

Clinton Devon Estates Modern Forestry At Its Best [8]

Clinton Devon Estates is a superb example of integrated land management on a vast scale, combining farming, forestry and other rural businesses with conservation, public recreation and social participation. Its mission statement is to “secure the long-term prosperity of the Estates and the people who live and work on them in ways which care for the countryside and assist the wider community”. The statement also says: “We like to think of ourselves as a progressive rural Estate with a rich, colourful history. Responsible stewardship is at the heart of how we go about our business.”

Clinton Devon Estates is a complex countryside organisation which directly employs around 70 local people, as well as, contractors and professionals. The Estates’ businesses directly boost the local economy, spending over £3.5m with 1000 local suppliers. Woodland cover is around 17 per cent, twice the English average, with 1900 hectares of commercial conifers and native broadleaved species.

The woodlands provide environmental, recreational and landscape benefits, as well as, a sustainable supply of timber for the wood-processing industry. Clinton Devon was one of the first estates to achieve Forest Stewardship Council certification to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard.

The Estates’ woodlands produce around 10,000m³ of certified timber per year. This is increasing, as conifers planted in the 1960s reach maturity and approach sustained production. This timber is sold to wood-processing industries locally, regionally and nationally, for fencing and construction. Broadleaf woodland produces ash poles for furniture and oak for fencing and planks. Traditional firewood logs are in high demand

and the Estates’ woodfuel business processes suitable wood into woodchip for boilers, supplying it through Forest Fuels Ltd to customers like Devon County Council and Paignton Zoo. Christmas trees provide valuable seasonal business.

Active forest management benefits biodiversity, achieving a complex environment with a rich diversity of tree species and age structure. For example, the rare nightjar thrives on the rotational conifer felling and replanted sites that adjoin the heathland. The ‘deadwood’ policy and areas of non-intervention safeguard bat roosts and have led directly to an increase in greater spotted woodpecker numbers.

The Estates manage significant Sites of Special Scientific Interest, including the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths, River Otter Estuary and western oak woods in North Devon. Commercial plantations occupy prominent hilltop positions within East Devon where the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation is testament to the long family history of sensitive stewardship.

The estate woodlands offer a range of other benefits including:

- » Public access is provided to 90 per cent of the East Devon woodland including horse-riding and mountain biking. More mountain bike access is being discussed.
- » Screening of radio masts and recycling centres.
- » Providing clean and renewable energy, as an alternative to using finite fossil fuels.
- » Absorbing over 6000 tonnes of carbon dioxide, from the atmosphere each year.

