



Autumn 2018

# PlumbHeat



## The silent killer

Why fitting a carbon monoxide detector is a matter of life and death



## Diggers with attitude

We take a trip underground and explore the work of Trenchless Installations



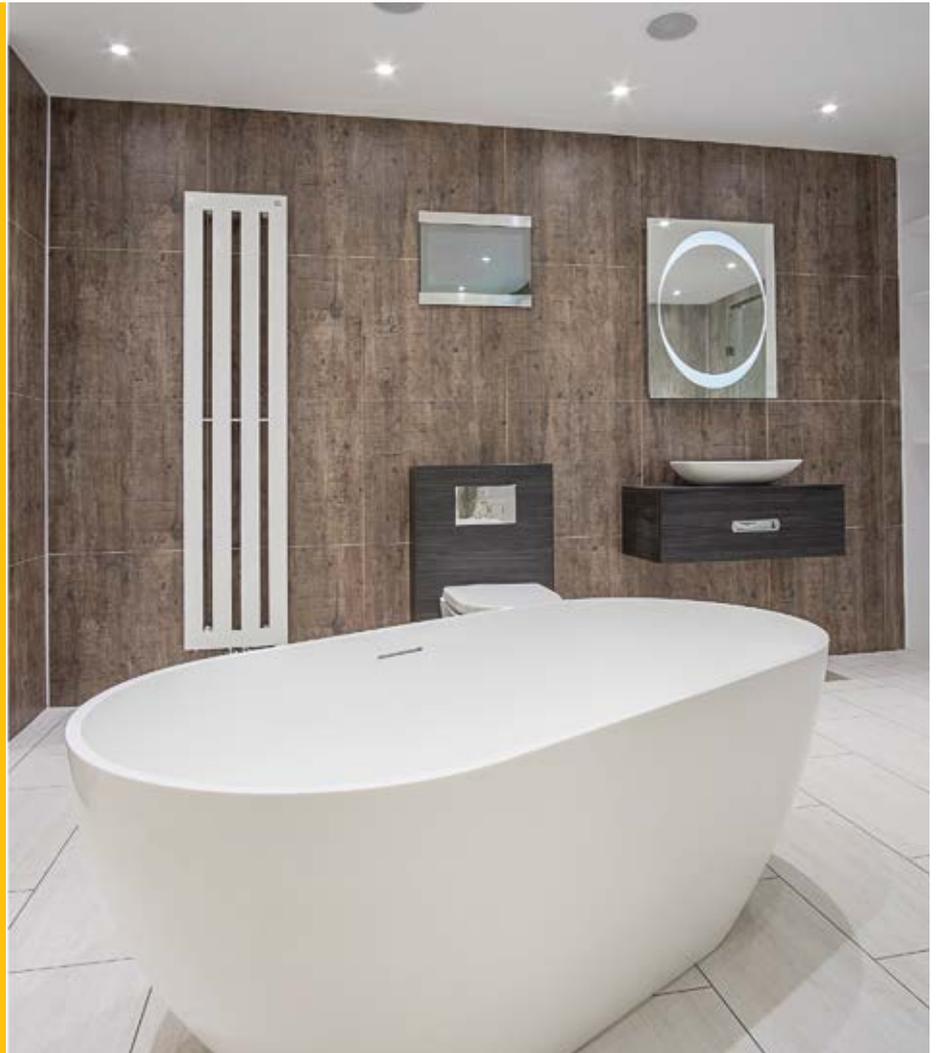
## Here come the girls

Meet the new female apprentices helping to close the skills gender gap

# Plumbers 'n hoses

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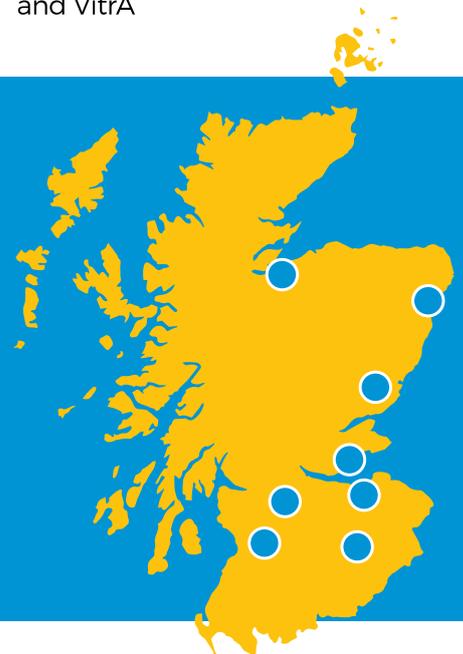
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# Comment

FROM FIONA HODGSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, SNIPEF

## Where are the new recruits coming from?

Investing in the future workforce and attracting more women is the only way to address the current skills shortage across the industry

**O**VER the past two months, SNIPEF Training Services has started more than 300 new apprentices in Scotland on its Modern Apprenticeship in Domestic Plumbing & Heating – the start of their career in the plumbing industry.

It is fantastic to see these young people choosing a career in the construction industry and I commend them on their choice. Not only is this industry diverse, it also offers many different types of career paths and the opportunities for advancement are virtually unlimited, regardless of where you start.

SNIPEF is proud of its long involvement in the training of apprentices for the plumbing industry. We were the first of the UK construction trade associations to set up its own dedicated managing agency – SNIPEF Training Services

Ltd – in 1983 and over the last 35 years we have seen several thousand people undertaking the required training to become plumbers.

However, the reduction in the number of new recruits to the industry is concerning. The industry requires more employers to take on the responsibility of investing in the industry's future workforce.

We currently have around 850 apprentices in training, including our new starts, but this is still 50% down on the numbers we had prior to the last recession. Although we are seeing small increases each year, we are still left well down on the numbers that were recruited prior to 2008.

Earlier this year, the skills shortage in the construction sector hit its worst recorded level and it is only expected to worsen over the coming years as the number of incoming talent fails to keep pace with that of retirement. The uncertainty with the Brexit



Fiona Hodgson,  
Chief Executive,  
SNIPEF

situation does nothing to improve the situation. Our members are already feeling the impact of skills shortage, with many reporting difficulties in finding skilled staff.

Unfortunately, in the past the construction industry was not seen as a place for women but in recent years we have seen an attitude shift recognising the value that women bring to the industry.

Data from the Office for National Statistics in 2016 showed only 13% of people working in the construction industry were women, so there is a huge opportunity to increase the number of women within the sector. The construction industry is a place for everyone and we need to promote equality and diversity to attract more people to pursue careers within it.

With the construction industry accounting for around 6% of the UK economy, it is crucial we act now to address this skills shortage. The only way we're going to do this is by investing in training and ensuring the construction industry is seen as an attractive career option to all young people. ■



You can read our interviews with two young female apprentices – and their bosses – on pages 29-32

“...in recent years we have seen an attitude shift recognising the value that women bring to the industry”

### 💡 PRESIDENT'S COMMENT

## Why 30-day terms should be the norm

In October, we are due to see the Peter Aldous Bill on retentions presented to Parliament. This is designed to make provisions in the construction industry contracts to protect retention deposits.

It states: "Any clause in a construction contract, entered into after the passing of the Construction (Retention Deposit Schemes) Act 2018, which enables a payer to withhold cash retentions shall be of no effect unless (a) upon their withholding, the monies are deposited forthwith in a retention deposit scheme under section 111A, and (b) prior to the first withholding of the monies, the payer has notified (i) the payee of the scheme administrator's name and contact details, and (ii) the scheme administrator of the payee's name and contact details."

Hopefully, this will deter retention money being used as a means of free finance and the money being lost in the event of insolvencies.

In discussions with main contractors, it became clear that many sub-contractors never apply for the release of their retention. One particular sub-contractor has a large six-figure sum due to them, dating back 10 years from one main contractor.

What has also become apparent is many sub-contractors do not ask for 30-day payment terms. It is a requirement of the construction act – main contractors should pay within that period and stop trying to impose longer terms of 45 to 60 days, or even more in the case of Carillion.

If all sub-contractors insist on 30 days, then it will become the norm and would stop main contractors taking longer to pay.

**Gordon Matheson,**  
President



### 💡 ARRIVALS

## Meet our new staff

### Marie Keith, SNIPEF Finance Administrator

Marie is an Edinburgh local, who has joined SNIPEF after working in the Purchase Ledger department of the National Trust for Scotland. She is now busy learning all of SNIPEF's financial processes while enjoying the team's friendly attitude. Marie loves to travel – on a trip to Egypt, she took a sunrise hot air balloon ride over the Valley of the Kings and enjoyed afternoon tea on the Nile at sunset.



### 💡 INDUSTRY

## Industry confident despite

Research by SNIPEF, SELECT, BESA and ECA shows steady growth in Q2 of 2018

**More than three quarters of engineering services organisations say turnover increased or remained steady in Q2 2018, despite rising material and labour costs.**

The figure of 77% comes in the latest sector-wide Building Engineering Business Survey, sponsored by Scolmore.

Compared to Q1, 62% of respondents reported a rise

in material costs and 45% an increase in labour costs.

Retentions were held against 61% of businesses, and late payment was an issue for over half of respondents in the commercial and public sector.

Despite this, the overall outlook for Q3 appears positive and optimistic, with 88 per cent predicting their turnover would grow or remain steady



### Meet a member

We put Mechanical Director Mark Sneddon under the spotlight / [Page 14](#)



### Out & About

Find out what Andy Furnevel and John Somerville have been up to / [Page 18](#)



#### Sarah Fitzpatrick, SNIPEF Membership and Communications Manager

Sarah joined the team after finishing a contract with Edinburgh PR agency, Stripe Communications. Another travel fan, she has moved to Scotland from New Zealand, where her last role was in the communications team at McDonald's NZ. Sarah harbours a quiet desire to be a race car driver.

#### Hayley Ricardo, SNIPEF Membership and Communications Administrator

Hayley is from New Haven, Connecticut, USA, and joined SNIPEF after completing her degree in Linguistics and English Language at the University of Edinburgh. In her free time, she plays piano and oboe. You may speak with her if you call with a membership query.

#### Aoife Meir, Apprentice Administrator, SNIPEF Training

Much like the plumbing apprentices she works with, Aoife is learning as she works, and will obtain her Level 3 in Business and Administration qualification in August 2019. A Harry Potter fan, Aoife has read the full series at least 18 times.

## rising material and labour costs

for the quarter. SNIPEF Chief Executive Fiona Hodgson said: "After a challenging start to the year for many of our members, it is heartening to see signs of steady growth in the industry.

"The industry continues to show resilience. However, there are ongoing challenges that must be addressed to provide certainty for businesses."

The survey is run in partnership with SNIPEF, SELECT, the Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA)

and Building Engineering Services Association (BESA).

This quarter, it received 372 responses from companies, mainly regarding their performance in Q2 (1 April to 30 June 2018) and expectations for Q3.

Darrell Matthews, SELECT Managing Director, said: "It's a tribute to the resilience of small and large employers that they are generally more optimistic about the future despite rising costs and late payment issues."



#### Keep an eye on your inbox

The Building Engineering Business Survey for Q3 will be sent out in October. The results give an invaluable insight into the current state of the industry, so please take a few minutes to complete it.

#### EVENTS

### Seminar postponed

The SEC Group Northern Ireland seminar on addressing contracts and payment risks in the post-Carillion era was due to take place in Belfast on Thursday 18 October.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, this event has been postponed until Spring 2019. An update will be sent when the new date is confirmed.

INDUSTRY NEWS

Capita wins extension of HSE service contract

Capita is to continue to operate the official register of engineers licensed to undertake gas work on behalf of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

The outsourcing company was announced as the preferred bidder to deliver the five-year contract last month. It will now provide Gas Safe registration services from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2024.

HSE said: "Their bid was strongest on cost and quality. We are confident they will continue to raise the standards of gas safety and provide gas safe homes."

NORTHERN IRELAND

David is elected as new NI president

The Northern Ireland Master Plumber's Association (NIMPA) has elected David Taylor as its new president.

David – who is Managing Director of Taylor Plumbing and Heating – will serve a two-year term in the role, which includes representing Northern Ireland on the SNIPEF Council.

He said: "I'm very proud to once again take on the role of NIMPA President and represent the best interests of plumbing and heating businesses in Northern Ireland during these challenging times."

Read an interview with David in the next issue of PlumbHeat.

Got a story? Email us on contact@snipef.org

2018 ANGLING COMPETITION

# Enthusiasts plumb



Eager entrants line up on the shore of the lake

## SNIPEF members and associates reeled in some big catches on Lake of Menteith at the 2018 SNIPEF Angling Competition

**Eighteen boats hit the water on Lake of Menteith on 22 August as keen anglers competed to hook the most delicious supper.**

Our anglers were competing for the heaviest catch, comprising of four fish. Ian Crighton took home the top prize with a basket weight of 11lbs 2oz, with Graham Fyfe's 9lbs catch securing him second place. Aaron Philip and Keith McDonald jointly hooked third place with

their 8lbs catches. The biggest fish overall came in at a whopping 4lbs, caught by Ian Crighton.

Unfortunately, not everyone enjoyed such a successful day. Despite his best efforts, the fish were



Left to right: Winners Graham Fyfe, Ian Crighton, Sean Timmons and Charles Johnston

It was great to see our members having a relaxing time out on the water, mixed with some fierce competition as everyone wanted to take top spot"

# the depths



not biting for Sean Timmons and he came in empty-handed, duly being rewarded with a booby prize.

ATAG Heating Technology and the Lake of Mentelth generously sponsored a raffle, with Charles Johnston winning a bottle of whisky and an evening of fishing at the picturesque lake.

Martyn Raine, SNIPEF Technical Manager and fishing enthusiast, said: "It was great to see our members having a relaxing time out on the water, mixed with some fierce competition as everyone wanted to take the top spot.

"Congratulations to all our winners – it was an event enjoyed by all."



The catches are carefully weighed

PLUMBEX

## Trio meet and greet at Belfast exhibition



Left to right: Andy, Sarah and Martyn on the stand

SNIPEF's Edinburgh-based team enjoyed a flying visit to Belfast last month to attend PLUMBEX, Northern Ireland's dedicated plumbing and heating trade event.

Technical Manager Martyn Raine, Membership Officer Andy Furnevel and Sarah Fitzpatrick, Membership and Communications Manager, manned the SNIPEF stand on 12-13 September.

During the two-day event at the Titanic Exhibition Centre, they answered questions, chatted about membership and discussed the state of the industry in Northern Ireland.

Sarah said: "PLUMBEX provided an excellent

**“ This event was a great start towards increasing our profile in Northern Ireland”**

opportunity for us to see many of our existing members, and to highlight the benefits of SNIPEF membership with plumbing and heating businesses who are not yet members.

"We'd like to do more in Northern Ireland, so this event was a great start towards increasing our profile in Northern Ireland."



Visitors chat to SNIPEF staff

If you spoke to our team at PLUMBEX and are interested in becoming a member, email us on [membership@snipef.org](mailto:membership@snipef.org) or call 0131 556 0600.



## OBITUARY

## Tribute paid to Robert



Robert Miller, an active member of SNIPEF's Kilmarnock branch, passed away at the age of 93 on 15 December 2017.

Robert had a very colourful past. He grew up in Stewarton, Ayrshire, and was trained as a slater in his family's business, Robert Miller & Sons, before becoming a plumber.

During World War II, Robert was sent to London to use his expertise as a slater to help repair the roofs of bomb-damaged houses. He was very proud to have seen his hero, Winston Churchill, during his time there.

He eventually took over the family business and worked for most of his life, finally retiring at 80 years of age. Robert Miller & Sons was taken over by his son, Matthew, and continues to trade as a plumbing-only business to this day.

Robert continued to attend committee meetings and special events in Kilmarnock even after his retirement. Andy McRoberts, current Kilmarnock branch president, said: "He was a very likeable man with a good sense of humour who always had something to chat about. He will be missed by all."

## BSE SKILLS LTD



Left to right: Head of BESA Scotland & Northern Ireland Iain McCaskey, Fiona Harper, Head of Employment Affairs at SELECT, and Duncan Wilson, Deputy Chief Executive of SNIPEF

## SNIPEF plays vital role in skills bid win

### Move will secure future of vocational training

**SNIPEF has joined forces with two other trade bodies to secure an historic agreement to manage and develop apprenticeships, qualifications and National Occupational Standards for the building services engineering sector.**

Working with SELECT and the Building Engineering Services Association (BESA), the group has created BSE Skills Ltd, which has been appointed to oversee vocational training in electrical, plumbing and heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC).

This historic precedent is the first time trade bodies have received a government commission to carry out such work.

The four central and devolved UK

governments turned to the three organisations to ensure a secure future for vocational training following the closure of SummitSkills in 2017.

As member bodies, the trade associations were able to demonstrate close links with employers and UK-wide capacity. They will now work with their respective memberships – comprising more than 43,000 businesses and 342,000 operatives – to manage the delivery of a training framework.

SNIPEF Chief Executive Fiona Hodgson said the successful bid demonstrated the strength of trade associations "working together to ensure that the sector and its employers continue to have the occupational standards, qualifications and apprenticeship frameworks they need to maintain and develop a skilled workforce for the future."



Second place and nearest the hole winner David Gordon with Andy

## 2018 GOLF TOURNAMENT

## PTS & City take honours as

**Ten teams swung into action at this year's SNIPEF golf tournament, each with a driving ambition to walk away with the top prize.**

Alyth Golf Club witnessed a fantastic day of competition, followed by an equally excellent meal.

Top individual honours went to Derek France from PTS & City Plumbing with a Stableford score of 39.

Together with team-mates Kevin Dermiddy, Grant Muir and John Muldoon, PTS also claimed first place and the Scottish Federation Cup in the



Left to right: Neil Hadden with top team Gary Coyle and Mike Davis

**CLAY PIGEON SHOOTING**

# Hotshots are bang on target

**Members had glory in their sights as they took part in the annual SNIPEF clay pigeon shooting competition.**

The 18 hotshots faced a number of challenges to test

their prowess at the scenic County Clays in Dunkeld on 29 August.

Overall winner on the day was Mike Davis, who received a Samsung A6 tablet

generously donated by simPRO Software Ltd. Mike and his teammate Gary Coyle were the top team, while Bob Hannam and Roddy Potter

were the flush winners. Andy Furnevel, SNIPEF Membership Officer, who was also the official scorekeeper, said: "It's great to see our members out on the field, enjoying some downtime.

It was an enjoyable day for members to test their skills and participate in some friendly competition. Well done to all who took part."



Members take to the firing range in Dunkeld



Overall winner Mike (left) receives his tablet from simPRO's David Park

## golfers get into the swing of things at Alyth

team event, with a Stableford score of 112.

Second place went to David Gordon from K Downs Plumbing & Heating, along with the prize for nearest the hole.

The K Downs Plumbing & Heating team – made up of David, Stewart Robertson, Colin Campbell and Bobby Williamson –

also nabbed second place, with a Stableford score of 93.

Andy Furnevel, SNIPEF Membership Officer, attended the event on 22 June, along with Neil Foxcroft, SNIPEF Regional Training Officer.

He said "It was good to see so many members on the day, making it a great

competition. Thanks go to Jim Moody from ATAG Heating Technology who presented a lovely bottle of whisky to Derek and to Alyth Golf Club for donating a four-ball prize to the winning team.

"Special thanks also to the team from Worcester Bosch, who support this great event every year."



Longest drive winner Alan McLean from Pitkerro with Andy

# APHC calls for

Quality Plumber Week 2018 debated the introduction of a mandatory licence to operate a plumbing and heating business

Got a story?  
Email us on [contact@snipef.org](mailto:contact@snipef.org)

This year's Quality Plumber Week (QPW) saw the plumbing and heating industry debate the pros and cons of introducing a single mandatory licence to operate a plumbing business.

Running between 1-7 October, QPW is about championing the diverse skills of plumbing and heating engineers and celebrating the important role they play in keeping people healthy and safe.

However, anyone can buy a set of tools and set themselves up in business as a plumber – a practice which the Association of Plumbing and Heating Contractors (APHC) believes needs



MEMBERS

## Amber meets Amber!

SNiPEF Regional Training Officer Vanessa Docherty was left seeing double when her bathroom sprang a leak during the summer.

Her local firm, Amber Gas, came out to fix the problem – and enjoyed an impromptu photo shoot with

their namesake, Vanessa's puppy Amber.

The dog enjoyed meeting Frank Baillie and his first-year apprentice, Jamie Bruce, who attends Forth Valley College.

Vanessa added: "She also really enjoyed interrupting their work!"



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# plumbers to be licensed

to be addressed. APHC put forward the argument that a single national mandatory licensing scheme would:

- protect the public from dangerous and non-compliant work
- assist the UK in reducing its carbon emissions through work compliant with regulation and best practice
- provide more of a level playing field for the bona fide plumbing and heating installers when quoting and tendering for work.



APHC chaired the debate via regional workshops in England and Wales, over social media and at PHEX Manchester, focusing on how terms like 'Licensed Plumbing Company' would be banned unless a company and its installers were accredited and had undergone a programme of CPD and assessment.

APHC CEO John Thompson said: "It was encouraging to see the industry come together and share their views.

"There was lively debate over the rights and wrongs of such a scheme, and how it could fit within the current framework of legislation and existing competence schemes."



## SNIPEF SAYS... SNIPEF CEO

Fiona Hodgson said: "Like APHC, we believe that people should not be able to sell their services as a plumber without being properly qualified and working to industry standards. Quality Plumber Week is the ideal time to debate the introduction of a national mandatory licensing scheme. It has been extremely interesting to hear the industry voice opinions from both sides of the debate and look at how such a scheme could practically be implemented."



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## Upcoming events

Keep an eye out for the following member events:

Event	Date	Venue
Edinburgh and District Apprentice Prize-Giving	25 October	Jewel & Esk Valley College, Dalkeith
National Landlord Day	13 November	Our Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh
SNIEPF Council Meeting	15 November	Bellevue House, Edinburgh
SkillPLUMB UK Final	16-18 November	NEC, Birmingham
Glasgow Association Dinner	11 January	Radisson, Glasgow
Dundee Association Dinner Dance	22 February	Invercarse Hotel, Dundee

**+** **Taking on a trainee?**  
Our useful guide can help you make the most of apprenticeships  
/ Pages 34-35

## Upcoming training

The following training courses are now open to members:

Course type	Date	Venue
Approved Certifier of Construction	5 December	Bellevue House, Edinburgh
Water Byelaws	16 January	TBA
Approved Certifier of Construction	20 February	TBA

### CONTACT

Please call the Schemes Department on 0131 357 2440 for further information on upcoming training.

More courses will be announced soon – check the website for details



## Meet a member

In the first of our new personal profiles, we catch up with **Mark Sneddon**, Mechanical Director at Moffat Electrical Services

### Hi Mark. How did you get started in the industry?

I was offered an apprenticeship as a 16-year-old and took my father's advice. He told me: "Get a trade – once you have it you can do anything in life."

### What's the best project you've been involved with and why?

Various projects come to mind, however I have two memorable ones, both from my days as an apprentice. The first was at the Templeton Business Centre on Glasgow Green, where I was left in a room with a sea of sanitaryware and told not to come out until it was all mounted. I'm sure many a start in the industry was like this! The second came when I was working at the original development of the Auchrannie House Hotel on Arran, where we soon learnt what it was like to be



away from home. Ironically, 21 years later I'm back at Auchrannie, offering help and assistance with heating issues in the new facilities.

### What's been your funniest plumbing moment?

One Saturday afternoon, I got a callout to the new Sir John Moore Wetherspoon's pub in Glasgow – it was trial run day and the drains had choked up. I was down in the basement, with trains thundering past into Glasgow Central low level station and had to split the hanging pipework to alleviate the flooding upstairs. Needless to say, it didn't go well. I couldn't get off the steps in time and was covered in waste and sewage water. I was monitored for Hepatitis A and C for months after – not to mention the injections. To this day, I still laugh about it, especially when I see apprentices wearing rubber gloves to handle pipe.

## New members

A very warm welcome to SNIEPF's latest member firms

### SCOTLAND

- Craig Field Ltd, Glasgow
- DM Plumbing & Heating Services, Aberdeen
- John B Little Ltd, Galashiels
- Eric Hyslop Ltd, Stranraer
- Phoenix Plumbing & Heating Contractors Ltd, Clydebank
- RGW Plumbing & Heating Solutions, Prestwick
- Ian Chambers Plumbing & Heating, Golspie



Favourite holiday destination?

**Tell us a bit more about the company you work for**  
Moffat Electrical Services was formed in 1996 by Craig Moffat, predominately as an electrical maintenance company. Over the years it's grown and expanded into five sectors – Maintenance, Testing, Commercial & Industrial Installations, Social Housing & Mechanical and Plumbing Installations & Maintenance. We now have a team of around 140 people.

**What type of work does the company carry out?**

We do a wide variety of work, from plumbing, heating and ventilation to air conditioning and full electrical installations.

**So what are your ambitions for the future?**

Just to continue the good work and name we've built up at Moffat. We really pride ourselves in the fact that we're a family-run business.

**And what would you change about the industry?**

Payment terms. There's nothing worse than agreeing a price for a job, only to get to the end and then be offered less than the agreed rate. And then being paid late anyway.

**And finally...what's the best thing about being a SNIPEF member?**

The back-up and support of an organisation that's stood the test of time.

## Mark's quick-fire questions

**Coffee or tea?**  
Coffee – I drink far too much of it

**Sweet or savoury?**  
Both!

**Favourite film?**  
*Cool Runnings*

**Last thing you read?**  
This questionnaire!

**Which super power would you choose?**  
Invisibility

**Dream car?**  
Tesla

**Morning person or night owl?**  
I'm a morning person – definitely

**Favourite holiday destination?**  
San Diego, USA



Coffee or tea?

Dream car?

- D Adam & Co Ltd, Arbroath
- PH Heating Solutions, Perth
- Murdoch Plumbing & Heating Ltd, Banff
- Stuart Watt Plumbing & Heating Ltd, Banchory
- McCabe Plumbing & Heating Ltd, Hamilton
- McCoid Plumbing & Heating, Glasgow

- SBL Plumbing & Heating, Bathgate
- Stewart Milne Homes Ltd, Uddingston
- ELEETE Plumbing & Building Solutions, Kirkintilloch
- DF Plumbing & Heating, Pencaitland
- Incorporated Water Services Ltd, Glasgow

- C Rowley Plumbing & Heating Services, Keith
- CDE Plumbing & Heating, Bankfoot
- DWF PlumbHeat, Larkhall

### NORTHERN IRELAND

- CHP Mechanical Services Ltd, Newcastle
- CMG Plumbing & Heating, Cookstown



## CONTACT

For more about membership, call 0131 556 0600 or email [membership@snipec.org](mailto:membership@snipec.org)

In the first of a new series, we meet a SNIPEF member firm and discover more about their work

# Going underground

**Matthew Kinloch wants to tell the world about something that's been hidden underground for too long.**

It's a quick, hassle-free way of replacing external lead piping that avoids the messy, frustrating and sometimes difficult business of digging a trench.

It's 'moling' and it's the process of providing a service by tunnelling underground with special equipment where the only digging involves creating two small holes at either end of the points you want to connect.

Matthew, a plumber to trade, started the firm Trenchless Installations with business

partner Robbie Millar a year ago. And as more and more people become familiar with moling, business is growing steadily.

He explained: "Around 30 years ago, my dad and his business partner used to offer this technique to whoever needed it. When he gave up, there was a great deal of expensive equipment sitting around unused, so I decided to start using it. Eventually, I partnered with Robbie, who's a landscape gardener. We bought new equipment, modernised some of my dad's pieces and got the business going.

**“We've yet to have an unhappy customer and everyone is usually amazed by the process”**

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snipef.org**

## Reaping rewards of membership

"We joined SNIPEF about a year ago but didn't realise exactly how useful the organisation was until recently," said Matthew. "Representatives came out to one of our jobs and talked through everything they can do for us. I was really impressed and wished I'd joined up sooner.

"There are benefits such as van and other insurance, and I've already found that they're great at coming up with useful information.

"We had a job involving a fire hydrant – something we hadn't come across before. I quizzed John Somerville at SNIPEF on it. Although



he didn't have all the answers to hand, he found them out and next day sent me all the details. That was brilliant.

"What's more, ultimately we'd like to do our own track inspections and sign off our own work off. The guys at SNIPEF are already on the case, checking out the possibilities with Scottish Water."

"We provide a stress-free, mess-free option. So instead of digging a trench across someone's garden or monoblock paving, we dig a 1m<sup>2</sup> hole at the boundary of the property and the same at the building, then simply tunnel between the two points.

"Everything we do goes underground and there's very little obvious impact. It's quick and it's cost-effective – despite its advantages our fees are roughly equal to the cost of digging a trench."

Matthew added: "We've yet to have an unhappy customer and everyone is usually amazed by the process.

"Often we fill the holes in the same day and people don't even know that we've been and gone."



At the moment, most of the company's work is in the domestic market, although they are gaining an increasing amount of corporate projects.

"We do work for plumbers and electricians – we can help with installing ducts for garden lighting or new cabling for houses," said Matthew. "We help gas fitters too. Modern day boilers require a bigger flow of water. However, most are supplied by a small half-inch pipe, which is often bent thanks to pressure exerted over time. As a result, the supply can't cope with the demands being placed on it.

"Many modern boilers specify a 25mm supply – which is what we always put into a house. It makes a huge difference to pressure and flow rate. Among other things, this makes a boiler work more efficiently."

Fortunately for Matthew and Robbie, the strength of the company's work is seeing it receive an increasing number of referrals from Scottish Water. Matthew said: "It's difficult for people who don't do external lead pipe replacement regularly, since there are a lot of regulations that you must follow. And Scottish Water won't sign the job off unless it's done exactly as it should be."

Until now the majority of jobs have been in East Lothian and Edinburgh, but it's a case of 'have mole will travel'. "We're not picky; we'll carry out work wherever we're asked," said Matthew.

Meanwhile, they're doing everything they can to make sure the benefits of moling are not kept in the dark, but brought into the light. ■



## QUICK FACTS

**NAME:**  
Trenchless Installations

**BASED:**  
Edinburgh

**PHONE:**  
0131 623 0742

**WEBSITE:**  
[www.trenchlessinstallations.com](http://www.trenchlessinstallations.com)



## View from the SNIPEF team

After seeing Matthew in action, SNIPEF Technical Inspector John Somerville said: "I was impressed with Trenchless Installations as they are using an old technology – roughly 30 years old – which could be mistaken for a new technology.

"This way of installing underground mains supply pipes cuts out the need to dig full-length trenches to then lay the pipes in.

"Depending on the length of the run, the installers only need to dig two to three holes that would house the mole to start digging."

John went on: "The mole is set up using measuring equipment to make sure the mole runs in the exact course that's intended.

"This is where the experience comes into play regarding the type of ground the mole is working in and whether the mole will be able to run in a straight line to the finishing point.

"The type of ground environment would be determined at the time of digging the starting and finishing holes.

"It's a very clever system and I don't understand why everyone else doesn't use it, or even employ Trenchless Installations' services."



## ARRAY OF SERVICES

Although Trenchless Installations currently focus mostly on lead pipe replacement, moling can be used for a wide array of services. As well as water pipes, the company helps with gas pipes and cabling, putting in ducts, and even irrigation for farmers.

They're one of very few firms doing this sort of work. As well as the necessary equipment, moling demands expertise and experience, especially when there's the risk of interfering with other services.

"We avoid that by doing a proper survey before any job," said Matthew. "If we've picked a line for the mole to go from A to B and we know any service crosses it, we will always dig a small pilot hole. And all water pipe installations are checked by Scottish Water."

One of my many highlights this summer was a joint visit with my very knowledgeable colleague John (see opposite), who had arranged an inspection with one of our members in Dornoch.

I was hoping to get on the golf course having played Royal Dornoch back in '93 – and if I'd scored 93 that day I would've been happy.

The meeting was on a new-build development and it was very interesting to hear John in full flow regarding Water Byelaws while answering questions at the same time. (I believe this is what they call multi-tasking, which is clearly something John has picked up during visits with me.)

I was able to discuss our many membership benefits during the meeting, and also reserve a place for our upcoming Approved Certifier of Construction Course, which is taking place not far away from Dornoch in Inverness.

### GET INVOLVED WITH ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

I've been inundated with Associate Membership enquiries this year. We've operated the membership option for some years as we believe it's desirable for installers, suppliers, colleges and others in the industry to work together. That way, they can help ensure that our sector is accorded proper recognition for the significant contribution it makes to the Scottish and Northern Irish economies.

Working with our associate members also assists us in our efforts to promote professionalism within our industry and connects our



By Andy Furnevel, Membership Officer, SNIPEF

### MY HIGHLIGHT

I have been inundated with new member enquiries which is a great sign. A lot of these firms are also recruiting apprentices, which is another great sign for the industry as a whole.

### WHAT I'VE LEARNED...

Royal Dornoch was rated 5th in the world by *Golf Digest* in 2016, so why they let me play there is anyone's guess.

associates to plumbers and heating engineers committed to high standards of work.

For more information on Associate Membership, email me on [andy.furnevel@snipef.org](mailto:andy.furnevel@snipef.org) or call **07801 741 346**.

### ARE YOU ON THE MAILING LIST?

What do you think of the new *PlumbHeat* magazine? Are you on the mailing list and if you're not, would you like to be? Get in touch and I can arrange it – email me on [andy.furnevel@snipef.org](mailto:andy.furnevel@snipef.org) or call **07801 741 346**.

### AND FINALLY...

After buying my first property in the capital 17 years ago, I'm moving to Dunfermline in the Kingdom of Fife, where my team, the mighty Dunfermline Athletic, ply their trade. I just wanted a change and a house, and as I spend the majority of my time north of the Forth Bridges it made sense to me – but not to many other people it seems!

### KEY:

- Andy visit
- △ John visit

Portree

### MY LOW POINT...



My trusty Mazda 3 will be returned to the lease company this month after three years' loyal service.

Clydebank  
Paisley

Kilwinning

○  
△  
Ayr

### DID YOU KNOW?

Dunfermline Athletic reached the semi-final of the Cup Winners' Cup in 1968-69, losing to eventual winners Slovan Bratislava. Contrary to what some members might say, I wasn't at the game.

# OUT

**WHAT I'VE LEARNED...**

It's always good to refresh your memory by looking back at old course literature – you never know what might crop up on the next job you attend.

**MY HIGHLIGHT...**

There are a few new faces at SNIPEF towers and it's been a pleasure meeting and working alongside them. It's also good to hear all the new ideas that will benefit our members.

**MY LOW POINT...**

Technology is only any use when it's actually working!



By John Somerville, Technical Inspector, SNIPEF

**During the scorching summer, the members I visited were working hard during the day and topping their tans up when they were finished – even in Inverness!**

The visits over these past months have been a mixture of new member visits and Approved Certifier of Construction visits. I also occasionally had the pleasure of visiting members with Andy – AKA the face of SNIPEF – and learned a lot from him during our trips together.

**SPOOKY SURPRISE**

On one of my recent visits, I met Joe McQueenie from Incorporated Water Services, who are based in Glasgow.

He was checking a pipe in a basement and took a picture – but didn't realise what was lurking in the shadows until later when he was putting a document together. Can you see the figures in his snap? I was just glad that I didn't need to go into the basement with him – it's not even Halloween yet!

**BEST IN SHOW**

During another visit, Steven Lyon from Malcolm Allan Housebuilders was pleased to show off the standard of their properties in Inverurie. The show home (*below*) was full of modern and easily accessible plumbing and heating technology – and not a basement in sight.



**SKYE'S THE LIMIT**

I also managed to visit the Isle of Skye, which was good timing as there was training in Inverness on 26 September. My visit meant I was able to remind members about it and hopefully add more delegates to the course.

We hit the road with our busy Membership Officer and Technical Inspector to find out exactly what they've been up to over the past few months...

# & ABOUT

# Home & hosed

Mixer taps with shower rinsers have become increasingly popular in modern kitchens – but also carry very real risks. Here's how to ensure safety and compliance, along with domestic bliss

## Advances in design and client demands have seen an increase in domestic kitchen mixer taps being installed with shower hose attachments.

Thanks to their flexibility, these attachments can seem very appealing, with their design making the cleaning of utensils and food products much simpler.

The Water Byelaws/Regulations, Schedule 2, paragraph 15 states: "Every water system must contain an adequate device or devices for preventing backflow of fluid from any appliance, fitting or process from occurring."

Devices for preventing backflow can be either non-mechanical via the use of an air gap or mechanical via the use of a mechanical component or fitting.

Of course, a non-mechanical device is preferable due an absence of working components

that can fail, unless the air gap is compromised by an incorrect modification of the configuration.

## RECOGNISING THE RISKS

Kitchen sinks in both domestic and non-domestic buildings are classed as having a fluid Category 5 risk. This means the appliance poses the greatest threat to the water system due to the presence of contaminants containing the greatest risk.

In this situation, a mechanical backflow device would not be suitable for protection against fluid Category 5.

To address fluid Category 5 on this type of appliance, normal practice is to apply a Type AUK3 air gap. This will provide protection from back siphonage to fluid Categories 4 and 5.

Regulators' specification of Type AUK3 backflow prevention



By Martyn Raine,  
Technical  
Manager,  
SNIPEF

is described as follows:

*The higher risk tap gap means the height of an air gap between the lowest part of the outlet of a tap, combination fitting, shower head or other fitting discharging over any appliance or other receptacle, and the spillover level of that appliance, where a fluid Category 4 or 5 risk is present downstream,*



Air gaps are essential when fitting shower hose attachments



## Always mind the gap

There are currently products on the market that will compromise the air gap due to their design.

Kitchen mixer taps with shower hose attachments are one such product that will increase the risk of contamination to the water supply. This is due to the shower head on some tap assemblies being able to reach below the spillover level of the sink, therefore compromising the air gap and creating a risk to both the water supply and the householder.

If you're asked to install this type of tap fitting, it's essential that you fully inspect the water fitting. Ensure the shower head does not reach within 20mm or twice the diameter of the inlet pipe – whichever is greater – of the spillover level of the appliance it serves.

The good news is, there are many reputable manufacturers that produce this type of tap assembly who won't allow the shower head to reach below the spillover level of the sink. Approved products can be found on the WRAS Approvals Directory.

On the other hand, it doesn't take long to find a kitchen tap assembly that incorporates a shower head on popular internet sites that contravene the Water Byelaws/Regulations.

Of course, the typical home owner will be unaware of these requirements – so if you're asked to specify or supply this type of water fitting, it's essential you carry out the required research to ensure compliance.

*such as (a) any domestic or non-domestic sink or other appliance, or (b) any appliance in premises where a higher level of protection is required, such as some appliances in hospitals or other health care premises, shall be not less than 20mm or twice the diameter of the inlet pipe to the fitting, whichever the greater.*

For example, if the water fitting was supplied with a 15mm supply, the air gap will need to be 30mm from the spillover level to the lowest point of the outlet from the water fitting.

### PREVENTION METHODS

Backflow prevention can be provided through the use of a break tank that is capable of providing a Type AA, Type AB or Type AUK1, with an interposed cistern.

The use of a break tank may prove to be difficult in

a domestic situation due to the restriction of space within that building. There may also be issues of low pressure and reduced flow rate at the termination point due to the nature of the system.

A boost pump may be required, but again this may be difficult due to the restriction of space. If such a pump is used, if it's capable of providing 12L/min flow or more, the water undertaker would need to be notified of the installation.

### SUMMARY

All sinks should be regarded as a fluid Category 5 risk

“... a non-mechanical device is preferable due to an absence of working components that can fail”

unless a risk assessment indicates otherwise.

Tap assemblies should be of approved type and at no point should the shower head of the tap be capable of reaching within 20mm or twice the inlet pipe diameter – whichever is the greater – of the spillover level of the appliance it serves.

The water undertaker will request these situations to be resolved if discovered on a site inspection. ■

### FIND OUT MORE

WRAS Water Regulations Guide:  
[www.wras.co.uk/news/wras\\_news/categories/technical\\_interpretations/mind\\_your\\_tap\\_gaps/](http://www.wras.co.uk/news/wras_news/categories/technical_interpretations/mind_your_tap_gaps/)

# THE silent killer

Carbon monoxide is lethal, yet can't be seen or tasted – so fitting the right detector is literally a matter of life and death

**Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas that can be produced from fuel-burning appliances. It is highly toxic and presents a danger to life at very low levels – as little as 35 parts per million (ppm).**

CO can be produced for a number of reasons including incomplete combustion, inadequate ventilation and poor appliance condition.

Types of fuels that have the potential to produce CO can be gas, oil, wood, coal and peat. CO can also be produced from woody biomass fuel stores, as it can be released when the fuel is in storage.

In December 2015, guidance was introduced to the Housing (Scotland) Act that required all private landlords to provide CO detection in their properties, in line with the Repairing Standard set out by the Scottish Government.

The Scottish Government requires all private landlords to ensure the property they let meets the repairing standard at the start of a tenancy.

As part of this standard, a CO detection device must be provided for all fixed combustion appliances, excluding an appliance used solely for cooking. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, it is also a requirement that all

new homes with combustion appliances are fitted with CO detectors.

Landlords should be advised that the installation of a CO detector doesn't mean that routine servicing and inspection of fuel-burning appliances should no longer take place. Instead, this should be done in line with any legal or manufacturer guidance.

## WHERE TO PUT THE DETECTOR

Positioning of CO detectors should be according to the manufacturer's instruction or as per the Building Standards Guidance in Scotland.

The Standards advise that the CO detector be positioned between 1-3m from the appliance, either wall-mounted 150mm below the ceiling and above any door or window, or ceiling-mounted 300mm away from any wall.



By Martyn Raine,  
Technical  
Manager,  
SNIPEF

New rules are in place in Scotland and Northern Ireland for fitting CO alarms

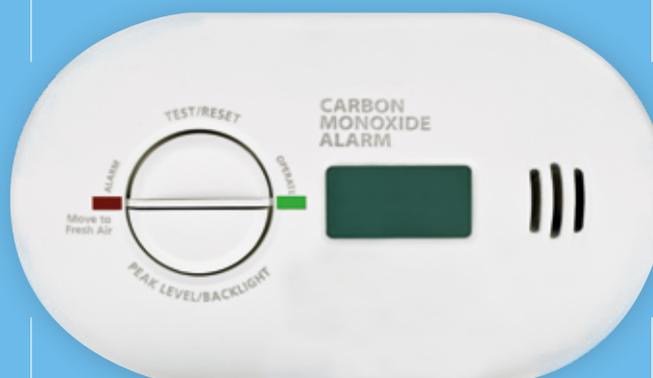
Consideration should also be given to any cooking appliances or any other appliances that produce steam as this can affect the detector sensor and hinder performance.

Consideration should be made when fuel-burning appliances are in secluded locations, for example cupboards, roof spaces or other remote locations, as this may make things a little more difficult.

If the CO detector is sited within the cupboard or roof space containing the fuel-burning appliance, the audible sounder would be obstructed by doors or other building fabrics. This is especially true in roof spaces, where loft quilt insulation can muffle the sound.

It's required that all CO detectors aren't obstructed in any way that the audible sounder level be impaired. If the fuel-burning appliance is located in a cupboard, it's therefore advised that the CO detector is positioned outside so the audible sounder is not obstructed. This will allow the occupier to be aware if the detector sounds.

If the fuel-burning appliance is sited in a roof space, it's advised that an interlinked setup is provided. This means a CO detector is placed in the roof space with the fuel-burning appliance, connected to a device



in the building's living area, usually next to the access hatch to the roof space.

This means if the CO detector is activated within the roof space, the interlinking will activate the CO detector to be sounded in the living area, which in turn would alert any occupants.

### HIGH-RISK SPACES

Installation of CO detectors is also required in high-risk spaces where a flue pipe passes. For example, if a flue pipe passes through a bedroom or other habitable areas, it's required that CO detectors are installed within that space.

The use of void detection systems can also be incorporated into a detection system. This is when the detector is sited outside a void and there is a sensing probe within the void that would detect any CO gas and activate the alarm.

“...the installation of a CO detector doesn't mean that routine servicing and inspection of fuel-burning appliances should no longer take place”

So if a fuel-burning appliance is in an interconnected room like a garage with a doorway into the living space, or a habitable room above it, a CO detector would be required for that appliance.

A CO detector would not be required in an external garage

where there is no direct route into the habitable area. This would include any passageways created from system pipework or cables passing from the garage to the habitable area.

### IN CONCLUSION

All privately rented properties are now required to have CO detectors installed for all fixed combustion appliances and all new or replacement combustion appliances, apart from appliances that are used solely for cooking.

This not only provides safety and security for the occupier and landlord but can provide another service for a SNIPEF member to provide to a client. ■

## Requirements for modern CO detectors

All CO detectors should:

- be manufactured to BS EN 50291-1 :2010+A1:2012
- include an internal sounder that will warn of the presence of CO gas
- have a life span of between five and seven years

- be battery operated
- incorporate a warning device that warns when the detector is coming to the end of its life.

*NOTE: It's permissible to install a CO detector powered from an electrical circuit, but it's required to have a sensor failure warning device.*

## FIND OUT MORE

*The Building Standards Technical Handbook:*  
[www.gov.scot/Topics](http://www.gov.scot/Topics)

*Building Control Northern Ireland Technical Booklet:*  
[www.buildingcontrol-ni.com](http://www.buildingcontrol-ni.com)

*Housing (Scotland) Act 2006:*  
[www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2006/1/section/13](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2006/1/section/13)

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Scottish Water has introduced a risk-based approach to Water Byelaws in new domestic developments. Here's how the changes could affect you

**Scottish Water has identified a need to improve its approach to Water Byelaws in new domestic developments. To do this, it's been working with key stakeholders from across the development community.**

Compliance starts with good design and choosing compliant water fittings. All water fittings and appliances connected to the public water supply in Scotland must be of an appropriate quality and standard and carry approved markings – e.g. WRAS, CE, BS Kitemark etc – to fully comply with the requirements of the Water Supply (Water Fittings) (Scotland) Byelaws 2014.

#### HOW THIS WILL AFFECT WATERSAFE ACCREDITED PLUMBERS

In June 2018, Scottish Water introduced a risk-based approach to Water Byelaws in new domestic developments. This primary change may affect the WaterSafe accredited plumbing community as follows:

- Developers will have several options for providing evidence of Water Byelaws compliance. If the developer selects a WaterSafe accredited plumber to carry out either their internal or external plumbing installation, Scottish Water will request that the plumber completes a signed compliance

certificate and sends it back to Scottish Water following completion of the work. This should be sent to [devopsbyelaws@scottishwater.co.uk](mailto:devopsbyelaws@scottishwater.co.uk)

Scottish Water will carry out inspections as appropriate, dependent upon the scale of the development. When field service advisors arrive onsite to carry out an inspection, they will ask the plumbers carrying out the installation if they are WaterSafe accredited.

If the plumber is not WaterSafe accredited and the development has been selected for an inspection, the advisor will carry out the appropriate Water Byelaws checks. If the plumber onsite is WaterSafe accredited, the advisor may ask to see their WaterSafe registration card.

#### OPTIONS FOR DEVELOPERS

As the tables on the right show, developers have several options for providing evidence of Water Byelaws compliance.

These range from Scottish Water undertaking all onsite checks, to WaterSafe accredited plumbers self-certifying their own work by completing a Water Byelaws compliance certificate.

Developers will be asked to complete a Water Byelaws (WB1) form to

**MORE INFORMATION** on Water Byelaws can be found at [www.scottishwater.co.uk/byelaws](http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/byelaws) or by emailing [byelaws@scottishwater.co.uk](mailto:byelaws@scottishwater.co.uk)

# Do your homework

notify Scottish Water on which option they wish to choose.

Scottish Water is encouraging developers to choose Option 1, as WaterSafe accredited plumbers have completed Water Byelaws training and are authorised through their accreditation scheme to issue a Water Byelaws compliance certificate covering their own work.

If a developer chooses this option, they will be asked to fill out the plumber's details on the WB1 form. This information is required so that Scottish

Water can confirm that the information provided is accurate.

Following completion of the installation, WaterSafe accredited plumbers should then send a completed compliance certificate to [devopsbyelaws@scottishwater.co.uk](mailto:devopsbyelaws@scottishwater.co.uk)

Please note that if a developer chooses to have a WaterSafe accredited plumber self-certify an external supply pipe as Byelaws compliant, they must also still follow the current process in place for full track inspections to ensure that the full service

## Dealing with contraventions

Scottish Water creates and enforces the Water Supply (Water Fittings) (Scotland) Byelaws 2014 to protect the health and wellbeing of everyone using the public water supply in Scotland.

If plumbing issues are identified that contravene the Water Byelaws, Scottish Water will follow the Byelaws Enforcement Policy. They will also offer guidance, advice and support with all relevant parties to help them comply.

pipe meets regulations.

If a developer chooses Option 2 to ensure internal Water Byelaws compliance, Scottish Water will then carry out inspections as appropriate, dependent upon the scale of the development. This may be on an audit approach where a percentage of properties will be inspected on an audit basis to ensure the development complies with Water Byelaws.

On arrival at the property, Scottish Water will inspect all internal plumbing systems, water fittings and appliances that are to be connected to

the public water supply.

If a developer chooses Option 2 for proving external Water Byelaws compliance then the current Scottish Water process for track inspections should be followed.

In the instance where a developer chooses Option 3 to prove external Water Byelaws compliance, the current remote track inspection process would be followed. ■

### Internal Water Byelaws Compliance

Option 1	WaterSafe accredited plumber issues self-certification certificate
Option 2	Scottish Water carry out an inspection

### External Water Byelaws Compliance

Option 1	WaterSafe accredited plumber issues self-certification certificate
Option 2	Scottish Water carry out inspection
Option 3	Remote track inspection



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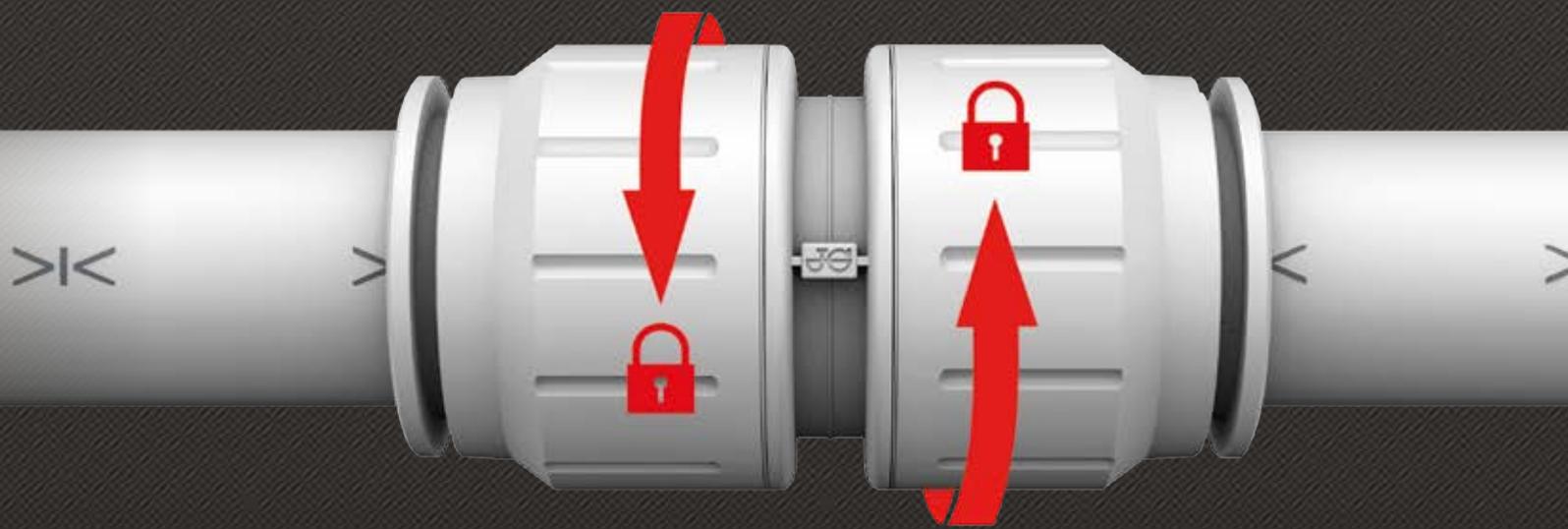
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[speedfit.co.uk](http://speedfit.co.uk)

# Round-up of latest WaterSafe® activities and events



Ben stars in the new advice film

**LOOK OUT**  
for the film at [watersafe.org.uk/taste](http://watersafe.org.uk/taste) and please link and share on your websites and social media channels.

## New film advises on taste and smell of tap water

WaterSafe's latest information film puts the spotlight on the reasons behind strange tastes and smells in drinking water and what can be done to prevent them. It features chlorine, metallic or antiseptic-tasting water, a musty or sewage smell and bitter water.

The film features advice from a UK water company and stars WaterSafe plumber Ben Robinson. It is also supported by the Drinking Water Quality Regulator (DWQR) for Scotland.

It follows the release of the annual report of the DWQR, which shows

that while tap water quality in Scotland remains among the best in the world, a small number of samples still fail taste and smell tests.

A significant proportion can be linked to poor plumbing in the home, wrongly connected pipework, poor materials and fittings, inadequate protection from water backflow into internal pipework from dishwashers and toilets cisterns, and poor hygiene.

WaterSafe is now encouraging SNIPEF members to share the film on social media via their dedicated YouTube channel to help keep the campaign in the public eye.

## Enjoy peace of mind and industry endorsement

When SNIPEF members become a member of WaterSafe, they're listed in our online directory.

And with WaterSafe's recent Facebook advertising campaign reaching thousands of

people across the country, there's never been a better time to be a member of the UK register of approved plumbers. Join now!

For more information on WaterSafe visit [watersafe.org.uk](http://watersafe.org.uk) and follow us on Facebook @WaterSafeRegister



## Keeping the relationship between consumers and plumbers watertight

Recent research from the Water Regulations Advisory Scheme (WRAS) has revealed the top 10 councils in the UK receiving most complaints about plumbers – with South Lanarkshire Council at number four on the list.

In response, WaterSafe is sharing expert advice for consumers looking to find and hire a plumber, developed with Trading Standards.

The aim is to protect consumers from rogue traders and the consequences of sub-standard and potentially dangerous work.

A WaterSafe spokesman said: "If you've used the WaterSafe postcode search, you're guaranteed that the plumber you've found is accredited as a member in good standing with their trade association."



Find out more at [watersafe.org.uk/hiringaplumber](http://watersafe.org.uk/hiringaplumber)

➤ For more information and advice about how you can benefit from your membership of WaterSafe, please visit us at [watersafe.org.uk](http://watersafe.org.uk)



4-PAGE  
SPECIAL

With more women being encouraged to join the industry, we meet two youngsters taking their first steps to becoming a plumber – and speak with the bosses showing them the ropes

# The girls closing the gender gap

**NAME:**  
*Sasha Mathers*  
**AGE:** 18  
**COLLEGE:**  
*North East Scotland  
College, Aberdeen  
(NESCOL)*  
**EMPLOYER:**  
*Sanctuary Group*

**S**anctuary Maintenance, the in-house repairs and maintenance service of housing and care provider Sanctuary Group, is putting its faith in Scotland's young people by providing apprenticeship opportunities.

Its newest recruit is Sasha Mathers, who's joined the growing number of women who have decided that plumbing offers a great career option.

Stevie Gilmour is assistant operations manager for Sanctuary

Maintenance in the North-East. He said that although the decision to take on apprentices was taken relatively recently – this is the third year of the programme, with three trainees recruited per annum – Sasha's performance and attitude are confirming that it's been a smart move.

He said: "She has a natural thirst for the job, seems very keen to learn, is settling in well and showing a lot of promise. There was very stiff competition to secure the apprenticeship – we received over 70 applications when we advertised

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“...she has a natural thirst for the job, seems keen to learn, and is showing a lot of promise”

STEVIE GILMOUR

Sasha with boss Stevie Gilmour

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the post." Sasha started her role back in August, though it wasn't her first job. Before that, she had a part-time post as a waitress. "I've always wanted to do something that's hands-on," she said. "I was never very keen on a job that involved sitting in an office. I prefer more practical things and I thought this would be much more satisfying.

"I have to admit that I wasn't

**“...although I'm the only female in the team it's not strange and I enjoy having a laugh with all the guys. It's the same at college – I'm the only female in a class of 12”**

100% sure about exactly what I wanted to do, but it was always something manual on the construction side."

The choice to take up plumbing was based on that desire to work in construction. She has no family in the trade, so in many respects it's all new to her. "I heard about the apprenticeship and thought it would be a good option to investigate," she said. "Plumbing is an important job that's always going to be in demand."

Sasha found the selection process straightforward. It involved two interviews followed a few days later by tests to gauge her suitability for the college-based element of the apprenticeship. She said: "A couple of days later I got the call to say the job was mine if I wanted it – I was absolutely delighted." Her

week is now split between college on Monday and Tuesday and working with Sanctuary on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday – an arrangement that suits her down to the ground. "I prefer day release to block release," she said. "I enjoyed the first few weeks at college because we got straight into things from day one with hands-on workshops. And this arrangement allows me to get involved in ongoing jobs at Sanctuary too."

Despite her lack of experience, Sasha was aware that it takes a lot to be a successful plumber. "Everyone seems to have the preconceived idea that you spend your day unblocking toilets," she laughed. "I knew that there's much more to it than that and so I'm not surprised about the amount of work involved and the number of skills you have to learn."

Stevie is pleased that Sanctuary has made one of its new apprentices a young woman. "I'm a real advocate for giving women the opportunity to get involved in our profession," he said. "In a previous post I worked with a number of female apprentices and know how good they can be. They have a great aptitude for the trade and show real attention to detail when carrying out tasks."

Crucially, Sasha said she gets great support from her colleagues: "Even though I'm the only female in the team it's not strange. I enjoy having a laugh with all the guys. It's the same at college – I'm the only female in a class of 12."

Having made the commitment to provide opportunities for young people, Stevie believes it's vital that Sanctuary follows through.

He said: "Generally, very



## QUICK FACTS

**NAME:**  
Sanctuary Group

**BASED:**  
Aberdeen

**PHONE:**  
0800 131 3348

**WEBSITE:**  
[www.sanctuary-scotland.co.uk](http://www.sanctuary-scotland.co.uk)

**NAME:**  
Connie McNaughton

**AGE:** 16

**COLLEGE:** Fife College

**EMPLOYER:**  
Robert Walker Plumbing & Heating Engineer

### HI CONNIE. WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO BECOME A PLUMBER?

My dad knew Rab, the owner of the company, from working with him before and Rab had said he wanted a new apprentice. I think my sister was originally meant to take it up but I've always loved working with my hands so I piped up and said I'd like to give it a shot. I got the opportunity to do it for a week and really enjoyed it.

### HOW DID YOU DISCOVER YOU ENJOYED WORKING WITH YOUR HANDS?

I took metalwork and woodwork classes in school, and also used to do a lot of gymnastics, so I was always using my hands – and now I use them for work!

### HOW DID IT FEEL WHEN YOU STARTED YOUR APPRENTICESHIP?

Well, I was still at school and I wasn't sure what I wanted to do when I finished; I was thinking about maybe something with animals. I had mixed feelings about what I was going to do, but



Sasha attends North East Scotland College, Aberdeen Altens Campus





Left to right: Connie with Stephen Gethins MP and her boss, Robert Walker

## MP pays a visit

North East Fife MP Stephen Gethins recently paid Connie and her boss Robert Walker a visit – and said he was delighted to hear about her new apprenticeship.

He said: "Connie is a great role model for young women who want to progress and possibly go on to run their own business.

"It is also great that Mr Walker is supporting her and encouraging others to do likewise."

then this opportunity came up. I was still 15 and got day release from school until I was 16, and then I left.

### WERE PEOPLE SURPRISED WHEN YOU SAID THAT'S WHAT YOU WANTED TO DO?

Yes – absolutely! People would often say: "That's a boy's job, why are you doing that?" They were always asking why I wanted to do something that was so physical, and also very dirty and messy.

### WHAT KIND OF JOBS HAVE YOU ENJOYED WORKING ON?

There's been a lot of variety. For the first week I was just watching, but when I started doing the work myself it became a lot more physical, and a lot more enjoyable.



### QUICK FACTS

**NAME:**  
Robert Walker  
Plumbing &  
Heating Engineer

**BASED:**  
Cupar, Fife

**PHONE:**  
01334 654 966

### WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

My first task was to dig a hole, and then I moved up to getting tools from the van. After that, I started piping up bends and welding fittings and compression fittings, and then servicing boilers. I've learned so much, and I've enjoyed meeting new customers – you never know what you're going to get and who you're going to meet on a job.

### HOW DO CUSTOMERS REACT WHEN YOU TURN UP?

A few people have been shocked that a girl is doing the work, but I just get on with it. A few people have said they feel more comfortable having me in the house than a man. I also think we're definitely a lot cleaner and tidier than the men are.

### WHAT'S IT BEEN LIKE GOING TO COLLEGE?

I absolutely love it – it's a great mix of people in my class. I'm the only girl so it was a bit scary at first, but as soon as everyone started to get to know each other it just settled down.

### HOW ARE YOU FINDING THE BALANCE OF COLLEGE WORK AND PRACTICAL ON-THE-JOB WORK?

With college work, a lot of the time it's just books and exercises and revising in your own time. Whereas the practical work is more satisfying because you're actually seeing how everything is done.

Continued on page 32



few companies seem to be taking on apprentices for the long term. However, we want people to progress through the business.

"A lot of experienced master plumbers throughout the country are getting close to retirement age and if we don't give them the chance to pass on their knowledge and skills then they will be lost for good.

That's why we're extremely keen to give apprentices the chance. In fact, following on from Sasha, we've also just taken on another female apprentice plumber in West Scotland."

For her part, Sasha is just ready to absorb as much as she can. "There's no particular aspect of the job I'm keen to learn about – I want to know

about everything and what I can do to improve my skills."

When she completes the four-year course she'll receive a SVQ Level 3 Plumbing certificate. But, as far as she's concerned, that's just the start and has faith in herself to take things further. "I appreciate the fact that you always keep learning," she said. "Once I achieve Level 3, I can keep advancing." ■

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Connie attends Fife College

**WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO OTHER YOUNG WOMEN WHO ARE THINKING OF BECOMING PLUMBERS?**

I've been telling everyone that they should do it. People think it's a man's job but it's not. There is nothing I've not been able to do because I'm female.

**HOW DO YOU LIKE WORKING FOR ROBERT?**

It's a small company, just Rab, me and

another girl called Demi, but I really enjoy working with them. Rab's a great boss and Demi's really good, too – she just gets on with it and shows how it's done. I knew Rab had another girl working for him but I didn't know she'd been with him for so long. Demi is so experienced and I learn so much from her.

**WHAT WOULD YOU ULTIMATELY LIKE TO DO IN THE FUTURE?**

I've thought about what I'd like to do when I finish my apprenticeship, and I'd really like to run my own business and have an apprentice to teach. ■

**The Boss's view**

**HI ROBERT. HOW IS CONNIE GETTING ON?**

It feels like she's at the start of a big adventure. All apprentices become part of the family but I've taken on two women now and they've done so well. I believe we desperately need more women in the trade.

**WHAT SORT OF WORK HAS SHE BEEN DOING?**

We're country plumbers and after a warm summer, a lot of people have struggled to get water, especially in the hills. So we're doing a lot of water filtration work and country supplies. We've been giving Connie bits and pieces and now she can bend pipes, weld stuff and do some mechanical fittings.

**THIS IS YOUR SECOND FEMALE APPRENTICE, ISN'T IT?**

We already have Demi Glenn, who's been with me for 11 years and we were just looking for another apprentice. Normally I get a lot of guys applying, but Connie's dad is a former colleague. He came into the office and when I said I needed a new apprentice, he said: "What about Connie?"

**SHOULD BE MORE WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRY?**

Yes. Once you've trained a girl, in my experience, they're brilliant. They think laterally, they're clean and tidy and they make customers feel comfortable. Elderly customers and female customers often ask me: "Can we have a lady plumber please?" An

old lady in a flat would rather have a woman coming in than a man.

**DO YOU THINK WOMEN CAN DO THE JOB JUST AS WELL AS MEN?**

My dream is to champion equal opportunities and get more women into the trade. Demi has been great and I'm confident that in Connie I've got another winner. When I started in the trade everything was in cast-iron mode. People broke their backs and I damaged mine when I was 20, trying to lift something I shouldn't. Now it's all changed

**“...an old lady in a flat would rather have a woman coming in than a man”**

because the trade is becoming lighter. Boilers are less heavy and there is no barrier whatsoever to women doing the job.

**SO APPRENTICESHIPS ARE A GOOD THING?**

Yes – it's just a great way to get into the trade. Why go to university? It's not everything. I've actually had degree-educated people asking me for a job. We need fresh blood in the trade and Connie's a great example of that. She's enjoying her college course, as well as the practical work, and that's in a class where she's the only girl. ■

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SNIPEF staff meet the team from Skills NZ



# Kiwis make a flying visit

**New Zealand's largest industry training organisation, Skills NZ, paid a visit to SNIPEF to find out how Scotland is a world-leader in the development and delivery of plumbing apprenticeships.**

The visit came as part of a global tour by key stakeholders from New Zealand's plumbing industry, who were keen to learn about successful training programmes in other countries and take some wisdom back home.

They duly arrived at SNIPEF on 9 July, with the two organisations connected through the World Plumbing Council, which aims to develop and promote the image and standards of plumbing.

Diane Lithgow and Richard Thornton from Skills NZ were joined by Greg Wallace from Master Plumbers NZ and Martin Sawyers from New Zealand's Plumbers,

Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board. In turn, SNIPEF was represented by Duncan Wilson, Deputy Chief Executive, Dale Thomson, SNIPEF Training Services Manager, and some of SNIPEF's regional training officers.

The group spent the afternoon discussing Scottish apprenticeships, with topics covered including training and assessment materials, modern apprenticeships, and support systems for apprentices and their employers.

Duncan said: "It was an honour to be included on Skills NZ's world tour. The time we spent together was exciting and informative, and I hope we can use what we learned to better both of our programmes."

At the end of the day, the visitors – who also visited Canada and England on their trip – gifted SNIPEF a commemorative plaque (above), which is now on display in SNIPEF HQ. ■



Members of New Zealand training delegation spend a productive afternoon at SNIPEF HQ during mammoth fact-finding world tour

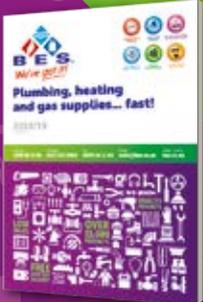
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An apprenticeship is a great way to start your working life, but it can be daunting. Likewise, taking on an apprentice is a good way to boost your workforce, but the training can be a challenge. Here are a few tips to get the most from an apprenticeship, wherever you are on the career ladder...

## FOR EMPLOYERS

### PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH

During their training, your apprentice will soak up knowledge and information like a sponge. They will learn and pick up new skills quickly, but this also applies to bad habits. Don't tell your apprentice to do something you would not do yourself, and ensure everyone in the business leads by example so your apprentice learns the best way to behave.

### ENCOURAGE LEARNING

From day one, create a welcoming environment where learning is encouraged. This will help your apprentice to feel comfortable and confident, not only to ask questions but also volunteer information and ideas. While your apprentice is there to learn from you, it's also an opportunity for you to learn from them – after all, they're seeing both the industry and your business with fresh eyes.

### SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

In many cases, this will be your apprentice's first experience of working life so they may need some extra guidance. Set clear expectations from the beginning and help them to understand what they need to be doing and how they need to behave. Don't assume they already know what you want from them.

### GIVE FEEDBACK

Your apprentice won't know if they are doing a good job or if there are areas they need to work on unless you tell them. Be approachable and ensure you have time to guide them. Have a regular meeting with your apprentice to discuss their progress and give them feedback on their work. Keep track of their skills and knowledge and set them tasks accordingly.

### BROADEN THEIR SKILL SET

Give your apprentice the chance to learn about the wider business. Set up your apprentice for a successful career by giving them an understanding of all parts of the business, from accounts and ordering to delivering good customer service. This will give your apprentice a more well-rounded education and will ensure that they become a real asset to your business. ■



300

New apprentices welcomed into their Modern Apprenticeship in Domestic Plumbing & Heating this year by SNIPEF Training Services

# Make the most of apprenticeships

## FOR APPRENTICES

### BE RELIABLE

As an apprentice, you're now an employee and with that role comes responsibility. Your employer and your colleagues will rely on you to do as you say. This includes attending college, being on time and completing projects. So if you say you're going to do something, then do it.

### ASK QUESTIONS

Asking questions is how we learn. If you don't understand something, ask. If you need clarification, ask. Your colleagues will understand you're learning and will expect you to have questions. Remember, it's better to feel silly about asking a question than it is to make a mistake because you didn't ask. And if you do have any problems, ask for help. It can help to carry a notebook so

you can jot down any questions or information for future reference.

### BE ENTHUSIASTIC

Be enthusiastic about the tasks you are set and what you're learning. A positive attitude will get you a long way and will help people notice and remember you. An apprenticeship is full of challenges but approaching each one with a positive outlook will encourage people to help you when needed or think of you when new opportunities arise.

### PLAN FOR THE LONG-TERM

Your apprenticeship may only be four years long, but you need to approach it with the future in mind. The choices you make now could impact the direction of your life so take time to consider what your goals are. There may also

be future opportunities within the business you completed your apprenticeship with. Your attitude and behaviour could impact whether you have a future career with them.

### USE THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO YOU

If you're having trouble with any part of your apprenticeship, whether it's managing your coursework, understanding a concept or issues with travel, people can help. Your college lecturer, your employer and your SNIPEF Regional Training Officer all want you to succeed and are there to help you do so. ■

*For more information on beginning a Modern Apprenticeship in Domestic Plumbing & Heating, or on employing an apprentice, contact SNIPEF Training Services on 0131 524 1245 or email [training@snipef.org](mailto:training@snipef.org)*

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By hiring two young apprentices through the SNIPEF training programme, **Graeme Blair** is demonstrating his firm's new commitment to moving away from sub-contractors and growing skills within the business



Left to right: Graeme, Iain and Alasdair at Crinan Harbour

# Building for the future

**Two plumbing apprentices have hit the ground running after Graeme Blair implemented a new business plan to grow his company.**

Alasdair McDougall and Iain Winnard joined Blair Plumbing & Heating Solutions through SNIPEF's Apprentice Training Programme, after Graeme decided to move away from sub-contractors and grow skills within the business.

With their boss covering a wide range of work, the duo have already seen their skills quickly develop through on-the-job training.

And while they followed different paths into plumbing, they're both relishing the opportunity to learn new skills that will set them up with a fantastic career.

Alasdair said: "When I left school I thought I wanted to be an electrician and didn't consider plumbing at all.

"I had no idea how extensive the range of work in plumbing was. I'm now in the third year of my apprenticeship and am really happy that I chose a career in plumbing."

By contrast, Iain always wanted to be a plumber but couldn't find a suitable apprenticeship until he met Graeme at the age of 22. Now in the second year of his apprenticeship, he says plumbing is even better than expected and he's confident he made the right career choice.

Graeme says introducing the apprentices has helped his company to grow, creating a strong team ethos that



## QUICK FACTS

**NAME:**  
*Blair Plumbing & Heating Solutions*

**BASED:**  
*Lochgilphead, Argyll*

**PHONE:**  
*07771 712 298*

**WEBSITE:**  
*www.blairplumbing.co.uk*

produces a high quality of work, with a focus on friendly customer service.

He said: "Getting involved with SNIPEF's Apprentice Training Programme has really taken my business in a great direction.

"My apprentices have become an integral part of my team and it's fantastic to see them learn and grow.

"I'm also extremely pleased with the off-the-job training they're receiving at Glasgow Clyde College, where I'm proud to say Iain has just been awarded SNIPEF Apprentice of the Year."

Graeme, who is based in Crinan near Lochgilphead, Argyll, now plans to extend both lads' training with practical business skills.

They'll be shown the paperwork side of the business and taught how to quote, order and invoice a job to increase their confidence and all-round skills. ■

“My apprentices are now an integral part of the team and it's fantastic to see them learn and grow”



# Trainees get kitted out

SNIEF's generous Edinburgh & District branch gives apprentices a helping hand for new term by handing over essential toolkits

**Around 70 first year SNIEF apprentices at three colleges were all smiles when they were surprised with brand new toolkits.**

Classes at Edinburgh, Borders and Forth Valley Colleges rang in the new academic year with the generous gifts from SNIEF's Edinburgh & District Branch.

Vanessa Docherty, Regional Training Officer for Forth Valley College, said: "Starting college should be a positive and exciting experience, but the cost of the kits can be prohibitive, especially on apprentices' wages.

"It's fantastic we've been able to support our trainees

and give them a boost at the start of their journey. It's lovely to see young people filled with such enthusiasm as they begin their apprenticeship."

Now that the new students are kitted out, Duncan Sharp, President of the Edinburgh & District Branch, is looking towards the future.

"This initiative was an opportunity for us to build a relationship with the newest members of our industry," he said. "We hope that in a few years, they will remember the gifts fondly and continue to engage with the branch and SNIEF." ■



**“It’s fantastic we’ve been able to support our trainees and give them a boost at the start of their journey”**



Duncan Sharp (centre) delivers kits to Forth Valley apprentices

# Living the

**Alex Clouston** was a last-minute entrant to SNIPEF's apprentice competition SkillPlumb 2018 – but after coming third in the copper category, he's now made the finals of WorldSkills UK. We caught up with him to find out how he's preparing for the competition, and how he's enjoying life at Pipedream Plumbing Ltd in Orkney

**HI ALEX. WHAT MADE YOU GET INTO PLUMBING?**

I've always been fairly good with my hands and other people in my family have got a trade; my dad, Robbie, is a joiner and my brother, Andrew, is a mechanic. So I just decided to give it a shot.

**HOW DID YOU GET INTO IT?**

I was 17 or 18 and was about to finish school, and I just walked up to the yard at Pipedream and asked for a job. They gave me a trial and that was it.

**HOW WAS YOUR FIRST YEAR AS AN APPRENTICE?**

It's been fun. There's a bit more to it than I expected, a bit more variety than people might think. Pipedream is a great place to work and it's a good feeling when you get home and you've done your day's work.

**WHAT KIND OF JOBS DO YOU ENJOY?**

Some are definitely better than others. Underfloor

heating is a nice one, especially when the weather is good. I also like the rough-in when you're working on a new house. It's good to go and put the pipes in – stuff like that.

**WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?**

I've learned so many new and different skills. And I've learned that it's more than just work, with things like the SkillPLUMB competition. Also I've learned a lot at Inverness College – we have four blocks a year and each block lasts three weeks.

Alex received his SkillPLUMB prize in June from Jamie Hepburn MSP (left) and Gerry Woods, SNIPEF Past President

**WHAT'S IT BEEN LIKE WORKING AT PIPEDREAM?**

Really good. In fact, I've had a lot of support from everyone I work with at Pipedream. It's a really good place to work. Everybody gets on really well and it's a friendly place – a good company to work for.

**WAS IT A SURPRISE TO BE ENTERED INTO SKILLPLUMB?**

Yes! I found out one day at college that I'd been entered, and that was only a couple of weeks before the competition. I think somebody else cancelled so I got the opportunity.

**WERE YOU NERVOUS?**

Not really, I tend to just take things as they come. I can be quite competitive, but I didn't go into SkillPLUMB determined to win or anything. I just thought I'd go along, do my best, and see what happened.



# dream

## SO WERE YOU SURPRISED TO COME THIRD?

Yes, I hadn't really gone with any expectations so I was a bit surprised. I just went along feeling happy to be involved, and as it turned out I did quite well so that was a bonus.

## WAS IT TOUGHER THAN YOU WERE EXPECTING?

It was interesting. You're given some materials and a set amount of time and then you are told what the task is. For me it was copper, and I had to bend and solder it and was then marked on the quality of the joints. Another lad from Orkney was in the competition and he was given lead to work with.

## AND DID YOU GET MUCH BANTER WHEN YOU CAME BACK TO WORK?

Oh yes – it's always good banter at Pipedream!



## QUICK FACTS

**NAME:**  
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**BASED:**  
*Kirkwall, Orkney*  
**PHONE:**  
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**WEBSITE:**  
*pipedreamplumbing.org.uk*



## ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO WORLDSKILLS UK?

I'll take it as it comes. I'm going to be doing a block at college and then it's the week after, and then Andrew is taking me down there. I'll just go in with the same attitude as I had for SkillPLUMB.

## WHAT WILL YOU BE PRACTISING?

I'll probably do some bending and soldering. No doubt there will be a few bits and pieces of work I do that will help me in the competition itself.

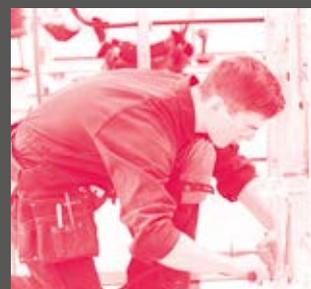
## AND FINALLY... WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO IN THE FUTURE?

I don't know, I haven't thought that far ahead. I'm just happy I got into plumbing – it's a good career and I'm enjoying it. ■



## WorldSkills UK LIVE

Alex is one of eight competitors in the national final of SkillPlumb, five of whom are from Scotland. SkillPlumb is a key part of WorldSkills UK LIVE, now its seventh year and held at the NEC in Birmingham on 15-17 November. Attracting around 70,000 visitors, it features more than 200 employers and training organisations, plus in-depth talks from industry leaders. The centrepiece is the WorldSkills UK Competition finals, where Alex will join almost 600 other trainees trying to win a place representing the UK on the international stage.



## 'A good all-rounder'

Alex's boss, Andrew Gunn, tells us how his young apprentice is shaping up – and how he think he'll do in Birmingham in November.

### HI ANDREW. HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN ALEX CAME THIRD IN SKILLPLUMB?

We were delighted, and so proud of him. He went off to Glasgow and did his thing and we didn't really have any expectations,

so we were thrilled when we found out that he'd finished third.

### HOW'S HE BEEN DOING AS AN APPRENTICE?

Alex is doing pretty well. He gets on well with the other boys and he is actually quite unique in terms of apprentices in that he really wants to be a plumber. Everyone applies for the job but it's not until they start that

you find out how much they're suited to it.

### WHAT KIND OF JOBS HAS HE HELPED WITH? IS HE GOOD AT ANY PARTICULAR SKILL?

We cover everything from lead to drainage and heating systems, so he gets quite a broad range of work to do. It's obvious from the way he performed in SkillPLUMB he has a bit of a talent for cutting and bending copper. He's a good all-round apprentice.

### HOW DO YOU THINK HE'LL DO AT WORLDSKILLS?

We hope he does the very best he can. We don't want to put him under pressure and, as far as we're concerned, to make it this far is an achievement in itself – anything else would be a bonus. Alex is the sixth apprentice we've had in the 14 years we've been trading and we've had previous apprentices who've won awards, but he's doing really well and we're very proud of him.

# A healthy resolution

What should you do if an employee is unable to work due to a long-term illness? Our case study outlines the right way to handle the matter

## THE ISSUE

**Steve had enjoyed 10 years' loyal service with Michael. However, he'd been absent from work for 10 months due to rheumatoid arthritis in his back and Michael didn't know if Steve would ever be able to work as a plumber again.**

## THE SOLUTION

Although Steve's sick pay ended after 28 weeks, he still needed to provide a doctor's line to Michael as he remained an employee. Just as important, Michael needed to keep in regular contact with Steve and invite him to a formal absence meeting.

The purpose of this meeting was to establish the state of Steve's health, what he was doing to assist improvement, and whether there were any reasonable adjustments Michael could make at work that would help Steve return.

To prepare, Michael was provided with the following materials by SNIPEF:

- invitation letters to attend any meetings
- a script with the format and questions for the meetings
- a letter to issue following the meetings, confirming to Steve what was discussed and agreed.

Over a series of meetings, it was established that Steve had attended a specialist doctor for his back and was taking medication to alleviate the pain. Steve didn't know whether he would be fit to return to work to carry out the work of a plumber.

Michael received written consent from Steve to write to his doctor to establish when or whether Steve would be able to return to work in the foreseeable future and what reasonable adjustments, if any, Michael could make to assist Steve back to work.

SNIPEF then provided Michael with the following materials:

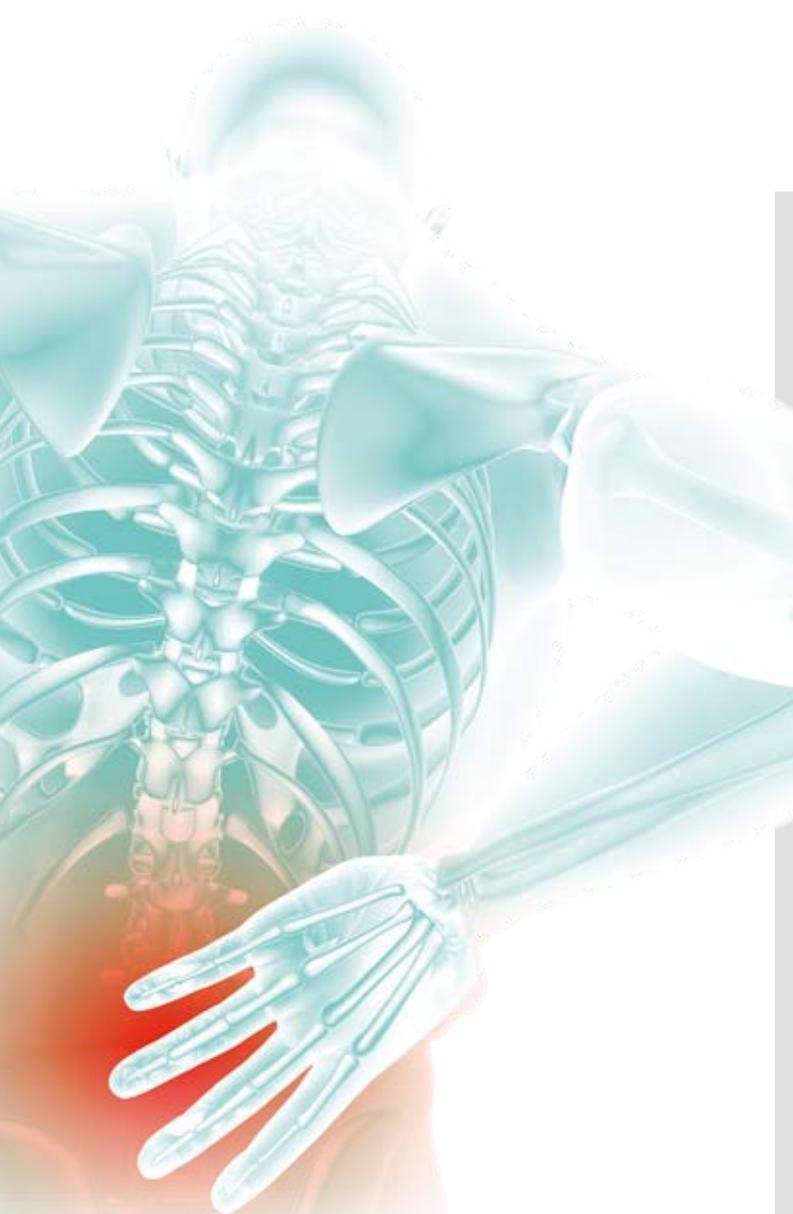
- a letter to issue to the

By Stephanie Lowe, SNIPEF's in-house expert on industrial relations

...it was established that Steve was never going to be fit to carry out the work of a plumber”



Michael was provided with a script and example questions for his meetings with Steve



specialist doctor with relevant questions enclosed, including the requirements of a plumber to carry heavy materials and bending and twisting in confined areas.

- a form that could be given to Steve to sign, giving written consent to contact his doctor.

Over a series of meetings, and following receipt of written confirmation from Steve's doctor, it was established that Steve was never going to be fit to carry out the work of a plumber.

There were no reasonable adjustments that could be made, nor alternative posts in the business that could assist Steve back to work, so

Michael would need to terminate the contract of employment.

Again, SNIPEF provided Michael with the following materials:

- an invite letter to a meeting
- a script with the format for the meeting
- a letter to issue following the meeting confirming to Steve what was discussed and agreed.

#### THE RESULT

Because Steve had completed 10 full years of service, Michael provided him with 10 weeks' paid notice and payment in lieu of holidays for the 10 months of absence, during which Steve had accrued holidays. ■

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## When it comes to contract regulations, it's vital to know your responsibilities

By **Liam Smith**

Solicitor, Anderson Strathern

Despite coming into force on 13 June 2014, the Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013 are still largely misunderstood or ignored.

These rules affect traders in various ways depending on whether the contract is an on-premises, off-premises or distance contract.

Off-premises contracts are generally concluded at a physical meeting between the trader and consumer, or immediately after such a meeting. Distance contracts are where the sale is made without a physical meeting taking place, or at a distance, i.e. online or over the phone.

On-premises contracts are defined as being those which are neither off-premises or distance contracts, i.e. those concluded on the business premises of the trader. Different rules apply in all three cases, but the underlying principles remain the same.

Before the consumer is bound by any of these contracts, the trader must provide certain information to the consumer which includes,

for example, total price, main features of the goods or services, delivery arrangements, complaints handling policy and cancellation rights.

For off-premises and distance contracts, consumers now have 14 days to cancel the contract; an increase from the previous seven days. The trader must

provide the consumer with information relating to this right and provide them with a model cancellation form.

Compliance with these regulations is a must for all traders. Those who fail to provide the relevant information are guilty of a criminal offence and severely restricted in terms of the rights and remedies available if and when a dispute arises.

The regulations are complex, and at times bewildering, so if you would like more information or advice about them, then please don't hesitate to contact me for a free 15-minute telephone call. ■

- For further information, email [info@andersonstrathern.co.uk](mailto:info@andersonstrathern.co.uk) or see [www.andersonstrathern.co.uk](http://www.andersonstrathern.co.uk)



## WHO WE ARE

SNIFE Training Services Ltd is the Plumbing Industry's Training Provider for plumbing apprenticeships in Scotland. We deliver the Modern Apprenticeship in Domestic Plumbing & Heating SVQ Level 3 using a network of SQA Approved Colleges & Training Centres across Scotland.



# Are you looking to take on an apprentice plumber in Scotland?

SNIFE Training Services Ltd has the right tools to help you train the future fully qualified plumbing operatives that you will need.

## WHAT WE DO

**COSTS** – Subject to available funding from Skills Development Scotland (SDS) we will meet the full cost of the College/Training Centre Training Programme.

**MONITORING** – We monitor all entrants on the Training Programme and provide support to apprentices and employers.

## FINANCIAL INCENTIVE –

A grant is available to the business at the end of the apprentice's 4th year, depending on achievement and available funding from SDS.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

Once you have found an apprentice please contact us and request the Plumbing Apprentice Application Form which can be posted or emailed to you.



## REASONS TO HIRE AN APPRENTICE PLUMBER

### INCREASED LOYALTY –

When you invest time and money training apprentices, they feel motivated, valued and grateful to join a skilled team. This increases the chance they'll remain with the business longer.

will bring back the most up to date methods and information gained from their training course.

### SKILL SWAPPING –

While you teach the apprentice the practical skills they need, the apprentice

### THEY'RE ENTHUSIASTIC –

Apprentices are generally keen to get stuck in, prove themselves and learn as much as possible, bringing fresh enthusiasm to the business.

## CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on taking on an apprentice plumber please contact us on 0131 524 1245 or [training@snipef.org](mailto:training@snipef.org) alternatively you can visit our website

[www.becomeaplumber.org](http://www.becomeaplumber.org)

# ProZone

9 pages of in-depth and insider knowledge from the UK's premier plumbing, heating and industry professionals

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**simPRO**

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New inverter driven air source heat pump is the greenest yet thanks to R32 refrigerant

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## Top of the class

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We reveal how flexi hoses can save time and effort when it comes to tricky second-fix installations

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## The famous five

Benjamin Dyer reveals the quickest way to grow your business in just five easy steps

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Contact our team to showcase your business in PlumbHeat's ProZone.  
David Hughes 0131 561 0022  
davidh@connectmedia.cc

# Lessons learned from trial and error

The search for the best job management software for your business can often seem like a relentless process of trial and error. However, the benefits of implementing the right system can be limitless

Perseverance in these times is key and if boundaries are pushed, businesses will be able to find the perfect solution.

Finding the right job management software makes proven differences to businesses with improved transparency. It leads to the identification of process blockages and ultimately results in businesses securing new solutions to use to their advantage.

You can better your business and you can build a future that is prosperous and profitable with patience the key in this instance.

Take John Mutch for example. His firm had experiences with multiple systems before finding one that really added value to the business.

John said: "After trialling three different solutions over a period of 12 years we really saw a drastically different level of service from **simPRO**. From the minute we implemented the system we've been supported throughout."

**simPRO** offers a unique solution that streamlines workflows and reduces the requirement for endless paper-based documentation. This powerful job management solution allows your entire workforce to manage the full end-to-end process.

John described how **simPRO** has enabled John Mutch Building Services to simplify its processes: "It's a seamless system that facilitates contact with our clients from enquiry, to quotation, to job scheduling, managing documentation, collecting information from our engineers, to managing costs,



purchasing, invoicing, and even collecting payments."

**simPRO** offers fortnightly software updates free of charge, meaning you and your engineers are always using the latest version of the software.

John explained his experiences with other providers: "One of the shortfalls of our previous partners was the stability of their systems and very slow development which frustratingly restricted our service to our customers.

"It's a very different experience with **simPRO**, with constant developments and improvements being implemented at least once a fortnight, to all users."

**simPRO** can maximise profits and give you total transparency across your business.

John revealed how **simPRO** has impacted his business: "Overall, **simPRO** has helped streamline our processes, save us time and money, and enhanced the service we provide to our customers." ■

**simPRO**

To find out how **simPRO**'s job management solution could deliver serious results for your plumbing and heating business, get in touch with David Park, regional manager for Scotland, at [david.park@simpro.co.uk](mailto:david.park@simpro.co.uk)



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# Legal eagles help ensure the law is on your side

Today's business world can often seem like a legal minefield. Luckily, the experienced team at Anderson Strathern can help with any issues. **Alistair Dean**, Solicitor Advocate and Partner at the firm, explains how SNIPEF members can benefit from their years of experience

I worked out recently that I have been involved with SNIPEF in one form or another for 13 years. That is exactly half of the time that I have been a qualified solicitor.

Over that period, I have seen SNIPEF move from a traditional to a modern office, to modernise the way in which they communicate with member firms, and to continue to be a relevant and important trade body.

It has been a period of change for myself over this period. When I started my involvement with SNIPEF, I was an associate at a large Edinburgh-based law firm. I then set up my own practice for seven years, and am now a partner at Anderson Strathern – a firm where I used to work not long after I qualified.

My colleagues at Anderson Strathern and I are very keen to support the SNIPEF members in any way we can.

My colleague, Daniel Ferguson, has been doing a great job helping a number of member firms recover their debts, and through Daniel's paralegal, we are now able to offer a high quality and competitive fixed-fee debt recovery service.

For any members who are interested in this service, I suggest you contact Daniel direct on [daniel.ferguson@andersonstrathern.co.uk](mailto:daniel.ferguson@andersonstrathern.co.uk).



Alistair  
Dean



- DEBT RECOVERY
- CONTRACT TERMS AND CONDITIONS
- EMPLOYMENT LAW ADVICE
- HEALTH AND SAFETY ADVICE
- SHAREHOLDING STRUCTURE
- PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS
- ACQUISITIONS

There are other ways in which we can support members. Anderson Strathern is a full service law firm and can assist in the following areas:

- drafting terms and conditions for domestic and/or commercial contracts
- providing employment law advice
- providing health and safety advice
- advising on corporate issues, such as shareholding structure, partnership agreements and acquisitions.

As I say, I am delighted to retain an involvement with SNIPEF, a number of members of which I would now count as friends, and I do hope myself and my colleagues will be able to continue to do so in the future. ■

**AS Anderson Strathern**

For further information, email [info@andersonstrathern.co.uk](mailto:info@andersonstrathern.co.uk) or see [www.andersonstrathern.co.uk](http://www.andersonstrathern.co.uk)

# Rising to the decarbonisation challenge

The goal is clear; carbon emissions from domestic heat must be reduced. Governments in the UK and Republic of Ireland (RoI) have set out their decarbonisation strategies, all of which are likely to focus on phasing out the use of high-carbon fossil fuels.

But far from viewing these plans as a threat, the oil heating industry is drawing on a proven track record of innovation to develop a realistic, affordable solution that meets the challenge of decarbonising heat from the 2.2 million oil-using homes across the UK and RoI.

## THE CHALLENGE

It's clear that 'solutions' favoured to date – primarily heat pumps – aren't fit for purpose, with the high upfront costs and considerable disruption at installation well documented as major barriers



Paul Rose,  
CEO, OFTEC



To find out more  
about OFTEC's  
work, please visit  
[www.oftec.org.uk](http://www.oftec.org.uk)

to take-up. OFTEC research shows 62% of homeowners in Ireland would be unwilling to pay more to 'decarbonise' their heating, while 30% said they wouldn't pay any more than €250 per year.

The poor thermal efficiency of most off-gas housing stock is also a key issue. In England alone, over 80% of off-grid homes have an EPC rating of D or below. The cost of bringing these properties up to the required standard for heat pumps to work effectively – if even possible for many – would be huge.

## THE SOLUTION

OFTEC believes the answer lies in 'greening' the fuel, not necessarily replacing the heating appliance. After all, it is the fuel that emits carbon, not the boiler.

A low-carbon liquid fuel would provide an almost 'drop-

in' replacement for kerosene in a retrofit situation, the existing supply chain could be maintained and with a network of over 9,000 accredited installers already in place, consumers would continue to be well supported.

OFTEC is currently investigating all options to ensure an appropriate solution is found, building on its work in 2011 to develop a FAME-based fuel called B30K.

OFTEC has also commissioned a detailed study into the supply and sustainability of various alternative fuels to help inform the best route to take. The findings are expected to be released later this year.

The future of liquid fuel heating lies in our hands. We have the skills and knowledge to develop a workable solution for all and we will continue our progress towards realising this ambition. ■

## A complete registration service for heating technicians



OFTEC competent person registration provides a range of benefits:

- Free technical support via phone, fax or email and regular updates
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- Free marketing material to help you win more customers
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- Discounts on equipment and publications from our OFTEC Direct shop.



Visit [www.joinoftec.com](http://www.joinoftec.com) or contact our registration team today:

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E: [registration@oftec.org](mailto:registration@oftec.org)

W: [joinoftec.com](http://joinoftec.com)

## Grant reveals greenest air source heat pump yet

The Grant Aerona<sup>3</sup> air source heat pump range is expanding with the launch of a new 12kW model with R32 refrigerant – Grant's greenest heat pump yet.

The Aerona<sup>3</sup> 12kW R32 inverter driven air source heat pump uses the more environmentally friendly R32 refrigerant which makes for a cleaner heat pump while still delivering excellent performance.

Achieving an ErP rating of A++, it's the first monoblock R32 air



source heat pump to be launched in the UK.

In addition, the Aerona<sup>3</sup> 12kW R32 model has a compact physical footprint and operates with low noise levels.

Currently available with 12kW output, it's also available with a guarantee of up to seven years, subject to full T&Cs and status.

For more details, please visit [www.grantuk.com](http://www.grantuk.com)

## LANDSLIDE WHICH? RESULTS FOR WORCESTER BOSCH

For the ninth consecutive year, Worcester Bosch has been awarded Which? Best Buy status across its gas and oil boilers, and also topped the UK's best boiler league table with a fantastic brand score.

The Which? score was calculated from a mix of trade and consumer feedback.

Which? Trusted Traders rated Worcester Bosch highly across several criteria, with five stars awarded for build quality, reliability, and the likelihood of an engineer recommending a Worcester

Bosch boiler to customers. One Which? Trusted Trader heating engineer said: "Worcester Bosch has a huge range of products, is generally very reliable and its customer service is a country mile ahead."

Worcester Bosch said: "To come out on top and have all of our boilers included in the coveted Which? Best Buy category is an amazing result."



For more about Worcester's full range of gas and oil-fired boilers, visit [www.worcester-bosch.co.uk](http://www.worcester-bosch.co.uk)



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# Bending over backwards to get the job done

Second-fix installations can often be awkward, time-consuming and difficult. **Nigel Sanger**, JG Speedfit's Divisional Director, Technical Support, explains how flexi hoses can save time

For plumbing and heating engineers, it's accepted that they'll often have to get into difficult positions and tight spaces to undertake installations. This is especially true when it comes to second-fix plumbing. The connection of appliances, sanitaryware and radiators can find plumbers craning their necks and backs to see and make connections.

Not only is this demanding on the body, it's also one of the more time-consuming jobs of the trade, which can lead to overtime and stress. Indeed, a survey from WaterSafe found that 54% of plumbers work more than 48 hours a week, with just 13% working the standard 35-40 hours.

However, simple changes in materials and plumbing methods can alleviate this issue and save installers up to 40% in installation time.

Push-fit flexi hoses are an ideal example of this in action.

## CHUCK THE COPPER

Like every other industry, the pace in plumbing and heating has dramatically increased. Another finding from the WaterSafe survey revealed that 61% of those questioned stated that they had to extend their working hours over the last ten years to cope with the workload.

Arguably, it's the industry's use of copper pipes that is contributing to the longer working days.

For example, to connect pipework under a basin using copper pipes, you must measure, cut, bend and solder the pipes accurately to the taps.

This process also involves many hazards that require much care, attention and additional procedures. This includes soldering in tight spaces, gaining hot works permits, ensuring there are no fire and fume risks, and allowing for shock absorption in the pipework. Also, with the need to hide pipework for aesthetic reasons, inflexible rigid copper pipes are adding more time onto jobs than is necessary, with no added benefit to the end user.

For plumbing and heating engineers to compete in an increasingly competitive market, they must have the right blend of speed and quality. This ensures they can win jobs and contracts, while bringing time and costs down.

## FLEXI HOSES: BENDING TO YOUR WILL

To combat the issues that copper plumbing brings, push-fit flexi hoses are now widely available on the market, with JG Speedfit offering nearly 50 different combinations of size, end



Flexi hoses are available in white PVC

connections and lengths. Flexi hoses can be bent and connected to fixtures where access is tight and connection points and layouts are varied.

Flexi hoses are suitable for both hot and cold-water applications. They can be bought in braided metal or white PVC. White PVC flexi hoses offer additional benefits in that they are easy to clean, reduce kinking and are aesthetically unobtrusive.

The JG Speedfit range of flexi hoses is also available with built-in service valves, removing the need for installing an additional valve for water isolation. ■

**JG Speedfit**<sup>®</sup>

For more details call 01895 449 233 or visit [www.jhnguest.com/speedfit](http://www.jhnguest.com/speedfit)

JG Speedfit offers a wide range of hoses



# Grow your business in 5 easy steps

Some people who own their own heating and plumbing business are extremely ambitious. To help them, **Benjamin Dyer** of Powered Now looks at some of the quickest ways to boost growth

## IDEA 1: CONCENTRATE ON QUALITY

If you are dealing with residential customers, you will get most of your business by word of mouth. Some 70% of all sales come from word of mouth or previous experience of your company.

That's why doing a great job is the first thing to focus on. If your customers are happy they will recommend you and use you again. If they are not they won't. It's as simple as that.

## IDEA 2: DO SOME MARKETING

Although 70% of business is by recommendation, that still leaves 30% coming from other sources. You can get your share of this if you do some marketing. Here are some ideas to consider:

- Join Checkatrade, My Builder or Rated People. They don't work for everyone but they certainly do for some.

- Showcase your work on your own website. Spend some money with an expert to promote that site.
- Get a system that sends out regular reminders to your customers.
- Promote your name and contact details on your van, on boards to be left outside your customer's premises, on T-shirts and on business cards. This is all very cheap.

## IDEA 3: INVEST IN YOUR BUSINESS

In my previous business, tens of thousands of small companies used our software. We looked at the winners for the secret of success. One thing that they had in common was a willingness to invest.

People prepared to invest in new materials, techniques and tools (including apps like those from my company) are more likely to succeed.

## IDEA 4: DON'T UNDERCHARGE

The biggest reason why people go bust is not charging enough. Similarly, the single most common thing that turns around failing businesses is putting prices up.

When you are good at your job, your customers receive a lot of value. You deserve your share.

Mark Goodchild of Electric Call Ltd never compromises on price. He said: "If someone else has priced a job, I don't bother quoting for it because I don't wish to compete on price."

## IDEA 5: FOCUS ON WHAT YOU DO WELL

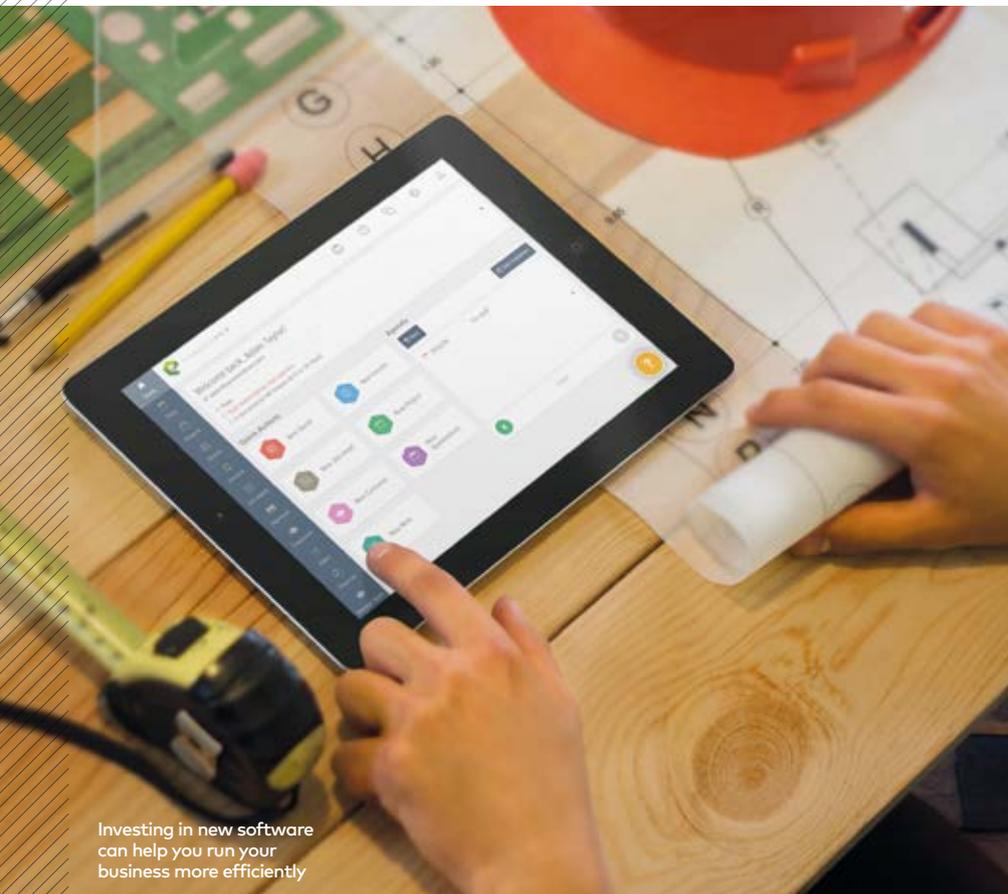
In plumbing and heating, it's impossible to be good at everything. So focus on the things you are best at. That will make you faster, more reliable and more profitable. It will also help to avoid problems.

## THE END OF THE LINE

It's a shame that running a successful and growing business takes skills that are beyond simply doing a great job. This short article has tried to suggest some tips that can help grow your business. Good luck! ■

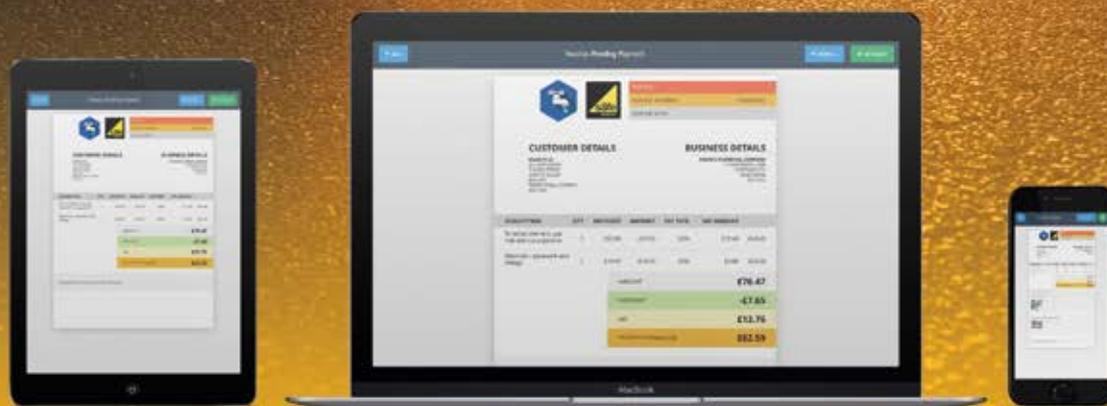


*Benjamin Dyer is the CEO of Powered Now, which provide mobile apps aimed to make it easier for plumbers, gas engineers and other trades to run their businesses. Find out more at [www.powerednow.com](http://www.powerednow.com)*



Investing in new software can help you run your business more efficiently

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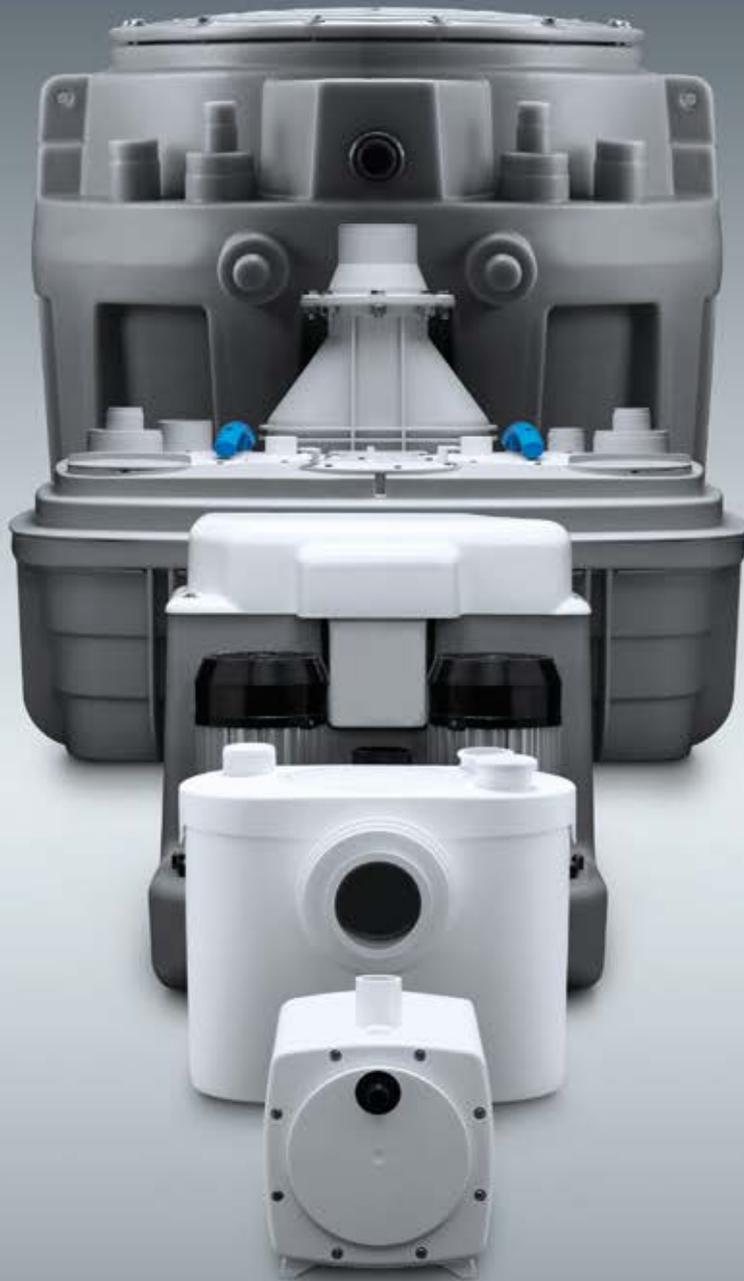
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