

Estate forestry 'has new life'

Trees help to cut carbon footprint and fuel bills

BY JILL NEILL

TREES on a country estate are providing "green power" for heating.

Trees removed from woodland at Aske, near Richmond, during forestry management are chipped and then burned in a computer-controlled boiler. The resulting power heats business units on the estate.

The 18th-century Aske Hall, home of the Zetland family, the estate offices and the chapel will be converted to the biomass heating system before the end of the year.

Lord Ronaldshay, son of the present Lord Zetland, was persuaded by his forestry manager, Shaun Purkiss, to switch to the environmentally-friendly heating system.

The move has not only reduced the estate's carbon footprint, but has also saved about 15 per cent on oil heating bills.

"The whole forestry process has got a new life to it and we are thinning and managing the woodland better," said Lord Ronaldshay, whose family lives at the hall.

"The tenants in the business units get cheaper heat; we supply it and it is environmentally sound. Even if there was no environmental benefit, we would still do it because of the economic benefit."

Tree trunks and branches from thinning work are stored on the estate's former wood yard and a contractor visits twice a year to turn them into wood chips.

A modified grain trailer carries the chippings to the boiler house, where they are blown through giant hoses into a hopper which feeds the boiler. Hot water is then piped to radiators.

When the hall is converted, the process will also supply hot water to bathrooms and the kitchen.

The first biomass boiler was fitted in November last year and the second six months ago. They come from Austria, where this type of heating is used in many communities.

Replanting of quick-growing



Lord Ronaldshay: process is so simple

conifers and slower-growing broadleaf species will ensure a constant supply of wood for the boiler and a managed landscape, said Lord Ronaldshay.

"The process is so simple that more people should adopt it," he said. "Whole villages or housing estates could be heated from a central boiler house."