

Woodside Farm

Woodside Farm based to the west of Stafford Town Centre have been growing energy crops for 20 years.

The 100 ha of land is a mixed farm comprising of 79 ha of cropping, the remainder being woodland, ecological areas and metal roads and infrastructure. Cropping consists of wheat, barley, oilseed rape, grass and energy crop growing for 20 years. The present model is that the crop is harvested each spring, baled into 600KG bales and stored and then transported to a specialist power station to be burnt to produce energy.

Mark Winnington - partner in Woodside Farm said:

"While this model works well, I am concerned particularly about the cost of haulage for the 300Tonne plus produced annually. This has of course a fiscal cost, as well as an impact on carbon production . In terms of the crop itself, (Miscanthus giganteus) has been proven to lock up carbon and does not require any fertilizer or chemicals. I wanted to investigate other uses for the product which would mean local processing."

Energy crops have been grown for many years at Woodside Farm, and the owner wanted to explore other end uses apart from the present system of energy produced by combustion alone.

The business wanted to trial diversifying and growing the business and workforce by blending/ pelleting crops to achieve maximum calorific values for burning or gasification, use of pelleted / chopped crops for animal bedding, and the use of chopped crops for plant mulch. To take this project forwards a bespoke site and building with good access to allow flexibility in terms of crop storage and processing was required. The site had already had over £500,000 invested for the first stage of the development.



Mark went on to say:

"The project will allow my business to further diversify under the auspices of the green agenda. we are already changing the delivery model of the farm, incorporating initiatives such as pollinator strips, winter bird food and wildflower areas. There is the timely opportunity to create a green technology based rural enterprise which will be able to evidence a significant contribution towards the Net Zero agenda and targets"