

**Minutes of 29th Meeting of the Supervisory Panel
Renewable Energy Consumer Code
18th September 2013**

Present:

David Laird (Chair)

Bryn Aldridge – former Director of Trading Standards and Veterinary Services for The City of London

James Court- Consumer Futures

Gretel Jones – Independent social issues expert

Heather Kerr – Gemserv (MCS Licensee)

Mike Landy – REA

Dave Sowden – Micropower Council

Jim Thorneycroft- Independent solar PV expert

Sara Godfrey- DECC (observer)

Anna Moule – Ofgem (observer)

In attendance:

Mark Cutler - RECC

Ciaran Burns -RECC

Sarah Rubinson- RECC

Sian Morrissey- RECC

Carrie Principe – RECC

Sumandeep Sohi – RECC (minutes)

Apologies:

Walter Carlton – Deloitte

Louisa Coursey- Renewables UK

Ian Cuthbert – EST

David Frise- B&ES

Steve Storey - SSE

Philip Wolfe- Independent renewable technologies expert

Paul Rochester – DECC (observer)

1. Welcome, introduction and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the 29th meeting of the Supervisory Panel. Introductions were made and apologies for absence were noted.

2. Minutes of the 28th Supervisory Panel Meeting

The Minutes of the 28th Supervisory Panel Meeting were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising

The matters arising from the Summary of Actions were discussed.

It was confirmed that the media materials for members were not yet available but were being prepared; and that EST would shortly finalise its series of factsheets for consumers.

It was explained that DECC, Ofgem, EST, MCS and RECC were all working to prepare guidance on the RHI for consumers. Panel members discussed the need for guidance to be externally reviewed and to be very clear especially as regards the performance estimate and the calculation of the RHI payment.

It was confirmed that updated complaints data was set out in the Highlight Report, and that the member complaint notification template, updated in line with the Panel's suggestions, would be circulated following the meeting.

It was confirmed that the other actions from the previous meeting had all been completed and, where relevant, would be picked up later in the agenda.

4. Highlight Report September 2013

The second Highlight Report outlining the activities of RECC since the end of June 2013 was reviewed by Panel members.

Membership:

It was noted that there has been a gain of 158 members during the 3-month period of June – August, and a net gain of around 50 members per month. It was further noted that an average of 3-4 applications were received per day online, with an increase of applications from heating-based companies. It was further noted that around 1 in 4 applications are spot-checked with 6 auditors regularly carrying out spot checks on all areas of compliance such as the applicant's advertising, marketing and claims and terms and conditions.

Panel members suggested that it would be useful to obtain data on the types of technologies sold and installed by member companies. However it was explained that this could be difficult as RECC does not collect this data systematically other than for applicants. (The Code is not technology-specific.) It was explained that MCS had data on which technologies companies were certified to install. The Executive agreed to circulate a breakdown of applicants in the three month period broken down by technology.

It was reported that 2014 membership renewal letters would be sent out during November 2013.

Monitoring:

It was noted that there had been an 18% response rate from Consumer Satisfaction Surveys that had been sent out since the beginning of June 2013.

Complaints:

It was noted that a total of 308 complaints had been registered 1 June 2013 to the 31 August 2013, and that 52 of these complaints had been referred onwards to external bodies such as the MCS Licensee, MCS Certification Bodies or Trading Standards.

It was noted that of the 308 complaints registered, 159 were feedback complaints. (Feedback complaints are registered where the consumer wants to alert RECC to a particular issue with a member or where the consumer did not have a specific outcome they were seeking and also included instances where the company was not a member of the scheme. Feedback complaints are logged on to the complaints database and prove to be useful where a non-member company is applying to the Code.) The number of conciliation and arbitration awards received during the period was also noted. Panel members noted that some of the cases submitted during the period were still awaiting awards.

Panel members requested that complaints data be presented side by side with the data provided in the previous quarter, allowing for a clearer comparison of the figures to be made. The Chair requested that this format be adopted for the next meeting.

A summary of the complaints received by the MCS Licensee was provided to the Panel. It was noted that there were currently 3,889 certified installers registered with the MCS, while 2,702 installers had ceased their certification. (It was noted that these figures did not include companies that had rejoined the scheme after having previously left it.)

Panel members reviewed a breakdown of complaint types received by the MCS Licensee. They noted that a majority of the complaints fell under the category of 'Design and Installation'. They further noted that it took on average 53 working days for a complaint to be closed, although the definition of 'closed' would not necessarily be the same as that used by RECC. It was noted that closed MCS complaints had not necessarily been resolved to the consumer's satisfaction, but rather that the company had made an offer.

The Panel requested a further summary of complaints received by the MCS Licensee be provided to the Panel at the next meeting, if possible broken down by the relevant Certification Body.

Newsletter:

The first edition of the RECC Newsletter was provided to Panel Members. It was noted that the second edition would be issued in early October 2013. Panel members suggested that future editions might include contact information for the different teams within RECC, and that a complaints case study might be interesting.

Regulation:

The panel discussed proposals for the introduction of the domestic Renewable Heat Incentive scheme. Panel members noted that the incentives would apply to air source heat pumps, ground source heat pumps, biomass boilers and solar thermal systems.

It was pointed out that the amount of benefit paid to a household in respect of heat pumps and biomass would be limited by the maximum heat needs of the property as well as the efficiency of the system. The former will be derived from the Energy Performance Rating for the property and the latter from the Seasonal Performance Factor to be determined by the installer. In the case of solar thermal installations the rate would be determined by the estimated output to be determined in line with the MCS installer standard. DECC has projected a target of 750,000 installations for these technologies by 2020.

It was agreed that REA's note to members about the domestic RHI would be circulated after the meeting. Panel members also requested an update on the domestic RHI Regulations at the next meeting.

5. Non Compliance Rules and amendments to RECC Bye-Laws

Panel members considered ways in which the non-compliance process could be made more effective. Three key areas were identified and considered, each of which would necessitate an amendment to the Bye-Laws:

- the Non-Compliance Panel should have the ability to impose a financial penalty and / or costs as a sanction for serious breach of the Code or Bye-Laws;
- the Executive should have the power to refer members directly to a non-compliance hearing in the instances of serious and continuing breaches of the Code or Bye-Laws;
- the Executive should have the power to issue Consent Orders to members suspected of breaching the Code or Bye-Laws.

Panel members noted the process for amending the Bye-Laws, and requested site of the amendments at the next meeting of the Panel.

6. Solar PV proposal pack, model quotation and guidance

It was confirmed that the updated solar PV model proposal pack, model quotation and guidance were currently available on the RECC website. It was explained that the heat pump proposal pack, model quotation and guidance were in a draft format and that the solar thermal and biomass proposal packs would be developed shortly. It was explained that these documents would all be externally reviewed before being finalised.

7. Update on TSI and CCAS

It was noted that the TSI audit of RECC would take place on the 23 and 24 September. It was noted that RECC was the second approved Code out of 11 to be audited by TSI. It was noted that the auditors would be looking at areas such as membership, applications and the complaints database.

It was noted that during the audits various other issues would be discussed with TSI. These included client accounts, members with links to finance companies and rules for mutual recognition between codes operating in the same sector.

It was noted that there would be a TSI Code Sponsors' Forum on 29 October. Panel members requested an update following the Forum.

8. A. O. B.

The Chair requested that a revised Panel Activity Plan for 2014 be prepared for the next Panel Meeting, and invited Panel Members to send in their contributions.

9. Dates of future Panel meetings

It was noted that the next panel meeting would take place on 11 December 2013. Before that meeting the dates of 2014 Panel meetings would be circulated.