

Heating manufacturer offers its expertise on energy efficiency

Heat Electric MD David Garrity looks at the crucial role social housing has to play within the new government strategy for household energy management.

The publication of 'Warm Homes, Greener Homes' – the long awaited government strategy for household energy management – underlines social housing's continued role at the forefront of environmental performance, paving the way for the widespread adoption of new eco technologies and improvement of the UK's building stock.

A new obligation on energy companies to help householders save energy will see a partnership approach between such organisations and both local authorities and the third sector to identify vulnerable households on low incomes, and to encourage improvements, where possible, to entire housing blocks.

Key to the success of the new strategy will be the trust between a housing association and its tenants, enabling it to market the proposed improvements to an audience that may be unfamiliar with the technology on offer and its long-term benefits to them in terms of warmer homes and reduced fuel bills.

INFORMED ASSESSMENT

Due to the wide variety of housing stock in the UK, there is no 'one size fits all' approach to energy efficiency, which is why we would also like to see heating manufacturers invited to work closely with these new partnerships. This would not only give decision makers access to experts who have been commissioned to provide heating solutions for similar properties in the past, enabling them to make an informed assessment of the options available, but would also help to identify systems that would cause tenants the least disruption.

Post installation, housing associations can also work with manufacturers to ensure that tenants are equipped with the information they need to use their



new heating system in the most cost-effective and efficient manner, thereby reducing their fuel bills and helping to fulfil the government's aim of reducing emissions from social housing by at least half by 2020.

Controls have a vital role to play in preventing energy wastage while ensuring tenants achieve maximum thermal comfort. However, despite it being widely acknowledged that improvements to controls can reduce the carbon emissions from heating and hot water by more than 20%, the strategy focuses its attention on more complex and

costly 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 or individual room basis, enabling the creation of a bespoke heating schedule for that particular property. As a result, systems such as ours are

not only 100% efficient, turning every pound spent on fuel into actual heat, but also 100% effective – ensuring that heat is only delivered when and where it is needed.

However, investment in new technology alone will not bring about the results the

government desires. Education and the resultant changes in behaviour to limit energy usage are equally crucial. Key to this will be altering the UK's current mindset, which views heating in absolute terms. Instead of the heating system being either 'on' or 'off', homeowners and tenants need to start thinking about when and where they actually need heat.

We would therefore urge housing associations to look beyond the issues raised in this latest report and to also consider the vital role of controllability when seeking to reduce fuel bills, lower carbon emissions and ensure their tenants' ongoing thermal comfort.

EMBRACING THE BENEFITS

One organisation already embracing the benefits of our range of electric water filled radiators is Prospect Community Housing, one of Scotland's leading housing associations.

Estates service officer, Steven McDiarmid, explains: "We hadn't been happy with our night storage heaters for some time and, after looking into the Heat Electric system, we could see it would be considerably more economical, particularly when running on Economy 10. With the low cost of installation – because they're simply wall-mounted and plugged in – there is also no mess or disruption.

"The bonus for our tenants is that the heat is completely controllable and can be altered according to their needs. We have just completed three pilots in 100 properties and the result is we now install Heat Electric radiators when and where they are needed, with a view to rolling them out into all of our properties."

It is, therefore, the ability of electric heating systems to deliver heat in highly focused areas of a property at specific times of day that make them the ultimate energy-saving heating solution – both now and in the future.

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