

PROTECTING CONSUMERS AND PROMOTING RENEWABLES

Welcome to the Summer Newsletter

Dear RECC Members,

Welcome to the summer edition of the Newsletter! I hope you are enjoying the sunshine now that it's finally arrived.

In this edition you will find a snapshot of RECC's achievements from last year as we publish our 2023 Annual Report. Moving on to 2024 you will see that the first six months have seen installation records smashed.

You can also find information about the new Government's plans to boost the renewable energy sector as well as details of new guidance outlining the do's and don'ts when marketing renewable energy systems to domestic consumers.

I hope you enjoy reading these and other updates and I send you best wishes for the holiday season,

Virginia Graham.



Installer of the Year recognised

Aida Razgunaite (third from right), Head of Operations at REAL, presented the Installer of the Year Award to Otovo at the 2024 British Renewable Energy Awards Dinner at the Sheraton Hotel in London on 13 June.

The Award was sponsored by RECC. The Dinner was hosted by our parent company, the Association for Renewable Energy and Clean Technology, and celebrated success right across the sector. Speaking afterwards, Virginia Graham, REAL Chief Executive, said:

"With the Government's push on domestic-scale renewable energy it is more important than ever that consumers can rely on high quality installations. As an installer this is the reassurance RECC membership gives your customers."



Otovo receives Installer of the Year Award 2024

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Installer of the Year recognised
- 2 RECC highlights year of achievement in 2023
 - RECC welcomes CMA's advice on marketing
- 3 CMA consults on improving trader recommendation platforms
 - Important changes made to the Boiler Upgrade Scheme
 - New Government signals commitment to renewable energy
- 4 Report shows effects of environmental policy costs being allocated to gas
 - System Operator calls for decisive action to deliver Net Zero by 2050
- 5 Record six months for small-scale renewable installations
 - RECC exhibits at Solar & Storage Live
 - RECC attends CTSI Conference

RECC highlights year of achievement in 2023



RECC's Annual Report describes our many achievements in 2023. To give you an idea, during the year we

- received over 2,012 new applications to join the Code. We ensured that applications were processed quickly and efficiently whilst maintaining our high standards through detailed due diligence checks. We processed 1,791 applications and welcomed 1,661 new members.
- monitored the compliance of 561 members by way of a Compliance Check, monitoring survey or full audit. We were quick to take effective action where we found any risk of non-compliance. We required 282 members to respond to suspected breaches of the Code and terminated 6 members for non-compliance with the Code.
- resolved 81 disputes, thereby helping our members and their consumers deal with problems speedily and effectively and, where issues were found, by helping recover over £281,000 for consumers.

In summary, in 2023:

- a total of 4,533 businesses were members of the Code
- Code members installed over 161,000 renewable energy generators across the UK
- 2,012 businesses applied to become a member of the Code
- In all, 2,228 businesses were monitored for compliance with the Code
- 282 members were asked to respond to breaches of the Code and/or Bye-Laws
- £281,643 was recovered for consumers through our Dispute Resolution Process.

Commenting on these achievements, Virginia Graham, REAL Chief Executive said:

"I would like to pay tribute to the RECC Team Members who have worked tirelessly to ensure that all applicants to join met our rigorous standards and that our existing members were complying with the Code. There would be no value in Code membership without compliance. That is why we devote so much time and effort to monitoring and enforcement."

RECC welcomes CMA's guidance on marketing

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has issued new guidance to help businesses who market domestic green heating and insulation products to understand their legal obligations.

RECC has welcomed the CMA's guidance and described it as clear and comprehensive. RECC believes it will play an important role in helping businesses to understand their legal obligations and build a competitive market in which consumers can make informed decisions.

RECC has also welcomed the CMA's recognition of the importance of Consumer Codes in raising standards in this area. RECC members already have access to clear, sector specific advice and training about marketing and advertising. Code members may also attend webinar training free of charge and can access a free review of their marketing materials.

CMA's guidance draws on the findings of its review into consumer protection which highlighted two types of potentially misleading information being given to consumers:

1. headline price information including access to Government funding; and
2. claims made on websites and other marketing channels.

The review covered a range of products including heat pumps, biomass boilers, solar thermal panels, home insulation, solar PV panels and battery storage systems.

CMA's guidance, which applies to all marketing channels, and to claims made verbally or on the phone, highlights the legal obligations which require businesses to provide consumers with information that is truthful, accurate and complete enough for them to make informed choices about products. The advice stresses that every business, whether selling directly or selling through someone else, is responsible for complying with consumer protection law including The Consumer Protection Regulations of 2008 (CPR).

The CMA advises businesses to look at other guidance including their Green Claims Code in relation to any claims about environmental benefit and the use of consumer reviews in online marketing to ensure they are genuine. (Claims made on websites, social media and other marketing channels, as well as advertisements on radio and TV, are covered by the Advertising Standards Authority.) The CMA urges businesses to review how they present marketing information to make any changes necessary to comply with the CPRs and other consumer protection laws.

RECC has voiced disappointment that the guidance does not extend to bespoke claims made to consumers, for example through estimates of performance, payback or environmental benefit made regarding a specific site. RECC's evidence shows that most mis-selling takes place by way of bespoke claims which are often the basis on which a contract is agreed.

RECC looks forward to working with CMA on the further development of its guidance and hopes that bespoke claims made directly to consumers will be included.

You can read the CMA guidance [here](#):

CMA consults on improving trader recommendation platforms

The Competition & Markets Authority (CMA) is consulting on draft consumer law compliance advice for trader recommendation platforms (TRPs). These are platforms where consumers can identify potential traders based on reviews and endorsement.

The CMA has identified concerns around:

- TRPs making misleading claims or creating a misleading impression that the traders listed or hosted on the platform can be trusted, when in fact the RTP does not vet, monitor or intervene to address complaints, sanction poor performance or does not appropriately tackle fake reviews;
- TRPs not having appropriate and effective vetting and verification processes;
- TRPs not having effective and accessible complaints processes, including an appropriate record-keeping and complaints review procedure in order to identify patterns of poor trader standards or behaviour;
- how TRPs deal with problematic traders and whether they sanction these traders appropriately; and
- TRPs' approach to consumer reviews, so that they do not present reviews in misleading ways and take appropriate steps to minimise the presence of fake reviews.

The closing date is 16 August. You can find the consultation [here](#):

Important changes made to the Boiler Upgrade Scheme

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) has made some important changes designed to improve the Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS) take up. These are:

1. Removal of requirement that any outstanding recommendations for loft and cavity wall insulation in Energy Performance Certificates be carried out in advance.
2. Extension of scheme scope to biomass boilers with an integrated cooking function.
3. Increase the threshold for shared ground loops for ground source heat pumps to 300 kWth. (The single heat pump installed capacity limit remains at 45 kWth.)
4. Deadline for making an application for a BUS grant set at systems commissioned maximum 120 days ahead of the application.

In the latest BUS Annual Report Ofgem confirms that the total value of grants paid since the start of the scheme on 23 May 2022 is £139 million, supporting some 24,000 low carbon heating systems (96% of which were air-source heat pumps).

Ofgem reports that, between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, it received a total of some 22,000 grant applications. After completing their stage 1 checks Ofgem issued some 19,000 vouchers worth £122 million. After completing their stage 2 checks, once the installations were complete, Ofgem paid grants towards some 14,000 low carbon heating systems.

You can find the Ofgem BUS 2023 Annual Report [here](#).

New Government signals commitment to renewable energy

Sir Keir Starmer has appointed members of his Government. Most relevant to RECC Members are two members of the team at the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero:

- **Miatta Fahnbulleh MP is Minister of State. She is expected to handle consumer issues, Clean Heat (including the Boiler Upgrade Scheme) and Heat Networks. She was formerly a policy advisor and a think tank worker including New Economics Foundation and Institute for Public Policy Research.**
- **Michael Shanks MP is also Minister of State. He is expected to handle GB Energy, Review of Energy Market Arrangements Feed-In Tariff, biomass, grid and networks during the past year. He was formerly a teacher and, latterly, the Shadow Minister for Scotland.**

On 17 July the King outlined the measures the incoming Government intends to introduce during the next session of Parliament. Several of these will have an impact on the renewable energy sector. For example:

- **The National Wealth Fund Bill will be a central part of the new Government's economic plans. Through the Fund the Government aims to invest £7.3 billion in UK economic opportunities. Priority will be given to achieving Net Zero and to the Labour Green Prosperity Plan. The Fund will apply across the UK.**
- **The Great British Energy Bill will establish GB Energy as a publicly owned, legal entity which will own, manage and operate clean power projects across the UK. This is intended to enable the benefits of homegrown energy to be available to all and to lower bills as well as encourage technological developments.**
- **The Planning and Infrastructure Bill is intended to streamline the building of infrastructure across the UK. It includes boosting renewable energy as well as accelerating upgrades to the national grid.**
- **The Crown Estate Bill will allow the Crown Estate to borrow money for the first time and to undertake other reforms. This will have a significant impact on the installation of offshore windfarms since the Crown Estate owns the seabed off England and Wales.**



Report shows effects of re-allocating environmental policy costs to gas bills

The MCS Foundation and Cornwall Insight have recently published a report on the effects of environmental costs on domestic energy bills. The report recommends that these costs be reallocated from electricity bills to gas bills. In this way, it is estimated that the financial case for replacing a gas boiler with an air-source heat pumps will be improved.

The report warns that, without Government intervention, it is unlikely that electricity costs will fall below gas prices. It therefore calls for a clear roadmap for policy change to enable consumers to make informed decisions about the likely running costs of energy-efficient systems such as air-source heat pumps. The report says it would also help builders and housing associations to justify installing systems whether in new build homes or on a retrofit basis.

You can read the report [here](#).



System Operator calls for decisive action to deliver Net Zero by 2050



The urgent need to decarbonise our energy system in order to achieve Net Zero by 2050 was underlined at this year's Future Energy Scenarios (FES) event.

The Energy System Operator (ESO) has developed a series of pathways which are designed to achieve this target and are calling for decisive action to be taken over the next two years. The ESO Chief Executive said: "Decarbonisation of the energy system is the challenge of our generation."

The ESO claims it has an important role to play in stimulating debate and helping to shape the energy system of the future. The ESO has identified eight key actions:

- A strategic approach to network investment and the introduction of planning reforms to speed up the delivery of whole system infrastructure.
- Reform of the market to reflect the changes in infrastructure and ensure a reliable service to customers using electricity, gas, hydrogen and CO₂.
- Priority given to hydrogen where it is hard to install electricity. This would involve agreeing business models to kick-start delivery of the hydrogen and CO₂, and providing adequate transport and storage to achieve flexibility in the system.
- Speeding up progress on low carbon heating and faster roll-out of heat pumps. Building consumer trust in the new technology which will help them to save money and help with the management of GB's electricity system.
- Focus on improving energy efficiency to reduce overall demand.
- Reform of the connections process to speed up the introduction of reliable new technologies and long-duration storage.
- Investment in the supply chain and essential skills required for the low carbon technologies and infrastructure in order to achieve Net Zero.

You can find the report [here](#).

Record six months for small-scale renewable installations

In the first six months of 2024, 26,797 certified heat pump installations were registered on the Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) database. This represents a 45% increase on the same period in 2023. MCS also reports that 81,000 certified solar PV and 7,900 certified battery storage installations were registered on its database in the first six months of 2024.

Given that the MCS battery storage installation standard was only introduced in 2021 this number of certified battery storage installations represents a considerable increase over previous years.

You can find more details [here](#).



RECC to exhibit at Solar & Storage Live

Solar & Storage Live is back at the NEC, Birmingham from 24 - 26 September.

The show will be an opportunity for finding new products, networking, connecting with manufacturers, industry professionals, learning from live sessions and staying updated with industry trends.

The exhibition celebrates the technologies at the forefront of the transition to a greener, smarter, more decentralised energy system.

Register for free tickets [here](#), and make sure you come say hi to RECC and EVCC who will be exhibiting at the show.



RECC exhibits at Installer Show

RECC was excited to participate and exhibit in this year's InstallerSHOW.

The InstallerSHOW provided an opportunity for installers, manufacturers and stakeholders from the heat, water, air and energy sectors to gather and exchange views.

Lorraine Haskell, Head of Membership at RECC said:

"RECC was very happy to exhibit at InstallerSHOW. It enables us to share our achievements and information with other participants, including the RECC Consumer Code and high consumer standards which guide the installation of renewable energy systems. We had a great opportunity to demonstrate the value of RECC in promoting sustainability and innovation."

The event took place at the NEC, Birmingham from 25 - 27 June.

RECC attends CTSI Conference

RECC was pleased to participate in the CTSI Conference from 12 - 14 June. The theme was: "Facing the Future – Innovate, Collaborate, Influence."

The event provided an opportunity for professionals from Trading Standards, Environmental Health and other regulatory practitioners to share learning and best practice on issues that impact consumers and businesses in the UK. The Conference sessions covered supply chain issues, findings from the national enquiry, legal responsibilities and ombudsman services.



Aida Razgunaite (Second from Right), Head of Operations at REAL, at the CTSI Conference

Virginia Graham, REAL Chief Executive participated in a panel discussion entitled: "The Drive to Net Zero – Switching on to prevent consumer detriment."