

## Case Study

### South Downs Forestry Partnership

# Social and Economic showcase - West's Woodfair 2014

#### Background

The South Downs National Park has over 38,000ha of woodland which covers approximately a quarter of the landscape. If all of this forest resource were actively managed it is estimated that it could contribute £22.8m to the local economy.

The South Downs Forestry Partnership project has therefore been established to bring more woodlands within the National Park into active management.

The project aims to pool and co-ordinate the efforts of key organisations acting within the National Park (Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust, Wildlife Trusts and Local Authorities) and work closely with landowners and local enterprises to seize new opportunities and respond to emerging markets such as woodfuel and sustainable development.

This is a collective landscape scale approach that will encourage networking for environmental, social and economic gains and enable the effective utilisation of timber to become a feature of the South Downs National Park identity.



Visitors to West's Woodfair enjoyed an exhibition of local produce and forestry skills all nestled within a tranquil valley in the heart of the South Downs National Park

#### The project

The South Downs Forestry Partnership sought to sponsor West's Woodfair as a showcase for sustainable woodland management and a demonstration of the local forest industry and its contribution to the local economy.

This event was run by Wests of East Dean Fine Furniture Workshop with the aim of showcasing local timber businesses and produce. Their business ethos and ongoing publicity for the production and use of high quality local timber compliments and supports the ongoing work of the South Downs Forestry Partnership.

This is the second time the event has run, the organisers plan to hold the woodfair every 2 years. The event is not run for commercial gain but aims to cover its costs as a minimum. The partnership sponsorship this year intended to tip the balance in terms of profitability and ensure the events success and its establishment as a regular attraction within the South Downs National Park.

The value of the event to the South Downs Forestry Partnership is as a public forum demonstrating sustainable woodland management and as a networking event for the local forestry enterprises.

“A great showcase of the variety of skilled professionals working in the local forestry sector. A fine mix of sustainable forest management and quality produce”

Matthew Woodcock - Forestry Commission

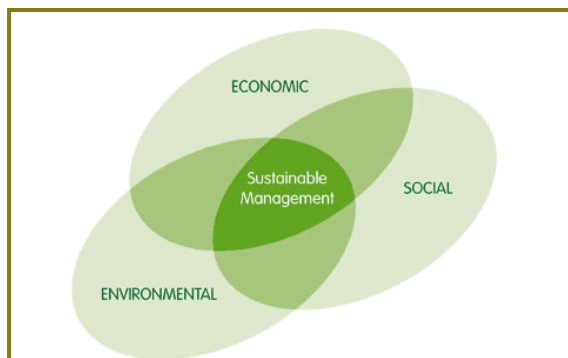
## The outcome

The event attracted over 3000 visitors over two days. In total the South Downs Forestry Partnership provided £1000 in sponsorship and also exhibited the works of the Partnership in a stand at the event. Additionally the Forestry Commission enabled access to Charlton Forest to demonstrate the sustainable woodland management practices used by the forestry Commission in a guided tractor tour free to all visitors.

The event attracted 68 exhibitors of which 44 were directly associated with the local timber supply chain. These forest enterprises ranged from timber contractors, timber merchants, sawmills to a range of end users and artisans. It reflected the full scope of the local timber supply chain and provided a valuable networking forum for all those involved. As well as informing the public and generating new potential clients from the visitors many of the exhibitors took the opportunity to link with potential new suppliers or customers amongst their fellow exhibitors.

The event delivered on its aim to showcase sustainable woodland management to the public and also highlighted the traditional and ongoing wood culture which is a feature of the South Downs landscape. Overall it was an excellent showcase for the South Downs Forestry Partnership and contributed all the partnerships aims and objectives.

This event also helped to deliver the forestry and woodland sector policies of the South Downs National Park. Specifically delivering towards policies 17-22 of the South Downs National Park Management Plan, delivering support to woodland owners, improving the economic viability of woodland and developing a range of sustainable markets.



Three strands of sustainable forest management

## The future

West's woodfair is likely to be staged every two years and the next event is planned for 2016.

The success of the woodfair has proven that a relatively small sponsorship can facilitate an event that has wide local impact.

The South Downs Forestry Partnership will continue to seek to sponsor events which demonstrate the three strands of sustainable forest management (economic, environmental and social) and link this good resource management with the protected landscape of the South Downs National Park.

West's Woodfair excelled because it sought to inform the public of not only the historic, cultural and recreational elements of our woodland landscape, but also exhibited the modern sustainable forestry industry and ongoing heritage crafts which maintain the woodland as a healthy and accessible habitat to be enjoyed by all.

It highlighted the value of our forestry industry to the local rural economy, and placed the “wood culture” that is an integral feature of the South Downs National Park in the forefront of public perception