



Summer 2026

# PlumbHeat



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# Comment

FROM FIONA HODGSON, SNIPEF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

## Time for reform and forward thinking

Apprenticeships are essential to the future of our industry but they can only continue if employers are supported to keep delivering these vital opportunities to the plumbing and heating professionals of tomorrow

**As the dust settles on the 51st Scottish Plumbing Apprentice of the Year (SPAY) competition, I want to reinforce the essential role that apprentices play in our profession.**

This year's competition at West College Scotland once again showcased the range of talent coming through our ranks. I would like to congratulate the winners and hope that all those who competed can use the experience as a vital stepping stone in their future career.

The success of our SPAY winners highlights the enduring importance of apprenticeships to the future of our profession. But it's a pathway that remains under threat as pressures mount on our employers' ability to provide these life-changing opportunities.

Throughout March and April, we hosted working groups across Scotland to speak directly to members to fully understand and evidence why apprenticeship numbers are in decline. This was an enlightening and informative

experience which made one point very clear – employers are the forgotten element in the apprenticeship triangle.

Apprentices and colleges are often prioritised, but it is employers that take the financial risk, carry the up-front costs and bear the on-site responsibility to train and develop an apprentice into a plumbing and heating professional. Without employers, there is no apprenticeship system.

The input from these sessions has been vital in furthering our aims for seeing apprenticeship reform. I would like to thank all of those who participated in helping shape a more forward-thinking vision of our profession. Work has commenced on the final report, which will set out the key findings and recommendations from the research and which we intend to present to the new government in the coming months.

The feedback gathered through these discussions also comes at a time when

many businesses still face significant economic pressures. Our latest State of Trade report continues to highlight supply chain disruption, rising material and energy costs, and wider uncertainty across the construction sector as ongoing concerns for members. The escalating conflict in the Middle East has only added further strain, potentially increasing inflationary pressure and creating renewed uncertainty around pricing, profit margins and future workloads.

Fiona Hodgson,  
SNIPEF Chief  
Executive



**“Without employers, there is no apprenticeship system”**



## + Top talent

The winners of the Scottish Plumbing Apprentice of the Year / Page 30

For our members, balancing rising costs against fixed-price work is becoming increasingly difficult. Reduced consumer confidence and delays to housing and improvement projects are also beginning to have a noticeable impact across the sector.

At times like this, clear communication, collaboration and realistic expectations across the supply chain become more important than ever in helping businesses plan effectively and continue investing in the future of the profession. However, the UK Government's recent proposals for reform to late payment and unfair retention practices are a positive step in supporting our profession and the wider construction sector.

Delayed payments and withheld retentions continue to place significant pressure on cash flow, investment and apprenticeship recruitment, particularly for SMEs. While meaningful reform is long overdue, it is essential that any changes are practical, proportionate and do not create additional burdens for smaller businesses.

Improving payment certainty and fairness across the supply chain is critical, but the success of these reforms will depend on

how they are implemented in practice.

June also provided an excellent opportunity to engage with the wider industry at InstallerSHOW in Birmingham, where it was encouraging to see so many SNIPEF members, partners and affiliates in attendance. Events like these are invaluable in bringing the profession together, creating space for important conversations around the future of plumbing and heating, and strengthening relationships across the wider construction sector. It was particularly pleasing to meet many members face-to-face and hear directly about both the challenges and opportunities businesses are currently experiencing.

The event also hosted the World Plumbing Conference, where I had the opportunity to speak about the Start at Home project, a collaborative initiative between SNIPEF and Nesta exploring how giving installers the opportunity to train, be mentored and install a heat pump within their own home can help build confidence, practical experience and readiness to enter the renewable market. The findings from the project have reinforced

ABOVE: Fiona speaking at this year's SPAY competition

the importance of practical, real-world experience in helping businesses transition into low carbon technologies and highlighted the potential for new opportunities across our profession as demand for sustainable heating solutions continues to grow.

Finally, we hosted our Annual General Meeting in Dundee at the beginning of June, welcoming Steve Craig as SNIPEF's President for the 2026/27 year. You will be able to read more about Steve and his ambitions for the year in this issue of *PlumbHeat*, but I would like to personally welcome him to the role. Steve has been ever-present in supporting SNIPEF in recent years and the experience he brings to the position is well-placed for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

It also marks the end of Duncan Sharp's presidency, and I would like to thank him for his service and commitment over the past year. He arrived with the desire to see SNIPEF grow, reinforce its value to members and engage with key stakeholders and decision makers. Duncan achieved many of these aims and certainly made an impact on SNIPEF, its members and the profession as a whole.

As we look ahead to a new presidential year, there is much to be optimistic about. While the faces representing SNIPEF may change over time, our commitment to supporting members, championing the profession and driving the industry forward remains as strong as ever. ■

**Fiona Hodgson**  
Chief Executive

# News

LATEST FROM AROUND THE FEDERATION

💡 SURVEY

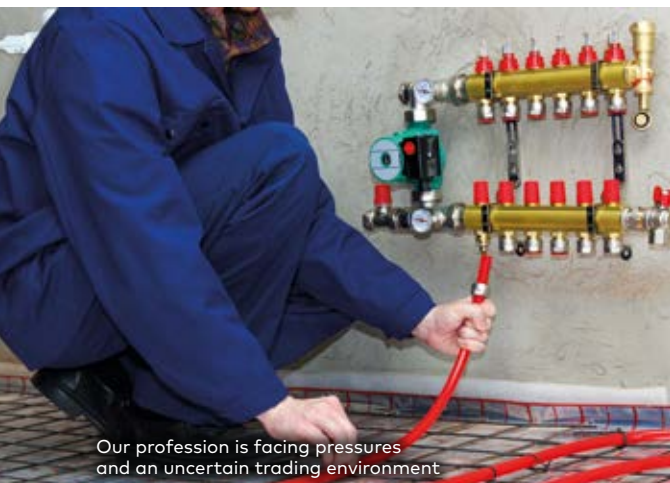
## Stable, but under pressure

SNIPEF's State of Trade report shows a resilient profession facing mounting cost pressures, weaker confidence and ongoing recruitment challenges

**Results from SNIPEF's latest State of Trade survey show a profession that remains active, but is facing growing pressure on confidence, profitability and workforce capacity.**

Stable demand, steady trading activity and manageable payment performance continue to support the market. However, weaker forward workloads, declining margins and subdued business confidence point to a more cautious outlook. Ongoing cost pressures, limited recruitment intentions and persistent skills shortages are also constraining growth.

While overall conditions remain stable, the profession is operating in a more challenging and uncertain environment than in previous reports. These findings parallel similar sector-specific and national reporting from CBI, IFS and ONS in recent months.



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Our profession is facing pressures and an uncertain trading environment

# 32%

of firms were busier than expected, down from 41% in Q4



# 23%

reported forward orders above expectations, down from 36% in Q4

# 61%

were very unlikely to recruit an apprentice in the next six months

# 93%

reported input price increases

### TRADING PERFORMANCE

Trading activity remained broadly stable in Q1 2026, although conditions were mixed. Around a third of firms (32%) reported being busier than expected, 39% traded as expected and 29% experienced quieter conditions. Forward order books were more evenly balanced, with 23% above expectations, 39% as expected and 39% below expectations.

Payment performance remained generally stable, with 60% of firms receiving payments within their usual terms. Delays continued to be reported, most commonly from homeowners, small builders and developers. Profitability remains under pressure, however, with 53% of firms reporting reduced margins and only 17% reporting an increase.

### COSTS AND THE ECONOMY

Cost pressures remain significant, with 93% of firms reporting higher material and product costs. Despite this, product availability remains largely manageable, with 90% rating availability as good or average.

Confidence has become more cautious. Just 28% of respondents were confident about trade prospects over the next year, while confidence in the wider UK economy remains particularly weak, with only 7% expressing confidence. Project delays and cancellations continue to affect businesses,

“Compared with a year ago, the profession remains resilient, but not clearly stronger”

You can view the full State of Trade Q1 findings by visiting [www.snipef.org/publications](http://www.snipef.org/publications)

**53% reported profit margins decreasing, up from 47% in Q4, including 7% decreasing significantly**

**68%**  
**reported low availability of skilled workers**



**28% were confident or very confident in the profession, while only 7% were confident in the UK economy**

with 58% reporting some level of disruption over the past year. Looking ahead, 86% believe the ongoing Middle East conflict could affect their business if disruption persists.

**PEOPLE AND WORKFORCE**

Workforce growth remains limited, with only 19% of firms likely to increase staffing levels over the next six months, while 51% are unlikely to do so. Apprenticeship recruitment continues to be a concern, with just 15% likely to take on an apprentice. Skills shortages also persist, with 68% reporting low availability of qualified plumbing and heating professionals in their area. Only 17% of firms expect to increase the number of plumbing and heating operatives they employ.

**WHAT CHANGED: Q1 2026 VERSUS Q4 2025**

Q1 2026 presents a more cautious picture than the previous quarter. Trading activity remains broadly stable, but more firms reported quieter than expected conditions. Forward order books are mixed, profit margins have weakened and workforce expansion remains limited.

**WHAT CHANGED: Q1 2026 VERSUS Q1 2025**

Compared with a year ago, the profession remains resilient, but not clearly stronger. Trading activity is mixed, forward order books are finely balanced and the main year-on-year concerns remain cost increases, weak UK economic confidence, limited recruitment intentions and persistent skills shortages.

# SNIEPF welcomes review of Minimum Wage increases

**SNIEPF has welcomed reports that the UK Government is considering slowing future increases to the National Minimum Wage, citing concerns about the potential impact on youth employment and apprenticeship opportunities.**

The federation has been engaging with the Low Pay Commission on the issue, highlighting the challenges facing employers that invest in apprenticeship training. SNIEPF argues that while apprentices should receive fair pay, apprenticeship programmes are not the same as standard employment due to the significant training commitments and costs involved.

According to SNIEPF, rapid increases in minimum wage rates could place additional pressure on the predominantly micro-businesses that provide apprenticeship opportunities within the plumbing and heating profession.

It also warned that if employment costs rise faster than training models can sustain, employers may be forced to reduce apprenticeship recruitment, limiting opportunities for

young people and affecting the future supply of skilled workers.

Stephanie Lowe, Deputy Chief Executive of SNIEPF, said: "Any decision that allows time to reflect on the impact of wage policy on youth employment and apprenticeships is welcome. Youth unemployment is rising and in professions such as plumbing and heating, where apprenticeships are essential to future skills, access to opportunity must remain a priority.

"SNIEPF is clear this is not an argument against fair pay. Apprentices should be properly rewarded for their contribution and progression. However, apprenticeships differ from standard employment. They involve long-term training, time in college and significant cost for the micro-businesses that deliver most apprenticeship places.

"If wage increases move faster than training economics can sustain, the unintended consequence may be fewer apprenticeship opportunities and reduced entry routes for young people, ultimately weakening the future skilled workforce."

Stephanie Lowe, SNIEPF Deputy Chief Executive





From left: Jim Butter, Steve Craig, Duncan Sharp and Raymond Gibb

### AGM

## SNIFEPA confirms new leadership team

SNIFEPA held its 2026 AGM at Discovery Point on Dundee's waterfront on Friday, 5 June. New office bearers were appointed, including Steve Craig, who will lead the organisation as President for the 2026/27 year.

#### NEW OFFICE BEARERS:

- Steve Craig – President and Chair
- Raymond Gibb – Vice President
- Jim Butter – Junior Vice President
- Duncan Sharp – Immediate Past President

#### DIRECTORS:

- Graeme Davidson – Aberdeen and District
- Ian Cowie – Banff and Moray
- Martin Hay – Dundee and District
- Kenneth Cullen – Edinburgh and District

- Gerry Woods – Glasgow and West of Scotland
- Alex Waldron – Glasgow and West of Scotland
- George Baxter – Inverness and Northern District

[+ Meet Steve Craig Pages 14-17](#)

### FUNDRAISER

## Charity ball raises more than £15,000 for CHAS

The Glasgow and West of Scotland Plumbing Employers' Association Annual Charity Ball returned in style on 21 March, bringing together 400 guests from across the plumbing and heating profession for a memorable evening of celebration and generosity.

On the night, more than £15,000 was raised in support of Children's Hospices Across Scotland (CHAS), adding



to the more than £29,000 raised over the years to help the charity's vital work continue.

Association President Alex Waldron said: "After several years without this event, it was incredibly important to bring everyone back together.

"The turnout speaks volumes about the

strength of our profession but also, more importantly, about its willingness to support others.

"The funds raised for CHAS will make a real difference to families across Scotland, something everyone in the room should be proud of.

"I would also like to thank everyone within

the Association who contributed to organising the evening. Events like this simply do not happen without that commitment and effort."

CHAS supports families across Scotland whose children have life-shortening conditions, providing care and support when it is needed most.

The funds raised on the night will help ensure that this vital work continues.

The Glasgow and West of Scotland Plumbing Employers' Association extended its sincere thanks to UK Plumbing Supplies, SNIFEPA, ADEY, The Plumbers M8, The Gas Certification Company and all those who generously contributed auction prizes.

# Worcester Bosch helps installers get heat pump ready

**Worcester Bosch is continuing its support of the Start at Home Initiative, working alongside NESTA and MCS Umbrella partners Alto Energy and Wolseley to provide installers with an industry-leading funding package to install and test heat pump technology in their own homes.**

By encouraging heating engineers to install a heat pump in their own home, the project aims to bridge the gap between training and real-world experience. Starting as a successful pilot in Scotland in collaboration with SNIPEF, the scheme has evolved into a nationwide model. The hands-on approach allows installers to understand the technology's performance firsthand, aiding them with the confidence and skills to provide heat pump services for customers.

Worcester Bosch and its partners have expanded funding incentives to ensure it remains the most accessible route for professionals to transition to renewables. Installers can combine national grants, including the Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS) and Home Energy Scotland (HES), with exclusive cashback offers:

- **Worcester Bosch CHMM Promotion:** £500 cashback available through the Clean Heat Market Mechanism.

- **Worcester Bosch Own Home Bonus:** An additional £300 cashback specifically for installers fitting a heat pump unit in their own property.

An additional £300 cashback specifically for installers fitting a heat pump unit in their own property.

- **Alto Energy Cashback:** Up to an additional £1,000 cashback, on top of the £7,500 from national grants, when using Alto Assured MCS Umbrella scheme, which supplies Worcester Bosch heat pumps.

- **Renewables Centre (Wolseley) Start at Home Package:** Eligible installers can receive up to £7,500 in free materials from national grants, covering Worcester Bosch heat pumps.

For many installers, the admin requirements of MCS accreditation

remain a hurdle to heat pump adoption. The Start at Home initiative prioritises the use of MCS Umbrella schemes, such as those offered by Alto Energy and Wolseley, to handle system design, grant applications and compliance paperwork, which allows the installer to focus on the physical installation and learning the heat pump installation process.

Andy Keyworth, Head of Business Development (Electrification) at Worcester Bosch, said: "Our goal is to ensure that every installer is empowered and has the confidence to embrace heat pump opportunities backed by our industry-leading after-sales team.

"By installing and living with the technology in their own home, they are gaining the practical experience needed to support the UK's transition to low-carbon heating."

**Installers interested in these combined funds for their own installation can find the full details at [www.startathome.org.uk](http://www.startathome.org.uk)**



The scheme helps installers try out the technology in their own homes

## A GREAT START



ABOVE: SNIPEF President Steve Craig, Steve Park and Ross Butter present first-year Modern Apprentices at UHI Perth with starter toolkits on behalf of the Dundee and Perth Association.

## NEW MEMBERS

- HSL Compliance Ltd
- Fusion Plumbing Ltd
- M C N (Scotland) Ltd
- L8 Water Hygiene Ltd

## NEW AFFILIATES

- Lindab Ltd
- OSO Hotwater (UK) Ltd
- Thoroughflush Ltd
- Grant Engineering Ltd (UK)

# New laws to tackle the issue of late payments

**New legislation has been announced to tackle late payments and unfair retention practices with the aim of protecting the financial security of British businesses.**

The announcement came during the King's Speech, which shared the UK Government's broader vision for economic growth in the country, including tackling the problem of late payments through the Small Business Protections (Late Payments) Bill.

Fiona Hodgson, Chief Executive of SNIPEF, welcomed the move and described the plans as "long overdue". She said: "SNIPEF welcomes the UK Government's commitment to tackling late payment and unfair retention practices within the construction supply chain.

"For many plumbing and heating businesses, particularly



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SMEs, delayed payments and withheld retentions continue to place unnecessary pressure on cash flow, investment and apprenticeship recruitment."

The Bill changes how businesses pay each other, putting an end to excessive delays and unfair practices that hit small firms hardest. The changes include a 60-day cap on payment terms on all large firms paying smaller suppliers,

ABOVE: The law changes will hopefully give businesses more financial security

mandatory interest on late payments, set at 8% above the Bank of England base rate, and a ban on the practice of withholding retention payments under construction contracts.

Fiona added: "Stronger protections for smaller businesses are overdue.

"However, it is essential that any changes do not simply replace one burden with another.

"Reforms must be practical, proportionate and avoid creating costly or complex alternative arrangements that could disproportionately impact SMEs and specialist contractors.

"Improving payment certainty and fairness across the supply chain is critical, but the detail of implementation will determine whether these reforms genuinely support smaller businesses in practice."

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The City Plumbing initiative is designed to save time and cash

**GUARANTEE**

## The price is right for tradespeople

**SNIEPF affiliate City Plumbing has launched a new Lowest Price Guarantee aimed at helping installers save time and protect profit margins.**

The initiative follows research by the merchant that found plumbers and heating engineers spend more than three hours a week shopping around for the best deals on products – equivalent to more than 20 working days a year and almost £7,000 in potential chargeable time.

The guarantee includes daily price checks across core electrical, plastic plumbing and boiler spares ranges. If customers find the same

product cheaper with an eligible retailer, City Plumbing says it will match the price or refund the difference.

The scheme covers a wide range of electrical products, more than 100 items in the PlumbRight plastic plumbing range and thousands of boiler spares stocked locally or available next day.

Hemal Morjaria, Chief Commercial Officer at City Plumbing, said the guarantee is designed to reduce the time tradespeople spend comparing suppliers while giving confidence they are receiving competitive pricing.



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# Faces change, but the mission is the same

*PlumbHeat* Editor Gregor Millar celebrates the new talent driving our profession forward, as well as the vital skills helping to preserve our past

**The summer issue of *PlumbHeat* is always one of change. We highlight the brightest talent in the profession and celebrate our new SPAY winners, and we begin a new presidential year – welcoming a new President with fresh aims, goals and ambitions. This year we have also had an election with a new government and whole host of new parliamentarians.**

While many of the faces have changed, our mission stays the same, as does the aim of this magazine – to promote our profession, its members, affiliates and the diverse services that our members all over Scotland and Northern Ireland provide.

For our main feature, I spoke to SNIPEF's new President Steve Craig about his vision for the future of the organisation. Steve wants his presidency to be defined by collaboration and engagement, so members' voices are at the forefront of SNIPEF's future direction.

In a period of uncertainty across the construction sector, his willingness to open a clear line of dialogue between our members and the boardroom feels like a positive step in embracing the challenges and opportunities facing our profession together.

This is the key to us making better decisions, representing diverse viewpoints and driving the profession forward effectively.

Ensuring the next generation has the opportunity to succeed is one

---

**“The future is in good hands, but the opportunity must be afforded”**

of these challenges, but I was once again incredibly encouraged for the future by witnessing the talent coming through the ranks at the 51st SPAY competition. This year we were in Paisley, ably hosted by West College Scotland, to showcase the very best of the plumbing and heating professionals of the future.

Seeing so much passion in the room only reinforces how essential it is this pathway remains open and accessible, for student and employer. The future is in good hands but we must fight together to ensure that the door always remains open to new faces who want to follow a career in our profession.

Leadwork was again showcased at this year's SPAY competition and I was delighted to have the chance to speak to Past President Gordon Matheson about the opportunities specialising in lead can provide for aspiring plumbers.

Gordon is currently working on the £70 million restoration of the Old Royal High School in Edinburgh, ensuring a part

of the city's great history can be revitalised and brought back into public use. In a time where lead suffers from many misconceptions, it remains a key element of a plumber's skillset and essential to the protection of our built heritage. It once again highlights the historic and diverse nature of our ever-evolving industry, constantly blending traditional and modern techniques to preserve the past while helping shape the future of the profession.

As always, I hope this issue of *PlumbHeat* offers an insight into the people, projects and progress shaping our profession across Scotland and Northern Ireland. Whether it is celebrating emerging talent, preserving historic skills or embracing new ideas and leadership, there remains a huge amount to be proud of within our industry. I hope you enjoy the issue. ■



# Experience, engagement, action

By Gregor Millar,  
PlumbHeat Editor



ABOVE: Steve began his career as an apprentice in 1979, forming his own company in 2012

New SNIPEF President Steve Craig sets out his ambitions to grow member involvement and strengthen SNIPEF's voice across the industry

## DESCRIBE YOUR JOURNEY TO BECOMING PRESIDENT OF SNIPEF

I made my start in the profession as an apprentice plumber in 1979 with Munro Petrosea in Dundee. They were a company that employed sheet metal workers, electricians, plumbers and armature winders.

Funnily enough, I became a plumber partly by chance. I had originally been put forward by my school careers adviser as an apprentice armature winder but I wasn't successful and, luckily for me, I was offered an apprentice plumbing role instead.

Over the years, I worked for a variety of firms until 2012 when I founded APS Dundee Ltd with my colleague Alan Greene, offering a variety of services from boiler installations to general plumbing needs.

It was at this time that I became involved with SNIPEF. I quickly began to understand the value it could provide and was keen to become a more active contributor. Initially, I joined the Dundee local association, where I would later become President. From there, I took the next step in becoming a SNIPEF Office Bearer, making my way up the ranks to where I am now.

## HOW DOES IT FEEL TO STEP INTO THE ROLE OF PRESIDENT?

It's a fantastic honour and very humbling. I see this as an opportunity to give something back to a profession that has given me my livelihood. Over

the years, I have developed a great understanding of the hard work and passion that my fellow directors and SNIPEF employees have for this organisation. I'm eager to bring this energy to my own presidency, helping to steer SNIPEF for the benefit of our members and wider profession.

## WHAT ARE YOUR PRINCIPAL AIMS FOR THE YEAR AHEAD?

I would first like to thank our immediate Past President, Duncan Sharp, for laying much of the groundwork on which I now hope to build. His commitment to growth across all aspects of the organisation is well recognised and it's vital that we continue that work and maintain the momentum already established.

A central theme of my presidency will be member engagement. SNIPEF can only grow and move forward with the active involvement of its members.

They bring the knowledge, experience and practical understanding of the profession, while SNIPEF provides the collective voice and vehicle through which that expertise can be represented, advanced and acted upon. I'm keen to see more members engage with us, work with us and help shape the future of the organisation across both Scotland and Northern Ireland.

I'm also acutely aware of the current pressures facing apprentice recruitment, retention and funding support. SNIPEF has undertaken

“SNIPEF can only grow and move forward with the active involvement of its members. They are the voice, experience and strength behind our organisation”



Steve Craig, SNIPEF's  
102nd President



extensive research and member workshops to better understand these challenges and our report is now at review stage. Following the summer recess at Holyrood, we hope to launch this work and use it to support continued engagement with the Scottish Government.

This matters not only to our members, but also to the long-term strength of the profession, the wellbeing and safety of the public and the delivery of government ambitions around skills, competence and the future workforce.

### YOU HIGHLIGHTED APPRENTICE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION AS KEY PRIORITIES. IS COST THE MAIN BARRIER TO ADDRESSING THESE CHALLENGES OR IS THE ISSUE MORE COMPLEX?

Cost is undoubtedly a major factor, particularly when employers are expected to invest at least £80,000 over four years to recruit and train an apprentice. However, the issue is more complex than cost alone.

There is still strong interest from young people and others looking to enter the profession, and many employers remain committed to taking on apprentices. The challenge is that the structure of the industry has changed. There are fewer larger employers than in the past, while around 92% of SNIPEF members are now small or micro-businesses.

That matters because smaller businesses are more exposed to financial pressures, supervision demands, college release costs and the risk of losing an apprentice once they become productive.

The intent to train is still there but the system is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain without targeted support and reform.

If we want to protect the workforce of the future, we need to recognise the real cost and responsibility carried by employers and ensure they have the confidence to continue investing in apprenticeships.

### WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE MOST PRESSING CHALLENGES CURRENTLY FACING THE PROFESSION?

The most pressing challenges remain cost pressures, skills shortages and the long-term sustainability of apprenticeship recruitment and training. Our State of Trade research shows that the profession is broadly holding up well, but members are still operating in a difficult environment.

Economic uncertainty, both nationally and globally, does not help. It affects confidence, costs and business planning.

However, ours is a resilient profession. Most members I know are careful, practical businesses that do not overstretch themselves. That discipline has helped the profession navigate difficult periods before, and it will continue to be important as we face the challenges ahead.



### HOW DO YOU AND SNIPEF PLAN TO AN ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES? IS THERE ANYTHING THAT SNIPEF CAN REASONABLY DO?

We need to continue engaging at government level and influence the powers that be to secure effective solutions. We have made a strong start, particularly in regard towards apprenticeship funding reform, by building positive relationships with politicians and officials. However, the work doesn't stop, and we must always look for new ways to be heard. Ensuring that our industry remains visible in government circles is essential in us achieving our aims.

This also links directly to the growth agenda established by Duncan Sharp. The stronger and more engaged our membership is, the stronger our voice becomes. By growing SNIPEF and increasing member involvement, we can better represent the profession, demonstrate its importance to the wider construction sector, and show government that its ambitions, particularly

ABOVE: Steve assumed the role of President on 5 June, after SNIPEF's AGM in Dundee

**“ I want to be present and accessible. I want to listen to as many members as possible, understand the challenges they face, and ensure SNIPEF continues to provide the support our profession needs”**



successful businesses around traditional heating systems, and those systems will remain part of the market for many years to come. SNIPEF has an important role in balancing the ambition for low-carbon technologies with practical support for those members whose work continues to be focused on existing systems.

We should encourage diversification but not suggest that every business must follow the same route at the same pace. One of SNIPEF's strengths is the diversity of its membership, from those already working in renewables to those maintaining and installing the systems customers still rely on every day.

Our role is to ensure all members have a voice, that their concerns are understood and that those who wish to transition have access to the right support, training and advice. Through the SNIPEF Academy, our affiliates and future partnerships, we can help members upskill where appropriate, while continuing to represent the full breadth of the profession.

### **HAVING SERVED AS PRESIDENT OF A LOCAL ASSOCIATION, WHAT VALUE DO THEY BRING TO SNIPEF AND ITS MEMBERS?**

Local associations are steeped in history – my own association dates to 1874, making it one of the oldest in Scotland. Their continued value lies in giving members a route to voice their opinions and concerns on day-to-day matters affecting our industry.

They also play an important role in helping SNIPEF understand regional pressures and opportunities. They have a responsibility to canvass the views of their members, listen to their concerns and feed them back through their nominated representatives to head office, ensuring a true and fair view is represented at national level.

This is vital when trying to understand the pressures and opportunities across different parts of the country, from Shetland to Stranraer, Northern Ireland and everywhere in between.

### **FINALLY, WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE WITH SNIPEF MEMBERS AS YOU BEGIN YOUR PRESIDENCY?**

Work with us, engage with us and help us to help you.

I am determined that all members should have a voice and the opportunity to contribute to SNIPEF's future direction. That means listening to members across Scotland and Northern Ireland, understanding the issues they face, and making sure their views are properly reflected in the work we do.

I will always welcome debate, challenge and constructive pushback. That is how we make better decisions, strengthen the organisation and ensure SNIPEF continues to represent the profession effectively. ■

around renewable technologies, cannot be delivered without a skilled and supported workforce. Our members are vital to delivering that future, but they need the right support.

### **WITH YOUR BACKGROUND AS A PLUMBER AND GAS ENGINEER, HOW DO YOU SEE THE TRANSITION TO NET ZERO RESHAPING THE PROFESSION?**

Renewables will play an important role in the future of our profession and it's vital that we embrace that transition. Since I began my apprenticeship in 1979, our industry has continually evolved, adapting to new technologies and higher standards at every stage.

While many members, myself included, are not directly involved in renewables, that reflects the breadth and diversity of our profession. Plumbing and heating is about far more than any one technology and that diversity is one of our greatest strengths. Our ability to adapt, while continuing to deliver trusted, high-quality work for customers, is why the profession continues to be so highly respected.

### **MANY MEMBERS ARE STILL PRIMARILY FOCUSED ON TRADITIONAL SYSTEMS. HOW CAN SNIPEF SUPPORT THEM IN ADAPTING TO THE GROWING ROLE OF RENEWABLES?**

Many of our members, including me, have built

# Training tomorrow's workforce

SNIFE affiliate **Ideal Heating** officially reopened its Dalgety Bay training centre in March 2025. The firm's Andrew Corrie reports on its first year training installers and the work that's being done to help tackle the skills shortage across the profession

**As the plumbing and heating sector continues to respond to rising efficiency standards, advancing technologies and the transition towards low-carbon heating, access to high-quality practical training has never been more critical for installers and businesses alike.**

Since we reopened in March last year, the Dalgety Bay centre has established itself as a key training hub for installers across Scotland, demonstrating strong and sustained demand for practical, manufacturer-led learning.

## A PURPOSE-BUILT LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The refurbished Dalgety Bay facility was designed to mirror real-world working conditions, giving installers access to a modern and professional training space focused on hands-on learning. We wanted to create a space where engineers could build practical skills, deepen product understanding and increase confidence when working with today's heating technologies.

Training is delivered by experienced tutors using live



By Andrew Corrie, Technical Training Manager, Ideal Heating



appliances and dedicated training rigs, enabling delegates to move beyond theory and gain meaningful, job-ready experience.

This competence-based approach reflects growing industry demand for practical knowledge alongside technical expertise.

## COMPREHENSIVE COURSE OFFERING

Our Dalgety Bay centre brings a broad portfolio of courses to the table, covering domestic, commercial and renewable



The refurbished facility opened in March 2025 and has seen a 220% rise in delegates

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Training courses help installers as well as the wider profession

## Delegate feedback

The impact of the Dalgety Bay centre is reflected not only in delegate numbers but also in feedback from attendees who have consistently highlighted the quality of tuition, facilities and practical learning experience.

One said: "Learned a lot of new tips and tricks, gained more knowledge on the boilers and why they work the way they do. I feel more confident on stripping and fault finding. The facilities are very nice – it's a great set-up and very hands-on."

Ideal stresses that this type of feedback underlines the value of practical, installer-focused training in improving confidence, reducing call-backs and supporting better system performance in the field.

heating technologies to help support installers at all stages of their careers.

Courses include training across Ideal's domestic boiler range, such as Logic and Vogue, alongside renewable solutions including Logic Air heat pumps and the HP290.

For larger installations, commercial training is available on products including Evomax 2 and Imax Xtra 2 boilers, as well as Ecomod air source heat pumps.

Recognising the increasing importance of low-carbon heating, the centre also delivers Intro to Heat Pumps, BPEC Heat Pump Qualification and System Design courses. In addition, essential compliance and safety training is available,

including BPEC Water Regulations, G3 Unvented Hot Water, Basic Electrics and Safe Isolation – all key areas for installers operating within an evolving regulatory landscape.

### SUPPORTING INSTALLERS AND THE WIDER PROFESSION

For both employers and self-employed installers, access to structured training plays a vital role in maintaining standards, improving productivity and building long-term business resilience. By combining product, compliance and renewable training under one roof, the Dalgety Bay centre helps installers adapt to changing market demands while continuing to deliver safe

“ Training is delivered by experienced tutors using live appliances and dedicated training rigs, enabling delegates to move beyond theory and gain meaningful, job-ready experience”

and efficient installations. As the industry continues to face skills pressures and the need to upskill the existing workforce, dedicated training facilities such as our Ideal Expert Academies provide a bridge between manufacturers, educators and installers.

The strong uptake during the first year since reopening highlights a growing appetite for structured, hands-on training across Scotland. With continued focus on efficiency, system performance and low-carbon technologies, the role of specialist training centres will remain central to preparing installers for the challenges and opportunities ahead. ■

To find out more and book a course, visit [www.expert-academy.co.uk/w/courses/cat-39-in-person-training](http://www.expert-academy.co.uk/w/courses/cat-39-in-person-training)



The centre offers a wide range of training courses

# One year with a heat pump

Scott Sanford shares his experience of 12 months living with a heat pump he installed at home, and reveals how it's made a difference

**Many readers may remember that I installed my own heat pump at my house last March, which was a combined project to coincide with the Start at Home project we ran with Nesta, the UK's innovation agency for social good.**

The scheme saw 40 SNIPEF members selected by Nesta to receive free heat pump training to meet the prerequisites of MCS accreditation, which was paid for by the SNIPEF Education and Training Trust Fund. Half of the group then received a free heat pump and materials from Nesta to design and install in their own homes. The idea was to give installers the tools to transition into renewable technologies and analyse if their business models had changed having completed the install.

As the Technical Manager for SNIPEF, I was heavily involved in the project and felt it was an ideal opportunity for me to mirror this process and learn more about the Home Energy Scotland (HES) grants and loans process. I was helped by experienced heat pump installer and SNIPEF member Barry Sharp from Renewable Heat. Barry provided support and mentoring,

By Scott Sanford, Head of Technical Services and Certification

while his company acted as an umbrella, enabling me to access HES funding for the heat pump. Renewable Heat also installed my solar and battery with funding support.

My installation was completed in spring 2025, meaning I only used the heating sparingly through late spring before turning it on again in the autumn. My system was designed to run on pure weather comp only with the heat pump adjusting its flow temperature based on the outside temperature, meaning the house was always warm and comfortable.

I adapted quickly to the weather comp, however my wife could not settle with the house just being warm – she needed a visible thermostat on the wall for peace of mind.

After a couple of months of telling her it wasn't needed, I gave in and added a room stat, which has no effect on the heating, it just provided the room temperature and a few other functions. My

wife also commented on the radiators not being hot, but this worry didn't persist as she realised the house was always warm enough.

## HOW WILL IT PERFORM IN WINTER?

Despite my confidence in the system design and installation, I was slightly nervous that my house may not be warm enough as the outside temperatures dipped below freezing. Thankfully my nervousness was unfounded and even at  $-4^{\circ}\text{C}$ , slightly less than the DOT (design outside temperature) of  $-3.4^{\circ}\text{C}$ , my house maintained the desired temperature.

In fact, the system performed better than expected. My youngest son rarely uses the radiator in his room as it stays warm from the heat circulating from the hall and neighbouring rooms. Similarly, in our bedroom, where I installed a second radiator to match the calculated heat loss, we only ever need one radiator on.

It shows that heat loss calculations are not an exact science and that, for our 1938 four-bedroom bungalow, the calculated 6.4kW heat loss may have slightly oversized the system. For 2025, my heating performed at an SPF of 5.3, an efficiency of 530%.

Roll on 2026 where I started to play around with my heat pump settings, adjusting the heating curve and flow temps as I was curious how the heating would perform and if I could reduce my bills further. After several weeks of playing

Scott Sanford





Scott installed his heat pump in March 2025

➤ around (and occasionally being moaned at for the house not being warm enough), I set the curve back to its design setting. I also started to turn the heating off on sunny days as my house is south facing and would overheat if turned back on in the evenings. Doing this has increased my education on heat pump performance and how critical the design and installation are. It may have also reduced my bills slightly; even though my SPF did drop to 4.9 – which is still great at 490% efficiency.

### SO, WHAT ABOUT MY HOT WATER?

My wife and I have lived with combi boilers since around 2005, so we've been used to an endless amount of hot water. When I sized up my hot water cylinder, I had to compromise on its size due to the cupboard including the electrics for my solar PV and battery. Frustratingly, I only installed a 180l cylinder, while in hindsight, I could have squeezed a larger cylinder in. Now 180l doesn't sound bad for my wife and me, however we have two boys to throw into the mix who love a long shower! Complaints of running out of hot water started and I wasn't flavour of the month.

To counter this, I changed the cylinder settings to produce a higher temperature meaning less hot water is used due to mixing in the shower. I also changed my HW setting from Eco to Comfort. This allowed the booster heaters in the hydro unit to kick in, reducing the HW reheat time from around 30 minutes to 15.

All sounds good, but this in turn uses more energy and increased my running costs (my SPF for the HW is only 2.1/210%), and dad is always the last one to get in the shower, so I either had a cold shower or waited for the cylinder to recharge.

As I mentioned earlier, I have 3.6 kw solar PV and a 9.5kwh



battery installed. Having both has its own challenges. I had a GivEnergy system installed, which wasn't the easiest to set up as a user and needs constant monitoring as there are no fault alerts generated to the app. Two different faults occurred in three months, of which I was none the wiser. On top of this there was added service time to resolve the issues.

They advised to check the app twice a week to monitor the system which isn't ideal as you expect that these systems would be fit, set up and ready to go. GivEnergy has now entered administration, leaving me with no warranty (and an added worry should anything on the system fail). On the plus side, the system has reduced my overall running costs in the house by generating my own electricity, charging the battery, and selling electricity back to the grid. I estimate that I have saved around £880 from the solar, battery and Octopus Go

tariff over the 12-month period. The cheaper night-time rates also mean I heat my house, recharge my cylinder and maintain any other electrical appliances that run during the night for a third of the normal costs, with around 26% of my electricity usage at the night-time rate.

### WHAT ABOUT THE ENERGY USAGE AND RUNNING COST?

Frustratingly, that's difficult to work out as I don't have specific usage details for the heat pump to calculate it all. I was hoping for installer access to the app to see things in greater detail. But that didn't happen and I can only base this on the heat pump's overall energy usage and the average cost of my electricity based on my solar, battery and night-time tariff – giving me an average electricity cost of 15.04p per kWh. My heat pump used 4,822 kWh of electricity so an overall running cost of £725.23 for

ABOVE: Scott's household has saved £470.34 in 12 months

the year. If I didn't have access to the solar PV, battery and night-time tariffs, my running costs would be £1287.47, which is based on the UK average cost of electricity per unit over the 12-month period at £0.267 kWh – a saving of £562.24 by having the three other benefits.

To put this all into context and compare my bills like for like, when I had a gas boiler, gas hob and no solar, my annual bill for gas and electric was £2,006.77 including standing charges. The 12-month period in comparison has cost me £1,536.43, a saving of £470.34. It's also worth noting that we are using more electricity in general as the kids now have TVs and more electronic items, coupled with us now using an electric drier for the clothes, so the savings are perhaps not a true reflection.

**HAS IT ALL BEEN WORTH IT?**

My house is warmer and more comfortable as the heating is constant and adjusts to the outside temperature. This

“ My house is warmer and more comfortable as the heating is constant and adjusts to the outside temperature”

means no more cold spells or the heating running too hot, then cooling too much before the thermostat kicks back in. It is also fully decarbonised, not reliant on fossil fuels and my bills are cheaper. My wife now uses an electric car which charges during the night-time rate and costs around £10 for around 500 miles. So, quite a few wins here.

On the downside, my return on investment is over 14-15 years, I now run out of hot water when I didn't before, I have less storage space in my house due to the cylinder and hydro unit, and when the heat pump is out of warranty, if needed, the costs of parts can be significantly higher than that of a boiler.

**WHAT COULD HELP MAKE IT MORE BENEFICIAL?**

The spark gap (the cost difference between gas and electricity) needs to reduce. I get cheaper electricity through all my add-ons, which come with additional cost and a long return on investment. But not everyone has these, so reducing the electricity price must happen sooner rather than later. ■

BELOW: Scott's wife wanted a thermostat for peace of mind



Scott installed a 180l cylinder

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## Round-up of latest WaterSafe® activities and events

# New name, same aim to protect standards

Jonathan Samuel, Managing Director of WaterSafe Register, explains why the organisation has a new identity



By Jonathan Samuel, Managing Director of WaterSafe Register

### WHY HAS 'REGISTER' BEEN ADDED TO THE WATERSAFE NAME?

Adding 'Register' to our name makes it immediately clear what we are – a register of vetted, qualified plumbing professionals.

That's always been our purpose, and now it's in the name too, making it clearer to households and businesses that are looking for a plumber that an official register exists – and for good reason too.

We also wanted a stronger comparison with the Gas Safe Register, which is well known in the UK. Although WaterSafe registration isn't mandatory, we want people to treat their drinking water plumbing with the same seriousness and respect that they give their boilers and central heating systems.

### DO HOMEOWNERS SUPPORT THE PRINCIPLE OF HAVING AN OFFICIAL PLUMBING REGISTER?

Our research found that as few as one in 10 homeowners say they only ever use an approved plumber.

However, the same survey found 91% agree the government should make it compulsory for

“For any plumber who takes pride in their work and wants customers to be able to see that, registration is a simple way to make that visible”



The new name helps to make the scheme's role clearer to customers

plumbers working on drinking water systems to be qualified and on an official register.

The support is there, but people aren't yet choosing to only use a WaterSafe-registered plumber, so we hope the name change will increase awareness and uptake.

Plumbers and installers themselves are an important part of the puzzle too – the chances of someone using a registered plumber are far greater if there are lots in the local area.

### WHAT'S AT STAKE WHEN SOMEONE PICKS THE WRONG PLUMBER?

At worst, contamination of the drinking water supply through the wrong fittings, untested products or failure to follow the Water Fittings Regulations.

This is why all UK water companies and the drinking water quality regulators for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland back WaterSafe Register. They share our interest in keeping water safe after it leaves the mains – and an unqualified plumber working on your internal plumbing can undo that.

Our research shows that 20% of homeowners have used a plumber who didn't carry out the work correctly and then had to hire another plumber to put things right. Problems included water leaks, wrongly connected pipework or other damage, and the average cost to rectify the damage was £387.

For more information and advice about how you can benefit from WaterSafe Register membership, please visit [www.watersafe.org.uk](http://www.watersafe.org.uk)

## WHAT DOES BEING ON THE REGISTER MEAN FOR INSTALLERS?

Around 7,000 contractors are already on the register and they benefit from being listed on the UK's largest directory of vetted plumbers – promoted by their local water company, recommended through Citizens Advice and recognised for plumbing work in NHS trusts.

But I think what members value most is what registration says about them to customers.

One of our installers put it well: "It's massively important to be properly qualified and for customers to be able to see that. It's the people who aren't qualified who give tradesmen a bad name." That's exactly why the register exists – it's a mark of quality and professionalism.

## WHAT IF A PLUMBER ISN'T ON THE REGISTER YET?

Joining is free for most eligible plumbers and the process is straightforward. To register, you need to be a member of one of our four Approved Contractor Schemes – SNIPEF, APHC, CIPHE or WIAPS – and hold the right qualifications to work safely on drinking water systems.

For any plumber who takes pride in their work and wants customers to be able to see that, registration is a simple way to make that visible. The register is growing and the more qualified plumbers who join, the easier it is for consumers everywhere to make a safe choice.

## WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO SOMEONE ABOUT TO BOOK A PLUMBER?

Take 30 seconds, go to [watersafe.org.uk](http://watersafe.org.uk) and put in your postcode to find your nearest WaterSafe-registered plumber.

Every plumber on the register has been vetted through one of our four Approved Contractor Schemes, carries the right insurance, keeps their qualifications up to date and has a complaints process in place if something goes wrong.

I'd recommend everyone find their nearest WaterSafe-registered plumber and keep their details handy – on the fridge or in your phone contacts – as you never know when you might need one. ■

## OPT IN TO WATERSAFE REGISTER

*If you're a plumber in Northern Ireland or Scotland registered with SNIPEF, you are eligible to join WaterSafe Register at no extra cost. Eligible members must opt to sign up for WaterSafe Register – you will not automatically be registered. Contact our Schemes department on 0131 357 2440 or email [schemes@snipef.org](mailto:schemes@snipef.org) for details. For more information about WaterSafe Register and its benefits, visit [watersafe.org.uk/howtojoin](http://watersafe.org.uk/howtojoin)*

Lead solder is another risk that's easy to overlook. Using lead solder on drinking water systems has been illegal since 1987, yet our research shows some plumbers still do – and two-thirds carry it in their bags alongside lead-free, which creates a real risk of accidental use.

Lead can dissolve into drinking water and build up in the body over time. There is no safe level of exposure, and babies and young children are most at risk, as it can affect their development.

A WaterSafe-registered installer is more likely to only use lead-free solder or fittings that don't need solder at all. If you're having any work done on your drinking water plumbing, ask your plumber directly which solder they use.

BELOW: The scheme helps people find a plumbing professional they can trust



© Magic Lens/Shutterstock

# Making installers best in class

SNIPEF affiliate **Instantor** explains why training, compliance and innovation are central to the growing adoption of press fit technology

**At Instantor, we invented and patented the first brass compression fitting in 1926 and we proudly celebrate our centenary this year. As market-leaders in press solutions, we've long been committed to supporting professional installers, helping them comply with the latest regulations and deliver best-in-class installations.**

Press fit technology is playing an increasing role across the plumbing and heating industry. Compared to traditional techniques such as soldering, press systems can significantly reduce installation time, while improving consistency and safety on site by removing the need for heat-based works.

However, as with any system, correct installation is essential. Training is vital to ensure that installers can take full

advantage of press solutions while maintaining high standards of workmanship.

At Instantor, we are placing a strong emphasis on compliance-led design and installer education to contribute to raising standards across the plumbing and heating industry as a whole.

## COMPLIANCE IS KEY

Instantor products are designed for the trade by our own team of installers who have the experience to understand the challenges facing the profession on a daily basis.

Compliance is a key driver within the business and for our ongoing product development activities. We make sure we keep abreast of the changing regulations so we are able to proactively help installers

to stay ahead of legislation. Examples of this are our new pre-insulated Pex-al-Pex multilayer pipe, which includes options that satisfy the requirements of Part L (heat loss) and Part B (fire performance), with insulation certified to Euroclass BL. Our lead-free brass compression fittings are made from CW511L brass and are ready for the EU Drinking Water Directive, and our new PPSU press fittings are manufactured from non-corrosive materials and include a leak before press safety feature.

## TURNING KNOWLEDGE INTO SKILLS

Product innovation is only part of the story. We understand the need to work closely with installers, supporting them to understand our plumbing and heating products and how best to install them.

With this in mind, we have developed a comprehensive training programme to help educate installers, including SNIPEF members, via our affiliate membership of the organisation.

Free competency training courses are available for a number of our press solutions. The courses focus on providing practical education relating to regulations, and-how to prepare and fit pipe and



By Andy Burton, Head of Marketing at Instantor

**BELOW:** Installers attending one of Instantor's competency training sessions



“Competency training not only allows installers to better understand products but also has the benefit of helping to eliminate the costly and time-consuming callbacks that can result when products are installed incorrectly”

fittings in order to achieve installations that are safe, compliant and reliable.

### SAVING PRECIOUS TIME

With the skills shortage within the profession still looming large, installer time has never been more precious, and it is essential for manufacturers to help them work more efficiently while minimising reworks. Competency training not only allows installers to better understand products but also has the benefit of helping to eliminate the costly and time-consuming callbacks that can result when products are installed incorrectly.

Over the last decade at Instantor, we have developed an all-encompassing press portfolio with solutions for every application, from multilayer pipe to copper and stainless steel. One of the key drivers for this is the speed at which press fittings can be installed – around 35% faster than traditional methods such as soldering.

In addition, press joints are created using a mechanically operated and calibrated press tool, which provides consistently accurate joints while removing the need for ancillary products such as flux, torches and heat mats, plus time-consuming fire watches.



#### ABOVE:

Training can give installers more product knowledge

In our case, improving installer understanding about press solutions helps to ensure they keep up to date with the latest technologies available, ahead of legislation and are able to complete more projects within their increasingly squeezed schedules and to a higher standard.

Upon completion of our competency training, installers are issued personalised ID cards confirming they have successfully undertaken training as part of their ongoing professional

development. The ID cards help them demonstrate their expertise to larger project owners.

Training is delivered via a number of channels including Instantor's state-of-the-art Dublin visitor and training centre, which includes a dedicated installer training room. Training is also available via our Mobile Training Academy that is available to visit SNIPEF member events and also has an active programme of demonstration days at plumbing and heating trade counters across Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The Mobile Academy also delivered training at more than 20 colleges in Northern Ireland at the end of last year in order to help engage with and educate the next generation of plumbing professionals.

Since joining SNIPEF, the Instantor team has also attended a number of events and contributed articles designed to enhance installer competence, and we will continue to work in partnership with the trade. ■

[SNIPEF members can find out more about the training available from Instantor and enquire about forthcoming dates, by visiting www.instantor.co.uk/training](http://www.instantor.co.uk/training)



Instantor Mobile Training Academy

# Leading the way

Heritage skills, modern standards and specialist craftsmanship are central to the restoration of the Old Royal High School

By Gregor Millar,  
PlumbHeat  
Editor

**Sitting prominently on Edinburgh's Calton Hill, the Old Royal High School is one of Scotland's most historic buildings. Designed by Thomas Hamilton and completed in 1829, the Category A-listed landmark has stood at the centre of decades of debate over its future, from proposals to house the Scottish Parliament to controversial plans for a luxury hotel development.**

Now, after more than 50 years largely lying dormant, the building is being transformed into Scotland's new National Centre for Music through a major conservation-led restoration project. At the heart of that work is specialist lead contractor, and SNIPEF Past

**BELOW:**  
About 80% of the roof work on the project is lead work



President, Gordon Matheson and his team.

The £70 million project will become an important cultural landmark, with an emphasis on restoration and preservation – and that's where Matheson Plumbing comes in. The firm is providing the craftsmanship required to maintain the historic character and appearance through specialist lead working.

Gordon said: "It's effectively a complete strip and re-covering project. There are about 11 roofs involved and eight of them are being stripped and redone completely. The main central roof is entirely lead and around 80% of the roof work on the project is lead work.

"With a historic building like this, you can't just apply modern methods without thinking about the original structure. Some of the historic detailing wouldn't necessarily comply with current standards, so you have to carefully assess what works, what needs to be improved and what should be replicated in the same traditional manner."

Gordon highlighted the need to marry the old and the new as one of the key challenges in projects of this kind. Specialists need to balance the requirement of meeting modern standards and improving performance while also respecting how the building was originally constructed. "Experience is crucial in making those judgements," Gordon added.

The work needs a level of experience that can't be learned solely in the classroom, with

the Matheson team honing their skills over many years to become some of the premier lead workers in the country. But they all made the same start in the profession.

"I started as an apprentice plumber with my father's company and completed my apprenticeship. At that time, plumbing naturally involved lead work, copper work and zinc work as part of the trade," Gordon explained. Gordon's nephew, Fraser, a trained plumber and accomplished lead worker, has now taken over the running of Matheson Plumbing.

"Most of our lead workers trained originally as plumbers through SNIPEF Training Services, but we've taken them further into specialist lead work training," said Gordon.

"A tradesperson might be able to do basic lead work, but heritage roofing is another level entirely. You need the experience to look at a detail, understand how it was originally formed and know how to improve it without losing the character of the building."

Lead remains an essential component of the modern-day plumber's skillset, especially those working on heritage projects. It is an incredibly durable material when installed properly with a shelf-life of up to 200 years or more. And it is also sustainable, with 99.6% of lead removed from old roofs being recyclable and reusable.

Yet there are still many misconceptions about the material. Gordon explained: "A lot of people see lead work



as an old-fashioned or dying trade, but there's still huge demand for it on historic buildings.

"There are also still some misconceptions around safety. Lead work is perfectly manageable when proper procedures are followed.

"The key risks come from poor hygiene practices such as eating or smoking without washing properly. With modern PPE, training and health monitoring, the risks can be managed effectively."

Changing regulations have made working with lead more difficult in recent times, but Gordon believes this is all part of a profession

that is constantly evolving. He said: "The industry has changed massively. There's far more mechanisation now, including lifting equipment and machinery for handling and forming lead.

"Workers also have far more PPE and health monitoring. Our employees undergo annual blood lead testing and regular occupational health checks to ensure they're working safely.

"The regulations are certainly stricter, but most of them are there for good reason. The important thing is ensuring businesses follow the correct procedures and properly train their workforce."

But he does believe that these changing regulations, along with misconceptions about lead, can discourage younger people from specialising.

He added: "Some younger people hear 'lead' and they immediately assume it's dangerous. The reality is that when lead work is carried out correctly the risks are manageable. The bigger issue is often perception."

**ABOVE:**

The Old Royal High School building has been mostly vacant for half a century

**BELOW:**

Gordon Matheson

In fighting this perception, Gordon is passionate to see the skill passed on to the next generation "because once these skills disappear, they're incredibly difficult to replace".

He concluded: "[Lead] gives you opportunities to work on some incredible buildings that most plumbers would never get access to. There's a huge amount of pride in being able to point to a dome, roof or historic structure and say you worked on it.

"If you enjoy working outdoors, enjoy historic buildings and are willing to learn, it can be a fantastic career.

"There are still many historic buildings that require specialist lead work and there will continue to be demand for those skills. The key is making sure the knowledge is passed on properly and that younger tradespeople are encouraged to learn the craft.

"It takes time to develop the skills, but if you show interest and commitment, you can build a very rewarding career working on projects that very few people ever get the chance to experience." ■



Changing regulations and health and safety have made working with lead more challenging



**Scotland's brightest  
apprentices shine at**

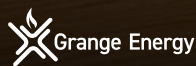
# SPAY 2022

The 51st Scottish Plumbing Apprentice of the Year competition showcased the skills, talent and ambition of the next generation of plumbing and heating professionals



6

Sponsors



Hosts



➤ Three apprentices have written their names in plumbing history after triumphing at the 51st Scottish Plumbing Apprentice of the Year (SPAY) competition.

The competition, held at West College Scotland in Paisley, brought together 27 of the most talented plumbing and heating apprentices from across Scotland to compete in one of three categories: copper, lead and renewable technologies.

The SPAY competition, organised by SNIPEF, has long been recognised as a flagship event in Scotland's apprenticeship calendar. Having marked its 50th anniversary in 2025, the contest has been the launchpad for the skilled professionals of the future – showcasing the life-changing potential of apprenticeships to more than 1,000 apprentices over the years.

At a time when the sustainability of apprenticeships is under pressure, combined with a decreasing availability of skilled workers, the importance of a trusted pipeline of talent is more important than ever. SPAY aims to provide a platform for the next generation and highlight the vital role apprentices play in supporting the national economy, infrastructure and the health



The apprentices' skills in leadworking were put to the test during the contest

**SPAY 51: Leadwork 2026 Finalists**

Competitor Name	Employer	College
<b>Sweyn Macaskill</b>	Moray Council	UHI Moray
<b>Logan Fawkes</b>	—	Dumfries & Galloway
<b>Joshua George McCaulay</b>	James Frew Ltd	Dumfries & Galloway
<b>Owen Doyle</b>	Stewart Shaw Ltd	WCS
<b>Jack Holliday</b>	Stephen Runciman Plumbing & Heating Ltd	Borders
<b>Jack Rennie</b>	M Walker Plumbing	WCS
<b>James Rafferty</b>	Sureserve Energy Services UK Ltd	Glasgow Kelvin
<b>Ben Vallance</b>	Precise Installs (Strathclyde) Ltd	South Lanarkshire
<b>Ross Dingwall</b>	ID Plumbing & Heating	Glasgow Clyde

and welfare for the population as well as the nation's low-carbon ambitions.

The copper category continued its association with BPEC, serving once again as the Scottish qualifying heat for the UK-wide SkillPLUMB competition. The partnership strengthens the link between SPAY and the WorldSkills UK framework, providing apprentices with a recognised pathway to showcase their skills on a national stage and, potentially, progress to international competition.

This year, Kai Gray of Cowie Plumbing and Heating and UHI Moray walked away with the copper prize, while James Rankin, from Eric Hyslop Ltd and Dumfries and Galloway College, and Chris Ripley, from BPS Group and Glasgow Clyde College, took home second and third place respectively.

Speaking after claiming his prize, Kai said: "It feels great! Last year I came second, so to come first this time round is fantastic. I thought I had a good chance this year, but winning still comes as a nice surprise.

"I'd like to thank my lecturer Jim and all the boys at work, especially Connor Cruden who won this competition before and went through to the Worlds. They have all definitely helped a lot.



BELOW: West College's Eric Brownlie gives his opening address to attendees



**Category judges**

➔ **COPPER**

- Neil Collishaw** – BPEC
- Mark Antrobus** – BPEC
- Tracey Richardson** – BPEC
- John Doherty** – John Doherty & Co Ltd
- Scott Murphy** – Precise Installs

➔ **LEADWORK**

- Gordon Matheson** – Matheson Plumbing Co Ltd
- Malcolm Thomson** – D Blake & Co Ltd
- Alan Marshall** – Associated Lead Mills (ALM)

➔ **RENEWABLE TECHNOLOGIES**

- Duncan Sharp** – Grange Energy Services
- Barry Sharp** – Renewable Heat
- Scott Sanford** – SNIPEF

- Craig Nicol** – Grange Energy Services
- Ian Edgeworth** – New Perspective



The apprentices were joined by friends, family, college staff and colleagues



SNIEPF President Steve Craig delivers his closing address at the competition



There was tough competition in this year's copper category

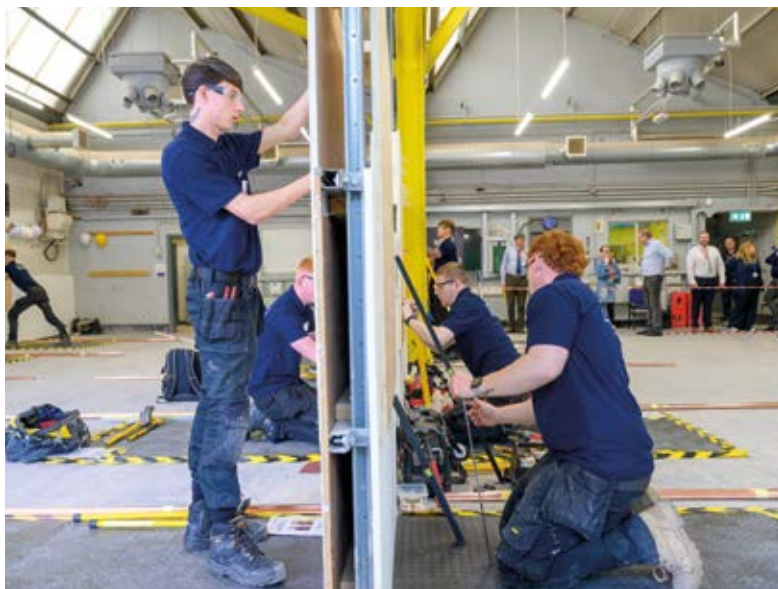
**“The skill, professionalism and commitment demonstrated by every finalist reflects the bright future of the plumbing and heating profession”**

“I would 100% encourage other people to get involved in plumbing and heating – taking part in competitions like this is a real highlight and you can make friends for life.”

SPAY's leadwork category aims to highlight the enduring importance of traditional skills in our profession, showcasing the career opportunities available to apprentices who want to work closely with Scotland's built heritage.

While much of the industry has transitioned away from leadwork towards new technologies, the skill continues to play a key role in heritage and conservation work. In the leadwork section,

**BELOW:** This year's contest showcased the huge talent in our industry



**SPAY 51:**

**Renewable Technologies 2026 Finalists**

Competitor Name	Employer	College
<b>Aiden Docherty</b>	H F Electrical Ltd	South Lanarkshire
<b>Blake Lockhart</b>	H F Mechanical & Electrical Ltd	South Lanarkshire
<b>James McFarlane</b>	OCS	Glasgow Kelvin
<b>Calum Wylie</b>	Orbis Services Ltd	UHI Inverness

Sweyn Macaskill of Moray Council and UHI Moray claimed victory, with Logan Fawkes of Dumfries and Galloway College and Ross Dingwall of ID Plumbing and Heating and Glasgow Clyde College finishing second and third.

Sweyn was delighted to take home first prize. He said: "It feels really good to win – I've put in a lot of effort practising for this event, so to win is incredibly rewarding. To win awards and recognition like this definitely makes you feel like you've chosen the right path. I'd like to thank everyone who has supported me and kept pushing me forward over the years."

Sweyn also encouraged other people to follow in his footsteps by starting an apprenticeship. He added: "It's definitely a great career to get involved in – by getting your apprenticeship you've got a career for life in front of you."

“Competitions like SPAY showcase the value of apprenticeship training and the crucial role played by employers, colleges and training providers in developing the next generation of skilled professionals”

SPAY’s newest category – renewable technologies – celebrated its fourth year in the competition. As Scotland continues its transition to low-carbon technologies, the plumbing and heating profession will play a vital role in delivering sustainable heating solutions. The renewable technologies category showcases apprentices who are embracing these new technologies and developing the skills that will help drive the industry’s future.

Blake Lockhart of HF Mechanical and Electrical Ltd and South Lanarkshire College claimed first place in the category, while Calum Wylie of Orbis Services Ltd and UHI Inverness and Aiden Docherty from HF Electrical Ltd and South Lanarkshire College finished second and third respectively.

Blake said: “I’m buzzing! I didn’t expect it at all. It was a great day out, mixing with everybody and having the chance to showcase my skills. I did think I had a good chance, but I’ve got to keep myself humble.

“I’d like to thank South Lanarkshire College for giving me the opportunity and my company HF has been so supportive in helping me develop my skills.” Keen to inspire the next generation of

apprentices, Blake urged others to follow a similar path. He added: “Don’t be scared, it’s a great opportunity and a job for life if you’ve got the mindset to succeed.”

Eric Brownlie, Education Consultant at West College Scotland, gave the opening address at the start of the event while new SNIPEF President Steve Craig delivered the closing speech.

Speaking after the event, SNIPEF Chief Executive Fiona Hodgson said: “As we celebrate the 51st Scottish Plumbing Apprentice of the Year competition, it is fantastic to see the calibre of talent coming through our industry. The skill, professionalism and commitment demonstrated by every finalist reflect the bright future of the plumbing and heating profession.

“Competitions like SPAY showcase the value of apprenticeship training and the crucial role played by employers, colleges and training providers in developing the next generation of skilled professionals.

“In a safety-critical profession such as plumbing and heating, apprenticeships create lifelong careers while delivering the skills needed to support Scotland’s homes, businesses and infrastructure. It is therefore vital that apprenticeship pathways continue to be protected, supported and remain affordable for employers, ensuring more young people have the opportunity to enter and thrive within our profession.

“I would also like to thank BPEC for its continued support of SPAY. Long-standing partnerships such as this help ensure the competition remains a respected platform for recognising excellence, celebrating achievement and inspiring future apprentices to pursue a career in our profession.” ■



The renewables category showed the importance of new technology

**SPAY 51: BPEC SkillPLUMB 2026 Copper Finalists (Scotland)**

Competitor Name	Employer	College
James Rankin	Eric Hyslop Ltd	Dumfries & Galloway
Theo Clachrie Burns	Derek Mitchell Group Ltd	Dumfries & Galloway
Kai Gray	Cowie Plumbing and Heating Ltd	UHI Moray
Robert Sandford	Moore Plumbing & Heating Services Scotland	WCS
Dylan Burns	Green Home Systems	WCS
Rhys Thomas	J W Grieve Borders Gas Ltd	Borders
Jack Benson	KJB Heating and Plumbing	WCS
Connor Wales	James Frew	Ayrshire
Ross Meikle	Castle Building Services Ltd	South Lanarkshire
Keenan Roney	A B Plumbing & Heating Services Ltd	Glasgow Kelvin
Arran Taylor	Jim Butter Plumbing and Heating Ltd	Dundee & Angus
Tommy Field	Craig Field Scotland Ltd	Glasgow Clyde
Hayden Fisher	A Alexander & Son (Electrical) Ltd	Glasgow Clyde
Christopher Ripley	BPS Group	Glasgow Clyde



Renewables winner  
Blake Lockhart with  
SNIFE's Steve Craig



First prize in the  
copper competition  
went to Kai Gray



Sweyn Macaskill  
came first in the  
leadwork category



A wide range of skills  
were on display from  
the 27 apprentices  
taking part in SPAY



Judge Malcolm  
Thomson chats  
with some of the  
lead contestants



The contest helps  
recognise the key  
role leadwork plays



Renewable tech  
judge Barry Sharp  
checks out the work  
on a heat pump



Concentrating on the  
copper challenge

**Plumbing and heating engineers work in unpredictable and often hazardous settings, so prioritising health and safety is vital – especially for apprentices and newer recruits.**

Jobs commonly involve working at height on roofs, flues and in lofts, where unstable ladders can cause falls. Faulty installation or poor servicing of boilers and appliances can lead to gas leaks and combustion risks. And pressurised central-heating systems and unvented cylinders store energy that can be dangerous if released unexpectedly.

There are also risks around hot and cold water systems that may harbour legionella and other hygiene risks, and backflow can contaminate drinking supplies. Portable tools, wet conditions and nearby electrics increase the risk of shocks, while handling heavy equipment can cause musculoskeletal injuries.

Working in customers' homes, sometimes in confined, poorly ventilated spaces or with vulnerable occupants, also demands extra care.

Reducing these risks begins with thorough, job-specific risk assessments and safe systems of work. Every job should involve identifying gas, water and electrical hazards and

# Protecting lives and livelihoods

**Marsh Commercial, SNIPEF's recommended insurance broker, explains how robust health and safety practices – together with the right cover – can help you look after your employees, assets and reputation**



By Abigail Meades, Affinity Development Executive at Marsh Commercial



selecting the safest method to complete the task. Isolate and lock off gas, water and electrical supplies before work starts and follow clear lock-off procedures during maintenance.

If you're working at height, avoid ladders where possible by using mobile elevating work platforms or fixed access; when ladders are necessary, use those that meet current standards and only for brief tasks.

Using the right equipment and keeping it maintained

is essential. Kit such as pressure test rigs, calibrated thermostatic mixing valves (TMVs), certified backflow prevention devices and tools rated for wet environments reduce exposure to harm.

Make sure you inspect ladders, harnesses, pressure kits, power tools and lifting equipment regularly and retain maintenance logs and certificates.

Gas work should be only by conducted by Gase Safe-

It's essential to be aware of the potential hazards in plumbing and heating work

registered engineers with combustion and flue checks and carbon monoxide testing after service or installation.

Water hygiene relies on effective system management: follow documented risk assessments, maintain correct storage temperatures, flush unused outlets, disinfect where necessary and provide clients with clear handover records and temperature checks. Fit and test RPZ and other backflow devices with certified testers and keep records.

Electrical safety and ergonomics matter too: de-energise circuits where possible, use RCDs for portable tools, ensure correct earthing and bonding, wear suitable PPE and use mechanical aids to reduce manual handling.

Training, supervision and a strong safety culture underpin all of this. Provide formal training, thorough inductions and close supervision for apprentices and newer staff; promote near-miss reporting and ensure management oversight of high-risk activities.

### INSURANCE: PROTECTING YOUR BUSINESS AND LIVELIHOOD

Even with robust safety measures, incidents can occur. The right insurance helps



The right PPE for a job is vital

“When ladders are necessary, use those that meet current standards and only for short tasks”

you recover quickly and resume trading.

Good health and safety reduces the likelihood and severity of incidents; insurance can provide the financial backing and specialist support to repair damage, cover legal costs and compensate for losses. Clear, documented safety practices also reassure customers and

regulators, protecting staff and clients and reducing reputational risk.

### KEY COVERS TO CONSIDER

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- **Employers' liability:** Legally required in the UK for most employers; covers employee claims.
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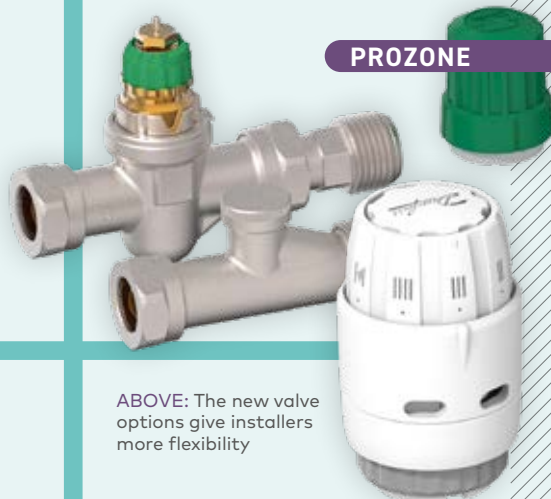
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4 pages of the latest innovations and products from the UK's premier plumbing and heating professionals

# ProZone

PROZONE



ABOVE: The new valve options give installers more flexibility

## New Saniboost Smart keeps up the pressure

Following the successful launch of its clear water pumps in 2025, Saniflo has added another innovative product to the Saniflo Clear Water portfolio.

The new Saniboost Smart is a variable speed, mains-boosting pump that delivers high pressure and flow rates for mains-fed water systems, providing a solution to restrictive mains water pipes. It is designed to boost water flow up to 97 l/min and pressure up to 5.5 bar in mains-fed systems to help overcome issues such as:

- Low flow and/or pressure from outlets such as showers, washing machines, dishwashers, toilets, etc
- Low flow when multiple outlets are used at the same time
- Poor water pressure and/or flow on higher floors
- Inability to extend a property with additional bathrooms.

Designed to be used in conjunction with cold water storage tanks, the typical application for this product is a larger dwelling with several floors and bathrooms, including guest houses, HMOs and light commercial properties. However, if space is available, it is an equally viable solution for smaller dwellings.

As well as offering very quiet operation, the variable speed Saniboost Smart is simple to install

and enables multiple outlets to run at the same time, ensuring sufficient pressure for multiple drench head showers working simultaneously.

With features such as brushless technology and continuous rating, the pump can operate 24/7. And with dry run protection, the pump automatically turns off when no water is detected, prolonging unit life and reducing maintenance costs. Auto-start is a standard feature and enables the pump to power back into life as soon as water is detected with no need to manually power on and off.

The Saniboost Smart is a highly cost-competitive, highly durable and highly productive addition to the Saniflo Clear Water range. ■

For more information, visit [www.sfaniflo.co.uk](http://www.sfaniflo.co.uk)



BELOW: The pump is the ideal solution to a range of issues

## Choice and performance from Danfoss

Danfoss has expanded its RAS-B2 self-balancing TRV range with new straight valve options for domestic and light commercial two-pipe systems.

Designed for applications where pipework runs directly into the radiator, the new additions give installers more flexibility on site while supporting a neater finish.

The RAS-B2 combines thermostatic control and dynamic balancing in a single valve body. Pressure independent by design, it maintains a constant 0.1 bar differential pressure to help preserve the set flow, while allowing installers to preset flow directly on the valve rather than the lockshield. Danfoss believes this can save up to two hours during balancing and commissioning compared with traditional methods.

Gareth Ash, of Danfoss, said: "These new straight valve options provide more choice, help support a quality finish and offer greater peace of mind that the system will perform as it should first time." ■

To find out more, visit [www.danfoss.com](http://www.danfoss.com)

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know-how and knowledge with the people who matter most.

✔ Contact David Hughes

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# Viessmann's project shines light on power of heat pumps

**A landmark pilot project in Germany has demonstrated that heat pumps can be used as active participants in electricity grid balancing: operating automatically, at scale and without affecting household comfort.**

Viessmann Climate Solutions' ViFlex project, which was conducted in partnership with German transmission system operators TenneT Germany and TransnetBW, integrated more than 100 Viessmann heat pumps in private homes into live grid management operations over a period of nearly three years.

The result is the first real-world, operationally validated demonstration that domestic heat pumps can contribute to demand-side flexibility – shifting electricity consumption in response to grid signals to relieve congestion and avoid curtailment of surplus renewable energy.

Heat pumps participating in the pilot were aggregated into virtual pools, organised by grid area, via the Viessmann Cloud. Load forecasts and available flexibility were submitted to the transmission system operators through the Equigy Crowd Balancing Platform – a European TSO initiative designed to harmonise the integration of small-scale, decentralised flexibility into system services markets. Activation signals from the TSOs were routed back through the same platform and translated into control commands to individual heat pumps.

Viessmann managed forecasting, aggregation and device control throughout. The result was reliable, automated load shifting that reduced grid bottlenecks without interrupting heat supply to households.

The project partners are now advocating for the regulatory consolidation in Germany of what they term Redispatch 3.0 – moving from the current cost-based framework to a market-based approach in which households can voluntarily participate in congestion management using heat pumps, home battery storage or electric vehicles.

## A PILOT RELEVANT TO THE UK

That direction maps directly onto the policy trajectory emerging in the UK. The Smart Secure Electricity Systems (SSES) initiative – a joint programme from DESNZ and Ofgem – is developing the regulatory framework to govern smart domestic energy appliances, including heat pumps and EV chargers, that

participate in flexibility services. SSES is expected to introduce requirements for smart capabilities to enable consumer-led flexibility (CLF) and introduces a licensing regime for load controllers – the intermediaries responsible for aggregating and dispatching demand-side flexibility. The ViFlex model, in which Viessmann acts as aggregator and controller within a regulated TSO framework, aligns closely with the type of architecture that SSES proposals are intended to address.

Peter Spurway, Head of Key Accounts and Strategic Partnerships, at Viessmann Climate Solutions UK, said: "There are similar concepts being trialled in the UK, but what makes the ViFlex project particularly significant is that it is backed by almost three years of operational data from real homes under real conditions – not modelling, not a short-term test. That is a meaningfully different evidential base.

"Viessmann is well placed for what is coming in the UK market. We have the products – our Vitocal heat pump range is already in UK homes – and critically, we have the APIs that enable the interoperability these systems require."

## ABOUT VISSMANN CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Founded in 1917 as a heating technology manufacturer, today Viessmann Climate Solutions is a leading global provider of sustainable climate (heating, cooling, water and air quality) and renewable energy solutions. The Integrated Viessmann Climate Solutions portfolio seamlessly connects products and systems via digital platforms and services, creating an individualized feel-good climate for users. Viessmann Climate Solutions is part of Carrier Global Corporation, global leader in intelligent climate and energy solutions. ■

For more information, visit [www.viessmann-climatesolutions.com](http://www.viessmann-climatesolutions.com)

BELOW: Heat pump from Viessmann



Peter Spurway



Customers are looking for personalised styles for their new bathrooms

# Balancing trends and efficiency

**Balancing customer preferences with practical installation requirements is a constant challenge for bathroom fitters. The key is a bathroom designed with both the customer and installer in mind.**

## THE LATEST TRENDS

Homeowners are increasingly turning to platforms like Pinterest and AI design tools for inspiration, leading to more customised styles.

Minimalist aesthetics is an area that remains strong with customers opting for sleek, uncluttered spaces with clean lines. Frameless shower enclosures continue to rise in popularity, giving bathrooms a modern, open feel.

Sustainability is also a key factor in bathroom renovations, with homeowners asking for water-saving fixtures such as dual-flush toilets and efficient showerheads. Smart technologies, such as sensor-activated taps and cold-start mixers, are also gaining

popularity. Customers are also considering how they can create a style they love now but with the option to change it later. This means simple, white sanitaryware with statement brassware or bold accessories.

## CONTENDING WITH TRENDS

There are some growing trends that can cause installers more of a headache.

Wall-hung toilets and vanities are popular due to their sleek look, easy cleaning and space-saving benefits. However,

**By Justine Scholes, Virtual & Showroom Proposition Development Manager at The Bathroom Showroom**

**BELOW:** Working with designers can help achieve the right result



from an installer's perspective, wall-hung options can be more challenging and time-consuming to fit. Fitters need to charge more for installation, which can lead to conversations around budget versus reality.

A great compromise is a wall-hung toilet paired with a floor-standing vanity unit, which achieves a contemporary look while minimising installation complexity.

## WORKING TOGETHER

As this example shows, it's possible to find the right balance between customer wants and practical installation by fitters, with installer-focused designers and the customer working together.

A practical way to do this is for the installer and designer to meet the homeowner on a call or in a showroom branch. This means challenges can be addressed and the designer can suggest practical options to achieve the desired look.

Everyone can also understand the implications of decisions and any complex installation requirements, so timelines and budgets reflect reality.

When installers and designers communicate directly during the planning phase, the designer can coordinate the right products, fittings, and materials, preventing delays due to missing components and ensuring everything arrives on time for smooth installation.

Fitters and customers often work long hours and can't always visit showrooms during the day, however leading bathroom showrooms offer virtual consultations up to 8pm. Installers who prefer less design involvement can also benefit, with designers providing the installer's perspective and thinking about the challenges.

By working together, customers can get the bathroom of their dreams while every step is made more manageable. ■

*For more information or to book an appointment, visit [www.bathrooms.com](http://www.bathrooms.com)*

# What can we learn from other governments about decarbonisation?

**The Scottish elections saw a surge in support for Reform UK and the Greens, which suggests the public isn't entirely happy with the status quo. People want a shift in direction and there are deep concerns about the cost of living. This resonates across the UK and provides a clear signal that, for net zero, we must focus on affordable and practical solutions. That's why we continue to advocate for the use of renewable liquid fuels.**

Despite this, meaningful progress remains slow across Scotland, Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. The Republic of Ireland is introducing a Renewable Heating Obligation from January 2027. While the starting blend is just 1.5%, it is at least a positive step. To see a

bolder approach, we should look to Germany. The government has scrapped legislation that would have forced households to replace existing gas and oil heating systems with low carbon technologies. Instead, under a revised law, households can keep their current boilers. New gas and oil systems will simply be required to blend in climate neutral fuels from 2029, gradually increasing from a current 10% to 60% by 2040.

Why can't the UK be equally ambitious? We know public support is there as nearly 16,000 oil-heated households, technicians and fuel distributors responded to the government's Alternative Clean Heating consultation to back renewable liquid fuels. With a blended



IMAGE: Gordon McAvoy Photography

approach, these fuels work immediately in existing systems.

Our industry is ready, consumers have voiced their support, and the Republic of Ireland and Germany have shown it's possible. We now need our policymakers to learn from these examples and recognise we have the same opportunity to deliver an affordable transition. ■

ABOVE: David Blevings, Ireland Manager at OFTEC

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

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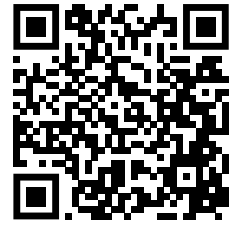
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