

## Welcome to the Spring edition of the RECC Newsletter

A very warm welcome to all our valued members! Thank you to those of you who have renewed your membership for 2018, and welcome to those of you who are new to RECC in 2018. I wish you all a successful year.

RECC works hard to bring a wide range of benefits for our members. You can find these listed on our website **here**. We are always looking for new benefits we can bring you, so if you have any thoughts or comments about what you would find useful, please let me know.

This year we have set up a new Primary Authority Arrangement with Hampshire County Council Trading Standards Service (more

about this on page 4, including how to opt in). We are also on the look-out for pictures of installations you have done for our website. If you have any you would be willing to share with us please see page 4 for details of where to send them.

Finally, new data privacy rules will come into force on 25 May. (See the article below for more details.) If you want to continue receiving emails with news, updates, research and events, it is important that you let us know: 'I want to stay in touch by email.' Emails to [info@recc.org.uk](mailto:info@recc.org.uk).

I look forward to hearing from you.

Lorraine Haskell, Editor

### NEW PRIVACY RULES TO ENSURE BETTER CONTROL OF PERSONAL DATA

New data privacy rules aim to enable individuals to better control their personal data. As a RECC member, this means that you will have more control over how your data is used and how we contact you. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is due to be implemented in May.

To comply with the GDPR we will shortly be publishing an updated Privacy Policy statement on our website. It sets out the data RECC holds, the reasons we hold it, what we do with it, and what your rights are in relation to it. So keep an eye out for it! We will send you an email alerting you as soon as it's available.

The RECC website, dispute resolution database and CRM database are all protected and have a high level of security. We are committed to ensuring that your data is secure. In order to prevent unauthorised access or disclosure, we have put in place suitable physical, electronic and managerial procedures to safeguard and secure the information we collect online.

The new rules extend to all businesses, and so we will shortly be publishing guidance setting out what you, our members, need to do to comply with them. We'll alert you about these too. In the meantime you should start considering what personal data you hold, where it came from and who you can share it with and for what reason.

**In the meantime ICO has excellent guidance and '12 Steps to take now,' which you can find [here](#).**

**And remember, if you want to continue receiving emails with news, updates, research and events, it is important that you let us know: 'I want to stay in touch by email.' Email this to [info@recc.org.uk](mailto:info@recc.org.uk).**

### Government Consultation expected on future of FITs

The Feed-In Tariff is due to close to all new projects on 31 March 2019. (Existing accredited generators will not be affected.) BEIS' consultation on the future of the policy is now expected this spring, having been delayed for 18 months. It will set out options for supporting small-scale renewable electricity generators after the scheme has closed. One option might be to allow the export tariff element of the FIT to continue for new projects.

RECC will engage closely with the consultation. We will tell you about any deadlines and will publish our response on the website.

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## NAO report points to strengths and weaknesses of RHI

The National Audit Office has published a **report** on the value for money of the Renewable Heat Incentive. It concludes that there have been over 78,000 installations up to December 2017 which have produced 22.7TWh of renewable heat, enough to heat over 1,800,000 UK homes for a whole year. It has also created some 33,500 low carbon jobs in sectors, ranging from biomass to bio-gas and biomethane.

On the downside, the report highlights the lack of reliable estimates of payments made to RHI participants who have not complied with the rules. On this basis, the NAO states that the scheme may not have achieved value for money and may be open to abuse known as “gaming”. This is where funds are granted to

generators whose facilities appear to comply with the rules but where the heat is actually being used to warm empty buildings; or generators who have installed multiple boilers to take advantage of the higher tariff for smaller units.

The Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), which the report praises for its adaptability in reforming the scheme, has begun to target participants it considers to be at risk of the “greatest financial losses” if found to be non-compliant.

Since 2011 the Government has paid out £1.4bn (up to August 2017) and the estimated lifetime costs of the existing schemes is £23bn up to 2040-41.

## Standards for Smart Appliances

Government is consulting on plans to introduce new standards for smart appliances, based on the principles of interoperability, data protection, and grid and cyber-security. This consultation is the response to the 2016 Call for Evidence on smart energy systems launched jointly by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and Ofgem.

The potential benefits of a ‘smart’ energy system are huge – with estimated savings ranging from £17 to £40 billion by 2050 - so Government is keen to ensure that the system is properly regulated. Through demand-side response (DSR) consumers will be able to turn their energy consumption up or down, responding to price signals, allowing them to take advantage of smart offers such as time-of-use tariffs. Not only will they be able to manage their bills better but the overall system will also benefit from a better balance of supply and demand.

The first smart appliances to be involved will include cold and wet appliances, heating, ventilation, air conditioning and battery storage. Government will be working with industry on the detailed development of these standards. Responses should be sent to BEIS via their **online platform** by 8th June 2018.

## More consumers switching to small- or medium-sized energy suppliers

Ofgem has published figures showing that over one in five energy consumers are now with small and medium-sized energy suppliers as more people switched to get a better deal in 2017. This is a significant increase from 2013 when their market share was 4.7% for electricity and 5% for gas. The market share for the six largest suppliers was at a record low of 79% for electricity and 78% for gas, down from 84% for both at the end of 2016.

Last year 5.1 million electricity consumers and 4.1 million gas consumers switched supplier, the highest number for almost a decade. Ofgem says that those who have never switched or rarely do so are still being overcharged. Standard

variable rates can be as much as £300 more expensive than the cheapest deals on the market.

Ofgem is making it easier, quicker and more reliable to switch in order to help people save money, particularly those on the worst deals, and has recently launched the first-ever “simplified” collective switch.

Ofgem is also protecting those who don’t switch from being overcharged by extending the safeguard tariff, which already protects 4 million prepayment households, to almost 1 million more vulnerable consumers. More on this can be found [here](#).

## Latest news on Domestic RHI from Ofgem

New regulations will come into force later in the spring. They include changes on performance metering for heat pumps, new Metering and Monitoring Service Package (MMSP) payment schedules and enforcement powers, revised degression thresholds as well as extending the RHI’s budget management mechanism until the end of 2020/21.

The DRHI rules for the Assignment of Rights are also included in these regulations, but will not come into force until 27 June. RECC will shortly publish guidance for consumers, investors and installers on the Assignment of Rights.

Ofgem has recently published new guidance – available in MyRHI - to help participants keep up-to-date with these and other changes. The guidance points out, for instance, that RHI payments are not direct debits or standing orders so participants will need to check that their bank details are correct: some banks are changing sort codes and account numbers. The guidance also reminds participants of their duty to provide an annual declaration confirming that they continue to meet the scheme requirements and gives advice on purchasing wood pellets from reliable suppliers on the UK Pellet Council’s list of members and the Biomass Suppliers List.

## No reductions in RHI tariffs for this quarter

The latest quarterly forecasts for domestic and non-domestic RHI published by the Government show that there will be no reductions in RHI tariffs for the quarter beginning 1 April 2018. This is because forecast expenditure for all technologies remains below their thresholds.

## OVO LAUNCHES ITS FIRST HOME BATTERIES



OVO, the UK's largest independent energy technology company and supplier, has launched its home energy storage. The home energy storage product works by charging when demand on the grid is low, storing the electricity in the battery, and then using it when demand on the grid is high. This helps to balance the grid and increases the overall use of renewable energy.

One of the energy industry's traditional challenges has been to manage spikes in demand when, say, millions of people want to boil a kettle at the same time. Enough energy must be generated at this time to ensure that all the kettles keep working.

Renewable energy presents different challenges: if the wind drops or the sun disappears behind the clouds, wind and solar power can suddenly generate less electricity. Batteries can store electricity when there is plenty being generated, thus providing back-up to the grid at times of peak demand. Find more information [here](#).

## The world's first energy storage fund to float in London

Gore Street, the world's first listed energy storage fund, has announced that it is going to float in London raising £100 million. This will enable the fund to invest in facilities such as lithium-ion batteries, produced by firms such as Tesla and NEC, which capture the energy generated from renewable sources and from the national grid.

The fund aims to achieve a yield of 7% of its net asset value in the first year and a steady dividend cover of 2.95 times. Gore Street claims that one important strength of the fund is that it is not closely linked to the performance of equity markets. Find more information [here](#).

## Chinese scientists invent solar panel that works in the rain

Scientists at Soochow University in China have demonstrated a new type of solar panel which can generate electricity from falling raindrops at any time of day or night as well as from the sun. It works by placing two transparent polymer layers on top of a solar photovoltaic cell. Friction is generated when raindrops fall on to these layers and roll off and produces a static electricity charge.

Other researchers have recently invented similar devices known as Tengs (triboelectric nanogenerators) but the new design is significantly simpler, lightweight and more efficient: one of the polymer layers acts as the electrode for both the Teng and the solar cell. Baoquan Sun, one of the scientists working on the project, pointed out, though, that "the output power efficiency needs to be further improved before practical application". More on this story can be found [here](#).

## Installers needed: Cornish or London Homes with Solar for Energy Storage trial



REA and RECC Member and Battery Manufacturer, Powervault have a unique opportunity for households with solar panels installed to receive an up to half price Powervault energy storage unit (brand new or second life 4kWh Lithium-Ion units available).

The 'PETE Project' will see 50 Powervault systems installed in homes in London and Cornwall by the end of March 2018, and another 50 by the end of June. Upside, a cloud-based energy aggregator, will balance demand and supply on the grid by regulating the flow to and from the Powervault.

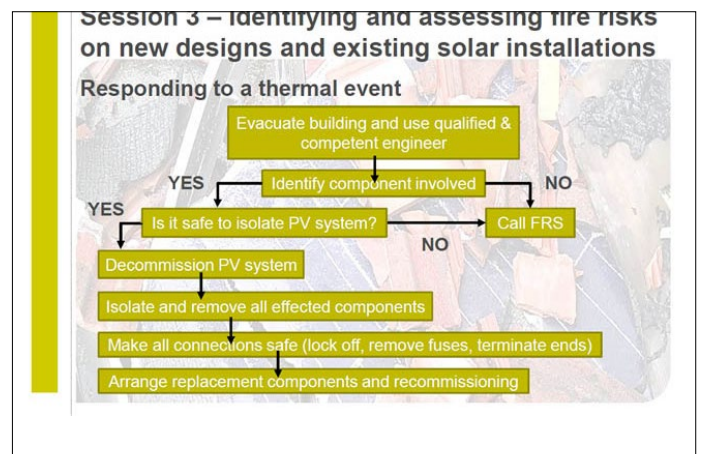
Installer companies could make the most of this opportunity. Contact Powervault directly or call them on 0203 653 1129.

## BRE - Fire safety tips for installers

Following recent reports of fires on roofs with Solar PV, RECC would like to remind members of the BRE's July 2017 research, including its report on, '[Fire and Solar PV Systems – Recommendations for the Photovoltaic Industry](#).'

Out of the research some themes were discovered including electrical arcing, which was significantly reported upon. Furthermore, out of the 80 systems studied, the components that were implicated included: DC isolators, DC connectors, Inverters, DC cables, PV modules and the DC combiner box (in order of number of incidents).

As a result of BRE's research several standards have been updated, and recommendations have been made for improving training. It is also worth highlighting this flowchart on what installers should do should they find a faulty system with the potential to cause a fire.





## RECC highlights dangers of mis-selling

The mis-selling of products linked to renewable energy systems, and inverter upgrades, has become common place in the market, and is now starting to be highly publicised. **RECC's blog** on 'Add-on' equipment for solar PV: an opportunity but beware of possible pitfalls,' hosted on the Yougen website, has reportedly been one their most popular blogs produced this year with 100% of anonymous poll respondents finding the article useful, and comments on social media have shown that Yougen's audience have been hugely grateful for this issue having been covered.

RECC would like to take this opportunity to signpost members to its guidance on these types of products, as well as guidance for consumers where their system stops working:

- **RECC guidance on supplementary solar PV equipment**
- **BRE/RECC: Batteries and Solar Power: Guidance for domestic and small commercial consumers**
- **RECC guidance on faulty or underperforming system issues**

Stories from other bodies on this topic can also be found below.

### RECC ADVISES CROSS PARTY GROUP AT THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT



RECC's independent auditor, Colin Meek, attended the Cross Party Group meeting at the Scottish Parliament the other month, to talk about consumer detriment through mis-sold Green Deal schemes.

Colin spoke to the group about the problems of mis-selling as well as on-going issues in the microgen industry and about having a forward looking remit. In the future, Colin's aim is to speak to the group about best practice in the industry, and having joint multi-agency approaches to issues, which is currently being seen on guidance for heat pumps, currently under development.

### SOLAR TRADE ASSOCIATION WARNS AGAINST MIS-SELLING

The Solar Trade Association has warned against a variety of mis-selling techniques being employed in the solar sector.

The STA has received reports of businesses contacting householders by means of cold calls or knocking on their doors to tell them that:

- their warranty is about to expire; their installer is no longer trading rendering all warranties void;
- they can get a free panel health check;
- their system needs a fire risk test; or
- they are entitled to an upgrade/maintenance plan in partnership with MCS.

The STA, RECC, MCS and Citizens Advice advise consumers who are approached in this way to check with them or with their original installer before agreeing to any such offer. No STA members have been implicated in this type of mis-selling: their terms and conditions state that all installers of domestic solar systems who join the STA must be MCS certified and a member of a consumer code.

The STA has produced a number of guides aimed at raising standards such as the **Confidence Checklist for commercial rooftop solar** and the **Commitments for Domestic Energy Storage**.

### Citizens Advice highlights problems in the energy saving market

Nearly 4,500 people contacted the Citizens Advice Consumer Service last year about problems relating to their insulation or solar panels. Some of the problems arose during the sales process with consumers confronted by cold-calling or pressure selling. Others arose during the installation process or immediately after and yet others, such as damp from faulty cavity wall insulation, when something went wrong after the installation.

As new products come on the market they bring a range of new problems with them. Batteries which store electricity for use when it is most needed do not always meet expectations and consumers most commonly report problems with installation and performance.

Householders are also being targeted by firms selling voltage optimizer or "boosters" which they claim, with little evidence, will significantly increase the output from solar panels. Some consumers say that they have seen no improvement at all and others realise too late that they have paid too much.

Citizens Advice will continue to monitor consumer experience and share key issues with policy makers and industry. It is calling on Government to ensure that consumer protection is built into all schemes designed to promote new technologies so that consumers can be confident about installing energy saving products which help to tackle climate change and fuel poverty and know that it will be easy to put things right if anything should go wrong. It is also supporting the Each Home Counts Review which promises to create a single industry quality mark for energy efficiency and renewables.

## BRITISH RENEWABLE ENERGY AWARDS 2018



The British Renewable Energy Awards for 2018 will be presented at a gala dinner at The Savoy Hotel in London on Thursday 14th June. These awards are organised by the Renewable Energy Association and recognise the achievements of companies and individuals who have made a significant contribution to the development of the renewable energy industry during the previous year.

The 15 awards cover a wide variety of categories from energy storage, innovation and low carbon transport to financial leadership, customer service and communications.

Entries closed at the beginning of March. Places at the dinner can be reserved [here](#).

## RECC wants your photos

RECC is asking all members to send us photos of your installation work. This is an opportunity to have your photo displayed on the revamped version of the RECC website, and photos will be credited. To send your photo to RECC, send a high resolution version to [info@recc.org.uk](mailto:info@recc.org.uk)

## EV Infrastructure Summit

Solar Media's EV Infrastructure Summit, will be held on 3-4 July, in London. The summit is designed with cities, local authorities and commercial end users in mind, and will show buyers how to build an effective strategy to enable the pending roll out of EV infrastructure to benefit the communities in which they are located.

For more information, and to buy your ticket visit the [website here](#).

## NEW PRIMARY AUTHORITY PARTNERSHIP

RECC has now finalised its Primary Authority Partnership with Hampshire County Council Trading Standards Service, previously with Slough.

Hampshire Trading Standards is one of the largest Trading Standards Services in the country and has a wealth of experience across the full range of consumer protection legislation and of dealing with businesses from the largest to the very smallest.

The partnership means that RECC can offer its members the protection of participating in this Government-led scheme, designed to ensure that you receive reliable, consistent and legally-recognised advice on matters relating to compliance over a wide range of legislation that impacts upon your business. Not only can you rely on the advice, but also be assured that all Local Authorities that enforce in your area

must have regard to the advice and liaise with the Primary Authority.

Primary Authority is a statutory scheme, established by the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008, which allows businesses to form a legally recognised partnership with a single local authority in relation to regulatory compliance. This Local Authority is then known as its 'Primary Authority'.

The initiative is aimed at cutting red tape through a partnership approach and promoting consistency of advice.

This will enable RECC members who decide to opt in to receive legally recognised advice and support through RECC, who will act as co-ordinators for the partnership.

**Members who wish to participate in the scheme should email RECC and 'opt in' via [info@recc.org.uk](mailto:info@recc.org.uk)**

## UPCOMING REA EVENTS

**The EV Experience** will take place on the 7 June at the RBS headquarters in central London. The conference will bring together a range of senior stakeholders from the tech, renewable energy, EV charging and automotive industries to investigate what the consumer experience of the transport system will be like in 2025 as the car and van fleet becomes increasingly electric and automated.

**The Clean Tech Revolution in Property**, hosted in partnership with the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors at their headquarters on Parliament Square in London, will take place on Tuesday, 24 July 2018.

The day-long conference will be an in-depth look at trends in the renewable energy and clean tech sector, including "smart" buildings, energy efficiency, onsite generation and storage, modular buildings and electric vehicles and their implications for the future of the housing,

surveying, farming, and commercial property industries. This event will be essential for property owners, developers, surveyors and managers interested in "future-proofing" their businesses considering the rapid pace of change in the smart and clean tech sectors.

REA partner event: **Join the REA at Fully Charged LIVE.**

Robert Lleywyn, host of the internet-famous Fully Charged Show which test drives and trials electric vehicles and clean tech products of all kinds, is hosting the first ever public-facing live exhibition. It's set to take place at Silverstone, 9-10 June. Families, friends, and energy-lovers are all welcome to check out some of the most strange and wonderful products the British clean energy scene has to offer. Test drive an EV, speak to the experts, and meet Bobby in person. Booking to open by the end of this week, found [here](#). #fullychargedLIVE