

## **If you go down to the woods today!**

Not so long ago, many landowners closed the gate on their woodlands because the costs to manage them and haul timber out were prohibitively high.

As the demand for renewable energy has recently increased, including woodfuel for biomass boilers and wood burning stoves, timber prices for both hard and softwood have seen a significant increase over the past year. According to the Coniferous Standing Sales Price Index for Great Britain prices for standing sales were 16% higher in real terms in the year to September 2011, compared with the previous year. This home-grown market is predicted to grow especially now that the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme for domestic users has come on stream, which provides grants for renewable heat technologies for householders who, in turn, will be looking for a regular supply of wood to burn.

Now farmers and landowners in the West Midlands, including Shropshire, Staffordshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire, have a perfect opportunity to realize a return from their woodlands in the form of not only higher timber prices, but also subsidised woodland management advice under Heartwoods Advisory Services. Approved Woodland “Champion” Advisors are supported through Heartwoods to deliver a day of professional time at a heavily subsidised cost of £100.00 + VAT per day, which includes a site visit by a professional forester to measure and assess the woodland’s potential, discuss management options and advise landowners about markets and grants they may be unaware of.

Martin Jones (Heartwoods Woodfuel Champion) says “I think this is a great opportunity for landowners to maximize the benefits from their woodlands and not just economically. The scheme will allow owners to get their woodlands back on track. Everyone benefits; the owner, the environment, the consumer and there’s minimum paperwork involved too. There is no obligation for the landowner to commit after the site visit. He can then decide whether he wants to go ahead and apply for a Felling Licence or a have a long-term management plan drawn up. There is even a planning grant for that too available from the Forestry Commission”. To find out more, please contact;

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