



Case Study 4: Growing renewable energy

A new woodfuel supply company creates a localised outlet for quality fuel

Woodfuel as a key renewable energy delivers a powerful combination of environmental and economic benefits



Achievements

As an example of regional action, a comprehensive installation and woodfuel supply chain has been established in East Suffolk. This:

- Works in partnership with a local boiler installer, Energy Innovations Ltd, to promote woodfuel systems
- Produces a consistent high-quality woodchip from Suffolk wood
- Ensured the development of the first lorry-mounted blower unit to deliver woodchip and pellets
- Delivers woodchip and pellets to six woodfuelled heating systems installed by Suffolk County Council, as well as clients throughout Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk
- Provides advice on woodfuel, its delivery and storage.

All of which adds up to growing customer awareness and confidence in wood for heating as an alternative to fossil fuels.

Background

The contribution of fossil fuel use to climate change is increasingly being recognised and the pressure to switch to alternative renewable sources, including woodfuel, is growing.

Initiative description

Eastern Woodfuel Ltd, a new woodfuel supply company based at Bentwaters Parks (the old USAF airbase), is sourcing and drying wood from adjoining woodland. It uses a woodfuel chipper hired from Anglia Woodfuels to provide a consistent quality chip. This is stored on site ready for delivery using a lorry specially adapted for blown woodchip or pellets.

Lessons learned

Until a critical mass of boiler installations is reached, woodfuel supply companies cannot operate economically – for a start it is uneconomic to transport woodchip over long distances. It is also essential that boiler installation be promoted in tandem with the development of the woodfuel supply chain. In the interim, this sector of the industry would greatly benefit from support in terms of grant and advice, as loss of woodfuel supply entrepreneurs would be unduly damaging.

Future developments

The adoption of the National Woodfuel Strategy is critical to the expansion of the woodfuel industry. Partners are establishing a regional woodfuel programme that will include:

- Provision of good one-stop local advice, including information on appropriate delivery methods and design considerations for fuel stores
- Signposting of grants to encourage boiler installations
- Support to the woodfuel supply chain for staffing, equipment and promotion
- Establishment of more local networks of woodfuel suppliers
- Adoption of appropriate methods of woodfuel supply that, as well as being economically and logistically viable, are environmentally sustainable