

ENERGY NOW PUTS THE SPOTLIGHT ON RENEWABLE ENERGY ACTIVITY IN THE EAST OF ENGLAND AND FINDS A GREAT ENTHUSIASM FOR TURNING WOOD INTO HEAT

Regional partnership looks to help more farmers grow wood for fuel

A regional partnership is providing grant support to a growing number of east of England farmers and landowners who are looking to diversify into using or supplying woodchip for energy.

Woodfuel East has funding available towards the installation of modern woodchip boilers on farms and estates, as well as grants for farmers looking to diversify into fuel supply – and these grants are already helping farmers to generate an income from their woodlands or grow their own source of fuel.

Edwin van Ek, of Woodfuel East, said: "The growing market for woodfuel is increasing the demand for locally-produced wood, but around 50,000 of the 140,000 hectares of

woodland in the east are either under-managed or not managed at all."

He explained: "Woodfuel East aims to bring 15,000 hectares of woodland back into positive management by 2013, by encouraging landowners to produce wood for fuel."

Mr Van Ek also pointed out that farms with woodland could grow their own heating fuel, or could generate an extra income by selling wood produced from thinning.

"One way we are supporting this is through our new advisory service grants, which provides 80% funding towards expert woodland management advice. We are aiming to provide advisory support to 245 farmers and woodland owners by 2013," he said.

Woodfuel East is hosted by the Forestry Commission and is managed by a steering group of 25 partner organisations, including the NFU and the CLA.

Launched in 2008, it received £4.3 million from the Rural Development Programme for England, which is delivered regionally by the East of England Development Agency, and its business development advisors, Sid Cooper and Phil Potter, can provide farmers with information on all the grants available for boiler installations, woodland management or for equipment needed to join the woodfuel supply chain. ■

➤ For more information go to www.woodfueleast.org.uk

New chairman for Anglia Woodfuels

West Norfolk farmer and forester Edward Brun has been elected chairman of Anglia Woodfuels, a co-operative group that facilitates the use of woodfuel.

An existing director of the group and committed user and producer of woodfuel, Mr Brun of Oykel Farms, Fring, in West Norfolk is taking over from John Austen who was founding chairman when Anglia Woodfuels was launched in 2006.

Anglia Woodfuels provides a hub within the supply chain linking all those involved from woodland owner and boiler installer to specifiers for public buildings and private end users.

Now well established, it offers general woodfuel advice including grant information. Its new lorry-mounted Heizohack chipper, which can chip 30 tonnes of wood an hour,



Edward Brun

is available for hire to members with a fully trained and highly competent forestry contractor.

"With various schemes and grants

such as the Renewable Heat Incentive, there has never been a better time to install a woodfuel boiler," says Mr Brun who has cut his heating costs by 40% since installing one at his home.

"Anglia Woodfuels has been championing the cause since 2006 and membership is growing all the time. The challenge for me as chairman is to build on these great foundations and ensure that our members benefit from an industry which is gaining considerable momentum."

Anglia Woodfuels offers two classes of membership. Full members can contract hire the Heizohack chipper with an annual subscription of £75. Those that would like to be kept informed about Anglia Woodfuels can pay a £25 annual associate subscription. ■

➤ For more information visit www.angliawoodfuels.co.uk, or call 01603 881881

A view of the progress so far on the new plant at Staples Vegetables near Boston



Spud power plans on target in Lincs

IMAGE: COURTESY XERGI

Things are looking pretty good so far and work is ahead of schedule at Staples Vegetables in Lincolnshire, where the company is installing a 1.4MW anaerobic digestion (AD) plant at its headquarters in Wrangle, near Boston.

The plant will be powered, principally by vegetable waste from the company's processing plant and

will produce sufficient heat and power to supply all the business's requirements, plus providing a surplus that will generate electricity for the National Grid.

The project is being supported by WRAP (Waste Recycling and Action Programme) on behalf of DEFRA. The technology supplier is the Danish AD supplier Xergi Ltd and it will be the

first of three AD plants the Danish firm plans to build in the UK during 2010.

The commercial director of Staples, Vernon Read, said: "So far progress on-site is going well with all major tanks and digesters in place and outside storage areas well on the way to completion, although the detailed installation work is just commencing.

"We also still have to install the CHP (combined heat and power) unit, along with the feeding system and ancillary equipment."

Mr Reed pointed out that the company's original plan was to have the plant completed and ready for commissioning in early October this year.

"The work started in December last year and despite some difficult weather conditions it has progressed well. The way things are looking, we should be ahead of schedule and could hopefully start in September," he added. ■

Norfolk estates move towards self-sufficiency for heat

Two working south Norfolk estates are becoming self-sufficient for heating by managing their own woodlands for fuel, with help from Woodfuel East's Sid Cooper.

By processing their own wood into chips for fuel, the cost of heating at Ditchingham and Ravingingham estates is the equivalent of buying oil at 17 pence a litre.

Jake Fiennes, estate manager at Ravingingham, which received a Woodfuel East grant to build a woodchip storage barn that can handle current and future demand, advised farmers thinking of using woodfuel to first consider

where the wood will be harvested, processed, stored and fed into the boiler, because each site was different so farmers needed to find a system that worked for their farm.

"Dealing with the end product is not a problem as modern boilers are so efficient that the ash from 30 tonnes of woodchips barely covers the bottom of a wheelie-bin," he said.

"We'll use around 150 tonnes of wood this year and have the potential to create 400 tonnes annually, from 500 acres of woodland. This will also bring more

woodland back into active management, from coppicing and thinning ancient woodland, through to removing non-native species."

Meanwhile, the Ditchingham estate is processing around 110 tonnes of wet wood a year into fuel from its 340 acres of woodland to heat Ditchingham Hall, its estate office, a greenhouse and an outdoor swimming pool.

Woodfuel East funding helped Ditchingham upgrade its logging equipment and convert a redundant Dutch barn into a bespoke woodchip store. ■