



David Proudley, the son of farm owner Ken and a partner in the caravan park business, takes a look at the new solar panels

York farmer sees benefits in shared ownership scheme

East Yorkshire farmer/businessman Ken Proudley, who decided to share ownership of his renewable energy scheme, says he is already benefiting from the project, which promises to provide him with a guaranteed return on his investment.

After considering various options, Mr Proudley, who owns South Carolina Farm and a caravan park in Easingwold near York, decided on a solar energy scheme in partnership with Nationwide Solar.

The company installed the 27kW solar panel system on one of his storage sheds, as part of the shared ownership scheme, in which Mr Proudley acquired 70% of the solar panels and the solar photovoltaic installation specialist bought the remaining 30% – and they share the Feed-In Tariff (FIT) accordingly.

Mr Proudley still has the option to acquire the remaining 30% at an agreed rate if he wants to in the future.

The system should generate free electricity for the farmhouse and the caravan park, which can accommodate up to 15 touring caravans and attracts visitors throughout the year. The panels are expected to supply between a third and a half of the electricity required, which represents a significant saving for the business.

Mr Proudley explains: "The system was installed in April this year and is predicted to generate 24,100kW per year. I can easily monitor how much energy it is producing each day, either by a read-out on the meter or through the installer's website.

"So far, the performance has been excellent with several days in which the

energy generated was far higher than was predicted and I have started to receive my quarterly tariff payments, which represent a significant income for the business."

He added: "I investigated solar power mainly because I wanted to reduce the amount I was paying for electricity to supply the caravan park, where each site has an electrical hook-up. However, it soon became clear that installing solar panels was an excellent investment because the FIT payments are guaranteed for 25 years.

"Nationwide Solar made the whole process simple and straightforward by handling all of the paperwork relating to planning permission and dealing with my contract with the energy supplier. The free electricity is an extra bonus and we have been able to cut the farm's carbon emissions and do our bit to further protect the environment."

The Barnsley-based solar company claims it can predict the minimum amount of electricity which will be generated by each of its installations, calculated on the property's location, perspective and shading to give customers a reliable forecast of their future FIT payments.

Managing director Russ Cowan said: "Many farmers throughout the UK are recognising the benefits of having solar photovoltaic (PV) panels installed on their buildings to generate electricity. Installations of this type can give an average return of 11.6%."

Planning permission was not required for this farm installation, although it is necessary in some circumstances. As part of its service, Nationwide Solar manages this process. ■

Yorkshire centre helps develop calculator to assess emissions

The Yorkshire-based National Non-Food Crops Centre (NNFCC) worked with the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) and the Environment Agency to develop the UK biomass and biogas carbon calculator.

Lucy Hopwood, head of biomass and biogas at the NNFCC in Heslington near York, said, "This will help bio-energy generators to report their emissions consistently and fairly to Ofgem, as required by the Renewables Obligation.

"It is fully compatible with the Renewable Energy Directive methodology for calculating GHG emissions, taking account of the recommendations set out by the European Commission in its report on sustainability requirements for solid and gaseous biomass."

Reporting GHG emissions to Ofgem becomes mandatory for all bio-energy generators above 1MW from April 2012, but with no financial implications. Then from April 2013, generators above 1MW must achieve GHG savings of more than 60% (compared with fossil equivalents) to receive financial support.

The NNFCC offers a range of consultancy services to assist organisations in understanding the opportunities and meet the challenges presented by the biorenewables sector. ■

➔ See www.nationwidesolar.co.uk for more information

➔ See www.nnfcc.co.uk