How can home- owners produce and sell their own electricity?

by Sean Burke

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Becoming a pro-active, money-wise energy consumer will provide you with loads of knowledge and a practical approach to running your home as efficiently as possible.

Begin your quest by using reputable websites such as The Energy Saving Trust. You will then be well equipped to understand words like â€˜micro- generationâ€™ and Micro-CHP. There are various technologies available which, besides reducing you carbon footprint, have government-backed financial incentives. These include solar panels, wood fuel boilers and wind turbines, all forms of micro-generated, renewable energy.

Before even considering any of these options, you should make your home as energy-efficient as possible. This may mean introducing more insulation in the loft, upgrading to double-glazing and generally saving on loss of heat.

Photovoltaics (PV), or solar electricity systems, harness the energy from the sun and will run the general requirements of a moderate-size home. Even in cloudy Britain, this can be a great way of storing energy and saving on your electricity costs.

Think wind turbine and you see rows of them scattered across the countryside. However, they can be sized down for household use and are known as microwind turbines. Consider hydro energy if you are near a small stream or river.

Biomass heating systems are really the environmentally-friendly way to go, since these are wood-fuelled stoves and boilers that utilise wood chips, pellets or logs to power up your central heating and hot water. For getting your home fitted with under floor heating, think about a ground source heat pump. This system generates energy from latent underground heat.

Lump it all under the heading of micro-combined heat and power (Micro-CHP); a heating technology generating electricity and heat at the same time, from various energy sources in and around the home. It is at this point that an advisor comes into the picture, looks around your home and its environs and, together, you decide the best choice for achieving energy savings and reduced emissions at the same time.

With electricity pricesbeing what they are finding alternative energy sources is no longer a wistful idea, but a more sustainable plan of action. If you are still unsure, try chatting to your neighbours in the area to see if they have alternative, tried and tested energy sources. Planning permission may be required for your choice, and possible adjustments on your insurance policy will need to be considered.

An important question remains; how do you pay for it? There are companies who will put solar PV on your roof for free. They will take all the FIT payments to recover their costs, so your financial savings will be very small, but you wonâ€™t have to invest your own money. Feed-in tariff schemes (FITS), Renewable Heat Incentives (RHI) and Renewable Heat Payment Schemes are all in place to assist the decision-making process.

After considering all your options, the final step is to find a reputable installer for which ever system is decided upon. They should be registered under the MCS and use only MCS-certified products.

Ask for 3 quotes and invite the potential experts to visit your home to discuss the various ways and means of becoming a potential producer and seller of energy.

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