



South East Woodland News

Promoting thriving woodlands in England's most wooded region

Spring 2008

Wood Fuel Taking Off in the New Forest

A farm in the New Forest is coppicing its existing woodland to produce heat for its main house and four cottages. The project is the first district heating system using wood fuel to be installed in the New Forest National Park.

Ipley Manor is a 81ha (200 acre) farm on the eastern edge of the New Forest. It has a small herd of red deer farmed for its venison, a livery stable, and the remaining grassland is cut as hay. There are some 27 ha (67 acres) of woodland which contains a fair proportion of alder and hazel that has been managed as coppice historically.

This is being harvested by the farm's own staff. Cut timber is stacked in cords outdoors to dry over several months with a waterproof cover over only the top of the stack to repel the rain. A hired wood chipper is brought in, on some four days through the year, to chip the approximately 70 tonnes of woodchip per year it is estimated the boiler will require.

The chip is stored in an indoor bunker from where it is fed by an automatic auger into a Veto 120 kilowatt boiler. Underground insulated pipes carry the hot water to the five houses where it is circulated through the existing radiators and hot water tanks. The heat consumed by the five houses is estimated at 250,000 megawatt-hours per year. The installation was performed by wood energy supplier Econergy Ltd and by Ipley Manor's own staff.



Bluebells & Hazel coppice in background - (Picture - FC Picture Library)

The Times They Are A-changin. Said Bob Dylan in 1963.

The same can now be said for our woodlands. Although in a constant state of flux, demonstrated not least through their growth or management, we do seem to be reaching a watershed where widespread and significant changes are likely to impact upon our woodlands and forests.

The key mechanism for this is climate change either through its direct consequences such as increased storm damage and changing species distributions, or through the actions to adapt to, or mitigate the impacts of climate change, such as the increased use of wood fuel and other local woodland/forestry products.

At the same time changes in global economics and the demand for energy and other resources will further magnify the focus on the sustainable management of the regions woodlands and forests.

As well as change, these factors also bring opportunities and increased awareness of the benefits of local woodland/forestry produce. Whether it is the humble bean stick, sawn timber, wood chip or pellets, demand for woodland products is likely to increase rapidly and remain strong.

A range of funding, such as the South East Woodland and Timber Fund, is available to support businesses willing to take these opportunities and help deliver sustainable management. www.seeingthewoodforthetrees.org (Publication & Resource Centre).

Thanks to all this issues contributors.

Jonathan Rau



Woodchip Pile/Woodchipper/Fire - Pictures FC Library

Each occupier is charged for the heat used as recorded by a heat meter on the house's hot water supply. The charge per kilowatt-hour was initially set at 2.5p, but it is acknowledged this will need to rise over time to recover the costs of the project. Nevertheless, it should still be possible to keep the charge to within half of the sum, £14,000 per year, (2007 prices), that the houses would otherwise pay for conventional heat supply. The capital cost of the installation was some £80k but recovering this within a reasonable number of years has only been achieved by receiving a grant towards the installation cost.

The system has been running successfully since November 2007, and provides the additional benefit that the woodland on the farm, after generations of neglect, is now being managed.

A case study is being produced to provide further details.

Article by John Pemberton (owner)

On site Conversion of timber

With the decline in markets for all but the highest grades of timber the on site conversion of timber for local use should make sense, but the operation must be approached with caution.

I had been looking at developing a market for low grade cedar for some years and a chance conversation with an architect friend in 2000 lead to me being involved in supplying cedar to be cut into cladding in the form of Yorkshire Boarding for a lottery project. It was intended to illustrate the use of local low grade timber in a modern building.

I have been concentrating on western red cedar ever since because of its superb characteristics. The main uses to date have been silage clamps, calf pens, barn cladding, upmarket landscape sleepers, weatherboarding for houses and log cabin profiles. All of these finished products add value after taking sawing and handling costs into account using a very basic low cost sawing operation. For smaller orders and soft wood beams I use a Swedish chain saw mill. This has a moulding head so log cabin profiles can be produced. For larger orders I hire in a mobile mill with an operator. All this is backed up with a bandsaw.



Woodmizer cutting 5m Western Red Cedar

If you are tempted into converting your own timber please consider a few of the following points, some of which might appear perhaps obvious but must be stressed.

- The products you plan to saw from your timber have a ready use.
- The size of the trees suits the specification of the sawn product (not always possible, this can lead to very high wastage).
- The application suits the species.
- A cutting list is a must before work commences.

To get anything like an acceptable level of output from a mobile mill you must have handling machinery available both to load the saw and remove the product and waste. Check on the experience of the contractor and ensure an adequate supply of sharp bandsaw blades are included in the hire. Finally expect a lot of waste in the form of slab wood, sawdust and reject boards.

Good luck and happy sawing.

Steve Marston - Marston Forestry



Forester resawing WRC into weatherboard



Re sawing Douglas Fir - (Pictures: S Marston)

South East Woodland and Timber Fund (SEWTF)

SEWTF is a fund for the forestry and timber sector to secure the management of the South East's woodland through strengthening the supply chain



and products available from the region's woodland. This fund is a delegated scheme funded by SEEDA, but will be managed by the Forestry and Woodlands Partnership (through the Forestry Commission) on behalf of the sector.

SEWTF will support the forestry and woodland sector to undertake direct and supporting activities to add value to medium and high grade timber, strengthen the timber supply chain, market its products, and examine emerging technologies for alternative uses of wood. This fund will complement RDPE support for primary woodland products, woodfuel and skills training. This fund will deliver specific outcomes of the Regional Forestry and Woodlands Framework.

What are the aims of this fund?

- To add value to woodland products beyond the forest gate bringing higher returns to woodland management so that public benefits of woodland are secured and the rural development contributions of the sector maximised.
- To provide support for specific projects and to undertake development work that will lay the foundations for future specific SEWTF and Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) projects. This will include research into the available woodland and timber resource, existing and potential demand for wood products and to identify or supply opportunities for existing and new markets.
- To facilitate development in the timber industries by establishing or supporting supply chains.
- To increase the amount of:
 - local timber harvested and processed
 - jobs related to forestry and timber
 - skills of workers in the industry
 - local woodlands actively managed
 - demand for local woodland products and services
- To promote the use of wood through marketing, events and promotional materials.
- To prepare the way for future investment in the industry through building up the evidence base and supporting new technologies, training and new networks or business clusters.

Funding awarded under the South East Woodland and Timber Fund (SEWTF) for 07/08

The projects approved for award of grant included:

- Production of a searchable on-line regional woodland products directory to improve access to information about timber and wood products
- Purchase of an industrial re-saw and associated infrastructure to increase the productivity of a sawmill.
- Purchase of peeling and pointing machine for high volume production of tree stakes

If you have a potential project in mind or want further information please contact: Chris Jankiewicz Rural Development Officer - Forestry Commission

South East England Region
chris.jankiewicz@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

01296 696543 / 07770 598020

Market ups and Downs

The ready availability of coal in the 18th Century meant a huge fall in the demand for coppice products - particularly firewood and charcoal. However, rather than decline as many predicted, demand for wood and wood products increased, driven by the agricultural and industrial revolutions.

A great variety of articles for use in agriculture, industry and the home were made from coppice wood. These included hop poles, hay rakes, feeding cribs, gate and wattle hurdles, tan bark, pit props, barrel hoops, thatching spars, pottery crates, scaffolding, besom brooms, tool handles, clogs and fencing.



Hop poles stacked and ready for use - (Hampshire Records Office)

Many products were in such demand that it outweighed supply. The estimated annual requirement for hop poles in the 1830's was in the order of 25 million. In Kent in the 1840's best 12-14 year old chestnut could fetch between £40-45 per acre - a return to the land owner of £3 to £3 - 10 shillings. per annum compared with £1-5s to £1-15s for agricultural land.

In the late 19th and 20th Centuries demand for these products declined due to foreign competition, substitute materials and mass produced goods. Many of our coppices consequently fell derelict and became solely used for growing timber. In fact in the 20th Century coppice woodlands were often seen as 'wasted' land and many were converted to forestry or grubbed out for agriculture.

However, some worked coppice survived to the present and in recent decades many attempts have been made to restore derelict coppice for both its economic and conservation potential. Although a tiny fraction of its former economic importance, some of these woodlands can still provide good economic returns (one exceptional 3 acre hazel coppice in Hampshire recently produced over £20k worth of product).



Picture: Hazel Coppice - FC Picture Library

Know one knows exactly what the future will bring, but it is likely that the global demand for land based products will increase. Coupled with growing consumer awareness of the value of buying local products it is likely that the demand for locally produced coppice and woodland products will once more grow.

Ask the Expert

Question: We've heard a lot about climate change and the impacts on native woodland, but less on what to do about it. Should we be planting olives or let nature take its course?



Answer: The first thing we should do is look after what we already have. A well managed woodland will be more resilient to any pressure, whether or not it's climate change. Regular thinning and control of deer and squirrel populations will encourage regeneration, allowing natural evolutionary processes to adapt to the changing climate. It will also provide the opportunity for species diversification (if seed sources are available) to enhance the woodland's resilience to climate change. Conversion to a continuous cover system of management may also be attractive, promoting regeneration and establishment, species diversification and, in effect, restocking before the possibility of catastrophic wind damage. Well managed, actively growing woodland will also contribute more to mitigating climate change through providing renewable energy (woodfuel) and a sustainable material (timber). Good management practice will also provide a measure of protection against fire and wind damage if strategies to address them are part of the management plan.

However, good conventional management is unlikely to be enough; we need to think about what species we are planting in new woodlands and when restocking existing woodlands. Species diversity will provide insurance against the uncertain future that climate change represents. We should look to include some of the minor native species such as hornbeam and small-leaved lime and, possibly, the inclusion of a small proportion of non-native species better adapted to the hotter, drier climate. Any planting of non-natives must follow a precautionary approach to ensure that biodiversity objectives are not compromised. It should be remembered that most of our native species have a huge geographic range and, although growth rates may fall in future decades, they are unlikely to prove totally unsuited to the future climate.



A measured approach would be to include provenances of native species from further south in Europe - up to 2-3 degrees further south - as part of the planting mixture alongside local provenance material.

So, the answer is not to panic but to incorporate a knowledge of climate change in management plans and ensure that they are implemented. Species choice for new woodland (and restocking) should reflect the hotter drier climate that is predicted, with a good diversity of species providing additional insurance. The bottom line is that climate change adaptation should evolve as our understanding of climate change improves - we do not need a knee-jerk reaction.

Mark Broadmeadow
Forestry Commission

Information on changing species suitability is available from [http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/pdf/fcin069.pdf/\\$FILE/fcin069.pdf](http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/pdf/fcin069.pdf/$FILE/fcin069.pdf)
<http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/INFD-5ZXFSD>

Beanpoles or Bamboo?

Spring is here once again and most of us, whether we live in country homes, terrace houses, blocks of flats or house boats, we will soon be looking forward to getting out and about in our gardens and allotments in the coming weeks - but just stop and think before you jump in the car and rush off to your local superstore to buy your bamboo canes.

The first National Beanpole week will be taking place this year between the 17th and 24th of April. Promoted by the Green Wood Centre, Beanpole Week will raise awareness of a range of sustainability issues around local woodland products and the value of our woodlands. Although focusing on the humble beanpole, (these are fairly accessible to all people both in location and price), the week will also promote the range of coppice products available from woodlands as well as sawn timber.

If you are thinking of joining in - then order your bean poles, pea sticks, wattle hurdles now before the annual spring rush when stock may be limited or waiting lists apply (especially for traditional English hazel hurdles). To find a local supplier please try www.coppice-products.co.uk or get in touch with your local Woodland Officer.

The Forestry and Woodland Partnership have also commissioned a web based guide for those wanting to buy local timber products - keep your eyes peeled on the 'Seeing the wood for the trees' website for more news on this.



Picture - Bean poles - Phil Allen (Hampshire Coppice Craftsmens Group)

Good Reading

The silviculture and management of coppice woodlands
Management handbook - Ralph Harmer 2003

The 20th century saw a marked decline in coppice but in recent years long neglected woodlands have been brought back into active management. This renewed interest has been mainly for wildlife benefits, but some well-managed crops, especially in-cycle coppice, can have commercial value. The aim of this book is to give information and advice on the management of trees, stools and woodlands as coppice, which is necessary if coppice woodlands are to continue to produce marketable crops and the variety of conservation, amenity and landscape objectives in which managers are interested.

Available from www.forestry.gov.uk/publications

Guides for the owners of small woods and makers of wood products

www.forestry.gov.uk/england-woodmarketing

Primary processing in the South East Region

In 2006 the SE Forestry and Woodland Partnership commissioned a simple assessment of the sawmilling sector in the region. The aim was to more clearly understand where processing resources and products are already available, the aspirations and barriers in this sector, and identify where potential support could be best focused.

A Summary of the report, (RFF Information Note 6), can be viewed at www.seeingthewoodforthetrees.org.uk (Publication and Resources Centre)

Useful Sites

Woodlots, an information & marketing service, aims to improve the economic viability of managing woodlands sustainably in the South East region by promoting the sale of local timber and wood products from the region. A well managed woodland environment has the potential to produce a vast range of renewable products, whilst maintaining the uniquely wooded landscape of the region, generating income within the local rural economy, ensuring woodlands are safe for people to enjoy, and maintaining and often improving biodiversity. When you buy local wood products you support your local woodland environment and rural economy. WoodLots is a Weald WoodNet initiative, based at the Woodland Enterprise Centre near Flimwell in East Sussex. To Subscribe to receive WoodLots: www.woodlots.org.uk

The Hampshire Coppice Craftsmen's Group seeks to support the work of coppice, underwood and associated craftsmen in Hampshire as well as raising awareness of the benefits and opportunities they provide for woodlands and their wildlife, the landscape, rural employment and sustainable development. www.hampshirecoppice.org.uk/

The Right Trees for Climate Change this website helps you decide what trees are suitable to plant in London and other urban areas in face of a changing climate. It's intended for use by planners, landscape designers, developers, ecologists and other professionals, but should always be used in conjunction with sound advice from a qualified arboriculturist.

<http://www.right-trees.org.uk/>

Subscribing to South East Woodland News

To subscribe to this free newsletter please call 01420 23337 or email southeast.fce@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

This edition of South East Woodland News was brought to you by the Forestry Commission and the following counties, unitary authorities and Woodland Initiatives of the South East Region.

Bracknell Forest Borough Council	Buckinghamshire County Council
East Sussex County Council	Hampshire County Council
Isle of Wight Council	Kent County Council
Oxfordshire County Council	Reading Borough Council
Slough Borough Council	Surrey County Council
West Berkshire Council	West Sussex County Council
Wokingham District Council	Chilterns Woodland Project
Oxfordshire Woodland Project	
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead	

