

WBGE Forum

Wednesday 29th January 2014 - 7:30pm- 9:30pm
West Berkshire Council, Council Chambers, Newbury

In Attendance: Richard Foster (Chair), Evangeline Wood (minutes), Robert Pattison, Yvonne Redgrave, Ken Neal, Gill Hall, Tony Drewer-Trump, Gareth Beard, Maryanne Thomas, Phil Newton, Mike Frank, Kelvin Hughes, Royce Longton, Keith Richards, Ffinlo Costain & Iona Hassan

Apologies: Martha Vickers & Tim Clarke

Welcome

Richard welcomed the group and thanked everyone for turning out on a wet and windy January evening. Richard welcomed the speakers and gave an overview on the talks to come throughout the evening.

Tree Hubs- Keith Richards

A tree hub/station is a purpose built facility designed to receive, process and deliver biomass fuel. They usually look like a large Dutch barn.

Biomass is very popular in Austria, and most places have a tree station.

Keith showed us a layout map for a previously planned site.

The local market for biomass is developing quite quickly. This is in two ways- retrofit e.g. replacing oil boilers; and through new developments. A tree station, or two, is needed in West Berkshire to satisfy this demand and give us a local wood source.

Biomass could work well in schools, Council buildings, leisure centres, estates, hospitals and social housing developments.

Pellets are generally made from compressed sawdust and wood chip was literally just chipped wood. Keith felt that wood and wood chip, were the best fuels for supporting local businesses.

There are a lot of under managed forest land in the UK which could be used. Potential supplies could come from:

- Under managed woodland
- New crops, short rotation forestry, short rotation coppice and other energy groups
- National supply networks
- New forests

Keith gave some examples of projects, such as the heat supply Esco at Curridge School, where heat is brought not the wood chip.

There were barriers, to increasing biomass, such as:

- Financial and economic
- Lack of confidence in technology
- Fuel supply and quality
- Lack of knowledge and awareness
- Training and skills
- Limitation and space
- Government policy

- Planning and regulations

The Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) is improving the biomass market, making it much more comparable with other technologies.

Richard asked what the WBGE should be doing.

Keith felt it was important to encourage more boilers to create demand and raise the profile. Groups could encourage local schools to consider biomass and generally those in oil. Community initiatives and district energy schemes could all help to raise the profile.

West Berkshire Council Update- Phil Newton

Phil introduced himself and the Energy Management Team's roles. Phil runs projects within the Council sites; he outlined the constraints such as the number of sites, the Central Energy Contract and Procurement process.

Phil explained how the Partnership Strategy, a Breath of Fresh Air focussed on carbon, where as the Council plan was about controlling the demand side and looking at the right mix of energy for any given site.

The focus was first about using less, making use of plans and technologies and then looking at how that energy is supplied.

WBC are installing Automated Meter Reading (AMR) in all sites where possible. This was progressing well with over 70 meters changed or 'swapped out' but still much to do. AMR should give WBC accurate data meaning that a projects effectiveness can be measured more accurately.

Work had been done on change management, highlighting opportunities to groups, e.g. schools but WBC wasn't able to insist that any work was undertaken.

Voltage Optimisation (VO) would take 7-10 years to pay back in schools, whereas recently installed VO in car parks was working very well. The installation in the car parks was on the lighting circuit alone and was looking like it would pay back in 23 months.

Phil mentioned the Council Timelord programme, which was around rationalisation of buildings, variable speed drives, Market Street- most of the building has heat reflective/solar film. The Council building is rarely heated during the working day. It is so efficient that air con is sometimes needed to keep cool in the winter.

Some LED lighting is used, but most is compact fluorescent (T5), these turned out to be more efficient in the offices. Trials were run to see what lighting was preferred to work under. The LEDs actually gave people headaches and used at least 14w energy more per fitting..

Heating and ventilation system work on the server room was also undertaken. All these things are helping to push down the cost of running the building. We have a heating and cooling policy, which has probably saved around 5-8% of the previous heating/cooling costs.

Phil had also been working with schools on energy planning, and encouraging them to have their own strategies.

New projects

Electric Vehicle chargers- There will be an electric vehicle fast charger installed at the Kennet Centre for Council fleet and staff use only, as a proof of concept project. It would look at use within the Council as a starting point, creating evidence and helping to overcome barriers to take up.

Biomass- Clear opportunity with two sites potentially close to agreeing a project start. Cannot insist that schools take such a route. There was looking to be a set of good opportunities but the quick wins were essential to help overcome barriers. There is also a need to prove that figures stack up. As always there are challenges and the largest with biomass is around ensuring that potential issues with air quality are addressed as a key issue in all biomass projects..

Pewsey Environmental Action Team (PEAT) - Campaigning- Iona Hassan & Ffinlo Costain

Iona (Chair of PEAT) and Ffinlo introduced themselves. Iona was fairly new to the environmental issue; Ffinlo was previously Chair of PEAT and is a professional campaigner. Ffinlo does a lot of work on behalf of animal welfare and agricultural groups.

They try to tight myths and preconceptions. Ffinlo gave an example of an anaerobic digestion plant which was heavily campaigned about and now it was being showcased as a case study for good practice.

Iona felt that it was important to meet other Wiltshire environmental groups. She did a cycle tour of Wiltshire. She played the violin and found that having something people could actually do, e.g. a petition or event to publicise was useful.

Top Tips: Make the most of press coverage; it probably reaches more people than your event/campaign will do. It's important to have friendly helpers to engage people, why not support a regional/national campaign and make sure you do something a bit different.

Press Releases- It is important to write well and the papers would usually print it.

Letters Pages are also worth writing into.

Promote yourself if you are building an expertise in something.

Wiltshire Clean Energy Alliance was formed in response to Wiltshire Council trying to ban wind farms. Various organisations involved but they were trying to campaign positively, building knowledge to make people feel more empowered. E.g. wind farm/climate change presentations.

Myth busting and networking are the key things that PEAT do.

Date of next Forum: Wednesday 30th April 7:30pm-9:30pm Location to be confirmed