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Spring 2020 Volume 14 No 1

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Table of Contents

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A new decade... with unprecedented change for the industry

As we enter the new decade, we can be certain of one thing above all else: that the heating industry is about to enter a period of change that will be bigger than anything most of us will ever have experienced. Indeed, not since the large-scale introduction of wet central heating has there been the potential for such a radical shake up. However, in this case it is not driven by consumer demand for more convenient and controllable heating, but by the government's decarbonisation agenda and the quest for net zero emissions.

Many of the changes are potentially expensive and disruptive for consumers and there is little chance that the government will fully fund the changes. That means households could face considerable financial challenges and maintaining their support will be crucial for the government.

We can expect many policy ideas in the months and years to come. The heat technologies that can embrace these opportunities – with solutions that help meet the government's net zero targets while minimising adverse impacts on consumers and adding value – can expect to do well in the 2020s; those that cannot should expect to face a very rapid decline.

For heating technicians too, the changes could be profound. The government is already grappling with the challenge of how to improve outcomes for consumers who have energy efficiency and heating retrofits. Some of the options it is considering – such as those deployed in ECO3 – could make life much more challenging for small businesses that are the lifeblood of our industry. This could have the effect of re-engineering the market, fundamentally changing how heating services are delivered and turning many installers into sub-contractors, rather than masters of their own work.

We explore the role of the 'future installer' in much more detail on pages 14/15/16, and you'll find articles on all these topics throughout this spring issue.

Paul Rose

Paul Rose,
CEO, OFTEC

New benefit of registration

As part of our continued follow-up work on the technician questionnaire and also in response to some of the calls we get here at OFTEC, we are very pleased to announce a new partnership with the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB). The FSB have agreed to waive the joining fee (currently £30) for any OFTEC registered businesses wishing to take out FSB membership.

Why join the FSB?

The FSB is a very well-known not-for-profit organisation that represents the interests of small businesses at national level and provides a host of services for their members too.

For a nominal annual subscription, FSB members can benefit from:

- 24-hour legal advice help line.
- 24-hour debt recovery services.
- Online legal hub with downloadable factsheets and documents to ensure your business literature remains up to date and compliant.
- Free legal costs insurance and tax investigation protection
- Free everyday business banking as well as a payment scheme so your customers can pay by card or online easily and securely.
- A local representative and regional events.
- Strong campaigning at government level to help persuade those in power to back small businesses.

Many of the benefits by themselves are worth more than the annual subscription – so it really is a matter of what the FSB can save you, rather than what it will cost. For more information please visit: www.oftec.org/technicians.

Please note, the FSB only operates in the UK. We are still investigating similar schemes for the Republic of Ireland.

Staff update

After several years working as OFTEC's compliance manager, Paul Sharpe has decided he would like to have more time for family and hobbies as he slowly acclimatises himself towards retirement. From January 2020 he will be working just three days a week and has moved to the role of compliance officer.

Paul Sharpe and Jonathan King

With Paul's move to a part time role, we are very pleased to welcome Jonathan King as our new compliance manager. Jonathan brings with him extensive experience working for an installer of boilers, renewables and insulation and is very familiar with the problems that registered technicians may face on site. Jonathan is looking forward to working more closely with registered businesses, to assist and guide as well as ensuring that homeowners know the value an OFTEC registered technician can bring to any work they need completing.

What could be coming down the road? *OFTEC dusts off its crystal ball!*

To drive through the changes needed to reach its carbon reduction targets, the government will need to shake up the current way that things are done in the heating industry. *OFTEC has dusted off its crystal ball and here considers a few of the most likely policy options the government may consider.*

The last decade has seen little policy success for the government when it comes to reducing emissions. The abject failure of the Green Deal means little progress was made with energy efficiency improvements. Similarly, the RHI, which ends in 2021 and was designed to encourage the deployment of some low carbon technologies, has completely failed to achieve its objectives. Both schemes have been widely criticized and, with more ambitious carbon targets looming, the government urgently needs to come up with something better.

So, what can we expect? It's likely that a mix of carrots and sticks will form the basis of future heat policy so here's our review of some of the most likely options:

Cash incentives and scrappage schemes

Probability: Medium. Given the scale of the challenge and the need to replace the RHI, the government will probably offer new support but is unlikely to have enough money for a large-scale incentive scheme. An updated RHI scheme with additional low-level up-front incentives for low carbon technologies, VAT reductions, or scrappage schemes to support the elimination of fossil fuel systems are all possible. A short-term payment scheme to support a switch to biofuels could be a possibility.

Green mortgages and low interest loans

Probability: Very high. The government has already set up a green finance initiative and is very likely to involve the private sector as a provider of investment and funding opportunities, at both large-scale infrastructure and domestic level. For example, this could include mortgages and loans with preferential interest rates linked to energy efficiency or low carbon retrofit improvements as part of a new government-supported home improvement scheme.

Tighter standards for homes

Probability: High. A Part L consultation for new build is underway and will tighten energy efficiency standards. Similar changes are likely to be forthcoming for existing buildings. However, policies that force change at key intervention points are also likely. The Scottish government has already proposed that existing homes will not be allowed to be sold unless they achieve EPC band C, and similar ideas will be considered for the rest of the UK too. Such approaches could have far-reaching implications, affecting house values and potentially disrupting the housing market.

Carbon taxes

Probability: Medium. Government may use the tax system to make the cost of fossil fuels such as oil and gas higher as a way of pushing consumers towards renewables. However, taxation is regressive and politically sensitive because it disproportionally impacts on poorer households – who will in any case be least able to afford to switch. Consequently, any changes will need very careful consideration.

Technology bans

Probability: Medium/high. An outright ban on the installation of fossil fuel appliances is certainly possible and is already being considered for new build. Bans on oil have already been imposed in some parts of Europe. However, this approach may lead to problems, particularly if new low carbon fuels such as hydrogen and biofuels become available. It is more likely that government will seek to impose progressively tougher carbon emission limits that all technologies must achieve to remain in the market.

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2020 – *a crucial year for the future of UK heating*

By Paul Rose

We may look back on 2020 as the year when the future of the heating industry finally became clear, after more than a decade of false starts and uncertainty. The outcome of the general election last December means the Conservative government now has a clear mandate to govern for the next five years, creating an opportunity for significant policy progress, although it's worth noting that there were few details of what to expect in their manifesto.

However, it's reasonable to assume that the existing direction of travel will continue and, with the outcome of Brexit now clear, work to reduce the emissions from buildings is likely to intensify, given that this is a key priority in the government's quest to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

That means BEIS, the government department in the UK responsible for leading on climate change policies, is soon expected to publish its long-anticipated heat and energy plans, which will set out a range of policy proposals to achieve its emission reduction targets. We assume there will then follow a period of public consultation before the policies are finalised and begin to be rolled out – which is expected to be from spring 2021.

For the oil heating industry, the goal is very clear. We must first convince the government to include low carbon liquid fuels as one of their heat policy options and then ensure that it is supported in the consultation responses.

This is not as easy as it might sound. The government has previously stated that heat pumps are its preferred solution for off-gas grid homes, a view recommended by its advisors, the Committee on Climate Change. However, many Conservative MPs represent rural constituencies and will be reluctant to support policies that will be unpopular with voters. Forcing householders to replace oil boilers with expensive heat pumps could be very unpopular indeed, particularly when they discover that major improvements will also be needed to their home's thermal efficiency.

Paul Rose, CEO, OFTEC

The Conservative Party's manifesto stated that "free markets, innovation and prosperity can protect the planet" so, alongside demonstrating our willingness to change, we need to show how supporting biofuels and encouraging competition makes more sense than trying to pick a low carbon technology winner. It's also the most pragmatic option, given the many challenges of retrofitting off-grid homes.

OFTEC is working hard to make the case for liquid fuels and we will keep you up to date on our work in future issues of *Oil Installer.*

Changes afoot for ECO installers

There's no resting place for heating technicians during the winter season and if you were lucky enough to grab a few days off during the holiday season, by January 2nd you will have been back sorting out the nation's heating systems.

The government brought in new legislation at the back end of last year and not everyone would have had the time to understand what the changes were, so to recap:

The way energy efficiency measures like insulation, fenestration and heating are installed under the government's Energy Company Obligation (ECO) scheme has changed, although some aspects are subject to a transition period until June 2021. The Electricity and Gas (Energy Company Obligations) (Amendment) Order 2019 states that from 1st January 2020 ECO work will only be carried out by an installation company that is certified to PAS 2030:2019 and that is a member of TrustMark.

However, during the transition period, companies may continue to be certified to PAS2030:2017 while certification bodies (such as OFTEC) obtain the necessary UKAS approval to certify companies to PAS 2030:2019.

Installation companies who are already with OFTEC for PAS 2030 work will only find minimal differences between the 2017 and 2019 versions, apart from a more risk based approached to calculating inspection rates. There is now also a requirement for all trades undertaking ECO work to have a vocational qualification, such as an apprenticeship, but it also recognises accredited personal certificates of competence which the oil industry has utilised to demonstrate competence for many years.

The more significant change is the requirement for a project coordinator to take responsibility for the specification and guidance for retrofitting dwellings for improved energy efficiency. This project coordinator will hold the PAS2035:2019 qualification and be listed on the TrustMark website. Installers could fulfil this project coordinator's role if they have the necessary skills, but it is anticipated that most installers will collaborate with a third party.

OFTEC is currently making the transition to the revised PAS2030:2019 standard with UKAS and, once accredited, will contact our existing PAS2030 certified installation companies to make the transition before June 2021. We are also in discussions with TrustMark.

It is very likely that there will be further changes as the new legislation settles in – we will provide further updates in E-News and *Oil Installer.*

OFTEC: "It's time for government to back low carbon liquid fuels"

As OFTEC launches its strategy outlining how low carbon liquid fuels offer the best decarbonisation solution for oil-heated homes, the trade association says it's time for government to back this practical, cost-effective solution.

OFTEC's 'industrial strategy for decarbonising oil-heated homes' underlines the unique challenge reducing heat emissions from off-grid properties presents, due to the diverse character, age, design, construction and sparse distribution of these homes.

Analysis of oil-heated properties in England alone reveals almost half were built before 1919 with hard to insulate, solid walls, while 51% are detached and typically larger than average. These factors greatly contribute to their poor energy efficiency, with 97% falling into EPC Bands D-G[1].

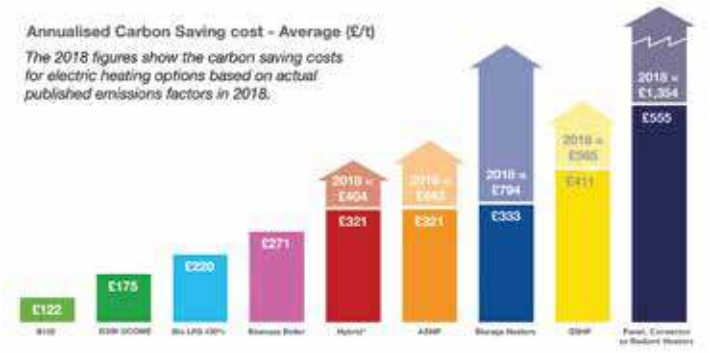
Rural households also face additional challenges including lower disposable incomes[2] and significantly deeper levels of fuel poverty[3]. This means those least able to fund carbon reduction measures are living in the hardest and most expensive homes to treat.

The low carbon solution most frequently advocated for oil-heated homes is heat pumps. Yet these technologies are not only costly to install (typically £6,000 to £18,000) but in many older, poorly insulated properties will require extensive energy efficiency improvements to be made, such as new windows and external cladding, to work efficiently. New, larger radiators, underfloor heating and hot water tanks would also need to be installed in many cases.

Switching heat technology is particularly problematic in 'distress' purchase situations, when an existing boiler has broken down. Cost is nearly always a major consideration and there is little time to consider an entirely different heating system with all the complications this could bring.

OFTEC says it's difficult to understand why current decarbonisation policy favours pushing oil-heated households towards these expensive, disruptive solutions when a simpler, more affordable option can be developed which is less reliant on extensive retrofit work.

Paul Rose, OFTEC CEO explains: "Climate change is the biggest and most urgent challenge facing the world today and decisive action from all sectors of the economy is needed, including heat. Gaining consumer support for the necessary changes will be crucial to the success of any strategy. Without this vital part of the jigsaw, there is a risk



The annualised carbon saving costs show that a low carbon liquid fuel (B100) has the potential to deliver the highest carbon reduction impact of any off-grid heating technology for the lowest overall cost over the lifetime of the appliance.

that decarbonisation targets simply won't be met.

"The nature of off-grid homes in the UK, including the 1.53 million heated by oil, means they will be amongst the most difficult to improve. Most are unsuited to solutions such as heat pumps without significant, costly retrofits which consumers are highly unlikely to embrace. What these households need are affordable solutions that are simple to deploy.

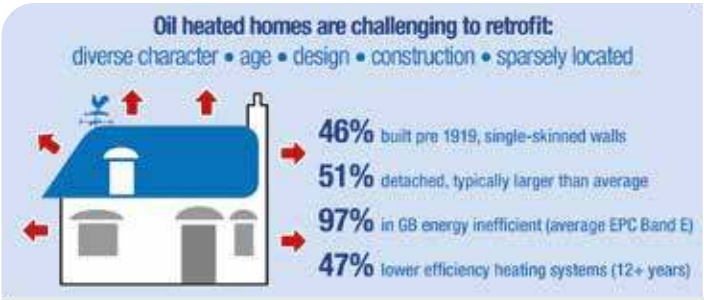
"Our strategy is based on in-depth, independent research which shows that for oil-heated properties, low carbon liquid fuels offer the highest carbon reduction impact for the lowest cost[4]. Analysis also shows that sustainable, low carbon liquid fuels could be produced in sufficient volume in the UK, with the additional benefit of generating investment opportunities and creating new green jobs.

"Our industry is committed to delivering a 100% liquid biofuel by 2035, starting with a 30% biofuel and 70% kerosene blend from 2027, providing a fit-for-purpose solution which will command the confidence of consumers."

OFTEC continues to work closely with the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and other key stakeholders to gain support for low carbon liquid fuels but to achieve the wholesale changes required and successfully deploy this solution, full government backing will be required.

Paul Rose concludes: "It's time for government to stop ignoring the facts and start supporting a decarbonisation solution that is fit for the challenge of rural homes.

Continued on page 9



The reasons why oil heated homes are difficult to retrofit.

The additional challenges rural households face when considering low carbon heating options.

Whichever low carbon option is chosen, consumers will need help to afford the necessary changes, so it makes sense for government to back the most cost-effective option, along with the alternatives. For most oil-heated homes this will be to retain and optimise their existing heating system and simply switch to a sustainable fuel.

"The liquid fuel industry also needs to be provided with confidence to invest for the future. Our new strategy clearly outlines the steps needed to achieve this and we will continue to work hard on behalf of industry and the 1.53 million oil-heated households we serve to ensure these are implemented."

OFTEC's 'Industrial Strategy for decarbonising oil-heated homes' can be found by visiting OFTEC's brand new website www.oftec.org/future-heating

[1] BEIS Minister written answer, 29/10/2018 based on Analysis of National Housing Model input data, drawing from English Housing Survey 2014, Scottish Housing Condition Survey 2014, Welsh Housing Conditions Survey 2014

[2] DEFRA Statistical digest of rural England, June 2019

[3] Renewable Energy Association Phase 3: Delivering the UK's Bioenergy Potential

[3] Based on existing SAP 10.1 figures

Biofuel trials to commence as industry gears up for a low carbon future

OFTEC and other industry partners will be joining forces this year as work intensifies to prepare for the future introduction of sustainable low carbon liquid fuels.

The aim is to undertake a large-scale field trial to ensure that the introduction of the new fuels goes as smoothly as possible. The work will build on the previous field trial undertaken by OFTEC in 2009-2010 and aims to improve the understanding of how the new fuels will perform in a wide range of conditions, such as extreme weather and different system configurations.

This work is vital for several reasons. For example, it will help the industry plan how the new fuels should be deployed, minimising the risk of negative impacts on consumers and providing data to ensure that fuel suppliers, equipment manufacturers, installers and servicing technicians can all be fully prepared. It will also provide certainty to government that the industry is able to manage the technical challenges associated with the transition, which is important to securing policy support for the new liquid fuels.

Stepping stone

The main part of the project will focus on B30K – a blend of FAME-based biodiesel (Fatty Acid Methyl Ester) and kerosene – that is expected to form the first phase of the transition to low carbon fuels. However, this is only a stepping stone to a complete solution and the field trial will also provide an opportunity to assess the potential of new fuels that were not available when the original trials took place, such as hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO), which to date has only been trialled in burner test laboratories.

The use of other types of biofuel is important if the target of 100% low carbon fuel is to be achieved, and HVO is a particularly attractive option. Unlike conventional FAME-based biofuels, which can only be used as part of a blended fuel, HVO is a paraffinic fuel that can be used as a 100% drop-in replacement for existing fuels. Lab trials already carried out produced very positive combustion results – burning cleanly, whilst reducing NOx and particulate emissions.

The main drawback with HVO is that it is not currently manufactured in the UK and world-wide production is relatively small, although this is expected to increase significantly in the coming years. However, it is possible that a future 100% low carbon liquid fuel will be a blend of more than one type of liquid fuel, for example a mix of conventional biodiesel, HVO and pyrolysis oil. Depending on availability, HVO has the potential to be either part, or all, of the solution and the trials are likely to test a number of blend options.

Look out for more details and further updates in future issues of *Oil Installer.*

New leaflet to help retain your customers

OFTEC has become aware that misleading information has been circulating, suggesting oil appliances are about to be banned, so it's vital that we act now to tell our customers that liquid fuels still have a viable future.

OFTEC has put together a new information leaflet, explaining the current situation, the benefits of low carbon liquid fuels, and answering some of the questions that householders frequently ask.

These are available free of charge to all registered technicians to hand to existing or prospective customers. Contact OFTEC's marketing team at: marketing@oftec.org stating your full contact details, business registration number and quantity required and we will get them in the post for you.

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Three generations in the oil heating industry

L J R Heating and Plumbing Services, based in Mid Glamorgan, Wales, contacted OFTEC recently as they were thrilled that a member of the third generation of the family was about to be registered as a technician. They also set OFTEC a challenge – *to find out whether he is the youngest ever OFTEC registered technician!*

Seasoned engineer Lewis had worked for 25 years as a toolmaker for Staedtler UK before deciding to retrain as a heating engineer in 1997. He began working with his brother-in-law who had a well-established oil heating business, putting his 'old school' engineering skills to good use. When his brother-in-law retired in 2003, Lewis bought the business.

Lewis's son Jonathan had worked as a fitness instructor for a number of years before the temptation of pipework and oil tanks got too much for him. In 2011 he started part-time studies to get his plumbing qualifications and then progressed

Jonathan, Josh and Lewis – the three generations of LJR Heating and Plumbing Services

to the OFTEC assessments, followed by GasSafe, and finally completed his G3 unvented qualification, working alongside his dad to gain valuable experience 'on the tools'.

Free registration

Jonathan's nephew, Josh, started his plumbing training at Bridgend College at 16 and joined the family business as an apprentice, aspiring to be OFTEC's youngest registered technician in Wales. He passed his OFTEC assessments in October and registered with OFTEC in November, taking advantage of the year's free registration OFTEC offers to newly qualified apprentices.

When asked about the industry Jonathan said: "The profession has changed massively in the last few years. A huge change I have noticed is the increasing use of the internet and information being readily available – it has the tendency to make everyone a qualified heating engineer. I once had a customer diagnose their heating problem as needing a new expansion vessel... they didn't even have one in the first place!"

So, did Josh achieve his ambition? According to our records, at the tender age of just 19 he certainly appears to be the current youngest technician, not just in Wales, but the whole of the UK and Ireland too! *However, if you know different, just email: marketing@oftec.org and tell us about your heating career!*

OFTEC launches new website

At the end of November 2019, we unveiled the brand-new look for our website – www.oftec.org. This website has been designed to work as well on mobiles as it does on desktop computers, making it ideal for viewing content when you are out and about. We've also restructured the page layout to make it easier to find the information you are looking for.

Most information for technicians is password protected, so you will need to create a new account to access these pages. Don't worry, it only takes a minute! Instructions were sent via E-News, but here's a quick recap.

Go to: www.oftec.org/users/user-registration and enter the details requested, once you have created a password, hit the orange submit button and go to your email inbox. You'll find a validation email from: website-admin@oftec.org with a link that you must click on to activate your new website account (check your junk or spam folders if you don't see the email straightaway).

Once you've clicked on the email link, you will be taken back to the website and invited to log in with the email and password you just entered.

If you are stuck, go to: www.oftec.org/help for handy tips on creating an account.

Once you are logged in, you can then access the technician's hub which guides you to all the content you are looking for. In the hub, we've grouped pages together into four sections to make it easier to find what you need – here are a few highlights from each section:

- Go to 'technical resources' for book updates, calculation tools and changes in legislation.

- Visit 'business support' to download the OFTEC logo and view your benefits of registration.
- The 'your registration' section provides help on preparing for inspections, completing works notifications, renewing your registration or adding new scopes or technicians.
- The 'compliance' section provides details about the workmanship warranty and how to report cases of unsafe work or misuse of the OFTEC logo.

Other sections of the website include the consumer pages, which contain information to help homeowners understand the different off-grid heating technologies and the building regulations that are in place to ensure safe and compliant installations. And the future heating section which contains our strategy for the transition of liquid fuel heating to low carbon alternatives. It will also be the section to view updates on our biofuel trials and further government policy changes.

We appreciate the new website will take a bit of getting used to, so please feel free to send any feedback or suggestions for new pages to: marketing@oftec.org.

OFTEC responds to government's "disruptive" plans

OFTEC learnt recently that, against its advice, the government has decided to incorporate TrustMark and the new PAS2035 standard into ECO3 for all energy efficiency measures. While the current changes mainly affect ECO work, the intended future direction of travel has been made clear in the consultation response which states: "This is just the first step forward to making these standards the norm, and we will champion the roll-out of higher standards and consumer protection across the retrofit market."

OFTEC's understanding is that the steering group responsible for these plans did not set out with this agenda, so it is deeply troubling that the government wishes to impose these changes without taking heed of our industry's views. As the UK responds to the challenges of improving home energy efficiency and deploying low carbon heating it is right to focus on the need to protect consumers and achieve high quality outcomes. However, we are deeply concerned about these disruptive plans which we think disproportionately impact on small businesses while failing to achieve the government's intended goal.

If implemented, the adoption of PAS2035 and Trustmark membership across the wider retrofit sector will increase costs for installation businesses which will inevitably be passed onto consumers. The heating industry already has robust training, inspection, compliance and consumer protection processes in place, and existing schemes – while not beyond improvement – have an excellent track record. We think that bolting another layer of requirements on top of what is already in place will confuse consumers and alienate installers. It would be far better to work with industry to improve the schemes that are already in place.

PAS2035 is most appropriate for scenarios where a 'whole house retrofit' is being undertaken, and a requirement to use this standard for all retrofit work would add significant delays and complexity to even simple projects, for example, a simple appliance replacement. We are particularly concerned about the requirement for all retrofit projects to have a 'retrofit coordinator' as the skills required for this role go well beyond what a typical heating installation business currently possesses.

Excluded from quoting

OFTEC fears this will lead to many small installation businesses becoming excluded from quoting for retrofit work, which will increasingly become the domain of large companies who then sub-contract the actual installations on a piece-work basis. This could lead to local installers no longer having a direct relationship with their customers – they will simply do the installation as quickly as possible and move on to the next job. This loss of ownership could be very damaging and will inevitably lead to worse, rather than better, standards – something we already see frequently with ECO work.

We also fear that the changes will lead to more installers opting out of the 'system' to undercut more qualified competitors in what could become an unregulated heating black market, within which consumers will have little protection. The only effective solution for this would be to make membership of a suitable registration scheme mandatory. We believe such a move, which OFTEC has constantly lobbied for, would be widely welcomed and would help to supply the necessary confidence that is required.

Despite this significant setback, OFTEC will continue to work constructively with government. We would encourage anyone who feels strongly about the proposed changes to make their views known by writing to the department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). We will also continue to offer a competitive registration service for businesses that wish to undertake ECO work.

New BPEC chairman Duncan Wilson (l) with retiring chairman George Thomson

BPEC chairman retires

BPEC is bidding a very fond farewell to George Thomson who has retired from his position of chairman. George has been a director and trustee of BPEC since 2008 and became chairman in 2015.

George served as SNIPEF national president in 2007 before going on to champion the importance of apprenticeships and skills. A second-generation plumber, George has worked in the plumbing industry for over 40 years, taking on a number of leadership roles and has represented the industry on the national and international stage.

This year George was awarded an outstanding achievement award from the Worshipful Company of Plumbers in recognition of his leadership roles within the plumbing and heating industry over many years.

Taking over the reins from George as BPEC chairman is Duncan Wilson. Duncan has been a director and trustee at BPEC for several years and has the expertise and dedication required for this pivotal role.

Neil Collishaw, BPEC CEO commented: "We will miss George and the enthusiasm and passion he has brought to BPEC.

"The skills and training landscape has, and is still currently going through radical changes, and George's leadership skills have made a real difference both for BPEC and the plumbing industry across the UK and overseas.

"BPEC have been fortunate to have someone of George's calibre at the helm, and we all wish him all the best for his retirement."

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Changes are coming to the heating sector

With the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions increasingly taking centre stage, the new decade is likely to bring changes to many aspects of our daily life. But what will it mean for the heating industry? Ahead of Futurebuild event, where MCS will be working with key partners to create the Future Installer Zone, we put some experts on the spot and asked them the questions that all heating technicians will need answered. You can see a selection of the answers here – or go online and read the full dossier at: www.oftec.org/future-heating/change-is-coming

What will the consumer expect from future installers?

Martyn Bridges – *director of technical communication and product management, Worcester Bosch*

• The consumer's ever-increasing expectations will require installers to specify low carbon heating and hot water solutions coupled with flexible and internet-connected control systems. Devices that allow the end user to make use of the cheapest fuel tariffs, allow remote operation and supervision of their heating systems, and also let them know when a fault has occurred, or their system needs servicing.

Phil Mason – *head of compliance at TrustMark*

• Consumers are waking up to the fact that more needs to be done in all areas of society to reduce our carbon footprint and this will impact on future installers [...] The consumer will expect the installer to be able to offer a wider knowledge of technologies and be able to react to their more varied requirements for quality information, installation and service. Consumers will seek more advice on what is best for their home and what impact changes will have in the future. They may also want information about finance options. All of this information should be at the installer's fingertips to enable them to deliver a positive experience for the consumer.

What is the best way for installers to future-proof their careers?

Stewart Clements – *Director – HHIC*

• We cannot stand still when it comes to training. Technologies such as heat pumps and hybrid systems will become more and more important as the government looks to cut carbon emissions. Heating engineers should proactively begin to include these technologies in their portfolio and review the training offerings available from manufacturers to ready them for the coming consumer demand in these products.

What is the best way for the future installer to support the decarbonisation of heating emissions?

Graham Lock – *founder, Low Carbon Homes*

• 'Frontline workers' in other professions are trained to identify and guide vulnerable households when they visit customers at home. There is a huge opportunity for suitably trained heating engineers to look beyond the appliance and to consider a whole-house and household approach to heating – to help reduce energy demand and provide low carbon alternatives to intensive fossil fuel use […] The 21st century heating engineer could

Unquestionably de-carbonisation is the biggest challenge installers and technicians will face in the 2020's. The net zero carbon target by 2050 and previous declarations by the government that high carbon fuels are firmly in their sights and oil and coal head that list is one that will affect all of us in the industry.

Martyn Bridges – *director of technical communication and product management, Worcester Bosch*

It is in no doubt that the construction industry, including the energy sector, is in a significant period of change. Certification bodies like OFTEC are in a valuable and crucial position to help installers deliver improved energy efficiency whether that's through raising awareness or providing upskilling opportunities. Supporting installers in understanding more about the changing landscape is key to positively delivering the changes the industry needs [...]

Phil Mason – *head of compliance at TrustMark*

[...] become the conduit to a raft of measures to not only reduce the carbon impact of homes, but also to support the vulnerable and alleviate fuel poverty.

Paul Rose – *OFTEC CEO*

• Technicians need to forget what they think they know about a particular customer's home – they will need to carefully assess the current energy requirements of each and every home and provide a range of recommendations to the homeowner including energy efficiency improvements as well as the heating system most appropriate for their home. This will require an entirely different approach – gone are the days of the like for like boiler replacement.

What is the biggest challenge that future installers can expect in the 2020s?

Phil Hurley – *managing director, NIBE Energy Systems Ltd and vice chair of the Heat Pump Association*

• The biggest challenge will be the shifting of mindset from like-for-like replacements to renewable and low carbon solutions and the provision of services to enable the transition. This will be aided by government policy and increased consumer awareness of climate change. However, installers will play a significant role in providing information and informing the decisions their clients make as well as installing less polluting heating solutions. They will need to be able to confidently and competently talk to clients about the solutions available in a holistic way and encourage the low carbon transition, this will require retraining and upskilling. The government has an ambition to phase out high carbon fossil fuels in the 2020s and installers are the key contact point meaning that they must be fully aware of the policy landscape and regulatory requirements. (Editor's note: According to the government's clean growth strategy, it is to phase out the installation of high carbon fossil fuel heating in new and existing off-gas grid residential buildings, so not necessarily the use of the fuel in existing installs).

Paul Rose – *OFTEC CEO*

• The biggest challenge will be for smaller installers to carry out all the work themselves. There will be a greater need to join forces or collaborate with different trades to provide a complete solution for the customer.

What will future installers expect from equipment manufacturers?

Martyn Bridges – *director of technical communication and product management, Worcester Bosch*

• Appliance manufacturers are pretty adept at trying to make the installer's life as easy as possible so I think you will see an increasing amount of options enter the market to answer the challenge of lowering the carbon output of heating and hot water generation. We will start to see oil-fired boilers being produced ready to burn lower carbon oils such as Bio-Kerosene as well as packages of appliances where the oil consumption is reduced and the heating and hot water generated from electric heat pumps with oil needed for perhaps 30% of the time when its exceptionally cold.

Phil Mason – *head of compliance at TrustMark*

• The whole house approach will lead to manufacturers launching new products which is likely to include an extension in technologies. This is essential to help meet the low carbon objective. Installers will and should expect a broader range of equipment available to achieve this and the product training and technical support to ensure they can be installed safely and effectively. Multi-measure installation packages will become the norm and

Continued on page 16

[Consumers will require] guidance on the range of heating solutions available to them, including being an advocate for renewable energy technologies, that in turn can reduce a consumer's dependence on traditional fossil fuels, lowering their energy bills as well as making a real contribution to the fight against climate change.

Ian Rippin – *CEO, MCS Certified*

Certification bodies are going to play a vital role in the transition to a low carbon future. They are a key source of information for installers and ensure that professional and technical standards are met [...]

Phil Hurley – *managing director, NIBE Energy Systems Ltd and vice chair of the Heat Pump Association*

Continued from page 15

manufacturers' solutions to deliver these are paramount to support the installer.

Guy Crabb – *technician representative, OFTEC scheme committee*

• I would like manufacturers to concentrate on making products more user friendly. Many technologies to date have proved to be very complicated for both the installer to set-up/commission and for the homeowners to control.

What new skills will installers need in the future?

Nathan Van Gambling – *founder, Betateach*

• The 4 "C" skills remain as fundamental as ever: collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity. Collaboration will take the form of peer learning and working closer with manufacturers. Regarding communication, engineers and installers will have to consider how to convey information to a diverse customer base.

Paul Rose – *OFTEC CEO*

• Technicians should assume that their customers don't know which heating systems or retrofit measures will be most suitable for their homes. They will no longer just be heating experts; they will need to understand the whole building and be able to identify the most appropriate low carbon solutions. For some homes this will be a heat pump and for others a low carbon liquid fuel boiler.

[...] The installer of the future will need to understand the requirements of the relevant regulations and standards that relate to the practical installation, testing and commissioning activities associated with the installation of renewable energy technologies.

Ian Rippin – *CEO, MCS Certified*

What will the future installer expect from their training centre?

Guy Crabb – *technician representative, OFTEC scheme committee*

• Training centres need to design courses that effectively teach new technology installations whilst identifying the skills already possessed by engineers.

Stewart Clements – *Director, HHIC*

• In the longer term, as we prepare for green gas, the industry will need to design and develop training requirements for commissioning hydrogen-ready appliances. These appliances will require new legislation, standards and a new set of commissioning requirements – all of which heating operatives will need to learn. Training is no longer a 'nice to do' it really has never been more of a 'must-have'.

What can certification bodies, such as OFTEC, do to support the installers of the future?

Ian Rippin – *CEO, MCS Certified*

• Provide guidance to their members as to the available resources, training and support that can enable an installer's business to deliver renewable heating solutions for their customers, alongside more traditional heating solutions. OFTEC is uniquely placed to do this as it can offer its members a 'one stop shop' with a range of certification schemes, covering liquid and solid fuels, as well as renewable energy technologies such as heat pumps, solar thermal and biomass.

Graham Lock – *founder, Low Carbon Homes*

• […] Certification bodies could act as sector advocates, promoting the exciting career prospects of a 21st century heating engineer to those currently in education [...]

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A manifesto for change...

The UK government has set a target of net zero carbon by 2050. Paul Wakefield, managing director of Grant UK, outlines what this means for off-gas and rural heating systems

Paul Wakefield

In line with the UK's target of net zero carbon by 2050, the clear goal for Grant UK is to take the lead on decarbonising home heating, helping installers and their customers make the transition to cleaner, more sustainable domestic heating systems.

We have recently outlined our vision for how off-gas and rural heating could look 10 years from now in 2030. Leading the way in the off-gas heating sector, Grant UK is well positioned to play this key role in the transition towards greener technologies. For over 20 years we have been helping homeowners consider and adopt more sustainable approaches to home heating, especially those in older, inefficient, harder-to-heat homes that are costly to upgrade.

We also continue to manufacture energy efficient oil boilers, such as the award-winning Grant Vortex condensing boiler range, available in outputs from 12 to 70kW. The boilers have won accolades such as Which? Best Buys in recent years, are endorsed by the Energy Savings Trust and are currently some of the most efficient oil-fired boilers on the market.

Hybrid or renewable solutions

Our hope is that both new and existing off-gas homes will no longer be solely dependent on fossil fuels for heating but have access to affordable and sustainable biofuel substitutes, or alternatively, can transition to hybrid or renewable solutions.

Hybrid systems are a significant and immediately available solution to transitioning the off-gas market towards low-carbon heating as they combine a traditional boiler with a renewable technology like a heat pump. This approach prioritises the renewable technology, with the boiler providing back up when required and is ideal for retrofit hard-to heat homes. A typical carbon reduction of up to 70% can be achieved with this method of heating and even more when using a biofuel alternative for the boiler.

Acknowledging the current situation in off gas and rural areas, what needs to change to help us achieve our 2030 vision? This is our manifesto for change to help the industry decarbonise:

1. The government policy to support renewable technologies including hybrid heating solutions, should be reinforced after the cessation of the RHI to continue to bridge the gap between fossil fuels and renewable technologies, especially with retrofit installations. There needs to be clear market direction and encouragement to end users to update their houses and make the move to greener heating alternatives.

2. Future legislation needs to consider how to make older houses more energy efficient. This must cover properties that are in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and possibly listed buildings, to enable solutions for improving thermal efficiency.

VortexAir Hybrid

3. Government needs to agree to support industry in the move to bio-liquid fuels, with a clear timetable for implementation (with the caveat of the use of sustainable palm free feed stocks).

4. A scrappage scheme should be introduced for older inefficient appliances to encourage homes to switch to greener heating methods.

5. Financial support should be considered for installers to encourage them to train on renewable technologies. This will increase uptake, ensure installations are carried out correctly and provide a higher standard of workmanship for consumers.

6. A Competent Persons Scheme is required for heat pump installers ensuring standards are maintained and the technology performs to its potential. *(OFTEC note: OFTEC and others already offer this to heat pump installers)*

7. New homes should be future-proofed today to ensure an adequate electrical and plumbing infrastructure is fitted, allowing for the move to renewable technologies in the future.

Grant UK is already investing heavily in external training facilities and staff so it can not only improve awareness and product knowledge in the marketplace, but also help heating engineers diversify and grow their own businesses to take advantage of these opportunities.

Installers will be so important to deliver the change that is required to move away from a reliance on fossil-fuels, especially those in off-gas areas. Our aim is to support installers as much as possible to enable this to happen.

www.grantuk.com

EOGB complete B30K installations

EOGB Energy Products Ltd have recently completed two B30K installations, with one located at EOGB's manufacturing and training facility and one at a residential property in Cambridgeshire. The tanks were supplied by Kingspan and Harlequin, the fuel is sourced from Argent Energy and the boiler is EOGB's new fully-modulating blue flame system – due to be launched later this year.

Martin Cooke, technical director at EOGB, comments: "This is really a continuation of the initial B30K trials that were conducted by OFTEC in 2010. Since then, new technologies have emerged like blue flame low NOx, yellow flame low NOx and, of course, modulating burners and boilers. The increase in this kind of technology shows us that testing for this decarbonisation solution is well underway to ensure a smooth and well-planned roll out of the fuel."

Martin Cooke

EOGB and other companies have also since produced bio-compatible products that are already used as standard today – like the bioliquid ready green hoses and filters – meaning that the bioliquid solution for off-grid decarbonisation will ultimately result in minimal changes for the end user.

"With the recent interest in heat pumps and electric heating solutions, it is important to ensure that we all have all of the information available to us in order to promote and take on the best solutions for net zero by 2050," continues Martin Cooke. "With this in mind, the liquid fuel industry is keen to point out that electrification and heat pumps are not suitable for all property types – particularly the more rural, less insulated properties that typically run on oil systems that would require major extensive renovation work to install a heat pump – only to result in similar or greater energy costs for the end user!

"As a company, we're keen to tackle the issue of potential fuel poverty, which could result from the installation of heating upgrades that do not necessarily fit a property's existing construction fabric. For this reason, and many more, EOGB backs the bioliquid decarbonisation solution, which keeps the existing installation and simply changes the fuel to a bio blend with a planned program for the whole industry to be on 100% bioliquid by 2035."
www.eogb.co.uk

MP visits Hounsfield Boilers

Andrew Hounsfield, MD of Hounsfield Boilers, with Dr Dan Poulter MP

Hounsfield Boilers recently welcomed Dr Dan Poulter MP to their Needham Market factory. The MP undertook a tour of the factory and took part in a discussion on how boiler manufacturers can reduce their carbon footprint.

Andrew Hounsfield, MD, Hounsfield Boilers, led the MP for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich around the Hounsfield factory and introduced him to his new Tuscan oil-fired boilers.

Dr Poulter was very impressed with the range, saying: "Hounsfield Boilers are a great example of British manufacturing at its best. They've created a revolutionary design and build boilers to last, which is ideal for helping us all reduce our carbon footprint."

Hounsfield Boilers was set up in 2008 following Andrew's 30-year career in the boiler industry. Andrew describes why he decided to invent the Hounsfield Boiler: "I had worked for some of the biggest UK boiler companies, but I had become frustrated – manufacturers had become too price focused, which had driven down the quality of the boilers on offer. I decided to put the customer first and invent a boiler which would minimise the lifetime running costs for the homeowner and create a practical design that's easy to install and service for the installer. With my engineering background I was able to design an oil-fired boiler that satisfied these objectives and develop a high-performance boiler with a host of features not found on any other in the marketplace".

Hounsfield Boilers are based at Lion Barn Industrial Estate, Needham Market and all components are sourced from the UK.

www.hounsfieldboilers.co.uk

Shaping the 'installers of the future' at Futurebuild 2020

Standards organisation, MCS, has announced it will combine forces with key partners – Ground Source Heat Pump Association, AceOn Group, RECC, Solar Trade Association and OFTEC – to showcase a zone for the 'Installer of the future' at Futurebuild 2020.

The exhibition's Future Installer zone will deliver a dedicated platform for installers to gain cutting edge education and access to practical solutions that will help them thrive. It will promote the mix of renewable technologies including solar PV, solar thermal, ground source heat pumps, air source heat pumps and battery storage. As a key partner, OFTEC will also be showcasing the progress made on developing a sustainable low carbon liquid fuel to replace kerosene and highlighting how its registration and training services can support the transition to low carbon heating technologies.

Future Installer will be divided into three interactive zones to ensure the best experience for visitors. A key focus will be qualifications, skills and training through an educational zone. MCS came up with the Future Installer concept and has been keen to bring stakeholders together to showcase the innovation and diversity of the sector, which is underpinned by the MCS standards and the requirement for quality.

Interactive workshops will be delivered across all three days at the heart of the Future Installer zone including live demos of heat pumps, solar PV and battery storage to showcase the working parts and installation of products.

Futurebuild 2020 takes place on 3rd – 5th March at ExCeL London. You can register for your complimentary ticket by visiting: https://registration.n200.com/survey/3ursqdu25k7xm?actioncode=MP36

You can read what industry experts are saying about the changes to the heating industry on pages 14/15/16.

Worcester pledges support to *'Time to Change'* movement

Worcester Bosch has announced its support to the "Time to Change" employer pledge, which aims to change the way people think and act about mental health in the workplace.

With one in four British workers affected by conditions like anxiety, depression and stress every year, the boiler manufacturer will be implementing action plans that help employees open up about mental health issues.

The company, which is based in Worcester and has a further manufacturing site in Clay Cross, Derbyshire, will raise awareness about the importance of mental health by publicising mental health national days such as Time to Talk, World Mental Health Day and Mental Health Awareness Week, along with dedicated events with speakers addressing the subject.

Carl Arntzen, CEO Worcester Bosch, said: "We understand the importance of raising awareness around mental health within all levels of our organisation. By pledging our support to the Time to Change movement we are making further steps towards ensuring all our employees feel comfortable both within work and within themselves, and that mental health awareness remains a top priority within Worcester Bosch."

Jo Loughran, director of Time to Change, said: "With nine in ten of those who experience mental health problems facing stigma and discrimination as a result, it's great that Worcester Bosch are pledging to support their employees by encouraging them to speak openly about their mental health and ensuring a workplace culture where it is safe to do so."

To find out more about the Time to Change movement and how you can support, visit: www.time-to-change.org.uk

www.worcester-bosch.co.uk

PipeSnug goes football crazy!

PipeSnug, the product which aims to provide a quicker, smarter finish around pipework, recently sponsored an EFL Championship match between Luton Town Football Club and Wigan Athletic.

Chris Burdett, a co-founder of PipeSnug, along with fellow director Alex Lever, are huge Hatters fans and Chris himself was on the books at the club as a young player.

Based down the road from Luton in St Albans, Hertfordshire, PipeSnug saw the Hatters role out as 2-1 winners, scoring two late goals in a hard fought win.

www.pipesnug.co.uk/

Alex Lever and Chris Burdett present the Man of the Match award

Grant launches new installation packs for Aerona³ heat pumps

New installation packs, which include all of the essential accessories for the Aerona³ air source heat pump range, are now available from Grant UK.

Three new installation packs are now supplied by Grant UK to complement all four models within its Aerona³ R32 air source heat pump range. The Grant Aerona³ installation packs are made up of eight core accessories required for heat pump installations with one pack being 'standard', the second including the addition of a 30ltr 'volumiser' and the third pack including the addition of a 50ltr 'buffer'. Each pack is compatible with all the Aerona³ heat pump models.

These new installation packs from Grant UK provide customers with a choice of different components which can be ordered under one code. This makes for a straightforward order process as installers can select the pack which is best suited to their installation requirements, depending on whether or not a volumiser or buffer is required, and turn to their local merchant quoting just two part codes – the relevant pack code alongside the heat pump model code.

"We have developed these installation packs in response to feedback from our heat pump engineers," comments Kevin Ellis, renewables sales manager at Grant UK. "For several years, we have supplied component packs to complement our Aerona³ heat pump range but these new installation packs deliver even more benefits to our customers. We appreciate that each installation is different so this is why we have redesigned the packs – rather than choosing a pack based on the heat pump size, customers can now choose a pack depending on the components they actually require, helping them to save both time and money."

www.grantuk.com.

Elf yourself at Worcester...

Worcester Bosch announced its support for the Alzheimer's Society's 'National Dress as an Elf Day' recently, with its employees donating and spreading elf-like cheer in order to help beat dementia!

With thousands of people depending on the Alzheimer's Society for support, the fundraisers are determined to help the charity to continue funding research, support services and campaigning in order to keep dementia firmly at the top of the political agenda.

Colleagues at Worcester's Clay Cross plant have chosen Alzheimer's as their company charity this year. A competition was held in which five members of staff were put up for the vote to decide who would be dressing as an elf for the special day. The winner was Gary Golden, TEF section manager.

Sue Pennington, corporate communications at Worcester Bosch, said: "Our colleagues at Clay Cross got into the spirit and visited the special JustGiving page to donate and vote for their choice and by a slim margin Gary was the lucky winner. By pledging our support to Elf Day we're committing to helping to raise funds for the Alzheimer's Society to ensure they can continue the great work they do in being there for people affected by dementia."

To find out more about the Elf Day and help Worcester Bosch to support the Alzheimer's Society, visit the donation page: https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/worcester-bosch1

Grant appoints renewable business development managers

To meet the growing interest and demand in their renewable product ranges, Grant UK has appointed two renewable business development managers – David Garcia and John Morris – who will provide increased sales support in the renewable market sector.

Throughout 2019, Grant UK implemented a number of changes to the structure of its external sales team. These changes were brought about to increase the level of sales coverage the company delivers to all customers, from those primarily involved with oil boilers through to those branching into the renewable product sector. With the renewable market consistently developing and rapidly growing, Grant UK has introduced new roles into its sales team with two renewable business development managers.

Joining Grant as the renewable business development manager for Scotland is David Garcia, who is highly respected in the heat pump industry. David joined the company in November and brings with him a wealth of experience working with renewables. He started his career working in an independent merchant, starting in the warehouse through to stock controller and then progressing to trade counter manager. After nearly fifteen years in this role, David wanted to get out on the road so he worked as a sales manager for a boiler manufacturer for a decade before joining a manufacturer specialising in the renewables market as a specification and business development manager.

Since then, David has also undertaken similar roles in companies focusing on underfloor heating and air source heat pumps so he has an extensive understanding of what contract and business customers need from heating manufacturers. In his role at Grant UK, David will be working closely with installers, specifiers and developers who are wanting to work with greener home heating technologies. In particular, David will be on hand to assist with sales support on ranges such as Grant's Aerona³ R32 Air Source Heat Pumps.

Grant UK's second renewable business development manager is John Morris who was appointed to this role from within the existing sales team. John has worked at Grant UK for more than thirteen years, providing sales coverage support to installers and merchants throughout Wales and the bordering English counties. As an area sales manager, John has built relationships throughout this area with customers who work with Grant's oil boiler products and increasingly with those wanting to increase their expertise in renewable appliances as well. John will be working with specifiers, developers and larger installation companies throughout Wales, the Midlands and Northern England.

John Morris

David Garcia

"We are looking forward to further developing our relationships with customers in the heat pump market following the appointments of David and John," comments Kevin Ellis, renewable sales manager for Grant UK who provides customer support throughout the South of England.

www.grantuk.com

Celebrating the opening of a €14 million facilities expansion

Grant Engineering welcomed Taoiseach Leo Varadkar to officially open its newly expanded facilities in Birr, Co. Offaly, representing a capital investment of €14 million.

The major expansion plans were announced in 2016 in response to increased demand for the company's heating products on a local and international level.

In recent years Grant has enjoyed further success in Ireland, the UK and further afield including France, Greece and New Zealand and has diversified its product portfolio to meet the changing needs of its customers around the globe.

The new facilities include a state-of-the-art R&D innovation centre, a customer services centre, a dedicated training academy featuring an auditorium and training suite, and an extension to the existing manufacturing facilities which has also seen further investment in robotics and automation.

Speaking at the opening Leo Varadkar said: "My vision for the future of the (Ireland) Midlands begins with companies like Grant Engineering. They have developed a 21st century facility for state-of-the-art, environmentally efficient heating products for the 21st century. And with the right vision, the right policies, and the right investment, the future for the Midlands itself is bright."

Grant Engineering founder, Stephen Grant, said: "We are delighted to be starting the new year with the opening of our new facilities. This investment demonstrates our commitment to innovation, growth and to the local economy. In recent years we have expanded into new markets and developed new products to meet the needs of our customer base.

"Our focus on sustainability continues to grow and to help achieve de-carbonisation, I believe that home heating fuel needs to follow in the footsteps of transport and transition to electric or 100% biofuel heating. This is impossible to do in the short to medium term in an affordable way. However the introduction of a 'biofuel obligation' for home heating could enable homes to become sustainable. We have future-proofed our products over the last five years so that they can operate using biofuel but to aid transition and further reduce emissions we need the support of fuel suppliers and the government."

Irish premier Leo Varadkar cuts the ribbon to officially open Grant's expanded facilities

This investment demonstrates our commitment to innovation, growth and to the local economy

Julie Sinnamon, CEO, Enterprise Ireland said: "Enterprise Ireland has worked closely with Grant Engineering, both in Ireland and internationally since its establishment.

"Hugely important to the local economy, Grant Engineering is an excellent example of an innovative, regionally-based company with global ambition that has expanded its reach to build a robust business in the face of challenges like Brexit.

"This new R&D innovation and training facility will enable Grant Engineering to continue to grow, and we look forward to continuing our work with the team both here and through our international office network as they progress on this upward trajectory."

Grant Engineering at peak season employs over 370 people in Ireland between full and part time roles and 80 in the UK.

www.grantengineering.ie

At the official opening are (l-r) David Blevings, OFTEC Ireland manager, Stephen Grant, founder of Grant Engineering, Paul Rose, OFTEC CEO, and Niall Fay, director, Grant Engineering

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OFTEC expertise in demand

OFTEC regularly presents to statutory bodies, building control personnel, training centres and students/ apprentices in colleges. We have recently updated staff in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on the revised BS5410 and presented to a group of plumbing apprentices in the Northern Regional College.

It is important to meet the next generation of installers and remind them that liquid fuel has a huge presence in Ireland and advise them about the industry's move to biofuel blends.

Peter Lynch from the college said: "Local support by industry bodies like OFTEC for the further education sector is invaluable in not only enhancing our apprentices' training but also in helping colleges provide up to date and current legislative resources and training."

David Blevings, OFTEC Ireland manager, said, "It is important that plumbing apprentices get a holistic view of the trade and we welcome the opportunity to inform them about the benefits of doing a job correctly and within building control requirements as this removes a lot of problems for consumers and the trade further down the line."

Sean McBride from OFTEC updates apprentices at the Northern Regional College

Disposal of waste oil tanks – Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) has amended the waste legislation from 1st January 2020 and this will affect technicians removing and disposing of 'waste' oil tanks in Northern Ireland.

NIEA has published guidance on their website at: https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk (search for oil tanks).

They define a waste oil tank as any tank with visible residues of kerosene and from 1st January 2020 these are deemed to be hazardous waste. That means to carry it in a van or trailer when removing from a site you will require a waste licence and a hazardous waste consignment note.

Also, the tank must be stored and disposed of correctly or transported to a facility that can handle hazardous waste. To get a licence to carry hazardous waste technicians will need to contact the NIEA, Regulation Unit on 028 9056 9359.

Alternatively, you can get a company to remove the waste for you. This means you do not need to hold a waste licence and so may be more convenient for small installers. For further information and a list of companies offering a waste collection and disposal service see: https://www.oftec.org/technicians/Signin/technical-resources/correct-disposal-of-waste on the OFTEC website.

Chancellor sees *"the future of heating"* at Worcester Bosch

Worcester Bosch has met with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sajid Javid MP, to present its developments in low-carbon heating technology. Mr Javid visited the manufacturing plant in Worcester in November with Worcester constituency MP Robin Walker.

The two VIPs were shown Worcester Bosch's new "clean gas" development lab and saw at first hand the company's first hydrogen-ready boiler.

A hydrogen boiler could drastically reduce emissions in the use of heating and hot water in UK homes, hence its title as 'clean gas', the MPs were told. The company believes it is a viable solution towards achieving the UK's net zero carbon targets by 2050. The boiler can run on natural gas until a future conversion of the gas grid to hydrogen.

Robin Walker MP commented on the visit on social media, having tweeted: "Great to be able to introduce the chancellor to some of the brilliant engineers and researchers working on the next generation of hydrogen boilers. So exciting to see this vital tech for #netzero taking shape."

Worcester MP, Robin Walker, Chancellor Sajid Javid and Worcester Bosch CEO Carl Arntzen

Martyn Bridges, director of technical communication and product management at Worcester Bosch said: "It was great to have Mr Javid at our plant to see our hydrogen boiler prototype.

"The development of hydrogen fired boilers will mean millions of existing heating systems in our homes can be saved, rather than the entire system needing to be replaced if alternative technologies such as heat pumps were installed. Millions of homes currently use a combi boiler system and if converted to hydrogen they would be able to continue to do so without the need for a new hot water storage cylinder."

www.worcester-bosch.co.uk/hydrogen

Tool Angel to the rescue!

Tool theft was a huge topic for tradespeople in 2019, with one insurer estimating that a third of tradespeople have had their tools stolen – plumbing, heating and ventilation contractors being the fourth most impacted trade.

To help tradespeople who have suffered such a loss, Williams & Co, with the support of partners including Makita, Kane and Armorgard, have established "Tool Angel" – a service which provides an immediate set of loan power tools and a top of the range flue gas analyser to keep their business viable in the first weeks after the crime occurs.

Ray Stafford, managing director, says: "We listen to what our customers have to say, and with tool theft being such a hot topic, we began to wonder what we could do to help. Every day, we hear of another of our customers whose van has been broken into, and whose tools have been stolen. The devastating effects of tool crime are not limited to the value of the tools themselves, as there is also the damage to the vehicle, days of disruption to planned work and the reputational risk as valued client's projects are delayed.

"What can we do when we can't stop tool theft? We can relieve the impact that tool theft has on our customers' livelihoods and help them get back on the tools – fast. When a customer is effected by tool theft they can call our national customer service team with the crime number and a drop off location, and the team will get a Tool Angel kit, worth over £2300, to them within our normal delivery times – on the same day for many postcodes."

The recipient has full, free use of the kit for two weeks. At the end of that period it is collected free of charge. The recipient can then choose to purchase a new kit of their own at the end of the loan period with a 15% discount.

Ray is confident that Tool Angel can reach out a helping hand to those customers affected by tool theft. "Unfortunately, we can't stop tool thieves, but we can help our customers who find themselves the victims of tool crime to recover quickly," he adds.

www.williams.uk.com/about-us

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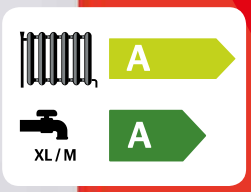

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www.warmflow.co.uk

Warmflow takes to the tower for cancer charity!

Friends of the Cancer Centre is calling on people across Northern Ireland to grab their cape and become a superhero to take on its 190ft abseil down Belfast City Hospital's famous yellow tower block.

The charity's Take on the Tower Superhero abseil takes place on Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th April and once again, local home heating company Warmflow have extended their support to the charity by sponsoring the event, meaning that even more of the money raised can be used to support local families affected by cancer.

Oliver Cormican, sales director at Warmflow Home Heating Solutions, is calling on superheroes from across Northern Ireland to sign up for the challenge. Oliver said: "Warmflow has been supporting Friends of the Cancer Centre for a number of years and we are delighted to be involved with the Take on the Tower abseil again in 2020. So many people loved the superhero theme last year and

the support from participants was overwhelming, raising over £130,000, so we are hoping to do even better this year. I would encourage people from across Northern Ireland to register and take on the challenge of abseiling down Northern Ireland's 4th tallest building. All the money raised from the abseil will make a huge difference to Friends of the Cancer Centre and the families supported by the charity."

Amy Reynolds, fundraising officer at Friends of the Cancer Centre said: "On behalf of the charity, I'd like to say thank you to Warmflow Home Heating Solutions for their continued support. This will be our 6th Take on the Tower Abseil and our superhero theme is a great chance for people to grab their cape and have a bit of fun when taking on Northern Ireland's 4th tallest building."

If you would like to Take on the Tower you can register online at www.friendsofthecancercentre.com or call 028 9069 9393 to find out more.

Worcester scoops four honours at Digital Impact Awards

Worcester Bosch won three gold and one bronze awards at October's Digital Impact Awards, the UK's largest celebration of digital work in corporate communications.

The boiler manufacturer picked up gold awards for the 'Best use of data', the 'Best use of digital from the engineering and manufacturing sector' and the 'Best use of digital from the energy and utilities sector'.

The MyWorcester app, which provides a series of tools to help installers easily manage their business, was particularly commended in the digital engineering/ manufacturing category. The judges commented that the technology is "a fantastic use of an app that is a no-brainer for installers to download."

Worcester Bosch's web platform and content management system were both praised in the 'Best use of data' and 'Best use of digital from the energy and utilities sector' category wins, with the judges commenting "taking boiler installations online must have been a tough challenge, and we're impressed by how they handled it."

The winners of the awards, judged by a panel of expert industry professionals, were announced at a ceremony at The Brewery in London.

Vic Billings, director of marketing at Worcester Bosch, said: "This is an absolutely fantastic achievement by everyone involved in our web platform and shows that our work is setting the industry-wide benchmark in digital engagement. The award wins highlight our ongoing commitment to ensuring our digital platforms are as user friendly for installers as possible, helping them to improve their business and making their lives easier every day."

www.worcester-bosch.co.uk

AAA rated combi oil boiler from Warmflow

With an oil-fired combi boiler already AA rated, Northern Ireland-based Warmflow have moved a step further and have launched a boiler with AAA rated status, thanks, says the company, to a market-leading patented design.

What this means is the Warmflow combi oil boiler is up to 5ltrs of fuel per week more efficient than other market leading oil combi boilers currently available.

The new Agentis combi boiler is part of an overhaul of the entire oil boiler range which sees new features and benefits added to all boilers in the newly named Agentis range. All boilers will come under the Agentis branding with "Utility" and "Kabin pak" models replaced with new internal and external models.

The new combi oil boiler is now one of the slimmest on the market at 515mm wide. Featuring a 24ltr, hinged expansion vessel for ease of servicing, other features include a reduced component count, O ring push fit connections, a domestic hot water mini expansion vessel, pressure reducing & pressure relief valve have been factory fitted as standard. The additional components added will save an installation engineer around £150 and two hours labour fitting the components, says Warmflow.

In addition, all Agentis combi boilers now come as a professional model which include over £250 worth of factory fitted extras, including an Adey Magnaclean Pro 2, Teddington fire valve, Crosland oil filter, improved condensate installation kit, bottles of inhibitor as well as a five years parts and labour warranty.

www.warmflow.co.uk

The new Agentis combi boiler from Warmflow – with AAA rating

Mini plier sets for tradespeople on the move

Pliers specialist Knipex has introduced three mini plier sets in belt tool pouches made of tough polyester fabric, complete with a velcro fastening and belt loop.

The Mini Cobra water pump pliers feature in all three kits and allow adjustment directly on the workpiece at the press of a button; with fine adjustment for optimum adaptation to different workpiece sizes up to 27 mm.

The different sets feature different tools, including a mini pliers wrench, a high leverage diagonal cutter, and needle nose combination pliers, ideal for working in hard-to-reach places thanks to its slender head shape with powerful, pointed jaws with cutting edges for soft, medium hard and hard wire up to 2 mm.

The Knipex mini pliers sets in tool pouches allow maximum flexibility for tradespeople with easy access to tools when you are on the move.

www.knipex.com

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Residential low NOx combustion

Following the introduction of the ErP regulations in September 2018, which require residential oil burners to achieve a maximum NOx emission of 120mg/kWh, greater emphasis is now placed on combustion and more precise air flow through a burner.

With previous NOx emissions of residential oil burners being in the region of 250mg/kWh, the requirement to reduce these by over 50% results in much stricter burner design and precise burner setting.

Riello has used the familiar RDB as its platform for a burner that conforms to these current regulations, with the introduction of the RDB…BX.

The RDB…BX has been designed to include many features which precisely control and drive the air flow through the burner to achieve low NOx combustion, with an additional feature being the provision of the adjustable head.

This function has been designed to provide installers and service engineers with adjustable head technology, which is normally found on larger commercial and industrial burners. It is used to control the secondary air flow around the flame and is adjusted when setting the burner at differing outputs within its range. It can also be used as an aid to help 'trim' the burner by making minor adjustments to the position to suit specific installation requirements, such as draught conditions.

All Riello RDB…BX burners are fully tested and pre-set to the relevant boiler specifications prior to leaving the factory, says the company. However, due to the critical nature of low NOx combustion, variable installation factors such as environmental and field conditions can have a greater influence on performance than on previous RDB 'T' series burners. To address this, the RDB…BX's adjustable head can be used by the installer/service engineer to slightly increase or decrease the secondary air flow within the blast tube and thus improve performance/emissions.

Riello works closely with all of its OEM customers, undertaking in-depth research and development and intensive testing, resulting in burner specifications that will accommodate the many boiler models that the burners are installed on. All manufacturers' instructions provide information on correct burner setting, but these should be treated as guidance for the installer/service engineer and all residential oil burners must be set according to the installation conditions, advises Riello.

With further changes to the ErP Regulations expected over the coming years, Riello says that its product development programmes will continually test and deliver upgrades to their residential oil burner range to further improve performance and satisfy ever-stricter regulation requirements.

www.rielloburners.co.uk

They don't make 'em like they used to....

A tough decision after half a century, but Graham and Dorothy Braddick – both 87 years old – have decided to replace their trusty Hotspur oil-fired boiler. Not that it has ever let them down, but because finding spares for it nowadays is proving a slight problem!

Graham and Dorothy bought the boiler when they moved into their house in 1971, in Northam, Devon. At the time it cost them a mighty £200.

The Hotspur oil-fired boiler, made by Harford-Unical Limited, has been serviced by the same man every year since they bought it. "He used to come regularly but the last time he visited he simply said he could not do it anymore," Graham said.

"It has been reliable – it hasn't gone wrong before. But now he can't get the bits he needs to fix it because it's so old, you see."

The couple are now in the process of choosing another boiler. "Now, the only old appliances left in the house are us," quipped Graham who celebrated his 65th wedding anniversary with Dorothy recently

"I even remember the man who came here to fit it... he was called Mr Grant. He put it all in for us when we bought the house. We had to keep warm with the boiler in those days. I don't know what we would have done without it."

Was Graham and Dorothy's Hotspur boiler the oldest in active service? Let us know if you know better!

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ASK OLLIE!

Ollie and his friends in the OFTEC technical team respond to the latest queries

I've been told that I should fit a carbon monoxide alarm if a liquid fuel-fired appliance is located inside a building or other type of structure, is this correct?

Yes. BS 5410-1:2009 recommends that any new or existing liquid fuel-fired appliance located inside a building or structure or within a restricted area externally, should have a carbon monoxide detector alarm fitted, which conforms to BS EN 50291-1. When servicing, ensure you note the lack of a CO alarm on your paperwork.

Can I still fit conventional open flued boilers in homes?

It is recommended that, where possible, room sealed appliances should be selected when installing a new appliance within habitable spaces.

I am about to service a boiler in a small room which also contains cleaning items. Is this classified as a boiler compartment and is it ok for the compartment to be used for storage?

A compartment is defined as 'an enclosed space intended solely to contain a heating appliance with or without ancillary equipment'. If the small room is only intended to house the appliance, then it should be treated as a compartment. During a routine service, a check should be made of the compartment that houses the heating appliance that it is not being used for other purposes, such as storage. There should be a notice fixed in a prominent position clearly stating this and it should be noted on any documentation that the customer has been advised of this.

I have my 101 scope of registration; do I need further specialised training to work on blue-flame or modulating burners?

Yes. Commissioning and/or servicing technicians should undertake appropriate training before working on burners other than traditional yellow flame burners. Manufacturers provide product training courses that will familiarise technicians with new burner types, such as blue flame or modulating burners.

Installer's invention launches to the trade…

Condensate Pro: The fast way to prevent condensate pipes freezing

Invented and launched by heating engineer David Smith, Condensate Pro is claimed to prevent condensate pipes freezing in low temperatures – a common cause of gas boilers in particular malfunctioning or breaking down when they are really needed the most.

Available in kit form to fit any installation (grate, rainwater soil pipe and soakaway), with specially designed UV/water resistant lagging and seal and bond adhesive, all products fit on to 32mm or 21.5mm overflow pipes.

"I invented Condensate Pro to help installers make sure boiler breakdowns are not down to a frozen condensate," explains David. "The trade had some bad press when the 'beast from the east' struck and tens of thousands of homes were left without heating because of this issue. I have designed the product specifically to help installers save time, cost, call-backs and to look professional.

"Condensate Pro also lowers the burden of costs associated with replacing or repairing boilers that are under warranty – a huge cost to boiler manufacturers and installers. The product gives householders more protection and much more time to clear any ice formation before a boiler malfunctions in really severe weather."

David has a proven track record in business, having founded and eventually sold a successful heating and plumbing company. He has experience of fitting and trying every technique and product associated with condensate pipes, so was perfectly placed to find an answer to the age-old freezing pipe problem.

"Condensate Pro protects the installer, their customers and the boilers which breakdown due to condensate pipes freezing. This solution is designed by a pro installer for pro installers and finally we have a product that insulates properly, is quick and easy to install and looks great!" adds David

www.condensatepro.co.uk

Technical updates reminder

As part of OFTEC's role in keeping technicians up to date with ever-changing industry guidance, the technical team has produced the following technical notices:

- **Technical Notice 027** – Use of integrally fire-rated tanks:

  This reminds technicians that they cannot presume that the use of an integrally fire-rated tank will meet the requirements of the building regulations and advises technicians wishing to install such a tank, they must do so under a building notice, so that the local authority building control body can decide whether this alternative approach meets the requirements of the building regulations.

- **Technical Notice 028** – Uninsulated solid fuel flues and combustibles:

  This clarifies the distance that should be maintained between an uninsulated flue pipe connected to a solid fuel appliance and combustible material outside of a fireplace opening, such as a mantelpiece or fireplace surround.

- **Technical Notice 029** – Using chemical combustion chamber cleaners:

  This highlights the possible pitfalls of using such products and recommends that technicians obtain a material safety data sheet for any chemical cleaner they intend to use and confirm with the appliance manufacturer that the product is suitable for use.

- **Technical book updates** – following publication of BS 5410-1:2019 and BS 8303:2018, technical books were significantly updated during 2019. If you have not yet downloaded and familiarised yourself with these essential updates, you should do so urgently to ensure that any installations you carry out are in accordance with the latest industry guidance and continue to be compliant.

All technical notices and book updates can be accessed in the technician's area of: www.oftec.org which can be accessed via the QR code below, once you have logged into the website.

Final deadline for Welsh control of pollution regulations

The Water Resources (Control of Pollution) (Oil Storage) (Wales) Regulation 2016 has required all newly installed fuel storage tanks in Wales to be provided with secondary containment (bunding) since 15th March 2016.

In addition, it requires all existing non-domestic oil tanks in Wales to have secondary containment by 15th March 2020. If the tank owner is found to be in breach of this regulation, they could face a fine and enforcement action. The regulations apply to internal and external tanks above 200 litres capacity. They do not apply to tanks installed wholly below ground, unless in a building.

Works Notification

OFTEC would like to remind registered technicians operating within England, Wales, Isle of Man and the Channel Islands of the requirement to notify their installations, as required by building regulations.

Local authority building control (LABC) must be notified of any oil, solid fuel or renewable heating installation work undertaken (including replacement works). Non-registered technicians or their customers must contact the relevant LABC prior to commencing work and pay them their fee to supervise the installation.

Benefit of registration

However, a principal benefit of OFTEC registration is that installation works can be notified to the LABC via OFTEC, without the need to directly involve LABC. Even those in non-participating regions can still use the OFTEC works notification system on a voluntary basis – this helps demonstrate professionalism and a commitment to certifying installations as compliant.

Registered technicians should notify work that is performed within their scopes of registration to OFTEC within 21 days of completion; either online (£2.80 + VAT) or over the phone (£5.00 + VAT). For online notifications, technicians will require their OFTEC company registration number and password to gain access to the online work notification system (www.ofteconline.com). For notifications via telephone, please have the following information ready:

- your business and technician registration numbers
- a list of the installation works undertaken
- the date of installation
- full postal address of the installation

Further information on works notification in your region and how to notify can be found in OFTEC technical books 3 and 4.

Further guidance on completing works notification can be found online at: www.oftec.org/technicians/Signin/manage-your-registration/works-notification

Paperwork – A technician's least-loved friend?

It was once said: *'What I hate about writing is the paperwork'*. Most technicians probably feel similarly. Completing paperwork, such as servicing and installation forms, is often seen as a chore and an obstacle to work. However, although record keeping takes time, it is an essential part of carrying out your duty of care, protecting your business interests, and complying with regional legislation and OFTEC's scheme rules.

Correctly completed paperwork demonstrates that you have acted in a professional and reasonable way and will protect you against claims of negligence. For this reason, it is vital that paperwork is retained for a minimum of six years, although there is no harm in keeping it longer. Also, ensure you have your customer's signature on any form, if at all possible.

It can be confusing at times to know which forms should be completed. To assist technicians, here is a review of the forms that OFTEC produce and a reminder of when to use them.

Installation completion reports CD/10 (oil firing) and CD/80 (solid fuel)

Your customer should receive a copy of this form on the day you complete the installation of an appliance, a non-masonry chimney or flue, a flue liner, a fuel storage tank, a fuel supply system, a heating system or controls.

Only fill out the sections that relate to the work you have undertaken. For example, if you only installed a fuel storage tank you should only fill out section 1 and 10. It is wise to strike a line through any section you are leaving blank.

An appliance you have installed should be commissioned prior to completing this report.

Servicing and commissioning report CD/11 (oil firing) and CD/81 (solid fuel)

Your customer should receive a copy of this form on the day you service or commission an appliance. You should not use it to commission an oil tank as oil tanks cannot be commissioned, only installed!

The entire form should be completed. Doing so enables you to carry out your duty of care by recording any defects or concerns associated with the entire installation. Don't forget that each item has a series of checks associated with it on the reverse of the form. For example, section 5 of the CD/11 asks technicians to check and pass/fail the installation's electrical safety. The reverse of the form explains that this includes visually inspecting electrical connections, bonding, and checking the appliance fuse rating.

CD/14 warning & advice notice and warning stickers/ tags

It is rare for existing installations to be fully compliant with current industry guidance. When identifying defects which might constitute potential or immediate fire, safety or environmental risks, these should be formally recorded, and warning labels attached to the relevant equipment.

Potential or immediate risks could be recorded on a CD/11 or CD/81. Alternatively, a CD/14 warning and advice notice is an excellent stand-alone form that can be used for oil or solid fuel installations. It allows you to easily classify the risk of a defect and has a section for identifying the date and time of the visit.

OFTEC would recommend taking a photograph of any warning sticker/tag you attach. This is to provide evidence of its existence at a later date if required.

Oil tank risk assessment forms TI/133D (domestic) and TI/133ND (non-domestic)

The main purpose of these forms is a pre-installation site survey to ensure that each tank installation undertaken is compliant. They can also be used to good effect to assess the compliance (or the lack of compliance!) of an existing tank installation, on a service for example.

In summary, however much you dislike filling out forms, it is a requirement and does protect you.

All of the forms highlighted are available from OFTEC Direct – www.oftecdirect.com – and can only be purchased by OFTEC registered businesses/technicians.

Open safety vent pipe: *it means just that – 'open'!*

In a new feature, OFTEC's technical team will review some common heating design defects and will advise how to avoid them.

In this issue we focus on the possibility of accidentally placing restrictions in an open safety vent pipe (OSV) when replacing an oil-fired boiler connected to an open-vented heating system. The OSV is an essential safety device that should provide an 'open' and unrestricted path for the relief of pressure and steam, should a boiler overheat. It also allows air to escape from the system.

The OSV should:

- have a minimum diameter of 22mm
- rise continually (unless otherwise stated by the boiler manufacturer)
- contain no restrictions, such as valves, pumps etc
- discharge below the level of the feed and expansion tank cover. The following diagrams are by no means complete, and only serve to highlight the specific problem discussed.

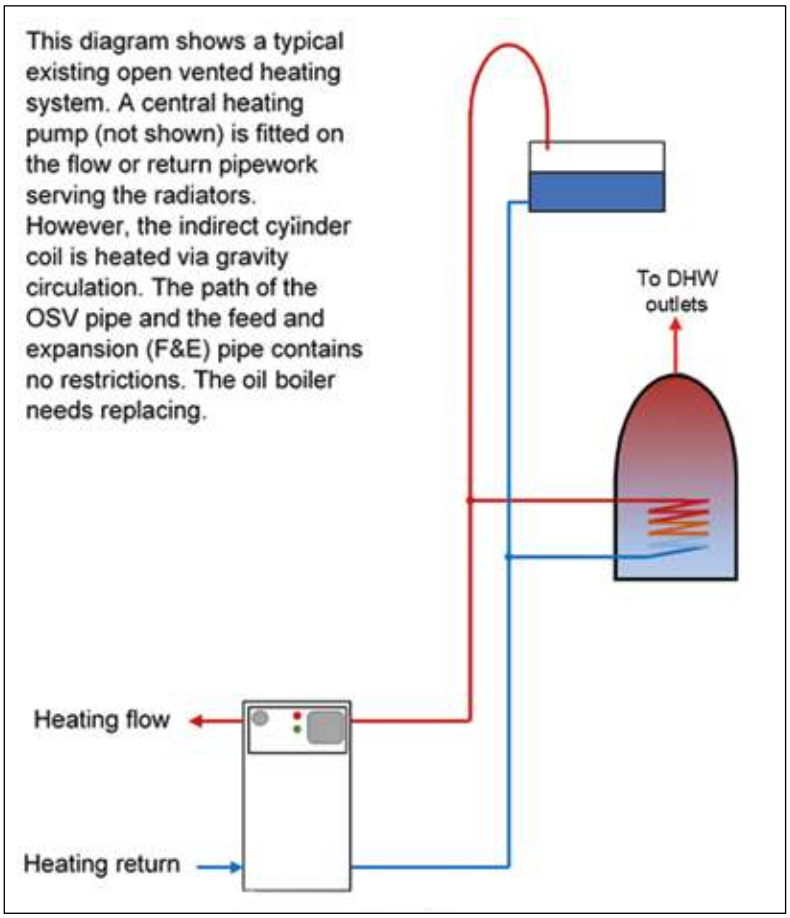

Diagram 1 – Existing installation

Change to registration non-conformities

During the last twelve months the OFTEC Scheme Committee (OSC) has been concerned about registered businesses that take a long time to address a non-conformity notice issued for a breach of the OFTEC scheme rules for registration. The concern centres around public confidence in a registered business still being competent to do work when an outstanding non-conformity has not been cleared promptly.

So, from the beginning of February, our Scheme Committee has agreed that businesses with an outstanding non-conformity will not be listed on the OFTEC website, nor have their details given out to members of the public searching for a registered business to carry out work at their property. Typical non-conformities include no evidence of public liability insurance or flue gas analyser out of calibration.

However, if a member of the public wishes to double check that a business is registered, the company/technician can still be found online by using the website validation tool to check a company/technician number or to check a business by name.

Once the non-conformity is cleared, the business will be listed again as normal.

OFTEC's aim is that the general public should not be put at risk whilst a business rectifies a major non-conformity (although in an ideal world, technicians would operate to the highest standard and there wouldn't be any non-conformities at all). We are hopeful that this change will help encourage businesses to put right any non-conformities as quickly as possible.

For further information about this new policy please email: alightwood@oftec.org.

The following diagrams show an incorrect and correct method of replacing the boiler – notice the effect on the OSV pipe.

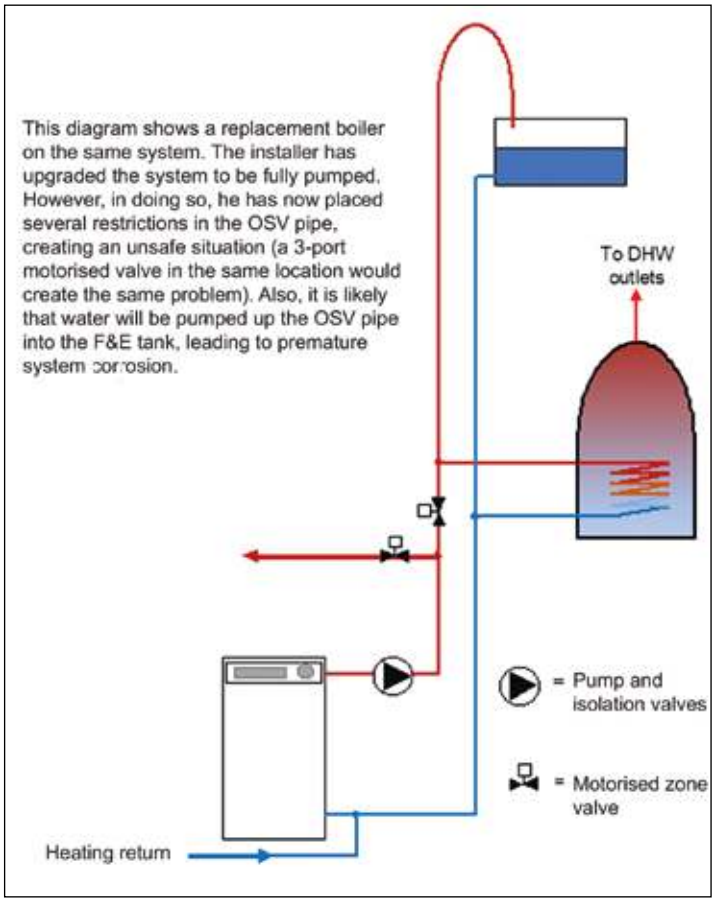

Diagram 2 – An Incorrect boiler replacement method

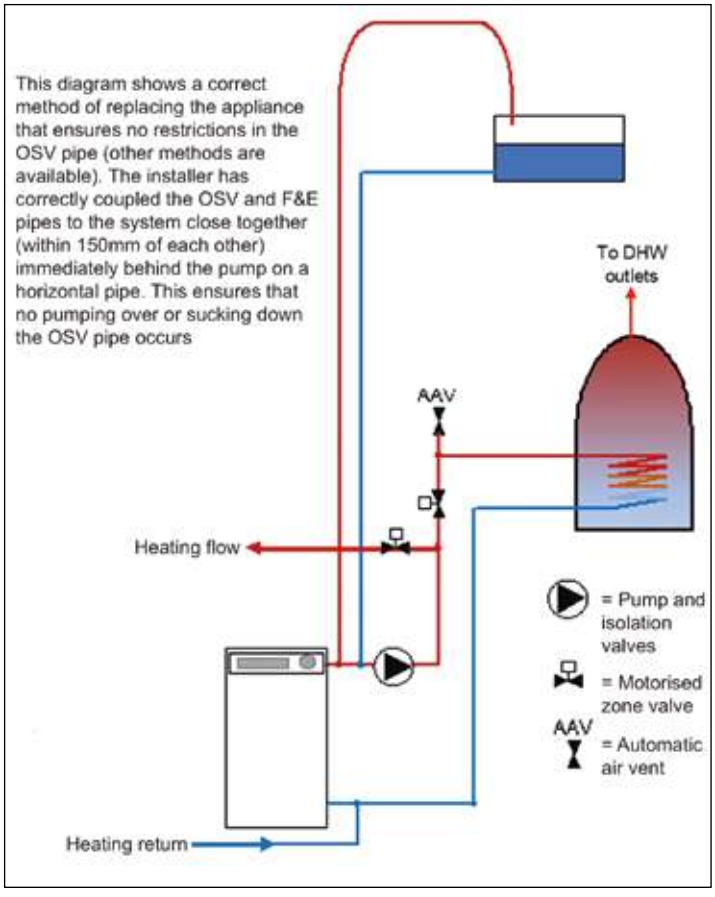

Diagram 3 – A correct boiler replacement method

"Game changing" technology from Navien

Navien's LCB700 blue flame oil boiler range, which includes combi, regular and system boilers, provides installers with the latest in oil heating technology but without a premium price tag, says the company.

The range features a blue flame burner and smart control panel and also incorporates Navien's stainless steel heat exchanger, resulting in a low lift weight of 67kg – up to half that of competitor models. This makes it possible for just two people to manoeuvre into the required installation position.

Navien claims that the install process is further simplified by the use of a space-saving combined PRV and condensate drainage along with the inclusion of the same plastic flue as the Navien gas boiler, making it easier to adjust the flue length and install as well as avoiding the need to use a more costly stainless steel flue. With outputs of 21, 28 and 36kW, all models are available in internal and external options, with a corrosion-resistant casing.

By incorporating the patented Navien water heater precision temperature control technology, the LCB700 achieves the highest standard of three stars for EN regulation of DHW performance assessment (EN 13203-1), says the company. In simple terms this means the boiler can deliver hot water instantaneously as well as eliminating temperature fluctuation from changes in flow rate and also allowing the user to control hot water temperature accurate to 1°C (between 30°C and 60°C).

The LCB700 boasts low NOx emissions of just 57mg/kWh and an ErP A rate energy efficiency (ErP A+ rating energy efficiency when used with Navien Smart Plus). The new range was received "exceptionally well", says the company, when it was seen at PHEX in Manchester late last year, with a number of installers referring to it as a 'game changer'.

ww.navienuk.com

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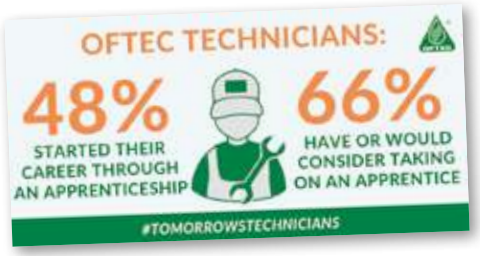
Tomorrow's technician:

New campaign encourages heating businesses to capitalise on apprenticeship opportunities



As the number of 16-18-year-olds starting apprenticeships continues to fall, OFTEC has launched a new campaign to highlight the business benefits of hiring an apprentice and, in turn, encourage essential fresh, young talent into the industry.

According to Department of Education data, the total number of apprenticeship starts among under 19s has fallen by 8% since 2017/18 to 83,300 and by 23% from 2016/17 figures. This drop is despite the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in April 2017 which is designed to encourage employers to invest in future skills.

OFTEC training manager, David Knipe

In a bid to drive up the number of young people entering the heating trade and help tackle the sector's ongoing skills shortage, OFTEC is underlining the advantages of apprenticeships through its 'Tomorrow's Technician' initiative.

David Knipe, training manager at OFTEC, explains: "Apprenticeships provide an excellent, low cost way to recruit, particularly when almost wholly funded by the levy. Heating businesses can train apprentices in the skills, knowledge and behaviours they need to fit their company, while taking on younger talent can often bring fresh, valuable ideas to a business. Studies have also shown that trainees are more likely to be loyal to the company which has helped them develop.

"At a time when the industry is facing a widespread skills shortage coupled with an ageing workforce, it is crucial to encourage more people to join this exciting and constantly evolving sector. We hope Tomorrow's Technicians will help to achieve this."

Smaller heating businesses and sole traders, who make up the majority of OFTEC's registered technician base, will qualify for 95% of apprenticeship training costs to be funded by government through the Apprenticeship Levy. Those taking on an apprentice under the age of 25 earning below the higher tax rate will also be exempt from paying National Insurance contributions, while those training a 16-18-year-old could qualify for an extra £1,000 payment.

> taking on younger talent can often bring fresh, valuable ideas to a business

David Knipe continues: "Heating businesses who are interested in capitalising on this valuable opportunity should contact the National Apprenticeships Service or their local further education provider for more information. Employers do not have to rely on training providers to advertise their apprenticeship vacancies and can do so on their own websites to retain control of the application process.

"A recent OFTEC survey found that 48% of our registered technicians entered the industry through an apprenticeship – in fact, OFTEC's own CEO Paul Rose began his career this way. We hope more young people will be given the opportunity to benefit from this valuable career opportunity."

To further support apprenticeships as an excellent route into the heating industry, OFTEC is offering free registration for the first year to newly qualified apprentices. In Great Britain and Northern Ireland they should have completed training up to Level 3 and in the Republic of Ireland up to Level 7. They also need to be employed with an OFTEC registered business.

Further information on employing an apprentice can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships or visit the National Apprenticeship Service website at: https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk

Why not add solid fuel registration?

It's easier than you think:

- If you're OFTEC registered for oil, you'll already have many of the skills required.
- Just take the appropriate solid fuel training and assessment at an OFTEC approved centre (course list available on www.joinoftec.com).
- Minimal cost to add solid fuel to your existing registration.

By registering with OFTEC's competent persons scheme for solid fuel, you demonstrate your competence and professionalism to customers and show you work in compliance with building regulations.

There has been a huge increase in the popularity of wood burning stoves over the past 10 years, which presents a great potential business opportunity for installers and servicing technicians. There are already over one million UK homes using wood burning stoves and fireplaces and many more are suitable for a new installation. Plus, according to the Stove Industry Alliance, modern wood burning stoves are virtually carbon neutral when using current burn technology with high quality wood, and can even help towards reducing UK carbon emissions.

OFTEC offer three routes to solid fuel registration:

- **OFT15-108D – Installation, commissioning and servicing (domestic space heating)**
  For technicians wishing to install, commission and service solid fuel appliances such as roomheaters, which are not connected to the central heating system. Course content includes: health and safety, regional legislation and requirements, safe electrical isolation, solid fuel storage, the combustion process, appliance installation, ventilation, flues (including twin wall flue installation), identifying unsafe situations, and practical servicing and commissioning.
- **OFT15-108W – Installation, commissioning and servicing (domestic space and water heating).** Building on OFT15-108D, this course covers solid fuel appliances connected to central heating systems and includes: safe methods of installing a solid fuel appliance connected to a heating system, interlinking solid fuel appliances into an existing heating system, and practical servicing and commissioning.
- **OFT18-108S – Commissioning, servicing and maintenance**
  This covers the combustion process, ventilation, fluing, suitability of hearths/fire surrounds as well as identifying unsafe situations.

For further information on adding solid fuel registration to your current scope, email: registration@oftec.org.

Stephenson College in Coalville is now approved to deliver BPEC Level 3 diploma in plumbing and domestic heating

College offers new BPEC qualification

BPEC has announced that Stephenson College in Coalville, Leicestershire, is now approved to deliver the new BPEC Level 3 diploma in plumbing and domestic heating.

The college was the first centre approved to deliver this new BPEC qualification and has worked closely alongside BPEC to ensure a smooth transition. The qualification is a mandatory requirement within the Plumbing and Domestic Heating Technician (Level 3) apprenticeship standard in England.

The apprenticeship has been specially designed to meet employers' needs, fill skills gaps and secure the future of England's plumbing and domestic heating industry. Mick Hinds, faculty head at Stephenson College, explains "This is an extremely exciting time, and here at Stephenson College all the staff involved are very proud that we were the first centre approved to deliver this new BPEC qualification.

"We feel very confident about our future working partnership with BPEC. Our aim is to offer excellence and innovation in learning, and we feel that this qualification enables us to succeed in our ambition".

Neil Collishaw, BPEC CEO, added "'Our new Level 3 plumbing qualification really is a win-win for English colleges and training providers. We are delighted with the feedback we have received from Stephenson College and we would like to thank them for choosing BPEC as their preferred awarding organisation."

www.bpec.org.uk

Training services in the south east

EG Training may be a relatively new name in the oil training arena, but between them the trainers have many years of experience both on the tools and in the education sector, says the company.

OFTEC approved EG Training is currently carrying out 10-101, 10-105E AND 10-600 oil assessments as well as offering many other courses that can complement them.

Based in Crayford, Kent, the training centre is easily accessible, being within minutes of the M2, M20 and the M25 as well as within walking distance of Crayford train station.

www.gasandoiltraining.com

Kingspan tank selector app helps find your perfect tank

The new Kingspan Titan tank selector app allows installers to visualise Kingspan oil tanks in a garden so customers can buy with confidence.

Easy to use, the new selector app allows the installer to "virtually" place 3D tanks in a customer's garden so they can see exactly how it will look in reality.

The new app gives access to Kingspan's entire range of bunded oil tanks. With just a click of a button, the app uses augmented reality (AR) to superimpose a tank within your customer's garden area, giving a useful preview as to how it will look once installed. Other sizes and shapes of tanks can be quickly and easily swapped in as needed.

The app also provides users with instant information about the tank, including physical dimensions, design features – such as bunding – 10-year warranty and smart monitoring features.

Kingspan Titan tank selector app is free to download from the Apple App Store. An android version of the app will be launched soon.

www.kingspan.com

A new guide from Tuffa

Fire-rated oil tanks offer an innovative solution to the limitations of conventional oil tanks, says manufacturer, Tuffa Tanks.

"Perhaps the greatest limitation is the inability to install an oil tank in a property's most convenient location such as within 1.8 meters of a boundary, or even inside buildings," says the company. "Tuffa's fire rated oil tanks are so unique that most people, and even some installers, aren't aware that they're even an option when purchasing a heating oil tank. This isn't surprising when you consider that Tuffa are the only manufacturer of plastic fire rated oil tanks."

To raise awareness about the product, Tuffa has published *'An expert guide to fire rated oil tanks'* which highlights the tank's benefits, offers domestic installation guidance and explains how Tuffa tanks offer an alternative means of compliance with regulations when compared to fire barriers.

tuffa.co.uk/firepro

Conclusive evidence: – *no expert maintenance results in big bills!*

The theme to this edition's Gallery pages seems to be maintenance... or, rather, the lack of it! Many of our photographs prove conclusively that the lack of proper maintenance by a qualified technician can lead to huge repair or replacement bills for the owner – whether we are talking about a one-year-old top of the range boiler or what first appears to be a modern oil storage tank with many more serviceable years.

OFTEC registered technicians who have their photographs featured on these pages will win a special seasonal prize – courtesy of OFTEC Direct. So, for a chance to win, send in your snaps showing the good, the bad and the ugly sides of oil-related installations. Don't forget to include your name, address and OFTEC registration number, and, if published you will be a lucky winner of an OFTEC Direct special prize! (www.oftecdirect.com).

Send your pictures, together with a brief description of your business and where you came across the subject of your snaps, to: jane@oilinstaller.co.uk

OFTEC registered engineer, **Billy Boardman** who works for a major heating company – Gasway – in East Anglia, was recently called out to investigate why a carbon monoxide alarm was going off in a rental property in Great Massingham, Norfolk.

Billy takes up the story: "It failed a room CO test and on investigation the heat exchanger was completely blocked with soot with the blast tube caked in solid soot. POC couldn't get out of the flue and was backing up into the kitchen.

"I fully stripped down and de-sooted the plume-kit which had to be taken off and jet washed. The flue also had to be removed and scraped out. I then tested the oil pressure and realised it was over double what it should be!

"I then spoke with the tenants who told me they had recently run out of oil and because the oil pump didn't have a bleed stem they thought it was the smaller stem below to set oil pressure.

"Just goes to show how much potential damage unqualified or untrained persons can cause just by fiddling around. Overall it took a full day to get it back up and running – and the boiler was not even one year old!"

As soon as OFTEC registered technician **Bryan Craig** spotted this "unorthodox" installation, he thought to himself: *"That'll give some oil pressure – and test the roof at the same time!"*

Bryan is both a Gas Safe and OFTEC engineer and works for Vinci Facilities, covering heating issues throughout Northern Ireland. He comes across all sorts of oddities during his working week but spotted this particular installation in Coleraine.

"The oil delivery company must carry ladders...," he quipped!

On first glance, OFTEC engineer **Kevin Church** thought that this tank had just the usual faults... tank overlapping base, wood structure, etc. But on closer inspection he discovered that the tank had multiple cracks and splits.

Naturally, Kevin advised the customer accordingly in the hope that he had averted a very expensive clean-up operation. Fortunately, Kevin – who covers the Newbury area of Berkshire – was there to quote for the installation of a new tank! Hopefully the replacement will receive better maintenance than its predecessor!

Fuel price commentary

For users of liquid fuel we can start the new decade with the welcome news that crude oil prices have fallen significantly since the new year. Although kerosene prices have also dipped, it's possible that the crude oil price falls have yet to fully feed through to the price consumers pay for their heating oil. It certainly came too late to be reflected in the latest Sutherland Tables annual fuel cost comparison figures.

One reason for the fall is because the crude oil market has caught a cold, or more precisely, a bad case of the Coronavirus, which has choked still further the already faltering demand in China. Another more local reason for the current low heating oil price is the relatively mild winter which has reduced the demand for kerosene.

However, it's important to keep this in context – the price may be at its lowest for a year, but it is nowhere near the unprecedently low prices we saw between 2015 and 2017 and it will be interesting to see how things develop over the coming months.

With most prices relatively static, in GB, the annual cost of oil heating remains second only to mains gas in the latest price comparison. Both mains gas and electric heating users have seen significant falls, a trend that started at the end of last summer and in both cases is probably mainly due to the OFGEM price cap.

In Northern Ireland, by contrast, electricity and wood pellet prices have increased significantly, while LPG has fallen the most. In the Republic of Ireland, prices have been largely stable which is good news for all consumers.

Comparative space and water heating costs for a three-bedroomed home in Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland

GREAT BRITAIN

	Average: Jan 16-Jan20	January 19	January 209	Price change	% difference
Anthracite Grains	£1,150	£1,127	**£1,209**	£82	7.28%
Electricity (Economy 7)	£1,869	£2,004	**£2,050**	£46	2.30%
Gas (British Gas – condensing)	£991	£1,025	**£950**	-£75	-7.32%
LPG	£1,861	£1,976	**£1,928**	-£48	-2.43%
LPG (condensing)	£1,532	£1,625	**£1,586**	-£39	-2.40%
Oil	£1,195	£1,397	**£1,350**	-£47	-3.36%
Oil (condensing)	£980	£1,143	**£1,105**	-£38	-3.32%
Wood Pellets	£1,412	£1,538	**£1,498**	-£40	-2.60%
Air source heat pump radiators	£1,661	£1,771	**£1,789**	£18	1.02%
Air source heat pump underfloor	£1,389	£1,355	**£1,370**	£15	1.11%

NORTHERN IRELAND

	Average: Jan 16-Jan20	January 19	January 209	Price change	% difference
Anthracite Grains	£992	£1,034	**£1,075**	£41	3.97%
Electricity (Economy 7)	£1,622	£1,871	**£2,034**	£163	8.71%
Gas (Phoenix – condensing)	£932	£1,050	**£1,050**	£0	0.00%
LPG	£2,435	£2,708	**£2,576**	-£132	-4.87%
LPG (condensing)	£1,998	£2,219	**£2,112**	-£107	-4.82%
Oil	£1,155	£1,455	**£1,314**	-£141	-9.69%
Oil (condensing)	£947	£1,191	**£1,077**	-£114	-9.57%
Wood Pellets	£1,119	£1,131	**£1,166**	£35	3.09%
Air source heat pump radiators	£1,509	£1,654	**£1,752**	£98	5.93%
Air source heat pump underfloor	£1,247	£1,246	**£1,320**	£74	5.94%

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

	Average: Jan 16-Jan20	January 19	January 209	Price change	% difference
Anthracite Peas	€1,558	€1,628	**€1,628**	€0	0.00%
Electricity (Urban Night Saver)	€2,053	€2,114	**€2,188**	€74	3.50%
Gas (Bord Gais condensing)	€1,347	€1,399	**€1,378**	-€21	-1.50%
LPG	€2,716	€3,135	**€2,998**	-€137	-4.37%
LPG (condensing)	€2,234	€2,574	**€2,463**	-€111	-4.31%
Oil	€1,605	€1,966	**€1,869**	-€97	-4.93%
Oil (condensing)	€1,313	€1,606	**€1,527**	-€79	-4.92%
Wood Pellets	€1,353	€1,398	**€1,398**	€0	0.00%
Air source heat pump radiators	€1,803	€1,852	**€1,913**	€61	3.29%
Air source heat pump underfloor	€1,492	€1,458	**€1,503**	€45	3.09%

Notes. The tables above are based on quarterly data published by the Sutherland Tables. They show the annual average cost of a range of heating options for a typical pre-1980 three bedroomed semi-detached home with a heat requirement of approximately 16,000 kWh.

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