



Annual Report 2008/09

Northwoods - the Woodland Initiative of the North East

08/09

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INTRODUCTION



The year 2008/09 has been another successful year for Northwoods, with a strong record of project delivery which has ensured support for individuals and businesses across the rural sector and across the whole of the North East.

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This annual review provides an overview of the projects we have run, and the benefits we've brought to the forestry, renewable energy, biomass and wider rural sectors.

Throughout the year we've focused on adding value to businesses across the region, on supporting communities in their efforts to improve resilience to natural events, and on lobbying at a regional and UK level on behalf of the forestry and rural development sector.

Our warm thanks go to our many partners who make this work possible - we look forward to working with them over the coming year. ”

David Clubb
Northwoods Project Director



STEERING GROUP

Northwoods is managed by Rural Development Initiatives and operates under guidance from our steering group, which meets quarterly.

Membership (as of April 2009):

Andrea Horner	One NorthEast
Ben McLaughlin	One NorthEast
Brendan Callaghan	Forestry Commission
Cameron Scott	Northumberland County Council
Catherine Grezo	Durham County Council
Elaine Rigg	Northumberland National Park
Jane Karthaus	ConFor
John Atkinson	Business Link North East
Lydia Speakman	Natural England
Richard Pow	Forestry Commission
Will Richardson	Rural Development Initiatives Ltd



THE YEAR AT A GLANCE

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Planning for Ignition09 begins

Northwoods talks about fuel quality at the Low Carbon Innovation Forum, Newcastle

April 08

Katie Coombs - MSc student - starts her placement

Marc Barendrecht leaves Northwoods for Australia

May 08

Ethan Bigelow joins Northwoods as wildfire Project Officer

Northwoods steering group meeting

June 08

Northwoods attends the Northumberland County Show

Attendance at Durham Sustainable Energy Group

Project BEn starts

Oct 08

Journalist's trip to Austria through the NEWHeat programme

Nov 08

Dec 08

Initial meeting on Flood Partnership

Project BEn kick-off meeting in Germany

Kasia Zielewska joins Northwoods as BEn Project Officer

David Clubb appears as an expert on renewables on BBC's 'Watchdog'

Jennifer Hewitson joins as bioENERgy Project Officer

Northwoods talks about producer groups at Cumbria Woodlands meeting

July 08

Renewable energy feasibility studies for Community Action for Energy

Publication of "Economic Benefits of Biomass to the North East"

August 08

Northwoods presents on producer groups at the International Energy Agency meeting, Warwickshire

Sept 08

New Northwoods website goes live

Jan 09

Preparation for Ignition09

Feb 09

Ignition09 takes place

March 09

Northwoods sits on expert panel advising Government on the Renewable Heat Incentive

NEWHeat project completed

KEY ACTIVITIES - FORESTRY

Developing and promoting the forestry sector

Outreach services -

Northwoods has represented the forestry sector at a number of regional and national events, including the International Energy Agency Biomass event in Warwickshire in September 2008. Northwoods is a tireless advocate of the forestry sector in the North East, and champions its adoption of best practice to other regions and bodies across the UK.

Support services -

Northwoods is always available at the end of the phone line or email to assist businesses and members of the public with any query related to biomass or forestry. We typically field hundreds of calls a year on all aspects of forestry and biomass.

Project development and delivery -

Northwoods leads on developing projects aimed at supporting the sector in the region. New projects undertaken during the FY 2008/09 include the Lantra Landskills North East training programme, the bioENERgy woodfuel suppliers grant support programme, BEn biomass strategic support and the Tree Skills Fund.

We continue to work to develop new programmes, and look forward to another year of success on this front.

Supporting the delivery of the woodfuel strategy

We provide the regional centre of expertise on

woodfuel, responding to requests for information with specialist advice, and linking effectively to the Biomass Energy Centre. These functions include the maintenance of databases of woodfuel producers, installations and installers.

We support the provision of training

through our two training courses - Lantra Landskills North East and the Tree Skills Fund. Both these training courses are helping maintain the flow of highly skilled individuals which will be needed by a robust and growing forestry sector.

Encourage production of high-quality woodfuel

through dissemination of best practice and industry standards. We have continued to deliver the award-winning Ignite training to a number of individuals across the region this year, and have provided expert guidance on woodfuel standards (CEN standards) at the Low Carbon Innovation meeting in Newcastle.

We help coordinate and consolidate the work of NEWFuels (the North East Woodfuel producer group), and have helped support the establishment of producer groups elsewhere in the UK, using NEWFuels as the model of best practice.



KEY ACTIVITIES - BIOMASS

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NEWHeat

NEWHeat is the regional business support programme for biomass. It provides feasibility studies, handholding support, grant support for detailed design work and training.

The NEWHeat programme ended on 31st March 2009, resulting in at least 900kW of installation, more than 300 businesses assisted, a huge amount of positive press coverage including television, radio and print, and also resulted in the organisation of the UK's first woodfuel expo - 'Ignition09'

From March until September 09, NEWHeat will be undertaking continued handholding for sites which are already involved in the NEWHeat support in order to ensure the best possible outcome

for the region and the businesses in terms of installations.

Following the success of the original project, the NEWHeat partners are working together to consider new ways in which to stimulate the sector - watch this space!

BEn

BEn (Biomass ENergy) is a European-funded project which aims to provide baseline figures on biomass activity (including many different types of biomass such as waste wood streams, anaerobic digestion fuel stocks etc), and then to map biomass potential on a publicly-accessible GIS system.

The final part of the project involves working with local and regional stakeholders to build up a biomass 'master plan' which can be used to inform decision-makers,

businesses and local residents and communities about the possibilities of biomass.

Katarzyna Zielewska (Kasia) is the Project Officer responsible for project BEn.

bioENERgy

bioENERgy can be seen as the woodfuel supply counterpart to the NEWHeat programme. The aim is to ensure a high-quality, well-trained and well-equipped woodfuel supply sector, which has the strategic vision necessary to eliminate bottlenecks in the system, and can foresee future supply pinch points and help address them.

bioENERgy uses RDPE funding to part-fund a number of different interventions into the woodfuel supply system. These might include assistance for forestry access, capital

equipment, covered hard standing or any number of different needs.

Jennifer Hewitson - the Project Officer - has considerable experience in working with rural businesses, and on helping them obtain the grant funding they need to

allow their businesses to grow.

NEWFuels

NEWFuels continues to offer support to businesses and woodfuel producers alike. We are investigating the possibility providing a better service by working more closely with our colleagues in

Yorkshire, and we will be talking to our membership about how best we can serve them in this fast-changing sector over the coming 12 months.

Case Study - Ignition09

Ignition09 was held on 11th and 12th March 2009, and proved to be a highlight in the annual renewable energy calendar, with more than 850 attendees and 65 exhibitors, including a number from overseas.

The event included site visits, expert talks and chipping demonstrations. Feedback from exhibitors and attendees was very positive, and the benefits to the local economy of hundreds of attendees enjoying the local sights and facilities, were extensive.

The external evaluation of the NEWHeat project examined Ignition09 as part of the overall support mechanism, and found there were very strong benefits to the project and to the wider woodfuel and biomass sector as a result of the media attention and expert advice available.



KEY ACTIVITIES - RURAL RESILIENCE

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Northumberland Fire Group

advanced wildfire training course

lessons learned from Northumberland.

The Northumberland Fire Group continues to provide a core function to the Fire and Rescue Service, to Landowners and to the wider community as it delivers fire plans, training and an overall strategic approach to the response to fires in the land-based sector.

- Press activity, including press releases and an educational DVD release
- Completion of Standard Operating Procedures handbook
- Featured on BBC 'Open Country' radio show

Activities which have been carried out over the last year include:

- Live burning exercises
- Wildfire training
- Approval of wildfire training by Lantra
- Development of

The Northumberland Fire Group's successful operation has informed the development of a Cumbria Wildfire Group, and Northwoods project staff have been working with partners in Cumbria to support its activities drawing on experience and



Northumberland Fire Group

Northumberland Flooding Partnership

The development of a Northumberland Flooding Partnership is progressing well, and Northwoods has gone a long way down the road towards its formation.

The impetus for this development work was the devastating flooding which affected large parts of Northumberland in September 2008. Shortly after the flooding, talks took place between Northwoods and the Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service, to discuss how the methodology which has been used for the Fire Group could successfully be applied to a Flooding Partnership.

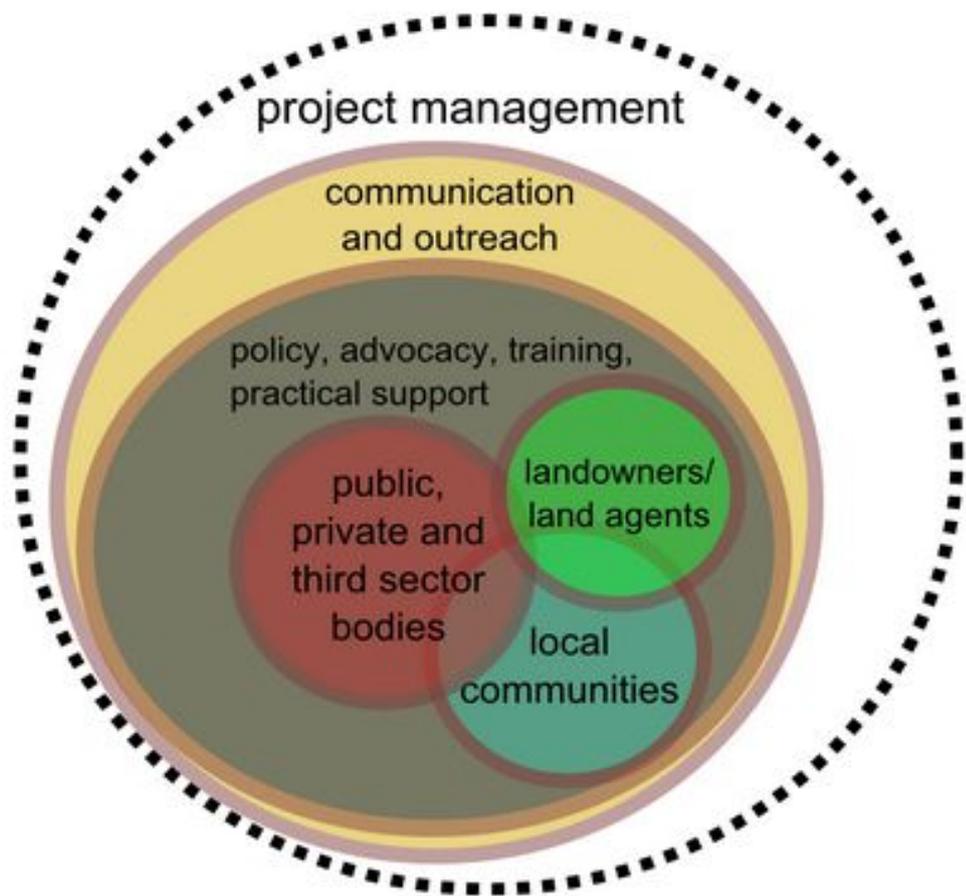
Meetings subsequently took place in December

and March, where the Environment Agency confirmed that they would allocate funding to support the employment of a project manager to carry out the actions supported by the steering group.

Northwoods is currently considering how best to incorporate the wider objectives of rural resilience within local communities, incorporating fire and

flood management and best practice, and we hope to see this sector become an important, useful and strategic benefit to Northumberland, the North East and possibly a case of best practice in the UK.

Key Relationships and Activities



THE YEAR IN FIGURES

Staff -	6
Training days provided -	120
Businesses supported -	260
Installed biomass capacity -	850kW
Grants allocated (approx) -	£180,000
Turnover (approx) -	£600,000

THE YEAR AHEAD

We anticipate that the year 2009/10 will bring continued benefits to the forestry, timber and wider rural sectors from our activity. We are confident that we will continue to develop new biomass, training and partnership projects, and look

forward to recruiting a project manager to develop and manage the Northumberland Flooding Partnership.

As climate change moves up the agenda, we look forward to helping the public and private sector work towards mitigating and

adapting to the inevitable changes which will result.

And we hope that our existing and new partnerships will continue to bring us the outstanding results which we've seen over the last 12 months.

CONTACT US

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northwoods
The North East's Woodland Initiative

ABOUT RDI

Northwoods is managed by Rural Development Initiatives Ltd (RDI). RDI works at the forefront of sustainable rural development, in

partnership with and under contract to local and national public, private and charitable bodies across the UK and other parts of the EU, and delivers programmes which

make a significant difference to the rural economy, the environment and the fabric of rural society.

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