

Forestry Commission England

The Government Department responsible for protecting, expanding and promoting the sustainable management of woodlands and increasing their value to society and the environment

In the South East, the most wooded region of England, we recognise that trees, woodlands and forestry are already playing an important part in our quality of life, environment and local economies.

Our vision is for our woods to make an increasing contribution to the sustainable development of the South East region, in both rural and urban areas.

We work with a range of partners to enable this vision that would see **woodlands with multi-use**:

- habitats for woodland **biodiversity**
- sustainable production of **timber** and wood products including **wood fuel**
- meeting growing demand for **recreation and leisure pursuits**
- a mechanism to mitigate and adapt to **climate change**

There are a number of key challenges to realising this vision

Land owner perceptions/Economics - The growing of timber has always involved vision and strategic investment on the part of a landowner. With yearly accounting systems there has a tendency for business to avoid such long-term investments. The growing resurgence in using wood as fuel has the potential to buck this trend and provide woodland owners an opportunity to achieve a regular income for low quality wood whilst also growing quality timber for future generations.

One of the key challenges for the Forestry Commission is to support the growth of an efficient woodfuel industry through sustainable woodland management that protects and enhances the woodland resource. Any Farm or Estate with a significant woodland holding should, assess opportunities for woodfuel on both its own property holding and within the local community.

Opportunities for planting new woodlands are limited by conflicting land uses such as food production. As such new planting should be targeted to low productivity land and where the new woodland will provide ecosystem services such as preventing soil erosion. There may also be financial incentives for new woodlands for their role in carbon sequestration.

Deer - Sustainable woodland management cannot be carried out where deer populations are not properly managed. High deer populations damage young trees and coppice regrowth but also impact negatively on other woodland biodiversity such as woodland birds and dormice. The Forestry Commission seek to support management of deer populations on a landscape scale.

Climate change & Plant health - The impacts of climate change will also have huge impacts on what trees will grow in the south-east based on predictions for our future local climate which is very closely linked to plant health issues. With a recent increase in findings of new pest and diseases it is clear that Britain's trees are under unprecedented threat. Our science indicates that climate change will create the conditions for even more pest activity.

Trees and woodlands offer a great range of opportunities to both mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change that we are going to face and also opportunities to reduce our carbon emission and the scale of the impact on future generations

For more information on the role of the Forestry Commission and the key issues and challenges facing woodland and forest managers please visit www.forestry.gov.uk/england