A photograph of a forest floor covered in fallen leaves. In the foreground, a large pile of cut logs is stacked, showing their circular cross-sections. The background shows a dense forest with trees and more fallen leaves.

Increasing timber production from small private woodlands in England: effectiveness of initiatives

Star Molteno and Anna Lawrence

Forest Research is the Research Agency of the Forestry Commission and is the leading UK organisation engaged in forestry and tree related research. The Agency aims to support and enhance forestry and its role in sustainable development by providing innovative, high quality scientific research, technical support and consultancy services.

An appropriate citation for this report is: Molteno, S. and Lawrence, A., (2013) Increasing timber production from small private woodlands in England: effectiveness of interventions and initiatives. Forest Research, Alice Holt, Farnham.

The appendices to this report are provided in a separate document.

Acknowledgements

This report is based on research conducted for the "Developing an Evidence Base for Furthering the Use of English Wood Products in a Range of Markets" project funded by DEFRA (contract WC0815), and was written with additional support from the Forestry Commission. The authors would like to thank all the participants in this research, and Elspeth Macdonald for comments on an earlier draft.

Contents

1.1. Objective	5
1.1.1. Boundaries of report.....	5
1.2. Addressing barriers and opportunities	6
1.3. Forest policy interventions in England	7
1.4. Financial incentives: Rural Development Programme England	8
1.4.1. Structure of RDPE	9
1.4.2. Objectives of RDPE.....	10
1.4.3. Delivery of RDPE.....	14
2. How we conducted this study	15
2.1. Qualitative approach.....	15
2.2. Sample selection	16
2.3. Interviews	17
2.4. Profiles.....	17
3. Findings.....	19
3.1. Features of initiatives.....	19
3.1.1. Coverage of initiatives	19
3.1.2. Project structures.....	20
3.1.3. Funding	21
3.1.4. Mechanisms used.....	22
3.1.5. Productive management and woodfuel.....	24
3.1.6. Problems encountered	26
3.2. Experiences with RDPE.....	27
3.2.1. Working with LAGs	27
3.2.2. Bureaucratic challenges	28
3.2.3. Training requirements	29
3.2.4. Eligibility issues	29
3.2.5. Poor take-up of certain funds.....	30
3.3. Experiences of barriers.....	30
3.4. Summary of section 3	33
4. Analysis.....	34
4.1. Issues with evaluating impact	34
4.1.1. Operational issues.....	34
4.1.2. Availability of data and evidence	36
4.1.3. 'Most successful outcome'	40
4.2. Processes	42
4.2.1. Engaging woodland owners	42
4.2.2. Supporting owners into active management	43
4.2.3. Stimulating local business and supply chain.....	47
4.3. Looking to the future	48
4.3.1. New technology for managing small woodlands.....	48
4.3.2. Changes to the supply chain.....	50

4.3.3. Changes to woodland owner support services	52
5. Conclusions and recommendations.....	54
6. References.....	58

List of Figures

Figure 1. Multiple cause diagram showing connections between barriers to increased management of English private woodlands	7
Figure 2. Diagram showing the main delivery bodies of the RDPE and the relationship to woodland initiatives.	10
Figure 3. Location of the Local Action Groups across England.	14
Figure 4. Map showing location of the woodland initiatives profiled	19
Figure 5. Diagram showing relationship between ways of working, supporting factors, barriers and outcomes	56

List of Tables

Table 1. Forestry Interventions in England.....	7
Table 2. RDPE measures relevant to forestry.....	11
Table 3. Brief description of selected initiatives	18
Table 4. Organisational structures and costs	20
Table 5. Funding sources for the initiatives profiled.....	22
Table 6. Activities of selected initiatives.....	23
Table 7. Published evaluations of initiatives	37
Table 8. Data on initiatives' contact with owners	40
Table 9. Respondents' views on success	41

Introduction

1.1. Objective

The overall aim of project WC0815 is to build an evidence base that can support future policy decisions aiming to stimulate productive forest management. This will 'help both government and the forestry sector to assess where forestry policies and industry activities could be better targeted, so helping to achieve better value for money in pursuit of the common goals of stimulating increased economic growth, particularly in rural areas, and seeing an increase in what the Independent Panel termed a "woodland culture" across society.' (Defra, 2012, p. 15)

This report is a qualitative social study conducted to address task 1, phase 4:

Review the effectiveness of any current or previous public/private sector activities, promotions or interventions aimed at furthering the use of wood, and in particular English /UK wood in different markets.

To achieve this, the report addresses three objectives:

- 1 Describe the current interventions and their delivery in England through the mechanism of woodland initiatives;
- 2 Evaluate the effectiveness of these initiatives in stimulating productive forest management;
- 3 Identify strengths and weaknesses in these initiatives that may better inform future interventions and policy decisions.

1.1.1. Boundaries of report

This part of the research focuses on interventions at the stages of wood production prior to sale in different markets. The stakeholders identified are private woodland owners and managers, woodland consultants and contractors. These private woodlands are predominantly hardwoods, but also include softwoods.

Interventions in this area have been ongoing for many years, as there is a long recognized issue of under-management of private woodlands in England. The focus of these interventions has shifted over time according to changes in the national forestry strategy and political goals.

We have restricted our research to interventions that seek to stimulate *productive* woodland management, i.e. woodland management that has

the aim of harvesting wood for sale in timber markets. This is not necessarily the same thing as active woodland management where the management goals may be biodiversity or recreation.

Although woodfuel was excluded from the project brief, it is in practice difficult to separate it from the suite of factors that influence management for timber. In recent years there has been a surge of interest in managing woodlands for supplying woodfuel, whether for personal use or for sale. Although this does not appear to boost the timber markets in the short term, there are indications that once woodland owners begin to manage their woodlands actively for fuel they continue to view their woodlands as a productive resource and are more inclined to look for other ways of making the woodland work for them. Furthermore, the thinning process for extracting wood for fuel is likely to result in better quality timber 10-15 years from now, compared with woods which have not been thinned.

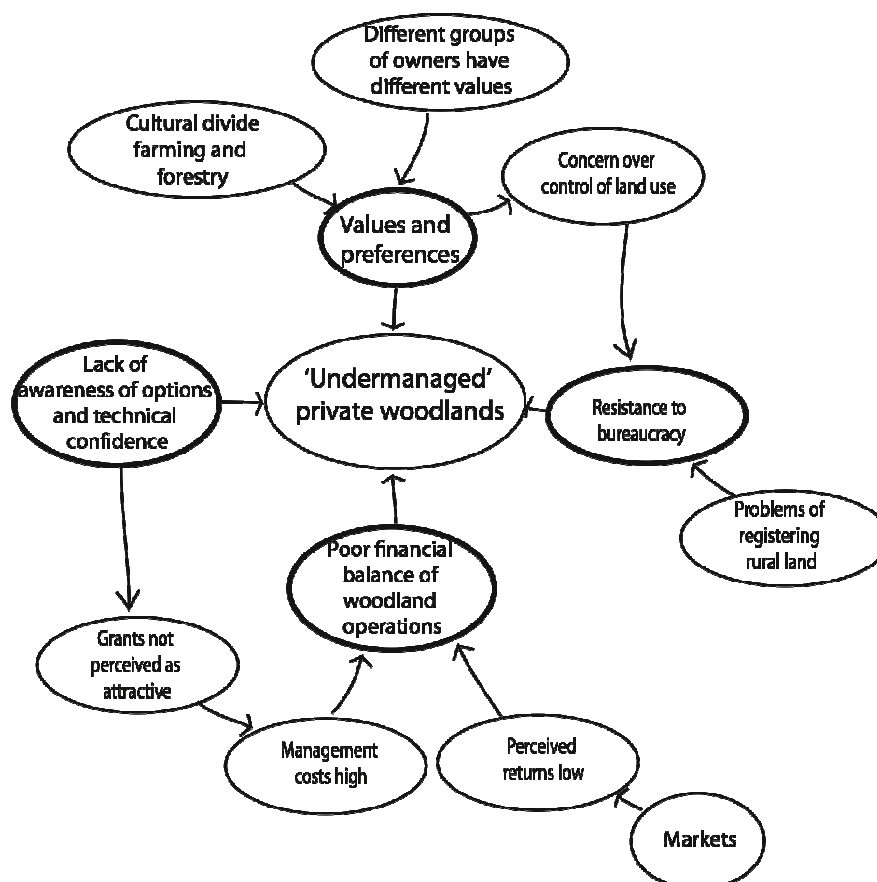
1.2. Addressing barriers and opportunities

Previous reviews (Dandy 2012, Lawrence and Dandy 2010, Robson et al. 2013) provide a consensus that change in land management is constrained by the following:

- a. Values / preferences for other management approaches, or for non-management
- b. Lack of awareness of options, technical confidence and / or access to technical knowledge and advice
- c. Poor financial balance implied in woodland operations
- d. Perceptions of bureaucracy and interference in personal control, implied by engaging with grant system

To better understand the context-specific significance of barriers, and focus on opportunities, it is helpful to consider the linkages between factors rather than simply list all possible factors. Figure 1 shows the relationship between the four main barriers identified in the literature and their contributing barriers. These suggest a number of entry points for intervention, most obviously through the format and information around 100grants, education and advisory services, and better understanding of individual circumstances and objectives.

Figure 1. Connections between barriers to increased management of English private woodlands



1.3. Forest policy interventions in England

Three groups of interventions for environmental goals are introduced with the idea of 'carrots, sticks and sermons' (Collins, Thomas et al. 2003). This allows us to differentiate between interventions that are regulatory, incentive based and those that use information as a form of persuasion.

Table 1. Forestry Interventions in England

Intervention type	Mechanism	Example	Description
Regulations	Legal obligation	Felling licences	A felling licence from the Forestry Commission is required to fell trees.
		Environmental Impact Assessment	Initially for afforestation, but now also deforestation, forest roads and quarries.
Incentives	Grant Schemes	EWGS – Woodland Creation Grant	For help establishing new woodland. (Includes a compensation payment for agricultural income forgone when creating new woodlands on agricultural land.)
		EWGS – Woodland Management Grant	To protect, increase and maintain the area of woodland under sustainable management

Intervention type	Mechanism	Example	Description
		EWGS – Woodland Regeneration Grant	To contribute to the costs of making changes to the composition of woodland within the normal cycle of felling and regeneration.
		EWGS - Woodfuel Woodland Improvement Grant	This grant supports the sustainable production of woodfuel and other timber products
		Capital funding through LAGs and RDAs	Eligible forestry projects are those that improve the economic value of forests through the efficiencies of improved processing and adding value. Eligible items include timber processors, forwarders.
	Fiscal mechanisms ¹	Income and corporation tax	The income and profits from timber sales in woodlands managed commercially are free from both Income and Corporation Tax
		Capital Gains Tax	The gain in value of standing timber, whether from the physical growth of the trees or rises in timber prices, is entirely free from tax, and the sale price or transfer value of the trees is also left out of CGT calculations.
Persuasion	Policy guidance	UK Forestry Standard Guidelines	The reference standard for sustainable forest management in the UK. It is supported by six Guidelines publications that provide advice on how to achieve the UKFS requirements.
	Free / subsidized advice	Woodland initiatives	Practical woodland management advice is available to owners of unmanaged woods
	Campaigns, promotions and information provision	Grown in Britain	Marketing campaign to promote consumer interest in English timber products

Regulations clearly have a strong influence on behaviour being legally binding. Incentives offer another strong tool where the financial incentive is significant for an individual. It is most difficult to assess the impact of persuasive tools but they have the potential to reach a wide audience and affect value shifts in a population.

1.4. Financial incentives: Rural Development Programme England

The primary source of financial incentives for forestry activity in England is the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), which is jointly funded by the EU, through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, and the UK Government. The current RDPE programme

¹ Only 'commercial forests' receive the tax breaks; woodlands therefore need to be managed in accordance with a commercial 'Forest Management Plan' to avoid putting potential tax protections at risk. Smith, S., R. Crabtree, M. Glynn, T. Quick, C. a. Quine, and P. Rowcroft. 2012. *Evidence on Woodland Economy, Woodland Creation and Woodland Management in England. Final Report to the Independent Panel on Forestry*. URS. Available at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel/views/>.

has run from 2007-2013 with a budget of £3.9 billion. The previous programme (ERDP) ran between 2000-2006 with a budget of less than half this amount. Consultation is currently ongoing for the next round of funding.

All the actions, organisations, projects, businesses and individuals featured in this study make use of RDPE funds in one way or another.

In this section we present an overview of how the RDPE underpins these activities, to provide a contextual understanding of the work that follows.

1.4.1. Structure of RDPE

In common with other European countries the aims of the RDPE are met through four funding Axes.

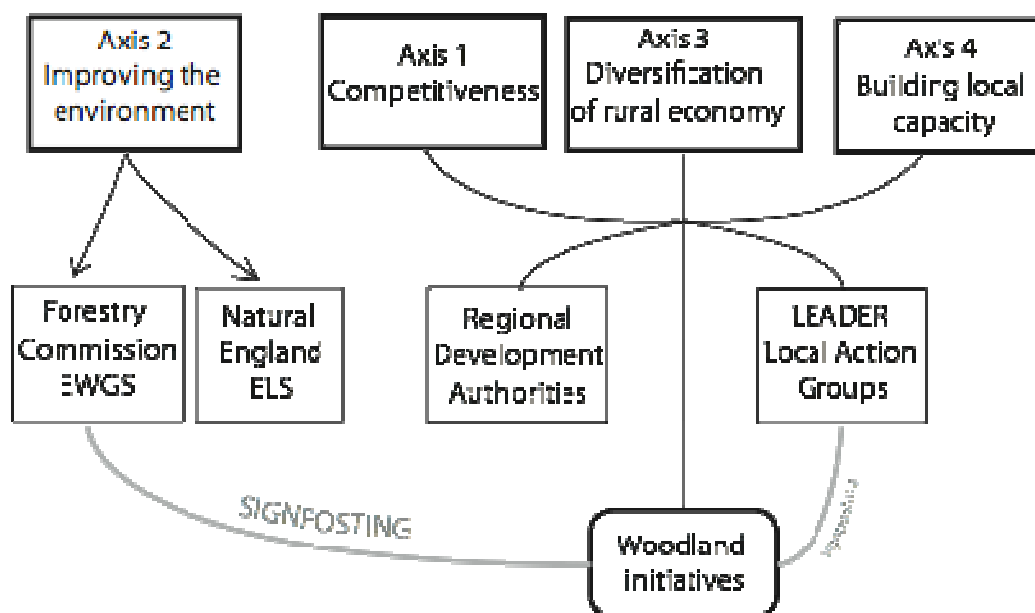
- Axis 1 - Improving the competitiveness of the farming and forestry sectors
- Axis 2 - Improving the environment and the countryside
- Axis 3 - Rural quality of life and diversification of the rural economy.
- Axis 4 – Building local capacity for employment and diversification

The official delivery bodies of these Axes are Forestry Commission England (FCE), Natural England, the Regional Development Authorities (till 2011) and the Local Action Groups (LAGs) under the Leader (Liaison entre actions de développement rural) programme. Third sector organisations have also been active in promoting the uptake of available grants where they are in line with the aims of the organisation. The term 'woodland initiative' has come to be used, to refer to locally led approaches for developing, facilitating, promoting and accessing tools for encouraging sustainable woodland management. In an evaluation report of 2002, such initiatives are not explicitly defined, but are described as follows:

Characteristically these Initiatives offer some or all of a wide range of services from advice, information, training, promotion and support to various points in the wood chain (from owners to contractors and processors). Their primary objective is to encourage sustainable woodland management. These Initiatives are non-statutory organisations and are often funded and steered by a partnership of organisations (Land Use Consultants 2002).

The woodlands covered by such initiatives tend to be small, and broadleaved, primarily because the larger woodlands are more able to access support through commercial enterprises.

Figure 2. Main delivery bodies of the RDPE and the relationship to woodland initiatives.



1.4.2. Objectives of RDPE

Each of these Axes is then subdivided into measures that specify the particular objectives and requirements of each strand of funding. Those that can be used to support woodland management and productive forestry are detailed in table 2.

Table 2. RDPE measures relevant to forestry

Source: (Defra 2007) with examples taken from interview data and initiatives reports.

Measure	Title	Objective	Forestry Example	Level of support
Axis 1. Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sectors				
111	Vocational training and information actions	To raise the overall level of skills in the farming, food2 and forestry sectors as a means of improving the competitiveness of these industries and the contribution they can make to a better environment and healthy and prosperous communities.	Training on managing woodland for wood fuel, sustainable woodland management and wood fuel quality.	
114	Use of advisory services by farmers and forest holders	To improve the sustainable management of neglected woodlands	One-to-one support for landowners and businesses. Grant advice and assistance (including for the planting of new woodland). Forest regulation guidance (e.g. felling licences, habitats regulations).	50 - 80% of the costs of the advice, depending on local need and demand, up to a maximum of 1500 Euro per advisory service
121	Modernisation of agricultural holdings	To improve the economic performance of holdings through better use of production factors,	Provision of woodfuel storage barns on farms or estates could be supported	35% to 50% of eligible costs
122	Improving the economic value of forests	To improve and broaden the economic value of private forests, increase diversification of production, and enhance market opportunities, whilst maintaining sustainable management by supporting investments in forest property or machinery which will in turn help secure the public interest or enhance the provision of public benefits	In forest activities up to and including harvesting can be supported; this could include the purchase of machinery for harvesting and in forest transport and processing	35 to 50% of eligible costs
123	Adding value to agricultural and forestry	To improve the processing and marketing of primary agricultural and forestry products through investment in improved efficiency, renewable	Investments in processing (including chipping), storage, transport and marketing of	30% to 40% of the total eligible project costs. Support under

	products	energy, new technologies and new market opportunities	woodfuel	this measure is subject to a maximum of €200 000 per enterprise over any three-year period
125	Infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture and forestry	The measure will mostly be used on two issues in England: access to forest and woodland, and water management	Access roads to woodland that cannot currently be accessed for harvesting; and the provision of hard standing for storage/drying of roundwood	30% to 60%subject to a maximum of €200 000 per enterprise over any three-year periods
Axis 2. Improving the environment and the countryside				
221	First afforestation of agricultural land	To support the establishment of permanent woodland on agricultural and non-agricultural land through the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS)	Woodland Creation Grant	
222	First afforestation of non-agricultural land	To support the establishment of permanent woodland on agricultural and non-agricultural land through the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS)	Woodland Creation Grant	
225	Forest environment payments.	To increase the area of woodland, particularly that of High Nature Value, that is being managed in a manner that will protect its public interest and enhance the environmental benefits it provides, through voluntary commitments by forest holders.	Woodland Management Grant (WMG).	Properties must have a management plan. £30/ha per year on the eligible area.
227	Support for non-productive investments	To support forest holders for non-remunerative investments where they are necessary to achieve forest-environment commitments and other environmental objectives, or to protect the public interest in the woodland and enhance the public	Woodland Planning Grants (WPG) that contribute to the costs of preparing a woodland management plan	WPG >3ha. £20/ha for the first 100 hectares, £10/ha thereafter, with a minimum payment of £1000.

		benefits it is providing	Woodland Assessment Grants (WAG) 4 types. Woodland Improvement Grants (WIG) that contribute towards the costs of improving the environmental and social values of woodland, and the costs of creating new environmental and social public benefits from woodlands	WAG – 4 types, contributions vary. WIG – 4 types of which Woodfuel WIG most relevant. contributes 60% towards the cost of the work
Axis 3. Improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of the rural economy				
312	Support for the creation and development of micro-enterprises	To support for the creation and development of micro-enterprises with a view to promoting entrepreneurship and creating employment opportunities.	Grant aid towards the costs of capital investment Start-up revenue costs Market research and feasibility studies Marketing support, product development, branding and design costs	Revenue or capital costs to start a new venture with up to £10 000 per business available

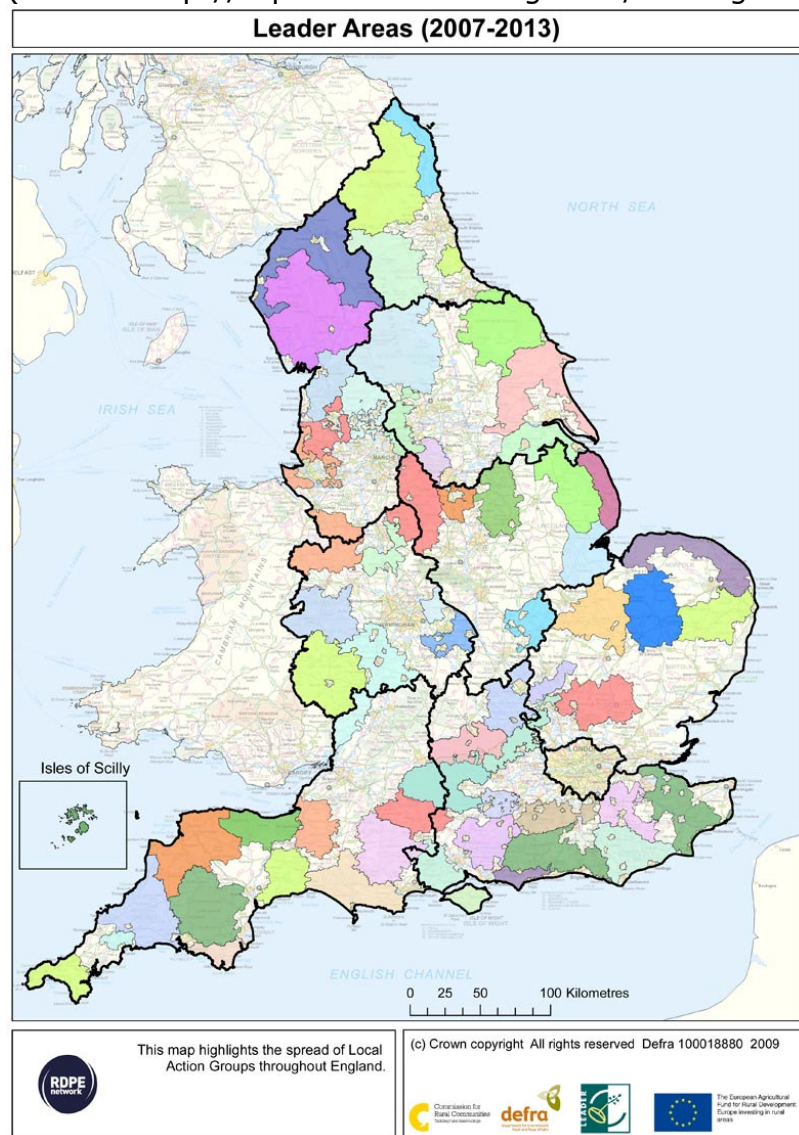
1.4.3. Delivery of RDPE

Various bodies oversee the delivery of the measures outlined above. The suite of grants that constitutes the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS), is delivered by Forestry Commission England (FCE), through Axis 2. Also under Axis 2 is Natural England's delivery of the Environmental Stewardships scheme, which has a more tangential influence on forestry.

When the current round of the RDPE began, the eight regions in England each had a Regional Development Agency responsible for setting regional goals and administering measures under Axes 1, 3 and 4.

Figure 3. Location of the Local Action Groups across England.

(source: <http://rdpenetwork.defra.gov.uk/funding-sources/leader-resources>)



Under the Leader programme, Axis 4 provides funding for community-led delivery of RDPE funding at a local level. Local Action Groups (LAGs) were invited to form, comprising interested volunteers from the public and private sectors. Each LAG developed a Local Development Strategy and competed across each region for a budget to fund projects under this strategy. Although Axis 4 funds the LAGs, they in turn fund capital projects through Axes 1 and 3 and the measures detailed above. The result is a patchwork of groups that does not cover the whole of England (figure 3).

On 1 July 2011, responsibility for the delivery of Axes 1, 3 and 4 was transferred from the RDAs to Defra. The RDAs were dissolved and some staff were integrated into local offices of Defra's new RDPE delivery team (RDT).

Woodland initiatives most commonly play a role in delivery by signposting owners to available funding streams, the EWGS for woodland management grants and the RDAs and LAGs for capital grants. Some RDAs developed specialised streams of funding in line with their objectives. The development of the woodfuel supply chain was supported in this way particularly in the Northeast through 'bioNErgy' programme and in the Northwest through the Rural Carbon Challenge Fund.

Other focused streams of funding through RDPE of relevance to forestry include the **Farming and Forestry Improvement Scheme** (FFIS) which 'is a scheme of support, developed to help farming, forestry and horticultural businesses in England to become more efficient at using resources'² and the **Rural Economy Grant** (REG) that 'provides grants to enable a significant 'game-changing', transformational performance in farm, forestry, tourism, agri-food businesses and micro-businesses in rural areas in England'³. REG supports micro-enterprises in five Rural Growth Areas.

2. How we conducted this study

2.1. Qualitative approach

Our method builds on a series of structured in-depth qualitative interviews to obtain systematic information on the perceptions, experiences and actions / behaviour (woodland management, participation in markets etc.) of relevant stakeholders. The approach is tailored to address the following constraints that characterise research into woodland owners:

- previous reviews have demonstrated the challenge of accessing woodland owners, and the need to obtain insights from other stakeholders, notably agents and contractors;

² <http://rdpenetwork.defra.gov.uk/funding-sources/farm-and-forestry-improvement-scheme>)

³ <http://rdpenetwork.defra.gov.uk/funding-sources/rural-economy-grant>

- the time frame and resources of the project did not allow for sampling of woodland owners;
- a concurrent study was attempting just this in relation to woodland owners' values;
- we were advised that there was a high degree of survey fatigue in the forestry sector.

We chose therefore to research the impact of interventions, through the experiences of staff in woodland initiatives that have been dealing with large numbers of owners over an extended period of time.

There are two stages to this approach:

- 1 Knowledge network combined with snowball sampling, to compile as complete a list as possible of interventions and initiatives;
- 2 In-depth interviews and report analysis to compile case studies of a selected sample of these initiatives.

It would have been methodologically elegant to select a range of initiatives, by systematically sampling RDPE projects. However this was not possible owing to the lack of any centralized database through which to access data on capital grants from Local Action Groups. The RDPE network database has a list of funds allocated by Local Action Groups on its website, but data entry to this is voluntary and far from comprehensive. Each Leader group has its own website and records but compiling this data would be a lengthy process, and with the demise of the RDAs there is little data available on the capital grants awarded through them. Data on the take-up of EWGS grants by region is also difficult to link to regional outreach activities.

2.2. Sample selection

We took as our sampling frame the woodland initiatives that are already part of the Woodland Initiatives Network and which include activities focussed on productive woodland management. All of these initiatives work to engage woodland owners, and some projects also focus on developing community cohesion, green infrastructure, education and health (Woodland Initiatives Network 2007). We supplemented this list with online research and interviews with Forestry Commission Partnerships and Expertise managers from the different regions who were able to add further initiatives and indicate which were most active in the region.

This created a list of 32 initiatives, which are listed in Appendix 2. Of these, seven are no longer active. We prioritised and contacted 18 as most relevant to this study. Of these we interviewed 14, and then selected 10 to profile for the report.

2.3. Interviews

The first round of interviews allowed us to build a picture of what organisations were currently most active in an area and provided the leads for local projects (Appendix 2).

The second round of interviews was with project staff. In each of the initiatives selected we aimed to speak to a key individual who had been with the organisation for some time. Usually we spoke with the person identified as 'project manager'. We in turn contacted owners identified as being innovative with their woodlands.

We developed a list of guide questions for these interviews. A total of 26 interviews were conducted over a ten-week period, by phone, lasting 45-60 minutes. They were then transcribed and coded. Citations remain anonymous. The list of respondents is in Appendix 3 and the guide questions used are in Appendix 4.

2.4. Profiles

Using the guide questions in the interviews allowed us to collect similar data on a range of quite different initiatives. We developed a profile template for presenting this data, to facilitate comparison between initiatives. It includes a standardised description of the initiative along with detail from the interviews on a range of standard themes. Being based largely on the interview data, the profiles presented here represent the perspectives of key individuals. Facts have been verified with other sources where possible and all profiles were returned to the respondents for comment and approval.

These descriptive profiles form the starting point of our analysis. The profiles are found in appendix 1. A brief description of each initiative is provided in table 3.

Table 3. Brief description of selected initiatives

Initiative name	Brief description
Blackdown and East Devon Woodland Association / Woodbiz Chiltern Woodlands Project	The Blackdown and East Devon Woodland Association has overseen several projects in recent years to stimulate productive woodland management. Woodbiz woodlands is a new project continuing from the Working our Woodlands project which ran from November 2009- October 2011. The Chiltern Woodlands Project covers the area around the Chilterns AONB, which spans across four County Councils. The project has been going for over 20 years in different guises and one key individual has been central throughout this time.
Cumbria Woodlands	Cumbria Woodlands has provided advice and support to woodland owners in the Cumbria region for over 20 years. The focus of the most recently funded projects has been the woodfuel supply chain, extending support to contractors and processors.
Heartwoods	Heartwoods is a West Midlands regional initiative managed by Small Woods a not-for-profit organisation with over 2000 members supporting the Woodland and Forest Industries. The Heartwoods project was set up to help all aspects of the woodfuel supply chain in the West Midlands.
Mersey Forest	The Mersey Forest is the largest of England's 12 Community Forests covering 465 square miles. It has an active programme of stimulating market 'pull' in the local woodland sector supported by a post dedicated to this.
Northwoods	Northwoods, and its Yorkshire counterpart Yorwoods, are initiatives working under the umbrella organization, Rural Development Initiatives Ltd (RDI). Supporting the local woodfuel market has been a key activity in recent years.
Oxfordshire Woodland Project	The Oxfordshire Woodland Project is a service for private woodland owners and community groups in Oxfordshire and offers advice, assistance with grants and woodland management skills training. The project has existed for 22 years, in recent years staffed only by the project manager.
Ward Forester	The Ward Forester project connects owners who are interested in having their woodlands managed, with consultants ('Ward Foresters') who are willing to take on a group of clients and offer their services at a group rate making use of the economies of scale that the situation presents.
Woodfuel East	Woodfuel East facilitates the take-up of woodfuel related capital grants in the East of England. The project includes support for harvesting/ processing, forwarding, haulage and processing equipment to produce woodchip and firewood logs, storage and drying facilities and hard standing/access tracks within woodland.
Woodnet	Woodnet is primarily a website with an active small-ads type directory called 'woodlots'. Currently there are no paid staff members but the initiative has had project funding in the past and employed staff, and would do so again should the right funding be found. The initiative has generated two other projects that are both now self-sustaining and independent of the initiative: Weald Woodfair, and Woodland Enterprise Centre

3. Findings

3.1. Features of initiatives

In this section we summarise the initiatives profiled in this report, in order to identify commonalities and differences between the projects.

3.1.1. Coverage of initiatives

The location of the initiatives profiles is shown in figure 4.

Figure 4. Map showing location of the woodland initiatives profiled



Although we include initiatives from the five FC regions, overall coverage is variable:

You've got pockets of good practice across the country but it's really patchy, it's not consistent across the country [2]

Ultimately it comes down to a few people who are sufficiently interested, ... individuals who are looking beyond their own benefit but to the benefit of the sector as a whole and that's not always forthcoming. [21]

Two regions are less well represented in this research (East, and East Midlands). In the East of England there is the FC-initiated Woodfuel East, but no locally-led initiatives. One respondent attributed a lack of local activity in the East Midlands to the presence of the National Forest.

Probably because the majority of the effort is put into the national forest, the National Forest was established and that was where all the effort and funding has gone, whereas elsewhere, other initiatives were supported. [21]

3.1.2. Project structures

Only three of the ten initiatives have a formalised legal structure (table 4). All three are registered charities and two are also companies limited by guarantee; one is a not-for-profit company.

Table 4. Organisational structures and costs

Initiative name	Date started	Staff numbers	Legal structure	Annual running costs
Blackdown Hills Woodland Association /Woodbiz	1998/2011	1 part time	None	no data
Chilterns Woodland Project	1989	1	Company limited by guarantee and registered charity	£100k
Cumbria Woodlands	1991	5	Unincorporated association	No data
Heartwoods	2009	4	None	Around £100k
Mersey Forest	1994	15	None	No data
Northwoods	1998	2	Unincorporated association	£80k (2013-14 budget)
Oxfordshire Woodland Project	1991	1	Registered charity	£45k
Ward Forester	2009	3 part time =1 full time	None	£50k
Woodfuel East	2008	4	Unincorporated association	FC provides £50k annually for non-eligible staff costs. Other staff costs met by RDPE
Woodnet	1996	none	Company limited by guarantee (not-for-profit) and an educational charity	None

Other initiatives are not separately constituted but are hosted by other organisations including:

- FCE (Woodfuel East),
- East Devon AONB (Woodbiz),
- Local Authorities (Cumbria Woodlands, Mersey Forest, Oxfordshire Woodland Project, Ward Forester),
- An umbrella charity or not-for-profit company (Northwoods – by Rural Development Initiative; Heartwoods – by Small Woods Association)

Those projects that are not legal entities still have a structure:

The project is unincorporated but it does have a structure - a set of objectives that are reviewed by the steering group [5]

When looking at how long the organisations have been operating, the initiatives fall in to two distinct groups. There are recent projects, which have begun within this current round of RDPE funding, and long enduring initiatives many of which have been going since the 1990s.

Most initiatives are small, with fewer than five staff; four rely on just one member of staff, and one currently has no paid staff. The Mersey Forest is a larger organisation, with 15 staff members, and has been able to dedicate a post to stimulating markets for timber and woodfuel for the past seven years.

3.1.3. Funding

The funding sources for these initiatives are shown in table 5. Eight of the ten initiatives rely on RDPE funding. Exceptions are Oxfordshire Woodland Project and Ward Forester, which both rely on Local Authority funding, but signpost owners to RDPE through the England Woodland Grant Scheme. Three other initiatives are supported by Local Authority contributions but all expressed concerns about the decline in such funding and are looking to other sources in the future. Funding issues were highlighted as a major problem for many of the initiatives and are discussed further below.

Table 5. Funding sources for the initiatives profiled

Initiative	Funding sources
Blackdown Hills Woodland Association/Woodbiz	Woodbiz: RDPE through 'Making it Local' and FC through Woodland Carbon Task Force. Association supported by members fees (£15pa)
Chilterns Woodland Project	RDPE Grants Service Level Agreements with Local Authorities Heritage Lottery Fund (supported 'Special Trees and Woodlands' project 2005-2010) Fees and donations
Cumbria Woodlands	Cumbria County Council, European Social Fund (ESF), Forestry Commission England Green Ways to Work (regional project funded by ESF) Lake District National Park Authority, Natural England Woodland Trust
Heartwoods	RDPE through Advantage West Midlands (the RDA for West Midlands)
Mersey Forest	RDPE Local Authorities EU Objective One funding (2000-2006) Private sector funding (e.g. United Utilities)
Northwoods	RDPE Small amounts of FC funding for certain events
Oxfordshire Woodland Project	Four Local Authorities Charging for training events
Ward Forester	Local Authority (Devon county council) Forestry Commission England
Woodfuel East	RDPE Forestry Commission England
Woodnet	RDPE Commercial Ventures

3.1.4. Mechanisms used

The initiatives are broadly similar as they were selected on that basis. All aim to support productive management of woodland in their area. Most of them also have the wider goal of stimulating the timber and woodfuel supply chains in the rural economy. The mechanisms used by initiatives to achieve these goals are summarised in table 6.

Most initiatives adopt a broad range of activities to achieve their aims. Here we review how initiatives work differently with differing stakeholders.

Table 6. Activities of selected initiatives

Stakeholder	Activity	Blackdown Hills Woodbiz	Chiltern Woodlands Project	Cumbria Woodlands	Heartwoods	Mersey Forest	Northwoods	Oxfordshire Woodland Project	Ward Forester	Woodfuel East	Woodnet
Woodland owners:	Engagement	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	Advice – woodland management	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
	Advice – Business related			Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	
	Grant aid or support with grants applications		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	
	Training	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y
	Direct management of woods	Y				Y		Y	Y		
	New planting	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y			
Contractors and Processors:	Advice – Business related	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	
	Training			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y
	Grant aid or support with grants applications	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	
Buyers of wood products:	Promoting local brands	Y				Y	Y		Y	Y	Y
	Events (wood fairs etc)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y				Y
	Networking across the chain	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Work with woodland owners

1. All the initiatives except for Woodnet are involved with engaging woodland owners, and providing advice to woodland owners on issues of woodland management. Several projects offer this advice 'in-house' whilst others tender the work out to private consultants (Cumbria woodlands, Heartwoods, Ward Forester).
2. Business advice is less widely offered. Woodfuel East is the only project to have staff dedicated to this as business development advisers.
3. Signposting to grant aid is a key tool offered by the initiatives (except Woodnet and Ward Forester, though the private ward foresters may well do this). Most typically this is signposting to the Forestry Commission's Woodland Management Grants in the first instance, but also includes signposting to capital grant schemes under the RDPE, through Leader LAGs or specific regional funds such as bioNErgy

in the North East. Woodfuel East is the only initiative to directly administer capital grants.

4. Training for woodland owners is seen as a key component of the work of many of these initiatives. Ward Forester is the only exception, but uses 'walk and talk' information events and has taken a study tour to Alsace Lorraine in Germany to generate interest among woodland owners.

Work with woodland contractors and processors

5. Work with woodland contractors and processors is less consistent as many initiatives have only started to do this in recent years. Support is similar in kind to that given to woodland owners; training, signposting to grant schemes, and business advice.

Work with buyers of woodland products

6. Networking is a key activity of all the projects, and is achieved through a variety of mechanisms. Local knowledge of the woodfuel supply chain is mentioned repeatedly as underpinning success in this. The internet is increasingly being used as a tool for networking, with woodlots small ads and other projects which host directories of local wood businesses (Heartwoods, Cumbria woodlands, Northwoods). Email newsletters are used by all initiatives to reach contacts already on their database.
7. Seven out of the 10 initiatives run larger scale events specifically aiming to reach a public audience, such as the firewood fair organized by Northwoods. (Also Blackdown Hills Association Woodfair, Weald Woodfair, and Take a Bough, Mersey Forest). Other networking events include day conferences such as the Heartwoods event in April 2013 'Putting commerciality at the heart of your woodlands'.

3.1.5. Productive management and woodfuel

Although timber, not woodfuel, is the main focus of this research, it is clear that the woodfuel market is a key influence on the path from non-management to productive management. Six of the 10 initiatives profiled here have focussed directly on stimulating woodland management for woodfuel. The market for woodfuel has changed significantly in recent years, with changes in oil prices and the introduction of the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI).

The woodfuel market is particularly significant to small-scale woodland owners as it is only profitable at a local scale (woodfuel is unprofitable to transport large distances) and it makes use of low quality wood. Many initiatives have used the emerging woodfuel market, as a tool for engaging woodland owners and starting them on the path to viewing their woodlands as a productive resource.

Wood fuel has been the big market opportunity and we see it as a really great first step at getting woodlands that haven't been managed, into management. [2]

Some of the smaller owners are new to managing their woodlands and because of the increases of firewood prices and the round wood prices of the last couple of years this has given them the stimulus to look at the economic side of things whereas previously they might not have done that. [10]

One of the other vital elements of marketing is wood fuel, because wood fuel is in essence talking about the economic element of woodland management. [14]

Several of the initiatives made use of specific funds supporting capital investment into small-scale contractors and woodfuel processing micro businesses. It is argued that this funding has been significant in stimulating the whole supply chain associated with woodfuel, as the market is not yet well established to operate independently.

The LAGs have invested in a lot of wood fuel businesses that are creating the demand for the woods to be managed. So that's the ideal scenario that you want to get to that you have the market pull that makes it viable for people to manage their woodlands. We're not quite there yet. There's not quite enough money to make it work without capital investment into access or equipment [2]

A well-developed wood fuel supply chain is seen to strengthen to the timber supply chain for two reasons. Firstly woodfuel creates a market for waste products:

My whole timber business has been greatly helped in past 3 or 4 years by the growth of the woodchip business. When the demand for woodchip started I actually had a barn full of it because I was making it for myself. And so I picked up customers very quickly, so from selling 30 tonnes of woodchip in the first year I'm going to sell 2000 tonnes this year. And that's helped my overall woodland management project hugely, hugely, because I can sell my rubbish, which is what I could never do before [17]

What our experience of doing this has given us is the confidence to say well there is no minimum size, the market for chip board has a 7cm minimum size and therefore everything under 7cm or 10cm if you've got a lazy harvester operator is left on the forest floor. [22]

Secondly, thinning for woodfuel can have a positive knock-on effect on the quality of remaining timber:

Woodfuel can produce the economic rationale for thinning and also get them used to manage their woodlands. So in 10-15 years time they have the skills in place to do that and cope with it [1]

The other angle is when you get people to start thinking about woodfuel they go into woodlands they haven't been able to touch for years, they then start thinking oh that piece is too good to burn. [8]

These positive effects are difficult to quantify, and may not be measurable for some time. The economic justification for supporting the development of woodfuel markets is further complicated by the fact that woodfuel is used by local people to meet their own fuel needs as a substitute for oil.

It's difficult to provide the categoric evidence so it was a sound logic chain that by increasing local production of wood fuel to replace oil, instead of money going to international oil companies and therefore disappearing out from the rural economy, it is actually staying in the rural economy because it is spent locally, although it may be only supplying their own wood, at least they then have more money to spend in the local economy because it's not going elsewhere. [21]

The incentive provided by the woodfuel market has therefore helped some owners to overcome key barriers to management including lack of knowledge, lack of interest and bureaucratic obstacles.

3.1.6. Problems encountered

3.1.6.1 Funding issues

Problems securing funding are the main obstacle faced by these initiatives. All of our respondents wanted to discuss this with the exception of Woodfuel East which receives core funding from the FC. The main issues are:

1. General decline in funding:

Funding at the moment is an absolute disaster because the fundraiser who works for XXX would say that once upon a time she was successful with one in three applications now its one in thirteen just because there's generally less funds about. [20]

2. Decline in funding from Local Authorities:

We've suffered as a result of the general reduction in government funding, we've had to reduce the number of staff and cut activity levels back, which is a bit unfortunate, given the current government priorities around the amount of woodland being brought into management [18]

3. Insufficient sources of core funding:

We are looking for funds that recognize that admin and organizational funds are part of the success of making these things happen. Without core support it's very difficult to run the projects successfully. We had an awkward situation with Leader where the core support was capped at 10% and it costs substantially more than 10% to run the project. So we felt the charity was actually subsidizing Leader which was awkward and difficult [25]

4. Gaps in funding between RDPE programmes:

All the woodland initiatives we work with, they are all on not very safe sustainable ground at the moment. I'm worried what happens in the transition between this programme and the next, because I'm worried we'll lose a lot of good staff [2]

3.1.6.2 Other issues

Related to issues of funding are issues around admin time and the bureaucracy involved in sourcing funds and reporting on projects.

Projects that outsourced woodland advice to private consultants commented that firstly, finding sufficient numbers of local, skilled consultants was an obstacle and secondly, ensuring that they followed through on their commitments to woodland owners had become an onerous task.

3.2. Experiences with RDPE

Since the RDPE funding in its many forms provides the backbone of much of the work of the initiatives it is interesting to consider what our analysis of initiatives reveals about the effectiveness of the RDPE programme. In this section we look at the experiences of the initiatives with the RDPE framework.

Being a European driven programme RDPE has had to develop generic structures that are adaptable to local contexts. Many of the issues raised by our respondents stem from this mismatch between top-down structures and bottom-up processes.

3.2.1. Working with LAGs

The LAGs set their strategies early in the RDPE period, and it seemed that forestry made it onto the agenda only where there was an interested advocate in a region who was aware of the process.

As to why forestry is or isn't included, that very much depended I think on who decided to get involved in the local action groups and put together the project plan and then I think forestry input to that was very patchy. It wasn't the role of the Forestry Commission to feed into those because we were on the assessment panel for the programmes that were

submitted ,so we had to be very clear that we weren't involved in the preparation of those programmes and so in places the forestry sector did get involved, in others they didn't. [11]

It would be nice for our woodland officers to be able to sit on those groups and get involved but it's just impractical, so we can only ever do it through other initiatives or agencies, who might be involved [11]

The geographical division of the LAGs followed EU stipulations about size of population that did not always suit the local area.

There is talk about Leader being across the country with LAGs across the country and we've ended up with two LAGs in xxshire that were put in there by Europe because of the maximum population, when ideally we'd have had one group for the whole of xxxshire, and that's how really its operated in practice. We had to artificially divide xxxshire into two. [2]

We have been involved in several Leader groups [names 3] but to be honest our programme cut across their areas. [20]

There is also some confusion about what LAGs are allowed to fund in relation to forestry.

I run a local action group. LAGs don't really fund forestry activity because it's all through the RDPE main programme we are not meant to fund production of wood. We funded four projects through my LAG but it was not about production it was about cooperative working. [26]

There's been a bit of to-ing and fro-ing about whether we are meant to fund equipment for forestry. Some of the LAGs fund the whole of RDPE but here we don't. They are funding Axis 1 outputs, we are only allowed to fund Axis 3. [26]

3.2.2. Bureaucratic challenges

The requirements for capital grants under RDPE are stricter than some previous grants. For example applicants are required to produce a full business plan based on actual costs rather than the older FC grants which were based on standard costs. This means applicants have to get quotes and facts to support their application.

The FC grants in the past used to be based on standard costs. We work on actual so you need to get quotes; you need to get facts. That is different. A lot of the contractors are not used to using computers and email [10]

This issue was a big one for the initiatives themselves as well as the people they work with.

We try to shield the participants from the bureaucracy. The paperwork requirements under RDPE particularly for externally funded projects are

very high. We have to do concept applications, full applications, approved by our steering committee, countersigned by Defra...

The bureaucracy was so much higher than anticipated that we ended up having to subcontract the training course. Paperwork takes 30/40% of our time. [10]

3.2.3. Training requirements

The majority of training funded through RDPE went through large contracts with Lantra, the UK's Sector Skills Council for land-based and environmental industries. Some initiatives found the RDPE offer restrictive, and unsuited to the needs of the forestry sector.

It's been very late in coming in the whole programme the training side of things, there's definitely a big need for that in the coming programme as well. The training measures, you can't do one-to-one training, that's why you need the advisory measures as well. You do need to have quite targeted specialized training. Sometimes they don't run training unless they can get 25 people and that's never going to work financially. [2]

I had a piece of funding to run some workshops and do some information sheets. Unfortunately the LEADER rules meant that I couldn't end up doing all the bits in the original application. The small print was so great that it stopped it being delivered. [5]

One respondent felt that the training his organisation offered independently of RDPE was better suited to the woodland owners.

Because we are operating locally and we don't have to have MPC or Lantra standards we can say 'what really interests you' and I will skew the day according to what my group needs [5]

3.2.4. Eligibility issues

In the current programme (2007-2013) capital grants were only available to micro enterprises. Many forestry businesses are on this scale but some, although larger, could have also benefitted from support.

We can only support micro enterprises currently not small-scale businesses so somebody has exactly 10 staff members we can no longer support them. Particularly on estates where they might have a lot of low skilled labour [10]

This is being addressed in the next round of RDP funding.

3.2.5. Poor take-up of certain funds

Certain measures have not been made full use of in the forestry sector.

The cooperation measure hasn't worked well which is really sad because cooperation and networks is a big opportunity that hasn't been realized. Marketing is another thing that the timber and forestry industry is notoriously bad at. We should be much more proactive at marketing timber as a sustainable product. [2]

The advisory function of smaller organisations was intended to be supported through RDPE measures 114 and 115. Some organizations were able to access funding for their advisory activities directly from measures though there were issues with this that emerged in our interviews.

The advisory services measure 114 we've used in Cumbria. It hasn't been particularly easy to make it work. We've also used a bit of 115, which was for setting up advisory services, but you had to be setting up something which was different from what you were already doing. ... and most places in the country didn't even take-up that measure, because it had to be additional from what was currently provided. [2]

There are other RDP funds directly from Defra now, you've got FFISM you've got REG but they've been very poorly taken up by the forestry sector again because you don't have the facilitation. Apart from going to the bank, there's not a lot for rural businesses. So I think the RDP is really important for small scale rural development but it's quite important how it's delivered. [2]

3.3. Experiences of barriers

Returning to our analysis of barriers introduced in 1.2, we see support for the main barriers expressed in our interviews.

a. Values / preferences for other management approaches, or for non-management

The vast majority of farmers aren't particularly interested in managing their woodlands. Farmers are getting more and more specialized, gone are the days of mixed farmers, now they are pig farmers or dairy farmers so to expect them to specialize and then expect them to go off and manage their woodlands is in most cases just not going to happen. [1]

b. Lack of awareness of options, technical confidence and / or access to technical knowledge and advice

There's always going to be those who don't see the woodlands they might have as an asset or they don't want any body else telling them what to

do with their land. But I think a lot of people don't understand the asset they have and the opportunities, so there's still a big communication side of things. [2]

c. Poor financial balance implied in woodland operations

I am really, really disillusioned with the whole idea of long term rotational forestry producing good quality saw logs. Its just rubbish, it never makes any money at all. I've just sold 4/5 acres of western red cedar (Thuja plicata), growing for 40 years and my father spent all sorts of money planting and protecting at the beginning and net, after my harvesting costs and replanting costs I'd be surprised if I'd made a pound out of it. [17]

Economic return is a funny thing with woodlands. You can make money over one or two years and end up with other costs a number of years afterwards. [9]

d. Resistance to perceived bureaucracy and interference in personal control, implied by engaging with grant system

It's all off-putting for the owners. Some of the owners have walked away because they don't want to be on the rural land register. [26]

We worked for Defra under the RDPE giving specialist advice and guidance to woodland agents. It meant that the applicants had to do a complete business plan. The process for businesses was a lot more bureaucratic and we saw a large drop off in the number of successful applicants. [7]

In relation to bureaucratic barriers, many respondents discussed the **paperwork process** of the grant applications as the biggest off-putting factor to woodland owners and contractors. This had two elements, taking up owner's time and daunting those who weren't familiar with form filling.

I think what puts them off from going further than the advisory visit is the number of bits of paper that they have to fill in and the hoops they have to jump through. That's more of a barrier I think than people not wanting to do anything. [2]

A lot of the contractors are not used to using computers and email and we've discovered that quite a significant proportion of the people we've worked with are dyslexic. We think a lot of people end up in forestry because they want to be out in the woods because they don't want to do paperwork. Of 96 applications over 10/15 people were dyslexic. [10]

Some of the barriers mentioned repeatedly by our respondents were different from those highlighted in the literature.

Access to smaller woodlands is a recognised barrier, which limits the profitability of such woodlands (Yeomans and Hemery, 2010). We found this was mentioned repeatedly.

In our region accessibility to woodlands is a big issue. In fact I would say that you could be facing that situation that up to 30% of woodlands are uneconomic to manage because there is poor access to them and poor topography [20]

I think the one area where there is a role for support is to improve the vehicle access to woodland, so that at least management can become economically viable through mechanisation [21]

But because half the woodlands in XXXshire haven't been managed very much in a long time, a lot of farm woodlands were planted 30 years ago and haven't been touched since. Access is a big issue. [2]

RDPE does make provision for funding roads into woodlands under measure 125 but uptake has been slow. Woodfuel East have funded only 11 infrastructure projects under measure 125, and only five of these have included improving road access.

Another barrier to profitable management that emerged was the **complexity and opacity in the timber supply chain**. Some respondents pointed out that there are a lot of middlemen in the timber selling process and a corresponding lack of transparency.

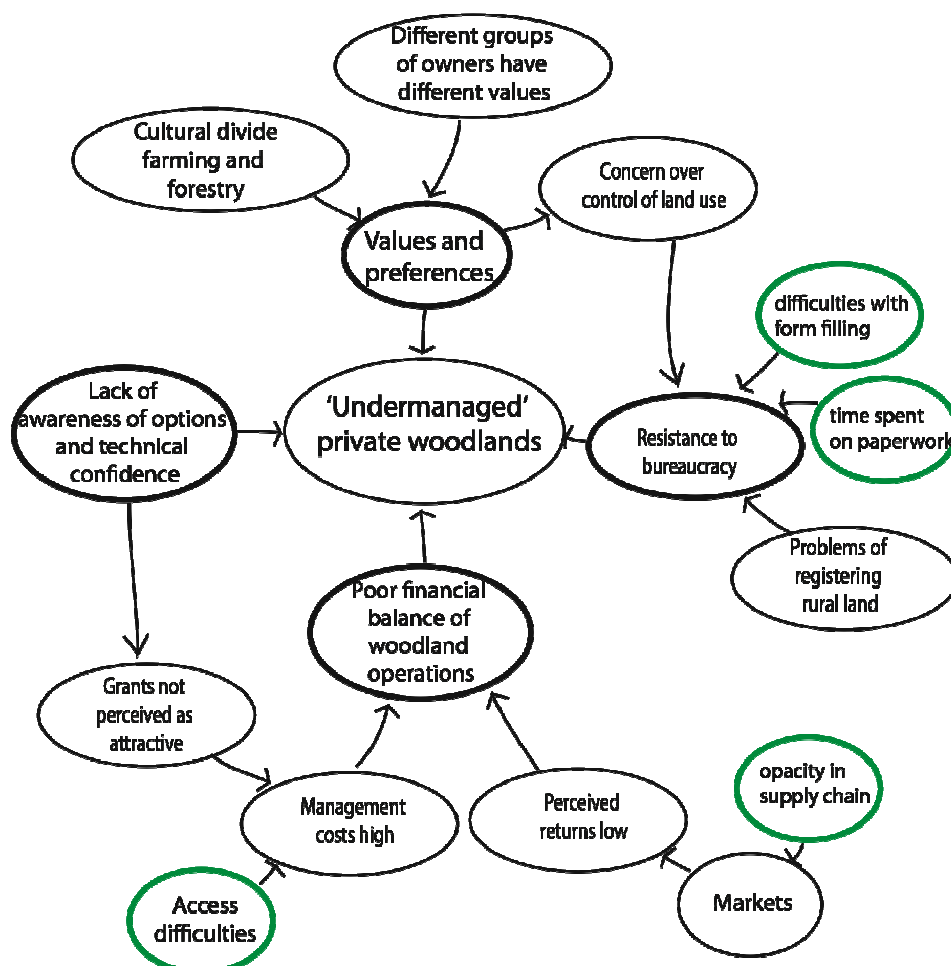
There are a lot of middlemen and that is eating into the profits. Their profit was made on ignorance and that secrecy means that there is not a lot of open-ness. [25]

One respondent suggested that part of the issue was lack of communication between the different parts of the forestry sector.

In forestry we have a tendency to say forestry stops at the forest gate. And the wood processing sector they are looking at wood as a commodity, they are not too worried about where it comes from. And there are very few people straddling the two to say we want to use the market to 'increase the demand for locally grown timber'. [25]

Some of the sawmillers down here do specialise in it [local timber] but they don't have a champion so if somebody wants locally grown timber they don't know where to go. It's the whole thing about forestry, nobody knows where to go to, nobody knows whom to turn to, there's no central thing. [13]

Figure 5. Diagram showing barriers to increased management emerging from our study



One earlier report picked up on the issue of trust between woodland owners and contractors but that was not mentioned directly by our respondents. Indirectly, the Ward Forester project addresses this issue by acting as a trusted go-between between the woodland owners and the consultants.

In the light of these findings we have added to our initial diagram showing barriers (Figure 5).

3.4. Summary of section 3

Section 3 presented comparative data on the main features of the woodland initiatives profiled. Greater depth is found in the profiles themselves in appendix 1. It was seen that:

- The initiatives have similar goals and ways of working

- Increasingly initiatives are working to support the all sectors of the timber supply chain.
- The woodfuel supply chain is an integral part of the work to engage woodland owners.
- The initiatives are increasingly reliant on RDPE funds, and issues with funding are their biggest obstacles.

Section 3 also detailed specific issues with the experience of RDPE funding. It emerged that:

- Working with LAGs presented some challenges as well as opportunities.
- The bureaucracy associated with RDPE funding was an issue both for initiatives and those they were trying to support to access grants.
- Certain eligibility issues will be addressed in the next round of RDPE funds
- Uptake of the different measures was patchy and could be improved by greater facilitation.

The literature analysis of barriers was supported by our study, and several barriers emerged as more prominent than previously thought.

4. Analysis

4.1. Issues with evaluating impact

4.1.1. Operational issues

The objective of this research was to assess the effectiveness of current interventions aimed at stimulating productive forest management. These interventions are delivered in part through initiatives. The effectiveness of these initiatives has two components; the *outcomes* of the project, both quantitative and qualitative, and the *process* of achieving these outcomes. Because it is often difficult to attribute a successful outcome to a single cause, a focus on process can also help participants to communicate what worked well.

Our respondents raised several issues with assessing outcomes and impact of forestry initiatives.

A. Time delay between advice or training given and take-up of grants (e.g. woodland owners and Woodland Management Grants)

'The problem with outcomes is that from advising someone to getting them to work in their woodlands can take a year, and we are still doing advice.' [14]

B. Indirect support: Some of the services offered by initiatives are only indirectly related to woodland management and the tangible outcomes such as grant uptake or harvesting timber.

It's difficult to measure because their activity has been, in many cases, indirectly related to woodland management in that it's been supporting the sector through provision of low cost training and advice and other forms of business support, rather than directly involved in woodland management per se. So it's very difficult to say but I would say it's been an important sector support and we would have struggled to manage without it. [18]

C. Attributing causality: There is no data held by the FC that can link take-up of Woodland Management Grants to activities of a particular initiative.

'The business stuff complicates it. The capital grants come from Leader but we've helped them access those grants, so it's connecting two sources of money.' [14]

These findings are supported by a rare external evaluation of forestry initiatives. This was a comparative evaluation of two rural development projects supported by FCE from 2002-2005: Forest Futures in Cumbria and South West Forest in Devon and Cornwall (PACEC 2006). The analysis was unusual in attempting a cost-effectiveness appraisal of the projects. They were able to show that for South West Forests an 'impressive range of impacts and outputs have been achieved at a (gross) project cost of £1,011,362 with grants provided of £3.068m' (PACEC 2006, p7). Forest Futures (gross) project cost was £415,558 and the total grants secured through the project came to £1,092,717 so their leverage of external grants may seem lower but their objectives were wider. The report highlighted similar challenges in evaluating such projects:

- The problem posed by **external factors** – positive and negative externalities hard to measure (e.g. benefits of forest access by users)
- **Lack of core data** - It has been problematic to access centralised, up-to date data on woodland improvement and new planting grants.
- **Diversity of beneficiaries** – made surveying difficult especially as different beneficiaries benefited in different ways - many did not experience any economic impact but felt significant quality of life improvements (e.g. health walkers in SWF)
- **Qualitative Impacts** - Many of the most significant impacts on people living in these areas have been qualitative. Because it is more difficult to apply a measure to these impacts, some observers may underestimate these impacts. (PACEC 2006).

4.1.2. Availability of data and evidence

The evidence of impact of initiatives could take several forms. Data on quantities of timber harvested would be the most straightforward, but only a couple of initiatives that work directly with owners were able to offer any figures on this, and only at a very small scale. Data on take-up of grants can also be taken as a proxy for numbers of woodlands engaged in active management though do not necessarily indicate productive forestry.

4.1.2.1 Data on grant uptake

Data on EWGS take-up by region was made available to us by FCE but did not enable us to ascertain numbers of new grants taken up in each region as we had hoped. The reason for this is that each grant (e.g. the Woodland Management Grant) lasts for five years. In the reported figures the same holding is therefore marked as a beneficiary of the grant in each of the five years. Furthermore activity under measures 225 (WMG) and 227 (WIG, WAG, WPG) may well be undertaken in successive years on the same piece of woodland so the figures cannot be accumulated to assess the total area of woodland being managed.

One respondent felt that the impact of the local woodland initiative would be registered as significant in the EWGS figures but reiterated the difficulties of demonstrating links:

There's been quite a big increase this year in grant applications. In fact in xxxshire there's been about a three-fold increase this year. If you compare what we've got in the pipeline at the moment compared with what we had in the pipeline this time last year, I think we can reasonably in part ascribe that to the extension type activity that there's been, with woodland management advice and support for training and the like that xxx initiative and others have been providing. There's always a lag effect so its hard to be totally confident about cause and effect but there does seem to have been a response in terms of grant applications. [18]

Similar issues arise when trying to assess data on uptake of capital grants through RDPE via the LAGs. There is no centralized database through which we could access data on capital grants from Local Action Groups. The RDPE network database has a list on its website, though inputting to this is voluntary and it is far from comprehensive. Each Leader group has its own website and records but compiling this data would be a lengthy process. Similarly with the demise of the RDAs there is insufficient data available on the capital grants awarded through them.

I don't think there is any better source apart from going direct to all the various local action groups, I'm not aware that as of yet, there's any collation of all that data, the biggest problem that we have with regard to local action groups is they don't have to report back to the centre until the whole programme is finished [21]

I think probably the national problem is their electronic management system doesn't make it very easy to work out which of the forestry related RDPE projects and the various strands of RDPE, so it's quite difficult for them to go back it seems and pick out all the forestry ones [11]

4.1.2.2 Project evaluations

The Ward Forester project is the only initiative profiled here, that has been evaluated upon completion. Heartwoods had a mid-term evaluation and is due to be evaluated in 2013. These projects have been evaluated because they were time-bound projects that included a budget for evaluation in their initial plans. In the same way, Mersey Forest and Cumbria Woodlands have had earlier projects evaluated (see table 5). An external evaluation of RDPE in Cumbria, including Cumbria Woodlands, has recently started, led by Newcastle University and Rose Regeneration.

The last review of woodland initiatives as a group was in 2002 (Land Use Consultants, 2002).

Table 7. Published evaluations of initiatives

Initiative	Evaluation?	Reference
Blackdown Hills Woodland Association/Woodbiz	None	
Chilterns Woodland Project	Annual report published internally	Chiltern Woodlands Project, 2013
Cumbria Woodlands	Earlier project Forest Futures was evaluated in 2006 Ongoing evaluation of the Leader programme in Cumbria to include in-depth look at Cumbria Woodlands contribution in this (Newcastle University and Rose Regeneration)	PACEC, 2006
Heartwoods	Mid-term evaluation done in 2009	Resources for Change, 2010
Mersey Forest	Evaluated as part of national evaluation of Community Forests in 2005 Evaluation of economic contribution of Mersey Forest's Objective One European funding 2009	Land Use Consultants and SQW Ltd, 2005 Regeneris Consulting, 2009
Northwoods	None	
Oxfordshire Woodland Project	None	
Ward Forester	Evaluated 2013	Hart, 2013
Woodfuel East	None	
Woodnet	None	

Of the published evaluations the Ward Forester evaluation concludes that 'the project has achieved the majority of its aims and outputs in a timely manner' (Hart 2013). The project impacts and achievements can be summarised as:

- Database of 157 engaged woodland owners
- 3700ha of woodland mapped
- 80 woodland owners registered for management through a ward forester, 48 currently engaged.
- Six wards established, led by a forestry consultant
- Grant applications supported for:
 - 20 individual woodland management plans and a joint plan for 13 woodlands;
 - Access improvements in six woodlands and woodfuel extraction preparation in 8;
 - Woodland improvement activities in three woodlands and several felling licenses.

One outcome that surprised the project organisers was that several larger woodlands on estates wanted to get involved.

Some of the estates have their productive side, and that's not the side they are looking at for Ward Forester, but they have other woodlands that they've forgotten about. This is what surprised us. It's undermanaged woodlands, that's why people come to us. [13]

The mid term evaluation of Heartwoods aimed to assess what benefits the project was bringing aside from its contractual targets. Some of the economic benefits highlighted include:

- Helping woodland owners to think about and understand the business opportunities offered by their woodland, and giving them information about potential routes to realise these benefits.
- Signposting woodland owners to a variety of grant funding sources.
- Helping woodland owners with their applications for funding.
- Helping small business owners to review their businesses, their business needs, their business practices and the opportunities for business development.
- Making connections between small woodland owners and other businesses e.g. firewood supply businesses.

Other benefits noted in the evaluation include:

- Providing significant support to one of the nine themes within the Regional Forestry Framework, i.e. woodland and forest industry sector.
- Helping public bodies and government departments to meet objectives and deliver on objectives, e.g. FCE and Natural England delivering EWGS and ES respectively.
- The relationships that have built up and strengthened between Heartwoods partner organisations.
- New people becoming involved in the woodfuel industry.
- Helping businesses to apply for registration with HETAS woodfuel quality assurance scheme (Resources for Change, 2010).

4.1.2.3 Data from project records

The records kept by initiatives vary but mostly relate to contact with woodland owners. This data is summarised in table 8 which illustrates the complexity in attempting quantitative analyses of project outcomes.

A rough estimate of maximum numbers of contacts can be gained from the sum of numbers on the databases of these initiatives. This totals to 5107 contacts. A recent estimate of the numbers of woodland holdings in England puts it at between 50 000 and 80 000 (Yeomans and Hemery, 2010). We can conclude that there is considerable scope for engaging more woodland owners.

Reaching the remaining owners may in fact be more challenging than the work already done. One respondent estimates that his project has reached about one fifth of the undermanaged woodlands in the area.

My gut feeling is there is another programme that could go out and do more work but you've got to be mindful that a lot of the lower hanging fruit has been picked in this region. If I was to run another programme there'd have to be quite a lot of innovation about how you engage with people. It's where do you go from here now. [20]

Table 8. Data on initiatives' contact with owners

Initiative	How is contact made	Number of owners on database	How many owners worked with?	What coverage does this represent?
Blackdown Hills Woodland Association / Woodbiz	No active outreach "They come to me"	100 members in Association	44 (2009-2011) (Under previous project 'working our woodlands')	500ha
Chilterns Woodland Project	Word of mouth Website Events	500	53 (2011-2012)	600 ha (2011-2012)
Cumbria Woodlands	Word of mouth Events Being around a long time	Data not given	407 (2008-2012) Averages 100 annually	1673ha
Heartwoods	Survey via National Farmers Union	700 includes contractors, timber businesses etc	150 (2009-2012) Averages 50 annually – targets were in place to achieve this	6000ha
Mersey Forest	Events Large database built up over 20 Years	800	68 (2011-2012)	No data
Northwoods	Events Training projects Existing database	600	No data on annual figures	No data
Oxfordshire woodland project	Existing database built up over 20 years	560	20/30 per year	No data
Ward forester	Project launch Events Training Mail shots	157	80 owners signed up to be joined a ward for management	3700ha mapped. Estimated by end 2013 220ha will be actively managed.
Woodfuel east	Attending events (farm shows) Advertising Articles in forestry magazines	90	90 projects supported	n/a
Woodnet	No outreach	1600 small ads	n/a	n/a

4.1.3. 'Most successful outcome'

In our interviews with initiative workers we asked them what they considered to be the project's 'most successful outcome' and what the reasons for this success could be. These are summarised in table 9. It is interesting to note that in nine out of ten cases what is mentioned are elements of process, the way that the project has worked, rather than outcomes.

Table 9. Respondents' views on success

Initiative	Summary of 'most successful outcome'	Reasons given for success
Blackdown Hills Woodland Association / Woodbiz	To get people think about managing their woodlands 'Once they think, the doing comes afterwards'	Steering group Knowledgeable local person
Chilterns woodland project	Continuity - not having a short term view of it	A flexible approach; to make use of funding while retaining core aims
Cumbria Woodlands	When different areas of support accessed by one individual or company	Flexibility and perseverance to get funding First visit free Simple paperwork Understanding owners
Heartwoods	'Hand holding' The free initial visit The targeting owners via outreach activities	Good partnership Skillset of staff - understanding owners
Mersey forest Northwoods	Wood allotments has most potential Hand holding -helping them through the process Being able to speak to public and the private sector	Training heating engineers Networking through making use of local knowledge
Oxfordshire woodland project	Training offered - we are able to combine the practical and the human with the technical	Flexibility Able to work without needing to make a profit
Ward forester Woodfuel east	The level of interest generated Can provide grants with support of business development advisers	Low obligation rate for owners One to one support Linking people together Getting actively involved in projects we support
Woodnet	The woodland enterprise centre The endurance of the woodlots directory	Partnership working Good connections

4.2. Processes

Given the difficulties in measuring impact and making causal connections to initiatives, many focused on the processes of working with stakeholders as their most tangible outcomes. The interviews focused particularly on aspects of contacting owners, and supporting those who were interested.

4.2.1. Engaging woodland owners

The four smallest initiatives (in terms of staff numbers) no longer actively market their services except through websites. Instead they rely on word of mouth and existing databases that have been built up over many years. These initiatives are at capacity, responding to unsolicited enquiries.

Many referrals now come through FC Woodland Officers who are themselves more constrained than previously, in dealing with such enquiries:

Most of them come to me... In the old days you rang up a Woodland Officer and they'd be round the next day to have a look at your woodland. But they just can't do that now because they haven't got the manpower [16]

This is different for the larger initiatives and those with more specific packages to offer woodland owners. One respondent on a (larger) short term project said:

If you wait for woodland owners to come to you, you could be doing a whole lot of nothing for a long time really. [20]

Marketing tools include websites, project launch events, training events, attending local events such as farm shows, and advertising in relevant publications though it is felt that this is not an easy process.

It is very difficult to proactively search for them. The way we've been doing things is attending events farming update sessions, organized by NFU county shows; young farmer shows to educate people about what we can do. Repeat adverts and articles in forestry magazines and a lot of advisory people, people in business link and the Countryside Land Association (CLA) would push people our way. A lot of the people that we could potentially help are either a member of the NFU or CLA [10]

This illustrates the value of an active partnership with connections to other rural organisations.

Way of working: Targeting outreach using partnership organisations
--

Heartwoods stands out in its approach to outreach activities. The project made use of its partnership contacts and sent a survey to 7000 National Farmers Union (NFU) members

to gauge the interest in woodfuel potential amongst these stakeholders. One thousand surveys were returned which led to around 150 advisory visits showing the high input needed to reach small numbers of interested people. Another estimated:

We've roughly worked out through the programme that you need three visits in order to get one. That's not to say you are flogging the services to every one of the three and only one is going for it. It's basically saying that of every three advisory visits, two might not be worth pursuing in the future. Or that you might offer it to two and only one of them takes it up. [20]

Heartwoods funding relies on attaining a target of 48 new woodland owners referred to consultants each year. It has achieved this through the extensive outreach and working with the consultants. However one of the key challenges for the project was ensuring that the consultants followed through in their work with woodland owners once the contact had been made.

Way of working: Using training events to reach new owners

Training events are also used as a means of reaching new owners. The Ward Forester project used 'walk and talk' training events in this way and attracted 93 attendees through this (Hart, 2013). The Oxfordshire Woodland Project has also specialised in offering training sessions of particular interest to small woodland owners but has found take-up for sessions decline since having to charge close to a market rate.

The benefits the project provides is to take the guts of training and apply it in a forestry circumstance. Not to make a business out of it. It's a question of bespoke training [5]

4.2.2. Supporting owners into active management

Establishing contact with woodland owners is the first step for engaging them but whether they choose to move forward into productive management of their woodland or not is influenced by a range of factors. The experience of these initiatives has shown that both the package on offer and the ways of working with owners affect this process.

Package on offer to owners:

Through the RDPE many initiatives are able to offer a free initial visit, and support in applying for grants. The free initial visit was seen as very important since it meant there was an opportunity to understand the owner's situation and to offer information before asking the owner for any commitment.

Our first advisory visit is free, and with incredibly simple paperwork, so it's really low risk stuff for a landowner. [14]

The initial visit is free of charge thanks to the Local Authorities and the conservation board funding. I have a broad discussion about the woodland in more general terms and discuss what the opportunities might be. And after that if they want me to do more work for them, either management plan or felling license, then I do that for them on an hourly basis or an agreed fee basis. [9]

Cumbria Woodlands have developed a three-tiered package of support to meet the requirements of different owners. The Silver Birch level of service is free and includes a site visit and an outline report on the opportunities for the woodland. If further advice or technical support is needed the Oak level of service includes:

- help registering with the Rural Payments Agency
- help applying for grant aid
- carrying out a more detailed assessment of the woods
- help firming up plans for a business idea

A charge is made for this service that is 10% of the commercial day rate for a consultant. There is a third stream of advice that is the Woodfuel Advisory Service, again charged at 10% commercial rates.

If an area of woodland is unmanaged, an application for a woodland management grant (WMG) is the first step and funding is available for £1000 to pay a consultant to help make this plan. Increasingly projects now pass this part of the work straight to the private sector (Ward Forester, Cumbria Woodlands, Heartwoods). Ward Forester aims to go beyond simply encouraging woodland management to facilitating the sale of timber through the work of private sector forest consultants who stand to make some income from facilitating the grouped sale of timber from a 'ward' of owners.

Way of working: One to one contact.

Meeting woodland owners face to face and having time to understand their individual concerns is mentioned repeatedly as a successful way of working.

A lot of its around the principle of going to have a chat with someone that has a woodland on their farm. It's how it fits into the whole business and their whole life. It's not just looking at the woodland in isolation and I think that's a really key part of it. It has to fit what people want to do with the whole landholding that they have. [2]

Owners have so many motivations for doing things; you really do have to chime with that. If you don't chime with what they want, then you aren't going to draw them in aren't you? [14]

Meeting in this way allows greater understanding of the motivations of the individual woodland owner. Some initiatives identified specific skills needed by staff members to facilitate this understanding.

In order to engage with those owners you need to be able to talk a multitude of languages, from biodiversity to archaeology to woodland landscape. A whole plethora of things that a traditional forester doesn't want to talk about. If we want to get those woodlands into management we are going to have to talk those languages. [8]

A lot of its around the principle, going to have a chat with someone that has a woodland on their farm. "What's your whole vision for what you want to do?" It's how it fits into the whole business and their whole life. It wasn't just looking at the woodland in isolation and I think that's a really key part of it. It has to fit what people want to do with the whole landholding that they have, so that's what we've tried to take forward, its not just thinking about the woodland in isolation. [2]

Way of working: Support with filling in grant applications

Supporting woodland owners through the grant application process is helped by having the human resources to provide in depth support where needed.

If they are completely unengaged at the outset then there is quite a lot to be done, single business identifier number (SBI), also a need to ensure that their land is registered with the Rural Land Registry. So there are a couple of hurdles, we help people get across those hurdles and then help them toward grant aid as well. [14]

It's the hand holding side where our expertise is making time for people who don't have time for business plans, or they don't understand how to fill in a felling licenses application. We try and help them through that process by trying to understand what they are wanting. [24]

Slowly and inexorably I've got drawn into this because I was finding that unless I really engaged and gave them the capacity to move forward things weren't going to happen. There's a very small number who will take the initiative and run on their own but the number of people who will do that is certainly less than 10%. [5]

4.2.2.1 Referring advice work to private consultants.

Because they are largely publicly funded the initiatives have to manage a careful balance in relation to the private sector.

It's a very delicate line that we tread, the majority of the money goes straight back into the private sector. When I designed the scheme that

was absolutely crucial to it. For two reasons really, one is so that we don't upset the private sector and the other one is that this funding will stop and we will get smaller, and when we stop, we don't want woodland advice to stop. So if they have connection to private sector that should carry on. [14]

We'd have a massive amount of conflict with the private sector if we didn't run that referral scheme to be honest. I think some consultants who didn't get in on the tender panel thought that's not fair, we are going in and offering free initial advice but what I would say is that the people that we've picked up are generally the people that the woodland management companies aren't interested in. [20]

When I set up xxx in the early days and obviously received some degree of public subsidy towards it, one or two of the wood merchants said it was inappropriate competition set up by the public sector. I didn't take that too seriously seeing as the private sector were failing anyway to address small woodland issues. [25]

As funding is becoming harder to source, several initiatives are supplementing their income with commercial work, most often through charging for training and taking the grant payment for supporting owners to write management plans. This opens up new areas of competition with the private sector and changes their relationship to the public.

The minute you start doing commercial work you lose your relationship with those that you've been impartial with before. [20]

The advisory work of initiatives is necessary where the private sector consultants are not interested in smaller woodlands. However some schemes are now going beyond this role of filling a gap, and proactively including the private section. Initiatives can act as brokers for consultants by connecting them with owners who want work done. The woodland initiative is often the first point of contact for owners who may not be aware of how to contact a forestry consultant directly, nor what they could offer.

Where the contact with woodland owners is passed on to private consultants it is unclear to what extent the quality of support is available as identified above. In the Heartwoods case commitment from consultants was an issue, as the profit to be made from small woodlands remains low. In contrast the evaluation of Ward Forester noted: 'These consultants have considered it an important enough initiative to support with significant amounts of their own time and effort' (Hart 2013, p.14) It is estimated that these consultants have contributed £10 000 in-kind through their unpaid time and expenses. Whether they recoup this through profit remains to be seen.

4.2.3. Stimulating local business and supply chain

Once owners have made contact with an initiative they can be signposted to capital grants to support business development where appropriate. Working with woodland contractors and processors is a relatively new area for the initiatives profiled. Woodfuel East is unique in administering its own grant scheme but Northwoods, Mersey Forest and Cumbria Woodlands have all had a key role to play in delivering woodfuel related Leader funding packages in their area.

Way of working: Specialised knowledge / Business advice

Having the capacity to offer business advice to individuals alongside practical advice on woodland management has been important to some initiatives. Writing business plans is a requirement for all of the capital grant schemes.

One of the biggest successes for us is not just that we can provide grants but that we have grants with the knowledge of the business development advisers. [10]

We assisted people with business plans and advice, we wrote development plan reports for businesses so that they could be firewood merchants, timber processors or contractors who harvest timber. [20]

Woodfuel East was the only initiative to have dedicated staff as business advisors and found this a valuable part of the support offered.

Several respondents had offered business management courses but encountered very low interest. One respondent felt that many forestry businesses are unused to thinking as a business:

Generally forestry is small-scale. I wouldn't call it a cottage industry but its one/two man businesses they tend to just get their head down and get on with what they are doing, and don't pay so much attention to marketing strategies and in that way it's quite infant in terms of business development structure. [20]

Way of working: Local networking

The local knowledge held by individuals is highlighted as a strength, particularly in facilitating networking between woodland owners and other parts of the supply chain.

We speak to a lot of people, and do good networking. It's that sort of local knowledge base, of who's doing what where, what the potential market is and, from a woodland owner point of view, who would be the best person to use on that site. Some people have different machines, which are more suitable for certain sites. [24]

If you were caught up into a larger body that didn't have the local knowledge, you wouldn't pick up on the human aspirations and possibilities. Connecting people. It's difficult to judge the cost effectiveness of that sort of thing. I can see it's very beneficial but it costs a lot to run [5]

I basically know everybody in the whole area. I've been farming here for about 50 years You need to be local and have local knowledge I think that's very important. [16]

This local knowledge is generated when the same individual is active in an area over a long period of time. Where projects have endured they offer continuity of support that is particularly useful in forestry where activity in woodlands moves slowly and it may be several years before the next step of action is needed on a site.

Not having a short-term view of it. We are hoping to stay and be a charity in the long term. Rather than just be a 3-year project that has targets and then ends when the money runs out. [9]

But also continuity, so sometimes people come back to us for more advice several years down the road. That's the advantage of being around for a while is that people do come back to us. [9]

4.3. Looking to the future

In this section we draw together respondents' views on the feasibility of future approaches.

4.3.1. New technology for managing small woodlands

Adapted equipment

Access issues can partly be addressed by changes in technology used in small woodlands. Some individuals have developed new equipment for managing small woodlands pointing the way to more innovation in this area. One farmer in the South East sourced £46k of grant aid to part fund a tractor-based harvesting system that is had designed and built and is capable of working broadleaves.

The beauty of the tractor is that in theory, there's no reason you couldn't take the harvester and the reach arm off the tractor and get it ploughing. There are a lot of farmers who've got a lot of kit out there which could be used for forestry situations if it was either slightly more robust or thought through. [8]

Mobile sawmills

Opinions are mixed on the potential of mobile sawmills: some are concerned about quality of timber produced, while others see great potential.

We know that mobile sawmilling is a really big opportunity but it's not in the conventional route. [8]

We helped I'm guessing 5 or 6 mobile sawmills start up, I don't think any of those have become full time jobs for an individual. Some of that's about a cultural shift, but some of that's about end markets [14]

It would seem that mobile sawmills may be useful in increasing on-farm use of timber but may not produce timber of sufficient quality for sale in competitive markets.

Promoting coppicing

Alternative management regimes may more profitable in some areas where traditional forestry is uneconomic. The prevalence of sweet chestnut in the South East is suited to coppicing and one estate owner has turned this into a successful business.

I am in a special situation because I am growing the stuff and I've got a ready supply of timber and partly I've been lucky because I've caught the wave of everybody getting fed up with soft wood posts because they rot. And partly I've succeeded because I have made the business bigger, and I've become a credible producer and I am able to supply big wholesalers who buy £3/400 000 of fencing from me because I can deliver on time which most of the little family businesses were never able to do in the past [17]

As he acknowledges, this owner is unusual in the scale with which he is able to operate. Most coppicing work is on a much smaller scale and less profitable. In one area our respondent described the range of lifestyles of local coppicers

It's questionable whether it's sustainable in terms of the money they make. Some them live in woods in benders, but some pay a mortgage and have a really robust business. [14]

The markets for coppice products have diminished in recent years as the industry has declined and cannot compete with imports.

There are a lot of listed buildings here with thatched roofs and that's where a lot of the coppice materials can be used but I know people who do thatching and they order their materials in from Poland because its cheaper than producing it locally. It is all price driven. [10]

One respondent was optimistic that coppicing would see a resurgence in its use for woodfuel

I personally am convinced that the coppice regime of management is going to see resurgence in next 15 years. The energy market alone provides the pull. Because the coppice is broadleaf the wood is denser therefore the energy value is higher (carbon sequestered in it) and the biodiversity benefits are much higher.[8]

4.3.2. Changes to the supply chain

Creating change in the supply chain could be a key tool for stimulating productive woodland management. Several of our respondents had ideas on this, but they remain at a local small-scale level and are unlikely to have a significant impact on the overall economies of timber marketing.

4.3.2.1 Virtual marketing

Virtual marketing has been suggested as a way of aggregating timber stock without the associated haulage costs of a timber hub. This is not dissimilar from the online marketing databases such as woodlots and eco-lots that have met with mixed success. Woodlots remains a vehicle for small scale trading within the South East. Ecolots attempted to become a national, commercially driven form of this but has met with financial difficulties.

Since the government spending review of 2010 Ecolots has been operating on a reducing, and ultimately zero, budget and until recently Beacon Forestry have maintained the service out of their own time and goodwill.

Despite the best efforts of partners to find alternative sources of funding and support, it is with deep regret that Ecolots must announce it will cease to function on February 20th 2013. (<http://www.ecolots.co.uk/> site accessed 23.4.13)

4.3.2.2 Tree banking

A related idea to that of virtual marketing is the concept of 'tree banking' where owners grade and map their trees and can market them *prior to* harvesting. One initiative found that local sawmills were not interested in sourcing local timber in general but that

the smaller guys are quite interested in my idea of banking local trees. If they want a particular tree for a particular job and we had a central database that they could go to they could select living trees. The sawmills' most positive response was for unusual trees - spalted ash and beech gives you a line or trees with burs on it to make bowls and tables. They are very interested in that thing. And locally we have a chap who builds oak framed buildings and he's always interested in unusual trees [16]

The attraction for the woodland owners is it provides a way of engaging and deepening their knowledge of their woods, whilst developing an awareness of the potential value of the timber without the expense or risk of harvesting.

4.3.2.3 Cooperative working and Ward Forester style groupings of owners

Several of our respondents commented on the challenge of getting cooperative projects working between woodland owners in England.

I do think it's a continuing vision that cooperative working between woodland owners could work but I do struggle to see how to make it work in the UK [25]

The other thing that isn't going to happen on a large scale is co-operatives. You see them working abroad, but it's a cultural issue, There are opportunities for cooperation but I think that's different from opportunities for cooperatives. They share kit from each other but that's very different from a formalized cooperative structure. [1]

The Ward Forester project is unusual in that it seeks to harness the benefit of a cooperative sale of timber without the owners needing to engage in any cooperative structure. The coordination of the group is handed to a private contractor who stands to gain by being given the contacts for a group of interested owners in a similar location. The role of the initiative is simply a networking one, generating interest among owners, mapping them and linking them to a pool of interested contractors.

4.3.2.4 Wood for work schemes

Several initiatives have begun schemes linking owners who want their woodland managed but would be unlikely to pay someone on a commercial basis with people who like to work in woodlands and are happy to receive woodfuel in return (e.g. Mersey Forest – Wood Allotments; Culm Woods – run through Blackdown and East Devon Woodland Association Coordinator):

The idea is the more experienced people go in on their own with chainsaws and they take the lion's share (around half the cubage). They do the cutting, take away half and then what's left can either be sold and distributed or it can be distributed between the other members of the group who will come in and do all the clearing up, i.e. the handwork. And right down to what we are calling a scavenger, they just pay \$5 a year and they come at the end to take the pickings. All the people have got to be qualified. [16]

In existing projects, many of the landowners are organisations such as the National Trust, the Woodland Trust, and Local Authorities, although there are some private individuals.

The Ward Forester project has also utilised this model as a way of allowing woodland owners with very small plots to join the scheme without threatening the economic viability of the group concept:

The contractor on the 'community ward' can "mop up the smaller woodlands. He can come to an agreement with those owners that it's not so much a commercial enterprise, but if you've got a group of volunteers who want to do a bit with hand tools and they get a little bit of firewood and they stack firewood for the owner. It's a quid pro quo arrangement that works well. [13]

That was an unexpected outcome of the pilot. I think in a way its integral. It's very important. We did worry slightly, if an owner with just 0.5ha came along and was desperate to be part of the project, as I could see a situation where we the ward forester wouldn't be interested as including that particular woodland as it might bring the price of a harvesting job right down. [13]

4.3.2.5 Vertical integration

One route for woodland owners to maximise their income from timber is to invest further up the supply chain thereby working to stimulate the market pull directly (Ralph, 2012; Yeomans and Hemery, 2010).

The best scenario for timber processing is vertical integration where woodland owners have a stake further along the chain. If owners want to get a better price for their timber they either wait or invest and reap the rewards [7]

We put the idea to one large landowner however who was very dismissive.

Interviewer: and have you considered investing further up that supply chain yourself?

Respondent: I don't want that aggro. You can really get into trouble starting to do things that you don't know about. It's a rubbish business to be in. [17]

4.3.3. Changes to woodland owner support services

4.3.3.1 Targeted support

Some initiatives are looking into ways of targeting their support to certain groups. While woodland owners of unmanaged woods have always been the main target new groups are becoming the focus for some initiative activity. Mersey Forest for example has found that targeting training support to the oil heat engineers in their area provided a useful way of stimulating demand for biomass boilers. The oil heat engineers provide heating advice to premises that are off-grid and are therefore the most suitable for benefitting

from biomass systems. Providing the engineers with the skills to offer this to clients has been a route to stimulate the woodfuel sector as a whole.

One respondent suggested that targeting woodland owners could be achieved through multilayered GIS mapping which could be used to identify woods with potential for economic return. The Marches Timber Study is doing this using GIS studies to identify where the most accessible woodlands are and which may have the most timber in them. The result aims to identify clusters of woodlands to help target activity in certain areas. At present it is anticipated that this work could be of benefit to contractors but it has been reported that:

Most contractors, indeed most people in the forest industry, don't have time to do those things that don't have an immediate turnover. So the things like marketing and door-stepping is the stuff which doesn't get done. [1]

4.3.3.2 Landscape scale approach

Two respondents suggested that a move towards a landscape scale approach would be most effective. Instead of focussing on existing business sectors, support should be aimed at a spatial area, and consider the potential local markets and potential supply from the woodlands.

That's the way my team, and that's the way woodland initiatives and a woodland enterprise zone should be thinking. Let's look at a landscape scale and generate a new culture of woodland enterprise by working differently [4]

This is essentially providing a networking function, by bringing together local supply potential and demand. One successful example of this is in Kent where a plan is in place to install a large biomass heating system in a private school to be supplied by local woodlands owned by public bodies.

4.3.3.3 Centralised services?

Several of our respondents said that they would like to see more integrated support available to woodland owners

What I want to see is an integrated forestry programme that has the starting point of giving advice to woodland owners and forestry businesses and has training available that is suited to their needs and has capital there without too much bureaucracy, and I know it's very difficult. We've got to find a way to make the bureaucracy as painless as we can for people, and whether that's having more handholding in place I don't know. [2]

While most initiatives do many of these things the idea is to make the system more streamlined for woodland owners and overcome some of the current patchiness in provision. These concerns lead some to suggest that a more centralised system would be more effective

Having centralised systems is not necessarily a bad thing because you don't have to develop everything yourself. [10]

One of our respondents suggested developing a national package that contractors could present to woodland owners outlining the grant support available and if they take it further, following this up with a standardised well-presented woodland management plan

So what you give them at the end of the day is not just a scraggy old piece of paper with a scrappy map, you actually give them a decent, bound report on their wood. [8]

The myforest website hosted by the Sylva Foundation provides free woodland management tools for land owners, managers and agents and helps owners to map their woodland online.⁴

5. Conclusions and recommendations

In this report we have explored the effectiveness of woodland initiatives in stimulating productive woodland management. We have focussed on woodland initiatives as a vehicle for delivering interventions, and as a means of accessing the experience of a large body of woodland owners in a limited time.

Overall, the amount of activity generated through these initiatives is high and they play an important role in delivering the national goals of increasing woodland management. Individuals from within these initiatives have been instrumental in encouraging Local Action Groups to prioritise forestry issues in their area.

This study of existing initiatives indicates in particular the following features that would be valuable to replicate more extensively across the country:

- A clear package of advisory support for woodland owners. For example, Cumbria Woodlands' three-tiered advice package provides a template that could be offered nationally.
- Developing staff capacity to offer business advice alongside woodland management advice – as in Woodfuel East.
- New ways of working in collaboration with private consultants – particularly the model of Ward Forester which has the added advantage of making use of economies of scale through grouping owners.

⁴ <http://www.sylva.org.uk/myforest/woodlandmanagement>

- Training that is suited to the needs of the local forestry sector – as demonstrated by the adaptability of training provision available through Oxfordshire Woodland Project.
- Promoting local networking events such as the Weald Woodfair, the Blackdown Hills woodland fair and the Woodfair hosted by Northwoods.

Recommendation:

1. These successful features have the potential for replication across the country and should be considered in any new programme of intervention working with woodland owners.

The potential of the woodfuel market to drive increased woodland management is recognised by many of these initiatives, who have broadened their range of activities in order to support the different stakeholders across the woodfuel supply chain. When the 2002 review of woodland initiatives was conducted they found that activity in this area was low and that work with contractors was 'broad and shallow' which shows that a marked change has occurred (Land Use Consultants 2002). Several initiatives now work with contractors, helping them to get capital grants, and offering woodfuel training events.

Figure 6 shows the links between ways of working, factors that support these ways of working, the barriers that they set out to address, and the outcomes that follow. This allows us to see *why* the ways of working are successful and what interventions will facilitate this success.

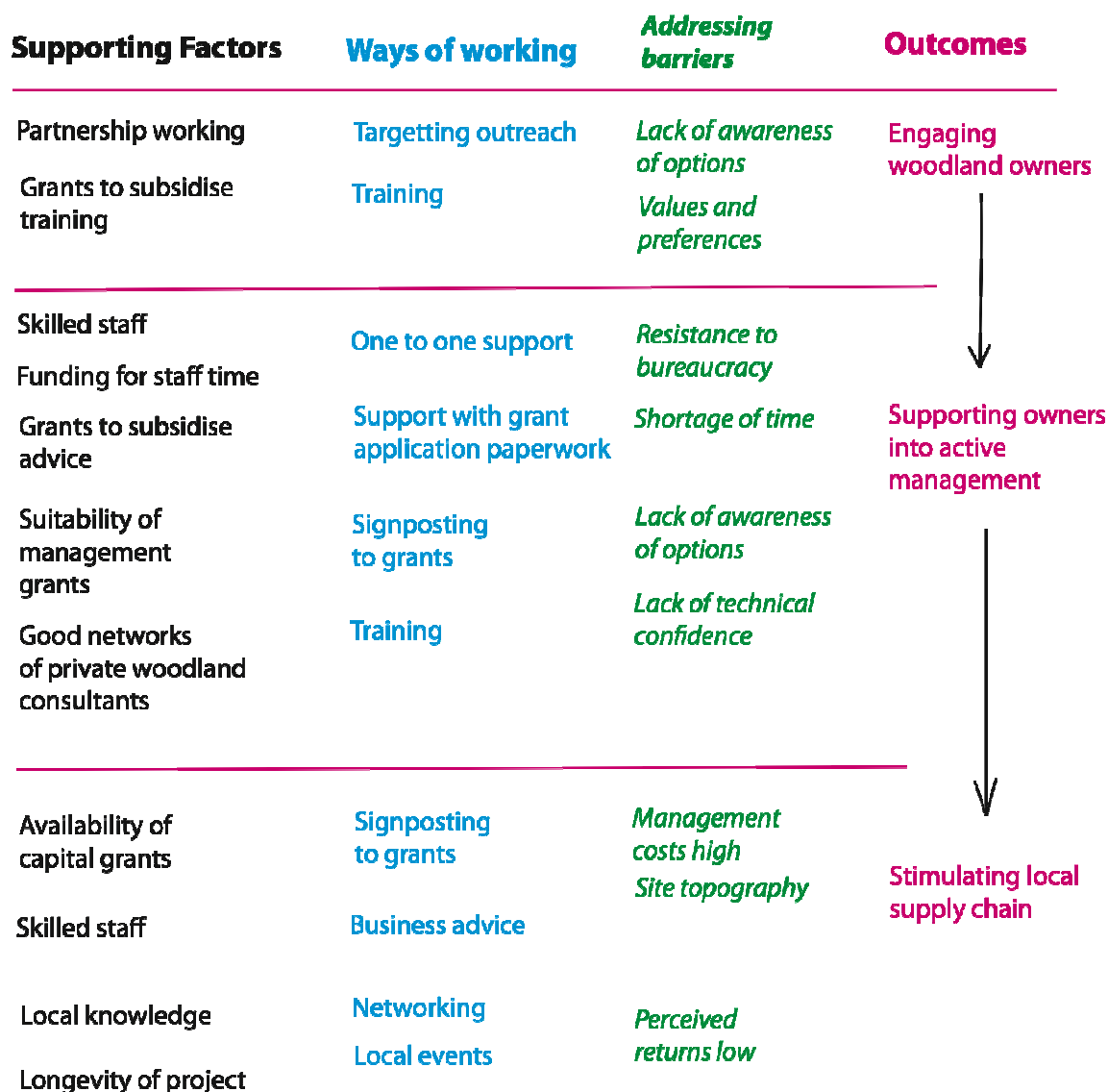
The supporting factors that underpin successful ways of working revolve around suitability of grants to the needs of woodland owners and forestry businesses. As the current RDPE grant scheme is the product of a Europe-wide process, this suitability is not always fine-tuned and the woodland initiatives perform a key role in interpreting and adapting the scheme for a local audience.

The human resource held within these initiatives is something to be valued as staff members hold a high degree of local knowledge, both technically through their experience with local growing conditions, and interpersonally through their connections across the supply chain. This resource can be lost when project funding is short term and there are gaps between projects.

Recommendation:

2. To investigate ways of helping staff and initiatives through funding gaps to ensure the longevity of initiatives in an area and retain the knowledge held.

Figure 6. Diagram showing relationship between ways of working, supporting factors, barriers and outcomes



At the same time, several of these approaches rely heavily on staff time and the question remains whether there are alternative means of addressing existing barriers that distribute the cost. Three projects are now referring woodland owners to private forest consultants and it would be interesting to review the outcomes and efficiencies of this compared to in-house provision of support.

Recommendations:

3. To acknowledge the importance of one-to-one support for woodland owners and ensure there is funding provision for this.
4. To support the commitment and skills of private consultants to work with small woodland owners.

Across England as a whole, policy support for woodland owners varies. The advisory role of the FCE woodland officers has been reduced over recent years and the localised distribution of woodland initiatives is related to the locations of particularly dedicated individuals.

Recommendation:

5. To explore a more proactively national approach to supporting woodland owners.
6. To support increased communication and learning between initiatives

Finally, improvements in data availability and compatibility would ensure a clearer measure and comparison of interventions. While the qualitative approach is necessary to understand process, interactions between incentives, and complex causality, it would be help to have simple indicators of impact.

Recommendations:

7. To report on year-by-year *new* uptake of EWGS grants by FC Areas, and where possible at a sub regional level.
8. To develop a mandatory centralised database of capital grants awarded.

The 2002 review of initiatives concluded that they were 'effective in identifying and adapting to changing needs over time' (Land Use Consultants 2002). Our work supports this conclusion and shows many initiatives demonstrate this quality and have successfully navigated through a period of much change in the past 10 years. They continue to innovate in their work with woodland owners, fine tuning it to local requirements, and are increasingly looking to support along the whole of the supply chain. Without the work of these initiatives the delivery of woodland interventions would be much slower, as they occupy a key position as the gateway between the public sector and the woodland owners.

6. References

- Chiltern Woodlands Project. 2013. *Annual Report 2011/2012*. Chiltern Woodlands Association.
- Collins, J., G. Thomas, R. Willis, and J. Wilsdon. 2003. *Carrots, sticks and sermons: influencing public behaviour for environmental goals* Demos/Green Alliance report for Defra. Available at: <http://www.demos.co.uk/files/CarrotsSticksSermons.pdf>.
- Dandy, N. 2012. *Understanding Land Manager Decision-making: A Framework for Forestry*. Forest Research. Available at: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/INFD-7THBDU>.
- Defra. 2007. *The Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 - A summary*. Available at: archive.defra.gov.uk/rural/documents/rdpe/rdpe-sum.pdf.
- DEFRA. 2013. Government Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement.49.
- Hart, J. 2013. *Evaluation of the Ward Forester project*. Silvanus Trust.
- Land Use Consultants & SQW Ltd. 2005. *Evaluation of the Community Forest Programme*.
- Land Use Consultants. 2002. *Review of the effectiveness of Woodland Initiatives. Final Report. Prepared for the Forestry Commission and Countryside Agency*.
- Land Use Consultants. 2002. *Review of the effectiveness of Woodland Initiatives. Final Report. Prepared for the Forestry Commission and Countryside Agency*.
- Lawrence, A., and N. Dandy. 2010. *Landowners' attitudes to woodland creation and management: a review of evidence in the UK. Summary report*. Forest Research.
- PACEC. 2006. *Evaluation of the South West Forest and Forest Futures Projects*. A report by PACEC (Public and Corporate Economic Consultants) for the Forestry Commission and the Countryside Agency.
- Ralph, J. 2012 Maximising timber value for woodland owners in England. Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust, 45 pp.
- Regeneris. 2009. *The Economic Contribution of The Mersey Forest's Objective One-Funded Investments. October 2009*. .
- Resources for Change. 2010. Heartwoods Project Review. Resources for Change.
- Robson, D., G. Newman, G. Hilton, S. Molteno, A. Mason, E. Macdonald, A. Price, and A. Lawrence. 2013. *Developing an Evidence Base for Furthering the Use of English Wood Products in a Range of Markets. Defra Project: WC0815 Phase 2 Report, March 2013*. Forest Research.
- Smith, S., R. Crabtree, M. Glynn, T. Quick, C. a. Quine, and P. Rowcroft. 2012. *Evidence on Woodland Economy, Woodland Creation and Woodland Management in England. Final Report to the Independent Panel on Forestry*. URS. Available at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel/views/>.
- Woodland Initiatives Network. 2007. Meeting Targets. Small Woods Association.
- Yeomans, A., and G. Hemery. 2010. Prospects for the market supply of wood and other forest products from areas with fragmented forest-ownership structures: - England case study. A contract report for CONFOR and CEPF. Sylva Foundation.