

Consumer messaging and protection sub-group meeting, 27 February 2013

	MGICG	Organisation	Name		
1	N	Bondpay (+ on behalf of Kinnell Group)	Nick	Egdell	NE
2	N	Chimera Insurance	Vince	Linnane	VL
3	N	Correlation Risk Partners Ltd	Iain	Bird	IB
4	Y	DECC	Paul	Rochester	PR
5	Y	DECC	Ali	Hawker	AH
6	Y	DECC	David	Jeans	DJ
7	Y	DECC	Alex	Jack	AJ
8	Y	DECC	Jacob	Andresen	JA
9	Y	EEPB	Luke	Smith	LS
10	Y	Energy Saving Trust	Ian	Cuthbert	IC
11	Y	Gemserv	Julie	Coombes	JC
12	Y	HETAS	Tina	Seymour	TS
13	Y	HHIC	Chris	Yates	CY
14	Y	Micropower Council	Thomas	Higgins	TH
15	Y	REAL	Ciaran	Burns	CB
16	Y	REIGA	Nigel	Poole	NP
17	N	Solar Trade Association	Leonie	Greene	LG
18	Y	Solar Trade Association	Paul	Barwell	PB

	MGICG	Apologies		
1	N	British Gas	Gavin	Baillie
2	Y	Consumer Focus	James	Court
3	Y	EEPB	Mark	Brown
4	Y	Gemserv	Kunal	Sharma
5	N	Which?	Simon	Osborn
6	N	YouGen	Cathy	Debenham

As a subgroup of the Microgeneration Government-Industry Contact Group (MGICG), the primary aim of this subgroup is to galvanise action toward appropriate industry led messaging and protection related outputs that align with the wider MGICG Action Plan. The notes hereon in are intentionally not a detailed account of exactly what was said, rather a log of areas covered. The full MGICG action plan distributed with these notes can be found here –

www.eepb.org.uk/uploads/microgen/MGICG_Action_Plan.pdf

1. Introduction

LS stood in as chair, following Mark Brown's apologies. LS outlined the background and purpose of the Microgeneration Government-Industry Contact Group (MGICG) and its Consumer Messaging and Protection Subgroup. The aim of the meeting is to help both the group members and DECC to gain an understanding of one another's activities relating to the consumers experience of Microgeneration and to provide an update on the progress that the group has made since its meeting on November 22nd.

2. DECC: Overview of related activity

DECC team willing and able to provide an overview of their studies in relation to consumers but are not currently at a stage where any of their findings can be published. Nevertheless, all agreed it was good for both parties for the two paths to meet in order to share the aims and objectives of their work and to identify areas of cross-over. The forthcoming Heat Policy paper (due end of March) will be when the first findings from the DECCs consumer insight analysis are published.

AH provided a comprehensive overview of a number of consumer centred studies that DECC are currently working on;

- **Consumer willingness to take up microgeneration technologies and their preferences**
 - 2900 home owners, representative of GB assessed
 - Choice experiment - validation of people's incentives and how are these valued
 - Sought to understand frequency of replacement
 - Will be published with the DECC Heat Policy Paper end of March
- **Smart heating controls research**
 - To understand the effect of control use on energy consumption
 - Research currently in the design phase, to commence early 2014
- **RHPP Phase 1 and 2 Studies**
 - Post installation questionnaires and 12 month in-use follow up studies are on-going
 - To test experience of the installation process, use of the equipment and other factors
 - Interim findings to be published late March 2013 and final write up expected June 2013.
- **Green Deal**
 - Lots of Green Deal specific research is occurring in parallel to the above. DECC is very much working with a 'whole house' view in mind and attempting to fill gaps to prevent specific technologies and options from being considered in isolation.

Open discussion was had about how the work of DECC is being largely used to inform policy development and to improve the overall consumer experience. This works well internally but presenting accepted messages direct to consumers is more challenging. What's more, when research findings are published as a standalone piece of research analysis, industry often inconsistently manipulates the findings for their own gain. IC said EST had similar experiences and that EST research is often misquoted.

All agreed that a key strength of the sub-group and its activities is that the group offers a good policing forum and can provide a degree of control regarding the communication of messages and ensure overall consistency. For example, the group can control the updates of a centrally hosted suite of consumer guidance chapters.

3. Communication Microgeneration: Update on Progress so far

IC provided a presentation to update all members of the group and DECC on what ideas the group has developed thus far. The full set of presentation slides may be accessed here - www.eepb.org.uk/uploads/microgen/2013-02-27_MGICG_Consumer_Messaging_Presentation.pdf

Discussion points included;

- The guide proposed in the slides would provide a single voice from the industry
- By acting as a group, there are a considerable number of dissemination means and this will be capitalised upon by providing supporting documentation for advice providers and for installers
- There is a need to better define the target audience in order to help shape the overall format and content of the guide - too broad and the content will meet nobodies needs and too refined will limit the guides reach. The 'consideration' group identified by EST research concerns people with a very varied understanding of microgeneration so guide content will need to introduce basic terminology and concepts but also signpost to where more detailed information or help can be found.
- A well-defined target audience will help inform the dissemination strategy for the guidance - e.g. via installers, existing advice provider websites, the EST advice line, local authorities and Government.
- Format of the guide. There was a consensus that the guide and the proposed chapters will form a lengthy document and therefore innovative provisions should be made to ensure the right information can be easily found and that all content can be simplistically navigated. One idea is that a website could host a short form which requires users to define their circumstances in order to help ensure they are directed to the right material. This would also help monitor who it is using the guide.
- Simple segmentation of the guide could comprise 'Heat' and 'Power'.
- An alternative to a suite of chapters or a single PDF document could be a neutral website of tabs, content, diagrams and links.
- Hosting of the guide. All agreed that it is critical for the guide to be centrally managed and continually updated/maintained. To allow this, the general consensus is that the guide should be hosted in a central location and that all other trade body/installers/advice providers' websites could link directly to it or embed a 'viewing window' (to the document in to their site to prevent the need for the user to navigate from their page). The EST already receives a considerable amount of consumer traffic to its site and all agreed that EST could host the guide providing the group retained a means to suggest improvements and updated content. An alternative discussed was the new central .Gov website.
- A consideration with regards to hosting is ultimate ownership of the finished guide and its maintenance. Currently as an MGICG activity, EEPB acts as a secretariat to coordinate the sub-group and the conceptual development of the guide, but over the life of the guide this may change and become the remit of MCS or similar.
- With the proposed technology chapters, concern was raised about how consumers may be informed about using multiple technologies in combination. This could be overcome with a separate 'combining technologies' chapter that describes possible scenarios.

- A challenge with communicating consumer protection will be gaining alignment between RHI, FITs and Green Deal and what protection and recourse is offered by each of the schemes.
- An additional challenge with communicating consumer protection is cutting through the sheer complexity and providing concise information about the various complaints, warranties and insurance options. A balance must be struck between providing useful insight and signposts vs. comprehensive and exhaustive information.
- Sponsorship or endorsement of the guide should be illustrated in the form of a page of respective logos that sits at the front or back of the guide. All those that contribute content, lend their time to the development process or offer their help in endorsing and disseminating the guide will be given credit on the final guide.
- All agreed with aiming to launch the guidance with RHI - DECC see the guide as a good opportunity to knit together all key policies and a good way to make use of research
- A launch of the publication in May/June could tie in nicely with a consumer centred event such as the Grand Designs show or the Home and Renovation Show.
- DECC see no issues with attaining Greg Barker's support for the guide and support the inclusion of a ministerial foreword within the guide.

Other points made;

- [U-Switch Survey](#) aligns closely with the findings of the EST YouGov Scotland survey with regards to why people consider microgeneration (for financial reasons, to help the environment, to improve or add value to the property etc.).
- Many agreed that the EPC and GDA Reports can offer conflicting microgeneration information, cause confusion and present misleading and inaccurate or incomprehensive upgrade recommendations.
- DECC confirmed RHI payments can only go to the technology owner.
- STA informed the group of its new non-commercial initiative yourroof.info which aims to help better inform consumers of PV and SHW. STA also circulated a 'PV - Questions to Installers' sheet, a 'PV-Be Aware' sheet and an output report from their 'PV Return on Investment' calculator.

3. Next Steps

- LS, IC and PR to liaise and ensure that the proposed guidance progresses to the next stage.
- LS and IC to follow up on the points raised in the meeting and to engage in further discussion with the group and individuals regarding the structure and content of the guide.
- LS and IC to work toward ensuring a final draft of the guide is delivered and consulted upon ahead of May 2013.