

E J Downs Forestry

Forest Contracting and Wood fuel Symbiosis



Following completion of a Forestry diploma at Newton Rigg, Ted Downs established one of the regions leading independent contracting businesses EJ Downs (Forestry). With a focus on the practical applications, the business has made the transition to woodland management and forestry advice.

Working throughout Northern Britain Ted has seen the percentage of his work sourcing wood for fuel or managing estate woodland as a fuel resource increase year on year. 70% of the work is conducted within Yorkshire & the Humber, about 20% of the businesses total casebook being wood fuel related. Ted is a member of the Institute Chartered Foresters.

objectives

- Diversification into the sourcing of wood for the fuel market and in turn, to provide greater economic stability to the business.
- To use this new and emerging market to bring 'new' old woodlands back into rotation for clients.
- To ensure client's woodlands have increasing levels of activity, owners can then see more rapid improvements, and instant value for contracting to E J Downs. (Forestry).

actions

- To get local fuel purchasers to match prices paid to that of particleboard manufacturers, then given the local delivery distances; the value of timber to the woodland owner is greater.
- To undertake a review of the 20+ estates (3,000+ Ha) in the businesses portfolio, looking at them not only as a timber source but now as a fuel source.
- To trial whole tree harvesting, changes to restock species and growth habits of new planting to bring crops back to the fuel market faster, ironing out peaks and troughs in supply.
- Re-evaluate financial models for estates, increased active management of woodland increases productivity/harvesting and in turn the value of the assets to the clients.

achievements

For Business:

- In 3 years the business has achieved a 20% increase of its portfolio, directly linked to emergence of a local wood fuel market.
- Improved financial stability of the business, with widening opportunities, meaning greater profitability and ability to re-invest in company.

For the Region:

- 15 - 20 local estates with 30km of the Denton Park Estate chipping depot have seen increased management as the company has been recruiting new woodland owner/estates, E J Downs operates as their main woodland agent.
- This new activity increases viability and profit for owners, contractors and associated industries locally.
- Both Denton Park & E J Downs now provide local wood fuel for local heat users, reducing travel, and keeping spend within the local community.

background

- In 2002/3 EJ Downs was approached by the NG Bailey Group with a view to managing their woodland estate and providing expertise.
- The eventual aim was to use the woodland resource surrounding the companies HQ to replace the oil heating system and reduce the associated carbon emissions.
- Firstly a management plan for the area was drawn up, along with a chip and onsite round wood store. This work assisted the estate post the FMD outbreak, as it gave the opportunity to undertake a diversification enterprise. Assistance for the estate under the Forestry Commissions Woodland Harvesting, Processing & Management Grant and English Woodland Grant Scheme was obtained.
- E J Downs had to conduct a landscape scale assessment of the woodlands across the locality, making the contacts and necessary networks to ensure that fuel supply contracts could be fulfilled. This gave the business opportunities to expand, gain new clients and bring into rotation woodland parcels that had previously been undermanaged, unmanaged or uneconomic to undertake normal silvicultural practices.
- EJ Downs offers a service as agent in a two-way process, both ensuring consistent supply to the chipping company and to the woodland owners of impartial advice and adding to the economic viability of woodlands.
- The company is now facing a more certain future and has draft plans for expansion as it is currently operating at, or near capacity.

quotes

"I welcome competitors in a market that is growing, a growing market will see my business continue to prosper. For my owners and estates the growth of this market has meant some woodlands coming back into profitability for the first time in 15 years."

Ted Downs, Proprietor E J Downs.

"When introducing ourselves within the market as a new outlet for timber products it was essential that we worked with a local agent that had both a good understanding of the local market and an established network of contacts."

James Bush, Denton Park Estate.

partners

Forestry Commission
Denton Park Estate Chipping Services



lessons learnt

- Access to woodland is the key, well maintained or easily accessible woodland will always be more preferable to those that are poorly served.
- Wood fuel has the opportunity to make woodland that has previously been uneconomic, to now make a contribution to the owner's portfolio. It allows for re-investment and capital works such as roading, meaning the long-term management of the woodland can be secured/improved.