



ENGLISH WILLOW
UNITED KINGDOM

Cricket Bat Willow Case Study

In early February, Oakbank Woodland was instructed to take over the long-term management of 250ha of predominantly Ancient Semi Natural Woodland and all other tree assets, including risk management, across a large mixed rural estate in West Cambridgeshire. Along with the massive task of the renewal of the long-term Woodland Management Plan and 10-year felling license process, and the renewal of the 5-year CS WD2 Woodland Improvement grant, the client expressed a desire to revisit the Cricket Bat Willow (CBW) opportunity on the estate. The client was aware of the increasing demand and therefore value of these trees and, with the very quick rotation of only c.18 years, he was keen to increase the Estate's investment in them.

The existing CBW plantation is a small area of c.16 years old trees which, like many such plantations, hadn't been meticulously managed since establishment. After our initial meeting, Oakbank contacted English Willow, our trusted CBW partner for Western East Anglia and the East Midlands, to engage them straight away to advise further on the value of the existing trees and help plan for more for the future.

Oakbank and the Estate Manager set about identifying suitable locations for additional CBW planting across the estate, predominantly along wetter ditch sides and poor yielding arable field corners where they would not pose a problem for drainage or ditch management.

Jonathan Clarke, Director of English Willow visited us a week later to review the existing CBW trees and the areas proposed for additional planting. The price offered for the existing willows, which are by no means perfect, was considerably more than anticipated and the price offered included English Willow felling them, chipping the branch wood and replacing each removed tree with a new set, complete with tree guard. Less than 10 days after the quote was accepted, the English Willow team arrived and felled the agreed trees and left a spotless site, complete with new sets in place.





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Photo 1. Showing trees removed, those left to grow on for a year or two more, chipped branch wood and replacement sets / tubes.
Spotless sight, I think you will agree!



Photo 2. Max, our Graduate Woodland Consultant who was integral to the process, standing next to the next generation of CBW on the Estate.



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During Jonathan's initial visit, we viewed the proposed new CBW planting areas and agreed on a programme of planting 300 new trees (10m apart spacing), over a 3-year planting period, commencing November this year.

This additional 300 trees will be of no consequence to farming practices but will add increased biodiversity and landscape value to the largely flat landscape, and a significant return to the estate in the long term.

The agreement with English Willow is that they will supply and plant these sets with a tree shelter (current price of £25/unit), manage the essential pruning operations annually and then provide the best prices going for the trees when they are ready for felling.

All in all, the service from English Willow has been excellent and both Oakbank and the Estate are delighted. We very much look forward to continuing to grow the relationship.



Photos 3 & 4 – CBW blanks at English Willow Yard and finished bat products.

If you have CBW to sell or are interested in planting more or venturing into growing them for the first time in Western East Anglia or East Midlands and beyond, contact us at Oakbank Ross@oakbankgc.co.uk or English Willow office@englishwillow.co.uk

Please also find our guidance note on Cricket Bat Willow in the download section on our Website.