

Biomass and Air Quality

August 2009



Introduction

With concerns over climate change and policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, both at European and UK level, the use of biomass technology to generate energy within new developments has been increasing. However, while biomass combustion offers significant potential environmental advantages for the reduction in emissions of greenhouse gases from a development, concerns have been raised by local authorities that significant increases in the uptake of biomass could have a detrimental impact on air quality.

WSP has produced this briefing to inform developers of the potential requests local authorities may make for information if biomass forms part of a proposed development.

Information a Local Authority may Require

Environmental Protection UK (EPUK) has recently published guidance for use by local authorities to help with planning decisions where development proposals will have an impact on local air quality through the use of biomass technology. DEFRA's recently revised guidance for the assessment of air quality also provides a new screening assessment for biomass plant in order to ascertain the potential impact on air quality. As a result Councils will increasingly be asking for more information as part of the planning application submission before approving schemes that include biomass technology. This information will include:

- **Boiler Details** – including make, model, manufacturer, thermal capacity, efficiency, abatement equipment to reduce emissions, fuel feed system, is it an exempt appliance; operation and maintenance;
- **Boiler Stack Details** – location, stack height, internal diameter, exhaust gas velocity, emissions rates; and
- **Fuel Details** – including origin, type, delivery and storage.

How can WSP Environment & Energy assist?

We have a specialist team of in house air quality professionals located across the UK with extensive experience in the assessment of biomass plants and liaising with local authorities. The team is able to provide information and design advice at an early stage of the development to ensure air quality impacts are reduced, in addition to the prediction of impacts using the application of advanced computer based dispersion modelling or a simpler screening assessment.

For further information, please contact us at environmentalplanning.uk@wspgroup.com