

# Home front



David Garrity looks at the crucial role local authorities have to play within the new Government strategy for household energy management.

market the proposed improvements to an audience which may be unfamiliar with the technology on offer and its long-term benefits to them in terms of warmer homes and reduced fuel bills.

While manufacturers such as Heat Electric support this new partnership approach, we would also urge such organisations to invite heating manufacturers to work closely with them on these schemes from the earliest planning stages due to the wide variety of housing stock in the UK. By providing decision makers with access to experts who have been commissioned to provide heating solutions for similar properties in the past, an informed assessment of the options available can be made whilst also helping to identify systems that will cause occupants less disruption and upheaval.

### Well equipped

Post installation, local authorities can also work with manufacturers to ensure that householders are equipped with the information they need to use their new heating system in the most cost-effective and efficient manner, thereby helping to reduce fuel bills as well as carbon emissions.

We also welcome the new Warm Homes Standard proposed in response to the need for stronger standards in rented housing. The new standard will focus on building fabric and heating systems with the aim of raising the SAP rating of social

housing from 59 to at least 70 and radically reducing emissions and energy bills for tenants. A specific emphasis on 'warmth' underlines the Government's aim to eradicate fuel poverty — defined as households which need to spend more than 10% of their income to maintain an adequate level of warmth — by 2018.

One crucial issue the new strategy fails to fully address is controllability. Controls have a vital role to play in preventing energy wastage, while ensuring occupants achieve maximum thermal comfort. However, despite it being widely acknowledged that improvements to controls can reduce by over 20% the carbon emissions from heating and hot water, the strategy focuses its attention on more complex and costly



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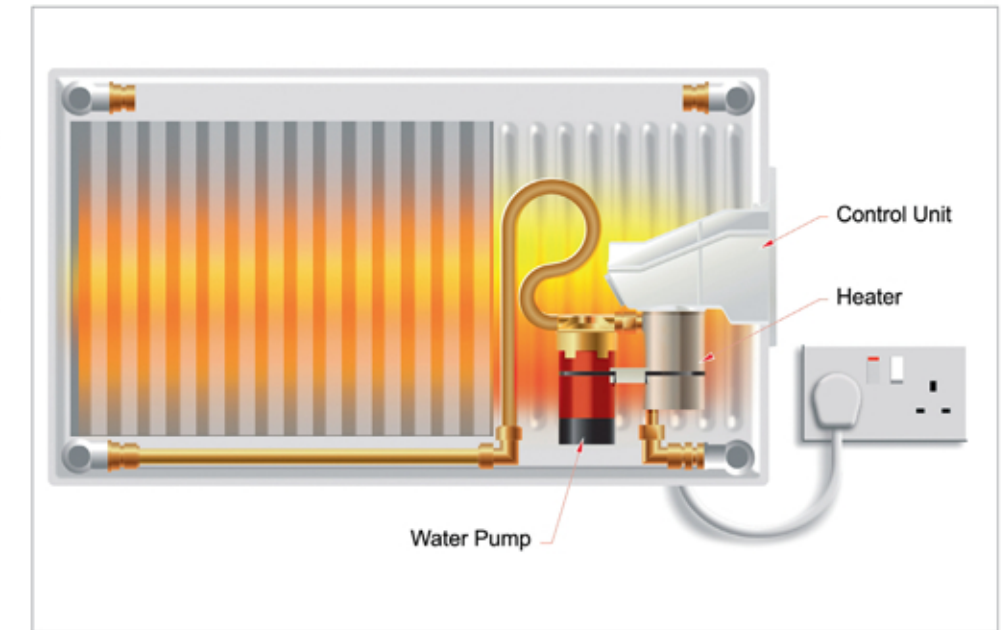
solutions such as solid wall insulation and district heating systems.

The latest generation of electric heating offers fingertip time and temperature control on a whole house, predefined zone and individual room basis enabling the creation of a bespoke heating schedule for that particular property. As a result, systems such as the one offered by Heat Electric are not only efficient, turning every £1 spent on fuel into actual heat, but also effective — ensuring heat is only delivered when and where it is needed.

### Under control

Controls also encourage residents to modify their behaviour i.e. by turning the thermostat down or programming heat to only come on in certain rooms at certain times. This precision approach is in sharp contrast to traditional plumbed heating systems where people talk about their heating provision in absolute terms — the heating is either 'on' or 'off' — and where it is widely accepted that some radiators and rooms will be warmer or cooler than desired due to heat loss from pipework. Consumer education is therefore as important as investment in energy efficient measures if Government targets to reduce carbon emissions are to be met.

Heat Electric's range of electric water filled radiators has been designed to give consumers maximum control over the output of their heating system. 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, ensuring the optimum operating temperature is achieved each time and removing the risk of total system failure. The system also comes with a range of control options enabling the occupant to create a heating schedule that accurately reflects the needs of their family, thereby minimising fuel bills.

Local authorities are the lynch pin in terms of delivering long-term improvements in energy efficiency. Forward thinking authorities will be quick to embrace this new role and to encourage energy companies to work with their

communities ahead of others by supplying vital information on local housing issues, supporting the promotion of initiatives to residents, identifying key stakeholders and inviting them to be part of the process and, overall, delivering a timely, seamless and viable approach to improvements.

■ David Garrity is managing director of Heat Electric

**For more information on Heat Electric's range of water filled radiators mark Readerlink 117**