

Electric is being penalised

Those who ignore the benefits of electric heating are being shortsighted, according to Spencer Clark of HWA member Heatrae Sadia Heating

Around 30% of the unvented hot water cylinders sold in the UK are direct electrically-heated by immersion heaters, proving that mains pressure electric water heating is very much in demand. This is particularly true where mains gas is not available, or in high rise buildings where gas appliances may not be favoured.

Despite this, electric water heating continues to be penalised in government figures, so installers trying to specify direct unvented cylinders could find it challenging.

Although electric water heating products are highly efficient at the point of use, most installers will know they are viewed as carbon intensive within the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP), because of the way electricity is currently generated in the UK.

However, we are certain the fuel's future is secure. We know from the Climate Change Committee Report 'Building a Low Carbon Economy - the UK's Contribution to Tackling Climate Change', published in December 2008, that a radical decarbonisation of power is planned, which will make electric water heating a very efficient and low carbon option.

Decarbonisation is likely to be achieved through a combination of nuclear power stations and renewable electricity generation - both of

which have government backing. As well as supporting a new generation of nuclear power stations, the government has set a target for 10% of electricity produced in the UK to come from renewable sources by 2010. 'Green' electricity, produced using renewable methods such as wind farms, hydropower and photovoltaics, is already available from some energy suppliers.

Large-scale decarbonisation could be some way off, but in the meantime, installers are willing to overcome SAP issues, especially in properties where electricity is a more viable solution than gas. It cannot be denied that electric water heating offers many benefits, especially for flats and apartments, with products being flexible, controllable, simple and cost effective to install, and having low maintenance requirements.

Installers that want to use electric heating and water heating products are making sure properties are well insulated, and they are incorporating renewable and low-carbon technologies to offset the emissions.

Electric products can be successfully coupled with renewable technologies, in



'Green' electricity, produced using renewable methods such as wind farms, hydropower and photovoltaics, is already available from some energy suppliers

particular solar thermal water heating and heat pumps, helping to meet SAP and Code for Sustainable Homes targets, and reducing carbon emissions and fuel bills.

Although this shows that SAP ratings can be successfully improved with good insulation and the inclusion of renewable technologies, there's a very real threat that the government's stance on electricity could result in a shift away from the fuel.

Ironically, the government has announced a major investment in electric charging points to encourage the use of electric cars. This investment runs into billions of pounds and, if successful, may signal something of a sea change in energy use.

HWA would argue that this is a good example of double thinking as, much like electric cars, electric water heating is

clean and efficient at the point of use, yet it is being penalised.

Electric water heating can have a promising future, especially as cleaner electricity generation is on the way. These products are compatible with renewable technologies, and solutions are more flexible and controllable than in the past. It must also be remembered that electric water heating products are actually highly efficient at the point of use, and can contribute to solving the intermittency problem of some renewable energy sources such as wind, as peak loads can be stored away in electric water cylinders and help load management in the national grid.

It is for these reasons that we encourage government and EU officials to change their current stance on electric water heating solutions. **HWP 219**