Oil installer

News and views from an evolving heating world

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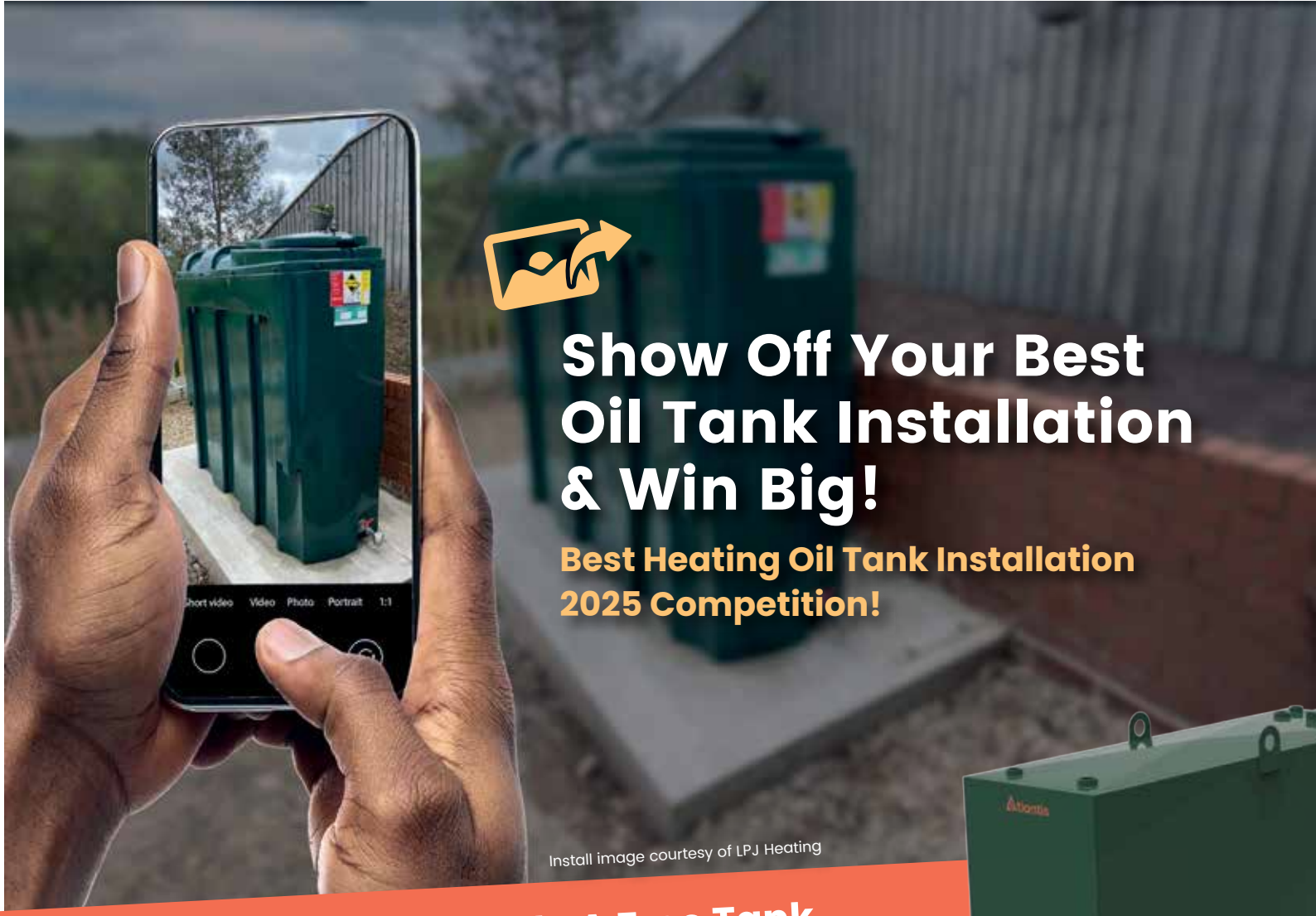
Spring 2025 Volume 19 No 1



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Atlantis
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Table of Contents

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Positive signs for the future of liquid fuel heating

Heating businesses – whether manufacturers or those directly in customer facing roles – know that, ultimately, pleasing the customer is what counts. Providing the products or services they want in a reliable, efficient and affordable manner is key. And when it comes to heating, the liquid fuel sector has an excellent track record of finding the sweet spot for success in the homes and businesses we serve.

Sadly, the Government doesn't seem to be as good at it as we are. Until recently, it hasn't really tried to find out what people want when it comes to low carbon heating. You wonder what took them so long, given how important is to the success of its plans. They seem to have finally got the message that most households won't switch to a technology that costs more than their existing heating. What they haven't got yet is a solution to this problem. They're hoping that incentivising heat pumps is part of the answer. They also hope that fining boiler manufacturers for not making the right technology will somehow bring the price of heat pumps down.

Neither option is likely to have the result the Government wants. Providing more affordable choices is the right solution, and the liquid fuel industry is ready to help achieve this goal. There are encouraging signs that governments in Scotland and Ireland understand this, and hopefully the penny will soon drop in Westminster too.

In the meantime, DEZNZ has announced a consultation on improving appliance efficiency standards. It's a strange time to do this, given it has so far been unwilling to give any assurances about the long-term future of liquid fuel heating. However, with encouraging signs of pragmatism elsewhere in Britain and Ireland, maybe this year they'll finally launch the consultation that will kick start the renewable liquid fuel revolution.

Martin Cooke

Martin Cooke,
Chairman, OFTEC

A true gentleman

OFTEC is saddened to report that the founder of OFTEC, Colin Sutherland, passed away peacefully on 6 November at the age of 90.

A gentleman, husband, father, grandfather, fundraiser, athlete, author, poet, organiser and deliverer are just a few words that describe this incredible character. Colin will be remembered for his positive, can-do attitude and for him "living to serve others".

Colin leaves behind a huge legacy within the heating and energy industries, including the setting up of OFTEC, the CIBSE Domestic Building Services Panel, energy reporting tables and participation in numerous committees and standards drafting projects.

Collaboration

During 1991, Colin had the foresight to acknowledge that, for the oil heating industry to thrive, there needed to be collaboration between fuel suppliers and equipment manufacturers to develop equipment standards and apply common working practices. There also needed to be a skilled workforce of installers and service technicians on the ground. Much of the early work was done by Colin and his late wife Jean from an office in Banstead, that later employed a few administration staff to manage the production of technical books, literature, training materials and registration of technicians. This allowed Colin to focus on building relationships and working on industry standards and codes of practice.

Colin was as proactive in his personal life as he was in his professional career. He dedicated his life to supporting local organisations, including Cochlea Implanted Children's Support Group; Home-start Epsom, Ewell and Banstead, The Royal British Legion, and the Local Business Forum. In recognition of this he was awarded an MBE for services to his local community in 2013. Since 1968, Colin was involved with his local Scout group and spent many years fundraising to rebuild their dilapidated scout hut. Through relentless commitment and mustering support from his business contacts, enough funds were raised to build a new Scout headquarters. For over 25 years he and Jean, ran an annual open garden day to raise funds for the Cochlear Implant Group and Home-Start.

A celebration of Colin's life took place at Reigate Manor in November, which was standing room only. Colin and Jean are sadly missed.

Activate your account today and unlock the full benefits of being part of OFTEC!

We've noticed some businesses and technicians haven't yet activated their accounts on our website. To maximise your registration, do take advantage of all the available resources available.

When you join OFTEC you'll receive an activation email. If you haven't received it or need it resending, please contact our registration department.

OFTEC registered business

By creating an account, you'll gain full access to our technical resources, ensuring your business and employee details are always up to date. You can renew your registration and report installation work, and you'll have exclusive access to our OFTEC Direct shop. cess to our OFTEC Direct shop.

OFTEC registered technician

Creating an account as a technician gives you access to our technical resources and other exclusive password-protected pages. You'll also be able to visit our OFTEC Direct shop.

For queries, contact the registration team or call 01473 626 298.

UK Electrification of Heat Demonstration Project – a stepping stone towards heat pump roll-out?

OFTEC and UKIFDA have been analysing the last information dump and the findings show that many rural oil heated homes will need alternatives to heat pumps due to the cost and disruption of installation, and high ongoing running costs.

When it was launched in 2020, the electrification of heat demonstration project was hailed by government as a critical stepping stone for the large-scale roll out of heat pumps. Around 750 homes were to receive heat pumps through the scheme, at an overall cost to the taxpayer of nearly £15 million pounds. The project was delivered by a consortium of organisations, led by the Energy Systems Catapult.

In 2023 an interim report from the project was released, claiming that "all housing types are suitable for a heat pump" and that "there is no property type or architectural era that is unsuitable for a heat pump". Naturally, this was seized on by many supporters of electric heating as justification for the Government's heat-pump-first approach.

Just before Christmas, further project data was released. While the headlines celebrated an 85% approval rating – hardly surprising given the heat pumps were free - we were surprised it did not comment on running costs which we were able to calculate using the data. It's a case where the devil is very much in the detail and showed that the original claims around heat pump suitability need to be qualified with a lot of ifs, buts and maybes, particularly where oil heated homes are likely to be concerned.

One of the most striking things it showed was that out of the 742 homes that participated, only 28 were homes previously heated by oil – hardly enough for a representative sample and a significant data gap. Worse still, because harder-to-treat homes were largely excluded due to conversion cost, the homes selected were far from typical of oil homes in general. Eighteen of the 28 had insulated cavity walls, and three had solid wall insulation.

Significant challenges

This is important because the project found there were often significant challenges involved in installing heat pumps in older homes, and uninsulated homes had very high energy consumption, even with a heat pump. Despite the heavy triaging process, the oil homes that were eventually converted showed these problems clearly. The average cost of installing the heat pump was a hardly cheap £14,500, while we found the running costs were on average £236 a year higher than they would have been for oil heating systems, based on current energy prices.

The high heat demand of older, less well insulated homes also created difficulties, and the report noted that pre-1919 homes were more challenging to progress as the heat load of many of these properties exceeded the heating capacities of the heat pumps available" and "…the fabric energy efficiency measures needed to reduce the heat pump capacity required would be too expensive within the constraints of the project".

While the project shows that the challenges of retrofitting heat pumps into older homes can be overcome – justifying to a degree the original claim – it often comes at a significant cost, both for the initial installation and subsequent use. Add to that the potential disruption, which was the most common reason why applicants pulled out of the project, and it's clear that heat pumps won't be an ideal solution for everyone – at least not for now. And given that over 40% of oil heated homes are of solid wall construction and typically have higher than average heat demand, ironically the report actually supports OFTEC and UKIFDA's view that oil heating customers need more decarbonisation choices than just heat pumps, including the option to use renewable liquid fuels.

InstallerSHOW is back

InstallerSHOW returns for 2025 - prepare to be surprised. At almost 50% larger than last year, you'll find a lot more to see and do at InstallerSHOW 2025. There's no other event in the UK that offers installers and decision makers the opportunity to get hands-on and in front of the products, the technologies, the knowledge and the industry leaders that will help you to make informed decisions and do your job more effectively.

InstallerSHOW is more than an exhibition, it's an active partner in promoting sustainability and net-zero. We're in this together. Registration for InstallerSHOW 2025 is already open and you can sign up here: https://www.installershow.com/

Join OFTEC on stand 5i74 to discuss OFTEC's role as a one-stop registration solution for all non-gas heating technicians, whether working in traditional or renewable technologies. Alongside registration and training material, OFTEC will also have information about its renewable liquid fuel work, and the role fuels like HVO can play in decarbonising off-grid homes.

What benefits do I get from OFTEC?

Many technicians join OFTEC's registration scheme to access easy works notification, receive technical help, use our control documentation and benefit from the recognition that comes with the OFTEC brand. But, alongside these, do you know what else is available?

As a registered OFTEC technician you also have access to a number of additional benefits, as we explain below.

Discounted insurance

Insurance protects both you and your customers and creates confidence in your business. Our selected insurance partner, Trade Direct offers specially negotiated business insurances for registered technicians and the businesses they work for. Public liability insurance is a mandatory requirement for heating businesses (minimum £2 million cover) and, if you undertake design of installations, then professional indemnity is also recommended (minimum £250,000 cover). OFTEC has partnered with Trade Direct Insurance who have been providing tailor-made insurance and support to the construction trade for over 40 years.

Keep your costs down with a fuel card

Transport is a major cost for most small mobile businesses such as heating companies, so it makes sense to make savings where possible. OFTEC is partnered with FleetMAXX solutions in the UK,. With FleetMAXX solutions you could enjoy discounted fuel cards, saving up to 10p per litre and accepted at thousands of pumps nationwide, including Shell, Esso, BP, Texaco, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, and Tesco. Additionally, benefit from EV charge cards, providing access to over 43,000 charge points across various networks, EV business home charging solutions, and advanced vehicle camera/tracking systems.

OFTEC registration gives access to other additional benefits

These include discounted membership of the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), which can assist in helping with everyday small business issues. Among the business problems you may encounter that they can help with are debt recovery, legal and health and safety advice, employment advice and workplace pensions.

OFTEC registered technicians can now apply for Which? Trusted Trader accreditation to further demonstrate their credentials in the consumer market as part of a new partnership between OFTEC'S registered services and consumer group. OFTEC registered technicians who successfully achieve Which? Trusted Trader status will receive a 50% discount on their Trusted Trader membership for the first six months.

Another offer available is discounted support for GreenPro for Easy MCS and Easy PAS Plus. Easy MCS and Easy PAS Plus™ are part of GreenPro, a provider of installer registration support in the UK, delivering specialist consultancy services to installers looking to enter the ever-evolving sector.

Sign up for these services through our website portal.

Future Ready Fuel update

Over 1,000 supporters write to their MP as part of new campaign

The campaign focus for the autumn and winter has been to encourage supporters to write to their MPs to highlight that the promise made by the previous government to hold a consultation on the introduction of renewable liquid heating fuel obligation, has not been kept. This is despite cross party support, including from Labour, which now forms the Government.

It's been highly successful in drawing attention to our concerns, with over 1,000 letters written by supporters.

This has been backed up by our ongoing lobbying efforts and has led to several MPs asking questions about the potential role of heating fuels like HVO in Parliament. This puts pressure on the Government to take action.

The frustrating thing is that the groundwork has already been done. On 26 October 2023, the Energy Act received Royal Assent and became an official Act of Parliament. Within the Act is legislation which, if invoked by the Secretary of State for the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), would create the renewable liquid heating fuel obligation, and pave the way for the introduction of HVO for heating.

This piece of legislation was introduced with the promise of a consultation on the technical details in a few months and certainly within one year. While acknowledging that there is a new government, rural consumers were effectively promised a consultation within a year but, so far, the consultation has not been forthcoming.

OFTEC compliance

OFTEC's compliance team works hard to ensure that all registered businesses and technicians uphold the highest standards. However, each quarter a few are suspended or have their registration revoked. This can be for various reasons and mean they no longer have the right to display themselves as OFTEC registered.

2nd July 2024 – 1st October 2024 a total of 5 businesses had their membership revoked*.

The revoked businesses are:

Company No.	Business Name
500728	Better Call Ol Ltd
500955	BJC Plumbing and Heating
500565	CDM Heating Services Ltd
103003	Simon Nash
105707	Zuloo Plumbing

* Businesses have the right to appeal decisions regarding any sanctions made by OFTEC.

Power up with the new Worcester Bosch loyalty programme

From now until 30 April 2025, installers can earn up to £800 in gift cards through the Worcester Bosch loyalty programme.

The promotion is rewarding installers for fitting qualifying gas and oil boilers or heat pumps. With milestones offering increasing incentives, points earned can be redeemed for a range of big brand gift cards or products in the loyalty shop.

Installers can choose from a multi-brand gift eGift card, Amazon.co.uk gift card or John Lewis eGift card. Alternatively, installers have the option to convert their rewards into points, which can be redeemed for a range of valuable resources including tools and training.

Grant UK donates £10,000 to charity

After another busy year of fundraising activities, Grant UK has donated a further £10,000 to local charity, Wiltshire and Bath Air Ambulance. This brings Grant's grand total of donations to £75,000 – funds which are essential in helping Wiltshire and Bath Air Ambulance to deliver its lifesaving service.

Grant has been a proud supporter and partner of Wiltshire and Bath Air Ambulance (formerly Wiltshire Air Ambulance) for over five years. With the charity's base located less than thirty miles from Grant's headquarters, the company's association with the charity has grown in strength with Grant employees continuing their fundraising efforts year after year. In 2024, fundraisers were held throughout the year at Grant's offices with bake sales, fancy dress days, personal fundraising activities and the annual Christmas raffle all contributing to the £10,000 donation.

Critical medical care

Wiltshire and Bath Air Ambulance deliver critical medical care, by land and air, to patients requiring lifesaving treatment. Its team of experts provides vital specialist care supported by state-of-the-art medical equipment to people in their hour of need, attending emergencies as fast as possible thanks to its Bell 429 helicopter which is able to fly to anywhere in Wiltshire in just eleven minutes and to the centre of Bath in only four minutes. In 2024, the charity carried out 1,343 missions which is an all-time high and demonstrates why support for its work remains critically important.

"Our team has been incredible with their fundraisers for Wiltshire and Bath Air Ambulance over the years and last year was no exception," comments Anna Wakefield, Head of Internal Sales and Marketing. "The activities we organise not only raise money for the excellent work carried out by this local cause, but they also bring our staff together, collaborating and supporting one another in fundraisers of all sizes. We even have individuals who are braving personal fundraising challenges such as skydives. We are very proud to have donated £75,000 to Wiltshire and Bath Ambulance since 2019 and we hope to add to this total throughout 2025."

Imogen Linham, the charity's corporate partnerships lead, explained: "Wiltshire and Bath Air Ambulance Charity relies entirely on voluntary donations, so to receive such long-standing support from a local business like Grant is so valuable. We are immensely grateful and privileged to have received £75,000 in fundraising, which has essentially paid for around a week's lifesaving work."

L-R Matt Metcalf (Trainee Critical Care Paramedic), Maria Smith (Medical Director), Helen Rishworth-Cutler (Content and Communications Manager, Grant UK), Imogen Linham (Corporate Fundraiser) and Fin Collins (Line Pilot)

Carbon and climate change

Andy Genovese of Hove Wood Burners compares wood burning with other heating methods.

Heating accounts for nearly half of Europe's carbon emissions. It's quite a stark fact and one of the main reasons why domestic heating and carbon reduction is such a hot policy issue for industry, government and lobbyists. Ultimately, we are arguing about which particular by-product of solar radiation is better for us in the short term.

Our candidates in this endeavour are the usual oil, gas (natural and LPG), wood and biomass and, of course, electricity, generated in part by one of the former. About 40% of the UK's electricity is currently decarbonised (produced from low or near zero carbon sources/renewables). Electricity is problematic from the start in that if 60% of it is produced from non-renewables, stored, transmitted and ultimately used, the efficiency is likely to be poor and therefore high carbon. The figure from the Government is 0.136g CO_2e per kW/h, although it will fall further over time

Surprisingly, heating oil is in the same bracket as electricity generating 0.298kg CO_2e per kW/h, which shows that despite all the effort to decarbonise the electricity grid, it has only just eclipsed carbon heavy heating oil. LPG scores better but not substantially at 0.241kg CO_2e per kWh. Mains gas, the backbone of UK domestic heating, with all the implied infrastructure, comes in better, but not substantially, at 0.210kg CO_2e per kWh.

When it comes to wood-burning we have two different types to consider – pellet and traditional log. Pellet occupies both the room heating and system heating categories, whereas due to the ecodesign legislation, there are very few wet or system stoves available, making log burners overwhelmingly a room-heating option only. Wood, as implied in the carbon cycle, cannot emit more carbon than it originally absorbed from the atmosphere, usually over a 50-year growth period. In strict terms it is carbon neutral; in reality there are harvesting and processing overheads which prejudice this but not by much. Wood logs are considered to produce 0.028kg CO_2e per kW/h and pellets 0.053 kg CO_2e per kWh.

The message is clear, burning wood for heating does NOT contribute to climate change. It can be problematic in urban areas in terms of air quality – hence the DEFRA legislation – but equally, it boosts to the local economy, employs retailers, installers, engineers, sweeps and log producers. An overwhelming percentage of UK firewood is domestically produced, circulating money in the local economy and the producers tend to be small, domestic businesses not multi-national corporations.

Andy Genovese trained in solid fuel in 2010 and has traded as Hove Wood Burners since then. Operating from his premises in Hove, Andy has three part-time employees. Self-taught, Andy has also trained four other installers and specialised in antique appliances for a while. He mostly operates in and around Brighton and Hove but has worked as far afield as South Wales, Cornwall and Birmingham.

** Data from SIA*

Freddie Ljungberg joins NIBE to inspire energy efficiency focus

The former Arsenal and Sweden football legend is partnering with NIBE to promote energy-efficient domestic heat solutions and inspire homeowners to 'Take The Step' toward sustainability.

With a mission to inspire consumers, NIBE has announced sporting legend Freddie Ljungberg as its new UK brand ambassador. The former Arsenal and Swedish football star will work with the manufacturer to encourage homeowners to "Take The Step" towards energy-efficient, more sustainable homes.

Freddie Ljungberg's journey – from growing up in Vittsjo in the Skane region of Sweden, a few miles from Markaryd, the town where NIBE was founded, to achieving global recognition as a football icon – makes this collaboration especially meaningful. Beyond his sporting success, Freddie has a strong personal connection to NIBE's history: his grandfather was an engineer with close ties to NIBE from its inception.

Bridging the gap

Freddie expressed his enthusiasm for the partnership, saying: "I'm incredibly proud to join NIBE as their UK brand ambassador. This partnership feels incredibly meaningful to me, not just because of our shared Swedish roots, but also because of the personal connection I have to NIBE's story. Growing up near Markaryd, and with my grandfather being an engineer, I've always had a strong appreciation for innovation and technology.

"Working with NIBE feels like coming full circle, and I'm proud to support a brand that's leading the way in sustainable solutions while staying true to its heritage and values."

With the UK market showing increased interest in sustainable heating solutions, the partnership with Freddie Ljungberg aims to educate and inspire homeowners about the benefits of heat pumps, bridging the gap between cutting-edge technology and everyday comfort.

Paul Smith, Managing Director, NIBE UK, commented: "We are delighted to welcome Freddie to the NIBE family. His dedication, teamwork, and drive for excellence resonate deeply with our mission to create sustainable, energy-efficient climate solutions. This partnership builds on the incredible growth and success we achieved in 2024 and takes us to the next stage of educating UK consumers about the benefits of heat pumps. Together, with Freddie's unique voice and our innovative technology, we're empowering more households to take the step towards a sustainable future."

The "Take The Step" campaign, which launched in 2024, encourages homeowners to join the global movement toward more sustainable living.

Worcester Bosch CEO receives honorary doctorate

Carl Arntzen, CEO of Worcester Bosch, has been awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Birmingham City University (BCU). The accolade was presented by BCU's new chancellor, Ade Adepitan, during a ceremony at Birmingham Symphony Hall earlier this week.

The Honorary Doctorate recognises Carl's exceptional contributions to fostering diversity and inclusion in engineering. His efforts include initiatives to encourage more young women and ethnic minority groups to pursue careers in the profession. Carl has consistently emphasised the importance of promoting engineering opportunities at an early age - ideally during primary schooling or between the ages of 12 and 13 - when students begin shaping their interests and career aspirations.

The work Carl has spearheaded at Worcester Bosch reflects this commitment. The organisation has developed children's books, participated in Lego League events and actively engaged its STEM ambassadors to inspire young minds. Carl's involvement stems beyond his work with the Greater Birmingham & Solihull Institute of Technology (IoT) and his support for the global Women In Engineering movement.

Photo credit: Jason Sheldon, Junction 10 Photography

Carl Arntzen with Ade Adepitan, chancellor of Birmingham City University

Early intervention

However, Carl stressed that challenges remain in creating a truly inclusive profession. Stating that early intervention is essential to address underrepresentation within the engineering field. Plus, diverse workforces, which drive innovation and industry growth, require sustained focus and leadership.

Carl's own journey from a 20-year-old intern at Worcester Bosch to CEO underscores the importance of creating opportunities and championing diversity within the workplace. He said: "I felt extremely honoured to receive the Honorary Doctorate from Birmingham City University and it has strengthened my resolve to continue encouraging all young people, particularly young women and those from ethnic minority backgrounds here in the UK, to seriously consider a career in engineering."

Increase in demand sees Carbery grow its team

Carbery Plastics has appointed Joanne Harding-Smith as its new business development executive. She will be working out of the Clonakilty factory where the multi-generational, multi-award-winning company manufactures its rotational moulding products.

The increase in demand from UK tank installers for its range of environmentally preferred, integrally bunded heating oil tanks distributed through Davant, motivated Carbery Plastics to create this new role

"You could say I have swapped the sun in Australia for the snow in Ireland – and the glorious rain of course," laughed Joanne. "The sun is over-rated anyway!"

It's been a huge learning curve for Joanne, and one that she's enjoyed: "Not being as large as some of our competitors means we deliver exceptional service, before, during and after sales. I had the pleasure recently of going around the country to meet some of our Irish customers and what I heard time and time again was that Carbery Plastics is their favourite supplier. And I'd ask them why, because this helps me do my job better. They ring, we answer right away and the person who answers the phone can usually answer your question, place your order, answer your delivery queries. If it's not done immediately, it's shortly after. Not having to wait two days to know where your delivery is means they can focus on their business without chasing their tails."

Joanne Harding-Smith of Carbery Plastics

She added: "I will be very happy to hear from professional installers wanting to join the growing number trusting Carbery to support their business."

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Atlantis Tanks launches 2025 heating oil tank installation competition

Recognising excellence in oil tank installations

Atlantis Tanks has launched an exciting new competition for 2025, aimed at celebrating the best heating oil tank installations across the UK. The competition will highlight the skill, expertise, and precision of heating engineers and installers while also promoting safe and compliant oil tank installations.

We spoke with Jon Mytton and Kieran Mytton, senior representatives from Atlantis Tanks, to learn more about the competition's origins, objectives, and benefits for installers.

The inspiration behind the competition

Why did Atlantis Tanks decide to launch this competition?

"We wanted to shine a light on the fantastic tank installations that heating engineers carry out daily.

"Too often, these installations remain hidden from view—tucked behind fire-resistant walls or outbuildings. While they may not be the most aesthetically pleasing structures, their proper installation is critical for safety, compliance, and environmental protection.

"This competition allows us to showcase excellence in oil tank installation and encourage more engineers to choose Atlantis Tanks."

From the industry, for the industry

Atlantis Tanks describes itself as a company 'passionate about the industry.' How does this competition reflect that?

"We started as an oil installation company before evolving into a manufacturer and supplier of storage tanks. "Despite expanding into other industries, our roots remain in heating oil storage, both domestic and commercial. This competition reflects our ongoing commitment to excellence in the field."

A family-owned business with strong values

How does being a family-run business benefit Atlantis Tanks?

"Our close-knit management structure allows us to take a long-term approach, ensuring customer satisfaction and business stability.

"For example, we invested in our own production facility in Mildenhall, Suffolk, which helps keep costs down and prices stable for our customers. We also have a major ongoing project focused on redesigning and improving our tank production across several different uses and industries. Ensuring our long-term success, this will result in improved product quality, faster production times and improved stock levels.

"These initiatives reflect our commitment to both quality and customer service."

Competition overview

How does this competition align with Atlantis Tanks' goals?

"Our vision is 'to be the indispensable supplier for liquid storage solutions.' By highlighting the professionalism and expertise of heating engineers, we reinforce that vision. "This competition aligns with four of our nine core company values: 'We Innovate,' 'We Collaborate to Succeed,' 'We are Industry Experts,' and 'We are Fun.'"

What are you hoping to achieve through the competition?

"We want to provide a platform for engineers to showcase their work and demonstrate the importance of high-quality, safe installations. Additionally, this competition will help increase awareness of Atlantis Tanks as a trusted supplier of plastic and steel heating oil storage tanks."

How to enter

- Start date & duration: The competition is already live and will run throughout 2025.
- Quarterly deadlines: A winner will be selected every quarter, with the final deadline at the end of December 2025.
- Eligibility:
  - Open to qualified heating engineers and installers working within the UK.
  - Installations must feature an Atlantis bunded oil tank and comply with OFTEC and UK Building Control standards.
  - Each entry must include 2 to 5 high-quality photos of the installation.
- Unlimited Entries: Installers may submit multiple entries, provided each meets the entry requirements.

What the judges are looking for

A panel of judges from the senior team at Atlantis, including Jon Mytton and Kieran Mytton, supported by representatives from Oil Installer magazine, will evaluate entries based on:

- Safety compliance: installations must adhere to UK Building Control Regulations and be confirmed as compliant by OFTEC.
- Technical precision: High-quality workmanship and

attention to detail are essential.
- Innovation & problem-solving: Creative solutions to installation challenges will score highly.
- Visual appeal: While oil tanks aren't the most attractive features, clean pipework, proper ventilation, and secure placement will be considered.

Prizes and recognition

What do the winners receive?

Each quarterly winner can choose between:
- A 1050 Litre Steel Bunded Oil Tank (retail value: £1400+VAT), or
- A 1250 Litre Slimline Plastic Bunded Oil Tank (retail value: £1200+VAT)
- Free UK-wide delivery is included.

Beyond the prize, what other benefits do participants gain?

- Industry recognition: Winners will be featured on Atlantis Tanks' website, social media, and in industry publications like Oil Installer magazine.
- Marketing advantage: An award decal to use on websites and promotional materials.
- Customer trust & credibility: Demonstrating installation expertise can help attract new clients.
- Potential for case studies: Standout installations may be highlighted as case studies, further showcasing the engineer's work.

You are clearly looking for installations that stand out, how does Atlantis stand out in the sector?

"With over 20 years of experience, we combine innovation with unmatched customer service. We manufacture steel bunded oil tanks in-house, ensuring superior quality and quick delivery. Our exceptional delivery service, industry-leading warranties, and personalized support make us the trusted choice for heating engineers across the UK."

Get involved!

Heating engineers and installers across the UK are encouraged to enter their best oil tank installations and gain well-deserved recognition.

For full details and to submit your entry, visit the Atlantis Tanks competition page at: https://atlantistanks.co.uk/best-heating-oil-tank-installation/

May the best installers win!

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Say hello to Grant's new specification sales team

Grant UK has created a dedicated New Build and Social Housing Specification Team with the addition of three new roles.

Gary Muir (Northern England and Scotland), Ian Lawley (East of England and the Midlands) and Craig Payne (West of England and Wales) have joined the sales team as regional specification managers, to support the new build and social housing sectors transition their properties to low carbon heating.

Working closely with National Sales Manager, Andy Smith, the trio will provide tailored sales support with product specification, installation and customer handovers. All three bring a wealth of experience from the heating sector, have extensive knowledge of air source heat pumps and an in-depth understanding of the customer support required.

Gary's previous roles have involved working with merchants, buying groups, housebuilders and social housing associations. As a heating specification manager for a heat pump manufacturer, Gary supported developers and social housing customers with project specification, heat pump training and on-site technical support.

Ian has been in the industry throughout his career. Starting as a self-employed plumbing and heating engineer, he has worked as a sales engineer for a plumbing, heating and underfloor heating distribution company as well as working for manufacturers in the sector. For the last ten years, Ian has been with a heating controls manufacturer working with both national and regional developers.

After finishing a degree in electronic engineering, Craig became area sales manager for a manufacturer before

Ian Lawley, Craig Payne and Gary Muir

joining a component manufacturer in the plumbing and heating sector. For nearly fifteen years, Craig has worked for a heat pump manufacturer, firstly as a sales engineer and then as its national sustainable home centre manager, providing specification sales support to energy suppliers, developers, social housing providers and installers as well as supporting the delivery of heat pump knowledge hubs to the trade and public.

"The addition of this brand-new team reflects our ongoing commitment to support the new build and social housing market as they make the move to greener, more sustainable heating solutions," comments Andy Smith, National Sales Manager.

"With the Future Homes Standard coming into effect in 2025, the housing market will need to adopt low carbon heating and the addition of Gary, Ian and Craig to our Sales Team will allow Grant to provide the bespoke support this sector needs."

Trade calls for tougher penalties for tool theft

Tradespeople took over London's Parliament Square on Monday 3rd February for the Stop Tool Theft Protest.

With members of affected trades demanding tougher laws against van break-ins, tool manufacturer Talon showed its support too, standing shoulder to shoulder with those calling for action.

According to industry reports, 44,514 tool thefts were reported in 2023, one every 12 minutes, and it's costing tradespeople an estimated £82 million in lost jobs. The peaceful demonstration, organised by Shoaib Awan of Trades United, brought together frustrated electricians, plumbers, carpenters and other trades, all calling on the Government to introduce harsher penalties for tool theft.

Destroying livelihoods

A heating engineer, Shoaib knows the devastating impact first-hand after thieves stole £8,500 worth of tools

from his van. "These are our offices," he told reporters. "We work from them. It's no longer acceptable. They need to understand the implications – mentally and financially – it has on us. The vans get broken into and we're out of work because we've lost our tools. We've lost our vans."

Talon's Annette Murphy aka 'Chatty Netty' on social, and Marketing Manager Mike Morris stood in solidarity with the protesters, supporting the push for real action and the message that enough is enough.

"Tool theft doesn't just hit wallets – it destroys livelihoods," says Mike. "Obviously it takes a huge financial toll, but it takes a huge mental toll too. Construction workers are already four times more likely to die by suicide than the national average and the stress of losing vital equipment only adds to the pressure.

"What is really positive is that despite the traffic jams and inconvenience the protest caused, local people and even tourists were incredibly supportive of the campaign."

Labour MP Amanda Martin has tabled the Theft of Tools of Trade (Sentencing) Bill, which proposes recognising tool theft as causing "significant additional harm" to victims.

Campaigners hope this will finally see stronger sentencing guidelines introduced as the message from the protest is clear – tradespeople need protection and they need it now.

Have you been affected by the increase in van break-ins or tool theft? Please share your thoughts: liz@oilinstaller.co.uk

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Warmflow Celebrates Continued Partnership with Friends of the Cancer Centre on Their 40th Anniversary

L-R: Ciara Bainbridge (FOTCC), Johnnie Black (Warmflow), Cherryl Holden (Warmflow), Ana Wilkinson (FOTCC) & Brian Beattie (Warmflow)

Warmflow, a leading name in home heating solutions, is delighted to be continuing its longstanding partnership with Friends of the Cancer Centre, who are celebrating their remarkable 40th anniversary this year. Giving back to the local community has always been very important to Warmflow and this enduring relationship with Friend's of the Cancer Centre underscores Warmflow's commitment to supporting vital community initiatives and making a tangible difference in the lives of those affected by cancer.

Warmflow has been an active supporter of Friends of the Cancer Centre, sponsoring key fund-raising initiatives such as the Tower Abseil and the Slieve Donard walk, among many others over the years, which have allowed every penny of Friends of the Cancer Centre's fundraising to go directly to the charity. Last year, Warmflow's partnership with the charity raised an incredible £186k which went to supporting much needed treatment for patients. This partnership has not only raised substantial funds but has also helped increase awareness about the invaluable work the charity undertakes across Northern Ireland. Additionally, the staff at Warmflow have engaged with the charity organising their own fund raising initiatives such as sponsored runs, cake bakes and many more activities designed to help.

Friends of the Cancer Centre has been at the heart of cancer care for four decades, providing essential support to patients and their families, funding specialist staff, purchasing vital equipment, and investing in groundbreaking research. Their unwavering dedication has positively impacted thousands of lives, making their milestone anniversary a testament to their significant contributions to healthcare and community well-being.

"At Warmflow, we believe in the power of community and the importance of giving back," said Johnnie Black, Commercial Director. "Our continued partnership with Friends of the Cancer Centre reflects our shared values and our commitment to supporting those who need it most. As they celebrate their 40th anniversary, we are honoured to stand alongside them in their mission to provide hope and support to cancer patients and their families."

As Friends of the Cancer Centre marks this significant milestone, Warmflow reaffirms its dedication to the cause, looking forward to many more years of collaboration. Together, they aim to continue making a difference, fostering hope, and driving positive change in the community.

For more information on how you can support Friends of the Cancer Centre, visit https://www.friendsofthecancercentre.com/.

New partnership removes compliance burden from installers

Grant UK has partnered with the Heat Pump Go MCS Umbrella Scheme to offer its G1 Installers a pathway to MCS certification on Aerona heat pump installations.

The partnership offers G1 Installers who are not MCS accredited themselves the option to provide their customers with an MCS certified Grant heat pump installation.

Heat Pump Go is run by Abode Heat and helps installers to fulfil the requirements for achieving MCS certified installations. Demand for MCS certified installations is increasing, as a result of consumers either seeking Government funding through the Boiler Upgrade Scheme or simply specifying that their heat pump is installed to MCS standards. The new partnership provides G1 Installers with a pathway to meet this demand.

Discounted rate

Grant is working with Heat Pump Go to give G1 Installers access to the scheme at a discounted rate.

G1 Installers who fulfil the eligibility requirements will work with both Abode Heat and Grant to achieve MCS sign-off on their Grant heat pump installations. Through the scheme, Abode Heat will support installers with the design of an MCS compliant heat pump system while Grant will support them with one of its in-house field service engineers, completing the MCS compliance for commissioning and customer handover.

In addition to achieving MCS certification on their Aerona installations, G1 Installers can access many other benefits through this partnership including administrative support, room by room heat loss calculations for heat pump specification with a comprehensive quotation, DNO application completion and on-site support with commissioning and customer handover.

"This partnership delivers many advantages to our installers," comments Neil Sawers, Commercial Technical Manager at Grant. "It will not only allow G1 Installers to access additional business opportunities in the marketplace, but it will also provide both installers and their customers with the peace of mind of an on-site customer handover with a member of Grant's Field Service Engineers Team."

"Making the move to heat pumps as easy as possible for installers and homeowners is so important," says Ben Hodges, Business Development Director for Heat Pump Go. "This partnership is a significant step forward in removing the administrative burden of MCS compliance for many installers and homeowners."

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Next steps for heat policy

There's an old saying that 'the road to hell is paved with good intentions, while the road to heaven is paved with good actions'. When it comes to decarbonising heating, we've seen a lot of good intentions in the last decade, but not enough action. That needs to change says Malcolm Farrow, OFTEC's Head of Public Affairs.

There are a lot of good intentions contained in the many heat decarbonisation strategies published in the last decade. We've also seen some taxpayer's money spent incentivising various technologies – particularly heat pumps – via schemes such as the RHI, Green Deal and BUS. Proposals to phase out the installation of oil boilers have come and gone, and we've seen a lot of hot air spent discussing how best to achieve the looming net zero targets (fortunately, all that hot air hasn't added significantly to carbon emissions😉).

It's right that we ask what's been achieved by all these good intentions. The answer, sadly, not a great deal so far. Yes, we have moved forward in terms of installing heat pumps, but at nothing like the pace needed to keep us on track to achieve net zero – anyone remember Boris's 600,000 heat pumps a year by 2028? The record on energy efficiency is even worse. Far fewer homes are being improved now, compared to the early 2010s, and the last decade has been a wasted opportunity to reduce emissions and improve the lives of countless thousands of households.

Does this lack of progress matter? Let's ignore for a moment that some still doubt that climate change is happening, and probably a bigger number think it doesn't matter what we do, given how small the UK and Ireland's emissions are, compared to the rest of the world. The fact is, we have legal targets to reduce emissions, a lot of which come from heating buildings, and, with every passing year, the challenge gets more difficult and expensive.

Decarbonisation efforts

Most of Labour's current decarbonisation efforts are focussed on delivering clean power by 2030, although they claim their Warm Homes Plan will upgrade five million homes over the next parliament at a cost of £6.6 billion, through a mix of grants and low-interest loans. Given the scale of the challenge, it's questionable whether this is remotely enough. The average cost of a heat pump installation is still north of £13,000, and a typical retrofit of an older home can easily exceed £20,000. Millions of homes in the UK need improvements, so that £6.6 billion will be stretched pretty thin. And given the dire economic situation the government faces, it's possible that even this funding could be squeezed in future years.

The UK Government has repeatedly said that households won't be forced to rip out their boilers. However, while committed to deploying heat pumps – no surprise given

its efforts to decarbonise electricity generation – the Government admits that reducing cost is critical to consumer acceptance and uptake. Forcing households to buy clean heat technologies that are significantly more expensive than existing fossil fuel types would be political suicide – as well as being doomed to failure. But unless prices fall very significantly - which is unlikely - it's hard to see how they can provide sufficient funding to bridge the gap.

That means the Government is betting big on more stealthy approaches, like the controversial Clean Heat Market Mechanism (CHMM), which they hope will force manufacturers to offer heat pumps at lower prices to avoid potentially business-damaging penalties. They are also looking at tightening appliance efficiency regulations which, if set too high, could effectively outlaw boilers without having to actually ban them.

High risk options

These are high risk options. There's little evidence the price of heat pumps will fall significantly and any sudden removal of boilers from the market would leave customers with only a few, very expensive alternatives. Oil Installer readers can be reassured that boiler manufacturers have no wish to abandon the market, but they're likely to want commitments regarding the future market for their products before agreeing to further efficiency-related product investment. One obvious way for government to provide this is by agreeing to the introduction of renewable liquid fuels like HVO for heating. It would allow them to make progress towards those pesky carbon budgets without having to spend a penny.

Alongside this is the thorny issue of green skills - one of the biggest challenges all governments face. The problem is that many in the existing workforce may opt not to retrain, so thousands of new installers may be needed, and their pathway into the industry is often difficult. Even if the government manage to solve that, it's still very much a chicken or egg situation. Few will wish to go through the process of getting trained, entering the industry and acquiring the necessary registrations unless the demand for their services will be there. Governments needs to continually strike the right balance between stoking consumer demand and ensuring installers are there to do the work – no easy task – particularly when there's little money available.

The time for talking is over

What should be clear is that the time for talking, and for yet more plans and strategies, is well and truly over. The next five years and beyond must instead be the time for action. And if those actions are underpinned by pragmatism and common sense, rather than a dogmatic heat pump first approach, then there's a chance that targets can be met. But these are big 'ifs', particularly when money and consumer confidence are in short supply. It doesn't help that plans to achieve to net zero have not featured prominently in political discourse, and households have had little or no say in how it should be achieved.

Achieving citizen buy-in is critical and this is best achieved by prioritising choice and minimising cost and disruption as much as possible This make it imperative that all solutions are on the table and, for the off-grid sector, that means the introduction of HVO for heating needs to be near the top of the list.

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- input a specific code number to find corresponding replacement parts.
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- filter searches by brand, covering both Danfoss products and those from other manufacturers.

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Take the guesswork out of burner maintenance

With this tool at your fingertips, you'll never be left wondering about compatibility or replacements again.

Collaboration in Ireland

The dictionary states that collaboration is *'the situation of two or more people working together to create or achieve the same thing'.*

What has that to do with liquid fuel I hear you ask?

Well, in Ireland, we have three organisations who all have an interest in liquid fuels; OFTEC, UKIFDA and Fuels for Ireland.

Rather than the three groups all doing their own thing, we agreed to come together and establish TAZCH, the acronym stands for "The Alliance for Zero Carbon Heating."

Under this name we have lobbied successfully on behalf of the liquid fuel sector, culminating in both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael referencing HVO and sustainable biofuels in the manifestos of both parties.

Fast forward to the Programme for Government and we now see in black and white;

- **Target older homes still using oil to switch to renewable heating systems, lowering carbon footprints and costs.**
- **Consider the use of sustainable biofuels to reduce emissions from existing home boilers where deep retrofits are not possible in the short term.**

This is good news.

If we look at the state of play; as of November 2024, heating in the residential sector in Ireland accounted for 10% of emissions. While the Government has a target to install 400,000 heat pumps by 2030 in existing homes, less than 20,000 have been installed since 2020. In 2024, the total number of heat pumps included in SEAI retrofits was only 3,609. Even in the unlikely situation that the 2030 target is met, that still leaves more than 300,000 homes without a decarbonisation solution.

If the Government is to meet its 2030 targets and avoid significant fines, all technologies need to have a role to play in decarbonisation, including heat pumps, retrofitting to include energy efficiency measures, and renewable fuels.

The irony is, TAZCH never disagreed with heat pumps as a heating source; for new or energy efficient buildings or where the grid will support the load, heat pumps are the obvious choice, but for hundreds of thousands of families, the cost of making their homes heat pump-ready makes a switch impossible. That is where low carbon liquid fuels can play a role. They are available in substantial quantities and an existing liquid fuelled boiler can make the switch with minimal adjustments and no capital spend on the building fabric.

So, with HVO and other biofuels now being specified in the Programme for Government we can sit down with ministers and civil servants and agree the new policy vehicle, the Renewable Heating Obligation that will pave the way for a lower carbon blended fuel to be the new normal for heating fuel and to replace kerosene.

Low carbon fuels have already been integrated into the transport sector in Ireland using existing infrastructure, with uptake continuing to rise. A 20% biofuel blend used in heating fuels has already been assessed in both the UK and Ireland and can work effectively in tandem with current government policies. Furthermore, introducing a 20% blend in Ireland could lead to a reduction in emissions comparable to deep retrofitting and installing heat pumps in 160,000 homes (based on current installation heat pump installation rates this would take approximately 26 years to achieve).

Watch this space as we continue to work with Darragh O'Brien, the new Minister for Climate, Environment and Energy and other government departments to ensure consumers have a choice on how to heat their home in the future and contribute to reducing their carbon emission but in a cost-effective way to suit their budgets. If we can get renewable liquid fuels accepted in the Republic of Ireland, it is only a matter of time before the other regions follow suit.

Liquid fuel sector meets SEAI at Grant Engineering

As part of our continuing campaign, we invited representatives from Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland to a presentation on how the liquid fuel sector plans to decarbonise domestic heating. The meeting took place in Grant Engineering in Offaly and the reps from SEAI welcomed the presentation and tour of the facility.

Many questions were asked about the equipment and fuel, including the inevitable questions about supply, affordability, sustainability, and availability of feedstock. A constructive debate about the pros and cons of biofuels was had and SEAI did refer to the national heat study which said heat pumps and heat networks were the preferred choice without ruling out some biofuels.

We did advise SEAI that all forms of low and no-carbon heating will be required if we stand a chance to deliver on the 2030 targets and said the sector was pushing hard for the biofuel obligation to be set at 20% instead of the 2% proposed in the consultation.

Republic of Ireland lobbying success

In the Republic of Ireland OFTEC, UKIFDA and Fuels for Ireland (FFI) work in partnership under the name The Alliance for Zero Carbon Heating (TAZCH). We collectively employ the services of a lobbying company and its remit ahead of the election was to have the various parties recognise the role that sustainable biofuels could play in the decarbonisation of home heating.

The very good news is that both Fine Gael, Fianna Fail and the independent grouping included reference to HVO in their manifestos. They all stated that they would promote the use of HVO and biogas as an alternative fuel source for domestic heating. This is a welcome change and clearly, they can see the 2030 targets are not going to be met with the current single technology and pro-electrification policy. We await the formation of the new Government and will be pushing hard for a change in policy to see HVO included in the mix of fuels helping decarbonisation targets.

Can biomass help the UK achieve net zero?

How resistor technology supports renewable energy projects

Biomass represented 8.6% of the UK's energy supply in 2022 and is set to play an important role in the Government's plan to meet net zero goals. However, there are concerns about the supply of biomass fuels and whether it is viable on a large scale. Mike Torbitt, managing director of resistor manufacturer, Cressall, explores the importance of sustainable biomass projects and the resistor technology involved in making them a success.

Biomass has long been earmarked as a greener alternative to fossil fuels. According to the European Environment Agency, it represented 40% of the continent's renewable energy supply in 2022.

Generating energy with biomass involves the combustion of a wide range of materials such as wood, agricultural residues and food and industrial waste. Although biomass releases carbon dioxide (CO_2) during the combustion process, the plants used as fuel capture almost as much CO_2 through photosynthesis, meaning that it is widely considered to be carbon neutral. The use of waste materials can also help cut down landfill and improve recycling levels.

Biomass also offers an advantage over wind and solar power when it comes to predictability and availability. The weather-based methods of generating energy are classed as intermittent, as they are not continuously available. Additionally, strong winds or waves can cause high inrush currents leading to overvoltages and potential equipment damage.

Sustainable strategies

Consequently, the previous UK Government created a 'Biomass Strategy', which highlights the role biomass can play in helping to achieve net zero emissions. While the recently elected Labour Government has introduced several new climate policies, such as the creation of Great British Energy, it seems to have adopted the previous biomass strategy.

In the UK and Global Bioenergy Resource Model 2024, which was released in August 2024, the Government set out its plans to secure the nation's biomass supply. Domestically produced materials make up two-thirds of the UK's biomass fuel, but a significant expansion of biomass energy projects means that a higher proportion would need to be sourced from abroad. The document has received criticism for including the possibility of sourcing material from countries such as Afghanistan and North Korea.

There are also concerns about changing land uses from food crops to grow biomass crops, as well as increased difficulties in tracing the sustainability of supply chains. So, should biomass still form part of the UK's renewable energy mix?

Resistors for renewable projects

The widespread usage of biomass across Europe shows that it holds great potential as a net zero energy source. However, to benefit from biomass without risking undermining progress in food security and supply chain traceability, it's important that it's not expanded beyond viable levels.

When implemented alongside a growth in solar, wind and tidal projects, biomass is a predictable way of generating energy while diverting waste materials away from landfill. To make use of all sources of renewable energy, the UK needs an energy system that not only ensures the safe and effective operation of biomass plants but can also deal with the more unpredictable nature of intermittent energy sources.

For biomass power plants, Cressall supplies neutral earthing resistors (NERs), which limit the current moving through a generator or transformer's neutral point in the case of a ground fault. By limiting the risk of equipment damage caused by fault currents, NERs can help to reduce downtime and allow the UK to make the most out of biomass resources.

Dynamic braking resistors (DBRs) and pre-insertion resistors (PIRs) are also useful in ensuring the grid can handle the increased unpredictability of intermittent energy sources. Used in tidal and wind turbines respectively, these resistors protect against excess power and overvoltages caused by extreme weather conditions. Ensuring that the UK's power system can safely handle these fluctuations means that it does not have to rely too heavily on more predictable sources such as biomass.

As the energy transition picks up pace, well-considered biomass projects making use of domestic products and waste materials offer a predictable, carbon-neutral energy source. However, ensuring that the UK's energy system can handle a wide range of energy sources will help to avoid an overreliance on biomass, and the negative impacts that come with that.

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New legislation affecting technicians working in Wales

From the 6th of January 2025, following an amendment to Building Regulations Approved Document J in Wales, it is now a requirement for a carbon monoxide alarm to be installed upon the installation of a new or replacement fixed combustion appliance, of any fuel, in a dwelling.

An alarm is to be installed in any space (including connected spaces, e.g. attached garages and loft spaces) containing a fixed combustion appliance (including a fixed flued combustion appliance used for cooking). An additional alarm is required in high-risk accommodation such as a bedroom or principle habitable room (living room) where a flue passes through these rooms.

Unless indicated otherwise by the alarm manufacturer, the alarm should be installed in one of the following locations:

- between 1-3m from the appliance, and either;
- on the ceiling at least 300 mm from any wall; or
- on a wall as high as possible but not within 150 mm of the ceiling, and higher than any door or window on that wall.

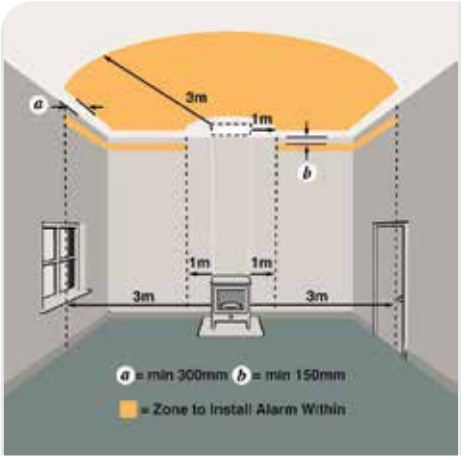
The alarm should not be sited in an enclosed space (for example in a cupboard or behind a curtain); where it can be obstructed (for example by furniture); directly above a sink; next to a door or window; next to an extract fan; next to an air vent or similar ventilation opening; in an area where the temperature may drop below -10°C or exceed 40°C, unless it's designed to do so; where dirt and dust may block the sensor; in a damp or humid location; or in the immediate vicinity of a cooking appliance.

The alarm should be manufactured to BS EN 50291 and be either:

- powered by a battery designed to operate for the working life of the alarm and incorporate a warning device to alert users when the working life of the alarm is about to expire;

or

- powered by mains electricity with fixed wiring (not plug-in types) incorporating a sensor failure warning device.



Changes to permitted development rights

Historically, the rules for the location of an air source heat pump serving a domestic property, blocked the unit from being within one metre of the property's boundary (three metres in Wales). This was mainly due to noise disruption to neighbouring properties and, if a heat pump was planned to go within the restricted area, planning permission was needed.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has now announced some changes to these rules and have amended the existing permitted development rights.

The main changes are:

- Remove the 1m boundary rule, enabling heat pumps to be installed within 1m of the property boundary.
- Increase the size limit of the heat pump for dwelling houses from 0.6m³ to 1.5m³.
- Double the number of heat pumps permitted, from one to two for detached dwelling houses.
- Support the roll-out of air-to-air heat pumps that can also provide a cooling function.

There is still a requirement that new installations are compliant with the relevant MCS planning standards, and this standard (Ref MCS 020) has also changed.

MCS has detailed the keys changes and improvements to MCS 020:

- The standards being split into two – 020(a) for air source heat pumps 020 (b) for small wind turbines.
- Definition of what is considered a solid barrier.
- How to determine the assessment position.
- Definition of what can be considered a reflective surface.
- Definition of a habitable room.
- Simplified the sound calculation with an overall limit of 37 dB(A).
- Provided a guidance document for installers.

Installation businesses holding MCS registration are asked to get familiar with the new rules for permitted development and the revised MCS 020 standard is available on the MCS website https://mcscertified.com/

Solid fuel stove – air supply requirements

When installing solid fuel stoves, it's important to make sure there's sufficient air supply to enable the safe and proper operation of the appliance and its connecting flue system. Contributing factors include the kW output of the stove, the age of the building, whether a flue draught stabiliser is installed/to be installed, and whether the building fabric has been substantially upgraded. It's worth considering that due to increased energy efficiency requirements in regional building regulations, it's unlikely that dwellings built before 2008 would have air permeability (air tightness) of equal to or less than 5.0 m^3 / ($h.m^2$) at 50 Pa.

So, let's look at the requirements, broken down to whether or not a draught stabiliser is installed, and the regional differences.

Without a draught stabiliser

In regions except the Republic of Ireland, if you were to install a stove with a rated output of no greater than 5kW and the property's design air permeability is greater than 5.0 m^3 / ($h.m^2$) with no draught stabiliser installed, there would not be a

requirement to provide a permanent air vent to bring air supply to the stove. However, if the rated output of the stove was in excess of 5kW, then provision would need to be made to provide air supply giving a minimum 5.5cm^2 per kilowatt of the rated output above 5kW. For example, a 6kW stove would require an air supply of a minimum 5.5cm^2.

Where the design air permeability is equal to or less than 5.0 m^3 / ($h.m^2$), air supply will need to be provided offering a minimum 5.5cm^2 per kW., whatever the appliance rated output.

In the Republic of Ireland, when installing a stove with no draught stabiliser and the property's air permeability is greater than 5.0 m^3 / ($h.m^2$), provision would need to be made to provide air supply which meets one of the following requirements. You would need to provide whichever is the greater of 65cm^2 or 5.5cm^2 per kW of the appliance rated output.

Where the air permeability is equal to or less than 5.0 m^3 / ($h.m^2$) then the air supply would need to be provided offering 65cm^2 plus 5.5cm^2 per kW of the appliance rated output above 5kW.

With a draught stabiliser

Additional combustion air supply is required where draught stabilisers are installed. In regions except the Republic of Ireland, where the design air permeability is equal to or less than 5.0 m^3 / ($h.m^2$), then the air supply would need to provide 8.5cm^2 per kW of the appliance rated output. When the design air permeability exceeds this, 3cm^2 per kW will need to be provided for the first 5kW of the appliance rated output and then an additional 8.5cm^2 per kW for the remaining balance. In the Republic of Ireland, where a draught stabiliser is installed, the information given in without a draught stabiliser is to be followed with the addition that a further 3cm^2 per kW of the appliance rated output is also to be provided.

Fuel price commentary

Are things finally looking up for heating users?

When it comes to heating costs, consumers have had a pretty tough time for the last few years. Political instability across the world, caused by a toxic combination of war and the Covid crisis, has had disastrous consequences for many household budgets. So, could there finally be some light at the end of this long dark tunnel?

The data from the latest Sutherland Tables suggests there might be. In Great Britain, the general price trend appears to be downward. While there have been some increases compared to the last quarter, all prices are lower than a year ago. In the case of heating oil and wood pellets, annual average prices are over £400 less than last year, and oil is at its lowest price since December 2021, below even the long-term four-year average. Irrespective of where you live, oil is the overall cheapest heating option.

In Great Britain, electricity and gas prices have been affected by the Energy Price Cap, which sets a limit on how much suppliers can change. Both rose significantly between September and December, though much less than in 2023. However, in Northern Ireland, where the cap doesn't apply, average prices were even higher. In Northern Ireland and RoI, the price of LPG has also increased.

Looking ahead, there are promising signs that the trend towards generally lower oil prices will continue. Crude oil is predicted to fall further in price through 2025 and into 2026, with production increasing across the world – and likely to be stimulated further by President Trump's "drill baby drill" comments, although whether that's good news for our warming planet is another matter. Future gas and electricity prices are less easy to predict. They may increase slightly in the short term, and it may take several years for them to return to pre-2020 levels.

Comparative space and water heating costs for a three-bedroomed home In Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland

GREAT BRITAIN (average)

	Dec-23	Dec-24	Price change	% Difference	4 year average
Electric storage heaters	3162	**2954**	-£208	-7%	£2,953
Gas condensing boiler	1626	**1423**	-£203	-12%	£1,337
LPG Condensing boiler radiators and DHW cylinder	2134	**2001**	-£133	-6%	£1,704
Oil condensing boiler, radiators and DHW cylinder	1746	**1270**	-£476	-27%	£1,317
Wood pellets	2370	**1960**	-£410	-17%	£2,093
Air source heat pump radiators	2750	**2684**	-£66	-2%	£2,592
Air source heat pump underfloor	2313	**2298**	-£15	-1%	£2,190

NORTHERN IRELAND

	Dec-23	Dec-24	Price change	% Difference	4 year average
Electric storage heaters	3675	**3201**	-474	-13%	£2,720
Gas condensing boiler	2215	**1782**	-433	-20%	£1,547
LPG Condensing boiler radiators and DHW cylinder	2166	**2291**	125	6%	£2,093
Oil condensing boiler, radiators and DHW cylinder	1429	**1192**	-237	-17%	£1,234
Wood pellets	1860	**1869**	9	0%	£1,630
Air source heat pump radiators	2875	**2933**	58	2%	£2,370
Air source heat pump underfloor	2377	**2459**	82	3%	£1,995

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

	Dec-23	Dec-24	Price change	% Difference	4 year average
Electric storage heaters	4304	**3790**	-514	-12%	€3,461
Gas condensing boiler	2659	**2379**	-280	-11%	€2,141
LPG Condensing boiler radiators and DHW cylinder	2831	**2933**	102	4%	€2,650
Oil condensing boiler, radiators and DHW cylinder	2021	**1767**	-254	-13%	€1,750
Wood pellets	2370	**2397**	27	1%	€1,933
Air source heat pump radiators	3640	**3410**	-230	-6%	€2,970
Air source heat pump underfloor	3069	**2913**	-156	-5%	€2,535

"Notes: 4-year average January 2021 to December 2024
The tables above are based on quarterly data published by the Sutherland Tables. They show the annual average cost of a range of heating options for a typical pre-1980 three-bedroomed semi-detached home with a heat requirement of approximately 16,000 kWh.Prices are shown in pounds sterling (£) for Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and euros (€) for the Republic of Ireland.

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