

Fuel price commentary

How do you make a fair comparison between the running costs of different types of heating? It is a question we have often wrestled with when discussing the pros and cons of the competing heating options. The data we use is supplied by independent fuel price analysts, the Sutherland Tables. Every quarter, they provide a huge range of price comparisons, based on average fuel costs over the previous quarter. Their statistics are extremely detailed, robust and authoritative and we use only a small amount of the information they supply. For example, we only compare the costs for one house type – a typical medium-sized pre-1980 house – and we provide an average figure for the whole of Great Britain rather than

comparing the costs regionally.

One particularly contentious element is how we compare heat pump performance to traditional heating. Up to now, we've chosen to compare the systems on a like-for-like basis, with all systems using conventional radiator-type heat emitters. This provides a level playing field but places heat pumps at a disadvantage because it reduces their system efficiency quite dramatically. More seriously, it doesn't provide a very realistic real-world comparison because heat pumps are often installed with part-underfloor heating and must achieve a Seasonal Performance Factor (SPF) of 2.5 to qualify for RHI payment – a significantly higher figure than the

Sutherland Table's radiator modelling.

We supply the fuel price data here in Oil Installer because we hope it will be useful to you – for example, when talking about costs to your customers. We would very much welcome your suggestions for improvements. For example, would you like us to include ground source heat pumps as well as air source? Would it be more useful if we just provided the current cost for each useful unit of energy (pence per kWh) – enabling you to easily calculate and compare the annual running cost for any heat demand? Would you prefer us to model more typical installation configurations or are you happy with the level playing field approach?

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

GREAT BRITAIN

	4-yr avg: Jan15-Jan19	January 18	January 19	12 month price change
Anthracite Grains	1143	1159	1127	-32
Electricity (Economy 7)	1757	1910	2004	94
Gas (British Gas – condensing)	1009	967	1025	58
LPG (condensing)	1554	1553	1625	72
Oil (condensing)	934	1048	1143	95
Wood Pellets	1375	1381	1538	157
Air source heat pump radiators	1573	1681	1771	90

NORTHERN IRELAND

	4-yr avg: Jan15-Jan19	January 18	January 19	12 month price change
Anthracite Grains	987	973	1034	61
Electricity (Economy 7)	1563	1518	1871	353
Gas (Phoenix – condensing)	929	885	1050	165
LPG (condensing)	1930	2219	2219	0
Oil (condensing)	896	1017	1191	174
Wood Pellets	1113	1065	1131	66
Air source heat pump radiators	1489	1459	1654	195

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

	4-yr avg: Jan15-Jan19	January 18	January 19	12 month price change
Anthracite Peas	1528	1510	1628	118
Electricity (Urban Night Saver)	2035	1977	2114	137
Gas (Bord Gais condensing)	1334	1337	1399	62
LPG (condensing)	2201	2213	2574	361
Oil (condensing)	1283	1367	1606	239
Wood Pellets	1341	1281	1398	117
Air source heat pump radiators	1788	1743	1852	109

Notes

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

Prices are shown in pounds sterling (£) for Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and euros (€) for the Republic of Ireland.