

Ingram, James

From: Steele, Barry [Barry.Steele@NIHE.GOV.UK]
Sent: 21 May 2013 16:28
To: Hutchinson, Peter
Cc: Rice, Noel
Subject: RE: Community Heating Schemes

Peter

There are currently around 9000 Housing Executive properties with electricity, mainly E7, as a primary source of heating. We also have 32 multi storey blocks of flats and all these have electricity as their main source of heating. There would also be electric heating systems in a number of Housing Associations.

We have recently looked at alternative means of heating for the multi storey blocks;

- Biomass – we carried out an investigation, in conjunction with Rural Generation, on the feasibility of replacing E7 heating in a block of flats with a community heating system based on wood chips. The conclusion was that there was no guarantee that the cost to tenants would be any cheaper than the cost of their current system. The end cost was inflated by the cost of providing the infrastructure. If the installation costs could be minimised in some way i.e. by the provision of a favourable RHI then it would make this option more feasible.
- Ecopod – this is a system whereby a prefabricated unit containing a measured number of gas boilers is installed on the roof of a block of flats and this services a community heating system to the flats below. The unit also contains solar thermal panels to provide free hot water to the system which saves on gas usage. Again this system would benefit from a favourable RHI to make it more competitive. This system was considered for a number of blocks but fell foul of our Procurement Unit.
- New generation electric – we have looked at a new generation of electric heating systems to replace E7. Glen Dimplex have recently launched the Quantum system which is an advanced type of E7 heating with slimline panels and smart controls. This system is currently being considered and legal opinions are being sought on whether we can install the system under current Procurement rules. We have also looked at a new wet electrical system which has been installed in a block of flats and is currently being assessed.

We have also carried out feasibility studies for community heating systems in rural areas for normal housing. Again this looked at biomass heating using wood chips. The results were similar to the multis in that there was no guarantee that the cost of heating to the tenant would be cheaper than oil. The underlying reason for this is again the cost of infrastructure. The cost of laying the pipework can be £1000 a metre and since we no longer own all the houses in an estate the cost of providing a system are not economic. Again the installation costs could be mitigated by a favourable RHI.

This is a flavour of what we have been looking at. We have considered other alternatives such as heating blocks of flats using waste heat from industrial sources but we always get back to the cost of the infrastructure.

Hope this is useful.

Kind regards

Barry

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From: Hutchinson, Peter [mailto:Peter.Hutchinson@detini.gov.uk]
Sent: 21 May 2013 09:36
To: Steele, Barry
Cc: Rice, Noel
Subject: Community Heating Schemes

Barry,

Hoping you might be able to help on a few queries regarding the energy requirements in social housing / housing executive properties.

We are carrying out some assessment on the potential costs of renewable district heating schemes as part of the second phase of the RHI in order to determine whether added incentives are required for these types of schemes. One area where switching to renewable district or community heating is very costly is where the existing building is using electricity heating, this is especially the case in blocks of flats.

I was wondering whether you would be able to advise on the following;

- The levels of electric heating (as a primary source) within social housing?
- Any instances where there are blocks of flats using electric heating?

In addition, would you be able to advise whether there have been any consideration by NIHE regarding the use of community heating rather than individual boilers? I would expect this to be limited to off-gas areas where there are 10+ houses?

Thanks in advance – happy to discuss.

Regards,

Peter

Peter Hutchinson

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