CLASP

Climate Change
Local Area
Support
Programme

Community Engagement Training Sessions

Frequently Asked Questions

A review of questions raised
together with answers provided.

www.clasp-nw.info

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nwIEP
north west improvement and efficiency partnership

In association with
energy saving trust®

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Climate Change Local Area Support Programme

Community Engagement Training Sessions | Frequently Asked Questions

About energy efficiency

Is it possible to have houses that need no heating systems due to their design?
Yes, passive houses are feasible in the right location although consideration needs to be given to comfort levels and liveability.

How does insulating in between rafters and then board on top compare to 11 inches of insulation?
Call the Energy Saving Trust advice service on 0800 512 012 to speak to one of our advisors about energy efficiency measures including insulation.

What control does Energy Saving Trust have over contractors who for example install cavity wall as part of Warm Front?
Call the Energy Saving Trust advice service on 0800 512 012 to speak to one of our advisors about energy efficiency measures including insulation.

Can you provide information about different types of dwelling and heat loss?
A report produced by the Energy Saving Trust on types of house can be found following the link below:

http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/business/Business/Housing-professionals/Existing-housing/House-types

About renewable energy technologies

Are heat pumps renewable even though they use electricity?
Although heat pumps use electricity to run, the source of energy it uses to produce heat is renewable as it is heat from air, water, ground which is constantly been replenished by the sun. For each unit of electricity used, a heat pump produces around 3 units of heat. In order to make your heat pump even greener, the electricity that the heat pump requires can be provided by a renewable source such as a wind turbine or through a green energy tariff.

How good an idea is it to encourage PV in the UK? Is it the most efficient option for the UK?
Debate was generated by one of the attendees regarding whether the UK Government should encourage the use of PV instead of other technologies. The debate addressed issues such as:

- Diversity of fuel and resilience
- Reduce individual buildings electricity demand to alleviate grid pressures
- Educational element of on site renewables such as PV
- Do we always need to look at the cheapest, most efficient solution?

What compliance is required for PV installations in line with building regs?
Information can be found below:
http://www.inbalance-energy.co.uk/articles/solar_pv_safety_and_the_building_regulations.html

Can I 'sell' the energy I produce with solar panels to other people rather than to the energy companies?
In order to do this you need to wire the system in such a way that the electricity goes to the buildings you wish to supply before going back to the grid.

Do you need insurance for PV panels?
Solar PV panels must be declared in your home insurance. It depends on the insurance company how bigger the premium would be for solar panels. Lack of understanding about the technology might lead to insurance companies not wanting to insure PV panels as they might consider them a potential liability. You will need to consult with your home insurance company and if issues arise investigate alternatives.

The more mainstream PV becomes the less likely it will be for insurance companies to present any issues with including PV panels in the house insurance.

How many certified products are there for solar hot water?
The MCS website has got a list of certified products and installers:
http://www.microgenerationcertification.org/

Environment Agency (EA) hydro sites, can you send maps?
Several attendees were interested in finding out more about EA's classification of sites for hydro. Information about the study and how to download the interactive maps can be found in their website:
http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/news/116624.aspx

Can you send Environment Agency and Energy Saving Trust hydro guide?
The guide "Hydropower: A guide for you and your community" can be found on the following link:
http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/news/116624.aspx

Does biomass pose a risk to health?
The combustion method, the quality of the equipment and the quality of the fuel have an impact in the amount of emissions. For more detail please visit the Biomass Energy Centre's website:
http://www.biomassenergycentre.org.uk/portal/page?_pageid=77,109191&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

Some information is provided below from the Biomass Energy Centre:
"Particulate emissions from burning natural gas tend to be extremely low, typically less than 1 mg/MJ. Boilers burning light fuel oil might have emissions around 5 mg/MJ, while those burning heavy fuel oil might be around 50 mg/MJ and coal might be 120 mg/MJ upwards, and significantly higher for larger and older equipment

The use of high efficiency modern filters, such as ceramic filters can ensure that particulate emissions are kept extremely low (<1 mg/m3 in the flue gas) at all times. As the optimum scale for wood boilers is that of district heating and large, multi occupancy sites, these abatement technologies are economically viable"

Are wood pellets produced in the UK?
Wood pellets can be produced in the UK or abroad. The North West of England has got a good supply of wood fuel from managed woodlands. For further information on biomass heating and wood fuel refer to Factsheet 6: Biomass Heating Systems on the CLASP website and visit the Biomass Energy Centre website for information on biomass wood suppliers by subregion **http://www.biomassenergycentre.org.uk**

Does the ground freeze with heat pumps?
Correctly sized heat pumps in the right location should not bring ground temperatures to freezing levels.

Is district heating too expensive?
There are many examples of district heating providing a low cost, low carbon option for heating communities. If the system is well designed and the life costs are carefully calculated, they can be a lower cost option to heating through gas or other fossil fuels. Maintenance requirements are generally lower due to having a central heating system rather than individual boilers or heaters in each dwelling.

How can I find out about transitioning products for MCS?
For more information refer to:
http://www.microgenerationcertification.org/admin/documents/FAQs%20for%20Transition%20Arrangements%202010.12.03.pdf

Can you provide more information about solar radiation in the UK?
A solar map with radiation levels can be found on the following website:
http://re.jrc.ec.europa.eu/pvgis/countries/countries-europe.htm

What chemicals are produced through burning wood?
From the Biomass Energy Centre: most biomass, including wood, is composed of roughly 50% carbon by weight, 40% oxygen and 5% hydrogen. Under ideal combustion conditions these are completely converted to carbon dioxide (CO_2) and water vapour (H_2O). In addition there can be about 0.3% nitrogen, 0.1% sulphur, 0.1% chlorine, and trace quantities of various minerals such as calcium, potassium, silicon, phosphorus and sodium. The levels of these, and other, elements depend on many factors, including the environment the material was grown in, the species, any contaminants in the soil, water or air, etc. The chemical composition of different parts of a plant also varies; for example higher levels of minerals in bark, lead to increased ash production, while there is more nitrogen and sulphur in green waste and brash. This underlines the importance of obtaining high quality woodfuel, with a high proportion of clean, white stem wood. More information can be found on the Biomass Energy Centre website:
http://www.biomassenergycentre.org.uk/portal/page?_pageid=77,103200&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

What does MCS consist of? How long does it last for? How much of a guarantee and protection does it provide?

MCS is the standard for installers of renewable energy technologies up to a certain size:

- 50 kW for electricity generating technologies.
- 45 kW for heat generating technologies.

Installers of these technologies need to be able to demonstrate through an assessment:

- That they have sufficient technical understanding of the technology.
- That they have sufficient practical understanding regarding how to install and maintained the technology (assessed during an installation visit).
- That they have quality management system in place to protect customers..

As part of the MCS, installers need to suscribe to the REAL assurance scheme, which is a code of practice to protect consumers. Installers who are found not to follow the standards, for example by providing misguiding information about technologies, can be reported to REAL and their MCS might be removed.

MCS installers are re-assessed yearly, in order to ensure that they are in fact following the code and that standards are maintained.

For more information, visit the MCS website: **http://www.microgenerationcertification.org**

Do you need insurance for PV?
Solar PV panels must be declared on home insurance. It depends on the insurance company how bigger the premium would be for solar panels. Lack of understanding about the technology might lead to insurance companies not wanting to insure PV panels as they might consider them a potential liability. You will need to consult with your home insurance company and if issues arise investigate alternatives.

Luckily, the more mainstream PV becomes the less likely it will be for insurance companies to present any issues with including PV panels in the house insurance.

About Feed In Tariffs and Renewable Heat Incentive

Clarification on FiTs and RHI: are they rewarding using or selling renewable energy?
Both incentives are designed to reward consumption of the energy produced in order to reduce energy imported from the grid or purchased from retailers. Higher savings can be achieved by using the energy produced on site due to the higher cost of energy bought from the national grid.

Can you provide more information about the RHI?
Link to RHI official document below:
http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/what_we_do/uk_supply/energy_mix/renewable/policy/incentive/incentive.aspx

FITs and rent the roof.
Debate was generated by attendees at several training sessions regarding this option and its benefits and downsides. More guidance can be found on the Energy Saving Trust website:
http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Generate-your-own-energy/Solar-electricity/Consumer-guidance-on-free-solar-PV-offers

If a community interest company makes profit on the Feed In Tariffs on a community building, is it still tax free or is it subject to corporate tax? Is it taxed before being distributed to shareholders?
Domestic users and other income tax payers will not be taxed for any income received from the Feed-In Tariffs or Renewable Heat Incentive. Companies will be subject to Corporation Tax on their tariff income.

Is there a provision within FIT to cater for the deterioration of performance of the technology over its lifetime, for example for solar panels?
The FITs have been calculated to provide an attractive return on investment and in order to determine the tariff levels average performance of the technology over the lifetime of the tariff has been considered. As the FIT has been calculated based on average performance, your particular system might perform better or worse than that.

Can you clarify the situation with State aid rules and FITs?
Recipients of publicly funded grants for a plant will be eligible for the FIT scheme for that plant without having to repay the moneys received if they are in compliance with the EU's rules on de minimis aid - i.e. if they have not received support from public funds (including FITs payments) that would exceed thresholds specified in de minimis regulations (€200,000 over a period of three years in most cases). Further information is also available on the BIS state aid pages.

Is FIT for 25 years or for the lifetime of the technology?
The length of time that FITs is guaranteed for depends on the technology. It varies from 10 years (for micro CHP) to 25 years (for solar PV). Refer to the DECC's website for the table of tariff levels per technology and the length of the payment.
http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/what_we_do/uk_supply/energy_mix/renewable/feedin_tariff/feedin_tariff.aspx

Housing associations and tenants: how will the tenant get the benefits of having a PV system installed on their roof?
Different options are available, such as the tenant receiving the free electricity and the landlord receiving FiTs payments. Individual cases will require different solutions, which the landlord and tenants should agree to.

Can I get RHI retrospectively if my installer wasn't MCS at the moment of installation?
No, the technology needs to have been installed by an MCS installer. Even if the installer does achieve its certification retrospectively the installations done prior to this will not qualify for RHI.

If a person is receiving FITs, does it affect the benefits received from State/DWP?
If somebody is receiving an income from FITs it will count towards their income as any other source of income such as financial investments. The difference is that FITs are tax free for householders.

Are there any templates of contracts for finance for renewable energy projects that communities can use?
For rent the roof schemes the Energy Saving Trust has put together a consumer guidance for such schemes:
http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Generate-your-own-energy/Solar-electricity/Consumer-guidance-on-free-solar-PV-offers
Regarding other schemes and finance contracts, it will depend on the lender and communities should seek professional advice to ensure that contracts are beneficial for the community.

About the Energy Saving Trust

What's happening with Energy Saving Trust's community support going forward after government cuts?
Energy Saving Trust has received cuts of 50% from the Government. This means that certain services such as Geen Communities do not exist in their previous form as of 31st of March 2011. Alternative sources of funding for community support are currently being explored.
Visit the Energy Saving Trust website for up to date content and news: http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/cafe

What's the scope of the Energy Saving Trust in contrast to the Carbon Trust?
The Energy Saving Trust works with householders and communities whereas the Carbon Trust provides support for businesses and the public sector.