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Winter 2025 Volume 19 No 4

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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](http://www.oilinstaller.co.uk)  
Managing Director: Emma Hatherall

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Winter 2025 Volume 19 No 4  
ISSN 1755 – 3490

# Foreword

In this issue, we expected to be providing you with our analysis of the Government's Warm Homes Plan (WHP). Unfortunately, we can't because, surprise, surprise, it's been delayed.



It appears that the new plan is having a difficult birth, and you can read more in our Future Ready Fuel update on page 5.

Whether the WHP turns out to be positive for our industry, or even for off-gas grid households, remains to be seen, but OFTEC is preparing for the future, so that we can support our industry and customers regardless of the political party in power. Our lobbying work, with ministers, elected representatives and civil servants includes Westminster, Holyrood, the Welsh Parliament, Stormont or the Oireachtas in the Republic of Ireland, and has never been more vital than it is today. Because of that, we have taken recent steps to strengthen our lobbying, communications and marketing activity – read more on page 5

Many of you will no doubt have seen the recent news stories following the publication of what can only be called a damning report on the problems caused by poor quality government-funded solid wall insulation work. The report makes it clear that the incompetence of installers, and a lack of effective oversight and governance in the sector – which meant that poor work went unchecked and those with problems were often unable to obtain redress – were key reasons for the problems occurring. What the report doesn't say, is that the design of the schemes made these problems inevitable – but that's another story.

The DESNZ Minister, Martin McCluskey has announced that reforms will be made and, despite not being involved in the scandal it seems possible that the heating sector may also be included in the review. It's vital that any changes benefit both the customer and workforce, so should this happen, OFTEC will be pro-active in defending the interests of the industry.

**Paul Rose,**

Paul Rose,  
OFTEC Chief Executive.

## OFTEC: setting the standard for compliance in a changing heating industry.

At OFTEC, compliance isn't just a requirement; it's the foundation of everything we do. As the heating industry continues to evolve with new technologies and regulations, we remain committed to ensuring that our members and technicians are always operating at the highest standards of safety and environmental responsibility.

However, each quarter a few

companies 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.

1st April 2025 - 30th June 2025 a total of 11 businesses had their membership revoked.

The revoked businesses are:

Company No.	Business Name
13795	Aqua Flame Plumbing & Heating
500546	CRB Plumbing and Heating
104047	Cunco Ltd
105758	F J Proud and Sons Chester Ltd
501172	James Ramsay (Glasgow) Limited
7670	John Munday Plumbing + Heating
10679	Liam Walker
502438	Mel Hemmings Plumbing and Heating
105932	Nordic Plumbers
5267	Vale Heating and Plumbing Ltd
501359	Woodlands Stove & Fuel

## OFTEC's autumn webinar series: a resounding success

OFTEC's autumn webinar series has once again proved to be a valuable resource for heating professionals, offering essential insights to stay ahead in a rapidly evolving industry.

Designed to address both the challenges and opportunities facing the heating sector, the series covered a wide range of topics - from navigating complex industry regulations to embracing the future of decarbonisation. These webinars helped equip attendees with the knowledge needed to shape the industry's future while offering a unique opportunity to stay on top of the latest developments. The added

bonus of exclusive offers and discounts for OFTEC registered technicians further highlighted the tangible benefits that OFTEC offers.

As the industry continues to transform, initiatives like this help to ensure that heating professionals remain competitive, compliant, and well-prepared for whatever lies ahead. Attendee feedback was overwhelmingly positive, underscoring the value of these learning opportunities.

If you missed the series, don't worry! All webinars are now available to view on the OFTEC portal.

# Future Ready Fuel update

**Warm Homes Plan delayed – but will renewable liquid heating fuels be included?**



## Future Ready Fuel

By the time you read this, it's possible that the Labour Government may have finally published its policy proposals for heat decarbonisation – its long-promised Warm Homes Plan.

The plan was due to be published on 22nd October but was delayed by wrangles over funding with the Treasury, and the need to respond to a damning report by the National Audit Office into numerous failings with government-funded solid wall insulation work. Even with the huge subsidies now available, heat pumps remain out of reach of most households, which makes it hard to understand why the potential of renewable liquid heating fuels continues to be overlooked.

Ahead of the Budget, there was speculation that some of the funding in the £13.2 billion plan allocated to the deployment of heat pumps would be cut, and the Boiler Upgrade Scheme curtailed or even cancelled, but that remains to be seen.

The current overall policy focus on electrification is unlikely to change, but OFTEC and UKIFDA have lobbied hard for the inclusion of a renewable liquid heating fuel obligation (RLHFO), and a change to the tax on fuels like HVO when

used in heating. We have done this both directly to MPs, ministers and civil servants, and indirectly through our Future Ready Fuel campaign, which has generated over 1,000 letters from oil-heating householders to rural MPs in the last two months.

Our message remains the same – supporting renewable liquid heating fuels is a way to make significant decarbonisation progress immediately, with no capital cost, disruption or subsidy needed. By increasing the renewable percentage of the blend, this may become a final decarbonisation solution for some (and we think the Government underestimates how many), but because no capital investment is required, it also leaves the door open to other alternatives, which retains consumer choice.

This could be just what the Government needs and we will update you once the plan is published, so look out for updates in the OFTEC e-news. We have developed response plans for a range of different outcomes once the plan is released.

### Rural MP support grows

Regardless of what the Warm Homes Plan contains, we now have very strong support among many rural MPs, and 15 attended our Westminster drop-in event on 15th October. There is clearly concern among rural MPs about the need for rural friendly policies across a range of key topics, including heat decarbonisation. This will stand us in good stead should we need to continue our work to get liquid fuels supported in heat policy, beyond the publication of the Warm Homes Plan - which seems likely based on recent engagement with civil servants.

# ACT NOW

## Support the Future Ready Fuel campaign

Changing government policy is mainly achieved by who shouts loudest. Add your voice to our campaign for renewable liquid heating fuels and help to safeguard the future of YOUR INDUSTRY. Visit the Future Ready Fuel website and send a letter today!

### Free flyers for your customers

If your customers support our campaign it will greatly increase our chances of success. Free flyers are available - just contact [marketing@oftec.org](mailto:marketing@oftec.org) to order your stock today!

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# Expand your registration now

For heating engineers, OFTEC registration remains a well-recognised benchmark of competence and professionalism within the industry. However, as the heating sector evolves, the value of broadening the scope of one's registration has never been greater. Extending registration not only enhances professional credibility but also aligns technicians with the long-term needs of the market.

## Broadening service capability

Expanding registration enables technicians to undertake a wider range of work, from traditional liquid fuel systems to renewables and energy efficiency technologies. In an increasingly competitive market, this versatility allows professionals to meet a broader spectrum of client requirements while maintaining high technical standards.

## Future-proofing against industry change

The transition towards low-carbon heating solutions is accelerating, driven by both policy and consumer demand. Technicians who extend their registration to include renewables or hybrid systems are in a better position to adapt to changing governmental developments and capitalise on emerging opportunities within the sector.

## Strengthening professional standing

An expanded registration portfolio signals a commitment to continuous professional development and adherence to best practice. Clients, contractors, and regulatory bodies increasingly seek assurance that technicians possess the necessary competence to manage complex, integrated systems. Broader registration helps build that trust with the consumer.

## Commercial advantage

Beyond technical benefits, expanding registration has clear commercial implications. A technician able to provide multiple services is more likely to secure long-term client relationships and achieve greater revenue resilience, particularly as seasonal demand fluctuates.

In an industry that is undergoing rapid change, OFTEC technicians who expand their registration demonstrate foresight, adaptability, and professionalism. Doing so ensures not only compliance with current standards but also readiness for the technologies and expectations that will define the future of heating.



## We need a managed transition – the implications of the closure of Lindsey refinery

**The liquid fuel heating industry depends on a robust fuel supply sector. UKIFDA's CEO, Ken Cronin, provides an update on recent developments.**

The last twelve months have seen significant changes in the fuel supply industry. In April came the closure of the Grangemouth refinery in Scotland, redeploying some of the assets to create an import terminal. Ahead of this, late last year the closure of the associated regional hub Dalston in Cumbria was finalised.

In a further blow to the sector, at the end of June came the news that the Lindsey Oil Refinery in North-East England was going into immediate liquidation, this was followed by two associated terminals.

First and foremost, our thoughts should be with the dedicated teams at the refineries and terminals who now face immense uncertainty.

Our industry is incredibly resilient. Despite facing extra miles, increased drivers' hours, more complex logistics and significant investments, we have found a way through the previous challenges. However, the loss of Lindsey Oil Refinery (without any replacement) is significant. The facility provided c10% of the UK's liquid fuel needs but on a regional basis the impact is much greater, especially given the previous announcements.

When the announcement around Grangemouth was made public, I urged the Government to manage the situation properly and called for a comprehensive and proactive approach to energy transition, rather than a drawn-out, fragmented response. The site could be converted to have a key role in the future supply of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) and HVO, which is a byproduct of the SAF production process.

However, the news regarding Lindsey is a hammer blow and we are now dealing with the triple impact of the closure of several facilities within a very short timeframe. This is not what you would describe as managed.

In the short term we are working with government and other sectors to ensure that a coordinated plan is in place to make sufficient fuel product available for our end users as we head into winter and sufficient supplies on our island to handle weather-related and unplanned operational disruptions.

Longer term, we need to replace the lost output from Lindsey and create a plan of what the next 20 years looks like.

# Staff changes

## Malcolm Farrow appointed director of marketing and external affairs

We are pleased to announce the promotion of Malcolm Farrow to Director of Marketing and External Affairs, effective 1st October 2025.

In this newly expanded role, Malcolm will lead our lobbying and public relations efforts across the UK and Ireland, working to enhance the organisation's profile and ensure our voice is heard on key policy and industry matters.

Malcolm has been a vital member of the organisation for many years, bringing a strong commitment to effective communication. His leadership in marketing has helped shape our brand and engagement efforts, and this new position will allow him to build on that success in a broader external affairs capacity.

## Emma Adams new role in OFTEC

We're pleased to announce that Emma Adams has changed from her role at OFTEC, moving from OFTEC Direct to join the Inspection Department as the new Post Inspection Administrator. The change took effect from Monday, 13th October 2025.



Paul Rose (left) and Malcolm Farrow (right)

## Inspection services manager recruitment

Due to retirement, OFTEC is seeking candidates for the internal full-time role of Inspection Services Manager to work in its busy registration services department.

This can be a head office or home-based role as regular travel throughout the UK and Ireland is required to support our network of contracted Regional Inspectors. Inspections are a fundamental part of the Government's Competent Person Scheme (CPS) and Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS). OFTEC's inspection services manager is at the heart of these operations to ensure our regional inspectors oversee compliance with these schemes, and technicians' work undertaken in homes throughout the UK and Ireland is to the required standard. The remuneration package is commensurate with this role which includes a company car and pension scheme.

For further details please see the careers page on the OFTEC website or call Adrian Lightwood on 01473 618570 or email [lightwood@oftec.org](mailto:lightwood@oftec.org)

# Have you got what it takes to be an OFTEC Inspector?

If you are thinking it's time to come off the tools, don't let all your knowledge go to waste - your industry may still have an important role for you!

We are currently looking for talented and conscientious ex-heating professionals to join our network of self-employed regional inspectors.

Ideally OFTEC inspectors will be able to diversify into renewables (particularly heat pumps), along with a strong commitment to oil heating and solid fuel.

After an induction the successful candidate will be used to provide on-

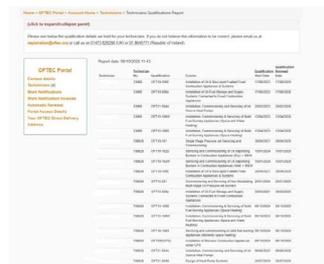
site inspection services for OFTEC's competent person scheme (CPS) and the microgeneration certification scheme (MCS).

## Vacancies are open for these areas:

- North Wales
- Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire or Northamptonshire area
- Northern Ireland

If this opportunity interests you, then please email John Vinter, our Inspection Services Manager ([jvinter@oftec.org](mailto:jvinter@oftec.org)) who will then contact you for an informal chat about the role.

# Helping you to keep track of your courses/qualifications



whereby you can see all the courses/qualifications held by you, or your technician(s), with the start date and renewal date so you can plan ahead and arrange renewal courses.

Behind every scope of registration there is a need to hold a relevant course or qualification. If you have more than one scope of registration or your business has more than one technician, it isn't easy to keep track of the five-year qualification renewal date. Following feedback, the registration portal on the OFTEC website has been updated and now has an additional feature

To access this feature, please sign into the OFTEC website <https://www.oftec.org/portal>, select the 'OFTEC Portal', and in the menu choose 'Technicians' and within the technician page click the 'Technician Qualification Report' icon.

We're always looking for ways to improve our website. If you have any suggestions or ideas, please share them with us at [marketing@oftec.org](mailto:marketing@oftec.org)

# Technician Forum outcomes

In October OFTEC held its second technician forum of the year where views were sought from heating technicians on industry matters and OFTEC's operations. The meeting was held via Teams with some interesting topics discussed.

## Technicians attending were -

- Antony, a long-serving oil heating technician from Liskeard, Cornwall first registered in 2007.
- Adrian, from Roxburghshire, Scotland who works on oil heating, but is also MCS registered for heat pumps.
- Dean from North Yorkshire, who works on oil heating and is also MCS registered for heat pumps.
- Brian from Waterford, Ireland, a technician on oil heating, who also works as a trainer of OFTEC courses at an approved centre.

Staff from OFTEC head office and regional inspectors also attended.

The first topic of discussion was of particular interest to Adrian and Dean

(who currently hold MCS registration) and will next year be required to transition over to the new MCS installer certification scheme (called MCS:2025). Jonathan King (OFTEC Registration Manager) updated that the registration department are busy working with UKAS to obtain ISO 17065 accreditation for MCS:2025 before rolling the new scheme out in 2026.

David Knipe (OFTEC Technical and Training Manager) then gave an update on the OFTEC assessments. This included the OFT101 single-stage and the OFT201 multi-stage commissioning courses, which are currently being looked at by an industry working group with a view to including the latest pressure jet burner technology (i.e. modulating burners).

Then it was over to the technicians' questions. Brian asked about oil pipework testing and the need to exclude a de-aeration device (if fitted) on the test. David Knipe confirmed this was the case. He also took an action to separately reinforce the requirements of pressure testing oil pipework and the regularity. Brian then went on to ask about alternatives

to limestone chippings used on condensate soakaways. Again, Technical took another action away to find out what alternatives could be used.

OFTEC control documentation also came up and what the group thought would be the demand for digital versions of these forms. Views were given and OFTEC's management will take these comments away and decide whether to make a digital option available in the future.

The final point was made by Antony who asked if oil delivery tanker drivers are qualified to risk assess a tank before filling. The view was that they would not be required to hold the OFTEC oil tank installation course but should have in-house training provided by the fuel supplier on safe working practices to ensure safe delivery of fuel.

The group were thanked for their valuable input, and all discussions will be fed into the OFTEC Scheme Committee and help shape future decisions. The next meeting will take place in Spring 2026.

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# Carbon reductions in Ireland – where is the appetite for sustainable biofuels?

Ireland is a divided country, not just by geography, but also by bureaucracy. The Republic is part of the European Union whereas Northern Ireland is part of the UK and therefore not part of the EU. But following Brexit and the fiasco around the Windsor Framework which was meant to alleviate some of the new barriers that came between the EU and UK, NI and GB. It's complicated and talking to any business involved in cross-border and cross-channel trade the feeling is that it's a controversial trading relationship.

In terms of energy policy, we have a single market for electricity, and this works well. On the liquid fuel side, kerosene is the main heating fuel for 60% of homes in NI and 40% of homes in the Republic (c.1.2M homes).

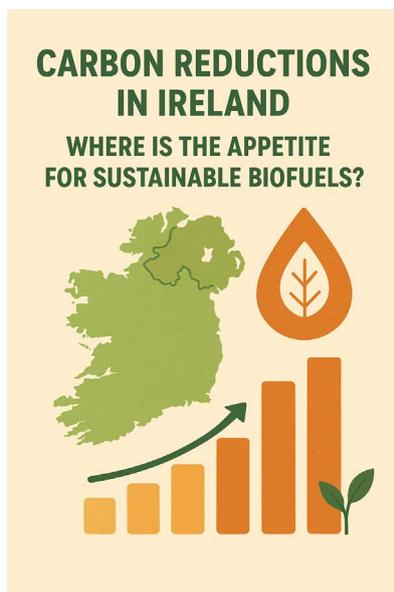
Both jurisdictions have obligations to meet serious carbon reductions by 2030 but are approaching this with varying degrees of ambition. In the Republic, under the EU's Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR) they have agreed to deliver a 42% reduction of emissions compared to 2005 levels by 2030.

The latest EPA projections show that currently implemented policies and measures (WEM) will achieve a reduction of 9.5% on 2005 levels by 2030, significantly short of the 42% reduction target. So, in response, Minister Darragh O'Brien has drafted legislation (The Renewable Heating Obligation) which is proposed to be introduced in 2026. As written currently, it proposes a low start rate – 1.5% and 3% in years one and two. As previously reported, OFTEC and UKIFDA have provided robust evidence to show the industry is ready to deploy at up to 20% to make a real difference in terms of carbon reductions, and discussions are ongoing around a 5%, 10% and 15% blend of HVO into kerosene to 2030.

Our unique selling point (USP) is that a 20% blend of HVO will give the same carbon reduction as the installation of 160,000 heat pumps in one go – that is hard point for government to ignore.

If we look at what is happening in Northern Ireland, things are moving at a much slower pace. Energy is a devolved matter in NI, meaning local politicians could do something completely different to Westminster, but looking at what happened several years ago with the RHI biomass fiasco, it is unlikely that a NI Minister will risk deviating far from UK policy.

We are still waiting on a NI Energy Strategy from the Department of Economy (it was promised in the summer) and recently the Department for Communities (DfC) held



an open session on the Draft Climate Action Plan that is currently being prepared. Note this CAP is for the years 2023 – 2027 and we are already near the end of 2025! Alarming, the plan advocates two technologies for the 526,000 homes that currently use heating oil; a switch to natural gas and low carbon heating technologies delivered through electrification – there is no mention of sustainable biofuels.

These proposals are being put forward despite the plan itself stating **“it is recognised that fuel switching to natural gas is not a long-term solution to emissions reduction”** and the Department of Economy in its recent consultation on support for low carbon heating in residential buildings stating **“the cost of running a heat pump is less expensive compared to a gas boiler but would be more expensive compared to an oil boiler”** and in its consultation Using Biofuels to Transition Away from Fossil Fuels for Heating **“technologies like heat pumps are currently costlier than traditional boilers”**.

The plan lacks any real ambition and in terms of low-carbon homes, it proposes a budget of only £1.8M for supporting 250 homes to move to heat pumps by 2027! The saving from this will deliver approx. 825 tonnes of carbon – a negligible amount.

The NI Audit Office agrees with us as it recently published a damning report on the green energy strategy implementation, explaining that since 2020, £107M has been spent in a bid to deliver net zero targets and affordable energy, but concluding that there is a very significant risk that two of the three key targets will be missed by 2030.

Given the audit office findings and the lacklustre draft Climate Action Plan, our industry feels rightly aggrieved as we have lobbied hard on sustainable biofuels being part of the solution, even going as far as establishing a joint industry and DfE biofuels group to provide detailed information and address supply and sustainability issues.

Following the damning report we have written to every MLA suggesting they need to urgently get DfC to review the plan with a view to including sustainable biofuels. If this Government is serious about reducing emissions, sustainable biofuels need to be part of the solution. A deployment of a 20% HVO blend would deliver carbon savings in the region of 500,000 tonnes, immediately – a very hard statistic for government to ignore given that the 2030 deadline is just around the corner.





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# New Commercial Director for Navien UK

Navien UK has appointed Greg Banham as its new Commercial Director, succeeding Graham Parkes, who will retire after a successful tenure steering the company's commercial growth across the UK heating market.

Greg brings more than 25 years of experience within the heating and plumbing industry, having held senior commercial and leadership roles across a range of well-respected businesses. With a deep understanding of installer needs, merchant relationships and the evolving route-to-market landscape, he joins Navien with a strong track record of driving sustainable growth and building trusted partnerships.

## Strengthening relationships

A leading brand in South Korea and North America, Navien is strengthening its UK market position through innovation and strategic growth. Greg's appointment will

continue to drive this expansion across the domestic and commercial heating sectors, with a growing network of trusted installers and merchant partners.

Commenting on his appointment, Greg said: "Navien's reputation for quality, innovation, and reliability is top class, and I'm excited to be joining the business at such a pivotal time. With a clear focus on growth, Navien has huge potential in the UK market."

"My focus will be on strengthening relationships with our installer network and merchant partners while exploring new opportunities across the commercial sector. By continuing to simplify installation, enhance product support, and expand our product suite, we aim to make Navien a leading brand of choice for heating solutions across the UK."



Greg Banham and Graham Parkes

## A seamless transition

Reflecting on his time with the company, Graham Parkes, outgoing Commercial Director, said: "It has been a privilege to play a part in Navien's growth journey in the UK. Over the past few years, we have built a strong foundation, working closely with our distribution partners and installers to bring Navien's innovative technology to more homes and businesses.

"I am delighted to be handing over to Greg, whose wealth of experience and industry understanding will ensure continued momentum for the brand. I wish him and the team every success in the next chapter of Navien's UK growth story."

# Worcester Bosch launches enhanced loyalty scheme

Worcester Bosch has launched an updated version of its loyalty programme, now known as VAULT, which will provide installers with more rewards and support in the ever-changing heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) industry.

The new programme has the same well-known loyalty levels (Worcester Bosch Installer, Worcester Bosch Accredited Installer and Worcester Bosch Accredited Partner), but installers can now level up by fitting a range of multi-technology heating products such as oil or gas boilers, air conditioning units and heat pumps, while also getting access to more exciting benefits and educational assets.

## The new benefits on offer include:

- Instant guarantee certificates for boilers

- New and improved Rewards shop items
- Product and business certification badges
- Ability to spend points from the app
- Ability to extend a guarantee from the app
- Unlock more heat pump and hybrid finance options
- New Marketplace Rewards
- Personalised dashboard

Speaking about its evolution, Sales and Marketing Director at Worcester Bosch, Jo Shepherd said: "The enhancement of our loyalty scheme, VAULT, is a natural evolution for Worcester Bosch as we commit to offering multi-technology solutions to installers and consumers. The HVAC

market is rapidly changing, and we want to ensure that our installers are empowered with the right tools and supported throughout this transition to enable their customers to make more informed choices."

Installers will continue to be rewarded for fitting Worcester Bosch products by earning points when they register their installs through their loyalty account. They can then convert points to cash on a card, or spend them on workwear, power tools and more. Installers even have the option to reinvest their points in marketing and business support.

Installers are encouraged to log in to the portal or WB Professional app with their existing login details to onboard onto the VAULT scheme. Existing guarantees, Gas Safe notifications and certificates will be carried over to their personalised account automatically, alongside their existing points and their expiry dates.



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# Grant's Kick The Carbon campaign delivers sustainability boost

Grant UK and Bath Rugby have completed the delivery of their Kick The Carbon campaign into primary schools for a second year. Throughout the 2024/25 season, more than 1,200 local school children took part, learning about sustainability and how we can all make changes to be more environmentally friendly.

The campaign, which started out as a light-hearted social media idea with some of the club's players, has developed into an impactful initiative with local primary schools. The first rollout in spring 2024 involved nine primary schools and nearly 900 Year 3 and 4 children. It extended into the 2024/25 season with even more schools and children from Years 5 and 6 participating.

Reaching more than 1,200 children – a 35% increase on the previous year – the second year exceeded targets set by both Bath Rugby Club and Grant UK.

The sessions were delivered to 11 new schools in Wiltshire and Somerset, and combined classroom activities with outside games which involved core rugby skills as well as engaging learning relating back to the classroom activities. In total, 88 hours of educational learning was provided, 20% more than in 2023/24.

## Feedback

Feedback from participating schools was very positive. One teacher wrote: "A great idea mixing sport with climate change. The coaches were great with activities as the lesson went on, which kept the children more engaged." Another teacher described their visit as: "Fantastic – the children absolutely loved it."

Other feedback really highlights how impactful sessions were. "The children were really engaged in both activities – the game element of the classroom task really



encouraged the children to be active learners," comments one teacher. Another wrote: "I thought the programme was amazing. The children from Years 5 and 6 are still talking about it."

"We are incredibly proud of what the programme has achieved," comments Anna Wakefield, Head of Internal Sales and Marketing at Grant. "Seeing it evolve into something that not only educates young people about sustainability but also inspires them to take action at home, is incredibly rewarding. Partnering with Bath Rugby has allowed us to connect with local communities through sport, in a meaningful and lasting way, and the enthusiasm from both the schools and the children has been fantastic."

"I am incredibly proud to have played a role in developing a powerful and impactful programme with Grant, aimed at educating children about carbon reduction through rugby," says Mike Fordham, Rugby Development Officer at Bath Rugby.

"Through our 'Kick The Carbon' initiative, I and other Bath Rugby coaches engaged with 1,216 pupils across 11 schools, sparking real excitement around both Bath Rugby and Grant UK. So much so, that students and teachers were asking how they could get more involved! This programme has been a fantastic example of how sport can be used as a vehicle to inspire, educate, and create opportunities for all children."



## KNIPEX raises over £1,000 for Band of Builders

Staff from KNIPEX UK have raised over £1,000 for construction charity, Band of Builders, lacing up their boots throughout July for a series of sponsored walks.

The initiative, driven by staff, saw UK colleagues walking individually, with their dogs, or during office lunch breaks, with the aim to hit the overall target of 450 miles (the distance from the UK office to KNIPEX UK head office in Wuppertal, Germany) to raise funds and awareness for a cause close to the heart of the construction sector. The highlight of the campaign was a group walk, bringing together team members for a collective effort and was rounded off with a well-earned picnic.

"Our main event was the group walk, which gave us a chance to come together as a team and show our support in person," said Laura Broadbent, Marketing Executive for KNIPEX UK. "But a lot of the effort happened in people's own time. Whether it was a lunchtime loop near the office, a longer weekend walk with the dog or time spent walking while on holiday, everyone found a way to contribute - and we're proud of what we raised."

Band of Builders, supports tradespeople and their families who are battling illness, injury, or financial hardship. With a growing number of project builds and support initiatives across the UK, the charity has become a crucial support network for the construction community.

KNIPEX, globally known for its high-quality pliers and hand tools, has a long-standing relationship with the trades and understands the pressures faced by those working in construction and related sectors. This latest fundraising activity forms part of the UK team's wider support for industry-related initiatives and charities that offer tangible help to those in need. The £1,000 raised will go directly to Band of Builders to support their ongoing projects, from home adaptations for injured tradespeople to wellbeing support and financial assistance for those facing tough times.



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# Heating the future:

## A visit to Warmflow's Lisburn facility

In September, Oil Installer was invited to the headquarters and manufacturing facility of Warmflow, in Lisburn, Northern Ireland. The visit proved to be a well-orchestrated blend of hospitality, local culture and serious engineering, offering a rare behind-the-scenes look at one of the UK & Ireland's leading heating-product manufacturers.

### A taste of Belfast

Arriving a day ahead of the factory tour, we were welcomed with lunch before boarding an open-top bus. A thoughtful addition to the itinerary, the tour of Belfast introduced the city's rich industrial past, history through the Troubles, and evolution into a modern, vibrant capital. More than simply sight-seeing, it offered context for the region in which Warmflow has operated for over half a century. Dinner and informal networking rounded off a very warm welcome.

### Factory tour: Engineering, innovation and culture

The next day, we visited Warmflow's Lisburn site for a tour of their modern manufacturing facility. The company's ethos becomes immediately clear: innovation, engineering precision, environmental awareness, and commitment to both installers and customers.

### Engineering excellence

Warmflow carries out full in-house design, manufacturing and fabrication and we saw modern panel benders, automated cutting and folding lines, robotic welding and efficient sub-assembly stations. The company prides itself on intelligent, repeatable production processes designed to improve accuracy, boost efficiency and reduce lead-times.

### Products and performance

Warmflow's portfolio includes high-efficiency oil-fired boilers, cylinders, warm air heaters, and a growing renewables range. During the visit we saw the full assembly process including rigorous performance testing.

A major highlight was the recent redevelopment of the Agentis oil boiler range. Driven by installer feedback and three years of focused R&D, the updated models now include over £250

worth of factory-fitted components that installers would previously have had to source and specify separately. These include a pressure-reducing valve, shock arrestor, enlarged plate heat exchanger, increased expansion-vessel capacity, and Warmflow's own Pro-Pack filtration. Integrating these into the manufacturing process and factory testing not only removes potential installation-stage error but also cuts more than two hours off a standard installation. The result is a slimmer, more efficient, AA-rated boiler that is easier to fit, simpler to service and significantly more cost-effective for installers and end users alike.

### Sustainability

Sustainability is embedded in both Warmflow's processes and product development. The facility generates its own electricity via a solar-panel system and recycles water used during testing. On the product side, a significant development is HVO readiness: all Agentis oil boilers are now HVO compatible with minor recommissioning, enabling an immediate and substantial reduction in carbon emissions. Warmflow's investment in its Zeno heat pump range, further reflects its commitment to offering quality low-carbon alternatives for those transitioning from traditional fuels.

### Culture and people

As impressive as the engineering, was the evident pride among the Warmflow team. Long-serving staff, disciplined quality-control and ongoing investment in automation all evidence a company that knows its strengths. Automation enhances consistency, while skilled craftsmanship remains where it delivers value. Warmflow's focus on being "installer-friendly" is clear – products are designed to be easy to install and service, supplied factory fitted with commonly required accessories and backed by strong after-sales support.

### Ethos

Throughout the visit the Warmflow philosophy came through strongly. Not only a manufacturer, the company regards itself as a partner to installers and specifiers:

- Performance and quality: High-efficiency products supported by rigorous in-house manufacturing.



- Sustainability: HVO-ready boilers and investments in low carbon technology.
- Installer support: Training and a complete after-sales service-infrastructure.
- Future-readiness: A commitment to bridging today's solutions and tomorrow's low-carbon alternatives.

### What this means for installers

- In-house manufacturing and state-of-the-art engineering deliver confidence in product quality, consistency and supply-chain reliability.
- HVO-compatibility offers a immediate, low-disruption option for customers wanting to reduce emissions.
- Investment in automation and testing ensures product excellence.
- Warmflow's installer support ecosystem of training, warranty registration and incentives – Warmflow Connect – benefits

### Final thoughts

The visit to Warmflow's Lisburn facility gave a clear sense of a company that honours its heritage and customer focus while embracing innovation and sustainability. For installers navigating an evolving heating market, the reassurance of a forward-looking, technically excellent manufacturer is invaluable.

As the industry tackles decarbonisation and rising customer expectations, Warmflow offers a compelling approach: blending heritage with modern engineering, product robustness with environmental ambition, and manufacturing strength with installer partnership.

Beyond the manufacturing insight, the open-top tour, warm welcome and networking added a human dimension to the experience. Warmflow understands that relationships matter as much as manufacturing excellence, and this visit demonstrated both in equal measure.

# TANK TOP



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# Reducing bills: The power of heating efficiency



## A case study in transition: Bentley Heating – Warmflow Zeno R290 air source heat pump installation

Bentley Heating, a well-established heating installation company based in Lincolnshire, partnered with Warmflow to deliver a high-performance, low-carbon heating solution using their new Warmflow Zeno R290 Air Source Heat Pump.

The installation formed part of a wider effort to help homeowners reduce their energy bills and transition to more sustainable, future-ready heating technologies.

The project involved a domestic customer who was looking to upgrade their existing air source heat pump system. With two older units already in place, the homeowner wanted a more efficient, low-maintenance solution that would improve energy performance while blending seamlessly into the property. A key consideration was to carry out the upgrade with minimal disruption to the home and its existing heating infrastructure.

### Project scope and approach

Following a detailed assessment of the property and its requirements, Bentley Heating recommended the Warmflow Zeno R290 22kW Air Source Heat Pump. The system was chosen for its natural R290 refrigerant, which has an ultra-low global warming

potential, and for its exceptionally quiet operation that makes it ideal for residential settings. Its compact footprint also ensured a discreet and aesthetically pleasing installation, while its high flow temperature capability – up to 75°C – made it compatible with the home's existing radiators.

In addition to its technical benefits, the Zeno R290 offers a user-friendly touchscreen interface and can be controlled remotely using the Warmlink App, providing the installer with convenient and intuitive monitoring over the heating system, reducing the need for onsite visits.

To ensure a smooth and efficient installation, Bentley Heating was supported on-site by Warmflow's Renewables Sales Manager, Niel Rumbold. His involvement in the assisted setup process helped streamline the integration of the new system and provided valuable guidance during commissioning.

### Installation and outcome

The project involved the removal of the two previous heat pumps, installation of the new Zeno R290 unit, and full integration with the existing central heating system. Bentley Heating managed the entire

process from start to finish, including commissioning and system handover with the work carried out swiftly and professionally, with minimal disruption to the household.

The result was a modern, efficient heating solution that delivered immediate benefits. The homeowner experienced a noticeable reduction in energy usage and costs, as well as quieter operation from the new external unit. The system's sleek, contemporary appearance also complemented the style of the home, adding both functional and visual value.

### Feedback

Richard Bentley of Bentley Heating commented: "The Zeno R290 was really easy to work with. The support from Warmflow made the whole process smoother. It's the best-performing system we've used so far."

This project highlights how the Warmflow Zeno R290 air source heat pump offers a smart, installer-friendly, and environmentally responsible solution for domestic heating. With expert partners like Bentley Heating and ongoing technical support from Warmflow, the transition to renewable heating has never been more accessible or effective.

# A growing opportunity: How sector transition is driving Navien's journey into renewables



**With heightening demand for manufacturers to support net-zero ambitions, Greg Banham, Commercial Director for Navien UK, explores how the leading provider of heating and hot water solutions is diversifying its product offering to help accelerate the development of renewables in the industry.**

The UK's heating sector is undergoing its most significant transformation in decades. With renewables and heat pump technology now central to net-zero targets, the Government aims to increase heat pump installations significantly as well as expand renewable energy capacity, both are key pathways to reducing emissions and dependence on fossil fuels.

From its foundations in high-efficiency boilers, Navien has consistently invested in advanced heating solutions, from its NCB ON range of efficient, future-proofed boilers and now to the launch of the PEM750 heat pump in the UK – Navien has made the decision to expand into the renewables space with a bold strategy and advanced new technologies, following its recognition of market demand and policy direction.

## Breaking down barriers

Driven by rising energy costs, evolving regulations and a growing number of government-backed incentives; installers and homeowners are feeling the pressure to switch to greener heating solutions. New regulations which came into effect on the 20th of May 2025, have made the installation of heat pumps simpler and more

flexible than ever before, encouraging homeowners to take the plunge into a more renewable heating system, making it increasingly important that installers consider doing the same.

Part of the Government's Warm Home Plan, the new regulations remove restrictions such as the 'one-meter rule' and allow for larger units, making installations more accessible – particularly in urban areas. Supporting progress towards the ambitious target set by the previous Government of 600,000 annual installations, they have also abolished planning restrictions and increased funding for the Boiler Upgrade Scheme to £295 million committed for 2025/26. This provides a £7,500 grant for eligible homeowners and landlords to help offset the cost of installing a heat pump.

These changes remove significant barriers to installation, and by doing so, are boosting the transition to low carbon heating and helping the UK to meet its ambitious net-zero targets by 2050. Simplifying the installation process, removing regulatory barriers and providing monetary support, may increase the pace of an already accelerating deployment of heat pumps across the UK.

## Future-proofed solutions

The increasing uptake of low-carbon solutions presents an attractive opportunity for installers and manufacturers alike. Navien's PEM750 heat pump is not only the solution provider's entry into the renewables space, but also its answer to several persistent industry challenges. The product has been developed to address installer concerns over ease of installation, system reliability and training support, while simultaneously responding to homeowner demands for energy efficiency, consistent comfort and long-term savings.

Navien recently celebrated a decade of operations in the UK, and this latest launch marks another significant step in its commitment to deliver both innovation and sustainability.

Designed with installers and homeowners front of mind, the PEM750 combines aesthetic design with high performance and is suited to both retrofit and new build. Backed by a seven-year warranty, the heat pump system is straightforward to install and maintain and can also be monitored via an app, giving homeowners remote control and enabling installers to identify and resolve any issues remotely.

A Monoblock system, the PEM750 simplifies installation by housing all critical components within the unit, which allows for easier wiring and faster set-up. The heat pump can also be configured with a wide range of parameters, suitable for both open-loop and zones systems, increasing versatility.

Navien's choice of R290 for the refrigerant gas at the heart of the PEM750 system design is reflective of the manufacturer's commitment to developing future-proofed technologies while delivering enhanced efficiency and reduced environmental impact.



Increasingly favoured by the industry, R290 has an ultra-low Global Warming Potential of 3, making it significantly more environmentally attractive than the previous standard R32 with its GWP of 675.

Not only does R290 align with current and future government regulations, but it is also more energy-efficient due to its thermodynamic properties and supports high performance, achieving temperatures up to 75°C.

### What low carbon uptake means for installer's

While the advancement of heating technologies continues to support the transition to renewable energy, many traditional oil and gas installers are left uncertain about what this shift means for their future. From navigating unfamiliar system designs to adapting installation methods and keeping up with evolving regulations, the transition can seem complex and daunting.

Nonetheless, change is clearly underway. In 2025, the UK was one of only three European markets to see growth in heat pump sales, with a notable 56% increase recorded last year. This signals strong momentum toward an established heat pump

market. However, the sector faces a significant workforce challenge. The Heat Pump Association estimates that nearly 40,000 full-time installers will be needed to meet the UK's deployment targets – yet, as of 2024, only around 9,000 installers had completed the necessary heat pump training qualifications.

To support installers with seizing the opportunity afforded by this growth and navigating the transition to renewable heating solutions, Navien has partnered with Ultimate Renewables Supplies, to offer practical training and access to essential resources. The programme focuses on understanding the system design and the installation of the new PEM750 heat pump, with installation kits provided on completion of the training. Ultimate Renewables will also assist installers through their MCS Umbrella scheme and offer ongoing service for the systems they help design – ensuring long-term support.

In addition to the new training scheme, Navien will also be working with air source heat pump specialists from across the UK to ensure that installations of the PEM750 are carried out to a high quality from day one of its launch.



### The right balance

Beyond the PEM750, the manufacturer is also exploring the possibility of hybrid systems. A lower carbon alternative for home heating, this typically consists of a gas or oil boiler and an air to water heat pump. The heat pump is expected to generate heat for 70-80% of the time and, during colder months, the boiler acts as a top-up, giving all year-round comfort. This would be the ideal solution for properties where a standalone heat pump may be unsuitable.

Navien UK is fully invested in supporting the UK's renewable heating transition. As a business, it recognises that the success of renewables lies in the balance between advancing technology and in equipping installers with the tools and knowledge that they need to help accelerate the shift.

## Book your OFTEC training now!

We understand that things are busy at the moment, but training centres often get booked up months in advance. Why not secure your place ready for the spring when things start to quieten down?

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# Carbery celebrates 40 years of oil storage innovation

Carbery is celebrating four decades at the forefront of oil storage – a journey that began in September 1985 when its very first tank rolled off the production line. Forty years on, a modest operation has grown to become one of the industry's most trusted names, with more than three quarters of a million tanks now in use across the UK and Ireland.

For installers, Carbery tanks have long been a familiar and reliable part of the job, designed to make fitting, maintenance, and long-term performance as straightforward as possible. That installer-first focus has helped Carbery remain relevant through changing regulations, evolving customer expectations, and new fuels entering the market.

The milestone is also about people. Jim Hunt, who was part of the team behind Carbery's first-ever tank, is still with the business today, marking 48 years of service and proudly standing alongside the company's 750,000th unit. His story captures the loyalty, expertise, and innovation that have shaped Carbery's past – and continue to drive its future.

Looking ahead, Carbery is preparing for the next chapter: from tanks ready for renewable fuels such as HVO, to smarter monitoring technologies, to the vital role installers will play in helping households adapt to a lower-carbon future. In this Q&A, the team reflects on 40 years of progress and shares their vision for the decades to come.

## Company beginnings and milestones

### Carbery is celebrating 40 years this year – how did it all begin?

It started with a real need for an alternative product to steel to store oil for domestic oil heating systems, one that wouldn't rust or rot. And plastic – manufactured by Roto Moulding – was the answer.

### What were the big turning points along the way?

Mostly the acceptance of plastic as an alternative to steel tanks, which took a few years to achieve.

### Looking back, what achievements

### are you most proud of?

I'd have to say the product range, design developments and quality standards that were introduced across the industry.

### Product development and innovation

#### How have Carbery's tanks changed since 1985?

There have been significant advances in design, materials and of course new applications of fuel delivery systems e.g. fuel-points, Mobi-points, HVO tanks and caddies etc.

#### How has installer feedback shaped your products?

We always listen to our customers and try and accommodate their requirements into our product development where possible.

#### What sets Carbery's manufacturing apart from others?

We're a family-run company and are always innovating and improving efficiency to provide a quality product within a reasonable pricing structure.

#### How do you ensure tanks are built to last and meet today's standards?

We have a rigorous quality control system in our factory and all tanks adhere to E.U. Standards E.N. 13341, OFTEC Standards OFTS 100 and Kiwa BRL K2 1002 standards.

#### What steps are you taking around safety and environmental responsibility?

The introduction of the bunded tank is a major advancement in controlling any spills.

## Installers and customers

#### Which sectors rely most on Carbery tanks today?

We tend to get a lot of customers in the domestic heating sector, as well as the farming community and transport companies.

#### How does Carbery support installers in their day-to-day work?



Most importantly by providing a quality product that's fully certified, but it goes beyond that. We answer the phone as soon as it rings and most of the time the member of staff who picks up can answer their questions, whether it's a technical query, a change to the outlet or a delivery. Having long-standing staff who know the installers makes a big difference; it's all about people working with others they like and respect. Everyone is busy, especially our installers, and because we're so responsive, it means they're not wasting their valuable time chasing up deliveries and instead, can focus on the job at hand.

## People and culture

### Jim Hunt has been with Carbery nearly 50 years. What keeps people at the company so long?

We operate a flat management structure; every employee is involved and aware of new product development. Our longevity as a manufacturer in the industry is also important to our team.

### How would you describe Carbery's culture today?

Always inclusive and respectful.

### How are you celebrating this significant anniversary?

In the traditional way with cake and Guinness and a view to manufacturing another 750k tanks over the next 40 years!

## The future

### How are you preparing tanks for renewable fuels like HVO?

The design structure of our tanks and the materials used make them suitable for storing HVO.

### What's your message to installers and customers as you mark 40 years?

Carbery Plastics is nearly 50 years in operation, and with plans to expand the factory, you can count on us to continue supporting you over the next 50!

# Thinking its time to come off the tools?

Then don't let all your knowledge go to waste - your industry may still have an important role for you!

We are currently looking for talented and conscientious heating professionals to join our network of self-employed regional inspectors. Ideally OFTEC inspectors will be able to diversify into renewables (particularly heat pumps), along with holding a strong work ethic in oil heating and solid fuel.

For more information see our website or to discuss this opportunity, please contact John Vinter, Inspection Services Manager, on 01473 618 558 / 07432 715 042 or email [jvinter@oftec.org](mailto:jvinter@oftec.org).

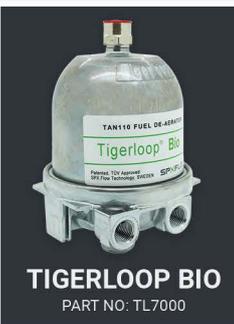
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## TIGERLOOP DE-AERATOR



### HVO READY TIGERLOOP BIO DE-AERATORS

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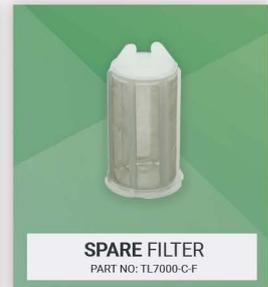
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# Flues discharging over neighbouring land

Can a flue pass through a building wall that forms a legal boundary, so that the flue gases discharge over land not belonging to the building owner?

OFTEC's technical department has been asked this question frequently in recent months, usually in relation to balanced flues. The answer is no. This is not just to ensure future access or avoid nuisance (which are potentially serious issues), but to ensure building regulations compliance. This is the case even when replacing an existing flue that is installed in this way - an alternative terminal position will be required.

The only possible exception to this is where a flue in England, Wales, Jersey or Northern Ireland is to discharge over a public right of way, such as a street, a canal or river, or railway (railway not applicable in Northern Ireland). However, technicians should seek further region-specific guidance from OFTEC's technical department before proceeding with such an installation. Whilst such installations are deemed permissible, OFTEC would recommend that alternative locations are sought to avoid local disputes.

# The hierarchy of standards

A common misconception often heard by OFTEC's technical department via the technical helpline is the idea that appliance manufacturers' instructions rule the roost and trump building regulations when undertaking installation work etc. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

So, let's talk about the hierarchy of standards. For example, in England and Wales, at the top of the pyramid is the Building Act which sets the framework that underpins the Building Regulations. The Building Act also gives the Secretary of State power to approve and issue documents containing practical guidance with respect of the

requirements contained within the Approved Documents (typically you will be using Parts J, G and L as a heating technician). Next come equipment manufacturers' instructions, and finally British Standards codes of practice.

Due to a gap that seems to be widening between regulations, manufacturer's instructions, and British Standards, from time-to-time a technician may find themselves in a situation where guidance differs across documents. OFTEC's advice in this situation is to apply the most onerous instruction, whilst ensuring that at all times your work meets regulations.

# England and Wales Approved Document J

Approved Document J was published in 2010, with slight amendments in 2010, 2013 and 2022 covering combustion appliances and fuel storage systems, but OFTEC has been made aware that a long overdue review of the document is about to commence. For over a decade OFTEC has been compiling a list of errors, out of date references and additions to be placed in the document. For example, updating the guidance on flue termination positions to

include external appliances with flues which terminate with a 45-degree terminal.

If you have any concerns about Approved Document J that you would like OFTEC to raise as part of the review process, please let OFTEC's technical team know via email at [technical@oftec.org](mailto:technical@oftec.org) and we'll add it to the list.

# Useful calculation tools

The technicians' section of the OFTEC website contains useful calculation tools covering a variety of subjects. They are available free of charge to registered technicians, and are designed to assist with common requirements. The current tools available are:

- Liquid fuel storage tank fire protection checklist.
- Liquid fuel fired appliance air supply requirements calculator.
- Condensing oil boiler installation exemption assessment.
- Fuel switch calculator (not for use in England, Wales or Scotland).
- Fuel switch calculator – England and Wales only.

- Fuel switch calculator – Scotland only.
- Radiator selection and output calculator.
- Heat Engineer Software Limited heat - loss calculation software.

These can be found at [oftec.org/technicians/technical-resources/calculation-tools/](http://oftec.org/technicians/technical-resources/calculation-tools/)

If you feel that we could add any other resources to this list, please let OFTEC's technical team know at [technical@oftec.org](mailto:technical@oftec.org)

A range of other technical resources, including technical notices and newsletter archives, can be found at [oftec.org/technicians/technical-resources/](http://oftec.org/technicians/technical-resources/)

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# Building a skilled and competent workforce in the RMI sector



It's a commonly accepted fact that there is a shortage of skilled tradespeople in the UK, along with a gap in the skills required to take us forward in meeting the UK's Net Zero target and plans for building more homes. The gap is particularly acute in the skills needed when improving homes to make them energy efficient and to lower their carbon footprint.

A recently published report by TrustMark, 'Skilled to Build', looks at the Repair, Maintenance and Improvement (RMI) sector, specifically the small and micro businesses operating within the sector and the challenges they are facing around recruitment, training and funding, both of people and knowledge. The report also highlights actionable and practical recommendations to address the identified gaps, affect change and build a skilled and competent workforce.

The research, which was commissioned from Eureka! Research, with economic analysis from Oxford Economics, includes evidence collected from more than 1,200 small and micro businesses to provide an 'on the ground' perspective of the challenges and comprehensive solutions required to help identify and alleviate the skills gap. The report also creates actionable and practical recommendations to address the identified gaps, affect change and build a skilled and competent workforce.

## Vacancies hinder the RMI sector

The key findings from the report show a strong desire amongst micro and small businesses to recruit, with nearly half (45%) of businesses reporting at least one current vacancy. Recruitment appears to be a much larger issue

than retention with these businesses, who have indicated specific challenges to fill the vacancies, including:

- Micro businesses report one vacancy
- Small firms report just over three vacancies
- Businesses actively looking to grow report five vacancies.

It found that a shortage of skilled workers is holding back the UK's RMI sector, hampering net zero goals, and threatening the long-term stability of thousands of small firms.

As a result of the vacancies, many businesses are forced to turn down work. Over half (52%) of respondents said they are scaling back due to staffing constraints, with sole traders and micro businesses most affected.

Relying on subcontractors has become a common workaround (used by 37%), but even that solution is under strain, with 56% of businesses saying that dependable subcontractors are increasingly hard to find.

## A ticking clock

The sector's current workforce is ageing fast with an estimated 39,000 businesses at risk of disappearing from the sector in the next 10 years. While 21% of the UK workforce are aged 55 years or older, 44% of the workforce in the RMI sector are older than 55 years, of which a quarter of those plan to stop or semi-retire within the next three years.

Without a clear succession pipeline, close to 40,000 businesses could exit the sector in the next decade. The issue is highly time sensitive and is expected to further

exacerbate skills shortages going forward. This poses a critical challenge where the rate of businesses exiting the sector will not be replaced by a similar rate of new entrants.

There is, however, a glimmer of hope. Among business owners approaching retirement, 55% said they're willing to give back by mentoring, training, or helping to shape the future workforce in some form. This points to a real opportunity for industry, colleges and the wider education environment to capitalise on and extrapolate both knowledge and skills from this skilled workforce before it is lost, especially if 39,000 businesses are set to disappear

### Three bottlenecks for businesses

In addition to the macro challenges facing the RMI and construction sectors, businesses have called out three specific bottlenecks in finding, recruiting and training that require immediate redress:

- **Burdensome recruitment processes**
  - 44% want a simpler, more transparent hiring process
  - 39% say bureaucracy and paperwork are major barriers to recruiting apprentices
- **Inadequate training provision and providers**
  - 22% cite a lack of suitable apprenticeship courses
  - 29% say there's not enough support from training providers
  - 34% have hired a young apprentice in the past three years
  - 52% haven't hired an apprentice at all
  - End Point Assessment completion has dropped from 55% (2017/18) to 35% (2022/23)
  - 49% of business owners often spend significant time supervising apprentices due to insufficient training quality
- **Limited access and awareness of financial incentives**
  - 64% say financial support isn't adequate for trade-based apprenticeships
  - 7% have accessed the Apprenticeship/Skills and Growth Levy
  - 32% cite lack of time or guaranteed work as reasons for not training apprentices
  - 21% access CITB training or funding, and the £1,000 grant is widely seen as insufficient

### Unrealised economic potential

If the sector were to fill its existing vacancies, which amount to an estimated 195,000 additional workers, the RMI sector could unlock a substantial economic boost by £9.6 billion in revenue and £4.1 billion in gross value added (GVA), representing a 4.3% uplift from its current annual contribution of £96 billion.

Importantly, the benefits would not be limited to London and the South East and would also help to reduce regional disparities. Over 70% of the GVA gains would be distributed across other regions in England, reinforcing the argument that growth is not only possible but also widely accessible and strengthens the case for targeted investment to level up the country.

### Grow a competent workforce for a greener future

To develop a competent workforce in renewables and clean heat technologies, it is essential to focus on both retraining the current workforce and building a robust talent pipeline. The urgency is clear - 79% of renewable

energy businesses report having vacancies, signalling a sector-wide struggle to attract and retain qualified staff. This ongoing skills shortage is already creating significant operational challenges.

More proactive support is needed to help businesses transition into renewables and prepare for future market growth. The sector is strongly voicing its need for increased training opportunities:

- 44% of companies say they require financial support to fund training courses
- Many express that time off for retraining would be highly beneficial
- And 20% believe that dedicated training centres for renewables are a critical need.

Adding to the complexity is the limited awareness and confidence among homeowners when it comes to adopting renewable and clean heat solutions. Addressing these gaps, on both the supply and demand sides, will be crucial to ensuring the UK is ready for a low-carbon transition.

### Looking to the future

TrustMark is committed to helping to address the chronic skills situation the construction and RMI sectors are facing and is looking to collaborate with government and industry to enhance the current infrastructures and build a resilient and long-term competent and skilled workforce. To help drive this national campaign, four practical recommendations have been proposed on how the skills challenge can be addressed:

- Developing and delivering fit-for-purpose training and curricula
- Strengthening the navigation system for businesses to find recruits
- Unlocking and raising awareness of the financial incentives available
- Promote upskilling in renewables and clean heat

Simon Ayers MBE, CEO of TrustMark, concludes: "Our research found a strong desire for growth within the RMI sector but these businesses need support to help make that happen. Our report provides not only their view of the challenges they face along with what they need to overcome them, but recommendations for what and how that can be done. This sector needs to be prioritised and by working collaboratively across it, the wider industry, associated organisations and government, we can all help to achieve warmer, more comfortable and healthier homes for the UK."



Simon Ayers MBE, CEO of TrustMark

To read the full TrustMark report here, click here [www.trustmark.org.uk/pages/skills-gap-research/thank-you](http://www.trustmark.org.uk/pages/skills-gap-research/thank-you)

# Fuel price commentary

## Oil still the cheapest fuel, but will the Government try to change that in the budget?

In Great Britain the price of the two most popular rural heating fuels – oil and LPG – has fallen slightly since the last set of data in June, but the changes are insignificant. The price of oil has risen slightly in Northern Ireland and fallen in the Republic of Ireland, but again the changes are so small most consumers will barely register the difference. The most important point to take away, which has been true for some months, is that oil heating is still by far the cheapest fuel you can use. This is regardless of where you live, and its annual cost is well below the long-term four-year average too.

With the Government putting considerable funding into promoting the transition to low carbon heating, it's worth looking at the costs of these technologies too. At first glance, heat pumps and biomass look hopelessly uncompetitive compared to traditional fuels. However,

in the case of heat pumps, it's partly to do with the way the Sutherland Tables calculate the cost, using default efficiency values that are somewhat lower than you might reasonably expect to achieve in the real world. However, even at more realistic efficiency values, oil will still come out cheaper assuming you use a modern condensing boiler – you need a really super-efficient heat pump to offset the higher unit cost of electricity.

That's why there was a lot of pre-Budget speculation regarding possible government plans to either move the green levies that are currently applied to electricity costs to other energies – for example mains gas, LPG, or even kerosene – or to simply further reward heat pump owners by giving them a discount on their bills. Any change that disadvantages rural households would be extremely damaging to support for Labour's policies and, as the Budget's will be published on 26th November 2025, we should know what has happened by the time you read this.

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

### GREAT BRITAIN (Average)

	Sep-24	Sep-25	Price change	% Difference	4 year average
Electric storage heaters	£2,688	<b>£3,139</b>	£451	17%	£3,123
Gas condensing boiler	£1,282	<b>£1,436</b>	£154	12%	£1,461
LPG Condensing boiler radiators and DHW cylinder	£2,023	<b>£2,014</b>	-£9	0%	£1,807
Oil condensing boiler, radiators and DHW cylinder	£1,277	<b>£1,165</b>	-£112	-9%	£1,391
Wood pellets	£2,390	<b>£2,156</b>	-£234	-10%	£2,186
Air source heat pump radiators	£2,541	<b>£2,378</b>	-£163	-6%	£2,689
Air source heat pump underfloor	£2,181	<b>£2,170</b>	-£11	-1%	£2,302

### NORTHERN IRELAND

	Sep-24	Sep-25	Price change	% Difference	4 year average
Electric storage heaters	£3,201	<b>£3,331</b>	£130	4%	£2,976
Gas condensing boiler	£1,782	<b>£1,782</b>	£0	0%	£1,715
LPG Condensing boiler radiators and DHW cylinder	£2,291	<b>£2,376</b>	£85	4%	£2,187
Oil condensing boiler, radiators and DHW cylinder	£1,241	<b>£1,115</b>	-£126	-10%	£1,307
Wood pellets	£1,869	<b>£1,818</b>	-£51	-3%	£1,753
Air source heat pump radiators	£2,898	<b>£3,003</b>	£105	4%	£2,609
Air source heat pump underfloor	£2,431	<b>£2,517</b>	£86	4%	£2,205

### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

	Sep-24	Sep-25	Price change	% Difference	4 year average
Electric storage heaters	€3,818	<b>€3,755</b>	-€63	-2%	€3,723
Gas condensing boiler	€2,188	<b>€2,404</b>	€216	10%	€2,344
LPG Condensing boiler radiators and DHW cylinder	€2,949	<b>€3,071</b>	€122	4%	€2,747
Oil condensing boiler, radiators and DHW cylinder	€1,847	<b>€1,696</b>	-€151	-8%	€1,876
Wood pellets	€2,309	<b>€2,089</b>	-€220	-10%	€2,077
Air source heat pump radiators	€3,426	<b>€2,634</b>	-€792	-23%	€3,150
Air source heat pump underfloor	€2,919	<b>€2,272</b>	-€647	-22%	€2,697

### Notes: 4-year average is September 2021 to September 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-bedroom 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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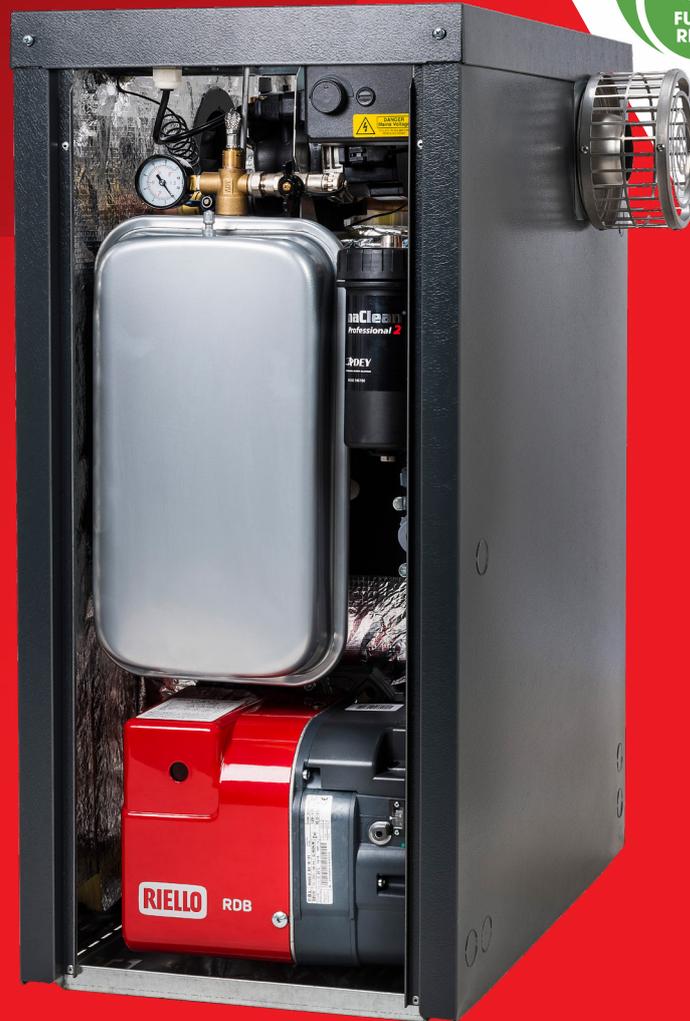
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