

Case study

Biggest woodfuel grant will produce huge environmental benefits

The largest woodfuel grant is set to unlock over 200,000m³ of timber from north Cumbria

In the largest project the Forestry Commission's Woodfuel Woodland Improvement Grant (Woodfuel WIG) has ever seen, 10km of road is to be upgraded unlocking over 200,000m³ of timber from north Cumbria.

Whitelyne Forest and Flatt Forest are pieces of adjoining land bought separately by the same company and separated by the White Lyne River. The combined potential of two large conifer plantations has been thwarted by a lack of access roads suitable for moving these large volumes of timber, but a Woodfuel WIG grant of over £140,000 will help to turn potential into reality. The timber will be used for a variety of products including woodfuel.

Mike Furness, Project Manager for the Woodfuel WIG in Cumbria, spoke of the effects and scope of the work, "In terms of the size of the forests and the amount of timber extracted this is by far the biggest Woodfuel WIG project we have seen. The statistics say everything; £142,000

of funding has been allocated for a yield of 227,000m³ of timber over an area of nearly 1,000 hectares. As this grant shows, the Woodfuel WIG can fund projects large and small. All projects supported will have a positive impact on the surrounding area, but work on the scale of Whitelyne & The Flatt will produce extraordinary benefits, displacing enough fossil fuel for the equivalent of 658 million miles of vehicle CO² emissions."

Large woods need long haul roads to keep forwarding distances economical. The funding helps to provide these, along with turning and stacking areas and the many culverts among the new components required to create a manageable, productive site. Crucial to the plans is repair work to the small Irish bridge which spans Whitelyne River and connects the two sites. The bridge will be raised to prevent vehicles becoming grounded by the current steep approach and exit. The environmental benefits spread further than CO² emissions, with the

FACTBOX SUMMARY

- 🔥 Total investment: £12,500
- 🔥 WWIG Funding: £7,500
- 🔥 Size of Woodland: 60ha /150 acres
Length of roading project: 701m
- 🔥 Potential woodfuel yield: 300m³
- 🔥 Future yield from 4 ha of Conifer woodland should be around 6 m³ per ha and we'll take an average energy value per seasoned m³ of 1,800kWh per m³ = > 10,800kWh per ha per year or over 43,000kWh per year for the wood as a whole – enough to heat 3 average homes (DECC average is 15,000kWh per home)
- 🔥 Composition of woodland: The predominant indigenous species are beech, ash, elm, and oak. There also exist sycamore, silver birch and wild cherry. In recent years, the owners have planted additional oak and a few walnut trees to add diversity to the growing stock.

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preservation of wildlife firmly in the owner's minds. Conifer will be pulled back from the riverbanks to create space for fauna and flora to prosper.

The land was purchased by the Sustainable Timber and Energy Limited Liability Partnership (STELP), and as Managing Agent, Simon Place, explains: "The forest offered an excellent opportunity for a commercial buyer of this nature to consolidate the local portfolio, as the age, species and yield class were of a high order."

The land had been untended for some time before STELP purchased it, with the internal road system inadequate to carry any vehicles of substantial weight, as the previous owners of the Flatt Forest discovered during harvesting operations of their own. There are, however, three active sandstone quarries within the property, a sign of life that the grant funding can build upon for the future. And to the future is where the owners are looking; beginning with an initial 12,000 tonnes of coniferous timber to be harvested, followed by the remainder of the estimated 227,000m³ over the next 10 years.

While the project was larger in scale than any other the Woodfuel WIG grants team had serviced, the one thing that didn't change was the help on hand to the owners, as Simon Place explains: "The Woodfuel WIG team were very helpful during the straight forward application process, always on hand to assist with anything and everything that came up."



An example of the roads that will - thanks to their new grant - be laid down at Whitelyne

For more information and to apply for a Woodfuel WIG contact **Mike Furness**, Project Manager, **Woodfuel WIG** by email mike.furness@ngagesolutions.co.uk or by telephone 01494 568970 or 07795 515413

If woodland owners don't already have an approved Forestry Commission management plan, the Woodland Planning Grant is available to meet the cost of preparing one and they can contact their local Forestry Commission Woodland Officer for further information.

For more information about the benefits of woodfuel visit www.biomassenergy.org.uk or www.forestry.gov.uk/woodfuel.



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Working on behalf of the Forestry Commission