

Sustainability Committee

SC(3)-10-10 : Paper 3 Annex B

Inquiry into Biomass in Wales

Response from the Confederation of Forest Industries

Energy and Climate Change

Biofuels

Paddy Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what estimate he has made of the amount of biomass needed to fuel proposed new wood-burning power stations; and what proportion of it he expects will be from UK sources. [317107]

23 Feb 2010: Column 466W

Mr. Kidney: Power stations of over 50 MW in England and Wales are subject to consent by the Secretary of State under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989.

Biomass capacity of up to 849 MWe has been approved under the Section 36 consenting regime since 2007, which is expected to use up to 6.77 million tonnes of biomass per year when all plants are operational. There is also 1,289 MWe biomass capacity currently under consideration by the Secretary of State, which if consented would use up to a further 10.56 million tonnes of biomass per annum. Therefore, the combined total of consented and in planning biomass applications for England and Wales, of plants over 50MW, is 2,138 MWe potentially using up to 17.33 million tonnes of biomass per annum. This capacity includes both dedicated biomass power plants and combined biomass and energy-from-waste power plants.

Power stations of 50MW and under, in England and Wales, are considered by the local planning authority in the normal planning regime.

According to the UK RESTATS database, which has collected renewable energy data since 1989, dedicated biomass power capacity of up to 349.6 MWe has been consented by local planning authorities in England and Wales. This consented capacity, assuming a typical 25MW plant will use up to 0.2 million tonnes per annum, would use up to 2.80 million tonnes of biomass per year when all plants are operational. There is also a further 90.1 MWe dedicated biomass capacity under consideration, which is expected to use up to 0.72 million tonnes of biomass per annum. Therefore, the combined total of consented and in planning dedicated biomass applications for England and Wales, of plants 50MW and under, is 439.7 MWe using up to 3.52 million tonnes of biomass per annum.

It is not possible to separately identify the wood-burning capacity as most plants will have the flexibility to use a range of biomass fuels according to cost, availability and other considerations.

Robust biomass supply chains are only now becoming established across the UK and biomass fuels are increasingly traded as a global commodity. Therefore, we expect, in the short term at least, that these plants will use a significant volume of imported biomass, together with wood fuel sourced from managed UK forests and woodlands and from other sources such as the by-products of our timber industry, home grown perennial energy crops such as miscanthus grass and short rotation coppice (SRC) willow, and a range of biomass fuels derived from waste as defined under the renewables obligation.