



Former Agricultural lecturer turn contractor, Jon Vicary has seen the emerging biomass sector as an opportunity to develop his core business. J & S Vicary provides the usual services to farmers and landowners across Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and the surrounding areas, estate maintenance (mowing, reseeding and highways work - tree thinning, strimming, rabbit control), harvest operations and fencing.

The chipping service is seen as a natural extension, with the client base often being related to that of the agricultural business. At the initial inception the business looked to farm woodland and small scale woodland compartments to provide fuel stock. However, the success of the enterprise has seen it develop into supplying grid connected power generation and undertake large scale ground clearance works.

## objectives

- To provide an additional service to a diverse client base, widen economic viability for them and bring their woodland into rotation (and thus, ensuring it is viewed as an asset).
- To widen customer base and provide increased prosperity and opportunities for J & S Vicary. The chipping enterprise can operate outside the conventional cycle of agricultural contracting, aiding cash flow and alleviating peaks and troughs in work patterns/machinery usage.

## actions

- Purchase of machinery, the Jenz 561D is their second large chipper and cost £250,000, with crane. The chipper is capable of 60 tonnes per hour with a more normal average of around 30t.
- They approached local wood powered generator SembCorp to secure the reserve chipping contract. They work closely with a number of local estates including Aske, Bolton and Swinton in North Yorks, Drewton and Dolton in East Yorks, Brocklesby in North Lincs and Forestry Enterprise in North Nottinghamshire.
- The chipper travels as far a field as Ireland, Hampshire and Scotland. J & S Vicary are flexible in their approach to clients, providing an on site chipping service, utilising the clients own timber, supplying tractors and trailers and even the timber itself where required.

## achievements

### For Business:

- Creation of a £750,000 turnover business with around £650,000 of assets, employing 6 staff, with a range of clients; small farmers through to large estates, a number of large utility companies and power generators.
- Provision of work throughout the year and not just peaks, spring, harvest time, maximising machinery utilisation, reducing investment payback times.

### For the Region:

- Significant fuel provision has been brought to the local market place, J & S Vicary produced circa 40,000t of G30 and G50 chip in 2008, this is a 25% increase on 2007.
- Security of supply is improved, the size of the operation means that installers of new systems have few concerns about sourcing fuel, due to volumes produced.

## background

- Former University agricultural lecturer Jon Vicary has been involved in the contracting business in Yorkshire and the Humber since 1997. The business provides fencing, reseeding, site clearance, mulching, highways rabbit control, strimming, tree works to the region, covering an area of 150 mile radius from its base in Market Weighton.
- Partner Jon Vicary identified a gap in the market for biomass woodchip, starting the chipping service in 2003, with a £100,000 investment in a Jenz 560Z chipper which utilised the contracting businesses 930 Fendt Reverse drive tractor unit.
- A further investment in 2008 of £250,000, saw the purchase of a 500Hp self contained Jenz 561D chipper unit, which will process timber up to 580mm in diameter. This has an hourly volume of one tonne per minute, with a working average around 30 tonne of woodchip produced for each hour the machine is working.
- The chipping enterprise predominately uses SRW, hardwoods and slab wood from sawmills as a feedstock and in 2007 chipped 30,000t with a further 40,000t in 2008.
- J & S Vicary provides a service on site converting local product into a fuel, ideal for estates harvesting their own timber for local heat, or chipping to storage for grid connected power generators.
- The Jenz 'Woodcracker' purchased in 2007 enables oversized, often un-millable stems, to be split in-situ then fed into the chipper as per conventional wood feedstock.

## quotes

*"J & S Vicary is utilised for chipping operations at Sembcorp's Biomass Power Station, this is to cover chipper outages and during holiday periods when woodchip availability volumes are reduced. Jon provides a flexible and reliable chipping service for Sembcorp producing woodchip to our 5 - 50mm specification at the required rates of between 30 - 40 tonnes/hour."*

Steve Bishop, Biomass Manager, Sembcorp UK Limited.

*"Developing the chipping operation has secured an additional full time position within the business and complements the services we offer."*

Jon Vicary, Partner, J & S Vicary

## funding

Department of Energy & Climate Change  
- Bio Energy Infrastructure  
- 40% Grant



## lessons learnt

- Understand the different chip specifications, G30 & G50 being the most common, and the relationship logarithmically between screen/grading sizes and the needs of an installation for consistent quality with minimum 'spears'.
- Clients are king, but they can be flexible, you have to appreciate and respect the way individuals work and met flexibility from the client with your own flexibility.