

## **Small scale equals big results**

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### **One of the many benefits of living and working in Scotland is the huge potential for harnessing green energy.**

And one way a business can maximise ITS assets, and add value to ITS property, is to look at using green energy to generate ITS own heat and electricity by using small-scale renewable generation - what have become known as "micro renewables".

Not only can micro renewable energy play a significant role in providing heat and electricity in homes and offices, but it can cut energy bills and, as no greenhouse gases are produced in its production, it can also reduce climate changing emissions.

The use of micro renewables has the backing of the Scottish Government as it has made clear its intentions to take part in the global effort to tackle climate change. As part of its first Climate Change Bill, the government has set an ambitious target to reduce Scottish emissions.

In fact, the Scottish Government recently announced £13.5m of increased support for "micro generation and community renewable initiatives" to encourage householders, businesses and community projects to generate their own renewable energy and contribute to meeting climate change targets.

The money will also be used to provide advice to householders and businesses wanting to install renewable technologies, including solar panels, heat pumps and micro wind turbines.

The efficiency of micro renewable energy for a business or a household depends on factors such as location and surrounding environment and planning permission may be required before they can even think about renewable energy.

Recently, Permitted Development rights have been extended in Scotland so that householders are now able to install solar panels and other energy generating equipment, such as ground source heat pumps and flues from biomass stoves and boilers, without the need for planning permission. The government has still to decide whether to extend this to wind turbines and air-source heat pumps - so far they have not been included because of concerns about potential noise.

This move by the Scottish Government indicates its desire to see greater use of micro renewables in Scotland and these planning changes will certainly help cut red tape. But the changes only apply to householders - commercial property owners still need planning permission.

Another possible benefit for the householder or organisation using micro renewables for electricity generation may be the chance to gain income from selling surplus electricity.

During periods of high generation, micro renewables may produce more power than is needed which might allow excess electricity to be fed into the grid and sold to an electricity company.

And during periods of lower generation, when additional power may be required, electricity can be imported from the grid.

For companies, additionally, there is a wider benefit of micro renewables to consider, in addition to the reduced costs and lower carbon emissions. Increasingly, organisations are paying attention to their corporate and social responsibility, and their green credentials are an important part of that. Organisations want to be seen to be green - and that aspiration will only get stronger in the future. And I say this without wanting to sound cynical - we, in the biggest sense of "we", need this sort of culture change.

With all these benefits to consider, the question is why would a firm or family not consider going down the micro renewables route?

Quite simply, there may be insufficient natural resources available, neighbours may not approve, and there are currently many objectors around who don't agree with renewable energy.

These objectors argue the government should tackle climate change by further investment in energy efficiency, rather than investing in wind farms, for example.

Nevertheless, by increasing ITS funding for micro renewable initiatives, as well as reforming the planning system, the Scottish Government is putting in place the incentives for businesses and householders alike to generate their own green energy to make a contribution to Scotland's climate future and help build sustainable economic growth.

The use of micro renewables may well prove to be a catalyst for businesses as they will send a clear visual message to the outside world of their seriousness about climate change issues.

**Nick Jones is a partner in MacRoberts Real Estate Group and Head of MacRoberts Energy Group. He has particular experience and expertise in wind farm development. For further information, email: [nick.jones@macroberts.com](mailto:nick.jones@macroberts.com)**

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