with local businesses including artisan furniture makes and timber framers - to help them source local timber,
- run living tree grading workshops - information on graded, saleable timber available from the Blackdowns and East Devon Woodland Association website,
- run other woodland courses included 'Managing woodlands for wood fuel and wildlife' and 'horse-logging taster sessions'
- established a woodland management volunteering service with necessary certification and insurance. Volunteers carry out work on a 'logs for labour' basis. Volunteers are now working in National Trust woodlands in the Blackdown Hills AONB, and
- been working with FC and, through EWGS, planted 2 ha of southern provenance trees to test climatic tolerance. A further woodland will be planted in winter 2014 and there will be long-term monitoring established for these 'Future trees' woodlands

### **Neroche Woodlanders**

This projects is one of six studies in report and 'toolkit' produced through the NAAONB Social Forestry Pilots. Its 'Wild Learning', sited in an area of woodland leased from FC, uses a structured learning framework of soft skills in natural history, woodland management and woodland crafts for existing and new learners from the deprived areas of Taunton.

### **Cornwall AONB**

The Cornwall AONB Partnerships has worked with a local renewable energy group to enable a survey to be undertaken on the **biomass potential of field hedgerows** in the Camel Valley. The results have been good and show that there is substantial potential for biomass from hedges. A second phase involves working with landowners to develop a new supply chain.

## **Tamar Valley AONB**

The Tamar Valley AONB Partnerships has been a lead partner of the EU Cordiale Project, an Interreg IVa grant aided with other South West Protected Landscapes and Regional Parks in Brittany and Normandy. A key learning point was how the French **manage their 'bocages' landscapes and utilise wood fuel for heat.**

The Tamar Valley AONB Partnership is supporting efforts to promote the management of production from hedges and woods by stimulating viable new markets for wood fuel.

As part of the process the Partnership has

- conducted detailed assessments to measure the potential wood fuel yield from different types of hedge,
- studied the potential for a hub for storing, processing and distributing wood fuel,
- undertaken a series of wood fuel audits at farm, estate and parish scale, and a series of studies on the feasibility of switching from fossil to wood fuel and installing wood fuel boilers,
- held a range of targeted events to raise awareness of wood fuel and to help either stimulate demand or supply of wood fuel,
- encouraged public participation in mapping hedgerow resources,
- investigated the installation of wood fuel boilers at a range of institutions including a school, hotel and estate buildings, and
- produced a handbook providing guidance on Community Supported Woodlands and Hedges.

The Tamar Valley AONB Partnership Lead Officer is the Devon Local Nature Partnership champion for wood and the aspiration is to be able to align this with a programme of funding through the LEP.

## **Lincolnshire Wolds AONB**

### **The Beechclump Project**

In recognition of the low tree cover in the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB, The Beechclump Project restores, replaces and creates new tree clumps.

### **Lincolnshire Firewood Fair and Auction**

The Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Partnership is a partner in the Lincolnshire Firewood Fair and Auction. There was a threefold increase in visitors last year and demonstrations included the popular Lincolnshire Lumberjack Olympics.

Whilst initially started by the FC, it is now standing as its own entity run by volunteers of the tree and woodland sector.

See [www.lincolnshirefirewoodfair.co.uk](http://www.lincolnshirefirewoodfair.co.uk)

The Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Partnership supports farmers and estates on long term woodland plans, assisted via an AONB grant scheme where other grants are unavailable. The Partnerships is also collaborating with a local company to set up charcoal retort.

## **Chilterns AONB**

The Chilterns Conservation Board hosts the Chiltern Woodland Project, the longest running small woodland project in the country. Last year it provided advice to over 50 woodland owners covering over 600 hectares of mostly small woodlands under 20 hectares.

A number of popular woodland archaeology training courses were run and a Woodland Forum was held. In addition, jointly with the Forestry Commission, a major conference was held on pest diseases attended by over 200 delegates.

**Steve Rodrick, CO, Chilterns Conservation Board**  
**On behalf of the NAAONB**  
**January 2014**