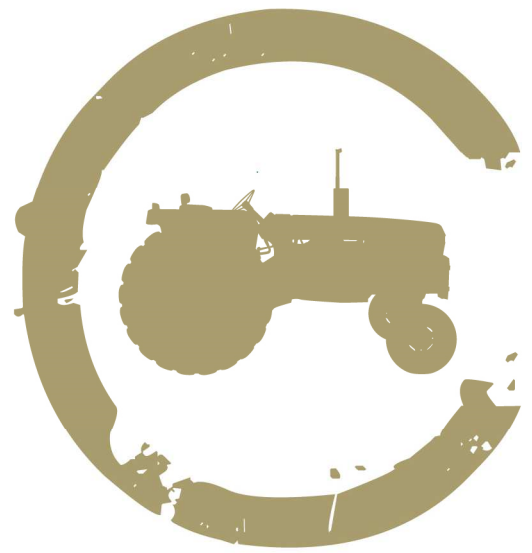


SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE



Community Supported Woodlands and Hedges

Wood fuel and other benefits from small woodlands and hedges
A Tool-kit for Communities - v1.0 July 2013

Chapter 10: Support hub

Prepared by Kate Royston and Dave Readman (Cotna)
Robbee Smole Sustainable Business Solutions
For Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



CORDIALE was selected under the European Cross-border Cooperation Programme INTERREG IV A France (Channel) – England, co-funded by the ERDF.

Robbee Smole
Sustainable Business Solutions

TamarValley
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Chapter 10 Support hubs

It may be quite daunting for a community group to get together, acquire a woodland/hedgerow, and take over its management without support. A landowner may also be cautious of dealing with an unsupported community group; and a landowner with many smaller assets (such as the Woodland Trust) may feel that undertaking agreements with many small community groups individually is too time consuming.

The answer may be in the provision of a support hub that is able to offer services and facilities to a number of community groups within the vicinity. Useful services could include:

- Expert support in woodland / hedge management and/or network of support contacts
- Administration services and communications support
- Purchasing services etc. (a buying group)
- Landowner agreement facilitation, acting as land holder if required.
- Insurance cover provision
- Register of suitable contractors
- Funding services (providing access to funding sources etc.)
- Training and skills development (provision or contacts)
- Tool / Equipment hub / machinery pool – tools centrally held for groups to use
- Wood fuel/product storage / processing / delivery services etc.
- Media and Marketing services

Support may be accessed from multiple sources, local to national, as illustrated by the diagram below; and may be provided through a combination of virtual network contacts and locally-based community support organisations. In Dorset, for example, the local Ranger service is supporting training provision, support with management plan development and access to specialist equipment.

A key area identified for support is in a 'development phase' particularly when a group is in the early stages of formation. This allows time to develop group cohesion, build necessary skills and competencies and get to know the woodland / hedge without the pressure of having to conclude an agreement to manage a woodland / hedge with limited experience. Developing a transitional approach from a simple agreement with a supported un-constituted group to a lease and constituted group may be a good approach; and the support hub could help facilitate this over a period of two to five years.

Within the Tamar Valley, the Tamar Community Trust is providing some support hub services.