

## **Woodfuel in the landscape: projects and funding workshop**

**Workshop held on 11 May 2015** at The Tamar Valley Centre at Gunnislake.

### Meeting notes

**Aim:** to facilitate co-ordinated activity and partnerships to deliver Devon Local Nature Partnership objectives relating to woodfuel from landscape features (e.g. small farm woodlands and hedges), ensuring that funding opportunities are not overlooked or missed. The focus will be on new proposals and projects, and agreeing the participants and activities for new EU bids, with a view to submitting Expressions of Interest as soon as possible.

### **Present:**

Alastair Mumford, Senior Project Manager, RegenSW  
Andrew Bell, Director, N Devon Biosphere Reserve  
Andrew Shadrake, co-convener, Devon Hedge Group  
Andy Bradford, Dartmoor Woodfuel Cooperative, Brimpts Farm  
Doug Eltham, Principal Environmental Policy Officer, Devon County Council  
Jane Hart, Silvanus Trust  
Jo Smith, Organic Research Centre  
Kate Royston, Co-ordinator of Transition Tavistock Co-ordinator and of Tamar Energy Community), and Chair of SW Devon Community Energy Partnership  
Linda Bennett, Manager, Blackdown Hills AONB  
Mark Prior, Partnerships and Expertise Manager, Forestry Commission  
Mark Clegg, Development Officer, Tamar Valley AONB  
Pete Youngman, East Devon AONB Project Officer  
Rob Wolton, Devon Hedge Group and co-convener  
Roger English, South Devon AONB Project Officer  
Rosemary Teverson, Farm adviser and SW FWAG Associate  
Sally Hope-Johnson, Farm adviser and SW FWAG Associate  
Sam Barnes, Tamar Valley AONB

### **Apologies:**

Chris Marrow  
Corinna Woodall, Manager, Tamar Valley AONB  
David Rickwood, Woodland Trust  
Kevin Frediani, Bicton College  
Kevin Lindegaard, Crops for Energy Ltd  
Lisa Schneidau, Northern Devon Nature Improvement Area Project Manager, Devon Wildlife Trust  
Ross Dickinson, Racedown Farm  
Tom Furness, Devon Association for Renewable Energy

## 1. Projects being developed

- a. South Devon AONB - more details in attached table  
Bid to Interreg 3.2. Approx. £220k. Woodfuel enterprises, clusters, support, outcomes include health and social benefits. Will need match. Also looking at a Local Action Group (LAG) bid. Current snag: All woodland (“green”) activity removed from funding stream – but many organisations lobbying for reinstatement.
- b. Forestry Task and Finish Group - more details in accompanying table  
Proposal to Heart of SW LEP to create a pot of (say) £850k for organisations (including businesses) to bid into. Mainly about creating demand for wood and wood products, especially by adding value & using and technology. 60% match will be needed.
- c. Organic Research Centre- more details in accompanying table  
Part of multi-partner EU research bid. Bioenergy, coppice and crops, adding value, landscape enhancement. Opportunity for Devon organisations to join network of sites. Max €500k.
- d. Regen SW
  - i. District Heat Networks - provides a forum for local authorities which have been funded through the Heat Networks Development Unit. Overseas firms see a big opportunity for selling district heat equipment in the UK.
  - ii. Developing GIS map of ideal locations for district heating in SW.
- e. Dartmoor Woodfuel Co-operative  
Prince’s Trust Countryside Fund – improving the market place for chip and log; groups of farmers processing wood e.g. small sawmills; other economic development activities.
- f. Forestry Commission
  - i. Countryside Productivity Scheme – grant awarded for advisers but needs 50% match – grant will be returned if match not found soon.
  - ii. Collating information on groups applying to LAGs for wood-related activity, and assisting them.
  - iii. Involved in establishing a Business Support Fund.
- g. Tamar Energy Community
  - i. Developing Rural Community Energy Fund (RCEF) bid for district heating
  - ii. Promoting community involvement in local supply chain and hub, to help participants develop and income.
  - iii. Promoting community woodfuel energy services company (esco).
  - iv. Local economic blueprint work – identifying who people buy fuel from, amount spent, opportunities for local sourcing.
  - v. Open homes network – demonstration sites
  - vi. Tavistock advice centre; energy shop
- h. Interreg N.E. Europe - – Sustainable Wood Energy Communities – Brittany organisation seeking partners – mapping community co-ops; <http://tinyurl.com/or3mzgw> Early contact needed.

## 2. Gaps identified

- a. For existing small scale contractors – access to equipment and support.
- b. Log – demand is growing but need to create market place linking buyers and sellers.
- c. Improve demand – get the boilers in to take the woodfuel. Need to grow them together.

## 3. Possible models

- a. Identify a potential biomass user, e.g. off gas primary school, and incentivise surrounding farmers to supply chip, on long term contracts. The school could get the biomass boiler free via a community share issue (sounds easy but actually a lot of work).
- b. Test and expand the use of branch loggers, like the one being demonstrated at the Skills for the Hills event. Would include purchase of a couple of different types, and testing the machinery ring option for making them available, as against one contractor going round. Also finding secure long term markets for the logs, testing efficiency of drying in the nets. Justification; huge increase in yield, and thus income to farmers. Could include R&D and testing for modifying existing equipment to suit Devon conditions.
- c. Community based woodfuel for sale, leading to job creation. A long shot, but it might work.
- d. A social enterprise training apprentices to chip hard to access hedges using appropriate equipment, and helping them find markets for the product. Clearly only where there is market failure, to avoid displacing existing contractors.
- e. Facilitating farmers to manage and crop their hedges for chips for use in their own biomass boilers, selling any unwanted or surplus chips to the local community or on the open market. This might involve forging loose collaborations between nearby farmers, so they can hire machinery at the same time and save on haulage costs. It could also involve grant-aiding purchase of the necessary machinery.
- f. Help contractors purchase the necessary machinery to offer hedge cropping services to local farmers. If they can offer a rounded service including provision of hedge management plans to ensure sustainable long-term rotational coppicing, so much the better.s

## 4. Grants and funding opportunities

[Particular thanks to Mark Clegg, Tamar AONB, for describing many of the following. Also see attached DCC 2014 table of EU funding streams, useful but some details may have changed].

- a. European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-Agri) Countryside Productivity Scheme - for operational groups of farmers, forest managers, researchers, NGOs etc. £5k - £150k no match needed. Revenue only. <http://tinyurl.com/osvj6s6> Open for 300 word “idea” now.
- b. Countryside Productivity Scheme
  - i. Capital investment farmers, woodland owners, contractors – small grants up to £35k –large £35k to £500k – (RPA supported) online app. windows vary, 60% match; see e.g. <http://tinyurl.com/oym6xru>

- c. Growth programme – via LEP. Includes renewable heat and energy
- d. EU Innovation Fund – applied research – e.g. irregular forestry
- e. LIFE – nature and environment - <http://tinyurl.com/mqnbbbyg>
- f. Horizon 2020 – sustainable ag. + forestry 2016-17 call – start new because 2 EU partners needed
- g. Countryside Stewardship –
  - i. Facilitation fund – pays people or organisations to support land managers to improve the natural environment through management agreements. 2 Devon bids exist already at least. <http://tinyurl.com/n9blb3x>
  - ii. Woodland Management Grant
- h. Heritage Lottery Fund – Landscape Partnerships up to £3 million. Grants to help develop a bid. Could work for hedges with heritage angle, e.g. traditional skills. <http://tinyurl.com/mcbyord>
- i. Woodland Trust MOREwoods - New small scale plantings. 40% match needed. <http://tinyurl.com/pg2ff23>
- j. Local Action Groups – intervention rate overall 50% but varies within strands. Comparatively high success rate to good apps developed in discussion with local fund administrators. DR ([www.drcompany.co.uk](http://www.drcompany.co.uk)) manages Greater Dartmoor and South Devon LAGs. East and Mid Devon manager not yet appointed. Torridge and North Devon via [www.northdevonplus.com](http://www.northdevonplus.com)
- k. Charitable grant-making trusts – good for match but timing can be hard:
  - i. Esmee Fairbairn – landscape scale esp. linear pathways e.g. hedges. “Relies on collaboration, for example between landholders, communities and statutory bodies”. <http://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/what-we-fund/environment/>
  - ii. Big Lottery – Reaching Communities – several priorities but include “Improved rural and urban environments, which communities are better able to access and enjoy,” also life skills. No max project size. Need community organisation applicant. <http://tinyurl.com/mlptep6>
  - iii. Big Lottery “Making Local Woods Work” – £250k AONB-accessible funding to support and train woodland social enterprises, each of which receive £5k to deliver woodland management. £750k non-AONB (?) 100% funding could be match to e.g. LAG project.

## 5. Raising match

- a. Andy Bradford: Dartmoor Woodfuel Co-op charges membership fees which can be used as match.
- b. Doug Eltham: Risk that if an EU-funded project leads directly to income (e.g. through wood sales) any profit will be clawed back by EU.
- c. Andrew Shadrake: Consider expanding project to include biomass boilers funded by community share issue, which is clean private sector match.
- d. Andrew Shadrake: Rural Community Energy Fund stage 1 grants (max. £20k) are DEFRA/DECC clean match, may be especially suitable for Local Action Group (LEADER) bids, but timing may be tricky. Can take months to get RCEF approved.

## 6. Opportunities mentioned

- a. Create Woodland Enterprise Zone –where investment in wood industry supply chain can lead to rural jobs. {Compare Marches Timber Study <http://tinyurl.com/q6gwgvf>}.
- b. Forestry Commission GIS woodland mapping.
- c. DCC- primary schools off gas grid – potential for wood boilers.
- d. Blackdowns – employment for young people.
- e. RegenSW – district heat as woodfuel customer; access to capital grants; LA links. Possible link to woodland enterprise zone.
- f. Tamar area –district heating, woodfuel supply models.
- g. Dartmoor Woodfuel Co-operative- off gas grid hotels.
- h. RHI is available for drying chip – though perfectly acceptable ways of air drying.
- i. Step-grate boilers – drying fuel before combustion, allowing boiler to take a wider range of moisture content in fuel.

## 7. Delivery models

## 8. Next steps and next meeting

Attendees agreed to exchange information on projects they were developing by using “Reply to” to reach the group. People would form groups, as required, to develop projects and submit funding applications.

Andy Bradford kindly invited us to hold the next meeting at Brimpts Farm. This will take place in three or four months' time, via a Doodle poll.