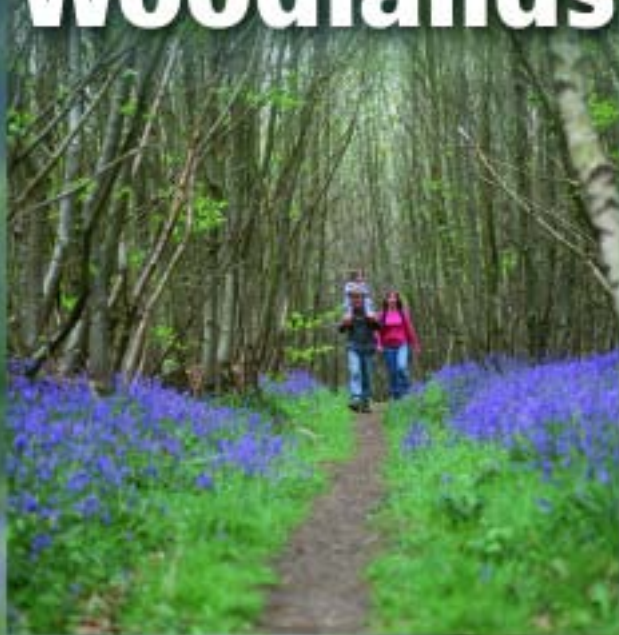
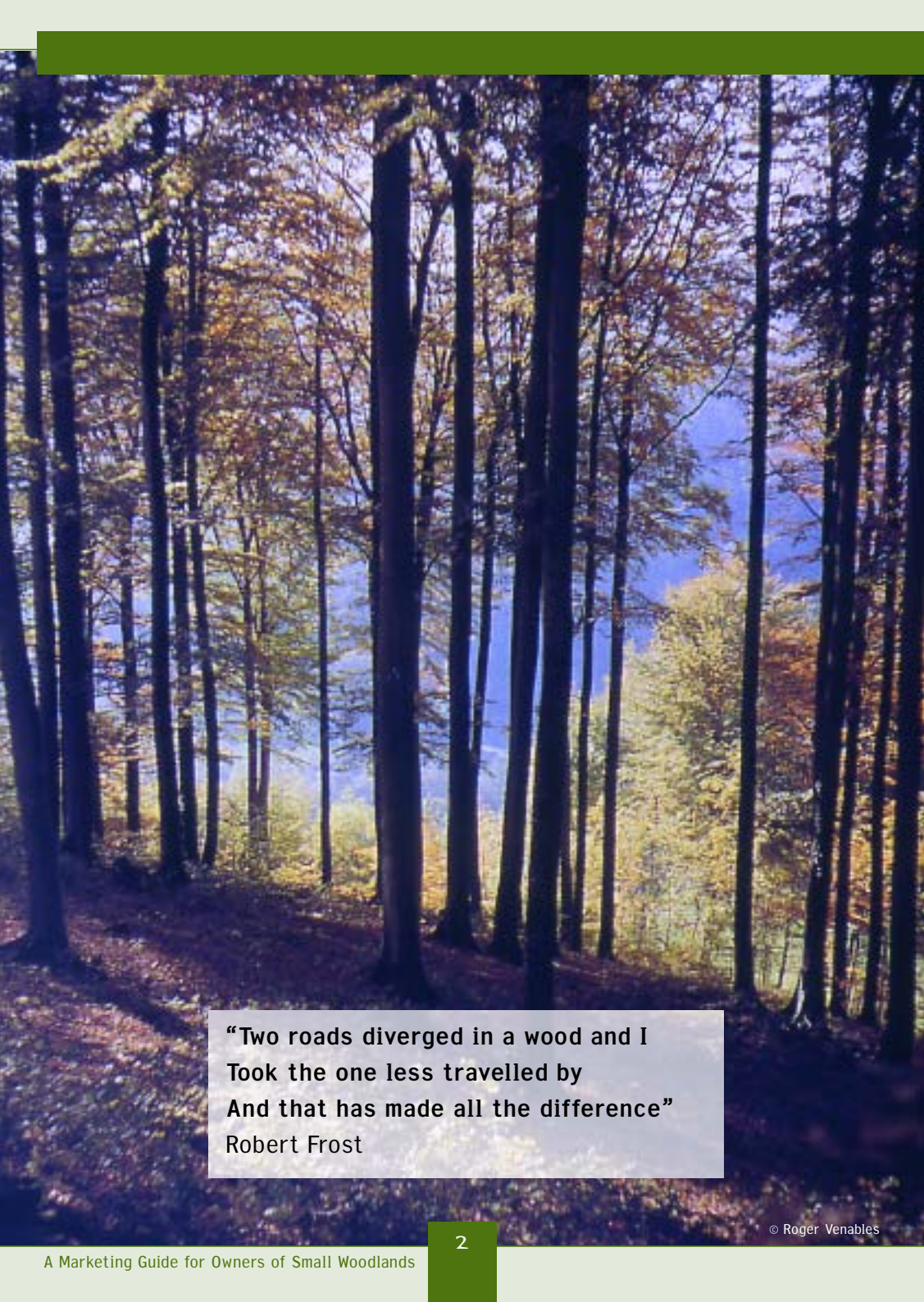




A Marketing Guide for Owners of Small Woodlands





**“Two roads diverged in a wood and I
Took the one less travelled by
And that has made all the difference”
Robert Frost**

FOREWORD

There is greater demand than ever for small woodland ownership and for practical guidance about how to market timber and the products made from it. We have therefore produced two different marketing guides providing sound and realistic advice for woodland owners and producers alike.

This booklet is for the owners of small woodlands. It recommends useful ways in which to set about selling timber and equips the reader with basic marketing know-how.

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THE BIG PICTURE

All forms of wood are now available worldwide. Global communications and fast, efficient transport combined with large-scale production units have driven down prices at the forest gate. Buyers create increasingly important economies of scale: around 35 million cubic metres of timber are used annually in UK construction, of which only 15% is British. The rest is imported and valued at £7bn.

The situation for the 50,000 UK medium and small woodland owners, whose species are mainly broadleaf, is very different: with fewer suitable trees the hardwood sawmill industry continues to decline, becoming more and more dependent on reliable supplies of good quality European logs.

This means that small woodland owners find it difficult to market their trees in this highly competitive international market and some are using 'added value' techniques to improve their profit margins¹. Many regional initiatives² seek to address this problem and there has been some success in developing niche markets for the small woodland owner alongside international timber trading. Examples are given later in this book.

1 See page 15
2 see **I need to know more** section



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IS THIS GUIDE FOR ME?

What is Marketing

Marketing can be defined as:

Positioning the right **P**roduct in front of the people most likely to buy, and **P**romoting it at the right time, in the right way at the right **P**rice

Marketing requires you to apply common sense to your own situation. Yes, you may have to spend some money on marketing but there is a great deal you can do which costs very little or nothing at all.

This guide therefore sets out the principles and main activities of marketing and provides easy-to-follow steps to gain more from your woodland. It offers you examples of marketing approaches and provides helpful checklists as well as further sources of information. It does not attempt to advise large woodland owners growing softwood or hardwood, who will continue to sell into the international timber market.

This book doesn't give you all the answers but it does set out the questions you should ask yourself when starting to market your timber or woodland products. We cover this in more detail in later sections.





MY WOODLAND - What can it do for me?

Who will buy?

Business Planning

To begin at the beginning...

Before you go any further please ask yourself “Have I got anything to sell?” Be honest and consider what your woodland offers to anyone else apart from you: does it have saleable timber now or in the future? Could it be a recreation facility - or does it have potential for something else?

This guide will take you through the important steps you should take before you successfully make and continue to make sales. First of all you should review your assets, your products and your potential markets. The results will determine your marketing action plan.

How do I do that?

Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT)

Firstly carry out a simple SWOT Analysis. When assessing your Strengths keep focused on the realities of your woodland assets and the market research which you will need to carry out. Remember that what you might first consider a Weakness can be an Opportunity, for instance, public access or land classification. Threats are often beyond your control so be realistic about your situation. It is useful to show someone else your SWOT and see if they agree with your conclusions.

My Woodland SWOT

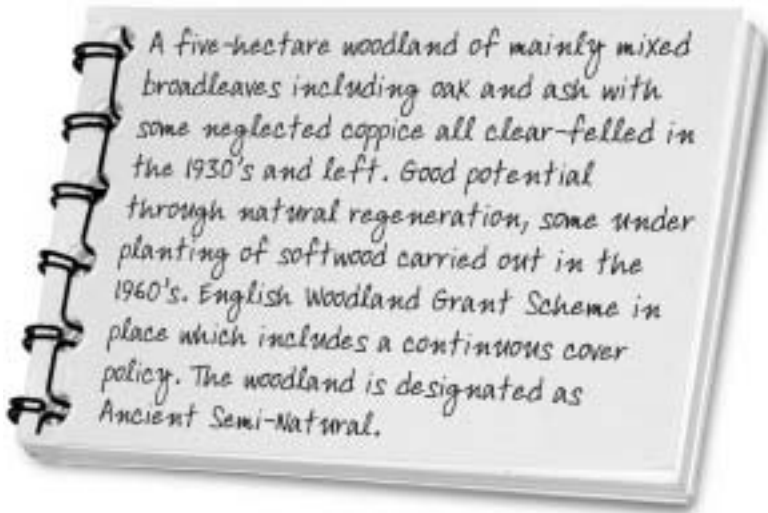
STRENGTHS

WEAKNESSES

OPPORTUNITIES

THREATS

Here's an example:



Strengths

- Good soil for growing good quality hardwood
- Easy access from a main road
- Stems that will be of timber size over the next 30 years
- Small area of Douglas fir ready to “clear fell”
- Some hazel coppice
- No need to obtain an annual income from the woodland
- Woodland on a gentle well-drained hillside
- Forestry Commission Woodland Grant Scheme in place

Weaknesses

- No area available for sorting or loading logs
- Young trees are subject to considerable squirrel damage
- The woodland is part of a shoot which restricts activity for some months of the year
- The woodland is not in an accredited assurance scheme
- Some areas of boggy ground and poor track access for timber extraction
- When the woodland canopy is opened up there will be heavy bramble growth
- Competing demands of commercial needs and public benefits

Opportunities

- To bring good quality stems 10” to 14” quarter girth in ash, oak and some sycamore and chestnut onto the market over the next thirty years
- To sell the oak veneer logs before the crowns start to die back
- To continue with the policy of hazel coppicing to extend marketing potential for hurdles, hedging stakes and other coppice products
- To get the maximum return from the Douglas fir saw logs when the market is right
- To clear the wood finally of softwood, selling into the pulp, fencing and sawmill market
- Ongoing sales into the local firewood market
- To create revenue to help maintain a continuous cover broadleaf woodland
- To introduce cherry into the wood on the clear-felled Douglas fir site, a fast growing high-value hardwood which is likely to retain its value in the market at the same time

Threats:

- A deterioration in the economy causing a slump in the market place
- Change in Government grant policy or other regulation
- The stripping of regenerated broadleaf by grey squirrels and an influx of deer in the area
- A shortage of skilled labour to carry out the work in the wood
- Building of a by-pass taking passing trade away
- Climate change

WOODLAND PRODUCT REVIEW

Before approaching your likely market[s] you must **assess** what is available to harvest and over what period of time. Remember that you need to match your product with your potential customers. The following headings act as a guide:

■ SPECIES

Name all the species and put them into an age class. This is defined as the class or group into which the trees in a woodland are divided, according to their age e.g. 5-10 years. List the number of trees.

■ QUALITY

Against each species determine their various qualities, estimating the volume against each grade. Timber in the UK is graded according to quality. There are three main grades with a series of sub grades.³

■ TIMING

Establish the best time to bring each species harvested onto the market. You may need to make compromises to hit the market when prices are increasing and you must be alert to this.

ALWAYS get a felling licence⁴ before cutting or felling, establishing your market and obtaining a customer. Always try to have a signed contract of sale before felling.

Unless you know how to measure and value standing timber it is better to employ a professional forester to do this for you and in due course teach you how to do it. This forms part of the technical plan and costs to take into account in your business plan which we cover next.



³ see Davies I. and Watt G. 2005, 'Making the Grade - a guide to appearance grading UK grown hardwood timber' published by arcamedia - free as a pdf download from www.forestry.gov.uk/hardwoods, (broadband connection needed)

⁴ Apply for a licence via your local authority

RECREATIONAL USE AND NON-WOOD PRODUCTS

Some owners want to consider other potential uses for their woodlands. The importance of an economic return will vary considerably between different owners. Shoots, wildlife or birdwatching “hides”, photography and painting, ecology trails, orienteering, riding, heritage and educational activities all have ‘pros and cons’. Some are compatible with the growing and selling of timber and cause no conflict. Other more ‘invasive’ activities such as paintballing, off-roading, or mountain biking need careful planning to produce more benefit than detriment to the owner and surrounding area. Tourism and leisure business support is available across the country⁵.

Further information is in the ‘I Need to Know More’ section.

How do I develop my woodlands for recreational use?

Here’s an example

John’s considering how to use his 15 hectare (38 acre) woodland for recreational visits, so he needs to do background research, assess options and plan ahead. He needs to make a small return on his investment but isn’t dependent on it. His ideas include: Arts & sculpture trail, guided nature walks, wildlife watching “hides”, an educational, photographic or woodland heritage centre.

Starting Up

- Business Start-up advice from Business Link and other agencies will cover all aspects: planning permission, insurance and health & safety, finance and business planning, grant-aid, personnel, marketing, partnerships and more
- The site: development, toilets, water and electricity on site, car parking, access, signage, telecommunications, health & safety, tree management and ecology must be taken into consideration

Deciding on what to invest - will it stack up?

Recreational use of woodlands for public access becomes more than a hobby if you are receiving public grant aid and charge for activity on the site. Statutory regulation and even a low key operation require attention to detail, constant monitoring and investment. John must be realistic about possible profits, if any, and take a long-term view of likely success.

⁵ Your local Business Link or council tourism officer will advise you

DO I NEED A BUSINESS PLAN?

The small woodland owner is unlikely to require a full business plan unless it is required for a grant application, to obtain finance or forms part of a larger commercial operation. Most will be in a Forestry Commission Woodland Grant Scheme and those with certified woodlands must account for their wood production from a sustainable and environmental point of view. Since the mid-1990s there has been growing consumer, and thus retail, demand for credible proof that timber products come from sustainably-managed forests. This demand is also increasing as Government, both at central and local levels, seeks to buy timber from legally-logged and sustainably-managed forests. This has driven the development of independent forest certification.

Writing a Business Plan

If you do need a business plan then here are headings to help you. Your statements should be short, clear and avoid jargon. Remember it may be the bank manager or a grant-making organisation reading it:

- 1. INTRODUCTION** Describe briefly how you came to own and look after your woodland.
- 2. YOUR AIM** A simple statement of your aspirations e.g. To produce maximum timber and product revenue from the woodland within ten years.
 - Your **BUSINESS OBJECTIVES**: Explain briefly how you intend to realise your aims e.g. to thin the woodland over 5 years.
- 3. MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS** Say how you will find the best markets for your woodland produce.
 - **SALES PLAN**: Show how you will offer your woodland produce to the right customers at the right time.
 - **COMMUNICATIONS**: Consider who will need to be kept informed about your developments e.g. existing and potential customers, bank manager, local authority. You should also keep the media and other networks updated as part of your marketing plan.



- 4. OPERATIONAL** Set out the methods and actions required to fulfill your objectives.
- **TECHNICAL PLAN:** assess at what level you will need to bring in expert advice or other external skills or equipment and what the outcomes will be.
 - **PEOPLE & RESOURCES:** explain who will carry out the work required and how you will resource it e.g. do you have machinery capable of creating a forest track or will you have to hire that in using a contractor.
- 5. FINANCE** Include management information and the financial controls systems you will use.
- **BUDGET & CASH FLOW FORECAST:** this must include all costs needed to look after your woodland and carry out what you have outlined above, matched against the proposed revenues.
- 6. CONTINGENCY** If for any reason you need to stop looking after your woodland then you will need a “Plan B”.

You can also get help on business planning from your nearest Business Link, DEFRA or go online to www.business-plans.co.uk/assistance.htm

See I NEED to KNOW MORE Section.

Checklist

Now you will know:

- your own strengths and weaknesses
- the products you can harvest
- your likely customers
- your financial and organisational capacity and needs

DECIDING HOW & WHEN TO SELL MY TIMBER

Have I enough to sell to make it all worthwhile?

For example: two veneer logs or 40 tons of firewood

There are four stages within your operation when you can sell timber. We also provide a “ready-reckoner” to help you work out your timber values in the I Need to Know section at the end of this Guide. Please remember that if you ‘employ’ a contractor to carry out operations he thus becomes ‘forest works manager’ and hence responsible for health and safety.

1. **STANDING** when purchaser fells and extracts

A given area will be marked out or individual trees will be marked or numbered in your wood allowing prospective purchasers to carry out a valuation.

Advantages: You have little involvement in the felling and extraction operation giving you a positive cash flow without having to pay contractors.

Disadvantages: You have less direct control of the operation which may create problems on sensitive sites. It could also mean you miss opportunities to add value.

2. **AT STUMP** Felling and extraction can be either by you or purchaser

Advantages: This allows the buyer to see the butt end of the logs giving him more confidence in his valuation. Enables a price by grade to be established before felling and obtains an actual measurement on the ground, which normally gives you a better return.

Disadvantages: A time consuming sale, needing an expert forester with a knowledge of all grades of timber. Not usually appropriate for low-grade broadleaves and seldom used in the sale of softwood.



3. FELLED & EXTRACTED TO RIDESIDE

Felling and extraction by you

Advantages: Gives you direct control of operations, able to stop work due to adverse weather or site conditions. Makes use of local contractors known to you. Adds value to the sale and in some cases it will be the only way to make it possible to sell small, low-grade timber.

Disadvantages: Requires more time, effort and knowledge from you or your agent. May incur negative cash flow by paying for harvesting before the sale of timber. Timber may degrade if you don't sell within an appropriate time after felling.

4. DELIVERED Felled, extracted and delivered by you

Only likely to be used in large-scale operations of low-value softwood or small dimension pulp-wood in order to give maximum value.

Some options to add value to sales

There is now a trend to allow operators to use an area in the woodlands to carry out their processing. The most common are:

1. MOBILE SAWMILL

Cutting logs into planks either for you to keep and air dry or to be sold on as 'green' to the local craft industry. Large section timbers in oak or softwood can also be cut either for own use or cut to order for the local building industry.

2. FENCE MAKING

Peeling and pointing fence stakes either for own use or to sell on - remember that softwood fencing will require treatment before use.

3. CHARCOAL BURNING

It is traditional for charcoal burners to set up their kilns on site to avoid moving heavy lumps of wood before burning and thus keeping costs down. This can also be an attractive educational opportunity for visitors. There are consortia who can help such as the Bioregional Charcoal Company, an effective broker for marketing charcoal.⁶

⁶ see I Need to Know More section

4. FIREWOOD

It is advantageous for firewood merchants to set up machinery in the woodlands, enabling them to deliver directly to customers' homes.

5. WORKSHOP IN THE WOOD

There is a growing trend to allow green timber craft workshops to set up in the woodland. This is particularly appropriate to coppicing, leading to the making of a whole range of products from hedge-stakes, hurdles and rustic furniture.

6. KILN

It is possible to use a solar or dehumidifier kiln to dry timber for indoor use within woodland, only if planning permission is obtained. This will only have advantages if there is good road access, existing buildings and hard standing. This would enable sales direct to the small-scale furniture maker and add greatly to the value. Kilning is a very specialist business and generally needs considerable experience to carry out successfully.

In all of these 'in-wood operations' the added value remains an option either for you or the timber buyer. Ensure that training, insurance cover and safety are all put in place by the operator remembering that you, the woodland owner, have the ultimate responsibility.

You must be satisfied that undertaking any of these options will produce sufficient financial return for you to make it worthwhile.



© Greenwood Community Forest Team

PRESENTING MY WOODLAND TO THE MARKET

You only have one chance to make a first impression...



The first impression of the area to be felled can make a considerable difference to the value of the stand. You should clear the undergrowth, mark trees clearly and consider access requirements before works commence. This preparation can make all the difference to whether a potential buyer makes an offer or not. It is likely to produce higher prices for you, but of course its cost must also be taken into account.

Think ahead and make sure that your prospective end-user is aware of your forthcoming timber sales: architects, builders and joiners will have no interest in your problems or timings BUT they do need to know when your timber will be available. They will always want it to suit their own timetable so it is to your advantage to alert them ahead of time. Keeping your eye on local building developments and letting everyone know in advance about your available timber will usually pay off.



HOW TO PREPARE TIMBER FOR SALE

Broadleaves

1. Prepare an accurate, clear schedule of trees with estimated volume against each species.
2. Allow time for valuation before an offer has to be submitted.
3. Give a completion date as a guide but leave room for negotiation.
4. Issue a draft contract with the invitation to tender. Make the contract as simple as possible to encourage possible buyers.
5. Provide a map showing not only the area of trees for sale but also the extraction route and loading area, giving indications of hazards e.g. overhead cables, underground culverts and areas of environmental importance.
6. When the sale contains valuable broadleaves clear the area of undergrowth to make it easier for the potential buyer to value every tree.
7. If you are working in an area of public interest it is vital to erect weatherproof notices explaining what you are doing.
8. When selling quality hardwoods always number the trees. Consider who has to do the valuation; e.g. if the area is on a bank then number them across the bank not up and down and make sure that you can see one number from the next.
9. If you are selling tree length at stump or high-grade butts at ride side, make sure the potential buyer can get round each tree in order to measure and grade. Only small thinnings and low-grade logs, which will probably be sold by weight, can be stacked up before sale.

Softwood The same level of care is recommended for the sales of large softwood sawmill logs and in addition:

1. Most softwood is sold in the log by weight. If standing, mark clearly the area of trees to be felled. Listing and numbering of trees is not practical or necessary but it is helpful to give an indication of the total volume for sale.
2. The most effective way to sell softwood is in piles, cut to length, graded and stacked at ride side.

Methods of Sale

There are commonly four ways to sell timber from woodlands:

1. NEGOTIATION

Negotiation has become the most common method of sale since interest in small lots of standing timber has declined.

Advantages: It enables you to build a relationship with the customer so that they can understand your objectives and become a regular buyer.

The amount of time spent presenting your sale will be greatly reduced.

Disadvantages: No satisfactory way of assessing whether you are getting the best market price.



2. TENDER

Traditionally the most common way to sell, it relies on having a parcel of timber that is attractive to several local buyers.

Advantages: You can be reasonably assured of getting a good local market price.

You retain a choice, selecting your customer for their care in felling, extraction and financial status.

Disadvantages: Cost and length of time needed in presenting your sale. Likely to be a more protracted time-scale between the invitation to tender and contract signing.

3. AUCTION

This is popular when the economy favours a seller's market. It is often used for large-scale sales of softwood. Some attempts have been made to bring together similar parcels from various owners in particular areas e.g. oak in the Forest of Dean, beech from the Chilterns. This is unlikely to be an option for small woodland owners unless they are part of a consortium or a co-operative.

Advantages: Makes the very best of a seller's market where large volumes and quality are assured.

Disadvantages: Loss of control in the selection of your customer by selling to the highest bidder.

4. THE INTERNET

Several options are open to the woodland owner. There are web sites that offer free advertising as well as sources of advice and information. Remember websites know no boundaries and in general can be freely accessed. If you advertise on a website be sure to specify how you wish buyers to respond: don't ask them to email you if you don't check your email regularly. If you give your phone number make sure it has an answerphone facility when you're not there. Small parcels of not particularly high-value timber are probably best advertised locally but a parcel of quality high-value timber could be placed on many sites e.g. www.beaconforestry.co.uk, www.woodlots.co.uk or www.ecolots.co.uk

Such sites provide reliable access to the latest timber price information, the annual electronic sales event calendar, newsletters, press releases and online timber sales.



TIMING

You will need to decide what period is right to fell and extract.

Here are some factors that will influence timing

Felling

Softwood can be felled at any time of the year. It is always better to remove logs from the site as soon as possible. During the summer months this is particularly important in order to prevent fungal staining and degrading from wood-boring insects.

Broadleaves should always be felled in the winter months when the sap has stopped rising. The white hardwoods e.g. sycamore, beech and ash are particularly susceptible to staining if left too long in the round and if felled in summer. Oak may be stored for many months, or even years, in the round. The sapwood will rot in time but as this part of the tree is removed before use, the log as a whole will not lose value.

Weather and Ground Conditions

Sites with poor drainage in autumn and winter call for special consideration. The ideal time for felling may not be the best for extraction. Low impact techniques using, for example, an Alstor 8-wheel Forwarder (see photo) or horses could be employed to reduce ground damage. You may need to stipulate that all extraction is carried out by a Forwarder to minimise the damage to the forest floor, although this may not be feasible for large timber.

‘Skidding’, dragging the log out, is another option although when ground conditions deteriorate, this can have an adverse effect on the site and appearance of the timber.



© Chris Wenlock

Nesting Season

The game keeper's interests are often contradictory to those of the timber harvester; be aware of nesting issues with regard to protected birds or other wildlife species.



Environmental Priorities

Part or all of your woodland may be particularly sensitive to conservation interests, time of flowering and seed production. If you have an SSSI within it there will be special conditions which you must observe. Likewise, if the woodland has a special landscape character, heritage or archaeological features, there will also be special conditions to observe.

Coppice cutting

Coppice cutting should be done in the winter months to avoid damage to the young regrowth that occurs in the spring and summer.

Checklist

You now know that you must:

- Make it easy and simple for the prospective buyer, prepare properly and know the market conditions of the day.
- Understand all possible ways of presenting your timber and the financial implications.
- Inform previous buyers and others who have shown interest even if they did not buy before.
- Keep accurate records of all interested parties for future marketing use.

Summary of considerations prior to sale

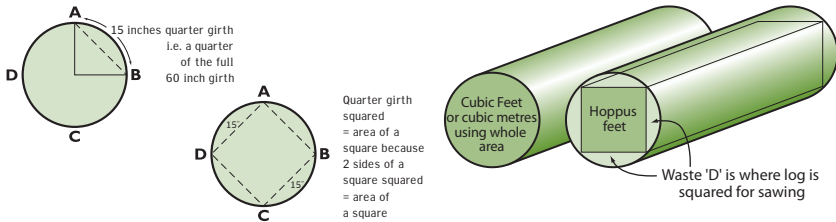
1. Clearly define the trees you want to sell. Example:

SPECIES	Ash
Size	10"-14" quarter girth.
Number	90 trees
Volume	Est. 2,000 Hoppus cubic feet
When	Next year

2. Estimate the volume, grade and value. Example:

Ash thinnings 10"-14" Q.G. 1,600 cu.ft. @ £2 per cu.ft.	£3,200
Firewood 20 tons @ £35 per ton	£700
	£3,900

Q.G.: quarter girth is a measurement of a sawn square log, one side of which is equal in length to a quarter of the girth:



Also decide how best to present the timber for sale taking into account the cost of each stage of felling, extraction and conversion:

Example: you have decided to fell and extract the timber using a contractor. Indicative costs are shown in the attached table. Please note these will vary due to location, the size and volume of timber, access, ground conditions and available market. Seek advice on current costs from your local Forestry Commission office before you start

Approximate costs 2005	£ Per cubic metre Hardwood/softwood
Cost of Felling	5
Cost of Extraction	10
Sorting or secondary haulage within the site	5
Cost of conversion	5

MARKETING TIMBER AND WOODLAND PRODUCTS

Recent research shows that very few people, wholesale or consumers, buy solely because they believe that buying and sustaining British woodland or supporting local industry is ‘a good thing’.

Whilst these are important you must provide even better reasons and benefits for them to buy your wood. These will be: **value for money, ease of access and supply, quality timber and reliable sourcing.**

Marketing people often refer to this as the WIFM factor:
What’s in it for me?

Marketing – What is it and how do I do it?

The Marketing Mix simply means the “menu” of marketing activities which you choose to employ: e.g. one or a combination of advertising, PR, website promotion, direct mail, telesales, door drops and so on.

‘**Push-Pull**’ marketing is a technique whereby you “push” your prospective buyer towards your product through your chosen activity from the marketing mix, then “pull” them in by means of incentives and a call to action.

It is helpful to remember the acronym **AIDA** even if you aren’t an opera lover!

- A... for Attention** first get your customers’ attention
- I... for Interest** then make them interested in your product
- D... for Desire** next, create a desire for what you are selling
- A... for Action** finally, make it easy for them to act – and buy it



The 4 P's of marketing are shown below: relate them to your SWOT analysis and apply to your own woodland:

PLACE

'Positioning' your product: consider the following

- Who will want your product
- Where will customers look, where will they find you - look at your competitors and see what they do
- Where are you in the overall market place
- Geographical location

PRICE

- Is your pricing strategy right
- Compare with other sellers both locally and further afield - are you competitive?

PRODUCT

- Is it fit for purpose
- Is it of appropriate quality

PROMOTION

- 'Word of mouth' is always the most powerful & 'editorial' coverage next
- Exhibitions and shows, internet, direct mail, collaboration with others
- Advertising costs money - make sure you research your market first

RESEARCHING YOUR MARKETS

Now is the time to identify your potential customers. Contact information is at the end of this guide:

- Get advice locally - from Business Link, Small Woods Association, Forestry Commission and others
- Check and compare yourself with other woodland owners - this is called **benchmarking**⁷
- Ask buyers where they generally look for their products
- Look at your competitors and assess their performance for yourself

7 More information on Benchmarking available from Business Link - see the **I NEED TO KNOW MORE** section

Your findings will help to **define the market** you are in and determine how you will **target** your potential customers.

Now establish the best method of selling in relation to your own situation and SWOT, for example:

- Set yourself research targets. Action research means that you don't file it away but act on what you find. The internet contains copious information but you must stay focused and not become overwhelmed by it. If you do NOT have access to the internet this will limit you. Instead, use support organisations such as Business Link or the Forestry Commission, the Country Land and Business Association, Forestry and Timber Association or the Small Woods Association.
- Are there enough potential customers locally to go to tender?
- Does your research tell you that there is just one very good sawmill which specialises in small ash that is both reliable and financially sound? In this case negotiation is probably the best route.
- Consider visiting this sawmill to get a feel for their operation. Is the yard tidy? What is the quality of the product? Has the owner a good relationship with his employees? If a limited company you can look at the accounts on the internet.⁸

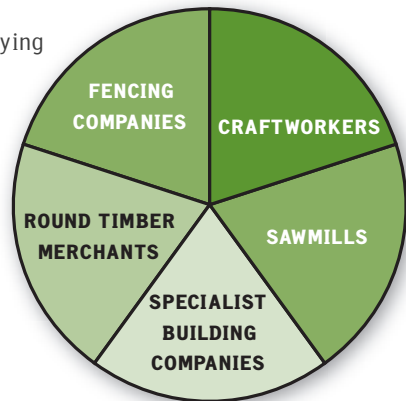
⁸ Companies House website is simple to use:
www.companieshouse.co.uk

Suggestions for your research

- Explore the market: there may be distant, but more efficient processors giving better prices which make selling to them worthwhile, even when taking into account transport costs.
- Take as much advice as possible from those who have been there before you; find and use existing research (see listings in this guide).
- Look out for alternative uses other than the conventional.
- Think about continuity of supply - maybe you can offer an amount of ash thinnings every year for five years enabling you set up a long-term contract with a price advantage.
- Are you missing a wider market? e.g. Specialist markets for turned ash sports equipment which requires a particular quality. This uses less than 5% of your logs but enables you to better your overall sale price.
- Look at promotion both locally and within the forest industry, by seeing how others do it and finding out what works best.

Market Segmentation

This means sub-dividing different types of customers and determining their different needs. It requires you to **understand and respond to** varying demands. Targeting these different groups of customers means knowing as much as possible about them, how they work, what they read or listen to, and how they source their materials.



Craftworkers – often working from home, requiring specific types of wood for bespoke products

Specialist building companies – who buy infrequently but pay “top dollar” for high quality timber for bespoke doors or banisters

Fencing companies – regular buyers, more interested in the bottom line

Sawmills – require all grades of broadleaved and softwood saw logs

Round timber merchants – buyers of all grades of logs including veneers and pulp wood

Keeping your customers happy

Marketing is as much about retaining your customers as about getting them in the first place. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is a marketing term which simply means building and maintaining a good dialogue with past and present buyers: looking after them, staying in touch with them, keeping them informed and making their relationship with you and your woodland productive.

Depending on resources, this can be sending a Christmas card or a simple postcard or a friendly text message which can be “broadcast” to several people in one go. It can be a newsletter/flier by print or by email, phoning them up or sending them a small gift related to your woodland every year to remind them of your existence.

Whatever you do, you must keep an accurate database or a simple list of their contact details and note the date and details of your last contact. The more they buy the more important it is for you to keep in touch. CRM can include more sophisticated direct mail such as catalogues and price lists. Use of the internet, digital cameras and scanners mean that almost anyone can create something presentable and if you don’t know how, just ask the nearest teenager.

Remember that whatever you send out to your customers reflects YOU and your product.

ADVERTISING & PROMOTION

Advertising costs money. PR and editorial do not. Don't miss a promotional opportunity but think twice before writing a cheque to the local newspaper or radio station. There is often a better way to get exposure in the media.

For instance, if you decide that paid advertising may be the only way, don't try to go it alone: there are organisations, often funded through public money, to help you. Use them. Our information section gives you their details.

Firstly:

Local media: Make friends with your local press - go and talk to them, find out how they prefer to receive information and pictures and what they like best. 'Free papers' are always looking for 'give-aways', competitions and news stories not covered by the paid press. Local paid-for newspapers are equally keen on 'people stories.' Human interest sells papers.

Next consider:

Websites: Search first, as if you were a customer, to see which sites come top of the main search engines and consider if any are suitable for you to promote your woodland. Some websites such as the Small Woods Association, Forestry Commission, Countryside Agency, act as signposts to others, to regional and local initiatives or other sites where you can publicise your timber. Others, such as local Wildlife Trusts, gardens or garden centres will give you ideas about possible buyers. There are dozens of commercial timber supply websites as well as those of Timber Cooperatives like the Forest of Avon. We give examples at the end of this book.

Local Information outlets: Try Post Office, Supermarket, Parish, Church, School, and WI notice boards where a well-designed poster that stands out can be very cheaply displayed and spread your name.

Local radio stations often offer barter and ‘for sale’ spots: they are always desperate for stories, especially with sound effects, so try to find a non-commercial angle to get you noticed. Perhaps they’d do a feature on what it is like to own a woodland, or a seasonal piece – they might do something educational about species or countryside skills. Any of this makes you visible.

Advertising your woodland

Remember what we have said already about alerting builders and sawmillers to your product. When buying advertising space never accept the first price quoted. Always ask for a better rate. And never write too much text. **Less is more.**

There are specialist press and media for the timber and woodland trades but if you decide to go for local press exposure, then advertising in the ‘run of paper’ will often be wasted: if you do decide to pay for an advert make sure it is targeted, in the right section, on the right day for your market segments and preferably on a right hand page near the outer edge. Or, try working with colleagues and putting together a composite advertisement.

The forestry trade media can be useful although are often more appropriate for equipment sales. More information is available from the Forestry Commission.

Checklist You should now know:

- The basics of marketing
- the various types of customers and how to attract them
- how to keep them once you have them

Round Timber Value Guide

There is an immense difference in value between breaking up saw logs for firewood and selling them into the top-grade log market as this simple table shows. It is not unknown for a veneer log to be broken up for firewood losing up to 90% of its true value.

A = value of firewood (same for all species) approximately £35 per ton at ride side

Species	Value	Size*	Circumference	Market
OAK				
Veneer Butt	A x 10	24" & up	2.4m	Furniture/Joinery
Prime Planking Butt	A x 8	17" & up	1.7m	Furniture/joinery
Burr or Beam Log	A x 4.5	20" & up	2.0m	Furniture/Building
Thinnings	A x 1.5			Pulp
Firewood	A			
ASH				
Veneer Butt	A x 5	20" & up	2.0m	Furniture/Joinery
1st Quality White	A x 3	14" & up	1.4m	Furniture/Joinery
1st Quality Coloured	A x 3.5	18" & up	1.8m	Furniture/Joinery
Thinnings	A x 2			Pulp
Firewood	A			
BEECH				
1ST Quality White	A x 3	15" & up	1.5m	Furniture/Joinery
1st Quality Coloured	A x 2	15" & up	1.5m	Furniture
Thinnings	A			Pulp
Firewood	A			
SYCAMORE				
Veneer Butt	A x 10	20" & up	2.0m	Furniture/Joinery
1st Quality	A x 5	14" & up	1.4m	Furniture/Joinery
Thinnings	A x 3			Pulp
Firewood	A			

1 Woodland Marketing Programmes

Beacon Forestry

Has a regular online timber auction
York Auction Centre, Murton, York YO19 5GF
Tel: 01904 489731
www.beaconauctions.co.uk

Ecolots

A free service designed to help the rural economy by assisting with the environmentally sensitive and sustainable management of land, trees and wildlife in the UK. www.ecolots.co.uk

Coppice Products

A site managed by the Green Wood Centre that lists local wood products and suppliers from coppice woodlands. www.coppice-products.co.uk

Woodlots (SE England)

Includes Woodlots that provides a detailed listing of woodland products from the South East. Free classified advertising for local timber producers, wood-users and all related organisations & businesses in the South East Weald WoodNet, The Woodland Enterprise Centre, Hastings Road, Flimwell, East Sussex, TN57PR
Tel: 01580 879552 www.woodnet.org.uk

2 National organisations

Small Woods Association

Britain's leading organisation for the support and promotion of the work done by the owners and carers of small woodlands. Courses, information and networking - a must for anyone who owns a small wood. Provides access to a low cost public liability insurance scheme
Tel: 01743 792644 www.smallwoods.org.uk

Forestry and Timber Association

The Forestry and Timber Association is the UK's leading representative body for all those with an interest, or a professional involvement, in the growing and management of trees. 5 Dublin Street Lane South, Edinburgh EH1 3PX Tel: 0131 538 7111
www.forestryandtimber.org

Royal Forestry Society

Aims to further the appreciation, understanding and knowledge of trees, woods and forests.
102 High Street, Tring, Herts, HP234AF
Tel: 01442 822028 www.rfs.org.uk

Country Land & Business Association

Founded to promote and protect the interests of owners of agricultural and rural land in England and Wales
16, Belgrave Square, London. SW1X 8PQ
Tel: 0207 235 0511 www.cla.org.uk

England Forest Industries Partnership

Works at strategic level to strengthen the competitiveness of England's forest industry and its contribution to the Government's wider objectives set out in the England Forestry Strategy.
16 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PQ
Tel: 020 7235 9463 www.efip.org.uk

Timber Research & Development Association

TRADA is an internationally recognised centre of excellence on the specification and use of timber and wood products. Stocking Lane, Hughenden Valley, High Wycombe HP14 4ND
Tel: 01494 569600 www.trada.co.uk

Building Research Establishment

For independent research consultancy and testing BRE, Garston, Watford WD25 9XX
Tel: 01923 664000 www.bre.co.uk

Wood for Good

Vision is to make wood the leading solution, where suitable, for construction and interior use.
Tel: 0800 279 0016 www.woodforgood.com

Confor Confederation of Forest Industries

ConFor has been established to help build the market for timber and timber products, create a supportive policy environment for the forest industries and to help our members become more competitive and successful.
5 Dublin Street Lane South, Edinburgh EH1 3PX Tel: 0131 524 8080 www.confor.org.uk

Health and Safety Executive

Britain's Health and Safety Commission (HSC) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) are responsible for the regulation of almost all the risks to health and safety arising from work activity in Britain.
Tel: 0845 345 0055 www.hse.gov.uk

British Woodworking Federation

55 Tufton Street, London SW1P 3QL
Tel: 0870 458 6939 www.bwf.org.uk

Furniture Industry Research Association (FIRA)

Maxwell Road, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG1 2EW
Tel: 01438 777700 www.fira.co.uk

Centre for Timber Engineering (CTE)

Napier University, Merchiston Campus
10 Colinton Road, Edinburgh EH10 5DT
Tel: 0131 455 2819 <http://cte.napier.ac.uk>

Continuous Cover Forestry Group

The Continuous Cover Forestry Groups objectives are to promote the transformation of even aged plantations to structurally, visually and biologically diverse forests, in which sustainable production of quality timber is undertaken with the application of the principles of continuous covermanagement. Contact Mark Yorke Tyddyn Bach, Llanegryn, Tywyn, Gwynedd. LL36 9UF
www.ccfg.co.uk

Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management

IEEM is a professional body which represents and supports professionals in the fields of ecology and environmental management. 45 Southgate Street, Winchester SO23 9EH Tel: 01962 868626
www.ieem.org.uk

The Wildlife Trusts

The umbrella group for an England-wide network of county Wildlife Trusts many of whom can provide consultancy in the form of wildlife surveys and management plans. The Kiln, Waterside, Mather Road, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG24 1WT
Tel: 0870 036 7711 www.wildlifetrusts.org

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

The UK's largest practical voluntary conservation charity BTCV Conservation Centre 163 Balby Road Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN40RH
Tel: 01302 572 244 www.btcv.org.uk

Visit Britain

The national tourism organisation, where you can find regional tourism & leisure information together with quality schemes and business support relevant to you.
www.visitbritain.com/trade

The National Trust

Charitable trust looking after land, coastline and historic properties. Enquiries relating to conservation: Heelis, Kemble Drive, Swindon SN2 2NA
Tel: 01793 817400 www.nationaltrust.org.uk

English Heritage

the Government's statutory adviser on the historic environment. Grants, archaeology, conservation, restoration, and building, retail & membership Customer Services Department, PO Box 569, Swindon SN2 2YP Tel: 0870 333 1181
www.english-heritage.org.uk

Woodland Burials scheme

www.nativewoodland.co.uk

3 Regional Organisations & Woodland Initiatives

Regional Development Agencies England

Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) promote sustainable economic development. They fund initiatives at regional and sub-regional level some of which are relevant to woodland businesses. Your local Business Link can provide details of schemes and programmes of support and the RDA website will indicate regional priorities. You can also find them in the Yellow Pages.
www.Englandrdas.com

Woodland Initiatives

Woodland Initiatives are regionally-based projects all around the UK delivering a wide variety of objectives. Visit this website and follow the interactive map to find your nearest initiative. Tel: 01743 792654
www.smallwoods.org.uk/initiatives

4 Woodland Sales Websites

Woodlands For Sale www.woodlands.co.uk

John Clegg & Co www.johnclegg.co.uk

Tilhill Forestry www.woodlandfinders.com

5 Business Support

Business Link

Business Links are locally based and provide access for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) to business advisors, Business Start Up advice, and signposting to training, IT and marketing support and advice.
www.businesslink.gov.uk

6 How to work with contractors & consultants

Institute of Chartered Foresters

Has list of chartered foresters who can produce management plans, do timber valuations and surveys. 7A St Colme Street Edinburgh, EH36AA
Tel: 0131 225 2705 www.charteredforesters.org

Forestry Contracting Association

The aim of the Forestry Contracting Association is to promote and protect the interest of its members and create an environment in which they can work to be successful. Tel: 0870 0421110 www.fcuk.com

BioRegional Charcoal Company

One of the useful services developed through this active and informative development consortium: BioRegional Development Group
BedZED Centre, 24 Helios Road, Wallington, Surrey SM6 7BZ Tel: 020 8404 4880 www.bioregional.com

Arbicultural Association

To advance the science of arboriculture for the public benefit. Ampfield House, Romsey, Hampshire SO51 9PA.
Tel: 01794 368717 www.trees.org.uk

7 Quality schemes Accreditation & Training

The Green Wood Centre

Tasked by Forestry Commission with leading the development of the coppice sector. Has established an apprenticeship scheme for coppice workers and is working with LANTRA on National Occupational Standards. Green Wood Centre, Station Road, Coalbrookdale, Telford. TF8 7DR
Tel: 01952 432769 www.greenwoodcentre.org.uk

Pan European Forest Certification

Aims to provide a means of assuring customers of woodland owners, that the products they buy come from sustainably managed forests, independently certified to standards complying with the resolutions of the Helsinki and Lisbon Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe. www.pefc.co.uk

Forest Stewardship Council

FSC is an international, non-governmental organisation dedicated to promoting responsible management of the world's forests. FSC UK Working Group, Room 8, 11-13 Great Oak Street Llanidloes Powys SY18 6BU.
Tel: 01686 413916 www.fsc-uk.info

LANTRA

The Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based sector, is licensed by the UK government to drive forward the new skills, training and business development agenda for the sector. Lantra House Stoneleigh Park, Nr Coventry, Warwickshire CV8 2LG
Tel: 024 7669 6996 www.lantra.co.uk

Coppice Association North West

Has established the Bill Hogarth Memorial Apprenticeship scheme for coppice workers
The Bill Hogarth MBE Memorial Apprenticeship Trust
c/o 93 Silverdale Road, Yealand Redmayne
Carnforth www.coppicenorthwest.org.uk

8 Government departments

Forestry Commission

The Government Department of Forestry. Contact Forestry Commission National Office for England, Great Eastern House, Tenison Road, Cambridge
CB1 2DU Tel: 01223 314546 www.forestry.gov.uk

Countryside Agency

Working for People and Places in Rural England
Countryside Agency Head Office, John Dower House, Crescent Place, Cheltenham, GL50 3RA
Tel: 01242 521381 www.countryside.gov.uk

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (for information and grants)

Helpline: 08459 335577 www.defra.gov.uk

Department for Trade and Industry

The DTI works to create the best environment for UK business success and they fund the RDAs
Tel: 020 7215 5000 www.dti.gov.uk

Department for Culture, Media & Sport

Tourism, sport, culture and leisure information
www.dcms.gov.uk

English Nature

www.english-nature.org.uk

9 Lottery Distributors & other grant making bodies

Heritage Lottery Fund:

HLF can fund landscape, wildlife and natural heritage as well as traditional heritage projects
www.hlf.org.uk

BIG Lottery Fund (merger between New

Opportunity Fund and Community Fund)
www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

Forestry grants:

www.forestservice.gov.uk/
Priv_woodlands/priv_woodlands.html
www.grantsonline.org.uk

Glossary of terms

Age Class – the class or group into which the trees in a woodland are divided according to their age, for example 5-10 years

At stump – sales of timber where a tree or trees has been felled and left at stump to allow a prospective purchaser to carry out a valuation

Butts – the end of a log which would have been nearest the ground when the tree was standing, the butt length is the distance from the butt end to the first branch or bend in the tree

Certification – a number of assurance and accreditation schemes that aim to certify that the timber comes from sustainable managed source

Clear Felled – an area that has been completely felled

Continuous Cover – the retention of woodland cover without clear felling through the management of individual trees

Conversion – Cutting a tree into shorter lengths and then into planks or other products

Cubic foot – a measurement of timber which is 0.0283 of a cubic metre

Cubic metre – 35.314 cubic feet or 27.736 Hoppus feet

Delivered/in – usually refers to the price when taken to the sawmill or pulp mill

Extracted – where timber is removed from the woodland to the loading area

Forwarding – where timber is placed on a machine that removes it from the woodland to the loading area. A Forwarder is the machine itself.

Health and Safety – statutory regulations that outline the legal requirements regarding forestry operations. HSE – Health and Safety Executive – the national council which oversees that these are kept.

Green Wood – used before it is air or kiln dried so has a high moisture content which makes it easy to work but liable to shrinkage

Hoppus foot is about 21% less than a true cubic foot, as it is based on measurement of a square log with the edges sawn off.

Quarter Girth – a traditional measure used in estimating the volume of a log. It is based on the quarter girth inch which is four true inches (which is an imperial measure of log volume based on length and quarter girth at mid point).

Rideside – the side of a ride or track going through the woodland

Skidding – dragging a log out of a wood to the loading area using a machine or horses

SSSI – Site of Special Scientific Interest – a legal designation to protect something of nature conservation value on a site whether it be the habitat or a particular species of flora and fauna.

Thinning – removal of trees to allow others more light to grow and put on timber diameter

Veneer – the most valuable timber for use in high quality cabinet making and furniture where thin strips are literally peeled or sliced off a log



In response to research which confirmed the need for more marketing expertise amongst owners of smaller woodlands, the Forestry Commission and Countryside Agency have produced a series of guides to help people make the most of the products from small Woodlands.

The guides give straightforward marketing advice in an easy to understand manner that is directly aimed at the small scale or occasional producer.

I hope you find the guides helpful in developing your business and through your work improve the sustainable management of England's Woodlands.

Paul Hill-Tout, Director, Forestry Commission England