

PRESS RELEASE  
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## **Scheme launches in Bristol to meet growing local demand for biomass wood fuel**

A new scheme is being launched in the West Country to meet the growing demand for local wood fuel for biomass boilers.

Schools and local authorities which have installed biomass boilers are already having to source fuel from outside the region from as far afield as Scandinavia. The problem is set to get worse as more organisations turn to biomass as an eco-friendly way to supply energy.

It is estimated that there is at least 25,000 tonnes per annum of unused fuel lying in local woodlands which is not being harvested, because until now landowners did not have a ready market which meant it was not cost-effective. There is demand from the public sector for 1,500 tonnes per annum of wood fuel for existing boilers and a further 5,000 tonnes per annum that are planned for installation over the next three years.

The new not-for-profit scheme, which has secured a government grant and backing from Regen South West and the Forestry Commission, is designed to guarantee the supply of locally sourced, high quality fuel for users of biomass boilers and provide a local market for suppliers.

Andrew Harvey, director of Harvey Shopfitters in Hanham, realised the problem faced by local users of biomass when he started converting the waste from his own firm into wood chip and donating them to Kings Forest School in Kingswood.

“I had been looking at what to do with the waste wood generated from the company and hit upon the idea of biomass,” said Andrew.

“Guaranteeing supply and quality of fuel was a real headache for the school and I soon discovered that this is a widespread problem. It’s no good burning poor quality fuel as it harms the boiler and can cause it to break down.”

Andrew Harvey enlisted the help of sustainability expert Mark Letcher who owns a climate change consultancy called Climate Works based at the Tobacco Factory in Southville, Bristol. Together they have set up Westwoods to tackle the current wood fuel supply and quality issues.

“In the SW region there is the potential for a continuous supply of wood fuel from forests, estimated at 200,000 tonnes. Westwoods has been set up to strengthen the wood fuel supply infrastructure locally to be able to use this potential.

“Finding a local fuel source also reduces carbon emissions generated by long distance haulage and creates jobs for local people. For every 1 job in the oil industry there is the equivalent of 20 jobs in Wood Fuel, for the same amount of energy generated. It is our challenge to find and train local people to work in this growing sector.

Westwoods is already working with Bristol City Council, Bath and North East Somerset Council and North Somerset Council which collectively have more than 12 biomass boilers installed plus 23 planned and are actively seeking local suppliers.

Westwoods will act as a broker between supplier and user as well as guiding people through the process of how to become a wood fuel supplier.

Suppliers can become a member for free and in return will gain access to wood fuel supply tenders, open days and training and advice on contract preparation. Westwoods also provides a quality control service to ensure that fuels meet consistently superior quality standards.

The scheme is being launched to suppliers and users in Bristol on 9<sup>th</sup> June, where architect George Ferguson will talk about the role of biomass in sustainable regeneration projects. Mark Prior from the Forestry Commission will speak about the need for reliable, good quality fuels and Paul Barker from Bristol City Council, which is using biomass at 7 schools and public amenities, will explain how the council has benefited from the technology.

**For media enquiries, contact Sue Amiel at Spirit Public Relations**

**0117 944 1415**

**[samiel@spiritpublicrelations.co.uk](mailto:samiel@spiritpublicrelations.co.uk)**

**Notes to editor**

Harvey Shopfitters employs 80 people at its headquarters in Hanham, Bristol with a turnover of £20m last year. Clients include national retailers Co-op, Peacocks, Bon Marche and Royal Bank of Scotland.

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