Good for cricket, good for the planet

ENGLISH WILLOW, one of the leading producers of *Salix alba* Caerulea (also known as cricket-bat willow) has signed a contract with Blenheim, Oxfordshire, to manage and harvest trees on the estate. The firm creates new plantations, purchases mature trees and replaces every tree it fells. English willow trees are perfect to grow on low-lying, wet and heavy soils that are often unproductive, it says, and they sequester carbon and improve biodiversity.

'The estate has a long association with cricket; the Blenheim Park Cricket Club still plays home fixtures on the South Lawn (*above*), so for us to be able to supply the timber to make bats is absolutely brilliant,' says Rachel Furness-Smith, head of estates at the palace. 'Working with English Willow means we can manage our willow trees in a sustainable and organic way, which is good for the environment, promotes biodiversity and makes use of traditionally unproductive areas of the estate.'

The trees are cared for and cultivated by hand in an organic and sustainable environment, says English Willow, with the trees grown in wide spacings (100 trees per hectare) and with 15 years of growth between planting and harvest.