

Oil Installer

News and views from an evolving heating world



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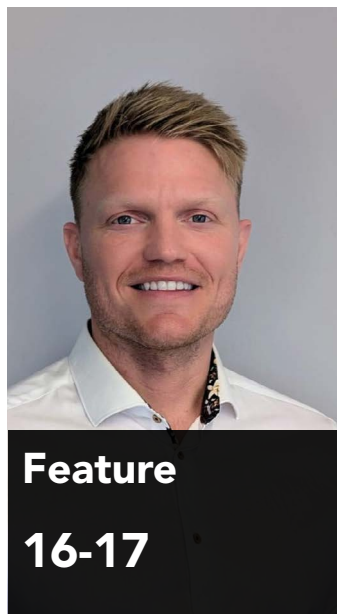
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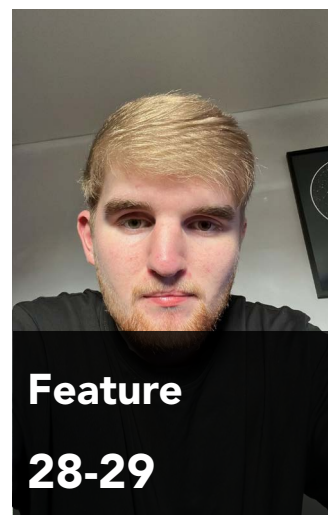
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Oil Installer is published by
Euromedia Associated Ltd
10 Ashfield Road, Chorley, PR7 1LJ
Tel: 01257 267677
Visit us online at www.oilinstaller.co.uk
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Summer 2025 Volume 19 No 2
ISSN 1755 – 3490

Is it time for a net zero reset?

There seems to be a lot of belt tightening going on at the moment.

Government departments are busy cutting back wherever they can, and millions will now lose out on benefits following rule changes - this at a time when Council Tax and utility bills are rising. Households, particularly those on lower incomes, are increasingly feeling the squeeze. It may not feel like a return to the austerity years (yet), but there's certainly a downbeat economic feeling in the air.



With so much bad news around it's good to report that at least one group is bucking the trend - those wishing to install a heat pump - who each can still receive a BUS grant of £7,500, regardless of how wealthy they are. And they certainly are pretty wealthy: despite a ASHP averaging £13,500 to install, a recent survey found that 41% of BUS grant recipients would have bought one even if the grant wasn't available.

The politics of this should be playing pretty badly for the Government. After all, rewarding the wealthy while penalising the poorest in society is not a good look for a Labour government. But - and here's the kicker - it gets even worse when we ask the question: is BUS actually working? Yes, more heat pumps are being installed, but not enough to achieve climate targets, and the installation price is still very high and show no sign of falling.

To keep on track for net zero we need to install an average of almost a million heat pumps a year between now and 2040. The Government can't subsidise even 10% of that number, so most households will pay the full price. It's simply unaffordable and raises serious questions about the cost of net zero and whether subsidies like BUS actually work.

The 2050 target is important, but perhaps it's time for some policy pragmatism. Renewable liquid fuels anyone?

Paul Rose, OFTEC CEO

OFTEC's 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.

From the 23rd January to 29th April 2025 a total of 9 businesses had their membership revoked*.

The revoked businesses are:

Company No.	Business Name
103704	B P Allen Plumbing & Heating
103493	Daniel Kemp
502346	David Hull Plumbing and Heating
502506	LM Plumbing and Heating Services LTD
10968	Mal Guckian Heating & Plumbing Ltd
10996	MFS Plumbing & Heating Specialists Ltd
502240	PK Engineering Ltd
501528	Swift Heating & Gas Services Ltd
501430	Thorn Heating and Plumbing.

Andy Kilby remembered

Registered technicians in and around the Gloucester area will remember former inspector, Andy Kilby, who worked for us between 2007 and 2020. Sadly, Andy passed away on 13th March aged 69 following a short illness.

Andy was a true heating professional dedicated to his profession, and always seeking improvement in the industry. He was always up for a good discussion and technical debate, many of which turned out in Andy's favour! Andy leaves his wife Angela, and two daughters.



Heat policy update

Government's Warm Homes Plan

The Government faces enormous challenges with its net zero policies and, when it comes to heating, it's easy to see why. With both government and consumer finances stretched, the Warm Homes Plan - a major policy announcement which is promised soon - really needs to deliver. So, what should it prioritise?

More and more heat pumps needed say the CCC

In its report on the 7th carbon budget, the Government's advisors, the Climate Change Committee (CCC), made it clear that a dramatic increase in the deployment of heat pumps is needed to hit climate targets. They recommend that by 2040 – just 15 years from now – half of the UK's homes should be heated by a heat pump. To achieve this, they say that by 2030 450,000 must be installed every year, and by 2035, 1.5 million. As advisors, the CCC are not required to consider the practical and political difficulties of actually doing it and look somewhat detached from reality as a consequence.

In simple terms, it's equivalent to installing roughly a million heat pumps each year over the next 15 years. However, the tech is still far too expensive – the average cost of an air source heat pump installation is over £13K and unlikely to ever reach price-parity with boilers – and they also cost more to run. The Government can't possibly afford to subsidise the difference for all households, so heat pumps are likely to remain an option mainly for wealthier high-income households.

Subsidy schemes enable better-off households to cash in – a reset is urgently needed

We know this is happening because a review of the Boiler Upgrade Scheme by DESNZ found that over half of BUS applicants (57%) had an annual household income of more than £52,000, much higher than the median national household income of £32,300 (ONS). It also found that 50% of BUS-funded installations were in homes with four or more bedrooms. Perhaps most strikingly, 41% of applicants said they would have installed a heat pump even if the grants had not been available – suggesting financing the installation wasn't a problem for them. A new report by the Resolution Foundation also found a high proportion of the heat pumps installed to date are in the wealthiest parts of the country.

At a time of benefits cuts and a squeeze on public spending, spending billions of pounds to incentivise wealthy households to install heat pumps isn't a good look for Labour, particularly when low-income households pay a greater proportion of their slender household budget on

energy. It's also vital that less affluent households are not left behind in the net zero race, but there's clearly a risk of this happening.

Perhaps the most damning evidence that the generous BUS subsidies don't work is the still-high cost of heat pumps. All the millions being spent subsidising heat pumps isn't making them cheaper and, instead, competition is being stifled due to the market distortion. The Warm Homes Plan offers Labour a vital opportunity for a policy reset, which must be taken.

What should be in the Warm Homes Plan – OFTEC's view

The Government's Warm Homes Plan must do four things:

- Recognise the unique decarbonisation challenges faced by the 1.7 million households who rely on heating oil, due to their rural location, age and construction.
- Contain policies to reduce energy demand in the least efficient buildings.
- Provide households with a meaningful choice of low carbon technologies.
- Support options that are easily affordable for as many households as possible.

Three of these can be achieved by providing support for renewable liquid fuels, and it's vital that the Government uses this important policy announcement to support this option, which will cost the Treasury nothing. Support for insulation measures should also be prioritised because it lowers energy bills, improves health and makes the building more suitable for a heat pump at a later date, should the owner wish to fit one.

And our survey says... rural households don't trust the Government and want renewable liquid fuels

A new survey of oil households by OFTEC has revealed widespread distrust, growing frustration and increasing concerns over costs when it comes to the Government's plan to transition rural homes onto greener heating systems.

The survey of 1,364 rural households has revealed over three quarters (79%) of respondents don't trust the Labour Government to deliver fair low carbon heating choices for their home.

The majority (65%) rated the Government's communication

around rural homes transitioning onto cleaner technologies as 'extremely poor' whilst over 85% said the decisions Labour makes will be an important factor in how they vote at the next General Election.

Concerns around the cost of switching to low carbon heating systems are also growing. An alarming 60% of those surveyed said they are more worried about the costs than they were three years ago. It follows the start of April which saw households facing increasing pressure from rising utility and Council Tax costs across the board.

However, the most striking response was the support for renewable liquid fuels - over 98% wanted the Government to support their introduction.

It's time to act - help us get renewable liquid fuels into the Warm Homes Plan

The heat pump industry will be demanding more subsidies from the Government; but there's still a chance we can influence the Plan and make the case for renewable liquid fuels.

It's really easy to support the campaign

Visit the Future Ready Fuel website and send the pre-prepared letter to the minister, Miatta Fahnbulleh. It will take just a few seconds. Please ask your customers to do the same.



InstallerSHOW

The InstallerSHOW at the NEC Birmingham is the UK's largest event for installers and specifiers of air, water, heat and energy technologies. As well as presenting, OFTEC will also have a stand (5i74) where we'll be showcasing our role as a one-stop registration solution for all heating technicians, whether you work in traditional or renewable technologies.

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.

We look forward to seeing you at InstallerSHOW 2025 in June. Do come and visit our stand for more information or a 'wheely good' time.

Registration is free and tickets can be booked at: <https://forms.reg.buzz/installer-2025-visitor/oftec-emailsig>

Join OFTEC on stand 5I74

A one-stop registration solution for off-gas businesses and technicians

Discover what OFTEC has to offer, including information on registration and training options. Benefit from our expert technical advice and updates on our work to promote renewable liquid fuels, such as HVO

Book your free tickets now at www.installershow.com



24-26 June 25
NEC Birmingham

www.oftec.org



OFTEC trade association conference announced

The 2025 OFTEC trade association conference in June will see industry leaders from across the liquid fuel heating sector unite in calling for Labour to set out a fair and pragmatic rural decarbonisation plan, which includes a key role for renewable liquid fuels.

It comes ahead of the expected publication of the Government's Warm Homes Plan, which will outline Labour's policy programme to deliver on the UK's net zero targets. To date, the Government has yet to provide clarity on how the rural off-gas grid heating sector will decarbonise in an increasingly uncertain economic environment.

Speakers will include Paul Rose, OFTEC CEO, Neil Sawers, Commercial Technical Manager at Grant Engineering UK, Wayne Timperley, Regulatory Specialist at Local Authority Building Control (LABC) and Jonathan Kane, CEO of Kane International. This year will then see Martin Cooke, from EOGB Energy Products, step down as

OFTEC Chair and hand over to Neil Sawers, Commercial Technical Manager at Grant Engineering UK, who will hold the post for the next two years.

Ahead of the conference, OFTEC CEO Paul Rose commented: "As the Government prepares to set out more details of its decarbonisation policy,

it's vital that off-gas grid communities are not overlooked. We've long spoken about the unique challenges and the need for a more bespoke, technology neutral approach which encompasses both electrification but also renewable liquid fuels, a technology we have proven is an ideal solution".

Lewis Osborne achievement

Many in the industry will know Lewis Osborne through his work at OFTEC. Lewis is now in his second spell with the company,

having originally started straight from school in 2002 before rejoining in 2022.

While he was working in the compliance department, OFTEC, together with MCS, put Lewis through a 'Future Leaders' programme, which was delivered over nine months for a new generation of leaders to be equipped to face the challenge of a net carbon zero world.

Following completion of this course, Lewis has since been promoted to become manager of OFTEC's compliance department.



After over 50 years in the industry, Richard Watt may be one of OFTEC's most experienced technicians

After over 50 years working on the tools, 87-year-old Richard Watt has finally decided to put away his tools for good.

Richard is believed to be OFTEC's oldest (experienced) technician, having worked in the heating and plumbing industry most of his adult life at his company R.S. Watt Plumbing and Heating, based in the Aberdeen area.

Richard states "I reached the age of 87 years. I now feel that after over 50 years, it is time to stop working or at least slow down".

The industry, we're sure, not to mention his customers, will miss his knowledge and expertise, but we think we can all wish Richard a very happy retirement.

OFTEC technician representative



L-R Simon Robson and Jon King

"Why doesn't OFTEC ever listen to me?" This is something we hear from time to time.

Did you know there is a registered technician sitting on our OFTEC Scheme Committee? If you didn't, perhaps it's because it's not been too obvious exactly who this person is and how you can contact them.

So, we are pleased to introduce the new person taking up this important role: Simon Robson, who has been registered on the OFTEC competent person scheme since 2022, working with liquid fuel installations and unvented hot water systems.

Simon is an experienced heating engineer who also works part-time as a trainer at an OFTEC training centre

in Yorkshire. That means he meets a lot of heating technicians every week, making him ideally placed to give feedback to OFTEC – both good and bad – on the aspects of being a modern-day heating technician.

Assisted by OFTEC's registration manager (Jon King), Simon will be chairing a technician forum which meets twice-yearly to raise issues, hold discussions and then feed recommendations into decision makers at OFTEC, the OFTEC Scheme Committee and further afield to the likes of LABC, the Building Safety Regulator and MCS.

The next meeting will take place in October.

If you have any issues you'd like to raise with the way OFTEC operates, then please email Simon at registeredtechnician@oftec.org and he will start the ball rolling to get things discussed with a view of seeking opportunities for improvement. Any issues raised will be treated in confidence.

New regional inspector appointed



John Vinter and Paul Henry

We are pleased to announce that Paul Henry has joined the OFTEC Inspectorate and will soon be visiting registered technicians throughout Northern Ireland.

Paul will be well known to many through his previous role as principal lecturer and assessor for the South Eastern Regional College in Newtownards for many years.

Paul also sits on the OFTEC Scheme Committee to represent the heating sector in Northern Ireland, meaning that feedback he receives on the ground can be directly fed back into OFTEC's scheme governance.

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Renewables Centre launches to help installers grow

Wolseley Group has launched Renewables Centre, a brand-new nationwide initiative created to support heating professionals thrive in the renewables market.

Offering a fully integrated solution, Renewables Centre combines accredited training, MCS-certified design, installation support, and access to high-quality renewable products, all in one place, helping installers to future-proof their business in the renewables market.

With demand for air source heat pumps rising by nearly 90% year-on-year*, and renewables forecast to grow from just 5% of installer workload to over 27% in the next five years**, Renewables Centre has been developed to equip installers with the tools, skills and confidence to take advantage of this significant opportunity whether they're just starting out or looking to grow.

Partner brand

Renewables Centre will operate as a partner brand for Plumb Centre. It will offer new and existing customers a fully integrated renewables solution, supported by Renewable Equipment Solutions (R.E.S) a recent Wolseley Group acquisition. R.E.S will offer additional technical expertise, design services and a support package to guide customers through an MCS process.

Renewables Centre aims to support installers from day one of their journey, with a full package to get



them MCS-ready, guiding them from first estimate to final certification. With R.E.S support, installers can turn training into action through fast, accurate system estimates, MCS-compliant designs with heat loss calculations, help with DNO approvals and contract setup, and technical guidance through commissioning and handover. The service also includes assistance in accessing Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS) grant funding - making the move into renewables commercially rewarding.

John Hancock, COO of Wolseley Group, commented: "One of the biggest barriers our customers tell us about when it comes to renewables is access to training and expert support. Many installers want to expand into renewables but don't know where to start. Renewables Centre will provide the best accredited training, design services, support and access

to supplies, so installers can take their first steps with confidence.

"The heating and energy sector is changing rapidly, and we're at a pivotal moment. Installers across the UK are about to face a surge in demand for renewables, and they need access to the right training, products, and technical support to take full advantage of this shift and make it profitable for them. Renewables Centre is ready and there for installers."

The first flagship Renewables Centre will open in Shrewsbury, with Swansea set to follow shortly. These will be supported by a growing number of regional training centres across the UK, ensuring installers have easy access to the resources they need, wherever they are.

Warmflow staff take on the tower

Warmflow employees, Hannah and Cherryl abseiled 190 feet down the iconic yellow tower of Belfast City Hospital on 10 May as part of the 'Take on the Tower Superhero Abseil' event. This thrilling challenge supports Friends of the Cancer Centre, a charity dedicated to assisting local families affected by cancer.

Warmflow sponsored the event and commended Hannah and Cherryl for their courage and commitment to this meaningful cause. Their participation not only raised vital funds but also highlighted the importance of community support in the fight against cancer.



Join Grant UK at InstallerSHOW 2025

Grant UK will be attending this year's InstallerSHOW with an eye-catching stand.

InstallerSHOW has established itself as a must-see event in the calendars of thousands of heating professionals, from installers and engineers, specifiers and developers, merchants and distributors through to



apprentices and the next generation. This June, it is anticipated that 30,000 visitors will step through the halls at the NEC to discover the latest innovations in the heat, water, air and energy sectors.

Located next to the InstallerPLAZA, Grant's Stand 5C40 will showcase the company's comprehensive range of sustainable heating products including air source heat pumps, hybrid technologies and HVO compatible boilers.

Visitors will be able to learn more about the products and speak to members of the team to discuss the different ways in which the company can support their businesses, from training and design through to on-site technical support and much more.

In addition, visitors to the Grant stand will be able to take away branded merchandise and enjoy some warm hospitality. The stand will also be home to something rather different this year, providing guests with the opportunity to win an amazing prize in the on-stand competition. Further details about this fun-filled challenge will be revealed nearer the show.

"We look forward to InstallerSHOW every year and excitement for the 2025 event is already building," comments Anna Wakefield, Head of Internal Sales and Marketing at Grant UK. "Although the show is three months away, the preparations are well underway with our team bringing even bigger energy than last year and planning for our best stand to date. This is an event you won't want to miss."

Get interactive with Talon at InstallerSHOW 2025

Talon Manufacturing returns to InstallerSHOW this year with a completely reimagined stand experience designed to engage, inform and excite. From hands-on product demos to the launch of a brand-new brochure and exclusive merchandise, Talon's Stand 4L10 is set to be a must-visit for installers.

One of the biggest changes this year is the introduction of Talon's new walk-through, interactive experience that brings the company's range to life. Visitors can explore solutions across pipe clips, collars, skirting covers and the full PipeSnug and FlueSnug pipe and flue sealing range, all within an immersive, informative setting.

Also making its InstallerSHOW debut is the new FS5 PipeSnug, with live demos running throughout the event. Installers can get hands-on with the product and take home exclusive FS5-branded stickers and freebies.

The 2025 event also marks the launch of Brochure 12, showcasing Talon's most up-to-date product offering – including recent additions that address current regulatory requirements and help installers save time on site. The new stand is almost a 'live brochure' showing off the entire Talon range.

There will be plenty of new Talon merch available too, giving fans of the brand a chance to gear up with some installer-friendly giveaways. Adding to the buzz, Talon will be welcoming some familiar and popular industry personalities onto the stand, including Pointy Plumber and John Cruickshank – to hear first-hand about the products

they trust and use on site.

"We're bringing even more energy and interaction to the show this year," says Mike Morris, Marketing Manager. "Whether you're already a loyal Talon customer or just curious to see what we offer, Stand 4L10 is where you'll want to be – grab a brochure, try a demo, meet the team and take something away!"





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Grant heads to the highway

Two new display vans are joining Grant UK's fleet and will be heading out on a nationwide Aerona 290 Roadshow. The vans will showcase Grant's fifth generation heat pump range alongside the company's many other sustainable heating technologies.

Each van is packed full of the latest Grant heating products including an Aerona 290 4kW air source heat pump, a QR Smart Pre-Plumbed hot water cylinder, an Aerona Smart Heat Pump System Controller and an Afinia aluminium radiator. The products will be showcased for customers to get hands-on opportunities to learn more about their core features and benefits.

Each display van will be visiting merchant branches throughout England, Scotland and Wales with events continuing during the spring and summer months. Customers both new and existing will be welcome to visit the roadshows in their local area, enjoying some refreshments while discussing low carbon heating systems with their Grant area sales manager and discovering the different ways the company can support their businesses as they transition to renewables. The



sales team will also be handing out some branded merchandise and giveaways.

"We are looking forward to our upcoming Aerona 290 Roadshow with not just one but two new display vans out on the road this year," comments Anna Wakefield, Head of Internal Sales and Marketing at Grant UK.

"We know how busy our customers

are so we hope that by bringing the vans to local merchant branches, it will be easier to catch up with our Sales Team and see some of the latest Grant products in person. We are also looking forward to welcoming those in the specification sector to the Aerona 290 Roadshow and, with two vehicles available, this year's schedule will be our biggest one yet visiting more merchants and venues than ever before!"

Warmflow turned up the heat at this year's Balmoral Show

Warmflow showcased its innovative products at the Balmoral Show 2025, Northern Ireland's premier agri-food event, which took place at the Eikon Exhibition Centre from 14-17 May 2025.

Cutting-edge heating solutions on display

Building on its commitment to sustainable home heating, Warmflow offered visitors an opportunity to explore its latest products, including:

- **Agentis Liquid Fuel Boilers** – Renowned for their high efficiency and suitability for various home heating needs.
- **Zeno Air Source Heat Pumps** – A highly efficient renewable heating solution designed to lower energy costs and reduce carbon footprint.



• **Nero Hot Water Cylinders** – High quality hot water cylinders available in various models and sizes to suit all hot water needs.

• **Warm Air Heaters** – Designed for commercial use in warehouses, garages and large spaces, Warmflow Air Heaters are a fantastic way to heat large spaces efficiently.

Free design service for Zeno air source heat pumps

As part of its commitment to customer support, Warmflow also offers a free

design service for its Zeno Air Source Heat Pumps. This exclusive service allows homeowners and installers to get a bespoke heating system design tailored to their property's specific needs.

Meeting the experts

Attendees were encouraged to visit Warmflow's stand to engage with its team of specialists, gain insights into cutting-edge heating solutions, and discuss how its products can enhance home comfort and energy efficiency.



Get Ready For Our New Products

Launching at the Installer Show 2025!



Brand New! Sapphire R290 Heat Pumps



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Full hybrid package with our Heat Pump & Boiler range



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Talon launches the FlueSnug 5

Talon has introduced the FlueSnug 5", known as the FS5 – a flue seal designed to make gas boiler flue replacements smoother than ever. Fitting perfectly into the existing flue hole, it eliminates the need for extra drilling or touch-ups, speeding up installation and ensuring compliance with the latest building regulations.

With the FS5, Talon has engineered a solution that addresses a common challenge faced by boiler installers. In traditional flue replacements, aligning the new flue with the existing hole often requires drilling or patching, leading to longer installation times and potential complications. The FlueSnug 5" is precisely sized to fit into the existing flue opening, providing a secure seal and saving installers time and effort.

By helping to maintain the integrity of the existing structure, the FS5

supports installers in complying with Part L of the Building Regulations. It ensures that there is minimal thermal bridging around the flue penetration, crucial for maintaining the energy efficiency of the building. With FlueSnug 5", installers can achieve a high-quality seal that reduces heat loss, keeping energy performance at optimal levels.

FS5 also offers a significant reduction in installation time. By eliminating the need for resizing holes or making good around the flue opening, installers can complete jobs faster and move on to the next project. One of the major pain points during boiler installation is the need to repair walls or make good around the new flue. With the FlueSnug 5", this becomes unnecessary and installers can achieve a neat, professional finish without the additional materials, labour, and costs typically associated with such repairs.

"We understand the demands faced by heating engineers and installers, which is why the FS5 has been developed with direct feedback from professionals in the field," explains Dean Heathfield, Commercial Director for Talon. "The launch of the FS5 really completes the FlueSnug range and reinforces Talon's commitment to delivering practical, high-quality solutions for the plumbing and heating sector."



Riello bids farewell to Bernard Dawson after 25 years of service

Riello's Technical Director Bernard Dawson has completed his final day, after 25 years of dedicated service to the business.

Bernard joined Riello in June 1999, in the role of Commercial & Industrial Project Manager and progressed through a series of key technical and

leadership positions over the years. Most recently, he served as Technical Director, where he played a vital role in driving technical excellence across the business.

An appreciative farewell

In an announcement formally marking Bernard's retirement, Riello highlighted his deep expertise in forced draught and pressure jet burners that has made him an invaluable resource across Riello's commercial and industrial burner operations. Contributing to a wide range of high-profile projects in his time with the business, Bernard has been widely respected by customers, colleagues, and industry partners alike for his depth of knowledge, professionalism, and commitment to quality.

As he steps into retirement, Bernard plans to spend more time with his

partner and their two dogs and has expressed his desire to travel across Europe in a camper van.

And a warm welcome

While sharing the news of Bernard's retirement, Riello took the opportunity to welcome the company's newest recruit, Nathan Chance, who joins Riello in the role of National C&I Technical Sales Manager. Nathan brings a strong background in combustion systems and technical operations and will work closely with the wider team to continue the high standards and trusted support that Bernard helped to establish.

Commenting on the retirement, a spokesperson for Riello said: "We thank Bernard for his outstanding contribution to Riello and wish him all the very best for the future."



In Conversation:

James Shenton MD on 20 years of Tuffa

This year marks a major milestone for Tuffa UK, one of the UK's most trusted tank manufacturers, as the company celebrates its 20th anniversary. A family business now in its second generation, Tuffa has grown from modest beginnings into a nationally recognised brand known for quality, innovation, and customer focus. We spoke with Managing Director James Shenton to reflect on the company's evolution — and what the future holds.



When and why was Tuffa founded?

Tuffa was officially founded in 2005, but the business itself has a 41-year heritage, starting with the manufacture of steel tanks. From the outset, our focus was on producing robust storage solutions for fuels and liquids.

Over time, we've expanded our offering with new materials and technologies, always driven by a clear goal: to provide high-quality, adaptable storage systems backed by excellent service.

20 years of Tuffa! What have been the major milestones?

We've come a long way. One of the biggest milestones was expanding our capabilities beyond steel to include rotational moulding and plastic fabrication. This allowed us to diversify our product range and improve design flexibility – evolving from carbon steel welded tanks to polyethylene rotationally moulded and

polypropylene & polyethylene plastic-fabricated models. As a result, we can now manufacture everything from 1,350L domestic heating oil tanks to 100,000L commercial bunded tanks.

We also achieved ISO 9001 and ISO 14001, which formalised our commitment to quality and environmental management. And we were the first to bring integrally fire-protected oil tanks to the UK market, which changed what was possible in domestic tank installation.

What industry innovations has Tuffa introduced?

Our FirePro® range is a great example. These tanks combine fire protection and bunding in a compact, compliant unit, making it possible to install closer to buildings or boundaries.

We've also led the way with AdBlue® tanks – both in off-the-shelf options and bespoke builds for fleet operators.

How has feedback from technicians and engineers influenced product development?

Customer feedback is the foundation of our product development. Our installer and heating engineer

customer base consistently provides valuable input – whether it's on tank dimensions, weight, ancillary components, or ergonomic features.

This two-way communication plays a crucial role in refining our designs and ensuring our products meet the practical needs of the people using them day in, day out.

What technologies or manufacturing processes distinguish Tuffa from other manufacturers?

We can combine steel, rotational moulded plastic, and fabricated plastic components in-house. That gives us huge versatility – whether it's a standard tank or a custom system.

Every product is designed in 3D CAD, prototyped, and tested before release – ensuring performance and reliability in the field. Our manufacturing complies with BS 799, EN 13341 and EN 13575, alongside our ISO accreditations.

What sectors or customers rely most on Tuffa tanks?

We serve a broad customer base: domestic heating oil users, farmers, commercial fuel users, chemical processors, and airports, which use our tanks for de-icer storage.

It's a point of pride for us that our products are used in such critical applications.

How has the team grown over 20 years?

We've doubled in size over 20 years and now employ 55 people. Our culture is built on servant leadership and empowerment – giving people



the tools and freedom to do their best work.

Many of our team have been with us 10, 15, even 25 years. That loyalty and experience is a big part of our success.

What trends is Tuffa preparing for?

We're seeing a shift toward better footprints, easier delivery and installation, and lower costs – all without compromising compliance or durability. That's guiding our future development.

We also have some exciting new technologies in the pipeline, but they're top secret for now!

How are you your 20th anniversary?

We're celebrating with

a summer festival here at our Utttoxeter HQ. It's a chance to bring together our team and to reflect on how far we've come.

Finally, what message do you have for customers, partners, and the Tuffa team on reaching this milestone?

A huge thank you.

To our customers – thank you for trusting us with your storage needs.

To our partners – thank you for your support and collaboration.

And to the incredible team here at Tuffa – your pride in what you do is what makes this company what it is.

Here's to the next 20 years!



Tuffa site in 1992



Tuffa site now



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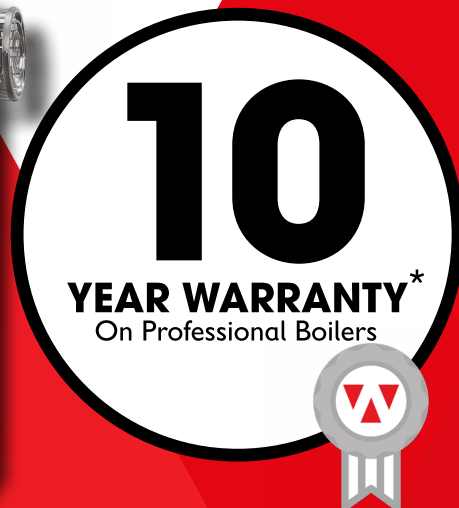
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SUPPLIED WITH CROSLAND OIL FILTER	NO	YES	NO	NO
SUPPLIED WITH 2 X INHIBITOR	NO	YES	NO	NO
BUILT-IN SHOCK ARRESTOR	YES	YES	NO	NO
24L EXPANSION VESSEL (COMBI)	YES	YES	YES	NO
TWIN CHANNEL PROGRAMMER	YES	YES	NO	NO
BUILT-IN PRESSURE REDUCING VALVE	YES	YES	NO	NO
BUILT-IN DIGITAL DIAGNOSTICS	YES	YES	NO	YES
Y-STRAINER	YES	YES	NO	NO
ERP EFFICIENCY RATING	AA	AA	AB	AB

* 10 Year Warranty available for Warmflow Professional Boilers installed by Connect Platinum Installers subject to terms & conditions. Speak to your local sales manager for more information.

** Based on 26kW Combi Oil Boiler comparison on 31/01/2024.

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Does Ireland need a single energy market for liquid fuels?

by David Blevings, OFTEC's Ireland Manager

The Single Electricity Market (SEM) is the wholesale market on the island of Ireland where electricity generators and suppliers trade the power used by homes and businesses across Ireland.

The utility regulator claims the SEM is good news and brings significant benefits for all consumers. It provides trading opportunities for generators, suppliers and investors while delivering an efficient and competitive electricity market. The market is designed to support competition, allow increased renewables on the system, encourage new investment and support security of supply, all while placing a downward pressure on prices.

We don't have a SEM for liquid fuels in Ireland, but the question is, "do we need one if the Republic introduces a renewable heating obligation in 2026?"



The renewable heating obligation (RHO) is the Government's proposal to introduce renewable fuels into the home heat mix. It will apply to all fuels and is supposed to begin in 2026. The RHO was thrown into some disarray when Green Generation went into receivership in March, and there were claims that fraudulent fuels were entering the Irish marketplace. Green Generation were the main biomethane producer in the ROI and their demise leaves a question mark over future production.

We have always pushed the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) for a realistic blend percentage (20%), but with the biomethane lobby struggling to produce biomethane at a reasonable level, we suspect the original proposal of 2.5% (or lower) will be the starting point, rising to 10% by 2030.

A porous border

While the prospect of an RHO is good news as it gives a continued lease of life to renewable liquid fuels, the prospect of Northern Ireland not introducing an RHO would cause problems. We have a very porous border, and many will understand kerosene and diesel moves North and South depending on the duty and exchange rates!

If a blend is introduced in the Republic and pure kerosene is cheaper in NI, then we will see kerosene move south across the border. In addition, if the blend rate is set at too low a level, importers will not bother blending as kerosene is brought into Ireland as Dual-Purpose Kerosene (DPK) for heating and aviation and a low blend rate will be

too much bother and they will likely just pay for renewable certificates. This will be cheaper for them and less hassle. Sadly, that would do nothing for the industry's decarbonisation plans.

In the North, we have explained the issue of a 'blend rate for the island' and the civil servants in the Department for Economy's (DfE) Energy Department understand the issue. We met them at Warmflow in February as part of the biofuels consultation engagement process. Warmflow is a major local employer and kindly gave several representatives from the Department a tour of the facility and we presented on how the liquid fuel sector plans to decarbonise domestic heating.

The meeting was constructive and informative, and the officials viewed a boiler in operation being switched from running on a 100% fossil fuel (kerosene) to a 20% blend of HVO and kerosene.

A blended approach

During the presentation we suggested that ALL forms of low and no carbon heating will be required if we stand a chance to deliver on the 2030 targets. We acknowledged that heat pumps have their place, in a thermally efficient house, but for most older and off-grid homes, we believe that sustainable biofuels are the right choice.

Johnnie Black from Warmflow said: "The key to the blended approach to decarbonisation is that government can work in partnership with the industry and raise the blend percentage as more sustainable biofuels come on to the market,

hopefully through indigenous production. A major advantage of using biofuels is that consumers do not have to make any adjustments to the appliance with a 20% blend, so the transition is seamless with no disruption or additional capital cost."

As part of the presentation, David Blevings from OFTEC added: "Our USP is that we can deliver carbon savings equivalent to the deployment of c.80,000 heat pumps with a 20% blend and that is a very powerful statement, especially as it can be done in six months, without the need for consumer interaction and we have done it before in the transport sector."



The biofuels consultation in the North closed on 4 March 2025, and the liquid fuel industry is very hopeful that the presentation and tour gave the Department confidence that the industry is ready to deliver on a blended pathway to decarbonising heat.

In its recently published summary of energy actions in 2024 and plan for 2025, it states:

"The department launched a Call for Evidence¹⁰ on 10th December 2024 to explore how biofuels such as HVO and BioLPG can play a crucial transitional role and provide sustainable heating alternatives in situations where low carbon technologies like heat pumps and heat networks are not currently suitable or feasible.

DfE aim to use respondents' submissions to help map out the complex challenge of heat decarbonisation and inform our approach moving forward, with a Departmental Response to be issued during Summer 2025 "

We read this as a positive and expect biofuels to play a key role in decarbonising homes in the new energy strategy. The full report can be seen at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/energy-strategy-action-plan-2025-and-action-plan-report-2024>

In the Republic we have reached out to the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), which is responsible for the RHO, and by the time this is printed, we will have met them to discuss the proposals, to ensure that any proposal will work for the sector and produce meaningful carbon reductions.

In conclusion, we won't get a single energy market for liquid fuels as we are dealing with two different jurisdictions with separate taxation and excise policies. However, with a blended pathway to decarbonising heat for liquid fuelled homes firmly on the table we do need to see some joined up thinking between DECC and DfE. The question still to be answered is the rate (percentage of blend) and how it can be introduced seamlessly across the island. Watch this space.

Expand your business with OFTEC

OFTEC is well known for its commitment to liquid fuel heating training and registration, but did you know that we offer a range of other options for anyone working in today's heating industry?

Competent person scheme registration:

- Liquid fuel
- Solid fuel
- Electrical (Part P)
- Solar thermal
- Biomass
- Heat pumps
- Unvented hot water storage systems
- Non-operative

Extensions of registration:

- Trustmark
- MCS
- PAS2030

OFTEC registration enables you to **self-certify work*** and your installations are covered by our free **workmanship warranty**. You'll also be listed on our '**find a technician**' web search, have access to our **technical support**, and get all the **latest industry news**, together with a range of other valuable benefits.

*In England, Wales, the Channel Islands and Isle of Man.



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Introducing the Firebird Envirogreen Combi Xceed: Simplicity by design

Exciting things are happening at Firebird – the manufacturer has introduced its new Envirogreen Combi Xceed range describing it as “a breakthrough in efficient, installer-friendly heating solutions”.

With over 40 years of delivering world-class products, Firebird continues to set new standards in quality, innovation, and sustainability.

Crafted by experts, inspired by installers

We hear from Gary Davies, Firebird's UK National Sales Manager, who played a key role in shaping the Combi Xceed range and shares with us more insight around this launch:

“Following extensive research and development, Firebird is proud to launch the new Xceed range of

combination boilers. By listening to feedback from our installers, we focused on simplicity in design for ease of servicing and maintenance, as well as robust construction.”

Why the new Combi Xceed?

Key features:

• **Twin circulating pump design:** Eliminates the need for specialist diverter valves – simplifying maintenance and boosting reliability.

• **No flow switch:** Water is electronically detected, reducing moving parts and failure points.

• **Innovative Lowara Eco-Circ circulating pump:** Built-in low-water safety device, eliminating the need for a separate low-pressure switch.

• **Superior build quality:** All major components made from brass and copper, with bronze Teflon seals – no plastic parts for maximum durability.

• **User-friendly layout:** Thoughtful pipework and component placement for quicker, easier servicing.

• **Modern, compact design:** Fits under worktops, blending seamlessly into kitchens, utilities or garden rooms.

• **HVO-ready:** Designed to run on Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel for

future-proof, eco-conscious heating.

• **Elco Low-NOx burner:** Reduces emissions, supporting cleaner heating.

• **Multi-directional flue options:** Full front access for straightforward maintenance.

• **High-performance hot water:** Delivering reliable, consistent hot water when you need it.

Built to last, backed by Firebird

Every Combi Xceed is supported by extensive warranty options – offering complete peace of mind.

Future-focussed home heating

Gary is unequivocal in his enthusiasm for the new range: “Upgrade to the Firebird Envirogreen Combi Xceed and experience the difference that simplicity, strength and smart design can make.”





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HRP Trade becomes sole distributor of Navien boiler spares and parts



In a strategic move set to benefit heating professionals across the UK, Navien UK has appointed HRP Trade as the exclusive distributor of all Navien boiler spares and parts.

This development builds on Navien's growing partnership with APP Wholesale Ltd – HRP Trade's parent company and a respected name in heating and plumbing distribution. The agreement marks a significant expansion in Navien's commitment to supporting UK merchants and installers with high-quality, readily available boiler components.

Strengthening supply for the trade

Navien, one of the world's most technologically advanced manufacturers of high-efficiency boilers, water heaters, and heat pumps, is boosting its UK presence by entrusting HRP Trade with its full range of boiler spares. Known as one of the UK's leading independent boiler spares distributors for trade merchants, HRP Trade brings a robust logistics and customer service network to the table.

With this new arrangement, customers can benefit from next-day delivery across the full range of Navien boiler spares – reducing downtime on site and helping installers provide a faster, more efficient service.

Commitment to quality and support

"All Navien spares and parts are manufactured to the same rigorous standards as our award-winning boilers, including the NCB700 ON," said Graham Parkes, Commercial Director at Navien UK. "We provide excellent stock availability and a one-year warranty on all parts, ensuring quality and peace of mind for our customers."

Navien's offering also includes technical support and troubleshooting services to help engineers quickly identify and resolve boiler issues - further enhancing their service to end users.

A growing partnership

"Navien is by far one of the world's most advanced boiler manufacturers," commented Neil Lake, MD of APP Wholesale Ltd. "We're thrilled to bring the entire Navien product line to the UK market. We're here to ensure that independent merchants and trade professionals have continuous access and service to Navien boilers, as well as the quality spares and parts they require, at the best price,"

This latest step builds on Navien's 2023 appointment of APP Plumbing and Heating (another APP Wholesale division) as the UK distributor of its boilers.

"Our partnership with APP Wholesale Ltd is going from strength to strength," said Parkes. "With the full range of Navien products now under their remit, we've removed friction in the supply chain and are better positioned to serve merchants and installers nationwide."

Futureproof heating solutions

Navien continues to lead the way with future-focused heating technology. In 2022, the company launched its innovative NCB ON range, designed to meet the needs of modern homes – from compact flats to large family properties. With maximised recirculation technology, the NCB ON provides consistent hot water for up to three showers simultaneously, setting new standards in domestic hot water performance.

Navien's investment in cutting-edge R&D, combined with its rapid supply chain and competitive pricing, positions it as a brand of choice for forward-thinking heating professionals.

Navien boiler spares and parts are available to order now via HRP Trade.



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To protect future generations and align with global climate challenges, Riello have led the way in renewable fuel testing and offer fully compliant Bio Fuel & HVO options.

For over a century, Riello has led burner technology and our RDB range stands as the preferred residential oil burner among installers and boiler manufacturers. Through rigorous R&D and direct feedback from the field, Riello continues to push the boundaries of performance and reliability.

With more than 2 million installed, its track record speaks for itself.



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Disposal of redundant liquid fuel storage tanks

OFTEC's technical department is often asked what the correct procedure is for the disposal of storage tanks, especially when a new tank has been installed.

The improper removal of a fuel storage tank can result in a serious accident and/or pollution incident. Therefore, it is necessary to consider all potential safety and environmental hazards and adopt appropriate precautionary measures.

In most cases, fuel storage tanks can be removed whole. Dismantling or cutting up tanks, especially steel tanks, should only be considered as a last resort where no other option is possible. It is a very hazardous procedure, and it is strongly recommended that this is only

undertaken by specialist operatives who have the right equipment, expertise, and insurance.

Before starting work the tank should be isolated, and all fuel removed from the tank. Any residue can be flushed out with water, allowing the fuel to float up to a level where it can be removed by a suction pipe. The residues, and contaminated water, should be safely stored in suitable containers which are appropriate for transportation and labelled accordingly. After the tank has been emptied and removed, check that the

surrounding soil or groundwater hasn't been contaminated.

Decommissioned tanks taken off site must be removed by a licensed waste carrier and must be accompanied by appropriate documentation. Tanks can only be disposed of at an appropriately licensed facility. There are legal obligations for all trades, including heating technicians, to properly remove, transport, and dispose of all trade waste. Technicians should contact their regional environmental regulator to discuss their legal obligations, details for each area are:

England	Environment Agency	03708 506 506
Wales	Natural Resources Wales	0300 065 3000
Scotland	Scottish Environment Protection Agency	03000 99 66 99
Northern Ireland	Dept. of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs	028 9056 9360
Republic of Ireland	Your local authority	
Isle of Man	Dept. for Environment, Food and Agriculture	01624 685835
Guernsey	Office of Environmental Health and Pollution	01481 221161
Jersey	Infrastructure, Housing and Environment	01534 445508

Technicians have a duty of care in dealing with any waste and failure to comply with these requirements could lead to prosecution. Technicians who generate any waste are defined as waste producers and are responsible for how such waste is transported and disposed of, even if this work is contracted out to a third party.

Businesses that transport waste must register as a 'waste carrier' or similar. Those transporting and disposing of waste will need to hold an 'upper tier waste carrier licence' (referred to as 'waste carriers licence' in Scotland). Waste contaminated with fuel is considered a greater risk and is therefore designated as hazardous waste (referred to as 'special waste' in Scotland) which may have stricter rules to follow, including the requirements

on the carriage of dangerous goods. Although holding a waste carriers licence may allow a technician to transport waste within a country/region, cross-border transport will likely require further documentation.

Technicians are responsible for the final disposal of waste they create or transport, even if this work is contracted to a third party. This stresses the importance of only contracting licenced waste carriers. Technicians should know where the final disposal of their waste will occur and should satisfy themselves that it is appropriate. There is no defence for a technician whose waste ends up illegally dumped by a third party – responsibility usually still rests with the technician if the waste can be tracked back to them. Most environmental

regulators host an on-line search tool to help find licenced waste facilities.

A system of record keeping is required for those transporting, handling, or disposing of waste. The system varies from country to country or region to region. Usually, 'waste transfer notes' or 'hazardous waste consignment notes' or 'special waste consignment notes' are mandatory. These are sometimes physical forms, although some regions now use electronic forms. These records track the waste from generation to disposal and leave a clear paper-trail demonstrating what waste was transported and disposed of, and who was responsible for the various parts of the process.

The records must be kept for your protection!

Liquid fuel appliance classification

Previous articles have looked at what the various OFTEC scopes of registration cover, and the differences between domestic and non-domestic liquid fuel storage tank installations. This time we will be looking at appliance installations, and whether they would be classed as domestic or non-domestic.

Some key things to consider would be the kilowatt output of the appliance/s and the building which the appliance/s serve, but unfortunately, there's a little more to it than that. So, let's look into it further.

What's classed as a domestic installation?

British Standards state that an appliance which does not exceed 70kW output serving a dwelling is classed as a domestic installation. If multiple appliances are required for the dwelling and are to be located in the same room, providing the combined output of the appliances does not exceed 70kW, the installation would fall within domestic requirements.

What's classed as a non-domestic installation?

If the appliance is serving a building other than a dwelling, for example places of work, worship, public assembly, entertainment or hospitality etc., the installation would be classed as non-domestic. Therefore, the appliance should be installed in its own dedicated fire-rated boiler room, with the degree of fire resistance determined by the class of the building¹ and the kilowatt output of the appliance.

Can I install two appliances in the same room with a combined output above 70kW serving a dwelling?

Yes, but as the combined output of the appliances exceeds 70kW, then the appliances should be located within a dedicated boiler room as they would fall under non-domestic requirements. The degree of fire resistance would be determined by the total output of the appliances.

Do smaller cased models no greater than 70kW output at a non-domestic premises need to be in a boiler room?

No, smaller-cased models (not boiler house) may be sited in another suitable part of the building in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. For example, the kitchen area of an office.

Class of building falls into two categories, being:

- place of public entertainment or assembly, or a large building.

Large building is defined as:

- a building with a height greater than 30 metres
- a building with a height greater than 24 metres that also has an area greater than 930m² on any floor; or
- a building used for trade and manufacture if it also has a capacity greater than 7,000m³.
- all buildings other than those referenced above.

The importance of testing fire valves

Fire valves should be tested at least once a year as a part of the servicing procedure to ensure safety.

The code of practice for liquid fuel burning installations for space heating and hot water supply purposes in domestic buildings with an output of not exceeding 70kW is outlined in British Standard 5410-1:2019, which states that "liquid fuel supply pipework, valves, filters and fire valves should be visually inspected and checked for proper operation,

including resetting, where appropriate, at least annually."

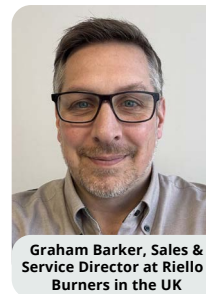
Visual inspection of the valve for indications of corrosion and/or oil leakage at junctions with the oil supply pipe is recommended, and the capillary tube should be carefully examined for any damage or kinks, and also to ensure that it's properly secured.

Appropriate test equipment should be used to verify that the fire valve

is operating correctly, that the valve closes at the correct temperature, and can be manually reset when the sensor temperature has dropped to normal.

Fire valves are important and should not be disregarded. They provide a vital and frequently unnoticed function in protecting houses from the risk of fire originating at the appliance, potentially saving lives even though they may never be needed.

Fault-finding: What happens when engineers need technical support?



Every burner engineer knows the moment: you're on site, everything's wired in, but the burner just isn't playing ball. Whether you're dealing with a smaller residential oil unit or a powerful commercial gas burner, a solid grasp of fault-finding is essential, but so is knowing when to pick up the phone and being sure of getting the technical support you need.

Riello's UK technical helpline taking thousands of calls a year from heating engineers, installers and service technicians looking for support. We speak with Graham Barker, Sales & Service Director at Riello Burners in the UK, Carrier RLC EMEA says, our UK to find out more about the questions being asked by oil heating engineers.

They vary in complexity, but many follow familiar patterns, revealing interesting insights into the realities of burner commissioning and servicing, as well as the importance of good design, responsive support and clear documentation.

What are engineers asking about most often?

Burners that won't fire

In both residential and commercial settings, the most common enquiry is refreshingly simple: "The burner's not doing anything, what do I check?" Often, it's an external enable signal holding things up, or a simple wiring or voltage issue. Riello's control logic is designed with safety and clarity in mind, if something isn't right, it will hold fire rather than proceed.

Fan runs, nothing happens

With Riello's residential oil burners, another recurring theme is the fan motor running while the burner fails to progress. This usually points to a flame sensor or component issue. The good news? With some basic checks to resistance values, coil voltages and the sensor, the fault can often be quickly identified. These aren't complex systems, but they're smart, and they know when to stop and wait for the engineer to catch up.

Emissions expectations

Burner performance isn't just about ignition; it's about the fine balance of combustion. Another common question is: "What emissions should I expect?" For oil burners the typical CO₂ level is in the 11.5-12.5% range and, with proper tuning, minimal smoke numbers.

These targets reflect Riello's focus on efficient combustion and emissions control, helping engineers meet performance expectations and compliance requirements with confidence.

The one-second lockout

A particularly frustrating fault is the burner locking out one second after ignition. Engineers know it's about the combustion triangle - fuel, air and spark - but Riello systems offer a level of clarity that helps you track the issue down. On Low NOx RDB BX models, even flame luminosity comes into play, with diffuser settings used to enhance flame detection in blue-flame conditions.

Flame-on, flame-off... and repeat

Closely related is the issue of continuous cycling with no lockout, a sign of communication breakdown between the flame sensor and the controller. Again, simple checks or adjustments to combustion settings usually solve the problem. In Riello's Low NOx RDB BX models, fine-tuning of the diffuser settings can also make all the difference as the issue can be that the Low NOx 'blue' flame is present, but due to reduced luminosity the flame sensor cannot register the 'running' flame - it will

detect the initial ignition which has a high luminosity, but when this quickly settles to the running flame the luminosity can be much lower which results in the flame sensor not 'seeing' the flame and attempting a new ignition sequence..

Sizing the right nozzle

When it comes to oil burners, nozzle sizing is a question that never goes away. It depends on heat input, fuel type and pump pressure, and while the maths is straightforward, Riello's documentation makes it easier to navigate. The aim is always balanced performance, and predictable control across stages of operation.

Servomotor switchovers

With the phase-out of certain older servomotors, engineers occasionally encounter wiring challenges when fitting new replacements. These conversions are fully supported with new diagrams and advice, and most issues can be traced back to one or two incorrectly assigned cables.

Understanding the blink code

Finally, burner diagnostics remain a favourite topic. For burners using Siemens RMG or RMO controllers, the built-in 'blink code' system allows rapid diagnosis of lockout causes. One push of the reset button puts the controller into diagnostic mode, and the LED pulses out the fault code, making it easier than ever to see what's wrong and get it sorted.

Burner confidence starts with support

What these enquiries show, above all, is that even the most capable engineers value backup. Riello believes that technical excellence shouldn't stop at the product. Riello's burners are built for reliability, but when things don't go to plan, the right support is important as Graham concludes: "Engineers are there to keep the heat on so, if a query arises, our technical team is there to guide, advise and support with a helpline that really delivers."



Warmflow driving the industry forward with free heat pump training

Warmflow, is making significant strides in the heating industry by offering free training on its latest product, the Zeno R290 Air Source Heat Pump. With 10 training centres strategically located across the UK and Ireland, Warmflow is committed to empowering heating engineers with the knowledge and skills required to install and maintain this advanced technology.



Warmflow's free training sessions cover various aspects of the Zeno R290 Air Source Heat Pump, including installation, commissioning, and troubleshooting. The Warmflow Zeno Air

Source Heat Pump range features Warmlink technology, a remote control and diagnostic platform that allows engineers to monitor, control, and run diagnostics on its installations from anywhere in the world, reducing unnecessary call-outs (subject to terms & conditions).

By offering these free training programs, Warmflow demonstrates a strong commitment to advancing the heating industry and supporting engineers in adopting greener technologies. The company's investment in training facilities and programs ensures that installers are well-equipped to meet the growing demand for sustainable heating solutions.

To register your interest in Warmflow's free training on the Zeno R290 Air Source Heat Pump, contact Warmflow at 028 9262 1515 or sales@warmflow.co.uk.

An apprenticeship journey: Through the eyes of Thomas Fenwick

Interview by Margaret Major, Managing Editor

At Oil Installer, we love hearing from the new generation of talent entering our sector, bringing fresh perspectives, new skills, and infectious enthusiasm. Recently, I had the pleasure of chatting with Thomas Fenwick, a 20-year-old apprentice making his mark at Heating World of Spares (HWOS). Thomas is currently working towards a Level 3 Multichannel Marketing qualification and has a refreshingly honest and upbeat take on life as an apprentice in the heating industry. Here's what he had to say.

Margaret Major: Thomas, tell us a little about your background.

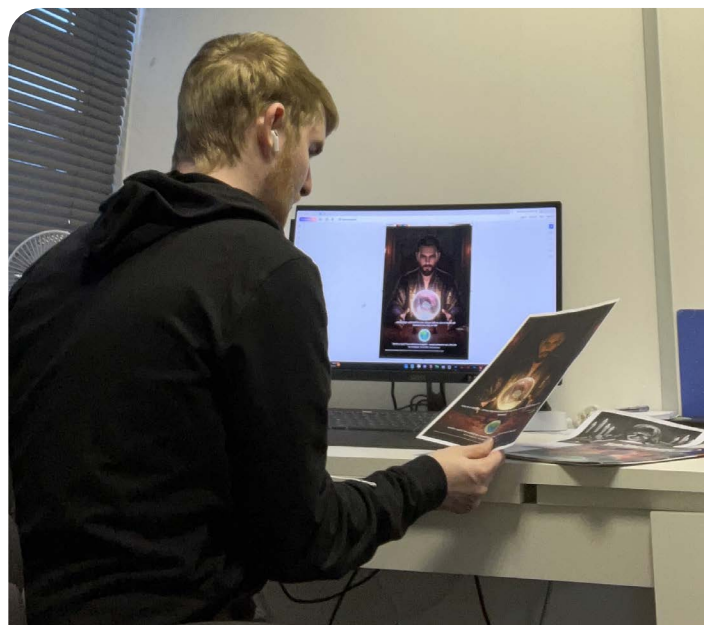
Thomas Fenwick: I'm from Darlington and have always had a passion for working with computers, media, and photography. Throughout school, I really enjoyed those subjects, which led me to pursue them into college. I decided against university because I felt an apprenticeship was the better route for me. I also work part-time in a pub, which has really helped me develop my communication skills.

MM: And what are you studying now?

TF: I'm currently working towards a Level 3 Multichannel Marketing qualification at HWOS. I'm really happy where I am — the people here are so kind, respectful, and funny. I'm incredibly grateful for all the opportunities I've been given and excited for what's to come.

MM: How does your apprenticeship fit into your studies?

TF: It's great knowing that what I'm doing has real-world impact. My manager, James, does everything he can to help me progress. I can't thank him and the company



enough for everything they've done for me.

MM: How did your placement with HWOS come about?

TF: I initially applied to a training provider just to get a qualification, but it turned out to be so much more. After some coursework and scenario-based training, I had a placement with a geothermal heating supplier, which was fascinating. Later, I had the chance to help with marketing materials at a podcast at Teesside University. After my placement ended, I was offered an apprenticeship at HWOS — and I haven't looked back!

MM: What's a typical day like for you at HWOS?

TF: When I get in, I check what I was working on previously.



Coursework takes up a lot of my time, especially now as I'm nearing the end of my apprenticeship. If James gives me a task, I get straight onto it. I've been trusted more and more, and now I add products to our website independently. I also keep an eye on upcoming promotions, so I'm always prepared.

MM: What do you enjoy most about your time there?

TF: Honestly, I've loved every minute. If I had to pick one thing, it would be creating marketing material for our loyalty club. It's a bit of a break from the coursework and really satisfying to see the results.

MM: What's the best piece of advice you've been given so far?

TF: It's a quote that stuck with me: "I'd rather it be done properly rather than quickly." That came up while we were working on the 2024 catalogue, and it's something I always keep in mind now.

MM: What strengths do you think you bring as a young person entering the sector?

TF: Over time, I'll gain a lot of product knowledge, but right now, my digital skills really help. I know how to manage content online, which can support the team when they're busy.

MM: The domestic heating sector is evolving — any thoughts on its future?

TF: Change will open doors for new companies and give bigger businesses the chance to offer more innovative products. But there's also risk: smaller businesses might struggle to keep up. It's a fine balance.

MM: What advice would you give to someone thinking about joining the industry?

TF: Give it a try! Even if it doesn't work out, you won't know unless you give it a shot. There's so much to learn, and every day you discover something new and fascinating.

MM: Was this an industry you chose deliberately?

TF: Honestly, no! I never thought I'd work for a company in the heating sector, but I'm really glad I accepted the opportunity. After the first week, it just clicked — I knew I'd enjoy it.


MM: What are your next career steps?

TF: I'd love to stay at HWOS, but if not, I'd aim for a larger company where I can continue to learn and possibly work on something related to TV or film.


MM: And finally, what do you enjoy outside of work?


TF: I'm a big fan of gaming and chatting with friends online to relax. I also love watching motorsport and spending time out and about with friends and family.

Thomas's story shows just how vital apprenticeships are to the future of our sector — bringing in bright, enthusiastic individuals who not only contribute immediately but also bring valuable skills that will help businesses evolve in an increasingly digital world. We'll definitely be keeping an eye on Thomas's journey and would love to hear from other young people in the sector — drop me a line margaret@oilinstaller.co.uk



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Fuel price commentary

Oil heating users are the big winners on price

In the last edition of Fuel Price Commentary, we posed the question whether there could finally be some light at the end of the tunnel for heating users, following several years of extremely high prices

That question seems to have been timely because the latest data from the Sutherland Tables does indeed reveal some significant price falls, including for mains gas, the most popular fuel in the UK. Compared to a year ago, the average annual running costs for the majority of fuels have fallen, so let's focus on those that haven't. LPG users are the big losers with all regions seeing price increases. In the UK, Ofgem's price cap puts a ceiling on how much suppliers can charge for mains gas, but LPG is not included, and unlike heating oil, the global price has remained relatively high, although it is cheaper now than at the beginning of the year.

In Northern Ireland, the annual cost of wood pellets and some types of electric heating have also increased, which is bad news for the users concerned. However, in the UK and Republic of Ireland, prices for these fuels have fallen.

However, without doubt, the biggest winners continue to be users of oil heating, which is the cheapest heating fuel option in all regions. Not only is the annual cost lower than a year ago, but it is also cheaper than the longer term four-year average price. There's a good chance this will continue. The price of crude oil has fallen significantly since the beginning of the year, and it's likely that the price of heating oil will continue to fall through the summer as this feeds through. Unlike most other fuels, the price of crude oil has now returned to pre-pandemic, pre-Ukraine war levels and, with Trump back in the Whitehouse, they may well stay low.

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

GREAT BRITAIN (Average)					
	Mar-24	Mar-25	Price change	% Difference	4 year average
Electric storage heaters	3324	3036	-£288	-9%	£3,012
Gas condensing boiler	1577	1442	-£135	-9%	£1,375
LPG Condensing boiler radiators and DHW cylinder	1904	2023	£119	6%	£1,732
Oil condensing boiler, radiators and DHW cylinder	1373	1293	-£80	-6%	£1,349
Wood pellets	2340	1948	-£392	-17%	£2,120
Air source heat pump radiators	2744	2316	-£428	-16%	£2,625
Air source heat pump underfloor	2309	2116	-£193	-8%	£2,235
NORTHERN IRELAND					
	Mar-24	Mar-25	Price change	% Difference	4 year average
Electric storage heaters	3675	3331	-344	-9%	£2,806
Gas condensing boiler	2215	1782	-433	-20%	£1,601
LPG Condensing boiler radiators and DHW cylinder	2209	2291	82	4%	£2,112
Oil condensing boiler, radiators and DHW cylinder	1333	1211	-122	-9%	£1,2364
Wood pellets	1817	1877	60	3%	£1,670
Air source heat pump radiators	2875	3003	128	4%	£2,448
Air source heat pump underfloor	2377	2517	140	6%	£2,069
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND					
	Mar-24	Mar-25	Price change	% Difference	4 year average
Electric storage heaters	4039	3790	-249	-6%	€3,551
Gas condensing boiler	2398	2379	-19	-1%	€2,205
LPG Condensing boiler radiators and DHW cylinder	2856	2973	117	4%	€2,680
Oil condensing boiler, radiators and DHW cylinder	1899	1802	-97	-5%	€1,791
Wood pellets	2345	2248	-97	-4%	€1,984
Air source heat pump radiators	3420	2634	-786	-23%	€3,009
Air source heat pump underfloor	2884	2272	-612	-21%	€2,576

Notes: 4-year average April 2021 to March 2025
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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