



CLIENT CASE STUDY: Lorna Singleton

Saving energy, capturing carbon and supporting an endangered craft

Lorna Singleton is one of the UK's last remaining 'swillers', a specialist in weaving baskets using coppiced oak and hazel, managing coppice oak woodlands for biodiversity and products. She also teaches others to weave, facilitating nature connection through the process, and working to make the craft more accessible to sustain it in the future.

As an inherently sustainable business you might be surprised to hear how we have been able to further support Lorna through the Green Enterprise Hub. Lorna recently found a new location for her business, in a traditional barn, and was keen to prioritise retrofit work to minimise environmental impact. John Millen, one of our energy surveyors, identified appropriate low carbon building materials (which have a lower embodied carbon footprint than standard oil based products) and created a report that identified potential operational savings of 842kg CO₂e per annum, by comparison to a standard retrofit of the building. It identified opportunities for insulation and airtightness measures, which would reduce energy loss in the building when in use, and protect the heritage timber using vapour open building materials.

Lorna's coppicing uses some heavy machinery; she was interested in the potential of an electric quad bike, having already moved to an electric chainsaw. The choice of electric quads is developing quickly and models are available for most budgets; Simon Brace identified the best option in the UK for Lorna's purposes.

The process of coppicing is integral to Lorna's business, albeit time consuming and expensive. Therefore, she was also looking for a way to use the carbon capture and biodiversity potential of coppicing oak to create a carbon offsetting scheme. Her idea was to turn this process into a way for local businesses to offset their unavoidable emissions, "to connect me to local businesses and to connect them to local landscapes and community."

Through the Green Enterprise Hub we were able to align Lorna with a student from Lancaster University to receive 75 hours of research time. The student identified that the coppiced land Lorna managed could be capturing around 58.5t CO₂e/ yr. The student then investigated the income that could be generated through various schemes, and made recommendations for Lorna's business. This could help the model of coppicing and weaving, which is an endangered craft in the UK, to become a more economically sustainable profession. It could also encourage more coppicing land management, which can have significant benefits for biodiversity, as well as carbon capture.

SERVICES ACCESSED:

- Attending events to meet with likeminded businesses and learn about innovative approaches to sustainability.
- A fully funded sustainability research project with a student from Lancaster University.
- An energy advice visit, to recommend approaches to the building retrofit Lorna is planning to create her new office.
- EV advice visit, specifically looking at appropriate replacements for the quad bike Lorna uses for her coppice work.

"Coppice work is hard, physical work, often unpaid because grant schemes don't cover small areas of land, and coppice workers are all small businesses or sole traders. Managing these woodlands keeps alive our local woodland heritage and provides an important resource for future generations to be able to work sustainably and provide rural livelihoods."

Lorna Singleton

If you're looking for advice and support to save money, connect with your audience and make the world a better place for us all, book a helpdesk call through the W&F Green Enterprise Hub today.