



Heat Networks

Heat networks use insulated underground pipes to distribute heat from centralised sources to a variety of different customers, such as public buildings, shops, offices, hospitals, universities and homes. This can be across entire cities or to a selection of neighbouring buildings.



Highly efficient

These highly efficient systems remove the need for individual boilers or heaters in each building and can utilise local sources of low-carbon heat – which would otherwise go to waste.

Cost effective

Heat networks are one of the most cost-effective ways of providing secure, reliable, and affordable heat to consumers and help us end our reliance on fossil fuels while cutting customer bills.

The future of heat

In 2026, around three per cent of heat in the UK is provided by heat networks. It is estimated that heat networks will supply almost 20 per cent of heat by 2050 to enable the UK to reach net zero.

This will unlock more than £80 billion of investment and create around 35,000 jobs in the sector.

Support for heat networks

The government's heat networks team is enacting legislation and developing policies, regulations and providing financial stimulus to ensure that heat networks can contribute towards reaching net zero.

This includes improving consumer protection, creating the conditions to grow the market, lowering emissions, improving the performance of heat networks, and building up skills in the sector to encourage investment and jobs growth.

Heat network zoning

Heat network zoning is core to this growth and when launched, it will fundamentally transform the development of heat networks in towns and cities across England.

Certain types of buildings in zones may be required to connect within defined timescales.



Are you ready for Heat Network Zoning?

Heat Network Zoning will designate areas in English towns and cities where heat networks provide the lowest-cost, low-carbon heating option

Heat network zoning

Using new legislation under the Energy Act 2023, local communities will be empowered to accelerate the development of heat networks in their area.

Requirement to connect

Certain types of buildings and low-carbon heat sources can be required to connect to a network within a prescribed timeframe. By identifying, and ultimately connecting, the largest consumers of heat within a given area, a critical mass can be reached and provide the certainty needed to support long-term investment in heat networks.

These buildings could include:

- new buildings granted planning permission after a zone is designated
- non-domestic buildings with an average annual heat demand greater than 100MWh
- buildings that are already communally heated

Building owners will be able to apply for exemptions to the requirement, such as where it would not be cost-effective to connect the building to a heat network or where a low-carbon solution is already installed.

Homes within zones which are not already communally heated will not be required to connect.



Unlocking investment and creating jobs

Developing heat network zones across the country will require tens of billions of pounds of investment and has the potential to create tens of thousands of jobs.

Local authorities and heat network developers will work closely together to build new networks and deliver a low carbon heating revolution across the country.

What's next

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) has responded to its consultation on proposals for heat network zoning.

A selection of towns and cities are now developing the first heat network zones, ahead of heat network zoning legislation coming into force.

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