

Scheme to provide special advice on renewables for farmers in Cumbria

A new project has been launched offering farms in Cumbria independent advice on how they can reduce their energy use and on choosing suitable renewable energy technologies to generate power on their farms.

It aims to help farmers to reduce current energy costs of the farm business, protect against increasing costs and to create additional income through the incentives for generating on-site energy.

The project is being delivered by the not-for-profit Envirolink business support organisation on behalf of Cumbria County Council through the Cumbria Fells and Dales and Solway Border and Eden LEADER programmes – and observers believe it could serve as a blueprint for similar schemes in other areas of the country.

It will be part-financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas and is also backed by the Northwest Regional Development Agency, with Defra as the managing authority.

“Farms in Cumbria are ideally placed to benefit from technologies

such as wind, anaerobic digestion, hydropower and solar photovoltaic panels, but can find it difficult to source independent advice and meet the full costs of feasibility studies,” said Emma Greenshaw, project manager at Envirolink.

She explained that the new scheme would offer advice in two stages:

■ At Phase 1 an auditor will visit the farm and identify ways to save energy as well as looking at the potential for using renewable energy. This is part funded by the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) and will only cost the farm £150.

■ The second phase is also part-funded and will look in detail at the most suitable renewable energy technology for the farm, including grid connection, necessary permissions, local installers, costs and income.

Once the farmers have gone through both phases they will have a business case for renewable energy on their farm and be certain that they are choosing the right technology and have site-specific guidance on how to undertake an installation. ■

For more information, call the project manager on: 01768 213 084 or email: farms@envirolink.co.uk with your name, address, telephone number and holding number



Adam Twine on the wind farm at Watchfield near Swindon, where he hopes to set up a demonstration energy park

Toolkit helps farmers with energy issues

A new company to help farmers gain and share practical advice on how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and use renewable energy to help them limit their carbon footprints is already providing support to several producers.

Set up by Oxon farmer Adam Twine and renewable energy expert Chris Walford, the Farm Carbon Cutting Toolkit (FCCT) is seeking to spark, stimulate and support local farmer discussion groups getting to grips with GHG-reducing ideas and renewable energy technologies on their farms.

“We want to help interested farmers get something going in their area and provide support and speakers,” said Mr Twine.

He explained that the not-for-profit FCCT

could also assist UK farmers set up new systems and technologies on their farms and then provide a knowledge base of appropriate technologies, farm examples and emerging best practice to share their experiences and needs directly with each other.

Mr Twine first came to prominence in the renewable energy field when he provided his land for the pioneering community-owned wind farm project at Watchfield near Swindon.

He now has plans for an ambitious 5MW solar photovoltaic (PV) scheme on another 30 acres nearby and then hopes to establish a small energy park that can be used for educational and demonstration purposes. ■

See www.farmcarbontoolkit.org.uk

Details of promised RHI scheme are revealed

UK Energy Secretary Chris Huhne announced details of the new Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) on March 10.

“Anything from a pub to a public library, a school to a power plant will be eligible under the RHI to install technologies like biomass boilers, heat pumps and solar thermal. Community projects will also be eligible, provided a single installation is providing heat to more than one house,” said Mr Huhne.

Biomethane is also included in the scheme and tariffs will be paid for 20 years to eligible technologies that have been installed since July 15, 2009 with payments being made for each kWh of renewable heat that is produced.

“Once in the scheme, the level of support

an installation will receive is fixed and adjusted annually with inflation. However, we expect the levels of support available for new entrants to the RHI scheme will decrease over time as the costs of the equipment and installation reduce through economies of scale,” he said.

“RHI tariff payments will start for homes alongside the Green Deal from 2012. In the meantime, up to 25,000 installations from July will be supported by a “RHI Premium Payment” to help people cover the purchase price of green heating systems. We plan to publish more details of this payment in May. ■

See www.decc.gov.uk/rhi for further RHI details

Solar bodies see strength in merger

The two trade bodies representing solar energy in the UK are in the process of merging their memberships to form a 400-strong association to champion the British industry.

Some details of the arrangements were still being worked out as Energy Now went to press, but the plans will result in the re-launching of the Solar Trade Association, as a trade body affiliated to the influential Renewable Energy Association (REA).

The move will unite the 33-year-old STA and members of the REA's solar power group, into a new revamped organisation representing both the solar thermal and photovoltaic (PV) sectors.

This is expected to give the solar industry a stronger voice and better representation, and the resources to fully engage in standards and certification work, as well as far more targeted promotional campaigning.

“With the growth in the solar

industry in the UK, this move to bring the industry together more fully could not have come at a better time. We really need good representation for solar in the UK and I believe this new revamped STA will provide it,” commented STA chairman Howard Johns.

Gaynor Hartnell, chief executive of the REA, said: “With the solar tariffs now under review, and the continued delay to the heat incentive, we need unity more than ever before.” ■

Levels of support

Tariff name	Eligible technology	Eligible sizes	Tariff rate (pence/kWh)	Tariff duration (Years)	Support calculation
Small biomass	Solid biomass; Municipal Solid Waste (incl. CHP)	Less than 200 kWth	Tier 1: 7.6 Tier 2: 1.9	20	Metering. Tier 1 applies annually up to the Tier Break, Tier 2 above the Tier Break. The Tier Break is: installed capacity x 1,314 peak load hours, i.e.: kWth x 1,314
Medium biomass		200 kWth and above; less than 1000 kWth	Tier 1: 4.7 Tier 2: 1.9		
Large biomass		1000 kWth and above	2.6		
Small ground source	Ground-source heat pumps; Water-source heat pumps; deep geothermal	Less than 100 kWth	4.3	20	Metering
Large ground source		100 kWth and above	3		
Solar thermal	Solar thermal	Less than 200 kWth	8.5	20	Metering
Biomethane	Biomethane injection and biogas combustion, except from landfill gas	Biomethane all scales, biogas combustion less than 200 kWth	6.5	20	Metering