# DECC-EEPB Microgeneration Government-Industry Contact Group meeting, 26 September 2012

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Organisation** | **Name** | |  |  |
| 1 | BPVA | Olivia | Hall | OH | deputising for Reza Shaybani |
| 2 | CIPHE | Keith | Westcott | KW |  |
| 3 | Consumer Focus | James | Court | JC |  |
| 4 | DECC | Paul | Rochester | PR |  |
| 5 | Alan | Christie | AC |  |
| 6 | Gary | Sturgeon | GS |  |
| 7 | EEPB (chairing) | Mark | Brown | MB |  |
| 8 | EEPB | Luke | Smith | LS |  |
| 9 | EEPB (notes) | Mathias | Hessler | MH |  |
| 10 | Energy Saving Trust | Ian | Cuthbert | IC |  |
| 11 | FETA | Tony | Bowen | TB |  |
| 12 | Gemserv | Kunal | Sharma | KS | deputising for Brendan McGarry |
| 13 | GSHPA | David | Matthews | DM |  |
| 14 | HHIC | Isaac | Occhipinti | IO | deputising for Chris Yates |
| 15 | MCS | Gideon | Richards | GR |  |
| 16 | Micropower Council | Grace | Bennett | GB | deputising for Dave Sowden |
| 17 | NHBC | Neil | Smith | NS |  |
| 18 | REA, also representing STA | Mike | Landy | ML |  |
| 19 | REAL | Ciaran | Burns | CB | deputising for Virginia Graham |
| 20 | Renewable UK | Indre | Vaizgelaite | IV |  |
| 21 | Scottish Government | Alan | Wilson | AW |  |
| 22 | SummitSkills | Nigel | Hollett | NH |  |
|  | **Apologies** | | |  |  |
| 1 | BEAMA | Kelly | Butler |  |  |
| 2 | CHPA | Ian | Manders |  |  |
| 3 | HETAS | Bruce | Allen |  |  |
|  | **Did not attend** | | |  |  |
| 1 | Energy UK | Amisha | Patel |  |  |
| 2 | LGA | Abigail | Burridge |  |  |

## 2. Notes and actions from last meeting

* The notes from the last meeting were approved without comments.
* The relation of RHI and GD is now covered in RHI consultation document
* A paper on heat pump connection issues was submitted by Kelly Butler this Monday at the MCS heat pump group, and this topic is now progressed by Energy Networks Association. It will also be covered at the upcoming MCS management meeting.

## 3. SAP Working Group

A snag list was prepared by the group, and received a response from BRE/DECC in a combined paper also addressing concerns raised by the Zero Carbon Hub and the HHIC. This was an informal paper not officially part of the SAP consultation. A majority of issues relates to system design/sizing. SAP is not a design tool, and these are therefore out of scope. For some others, the difficulty lies in the practicalities of assessing. MPC have raised some questions regarding the written feedback to the snag list paper. AC confirmed that he would welcome the opportunity to discuss these further with BRE, DCLG, technical experts and software providers.

HHIC and Micropower Council filed separate consultation submissions that were addressed by BRE. A summary response and proposed changes to SAP is awaiting ministerial agreement to get published.

DCLG have decided not to put in the Part L improvements by April 2013, coming into force in October 2013. This means that some issues for building regulation compliance in SAP will not be finalised until April 2013.

Since SAP is the only tool for demonstrating building regulation compliance, it has become very commercially focussed. The newly formed SAP integrity group's purpose is to help BRE to maintain the scientific integrity of SAP while dealing with the commercial pressures. For practical reasons, the group has been set up as part of BRE’s quality assurance procedure. The terms of reference will be published once finalised. A decision is yet to be made whether the minutes will be made public.

The Group comprises:

* Robert Lowe, UCL
* John Counsell, University of Strathclyde
* Malcolm Bell, Leeds Metropolitan University
* Martin Searle, independent (formerly Baxi)
* John Tebbit, Construction Products Association
* Tessa Hurstwyn, Zero Carbon Hub

DW mentioned that CIBSE are developing a design guide. The design would need to be developed as a separate tool or perhaps as a possible add-on to SAP by software companies. There are significant risks for liabilities associated with a design guide. TB added that HHIC and MCS were also working with CIBSE on integrating common design standards.

A workshop was proposed to go through the main remaining issues from the snag list and beyond. The timelines would not tie in with the Government consultation response, but SAP/RDSAP will be subject to yearly revision to support Green Deal. AC also mentioned that improvements so SAP can be incorporated via Appendix Q, which was not just for product performance.

**Action MH and GB** to liaise on the next steps for a workshop. It was suggested to start the dialogue early by responding to points made by AC.

## 4. Next steps with the projects on warranties and consumer messaging

Kelly Butler and MH have produced a general overview of the available warranties for products and installations, including servicing and maintenance. This forms part of the gap analysis and aims at providing a general overview for consumers. The Energy Saving Trust's FAQ section and MCS also provide detail on consumer protection, including [REAL's customer complaints process](http://www.realassurance.org.uk/consumers/how-to-complain). Green Deal also includes consumer protection entitlements. The overview should not be too short as to become a confusing generalisation. It could cascade from the top, picking out elements of MCS / GD rather than starting from the bottom. All installations should have workmanship insurance, but it is not compulsory (as that you would limit competition), so if not covered by voluntary insurance, the paper could explain how consumers are still protected.

The levels of consumer protection available are not so much the issue as how to communicate them in through credible, independent channel and in a way that can quickly and easily be internalised. E.g., a leaflet could be provided at quotation stage

A workshop was proposed to bring together MCS, REAL, EST, Consumer Focus, Which? and NEA, to develop the messages and channels for communication and to link up the various portals to establish consistency.

### Update from Ian Cuthbert on consumer messaging

EST now run one central advice centre in London but continues to run regional centres in Scotland. Scottish Government is providing public funding for much of the microgen fact sheet and consumer information work. There have been 1 million unique visitors to the microgen section of EST website in the five months between 1 April and 31 August 2012, 3000 enquiries to GD advice line, and 3000 as well in Scotland, where there is much more marketing. Main interest is in FiTs and RHI but there is steadily more interest about Green Deal too. Over 2000 RHPP vouchers have been issued, and cost data is collected for each of these. EST also developed guides on [thermal stores](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Generating-energy/Choosing-a-renewable-technology/Thermal-stores), on [measuring wind speed](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Generating-energy/Choosing-a-renewable-technology/Wind-turbines/How-to-measure-wind-speed), and others – see [Whiteboard on Huddle](https://eepb.huddle.net/huddleworkspace/whiteboard.aspx?workspaceid=14874413&whiteboardid=20294314). The buyers’ guides have also been updated. There now is a cashback calculator for non-solar measures.

Scottish Government also continue to offer interest-free loans up to £10k for microgen installations, and are running a "Green Homes Network" of exemplar homes.

Printed guides are a good and bad idea at the same time. Resourcing is required to update them quarterly, including production costs; alternatively, the printed version can refer to online resources.

IC volunteered for EST to facilitate the messaging taskgroup. The work of the group should include:

* Verify websites: determining what information is substantiated and what is hearsay. ML added that the principles for this should be independence, authority and objectivity.
* Define core messages, including around MCS, REAL and wider consumer protection
* Energy efficiency requirements: information needs to be aligned with GD
* Guidance on incentives, including RHPP, RHI and FiTs, ECO affordable warmth, GD partial finance / cash incentive
* Defining the audience: who is “the consumer” – kinds/types
* Also develop information for intermediaries: planners, specifiers

GR confirmed that MCS are happy to get involved, and offered to sponsor the venue for the initial meeting. Organisations have certain functions, not all of them are one-stop-shops; e.g. MCS is not primarily an information provider, it’s meant to be certification provider. There should be a central hub plus references to more specific information. KW added that plumbing and heating engineers also were an important conduit to the consumer.

The Energy Saving Trust is also liaising frequently with Ofgem on messaging. Research from DECC’s customer insight team would also be relevant for the taskgroup.

**Action: LS** to convene the workshop with EST

## 5. Scotland update – Alan Wilson

Scotland published their Microgeneration Strategy in June, and had a first taskgroup meeting on 13 Sept. The following workstreams have been defined:

### Deployment, including grants

Looking at FiTs/RHI in particular, but as part of a national retrofit programme. A big concern is in former social housing that has been sold cheaply into the owner-occupier sector. Many of these properties have fallen behind with insulation and general upkeep.

Open days are a good opportunity to showcase installations including experiences of operating / living with technology. The Scottish Government are funding these through EST. The point was raised that this initiative could be joined up with the [SuperHomes](http://www.superhomes.org.uk/) network or the Devon “Energy Safari”.

On top of the interest-free loan for installations, Government also have a £5m budget for funding gas grid connections.

### Technologies

Including dialogue with GD and MCS, the taskgroup has observer status on MCS steering board.

### Planning and regulation

Main concern is slackness on building regulations compliance, particularly on health & safety issues. Noise issues for ASHPs are also looked into, and the length of delays for planning applications.

### Skills

A separate group is looking into delivery of training, and there are 6 new hub colleges. All engineering contractor organisations have now introduced microgen modules into their apprenticeships.

### Communication

Includes communication with the public and with the trade. Scottish Government is the authoritative, objective hub at the centre, with spokes out to various organisations. There is plenty of information available, but it needs to be filtered by relevance and accuracy.

## 6. Action plan updates

### Skills

A complete database of courses will not be feasible as there are too many training providers and the administrative resource to develop a single database is not there. The National Skills Academy will have a database of courses, and MCS will have their own database. There are risks for mapping out GD courses, as an omission may communicate that a course is not suitable, while in fact it has just not been added to the database.

### MCS

Results on the competency criteria are expected within next few weeks, along with a response to the industry consultation. MCS remains committed to the competency framework, which is also required under the EU Renewable Energy Directive. Defining competency criteria generically is important to enable flexibility in how they are achieved.

After the competency criteria have been established, MCS will reach out to those delivering training and ensuring all operatives are getting assessed against it. Manufacturers delivering in-house installer courses can become approved training providers. QCFs for design are under development as well.

AW mentioned that in Scotland, an overarching database has been established under [Skills Development Scotland](http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/); the problem of inconsistency has been overcome by courses being checked by the relevant Sector Skills Council.

It was agreed that quality of courses and databases should get time allocated at the next meeting – **Action EEPB** to put on the agenda.

Some industries are keen to get technologies certified under MCS that are over 50kW electric or 45kW for heat. This would be voluntary and not tied to FiTs/RHI. MCS are liaising with Ofgem. Concern was raised about the greater training requirements for installations over 50/45kW.

There is a debate about certification of innovative and hybrid technologies such as phase change stores or thermodynamic solar panels. DW mentioned that CIBSE are developing a systems integration guide.

## AOB - VAT

The “energy saving materials” that could face a 4-fold increase in VAT if the EU’s complaint is upheld include microgen. This could be particularly damaging for the industry which was already operating at extremely short margins. A legal opinion was circulated by ACE which had been prepared by a legal company for the RLA. It seems to indicate that the “social policy” justification for the reduced 5% rate may be easier to support for energy efficiency than for microgen.

## Summary of actions

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Action** | **lead** | timing |
| 3 | Make arrangements for a workshop on SAP | **GB & MH** |  |
| 4 | Convene a workshop on warranties and consumer messaging with EST | **LS** |  |
| 6 | Put item on agenda for next meeting on quality of courses and databases | **MH** |  |