

Developing Domestic Microgeneration in Private Sector Housing Stock in Worcestershire

Background

Domestic dwellings are responsible for 34% of CO₂ emissions in the West Midlands. With increasing domestic energy consumption, CO₂ emissions from our homes are set to continue to rise in the future.

Given that at least 75% of our existing housing stock will still be in use in 2050, the year by which the government hopes to have cut UK CO₂ emissions by 60% from 1990 levels, it is important that the energy efficiency of existing homes is improved.

Under the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) the Government tasked all Housing Authorities with a statutory duty to reduce domestic CO₂ emissions by 30% by 2011. Under the Act, Worcestershire authorities have achieved on average 20% domestic CO₂ to date. Meeting the 30% HECA target by 2011 will be challenging as properties with uninsulated cavity walls and loft become harder to find.

Microgeneration

While domestic energy demand increases, it is important that energy efficiency measures are supported by increases in renewable energy generation. The Energy White Paper 2003 outlined the Governments aim of generating 10% of UK electricity from renewables by 2010.

The Low Carbon Buildings Programme (LCBP) www.lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk is the DTI grants programme aimed at encouraging householders to install microgeneration technologies. Grants were made available in April 2006 and £6.5million will be allocated to householders on a first come, first served basis until 2008. To give an indication of the level of funding available per household, £400 is available towards solar hot water panels and approximately £500 towards mini wind turbine installations.

Microgeneration in Worcestershire

To date there have been very few installations of renewables in Worcestershire. Between 2003 and 2006 there were approximately 50 Clear Skies grants (forerunner of LCBP) awarded in the County. The majority of these grants were awarded for solar hot water, followed by grants for heat pumps and mini wind turbines.

The LCBP requires accredited installers and products to be used, and that where possible low energy lightbulbs, loft and cavity insulation and heating controls are all fitted. Where householders do not have adequate insulation and heating controls in place, District Councils could facilitate this through

existing HECA programmes with the Worcestershire Energy Efficiency Advice Centre.

Potential to Increase Microgeneration in Worcestershire

In an attempt to increase the number of microgeneration installations in existing households, it is proposed that Worcestershire Districts support the programme through their own private sector housing and affordable warmth strategies. This may include awarding top up grants to households qualifying for LCBP assistance, to be paid on proof of LCBP grant being received. Leaving the technology, installer and energy efficiency checks to the LCBP administration. Each District would, however, decide how to support and importantly promote the initiative through its current activities. We would also welcome the support of other agencies, Housing Associations and voluntary sector groups, who are vital in building community support and also embracing new technologies within their own organisations.

Targets

These will be set across the County as a whole.

Conclusion

By committing to targets and to increase the number of domestic microgeneration technologies installed in Worcestershire, Authorities would be demonstrating community leadership and raising awareness of energy issues, sustainability and renewable technologies. The use of Local Authority grants would trigger more interest in insulation, Warm Front grants, and energy saving – meeting HECA targets, Worcestershire Affordable Warmth Strategy targets and the adopted Worcestershire LAA outcome B2 “to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change”.