

# Advice for Wychavon businesses on installing micro renewable energy schemes

## Background

Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Local Planning Authorities are responsible for small scale renewable energy schemes (under 50 megawatts of installed capacity).

The government are committed to meeting 15% of the UK's energy demand from renewable sources by 2020 (Department of Energy & Climate Change).

Planning can play an important role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions to slow down climate change. The main theme of the National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) is to promote sustainable development and the emphasis is for planning to help to support the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy (Para 93).

## Introduction

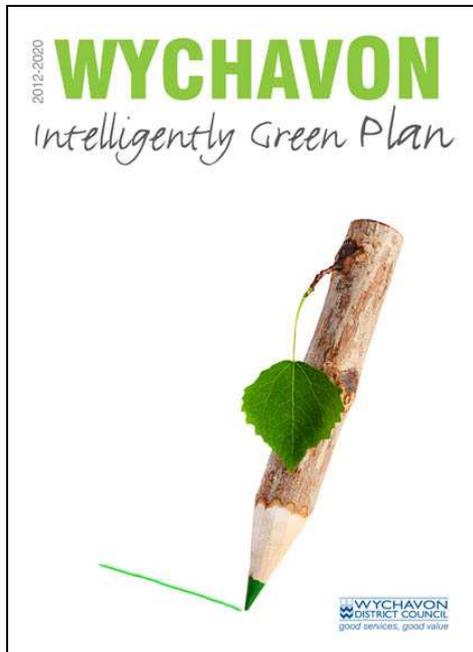
This webpage provides an overview of the permitted development rights for installing micro renewable energy schemes (also known as micro generation) for businesses. Permitted development allows businesses to make some alterations to their premises without requiring a formal application for planning permission.

Using renewable energy sources can offer a wide range of benefits to your business including: lower energy bills, security of energy supply and price, the possibility of generating an income through selling energy back to the grid or through financial incentives, such as Feed-in-Tariffs. It can also contribute to your corporate social and environmental responsibilities and policies.

Although micro generation is often permitted development and may not require planning permission, **we recommend that you discuss any of the restrictions set out below with us before any installation commences.**

## Aims

Our [Intelligently Green Plan](#) sets out our vision for a greener, more energy efficient and self-sufficient Wychavon by 2020. As part of this we want to encourage the generation of energy from renewable sources and support the delivery of appropriate schemes across the district.



The purpose of this advice is:

- To raise awareness of permitted development rights and micro generation schemes for Wychavon businesses
- To increase the uptake of micro generation schemes to help businesses to reduce energy consumption, running costs and reduce carbon emissions.

## What is micro generation?

Micro generation refers to small-scale power generation that is designed to provide comparatively small amounts of energy, such as powering the average family home or business.

## Types of micro renewable energy

There are a number of micro renewable schemes available. This advice focuses on four specific schemes which are detailed in the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order (2012).

## 1. Solar panels

There are two types of solar panels:

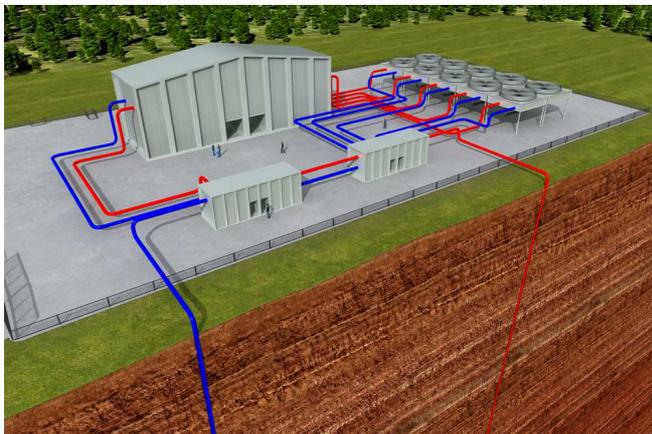
- **Solar photovoltaic (solar PV)** photovoltaic cells convert sunlight into electricity which you can then use for your business and/or export onto the grid.
- **Solar thermal equipment** uses energy from the sun to heat up water, using solar panels, called collectors. A conventional boiler or immersion heater can be used to make the water hotter, or to provide hot water when solar energy is unavailable.



Both types of panels can be attached to walls, the roof or glass and convert radiation from the sun, both heat and daylight, into electricity. The panels also continue to work on overcast days.

## 2. Ground source heat

Underground pipes and boreholes are used to absorb natural heat from the ground, which is then upgraded to a useful temperature and can be used to provide space heating and to heat domestic water.



### 3. Biomass heating

Stoves or boilers can be installed and use biomass material instead of traditional fossil fuels. Wood that comes from a sustainable source is often used. Although biomass is not a zero carbon method, it provides lower emissions than coal, gas and oil.



### 4. Combined heat and power

Combined heat and power is defined as the recovery and use of waste heat from power generation.

Wind turbine schemes are not considered as permitted development and therefore planning permission is likely to be required. Please contact us for further advice on 01386 565565.

## Is planning permission required?

This section explains the circumstances where businesses will be required to apply for planning permission for each type of renewable energy schemes highlighted above.

### **Solar PV or solar thermal equipment mounted on to business premises**

In many cases the installation, alteration or replacement of solar panels for businesses is likely to be considered 'permitted development' with no need to apply to us for planning permission.

However, development would **not** be permitted without planning permission if the solar panels or solar thermal collectors are:

- installed on a wall or a pitched roof and the panels project more than 200mm from the wall surface or roof slope, when measured at right angles to the wall or roof slope;

- installed on a flat roof, where the highest part would be higher than 1 metre above the highest part of the roof (excluding the chimney);
- installed on a roof and is within 1 metre of the external edge of the roof;
- installed on a wall or and within 1 metre of a junction of that wall with another wall or with the roof of the building;
- installed on a wall or roof slope fronting the highway of a building within designated land, such as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB);
- installed on a site designated as a scheduled monument; or
- installed on a listed building or within the grounds of a listed building.

**The following condition must also be considered:**

- Site panels, so far as is practicable, to minimise the effect on the external appearance of the building and the amenity of the area.
- When no longer needed for micro generation, remove panels as soon as reasonably practicable.

**Stand alone solar panel installations in the grounds of business premises**

Only the first stand alone solar installation will be considered as permitted development. Further installations will require planning permission.

**The following conditions must also be met:**

- Site panels, so far as is practicable, to minimise the effect on the amenity of the area.
- When panels are no longer needed, remove them as soon as reasonably practicable.



**And the following limits must be met:**

- No part of the installation should be higher than 4 metres;
- The installation should be at least 5 metres from the boundary of the property;

- The size of the array should be no more than 9 square metres or 3 metres wide by 3 metres deep;
- Panels should not be installed within the boundary of a listed building or a scheduled monument;
- If the property is in a designated area such as an AONB or a conservation area, no part of the solar installation should be nearer to any highway bounding the grounds of the property than the part of the building that is nearest to that highway.

### **Building control advice**

If you wish to install a solar panel on your roof, Building Regulations will normally apply and the following will need to be taken into consideration:

- The ability of the existing roof to carry the load (weight) of the panel will need to be checked and proven. Some strengthening work may be needed.
- Work such as fire protection, weather proofing, fixing details, an energy efficiency appraisal and information as to how these devices interact with existing heating or electrical systems.
- Where the electricity supply is being altered you should also notify your existing electricity supplier about your proposed installation.
- If the contractor is registered with a government approved Competent Persons Scheme (Building Regulations 2010, Schedule 3, Item 17), then self certification for compliance with building regulation requirements, can be issued. Please ensure that the relevant structural implications will also be included as part of the contractors registration with the Competent Persons Scheme.

### **Ground source heat pumps**

The installation of a ground source heat pump in the grounds of a business premise is likely to be considered 'permitted development' with no need to apply to us for planning permission.

**However**, you must meet the following limits and conditions to benefit from permitted development rights:

- If the pumps are no longer being used for micro generation you must remove them as soon as reasonably practicable and restore the land to its former condition before the development took place, or to the condition agreed with the council.
- The total area of excavation must not exceed 0.5 hectares.
- **Only the first** stand alone ground source heat pump will be permitted development. Further installations will require planning permission.

### **Water source heat pumps**

If your business wishes to install a water source heat pump in the grounds of the business premises, you must observe the following conditions:

- The total surface area covered by the water source heat pump (including any pipes) must not exceed 0.5 hectares.
- If you are a leaseholder you may need to get permission from your landlord, freeholder or Management Company.

### **Air Source Heat Pumps**

Air source heat pumps are not covered by permitted development rules. Businesses who wish to install air source heat pumps should contact us as an application for planning permission may be required, especially if the building is listed or within a conservation area.

### **Building control advice**

- Installation of either a ground source or air source heat pump must comply with Building Regulations.
- It is advisable to contact an installer who can provide the necessary advice, preferably one who belongs to either the Micro generation Certification Scheme or the relevant Competent Person Scheme.

### **Biomass heating systems**

#### **Flues for biomass and combined heat and power systems**

If a businesses wish to install, alter or replace a flue on their building, as part of a biomass heating system, or a combined heat and power system, then it is likely that such works will be considered 'permitted development' with no need to apply to us for planning permission.

**However**, you must comply with the following important limits to benefit from the permitted development rights:

- The capacity of the system must not exceed 45 kilowatts thermal;
- The height of the flue would not exceed the highest part of the roof by more than one metre **or** the height of an existing flue that is being replaced (whichever is highest);
- No more than one flue, as part of a biomass heating system or combined heat and power system, should be installed on the same building. Further installations will require planning permission;
- Permitted development rights do not apply to installing flues on listed buildings, within the grounds of a listed building, or on a site designated as a scheduled monument.
- If the building is on AONB land or in a conservation area, the flue should not be installed on a wall or roof slope which fronts a highway.

If you are a leaseholder you may need to get permission from your landlord, freeholder or Management Company.

### **Building Control Advice**

- If you wish to install a flue then the Building Regulations apply. You should take into account factors such as ventilation and general safety. Installation should be carried out by a suitably competent person.
- Building work may also be subject to more than one requirement of the building regulations. In such cases the work must comply with the other applicable requirements of Building Regulations.

### **Grants available for businesses:**

There are a number of schemes available to help with the costs of having energy-saving improvements fitted to your business. Here are some of the main ones.

### **Resource Efficient Worcestershire**

Worcestershire County Council in partnership with Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce are offering energy and resource assessments and grants to small and medium size businesses in Worcestershire. Grants of up to £6,750 available to help you cut your running costs! Further information can be found at [Resource Efficient Worcestershire](#).

## **Feed-in-Tariffs**

If you install an electricity-generating technology from a renewable or low-carbon source the [UK Government's Feed-In Tariffs scheme](#) (FITs) could help you to get paid for the electricity you generate. The amount of electricity you buy from your supplier is reduced, any excess electricity generated can be exported to the grid and subsequently this saves you money on your electricity bill.

The following technologies qualify for the scheme:

- solar electricity (PV) (roof mounted or stand alone)
- wind turbines (building mounted or free standing)
- hydroelectricity
- anaerobic digesters
- micro combined heat and power (CHP).

### **For more information:**

[Energy Saving Trust: www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/)

[UK Government: www.gov.uk/feed-in-tariffs](http://www.gov.uk/feed-in-tariffs)

## **Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI)**

The [Renewable Heat Incentive](#) (RHI) is a UK Government scheme set up to encourage uptake of renewable heat technologies to homes and businesses through the provision of financial incentives, for the life of the installations or up to a maximum of 20 years.

Ofgem is responsible for administering the scheme and further information can be found at [www.ofgem.gov.uk](http://www.ofgem.gov.uk) or through the links below:

- [Eligibility criteria and the application process](#)
- [Guidance document on the eligibility requirements for the scheme](#)

## **Green Deal**

A Government-backed scheme to help you make cost-effective energy saving improvements. Instead of paying for the full cost of the improvements up front, you pay over time through a charge added to your electricity bill.

The Green Deal is a scheme that can help you make energy-saving improvements to your business, for example:

- insulation - e.g. solid wall, cavity wall or loft insulation
- heating
- draught-proofing
- double glazing
- renewable energy generation - e.g. solar panels or heat pumps

You have to pay back the cost of the improvements over time because the Green Deal is a loan, not a grant. However, the savings on your energy bills after you've made the improvements should cover the repayment of the loan.

## **Other sources of information / guidance:**

- Wychavon District Council planning advice: <http://www.wychavon.gov.uk/cms/planning.aspx>
- If you would like written confirmation to clarify whether your proposal is permitted development, please refer to Wychavon District Council Permitted Development Enquiry form (please note there is a charge for this service) – [www.wychavon.gov.uk](http://www.wychavon.gov.uk)
- Wychavon planning application forms: [www.wychavon.gov.uk](http://www.wychavon.gov.uk)
- For information on Building Regulations in relation to the installation of micro generation and non domestic buildings: <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/>
- South Worcestershire Building Control Service website: <http://e-access.malvern hills.gov.uk/SWBCP/Building-Regs.asp> or contact them on: 01684 862223 / email: [mail@southworcestershirebuildingcontrol.gov.uk](mailto:mail@southworcestershirebuildingcontrol.gov.uk)
- Planning Portal – [www.planningportal.gov.uk/](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/)
- The Energy Saving Trust – [www.est.org.uk/](http://www.est.org.uk/)
- The National Energy Foundation – [www.nef.org.uk/](http://www.nef.org.uk/)
- The Carbon Trust - [www.carbontrust.com/](http://www.carbontrust.com/)