



## PRESS RELEASE

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# Renewable Heat Incentive calculator launched to help businesses number-crunch the benefits of biomass

The Mersey Forest has launched an online calculator to help businesses and consumers explore the financial and carbon benefits of switching to a biomass boiler to take advantage of the government's Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI).

The free tool at [www.merseyforest.org.uk/rhicalculator](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/rhicalculator) is believed to be the first of its kind, and provides users with estimates of how much they would earn from the RHI, how quickly their boiler would pay for itself, the expected difference in annual fuel bill and what return they could see after 20 years.

The calculator is powered by users' answers to less than a dozen simple questions, ranging from details of their current heating system to the size of biomass boiler they are considering installing. It is to be unveiled at UK woodfuel event Ignition 11, held in Manchester as part of the GreenBuild Expo on 29-30 June.

Nigel Blandford of The Mersey Forest, developers of the calculator, said: "We wanted to make it as easy as possible for businesses and domestic consumers to get an at-a-glance verdict on the viability of switching to biomass, without them having to put in hours of research to do so.

"The calculator is already highlighting the particular advantages of biomass for those in off-grid areas whose properties aren't connected to mains gas."

In anticipation of these findings, over the past year The Mersey Forest has mapped "off gas" parts of Cheshire and Warrington, and made contact with businesses in these areas to provide advice on changing away from increasingly expensive alternative fuels such as heating oil and coal.

Through its Woodland Advisory Service, The Mersey Forest is also now offering free support and training on growing wood for fuel for eligible woodland owners and managers in Merseyside and Halton.

Nigel Blandford continues: “By building both supply of and demand for woodfuel in Merseyside and Cheshire, The Mersey Forest is working to not only support the local economy, but also show how sustainable renewable fuel can be part of the solution to climate change and energy security.”

Funding for the RHI calculator and Woodland Advisory Service comes from the Mersey Rural Leader programme, Defra and the Northwest Regional Development Agency. The RDA also co-funded the project to support “off gas” businesses alongside the Cheshire and Warrington Economic Commission.

## **ENDS**

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### **Notes to editors:**

#### **Renewable Heat Incentive calculator**

The calculator is designed to give businesses and consumers an idea of the kind of financial returns that may be expected from installing a biomass boiler as opposed to a fossil fuel equivalent. It does not cover everything users need to know to make an investment decision. Users need to seek expert advice before undertaking a specific project. The Mersey Forest and its partners accept no liability for any loss or damage as a result of reliance on the calculator.

[www.merseyforest.org.uk/rhicalculator](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/rhicalculator)

#### **Renewable Heat Incentive**

The government’s Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme is the first of its kind in the world. It will provide long term support for renewable heat technologies, from ground-source heat pumps to wood-chip boilers. The scheme will help drive around a seven-fold increase in renewable heat over the coming decade, which will help shift what currently is a fringe option, firmly into the mainstream.

[www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/meeting\\_energy/Renewable\\_ener/incentive/incentive.aspx](http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/meeting_energy/Renewable_ener/incentive/incentive.aspx)

## **The Mersey Forest**

The Mersey Forest is a growing network of woodlands and green spaces spread across Cheshire and Merseyside, which has been creating 'woodlands on your doorstep' since 1994.

The Forest is one of the leading environmental regeneration initiatives in the North West. Through community and partnership working, we have planted more than 8 million trees - equivalent to five new trees for every person living within the Forest area.

The Forest helps our towns and cities adapt to climate change and has won the Brian Redhead Award for Environmental Sustainability, creates woodlands that 20% of local people visit at least once a week, and by improving the image of our towns and cities sets the scene for growth within the region's £98 billion economy.

We achieve all of this and more through our partnership of local authorities, landowners, the Forestry Commission, Natural England and businesses including United Utilities.

[www.merseyforest.org.uk](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk)

## **Mersey Rural Leader programme**

Mersey Rural Leader is part of the LEADER programme to support local businesses, farmers, foresters and a range of rural enterprises using funding from the European Agricultural Fund.

[www.merseyruralleader.org.uk](http://www.merseyruralleader.org.uk)