

# PLANNING AND CONSULTATION

## Fact Sheet 3

The key to smooth project development is in early communication and dialogue with all those affected by the project.

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## Your local Planning Authority

Before any wood fuelled energy project goes ahead, it is advisable to talk to the Local Planning Authority and the community. This should be done as early as possible in project development since obtaining the various statutory consents can be a long process.

Your local planning authority will be able to advise on statutory consents (see 'Do I need planning permission'), which may be applicable even for small scale heat projects. For any development, Building Regulations will have to be met. Your Local Authority Building Inspectors can advise on this.

## The local community

The Community Council is a good initial contact for informing the local community affected by the project.

As there are so few wood energy systems operating in Wales, people do not know what to expect.

Potential areas of conflict in a wood fuelled energy system include:

- impacts of wood processing such as noise

- transport of wood fuel to the installation
- plant construction – noise and increased traffic
- plant operation
- visual impact of the plant, such as the chimney and gas plume
- concerns over local air quality

To overcome these concerns it is recommended that site visits to similar developments are arranged, which will demonstrate good practice and allow the community to understand the implications of the project. Fears can also be allayed by demonstrating that the individual project has been researched thoroughly and all potential impacts considered. Arranging open meetings for community groups and special meetings for key local organisations will maintain an open dialogue and help resolve any conflict.

Benefits of the system should be emphasised such as increased local employment through fuel production and plant operation and the improved amenity value of local woodlands through increased forest management.

Provided the project is of a suitable size for the area in which it is planned, and an open dialogue is maintained throughout, obtaining the support of the community should not be considered a large hurdle.

## Emissions

Regulation of fuel combustion processes by the Environment Agency generally only applies to those installations that are above 50 MW. However your local authority may still decide to regulate emissions under the Integrated Pollution Control (IPC) Regulations made under Section 2 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA90) or under the more recent Pollution Prevention and Control Regulations 2000. Under section 14 of the Clean Air Act 1993, unless the chimney height has been approved by the local authority it is an offence to burn solid matter at a rate of 45.4 kg per hour. Once again you would need to check with a local authority contact as to whether this applied to the processes you are planning to use.

## Why consult?

There are statutory regulations to fulfil such as Building Regulations, and in most cases planning permission, before the project can go ahead.

Potential conflicts can be identified and either avoided or resolved at the early stages of a project development.

Involving the community by consultation can improve a project by utilising expert local knowledge and ensuring the project runs smoothly.

## **Do I need planning permission?**

The local planning authority should be consulted before the installation of any wood energy scheme. Planning permission will generally be required, even for small schemes. The planning authority will also advise you of any other consents required.

A Revised Planning Guidance Technical Advice Note 8, 'Renewable Energy' will shortly be published by the Welsh Assembly Government which covers this in more detail.

## **Checklist – organisations to contact:**

Local Authority Planning Department

Environment Agency

Local Authority Building Inspectors

Community Council

Other interest groups

Photos by: Welsh Biofuels

