

AUTUMN 2010

Message from the CEO

Welcome to the first Highland Birchwoods Tree-Zine. We decided that a regular newsletter will keep you up to date with what we're doing, and what we are thinking of doing next. The range of work covered by Highland Birchwoods is as varied as ever, so we hope that there will be something to interest everyone.

We believe that the more varied the stakeholder contributions to our work are, the richer and more effective that work will be – in short we need your input!

We also think that our work has more value if the outputs are more widely adopted and to help with this we are setting up a commercial trading arm to deliver our outputs to market where they will contribute to integrated land management policy and practice. All profits will be reinvested in our future projects.

So, if you are interested in any of our current projects, have an idea for a future project, or want to know more about our commercial services we'd be delighted to hear from you!

Cliff Beck

<http://highlandbirchwoods.blogspot.com/>



New Renewable Energy Helpline



Highland Birchwoods has set up a Renewable Heat advice and support service designed to guide people through the myriad of information available. ▶

<http://www.usegreenheat.co.uk>

08000 285858

To be able to use all the links in this newsletter – read it in PDF format, downloadable from the publication section on the HB website.

<http://www.highlandbirchwoods.co.uk/publications-g.asp>



WOODLAND RESEARCH GROUP

Highland Birchwoods has formed an innovative partnership with UHI to establish a **Woodland Research Group**. This group builds upon previous successful partnerships between the two organisations, and has an Advisory Panel made up of representatives of government agencies, research, NGO, community and private sector interests. It will develop applied research covering all aspects of the functioning, management and utilisation of woodlands. The group promises to be an exciting and useful development for all involved, and brings together a wealth of expertise in applied research in woodland ecology, forest management and timber utilisation including specialist expertise in bioenergy, woodland palaeoecology, rural development forestry, and scrub ecology.

HB Joins the Battle Against the Bloom

Rhododendrons are a garden favourite with their bright flowers and attractive foliage, however one species, *Rhododendron ponticum*, has 'gone native', spreading through



large swathes of Highland roadsides, hillsides and woodlands to become a significant threat to native flowers, mosses, lichens and other wildlife.

Left unchecked, *R. ponticum* develops a dense canopy which shades out everything beneath it and so reduces the habitat available for other species.

Identified as a priority Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) under Scotland's Species Action Framework, rhododendron is now the focus of HB's latest project.

Launched in June 2010, the Highland Rhododendron Project (supported by SNH, FCS, THC, Highland Birchwoods and Highland Invasive Species Forum) aims to encourage landowners to take on the rhodie menace, initially focusing on control in and around designated sites. HRP will provide support and advice on SRDP grants and best practice in the removal of rhododendron as well as developing community-led projects. Find out more [here](#).

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Woodfuel Seminars

Due to our past experience in numerous woodfuel projects, Highland Birchwoods is delighted to be working with UHI (Perth College Centre for Mountain Studies) under contract to the EU funded project Clim-ATIC, in promoting the use of woodfuel within the Cairngorm National Park. We are delivering events covering a wide variety of topics including supply chains, construction industry, domestic and community and installers. The programmes have been tailored to the area and the delegates needs and there has been a fantastic response to date. It is anticipated that some 180+ delegates will have attended one or more of these events by the end of September 2010. For more information about the Climatic project and the upcoming events please go to <http://www.clim-atic.orgnews.html>

New Woodland Walks Leaflet and Wildlife Hide for East Sutherland

Since June 2009, HB has been working with SNH, FCS, The Highland Council, Sutherland Estates and Sutherland Partnership to deliver the East Sutherland Woodlands (ESW) project to the Kyle of Sutherland, Rosehall and the East Sutherland coast. ESW has been successful in bringing together community woodland managers, public bodies and private estates to promote woodland walks in the area through a new, free **Woodland Walks leaflet** and has supported several local community groups to develop woodland-related projects and apply for funding. The 'Go & See' fund will be open until the 30th of September for local groups with a woodland interest to find out more about projects elsewhere in Scotland. As part of the **Developing the Scots Pine Resource Project** HB is also working with Sutherland Estates, SNH and Scottish Wildlife Trust to build a timber wildlife hide on the shores of Loch Fleet National Nature Reserve. Set against the backdrop of Balblair Woods, a managed Scots pine woodland, the hide will demonstrate the use of Scots pine in timber construction and enable more people to enjoy watching wildlife.



Artists impression of new bird hide at Loch Fleet

Development of Harvesting Software

The **Developing the Scots Pine Resource project**, led by Highland Birchwoods, has developed new software **PREHAS** that provides foresters with a forecast of harvestable timber in terms of both volume and quality. It has been developed by the Finnish Forest Research Institute in collaboration with Forest Research and uses data collected from harvester processing machines.



In April architects and specialists in timber engineering took part in a 3 day study tour to Trondheim organised by the Norwegian forest and Landscape Institute to learn about the use of engineered timber products in construction. There was a strong focus on the manufacture and use of laminated timber products including cross laminated timber in residential and commercial buildings, and stress laminated timber in bridges.





Kids get involved in Action for Mountain Woodlands

What are Mountain Woodlands? The woody vegetation found near the tops of mountains, also known as 'montane scrub' or 'treeline woods'. It is characterised by low-lying, twisted trees and shrubs.

Who is benefitting? As one of the seven sites involved in the project, the Cairngorm Mountain Trust has successfully restructured the Mountain Woodland Garden which lies adjacent to the funicular railway base station in the Cairngorm National Park.

Thousands of scrub trees have been planted by children from local primary schools. It was originally anticipated that two to three schools would be involved, however it very quickly became obvious that we could achieve so much more. With thanks to our key funder the Heritage Lottery Fund we have continued to teach children about this rare and declining habitat and provide them with an opportunity to plant trees for future generations to enjoy. A new section of path linking the garden to the existing hill path has also been built, and maintenance work carried out on the many threatened native Scottish mountain plants.

A plant nursery area is now established providing a future stock of locally sourced plants for the mountain woodland garden. An interactive visitor display is in progress and will be housed within a 'stumpery' at the top of the new path during 2010.

If you are interested in finding out more about the exciting work being carried out across our other sites, the educational focus, or maybe you would like to join us on a plant assessment day, then please visit our website:

<http://www.mountainwoodlands.org/>



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What is Use Green Heat?

As awareness of the benefits of renewable heat has increased so too has the volume and complexity of information available.



Use Green Heat is a Highland Birchwoods led partnership of renewable heat advice and support organisations funded through the European Structural Fund Programmes for the Highlands & Islands 2007 – 2013.

Whether you're a homeowner, tenant, business or community in the Highlands, Moray or Argyll we want to help you find your way through the myriad of information available.

By offering a dedicated enquiry point "Use Green Heat" will ensure that your question is dealt with by the partner best qualified and resourced to deal with it.

How can you contact us?

If this topic interests you and you want to find out more why not visit our website www.usegreenheat.co.uk or give us a call on **08000 285858** to learn about green heat including biomass and solar as well as ground and air source heat pumps. Discover the funding opportunities and the savings you could make on your heating bills by switching from traditional heating such as oil and electricity and look for upcoming events near you.



Species Action Framework

The **Species Action Framework** was launched in January 2007 by SNH and the Scottish Government. It sets out a strategic approach to species management in Scotland and focuses on new management action for 32 species over five years (2007-2012). Along with SNH, FC S and RSPB, HB is involved in delivering the SAF for Capercaillie, and is working with a range of landowners to fund direct conservation management for Capercaillie. You can find out more about this [here](#) or by contacting us directly.



Staff Focus –Cliff Beck -CEO

-Where are you from?

I was born in London, the first Londoner in the family as previous generations were from the New Forest area, although most of them worked at sea. My parents moved to London the year before I was born, and are still there. I left at 18, and came to the Highlands when I was 21



-How long have you worked for Highland Birchwoods?

I arrived at HB in 2002 on a short term contract to promote woodfuel and manage delivery of Treefest 2002 in the Highlands. One thing led to another and I became CEO in early 2005

-Where did you work/what did you do before you came to Highland Birchwoods?

I am old enough to have tried quite a few things – museum archivist, debt advisor, creel fisherman, freelance journalist, lighthouse keeper and forestry. Immediately before coming to HB I was self employed carrying out small consultancy contracts, seed collections and grant scheme inspections for FCS

-How did you first become interested in forestry?

As a kid who liked climbing trees! Then many years later Fountain were advertising for tree planters so I started planting conifers in the flow country because I naively thought planting trees must be good! I soon became convinced that there had to be a better way of doing it and started researching alternative approaches. Then Sandie and I went self employed doing a combination of firewood, planting contracts, seed collections and running a small local provenance nursery

-What do you feel is the most interesting/important issue facing foresters/ land managers at present?

Creating a resource which is large enough, resilient enough and sufficiently adaptable to cope with climate change, economic change and social change

-Something interesting about yourself outside of work?

I went to school with the Sex Pistols, love cricket and have a keen amateur interest in Botany. Sandie and I are just finishing a self build wooden house.



Giant picnic table being made for the Highland Housing Expo by the **Developing the Scots Pine Resource** project

Last Word from the Directors



Hope you have found the first edition of the HB Tree-Zine enjoyable. I've recently taken the role of Chairman of HB, this will be an interesting and challenging role for me as I have no formal background within the forestry sector. That said I am more than aware of the challenges that are presently faced by the sector through my role as regional facilitator for the Highlands & Islands Forest Industry Cluster. I am also delighted to be supported by a team of Directors who have a wealth of knowledge and experience within the sector.

I am confident that there are some real opportunities for the sector and I look forward to HB playing a key role.

Stewart Meikle –Director



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