

PROTECTING CONSUMERS AND PROMOTING RENEWABLES

Welcome to the Autumn Newsletter

Dear RECC Members,

Welcome to the autumn edition of the Newsletter!

In this edition you will find articles on the importance of consumer protection in the sector, on RECC guidance and training for members and on the success of RECC's move to adjudication.

You will also find details of Worcester Bosch's agreement not to market domestic boilers as 'hydrogen ready' following an investigation by competition authorities as well as of a new website to provide consumers with information on heat pumps.

I hope you enjoy the Newsletter and I wish you all a successful and busy autumn.

Virginia Graham, Editor.



RECC team explains importance of Consumer Code membership

The RECC team was pleased to participate in the Solar & Storage Live Show at the NEC, Birmingham from 24 to 26 September.

Over three days the team engaged with a wide range of stakeholders at the Show. They outlined the benefits of RECC membership and explained what was involved in joining. As a result several installers submitted applications. The Show provided an opportunity to consolidate relationships with a wide range of players in the industry.

Lorraine Haskell, Head of Membership at RECC, gave a presentation on why Consumer Code membership remains important for installers. She said:

"This major event provides RECC with an opportunity to share our achievements with the wider home renewables sector. We are proud to be seen as the Gold Standard in consumer protection in the sector."

Virginia Graham, Chief Executive at REAL, took part in a Panel Session on the Global Solar Training Standards Initiative. This initiative aims to certify solar PV training courses worldwide, thereby ensuring quality and safety for all those who work in the sector, believed to number around 5 million. She said:

"RECC fully supports the Solar Training Standards Initiative. We see a lot of scope in extending it into the domestic rooftop sector. We would be happy to work with Global Solar Council to deliver it."



RECC team members at the Solar & Storage Show

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RECC hails success of move to adjudication

In Summer 2023, RECC made a significant change to its Dispute Resolution Process, transitioning the final stage from arbitration to adjudication. Now, more than a year on, we are delighted with the results.

Since going live, over 70 disputes have gone to adjudication and the results clearly indicate that the shift has proven beneficial for RECC members and their consumers. Importantly, the enhanced transparency and efficiency of the adjudication process has fostered greater satisfaction and trust.

In 83% of cases, the adjudicator upheld the consumer's complaint in full or in part, setting out clearly where the code and/or MCS standards had not been met. In 2024, Consumers have been awarded over £90,000, though successful cases have also included decisions with non-financial remedies, e.g. requiring an apology to be issued or providing missing handover documentation.

In 17% of cases, the adjudicator did not uphold the consumer's complaint, clearly setting out how the member had met its contractual expectations.

Decisions have generally been published within 45 working days providing both parties with a timely resolution to the dispute. This efficiency has helped prevent protracted court proceedings and contributed to the overall effectiveness of the Dispute Resolution Process.

What our members say...

It is clear from our members' feedback that the adjudication process is viewed as an effective and engaging alternative to arbitration.

Members have welcomed having the opportunity to express their views throughout the process, increasing their sense of involvement and empowerment. A proposed decision is issued before a final decision is made, giving both parties an opportunity to make comment and, if required, submit additional supporting evidence. Generally, members have felt more engaged in this process than with arbitration, and felt that it was a simpler process to understand and participate in. Though a fee is payable for the service, it has been recognised that paying a fixed one-off fee can protect members from unexpected costs. Additionally, the possibility of recovering some costs if the consumer's claim is not upheld adds an extra layer of reassurance.

Overall, this combination of efficiency, engagement, and cost-effectiveness has made the adjudication process a preferred option for our members. You can find more information [here](#).



RECC hosts series of free webinar training sessions



This year RECC has delivered four training webinars free of charge for our members. In a series of five, running from May to November, the webinars cover the essential elements of the consumer journey.

Our members tell us that they appreciate webinars which explain in more detail the legal and regulatory responsibilities for installers in the home renewables sector. In this way we hope to make it easier for members to comply with the high standards expected of RECC members.

The first four sessions have covered:

- the Consumer Code as well as advertising, marketing and sales behaviours;
- performance estimates, written proposals and estimates;
- the contract, using sub-contractors and cancellation; and
- paying for the order and completing the installation.

The final session, scheduled for 19 November from 10.30 a.m., will cover after sales. To register your interest in attending this session you can find the link [here](#).

The sessions are presented by actor, and friend of RECC, Michael Cusick. Colin Meek, our technical, legal and compliance expert, is on hand to answer any questions from members with Lorraine Haskell, RECC's Head of Membership, available to provide support where needed.

Following the sessions the RECC team sends the slide presentations to all who registered and attended and posts recordings of the sessions on the website for future reference. You can find them in the RECC member area under the webinar section [here](#).

New website encourages uptake of heat pumps

A new website, Get A Heat Pump, has been set up to provide consumers with impartial and reliable information about heat pumps. Developed on behalf of Government by The MCS Foundation and Nesta, the website is intended to give consumers confidence when choosing heat pumps to heat their homes in future.

Consumers can find information, tools and guidance about how heat pumps work. This allows them to choose the right heat pump, estimate costs, learn about the grants available, understand the installation process and find a good installer.

The resource explains a heat pump's benefits in terms of efficiency and lower CO emissions. When it comes to cost savings these are likely to be most evident when switching away from oil, liquid petroleum gas (LPG) and direct electricity heating systems. Current energy prices mean that equivalent savings are unlikely to be made when switching away from natural gas systems. However, the introduction of 'heat pump friendly tariffs' is likely to improve the cost effectiveness of heat pumps in future.

The resource is part of Government's plans to phase out new gas boilers from 2035 and see 60,000 heat pumps a year installed by 2028. You can visit the website [here](#).

Worcester Bosch to change approach to boiler marketing

Following an investigation opened in October 2023 by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) Worcester Bosch has agreed to change the claims it makes about its boilers.

The CMA was concerned that, by stressing their boilers were "hydrogen-blend ready" and able to run on a blend of up to 20% hydrogen, Worcester Bosch could mislead consumers into believing that they were unique or special whereas most boilers on the market can already do this. They could also lead consumers to believe, falsely, that, by installing these boilers, they would reduce their carbon footprint and "future-proof" their heating system. Again, Worcester Bosch boilers are the same in this respect as other boilers on the market.

The CMA also found that Worcester Bosch was in danger of misleading consumers because its claims failed to make it clear that it is not yet certain whether hydrogen will be used for home heating systems at all.

Worcester Bosch has committed to withdrawing or changing all its marketing material and to contacting its network of accredited installers and third-party retailers asking them to remove or amend the marketing material criticised by the CMA. You can find more information [here](#).

RECC welcomes new guidance for trader recommendations

RECC has welcomed the draft guidance for Trader Recommendation Platform (TRP) operators produced by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA).

In its response to the CMA's consultation RECC urged the CMA to make it clearer that:

- platforms that may regard themselves as lead generators rather than TRPs are included if they implicitly make trader recommendations; and
- platform operators who only publish reviews and testimonials still have a duty to ensure that these are genuine by following best practice guidelines and checking that reviews have not been generated by AI or other 'review farms'.

With specific reference to the domestic renewable sector RECC pointed out to the CMA that installers who contract with consumers are responsible for the content of all their advertising and marketing materials. They are also responsible for the accuracy and legal compliance of all claims made by lead generators and TRPs on their behalf. They themselves have a duty to ensure that any advertising or marketing claims comply with the law.

The CMA is expected to publish the final version of the guidance in November 2024.



Citizens Advice calls for stronger consumer protection in the sector

Citizens Advice has compiled a report, 'Hitting a Wall', calling for an improved consumer experience in the home insulation and renewables sectors.

Based on an analysis of 683 contacts received by its consumer service between January and June this year and on 35 in-depth interviews with consumers who had applied for a range of Government incentives the report finds that consumer protection standards are patchy.

Building on its earlier reports, *The Net Zero Puzzle* and *Home Safe*, Citizens Advice is calling on Government to deliver:

- a single quality scheme for the low carbon home improvement market
- a simple redress scheme including a single Ombudsman scheme
- a legal enforcement regime to tackle wrongdoing
- access to independent advice throughout the consumer journey.

Citizens Advice plans to set out further detail on how a new consumer protection regime could work shortly.

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

Hitting a Wall

Protecting consumers who install net zero technologies



New power auction boosts solar power's UK trajectory

The Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) has announced that 93 ground-based solar photovoltaic (PV) projects, with a combined capacity of 3,288 MW, have been guaranteed support under the sixth round of the Contracts for Difference (CfDs) allocation mechanism

The CfD scheme is Government's main mechanism for supporting low carbon electricity generation. CfDs incentivise investment in renewable energy by providing developers of projects with high upfront costs and long lifetimes with direct protection from volatile wholesale prices, and they protect consumers from paying increased support costs when electricity prices are high. The 'strike price' for solar in the latest round is £50 per MWh, up from £47 in 2023.



This outcome of the latest round compares with the previous record, set in 2022, of 66 solar PV projects with a combined capacity of 2,209MW. Three of the projects in the current round - at Longfield and Little Crow in Hertfordshire and Cleve Hill in Kent - are among the largest to be approved to date. Longfield has received a contract for 299 MW of its 420 MW capacity, Little Crow has received 100 MW for its 150 MW capacity while Cleve Hill has received 112 MW for its 373 MW capacity.

Trade body Solar Energy UK has welcomed this development. Gemma Grimes, UK Director of Policy and Delivery, said:

"It is hugely encouraging to see an unprecedented volume of solar generation capacity contracted, enough to put a meaningful dent into future electricity prices".

She predicted that energy bills would begin to fall within two years partly because of this record-breaking renewable energy auction. She pointed out that solar PV was one of the cheapest sources of power available in the UK. But she stressed that similar levels of contracted capacity would be needed each year to meet the UK's Net Zero target.

You can find more information about the CfD allocation auction [here](#).

Survey suggests confusion over domestic renewables



A survey of 2,000 UK adults has revealed that a low carbon home would be the preference for around half (49%) of all respondents if looking to move.

The survey, conducted by Opinium Research on behalf of KPMG, found that nearly two thirds of respondents agreed that UK households should reduce CO₂ emissions from their homes. More than half believed that doing so would reduce bills and 44% saw the potential to waste less energy and reduce their impact on the climate.

However, the survey also found that, when it comes to improving the efficiency of their own home, respondents are put off by the costs, inconvenience and misinformation. Overall, the survey found a high level of confusion and inconsistency in knowledge about renewable sources of energy.

One in seven respondents said they had not given any thought to green technology upgrades in their homes while 12 per cent did not know where to look for information. More than a third said they knew nothing about heat pumps and a quarter did not think they were suitable for homes. The main deterrent for people making green home improvements was upfront cost while one in five respondents did not think their properties would be suitable for upgrades. A similar number think that installing a heat pump would lead to higher electricity bills.

A third of respondents said that more financial support from Government was needed and called for removal of upfront costs through the provision of measures such as interest-free loans.

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



EVCC discount for RECC members



**RECC Members can join our sister code, EVCC!
Contact our EVCC team for details.**

We know that many RECC Members already install home chargepoints in consumers' homes, often alongside solar PV and battery storage systems. That is why we set up the Electric Vehicle Consumer Code for Home Chargepoints (EVCC) to sit alongside RECC and set out high standards for installers.



5 reasons to join EVCC:

1. Show homeowners you are competent, qualified and reliable, and serious about offering high standards of consumer protection
2. Stand out from your competitors
3. Be listed on the EVCC website and increase your exposure
4. Get assistance with resolving consumer complaints
5. Get access to guidance, training and model documents, making technical and legal compliance straightforward.

You can find more about EVCC, including how to join [here](#).