

## **Forestry Commission**

### **Matthew Woodcock - Programme Manager, SE Region**

Having gained a degree in forestry from Aberdeen University, Matthew came to the south east in 1985 to manage East Sussex County Council's Dutch Elm Disease control programme. He joined the Forestry Commission in autumn 1985, based at Bedgebury in the Weald Forest District and having worked for two years gaining an understanding of the unique qualities of the south east's woodland, the Great Storm of 1987 changed everything! From then until 1994 he was one of three Woodland Officers covering Kent and East Sussex.

Matthew worked for six months at FC headquarters where he helped develop the Woodland Grant Scheme and then joined Lothian and Borders Conservancy where he gained experience of upland and community forestry. He then returned to England, working in Midlands Conservancy, where he learned about coal tip restoration and began his interest in woodfuel.

In 2000, Matthew returned to the south east as Operations Manager for the region, managing the team which delivers grant aid and administers forestry regulations. During that time he worked on promoting wood as a sustainable fuel source and finding market based solutions to bring woods back into active management.

From autumn 2007 to 2009, he gained further experience as Acting Regional Director for South West England, returning to the south east in June 2009 as Programmes Manager. He is responsible for establishing links between Government objectives and practical delivery tools, including grants, regulations, market development, advice and advocacy; as well as exploring how this can be achieved by closer working with the public forest estate.

He retains a major interest in the evolving market for wood both as a fuel and a building material and is currently managing the Woodheat Solutions Project which is transferring knowledge to South East England from Finland and Austria, where the use of woodfuel is well established, and establishing partnerships to pilot focused support to help build the woodfuel industry in the South Downs National Park and the North Kent Downs AONB.

### **Ian Tubby, Head of the Biomass Energy Centre and Programme Group Manager, Centre for Forest Resources and Management**

Ian joined Forest Research in 1997. Since then he has been involved in numerous research projects investigating the potential for forestry and energy crops to produce sustainable, low carbon heat and power. His main focus has been on the interaction between different varieties of short rotation coppice and site conditions and how this influences yield. He has also been involved in projects evaluating the biomass resource at both the National level and regional levels.

Since April 2006 he has led the development of the [Biomass Energy Centre](#), launched as part of Government's response to recommendations made by the Biomass Task Force. It provides advice and guidance to organisations and individuals producing or using fuels derived from all kinds of biomass. This advice ranges from technical and practical information on fuel processing equipment or likely fuel requirements for a given application through to more general information on how sustainably sourced biomass can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions by displacing fossil fuels. Much of the information it conveys is emerging from research conducted by Forest Research and the research consortiums it is affiliated with. The BEC has also developed a wide network of contacts in both the public and private sectors which helps to ensure the information provided is current and well balanced. The BEC supports the network of Forestry Commission Woodfuel Officers in Scotland, England and Wales. Ian is also a Programme Group Manager for the Bio-energy Development programme in the [Centre for Forest Resources and Management](#).

### **Suggested Themes & Questions**

1. Could you tell us something about the role of forestry in mitigating climate change, with regard to carbon capture/sequestration:
  - Could forestry contribute to carbon mitigation in Kent and are there accepted or standardised ways of measuring the contribution of particular species or sizes of planting area?
  - Is growing trees for energy, and thus reducing fossil fuel use, more effective in sequestration terms than tree planting alone?
  - Would it be beneficial for public sector organisations such as KCC to identify land assets which could be utilised for woodland planting?
2. Could you explain briefly the main regulatory issues applying to the planting and management of woodlands and outline the available grants?
3. Are you aware of any issues, or have you received feedback from the sites you list in your written evidence (including two KCC sites) where medium scale woodchip fuelled heating systems are in use in Kent?
4. In your written evidence you estimate that Kent could produce 90,000 cubic metres of wood fuel (half the sustainable yield) which equates to 90MW heating capacity. This represents a substantial scaling up of forestry operations – what conditions would be required to make this a viable proposition?
5. What could be done to ensure the local resource is firstly, maximised and secondly, used locally in the most energy efficient way?
6. What do you see as the main opportunities for KCC in working with you to stimulate the establishment of a 'robust woodfuel industry in Kent'?

7. Could you please elaborate on your plans in relation to the North Kent Downs AONB.
8. Could you outline what is meant by a fuel co-operative and whether/how this might be applicable to Kent? Would such an arrangement be helpful to owners of small woodlands in obtaining sustainability certification or a practical alternative. Is best practice sufficiently encouraged through procurement protocols in Kent?
9. One of the challenges in switching to biomass fuel for heating is the relatively high level of maintenance required (compared to, say, gas boilers). Are there other models of operation which would take the responsibility for fuel (including quality assurance issues) and/or equipment maintenance out of the hands of the end user without compromising the cost effectiveness of the biomass option?