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# A strong start to 2018...

Last year was a good one for the oil heating industry. Boiler and tank sales remained buoyant and the continued low price of kerosene ensured that consumer support for our products and services remained high. It means that the oil heating industry goes into the New Year in a strong position, unrivalled as the preferred heating option for off-gas grid homes both in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.



While it's great to start from this position of strength, it's likely that 2018 will be a more challenging one for fossil fuel heating and particularly for oil. The price of crude oil has been creeping up – see page 34 for details – and while we are sure to remain very competitive on price, the gap to our competitors may be narrower and the competition a bit fiercer. That's only right and proper in a competitive market.

Looking beyond 2018, of greater concern are signals that government may intervene in the off-grid heating market as part of efforts to meet its decarbonisation obligations. This could create a situation where some heat technologies enjoy an unfair advantage, stifling competition and dramatically increasing costs for homeowners. OFTEC is 100% behind the need to decarbonise, but we think that all practical low carbon solutions should enjoy the government's support.

Off-grid homes were not all created equal and there is no one-size-fits-all solution to heating them. Homeowners must be able to choose the right solution for them from a full range of options, not the one the government tells them they must have. Choice, low prices and fair competition are a vital part of a healthy future low-carbon marketplace, both for home and commercial heating.

Although any changes won't start to take effect until the mid-2020s, it matters now because the government will make many of the key decisions about its future decarbonisation plans during the next two years. It's vital that we help them to make the right ones and OFTEC will be working hard on behalf of our industry. To find out more, see page 5.

**Paul Rose**

Chief Executive Officer, OFTEC

# Changes to direct debit payment date

Paying for OFTEC registration monthly by direct debit is very popular because it spreads the cost and, once it is set up, is simple and convenient to use.

To help manage the collection process, from April, OFTEC will be changing the date that the payments are collected. From April 1st, the payment will be taken on the first of the month, rather than the 20th. This means that the March payment will be taken on the 20th as usual, and the April payment will then take place on the 1st April. The payments will then continue on the first of each month from then on.

If you pay by direct debit, OFTEC will have already contacted you about the change, which will happen automatically. There is no need to do anything. Only one payment will be taken each month and the amount you pay will not change. OFTEC hopes this will cause no inconvenience but if you have any questions, or need more information, please contact the finance team by email at: [finance-team@oftec.org](mailto:finance-team@oftec.org)

## OFTEC to attend trade events



OFTEC at last year's Installer exhibition

OFTEC plans to attend several trade events during 2018. As well as being an interesting day out in their own right, the trade events offer technicians and installers a great opportunity to find out more about all the benefits OFTEC registration offers, meet local inspectors and chat to staff from OFTEC's technical and registration teams.

OFTEC will be exhibiting at:

- Selfbuild Show: 16th-18th February, Belfast
- NACS Exhibition: 13th-14th April, Stratford upon Avon
- Installer: 8th-10th May 2018, Ricoh Arena in Coventry
- Hearth and Home Exhibition: 10th-12th June, Harrogate
- Installer Scotland: 5th-6th September, Glasgow
- Selfbuild Show: 14th-16th September, Dublin

OFTEC's attendance at further shows will be confirmed during the year, so please check the events section of the OFTEC website for details, or look out for updates in the monthly e-newsletter sent to registered technicians.

# Positive response to OFTEC's decarbonising concerns...

OFTEC has welcomed a positive response from the Minister of State for Climate Change and Industry, Claire Perry MP, after putting forward strong concerns over the viability of government plans to decarbonise heating from the 850,000 oil-using homes in England.

The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy's (BEIS) plans, outlined in the 'Clean Growth Strategy' published last year, propose a preference for moving rural households currently using oil heating to electrically driven heat pumps as an early phase of efforts to cut carbon emissions from the heating sector.

However, in a reply to a letter from OFTEC, Claire Perry indicated that BEIS was still willing to consider other decarbonisation options and expected 'to see a mix of technologies into the future'.

OFTEC's letter summarised the trade association's concerns about government plans for decarbonising off-grid heat and made a strong case for other possibilities to be considered. Drawing on extensive knowledge of the off-grid heating sector, OFTEC believes BEIS' plans are:

- **Ill-considered** – because the heat solution proposed (heat pumps) is expensive and difficult to implement in many existing rural homes;
- **Unfair** – because it unreasonably imposes a financial burden on oil-using rural homeowners;
- **Anti-competitive** – it is not for government to stipulate how consumers heat their homes, nor to compel them to purchase a particular energy source;
- **Premature** – because appropriate solutions for off-grid homes are not yet available and;
- **Inconsistent** – because heating emissions from other high carbon fuels such as natural gas, LPG, and one-to-one electricity are not being targeted.

OFTEC CEO Paul Rose cautiously welcomed the letter: "I'm pleased that BEIS appears willing to consider other options. OFTEC was particularly

concerned that government had already decided on its preferred solution for decarbonising England's 850,000 oil-using homes without fully considering the practicalities and impact on homeowners – or the other options available.

"BEIS' plans fail to address the reality of the situation. While suitable for some, electrification is currently not a practical heating solution for many rural homes without wholesale and expensive energy efficiency improvements.

"It is encouraging that our voice has been heard"

"Proceeding with this expensive approach could have serious financial implications for many families without considerable government support to help the majority of homeowners meet the substantial installation costs of heat pumps or improve insulation standards.

"This becomes even more of an issue when you consider the higher proportion of rural households currently living in fuel poverty compared to urban areas. How are these families who are already struggling to make ends meet expected to find the money to fund an expensive new renewable heating system?"

"We fear this would, in turn, further increase the already scandalously high number of elderly and vulnerable people who die each winter because they can't afford to keep warm.

"Decarbonising the off-gas grid heating sector is a must – but it can't



Claire Perry, Minister of State for Climate Change & Industry

be at the expense of people's health or their financial well-being. We were therefore pleased to receive a constructive response from the Minister of State for Climate Change and Industry."

## The rise of alternative fuels

The correspondence from Claire Perry also encouraged continuation of OFTEC's work to bring to market a low carbon liquid fuel as an alternative to kerosene for a decarbonised off gas grid heating sector.

Paul Rose continued: "It is encouraging that our voice has been heard and our efforts to champion the interests of our industry and liquid fuel users have made an impression.

"The Clean Growth Strategy states that 'Decarbonising heat is our most difficult policy and technology challenge to meet our carbon targets'. It is certainly a challenge but we remain convinced that a reduced carbon liquid fuel is a viable solution.

"We will continue to work with members, the oil distribution sector and others to make an alternative fuel available that strikes a balance of affordability, practicality, carbon reduction and sustainability.

"Industry will also continue to develop the next generation of appliances to ensure they meet the increasingly stringent standards for efficiency and emissions."

*What you need to know about the government's Clean Growth Strategy – see page 7*

# Tanktop

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## 2018 NOx limits

OFTEC boiler and burner manufacturing members report that they are ready to meet the requirements for emissions of nitrogen oxides under the EU Ecodesign Regulations for boiler space heaters and boiler combination heaters.

From 26th September 2018, emissions of nitrogen oxides, expressed in nitrogen dioxide, of boiler space heaters and boiler combination heaters must not exceed 120 mg/kWh of fuel input in terms of gross calorific value.

Significant developments in both boiler and burner technology has ensured that both yellow flame and blue flame burner/boiler packages will be available after 26th September 2018.

## Take it easy Sally!

Loyal servant to OFTEC Sally Foster retired in December with plans to take things easy for a change!

Sally joined OFTEC in 2006 and for eleven years served on the registration administration team helping businesses and technicians with their registration requirements.

Customer service was Sally's forte and OFTEC received many compliments over the years for her calm and polite manner when dealing with members of our industry.



## Be sure to renew your qualifications early

Maintaining up-to-date qualifications is important and, as a useful reminder, you will automatically receive a renewal letter from OFTEC's registration team approximately three months before your qualifications are due to expire.

Qualifications must be renewed every five years and your certificate should confirm the date of issue or expiry date, or both. Qualifications can be renewed up to six months prior to expiry and the new certificate will then be valid for five years from the expiry date of the previous certificate held.

For contact details for training centres offering OFTEC courses visit the OFTEC website, [www.oftec.org](http://www.oftec.org)

# What you need to know about the government's Clean Growth Strategy

The UK government hopes the new Clean Growth Strategy is a radical blueprint for decarbonising everything from transport to home heating – including proposals that would transform off-gas grid heating. *OFTEC's communications manager, Malcolm Farrow, explains what you need to know.*

Clean growth is a new government catch phrase which means *increasing* economic growth while *decreasing* carbon emissions at the same time. The UK government claims their recently published Clean Growth Strategy (CGS) 'sets out a comprehensive set of policies and proposals that aim to accelerate the pace of clean growth'.

The strategy covers the period from now until 2032 and sets out the areas where action is required to meet the UK's 4th and 5th carbon budgets. Carbon budgets are the amount of carbon the UK can emit during a five-year period if it is to hit the long-term target for carbon reduction which is to reduce overall emissions by at least 80% by 2050, compared to 1990 levels.

The CGS covers the whole economy and decarbonising the emissions from heat is an important priority. Hitting the 2050 target would mean decarbonising nearly all heat in buildings and the strategy assumes this won't happen unless the government pushes things along.

Decarbonising home heat, which contributes about 13% of all emissions, is one of the toughest challenges and, to tackle it successfully, the government must achieve three things:

- Improve the thermal efficiency of homes
- Make heating appliances more efficient
- Switch homeowners to low carbon fuels

## How will this happen?

The government doesn't have all the solutions yet and will use the next three years to develop its plans and, where necessary, consult on options. What is certain is that it's a massive challenge, covering both the new build and retrofit sectors. Here's a quick summary of the government's current thinking:-

**The thermal efficiency of existing homes** still offers plenty of decarbonisation potential and the government thinks a further six to nine million properties could be insulated. The CGS rightly identifies the need to focus on households in fuel poverty and aims to have 2.5 million fuel poor homes in England improved to EPC C or better

by 2030. More broadly, the government wants to move as many homes as possible to EPC Band C by 2035, providing it is practical, cost-effective and affordable.

The point about affordability and value for money is crucial – where do you set the bar in terms of cost and who is going to pay the bill? So far there isn't any detail but it's worth noting that, according to research by the Association for the Conservation of Energy, the number of homes being improved through government-backed schemes fell by 80% between 2012 and 2016 – from 1.74m homes each year to just 340,000, so a step-change is needed.

**Appliance efficiency** is being tackled through measures such as Boiler Plus – which sets stricter standards for boiler efficiency and requires additional controls – and through measures such as setting Seasonal Performance Factor (SPF) requirements that heat pumps must reach to qualify for Renewable Heat Incentive payments.

**Low carbon fuels** present different challenges and the best blend of approaches is still far from clear. Decarbonised electricity, bio-gas, hydrogen, biomass and bio-liquids may all play a role and the best option will depend on a range of different factors. However, that hasn't prevented the government from using the CGS to announce that it intends to start the decarbonisation of the UK's homes by tackling the 850,000 English households that use oil for heating. Their ambition is to phase out the installation of oil appliances in new and existing homes during the 2020s, starting with new homes. Heat pumps are the government's preferred replacement option, although there are indications that they may be open to other ideas.

## OFTEC's view: we need to decarbonise, but not at any price

It's clear that the government's plans are a major threat to our industry and our customers. They threaten manufacturing jobs and the livelihoods of installers and servicing businesses. They could force oil-using households to make very costly

changes to their homes, install more expensive appliances and pay more for their heating – with little or no support from the government.

The need to decarbonise home-heating may be clear, but the best way to do it is not. We think that the government's decision to target oil heating is premature and based on ideology, rather than evidence. Other options haven't been given adequate consideration and little seems to have been done to confirm that heat pumps can be installed and run in most off-grid homes at reasonable cost.

OFTEC agrees that heat pumps probably make sense for new build, and will certainly be suitable in some retrofit situations. However, in many cases, it won't be possible to insulate a home for reasonable cost and, once the cost of the new heat pump installation is also factored in, the price will simply be too high.

Instead of heat pumps we think sticking with existing technology and 'greening the fuel' – by introducing a low-carbon bio-liquid fuel – would be a cheaper and more effective solution for most off-grid homes. We also think that incentivising a range of solutions would provide better choice for consumers and allow for more competition in the off-grid market, which means lower prices and a better deal for homeowners and taxpayers. Most importantly, it makes the goal of successful decarbonisation more likely.

In the coming months OFTEC will work hard to convince the government that this approach is the best way forward. Liquid fuels are currently not on the government's radar and we need to change that very quickly. Trials of a new low-carbon bio-fuel are about to start and the hope is that it will prove to be a relatively simple drop-in replacement for kerosene. We will also undertake research to shed light on the true cost of decarbonising off-grid homes, and ask the difficult questions no one wants to answer – such as who exactly is going to pay the bill?!

Look out for further updates and details of how you can support OFTEC's campaign.

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# OFTEC challenges “misleading information”

The publication of the Clean Growth Strategy in October 2017 signalled a renewed commitment by government to decarbonise the UK economy, including the heat sector.

Amongst a wide range of proposals, it contained a commitment to ‘phase out the installation of high carbon fossil fuel heating in new and existing homes currently off the gas grid during the 2020s, starting with new homes’. Oil and coal (though curiously not LPG or mains gas) were singled out as the ‘fuels considered to be ‘high carbon’, presenting a serious challenge to our sector and a major opportunity for oil’s competitors.

Many are seeking to take advantage of the situation but, perhaps predictably, some are straying well beyond what is factually accurate. Already, OFTEC has acted to correct a misleading article in the trade press by Calor, which claimed the Clean Growth Strategy means ‘homeowners using heating oil will have to switch to a different system to provide heating and hot water...’ when in fact it says nothing of the kind.

OFTEC has also written to another trade organisation about

overly-optimistic and misleading claims of cost savings that could be made by fitting an air source heat pump compared to a non-condensing oil boiler – even though this type of boiler can no longer be installed in most cases!

While claims of this kind are obviously unfair, the risk is that homeowners may believe them, which, while damaging our industry, would be even more disastrous for the household concerned. OFTEC’s concerns have also been echoed by Mike Foster, CEO of the Energy and Utilities Alliance, who called on the Energy Savings Trust and Each Home Counts implementation board – which both have a remit in this area – to ‘root out these bad apples in our industry’.

OFTEC will continue to monitor and challenge all false claims. More constructively, it will work with other industry bodies to establish some ground rules to enable fair and meaningful performance comparisons to be made. Perhaps most importantly, it will engage with other stakeholders in the liquid fuel sector to present alternative energy efficiency and decarbonisation options to government, while remaining constructively critical of the government’s current preference for electric heating.

## Works notification and compliance certificates

Please remember that all notifications should be made to OFTEC within 21 days of the date of installation, which will enable OFTEC to submit the information to the local authority within the required time-frame.

Once work has been notified, you are able to obtain free electronic copies of the compliance certificate from your online account, as early as the following Tuesday, by selecting ‘request standard certificate’ on the notification record. Simply input either your, or your customer’s email address, and select ‘submit’.

When inputting a notification, if the exact address you are looking for does not appear on the list when you verify the postcode, simply select an address from the list then amend the first (and second if applicable) line of the address before continuing.

If you have notified an installation incorrectly it can be amended until the Friday of the week the work is notified. Select ‘amend these details’ against the notification record and follow the on-screen instructions. Once the notification has been uploaded to local authority it cannot be amended and you will need to invalidate the incorrect notification and submit a new notification (and pay another fee).

The cheapest and easiest way to submit your works notifications is via your online OFTEC account (£2.80 plus VAT per notification). Alternatively, please contact our registration team on 01473 626 298 (option 1) who can process the notification for you at a cost of £5 plus VAT per notification. Prices are subject to change without prior notice. Payment by credit or debit card only.

## Removing the frustration from registration renewal

When OFTEC registered businesses forget to action their annual registration renewal it can cause problems when tendering for work, self-certifying, or buying supplies from OFTEC Direct.

To solve the problem, OFTEC recently implemented an automatic renewal service to keep OFTEC registration continuous (subject to maintaining current qualifications). After your next renewal, the automatic system will operate, conveniently billing your credit/debit card when you are due to renew exactly one year later. Only one-year registrations are included in the service. If you register for five years, or have PAS2030, MCS or Part P registration, you will not be enrolled on to the automatic renewal service.

The new system provides peace of mind about continuing your registration and is more convenient, saving businesses and individuals the bother of having to remember. Well ahead of the automatic renewal, OFTEC will send an email, advising of the

amount and date it will be taken. This will give ample time to stop the automatic renewal if required. Once the renewal has gone through, OFTEC will send a receipted invoice, updated registration certificate and technician ID card(s).

You can opt out of automatic renewal at any time, simply by logging on to your OFTEC account at OFTEC online, clicking on the ‘disable automatic registration renewal’ button and following the on-screen instructions. If you choose to opt out, you will need to renew your registration manually before it expires.

It is important to remember that if you do not renew by the expiry date, you will lose your registration privileges and, after a six-month break, you will be treated as a ‘new applicant’ should you apply to re-join OFTEC – which means you will have to pay the joining fee again.

For more information, contact the registration team on 01473 626 298 (UK) or 01 864 5771 (RoI) and select option 1.

# Worcester urges “common sense approach” to ErP and spare parts



Martyn Bridges

Worcester, Bosch Group, is urging the European Commission to take a “common-sense approach” and reconsider bringing spare part circulating pumps under the Energy-Related Products (ErP) Directive by 2020.

Such a move, it argues, would require boilers installed before September 2015, which may not have had a low energy circulating pump at the time of manufacture, to be fitted with one, should the original pump fail. This could compromise the safety and performance of a boiler, and leave homeowners out of pocket.

The ErP Directive, which was first brought in during 2015, requires all new combi and system boilers to be fitted with low-energy circulating pumps. These pumps are often larger than traditional pumps, which is a particular issue in the UK, where boilers have usually been more compact.

- **Boilers fitted before September 2015 may be unable to house ErP-compliant parts**
- **Repairs could compromise on safety and performance**
- **Focus should be on low-energy boilers, with potential to introduce “swap-out” scheme**

According to Worcester’s director of technical communication and product management, Martyn Bridges, an installer will not be able to source a circulating pump of the type that was originally used within the boiler at the time of manufacture if the changes to ErP are carried out.

He explains: “No-one is denying that the ErP Directive and the move to ensure minimum efficiency standards for

all appliances are a positive thing. However, bringing spare parts under its remit seems unnecessarily complicated and incredibly short-sighted. In effect, what it actually could do is penalise anyone who owns a boiler more than six years old.

“Circulating pump replacements will become problematic for installers when faced with the challenging situation of attempting to fit a larger, low-energy pump into a more compact space. This raises a great deal of questions about safety and performance, not to mention the possibility that, if a repair is not possible, a customer may be required to replace the boiler entirely at a much higher cost.”

Worcester is now lobbying the Commission via its trade associations to allow for a “repair as produced” position. This would ensure that a reasonable working life is obtained from a boiler.

Martyn adds: “In essence, we’re calling for a common-sense approach. There’s a huge amount of doubt, risk and potential inconvenience attached to the legislation as it stands now, so why not focus on the bigger gains of making new boilers with low energy secondary components such as pumps, while allowing existing boilers that weren’t made with these components to be repaired as produced?”

“Green policy such as the ErP is a positive thing, but it needn’t come with such a high cost or burden to both the consumer and installer.”

[www.worcester-bosch.co.uk](http://www.worcester-bosch.co.uk)

## New app puts Worcester straight into installers’ pockets

The launch of a new app from Worcester, Bosch Group promises to make it easier than ever for installers to register boiler guarantees, organise appointments, and access Worcester’s full suite of technical literature from the palm of their hand.

With a phone or tablet now an essential component of a heating engineer’s toolkit, the MyWorcester app boasts a host of tools to make heating engineers’ daily working lives easier.

Through the MyCustomer section, installers are able to create their own customer database, register and store product guarantees against individual customer profiles, while also managing incoming sales leads that are generated and delivered by the Worcester website. The MyCalendar

area then allows installers to organise customer appointments, set service reminders, and keep up-to-date with Worcester’s latest promotions.

For those in need of technical support on-the-go, the app’s MySupport area grants installers access to a library of technical information ranging from product manuals and technical bulletins, to how-to videos and FAQs. Users will also be automatically notified as and when new promotions start and when bulletins are made available.

The app’s MyTools section boasts a fault-finder and a flue sizing calculator to aid the sizing of flue lengths for a given boiler installation.

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



Group, commented: “With so many of us now relying on apps in our personal and professional lives, MyWorcester has been introduced to make some of an installer’s typical daily duties that bit easier. With only a single app needed to manage everything from customer details to product guarantees and service reminders, the challenges brought about by physical paperwork can be consigned to history.”

The MyWorcester app is now available to download via the App Store and on Google Play. For more information, visit [worcester-bosch.co.uk/my](http://worcester-bosch.co.uk/my).

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**RDB**  
INSIDE

# Wolseley launches new customer feedback system – ‘Tell Wolseley’

Wolseley has launched a new customer feedback system to improve the overall customer experience across the company’s UK-wide branch network.

Today Wolseley operates Plumb, Parts, Drain, Pipe and Climate Center as separate businesses. However, it is working towards bringing every part of those businesses together to form one specialist trade merchant called Wolseley.

‘Tell Wolseley’ is an anonymous customer feedback service, available 24/7 for customers to share their branch experiences via a short online survey on their smart phone. Each time a customer provides feedback, they are given the opportunity to enter a monthly prize draw to win one of three £100 Love2Shop vouchers. Feedback provided is used to improve the overall experience on a local and national level.

“Delivering great customer service is a number one priority for branch teams and the Wolseley business as a whole. By completing the survey, branches receive instant feedback



so they can work on understanding what or who, makes their branch so great, or in some cases, what makes them miss the mark,” says Hannah Foley at Wolseley.

“It is important we receive honest feedback from our customers to ensure the right things continue to be done well, and the not-so-good things, done better. We want to know what our customers think and all feedback, both positive and negative, is acted upon and directed to the local management teams to review.

“One of the best bits of customer feedback is hearing which members of our team have given great service so that we can give them a well-deserved pat on the back! The survey takes a couple minutes to complete, and can be done during a quick tea break, all you need is a charge note number from your most recent transaction.”

For more information, [www.tellwolseley.co.uk](http://www.tellwolseley.co.uk)

## Specflue strengthens sales team

Further strengthening its sales team, flues and renewable technology supplier, Specflue, has appointed Mark Giacone as area sales manager for the Midlands and South Wales.

The job involves account management and business development for the Sudbury-based company. Mark explained: “I am now the primary point of contact for Specflue’s various customers in the Midlands and South Wales and anybody else who may need me, and I look after the key accounts.

“I am really relishing the chance to get to know our customers well, serving them to the best of my ability and to developing the Specflue business wherever possible.”

Mark, 47, who reports to Specflue commercial



director Ian Sams, has a background in commercial sales in the IT industry, print, networking and construction software. More recently he ran part of the Midlands operation for French car manufacturer Peugeot.

Ian Sams commented: “It’s great to welcome Mark on-board in a crucial role for the business. With his broad range of experience in sales, marketing and consultancy work, and his great enthusiasm and determination to succeed, he’ll make a valuable addition to the Specflue team, which continues to go from strength to strength.”

Mark can be contacted at: [mark.giacone@specflue.com](mailto:mark.giacone@specflue.com)

## Daniel scoops bronze in WorldSkills competition

Twenty-year old Daniel Martins is the pride of the UK plumbing industry, after being awarded a bronze medal in the 2017 WorldSkills competition.

Daniel, employed by Northampton-based Briggs and Forrester, spent a challenging four days competing in Abu Dhabi against plumbers from 30 different countries. He was originally a UK finalist in the 2015 SkillPLUMB competition and went on to be selected by WorldSkills UK to represent the country at international level.

Training provider EAS Mechanical, along with colleagues from Briggs and Forrester, gave comprehensive support to Daniel throughout his intensive training period in preparation for the event. Both companies joined Daniel in Abu Dhabi to give him encouragement whilst competing under pressure in front of around 100,000 visitors.

BPEC Chairman George Thomson also attended the event. He said: “As organiser of the SkillPLUMB competition, BPEC would like to congratulate Daniel on this fantastic achievement.

“He’s a wonderful ambassador for the industry and we look forward to continuing our journey with him as he progresses through his undoubtedly successful career.”



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Central to Heating



# Firebird technical hub “offers unrivalled support”

Firebird’s new technical hub aims to make the design and installation process of a heating system as simple and as trouble free as possible, says the company.

Based at the company’s UK headquarters in Plymouth, the technical hub provides a free design and technical support package for the heating professional. From the initial design, right through to the completed installation, the Firebird technical team are on hand to provide support and assistance.

This not only ensures that warranty criteria are met, but in the case of renewable installations, provides valuable support in complying with the stringent requirements of MCS.

Providing as much help as required, the Firebird technical hub team is available to help design and plan the project before it gets on site. When the design is agreed, assistance is also available to help with quoting for the project and then providing a picking list of all the items required once it is secured. Members of the technical hub team are then on-hand for any technical support or assistance that may be required during installation.

Commenting on the concept behind the technical hub, David Hall, Firebird’s UK director said: ‘We believe that we are the only oil-fired boiler manufacturer in the UK currently

offering this level of total package of support. Not only are we making the design and installation process easier for the installer but we are also saving them valuable time. Add to this the satisfaction of the homeowner and it really is a win-win situation for the installer’.

[www.firebird.uk.com](http://www.firebird.uk.com)



## Hitachi announces brand name change

Hitachi Koki Co. Ltd., a leading manufacturer of power tools and life-science equipment, has announced that the company will change its corporate name to Koki Holdings Co., Ltd., effective from June 1st, 2018, and will rebrand its full range of power tools known as Hitachi and/or Hitachi Koki under the new HiKOKI (pronounced “hai-koh-key”) name, from October 1st, 2018.

The name changes are in line with the company’s ambitious international growth strategy, aimed at ensuring sustainable growth while expanding business in the nearly 100 countries in Hitachi Koki’s global network.

[www.hitachi-koki.com](http://www.hitachi-koki.com)

## Top up on training through Greenstar rewards...

Worcester Bosch has extended the range of courses available through its Greenstar Rewards incentive scheme, meaning registered members will now be able to trade in their points for a place on a number of product training courses.

The following courses will be available to redeem for just 10 points each;

- Greenstar CDi & Si Compact
- Greenstar CDi Classic Combi
- Greenstar Floor-standing Gas Combi
- Greenstar Gas System and Regular
- Greenstar i Combi
- Greenstar i Junior
- Advanced Oil Fault Finding
- Greenstar Oil
- Worcester Controls
- Greenskies Solar Hot Water System

Additionally, for those looking to top up their knowledge on water treatment, installers will be able to redeem the Water Regulations Certificate (WRAS)

training course and Chemical Water Treatment training course – both of which are now available for 75 points each.

Martyn Bridges, director of technical communication and product management at Worcester, Bosch Group, commented: “We’ve welcomed an incredible volume of installers to our training centres across the country, and having just re-opened our expanded academy in Worcester, we wanted to give our engineers the opportunity to benefit from our wide range of courses. Whether you work with gas, oil or solar, you can be sure we have a course to suit you.

“So with a host of new courses available, as well as a selection of our most popular Bosch power tools and workwear, there’s never been a better time to trade in your points.”

To sign up for Greenstar Rewards or check how many points you have, visit the dedicated website: [worcester-bosch.co.uk/greenstar-rewards](http://worcester-bosch.co.uk/greenstar-rewards).



# Grant enhances its G-One installer scheme – enjoyed by 2,400 engineers

Grant UK has enhanced its accredited installer scheme.

In 2011, Grant UK unveiled the G-One installer scheme designed to assist engineers in the field. Since launching, it has welcomed over 2,400 engineers. "Through this network of installers, thousands of householders have incorporated Grant's award winning heating technologies into their homes," explains marketing and corporate communications manager, Anna Wakefield.

The original scheme included free Grant product training, longer guarantees on products, and access to marketing support. Although these remain at the heart of G-One, changes are being made which will increase the benefits.

The scheme itself will now be known as G1. With its new logos, Grant UK's G1 scheme has been given a fresh new look and branding that members will be able to use in their own marketing materials.

The G1 installer network has continued to evolve, with product training and experience at its core. The accreditation has become increasingly sought after by homeowners who want their new heating system to be installed and fitted by an approved Grant installer. "While new scheme features are being launched this year, the fundamental ethos of the G1 scheme will remain – supporting experienced engineers to install quality, reliable heating for homeowners for years to come," says Anna Wakefield.

G1 installers will have access to a new online portal which is replacing the online platform previously set up for scheme members. The G1 portal is the place where installers must register their installations in order to activate the longer guarantees, so its functionality and usability is essential.

Some key features of the new portal include:

- Quick, simple product registration form with the option to save drafts
- Registration log with useful indicators to highlight upcoming service due-dates



- Interactive, bespoke dashboard with an installer's account information collated together
- Downloads hub where technical manuals, marketing literature and other useful guides can be viewed
- A new blog
- A G1 shop where branded clothing, merchandise and promotional items can be ordered.

While the portal's central purpose is to process product registrations, Grant also intends the platform to be a place where installers go for marketing and technical support. The news feed will continue to share the latest Grant news to keep G1 installers up to date; the new blog will give installers the opportunity to interact with content; and the improved G1 shop will offer a wider range of items for installers to purchase.

A 'G1 Click' product registration app enables installers to register products onsite with the quick click of a button by syncing with an installer's G1 Portal account, providing a seamless user experience.

Through the app, G1 installers can submit a new registration in full or complete a partial registration, save it as a draft and finish it at a later date. G1 Click also incorporates some handy features all designed to help make life easier for engineers, including:

- Serial number scanner which can auto-fill the boiler details
- Online and offline modes so, even when there is no wifi onsite, the app will still function and save any data entered
- Automatic syncing with an installer's G1 portal account

G1+ Points is a brand new tier that engineers can progress to after installing and registering the required number of products. G1+ Points installers will be able to accumulate points against the oil boiler installations that they register via both the portal and G1 Click, points that they can then use in the G1 shop.

If you are already a member of G1 or if you are an *Oil Installer* reader interested in joining the G1 scheme, contact: G1@grantuk.com for further details.

# Heavy rain just as damaging as winter cold, warns Worcester

Worcester, Bosch Group, is reminding installers that heavy rain can be as damaging to a condensing boiler as extreme cold, if the proper precautions are not taken. In some cases, wet weather can be more costly and burdensome than cold weather, because flooded boilers cannot be repaired.



Correct installation

The damage done to a boiler through rainwater can also void any guarantees an installer may have with their supplier.

"The domestic heating community has done a great job raising awareness of the importance of protecting a heating and hot water system against extreme winter weather, particularly the cold," says Martyn Bridges, Worcester's director of technical communications and product management.

"Heavy bursts of rain place greater strain on the domestic drainage system, which can lead to water being diverted back into the internal pipework of the house. This is exacerbated if pipework and filters become clogged with leaves and

debris. Condensing boilers can be at a particular risk of flooding.

"Condensate pipes can terminate at the rain water downpipe, providing the pipe terminates to the foul waste water system. If this becomes blocked or overflows, there is a strong chance of water backfilling into the condensate pipe and, subsequently, the boiler.

"The damage done to a condensing boiler is irreparable and a replacement will usually be required," says Martyn. "With this type of termination, it's vital that you fit an external air break into the pipework before it enters the vertical rain water pipework. This separates the condensate outlet of the boiler from the drain pipe connection, which means that water won't flow back into the condensate pipe, even if the downpipe becomes blocked.

"It's a simple solution to a potentially big problem, and will help to protect heating and hot water systems right the way through the winter months."

[www.Worcester-bosch.co.uk](http://www.Worcester-bosch.co.uk)

Oil Installer Spring 2018

# Riello introduces new low NOx technologies

"Air quality and carbon reduction are very much in focus when considering new government legislation in the making," says burner manufacturer, Riello. "The challenge for the oil industry is to innovate to meet the decarbonisation agenda. Oil boiler and burner development has evolved over many years with the deployment of high efficiency condensing boilers being the norm.

"In 2018 the Ecodesign Directive brings to the UK and Irish markets for the first time Low NOx legislation requiring boiler and burner manufacturers to develop compliant solutions prior to the September 2018 deadline."

Working with appliance manufacturers, Riello will now begin to phase in the new RDB Low NOx combustion technologies in advance of the ErP deadline. However in addition to the single stage RDB, Riello has been innovating multi-stage versions of the ErP-compliant kerosene models and also include blue flame variants designed to meet anticipated and more demanding NOx legislation in the future.

The new two-stage models will cover a range from 12-100kW in ErP compliant versions and in three models from 12-75kW in blue flame. "These will represent further energy saving and, thus, overall carbon reduction as they are able to better respond to and follow the heat demand of the system. Two stage burners can also be perfectly matched to combination boilers with their changing heat and HWS demands," adds the company.

During 2018 Riello will be introducing into its training calendar the RDB ErP BX, RDB BG BLU and then, later in the year, the two stage model variants.

[www.rielloburners.co.uk](http://www.rielloburners.co.uk)



The Riello RDB BG low NOx oil burner

## New Titanium boiler from Warmflow

Warmflow, suppliers of the UK's first and only double A rated combi oil boiler, are launching a new range of oil boilers.

The new "Titanium" range of oil boilers comes with an increased customer warranty included in the price, without anything else to pay.

"Ensuring our customers receive the highest level of service and support after they have purchased our products is of the utmost importance," said Brian Beattie, head of GB sales. "Our customers, especially those who have invested a considerable sum in a new boiler, want the extra protection of an extended warranty period."

Warmflow's new Titanium range of boilers extends the standard warranty period from two years to a maximum period of five years for both parts and labour.

The new Titanium range is the latest product launch from Warmflow, who launched the UK's first double A rated combi oil boiler, which, claims the company, is up to 30% more efficient than competing brands. Warmflow are also introducing 5mm steel heat exchangers on all boilers in the range.

[www.Warmflow.co.uk](http://www.Warmflow.co.uk)

## Updated oil nozzle calculator app launched

EOGB, manufacturers and distributors of oil, gas and dual fuel burners, has launched an updated version of its popular oil nozzle calculator app with added features to provide extra information and support to engineers and installers.

The 'oil nozzle output calculator' app, which is based on Danfoss nozzles, calculates burner and boiler outputs in kW based on pump pressure, nozzle size and boiler efficiency inputs. It is suitable for all makes of pressure jet burners that use Danfoss nozzles and covers kerosene (class C2) and gas oil (class D) to BS2869.

The new version of the app features an intuitive, easy-to-use design and includes additional features such as contact buttons to request support and direct links to EOGB's Facebook and Twitter pages. With a lack of internet connection, all the app functions can be made available offline.

Martin Cooke, technical director at EOGB said: "We're delighted to launch our upgraded nozzle calculator app. It really is an essential tool for heating engineers when it comes to onsite calculations, especially for older boilers and burners when no onsite data is available. It removes the need for manual calculations, saving vital time and eliminating any guesswork."

The app is compatible with most mobile devices and is available to purchase and download now from the Google Play store and Apple store.

[www.eogb.co.uk](http://www.eogb.co.uk)

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# Maxiflow – a small family company with a huge reputation!

For a family-owned company, based in the north west of England, Maxiflow can boast a list of very enviable clients – some of the best-known and best-respected organisations in the UK and beyond! They include the Ministry of Defence, luxury car maker Bentley, international aerospace conglomerate Airbus, property specialists CBRE, French multinational electric utility company ENGIE, and even Chester Zoo!

The company has been trading for more than 30 years, having first started as a Chester-based roofing and drainage specialist. Today, Maxiflow provides a wide range of building services, specialising in construction, roofing, drainage, mechanical, electrical and heating solutions.

The company first came to the attention of *Oil Installer* during 2017 when Maxiflow's mechanical services manager and OFTEC-registered technician Tony Drury, sent in a selection of photographs of shabby workmanship he had come across whilst undertaking routine maintenance work on an exterior oil-fired boiler. Tony's photographs subsequently appeared in *Oil Installer's* winter edition Gallery section.

Being based in Chester, Maxiflow is close to huge rural areas of off-gas territory both in England and North Wales – areas which the company is moving into. Currently the company boasts a



Members of the Maxiflow team outside the company HQ in Chester

workforce of more than 40, all specialising in aspects of construction. But Tony sees a huge potential in off-grid heating.



Such is Maxiflow's reputation, that in 2013 the company competed against some of the best-known construction companies in the UK – and won the "Most Considerate Company" accolade. Shown here at the award ceremony are building manager Kevin Beatty, director Warren Beatty and mechanical services manager Tony Drury

"We have a large number of customers within the construction industry and carry out planned and reactive maintenance for businesses across the public, private and voluntary sectors," explains Tony.

"But, in addition, we are able to provide domestic services on a one-off or contractual basis. Our dynamic business model allows us flexibility whilst our operatives are all highly skilled, enabling us to carry out tasks of any size or complexity.

"Our workforce has a wide age demographic – from 17 to 58 years. Many of our employees are veterans and have served

in Iraq and Afghanistan. We work in partnership with West Cheshire College providing training for four apprentices this year, who whilst gaining valuable work experience, will gain much sought after qualifications in their chosen trade such as City and Guilds. Most apprentices later progress to full time employment with Maxiflow.

"We also employ older apprentices. Many young adults are now choosing to learn a trade rather than attending university, realising the potential benefits of learning a trade rather than studying for a degree."

Maxiflow invests heavily in sustainability and is a member of the Sustainability Supply Chain School. "We have taken the initiative for all of our practices to be carbon-neutral wherever possible and constantly strive to reduce our carbon footprint," says Tony. "We are also reducing our environmental impact by working with our waste disposal partners to reduce the amount of waste that we send to landfill."

Asked what had been his company's most unusual job or installation, Tony said that he had encountered many tricky situations, but decided that installing a boiler in a nuclear bunker where the walls were 3ft thick solid concrete was perhaps one of the most unusual!

And finally, asked if Maxiflow could invent one thing to make life easier



One of the most challenging oil heating jobs which Maxiflow has encountered recently was to strip out and replace a 60+ year-old oil boiler – insulated with a complete covering of asbestos (pictured above) – in a 15th century country mansion. With the company's all-round construction and heating expertise, Maxiflow treated it as a routine assignment...



Tony Drury starts work on his next contract

for his company and/or his customers, what would it be, without hesitation Tony answered: "Vehicles that never let you down." We can all relate to that!

[www.maxiflow.co.uk](http://www.maxiflow.co.uk)

# OFTEC to the rescue as oil thieves target children's home

Following the theft of 1,500 litres of heating oil from Whitehaven Respite Unit, a home for children with disabilities, in Carrickfergus, County Antrim, OFTEC responded swiftly to help alleviate the situation. After a call to distributor members of the NI Oil Federation, Solo Direct offered to give Whitehaven 1,000 litres of oil to help during this difficult time.

OFTEC has also issued advice to businesses and homeowners to help prevent oil theft. The association is urging vigilance following this latest incident which shows that oil theft is not limited to residential oil tanks but that schools, businesses, play groups and churches can also be targeted.

David Blevings, OFTEC Ireland manager said: "This is particularly unpleasant for the staff and children at Whitehaven. On a positive note, I am pleased to advise that the oil industry has responded so generously and I can report that Solo Direct have offered Whitehaven 1,000 litres of oil to demonstrate their support in this tough situation.

"During the winter, fuel tanks can be easy targets for thieves as many people are keeping their tanks stocked up. Houses, farms, transport depots, holiday homes and business premises can all be affected – as we have sadly seen today. Usually it's only when people run out of oil and their heating stops working that theft becomes apparent. However, taking a few simple precautions, such as making a regular note of your oil levels, will help to ensure that you are not the victim of oil theft."



Whitehaven Respite Unit



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# CITB to reopen as SERC's professional skills centre

OFTEC has welcomed SERC's revamp of the former CITB training centre in Dundrod Road, Crumlin.

David Blevings, OFTEC Ireland manager, said: "This is a positive development and complements our existing network of training centres in Northern Ireland.

"The transformation is fantastic and I wish Paul Henry of SERC and his colleagues every success with the centre. All oil courses are offered at this strategic location and the redevelopment will see many hundreds of technicians trained and reassessed in the coming years."

For details of courses at the professional skills centre contact Emma Finney on 0289 262 6778 or [emmafinney@serc.ac.uk](mailto:emmafinney@serc.ac.uk)

A full list of training centres is available at the OFTEC website: <https://oftec.org/technicians/approved-training-centres>



Oliver Cormican of Warmflow, Paul Henry of SERC, and David Blevings at the SERC professional skills centre

## Top or bottom outlet?

The Northern Ireland OFTEC office has received a number of enquiries recently about oil tanks for the "Affordable Warmth" grant scheme and the issue of retro fitting a top outlet. OFTEC now clarifies exactly what is required.

Staff in the Affordable Warmth Unit of NIHE advise that they do not approve tanks but require them to meet the description on the schedule. On the issue of top outlet, this was added to all the heating codes on the 17th January 2017.

NIHE are not asking for bottom outlet tanks to be modified, but all tanks being fitted currently must be top outlet.

In Northern Ireland, the installation of any oil storage tank must meet the requirements of the Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012. Practical guidance with respect to the technical requirements for oil storage tanks can be found in technical booklet L (combustion appliances and fuel storage systems), section 6.6, which states: 'An oil storage tank should be constructed in accordance with the recommendations of OFS T100 for polyethylene oil storage tanks or OFS T200 for steel oil storage tanks'. Both OFS T100 and OFS T200 allow for the provision of either a top or bottom outlet at the time of manufacture.

Modifying top outlet tanks to accept a bottom outlet connection is not a practice OFTEC would recommend and it would void any warranty from the tank manufacturer.

If you are coming across building control officers or staff in local councils asking for retro fitted top outlets as part of the scheme, please refer them to David Blevings. [dblevings@oftec.org](mailto:dblevings@oftec.org) or 02891862916.

## Free guide launched for older people in ROI

OFTEC Ireland, Age Action and Jim Daly TD, minister of state at the Department of Health with special responsibility for mental health and older people, officially launched a free guide, offering key advice to help older people using oil heating to stay safe and warm throughout the winter period. The guide encourages consumers to use OFTEC registered technicians for oil boiler servicing.

Technicians in the Republic of Ireland should encourage everyone to pick up a guide from their nearest Age Action Shop and visit elderly relatives and neighbours.

"Whilst the leaflet provides older people with as much information as possible to help them save money and keep warm during cold weather, you can't beat the personal touch when it comes to the support and comfort of knowing a friendly face is on hand to help!" says OFTEC Ireland manager, David Blevings.



Justin Moran (Age Action), Minister Jim Daly TD, David Blevings, (OFTEC Ireland)



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# The loss assessors are looking...

By OFTEC regional inspector, Colin Burrell

When oil leaks occur the costs of dealing with the resulting damage can be very substantial. A company that specialises in clearing up after these incidents told me that their last two domestic oil installation clean ups cost £45,000 and £115,000 respectively. In both cases the source of the oil leak was a domestic oil line and flexible oil hose.

Some technicians may not be aware but as soon as the incident is reported by the homeowners to their insurance company they will appoint a loss assessor. The loss assessor's role is to verify the damage caused and potential costs associated with the oil leak that the insurance company may be liable for. The loss assessor will also look into the reason why the incident occurred and whether any party is to blame.

A key focus of the loss assessor's investigation will be of the work of the last attending engineer and the procedures they have followed. This is why it is vital that you take appropriate steps to protect yourself from any liability. My conversation with the clean-up company revealed that assessors are looking into four main areas on domestic oil boilers:

## Has the oil filter been cleaned and checked?

If the leak is from an oil filter the loss assessor will look to see if this is caused by poor working practices. For example, have seals been replaced; has the filter bowl been cleaned; and, from the date of inspection, would the bowl have lasted 12 months before any chance that corrosion would allow the oil to leak?

## Has the oil line been tested?

The loss assessor will be looking at the oil line and the comments made on the technician's paperwork that indicate whether the line has been inspected adequately and any recommendations made to the customer. For example, the technician may have commented that a visual inspection was carried out where the oil line was accessible and that it was pressure tested. Assessors will also be alert for situations where the oil tank

had been replaced, sometimes more than once, while the original oil line was still in place and no testing had occurred.

## Has the flexible oil hose been changed?

The loss assessor will look at the condition of the flexible hose and manufacturers' recommendation for changing them. They will also look at the environment the hose is in and any factors that could contribute to the hose being damaged. An example given was a technician on a new boiler installation allowed condensate to drip on to the copper oil line because he had failed to solvent cement the condensate joint. The copper oil line did not have any plastic protection and corroded through, causing a major oil leak to the inside of the property.

## Does the engineer's supporting documentation (CD 11) provide evidence of their working practice?

Following an oil leak, one of the first things a loss assessor will ask for is the controlled documentation supporting the works carried out on that installation. This is where the technician can provide themselves with additional protection. The CD11 is designed with a tick box check procedure, but additional information should be added into the form alongside that procedure or in the comment box below. For example, if you have recommended that the oil filter needs to be replaced but the customer has declined to have the work done, record that information on the form. If a leak then occurs because it has rusted through, you can demonstrate that you followed procedure and the customer made the decision that led to the failure – making them responsible.

When inspecting oil tanks, the TI/133D and TI/133ND can be used to demonstrate the procedure you used for inspecting the oil tank. The CD14 warning and advice form allows you to document situations in more detail and classify situations following OFTEC unsafe situations procedure. Good practice is to cross reference between the documents. For instance,



Colin Burrell, OFTEC regional inspector

on the CD11 oil tank state 'See TI/133D' as this tells the customer that this is the form you used to inspect the tank against. Also, if there are any other areas of concern, you can write 'see comments below or CD14' where more details of any situations identified can be recorded in detail.

Inevitably, there may be situations where we are unable to carry out a procedure. For instance, because we cannot gain access to an oil tank because materials are stored around it or it is overgrown. In these situations, we still have a duty to inform the client why a procedure was not carried out, so you might record on the CD11 or CD14 'Unable to gain access to oil tank, advised customer to clear area around the oil tank and have it inspected as soon as possible by a registered technician'. This can be supported if required by use of a warning label. I would also advise taking a picture of the label in place as they seem to have a habit of disappearing. If you deem that you must also inform a customer of a situation verbally, then follow this up by recording it on your paperwork as some customers have a shorter memory span than my springer spaniel!

I hope this has given you an insight into some areas the insurance company are looking into and how you, as a technician, you can protect yourself. This article has not addressed every situation, but remember, if you are unsure, the OFTEC technical helpline is there to provide you with assistance and free advice.



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# Apprenticeships vs university degrees – I blame the parents!

by Clive King

Over the last couple of years much has been written about the lack of young people wishing to train as plumbers, heating engineers, electricians, bricklayers and all general construction work based occupations. There are many organisations bemoaning the fact that they cannot attract skilled people or apprentices of either gender. Whilst reading many articles and letters in the trade press it has struck me that not many of these organisations have really got to the root of the problem. Within this article I hope to be able to put forward my explanation as to why this is so.

It could be said that if a house could be built or a fully operational heating and hot water system be installed by simply pressing a few buttons on a computer then our industry and the whole of the construction industry would be over-supplied overnight. I have spoken to many people recently involved with the profession, and they are under the impression that young people today do not want to get their hands dirty or get up in the morning to do a worthwhile job of work.

Unfortunately some parents and teachers assume that doing well at school and achieving good exam results that transport young people to a university education is the only way to achieve success in life. This is not true and in the good old days when technical schools were in existence, pupils performed very well in the world of manual work. They were encouraged to become very skilled at whichever trade they chose.

At some schools, if you could speak or write Latin or ancient Greek you

were lauded by your teachers and encouraged to try for a place at Oxford or Cambridge universities. Some succeeded, but the majority went to less famous seats of learning. Those who studied 'easy' and 'unnecessary' subjects usually found themselves stacking shelves at one of our many supermarkets after having spent three years 'walking the halls of academe'. I am probably wrong, but I don't think I have ever seen a plumber or any member of the construction industry stacking shelves!

So what is to be done? How often have I heard parents say "Oh, he/she must go to university or they won't get a decent job with a good pay-scale." This parental attitude is normally a result of meetings with teachers when they discuss the child's progress at school. Whilst we all wish our children to have a good all-round education, university for many is not a requirement because some couldn't cope with the work and others would have no interest after a period of experience on campus.

## Common sense and skills

It would be good if more companies and training organisations took it upon themselves to get in touch with schools and academies and offer an insight into their world of work when the pupil is about to have a careers interview. It is my view that when an apprentice finishes his/her time they are a more complete person displaying more common sense, a high degree of skill, a better relationship with their peers that promotes a more worldly-wise approach to life and a salary to help in his/her start in life.

Of course we need university graduates. Our design, manufacturing and research industries would be nothing without them, but many school students would not be able to cope with the high demands of a university education. Learning on the job for them is a much better way.

Much of the work involving apprentices and the quality of their training relies upon the ability of the manager/owner of the company employing them. Apprentices should not be viewed as 'cheap labour' and the company must be able to communicate intelligently with the new worker so that they are not confused by their new surroundings and work placements.

In conclusion I believe that apprenticeships are a wonderful start to a young person's life, giving them a sound footing to a lifelong career within the trade of their choice. And remember, a skilled person is more easily able to move within associated trades throughout their working life allowing them to gain experience in other areas, should they become disillusioned with their present position. But I also believe that parents, teachers and future employers should take a more positive role towards making this whole experience a happy and satisfying one...

Clive King has been involved in the oil heating industry since leaving school in 1958. Since then he has owned his own company – Energy Systems (Exeter) – and carried out consultancy work for OFTEC. In 2007 Clive became an OFTEC inspector, a position he held until May 2014. Although now semi-retired, Clive continues to carry out consultancy work and still takes a keen interest in the oil industry.

## Course supports new government guidance

Energy performance measurement specialist, Elmhurst Energy, has launched a series of courses to support the government's recent guidance on the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES), due to come into effect in April 2018.

MEES represents a major opportunity for energy assessors – around a quarter of domestic properties are likely to be non-compliant and landlords will need experienced and informed assessors to advise them. To explain the legislation in detail, the implications for landlords and opportunities for assessors, Elmhurst Energy is running a series of courses.

The *Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards for Domestic Energy Assessors* course includes: tenants energy efficiency improvements, requests for consent, landlord duties, relevant improvements, temporary exemptions and enforcements.

"Our advice is simple," says Martyn Reed, managing director of Elmhurst Energy. "Landlords need to understand what EPC rating their property is, and if it is 'F' or 'G' then they need to speak to an Elmhurst member to get some good advice on how to get that property 'E' or above."

[www.elmhurstenergy.co.uk](http://www.elmhurstenergy.co.uk)

# Industry skills discussed at PHSP event

Plumbing and heating organisations and other stakeholders gathered recently to discuss how the industry could work collectively to address training and skills issues.

During the event, hosted by the Plumbing & Heating Skills Partnership (PHSP), attendees were briefed on the skills activity currently taking place across the UK and asked what future skills needs the industry might have.

Issues concerning consistency of standards, qualifications and apprenticeships across the UK were seen as important, as well as the implementation of the new plumbing trailblazer apprenticeship in England.

George Thomson, chairman of the PHSP, said: "It was great to receive a positive response in the discussions groups, there was a clear common desire for all parties to work together for the benefit of the plumbing and domestic heating industry."

[www.phsp.org.uk](http://www.phsp.org.uk)

# 2018 – "the year the government must act on skills crisis"

**The apprenticeship levy is destined to turn into a "hollow and wasted opportunity" if the government doesn't act urgently in 2018, warns a leading training specialist.**

Chris Wood, CEO of construction, utilities and energy sector skills specialist Develop Training Ltd (DTL), said: "Recent statistics supplied by the Department for Education suggest that the levy is not generating an uplift in the number of apprenticeships.

"Firms seem either to view the levy as a mildly irritating additional tax or fail to understand the basic mechanisms behind it. If the government wants to realise the potential of the levy in 2018, and with it an increase in skilled labour, then it needs to increase awareness and demonstrate the scheme's effectiveness in delivering worthwhile training programmes. If it doesn't the levy will join many other historic initiatives as a hollow and wasted opportunity."

He added that training would need to address not only technical

skills shortages but softer skills such as dealing with customers: "Clearly, the basic required skills will be technical," said Mr Wood. "However, with ever greater public interaction and increasing consumer expectations, utility companies will need to focus more heavily on ensuring that their engineers are suitably trained in the softer skills such as those needed to ensure good customer relations."

Develop Training Limited (DTL) is a UK accredited provider of compliance, technical, and safety training, supporting thousands of firms with their training needs at the company's seven dedicated training centres in Linlithgow near Edinburgh, Romford, York, Derby, Bolton, Swindon and Lisburn near Belfast,

[www.developtraining.co.uk](http://www.developtraining.co.uk)





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# Changes to MCS guidelines – top tips for ground source heat pump installers

In order to be eligible to claim for quarterly payments from the government's Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme, ground source heat pump installations must be compliant with the Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS). The MCS is an independent scheme designed to evaluate heat pump systems and installers against robust criteria, providing greater protection for consumers.

At the end of October 2017 the MCS standard MIS3005 'Requirements for MCS contractors undertaking the supply, design, installation, set to work, commissioning and handover of microgeneration heat pump systems' was updated. The update includes a number of changes which will affect a heat pump project. UK heat pump manufacturer, Kensa, offers top tips for installers following the two major changes, which are:

- A standard performance estimate is now required to produce an MCS quote;

- A room-by-room heat loss to BS EN 12831 is not needed until an order for a heat pump product has been placed.

The standard performance estimate will detail the expected running costs of the heat pump system and estimated RHI returns, and should be consistent no matter which installer is used.

To obtain this information and in order to produce an MCS compliant quote, the installer should obtain a copy of the property's energy performance certificate (EPC) (or SAP in the case of new builds). Ideally the EPC should be provided by the house holder, or if the current lodged EPC is valid, downloaded from the EPC register.

## Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)

The important figures from the EPC are the space heating and hot water requirements. If the building is being altered (e.g. extended, additional

insulation measures etc.), the figures may be taken from a draft EPC, which may not be formally submitted until the works are complete. The energy loads quoted in the performance estimate should only be used to calculate running costs and estimated RHI payments – they should not be used to size the heat pump. An appropriate whole house sizing method should be used, followed up with a room by room heat loss to BS EN 12831.

## Room-by-room heat losses

The other major change is that a room-by-room heat loss to BS EN 12831 is no longer required before a MCS compliant quote can be produced, although this calculation is still required once the order has been placed. Any changes to the heat pump size caused by a more accurate sizing method being used or a change in operating temperature, should trigger a new performance estimate to be produced and, if needed, a variation of contract. [www.kensaheatpumps.co.uk](http://www.kensaheatpumps.co.uk)

## Grant offers air source heat packs

New heat pump packs are now available to purchase from heating specialists Grant UK, which consist of the Aerona<sup>3</sup> air source heat pumps and their key accessories.

Available for all three sizes of the Aerona<sup>3</sup> heat pump, the packs have been launched to make life easier for installers and to deliver cost savings.

Each pack also contains the following accessories: buffer tank; Flexi foot kit; Mag One filter; domestic hot water boost kit; sealed system kit; through wall insulation kit. Installers will be able to source all of these items using one code, making their life simpler when it comes to ordering products through their local merchant – a heat pump and its six essential accessories are all included within one pack code.

Ordering the packs will also deliver cost savings to engineers. Compared to buying the products individually, each of these heat pump packs can help installers make a saving of over £140 (based on 1st October 2017 RRP).



[www.grantuk.com](http://www.grantuk.com)

## Vaillant announces partnership with SBS

Heating manufacturer, Vaillant, has announced a partnership with Sustainable Building Solutions (SBS), part of Travis Perkins Plumbing & Heating division, marking a concerted drive to make more of its energy efficient products available to the market.

The working relationship permits SBS to hold stock of Vaillant's aroTHERM and flexoTHERM heat pump range, including the uniSTOR heat pump cylinders.

Chris Johnson, national sales manager of renewable systems at Vaillant, said: "Customers are becoming increasingly aware of their own environmental impact and are making purchasing decisions that reflect this. To help capitalise on this growing demand, Vaillant's strategic approach towards renewable technologies will continue to focus on products and systems that can meet the needs of our installers and their customers.

"This new partnership with SBS is a key move in improving our order to delivery timescales. Through the TP Group's extensive distribution channels, our installers will now benefit from next day delivery across much of the UK, ensuring that they can quickly meet the demands of their customers with quality products."

Jacqui Rose, category manager at SBS, added: "SBS is well known for providing specialist advice for sustainable technologies, including heat pumps. This partnership with one of the UK's leading manufacturers of heating technologies is a result of our business growth and dedication to the heat pump sector."

[www.vaillant.co.uk](http://www.vaillant.co.uk)



**Atkinson** extends its range of oil heating products with the acquisition of the Fuelstop Fire Valves that is now manufactured in the Westbury facility alongside the Tankmaster, Tanktop and Filstop.



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# Advice on intermediate bulk containers

Following a number of recent enquiries, OFTEC wishes to advise technicians about the unsuitability of intermediate bulk containers (IBCs) for the storage of oil serving fixed combustion appliances.

They are not defined in building regulations or British standards in this respect, and are not designed or constructed for this purpose. BS 5410 Parts 1 and 2 stipulate that oil storage equipment should be manufactured to provide a 20-year expected working life. Regional building regulations, and BS 5410 Parts 1 and 2, provide details of the relevant standards against which oil storage tanks must be manufactured and tested, and the location for which they are suitable:

Standard	Type of tank	Location
BS 799-5	Steel fabricated primary tank	Above ground, internal or external
OFS T200	Steel fabricated primary tank or integrally bonded tank	Above ground, internal or external
BS EN 13341	Thermoplastic primary tank	Above ground, internal or external
OFS T100	Medium density polyethylene primary tank or integrally bonded tank	Above ground, internal or external
BS EN 12285-1	Steel fabricated double skinned primary tank	Below ground



OFTEC also advise technicians who encounter IBCs being used for the fixed storage of oil serving fixed combustion appliances that it would be both irresponsible and poor practice to connect an appliance to such an oil storage installation. OFTEC's advice to technicians is to inform their customer of the severity of the issues via appropriate documentation and request that these be rectified prior to any new or replacement appliance being installed or connected.

## How to pressure test oil supply lines – an overview

Following on from the article published in the previous edition of *Oil Installer* (Winter 2017), that discussed the statutory requirements under the Control of Pollution Regulations for initial and subsequent periodic pressure testing of oil supply pipework, OFTEC has now prepared an overview of other occasions when pressure testing should be undertaken, and the procedures to be followed.

BS 5410 Parts 1 and 2 require all new oil supply pipework installations to be pressure tested. This is to ensure their integrity prior to being put into service and similar requirements apply where existing oil supply pipework is altered or where oil leakage is suspected. OFTEC strongly recommends that existing oil supply pipework installations are also tested during the installation of a replacement oil storage tank or oil-fired appliance.

For copper and steel oil supply pipework, including steel extended fill pipework up to 80mm diameter, the following procedure should be followed:

- Isolate the section of oil supply pipework you are looking to test, ensuring that components that automatically vent to atmosphere, such as de-aerators, have been disconnected. If it is an existing oil supply line, ensure any oil which could still be present in the pipework is removed if practical to do so, to minimise any potential loss of oil during testing.
- Connect your test equipment (this will typically comprise a foot pump, pressure gauge and Schrader valve, or a dedicated pressure testing device).

- Pressurise the pipework to 1 bar (14.5 psi) and leave standing for 15 minutes checking for any obvious loss of pressure. If there is an obvious loss of pressure, investigate and repair or replace the pipework and repeat the test.
- If no obvious loss of pressure is identified, repeat the test and leave standing for a further 30 minutes observing the pressure reading.

For approved underground plastic oil supply pipework, the testing procedure should be as specified in the product manufacturer's instructions.

Non-domestic installations incorporating suction supply lines that might be subjected to sub-atmospheric pressure should be tested under vacuum and should hold a negative pressure of 0.3 bar for 30 minutes with no gain of positive pressure of more than 0.03 bar.

The test should cover the whole of the suction supply pipework from the tank draw-off valve to the pump inlet including all valves and filters incorporated in the supply pipework.

Upon completion of the test, record that a pressure test had been undertaken and passed. For example, this can be recorded on the OFTEC CD/10 (Installation completion report) under Section 2 (Oil supply system) by ticking the relevant box when a new oil supply line is installed.

# When to use a vacuum gauge

A vacuum gauge is an essential piece of equipment for all pressure jet burner servicing and commissioning technicians. In simple terms, its use helps to avoid fuel pumps being damaged and the potential combustion problems associated with gas in the fuel supply. If you attach a vacuum gauge to the vacuum port of a fuel pump (usually marked with a 'V') you do not get a positive pressure reading, but a negative pressure reading.

So, what does a vacuum gauge tell us? To answer that question, we need to understand a couple of basic facts about 'negative pressure' and 'resistance'.

Imagine an oil storage tank installed so that the level of oil in the tank is 4m higher than the fuel pump. What static pressure would be present at the inlet of the oil pump? A 10m 'head' of oil equates to 1.0 bar pressure. So, a 4m 'head' of oil would equate to 0.4 bar pressure. Now let's reverse the scenario and imagine a tank installed so that the level of oil is now 4.0m below the oil pump. We now have a 'negative head'. This would be expressed as -0.4 bar negative pressure. When the pump 'lifts' oil up the supply pipe it has

to overcome this negative pressure or vacuum.

A fuel pump is quite capable of 'lifting' oil from a tank lower than the burner. In fact, many pump manufacturers state that their pumps will lift up to 3.5–4.0m. When designing a system this measurement would be taken from the outlet of the tank (the lowest possible fuel level) to the height of the installed fuel pump.

However, as well as overcoming this negative pressure, the fuel pump will also have to overcome the 'resistance' of the fuel supply. As the fuel moves through the pipework it faces resistance from the walls of the pipe itself, bends, valves, filters, the fire valve and other fittings. Now imagine a fuel supply with a dirty filter, debris in the pipework or, worse still, a crushed pipe; the resistance greatly increases and puts an extra load on the pump.

So how do we know if the fuel pump will overcome the combined effects of negative pressure and resistance? We use our vacuum gauge. The pump manufacturer will specify the maximum permissible vacuum reading. Connect your gauge to the vacuum port and set the burner into operation; the pressure

reading should not exceed that given by the equipment manufacturer, and should never exceed -0.4 bar.

This check is essential in the following circumstances:

- commissioning or servicing an installation where the fuel supply pipework is very long (potential for increased resistance);
- commissioning or servicing an installation where the outlet of the tank is a similar height or lower than the pump (potential for increased negative pressure);
- fault finding for a suspect or failed fuel pump.

Finally, it is worth noting one more problem when lifting fuel oil. When a vacuum reaches approximately -0.4 bar, gas is released from the fuel. As the vacuum increases so does the quantity of gas released. For this reason, whether a de-aerator is used or not, pump manufacturers tend to set a maximum vacuum pressure of approximately -0.35 to -0.4 bar to avoid damaging the pump and also to avoid potential combustion problems associated with too much gas.



## Job opportunities at OFTEC

### Technical Manager / Supervisor

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Based in Ipswich, OFTEC's Technical Manager / Supervisor oversees the support we provide to the liquid fuel heating industry and OFTEC's registered technicians.

You'll lead the day to day work of the department, answering technical enquiries by phone and email and managing the production and maintenance of technical publications and standards, updates and bulletins.

Good organisational skills will be just as important as an in-depth knowledge of domestic oil heating. Hands-on experience would be an advantage and good communication skills are a must.

### Contracted Regional Inspectors

**Areas required:** • Wales • North East England

Do you have the in-depth knowledge and proven track record to be an OFTEC Inspector? As part of our Inspection Team you'll work closely with registered businesses and their technicians. Visits will include auditing business procedures and checking individual technical competence.

You will also investigate complaints and could represent OFTEC at trade events and meetings with other industry bodies. Knowledge of oil industry legislation is essential and previous auditing or assessing experience would be desirable. Computer literacy and exceptional customer skills are required for these roles.

### The closing date for both roles is 16th March 2018

To request an application form and job description for either role, please contact Andrew Peirson (Office and HR Manager) on 01473 618 552 or email [apeirson@oftec.org](mailto:apeirson@oftec.org)

**OFTEC is the Oil Firing Technical Association. OFTEC represents and promotes the domestic oil heating and cooking industry in the UK and Republic of Ireland and is the provider of a Competent Persons Scheme. For more information, visit [www.oftec.org](http://www.oftec.org)**



# More calamities captured on camera!

Our regular collection of disturbing, amusing and downright shocking photographs of oil-fired heating installations continues to capture the imagination of our readers, with more and more shots arriving in the editor's in-box!

If you come across an installation which leaves a little to be desired, take a photograph and send it to *Oil Installer* so that we can share it with all our readers! Send your photographs to: [jane@oilinstaller.co.uk](mailto:jane@oilinstaller.co.uk)



Having just read the article "Let this be a warning..." in the Winter edition of *Oil Installer*, concerning warning stickers from OFTEC Direct, OFTEC registered installer, Kevin Church, contacted *Oil Installer* and enclosed three photographs...

Newbury-based Kevin said: "Having read the article in the current edition, I have a question: *What do the tanks above/ below have in common?*"

"My Answer: *Some muppet keeps filling them up!*"

"They were all discovered recently and although a written advisory was passed to each customer I have no doubt they will still be in use on the next visit.

"If delivery companies took liability for what they were filling, then I suspect they would not have filled the tanks above. Owners would then stop ignoring the warnings (stickers or not!)"

Within 24 hours, Kevin contacted *Oil Installer* again and enclosed another set of photographs showing the appalling condition of a tank he had come across that day. He made the following comment... "Further to my letter yesterday, asking why hazardous tanks keep getting filled, please find below pictures of another incredible example discovered this morning. How and why does a delivery driver think this 2500 litre single skin tank is okay to fill?!"



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor

*I am astonished to learn that two thirds of companies are failing to take up the Apprenticeship Levy offer.*

*Firms with a £3 million pay bill and above are legally required to pay into the scheme, but if they do not claim back the funds to train people within two years, that money will be lost to the taxman.*

*There is evidence that employers don't fully understand the Levy, so while some may have weighed up the pros and cons before making a decision, others will be out of pocket because they didn't get to grips with it early enough. Perhaps more worrying is that businesses are missing out on an opportunity to train new and existing staff at a time when the country is suffering from serious skills shortages.*

*As training specialists, we work on levy-funded apprenticeships with major utility and construction companies. We also provide advice to help firms plan their use of the levy to meet their training needs. I would advise any company affected by the Apprenticeship Levy to get specialist help to navigate their way through the options.*

Chris Wood,

CEO Develop Training

# Pricing page

## Heat costs rise for oil-using homes

The latest update from the Sutherland Tables reveals that oil has lost its crown as the cheapest major fuel. However, in much of Great Britain mains gas is not our main competitor and against LPG and electric storage heaters oil maintains a massive price advantage. The situation is more challenging in the Republic of Ireland where gas presents a more serious threat.

Since last June, the price of Brent crude oil has increased from around \$45 a barrel to a high of \$70 in January – a rise of over 50% - before falling back to \$65 in February. This has been largely mirrored by the price

of kerosene which has climbed from 36ppl to around 46ppl in December. It briefly peaked even higher than that in the run up to Christmas, when colder-than-normal December weather led to a surge in pre-holiday demand.

## Oil price rises but will it be sustained?

What are the price prospects for 2018? Our industry has benefitted enormously from low prices since 2013 and any return to the days when crude oil was over \$100 a barrel would be a major blow, encouraging customers to consider other options. Fortunately, the evidence suggests this is unlikely to happen – although you can never say never with the crude oil market.

The recent upward price trend has been due to three factors, geopolitical

instability in oil producing regions, the successful alliance between OPEC and Russia to limit production and increasing world-wide demand. However, a higher price has made it viable for American and Canadian shale and sand oil producers to ramp up production and this may rise dramatically in 2018, undermining OPEC's efforts to restrict supply. It's also possible that Russia, or some of the OPEC countries may break ranks and increase their production.

In the short term it seems likely that the Russia/OPEC alliance will keep the lid on supply, so oil prices will remain relatively high, most likely in the \$60 - \$75 a barrel range. While not ideal, this is not disastrous for our industry. The prospects for the second half of 2018 look better but are hard to predict, so watch this column for more updates.

## Comparative space and water heating costs for a three bedroom house

### GREAT BRITAIN

	4-yr avg: Jan14-Oct17	Jan 17	Jan 18	Difference
Solid Fuel (anthracite grains)	1147	1146	1159	+13
Electricity (storage heaters)	1638	1635	1910	+275
Gas (British Gas - condensing)	1042	967	967	0
LPG	1986	1771	1885	+114
LPG (condensing)	1635	1460	1553	+93
Oil	1149	1161	1279	+118
Oil (condensing)	943	952	1048	+96
Wood Pellets	1328	1281	1381	+100
Air Source Heat Pump (radiators)	1493	1491	1681	+190

### NORTHERN IRELAND

	4-yr avg: Jan14-Oct17	Jan 17	Jan 18	Difference
Solid Fuel (anthracite grains)	999	953	973	+20
Electricity (storage heaters)	1596	1437	1518	+81
Gas (British Gas - condensing)	963	825	885	+60
LPG	2272	2173	2708	+535
LPG (condensing)	1866	1785	2219	+434
Oil	1098	1043	1241	+198
Oil (condensing)	901	857	1017	+160
Wood Pellets	1140	1143	1065	-78
Air Source Heat Pump (radiators)	1525	1384	1459	+75

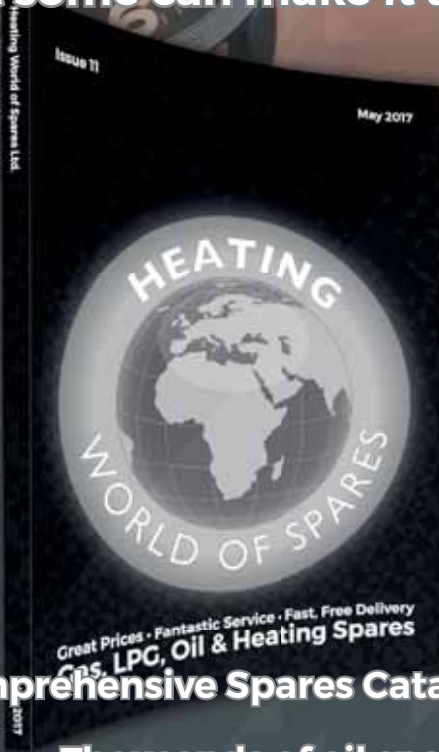
### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

	4-yr avg: Jan14-Oct17	Jan 17	Jan 18	Difference
Solid Fuel (anthracite grains)	1483	1510	1510	0
Electricity (storage heaters)	2046	1953	1977	+24
Gas (British Gas - condensing)	1338	1291	1337	+46
LPG	2794	2380	2689	+309
LPG (condensing)	2298	1962	2213	+251
Oil	1637	1499	1671	+172
Oil (condensing)	1339	1228	1367	+139
Wood Pellets	1320	1293	1281	-12
Air Source Heat Pump (radiators)	1788	1718	1743	+25

The tables above show the average annual costs for a range of heating options. Prices are shown in pounds sterling (£) for Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Euros (€) for the Republic of Ireland. Figures are for a semi-detached three bedroom house, requiring 13,500 kWh space heating & 2,500 kWh DHW heating. Great Britain (Average) is calculated using South East, South West, Wales, Midlands, Northern England and Scotland. Data from the Sutherland Tables.

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