

Leader and Forestry in England

This document has been prepared by Martin Glynn of [Rural Development Initiatives](#).

A Brief Introduction to Forestry in England

Forestry, after agriculture, is the second largest land use in England with 8.7% woodland cover, having increased from a low of 5.1% shortly after the First World War. Yet England still lags way behind our partners in the European Union which averages an impressive 37%.

Many of England's existing woodlands are undermanaged due to low prices for timber (given that over 80% of our timber needs are imported), shortages of skilled labour with appropriate equipment and lack of awareness amongst owners. In England, every year we grow approximately 7m tonnes of timber, yet only 3m of these are harvested i.e. less than 43% of the 'sustainable yield'. In addition to the lost economic opportunity for rural communities, this situation is leading to a decline in the condition of woodland with consequent losses for biodiversity, recreation potential and landscape value, amongst the many other benefits woodlands could provide.

In recent years increased recognition of timbers sustainability credentials has presented new opportunities such as greater use of timber in construction and woodfuel. Support through RDPE has the potential to enable businesses and local communities to take advantage of these and other growing markets.

The forestry sector in England, although highly variable, is characterised by a large number of micro-businesses which are in need of upskilling and investment in new machinery and working practices.

Leader opportunities for forestry

Under previous EU funding programmes such as Objective 5b and ERDP, the forestry sector were not eligible for the same wide ranging support as agriculture, but under RDPE this situation has altered and now forestry businesses and workers are on an equal footing – more or less – with farmers.

A guide to potential forestry investments under RDPE has been prepared by [South West Woodland Renaissance](#) and is available on their website. Although aimed at South West England, this gives a useful run down of potential project activities for all LAG's.

The [Small Woods Association](#) recently held a meeting to explore opportunities for co-operation projects based around forestry and Leader. Themes for consideration include '(i) how can Leader address the issues surrounding the ageing/retiring forestry sector workforce, and help to rebuild the network of forestry contractors that once existed (ii) how to engage with the few private estates & management companies who employ people to develop opportunities for apprenticeships (iii) how to raise expectations appropriately and avoid creating a flood of interest in individuals who then get disillusioned due to the lack of job opportunities in the sector'. Another meeting is planned for 10th December and LAGS interested in attending can get further information from the project officer, Katie Eastaugh, on 01569 708466 katie.eastaugh@smallwoods.org.uk

RDPE Measures relevant to forestry

Many RDPE measures are targeted specifically or in part at the forestry sector, and, depending on the prioritisation in each region, could include: -

- 111 Vocational training and information actions
- 114 Use of Advisory Services by farmers and forest holders
- 115 Setting up of farm management, farm relief and farm advisory services, as well as of forestry advisory services
- 122 Improving the economic value of forests
- 123 Adding value to agricultural and forestry products (timber, wood)
- 124 Cooperation for development of new products, processes and technologies
- 125 Infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture and forestry
- 312 Support for the creation and development of micro-enterprises

In addition, Axis 2 supports the [English Woodland Grant Scheme](#) (EWGS) which is operated by the Forestry Commission. The EWGS consists of a suite of grants for creating and managing woodlands where these provide recognised public benefits.

A Case Study – NULogs

One forestry project already funded by LEADER, through the Northumberland Upland LAG, is NULogs, which aims to support and professionalise firewood producers.

NULogs supports existing and new firewood suppliers by providing them with technical assistance on harvesting, storing, processing and delivery; and also provides strong networking and marketing opportunities, as well as helping educate the public and woodland owners on the benefits of well-managed, productive local woodlands.

A local brand is under development, and Northwoods (the Woodland Initiative of the North East) is working on providing an online map of suppliers of firewood and heating equipment.

For further information on the project, please contact John Farquhar on 01670 513292 or see www.northwoods.org.uk.

Further Advice & Support

Further advice and support regarding the forestry sector and potential for working with LEADER can be obtained from [regional Forestry Commission offices](#) or from the network of [woodland initiatives](#) which cover much of England. Woodland Initiatives are public/private sector partnerships which have been created to support woodland owners, managers and contractors in pursuing a wide variety of economic, environmental and social objectives.

Links

ConFor – www.confor.org.uk

The Confederation of Forest Industries (UK) Ltd (ConFor) is the main forest industry trade association in the UK and was established to help build the market for timber, timber products and forest services, create a supportive policy environment for the forest industries and to help its members become more competitive and successful.

England Forest Industry Partnership – www.efip.org.uk

The England Forest Industries Partnership (EFIP) works at a strategic level to strengthen the competitiveness of the forest industry sector in England and its ability to contribute to the delivery of the Government's wider objectives as set out in the England Forestry Strategy

Forestry Commission England – www.forestry.gov.uk/england

The Forestry Commission is the Government Department responsible for protecting, expanding and promoting the sustainable management of woodland and increasing their value to society and the environment.

Institute of Chartered Foresters – www.charteredforesters.org

The ICF is the Royal Chartered body for forestry and arboricultural professionals in the UK and is regulated by Royal Charter and maintains a Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct. Members practice in every branch of forestry and arboriculture relating to forests, woodlands and trees. A list of members offering advisory services is available on the website