

PLANNING POLICIES RELEVANT TO RURAL WASTE MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENTS:

DRAFT PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT 18 – RENEWABLE ENERGY

This note provides an outline of the (draft) process for the development of renewable energy and heat generating facilities, and the rationale behind it.

Planning Policy Statements (PPS) set out the policies of the Department on particular aspects of land-use planning and apply to all of NI.

(Draft) PPS 18 ‘Renewable Energy’¹ is intended to encourage and facilitate the provision and siting of renewable energy generating facilities in appropriate locations within the built and natural environment by:

- Contributing to alleviation of effects of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Contributing to the regional target of 12% of electricity generation by 2012, and 40% by 2025 from renewable energy sources.
- Assisting diversification of energy supply and a more competitive energy market.
- Encouraging economic growth and rural diversification associated with the development of an indigenous renewable energy industry.
- Ensuring that the environmental, landscape, visual and amenity impacts associated with renewable energy developments are adequately addressed.
- Ensuring appropriate protection of the Region’s built, natural and cultural heritage features.
- Promoting knowledge of and greater acceptance by the public of prospective renewable energy developments that are appropriately located.
- Fostering greater community involvement in renewable energy projects and encouraging use of community benefits.

The **planning policies of (draft) PPS 18** set out the main planning considerations that the Department will consider when assessing proposals for development of renewable energy and heat generating facilities.

¹ http://www.planningni.gov.uk/AreaPlans_Policy/PPS/pps18/pps18_draft.pdf

Policy RE1 'Renewable Energy Development' considers:

- Natural and built heritage.
- Landscape and visual effects.
- Community involvement and benefits.
- Subsequent decommissioning of redundant schemes.
- Information requirements.

For **biomass-fuelled power plants** specifically, the following issues will be considered when determining an application:

- Positive benefit of the plant to the local economy.
- Visual intrusion.
- Noise from traffic and plant operations.
- Effects on health, local ecology or conservation.
- Traffic to and from the site.
- Greenhouse gas mitigation.

Information requirements to accompany a planning application for biomass-fuelled power plants might include details of:

- Location.
- Technology.
- Transport.
- Landscaping provisions.
- Emissions and impact assessments.
- Residue disposal.
- Site management measures.
- Infrastructure connection measures.

Environmental Impact Assessments are likely to be required for biomass-fuelled power plants which:

- Are industrial installations for production of electricity, steam and hot water which exceed 0.5 ha.
- Are industrial installations for carrying gas, steam and hot water which exceed 1 ha.
- Process waste.

Other authorisations which might be required to be satisfied for a biomass-fuelled power plant, in addition to planning permission, include:

- Building Regulations.
- Abstraction Licence.
- Pollution Control.

(Draft) PPS 18 states that **energy generation based on biomass** is technologically well-advanced and widely utilised in many parts of the world by:

- Direct combustion for heating water or to raise steam to drive a steam engine or turbine to generate electricity.
- Gasification where solid fuel undergoes incomplete combustion in a limited air supply to produce a combustible gas that can be used in a boiler, or used as fuel for an engine or gas turbine.
- Pyrolysis where biomass is heated in the absence of oxygen to produce a combustible gas for use similar to that of gasification.

(Draft) PPS 18 recognises that:

- Direct combustion is the most commonly used technology for 'heat only' plants.
- Direct combustion and gasification are used for CHP and 'electricity only' plants.
- Pyrolysis is more commonly associated with production of transport fuel.
- Gasification and pyrolysis are less mature technologies than direct combustion.
- All 3 technologies appear similar externally.
- All 3 technologies share common characteristics of size, scale, appearance, feedstock requirements, emission and waste production.

11 June 2008