

# Estimating the type, cost and timescales of the studies needed to get planning permission for a biomass project

**This exercise will encourage attendees to consider and discuss what information will be needed to support the planning application for a small-to-medium scale community biomass proposal, if expert support will be required, how long it will take to gather and prepare the information and how much it might cost.**

## Time needed

50 minutes (plus 10 further minutes if you want open discussion)

- Stage 1) Grouping and explaining (10 minutes)
- Stage 2) Carrying out the exercise (20 minutes)
- Stage 3) Feedback and create timeline (20 minutes)
- Stage 4) Optional discussion (10 minutes)

## Films that accompany this exercise

'Getting planning permission' (disc 2): required

'Introduction to biomass' (disc 1): required

'Setting up a biomass project' (disc 1): required

## Materials needed

- A3/flipchart sheets for each group to make notes and marked up like Table 1 below.
- Pens/markers for groups to make notes.
- Series of A3 sheets with tape/blu-tack, or similar, so they can be attached to the wall to create the timeline.
- Large marker for facilitator to create timeline.

## Arranging the room

Stick the A3 sheets to the wall (landscape) and to create one long sheet which you will mark up with the timeline during the feedback from the exercise.

## Running the exercise

### Stage 1) Grouping and explaining (10 minutes)

Explain to the whole audience that you are going to work in groups to assess all the information needed to inform the preparation and determination of a planning application for a biomass plant.

Ask them to split into groups (how many depends on the total number of people/tables/flipcharts you have).

Provide each group with a copy of Table 1 and pens.

Tell them that they are going to consider all the potential information that will be needed to inform the preparation and/or determination of a biomass plant planning application, where this information could be available (or if it will need to be a bespoke commission), if expert support will be needed, the potential time needed to obtain the information and the potential costs involved.

They should record their thoughts on the pre-prepared **Table 1**.

Whilst the groups are doing the exercise mark up a skeleton timeline of the A3 sheets on the wall which will be added to during the feedback – see example at the top of the next page.

Setting up the groups and explaining this should take not more than 10 minutes

### Stage 2) Carrying out the exercise (20 minutes)

Allow not more than 20 minutes for the groups to follow the instructions you have given. Circulate the room to make sure they all understand.

### Stage 3) Feedback

Advise people when there are just 5 minutes remaining to allow them to finalise their feedback

Once everyone has finished, get one person from each group to feedback a maximum of two points from each of the categories from the sheet – this limitation will allow all the groups to feedback with limited repetition. If you have a small number of groups you can ask for any other points once each group has given their initial feedback.

As each of the groups provides their feedback annotate the timeline accordingly – see example below:

Once the timeline is filled with all the possible stages of the process, all the time estimates can be added together to give total timescale for the project, but remember that

some of the research/studies can be carried out at the same time. The timeline can also be annotated with some cost estimates, where these are known.

Explain to the group that there are many factors involved and therefore this timescale can only be taken as a rough estimate at this stage, and the whole process may be quicker or slower.

*Stage 4: Optional discussion period*

This could be a useful point to take suggestions from the floor about what you might start researching first. It's likely that the issue of cost will arise early on, so you can make it clear that you have information on funding, and the financial support from the feed-in tariff, which you will be addressing either later in this event, or in a future event.

Things you might want to throw into the discussion are:

- Local knowledge, experience and contacts
- Working with the local authority
- Responsibilities for co-ordinating information/tasks

Tie up the discussion by asking if anyone would be interested in getting involved with researching the options. And remember to record all the comments made on a flipchart – you can ask a member of the audience to be the recorder if you are running this event alone.

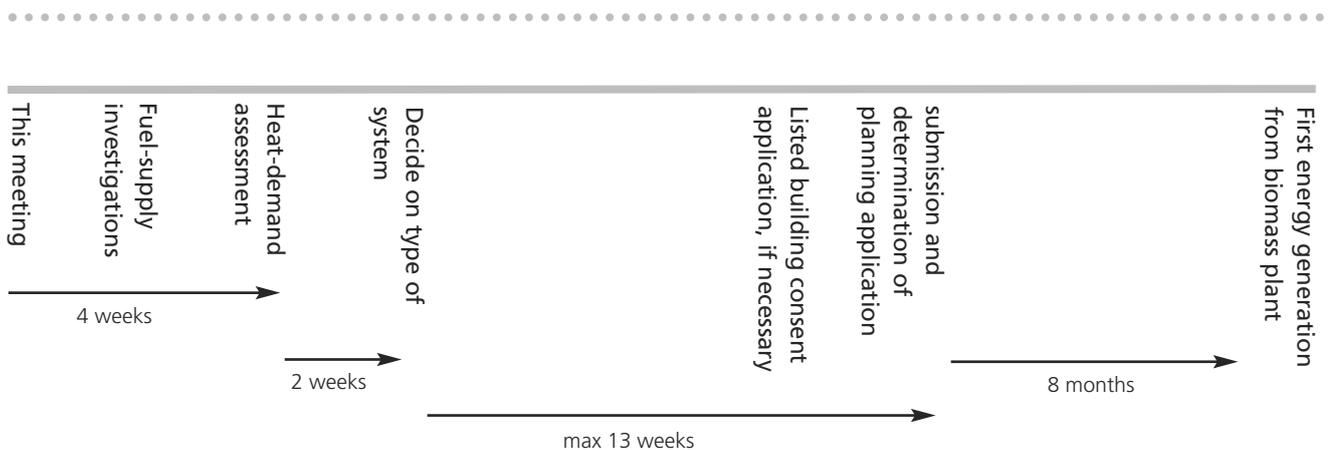
**Output**

The feedback from each of the groups should be used to create a timeline of the planning application process, highlighting key milestones and illustrating the timing implications of requirements such as environmental or ecological surveys, which can only be conducted at certain times of the year. This can also be used to highlight necessary work that will incur significant costs, which can assist with budgeting for the project.

**Timeline 1 Before filling in**



**Timeline 2 Example of what the timeline might look like as the group fill in the detail**





**Table 1** Information needed to support the planning application for a medium-to-large scale biomass plant

**NB** The information in this table (except for the column headings) is provided as a guide only and for the facilitator. This should not be given to the groups until the end of the feedback session. Timescales/cost will vary on a case by case basis, use the information in these columns as a guide to get attendees thinking about costs and timescales.

Research and/or information needed	Potential sources	Expert support needed? (Y/N)	Timescale	Cost
Environmental Impact Assessment	Specialist consultant	Yes	Up to 12 months to allow for surveys	High. Between £10-20k
Emissions and/or noise	Specialist consultant	See Environment Agency website for further details	Weeks	Medium. £2k – £4k
Environment Agency Licence	Environment Agency (England & Wales)	See Environment Agency website for further details		Low. Less than £500 unless study required
Fuel supply options	See Biomass Energy Centre website for details	No	Days	
Fuel – supply and delivery	Woodfuel supplier	No	Weeks	Depends on supply volume and/or contract type
Self-sufficient fuel supply – woodland management	Specialist consultant	Yes	Weeks	Medium. £3k – £5k
Heat demand assessment	EST on-line calculator <a href="http://www.est.org.uk">www.est.org.uk</a>	Yes, if complicated building	Weeks	Low. Less than £500 unless detailed study required
Type of system	System supplier and/or installer	Yes, if complicated building/different options	Weeks	
Planning permission (e.g. for flue/fuel store)	Planning Portal and/or local planning department	Yes, if plans required	Weeks	Low. Less than £1,000 unless complicated
Listed building and/or conservation area considerations	Planning Portal and/or local planning department	Yes, if plans required	Weeks	Low. Less than £1,000 unless complicated
Fuel reception and storage	System supplier and/or installer	No	Weeks	
Review management options and benefits of ESCo	Woodfuel supplier and/or installer	Yes	Weeks	Medium. £2k – £4k