installing a 150 kilowatt wood-fuel heating boiler in the guest house, again tapping into advice from Cumbria Woodlands, together with seven wood fire stoves. Could the plantation provide enough timber for the property to become energy self-sufficient in the long-term?

Cumbria Woodlands gathered the data and did some number crunching using various scenarios and production forecasts. The calculations showed that the woodland was, in fact, more than capable of meeting demand without removing more volume in any year than was being put on by the remaining trees.

Plan
That was good news and a new green vision opened up. Armed with the data, Cumbria Woodlands is helping Gary to formulate a Woodland Management Plan using a grant from the Forestry Commission. This kind of plan is the foundation of sustainable woodland management, helping owners identify the existing value of their mental and social) and their objectives. It will guide management over the next 25 years and open the door to grants from the Forestry Commission, including Woodfuel Woodland Improvement Grant which helps pay for better access to bring woods back into active management. A management plan can also help in gaining certification through the UK Woodland Assurance Standard and tapping other funding sources.

Gary continued:
"It’s a very elegant plan based on a virtuous circle – we improve the wood’s ecology by putting it back to work, use the timber as a lean burning fuel cutting our energy costs, which in turn allows us to continue our work managing the wood. We are also making a small, but important contribution towards a more sustainable society."

"The focus now is on implementing the blueprint and without the advice from Cumbria Woodlands we would not be where we are today. I don't think we would have pushed so far so quickly."

Woodland owner comes up with the right answers

When landowner Gary Primrose took part in a quiz run by Cumbria Woodlands at Westmorland Show in 2010, funded by Cumbria Fells and Dales LEADER, he definitely came up with the right answer!

The prize for the winner in the Sylva-sponsored competition was an in-depth Oak level advisory visit by an expert from Cumbria Woodlands, who carried out a detailed assessment of his woodland and helped him to explore forest-based business opportunities and grant sources.

It was a slice of luck that sparked a series of developments culminating in a new vision for a beautiful Lake District wood and the prospect of achieving energy self-sufficiency.

Gary hails from Canada and moved to Cumbria 20 years ago having originally come to England to train as a landscape gardener in Hampshire. He became involved in Yewfield Guest House, at Hawkshead Hill, and now manages the land around the Victorian property, which is popular with holiday-makers. His quiz victory was timely as he was in the process of jointly buying 20 hectare Sawrey Ground Plantation on the edge of the property from the Forestry Commission. Gary explained:
"Many of the conifer stands are mature and ready for felling and there are opportunities for converting some parts of the wood back to native broadleaves. Initially we had a Silver Birch level visit from Cumbria Woodlands, who produced an overview of the wood and discussed options for future management. I've got a life-long interest in conservation and this was a chance to nurture a more varied woodland and revitalise habitats, which is a big motivation."

Advice
Cumbria Woodlands advised Gary on providing more trails, methods of felling and extracting timber, restoring ancient woodland and thinning for improved timber quality. But a key question for Gary was whether his biodiversity push could be taken on a step further down an eco-friendly road. He was in the process of

"I've got a life-long interest in conservation and this was a chance to nurture a more varied woodland and revitalise habitats." Gary Primrose
hard to make our ideas into a reality. This year we are felling about 100 tonnes of timber, all of it using horses for extraction, which are kinder to the ground than machines. Our woodfuel requirement is between 100 - 120 tonnes annually, so we are definitely on course. Ideally we would like to process wood on site, but that is a long-term aim, and for the time being it is processed elsewhere. But we are gearing up nicely and we have just bought a share in a log splitter, which will be very useful for meeting firewood requirements in the guest house.”

Gary is keen to upgrade his own skills and Cumbria Woodlands has arranged for him to go on courses under the Woodfuel School initiative. He’s also undertaking chainsaw and small scale felling training and a silvicultural course. As Gary has discovered, a bit of knowledge can go a long way.

Cumbria Woodlands Advisory Service

The service offers a key source of advice for owners of undermanaged woodland in Cumbria aimed at bringing more woods into active management. The need to tap this vital sustainable resource and invest in woodfuel was identified in the Cumbrian Local Development Strategy (2008). Both Cumbrian Fells and Dales and Solway Border and Eden LEADER RDPE projects earmarked funding for the initiative. The scheme highlights the potential of woods to reduce heating bills by using local firewood, setting up rural forest-based enterprises, offsetting the effects of climate change and improving wildlife habitats. Three levels of service are offered: an initial free assessment and report (Silver Birch Day), followed by more specialist support under the Oak level service, which can include grant applications and timber mensuration, and a woodfuel and renewable energy assessment, both charged at just 10% of cost. Funding is also provided by client contributions and United Utilities.

150kw biomass boiler at Yewfield Guest House

Key facts
- Woodland Management Plan drafted using £1,000 Forestry Commission grant.
- 100 tonnes of timber to be felled this year using logging horses to extract the wood.
- Home grown firewood used heating guest house – surplus sold, increasing income.
- Goal set for energy self-sufficiency, whilst restoring ancient woodland.
- Renewable Heating Incentive offsetting equipment installation costs.
- 150 kilowatt biomass boiler and 3,000 litre accumulator tank commissioned in 2010.

Key achievements
- 475 woodland owners have contacted the service to enquire about help with managing their woods.
- 394 woodland owners signed up for a free advisory visit and report.
- 4208 hectares of woodland visited by advisers.
- 58% of clients accessed further specialist advice (Oak Days for grant applications, timber mensuration, woodfuel assessment).
- 116 applications made to the Forestry Commission’s English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) resulting in projects with a total value of £397,735 declared to date.
- 51 woodfuel reports commissioned.

Skills

Cumbria Woodlands also runs an RDPE funded training scheme ‘Skills for the Forest’.

Set up to deliver training to the forestry and farming sector in Cumbria, this £400,000 scheme has been providing subsidised training to raise the skills of the forestry workforce and to improve the employment prospects of forestry workers in Cumbria.

The scheme has also upgraded the skills of woodland owners to enhance their abilities to manage their woods. Key achievements:
- 700 enquiries logged since the scheme began in 2011.
- Six major demonstration events organised, including timber extraction using small scale equipment.
- 337 training places taken up, 73 training courses offered and 841 training days provided (Sept 2011—Dec 2012).