

PROTECTING CONSUMERS AND PROMOTING RENEWABLES

Welcome to the Autumn newsletter

Dear RECC Members,

Welcome to the autumn edition of the RECC Newsletter. There's lots going on in the small-scale renewables sector at the moment, with record interest in solar PV and battery storage and also air-source heat pumps continuing. This edition celebrates the success of two of our members in winning awards. It sets out details of the new Primary Authority arrangement RECC has agreed. Finally, it sets out details of recent Government initiatives and MCS developments.

Best wishes for the Festive Season!

Virginia Graham (Editor).



RECC Members win key solar PV awards

Two RECC members, Solarsense UK Ltd and Advanced Renewable Power Ltd, have won key awards at the recent Solar and Storage Live awards ceremony held in Birmingham on 19 October.

Solarsense, a RECC member since 2009, was voted Solar and Storage Contractor of the Year. Set up in 1995, the company operates across a wide range of renewable energy markets. Among its notable clients have been the NHS, Tesco and the RSPB.

Current projects include solar PV and storage installations for the Crown Estate and Guide Dogs for the Blind. The company is also promoting measures to enable further carbon and financial savings in a period of increasing energy prices.

The judging panel praised Solarsense for its reputation for providing trusted advice, for pioneering renewable energy projects and for its excellent customer service.

Advanced Renewable Power Ltd, a RECC member since 2011, won the installer award for the Residential Solar and Storage Project of the Year.

The winning project was the installation of a solar PV pergola in the garden of a 17th century listed building where neither rooftop nor ground-mounted solar PV arrays were permitted. The solution AR Power devised was to build a solar PV pergola against, and just lower than the height of, a wall so that the panels would not be visually intrusive. AR Power estimated that the system would generate 4,584 kWh in year one and that the homeowners would stand to use over 80% of this, thanks to battery storage units and a two-way EV charge point. AR Power's estimates have been met and the homeowners have since installed a sheltered seating area under the pergola.

REAL Chief Executive, Virginia Graham, was one of the judges. She commented: "It is very gratifying to see two of our long-standing members being recognised for their outstanding work. I congratulate them both."



Oak solar pergola wins residential project of the year

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RECC model documents and guidance boosted by new Primary Authority Arrangement

In October RECC entered a new Primary Authority Arrangement (PAA) with Surrey and Buckinghamshire Trading Standards. It replaces the one RECC previously held with Hampshire Trading Standards who no longer offer this service.

Rebecca Robbins, Director of Consumer Codes, explained:

“This arrangement enables RECC to receive assured and tailored local authority advice on meeting consumer protection regulations and trading standards through a single point of contact. It also assures our members that RECC guidance and model documents are legally sound and accurate.”

PAAs are the responsibility of the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) which nominates partnerships, issues guidance and resolves determinations. There is a secure online Primary Authority Register containing details of every PAA, providing a forum for communications and facilitating the exchange of important documents and business information.

You can find more information here: www.gov.uk/guidance/primary-authority-a-guide-for-businesses-with-a-co-ordinated-primary-authority

RECC responds to CMA call for information on consumer protection in the green sector

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is seeking information, by way of a survey, about consumer protection standards in the UK ‘green heating’ and insulation sectors.

The call for information, which closed on 1 November, focused on the consumer experience with the sale and installation of domestic heat pumps, biomass boilers and hydrogen-ready boilers as well as with insulation. It looks at the regulatory safeguards in place to protect consumers and ensure that their experiences are positive.

Among the issues CMA is looking at are:

- the way consumers select products and installers
- the way businesses promote their products and services
- the information businesses provide to consumers
- the complaints process available should things go wrong
- the role of certification schemes and codes of practice in maintaining and enforcing consumer standards.

RECC forwarded CMA’s installer questionnaire to its members with an invitation to respond with their own experience in the sector. RECC has also provided a detailed response to the CMA and has offered to assist the team further with its work as and when required. CMA plans to report on its findings in Spring 2023.

You can find more information here: www.gov.uk/cma-cases/consumer-protection-in-green-heating-and-insulation-sector

BUS Scheme pays out £4.5 million in first quarter

Government launched the Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS) on 23 May this year to provide grants to support the installation of heat pumps and biomass boilers. The scheme is administered by Ofgem.

Ofgem’s first quarterly report reveals that, between May and July, it received 4,337 applications for grants from installers and issued 2,930 vouchers with a total value of almost £15 million. Once installations are complete installers apply to redeem the vouchers. Ofgem reports that it received 1,208 applications for voucher redemption with 912 grants paid to a total value of £4.5 million. This means that, out of the original £150 million budget for year one of the scheme, just over £135 million remains to be allocated.

Almost all the grants paid were in respect of air-source heat pumps (888 or 97%) with only 15 in respect of ground- source heat pumps (GSHP), with 2 of these shared ground loop GSHPs. Finally, 9 grants were in respect of biomass boilers.

One fifth of the grants paid were for homeowners in the Southeast and a further one fifth were for homeowners in the Southwest. The lowest uptake was from homeowners in London (4.3%) and in the Northeast (3.4%). Just over half the heating systems being replaced were gas-fired, while just over a quarter were oil-fired. You can find more information here: www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/boiler-upgrade-scheme-bus-quarterly-report-may-july-2022

Rush to apply before DRHI scheme closed

The Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (DRHI) scheme closed to new applicants at the end of March. Figures recently published by Ofgem show double the number of new applications made in the last quarter of the scheme - some 11,560 compared with 4,284 and 5,645 in the previous two quarters. In the scheme's final year, the number of applications made rose by 140% from the previous year.

The scheme had been set up to support homeowners who wanted to install renewable heating technologies in their homes with payments being made over a 7-year period to reflect the amount of heat the system was providing.

Ofgem reported that the total number of renewable heating systems accredited to the scheme since its launch on 9 April 2014 was 113,292. (This includes 23,373 legacy systems which were commissioned between 15 July 2009 and 8 April 2014.) These systems have generated 7,369 GWh of renewable heat to date.

Homeowners with biomass boilers had received a total of £347 million while those with air-source and ground-source heat pumps had received a total of £249 million and £246 million respectively. Those with solar thermal systems had received just under £18 million.

The regional distribution of accreditations showed a marked difference, with Southwest England topping the table with over 17,000 accreditations, followed by East England (14,769) and Southeast England (13,743), and Northeast Scotland, London and West Central Scotland having between 1,000 and 2,000 each.

You can find more information here: www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/domestic-rhi-annual-report-2021-2022



RECC responds to Government on ways to deliver a smart and secure electricity system



In its response to Government's recent call for evidence from industry and consumers on future measures needed to deliver a smart and secure electricity system RECC has stressed the need for transparency and fairness.

Government sees that, in future, energy smart appliances (ESAs) and services that manage consumer usage have the potential to provide the flexibility that will deliver a more efficient distribution of electricity across the system and reduce the overall amount being generated. This could result in savings as high as £10 billion a year by 2050.

The key proposals outlined in the consultation document focused on a) creating the right technical frameworks to unlock the potential flexibility for domestic and small non-domestic energy; b) developing new cyber security and grid stability requirements to improve the security of the system; and c) establishing minimum standards to build consumer confidence in and use of a smart energy system.

In future, 'time of day' tariffs will incentivise consumers to use electricity when it's cheapest, at periods when overall demand is low. In line with this demand-side response (DSR) contracts will allow consumers with smart meters to switch their usage away from times when electricity is most expensive, when overall demand is high.

These flexible systems, based on algorithms, are not transparent or easy for consumers to understand. RECC has outlined the need for clear messaging and minimum standards of protection. Certain groups of consumers are less able to switch their energy use to cheaper times of day, for example for health reasons. RECC has stressed that these groups should not be penalised. RECC has also underlined the need for consumers' data to be secure.

Government is planning a phased introduction of any changes so that it can work with industry to address all the most significant and near-term opportunities and risks. You can find more information here: www.gov.uk/government/consultations/call-for-evidence-a-smart-flexible-energy-system

MCS awarded funding to develop digital tool for heat pump consumers

MCS has been awarded Government funding to develop a tool to help consumers who are thinking about installing a heat pump.

Working with the Energy Saving Trust (EST), MCS will build a technology selection tool based on one managed by EST in Scotland. It will provide a tried-and-tested means of assessing a property's suitability for a heat pump.

The project aims to provide accurate and dependable information about each home so that installers will be able to give clients accurate quotes in 90% of cases. The tool will be linked to an enhanced version of the MCS 'Find a Contractor' search platform.

Government has set a target of installing up to 600,000 heat pumps a year by 2028. This award has been made under the 'Heat Pump Ready' programme which is part of the £1 billion Net Zero Innovation Portfolio. This sees that heat pumps are one of the key solutions to decarbonising homes and will be critical in meeting the UK's Net zero target by 2050.

You can find more information here: mcs-certified.com/mcs-awarded-funding-under-heat-pump-ready

MCS launches new Data Dashboard

MCS launched its new Data Dashboard on 7 November. Drawing on information from the MCS Installations Database (MID), the Data Dashboard is a dynamic, online platform that tracks the adoption and distribution of small-scale renewable installations across the UK. The platform provides near-real-time insights into current and past trends in domestic renewable energy, helping identify opportunities for further development and growth.

Installation and contractor data since 2008 has been captured in the MID. This makes it the single most reliable reference for small-scale renewable installations in the UK, a useful resource for policymakers, journalists and researchers. The launch of the Data Dashboard means that the data will now be publicly available for the first time.

You can find more information and register here: datadashboard.mcs-certified.com/welcome



As a RECC member, you have satisfied our strict criteria for membership. You now have the opportunity to become TrustMark-registered through RECC.

You can find full details of our streamlined process here: www.recc.org.uk/trustmark

MCS publishes updated Competency Standard and Framework

Following consultation with industry, MCS has published a revised version of its Competency Standard (MCS 025) and accompanying Competency Framework which will become mandatory in April 2023.

The framework includes a list of MCS-approved training courses to help contractors choose appropriate training for their installers as part of demonstrating their competency. Each company will have to appoint a Nominee and Nominated Technical Person for each technology they install to ensure they meet the Scheme requirements.

The overall aims of the Competency Framework are to:

- ensure that companies can select training, personal certification and MCS - approved competency assessments and qualifications which are appropriate for any given technology
- make the scheme accessible to companies of all sizes who employ or contract with competent individuals
- allow contractors to demonstrate how those individuals meet clearly defined competency requirements.

The MCS Competency Guidance document will be replaced with an online reference to approved training courses and a five-year reassessment will be required to take into account changes in industry standards and significant technological changes in working practice. See here for more information: mcs-certified.com/skills-and-competency

RECC Membership Benefits

A full list of RECC Member Benefits and Affinity Arrangements available to you can be found here: www.recc.org.uk/join/affinity-arrangements



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