



## Woodfuel... ..lean, green and clean

Unstable prices, insecure supply and diminishing available resources. All terms used to describe *fossil fuels* over the last few months. Woodfuel has now entered into a new era, with the renewable energy source becoming the cheapest way to meet the UK's heating demands.

Energy has become front-page news - spiralling gas and oil prices, combined with unreliable links to suppliers has adjusted the focus of energy policy onto renewable energy - and biomass in particular is attracting a lot of interest. Locally sourced and available, biomass is playing an important role within local authorities who have an obliga-

tion to meet renewable energy targets.

Promoting the use of biomass was once an uphill challenge - biomass was expensive to install, the costs of fuel were similar or higher than fossil fuels and people were concerned about the supply of timber to meet the growing demand. Things have changed dramatically with a hike in the price of oil and gas...

The comparative cost of the fuels stack up clearly in favour of biomass - so a large scale gas or oil consumer can often expect a payback of months, rather than years - the quicker the payback the better the subsequent returns. Projects

have moved up in scale - from woodfuel and environmental enthusiasts to businesses and developers wanting to make significant financial savings.

Strong messages are coming through from central government, from industry and Regional and local government offices about how biomass can meet our energy requirements now and in the future. Sir Ben Gill's Biomass Task Force has produced a document which adds further strength to the position of woodfuel in the UK.

For more information on how to get involved with woodfuel see the article on page 2.

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## WoodsWork

### make your farm woodlands work for you...



If managed effectively farm woodlands can provide a wide range of economic and environmental benefits. They can generate additional income, especially due to the rapidly increasing demand for wood fuel in the region. Farm woodlands also provide a haven for wildlife and play an important role in enhancing our countryside's biodiversity.

Northwoods are working with funding from Defra to help you make the most of your farm woodlands.

WoodsWork will assist you to identify the opportunities available for your farm woodlands. Ultimately it will provide the training and technical skills required for safe and efficient woodland management that will enable you to realise these benefits, and will provide the knowledge and understanding to improve the wildlife and landscape value of farm woodlands.

The project will help you to:

- improve your skills & knowledge
- access subsidised technical training
- create better managed woodlands
- generate income from your woodlands
- access grants and other support for woodland management, expansion and planning

What next?

If this is of interest to you, get in touch and we will arrange an informal meeting at a time and place of your choice, even if that's in a corner of a field at 6.30am!

This session is free, and we'll use the information collected in an application to Defra which could unlock funds for up to 75% of the final cost of training.



## NEW Fuels supplying natural energy



Purchasing fuel should be as simple as opening the Yellow Pages, ringing a few well established suppliers, telling them what you want (in a common language) comparing prices and quality and then making a choice. It should be this simple for woodfuel, and it can be. The choice should remain with the consumer and provide them with the confidence that woodfuel suppliers will be around as long as their boilers are. Long term contracts, a common knowledge of quality standards and pricing structures are all essential elements of a functioning wood-fuel industry.

Potential woodfuel consumers need reassurance over supply side issues - something Northwoods have been working on for a few years, through provision of training and through the development of co-operative working - the creation of NEW Fuels.

NEW Fuels is the producer group established to cover the North East of England. Working with a network of suppliers, Northwoods are involved with the full range of potential producers - from sawmills with hundreds of thousands of tonnes available to larger consumers, through to individual forestry contractors capable of supplying to several local heat users.

Prices are improving for forestry products as new markets are being created for the Regions poorly managed woodlands. With the support of the wider group, Northwoods have invited six Directors to take up the reins of managing the producer group for the first year. The first board meeting will be in the next month as the legal establishment of the group gets underway. The group will be capable of meeting the demand for a variety of fuels right the way across the Region. To get involved, please contact the Northwoods office. We need you!

## More Money for North East Forestry!

The second window for applications to the Forestry Commission's Woodland Harvesting, Processing and Marketing Grant scheme is now open. The scheme, which is a pilot programme covering the southern part of the North East Region, parts of Yorkshire and parts of South East England, makes grants of between £2,000 and £50,000 at a rate of 30%, and is open until the end of April.

Phase one of the scheme funded firewood equipment, tracked chippers and other processing machinery for contractors across the pilot area. Other equipment that could receive funding includes band saws, harvesters, trailers, peelers, loaders, de-limiters or pretty much anything which harvests or processes timber!



The Northwoods website contains details of the eligible part of the Region, and all the forms you'll need to fill in to access the funding. Northwoods have been asked by the Forestry Commission to help people make high quality applications to the fund, so why not get in touch to see how we could help you to access this excellent funding package?!

Contact Neil on 01669 261 489 to discuss making an application to the fund.

## Energy crops courses

With demand for biomass rapidly increasing, short rotation coppice (SRC) is an ideal fuel to meet this growing energy market. Northwoods, with support from the Learning and Skills Council and Defra, are running two training courses to provide the knowledge and skills required to take full advantage of the current situation:

- 'Establishment and Management' course;
- 'Harvesting and Logistics' course,

The courses are a mixture of classroom sessions and hands-on practical sessions on sites where short rotation coppice is being established and harvested in Northumberland.

One of the major barriers to potential growers starting out in energy crops is the lag time between planting and the crop producing an income, in order to address this, the course includes advice on how to access grant aid for the establishment of energy crops. Growers may also be eligible for an energy payment of a maximum of €45 per hectare.

The first set of courses are running on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of April at Cockle Park near Morpeth. They are for anyone who may be considering energy crops as either a complimentary crop or as a farm-scale diversification opportunity, and are heavily subsidised with places costing only £25 + VAT for each course for people living or working in Northumberland. If you would like a course information pack, want to book a place or if you have any questions, please contact Northwoods. (01669 621 489, [info@northwoods.org.uk](mailto:info@northwoods.org.uk)).

establishing, growing, harvesting,

transporting, marketing, supplying

## Northumberland Fire Group

Northwoods are working in partnership with Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service and Forest Enterprise in a new initiative to cut the risk of a major fire sweeping through the country.

Increased access to the countryside, combined with warmer, longer summers and milder winters are increasing the risk of more severe wildfires in the UK. The impact of an unplanned fire on a rural community can be vast - starting with the direct costs of putting out a fire. In addition, the damage to buildings and property that need to be repaired, loss of income from grouse shooting and sheep grazing and damage to the landscape can have a major impact on recreation and tourism. Worst case scenario is personal injury or loss of life.

Chief Fire Officer Brian Hesler said that we need to be more prepared if a large scale fire ever happened in the Northumberland countryside. Controlling forest/moorland fires requires specialist

equipment, training and resources, but the best tool we have is information to try and prevent them. By opening lines of communication, facilitating practical training and helping create effective and meaningful fire plans, the threat can be significantly reduced.

The aim of the Northumberland Fire Group is to liaise with rural communities, landowners and land managers to improve communication, promote effective fire planning and reduce the threat of these types of fires.

We're keen to hear from anyone who would like to become involved in the group. Take a look at the group's website for more information - [www.neforestry.info/firegroup](http://www.neforestry.info/firegroup).

If you would like to be contacted with details of future meetings and newsletters, please contact Northwoods.



## health and safety update

### new regulations

>> Two new sets of Regulations have been introduced which will have implications for those involved in forestry and arboriculture. These are the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 and the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005. Further information and advice is given on the HSE website. The HSE have also produced a range of free and priced publications to explain the new requirements and to give practical guidance on compliance.

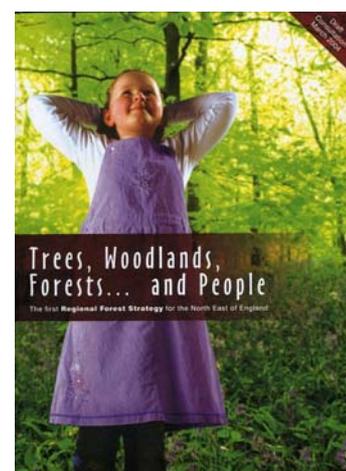
### advice for arborists

>> In April 2004 HSE's Health and Safety Awareness Officers began a 3 year national project involving contacting arboriculture contractors to offer help and guidance in complying with the many areas of health and safety legislation that apply to them. They are sending out a letter which covers a wide variety of subjects including Employers Liability Insurance, Risk Assessment, Work at Height Regulations, LOLER and training, including awareness of current guidance. A proportion of recipients will then be contacted in person to obtain further information about the control of risks arising from their activities. Contractors will be given help and encouragement to get up to speed in any areas in which they are lacking. This project is shortly to begin in the North East.

[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

## Regional Forestry Strategy

Northwoods, under contract to ONE NorthEast - the regional body responsible for economic development, are putting the finishing touches to a research project which recommends a programme of investment and support activities for the Region's forestry sector. Focussing on the practical actions and interventions which we feel will benefit the sector the most, we hope ONE NorthEast will have a strategic programme of support in place for our sector towards the end of this year. Informed by every conversation and meeting that we've had with timber growers, forestry contractors, sawmillers and arborists over the past 3 years, we're confident that what we're recommending will make a real difference to the tree and timber businesses of the North East. We'll keep you posted on the development of the programme, and will be sure to give it extensive coverage once it looks like becoming a reality.





## northwoods notices.....

### New Face at Northwoods

Northwoods have recruited a new Assistant Project Officer. Kate has joined us from Northumberland Information Network where she was involved in research into rural Northumberland. Kate is very interested in the rural environment and economy and is looking forward to being out and about with the Northwoods team.

### Work Wanted? Workers Wanted?

Northwoods regularly get enquiries both from people looking for work, and from those looking for new employees or subcontractors. We thought we'd try something new with this month's Northwoods News and promote a couple of our Work Wanted candidates to you. Both are currently employed in landscaping businesses in the North East and have 10+ years of experience, but are keen to find a job in the forestry sector. One candidate has his basic chainsaw tickets, and brushcutter, the other has all the basics, plus many of the more advanced forestry tickets and pesticide application, as well as several years forestry work experience. Both are used to hard work in an outdoor environment and would make a welcome addition to any forestry business. Please contact Neil at Northwoods if you'd like to arrange to speak with, or interview, either candidate.

### Air Ambulance Appeal

The Air Ambulance, a registered charity, is seeking to reintroduce the Northumbria service & is looking for a suitable base for the helicopter.

Ideally north west of Newcastle Airport, the hanger needs to be 40 x 40 x 12 ft with a door 35ft wide with 12ft clearance. The helicopter also needs an area of hard-standing which is 15 square ft. To find out more please contact Northwoods.

### First Aid

Do you need a first aid qualification?

Is your qualification about to run out?

Get in touch with us to find out when our next Forestry First Aid courses are running.

## Training and Events Diary

What?	When?	Where?	Who?
Energy Crops	26th & 27th April 2006	Cockle Park, near Morpeth	Contact Northwoods to book
Ignite	TBA	TBA	Contact Northwoods to register your interest
Build your own website	On request	Various	Contact Northwoods to register you interest
Risk assessment for Arborists	23rd March	Houghall College, Durham	Arboriculture Association, 01794 368717
Cumbrian Beanpole Festival—green crafts	20th April	Brockhole National Park Visitor Centre, Cumbria	Contact Cumbria Woodlands: 01539 822140
21st Century Coppice	11th—13th May	Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria	Coppice Association NW 01539 822140
Arborists Trade Fair	23rd & 24th June	Bathurst Estate, Cirencester	For more details: <a href="http://www.trees.org.uk">www.trees.org.uk</a>



**northwoods**

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