

MICRO HYDRO SCHEMES IN JEOPARDY.

The Feed-in Tariff (FiT) implementation of the 2008 Energy Bill has brought with it the requirement for microgeneration products and installers to obtain and maintain (by payment of substantial fees) MCS accreditation. Domestic and community generators with existing and potential microgeneration schemes (those under 50kW capacity) must under this legislation use accredited products and installers to be eligible to receive the FiT. The FiT has replaced the Renewables Obligation Order for microgenerators which issued tradable certificates (ROCs) to reward and encourage “renewable electricity” generation.

As will be seen by the many posts on this subject, the MCS accreditation process is not fit for purpose for hydro schemes, although they provide arguably the most effective way of generating renewable electricity on a domestic or community scale where suitable watercourses are available. The apparent purpose of MCS is to deter “cowboys” from selling inefficient or dangerous products or installing schemes which will not produce the amount of energy expected by the “consumer”. However, a hydro scheme and the turbine can only be efficient and safe if designed and constructed according to the specific site, and safety is already assured through existing electrical and environmental regulation. A micro hydro scheme does not comprise an off-the shelf ‘product’ to be installed by a fitter as with other microgeneration technologies for which the MCS accreditation method has been designed.

The resources in this field are scarce: existing hydro component suppliers and engineering/civil construction companies have experience and interests mostly in the 50kW+ range. The arrangements drafted to date for accreditation are, in the view of most of the micro hydro suppliers/installers, unworkable. The DECC-sponsored MCS hydro working group, facilitated by a private consultancy, has failed to produce accreditation standards for products and installers in 10 months of work to date. Furthermore, the proposed accreditation bodies themselves inevitably lack experience with micro hydro.

On behalf of our small but growing association of current and potential micro hydro generators and suppliers/installers I have already made a number of submissions to the previous government and to DECC/Ofgem. I now urge the new Coalition Government to cancel the requirement for hydro products and installers to be accredited and thereby allow the industry to grow, and experience of micro hydro generation to be gained, whilst trialling more appropriate regulation in the form of design and site inspections by experts and continuing to register and accredit schemes as before 1 April 2010.

Failure to cancel MCS for micro hydro will stifle development and lose the opportunities to reward responsible pioneers, provide new employment, reduce carbon emissions, and allow wasted energy resources (water) to be used to good effect to provide power for many thousands of people.

Gavin King-Smith

Micro Hydro Association (current membership 75+)

www.microhydroassociation.co.uk

See also the post by *Greg* [8 June 2010 at 8:37 pm](#) – an excellent way to achieve what Ofgem have hitherto failed to address.