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**PRESS RELEASE
DATES ANNOUNCED FOR UK'S FIRST DEDICATED WOOD FUEL EXPO**

**IGNITION09 – The UK Wood Fuel Expo
11th and 12th March 2009, The Sage Gateshead**

The UK's first dedicated wood fuel expo, Ignitio09, is to be held at The Sage Gateshead, Tyneside, on the 11th and 12th March 2009 – an event backed by One NorthEast and Rural Development Initiatives to provide networking opportunities for organisations involved in the supply chain and those interested in finding out more about how wood fuel can benefit their business.

The expo is designed to be a 'one-stop shop' and planned events include exhibitions, practical workshops and keynote lectures from leaders in the renewable fuels and heat supply industries. The expo will showcase installers, consultants and suppliers from across the UK and Europe with one of the leading installation companies in the UK, Wood Energy Ltd, already signed up to exhibit.

As oil prices continue to spiral upwards and people become increasingly aware of the environmental costs of carbon emissions, the incentives to consider alternative sources of heat have never been greater. Wood fuel as a heat energy source is not only more than 90% carbon neutral, but has the potential to cut energy bills by half – a real solution for businesses looking both to reduce their energy costs and carbon footprint.

Wood fuel is a viable option for a wide range of businesses and organisations - particularly those with a high demand for heat energy - such as hotels, schools, manufacturers, food companies and factories, as well as large commercial and residential developments.

The expo will be a unique opportunity to network and forge business links with like-minded individuals from across Europe. **David Clubb, Project Director, Rural Development Initiatives explains:** "As more and more businesses seek new methods of running 'greener' operations, the wealth of information available is also increasing at a rapid rate. We therefore identified a need to pool these resources and create a 'one-stop shop' to enable businesses to navigate their way around the wood heat process in a straightforward and simple fashion. The event should help dispel the myths surrounding wood heat and provide valuable information to anyone wishing to reduce their carbon emissions whilst making significant savings on longer term energy costs."

Ian Williams, One NorthEast's Director for Business and Industry, said: "North East England has a growing reputation as a centre of excellence for innovation in renewable energy, and Ignition09 will highlight how this translates to businesses on the ground. Hosting the first dedicated

wood heat expo will really put the region on the map for its work in this field, and we look forward to welcoming some of the industry's most influential speakers."

Liz Smith, Assistant Regional Director CBI North East adds: "Innovations in new and renewable energy - including projects like this - are vital in tackling climate change. Ignition 09 will place these opportunities firmly under the spotlight, meaning businesses can be more easily equipped with the knowledge and expertise to help cut their energy costs, along with their carbon emissions."

For further information on attending this FREE event, or to enquire about exhibition space, see www.ignition09.co.uk.

Ends

For further info contact Jane Walton or Lucy Winstanley at Hundredth Monkey on 0191 230 3100 or email jane@hundredthmonkeyuk.com

NOTES TO EDITORS:

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF SWITCHING TO WOOD HEAT:

With the impacts of climate change having more rapid and severe consequences, and the part that businesses can play in being part of the solution in moving to a low-carbon economy, wood heat has the potential to cut energy bills by half, with wood chip boilers paying for themselves within as little as two years. Boilers using wood can be 96% carbon neutral, with the few emissions coming from processing and transport.

Increased use of wood heat will have multiple benefits for the region, both economically and environmentally, and poses no sustainability problems as the North East has an abundance of natural woodland, from which ample woodchip can be produced by harvesting the increment of natural growth. Sensitive forest management would in turn have beneficial consequences to the levels of biodiversity in woodland habitats and would also create significant employment opportunities in rural areas.

There is widespread public knowledge that fossil fuel supplies are dwindling and costs are steadily rising and that other renewable energy sources are out there. Whilst other renewables can supplement traditional energy sources, the likes of solar power and windpower cannot generally replace existing systems wholesale. However, many people do not realise that wood heat can reliably replace all other heating systems to be the business' main heating source.

THE BOTTOM LINE - WHAT ARE THE REAL ECONOMIC BENEFITS FOR BUSINESSES?

David Clubb, Project Director at Rural Development Initiatives, gives some examples of what wood heat can really save businesses.

Example 1:

A country hotel using 1,500,000kWh of energy a year would have an annual oil bill of around £60,000 (likely to increase year on year in current conditions). They could then install a woodfuel system of circa 500kW at a capital cost of around £200,000. The system would use 400 tonnes of woodchip annually at a cost of around £30,000 (delivered at £75 tonne), with an annual saving of £30,000 per year, and a simple payback of 6.7 years on the capital investment. This could be reduced by up to 30% by the application of grant aid to the capital cost, giving a simple payback of 4.6 years, with additional savings potentially available in tax relief. In both cases, the customer is saving 50% on their fuel bills after the initial payback period.

Example 2:

An industrial laundry using 4,000,000kWh of energy a year would have an annual gas bill of around £120,000 per year. They could then install a wood fuel system of around 1.5MW at a capital cost of around £500,000. The system would use 1150 tonnes of woodchip and cost around £74,750 (delivered at £65 tonne), with an annual saving on energy costs of £45,250 per year, and a simple payback of 11 years. This could be reduced by up to 30% by grants to a payback of 7.7 years. The capital investment would be eligible for 100% enhanced capital allowances, further decreasing the payback time. They would also save over 1000 tonnes of CO₂ per annum.

ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

How is Wood fuel carbon neutral? The carbon produced in the burning of the wood, is offset by the carbon absorbed by the plant during its life, making wood heat systems 96% carbon-neutral.

Isn't cutting trees down bad? Forests and woodlands respond positively to good management. A managed woodland has a broader range of plants and wildlife than an unmanaged woodland. A well-managed woodland also creates jobs and, as part of a managed forestry programme, improves the rural landscape.

Wood fuel is old fashioned. No – it's cutting edge, with as much technology applied as to a fossil fuel system.

Wood fuel is something new and unproven. No – hundreds of businesses across the UK are turning to woodfuel as a solution to rising energy costs and carbon taxes, and we're following in the wake of mainland Europe (€380m of commercial woodchip heating systems were installed in Austria in 2006 alone).

Wood fuel is dirty. No, it's cleaner than fossil fuels, with lower emissions and is 96% carbon neutral. It also gives off far lower levels of other gases and toxic materials. The small amount of ash produced is so clean that you can sprinkle it on your vegetable patch.

Wood is going to run out. Wood fuel is produced from sustainable forestry. We have 100,000 hectares of woodland in the North East, one third of which is unmanaged (i.e. unused), and one third of which is under-managed. There is a huge resource in the region for woodfuel markets.

How does wood heating stack up against other renewable energy sources? There is widespread public knowledge that fossil fuel supplies are dwindling and costs are steadily rising and that other renewable energy sources are out there. Whilst other renewables can supplement traditional energy sources, the likes of solar power and windpower - cannot generally replace existing systems wholesale. However, many people do not realise that wood heat can reliably replace all other heating systems to be the business' main heating source.

Wood heating is usually the most cost-effective form of renewable energy for most sites.