

Background note – Rural generation

Rural Generation and the 'Green Economy'

- Rural Generation supplies renewable heating systems for customers in the domestic, public, industrial and commercial sectors, supplying wood chip boilers as well as the necessary fuel which they grow themselves. They also offer advice to consumers on appropriate heating systems and are involved in research and development in this sector.
- Rural Generation has recently formed a partnership with Austrian counterparts in order to share information on the manufacture of boilers, the growing of energy crop and the production of quality wood chip fuel. Austria has one of the highest levels of renewable energy generation in Europe at over 23%, with over half of the electricity generation coming from hydro power and an aspiration to generate all electricity from renewable sources by 2030.
- Given the breadth of activities included in the Energy and Environmental sector accurate data on its scale have proved difficult to establish. However current estimates indicate that in NI the sector currently employs 4,500 people in 200 companies and currently has an annual turnover of £300m. This indicates Northern Ireland has a solid base on which to build future development and Invest NI believes the rapid growth of the sector offers many opportunities for all businesses in Northern Ireland in design, installation or manufacture of the component parts associated with a range of renewable energy technologies.
- Rural Generation has proactively worked with Invest NI and through its networks facilitated the first official biomass technical visit for industry to Austria in June 2005 for 12 local companies. This visit gave confidence to the companies attending and led to the installation of the first industrial biomass boiler in NI at Strabane Mills. Since this initial visit, Northern Ireland businesses have installed 34 biomass installations in industrial and commercial premises and several hundred domestic biomass boilers and wood pellet stoves have been installed throughout NI. The Austrian biomass boiler company KWB provided the technical assistance to the South West College in Omagh for the formation of the biomass installer academy training courses.