

Solar panels on the new extension to the home at Leadon Court Farm provide hot water in the summer



Julian gets to grips with 'alternative' future

Herefordshire farmer and businessman Julian Morgan with the biomass boiler that supplies his heating and hot water during the winter

ENERGY NOW FINDS OUT HOW A RURAL BUSINESSMAN'S ON-FARM EXPERIENCE AND WIDE-RANGING RESEARCH INTO RENEWABLE ENERGY IS HELPING OTHERS

Herefordshire farmer and businessman Julian Morgan believes farmers and rural businesses are uniquely placed to develop and exploit the opportunities in renewables in the future.

"Not only do they occupy the vast majority of land in the country, including properties on the edges of UK towns, they also own most of the woodland and have all the necessary resources in terms of machinery and labour to undertake the day-to-day management of the projects to pull it all together," said Mr Morgan in an exclusive interview for Energy Now.

Mr Morgan is chairman of Herefordshire-based 7Y Services Ltd, which provides a wide range of services to rural businesses. He also farms in the county and hasn't just formed an interest in alternative energy because of the recent energy price rises and the talk of climate change.

He has had a life-long passion in alternative energies stemming from his childhood and has been investing in renewable technologies, including biomass and solar thermal systems to heat and provide hot water for his Leadon Court Farm home, plus an adjacent workshop.

Mr Morgan is also currently planning to install a wind and photovoltaic system to provide electricity for the

farm and an additional commercial property enterprise.

In conjunction with 7Y Services and the Nuffield Foundation, Mr Morgan recently undertook a project to investigate biomass-based renewable energy opportunities for farmers and has gained considerable insight looking at all the options available and the viabilities of the ones currently on the market.

Under the heading of "The Carbon Footprint of British Agriculture," the report considered agriculture's role in energy production from biomass and waste and was published last year. (Log on to www.thecarbonfootprintofbritishagriculture.com to access the full report).

Mr Morgan uses a 40KW REFO biomass boiler sourced from Teison Products, Worcestershire to provide heating and hot water at Leadon Court from October through to April every year.

Fuel for the boiler comes from the farm's existing 30 acres of mixed woodland. The wood is cut in February and air-dried through the summer to get as much moisture out of the wood before September when it is chipped. The boiler was installed by a farmer friend Jim Snell who retrained as a plumber supported by 7Y's Vocational Training Scheme (VTS), and who has since carried out at least half a dozen

more similar jobs.

Between April and September, the heating for domestic water is provided by the south-facing solar panels, which were installed on the house when an extension to the house was built.

The tubes warm up and transfer heat to a horizontal unit along the top, which then heats water in two 300-litre tanks. When sunlight diminishes, the warmth built up in the tanks means the electric immersion is only needed to bring the heat up to shower temperature, which again reduces energy costs.

Mr Morgan believes his practical experience in renewable energy, as well as all his research into the fledgling sector means that 7Y Services is well-placed to offer independent and cost-effective advice to farmers and rural business considering their options in the field of renewable energy technologies.

He maintains that the company is quickly building a reputation of offering practical solutions on renewable energy sources, without the commercial conflict of having a particular technology to sell.

It can offer advice from the inception of schemes through to putting together funding applications. ■

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