



WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

*The wood waste sector is expecting more change as biomass plants come on stream, says **Andy Hill** of the Wood Recyclers Association*



Over the past five years the waste wood sector has seen unprecedented growth and far-reaching changes to legislation, guidance and processes, altering the shape of our industry as we know it.

During the next 12 months we are expecting even more change, with several large scale Industrial Emissions Directive and Waste Incineration Directive-compliant biomass plants due to enter commercial operations in the UK,

demanding in excess of an additional 1 million tonnes of waste wood biomass fuel per year.

Given that we estimate that the UK produces approximately 5 million tonnes of raw waste wood a year, these new plants will be a game changer, generating sufficient industrial and commercial demand to ensure the UK no longer has to landfill waste wood, a real success.

From our own members' survey statistics in 2017, the effect of the increasing biomass market is clearly evident: its demand rose to 1.7 million tonnes last year compared to 1.6 during 2016. This increase was offset by a fall of approximately 300,000 tonnes in waste wood exports, which was just 300,000 tonnes in 2017 compared to 600,000 in 2016.

Our prediction now is that we are likely to become a net importer before very long if we are to feed the new biomass plants with the feedstock they will require.

Last year also saw a year-on-year growth of 38% within the panel board sector for Waste Recycling Association members. Total UK panel board usage in 2017 rose to 924,000 tonnes.

Further recycling routes such as landscaping, animal bedding and the equestrian surfaces markets produced an additional 800,000 tonnes during 2017, which is fantastic for the UK's economy and environment.

All of this growth has, as I said, been happening alongside tremendous change to the regulations that govern our sector. In particular the Environment Agency's (EA) Fire Prevention Plan (FPP) Guidance and Waste Wood Classification project.

On the first point, through many meetings, discussions, perseverance and determination on the sector's part, we managed to secure an open dialogue with the EA, which eventually led to a better understanding on both sides and ultimately more flexibility within the guidance to allow bona fide operators to continue with their business.

The issue is still on-going but we are now very close to becoming the first material stream to publish sector specific guidance to help wood recyclers and re-processors

Andy Hill is chairman of the Wood Recyclers' Association

gain an FPP and the EA is producing a list of acceptable alternative measures for operators who need to move beyond the standard guidance.

Crucially the EA has listened to our concerns over the guidance and has been willing to work with us to find solutions that work for operators whilst achieving the EA's main goals of protecting the public and the environment.

The fact that our sector has played such a huge role in bringing this issue to light is one we are very proud of. It shows a maturity and understanding among operators that may not have been as possible 10 or 15 years ago.

We have also been working closely with the EA and other industry trade bodies to identify the real scale of hazardous waste wood in the UK waste wood stream. Again, this is an on-going project but one which, as the lead, we have recently been complimented on our handling of by the EA.

It is clear that the percentage of hazardous wood in our waste stream is currently less than 0.1%, although we accept this may increase slightly as a result of the work we are currently doing. We will continue to work with colleagues to complete this project and look forward to sharing the result in due course. ■

Below: RWE Generation's biomass-based combined heat and power plant in Markinch in Scotland



The Wood Technology Society

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