

**Minutes of the 36<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Supervisory Panel**  
**Renewable Energy Consumer Code**  
**10<sup>th</sup> June 2015**

**Present:**

David Laird (Chair)

Bryn Aldridge - Former Director of Trading Standards and Veterinary Services for the City of London

Amanda Clark - Certsure

Heather Kerr - MCS

Zoe Leader - Citizens Advice Bureau

Steve Lisseter – Independent consumer expert

Dave Sowden - Sustainable Energy Association

Jim Thorneycroft- Independent Solar PV Expert

Chris Wood – Ofgem (Observer)

Cathy Debenham – Independent Expert (Observer)

**In Attendance:**

Virginia Graham- RECC

Mark Cutler – RECC

Sumandeep Sohi – RECC (minutes)

**Apologies:**

Martin Cottrell

Walter Carlton

David Frise

Gretel Jones

Philip Wolfe

**1. Welcome, introduction and apologies**

The Chair welcomed attendees to the 36th meeting of the Supervisory Panel. Panel Members introduced themselves and noted apologies for absence received.

**2. Minutes of the 35<sup>th</sup> Supervisory Panel Meeting**

Panel Members agreed the Minutes of the 35<sup>th</sup> Supervisory Panel Meeting as being an accurate record of the meeting.

### **3. Matters Arising**

The Executive ran through the Summary of Actions from the 35<sup>th</sup> Supervisory Panel Meeting. The Panel reviewed the RHI complaints breakdown by technology and discussed the prospect of an increase in complaints due to the biomass digression due on 1 July. The arbitration figures requested would be picked up later on in the agenda.

The Executive reported that the recent webinars on the consumer contract regulations, marketing and performance estimates would be uploaded on to YouTube and that the next webinar was scheduled for 23<sup>rd</sup> June.

The Executive gave a summary of the exhibitions and shows to be attended by RECC over the year as well as of the new training webinars for members, member leaflets and regular Twitter posts.

### **4. Highlight Report**

Panel members considered the Highlight Report that had been tabled.

#### *Membership*

The Executive explained that, during the 2014 membership renewal period, there had been a 19% loss in membership overall. This was a net figure which took account of joiners during the period as well as leavers. Over the equivalent renewal period in 2015, there had been an 8% loss in membership overall. Again, this was a net figure which took account of joiners during the period as well as leavers.

#### *Monitoring*

The figures for the 9<sup>th</sup> round of on-site audits displayed the new method of positive scoring which had been used in line with the key Compliance Areas agreed with TSI. The report identified that the most problematic compliance areas were CA4: Pre-contractual information, CA6: contracts and cancellation rights and CA3; marketing and selling as displayed in Figure 5 of the Highlight Report.

The results from the Consumer Satisfaction Surveys identified the various business models used by members as shown in Figure 8 of the Highlight Report. This revealed that 49.2% of members signed the contract with the consumer during the sales visit, with 6.5% of consumers purchasing the system through credit or a finance agreement.

#### *Complaints*

The Executive discussed the complaints statistics which identified a rise in the number of complaints received and an increase of arbitration awards that had been published in the last quarter.

The Panel discussed the possibility of comparing complaints data with other industries and confirmed that they would like to keep a watching brief on the number of complaints received by RHI technology.

## **5. Citizens Advice Research into consumer satisfaction and solar PV**

Zoe Leader from the Citizens Advice Bureau introduced Brooke Flanagan and Trevor xxx from Future Climate who presented their findings on their research into consumer satisfaction with solar PV. The results were based on data from interviews with 647 consumers who had purchased solar PV systems and were categorised by whether they had purchased the system outright, through finance, through social housing or a landlord or from the rent-a-roof scheme. It was found that satisfaction levels were generally at around 80% with a lower level of satisfaction expressed for installer aftercare. The data presented to the Panel indicated that satisfaction levels have fallen slightly since 2011.

The Panel were also shown the different sources of information which consumers had used when researching solar PV. The data revealed that 42% of consumers used the general internet as a source of information, 36% used the installer leaflet or the sales visit and 8% used the RECC website. The average number of quotes obtained by the consumer was 2.4, with consumers having a rent a roof installation less likely to obtain more than 1 quote as opposed to those who purchased their systems outright.

The Panel discovered that when checking whether an installer was MCS certified the majority of consumers looked for a logo and on the installer's website or materials and only 1 in 5 consumers visited the MCS website to verify this. The survey also found that 30% of users were not made aware of RECC before the contract was signed and those consumers had either purchased outright or through finance.

The Panel discussed the key drivers of interest in solar PV being mainly the Feed in Tariff, price of energy and other environmental considerations. The Executive explained that these findings generally corresponded with the RECC consumer satisfaction figures which also indicated a generally high level of satisfaction.

## **6. Draft 2014 Annual Report**

The Executive explained that the Annual Report will be completed by the end of June and that the charts included in the draft Annual Report were up-to-date. Changes to be added in more detail would include the non-compliance Consent Orders as well as updates on legislation such as the Consumer Contract Regulations. Panel Members agreed to send any amendments by email.

## **7. Update on the implementation of the ADR Directive**

The Executive explained that the ADR Directive would come into force in October 2015, with some information provisions coming in in July 2015. The Executive confirmed that RECC had applied to be ADR certified through TSI and that they were currently waiting to be audited.

## **8. Update on multiple codes in the sector**

The Executive read out an update from Sarah Langley, responsible for Codes at the CTSI, confirming that there were currently 2 other Codes in the sector with Stage 1 Approval with at least one of these anticipated to apply for Stage 2 Approval before the end of 2015.

The Executive reported that a Memorandum of Understanding between the MCS and CCAS had been approved. It retained the independent panels in order to ensure that the standards of consumer protection would remain at a high level and that the decisions made by the panels should apply throughout the sector. The Executive explained that the MOU would need to be signed and complied with by all approved Codes in the sector.

The Executive agreed to keep Panel Members updated with any further developments.

## **9. A.O.B. and date of next meeting**

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed and confirmed that the date of the next meeting of the Supervisory Panel would be held on **9 September 2015**.