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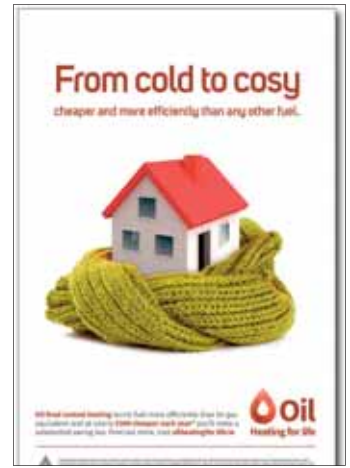


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# Oil heating goes from strength to strength...

With the heating season now in full swing, I'm pleased to report that oil heating retains a strong trading position. Boiler sales were up an unprecedented 35% in August, compared to the same month in 2015, and sales for the year to October are very healthy at +14%. The run up to Christmas is usually a busy time so let's hope for a strong end to the year.



Owning a state-of-the-art boiler is a good thing, but it is equally important that the rest of the system is also up to scratch. Within the industry there is concern that many potentially life-expired tanks are in use. We all need to take this issue seriously and I'm delighted that OFTEC has joined forces with FPS to introduce new reporting arrangements, designed to alert homeowners that their tank may be at risk of failure. It's vital that we take action on this issue and, with the oil price still low, I'm sure many homeowners will be content to replace their tank and continue to benefit from the reliable, low cost service their oil heating provides.

In this issue of Oil Installer you'll see that OFTEC is expanding its online services, with its own YouTube channel and a new website nearing completion. The steady growth in online applications for registration shows the importance of offering good web-based services, even in a traditional industry like ours. And, talking of tradition, with the evenings turning colder, there's nothing more pleasant than a wood burning stove, so it's great to see that OFTEC registration is proving popular with the installers who fit them. Over 100 solid fuel installers have already registered with OFTEC and that number is growing every week.

OFTEC continues to work hard on behalf of the non-gas heating industry, highlighting to government the role we think it should play in improving energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions. It's important work and you can find out more about it on page 8. Finally, on behalf of everyone at OFTEC, I would like to wish you a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

**Nick Hawkins**  
Chairman OFTEC

## Tim becomes new technical director

Tim Lock, previously OFTEC's inspection manager, has been appointed as the association's new technical director. He took over the post vacated by Paul Rose on 1<sup>st</sup> November.

Tim brings considerable experience to the role, having worked in the heating industry for around 25 years, including five years as part of OFTEC's registration and inspection team.

Prior to joining OFTEC, Tim worked for 18 years as an installer of oil, gas and solid fuel heating and hot water systems for a Lincolnshire based family business before moving to a national installation company where he worked as a technical surveyor/supervisor of both traditional and renewable technology systems.



Tim Lock, OFTEC's new technical director

## OFTEC welcomes fall in heating oil theft

OFTEC has welcomed research which reveals that heating oil is no longer one of the top five most commonly stolen items in rural areas of the UK.

The NFU Mutual rural crime report 2016 shows that the overall cost of thefts from rural homes decreased to £6.2 million in 2015, down from £7.1 million the previous year, and whilst heating oil and diesel were the third most frequently targeted items in 2014, fuel does not feature in the 2015 top five.

Commenting on the report findings Paul Rose, OFTEC CEO, said: "It's encouraging to see that heating oil is no longer a key target for criminals in rural areas. This trend has quite likely been influenced by the sustained fall in heating oil prices we have seen over recent times, meaning oil is not the expensive commodity it once was.

### Security measures

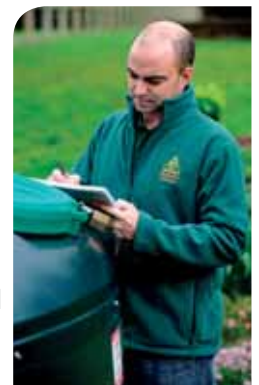
"The report findings also suggest that homeowners may have become wise to the threat posed by thieves and adopted the simple security measures that make heating oil a less attractive target. These include locks, screening, security lighting and fuel level alarms."

Despite small increases in cost since the beginning of the year,

heating oil remains around 50% cheaper than when prices peaked in spring 2013. Latest figures from the Sutherland Tables show oil is still by far the cheapest of all major home heating fuels.

It is currently 14% cheaper to heat an average three-bedroom home in Great Britain with an oil condensing boiler than with mains gas, the second cheapest option; 44% less expensive than with an LPG condensing boiler, and 49% cheaper than electric storage heaters.

Paul Rose continued: "Consumers are continuing to benefit from the sustained low price of oil and there's good evidence to suggest this will remain the case for the rest of 2016 – and quite possibly beyond. However, we still recommend that oil households, indeed all rural communities, remain vigilant against crime and take the necessary precautions to protect their assets."



OFTEC technician checking the security of an oil tank

# Taking action on misrepresentation

2016 has been a busy year for OFTEC's compliance officer, with 61 cases of misrepresentation – the technical term for heating businesses falsely claiming to be OFTEC registered and displaying the OFTEC logo without permission – reported by the end of September.

A growing number of cases have been initiated by registered technicians who have spotted local competitors using the OFTEC logo when they don't hold registration – often when registrants had been asked to sort out problems left behind by the untrained rival.

Misrepresentation is a cause of serious problems for homeowners and a major frustration for registered businesses, particularly if they miss out on work having been undercut by the less scrupulous rival.

However, while some heating businesses knowingly use the logo without permission, in many cases the explanation is less sinister and more straightforward to resolve. It could be that the business's registration has lapsed and they've forgotten to remove the logo, or a technician who has done OFTEC training has wrongly assumed that he is entitled to display the logo. In these cases there is rarely a deliberate intention to mislead and they can be easily resolved once the evidence is presented by OFTEC.

The toughest cases to crack are those where the company is deliberately aiming to mislead customers. Such businesses have few qualms about cutting corners in other areas too, making them both a potential danger to their customers and a danger to the reputation of the industry and the OFTEC 'brand'. These more serious offenders rarely respond when OFTEC contacts them and the solution is to

escalate the pressure by involving their local trading standards department. OFTEC has built strong relationships with many trading standards teams, and their additional powers – which include the threat of legal prosecution – can often be enough to resolve the case.

## Help us to help you

Rogue traders who claim to be OFTEC registered damage the reputation of all responsible, registered heating businesses. **OFTEC can only take action if these businesses are brought to our attention – and that is where you can help. Please let us know if you believe a heating business is falsely claiming OFTEC registration.** We take action in every case and this year around half of the cases have already been resolved – and we're still actively pursuing the rest.

You can report your concerns by emailing our compliance officer at: [compliance@oftec.org](mailto:compliance@oftec.org). Alternatively ring the main registration number: 01473 626 298. In the Republic of Ireland you can also contact our local representative Sean McBride on tel: 0872 417 041. It's vital that we take action against the small minority that flout the rules, so please help us by getting in touch and reporting your concerns.

## Evidence is king

For OFTEC or trading standards to take successful action we need good evidence - a business card, advert or invoice, a photograph of a van showing the date taken, or a link to a website or social media page showing the OFTEC logo. While we can't guarantee a successful outcome in every case, the better the evidence, the greater the chance of success!

## What the law says...

### England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland

Unauthorised registration claims are misleading to the public and contravene Schedule 1 of the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 which provides a list of banned practices, that is, trading practices that are in all circumstances considered unfair. Paragraph 4 states: "Claiming that a trader (including his commercial practices) or a product has been approved, endorsed or authorised by a public or private body when the trader, the commercial practices or the product have not, or making such a claim without complying with the terms of the approval, endorsement or authorisation."

*Regulation 12 of those same regulations provides that the above conduct is a criminal offence.*

### Republic of Ireland

Consumer Protection Bill 2007 Part 2 - Clause 44, Misleading Commercial Practices, which provides a list of banned practices, that is, trading practices that are in all circumstances considered unfair.

*Regulation 42 of those same regulations provides that the above conduct is a criminal offence, and may be subject to fines and penalties.*

## Free marketing leaflet updated

OFTEC has updated its popular free leaflet that explains the benefits of using an OFTEC registered technician.

The updated leaflet now matches the popular range of home guides that are also available free of charge. The aim of the leaflet is to enable home owners to understand why it is important to use someone who has been properly trained, and also explains the other benefits that choosing an OFTEC registered business brings.

Commenting on the update, Malcolm Farrow, OFTEC's marketing and communications manager, said: "Many thousands of the original 'choose a technician you can trust' leaflet were handed out, enabling homeowners to fully understand the benefits of OFTEC registration. The new leaflet should be equally popular and will help registered businesses have the edge over unregistered alternatives, making it a useful benefit of registration."

All leaflets and guides can be ordered free of charge from OFTEC's marketing team or downloaded from the OFTEC website. To obtain the new leaflet, which is available in bundles of 100, or copies of the home guides, which come in bundles of 20, email: [marketing@oftec.org](mailto:marketing@oftec.org), quoting your registration number. Please allow up to seven days for delivery.

# Which boiler?





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# New government heat policy urgently needed

With much of the recent political agenda dominated by all things Europe, it's easy to forget that other challenges also need the government's attention. Climate change, fuel poverty and energy efficiency are all high on the political 'to do' list so the government's evolving heat policy is much-awaited by our industry.

It's perhaps not surprising that there's a lack of clarity. After all, we've been through a period of post-Brexit vote upheaval which has seen the axe fall on the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) and the creation of a new Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) instead.

There are also plenty of projects already 'on the go' or about to start, including the Bonfield Review, the RHI consultation, the ECO consultation, and the Boiler Plus programme. However, with new ministers and a new department to bed-in, we still await significant announcements on the future government policy for our sector.

Before the Brexit vote there were signs that DECC officials might be moving away from totally renewable solutions towards a more flexible approach. OFTEC is still hopeful that this will happen so the association has written to the new ministers, suggesting a few principles that their new strategy should adopt:

- **Joined up – it must address the need for energy efficiency and carbon reduction simultaneously**
- **Compatible – it must support solutions that will install easily into existing UK homes without the need for expensive renovation**
- **Inclusive – it must promote affordable solutions to allow high participation**
- **Accessible – it must enable those that most need help to participate by providing simple, low cost loans and/or a scrappage payment scheme**
- **Industry-led – it must be easy for registered installers to participate, with no unnecessary bureaucracy or additional hoops to jump through**
- **Pragmatic and best value – it must support solutions that give the best result for the least cost, so condensing boilers, controls and insulation rather than more costly renewables**

## We need your help

Many commentators from both inside and outside our industry support OFTEC's views on what the government needs to do. However, the more support we have, the better the chances of success. If you would like to add your support, look out for an update in the OFTEC e-news explaining how you can help us persuade the government to do the right thing. OFTEC will also monitor all announcements and will publish updates in future editions of this magazine and our e-news.

## OFTEC is recruiting...

OFTEC has vacancies for **regional inspectors based in Scotland and South West England**. The appointments will be on a contracted (self-employed) basis and we need applicants who have an in-depth knowledge and proven track record of the heating industry, combined with excellent customer skills. Previous auditing or assessing skills would be an advantage.

OFTEC is also looking to recruit a **technical officer** to work as part of its busy technical support team, based in OFTEC's head office in Kesgrave, Suffolk. The successful candidate must have practical heating industry experience, preferably in oil and solid fuel, and a good working knowledge of building regulations. Excellent communication skills and an eye for detail are a must. For an informal chat about the role, please contact Tim Lock, OFTEC's technical director, on 01473 626298

To apply send your CV and covering letter to: J Corbett, HR Dept, OFTEC, Foxwood House, Dodds Lane, Kesgrave, IP5 2QQ, or email: [jcorbett@oftec.org](mailto:jcorbett@oftec.org)

# Website project nears completion

The redesign of OFTEC's two main websites is now well advanced. The aim of the project is to improve the popular OFTEC.org and OFTECdirect.com sites and, in particular, to enable registered users to access password restricted content via a single log-in.

Currently different passwords are needed for three of OFTEC's websites and the first phase of the redesign project will see the two main websites merged into a single new site, accessible via a single password.

A second phase of the project is expected to see the OFTECOnline.com database, which enables registered businesses to access their online account and submit work notifications, combine with the two other sites during 2017.

Making the OFTEC website work equally well on all devices is another important goal of the project. Research shows that registered technicians and consumers are now just as likely to access the internet via smart devices as more traditional personal computers.

The design of the new site reflects that particular change, and the overall look and feel has also be refreshed, bringing OFTEC's web presence into line with the latest and best web standards.

The new site is expected to go live in January 2017, so look out for announcements via OFTEC's e-news service. Information about how to log in to the new site will also be provided and OFTEC's aim is make the transition as quick and easy as possible, while ensuring data security.

## YouTube channel

In a separate project, OFTEC is setting up a YouTube channel to host short films aimed at both technicians and consumers. The films to be uploaded include advice on looking after an oil tank and the benefits of using an OFTEC registered technician.



# Top tips to avoid fraudster scams

OFTEC is warning technicians to be extra vigilant after being alerted to a growing number of heating businesses that have been contacted by fraudsters.

Fake advertising opportunities are a particularly popular tactic used by scammers. One recent example involved a technician who received a call from a person claiming to be selling advertising for a magazine on crime prevention. They began by confirming the technician was OFTEC registered.

Others have attempted to prey on the goodwill of victims by asking them to advertise in magazines for charities and other similar – but actually fake – good causes. Fraudsters also use deception to obtain bank details. These so-called ‘phishing’ scams - when fraudulent calls, emails or texts are sent in an attempt to gain personal information or payment - include impersonating public sector bodies and even pretending to be from banks or HMRC concerning tax returns.

## Small firms attacked

Figures from GetSafeOnline, the government-backed cybersecurity body, show that ‘phishing’ attacks rose by 21% during 2015. Furthermore, over half of all the attacks on businesses reported last year were made against small firms.

Malcolm Farrow, marketing and communication manager at OFTEC comments: “Heating firms, like other small businesses, can be especially vulnerable to scams and it’s not unusual for criminals to harvest contact details from online directories such as those on the OFTEC or GasSafe websites.

“Understandably, the majority of heating businesses we work with don’t feel the need to put formal security systems or procedures in place due to their size, and it’s very easy for owners to be caught unawares, especially when they are busy.

“We urge anyone who receives unsolicited phone calls, texts, emails or letters to ignore them. Avoid entering into conversation with someone you don’t know online or over the phone and never place orders initiated via cold calls.”

## To help protect heating businesses from fraudulent activity, OFTEC has put together some top tips to avoid getting caught out:

- Always ask for written details before committing to anything
- Compare email addresses and other details to previous correspondence
- If you are dealing with a public body representative you have not previously communicated with, don’t be afraid to ask for proof of identification
- If a delivery address is different to usual, query why. There could be a simple explanation but it’s always best to check
- Never open a suspicious email or click on a suspicious link. Web viruses don’t just ruin your computer, they can be used as a way to steal money. Free anti-virus software is widely available
- Poor grammar or bad spelling can often be a tell-tale sign. Genuine companies will spend time proof reading correspondence
- Be wary if you are asked to pay upfront for anything - play for time and do some online research to confirm whether the offer is genuine
- Numbers starting with 084, 087 or 09 are now premium rate so most reputable companies have stopped using them. However, they are used by scammers to trick people out of money
- If you receive an offer that sounds too good to be true – it probably is!

Malcolm Farrow concludes: “If you have been scammed don’t panic. End all communication with the fraudster and don’t pay them any money without first seeking advice - fraudsters are unlikely to take legal action, so don’t give in to their threats. If you think your security has been compromised, inform your bank straight away. They will step up security on your account to stop other unauthorised transactions. They should also be able to refund any money that has been taken. It is also worth contacting Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 or via the website for further advice.”

# New workwear range launched

OFTEC has launched a new-look range of workwear through its online shop OFTEC Direct.

The expanded collection includes t-shirts, polo shirts, sweatshirts, trousers and fleeces which are now produced in a more practical black colour rather than the traditional OFTEC bottle green. The changes follow a survey OFTEC carried out amongst its registered technicians to determine their preferences for OFTEC branded clothing.



OFTEC is also planning to add a new range of affordable hand-held measuring devices, compatible with smartphones, to help technicians work more efficiently.

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

## Have something to say?

Do you have strong opinions about the oil heating industry or simply something useful to share with fellow Oil Installer readers?

If so, send us an email to be included in a new “Readers’ Letters” section starting in the next edition of Oil Installer.

Share your thoughts, tips and experiences now. Email: [jane@oilinstaller.co.uk](mailto:jane@oilinstaller.co.uk)

# Don't cut corners with contracts and quotes

**A desire to please the customer shouldn't override the need for a written estimate and customer approval, says OFTEC's Malcolm Farrow**

The need to have a contract in place before starting work should be a 'must do' for any professional heating business. But complaints received by OFTEC suggest that in some cases it still isn't happening – with problems occurring as a result.

In an ideal world you get your quote for the work approved and then complete it to the best of your ability, the customer is pleased with the result and they pay you. However, in the real world things aren't always so simple and there are several situations where work might be done without a written agreement between heating business and customer.

One common situation is where an existing appliance can't be repaired and needs to be condemned. This typically results in a distress purchase with the customer demanding a speedy resolution. "I don't care what you do, just get the heating back on!" is a demand most technicians will be familiar with. In such cases it's natural to want to speed things up and it's all-too-easy to fall into the trap of cutting corners and overlooking the need to get a quotation approved.

## Customer's approval

Problems can also happen even when you've got a contract in place. For example you might start work but then something unforeseen happens that requires additional expense. In this situation, it is essential to re-quote and get the customer's approval in writing, even if that means delaying the job. The obvious danger of not re-quoting is that the customer may not realise that the work is going to cost more. The shock when they get the final bill can lead to a rapid breakdown in their relationship with you, resulting in negative feedback and sometimes a damaging dispute that threatens your business and your bank balance.

In these and other similar cases it's the lack of a written agreement that leaves the installer (and customer) dangerously exposed because, if something goes wrong, it's one person's word against another's. At OFTEC we frequently hear of situations where a dispute of this type has happened and, in most situations, the law is firmly on the side of the consumer. As a result we

would encourage all technicians to familiarise themselves with their legal responsibilities under the Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013, which came into force on 13th June 2014 and involve contracts made between a trader and a consumer. All technicians who provide quotes, estimates and contracts of work on a householder's property are affected, though contracts with a value under £35 are not included.

A key requirement of the regulations is that technicians must provide consumers with certain information in straightforward language. This includes the main characteristics of the goods or services provided; total price; payment arrangements; the time frame of the job; and the complaints procedure. The amount of information required is reduced for any repair or maintenance work which is requested immediately and the price of the work is no more than £170.

## The right to cancel

Technicians must also let the customer know in writing that they have the right to cancel the contract within 14 days. This 'notice of the right to cancellation' applies whether the contract is agreed verbally or in writing. However, this doesn't apply if the customer has ordered something to be made up to their own specification or if they have requested urgent repair or maintenance work. If a technician fails to notify the consumer about their cancellation rights, they run the risk of the cancellation period being extended from 14 days to 12 months.

For contracts where work or services start within 14 days, technicians must get written authorisation from the customer to start. The notice should also state that the customer must pay a reasonable amount for goods and services provided before any cancellation.

OFTEC has produced a guide for registered technicians covering contracts of work (Technical Notice 015), which outlines their key legal responsibilities. It can be found in the technician area of the OFTEC website. Additional useful guidance can be found by visiting the Trading Standards' website.



## OFTEC's tips for contract bliss

- Make sure you have a full and signed contract before starting work
- Always take a deposit
- Make sure you have all agreements in writing and make it clear to the customer that, by signing the contract, they agree to your terms and conditions (which should be made clear)
- Tell your customers in writing that they have a right to cancel
- Keep records of all communications and amendments to any agreements
- If anything changes as the job progresses, re-quote and re-issue the paperwork, and don't do any more work until it has been signed off by the customer
- What's the worst that could happen? – think ahead and have a plan in place to deal with it

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# Communication skills – an essential tool for all technicians

by Clive King

**It has been my experience over many years in the domestic oil installation and service industry to observe - and to be frustrated by - the attitude of some oil installation and service technicians towards their customers or their company's customers.**

This seems to stem from a lack of consideration towards other human beings... not to treat them as a customer, but to treat them as an interruption to their business. Business owners are often heard saying, albeit in an amusing way, "*the business would be doing very well if it wasn't for the customers*". Many a true word spoken in jest, but we all know that we cannot run a business without customers.

Today's problems are no different from those of yesteryear, but I notice that nowadays more and more technicians just do not know how to converse correctly with their customers and often refuse to enter into a conversation with them at all. If there is a problem, it is always someone else's fault. If something is difficult to achieve, why not tell the customer that it can't be done and treat them with disdain for even suggesting it?

## **Compromise...**

To do the job exactly as you would want it done is not necessarily the best way, especially if the paying customer does not agree with you. A very big word here is "compromise", but today technicians do not seem to want to get involved with compromise, only to complete the job the easiest way, in the shortest possible time, using the cheapest materials and making the greatest profit.

Don't get me wrong, not all businesses and individuals operate in this way. There are some very good engineers out there, and you will find that they nearly always have an excellent rapport with their customers, getting to know them well,

understanding how they think and how to satisfy their needs. These are the successful engineers – the ones with a good working relationship with the person who pays their fees!

The unsuccessful technician is at a disadvantage straight away if he has not been taught good manners and common-sense negotiation skills. His approach to his customers is normally awkward and undeveloped. He is incapable of asking the correct questions of his customer without alienating him in the process. In fact good communication skills are just as important as knowing which nozzle is right for which oil burner or knowing why a deaeration device should be fitted to an oil storage tank.

Some clever technicians are brilliant with their customer relations, but it is those who lack these skills who fare the worst in a very competitive market. A good technician who has a broad and successful customer base is not the one who necessarily charges the least for his services, but is the one whose customers are happy to pay his charges because they are happy to have him around and feel secure with his work and attitude.

So how does the socially unskilled technician obtain these qualities? In the 1960's and '70's sales training schools operated throughout the country and, if an individual was to be employed as a sales person, reputable companies usually organised training courses in product knowledge and sales skills. Nowadays this practice appears to have deteriorated, although some large pharmaceutical and scientific companies still carry out such training because they know that their reputation depends upon the person in the field.

## **Investment...**

Why should a small business, working in the domestic market with homeowners as its customers, think it can operate without training

investment? Company representation starts with anyone from the organisation being in front of the customer/end user. That is why I can never understand why companies take on a person straight from school and put them behind the main switch board to answer the telephone without any training!

I recently read that the Association of Plumbing and Heating Contractors have started an online training scheme to enable technicians to prepare quotations, contracts and invoices correctly so as to avoid customer dissatisfaction and endless arguments as to why the quotation/estimate bears no resemblance to the work actually done. I applaud this initiative as it is one of the most progressive training projects that I have heard of in recent years. Perhaps they could extend the training programme to include customer relationship training...

In conclusion, surely it is not beyond the wit of man to offer customer relationship training to all newly qualified engineers – and especially to apprentices – so that they can exit their training period as complete individuals, competent in their work and with the confidence to make their way in the world.

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.



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# Up, up and away with Grant UK!



When Bristol hosted its International Balloon Fiesta recently, attracting 500,000 visitors over the course of four days, Grant UK took to the skies with one of their G-One installers!

One of Grant UK's G-One accredited installers, Duggan Plumbing and Heating, was flying a balloon at this year's fiesta with their basket sponsored by Grant UK. More than 140 balloons took part in the event, but Grant's well-known and distinctive brand colours certainly stood out!

"The fiesta is a great opportunity for companies to gain some local, national and international publicity as the event is hugely popular both at home and further afield," explains Anna Wakefield, marketing and corporate communications manager for Grant UK.

"This year's event was another great success and Grant UK was thrilled to reach new heights with Duggan Plumbing and Heating to share the message about their efficient heating solutions!"



## Another season with Bath Rugby...

Grant UK has confirmed that the company is continuing as a business partner of Bath Rugby for the new 2016-17 season, as well as becoming a new shirt sponsor for the team.

This will be Grant's second year as a business partner for the boys in blue, black and white. Being based only twenty miles from Grant UK's headquarters, Bath Rugby is a local club whose development the company is keen to support.

In addition, Grant has become a new 2016-17 shirt sponsor for Bath Rugby. When the team steps out on to the pitch either at home, away or in training, their shirts will now proudly display the Grant UK logo on the back.



## On the rally circuit...

As well as in the sky and on the backs of rugby players, the Grant logo has also been spotted during the 2016 British Rally Championship!

In mid-August, the championship went to Northern Ireland where competitors took part in the Ulster Rally. One of the drivers was Chris West from C W Oil Services, whose car is sponsored by Grant.

C W Oil Services are Grant UK G-One accredited installers, based in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire. Chris is a keen rally driver who has enjoyed many driving successes over the years. This year, he is participating in rallies throughout the UK with sponsorship support from Grant.

Chris is racing in a Works Opel Adam R2 car and following the Ulster Rally, he competed in the

Jersey Rally during October, and now has his sights focused on the championship's Rockingham stages in December, Brands Hatch stages in January - an event which Chris won last year - and finally the Epynt Rally in Wales in early 2017. All the events are being televised so readers can watch Chris compete in his Grant-branded car.

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

## Worcester tops Which? boiler survey for 7th year

For the seventh consecutive year, Worcester, Bosch Group has come top in the Which? boiler report having achieved Which? Best Buy status across every boiler it makes, from its Greenstar gas boiler range to its highly-efficient oil-fired models.

In the latest Which? boiler report, the Greenstar range achieved an impressive overall score, placing it 9% ahead of the competition and sealing its place as the only boiler brand to have achieved the endorsement for its gas boilers for seven years running.



The results were calculated from the views of 10,859 Which? members and 601 members of the public, as well as a total of 179 Which? Trusted Traders who were surveyed about boiler manufacturers they're not affiliated with.

The Greenstar range achieved the maximum star rating in five of the seven categories, including brand reliability, build quality, and availability of spare parts.

### Oil boiler range

For the first year the Greenstar oil boiler range has also obtained Which? Best Buy status, the only oil boiler range on the market to achieve this. Homeowners and heating engineers rated the Greenstar range that highly it was a clear 16% points above the nearest competitor. Having achieved a five star rating in three out of four categories, the range was credited as "simply the best oil boiler around according to owners and engineers".

Martyn Bridges, director of marketing and technical support at Worcester, Bosch Group, commented: "We are delighted that every gas and oil boiler we make has now achieved Which Best Buy status, which is a very reassuring endorsement for homeowners and heating engineers alike. The fact we are the only manufacturer to achieve this status for a seventh successive year is a real testament to quality and reliability we consistently achieve."

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

## Grant celebrates 20 years of trading

Grant UK's staff were recently welcomed by managing director, Paul Wakefield, to Farleigh House, the home of Bath Rugby Club, to enjoy an anniversary summer party to mark 20 years of trading.

Paul established Grant UK in 1996 and over the past two decades, the company has gone from strength to strength, leading the way with product innovation and becoming the market leading oil boiler manufacturer in the UK (source: SBGI).

Initially founded in Salisbury, Wiltshire, Grant UK began selling a range of oil-fired boilers, namely the Euroflame and Multi-pass ranges. In 2002, the company launched its first high efficiency condensing oil boiler to the UK market.

Following entry into the renewables arena in 2007, its range of products now includes air source heat pumps, condensing biomass boilers and solar thermal systems as well as hot water cylinders and thermal stores. Grant UK's parent company, Grant Engineering in Ireland, has over forty years of experience in the heating industry and this is reflected in the range of innovative products that Grant has in its portfolio.

Most recently, the Grant VortexBlue oil-fired boiler was launched which incorporates the latest low NOx burner technology. The new Grant VortexAir hybrid offers the best of both worlds by combining a VortexBlue oil boiler with the Aerona<sup>3</sup> inverter driven air source heat pump.

"We are delighted to celebrate this milestone with our loyal and experienced staff as well as Grant Engineering's founder Stephen Grant, and Niall Fay, Grant's operation's manager and director," explains Anna Wakefield, marketing and corporate communications manager for Grant UK. "It was a great event and with our product portfolio we are confident the company has a fantastic future ahead."

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

## 800 redundancies likely in Wolseley "review"

Wolseley UK has announced a major programme to transform the way it serves its customers following a wide-ranging review of its plumbing and heating operations. The programme is likely to result in the closure of around 80 branches across the UK with up to 800 redundancies.

Wolseley is to start a period of employee consultation at affected sites, but, as Oil Installer was going to press, the company was unable to identify which branches may close.

Patrick Headon, managing director of Wolseley UK, said: "The trends in our profitability have been disappointing and we need to take action to improve our customer proposition and the efficiency of our business. We have an outstanding team made up of hard working and dedicated people across the UK and we are very conscious of the impact this transformation of the business will have on some of them.

"We are therefore committed to carrying out this programme as sensitively as possible, using voluntary means to achieve the proposed headcount reductions wherever possible. Over time I'm confident our proposals will benefit both our colleagues in the UK and the customers they serve every day."

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



# Plumb Center celebrates ACE award win

Plumb and Parts Center has been recognised for its ongoing commitment to customer service in the annual Conformat ACE (Achievement in Customer Excellence) awards.

The ACE Awards program was established in 2005 and recognises outstanding achievement in customer experience. As part of the entry process, applicants need to demonstrate how their customer service programme has helped improve customer and delivered business growth. Plumb Center, together with several fellow Wolseley UK businesses, launched a feedback programme to continuously track the views of customers to ensure that they were meeting the needs of their customers.

Gary Hitchens, customer service director at Plumb and Parts Center said: "It's always pleasing to receive an award but this one is particularly satisfying as it recognises the huge effort made throughout the Plumb Center business over the past year to make customer service our number one priority. It's also a great testament to our loyal customers who give us regular constructive feedback that helps us to respond to the challenges they face day to day and identify ways we can further support their businesses to be successful."

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



Customer service – the number one priority for Plumb Center

# Worcester's new appointment



Rob Leonard has been appointed national specification manager at Worcester

Worcester, Bosch Group has boosted the profile of its national sales team with the appointment of Rob Leonard as national specification manager.

Rob joined Worcester in 1993, where he worked on the factory floor helping to manufacture the company's heating and hot water technologies. Since then Rob has held various roles including regional sales manager central and, most recently, specification operations manager.

The new role will involve Rob overseeing specification sales for Worcester and taking responsibility for key accounts. As part of his new position, Rob is aiming to maintain the performance of Worcester in the specification market, grow the manufacturer's sales within the new build sector and continue Worcester's strong performance in the eco sector.

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

# Hitachi powers cave expedition

A caving expedition from the University of Sheffield has been supplied with power tools by Hitachi - with spectacular results, both for the expedition team and Hitachi Power Tools.

The expedition was to Serbia where the objective was to join a local Serbian caving club in surveying the area north of the Montenegrin/Serbian border to try to locate a potential cave entrance that runs from Montenegro to the Serbian side of the border.

"The tools provided by Hitachi aided us greatly as most of the caves were vertical shafts, meaning we had to drill our own anchors in order to explore them," explains Will Burn from the University of Sheffield Speleological Society. "The main advantage of the Hitachi drills is the battery life – we were able to drill 14 good anchor-holes on a single battery."

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# Benefit of controls highlighted by DSD boiler replacement scheme

The Department for Social Development (DSD) has published results for its boiler replacement scheme, which was launched in 2012 and has run for four years. The scheme gave homeowners the opportunity to replace their older, inefficient boiler with a modern condensing boiler replacement. A grant of up to £1,000 was offered and the numbers and savings are encouraging.

The highly successful project has replaced over 27,298 older and inefficient boilers in homes across Northern Ireland, the majority (17,924) choosing to fit a modern oil fired condensing boiler. This is encouraging for the oil sector and shows that oil is an attractive option, especially given current low oil prices.

The savings are worth noting as well. An average saving of two tonnes of CO2 per install gives a total saving of around 54,000 tonnes for the scheme as a whole. On the monetary side, the average saving per household was £384 per annum. This ranged from £273 for an oil install without controls to £407 for an oil install with controls. The key message here for installers and consumers is to make sure you upgrade your controls when upgrading your boiler.

What can we learn from this scheme?

The obvious lesson is that by offering consumers a relatively small capital grant, rather than offering loans, positive reductions in carbon emissions and gains in energy efficiency can clearly be made. Add to the mix, consumers saving money and you have a recipe for success. A further bonus is that the majority of the installs were carried out by smaller, independent installers – a further boost for local employment.

## Clear benefits...

There are clear environmental and financial benefits in funding such a scheme again and perhaps, other governments and areas of the UK and Ireland can learn from DSD's success.

While this scheme is welcome, we know that the majority (c.1m) of home heating users in Ireland still use a standard efficiency oil boiler with efficiencies in the 60-70% range. A nationwide boiler replacement scheme, supporting the installation of modern condensing oil boilers of 90% plus efficiency levels, is needed. Such a scheme would see a significant reduction in oil use (around 475 litres per household per annum) and a reduction in consumers' fuel bills and emissions. If all the one million oil users upgraded to a condensing

boiler this would remove around 1.5m tonnes of CO2 from Ireland's emissions and 475m litres of oil annually from the demand side. This equates to a CO2 saving on boiler emissions alone of 1.5m tonnes – a significant move forwards!

Such an initiative is very affordable for house holders, due in part to the low capital cost of oil boilers, and achievable with a level of grant assistance of around 1,000 pounds or euros per household, leaving consumers with substantially reduced home heating costs and the country with a large reduction in carbon emissions – a clear win win for governments targeting carbon reduction.

Looking forwards, any pragmatist will look at the current energy mix and realise that oil will be still be very much in the mix in 2050. While renewable technology is improving, innovation in the oil sector is continuing and with consumers comfortable with oil, we believe a nationwide boiler replacement scheme is the way forward to improve energy efficiency levels - especially for those in fuel poverty - and a vote winner for any administration. Add in a substantial reduction in CO2 emissions and you have a clear formula for success.

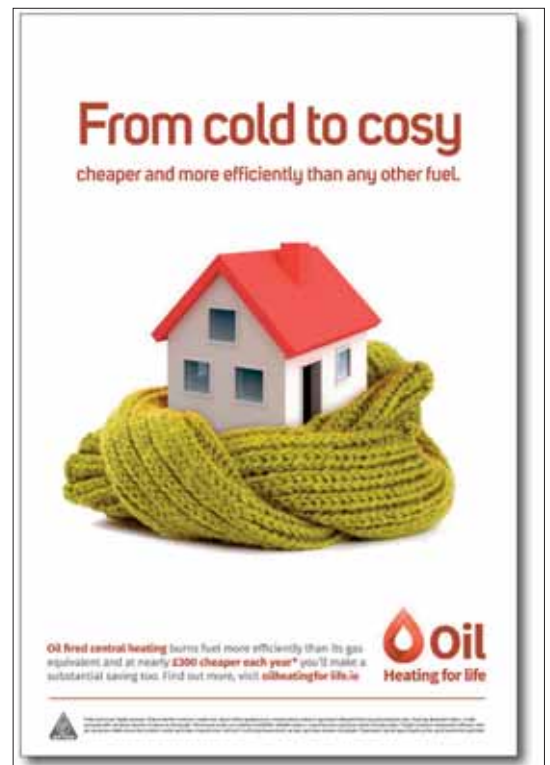
## Campaign promotes the benefits of "staying with oil"

In response to an expanding gas network in Ireland, Ireland based manufacturing companies and a local fuel distributor have agreed to fund a small pilot advertising project in the NI town of Ballygowan to promote the benefits of oil – especially its low cost compared to other fuels.

Ballygowan has a population of 4,500 people, of which 90% have oil fired central heating. The campaign is based on a simple message to 'stay with oil' and features three postcard direct mailers to every house over the winter period.

The first postcards, featuring the slogan "From cold to cosy – cheaper and more efficiently than any other fuel" - were delivered during October and supported by a webpage containing information on the benefits of remaining with oil, upgrading the boiler and tank, and adding energy efficient controls.

For more information, contact David Blevings, OFTEC's Ireland manager, email: [dblevings@oftec.org](mailto:dblevings@oftec.org)



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The Redlands Property Services team: director James Mead (right), with Ian Dawkins, service and installation engineer, and Andy Meeks who looks after installations and plumbing

## James serves a niche market – and looks forward to a prosperous future for oil

Because of his rural catchment area, ten years ago James Mead saw a gap in the market for a professional installation and maintenance business, specialising in all aspects of oil heating. That was the birth of Reading-based Redlands Property Services and since then, James has continuously expanded his company and the services he provides.

“Based in west Berkshire, we knew there was a high demand for oil engineers in the area,” James tells Oil Installer. “Within two years we were fully booked with work for one engineer, and have carefully expanded as the demand got greater.

“From our initial start up, our aim has been to specialise in one area of expertise - all aspects of oil including servicing, breakdowns, new boiler installs and oil tanks.

“We are a small, family run business, covering a 30 mile radius of our base. There are many rural villages within this parameter and this keeps us more than busy all year round!”

As a registered OFTEC company Redlands installs, services and commissions boilers, including range cookers, and also specialises in oil tank installations.

“We carry a large spares holding for the majority of boilers, meaning we are usually able to fix the issue on the first visit,” continues James. “And we always try to provide a same day

boiler and system breakdown service for our customers.

“We make sure that all our work is carried out to the highest standard, and we are in close contact with the boiler manufacturers, governing bodies, OFTEC and local building authorities – this is the only way to keep up to date with the ever changing rules and regulations!

“We predominantly carry out domestic work, but some small commercial work too. This extends to all types of oil work - our most interesting is looking after the mobile heaters for Zippos Circus, and abattoir boilers for Laverstoke Park organic farm.”

### Prosperous future

James sees a prosperous future for Redlands Property Services and the oil heating industry in general.

“Technology in oil is constantly moving forward and being embraced by us and customers,” he says.

“Equally there are a lot of older boilers - some still running at 40 years old - that need to be looked after over the coming years.”

However, when asked if Redlands was considering diversifying into renewable technology, James says: “We generally haven’t found a renewable product that is cost effective and as productive as oil. But in the past year we have been installing blue flame technology boilers which have proven to be

excellent and are becoming very popular with end users.

“In fact, our most interesting job recently was installing the first Blue Supreme boiler. It was amazing to see how fast the heat up time was in the house, how quiet the unit is when it is running, how the extremely efficient output can be downgraded from the old boiler (ie 35kW to 26kW) and how simple this new technology is to fit to an existing property and system. Customers regularly comment on their fuel savings and how pleased they are with this technology.”

Finally, James was asked: ‘If your company could invent one thing to make life easier for you and/or your customers, what would be?’ Without hesitation, he answered: “We have moved away from installing plastic tanks, due to their shortened lifespan, and back to banded steel tanks. Invariably the installations are around the back of properties and have to be man-handled into awkward spots. In the majority of cases, the use of a Hiab crane is not an option as you can rarely access the site for the tank’s new position.

“Therefore, if some motorised way of moving and lifting these tanks across lawns, patios, narrow paths, etc., could be invented to take the weight off our labourer’s back it would make our lives so much easier, and jobs much quicker!”

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# New Domusa boiler range launched in the UK

The specialist manufacturer of HVAC products, Domusa Teknik, has launched a new concept of boiler on to the British market.

The company, located in the Basque Country, an industrial region of northern Spain, is a market-leader in the production and sales of high efficiency oil boilers, and has built a reputation as one of Europe's most important manufacturers of floor standing boilers.

The Domusa Teknik Evolution HFDX boiler has a cast iron body and incorporates a 130 litre stainless steel DHW tank. The boiler has already been successfully trialled in several European markets, but is totally new to the UK.

Domusa claims that the Evolution HFDX boiler is the perfect solution when DHW is required in large quantities - two showers at the same time for example. It provides a strong flow for a longer period of time, thanks to its 130 litre DHW storage.

It also features fast temperature recovery, helped enormously by the stainless steel tank which has the highest quality insulation in the market.

With the boiler and tank contained within the same body, the company promotes the Evolution HFDX as a space-saver option whilst also being economical to use. For the technician,

the boiler is simple to install ("plug & play", says the company) and easy to maintain.

All Domusa boilers incorporate an individually designed Domusa burner. The company has manufactured both boilers and burners for more than 30 years.



Domusa has been part of Corporación Mondragón since 1998, with offices and production subsidiaries in 41 countries and sales representation in more than 150. Corporación Mondragón is one of the most important business groups in the Basque Country in terms of employees (80,000 people) and turnover, and is the tenth biggest company in Spain.

In the UK, Domusa has offices at Stanlaw Abbey Business Centre in Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, tel: 07941 530840. [www.domusateknik.co.uk](http://www.domusateknik.co.uk)

## Domusa's UK roadshow

The specialist manufacturer of HVAC products, Domusa Teknik, is taking to the UK roads during the winter to demonstrate its wide range of oil-fired boilers to British installers.

The company, located in the Basque Country, an industrial region of northern Spain, is a market-leader in the production and sales of high efficiency oil boilers, and has built a reputation as one of Europe's most important manufacturers of floor standing boilers.

Domusa's "DemoTrailer" will be fully equipped with a wide range of boilers, including one which will be fired up, and installer presentations will be held at the premises of partner merchants throughout the UK.

Installers interested in attending one of these presentations are asked to contact the company either by email: [info@domusa.es](mailto:info@domusa.es) or telephone: 01519 096 222 for information about dates and venues.

In the UK, Domusa has offices at Stanlaw Abbey Business Centre in Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, tel: 07941 530840. [www.domusateknik.co.uk](http://www.domusateknik.co.uk)

## Plumb, Parts and Drain Centers all in one place...

Procuring plumbing, heating and drainage products in one go will now be far easier as Plumb and Parts Center embraces fellow Wolseley UK brand Drain Center.

Following customer feedback from across the branch network, the business has brought the brands together so that customers of Plumb, Parts & Drain Center can trade from a single site. A full range of drainage products are now available to all customers from more than 500 locations across the UK.

Matt Allcock, Drain Center director explains: "Combining the operational models enables Plumb and Parts Center branches to access the specialist knowledge provided by Drain Center and all customers now have a hub of product knowledge in one place.

"We know that installers don't want to spend time carrying out multiple transactions during their busy day and this change is all about improving our customer service proposition through making it easier to do business."

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



The new combined Plumb, Parts and Drain Center branch in Redhill

# Firebird's blue flame technology boosts sales

Sales of Firebird's Enviromax Blue Supreme boiler range are soaring for Redlands Property Services as demand continues to increase for the UK's most energy efficient domestic oil fired boilers.

Developed by Firebird Heating Solutions, the Enviromax Supreme is the first blue flame oil fired condensing boiler for the domestic heating market in the UK.

The highly innovative blue flame technology has the lowest possible NOx emissions together with soot free combustion which, in turn, considerably reduces the consumption of heating oil. It is therefore no surprise to Firebird that the Enviromax Blue Supreme range is now the number one choice for Redlands Property Services.

The Enviromax Blue Supreme boiler is available in three models - kitchen, boilerhouse and external heatpac. All models are available with two fixed outputs of 20kW and 26kW. Currently the most energy efficient domestic oil boiler in the UK due to Firebird's patented 3rd heat exchanger, customers are able to enjoy even

greater fuel efficiency and, as a result, make significant savings on annual heating costs, claims the company.

Established in 2006 and covering Wiltshire, Berkshire and Hampshire, Redlands Property Services specialises in domestic oil fired installations. Commenting on the Firebird Enviromax Blue Supreme range James Mead, proprietor, said: "We have a great relationship with Firebird Heating Systems and the level of technical and customer support provided is second to none. We are seeing our customers becoming increasingly proactive in seeking the most efficient technologies available, and this is where the Firebird Enviromax Blue Supreme range is just brilliant."

What is Blue Flame technology? Firebird provides the answer: "Whilst highly innovative, the principle is simple. Heating oil is atomised at high pressure before being mixed with pre warmed air and ignited. Hot combustion gases are then re-circulated through the burner blast tube via a specially designed slot which produces a blue flame."

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



James Mead of Redlands Property Services with Firebird's Enviromax Blue Supreme boiler

**Redlands Property Services, a company profile**  
- see page 21

## Grant oil boilers are UK's number one choice

Grant Engineering continues to hold its position as the number one selling oil boiler manufacturer in the UK. The latest figures published by the Energy Utilities Alliance (EUA), formerly SBGI, demonstrate that more than one in every two oil boilers installed in the UK is a Grant Vortex.

The Grant Vortex and VortexBlue oil-fired boiler ranges now have over 60 model variations, providing installers with greater choice when deciding upon what option will best suit their needs.

"We are delighted that Grant Vortex oil boilers continue to be purchased and installed more than any other oil boiler brand in the UK," explains Anna Wakefield, marketing and corporate communications manager at Grant UK. "We continue to listen to feedback from installers and there will be even more development, innovation and exciting new products waiting in the wings for 2017."

The VortexBlue range is known for its high efficiencies and for delivering



Grant Vortex oil boilers are No. 1 in the UK

low NOx emissions which comply with - and exceed - forthcoming legislation.

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

## Stock up with "essentials"

As the heating industry enters the busiest trading period of the year, Plumb and Parts Center is ensuring that installers will get low prices on key product lines identified as "everyday essentials" both in branches and online.

The essentials range, which includes heating and plumbing products together with, pipes, valves, fittings and parts will continue to grow throughout the heating season.

Phil Viner, category director for PVF & drainage at Plumb and Parts Center, said: "Heating season can be unpredictable for installers, especially as the number of distress jobs increase. This is why we are doing everything we can to support them with getting the job done. A huge part of this is making sure they have all the essentials readily available on their van, so we've cut our prices to enable them to stock up."

[www.plumbcenter.co.uk](http://www.plumbcenter.co.uk)  
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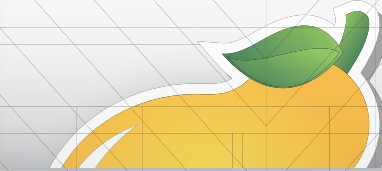
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# "Setting new standards of efficiency" in combi boilers...

The introduction of the new patent-pending Eco Combi range of oil fired combi boilers by Warmflow is seen as "a huge step forward for the UK market" by the Northern Ireland headquartered company. The Eco Combi features ErP A rated performance for domestic hot water production as well as space heating and is the only double A oil boiler in the UK and Ireland.

Gerard Mackle, director of R&D and production at Warmflow, told Oil Installer: "We have a proven track record of setting new standards of efficiency; you just have to look at our ground source heat pump which is the most efficient in Europe to see that. While we have spent considerable time in R&D getting our range ready for the first step in lower NOx levels in 2018 and testing blue flame (which might not even be required in the future), we felt that it would be better to develop products that offer not just better emissions, but actual pounds and pence savings to homeowners and we've been able to do this without having to charge a price premium."

He added: "This is a huge leap forward for oil boiler technology. We all know that there's only one or two percent difference in the heating side of all the band A oil boilers, but this is ground breaking for water heating efficiency. Our ErP band A means that we are over 30% more efficient than some of the current best-selling band B combis on the market today. We've had really positive feedback



The Eco Combi oil fired boiler by Warmflow

from our installers who are delighted that they can show real savings to their customers, combined with the confidence and peace of mind that comes from our seven-year extended warranty."

The Eco combi is now fitted with a single Grundfos circulator and a Honeywell diverting valve to meet the required heat demand; it removes the need for non-return valves within the appliance. The control panel has been updated with a new design to feature an eco switch, and the Kabin Pak models now feature a distinctive new anthracite casing colour, still with a galvanised base for corrosion free use in outdoor installations. The utility models feature a revised door handle for a more integrated appearance.

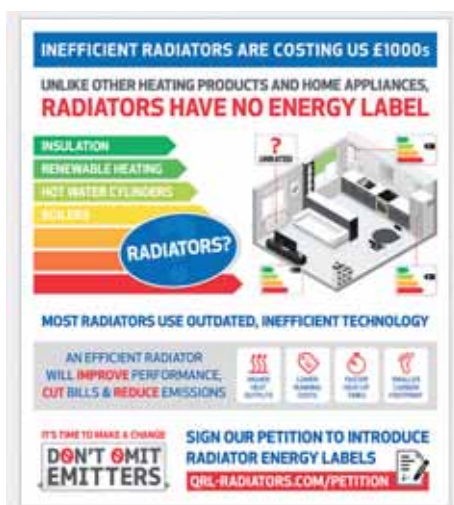
Privately owned, Warmflow Engineering Co Ltd has been trading for more than 40 years, and at its Lisburn, Northern Ireland, headquarters has a production facility of around 100,000sq.ft. The company also has a distribution centre in Telford, Shropshire. [www.warmflow.co.uk](http://www.warmflow.co.uk)

## QRL launch campaign for radiator energy labelling

British manufacturer QRL Radiator Group has launched a campaign for the introduction of an energy labelling system for radiators – similar to the one used for boilers, renewables, hot water cylinders and other household essentials.

QRL's "Don't Omit Emitters" campaign calls for the industry to come together and petition the government to include radiators in mandatory efficiency ratings. Radiators are not currently covered by the EU's ErP Directive which means there is no requirement for manufacturers to produce an energy label for radiators, or for installers to include radiators when producing the package label indicating whole-system efficiency.

David Kerr, CEO at QRL Radiator Group, says: "At a time when everyone connected with the heating industry – from government right through to manufacturers and installers – is putting efficiency at the



top of the agenda, it's ludicrous that there is no energy labelling system in place for radiators. Of course it's important that we focus on insulation and the heat source, but if emitters aren't included as the third piece of the efficiency puzzle then we risk undermining the performance of the system as a whole."

In its "Don't Omit Emitters" manifesto, the company argues that proper energy labelling would make it easier for people to identify high-efficiency emitters.

Mike Wright, product development manager at QRL Radiator Group, continues: "Unfortunately, when it comes to radiators, outdated heating technology is the norm in the UK. As a result, inefficient emitters are costing homes and businesses thousands, whilst having a massive impact on our collective carbon footprint.

"The introduction of clear, recognisable and universal energy labels is the most effective way for the trade and their customers to confidently pit one product's performance against another's."

For more information about the campaign – and to sign the online petition – visit: [www.qrl-radiators.com/petition](http://www.qrl-radiators.com/petition).



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# Cake cutting celebrates training centre's 10th anniversary

Steve Willis Training celebrated the 10th anniversary of their Portchester Training Centre in Hampshire with a spectacular boiler cake recently.

Martyn Bridges, director of marketing and technical support at Worcester, Bosch Group cut the ribbon at the centre's opening ceremony ten years ago, and returned a decade later for cake cutting duties.

Managing director, Steve Willis, values the collaboration with Worcester, Bosch. "We have been working with Worcester for over 20 years, and their support has always been second to none. This allows us to keep our customers up to date with technological advancements in boilers and related industries."

Martyn Bridges commented: "As a very practical line of work, the heating and plumbing industry needs facilities like this to allow its engineers to benefit from hands-on training. Maintaining such a commitment to professional development for a decade is a great achievement and I'm sure plenty more plumbing and heating engineers will pass through the centre's doors over the next decade and beyond."

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



Martyn Bridges returned to Steve Willis Training recently to perform special cake-cutting duties in celebration of the Portchester Training Centre's 10th anniversary

# Apprenticeship Levy "could stem the industry's skills shortage"

As latest figures reveal the number of young people starting apprenticeships in England rose by 14% during 2014/15, the first time the total has increased for three years, OFTEC is urging heating businesses to consider whether they can take advantage of the new Apprenticeship Levy to help them recruit fresh, young talent and contribute towards stemming the industry's skills shortage.

The Apprenticeship Levy comes into force on April 6th, 2017, and will see companies with annual wage bills in excess of £3 million pay a 0.5% tax on payroll. All businesses will then be eligible to claim back funding from the money accrued to help offset the cost of employing apprentices.

The move is part of the government's pledge to create three million more apprenticeships in the UK by 2020. Currently the majority (73%) of apprenticeships are concentrated in the services sector, but according to OFTEC, this pattern needs to change to provide opportunities in the sectors where there is most need – such as the heating industry.

OFTEC training manager, David Knipe, comments: "It's very encouraging to see the number of apprenticeships in England increased last year. Quality apprenticeships are an invaluable part of further education and can give young people a real opportunity to start a rewarding and secure career.

"Recruiting young talent in this way can provide an affordable route to business expansion with the advantage of being able to train an apprentice to the high standards you expect.

"With the heating and plumbing sector identified as one of the industries most affected by the UK's growing skills shortage, it's imperative we encourage the next generation of technicians and equip them with the right skills to take the sector forward."

David Knipe continues: "OFTEC fully backs the apprenticeship reforms which aim to ensure the new on-the-job training schemes equip young people with workplace skills that are relevant to both business and industry."

# Commercial course – coming soon to a centre near you!

OFTEC's 201 course, which covers the servicing and commissioning of multi-stage burners, as fitted in many light and medium commercial appliances, is now available at ten training centres across the UK and Republic of Ireland – with more on the way soon.

The OFT10-201 course – to give it its full name – includes a mixture of theory and practical-based assessments for two and three stage pressure jet burners connected to space and water heating appliances. The popular courses also cover health and safety, fire valve installation, regional requirements, safe electrical isolation, OFTEC procedures, knowledge of oil storage and supply, and appliance installation.

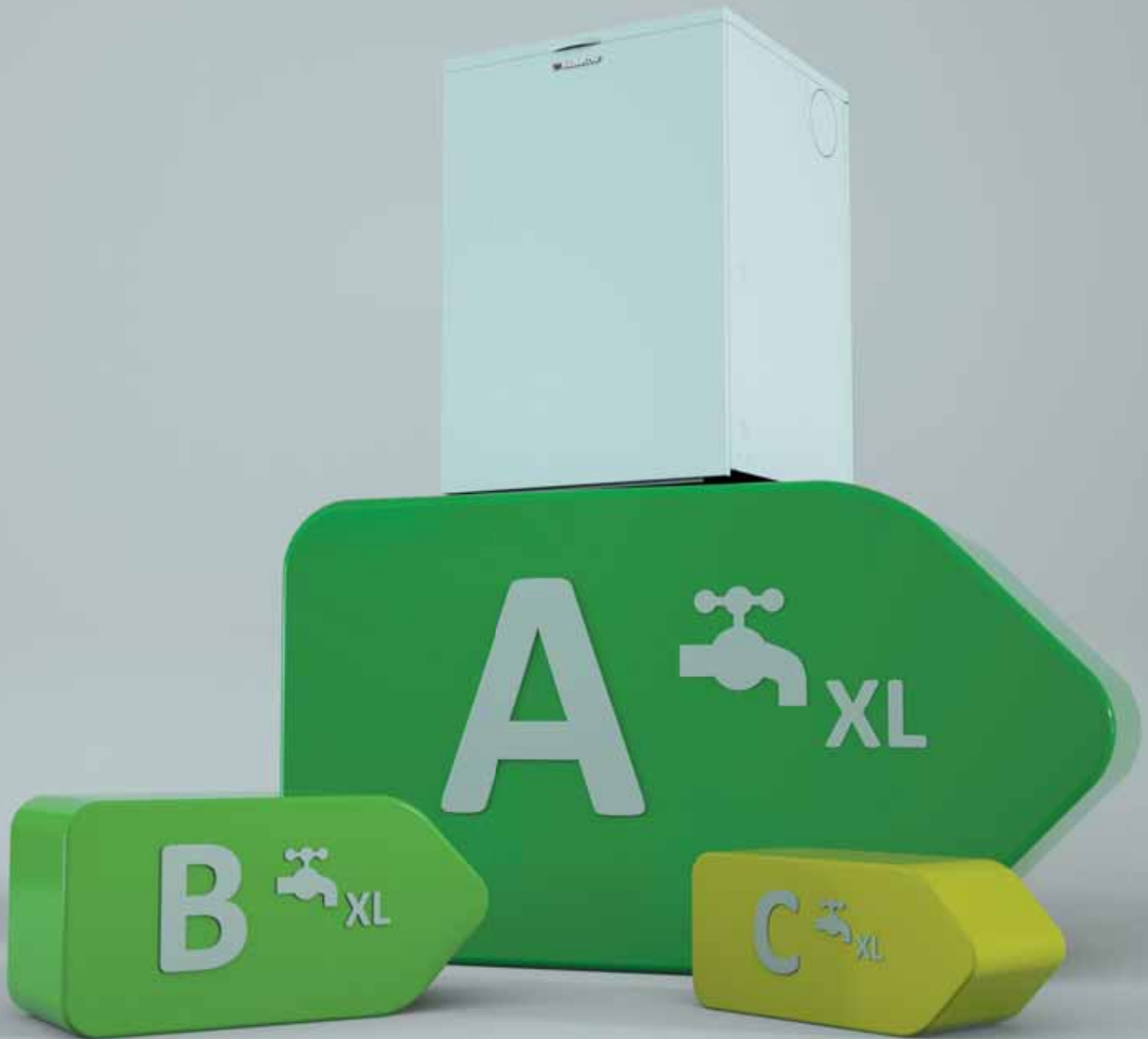
Feedback suggests the courses are proving useful both for technicians moving into commercial work for the first time and for those with more experience in the sector.

The course is available now from the following training centres:

- Blackburn College, Blackburn, tel: 01254 292451
- Boilerserve.com Ltd, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent, tel: 01782 825708
- Complete Construction Training Services, Belfast, tel: 02890 739418
- EOGB Energy Products Ltd, St Neots, tel: 01480 477066
- Flixborough Training & Assessment, Scunthorpe, tel: 01724 849689
- METAC, Mountrath, Republic of Ireland, tel: 057 8756540
- Nationwide Training Services, Livingston, tel: 01506 418798
- South West Assessment & Training (SWAAT), Liskeard, tel: 01579 348544
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- Specialist Gas Assessment Services, Blackpool, tel: 01253 697078
- TC Training, Birmingham, tel: 0121 788 2165

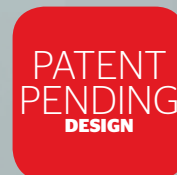


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\* Subject to registration and annual service. T&Cs apply - visit [warmflow.co.uk](http://warmflow.co.uk)  
Patent pending GB 16134660. Based on Official ERP Data Sept. 2016.



# Guidance on how complaints can be avoided

OFTEC operates a robust complaints procedure, whereby consumers who are unhappy with work that they have had done by OFTEC registered technicians can submit their concerns for investigation. Many complaints arise from situations where the problem could have been easily avoided and it's clear that certain types of complaint occur repeatedly. The technical team at OFTEC have provided Oil Installer with three recent examples of typical complaint situations together with useful guidance on how such situations could have been avoided.

## **Case study 1**

A non-OFTEC registered building company installed a new oil storage tank at a domestic property. Upon completion, the building company contacted an OFTEC registered technician to "sign-off" the installation, requesting that they complete the OFTEC CD/10 installation completion report and notify the work to building control via OFTEC's self-certification scheme.

Later in the year, the boiler connected to the oil storage tank was serviced. As part of the work, the service engineer checked the condition and compliance of the oil storage tank and reported to the homeowner that it did not comply with the requirements of building regulations at the time it was installed. This prompted the homeowner to submit a complaint against the OFTEC registered technician to OFTEC, with a view of getting the work rectified.

On the basis of photographic evidence provided by the homeowner, the complaint was upheld and the OFTEC registered technician was deemed responsible having completed the associated control documentation and work notification.

The message from OFTEC, in this case, is clear – Do not sign off work for others.

*For further information on liabilities when completing paperwork on behalf of others, download OFTEC Technical Notice 006 from: [www.oftec.org](http://www.oftec.org)*

## **Case study 2**

As part of a property renovation, a replacement oil fired boiler was supplied and fitted by an OFTEC registered technician. Following completion of the renovation work over the summer months, the homeowner began to use the boiler to heat the property and found the boiler was firing constantly and the system was struggling to maintain temperature in some rooms. It

was later established by another technician, by means of a heat loss calculation, that the boiler was undersized for the heating system. A complaint was then submitted to OFTEC by the homeowner, alleging that the boiler was incorrectly specified by the original installer.

OFTEC's investigation into the complaint established that the renovation work included a sizeable extension to the property, increasing its overall heat requirement. A heat loss calculation on the original building, i.e. not taking into account the extension, showed the boiler was appropriately sized prior to the renovation work taking place. The validity of the complaint was, therefore, subject to whether the technician completed a heat loss calculation prior to undertaking the installation and whether there was an agreement in place as to whether this was to take into account the subsequent extension.

To prevent such disputes, OFTEC strongly recommends:

- Using quick heat loss calculation tools, such as the whole house boiler sizing method, as a guide when providing a quote for a new or replacement boiler installation.
- Upon acceptance of a quote, devising a contract of work to be signed by the technician and the client/homeowner, which includes any special details. For example, "boiler to be sized taking into account planned extension work – plans to be provided by the client."

*For further guidance on what should be included in a contract of work, download OFTEC Technical Notice 015 from: [www.oftec.org](http://www.oftec.org)*

- Performing a full heat loss calculation, in accordance with the Domestic Heating Design guide, prior to specifying, installing and commissioning a new boiler.

- Upon commissioning the boiler, recording the "required appliance heat output rating" on the OFTEC CD/11 servicing and commissioning report.

The Domestic Heating Design Guide and pads of OFTEC CD/11 forms can be purchased from OFTEC Direct. Call 01473 626 298 (UK) or 01-8645771 (RoI), e-mail: [sales@oftecdirect.com](mailto:sales@oftecdirect.com), or visit: [www.oftecdirect.com](http://www.oftecdirect.com).

## **Case study 3**

A homeowner became aware of several non-compliant, but easily resolved, issues following the installation of an oil-fired heating system. As a result, the homeowner submitted an initial complaint directly to the installation company. However, upon receipt, the installation company failed to respond in any form, leaving the homeowner frustrated and instigating the submission of a complaint to OFTEC.

OFTEC's investigation into the complaint established that there were understandable and evidential reasons why the initial complaint could not be dealt with by the company at the time it was submitted. However, by not responding and explaining the situation to the homeowner, the relationship between the two parties became fractured and finding a resolution to the complaint became a long and drawn out process.

It is OFTEC's view that the complaint might never have been submitted if the company had followed an internal complaints handling process upon receipt of the initial complaint. Such processes should include an outline of actions to be taken to deal with complaints and set timescales to acknowledge, investigate and respond, so as to help ensure a good working relationship continues with the client and to help resolve the matter swiftly.

*For further guidance on how to operate your own complaints process, download OFTEC Information Sheet No. 66 from: [www.oftec.org](http://www.oftec.org)*

# Keeping efficiency high

To ensure maximum reliability, Danfoss is urging technicians pay more attention to the oil burner.

"Your oil burner needs the same attention as your car in order to perform at its best," says the company. "It takes regular cleaning, inspection and servicing to make sure it's in perfect shape and running in a reliable way."

A well-adjusted oil burner is far more efficient and can save up to 10% or more in oil use, says Danfoss. If soot builds up, the oil use will go up by 2-4% per millimetre of soot layer.



The company continues: "With the nozzle being such an integral part of the combustion process, it is essential that the specified product is always used and is regularly replaced. The burning of kerosene is a fine process that can be easily affected either when a part is used that is out of the specified definition points or when it has not been updated to avoid any blockages or wear.

"If there isn't optimum combustion, soot can build up in the combustion chamber resulting in a loss of efficiency of up to 10%. Danfoss recommends that the nozzle is replaced with every service that should occur every twelve months to avoid this happening, and to keep the efficiency level at a premium by using a nozzle that has been tested and calibrated to meet the specification for kerosene operated burners."

The company is widely acknowledged as the manufacturer of the most precise nozzles – and Danfoss "EH" and "ES" nozzles have been developed especially for kerosene.

[www.heating.danfoss.com](http://www.heating.danfoss.com)

# Development of the OFTEC app

*OFTEC provides an update on the development of the OFTEC app, following a successful trial period during the autumn*

A 'beta' version of the OFTEC app, which went live on the Google Play and Apple iTunes stores during August, has been thoroughly tested by technicians and comments have been gratefully received by OFTEC's technical team. Reported issues and vital improvements to the software have been forwarded to the app's developer, Software Works for You Ltd, who have acted swiftly in applying necessary updates.

The full version of the app, which will be a subscription-based product available to OFTEC registered technicians only, is expected to be available towards the end of 2016. Technicians will be able to access and complete the whole range of OFTEC's control documents, with

additional functionality planned to be implemented in due course. The OFTEC technical team would also welcome further feedback or suggestions for improvements – email: [technical@oftec.org](mailto:technical@oftec.org).

Existing users of the OFTEC app will notice that the control documents generated by the software are newer versions than those currently available in the traditional, hard copy format. OFTEC has confirmed that pads of the new forms are expected to be available in the first quarter of 2017, via OFTEC Direct ([www.oftecdirect.com](http://www.oftecdirect.com)). In the meantime, the original hard copy versions of the forms remain acceptable to use.

To keep up-to-date with the latest developments with the OFTEC app, read OFTEC's monthly e-news update. OFTEC registered technicians not receiving this e-mail newsletter should contact: [marketing@oftec.org](mailto:marketing@oftec.org).

# New and updated technical notices

Since the last edition of Oil Installer, OFTEC have updated Technical Notice 002 which covers the CE marking of plastic oil tanks. This latest version (Issued 2nd September 2016) gives an updated hyperlink to the UK government's website where more guidance on the Construction Products Regulation (CPR) and CE marking can be found.

OFTEC have also published a new Technical Notice (019), which discusses guidance on the cleaning and gas freeing of oil storage tanks.

Technicians who undertake decommissioning work on oil storage tanks may be aware that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have recently withdrawn their publication

"CS15", which provided guidance on the cleaning and gas freeing of tanks containing flammable residues.

Following the withdrawal of this document, the HSE have uploaded a new webpage citing alternative sources of information and relevant publications on this subject. Technical Notice 019 contains a list of these guidance materials, including hyperlinks to the relevant web pages and PDF documents.

Both Technical Notice 002 and Technical Notice 019 are available for OFTEC registered technicians to download from the password-protected area of OFTEC's website. Visit: [www.oftec.org/technicians/signin](http://www.oftec.org/technicians/signin)

# EOGB grows technical team

Burner manufacturer and distributor, EOGB, has expanded its technical team with the appointment of Daniel Hanslip as technical sales manager.

Daniel joins the company from industrial boiler manufacturer ICI Caldaie where he worked as technical manager. In his new role at EOGB, Daniel will be responsible for all industrial and commercial burner sales across the UK.

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



Daniel Hanslip, technical sales manager at EOGB

# Emily sweeps aside the industry myths...

The chimney sweep trade is under threat. The cause? Lack of public awareness, says HETAS approved chimney sweep, Emily Skeet

"There are a number of myths that need to be dispelled about chimney sweeping. I think the first images to



Chimney sweep, Emily Skeet

come into people's minds are of small, soot-covered children, as seen in the film, 'Mary Poppins'. Today, it's a very different reality," says Emily, 22, who set up her own sweeping business, Cinnabar Stoves Chimney Sweeping, three years ago.

Emily provides sweeping services to homes in and around Carmarthen in West Wales, carrying out up to six sweeps a day. "A normal sweep will take me about an hour and a half as I like to have a good chat with the client about their appliance. Contrary to what many people may think, I don't make a mess. I use modern methods and tools such as power-sweeping, CCTV and vacuums to ensure minimal disturbance for the homeowner. I've had a few cases where customers move all of their furniture out of the room, which really isn't necessary!"

Emily has been working in the industry since she was 14 when she would shadow her father, a HETAS registered installer.

Having undertaken the HETAS approval scheme, Emily has gone through training which is in line with building regulations so that she can offer sound advice to her clients. "The course was invaluable. Now, when I find something that's not quite right

with a chimney I have the knowledge and collateral to be able to explain the problem fully to the customer," she says.

Emily is passionate about getting more people interested in the chimney sweep trade, especially females. "Women are largely unrepresented in this industry, but unfortunately I think it is suffering across the board. Alarmingly, there are a lot of sweeps who just don't have the qualifications required nowadays to ensure the job is done well and safely. I think it's easy to underestimate chimney sweeping, but it's a very important job that requires a lot of training and investment in equipment.

"Unfortunately, I've met other female sweeps who were discouraged from pursuing this career path at school. Luckily, they were determined to continue working in the industry, but it shows there is work to be done here to encourage more females into the industry. Certainly I've found chimney sweeping to be a very satisfying and enjoyable career," adds Emily.

For more information about the HETAS approval scheme for chimney sweeps, visit: [www.hetas.co.uk/professionals/chimneysweeps/](http://www.hetas.co.uk/professionals/chimneysweeps/).

## Homeowners urged to "clean up their act" to prevent household fires

Chimney fires in England accounted for over 5,000 incidents dealt with by fire and rescue services between April 2014 and March 2015 last year. This year's Chimney Fire Safety Week during September, part of the government's Fire Kills campaign, called for homeowners to clean up their act and get their chimneys swept by a HETAS approved sweep to prevent chimney damage, and, in worse cases, household fires.

Bruce Allen, CEO of HETAS, comments: "Sweeping your chimney twice a year and using a quality assured fuel is the key to prevention. Not only does this remove soot and tar deposits, but also gives sweeps the opportunity to check for any problems with the chimney or liner.

"Homeowners using HETAS approved chimney sweeps can be confident that a sweep has obtained the necessary

training to safely sweep their chimney and will be giving their home the very best care and attention."



Peter Holland, chief fire and rescue adviser to the government, says: "An open fire can be an ideal and pleasant way to keep warm in the winter, but without proper maintenance a chimney can become dangerous. Latest statistics show that there are over 5,000 chimney fires a year in England, but most of these are preventable."

Chris Smith, a firefighter with Fakenham Fire and Rescue Service in Norfolk, has witnessed 10 chimney fires in his small market town in the last year. He says: "The common issue around chimney fires is the build-up of carbon deposits in the flue which can of course be a result of irregular cleaning, but also the burning of unsuitable fuel.

"My message to homeowners is: know how to use your stove correctly. For example, many people mistakenly burn wood at a low level over a long period of time, thinking they are saving on fuel. However this can be a very inefficient way of heating your home and could increase tar build-up in the chimney. Maintain your flue by having it swept at the right intervals, ideally by a HETAS approved chimney sweep."

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

# Elmhurst launches energy efficient society manifesto

Energy performance measurement specialist, Elmhurst Energy, has launched a manifesto, highlighting the six steps it believes are needed to work towards an energy efficient society.

"We need to create a more energy efficient society to reduce carbon emissions which impact upon climate change, reduce our reliance on unsustainable fossil fuels and to lift the poorest in our society out of fuel poverty," explains Martyn Reed, managing director of Elmhurst Energy.

"Undertaking energy efficiency measures can provide a great return on investment and save families and business money, whilst also reducing carbon emissions for the country as a whole."

Elmhurst's approach includes six simple steps, says Martyn Reed. "To help create an energy efficient society we need to:

1. Create a clear government strategy that reduces carbon emissions by reducing demand as well as decarbonising energy generation;
2. Ensure an appropriate focus on energy efficiency initiatives that benefit the fuel poor, families on low incomes who live in the least efficient homes;
3. Reduce the validity period for Energy Performance Certificates to three years so the information is meaningful and up-to-date;
4. Have Energy Performance Certificates at the core of all future energy initiatives to allow successes to be measured and compared;
5. Extend the role of energy assessors to include best practice advice to families on how to reduce fuel bills and make their homes warmer;
6. Maintain a long-term energy efficiency strategy to allow stability to plan and invest."

These points will be the basis for the company's lobbying of government and other industry stakeholders over the coming months.

"Supporting these steps will provide a route to achieving change and a more energy efficient society," explains Martyn. "We must not allow energy issues to be ignored in what is a time of change in the United Kingdom. We will continue to work towards a better future where people are removed from fuel poverty."

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

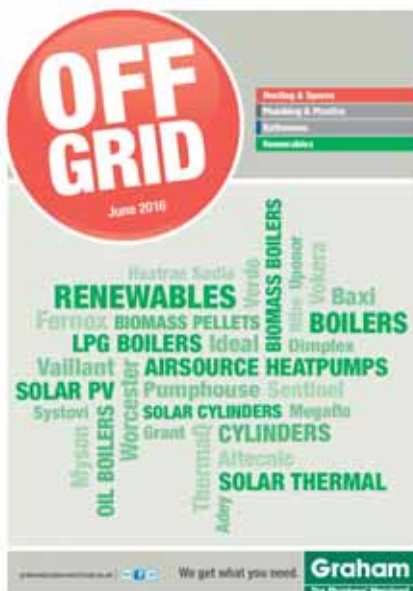


Martyn Reed, managing director of Elmhurst Energy

## Elmhurst delivers Section 63 accreditation and training

Elmhurst Energy has received approval from the Scottish government to accredit the new Section 63 adviser and Display Energy Certificates (DEC) assessor roles. New legislation in Scotland requires owners of non-domestic buildings (over 1000m<sup>2</sup>) which are eligible for an Energy Performance Certificate for sale or rent, to have an additional assessment carried out.

Elmhurst Energy were first to be approved to accredit assessors, and have successfully run Section 63 training courses, with more scheduled at a number of locations in Scotland. [www.elmhurstenergy.co.uk/elmhurst-section-63](http://www.elmhurstenergy.co.uk/elmhurst-section-63)



## Off-grid guide from Graham

Graham Plumbers' Merchant has launched its new off-grid guide, featuring an overview of product solutions for when connecting to the mains gas grid is not an option.

Whether it is a new build property or a retrofit, the guide includes all the leading brands for oil boilers and oil tanks as well as renewable technologies and the products required to protect them.

"Our new off-grid guide serves as a practical point of reference when connecting to the mains gas grid is not possible," commented Andrew Clarke, heating category manager at Graham Plumbers' Merchant.

"Developments in renewable technology have made alternative heating systems an increasingly viable option, especially for off grid properties, and our growing range allows installers to offer complete solutions that suit their customers' needs."

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



# OFTEC *direct*

## Where's Ollie competition!

Remember 'where's Wally'? We've created our own 'where's Ollie' alternative version for this edition of Oil Installer! OFTEC Ollie is hidden somewhere in the magazine, all you need to do is find him! Once you do, send an email to [sales@OFTECdirect.com](mailto:sales@OFTECdirect.com) with 'Ollie competition' in the subject line, and include your name, registration number and the page number where you found Ollie. The lucky winner will be drawn on 9th January and will receive a brilliant Testo 310 printer kit worth over £400. Good Luck!

One entry per registered technician. Closing date Friday 6th January 2017.

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



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1) Includes heat pumps, biomass and solar thermal installation with/without MCS option.  
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West Dean College near Chichester, West Sussex

## West Dean College recommits to biomass energy

The Edward James Foundation has invested in a new state-of-the-art biomass boiler at the West Dean Estate.

After 35 years of constant use the old boiler, used to heat the internationally renowned West Dean College together with student accommodation, the Victorian glasshouses in the award-winning gardens, and several properties on the 6,400 acre estate in West Sussex, has been replaced.

The first biomass boiler was installed in 1981 when trustees were faced with replacing an old boiler and decided to make use of the estate's own renewable source of energy from its forestry operations. All wood used for the biomass is produced on the estate.

The new and extended district heat network is powered by a Froling boiler and will receive a subsidy for each kwh of heat produced under the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI). In addition to heating the properties served by the old system, the new system will allow a further 22

residential properties on the off-gas estate to be added, with no increase in the amount of fuel required.

Based in Grieskirchen, Austria, Froling's firewood, wood chip and pellet boilers are used throughout Europe. All the company's products are manufactured in factories in Austria and Germany.

### Oil back-up

"West Dean Estate has been committed to heating self-sufficiency for the past 35 years and we are proud to have made this long-term investment in the latest biomass technology," says Alex Barron, chief executive of The Edward James Foundation. "The new high-tech boiler system will be much more efficient so, for the same annual fuel requirement, we have been able to extend the heating system to a greater number of tenanted properties in West Dean village in addition to the main buildings across West Dean College and gardens."

The work began over the winter

months to minimise disruption to the college, garden visitors and local community. Contractors laid 1,500 metres of piping from the boiler's new location, opposite the entrance to the college, to serve the new district network. The new district heat centre incorporates a larger chip store which streamlines the production process, enough to run the boiler for two months in the winter or six months in the summer.

The new high tech system incorporates two oil boilers which top up the heat produced in extreme low temperatures as well as providing back-up in case of any maintenance.

West Dean College was established in 1971 by Edward James, poet and lifelong supporter of the Surrealist Movement. It is one of the few colleges in the world which offers graduate and postgraduate study in a range of conservation disciplines, as well as programmes in the creative arts.

[www.westdean.org.uk](http://www.westdean.org.uk)  
[www.froeling.com](http://www.froeling.com)

## It's time to tackle the problem of life-expired tanks...

At the moment oil heating customers are enjoying a period of sustained low prices, following the unprecedented fall in crude oil prices. With customer enthusiasm for oil high, we have a golden opportunity to encourage investment in replacing life-expired tanks.

OFTEC and FPS estimate that one in three tanks could be at the end of its design life – typically 20 years in the case of plastic tanks. At present tank failures are quite rare, but if we don't act now they may become more common in the future, resulting in bad publicity for our industry and inconvenience and expense for our customers.

A further complication to consider is the issue of liability, which could rest with the last professional on site – usually the servicing technician or fuel delivery driver. Neither wants unhappy customers, to whom we have a duty of care, let alone the threat of court action which could be very damaging for the business concerned.

The only way to deal with the problem is by adopting a pro-active approach and OFTEC and FPS are joining forces to alert customers to the risk posed by poor oil storage. New warning labels and tank information cards are to be produced, and additional information about the problem of old tanks added to the Oilsave website. However, to succeed we need your help.

What you can do:

- Ensure that tanks are always inspected during a servicing visit and that you complete checklist CD/11, which is available from the OFTEC Direct website or mobile application.
- Always apply the new OFTEC 'Oil tank warning' label to suspect tanks and hand the householder a 'Tank assessment notice card' (both will be available free on request).

Look out for launch details soon in the OFTEC e-news.

## Kingspan extends product range

Kingspan Titan has launched the latest addition to its slimline oil tank portfolio.

The ESSL1000 has a total footprint of only 1.152m<sup>2</sup> and offers safe and secure heating oil storage at premises where space is limited and access restrictions may apply.

The ESSL1000 is the latest addition to the Titan EcoSafe slimline range which currently includes the ESSL4000, ESSL1400 and the recently launched ESSL2000 tank.

All Titan's plastic tanks are specifically designed to provide the user with full regulation and environmental compliance and all are CE marked in accordance with the mandatory Construction Products Regulation 2011 (CPR).

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

## Innovative tank valve proves a hit with both industry and authorities

Back in April 2014 former fuel tank installer Stuart Bratt developed a simple answer to an age old problem associated primarily with bottom outlet polyethylene fuel storage tanks. Stuart's idea was a simple one – replace the adaptor with a neat, purpose-made compact isolation valve.

After two years of development, the Ultra Compact fuel tank valve (copyright protected) was launched at FPS EXPO 2016.

"Whilst the fuel tank manufacturing sector – with the exception of Envirostore – has been slow to take up this new, innovative product, business is both brisk and nationwide at the coal face," reports Stuart.

"For decades the widely used generic oil filter/valve arrangement connected to the tank using a reduced coupling has proved problematic," he explains.

"The two-piece set-up, known as an 'OFV', has cost many fuel distributors a small fortune in unwelcome pump-out costs. Due to its design combining filter/isolation valve in one unit, the filter housing cannot be replaced when damage, corrosion, failure, leaking, etc, occurs, without the need to first drain/pump out the entire contents of the tank.

"With the Ultra Compact tank valve, rectification work can be completed within a few minutes using



The Ultra Compact tank valve is available in boxes of 10, 50 and 100

just a couple of hand tools. From the fuel oil distributors' point of view it's a belt and braces job for the filter – particularly when an unsuspecting driver accidentally steps on the oil filter valve – and tank installers are already describing the inclusion of the Ultra Compact with their tank packs as a 'no brainer'!"

Envirostore is the first major tank manufacturer to commit to using the product. Director Richard Marsh comments: "At Envirostore we are always looking at new ideas and innovative products, whilst understandably at the same time, being cautious to protect our own brand and good name.

"The Ultra fitting certainly seems to have prompted our customer base to request more information. The early response is favourable on the Ultra fitting, and Envirostore wish Stuart and his team all the best with this innovative product."

[www.sos-oil.co.uk](http://www.sos-oil.co.uk)



# A horror around every corner!

Once again, this edition's Gallery section features a variety of photographs, ranging from amusing to extremely disturbing – most of which centre around oil storage tanks!

OFTEC and FPS estimate that as many as one in three tanks have probably reached the end of their design life – typically 20 years in the case of plastic tanks (see separate article in the Tank News section of this magazine). The number of photographs we receive featuring poorly maintained or badly installed tanks from worried technicians certainly backs up that estimate!

Keep the photographs coming so that we can share your finds with all our readers. Send them, together with a brief description of your business and where you came across the subject of your snaps, to: [jane@oilinstaller.co.uk](mailto:jane@oilinstaller.co.uk)



Send your photographs to [jane@oilinstaller.co.uk](mailto:jane@oilinstaller.co.uk)

"Is this legal?" This was the first question asked by Alex Samborek – an OFTEC registered heating and plumbing specialist based in Lochgilf, Argyll – when he came across this extremely dodgy tank installation! "If it wasn't so scary, it would be funny!" he told Oil Installer. Alex was called out for a totally separate job when he came across the balancing tank. He told the homeowner that the tank would have to be moved, but never heard from him again. "The strangest part is I think an oil company was filling it!" added Alex...



When technician Alex Murchison of AM Plumbing & Heating Ltd in Scunthorpe, North Lincolnshire, was called out by a homeowner who could smell oil, he found the plastic storage tank sitting in a pool of oil. The tank had been installed on rough and uneven land and had fallen victim to sharp stones. "I'm surprised the tank lasted this long!" Alex told Oil Installer.



Technician John Newman discovered Thomas The Tank Engine in Torquay, Devon.

"The owner of the property camouflaged his oil tank for the amusement of passing tourist coaches which looked down into his garden on the way to a local attraction," says John.

"Needless to say this elderly gentleman had no children and it wasn't constructed to play on!"

The Fat Controller would be proud!



When technician Scott Makenzie visited a property in Wembley, north London, to complete an annual service, he didn't like what he found – an asbestos flue leading from the boiler, through a plastic conservatory roof and through the wooden soffit. Therefore, there was no means to undertake a gas test. "And I won't be drilling the hole for a probe!" said Scott.

# Pricing page

## Oil boilers buck the trend

After more than two years of falling prices, the most recent Sutherland Tables figures have shown a slight rise in the cost of oil heating – the first since October 2013.

However, with the average annual cost of heating a three bedroomed home with an oil condensing boiler still only around £XXX, oil remains by far the cheapest domestic heating fuel. It remains typically around half the price of using LPG and electric storage heaters and £XXX cheaper than mains gas. The most popular renewable technologies are also significantly more expensive than oil, dampening the attraction of switching, even with the benefit of RHI payments. The effect of the low oil price is most

readily seen in the sale of oil boilers, which so far this year have soared to a nine year high – up 14% on 2015. By contrast, gas boiler sales for the year to July have fallen by almost 20% compared to 2015.

## Higher heating oil prices around the corner?

In late September the OPEC cartel announced a surprise agreement to cut production, a move that could reduce the current global oil over-supply and herald an increase in crude oil prices. However, so far at least, the announcement has resulted in only a relatively small price rise and the reasons for this are complex.

For a start, the deal still needs to be formally approved and some industry sources doubt it will actually happen. Other commentators have pointed out that the reduction is too small and so will have little impact. A third factor is that OPEC is no longer such a dominant player in the oil market and that any price rise will simply enable US frackers to ramp up their production again.

Concern about a possible price rise has also been expressed by some economists, who believe it could choke the fragile global economic recovery. For the UK oil heating industry, higher crude oil prices would inevitably lead to an increase in the price of kerosene. However, at present the evidence points to, at most, a relatively modest rise.

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

### GREAT BRITAIN

	Oct-12	Oct-16	Price change	% Difference
Anthracite Grains	1011	1162	151	14.98%
Electricity	1314	1600	286	21.73%
Gas (British Gas)	1008	967	-41	-4.07%
LPG	2461	1699	-762	-30.95%
LPG (Condensing)	2020	1402	-618	-30.59%
Oil	1658	996	-662	-39.92%
Oil (Condensing)	1356	818	-538	-39.66%
Wood Pellets	1341	1301	-40	-2.98%

### NORTHERN IRELAND

	Oct-12	Oct-16	Price change	% Difference
Anthracite Grains	1015	953	-62	-6.11%
Electricity	1523	1437	-86	-5.65%
Gas (Phoenix)	1008	825	-183	-18.15%
LPG	2364	1975	-389	-16.46%
LPG (Condensing)	1940	1624	-316	-16.29%
Oil	1630	930	-700	-42.94%
Oil (Condensing)	1333	765	-568	-42.61%
Wood Pellets	992	1142	150	15.12%

### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

	Oct-12	Oct-16	Price change	% Difference
Anthracite Grains	1297	1510	213	16.42%
Electricity	2015	1945	-70	-3.47%
Gas	1281	1310	29	2.26%
LPG	3273	2448	-825	-25.21%
LPG (Condensing)	2686	2018	-668	-24.87%
Oil	2311	1485	-826	-35.74%
Oil (Condensing)	1886	1216	-670	-35.52%
Wood Pellets	1132	1293	161	14.22%

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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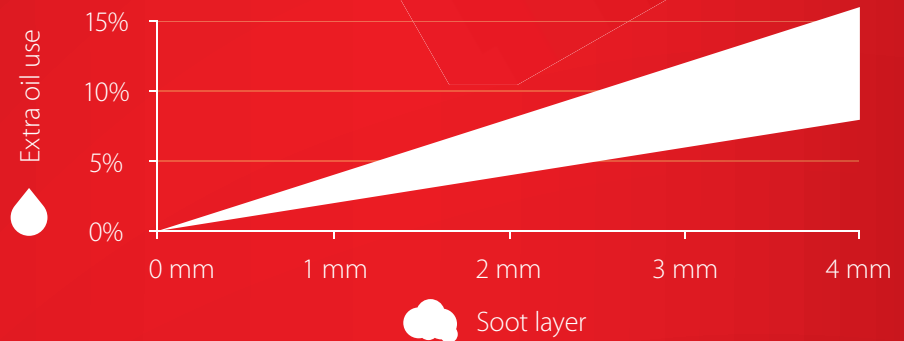
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INSIDE

Oil burner maintainance

# Maintainance means reliability

Your oil burner needs the same attention as your car in order to perform at its best. It takes regular cleaning, inspection and servicing to make sure it's in perfect shape and running in a reliable way.

A well-adjusted oil burner is far more efficient and can **save you up to 10% or even more in oil use**. If soot builds up, the oil use will go up with 2-4% per mm soot layer.



To obtain savings and minimize risk the annual **service should include:**



Replacement of oil nozzle



Replacement of main cartridge filter

Save up to  
**10%**  
in oil use  
with an annual  
burner service

Replacement of pump filter



Cleaning and fine tuning



An annual service will help ensure:



**Energy** savings



**Money** savings



**Minimum** pollutions



**Longer** burner lifetime



**Avoid** break downs



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