



LOGS FOR LABOUR: BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION

'England's wildlife and landscapes have inspired and delighted through generations. There are strong moral arguments for recognising the intrinsic values of other species and for passing on the natural riches we have inherited to future generations. We have also recently begun to better understand (or perhaps remember) that our natural world is not a luxury: it is fundamental to our well-being, health and economy. The natural environment provides us with a range of benefits – ecosystem services including food, water, materials, flood defences and carbon sequestration – and biodiversity underpins most, if not all, of them. The pressures on our land and water are likely to continue to increase and we need to learn how to manage these resources in ways which deliver multiple benefits, for example, achieving profitable and productive farming while also adopting practices which enhance carbon storage, improve flood water management and support wildlife.' From 'Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network'

The Logs for Labour scheme accords well with these principles. Sometimes a tree has to be felled for safety but mostly logs are produced when woodland management such as thinning or coppicing is undertaken or when paths are cleared of encroaching trees. All three types of management allow light to reach the ground for a time and so stimulate ground flora. This is beneficial to many insects, including butterflies, particularly along woodland rides. A coppice rotation where a proportion of the whole coppice area is clear cut every winter, gives maximum biodiversity benefit because there will always be:

- areas of newly open ground, allowing species of the woodland herb layer to flower and support early spring invertebrates such as bees
- areas of light regrowth, supporting a different range of plants, invertebrates, birds and mammals, particularly good for foraging
- areas of increasing density and height, again supporting different species and providing nesting cover for birds

A few rules will ensure that you can take your logs home and feel good that you have benefited the woodland as well:

- logs that are rotten should be left as they are because they are of more value to wildlife than to provide heat
- a few good logs should be left to rot because they will soon become valuable to wildlife
- brash should not be burned but some piled up and some left as it falls. Wrens in particular love to forage for insects in piles of brash
- coppicing should leave an area open to light – no 'cherry picking' of only the easiest trees or the forest floor will be left shaded and its biodiversity will not get chance to bloom. The only exceptions here are when tall standards amongst the coppice are left to grow on for timber products but these are pruned regularly of their lower branches to reduce knots in the finished product and so cast less shade as they grow.