



Autumn 2026

PlumbHeat



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of delivering Scotland's low-carbon heating ambitions



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The pros of adding
qualified RPZ testing
to your business



The final eight
Meet the apprentice
plumbers heading to
the SkillPLUMB final



First defence
Plumbers and heating
engineers are key to
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Contents

Autumn 2026



16



20



28



30

» NEWS

- 06 News from SNIPEF and across the wider industry

» SNIPEF

- 12 *PlumbHeat's* Gregor Millar on protecting public health

» MEMBERSHIP

- 13 From van prototype to industry-wide solution
16 Emma Bohan on delivering low-carbon heating ambitions

» TECHNICAL

- 20 Scott Sanford reports on adding RPZ testing services
24 WaterSafe boss backs mandatory plumbing register
26 The fundamentals of a heat pump installation

» TRAINING

- 28 The apprentices heading to the 2026 SkillPLUMB final

» ADVICE

- 30 Why plumbers and heating engineers are key to preventing Legionella
32 How we can all improve water standards

» PROZONE

- 34 Five pages of great ideas, innovation and insight



13

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Comment

FROM FIONA HODGSON, SNIPEF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Sowing the seeds for reform

The challenges facing our members must be addressed by legislators in the right way to ensure that small businesses can operate successfully in a tough economic market, without facing the burden of extra costs and red tape

As the summer comes to an end, I hope you all had the chance to spend some time off with your family and friends. While the summer months can often be a much-deserved quieter period for our members, it allows the SNIPEF team to look at new opportunities, focusing our energy behind the scenes for the betterment of the profession.

Understanding the challenges facing our members is central to this work and our latest *State of Trade* report gives us a valuable insight into the current state of the profession. It shows the profession remains stable despite some continuing and underlying economic challenges. However, late and delayed payments remain an ongoing hindrance to businesses.

The report also highlights that while payment performance remains stable, retentions are becoming a concern. Over a third of our

members have more than £10,000 held in retentions, while one in five has more than £100,000 being retained. This has a significant knock-on effect to the profitability of our members, their cash flow and their ability to recruit apprentices – in particular, SMEs and micro-businesses that make up the vast majority of our profession.

But it is these concerns that the pending Commercial Payments Bill should help to address, if implemented effectively. Late payment and unfair retention practices have plagued the construction sector's supply chain for many years, but the proposed bill aims to fundamentally change how businesses pay each other – putting an end to practices that hit the smallest businesses the hardest.

On paper, the reforms are exactly what our members need to see but it is essential they do not

exchange one burden for another. The devil is in the detail and this is something that I, along with colleagues at the Construction Industry Collective Voice (CICV), have been examining at our meetings.

Our aim is to identify the Bill's strengths and weaknesses, using our collective voice from across the construction sector to influence necessary amendments that mean businesses are not negatively affected. Ultimately,

Fiona Hodgson,
SNIPEF Chief
Executive



“Late payment and unfair retention practices have plagued the construction sector's supply chain for many years”



+ Final countdown
 Scots student Kai is
 in the running for top
 UK apprentice title
 / Pages 28-29

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

We have also been active in responding to the UK Government's call for evidence on the strategy for the built environment professions, trades and occupations. While the consultation is focused on England, its implications extend beyond its borders, particularly for businesses, workers and qualifications operating across the UK.

Our response made clear that any future framework must recognise established occupational qualifications and industry-led assurance, while taking stronger action against poor and unqualified operators. We also stressed the importance of ensuring any new registration or licensing requirements are proportionate, affordable and do not simply add another layer of bureaucracy for SMEs and micro-businesses.

Crucially, competence must be built on a strong occupational foundation, with specialist training and new technologies adding to that core expertise. We also

highlighted the need for better support for apprenticeships and low-carbon skills, clearer lines of accountability and greater recognition of equivalent qualifications across Scotland, Northern Ireland and England.

These principles are central to ensuring that reform raises standards without placing unnecessary costs or barriers on the businesses already doing the right thing.

Reform is also needed within the apprenticeship system.

Qualifications Scotland is seeking to impose on-site assessment as part of the new plumbing and heating qualification. This requirement is delaying the introduction of the qualification, despite SNiPEF members having played an integral role in its development almost two years ago.

We have made clear that on-site assessment is neither practical nor affordable for the small and micro businesses that make up much of our profession. The mobile nature of plumbing and heating work, the range of sites and domestic properties involved and the difficulty of guaranteeing suitable assessment opportunities would create significant additional cost and

ABOVE: SNiPEF's apprenticeship report will be published in October

disruption for employers and apprentices alike.

SELECT is experiencing the same issue in relation to electrical apprenticeships and we are working closely with them to challenge the proposed approach.

Together, we have arranged a meeting with the Minister for Innovation, Technology and Tertiary Education, to set out our concerns and press for the continued use of simulated assessment in colleges. We believe this model to be safe, consistent and workable for employers.

The meeting will also provide an opportunity to highlight the growing unaffordability of apprenticeships for many businesses and the need for targeted funding to help employers meet the substantial costs involved.

These concerns are explored further in our forthcoming apprenticeship report, which will be published in October. Drawing on the views of more than 240 plumbing and heating businesses, the report examines the often-forgotten third side of the apprenticeship triangle: the employer.

Employers carry much of the cost, responsibility and risk associated with a four-year apprenticeship. Our report considers what must change to ensure that employers can continue investing in apprentices without compromising the high standards required by our profession. I look forward to sharing its findings with members, so please keep an eye out for its launch. ■

Fiona Hodgson
 Chief Executive

News

LATEST FROM AROUND THE FEDERATION

ENERGY

Mitsubishi backs transition to heat pumps

SNIEPF affiliate Mitsubishi Electric has announced a new collaboration with Alto Energy aimed at helping heating engineers expand into the heat pump market through a simplified MCS umbrella scheme.

The scheme is designed to remove barriers that can prevent experienced gas boiler installers moving into heat pump installations by providing access to training, technical support, MCS-compliant system design and commissioning.

Joanna Crown, Product Marketing Manager at Mitsubishi Electric, said: "We know there are thousands of highly skilled heating engineers across Britain who are looking to take advantage of the growing heat pump market. Our collaboration with Alto Energy provides a straightforward pathway into renewables, to give installers the confidence to start installing heat pumps and to growing their businesses."

Under the scheme, installers submit project details to Alto Energy, which then provides a bespoke system design and quotation. Once the installer completes the installation, Alto Energy commissions the system to MCS standards, provides sign-off and, when applicable, manages government grant applications and associated paperwork.

For more information, visit bit.ly/ph-mitsubishi



29%

of firms were busier than expected, down from 32% in Q1



19%

reported forward orders above expectations, down from 23% in Q1

54%

reported profit margins decreasing, broadly unchanged from 53% in Q1

96%

reported increased material and product costs



RESULTS

A confident but cautious situation

SNIEPF's latest *State of Trade* finds a resilient profession facing weaker forward workloads, persistent cost pressures and constrained workforce capacity

Results from SNIEPF's Q2 2026 *State of Trade* show a profession that remains active but operating with less headroom. Trading conditions have softened, forward order books have weakened and profit margins remain under pressure. While confidence in the profession has improved, recruitment intentions remain subdued and skills shortages continue to constrain growth.

Payment performance and product availability remain stable, providing some resilience. However, rising costs, higher retentions and weaker future workloads mean businesses are operating in a more challenging environment.

The overall assessment remains stable but under increasing pressure, with the latest findings moving closer to the boundary with a 'Weak' assessment.

TRADING PERFORMANCE

Trading activity softened in Q2 from Q1, with 29% of firms reporting being busier than expected,

52% reported that they were unlikely to increase their workforce, up marginally from 51% in Q1

80%

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

39% were confident or very confident in the profession, up from 28% in Q1, while only 12% were confident in the UK economy

33% trading as expected and 38% experiencing quieter conditions. Forward order books were also weaker, with just 19% above expectations and 44% below expectations.

Payment performance remained relatively stable, with 63% of firms receiving payments within their usual terms and 90% reporting the same or fewer non-payment issues than usual. Retentions are becoming a greater concern, however, with 35% reporting more than £10,000 being held, including 15% with more than £100,000 retained. Profitability also remains under pressure, with 54% reporting reduced margins.

COSTS AND THE ECONOMY

Cost pressures remain widespread, with 96% of firms reporting increased material and product costs, although the proportion reporting significant increases fell from 54% to 42%.

Product availability has improved considerably, with 96% rating availability as good or average. Confidence in the profession strengthened, with 39% confident or very confident, up from 28% in Q1, although 35% remain pessimistic.

Project delays and cancellations continue to affect around 60% of firms. Confidence in the wider UK economy also remains weak, with 54% pessimistic or very pessimistic, although this represents a significant improvement from 76% in Q1.

PEOPLE AND WORKFORCE

Workforce growth remains limited, with only 19% of firms likely to increase overall employee numbers over the next six months, while 52% are unlikely to do so. There is some positive movement in intentions to increase the skilled workforce,

with 25% expecting to employ more plumbing and heating professionals, up from 17% in Q1.

Apprenticeship recruitment has weakened further, with just 14% likely to recruit an apprentice, while skills shortages persist with 65% reporting low availability of skilled plumbing and heating professionals.

Cost pressures remain widespread, with 96% of firms reporting increased material and product costs”

WHAT CHANGED: Q2 2026 VERSUS Q1 2026

Q2 presents a more cautious trading picture than the previous quarter, with weaker forward workloads and continued pressure on profitability. Businesses are also facing greater pressure on cash flow, as higher retentions become more common.

However, confidence in the plumbing and heating profession strengthened, while the sharp pessimism around the wider UK economy seen in Q1 eased considerably.

The overall picture is therefore mixed: businesses remain cautious about demand and costs but confidence in the profession itself has improved.

WHAT CHANGED: Q2 2026 VERSUS Q2 2025

Compared with a year ago, the profession remains resilient but is operating in a less supportive environment. Businesses are facing more uneven demand, persistent cost pressures and continued pressure on margins, while recruitment and apprenticeship intentions have weakened.

There are some encouraging signs, particularly around product availability and insolvency exposure. However, the wider mood remains cautious, with economic uncertainty, project delays and workforce constraints continuing to weigh on businesses.

Overall, the Q2 findings point to a profession that continues to trade through challenging conditions, but with less certainty about what lies ahead.

You can view the full *State of Trade Q2* findings by visiting www.snipef.org/publications





💡 APPOINTMENT

New chair for CICV

Paul Mitchell, Managing Director of the Scottish Building Federation (SBF), has been appointed chair of the Construction Industry Collective Voice (CICV).

He succeeds Alan Wilson, following his retirement as managing director of SELECT and his decision to step down as CICV chair.

Paul's appointment was confirmed at CICV's meeting on 29 July. Fiona Hodgson, SNIPEF Chief Executive, was re-elected as Deputy Chair.

Established in 2020, CICV brings together 24 leading construction trade and professional bodies to provide a collective voice for Scotland's construction sector. It gathers intelligence,

ABOVE:
(From left) Fiona Hodgson, Alan Wilson and Paul Mitchell

shares expertise and engages with the Scottish Government and other key stakeholders on the issues affecting the industry.

On his appointment, Paul Mitchell said: "It is a great honour to be elected as chair of CICV. The group has shown what can be achieved when the construction sector works together.

"I look forward to working closely with Fiona and all of the representatives around the CICV table to build on that success, strengthen our engagement with government and collectively address the challenges facing the industry, delivering tangible benefits for our sector.

"I would also like to thank Alan for his leadership over the past six years. He has made an enormous contribution to establishing CICV as a respected and influential voice for Scotland's construction industry, providing a strong foundation for the future."

Outgoing chair Alan Wilson helped establish CICV during the COVID-19 pandemic, when it was launched as the Construction Industry Coronavirus Forum to coordinate the sector's response to the unprecedented challenges facing businesses and workers.

The group evolved into the Construction Industry Collective Voice, reflecting its broader role in representing the interests of Scotland's construction sector.

Alan Wilson said: "It has been a great privilege to chair CICV since its formation and I was humbled by the reception from colleagues. I leave knowing the organisation will be in excellent hands with Paul and Fiona going forward and I am sure that the CICV will go from strength to strength."

Fiona Hodgson, Deputy Chair of CICV, added: "On behalf of everyone involved with CICV, I would like to thank Alan for his outstanding leadership and commitment over the past six years.

"His vision in bringing everyone together during one of the most challenging periods in recent history created a forum that continues to deliver real value for Scotland's construction sector.

"Alan has helped establish CICV as a trusted and respected voice with government and stakeholders. I look forward to working with Paul and colleagues from across our member bodies as we build on that legacy."

💡 EMPLOYMENT

£3,000 grant available to support youth recruitment

Employers looking to grow their workforce could access a £3,000 Youth Jobs Grant when recruiting an eligible young person aged 18 to 24.

The UK Government scheme supports the recruitment of young people who have been out of work and claiming Universal Credit for at least six months.

Eligible roles must provide paid employment for at least 25 hours per week, last a minimum of 16 weeks and pay at least the applicable National Minimum Wage or National

Living Wage. Vacancies must also not displace an existing employee, worker, apprentice or contractor.

Employers must apply and have their vacancy approved before recruiting through the scheme. Approved vacancies are passed to DWP Work Coaches, who can identify and refer suitable candidates, while employers retain control of their

usual recruitment process. The £3,000 grant is paid in two stages, subject to employment and earnings requirements being met.

Employers must also meet eligibility criteria, including having traded for at least six months and operating an active PAYE scheme.

Applications close on 31 October 2026. Find out more at bit.ly/ph-youthjobs

Plumbing profession remembers Jack Wishart

SNIEPF has paid tribute to Past President Jack Wishart, who has died aged 82 following a lifetime of service to the plumbing and heating profession and his local community.

Jack was a well-known figure in the profession as the owner of Kirkcaldy family business JW Wishart Plumbing and Heating and through his longstanding involvement with SNIEPF, culminating in his term as President in 1992.

Founded in 1926, the family firm has been part of Kirkcaldy's plumbing and heating landscape for a century and remains a SNIEPF member to this day. Under Jack, the business also played its part in developing the next generation. Providing apprentices with the opportunity to learn their trade and build their own careers. The business continues in family hands to this day, with son Scott running the business after Jack took a step back a few years ago.

Jack's contribution extended beyond his own business. Through SNIEPF, he devoted considerable time to representing fellow plumbing and heating professionals and supporting the work of the federation, serving as President at a time of significant change across the industry.

Away from plumbing, Jack was also synonymous with ice hockey. A lifelong supporter of the Fife Flyers, he became one of the businessmen behind Fife Flyers

Limited in the 1990s and went on to spend 28 years at the helm of the club alongside Tom Muir. Their tenure included taking the Flyers into the Elite Ice Hockey League in 2011 before they stepped down from the club in 2025.

Fiona Hodgson, SNIEPF Chief Executive, said: "During his time as President and throughout his many years of service to the plumbing and heating profession, Jack made a significant contribution to both the industry and our organisation. He was a respected colleague whose knowledge, professionalism and commitment to raising standards were greatly valued by all who had the privilege of working with him.

"Following his presidency, Jack continued to give generously of his time and expertise, representing SNIEPF on a number of important bodies, including BPEC, Employment, Safety & Training, and Membership services. His willingness to champion the interests of our members and the wider industry over so many years reflected his dedication to the profession and to SNIEPF. His contribution has left a lasting legacy, and he will be remembered with great respect and appreciation by colleagues, members and friends across the industry."

SNIEPF extends its sincere condolences to Jack's family, friends, former colleagues and all those who knew him.



Jack Wishart was President of SNIEPF in 1992-93

Acquisition means business

SNIEPF member CHAPS (GB) Limited has acquired Blantyre Park Building Services Limited, bringing together two building services businesses with the ambition of strengthening their presence across Central Scotland.

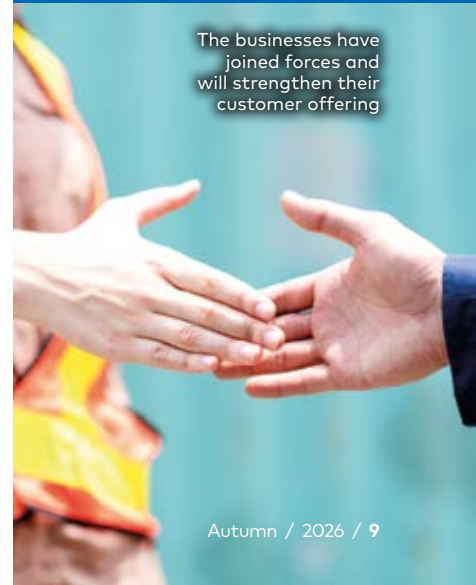
The acquisition, which took effect on 18 August, will see Blantyre Park continue to operate under the leadership of David Campbell, who will work closely with the directors of CHAPS.

Both businesses have emphasised continuity for existing clients, with the Blantyre Park team remaining in place and continuing to support its existing customer base.

CHAPS said the acquisition brings together complementary skills, knowledge and experience, while providing Blantyre Park with access to the wider resources and capabilities of the CHAPS business.

The companies said their shared ambition is to build one of the strongest building services businesses in Central Scotland while retaining the personal approach and service that have underpinned both businesses.

The businesses have joined forces and will strengthen their customer offering



NEW MEMBERS

- Mark Scollon
Plumbing & Heating
- Blantyre Park
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- Heatflow Plumbing
Limited
- Hoxa Services
- OCS Technical
Services Ltd
- CalForth
Construction Ltd

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Hygiene Testing
UK Ltd
- Mitsubishi Electric
Europe B.V UK Branch
- Hydrosense Limited
- Ferroli Limited
- Simpro

WEBSITE

Lawton Tubes launches online technical hub

SNIEPF affiliate Lawton Tubes has launched a revamped website, giving installers easier access to technical information and resources for copper and stainless-steel products.

The updated site brings together product specifications, technical data sheets, installation guides, interactive tools and downloadable resources, designed to provide installers and contractors with practical information.

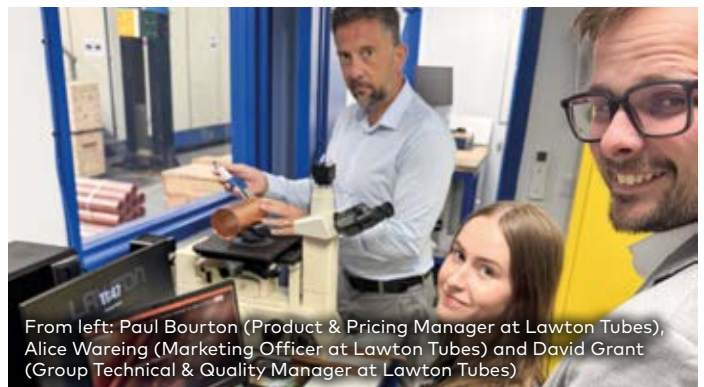
The platform – available at www.lawtontubes.co.uk – has been developed to make it easier for installers, especially younger professionals, to find the information they need

quickly while working. It ties into Lawton Tubes' Lawton Next Gen initiative, which aims to encourage young people to choose a trade as a career.

Robert Lawton, Director of Lawton Tubes, said: "We're finding that more and more of our customers want

quick access to technical information when out on a job, and the overhaul of our website does that for them.

"It's especially true of younger installers who expect to get information straight away when using their phone to look things up."



From left: Paul Bourton (Product & Pricing Manager at Lawton Tubes), Alice Wareing (Marketing Officer at Lawton Tubes) and David Grant (Group Technical & Quality Manager at Lawton Tubes)

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AL Contracts claimed
the Federation Cup



 **SPORT**

Golf event was just par-fect!

Members, affiliates and partners came together for SNIEF's Annual Golf Tournament 2026, with AL Contracts Ltd taking home the Federation Cup and £439 raised for charity.

The tournament saw teams and individual players compete at Monifieth Golf Links and enjoy a day of competition and networking.

The individual competition saw Stuart Inglis of AL Contracts Ltd take home the Tommy Thomson Cup, with Adrian Thompson of Joule UK finishing as runner-up. J Q & Son Plumbers Ltd was the runner-up for the Federation Cup.

There were also a number of individual prizes up for grabs throughout the day. John Hall of Heatsource (Aalberts Integrated Piping Systems) recorded the longest drive on the 18th hole, while Jim Butter of the President's Team, Neil Sinclair of Sinclair Heating and Plumbing Services and Henry McNicol of

Worcester Bosch each claimed nearest-the-pin prizes on holes five, 11 and 14 respectively. Gordon Matheson of the President's Team took the Nearest the Pin in Two prize on the 12th hole.

Alongside the golfing competition, attendees also supported a charity raffle in aid of Tayside Cancer Support.

SNIEF thanks tournament sponsors APS Dundee Ltd and 1st Supplies Scotland Ltd for their support, as well as the businesses and SNIEF Local Associations who donated prizes for the tournament and charity raffle. Prize and raffle donations were provided by Monifieth Golf Links, William Wilson, North Wealth Management, TradePoint, Marsh Commercial, City Plumbing Supplies, Daikin, Worcester Bosch, and SNIEF Local Associations in Aberdeen, Banff & Moray, Dundee, Edinburgh, Fife, Glasgow and Kilmarnock.



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A vital role, a powerful voice

PlumbHeat Editor **Gregor Millar** issues a reminder about the influence our profession has, including in protecting public health and safety

It can sometimes be easy to underestimate the wider role our profession plays. Beyond installing and maintaining the systems we rely on every day, plumbing and heating professionals protect public health, support the transition to a lower-carbon future and bring the practical expertise needed to shape effective policy. This issue of *PlumbHeat* reflects that influence, from giving members a voice in the decisions affecting their businesses to recognising their vital role in keeping our water safe.

For our main feature, I spoke to Emma Bohan, Managing Director of IMS Heat Pumps, about the realities of delivering Scotland's transition to low-carbon heat. While the ambitions are significant, Emma highlighted some of the practical challenges that risk holding progress back, from uncertainty around policy and funding to issues with the Home Energy Scotland Grant and Loan Scheme and the barriers preventing smaller specialist firms from accessing larger contracts.

What struck me most was how important it is that conversations around net zero are informed by those expected to deliver it. Targets, legislation and funding schemes can look very different on paper than they do to the businesses investing in people, training and technology, managing cashflow and installing these systems. Emma's experience offers an important perspective on where changes to the current approach could unlock opportunities and accelerate the transition.

It is exactly the kind of voice I want *PlumbHeat* to champion.

“Whether influencing policy or protecting water systems, our members make an impact beyond the tools in the van”

Our profession has a huge amount of knowledge and experience to contribute to the debate around Scotland's energy future, and it's vital policymakers listen. As SNIPEF continues to represent the profession and push for meaningful change, that work depends on members being willing to share their experiences. Without you, we have no industry, and without your voices, we lose the power that represents.

Away from our main feature, the theme of this issue is water and its importance to our profession. This may feel like an obvious statement. Of course, water is pivotal in plumbing and heating, but we often underplay the role our profession plays in protecting public health and keeping society running smoothly.

I met Ricky Prescott, founder of SNIPEF affiliate ThoroughFlush, to learn about the product he developed that's now in vans up and down the country. It was enlightening to hear about why he developed the tech, bringing simplicity to flushing in a chemical-free way. But it also highlights the ingenuity of the people in our industry. When problems arise, our

profession is always ready to find a solution. It mirrors the attitude our professionals take when they enter someone's home, constantly problem solving and ever evolving.

Also in this issue we hear from Greg Rankin, CEO of rapid *Legionella* testing provider Hydrosense, who discusses the role plumbing and heating professionals play in protecting public health. His advice is invaluable in informing how plumbing and heating professionals can contribute to risk assessment and early detection – becoming the frontline defence in protecting the population from *Legionella*.

Across these stories, there is a common thread: the knowledge and experience within our profession matters. Whether influencing policy, developing new solutions or protecting the water systems we all depend upon, our members make an impact far beyond the tools in the van. As always, I hope *PlumbHeat* continues to provide a platform for that work, and the contribution our profession makes every day. I hope you enjoy the issue. ■



By Gregor Millar,
PlumbHeat Editor

From developing a solution for his own work to championing better water-quality practice across the industry, Ricky Prescott shares the story of ThoroughFlush

Clean water, better systems



ThoroughFlush is quite the outlier when it comes to SNIPEF affiliates. Where most are large firms, or in some cases multinational companies, ThoroughFlush was founded by one man and continues to be solely owned by him.

Yet, the impact Ricky Prescott has had on plumbing and heating professionals across the country has been profound. His product has become a staple in the back of many vans – giving plumbers a simple, practical tool that takes the complexity out of flushing.

Ricky was a late bloomer when it came to plumbing and didn't join the industry until he was 30. Having just returned home from travelling, a friend told him of a plumbing course he had been on, so he took the plunge.

After an initial interest in leadwork, Ricky turned his attention towards boilers, working with a local plumber one day a week.

He explained: "I started looking at boiler work and central heating systems.

"I'd go out with an engineer and see him doing something wrong. He'd put a bit in and it still wouldn't work, so he'd put another bit in, and it still wouldn't work. I was thinking, 'If you just read the manual, it'll tell you what it is.' It just started clicking then."

“Water is critical but monitoring it is even more critical”

This experience was the foundation of ThoroughFlush, as Ricky identified a gap in the market. He started wondering why the heating systems he was working on weren't clean, regularly returning to jobs after a few months because diverter valves were leaking.

He said: "We started doing a lot of refurbishments and there weren't really any tools on the market that suited what I wanted.

"We were power-flushing a lot of installs and hardly any debris was coming out. I would think, 'Is this power flusher working?' Then you realise that systems aren't really that dirty anymore because of the oxygen-free systems. It's only the older systems that needed the aggressive chemicals."

➤ "I started thinking about how I could make something better than what was on the market. That's when ThoroughFlush came along – the idea of bidirectional flushing."

Ricky had a prototype made but it was only for his personal use and was never meant to go to market. However, after he shared it with a couple of his colleagues, interest rocketed.

"I gave it to a couple of lads and one of them put it on Twitter in January 2020. It went crazy overnight and everyone was ringing to ask where they could get it."

The ThoroughFlush offered heating engineers a compact device that could fit in their vans and clean most systems, reducing the need to book larger equipment.

Ricky explained: "Most devices on the market use either a circulator pump in a tank or they use the boiler circulator to move the debris around and catch it with a magnet or dump it to drain."

"I thought there had to be a way of making rapid bidirectional flushing. So, we came up with this device."

But Ricky maintains his product isn't the only one plumbing and heating professionals should use, with some systems still requiring more aggressive cleaning.

He added: "Some systems might want power-flushing with an aggressive cleaner. If you've got a blockage, you might want to pre-dose it. With ThoroughFlush, you can go in, pre-dose it with a cleaner, leave it a week or two and then go back and flush it."

"I wouldn't say my kit is the only kit to use, but I would say the majority of systems now, if they've been oxygen-free and you've got good mains pressure, have sufficient pressure to flush the heating system."

"The good thing about ThoroughFlush is that it's small and compact. It's in

your van. You don't need to book anything and you can clean most systems with it if you need to."

For Ricky, the importance of flushing goes beyond simply ensuring a heating system is working properly. He sees water quality as fundamental to the longevity and performance of a system and believes engineers need to take a more proactive approach to monitoring it.

He said: "Boiler manufacturers have said that 70 to 80% of breakdowns are water-quality related."

"It's the water in the system. It's like the blood, isn't it? If you can clean all the water, get the water to the right quality and get rid of the debris, you should have good longevity from a heating system."

"Water is critical but monitoring it is even more critical."

Water quality is also an area where Ricky takes a different approach from much of the industry. ThoroughFlush takes a chemical-free approach and does not promote the use of inhibitors, instead offering testing kits that allow engineers to establish what is actually present in a system.

His concern is that plumbers are often asked to monitor the concentration of additives without being given the information or tools needed to do so effectively. This creates a wider problem around how professionals demonstrate that systems have been properly commissioned and maintained.

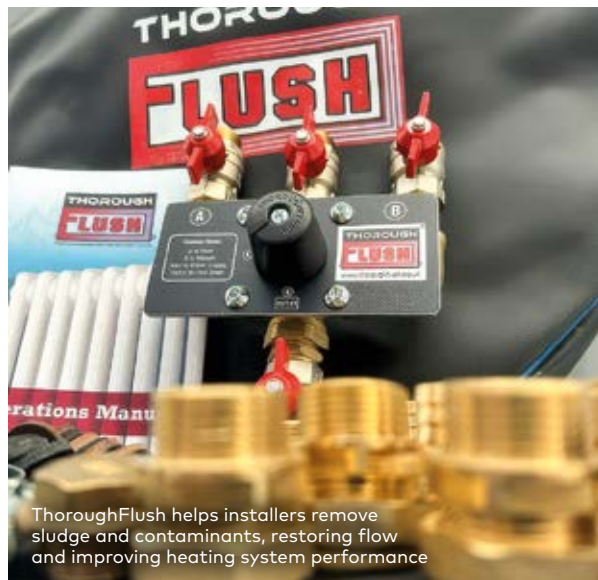
"If you don't clean the system out, I'd say it's a risk to your business, because you're not doing your job properly," Ricky added.

"I've always said to people: get a decent test kit, use an inhibitor that you know how to test for, take your pH reading, take your conductivity and your molybdate samples, and get some photographic evidence. Then you've got that backed up."

"The consequences of getting it wrong can be costly."



LEFT: Ricky developed ThoroughFlush to bring simplicity and accessibility flushing in a non-chemical way



ThoroughFlush helps installers remove sludge and contaminants, restoring flow and improving heating system performance

Ricky also sees a wider responsibility for plumbers when it comes to water quality and regulation. With standards and technologies continually evolving, he believes professional development should not stop once you leave college.

"We're obliged to protect public health, aren't we? We should adhere to all the local regulations," Ricky said.

"I'd say as an engineer you need to be consistently learning and keeping up with the regulations.

"It's not just about going to college every five years. It's about peer-to-peer learning, being in these groups and consistently reading and educating yourself.

"You've got to start doing this stuff, learning how to test and how to flush properly. It doesn't just come overnight."

It is a philosophy that has also kept him connected to life on the tools, despite the demands of running ThoroughFlush.

He added: "It's good to still be on the tools because when the heat pump transition happened, I realised I was well behind it. I started going out with some of the lads to training events and thought, 'I'm lost here.'

"By keeping yourself active, you feel like you're able to keep up with the changes in the industry."

As ThoroughFlush continues to grow, Ricky is keen for the business to develop beyond the product itself, with training and education becoming an increasingly important part of its future.

He believes there is an appetite among plumbers for more accessible opportunities to learn about water quality, flushing and system performance, particularly through online resources and peer-to-peer discussion.

He concluded: "I think that's what the industry is lacking: proper online training."

For Ricky, that focus on sharing knowledge is a natural extension of the journey that took him from learning the trade himself to developing a solution to a problem he encountered on the tools. ThoroughFlush may have started as a prototype for his own van, but its future, he believes, lies in helping other engineers work more efficiently while encouraging better practice across the industry.

And that brings Ricky back to the principle that inspired ThoroughFlush in the first place – making life easier for plumbing and heating professionals while encouraging them to think differently about how heating systems are flushed, tested and maintained. ■

“I started thinking about how I could make something better than what was on the market”

A clear road ahead

Emma Bohan, Managing Director of IMS Heat Pumps, speaks to *PlumbHeat* about the realities of delivering Scotland's transition to low-carbon heating, the challenges facing installers and why smaller, local businesses need to be at the heart of the journey

CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND AND HOW YOU CAME INTO THE INDUSTRY?

I first came across heat pumps around 2001 or 2002, when I was working in business development consultancy. We were surveying manufacturing businesses across South Yorkshire and a lot of the issues coming back were related to energy efficiency and energy security.

That led to work supporting businesses in emerging energy technologies and eventually introduced me to the heat pump industry. At that time, it was predominantly ground source and still niche.

I became involved in another heat pump business around 2015. While that business ultimately didn't work out, we got around the kitchen table and decided to go again with IMS Heat Pumps, concentrating on doing installations properly.

I started running IMS as Managing Director and major shareholder in 2019. The principle has always been simple: do it right, do it once, make sure everybody has a good experience and, most importantly, make sure the thing works.

By Gregor Millar,
PlumbHeat
Editor

FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, WHERE IS SCOTLAND'S HEAT TRANSITION RIGHT NOW?

It's interesting for us because IMS is Scottish by origin, with roughly half of us in Scotland and the other half south of the border, so we operate across two different legislative environments.

Looking at Scotland from England, Scotland can seem to be leaps and bounds ahead. You've got ambitions with the Heat in Buildings Bill and requirements around new-build heating, while Home Energy Scotland offers grant and interest-free loan support that simply isn't available in the same way in England.

But there is still a tendency to look at the industry and say: "There's the landscape – crack on." There isn't enough focus on the homeowner or enough communication about the fact that this transition is necessary and is going to happen.

There seems to be a hesitancy from government to fully commit because of concerns that the industry isn't ready or there aren't enough trained people. But the industry is sitting here. There are units sitting on warehouse floors and installers with capacity. We could significantly increase the amount of work before we reach a genuine capacity crisis.

WHAT DOES THE UNCERTAINTY AROUND POLICY AND FUNDING MEAN FOR BUSINESSES EXPECTED TO INVEST IN DELIVERING THAT TRANSITION?

As a business owner, you know you're on this road, but the condition of that road keeps changing. What we need is effectively the German autobahn of renewables: one direction, one message to the public and a clear path ahead.



The IMS Heat Pumps team at the Perth office

“What we need is effectively the German autobahn of renewables”

If I take on an apprentice, I'm making a four-year commitment. If I then put that newly qualified engineer into a van, that could be another three-year commitment. Businesses are being asked to make investments over three, four or five years while the policies supporting the market can change far more quickly.

This is the first year that we haven't taken on an apprentice because of this uncertainty. We would normally have apprentices progressing through years one to four, but we haven't recruited this year.

What we need is sustained funding, legislation and consistent communication to customers. Businesses need to know where we are going and know that the policy environment will support that direction for five or 10 years. Then we can make decisions around recruitment, training and investment.

YOU'VE PREVIOUSLY RAISED CONCERNS ABOUT THE HOME ENERGY SCOTLAND GRANT AND LOAN SCHEME. WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST PROBLEMS FROM AN INSTALLER'S PERSPECTIVE?

The biggest issue is the length and uncertainty of the process.

There is much to commend in the consumer-first model. However, when a customer contacts Home Energy Scotland, there is no clear indication of when their application will be approved. Will it take three, six or 12 weeks? Without defined service levels or visibility of progress, neither the customer nor the installer can plan with confidence.

Crucially, you cannot start the installation until that paperwork is in place.

You can then have similar issues at the end of a project. Once the installation is finished, how long will it take for the money to come through? Again, the installer has very little visibility.

We're a big enough business that we can carry more than the average installer in terms of waiting to be paid. But if you're a small installer waiting for £10,000 or £15,000 to be paid, that is an enormous amount of cash flow to have tied up.

£20,000 can be the difference between being able to pay your staff and bills at the end of the month or not. That changes which jobs businesses are prepared to take and makes them less likely to concentrate heavily on heat pumps.

WHAT ELEMENTS OF HOME ENERGY SCOTLAND DO YOU VALUE AND BELIEVE WORK WELL?

One thing I really like is that Home Energy Scotland gives the homeowner someone independent to speak to.

An installer can try to provide impartial advice, but ultimately the customer knows that installer wants to sell them an installation. ➤

IMAGE: Claire Wood Photography



Emma Bohan, Managing Director of IMS Heat Pumps

➤ Having genuinely independent advice, delivered by a person rather than simply through a website, is going to be incredibly important to the transition.

If you look at previous transitions in how we heated our homes, there was a huge amount of public information and support. People needed to understand the new technology and become comfortable with it.

IF YOU COULD REDESIGN THE HOME ENERGY SCOTLAND FUNDING PROCESS, WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE?

I would take the best elements of Home Energy Scotland and the Boiler Upgrade Scheme.

From the Boiler Upgrade Scheme, I'd take the speed of the application process and the online portal, but I would go one step further and effectively make it a joint application where both the installer and the customer have visibility.

Both parties should be able to see that an application has been received, that it is being reviewed, whether more information is required, that it has been approved and when it has been redeemed.

If Home Energy Scotland needs to discuss something privately with the homeowner, I don't need to know the details. I just need to see that communication is taking place and the application is progressing.

I would also introduce clear service-level commitments. If you could say: "We will process a straightforward application within seven days," everybody would know where they stand.

For me, the best system would provide transparency, visibility and flexibility.



I would take the best elements of Home Energy Scotland and the Boiler Upgrade Scheme"

HOW DO WE MAKE THE TRANSITION ACCESSIBLE TO THOSE SMALLER INSTALLERS?

If you're a gas engineer who has completed a four-year apprenticeship, has your gas qualifications and runs a good business, but

nobody is asking you for heat pumps, why would you make that jump?

Then, when you investigate it, you hear about MCS, additional requirements and all the perceived bureaucracy involved. It can feel like a minefield.

There needs to be a much clearer route that says: you've got this qualification already, here's the next thing you need.

There also aren't enough good local umbrella models in Scotland that make it easy for smaller installers to enter the market.

SNIEPF's Local Associations could potentially offer a model. You could have experienced heat pump installers supporting traditional plumbing and heating businesses through an umbrella or peer-to-peer mentoring arrangement.

If a plumber has a customer saying: "I don't want another gas boiler; can you help me?", they would have somewhere to go for support rather than simply turning the work away.



ABOVE: IMS Heat Pumps specialises in the design, installation and maintenance of ground and air source heat pump systems for homes and businesses from offices in Perth and Dronfield, near Sheffield

YOU RECENTLY ARGUED AT A ROUNDTABLE EVENT THAT SMES SHOULD HAVE A GREATER ROLE IN LARGER PUBLICLY FUNDED PROJECTS. WHY IS THAT IMPORTANT?

This is about much more than simply ensuring that small businesses receive a share of the work. Large public programmes are often dominated by companies seeking to deliver every element, from insulation and windows to solar panels and heating systems. However, there is a strong case for bringing local specialist businesses into these projects.

These firms have an established reputation within their communities and a direct interest in delivering work to a high standard. They employ local people, train local apprentices and serve customers who know and trust them.

Their involvement also ensures that more of the investment remains within the local economy through jobs, wages and local spending. If we are serious about delivering a just transition, those wider benefits should matter.

Procurement practices must reflect this ambition. Requirements such as disproportionately high professional indemnity cover or substantial cash deposits can exclude smaller businesses before they can even compete. Publicly funded programmes should be structured so that capable local specialists have a fair opportunity to participate.

WHAT COULD A PUBLIC PROCUREMENT MODEL LOOK LIKE?

Imagine a council has 100 homes on an estate that require heat pumps.

Rather than handing the entire programme to one national contractor, you could have five specialist installers each delivering 20 properties. Each business carries insurance proportionate to the work it is actually undertaking, rather than being expected to carry insurance appropriate to the entire programme.

The council or another coordinating body could provide the logistics, retrofit coordinators and assessors, and manage the programme centrally. That creates skilled employment locally while allowing specialist businesses to do what they are good at.

You still have coordination and oversight, but the actual work is delivered by businesses embedded in those communities.

DESPITE THE FRUSTRATIONS, HOW BIG AN OPPORTUNITY IS THE LOW CARBON TRANSITION FOR PLUMBING AND HEATING BUSINESSES?

What is the alternative? Heat pumps are the de facto technology unless somebody invents something fundamentally different.

If we are moving away from burning fossil fuels and want to use energy efficiently, heat pumps are a winner on both fronts.

IMAGE: Jason Mitchell Photography



IMS Heat Pumps was recognised at the Scottish Energy Efficiency Awards in 2025 as the Renewable Heat Installer of the Year

Fundamentally, they connect to a water-based heating system. We have thousands of people who have gone through plumbing and heating apprenticeships and are qualified to install wet heating systems. A heat pump is ultimately a different way of heating that system.

It doesn't have to happen overnight. If a business currently installs 100 heat pumps a year, what does it need to get to 120 or 150? If somebody installs 10, how do we help them get to 20?

If a traditional installer can begin by doing one heat pump every couple of months, that can become two. Small increments across a large number of businesses can build momentum very quickly.

FINALLY, IF YOU WERE SITTING ACROSS THE TABLE FROM SCOTLAND'S HOUSING OR ENERGY MINISTER, WHAT WOULD YOU MOST WANT THEM TO UNDERSTAND?

Stop thinking that you can make the transition easy simply by dealing with big companies.

It is a difficult transition and government needs to understand and accept that.

Signing one contract with one large company might make administration look easier, but that doesn't necessarily make the transition better.

If you genuinely want a just and fair transition, and you want the benefits of that transition to remain in Scotland, then you need to accept that it requires a different approach.

Embrace the fact that it is difficult and look at different ways of managing and delivering it, because ultimately that can benefit everybody. ■



An Ultravalve RPZ test kit

The value in valves

By Scott Sanford, Head of Technical Services and Certification

Scott Sanford reveals why adding qualified RPZ testing to your services can boost your business and deliver more for customers

For plumbing businesses already serving commercial and higher-risk premises, RPZ valve testing offers a practical route to recurring compliance income, stronger customer retention and greater control over service delivery. Entry requires a qualified tester, compliant calibrated equipment, appropriate insurance and ongoing revalidation.

As all plumbers know, the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 for England and Wales, the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 and the Water Supply (Water Fittings) (Scotland) Byelaws 2014 categorise the risk to health posed by potential contaminants into five fluid categories (listed on page 22). To protect the water supply,

correct backflow protection is a must. A reduced pressure zone (RPZ) valve, also known as a Type BA device, is a high-security mechanical backflow prevention device. It protects against back pressure and back siphonage up to and including Fluid Category 4. It is often used in commercial, industrial, healthcare, education, catering and other higher-risk premises. An RPZ valve is not suitable for Fluid Category 5 protection; this normally requires an appropriate air gap.

Anyone installing an RPZ valve must be competent and must follow the manufacturer's instructions and the Water Undertakers' Approved Installation Method (AIM).

Water undertakers recommend using an Approved Contractor. The testing role is separate: an RPZ valve tester does not need to hold a general plumbing qualification but they must be properly trained, hold a recognised RPZ valve tester qualification and remain competent.

WHAT CHANGED UNDER THE CURRENT AIM?

The latest RPZ AIM, Issue 3, began on 1 January 2025. It introduced a new minimum

Scott Sanford



specification for test equipment, clarified acceptable testing methods and introduced periodic revalidation of tester competence. Single-tube manometers are no longer acceptable. From 1 July 2026, all equipment used for RPZ testing must meet the new minimum specification. RPZ testers must also revalidate their qualification at least every five years.

WHY SHOULD A PLUMBING BUSINESS CONSIDER RPZ TESTING?

Many SNIEF member businesses already install and maintain plumbing systems in premises where RPZ valves are used. Adding a suitably qualified RPZ tester allows the business to provide a more complete service rather than passing the testing work to another contractor.

- **A regular service:** RPZ valves must be tested at intervals set by the water undertaker. The interval will not exceed 12 months and may be shorter.
- **Recurring income:** Annual compliance testing can become part of a planned maintenance programme and provide repeat work.
- **Better service for customers:** One business can deal with the plumbing work, arrange the testing and help the customer keep the valve in test.
- **Stronger business credentials:** Recognised tester status demonstrates the operative's qualification and equipment are current.
- **More control over the job:** Using an in-house tester can reduce delays and the need to coordinate a separate specialist contractor.

THE TESTER MUST BE SUITABLY QUALIFIED

The work must only be carried out by a person who is competent in RPZ commissioning and compliance testing to the standards of the Water Undertakers' AIM January 2025 Issue 3. The tester must hold a recognised RPZ valve tester qualification and revalidate no later than five years after their certification date.

A qualification shows that the individual has been assessed, but the business also needs to make sure the tester's insurance, equipment and recognised status remain current. If any of these lapse, the individual should stop RPZ testing until the requirements are met again.

THE EQUIPMENT

An RPZ tester needs suitable differential-pressure test equipment that can complete every stage of the AIM test. The kit must have a unique serial number or other identifier and must be suitable for the system being tested, including hot water use where applicable. It must cover the required test range, including the key

differential pressures between 0.5 kPa and 34 kPa. The equipment must be calibrated by a pressure calibration service accredited by UKAS at least annually, or more frequently where the manufacturer specifies. The certificate must confirm the required accuracy at the relevant test points. The tester must understand and apply any calibration corrections shown on the certificate.

KEY POINTS OF THE AIM

Every RPZ valve must be tested by the due date set by the relevant water undertaker. The interval will not exceed 12 months, although the water undertaker may require more frequent testing. A valve must also be commissioned and compliance tested after installation and tested again following repair, dismantling, component replacement or relocation before it is returned to service.

The main points for the business and tester are straightforward:

- Notify the proposed installation or relocation and obtain the water undertaker's

consent before work starts – Scottish Water: www.scottishwater.co.uk/business-and-developers/byelaws-and-trade-effluent/water-byelaws/byelaws-notification-form Northern Ireland Water: www.niwater.com/about-your-water/water-fittings-regulations – and download the Water Regulations Advance Notification Form.

- Install the valve in accordance with the AIM, the manufacturer's instructions and any conditions of consent, with suitable access, clearances and relief-valve discharge arrangements.
- Complete the required on-site commissioning and compliance tests before the valve is brought, or returned, into service.
- Use the correct equipment and follow every applicable AIM test step and acceptance criterion. If a requirement is not met, record the test as a failure.
- Complete, sign and date the test report for the valve personally tested. Provide the customer with a copy and send the report to the relevant water undertaker within the required timescale, normally 10 working days. For Scottish Water, send to byelaws@scottishwater.co.uk and for Northern Ireland send to waterregulations@niwater.com



ABOVE:
An RPZ valve test kit used to check RPZ valves are operating correctly

Annual compliance testing can become part of a planned maintenance programme and provide repeat work”

BELOW: An RPZ valve designed to protect the drinking water supply by stopping contaminated water up to fluid category 4 flowing back into the potable system



Know the risks in drinking water

RPZ valves protect drinking water supplies from Fluid Category 4 risks. For SNIPEF members, adding qualified RPZ testing can provide customers with a complete service and create ongoing work opportunities.

Fluid category	Level of risk
1	Wholesome water supplied by the water undertaker and safe to drink.
2	Water, whose taste, odour, colour or temperature has been changed, but which does not present a health hazard.
3	Water posing a slight health hazard because of substances of low toxicity, such as dilute chemical additives.
4	Water posing a significant health hazard because of toxic substances, including some chemicals, pesticides or carcinogens.
5	Water posing a serious health hazard because of pathogenic organisms, radioactive or very toxic substances, faecal matter, animal waste or unidentified contaminants.



- Report failures promptly. Some failures require notification within 24 hours or immediately, and the valve may need to remain isolated until the water undertaker confirms the action to be taken.
- Keep secure copies of test records for at least five years, or longer where required.

JOINING SNIPEF'S RPZ VALVE TESTER SCHEME

Joining SNIPEF's RPZ Tester Scheme provides a recognised route for the business and its testers. The scheme is designed specifically for RPZ commissioning and compliance testing and is recognised by UK water undertakers.

To join, the business will need to provide:

- Evidence that each operative holds a recognised and current RPZ valve tester qualification.
- A current UKAS calibration certificate and photographic evidence identifying the test kit.
- Public Liability Insurance of at least £2 million and appropriate Employers' Liability Insurance where required.
- Agreement to follow the scheme terms, the current AIM and the conditions set by the relevant water undertaker.

Membership gives customers reassurance that the tester's qualification, insurance and equipment evidence have been checked and are subject to renewal. It also gives the business a recognised status it can promote. Where the business and tester meet WaterSafe's separate requirements and are accepted, the scheme can also provide a route to WaterSafe registration and listing so customers can find approved RPZ testing services. For SNIPEF members already working in premises where RPZ

valves are used, testing can be a valuable extension to existing services. Businesses should assess likely local demand against the cost of training, qualification, insurance and compliant test equipment. Where the case is viable, the service can help retain work, strengthen long-term customer relationships and protect drinking-water supplies. ■

To find out more, contact the SNIPEF Schemes Team on 0131 556 0600 (option 4), email schemes@snipef.org or visit the RPZ Approved Valve Tester Scheme webpage at www.snipef.org/rpz



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Round-up of latest WaterSafe® activities and events

Should plumbing require a licence?

Jonathan Samuel, Director of WaterSafe Register, explains why he believes it's time for a mandatory plumbing register

At present, anyone in the UK can call themselves a plumber. There is no legal requirement to hold qualifications or prove experience, and the term itself has no protected definition.

For skilled plumbing professionals, the issue is not whether most trained installers already work to high standards. The question is whether the current system does enough to distinguish competent, accountable tradespeople from those who are not.

Members will have seen the consequences themselves: work that damages the profession's reputation and leaves customers exposed to safety and financial risks.

Our research found that, in the past five years, one in five UK homeowners had hired a plumber who failed to carry out work properly, forcing them to pay another professional to correct it. The figure was 19% in Scotland and 23% in Northern Ireland. Jonathan Samuel has been

BELOW:
A licensing scheme would help to protect the reputation of skilled professionals

making the case for licensing UK plumbers since taking up his role last year.

He said: "Poorly installed plumbing and heating systems can cause contamination, scalding, leaks and structural damage. Without regulation, there's no reliable way to guarantee competence, however good individual plumbers are.

"We don't need to start from scratch. Membership organisations such as SNIPEF already exist, alongside established water regulations. Consumers already understand the value of recognised tradespeople, just as they do with Gas Safe registered engineers.

"Our research backs this up. Of the 2,000 UK homeowners we surveyed, 91% agreed that plumbers should be officially registered. In Scotland, that rose to 93%. In Northern Ireland, it was 81%, with two-thirds agreeing strongly. The public increasingly expects their plumber to be qualified, competent and accountable, and it's time the law reflected those expectations.

"The water arriving at the property boundary in Scotland and Northern Ireland is consistently excellent. The Drinking Water Quality Regulator's 2025 annual report puts Scottish Water's public supply compliance at 99.94%, while the Drinking Water Inspectorate Northern Ireland reported 99.88% compliance for Northern Ireland Water's mains supply in 2024.

Jonathan Samuel,
Managing Director of
WaterSafe Register





Customers expect their plumbers to be fully qualified



For more information and advice about how you can benefit from WaterSafe Register membership, please visit www.watersafe.org.uk

"However, both reports highlight issues that using a registered plumber would help prevent, including wrongly connected pipework, unsuitable fittings, backflow from white goods, lead solder and taste or odour problems.

"A licensing scheme would mean verified entry qualifications, ongoing CPD, on-site auditing, regular reassessment, proper insurance and a public register, giving plumbers the professional recognition their skills deserve.

"Not everyone agrees the time is right. Some question how a scheme would fit within existing legislation, what it might cost small businesses and how it should be administered. Those are legitimate questions and we want to hear the industry's views. The Gas Safe Register model demonstrates that licensing does not have to mean unworkable red tape. Done well, it can raise standards, protect the public and support professional livelihoods." ■

Get involved in the debate and tell us what you think on Facebook, X or LinkedIn. Whether you support a mandatory register, oppose it or are still weighing up the arguments, we'd like to hear from you.



WaterSafe
REGISTER

OPT IN TO WATERSAFE REGISTER

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

A firm commitment to quality

Michael Cairns, Director of Celsius Plumbing and Heating in Edinburgh, explains what registration means for his business

Being WaterSafe registered is something we're proud of because it demonstrates our commitment to recognised standards and professional workmanship.

When customers ask about our qualifications or experience, being

able to explain that we're WaterSafe registered and members of SNIPEF gives them added confidence in the quality of our work and our commitment to doing the job properly.

Customers increasingly want reassurance that the person working on their plumbing is qualified and accountable. Anything that helps consumers make informed choices and recognises competent, qualified plumbers is a positive discussion for the industry.



Michael Cairns,
Director of
SNIPEF Member
Celsius Plumbing
and Heating

From good to great

What makes a great heat pump installation? **Neil Sawers** from Grant UK breaks down the technical fundamentals and the support available to installers



By **Neil Sawers**,
Commercial
Technical
Manager at
Grant UK

For plumbing and heating businesses considering adding air source heat pumps to their offering, the technology itself is well proven. What separates a system that performs efficiently for years from one that leaves cold rooms and high running costs is almost always the quality of the design, specification and commissioning behind it. Here's what installers need to get right and where Grant UK's support can help.

START WITH THE HEAT LOSS CALCULATION

Every heat pump installation should begin with a full room-by-room heat loss calculation, rather than a rule-of-thumb estimate based on existing boiler size. This accounts for room dimensions, ceiling height and the insulation levels of walls and windows, alongside air change rate and expected internal comfort temperature. It must also reflect the lowest outdoor temperature the property is likely to experience and the effect any defrost cycle will have on the heat pump's performance.

This perhaps matters more in Scotland than in much of the rest of the UK. Manufacturers test their units against standardised low-temperature benchmarks to establish 'drop off' – the difference between a unit's potential output and what it can actually deliver once temperatures fall. Where the UK benchmark is typically -3°C, Scotland's is -7°C, reflecting harsher winter conditions. Design against the wrong benchmark and a heat pump that looks adequate on paper can underperform in winter. Undersize the heat pump and it won't keep pace with demand on the coldest days; significantly oversize it and the system will be inefficient and waste energy.

SIZING HEAT PUMPS AND SELECTING EMITTERS

Once the heat loss figures are established, you need to look at heat emitters. Air source heat pumps operate at lower flow temperatures than gas or oil boilers, so emitters need a larger surface area to transfer the same amount of heat.

This is why underfloor heating has become a popular choice for heat pump installations. But it's not the only option: a combination of underfloor heating downstairs and larger aluminium radiators or fan coil heaters upstairs can deliver the comfort customers expect without wholesale changes to a property's layout.

Where existing radiators are retained, the calculation changes again. Because the Delta T across a radiator on a heat pump system is significantly lower than on a boiler system, radiator outputs must be recalculated using the new flow temperature to ensure they deliver the same output. The index circuit, which is the circuit of highest resistance, and other pipework may also



Grant UK became a SNIPEF affiliate earlier this year

“Gaps in insulation on exposed pipework will negatively affect the heating system's performance”



COMMISSIONING AND HANDOVER

Commissioning is where design intent either translates into real-world performance or doesn't. The heat pump and heating and hot water system need to be comprehensively set up and commissioned, in line with the manufacturer's instructions, before a comprehensive client handover. Talking the owner through their system matters as much to long-term satisfaction as technical installation.

ABOVE:

Conducting heat loss calculations is the first step to a successful heat pump install

need upgrading to cope with higher flow rates. This isn't difficult to plan for, but it needs to happen at the design stage, not be discovered on site.

INSTALLATION PRACTICE

Pipework needs to be correctly sized, properly supported and fully insulated, internally and externally; gaps in insulation on exposed pipework will negatively affect the system's performance.

An in-line filter should be fitted, expansion vessels sized to suit the system and minimum volume of the system should be calculated with a volumiser included if there is a shortfall between what is required and the actual volume of the system. The use of buffers should only be a last resort or where large capacity heat pumps are employed (eg. greater than 20kW).

Where a heat pump is going onto an existing system, a thorough flush before filling with the appropriate thermal fluid is essential and a flow regulator on the return pipe helps maintain the required flow rate.

Siting the unit deserves proper attention too. It should sit on a firm, level, vibration-isolated base capable of supporting the weight, with the manufacturer's recommended clearances maintained. Position affects performance: a sheltered south-facing wall, away from doors, windows and boundaries, will generally give the best results. Condensate drainage needs a safe route away from paths and driveways, where standing water can freeze in winter.

Electrical work must be carried out by a suitably trained person, with a dedicated, correctly rated power supply and lockable isolator. Every installation also needs to be notified to the relevant Distribution Network Operator. Grant's Aerona³ and Aerona 290 ranges are ENA 'Connect and Notify' approved, simplifying this step.

WHAT GRANT UK OFFERS

For firms building up heat pump capability, Grant UK's in-house Design and Specification Team can help with heat loss calculations, system quotations, site survey advice and even full underfloor heating system designs. The Grant UK Training Academy also runs a free one-day heat pump system design course covering heat loss calculation, heat pump selection, emitter sizing, pipe sizing and pressure loss, system types and sound level calculation for MCS020 compliance, alongside product-specific training through the G1 Installer Scheme.

There's a funding element for Scottish customers too. Homeowners can apply for a grant, a loan, or a combination of both through the Home Energy Scotland (HES) scheme, offering up to £7,500 in grant funding (with a further uplift of £1,500 in grant funding available in eligible rural and island homes) and up to £7,500 in interest-free loans towards a new air source heat pump and other energy efficiency measures. As with all such schemes, the installation must be completed by an MCS-certified installer using an MCS-approved heat pump, so maintaining that accreditation remains essential for firms serving this part of the market. ■

For more information, visit www.grantuk.com/professional



The siting of a heat pump can make a significant impact on its performance



Top eight apprentices named for SkillPLUMB finals

UHI Moray's Kai Gray to represent Scotland at national final

Eight apprentice plumbers have now been named for this year's SkillPLUMB UK final, including SNIPEF Training Services apprentice Kai Gray from Cowie Plumbing and Heating and UHI Moray.

Kai won the BPEC SkillPLUMB copper category at SNIPEF's Scottish Plumbing Apprentice of the Year competition (SPAY) at West College Scotland in June. Having finished second in 2025, Kai returned this year and went one better, taking the copper category title. He was delighted at getting over the line this year, describing his SPAY victory as a "nice surprise" while thanking his lecturers and employer for helping him to reach the next level in his skills.

Stephanie Lowe, SNIPEF Deputy Chief Executive, was pleased to see a SNIPEF Training Services apprentice make the UK final. She said: "We're absolutely delighted to see Kai progress to the SkillPLUMB UK final. His success is a great reflection of the talent, determination and commitment of apprentices across Scotland and it is fantastic to see him have the opportunity to showcase his skills on the national stage. It also reflects the commitment of employers like Cowie Plumbing & Heating to

supporting and developing their apprentices. SPAY provides an excellent platform for apprentices to test themselves in a competitive environment and Kai's journey from finishing runner-up last year to winning the copper category this year shows what can be achieved through hard work and continued development.

"Ensuring that the apprenticeship pathway remains accessible and attractive is essential if we are to continue developing the highly skilled workforce our industry needs for the future. Kai's achievement is a great example of the opportunities that our profession can provide, and we wish him every success in the UK final."

Kai's win at SPAY did not guarantee his entry into the UK finals. Scores from all the regional finals were tallied together, with the top eight progressing to the next stage. Fortunately, Kai's example at SPAY met the required high standard, meaning he can fly the flag for Scotland in November.

Garry Cowie, Kai's employer, added: "We are incredibly proud of Kai for reaching the SkillPLUMB

BELOW: Kai Gray, pictured with SNIPEF President Steve Craig, won the BPEC SkillPLUMB copper category at this year's SPAY competition

2026 UK final. His hard work, determination and commitment to developing his skills have been outstanding from day one.

"Reaching the final is a remarkable accomplishment, and we are delighted to see his efforts recognised.

"Kai has been a fantastic addition to the business and this achievement reflects the professionalism and enthusiasm

he brings to his work every day.

"Working with SNIPEF Training Services and UHI Moray, we've seen first-hand



value of high-quality apprenticeship training in developing the next generation of skilled plumbing and heating professionals. We wish Kai the very best of luck in the final."

The finalists will now go head-to-head at the SkillPLUMB 2026 UK Finals at Bridgend College on the week of 16 November. In total, about 50 WorldSkills UK national finals will be taking place that week, representing a variety of professions at different venues across South Wales.

In the quest to be named SkillPLUMB champion, competitors will have to tackle a complex task that involves the installation of a central heating system and hot/cold water system, incorporating a boiler, unvented hot water cylinder



ABOVE: Kai (right) competing at the 2026 SPAY competition

and associated pipework and bespoke designed copper radiators. Competitors will also work on a heat pump task developed in collaboration with Ideal Heating.

SkillPLUMB is organised by industry charity BPEC and is part of the WorldSkills UK competition framework. The event has Ideal Heating as its headline sponsor and is supported by other industry sponsors including Mueller Europe, Monument Tools,

DeWalt, APHC, JIB-PMES, SNIPEF, WaterSafe, CIPHE, Plumbmaster and McAlpine.

Those who perform well enough and are age eligible could be in with a chance of competing at WorldSkills 2028 in Aichi, Japan.

"Congratulations to all of this year's SkillPLUMB finalists on reaching the national final," said Neil Collishaw, BPEC CEO.

"The standard throughout the qualifying heats has been outstanding, making this a fantastic achievement.

"I'm looking forward to seeing the competition first-hand in Wales this November.

"My thanks also go to our valued SkillPLUMB sponsors. We wish all of our finalists the very best of luck." ■

For more information, visit the BPEC SkillPLUMB pages at www.bpec.org.uk/the-bpec-charity/activities/skillplumb



Finalists are the best of British

The eight student plumbers who scored most highly across the SkillPLUMB 2026 national qualifying heats were (pictured left to right):

- **Bikesh Limbu** – HM Royal Engineers
- **Daniel Young** – Coleg Meirion Dwyfor

- **Georgia Greenfield** – London South Bank Technical College/Robson
- **Harvey Cooper** – Oxford Energy Academy/Uni Plumb
- **Hudson Denner** – Coleg y Cymoedd/JD Property Renovation

- **Kai Gray** – UHI Moray/Cowie Plumbing & Heating
- **Lewis Wallace** – New College Durham/DW Plumbing & Heating
- **Tristan McGrath** – South West College/DH Mechanical & Ventilation



Safer waters

Greg Rankin, CEO of rapid *Legionella* testing provider Hydrosense, discusses how plumbers and heating engineers can help protect public health

This August, Basel became the latest major city to experience a *Legionella* outbreak, with 26 people falling ill and one person dying in the canton of Basel-Stadt.

Just a month earlier, New York experienced another Legionnaires' disease cluster, with seven people dying and more than 90 falling ill. This follows last summer's deadly Harlem outbreak, in which seven people died and more than 100 people became ill after exposure to *Legionella*.

Why, you may ask, is this relevant to UK plumbers and heating professionals? Put bluntly, any one of these incidences could have just as easily happened in the UK.

The reality is that they are indicative of a pattern seen increasingly across the globe. Ageing infrastructure, warmer temperatures and inconsistent maintenance practices are combining to create ideal conditions for *Legionella* growth. Modern buildings, with their more complex plumbing arrangements, can inadvertently encourage stagnation and temperature fluctuations if not carefully designed and maintained. Put this all together and it's easy to see why *Legionella* rates are rising all over the world.

According to the latest figures, the notification rate of Legionnaires' disease in Europe now stands at to 3.2 cases per 100,000 population, up from the 2.6 cases per 100,000 population reported in 2022.¹ In the UK, it's estimated that there are almost ten cases of Legionnaires' disease each week.²

FIRST ON THE FRONT LINE

For plumbers, this escalating risk has significant implications. As water system professionals working directly with these infrastructures, they are uniquely positioned to help detect, prevent and mitigate *Legionella* contamination in commercial plumbing systems.

They understand how systems behave in the real world, not just on paper. Every time an engineer designs, repairs or commissions a system, decisions are being made that directly affect whether water remains safe over the long term. By eliminating dead legs, ensuring proper flow, setting up effective recirculation and confirming that systems can maintain safe temperatures, they can stop many problems before they start.

However, technical expertise is only part of the picture. Plumbing and heating professionals are also in a unique position to educate building owners and facilities teams – many of whom severely underestimate the risk until an incident occurs.

Clear advice on flushing regimes, maintenance schedules and early warning signs can make the difference between a compliant, well-managed system and one that is quietly harbouring risk. As the *Legionella* risk continues to grow, clients will frequently look to experts for guidance and the more informed that guidance is, the stronger their overall water safety strategy becomes.

THE NEED FOR SPEED

Rapid testing is a key area where plumbers and engineers can lead the way as part of this. Despite today's rising *Legionella* risk, most duty holders still tend to rely on the lab-culture method – where water samples are sent to a laboratory for *Legionella* testing. However, this approach is time-consuming, cumbersome and has limitations.

Most lab culture tests take 7-10 days to return results. Yet *Legionella* can double in a day. This large time-lag means increased exposure and risk.

Water samples can also get damaged in the transportation process, potentially killing the *Legionella* inside and increasing the risk of a false negative result. Lab culture testing is also unable to detect Viable but Non-Culturable (VBNC) *Legionella* – which, though dormant, can still be incredibly dangerous due to their ability to resuscitate and reinfect a water system.



By Greg Rankin, CEO of Hydrosense

“Plumbing and heating professionals are also in a unique position to educate building owners and facilities teams – many of whom severely underestimate the risk until an incident occurs”

The latest generation of rapid testing kits use lateral flow technology and can deliver results in around 25 minutes, detect both culturable and non-culturable bacteria and allow testing at the exact point of use. By incorporating these into routine maintenance, installers can provide immediate reassurance or early escalation long before bacterial levels reach danger zones. Not only does this approach minimise potential exposure and protects clients but it also strengthens the engineer's own professional reputation and reduces their liability.

ADDING VALUE AND REVENUE

Historically, plumbers and heating professionals may not have been heavily involved in *Legionella* testing. However, as *Legionella* risk continues to grow, it makes sense for them to play a much more active role in risk assessment and detection.

This translates into a huge opportunity. By proactively monitoring and identifying potential *Legionella* breeding conditions and advocating for and conducting regular rapid inspections as part of existing works, engineers can help reduce risks for commercial clients. They could even provide on-site rapid testing as part of an installation or maintenance package. The result is a win-win way to add value, create a recurring revenue stream and strengthen client relationships – helping them navigate safer waters. ■

hydrosense

For further information please visit:
www.hydrosense-legionella.com

¹ <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/legionnaires-disease-annual-epidemiological-report-2023>
² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/legionellosis-in-residents-of-england-and-wales-2024/legionellosis-in-residents-of-england-and-wales-2024>

Protecting water quality

McDonald Water Storage explains why everyone has a part to play in ensuring the quality of water is the best it can be



By Mark Strachan,
Sales Director
at McDonald
Water Storage

WATER QUALITY: WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

Once mains water enters a building, the way it is stored, heated and distributed can influence water quality. If there is an issue with the design, if it is not properly installed or if incorrect components are used, this can create an environment where the water quality can degrade. This shows everyone has a part to play in keeping the water quality at its best, between the manufacturers, designers and installers.

MANUFACTURERS

A key consideration for manufacturers to keep in mind is how their materials will interact with drinking water, ensuring all components used comply with the relevant standards and regulations. From a manufacturing point of view, ensuring the design is created in such a way that the water is effectively heated and circulated is important, while also ensuring they provide clear technical information so installers can fit these products efficiently.

THE ROLE OF TEMPERATURE

Managing the risk of *Legionella* is an important thing to think about at the design stage, where temperature has a large impact

on whether this could be an issue.

Consideration should be given to how the systems need to be designed to achieve the optimum temperatures to mitigate the risk of *Legionella* and other microbial growth. This thought process must be considered throughout the whole hot water system, from the pipework to outlets and circulation, to ensure there is as little risk to health as possible while providing effective heating.

SYSTEM CONFIGURATION

Depending on how it is designed, the overall system can perform very differently, for example pipe runs, dead legs, circulation, storage volumes and usage patterns can all affect water quality. This highlights the important role installers play in making sure the system they are installing works as intended.

THE RIGHT COMPONENTS

An important part of pressurised hot water systems is expansion vessels. A flow-through expansion vessel is designed so water passes through the vessel, helping to reduce areas of stagnant water. This shows that every part of the hot water system, even those that seem like small parts, contributes to the overall water quality. For example, at McDonald Water Storage we used this thought process when creating our Flow Through Expansion Vessel, where water hygiene considerations are at the forefront of our manufacturing process.

SAFE SYSTEMS

Installers play a key role when installing the hot water systems and even the best-designed cylinder will not work as it should if it is not installed correctly, which is why following the manufacturer's instructions and keeping up with the relevant standards are essential. Every aspect of the installation process makes a difference, from correct connections to pipework, valves, temperatures and

BELOW:
Protecting water
safety starts at
the design stage





ABOVE:
Flow-through
expansion vessel

BELOW: Manufacturers need to know how their materials will interact with drinking water



commissioning. As the installers are fitting the cylinders, they may come across issues on site which need to be fed back to the manufacturer, with their feedback being a valuable asset.

COMPLETE COMPLIANCE

Instead of just thinking "is this compliant?", ask yourself "does this system provide safe, reliable water for the people using it?". The essential framework comes from regulations and standards, but compliance should be viewed as part of the role of both manufacturers and installers. Manufacturers need to ensure they are making the compliance achievable, while installers need to understand the requirements fully to then be able to apply them on site.

KEEPING WATER SAFE

Installers should think about how the building will be used and not just what is shown on the drawing. Water that stays in one place for a long time can create low-quality conditions for the water to sit in, resulting in low water quality. Things to consider are dead legs, oversized storage, unused outlets or poorly configured pipework. This is where manufacturers can step in to help by providing an option of product sizing and guidance to the systems.

WHY IT MATTERS

Water quality is vital for public health. Leaving it untreated or not thinking about the end user can become public health concerns. This is why everyone has a part to play ensuring the people using the hot and cold water are protected in the best way possible. Whether it's water in homes, schools, hospitals or commercial buildings, they all need high-quality water from professionals who have carefully mitigated the risks as best they can at every stage of the process. ■



McDonald Water Storage
was founded in 1945 and
is now based in Glenrothes

“Even the best designed cylinder will not work as it should if it is not installed correctly, which is why following manufacturer’s instructions and keeping up with standards are essential”

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The clear water range offers robust, sustainable solutions

Saniflo launches clear water pump range

Saniflo is pleased to announce the launch of the new clear water range – a complete line-up of innovative pumps designed for the collection, distribution and pressurisation of clean water. Building on more than 70 years of expertise in wastewater management, Saniflo's clear water range now offers robust, sustainable solutions for clear water applications, including jet pumps, booster pumps, submersible pumps and underground lifting stations.

Whether you're collecting rainwater, irrigating gardens, draining basements, or boosting water pressure in domestic systems, the clear water range has a high-performance product to suit every need.

Sanijet is a range of five stainless steel centrifugal surface pumps optimised by a Venturi (jet) system for increased suction up to 8m. Automated for on-demand and self-priming for a simple start, the pumps have a max head between 50 and 54m and max flow rate from 3.6m³ up to 5m³.

SaniMHP is a 10-strong range of multi-stage surface pumps ideal for irrigation, rainwater use and water supply. From the 4-40 through to the 9-50 PC4 model offering max head ranges from 40m to 52m and max flow from 4m³ to 8.7m³, there is a model that will tackle pretty much every clean water movement requirement.

With four models in the range and max head capacities between 40-54m, the new Saniboost range is a domestic booster pump ideal for optimised and smooth water supply. Max flow from 3.6m³ to 5.2m³ ensures there is a model to increase and regulate the pressure of water collected in most sizes of domestic water tank and the units operate automatically and are particularly suited

for low-flow consumption. A Saniboost booster includes a buffer tank that limits the frequent starts and stops of the pump to which reduces noise disturbances. Each model offers guaranteed service pressure on drip irrigation installations or automatic flush mechanisms.

Sanisub is a family of submersible pumps designed for a variety of applications including flood recover, basement drainage, rainwater re-use and, in some cases, light commercial operations.

With flow rates between 9-15m³/hour and heads up to 11m, Sanisub models such as the ZPK, 800 Rainkit, and Steel + Emergency Kit provide powerful, reliable water management for challenging environments.

The Sanifos range offers two pre-assembled lifting stations with 110L and 280L capacities for the management of grey or treated water. With four inlets, flow rates up to 14m³/hour and heads of 10m the robust Sanifos can be discreetly installed underground to move water from buildings, garden rooms and multiple small units – such as pods.

From a sustainability perspective, the clear water range promotes responsible water reuse and offers eco-conscious solutions that support the full water cycle – from collection and storage to redistribution. By enabling the reuse of grey water and alternative water sources like rivers, pools, and rainwater, these pumps help reduce demand on treated mains supply.

The addition of the clear water means that Saniflo is now a one-stop shop for all water management requirements. ■

To learn more or download the clear water brochure, visit www.saniflo.co.uk

Transport funding is going places

Are you looking to reduce transport costs and prepare your business for an electric future? **Energy Saving Trust offers a range of funding options to help Scottish businesses transition to cleaner, more sustainable transport solutions.**

LOW EMISSION ZONE SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES

Does your business operate within 40km of Scotland's Low Emission Zones (LEZs) in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen or Dundee? Sole traders and micro businesses with nine or fewer full-time employees can apply for a £2,000 grant when they dispose of a non-compliant vehicle through an authorised treatment facility. This funding can help your business adapt to LEZ requirements while avoiding future penalty charges.

BUSINESS CHARGE POINT FUNDING

Thinking about switching to electric vehicles (EVs)? Installing workplace charging can make the move easier and more affordable. The business charge point fund offers eligible microbusinesses and third sector organisations in rural and island areas of Scotland up to £5,000 towards the purchase and installation costs of EV charge points. This funding supports private charge points for staff and fleet vehicles, helping organisations lower running costs and switch to electric sooner.

HOW TO APPLY

Visit www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/business/transport/funding to check eligibility and apply. Both funds are limited and operate on a first-come, first-served basis. ■



Workplace charging can make the move to electric vehicles easier

Shower range is a splash hit

Kinedo has expanded its shower cubicle range with the introduction of Artemis, a practical and stylish solution designed specifically for compact living spaces including mobile homes, caravans, holiday lodges, park homes and modular buildings.

Developed to offer a complete showering solution that is quick to install and easy to maintain, Artemis is sleek and contemporary in appearance, offering the same high-quality solution as the whole Kinedo range. The integrated cubicle package includes a choice of black or white profile, durable 70mm white shower tray, mechanical shower valve, pivot door, a 90mm vertical outlet waste with polished stainless-steel cover. Internal white Kinewall panels are supplied as standard, and these are pre-drilled for rapid installation.

Designed with both installers and end users in mind, the Artemis delivers a practical, high-quality showering solution for projects where space is at a premium, without compromising on comfort, functionality or contemporary design. ■

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Heat pumps are made for homes

Daikin UK and Eurovent Certification have announced a UK industry first, with Daikin becoming the first successful applicant to have multi-split Air-to-Air (A2A) heat pump products listed on the MCS Product Directory through the Eurovent Certification route.

A total of 65 residential Multi-split and Multi+ combinations are now listed, each pairing a single outdoor unit with two to five wall-mounted indoor units to suit a wide range of home layouts. The certified systems include Daikin's Perfera indoor unit.

The listing spans two product families. Forty-five Multi-split combinations cover everything from small compact properties to five-zone whole-house systems, giving households flexible, room-by-room comfort and heating only the spaces in use. A further 20 Multi+ combinations bring heating, cooling and hot water together in a single system, connecting up to four indoor units and a domestic hot water tank to one outdoor unit. Between them, they suit the kinds of homes a conventional radiator system can struggle to reach, from flats and smaller terraced houses to properties with limited space or awkward



pipework routes. The listing is a significant step for the A2A category. It shows that the certification pathway from Eurovent Certification into the MCS Product Directory is now established and working, laying the groundwork for A2A heat pumps to play a fuller role in the UK's low-carbon heating mix as the MCS scheme completes its expansion to cover the technology. Product listing is a required first step towards A2A heat pumps becoming eligible for government support under schemes such as the Boiler Upgrade Scheme, once MCS certification for the technology is complete.

Both companies see the listing as the start of a wider rollout. As the MCS framework for A2A matures, further products are expected to follow, broadening the choice of certified low-carbon heating options available to UK households. ■

ABOVE: The products provide more flexibility in the home

To learn more, visit www.daikin.co.uk

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Three lessons this summer taught us about decarbonisation

This summer gave us plenty to think about. Heatwaves hit homes across Scotland, Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, while household budgets everywhere remain under pressure. Now we are in autumn, it's worth stepping back and reflecting on what the past few months tell us about the future of home heating and decarbonisation.

1. HOMES NEED TO ADAPT FOR COOLING

For years, heat policy has focused exclusively on driving down carbon emissions. While we must continue with this approach, we also need to address the new challenge we are facing today: most of our homes are simply not built for extreme summer temperatures. They trap heat, making

bedrooms unbearable and posing health risks to vulnerable people. We need to start investing more in adaptability to keep homes cool.

2. WE MUST MAKE FASTER PROGRESS

Electrification remains the main net zero policy across UK governments. However, despite generous grants, the uptake of heat pumps is still sluggish. We know the reasons why:

ABOVE: David Blevings, Ireland Manager, OFTEC

To find out more about OFTEC's work, visit www.oftec.org

IMAGE: Gordon McAvooy Photography



off-grid properties are older, more expensive to retrofit and many consumers want a choice; not just to be forced down the electrification route. On top of that, the changing weather tells us we can't afford to keep going at the current pace or it will take another decade to make meaningful progress.

3. TIGHTER BUDGETS HEADING INTO WINTER

Household finances are already stretched and it's expected water costs will rise following the droughts, energy bills will increase due to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East and food prices may rise due to a poor year of farming. At the same time, public finances are under pressure. That's why any net zero solution needs to be affordable and cost-effective.

Renewable liquid fuels can tackle all the above issues.

It's time all government across the UK took a more pragmatic approach to the challenges we are facing. ■

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www.oftec.org



Smart Freeze Clamp is one step ahead

Arctic Hayes by DiversiTech UK has unveiled a global first in professional plumbing innovation with the launch of the Smart Freeze Clamp – a connected solution designed to bring unprecedented accuracy, control and confidence to installers looking to isolate pipework on live systems.

Building on six decades of pipe freezing expertise, the Smart Freeze Clamp represents a significant step forward from traditionally disruptive, costly and messy drain-down methods, combining the best in precision freeze technology with digital intelligence, via real-time app monitoring and ultrasonic sensing.

At its core is a simple but powerful concept: giving plumbing and heating engineers clear, live feedback on exactly what is happening inside the pipe as it freezes.

Using a dedicated and interactive iOS/Android app connected via Bluetooth, the Smart Freeze Clamp provides real-time temperature monitoring, visual countdowns and alerts throughout the freeze cycle, allowing installers to see precisely when an ice plug has formed and when it begins to thaw.

This is made possible by an integrated ultrasonic sensor that confirms freeze formation by measuring the actual temperature of the pipe itself, rather than relying on estimated times or ambient conditions. The result is a more accurate and repeatable process.

For installers, this directly translates into improved confidence and job efficiency on site. The system provides audible and visual confirmation when a solid ice plug has been

achieved, ensuring it is safe to begin work. It also alerts users if the freeze begins to weaken and additional refrigerant is required, helping to prevent any costly mistakes and unnecessary disruption.

Precision engineered and robust for regular use, it features a secure locking mechanism, clear orientation indicators and full compatibility with the current range of Arctic Hayes refrigerants. Available in 15mm and 22mm variants, it is optimised for the most common UK copper and PVC pipe sizes and can be used on both horizontal and vertical pipework.

The addition of dual-freeze capability further enhances its versatility. Using a Y-piece connection, engineers can operate two clamps simultaneously, allowing sections of pipework to be isolated with greater control, particularly useful in more complex installations or commercial environments.

"Pipe freezing has long been valued as a way to avoid draining down entire systems, saving time, reducing water waste and minimising disruption for customers," explained Lee Parsons, UK Business Unit Director. "However, research tells us that 70% of installers have never tried a pipe freeze product for fear of it not working.

"Pipe freezing has always been about making installers' lives easier, so with the Smart Freeze Clamp, we've removed any guesswork entirely by adding modern, digital control and precision."

The message for installers and heating engineers is clear: work safer, cleaner and faster now that advanced pipe freezing has technologically evolved even further. With the Smart Freeze Clamp, Arctic Hayes by DiversiTech UK is not just refining an established and proven technique, but redefining what users can expect from it – delivering greater control, improved outcomes and the ultimate streamlined experience from start to finish.

For a step-by-step guide, ensuring you get the perfect freeze every time, view the latest Smart Clamp videos at: bit.ly/ph-arctichayes. To view the Arctic Hayes range, visit www.arctic-hayes.com



ABOVE: The device uses the latest digital intelligence



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