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# UK energy survey – Wales could lead the way on renewables

Wales could be making a vital contribution to the UK Government's latest energy review – by proving that wood-energy can provide a viable alternative to nuclear, gas and oil technology

Latest findings from a survey by Robinwood, the ground-breaking Forestry Commission Wales project which aims to show how best forestry practices can help provide jobs and new income across regions of rural Europe, show that Wales is on the verge of making wood fuel a reality in the UK.

And a team headed by Mike Pitcher of the Wood Energy Business Scheme, which helps business in Wales make the switch to wood fuel, will be telling delegates at the RW International Wood Energy week in Berlin tomorrow that Wales is leading the field – with 31 major systems already on line and another 26 already in the pipeline for this year.

“Wood fuel works across much of Europe now, and we in Wales are leading the way in the UK,” said Mike, who runs the Forestry Commission Wales and EU Objective 1 funded initiative. “The infrastructure in Wales is already established and we have installers and wood suppliers across the whole country, if we can make woodfuel systems more affordable then wood fuel will take off in a big way,” he said.

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“Most of the UK is lagging far behind, but we believe that we can prove wood energy can make a very real impact, and we shall be feeding the results of our work into the Government’s energy survey,” he added.

Mike is speaking to regional development specialists, politicians and forestry experts at the week-long fact-finding and information sharing event at Eberswalde organised by Robinwood, the Forestry Commission Wales European Interreg IIIc project with six partners across Europe.

“We are very pleased to be playing a part in providing an important platform for the interchange of technologies and information for an industry which can play a vital role in the future for jobs and incomes in Wales,” said Robinwood project manager Kim Burnham.

As well as working on wood fuel, the Aberystwyth-based Robinwood team is responsible for the major component of the £4 million cross border project – looking at how forests, trees and timber can revitalise rural communities through new business opportunities

**ENDS**

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**Editor’s notes:**

- At present there are 31 large scale wood heating systems operational throughout Wales. They consume just over 2460 tonnes of wood chips, pellets and logs.
- The maximum wood resource in Wales, without importing or increasing wood production, could be up to 998,525 tonnes and burnt in modern efficient boilers, it would be enough to heat almost 20 per cent of the houses in Wales.
- Robinwood has given Wales its first opportunity to be a partner in one of the European Interreg 111c RFO (Regional Framework Operation) projects aimed at bringing partner

countries together, fostering cross border work between academics, private business and the public sector. The Welsh part of the three and a half year project is worth 1 million Euros to Wales.