

# Comment

## **The Future Homes Standard Consultation closes on 6 March 2024 – there is still time to have your say.**

However, many in the industry feel that no matter what you might contribute, not a lot will change when it comes to seeing new improved windows and doors as vital in conserving energy and making UK homes warmer and cheaper to run.

Required U-values have come down as part of recent updates to the building regulations, yet the Future Homes Standard was expected to require them to come down even further. There was an expectation that triple glazing would be pushed to become the norm.

However, the direction this government wants to go in can be seen in the now named 'Home Energy Model Future Homes Standard Assessment' consultation document (which was released on 13 December 2023). It has 36,000 words which major on cheaper energy via heat pumps and solar panels – not on insulation or windows or doors.

Most sensible people know that the way to save energy on the road to net zero is to take a fabric first approach to our building stock especially new and existing homes.

We also know that if you encourage the use of heat pumps instead of conventional gas boilers the take-up will be slow no matter what grants are on offer and those that do install them, will still see their energy float out through the walls and their existing (if they are relatively old) windows. If insulation and windows are upgraded after a heat pump is installed, the heat pump will have been over-specified as the installation was designed to operate to overcome the lack of insulation measures.

## **The government is going down a path that only idiots would follow.**

You would think that the heat pump boys either have a damn good lobbyist working in their corner – or someone in the Sunak clan has got some money invested in the technology.

## **Follow the money**

Not that long ago, the majority of homes had gas boilers that heated hot water in an insulated tank. Once the hot water was gone, it was gone until the boiler heated some more. Energy usage had a 'natural' limiter. Then we had the imposition of combi boilers that give us endless hot water...and endless energy consumption. Combi boilers were recommended to government by the gas companies. I used to think, either they had very good lobbyists or somebody in government was heavily invested in gas.

## **So long solar**

Solar panels were once a good investment because you could sell your not-used electricity back and use the profit to pay for your installation. Then the government killed the feed-in tariff and killed domestic solar panels in the process. You would almost think that the electricity companies had some influence – they may want to sell green power now but they certainly didn't want to acquire it from Mr & Mrs Jones when they had plenty of it to get rid of themselves.

And the reason they have so much of it is that UK offshore wind farms mostly produce more electricity than we can use. This is why, in my opinion, there is a commitment to electric cars – the government and the wind farmers don't know how to store (and thus bill for) all that electricity...unless of course, Mr & Mrs Jones buy 'storage' with four wheels attached. Electricity can be used to make hydrogen for cars while hydrogen boilers could run on the same gas grid we have now...and then there would be no need for heat pumps, no need for gas imported from Russia and lots of grant money to spend on things like insulation including upgraded windows and doors.

**Brian J. Shillibeer, Editor – [brian.shillibeer@profinder.eu](mailto:brian.shillibeer@profinder.eu)**

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## **Editor**

Brian Shillibeer

**E. [installer@profinder.eu](mailto:installer@profinder.eu)**

## **Editorial & Admin**

The Studio, 47 Hillside Avenue,  
Elstree & Borehamwood,  
Herts WD6 1HQ

Cathryn Ellis

**E. [cathryn.ellis@profinder.eu](mailto:cathryn.ellis@profinder.eu)**

## **Publisher**

John Roper

**E. [john.roper@profinder.eu](mailto:john.roper@profinder.eu)**

## **Advertisement**

### **Account Manager:**

Steve Anthony

T.07967 585475

**E. [steve.anthony@profinder.eu](mailto:steve.anthony@profinder.eu)**

## **Advertisement**

### **Account Manager:**

Mehreen Haroon-Ali

T.07932 243008

**E. [mehreen.haroon@profinder.eu](mailto:mehreen.haroon@profinder.eu)**

## **Advertisement**

### **Account Manager:**

Roy Winters

T.07900 168871

**E. [roy.winters@profinder.eu](mailto:roy.winters@profinder.eu)**

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