

Date: 14th September 2012

MP will be 100th member of pioneering woodfuel co-op

Jesse Norman MP has joined people from across Herefordshire and the UK in applying to join Woolhope Woodheat Co-operative.

Woolhope Woodheat is aiming for a 900-tonne reduction in Herefordshire carbon emissions by becoming the first cooperative in the country to heat organisations using locally sourced woodchip.

Members of the public are being invited to join the cooperative. They can invest between £250 and £20,000, with a view to raise £275,000 to get the project underway.

This week Woolhope Woodheat received an application for membership from Jesse Norman MP who has supported the initiative from the beginning - coincidentally he is the 100th applicant. Jesse said "I am delighted to have the chance to invest in this excellent social venture."

Gareth Williams, a founding Director of Woolhope Woodheat, comments: "It's great to have Jesse on board as the co-operative is specifically looking for local members. With two weeks left to go, this is really the last chance to become involved in the co-operative and play your part in a ground-breaking environmental project based in Herefordshire'.

Gareth continued, 'over £188,000 has been invested already. The cash raised will be used to install clean burning woodchip boilers and provide a stimulus for better woodland management in the area. The co-operative is looking for the final £87,000 to complete the share issue. This is a local ethical investment opportunity and members can expect a return of between 6.1% and 8.7%. Their money will be used to help drastically reduce the local community's carbon footprint and get our woodlands back into management, while also sustaining local jobs.'

Woolhope Woodheat plan to install their first woodchip boiler at Canon Frome Court, a community comprising 19 homes and set on a 40-acre organic farm.





Gareth Williams adds: “By bringing our neglected woodlands back into productive use, we will increase biodiversity and wildlife habitats. The aim of the project is to get Herefordshire on the path to renewable energy and to attempt to swap our unhealthy dependence on fossil fuels for a sustainable alternative; we hope that we can pave the way for other schemes like this across country and inspire other communities to come together to make a long-term difference.”

Woolhope Woodheat emerged from the work of Fownhope Carbon Reduction Action Group (CRAG), a grassroots carbon conscious community group, who teamed up with Sharenergy, a not-for-profit organisation which helps communities find, build and own renewable energy generation, to get the project off the ground.

The project management is part funded by the European Union (EAFRD) and Defra through the VITAL Herefordshire LEADER programme.

To find out more, watch the Woolhope Woodheat short film and download the community share offer document from www.woolhopewoodheat.org.uk or contact Sharenergy on 01743 277119.

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