

Howard's Wood, Dorset



Woodland manager Helen with Forestry Commission Woodland officer Chris Gibbard

In the summer of 2019, we met up with Helen to find out more about the woodland she manages with her partner Adam, and what benefits the trees are now providing.

It was Helen's late father-in-law who had the foresight to plant the 13 hectare woodland back in 2002. Helen explained how her late father-in-law was a farmer, and the land was formerly a maize field, but he realised the benefits of tree planting could outweigh the financial rewards he could get through continuing to farm the land. He also wanted to help provide a future income for his sons and provide an amenity for the village.

'He could have continued to make an income from maize, but the availability of a Forestry Commission grant to plant a woodland made a big difference. He also saw the woodland as a legacy for the village.'

A broad range of trees were planted, including broadleaves for the timber crop – oak, ash, cherry, lime and field maple. But there is also crab apple and a whole variety of shrubs to attract wildlife which help to maintain a healthy woodland. The woodland is now 17 years old and is undergoing its first thinning, with the wood being sold as firewood to the village.

Key facts

Location:

Howard's Wood, Dorset

No. of hectares:

13

No. of trees planted:

24,000

Species range:

Predominant species include oak, ash, cherry, lime, and field maple

Grant applied for:

Farm Woodland Premium Scheme

Planting time:

2002

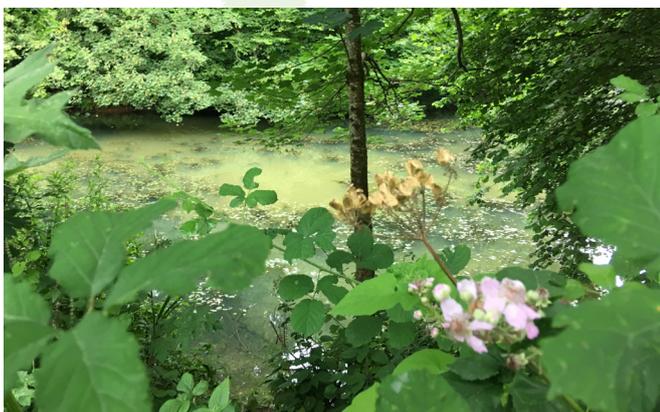
Grant aid is available to support the purchase and planting of trees and their protection, for example with fencing.

To create a woodland like Howard's Wood – planting 24,000 trees across 13 hectares – you could receive grant aid in the ranges below:

- **£30,720 – £88,400 (£1.28** per tree and up to a total of **£6,800** per ha through the Woodland Carbon Fund or the Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation Grant).
- **£38,400 – £110,500 (£1.60** per tree and up to a total of **£8,500** per ha through the Woodland Carbon Fund if planting near urban areas and providing access to the public on foot).
- **£26,000** over 10 years in maintenance payments (**£200** per ha each year for 10 years through the Woodland Creation Maintenance Payment – available if you plant through the Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation Grant).
- **£13,000** five years after planting (**£1,000** per ha after five years – available if you plant through the Woodland Carbon Fund).



Helen told us how, 17 years ago when the site was a maize field, there wasn't much wildlife, but as the woodland grew so did the wildlife. As well as butterflies and bats, the trees are now alive with the sound of birdsong. The dawn chorus includes the distinct sound of the chiffchaff and young hobbies hunt dragonfly across the lake.



Helen's advice for anyone considering planting a woodland would be to firstly speak to your local Forestry Commission Woodland Officer.

'My late father-in-law worked with the Forestry Commission to help plant the woodland and that really helped with knowing which trees to plant to deliver against his objectives. Forestry is different to farming as there is more time to do things so don't worry if you're new to it and need to get some help or advice.'

In the early years weed control is important and there are payments to support this work. You also don't have to do everything yourself so as the woodland grows – don't panic!

'We have help thinning from the students at our local agriculture college, it helps with their training and it obviously helps us too, which is great!'

Another top tip would be to create a Woodland Management Plan.

'This really helps you to focus, woodlands evolve over time and different opportunities arise, people make suggestions of extra things you could do.'

For example, Helen and Adam now earn extra income under the '28 day rule' (where landowners can use their land for alternative uses other than woodland for up to 28 days a year). This is something which has evolved organically as the woodland has grown, but having a management plan helped Helen and Adam to head in the right direction. There is also a grant available for the Woodland Management Plan, which gives a one off payment based on the area of woodland once the trees are established.

'The great thing about the woodland is that the timber crop doesn't affect the other things going on in the woodland, it all links together and that's something which has developed over time.'

Howard's Wood is at the heart of the community; it is a woodland base that is used by a local Forest School and for community events and short courses.

'We would never have expected these types of opportunities to present themselves when the trees were planted, but the woodland really has become an amenity for the village and I think my late father-in-law would be very pleased to see how it has developed – providing a stable income, a home to wildlife and a beautiful environment all in one.'

If you'd like to hear more from Helen, see our YouTube channel – [youtube.com/ForestryCommission1](https://www.youtube.com/ForestryCommission1)



Find out how we can support you to plant trees on your land and the funding that is available to help.

gov.uk/government/organisations/forestry-commission

