

We are constantly asked for information on Pellet appliances. In response we thought this Factsheet may be useful to dispel some of the myths surrounding these appliances.

- 1) **Cost.** There is no such thing as a cheap pellet stove! Those available appliances from reputable manufacturers retail in a price bracket £1800 to £3000.
- 2) **Fuel.** Before considering a pellet appliance, please check availability and prices for pellet fuel. In Scotland currently we are aware of three manufacturers of pellet fuel, producing, small, expensive quantities. Imported fuels are available but prices of £200 to £300 per tonne are not uncommon. Check fuel quality. Pellet appliances are constructed to burn fuels with specific moisture contents (<6%), which in our climate will most probably mean that the fuel should be supplied bagged, not loose. Ask for refined fuel. A dusty product will create a cloud of dust as the appliance is refuelled. Pellet appliances require a specific fuel diameter, 6mm in the case of most pellet stoves.
- 3) **Chimney.** Local authorities in Scotland regard any woodburning appliance as “Class 1”. This means that the flueing arrangement must be acceptable for the fuel being burnt, comply with current regulations and codes of practise, and where a flue doesn’t currently exist be subject to the provisions of a valid building warrant.
- 4) **Grants.** Grant aid exists for the installation of this type of appliance. Note the grant is conditional on the registration of the installer with a qualifying body.
- 5) **Power.** Note that these are electrical appliances, reliant on an uninterrupted source of electricity. They will not work in a power cut! Fan motors power the appliance, driving air through the fuel, driving the hot air output in to the room, and driving the exhaust in to the flue.
- 6) **Noise.** Be prepared for noise. Electrically run fan motors and auger drives are not silent. At full output pellet stoves can be noisy. It is no accident that many pellet appliance manufacturers compete on the basis that their product may be quieter than their competitors.
- 7) **Maintenance.** These are electrical appliances and should be serviced by suitably qualified, preferably manufacturer trained, electrical engineers.
- 8) **Sweeping.** Like all other solid fuel appliances flues should be swept annually.

As a premise, the concept of pellet appliances seems superb. In practice the information above makes the provision, supply, installation and support of a pellet stove, unwieldy, cumbersome, and not always economic against other more available fuel types.

On a personal level I question the validity of a processing system that takes an already existing fuel source and converts it in to another! Inevitably this leads to increased costs and environmental impact.

There also appears to be evidence that after an initial flurry of enthusiasm over the last ten years that the Northern European pellet industry is contracting. This for a very simple reason, it is hellish difficult in Northern Europe to maintain low moisture levels in pellet fuel! The sun don’t shine!

Notably, the “Hotspots” for pellet appliances in the UK are those closest to the points of pellet production, resulting in lower fuel costs, transportation and availability. (South Wales, the south coast, Northumberland, Northern Ireland)