

Earlswood Services

Biomass uptake expands heating business



Peter Handsley, a rural heating engineer, specialising in oil installations has seen the growth in biomass heating as an opportunity to expand his business and ensure it's long term future. Concentrating in 'off gas' areas, Peter's experience with 'Rayburn' and older traditional wood fuelled systems and the fluctuations in oil prices has seen the biomass aspect part of his business develop beyond being just a niche. Fears over fuel security and the increases in consumer's interest in sustainability have also helped Earlswood Services Ltd become one of the regions leading wood fuel heating contractors.

objectives

- To ensure the continued economic viability and development of the business, with the aim to become the regions market leader in biomass installation.
- To expand to meet growing market needs, improving competitiveness. The oil heating market is reaching saturation point and becoming increasingly difficult to sustain a full order book.
- To create a business within the burgeoning sustainability sector without been tied to a particular boiler manufacture or supplier.

actions

- In 2005 Earlswood Services undertook a study tour to Denmark to investigate the wood-heating sector. This was followed by a visit to Austria in 2007, to become ETA trained and attending the Dublin Energy Show.
- The business has undergone, and is continuing to undertake a series of industrial accreditations, with OFTEC in 2000, CORGI in 2001 and HETAS in 2005. The business also registered with NewHeat, OneNorth-East and Yorkshire Business Link as an accredited installer.
- The business has developed its capacity to fulfil the full gambit of biomass services, from full installation, maintenance and servicing, through to commissioning. Peter has now expanded further to encompass consultation services, training, helping businesses design and specify heating systems.

achievements

For Business:

- Utilisation of 14+ years of industrial experience within the construction and diesel plant sectors into a biomass heating enterprise.
- Expansion of rural oil heating business into one of Yorkshire & the Humber's leading biomass installers.

For the Region:

- Earlswood Services completed their first full installation in 2005, for the Forestry Commission at Sherwood Pines. Since then 15 more installations have been completed and 36+ installation commissioned, ranging from 12Kw to 120Kw, with the associated CO₂ savings this brings for the region.
- Creation of a whole system contractor; from boiler to interior radiator fitting, giving the region an 'in house' resource.

background

- The business has a wealth of industrial diesel fitting experience, and took the opportunity to diversify into the previously expanding rural 'off gas' oil heating market. As this has become saturated, the business has taken the opportunity to evolve again into the field of biomass heating. Developing a business model that ensures that the customer relationship is the first priority.
- Earlswood Services has installed a variety of wood heating systems; log, chip and pellet, in a variety of situations, domestic, religious, industrial, educational and community buildings. The business has experience with CN, Eta, Rika systems and has developed a supply model that runs from boiler house through to interior room radiators and under floor heating. The largest of these being a 120Kw, CN Log fuelled system, which is heating a period stately home. The smallest being a 12Kw, Rika boiler stove, fuelled by wood pellets, used to heat a domestic property.
- The business now works on installations across Yorkshire, the Humber and Lincolnshire area, and provides a nation-wide consultancy for system design.
- Biomass heating now accounts for approximately 50% of business, with spin off work resulting from these initial projects.

quotes

"Biomass technology is superb, but like anything one encounters for the first time there is a learning curve. It is hard to imagine anyone better placed than Earlswood Services to guide one through the commissioning and daily use of wood fuel. Their long experience of biomass technology is shared in a way even the most un-technical person can easily understand."

Christopher Marlowe, Chopsticks Charity, Northallerton.

"My house has never been so warm, the biomass boiler is so cheap to run that it ticks over all the time which thoroughly heats the place. My Dad comes to see us more now!"

Ian Gilliant, Gembling House, Gembling.

partners

Manco Energy
– CN Boiler Suppliers

Midtherm Flue Systems

Uponor Housing Solutions



lessons learnt

- Develop an independence of any single market, i.e. construction to avoid volatility of the market.
- Fuel supply is fundamental to the success of any installation, it is imperative that design, source and supply be considered at the early stages of any development.
- The Biomass market has long lead times, necessitating a lot of customers support, which done well has the benefit of strong links being formed.
- Remember boiler specifications are not the same for wood as oil; using this method can result in oversized boilers. A 3phase-power supply is also preferable.