

Climate control



David Garrity looks at the benefits for housing providers, tenants and the environment of specifying an electric heating system.

The government's Climate Change Bill underlines its commitment to reduce UK carbon dioxide emissions by at least 26% by 2020 and at least 60% by 2050. With heat accounting for around 47% of emissions, the search for a practical, cost-effective and environmentally friendly alternative to traditional central heating is constantly gathering momentum.

Ultimately, the success of any new heating initiative will be determined by the end-user, who wants a system that is not only proven, but that they're comfortable with. Electric water-filled radiators overcome this issue by providing an innovative system in a familiar guise. While each unit might look like a conventional radiator, a built-in boiler, pump and thermostat transforms

each into a self-contained central heating system. Wall-mounted on brackets and plugged into any 13 amp socket, the system requires no pipework, immediately eliminating this form of energy wastage.

A built-in thermostat allows each radiator to be programmed to achieve a specific room temperature, for example, a cooler bedroom or a warmer lounge. Once the desired temperature for that particular room has been achieved, the radiator will stop

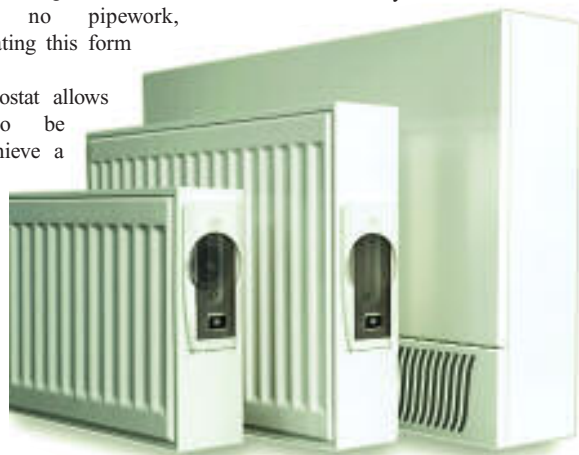
drawing electricity immediately. Meanwhile, a choice of controls enables users to create a heating schedule that accurately reflects the household's needs ensuring heat is only delivered when and where it is required.

Forward-thinking developers are already installing electric heating systems in their properties as they recognise that a seismic shift in energy is about to take place. Our reliance on fossil fuels is affecting our economy, our environment and – with gas and oil supplies increasingly concentrated in unstable parts of the world – the security of our energy supply.

Renewables Obligation

The government has already stated its plans to significantly increase the Renewables Obligation – where electricity suppliers must obtain a specified and increasing proportion of their electricity from renewable sources – in order to achieve its overall goal of 20% of the UK's power coming from renewable energy by 2020. There is an argument to state that clean, green electricity is the key to our economic and environmental future while fossil fuels will soon be confined to the past.

Against this backdrop, electric heating has a vital role to play. Housing providers can install the system confident that tenants will be able to take full advantage of suppliers moving to low and zero carbon electricity over the coming years, while in the meantime limiting energy usage through enhanced controllability.



HEATING & RENEWABLE ENERGY feature

The latest generation of electric heating also eliminates many of the issues associated with gas- or oil-fired central heating, offering housing providers and tenants significant benefits over a traditional system:

- lower purchase and installation costs;
- ability to run on the low cost Economy 10 tariff;
- maintenance-free – electric radiators do not need to be bled, topped up or serviced – the system also eliminates the need to obtain access to properties to conduct an annual inspection;
- ease and speed of installation;
- greater choice in terms of the design and layout of a room as no pipework is required;
- consistency – while in a plumbed central heating system heat loss through pipework means the first radiator fed by the boiler is always warmer than the last, each electric radiator operates independently, reaching its optimum temperature every time;
- reliability – if a boiler fails in a plumbed central heating system the entire system goes down, leaving a home without heating or hot water and potentially costing hundreds to repair or thousands to replace; in contrast, if an



Electric heating solutions provide ease and speed of installation.

individual electric radiator fails, the others will continue to operate as normal;

- safety – a malfunctioning boiler in a gas central heating system can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning, an electric system completely eliminates this risk.

One housing provider already embracing the benefits of the latest electric heating technology is Fife Housing Association. Clerk of Works, Jim Bett, discovered the Heat Electric range of water filled electric radiators when researching an alternative to storage heaters and was staggered by the impact the product had on the Association's SAP rating.

“The storage heaters were giving below 50 on our SAP rating and we'd had complaints from tenants who found their restrictive heat output inconvenient and expensive,” Jim explains. “Since installing Heat Electric radiators we've gone from a rating of below

50 with the storage heaters to 64 – the same as a condensing boiler. Our SAP rating is crucial in our role as a responsible housing provider and we were delighted to see our rating soar as a result of the controllability of the radiators.”

Meanwhile, results from an energy monitor in a pilot house fitted with Heat Electric radiators prior to the installation showed a saving of over £5 a week on heating costs while the tenant reported controllability as a huge benefit.

Bright future

Jim added: “A saving of anywhere up to £15 a week could be possible if energy was supplied through a supplier which provides an Economy 10 tariff. We are therefore encouraging all our tenants to switch suppliers to receive maximum benefit from their new radiators.”

The future of electric heating systems has therefore never looked brighter. When combined with low and zero carbon electricity their ability to deliver heat in highly focused areas of a property at specific times of day means they offer a 100% efficient, 100% effective and sustainable solution to the current heating debate.

Jim concludes: “With ease of installation, cost savings on maintenance and the lack of risk in not working with gas systems, the Heat Electric radiators provide the smartest, most future proof heating system I have ever come across. With this in mind we are now proposing a report to the board to replace all our gas central heating systems with Heat Electric radiators because, for Housing Associations who have to consider tenant welfare, energy consumption, maintenance and cost, there really is no better heating provider on the market.”

- David Garrity is managing director of Heat Electric.

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The radiators are wall mounted on brackets and plugged into any 13 amp socket.