

Press release

Cherbourg-en-Cotentin chooses local, sustainable and competitive biomass-fired heating with Idex

- A new 2.2 MW biomass boiler plant.
- Saving 13 GWh a year.
- 90% biomass in the energy mix

Cherbourg-en-Cotentin, 25 April 2025 – Idex, a pacesetter in the local, low-carbon energy market, is opening a new biomass boiler plant in Cherbourg-en-Cotentin, Normandy. This ambitious project, backed by the French Agency for Ecological Transition (Ademe), is part of the area's broader energy transition and a momentous step towards energy self-sufficiency. It will also shrink its carbon footprint while protecting users' purchasing power.

The new 2.2 MW biomass boiler plant will feed Cherbourg-en-Cotentin's district heating network, which has been extended by 4 km. The plant will supply 13 GWh of heat a year from a 90% biomass fuel mix. The investment amounted to €16 million, including a €5.7 million Ademe grant, and the works took almost a year and a half to complete.

Enhancing environmental performance at local level. As the heating plant uses the latest combustion and filtration technologies, its air emissions are well below regulatory thresholds. It has an economiser to harvest latent heat from flue gases, which puts its energy efficiency at over 85%. The system is fully automated, so it fine-tunes heat output in real time according to subscriber needs and uses renewable energy sources whenever possible.

Economic upsides for local residents and businesses. This district heating network is tangibly increasing the area's resilience to sharp volatility in energy prices. Heat pricing will remain stable over the long term and subscribers enjoy a reduced (5.5%) VAT rate. The €16 million investment also fuelled the local economy, as several local businesses were involved in the project.

Local resources powering a more sustainable city. The new biomass boiler in Cherbourg-en-Cotentin will play a vital role in making the city more sustainable and is an example of an energy strategy grounded in local realities. It generates energy locally using renewable resources and distributes it efficiently to users. It is powered by over 19,000 tonnes of wood fuel – mostly from sustainably managed forests and hedgerows and waste wood from within a 150 km radius – to extract value from the region's widely available resources while limiting carbon emissions from transport.

This circular model is based on sustainable sourcing from local suppliers who are committed to forest and biodiversity stewardship. Idex is also looking into new opportunities to upgrade its energy mix, such as harvesting waste heat or solar thermal energy. Its overarching aim is to use this heating network as a fully functional standard of environmental performance and local resilience to inspire other communities on their own energy transition journey.

Thomas Le Beux, Chief Operating Officer of the Idex group: *“This project encapsulates Idex’s vision for the energy transition – building on local initiatives, with and for communities. By tapping into locally available resources, using biomass smartly and covering the entire value chain – from production to consumption – we are helping to bring about more resilient, self-reliant and sustainable towns and cities. We are proud to play our part in Cherbourg-en-Cotentin’s carbon reduction strategy and in building a local, positive and replicable energy model.”*

Benoît Arrivé, Mayor of Cherbourg-en-Cotentin: *“Opening this new wood-fired boiler plant next to the one already in operation in Les Provinces has increased the district heating network’s capacity – and it has now reached the Cotentin community centre as well as the Divette and Les Provinces neighbourhoods. This new step shows that the city is determined to move forward on its energy transition. We are avoiding tonnes of CO₂ emissions and will be able to keep energy costs stable for all our subscribers.”*

About Idex

Founded in France in 1963, the Idex Group develops, designs, finances, builds and operates local, low-carbon energy infrastructure assets to supply heat and electricity for buildings, cities and industry. With a workforce of more than 6,300 employees and revenue of €2.16 billion in 2024, Idex is the only vertically integrated operator on the market today with a presence across the entire local energy value chain. Its activities range from the production of thermal or electrical energy from local, low-carbon energy sources (waste, biomass, geothermal, solar) to the distribution of this energy through heating and cooling networks, and the optimisation of its end use in industrial, residential and commercial buildings. For more information: www.idex.fr

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