

Pretty plot on the landscape

By Deborah Stone

RISING energy prices have turned the spotlight on the eco-friendly features of new-build properties – such as insulation, triple glazing and air source heat pumps – but not everybody wants to live in a new housing development and in the countryside there's limited opportunity to do so. That's particularly true if you want a home with a bit of land, which experts say is becoming a top priority for people who want a home with its own source of renewable energy – in other words woodland.

"Property with attached non-commercial woodland is attracting a premium," says Anto Clay, [property finder for Stacks Property Search](#) (01594 842880; [stacks.co.uk](#)). "While everybody previously wanted a pony paddock, an area of mature trees is the new must-have."

"In these days of stratospheric fuel prices, firewood keeps you warm three times – once when you cut it, once when you split and stack it, and finally when you burn it," he jokes.

Clay, [property finder](#) in Monmouthshire, South Herefordshire, South Powys and the Forest of Dean adds: "Of course, woodland is good for the soul. Our desire to immerse ourselves in nature locally is growing, whether that's bird watching, coppicing, insect spotting, clearing brambles, the simple joy of open air labour, or simply sitting quietly watching the weather and the sky."

But how do you go about buying a home with its own copse and aren't there rules about managing trees, even if you're only clearing dead branches?

Charlie Rearden, Rutland and the shires agent for Stacks, has some answers: "If you're thinking about buying woodland, whether it's attached to a [property](#) or a separate plot, talk to a land agent who will advise on uses,

maintenance, management and kit that will be required, local contractors for the tricky or dangerous work, tax advantages, and planting grants.

He suggests researching the installation of a biomass boiler "to take advantage of your own fuel" but warns there are limits to what you can do with the land.

"Buying a plot of woodland that's near your home for recreational purposes can work but beware the romantic notion of constructing a cabin for overnight stays, or leaving a caravan on site. This is strictly not permitted.

"You should be able to construct a shed but you'll need to demonstrate that it's for practical purposes and that it's not decked out with sun loungers and a bar. You may be able to camp for the odd night but for pretty much anything more you will require planning permission."

The good news is that a home with a bit of land can be the source of endless satisfaction – from watching deer and other wildlife to putting up nesting boxes and planning conservation projects.

As Rearden says: "The nearer the land is to your home, the more you'll get to enjoy your own little piece of heaven."

PROMISED LAND: Polkinghorne Barn, a two-storey sea-view barn conversion near Penzance, has an additional cottage and studio set in more than three acres of a secluded Cornish valley with private woodlands, meadows, ponds and gardens. For sale at £1.25million (01872 261160; [Jacksonstops.co.uk](#)), the three-bedroom barn has granite walls and open beams while the cottage, a single storey converted barn, has two bedrooms, a kitchen, bathroom and living room with sea views, while the studio has a kitchen and shower room as well as its main room



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