

PROTECTING CONSUMERS AND PROMOTING RENEWABLES

Welcome to the Spring newsletter

Dear RECC Members,

Welcome to the spring edition of the RECC Newsletter. I know many of you are finding it very difficult to carry on your businesses at this time of severe restrictions and the future seems bleak. I want to reassure you that RECC is here to assist you in any way we can. Please don't hesitate to call us for advice or just for a chat. It's always a pleasure to hear from our members. Our (virtual) office is open as normal and we are at the end of the phone. I have summarised some useful sources of advice for you. You can find the link in the box below.

With best wishes to you and your families, **Virginia Graham (Editor)**.



Cash flow and market recovery top COVID-19 concerns

The MCS Helpdesk Team has carried out a telephone survey to gauge installers' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and to understand their concerns.

Of those surveyed over the past three weeks, 90% have seen a negative business impact due to COVID-19. One installer stated: "The supply of panels is very difficult with slow replenishment, customers seem very nervous and I now cannot go on site to do installations." Another said: "All the jobs that we had lined up have had to be postponed. Fortunately, we haven't seen any cancellations so far. Customers have been understanding."

Cash flow and worries of the financial impact topped the responses, with one Installer saying: "The financial impact and cash flow are my main concerns, I've got staff sat at home with no work to do. We've started jobs that we can't finish and are unable to invoice for." Another said: "Cash flow is a massive issue, but in the long term I don't know if it will have a huge effect."

Of those 10% that hadn't seen a negative impact, reasons including a strong pipeline of existing jobs that would keep them going, or due to customers postponing jobs and a level of confidence that these jobs will reactivate once this is over. Others are now focusing on design and quotes, as they have stepped away from both residential and commercial installations for the safety of their staff and clients.

More generally, installers stated variously that they had: a downturn in work and worries about survival; an existing strong pipeline of work and were able to continue; or proactively taken the decision to furlough staff and shut down their operations.

Ian Rippin, CEO of MCS said, "Coronavirus is impacting all of our lives and is a stressful and worrying time for many. Looking ahead to the future, we need to maintain a level of optimism that we can get the renewable installation market back up and running. MCS will be prepared for the recovery approaches and will do all we can to help Installers weather this and survive."

No answer/response to attempted calls: 45%

Of those that answered that are worried: 90%

We have provided a digest of useful information and guidance for you here:
www.recc.org.uk/news/recc-provides-guidance-for-covid-19

RECC is ensuring that its procedures are adjusted where necessary.

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Big welcome for REAL's Electric Vehicle Consumer Code

Renewable Energy Assurance Ltd (REAL) launched the UK's first Electric Vehicle Consumer Code (EVCC) in February. Industry members, consumer bodies and the media all gave it a good reception.

The aim of the code is to ensure that domestic chargepoint installers follow best practice in sales and installation. It covers everything from pre-sale activities, contracts and installation work to after-sales activities, complaints handling and dispute resolution. Only businesses that meet these standards will be able to display the EVCC logo.

The EV code builds on the experience and expertise of the REAL team behind the Renewable Energy Consumer Code (RECC) which sets and enforces high standards for installers of home energy generating systems such as solar PV and battery storage.

There are currently around 1,000 businesses in the UK installing domestic chargepoints under the Government's EV Homecharge Scheme but more are expected to be set up over the next few years as sales of new electric cars and vans increase. Around 250 of these businesses are RECC members which makes them eligible for a 50% discount on their first year of code membership. The two first EVCC members were Joju Solar and Caplor.

It is estimated that 60% of UK car users have access to off street parking which would be suitable for home charging.

The code was welcomed by Transport Minister Rachel Maclean who said: "Zero emission vehicles are cutting transport emissions and improving air quality, making our communities healthier, better places to live. Having the right rules and regulations on chargepoint installation standards is important and we want to see industry showing leadership in this area."

REAL Chief Executive Virginia Graham OBE said: "RECC has played a foundational role in enforcing high consumer protection standards in the small-scale renewable energy industry since 2006. We aim to extend the lessons learnt from that sector into the rapidly growing world of EV home chargepoints."

For more information please see:

www.electric-vehicle.org.uk/

For applications to join EVCC please contact:

info@electric-vehicle.org.uk



MCS sets up Emergency Repair Work Register

As part of its response to the coronavirus outbreak MCS is compiling a register of certified installers who can offer emergency repair work during the time that the UK is affected by COVID-19.

The response from installers has been overwhelming but some are worried that there are or will be problems with the supply chain. So MCS is also asking manufacturers and distributors who supply materials and/or MCS certified products for renewable technologies to contact them so that they can also compile a useful list for installers.

For more information please contact MCS on: 0333 103 8130.

On 22 April MCS published new guidance on percussive events for biomass installations. It will sit alongside the existing Biomass Installation Standard (MIS 3004). It defines good practice and the key competencies needed when working with solid fuel biomass appliances, and complements the Biomass Product Certification Scheme Requirements (MCS 008). You can find more information here:

mcscertified.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/MGD-006-PERCUSSIVE-EVENTS-GUIDANCE-1.pdf

MCS provides guidance for emergency repair workers

MCS has also issued guidance for anyone called to carry out emergency repairs during the coronavirus outbreak on heating, hot water or electricity systems in properties which have renewable technology installed.

It outlines current Government guidance on travelling for work purposes, working in offices and carrying out work in people's homes and underlines the vital importance of ensuring that neither you nor any of the people you are likely to come into contact with are showing signs of coronavirus symptoms.

The guidance lists key considerations to be thought through before taking on any work and practical steps to protect your health when working in the field. You can find the guidance here:

mcscertified.com/guidance-on-emergency-repair-work-for-renewable-technologies-during-the-pandemic/

FiT completion deadline extended following COVID-19 delays

The deadline for community energy projects to complete and register for the Feed-in Tariff (FiT) has been extended for six months to September 2020 to help applicants deal with various delays caused by COVID-19.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) responded quickly to a request for help from Community Energy England (CEE) who were concerned about delays including the disruption of supply chains, buildings being closed, installers placed in isolation and certifiers being unable to visit to enable projects to be accredited in time. Some 250 projects are thought to be affected.

BEIS passed the Feed-in Tariffs (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Order 2020 which has shifted the deadline for applications from the end of March to the end of September and gives affected projects legal certainty and clarity about their status. BEIS will be keeping delays caused by COVID-19 under close review in case any further extensions are needed.

Duncan Law, policy manager at CEE, said: "Now we will see more than 1MW of extra community renewable energy capacity, at least £1 million more investment in local solutions by local people and huge long-term community benefit".

Emergency measures for vulnerable energy consumers agreed

All UK domestic energy suppliers have agreed with BEIS on measures to be taken to support vulnerable consumers through COVID-19. They aim to ensure that prepayment and pay-as-you-go customers, as well as any other customers who may be in financial distress, remain supplied with energy.

This could involve nominating a third party for credit top-ups, having a discretionary fund added to their credit or being sent a pre-loaded top-up card to ensure that their supply is maintained. Energy suppliers might also reassess debt and bill repayments, reducing or pausing them where necessary. Disconnection of credit meters will be completely suspended.

Alok Shark, Energy Minister, emphasised that, while friends and families would play a role in helping vulnerable people affected by COVID-19, the Government would do whatever is necessary to cope with the challenges it

produced. He said: "Today those most in need can rest assured that a secure supply of energy will continue to flow into their homes during this difficult time."

Chief Executive of Energy UK, Audrey Gallacher said:

"As providers of essential services and critical infrastructure, the energy industry has well practised contingency plans to ensure the delivery of services."

She stressed that energy suppliers would be doing all they could to identify vulnerable customers and to provide additional support wherever possible.

Those most in need can rest assured that a secure supply of energy will continue to flow into their homes.

COVID-19 leads to postponement of COP26 climate summit

COP26, the international climate summit which the UK had been planning to host in Glasgow in November, has had to be postponed because of COVID-19. The planned conference had been described as the most important climate summit since the creation of the Paris Agreement in 2015.

UK Energy Minister Alok Sharma who is President of COP26 explained why the summit had been postponed.

"The world is currently facing an unprecedented global challenge and countries are rightly focusing their efforts on saving lives and fighting COVID-19. We will continue working tirelessly with our partners to deliver the ambition needed to tackle the climate crisis".

A new date for the conference has not yet been agreed.

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) also confirmed that another COP conference for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which was due to be held later this year, has been rescheduled for October 2021.

The UNFCCC has warned that the world is "way off track" from meeting targets to limit global warming and the signs of climate emergency grow more damaging. It pointed to increasing heat, accelerating rises in sea levels and extreme weather in 2019 as signs that we are failing to reduce carbon emissions. Its World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) warned that urgent and far-reaching action was needed to ensure that global warming could be limited to the 1.5C or 2C called for under the Paris Agreement.

Government consults on Clean Heat Grants for domestic heating

On 28 April Government unveiled its plans to introduce a support package to follow directly from the Domestic RHI due to close on 31 March 2022, allowing for a smooth transition.

This support, to be known as the Clean Heat Grants, will complement £9bn of measures already announced to improve energy efficiency and support the move to low carbon heating.

The Clean Heat Grants will assist with the cost of installing heat pumps and, in limited circumstances, biomass boilers, in homes and in small non-domestic buildings. These will provide space and water heating and replace fossil fuel systems. (Around 1.3 million homes are heated by coal or oil in GB, as well as 0.2 million by LPG.) The programme will be rolled out in tandem with the Devolved Administrations. Government is seeking views on the way the grants are administered.

Government hopes that capital grants, paid up-front through

a system of vouchers, will contribute to its carbon reduction targets, stimulate the clean heat supply chain and reduce consumer barriers to take-up. It sees grants, at a flat-rate of £4k, as a solution that will: directly address upfront costs, widen access to the scheme, have a better distributional impact, remove the risk of overcompensation, be simple to administer and easy for consumers to understand.

Government is proposing a 45kW capacity cap for systems supported. However, even for air source heat pumps with a grant of £4k, consumers would need to find a further £6k, on average, either through finance or from their own means.

Responses must be submitted to BEIS by 7 July. RECC will be responding robustly and will be canvassing your views in advance.

You can find the full consultation here:

assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/881622/future-support-for-low-carbon-heat-consultation.pdf

UK solar has smashed generation records, hitting a peak of 9.68GW

At around 12:30 on Monday 20 April 2020, solar reached a peak of 9.68GW, breaking the all-time peak generation record and meeting almost 30% of UK electricity demand.

This was recorded by the Sheffield Solar live PV tracker, whose data is used for forecasting by National Grid ESO.

The peak generation surpassed the previous record of 9.55GW, which was set on 13 May 2019, the same month that saw the landmark coal-free fortnight. The figure recorded by the tracker may be subject to retrospective change, however there is a 90% certainty that the exact figure will fall between 9.65GW and 9.71GW, according to information provided by the Solar Trade Association (STA).

The amount of solar on the grid has also led to a significant period of coal-free generation, with 11.5 days having currently passed according to the STA, the longest coal-free period of 2020 so far.

Chris Hewett, chief executive of the Solar Trade Association, said:

“Ideal weather conditions and lower levels of pollution than normal mean solar is providing record levels of cheap, clean power to the grid. At a time when most of us are working remotely, we can say that solar is truly keeping the WiFi on.”

Meanwhile, coal generation in the UK has fallen by 35% in the last month due to COVID-19.

This is according to new analysis from technology group Wärtsilä, which found that between 10 March and 10 April 2020, coal power dropped 35% and gas 24% compared with the same period in 2019. Renewables held a 43% share of the UK's generation, up 10% compared to 2019.

This trend was reflected across Europe, which saw a 29% drop in coal generation, meaning coal made up just 12% of EU generation. Conversely, renewables came in at 46% of generation, jumping 8% in comparison to 2019.

Across the entirety of Q1 2020, coal generation in the UK and Europe dropped 25.5%, with renewables reaching a 43% share of generation.

For more information see:

www.solar.sheffield.ac.uk/pvlive/

"GB: Today (28 April) just before 6AM, Great Britain broke the record for the longest period of electricity generation without coal. The previous record of 18 days, 6 hours and 10 minutes was set at 21:25 on June 4, 2019. Now we are into record territory and no reason it won't continue."

twitter.com/enappsys/status/1255002889539502080



Consultation on Solar PV Installation Standard

MCS is conducting a one-month consultation on changes to the Installation Standard for Solar PV systems (MIS3002).

The new draft standard adopts the IET Code of Practice for the installation of Solar Photovoltaic Systems and also fills in gaps and re-enforces certain requirements. While incorporating the energy performance method from the old guide, it separates the shade assessment into a new guidance document MGD005.

There have been practical issues with the current shade assessment method which has meant that MCS Certified Installers have been permitted to use other shade assessment methods providing they could show that they were no less valid.

MCS would like to hear suggestions of other simplified shade assessment methods which could be adopted instead of the one within MGD005. It is important not to suggest any method which is reliant on a proprietary software package as MCS are not in a position to adopt or endorse software from any one particular vendor.

The deadline for comments is Thursday 7th May 2020.

A consultation response form is available here:

mcscertified.com/consultation-announcement-solar-pv-installation-standard

Mixed picture for jobs in the sector

A report into the low carbon and renewable energy economy in 2018, published by the Office of National Statistics, has shown that the number of full-time jobs in the solar sector has fallen from 9,000 in 2015 to 6,600 in 2018.

These figures can largely be explained by the decrease in solar projects which followed the ending of the Feed-in Tariff (FiT).

Turnover also fell in the same period from £2.7 billion to £1.8 billion and the proportion of capital assets acquisitions fell from 30% to just 4%.

The fall in solar jobs is mirrored across the green sector. In 2014 there were around 235,900 people employed in the sector which includes renewables, but by 2018 this figure had dropped to 224,800.

Meanwhile, LinkedIn has named the UK as a hotspot for sustainability jobs, with London ranking 6th out of cities for its concentration of sustainability professionals. The UK recorded a growth in 12% of sustainability professionals using the platform last year, higher than the global average of 7.5%.

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According to the data, green job postings rose by 32% in the UK last year.

“Climate change remains a defining issue of our time and while COVID-19 is all-encompassing at this moment, it’s reassuring to see that the UK is well placed to lead on sustainability with the world-class talent to take us forward,”

LinkedIn’s UK country manager Josh Graff said.

“As the UK increases its focus on lowering emissions and with an ambition to hit climate neutrality by 2050, we have seen a rise in the number of people pursuing green careers. With the breadth of sustainability roles and skills available, it’s encouraging to see an increasing number of businesses and professionals looking to make a positive difference to people, society and the planet.”

London is ranked behind Stockholm, Helsinki, Amsterdam, Zurich and Vancouver in terms of concentration of sustainability professionals. Europe has recorded a 13% year-on-year increase in the number of sustainability professionals, according to LinkedIn.

The fastest-growing core skill listed by sustainability professionals globally is data analysis, with a year-on-year growth of 18%. Circular economy and environmental monitoring have also emerged as key listings.

The sustainability professionals are spread across 10 key industries, namely environmental services, renewables, civil engineering, utilities and research.