

Business fired up over green fuel

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A PIONEERING business set up by a group of Nottinghamshire farmers attracted heavyweight political interest for the launch of the latest addition to its range of environmentally-friendly fuels made from oilseed rape.

The Rufford-based Phoenix Group is developing products including oil for transport fuel, biodiesel for transport fuel and power and solid fuels for heating systems, stoves and fires.

Transport secretary Mr Geoff Hoon and Sherwood MP Mr Paddy Tipping visited Phoenix Fuels' production plant at Stud Farm, on Monday for the launch of a new pellet form of the product for automatic boilers.

Founder

While there, Mr Hoon and Mr Tipping were able to see for themselves how the business makes its full range of fuels.

Mr Colin Bower, who farms at Stud Farm with his father, Mr Geoff Bower, is a founder member of Phoenix and acts as the business's project manager, responsible for all aspects of production.

Phoenix has close links with the Nottinghamshire fruit and vegetable producer group, Sherwood Produce, and was originally founded to develop a green transport fuel for the organisation's transport fleet.

Two of Sherwood Produce's leading members, farmers Mr Jon Hammond and Mr Tim Bradshaw, are also shareholders in Phoenix.

Mr Bower told the Advertiser that the latest addition to the product range would open up a large new market in supplying a green, efficient fuel in the



FARMER Mr Jon Hammond, left, explains the process of creating fuel pellets to the Secretary of State for Transport, Mr Geoff Hoon.

form of a flowable pellets for use in automatic boilers.

It is hoped that the pellets, marketed under the Green Dragon label, will match the

success of the company's Green Dragon logs — briquettes made from the husks of rape seeds that burn longer and hotter than wood.

"We have put a lot of research into developing the pellet and the challenge was to find a way of producing the fuel in pellet form without using any additives," said Mr Bower.

"The pellets can be used in boilers serving large public buildings like schools and hospitals, local heating schemes or even domestic households.

"Our briquettes have been selling very well over the past six months but the pellets open up a large new market."

Both the pellets and the logs are made from the husks of rape seeds that have been crushed to remove the oil.

Mr Bower said he and other farmers involved in the project were particularly keen to talk to Mr Hoon about potential of biodiesel made from rape oil.

Duty

"Biodiesel made from rape oil has huge potential as a clean, green transport fuel but is being held back by what we see as an unfair tax system," said Mr Bower.

"In terms of the amount of carbon produced, our biodiesel is subject to much higher duty than ordinary mineral diesel. It means the market place has been very difficult for us in recent months.

"A lot of attention and help seems to be being given to new transport technologies that may help reduce emissions in a few years time but we have a clean fuel technology that is proven and ready to go now.

"If the Government is really serious about starting to reduce carbon emissions now, rather than in five years time, it needs to do something about the unfair levels of duty on clean, home-produced biofuels."