



Autumn 2011 Newsletter

From Rickmansworth in the north to Staines & the Thames in the south, Uxbridge in the east to Cliveden & Beaconsfield in the west.

“To achieve a vibrant and sustainable rural economy, including farming and forestry, underpinning the value of the countryside”

Contact: Nina Thornhill, 01895 839853, nina.thornhill@groundwork.org.uk

KEY ISSUES:

- Viability of farming in the rural urban fringe
- Local Food to Local Markets (a co-operative approach)
- Woodland management
- Links between local people and the countryside on their doorstep
- Tourism & day visits

INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Estate I manage is made up of approximately fifty percent farmland and fifty percent woodland. This means I need to keep one eye on the beef market and the other on the timber. The beef side of the business has grown steadily over the last 10 years, since I have managed the Estate. However, the timber side of the business has had a difficult couple of years. With a predicted growth in the wood fuel market, stoked by the impending introduction of the Renewable Heat Incentive, I consider this something of a timely opportunity. With the cost of oil on an upward spiral, I see an opportunity to reduce the cost of heating the various estate dwellings, earn a payment for generating heat whilst finding a use for some of the estate's poorer quality timber.



Although being able to supply my own wood fuel puts me in a fortunate position, there are plenty of opportunities for others to reap financial benefits. The payments alone from the Renewable Heat Incentive ensures that the initial costs of replacing existing boilers will be recovered long before the payments stop. Even without these payments, anyone on oil will make further savings on the cost of fuel. I am looking forward to finding out more at the Forum's annual event on the 24th November. One of our speakers, Sam Whatmore has been involved in the development of the wood fuel market in the West Country and will be discussing a real possibility of a stronger wood fuel market developing in Bucks.

Whilst on the subject of the Forum's annual event, I shouldn't forget our other speaker, Linda Roberts from NFU Mutual who will be sharing her tips to reduce the impact of rural crime. Something I'm sure many of you have had the misfortune to experience first hand. I do hope to see as many of you as possible on the 24th November, both old and new faces will receive a warm friendly welcome.

Andrew Allan, November 2011

FARMING & FORESTRY OFFICER REPORT

With the cost of woodchip lower than the price of oil, woodfuel is already proving to be an economically viable fuel source (see table). Working in a similar way to the Feed In Tariff, the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) will increase demand even further, as beneficiaries receive a guaranteed income over 25 years for any heat generated.

I was fortunate enough to attend a Wood Fuel event at the Berkshire College of Agriculture in September, where we were invited to see the college's woodchip boiler in action. The students are responsible for the coppicing and harvesting of timber, all of which are sourced from the estate. The boiler has already proven to be a great success and BCA plan to install a second one.

Fuel Type	Price £ per kWh
Woodchip	0.03
Pellets (loose)	0.047
Pellets (bagged)	0.055
Heating Oil (domestic)	0.056
LPG (domestic)	0.086
LPG (commercial)	0.035
Electricity (domestic)	0.13
Mains Gas (domestic)	0.041
Hardwood Firewood	0.035

Updated July 2011

One of our November Forum's event speakers, Sam Whatmore has been involved in the development of woodfuel supply chains for over a decade, principally in the South West. More recently, he has been working closely with Bucks Country Council who are drawing up a biomass action plan. This will ensure all their old oil boilers are replaced with biomass boilers throughout the estate. They have pledged to source woodfuel as locally as possible, which will provide woodland owners with another source of income. If you would like to learn more about this opportunity, please come along to our annual event on the 24th November.

Nina Thornhill November 2011

VIABILITY OF FARMING

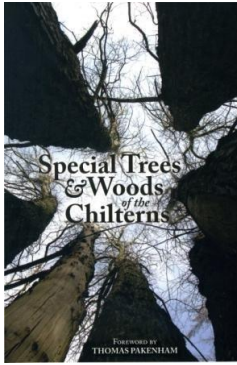
Free consultancy support for rural businesses

The Peter Jones Enterprise Academy is currently able to offer five rural business or rural social enterprises £250 worth of free consultancy support, information, advice and guidance to individual businesses. The assistance can be personal face-to-face, telephone or web-based dialogue. The support should be directed to improving the performance of the business. The support may include:

- management/leadership
- corporate and social responsibility e.g. awareness raising on statutory and legal responsibilities
- participation in new supply chains
- marketing
- use of R&D
- process and resource efficiency e.g. in use of ICT, waste management
- quality assurance
- fund-raising for social enterprises.

This support will be offered on a first come, first served basis so please contact David Corke by e-mailing david.corke@pjea.org as soon as possible.

WOODLAND



The Special Trees and Woods of the Chilterns – Ideal Christmas gift!

This new book contains 50 of the most interesting and unusual stories unearthed by volunteers working on a four year project organised by the Chiltern Woodlands Project. It brings to life the history of this area and some of the fascinating characters that have lived here in past times. There are plenty of full colour illustrations and information to help people find the trees and woods today, many of which are publicly accessible.

Special Trees and Woods of the Chilterns contains 176 pages and is priced at £16.99 plus £1.45 package and posting. Contact John Morris at the Chiltern Woodlands Project to order copies - telephone 01844 355503 or email

woodlands@chilternsaonb.org.

LINKS BETWEEN PEOPLE & THE COUNTRYSIDE ON THEIR DOORSTEP

Glamping – An experience by Liz Robinson of Pinewood Nurseries

Have you ever thought of using your scenic farm as a campsite? You've probably come to the same conclusion that we often have - far too little money for what will probably be a whole lot of hassle. You can expect to get from £8.50 for no facilities up to £18 for a family of 4 to camp with a toilet/shower block.

Now, have you ever thought of starting a glampsite? I went glamping a few weeks ago with some girlfriends in Meon Springs and we paid £295 for the weekend. All the other yurts were booked out too so the farmer would have taken about £1800 for his 6 yurts for one weekend. Now that is something to think about! Having only 6 there made it a lot more private and appealing, both for us as customers but also for the business owner with less people to look after. I didn't see the owner the whole weekend. He had met my friend to give them the key and info pack and then we were left to it for the weekend.

The yurts were set amongst a small orchard, each one with space to park their car. Inside the yurt which slept 6, we had a wood burner in the centre. The mattresses were similar to a futon but far more comfortable, with nice duvets and pillows, it was extremely snug. There was electric, for phone chargers, hair driers, a kettle, mugs and a little fridge. Each yurt had a bit of decking out the front and their own fire pit (a few rocks in a circle around a dug out hole). We were provided with wood and firelighters for own fires and that was it.

The main expense would be the conversion of existing farm buildings into shower/toilets. This site had a communal kitchen area which had benches and a couple of sofas with two ovens/cookers and sinks to share between the yurts. Outside the communal area they had some picnic benches and a large fire pit.



We were a party of 12, covering two yurts and admittedly had a sophisticated hen party. The others there included a couple of families who had gone to get away from it all and loved the fact their children had space to run around, climb trees and get back to nature. This particular site was a short drive from London and guests felt like they were having a real break. There were a few couples, away for the weekend with a few beers and cooking bbqs. It was a really nice bunch of people, we were able to stay out of each others way. It really felt that by paying that extra the farmer was attracting a more respectful clientele, which in turn would made his job easier. Everything was kept clean and we certainly left our yurt as we had found it.

I think this would be great for the Colne Valley as people could literally hop out of London and take advantage of a trip to Windsor if they wanted to, Go Ape at Black Park, fishing at various farms, possibly with bikes to hire. The most important thing for us, and what Meon Springs was able to offer, was a peaceful, private, green location that we could all get to easily for a weekend, or short break. Somewhere with activities near by, but have the comforts of home (a nice bed, a yurt already up), something quirky and different and at that price we all felt that we were getting a bargain, £50 each for a long weekend to be with a big group and getting back to nature! For further information please see the following website: www.glamping-uk.co.uk

NEIGHBOURLY NEWS

Grazing Land Sought

A local farmer's Aberdeen Angus suckler herd of is looking for a new home. If you have approximately 20 acres of land available to rent or buy with or without a building, please contact Andrew McAteer directly on 07860 859005 or 01494 764656.

TRAINING & EVENTS

EVENTS

Rural Development Forum Annual Event 24th November

Colne Valley
Rural Development Forum 

Iver Environment Centre, Iver Heath, SLO 0EB.

Back again by popular demand, the Forum's annual event will be taking place at Iver Environment Centre, see enclosed invitation for more details.

Buckinghamshire Rural Affairs Group Annual Conference 25th November.

Clare Foundation, Saunderton. This conference at the provides an opportunity to:

- Learn more about DEFRA's vision for rural communities.
- Understand the implications of the National Planning Policy Review
- Have your say on the most pressing rural issues in Bucks.
- Meet other rural stakeholders, organisations and interested parties.

The event is free and includes lunch, but please register first at:
<http://brag2011.eventbrite.co.uk>



Farmhouse Breakfast Week 22nd – 28th January 2012



This well established consumer campaign aims to reduce the number of people who skip breakfast. By providing consumers with independent nutritional information, tasty recipes and lifestyle tips, Farmhouse Breakfast Week highlights the benefits of incorporating cereals, such as wholegrains and oats, into every day diets. Organisers HGCA are keen for the farming industry to get involved and showcase the best in home grown produce. If you are interested in promoting your produce or hosting an event, please get in contact with Nina Thornhill on 01895 839853

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The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) is funded by Defra and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD): Europe investing in rural areas.



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