

Gas gripes

Energy complaints fell for five of the big six suppliers last quarter, with EDF the odd one out, according to figures published by Consumer Focus.

<http://bit.ly/pjfvwL>

Londonderry attacks

Arson attacks on sewer improvement crews have led NI Water to abandon nighttime working in Londonderry.

<http://bit.ly/pCu7QM>

DNO £0.5m payout

UK Power Networks has been fined £300,000 with £200,000 costs after the death of an employee in 2007 while working at one of its Norfolk sites.

<http://bit.ly/pUAhdL>

Top Jobs

Thames Water

Water resource analyst
£20,000-£29,000

ATA Energy

Cost planner
£35,000-£40,000

Morgan Hunt

Lead category manager
£40,000-£55,000

All jobs at: <http://bit.ly/fC5PMo>

ELECTRICITY

Government tackles heat pump problems

by **Brendan Coyne**

HEAT PUMP standards were tightened this week as industry and government moved to address poor performance in many units installed so far.

The revised Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) standards were launched on Thursday. Details were not available as *Utility Week* went to press, but a spokesman for the Energy Saving Trust (EST), Jaryn Bradford, said installers would have better guidance on appropriately-sizing equipment.

He said the revelations of a major EST study last year could be attributed to choice of the wrong equipment and householders who had not been told how to use the products properly.

Jaryn said the revised standards must be put into practice swiftly and urged "a step change in installer training and skills".

The move came as two pieces



Made to measure: new rules will enforce best practice

of heat pump marketing literature were banned by the Advertising Standards Authority. Danfoss, whose equipment is specified by British Gas, made exaggerated claims about its products, as previously did ACR Renewable Solutions, whose advertising was challenged by Calor Gas.

Mike Landy, senior policy analyst at the Renewable Energy Association, said performance could only be gauged when site-

specific variables were taken into account. He said Decc should fund more trials.

EST figures for the Renewable Heat Premium Payment, which Decc launched last month to support installation of technology such as heat pumps, showed that 511 grants from 539 applications had been awarded for air source heat pumps, with 283 grants awarded for ground source heat pumps from 302 applications.

COMMENT

The private sewer transfer is a golden opportunity

NEXT MONTH'S transfer of responsibility for private drains and sewers connecting to the public network is far from straightforward and presents operational and customer challenges of unknown proportions. But taking on these extra assets over the next three years also represents the single largest opportunity water and sewerage organisations have had since privatisation to better understand customers and develop lifetime customer relationships.

A number of workstreams have to be in place to ensure that the transfer runs smoothly throughout its entirety. Customer data and analytics have to be working alongside efficient processes, working all the way from the first customer call through to reactive repairs, from the first advanced notification on improvement work to it being carried out, through to leaving the customer with an improved sewerage system which they can understand and look after.

Using effective workstreams will improve customer satisfaction by ensuring that the right people are in the right place at the right time to solve customer problems, however the industry must not rely on this alone – it is essential that time is taken to properly communicate with customers.

A significant increase in customer call volume into the contact centre is anticipated due to the very uncertain nature of the trans-



fer. There will be bumps along the way and managing the extra incoming data effectively and optimising customer communications is vital. Customer service teams need to have the available information immediately to hand to deal with any customer enquiry first time, and the appropriate analytics in place that help them quickly identify whether the problem exists on the public system, transferred sewers or remaining private drainage. As their SIM score will also be judged on the volume of customer enquiries, it's imperative that they attempt to pre-empt problems and clearly communicate the impact of any changes ahead of time, before the customer begins to question it.

By far the biggest communications challenge for organisations will be to explain to customers why the considerable costs of the transfer are worth the substantial benefits, what levels of disruption they will face and how their bills will change to accommodate the transfer. With the right systems in place, the bill or any other customer communication channel becomes the perfect platform to keep them informed of new information at each stage.

The stakes are high for both success and failure, but every new interaction facilitated by the transfer presents a golden opportunity for organisations to improve customer data and build up trust, thereby ensuring stronger and more profitable lifetime relationships.

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