

North East England

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EWGS & Regional Update

Update No 20 (25 August 2011)

Editorial

I hope you are all enjoying your summer holidays. As I write this we are in the August holiday period after a very busy early summer period and with much change on the horizon for later in the year.

The [Independent Panel](#) visited Northumberland at the end of last month to see something of the forests of the north and to hear the views of stakeholders. Their visit to Kielder, Park End and Egger went very well and they left the region with a clearer understanding of forestry in the far north of England. Thanks to all those who made this such an interesting and informative visit. We expect the Panel to publish their initial findings in the autumn and to make their recommendations to the Secretary of State in the spring. Further information can be found on the [Defra website](#).

SR10 and FC Restructuring

Most of you will know that the FC is embarking on a major restructuring. This, necessitated by the Governments last Spending Review, will mean changes to the Forestry Commission in NE England. For the Forest Service (the part of the FC that provides grants and licences and policy) we are merging with Yorkshire and Humber; the main office will be at York and offices at Rothbury and Hamsterley will close. There will be a very similar number of woodland officers working to beats as there are now – we are keen to maintain our front-line delivery capacity. The new Area Director will be selected within the next few weeks and we will migrate to the new structure over the following months, taking care to minimise disruption to service. On the FE side (the part of the FC that manages the public forest estate) Kielder is merging with much of the current NW England Forest District to produce a North England District. The main office will be at Bellingham. Graham Gill has been appointed Forest Management Director.

Woodfuel

The [Woodfuel Implementation Plan](#) was launched by the FC Chair on 29 June. Alongside this we have also just launched the [Woodfuel WIG](#). This provides grant aid towards the cost of harvesting wood from undermanaged

or difficult to access woodlands. Unlike all our other grants it is to support activity that will increase the economic value of the woodland or forest. Grants at the rate of 60% of costs are offered. A condition of grant is that the woodland has an approved [Woodland Plan](#). If you are interested in being added to our list of agents providing such plans please contact [Lucy Phillips](#). [Ian Everard](#) is handling [Woodfuel WIG](#) applications and would be pleased to here from you on anything in connection with this grant.

It is also worth noting that [Northwoods](#) continue to provide grant aid for woodfuel related equipment, machinery and infrastructure (such as drying sheds). This compliments our Woodfuel WIG very well. For further information contact [Jill at Northwoods](#).

EWGS Budget

We are still accepting applications for [WCG](#), [WPG](#) and [Woodfuel WIG](#) for 11/12 claim year. For all other grant types we are now fully committed for this year. However, we are still accepting applications for [all grant types](#) for 12/13 and 13/14 claim years with considerable funds remaining.

We are particularly keen to accept [WCG](#) applications to bolster the rate of new planting. In 10/11 we paid out over £382K for new planting over 158ha and we are on track to more that double that this year. [WRG](#) was at around £351K over 327ha.

Red Squirrels Northern England

A new red squirrel conservation project called Red Squirrels Northern England was launched in February 2011. Forestry Commission, Natural England, The Wildlife Trusts and the Red Squirrel Survival Trust are working together with landowners and local communities to improve the co-ordination of grey squirrel control and ensure appropriate monitoring takes place in the red squirrel strongholds across northern England. The project manager Nick Mason and his team are starting to work with landowners and land managers to help put grey squirrel control in place. Nick would be delighted to hear from woodland owners and agents in the designated reserves and buffers who are interested in red squirrel conservation. Nick and his team are available to provide assistance and advice to help put control and monitoring arrangements in place and where EWGS funds are available they will help owners to access them. Please contact: e-mail <mailto:nick.mason@rsst.org.uk>, mobile 07917 182018

Plant Health Issues

P. ramorum has rapidly become a major plant health problem in larch. It appeared last year in the SW and has spread rapidly within and beyond this region. It is a disease that thrives in the warmer and wetter conditions characteristic of south western Britain and so far has not been found in NE England. However, its presence has just been confirmed in Cumbria and Lancashire so it is essential that we all remain vigilant. Characteristic symptoms are needle death and dieback in the crown, initially in just one or

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two branches. [Full details on disease recognition and information on action to take is available on our website.](#)

WRG and the Ancient and Native Woodland Practice Guide

Earlier this summer we changed our [Woodland Regeneration Grant rates](#). Hopefully you will have all received details of these changes. [The Ancient and Native Woodland Practice Guide](#), published in May, is the new definitive guidance to managing Ancient and Native woodlands in England. The new grants draw on this, for example by adopting a more flexible attitude to native species in the face of climate change.

Timber Supplies

Last years outturn for the public forest estate resulted in volume removals of 104% of production forecast. The last month of the year, March, was an unbelievably busy month with timber removals greater than at any point in the previous year. Indeed, this resulted in forecast variances being submitted on a weekly basis in order to take account of the demand for all timber products at the year end.

This year has again started well with volume removals for both road side and standing sales being on profile.

Electronic tenders during March and May have indicated an excellent level of competition and demand for timber both again at roadside and standing.

There is also at last, more evidence of private sector material coming to the market and this should help to underpin current demand.

End



Nick Ridley with Ian Everard of the Forestry Commission and Ian Wylie, works foreman, at Park End Estate, near Wark, Northumberland putting down new roots to revive an ancient woodland many hundreds of years old with Forestry Commission grant.