

# DECC unveils plans to back district heating

ONE YEAR on from the launch of the UK's first heat strategy, the government has set out its first steps to "ensure affordable, secure, low carbon heating plays an important role in the nation's energy mix, now and in the years to come".

The plan unveiled this week looked at the potential to cut emissions from heat from across the entire UK economy and focused on a number of actions to spur on the move to low carbon heating alternatives.

Included within the government's action plan are a £9m package to help local authorities get heat network schemes up and running across the country with a new heat networks delivery unit to sit within the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) providing

expert advice; £1m for the cities of Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle, Sheffield and Nottingham to help them develop heat networks as well as 100 green apprenticeships to be funded primarily for young people in small scale renewable technologies.

Also contained within the action plan are a number of low carbon heat studies, including the first ever biomethane installation accredited under the renewable heat incentive in Poundbury, Dorset; Aspire Housing's work to install low carbon heating in the homes of 56 social tenants and the gas CHP plant which provides heat to the 72 storeys of the Shard in London - the tallest building in Western Europe.

Graham Meeks, director of industry body CHPA, said: "Together

with pioneering initiatives already underway in London and other cities, the measures announced [this week] could accelerate early investment of around £300m in new low carbon infrastructure, and provide the platform for an estimated £2bn of investment each year in the coming decades. With that will come tens of thousands of local jobs in engineering, contracting and operations."

According to the CHPA, a district heating scheme comprises a network of insulated pipes used to deliver heat from the point of generation, in the form of hot water or steam, to an end user. Heat networks can be supplied with heat from a diverse range of sources including waste to energy facilities, power stations and biomass boilers.

## Edinburgh food waste scheme grows

THE MAJORITY of Edinburgh residents are expected to have access to food waste recycling by this summer with the service being rolled out to the city's flats and tenements, according to Edinburgh City Council.

Although a kerbside food waste collection service has been available to residents with individual wheel bins, there has until now only been limited access to the service for residents in more high density forms of housing, continued the council.

"With food accounting for nearly a third of the waste being thrown out, residents in flats and tenements will be able to do their bit to reduce harmful greenhouse gases and reduce the millions of pounds that is spent by the council each year on sending waste to landfill," said a council spokesperson.

Letters explaining how the food collection service will work are being sent to each household, while secure kitchen caddies and large street containers will be delivered ward by ward between March and the end of May. The containers will be placed at existing bin points, either on the street or in bin stores.

The latest step in the food waste collection programme is taking place almost two years after a pilot was trialled in Edinburgh. It was then expanded to include low density properties last year.

Jim Orr at Edinburgh Council said: "Separating food waste from residual waste will make a huge difference to the amount being placed into bins and ending up in landfill.

"Last year this council spent over £13m on sending waste to landfill. This is money that would be far better



spent on improving local services," continued Orr.

"Of course, sticking to the reduce, reuse and recycle message will help individuals in Edinburgh to stop wasting food."

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### Industry opinion

## Why small scale AD has an important role to play

Sandra Sassow, CEO at SEaB Energy, contends that local, small- and micro-scale anaerobic digestion can all play a crucial role in the UK's waste and resource management strategy.



IN THEIR respective zero waste policies, both the Welsh and Scottish devolved administrations have proclaimed the benefits of adopting anaerobic digestion to process food, and other organic, waste streams as the most environmentally sound solution.

With the introduction of feed-in tariffs and a range of other financial incentives, outlined in the recently published anaerobic digestion strategy and action plan, the UK government has opened up new opportunities for AD facilities, both large and small.

Growth in AD in the UK has been slow though in comparison to many other mainland European countries.

Uncertain future pricing, restrictive planning permission and multiple stakeholders, resulting in complex financing and contract negotiations, have all contributed to this market's slow development.

The recently announced localism bill, which devolves greater powers to councils and neighbourhoods and gives local communities more control over planning decisions, might also play a part.

AD delivers on many levels but we need to broaden our outlook on how the technology can best be applied. In this January's *Pollution Engineering* publication, respected experts Roy Bigham and Josh Foster highlighted "pre-packaged anaerobic digesters" in their list of ten top clean technologies for 2013.

Indeed, numerous research studies have demonstrated that there is a significant market requirement for small- and micro- scale AD facilities (generally those with an output capacity of 250kWe and below).

Their comparatively low build and running costs, together with simple maintenance and operating requirements, provide a quicker return on investment and an attractive financial proposition.

In processing the waste on the site on which it is first produced, small- and micro- scale AD assigns complete management control to the waste producer, thereby removing any exposure to unpredictable market forces and rising waste collection and disposal costs.

AD at source removes the need to transport waste from one location to another which, in the current market, can involve journeys of considerable distance, burning our dwindling resource of fossil fuels and polluting our atmosphere with harmful greenhouse gas emissions.

Furthermore, where the liquid and solid fertiliser and soil enrichment digestates can also be used on the same site, there is no requirement to transport the outputs of the process either, resulting in a perfect example of self-sustainability and closed loop recycling.

AD in this format is scalable across a broad range of waste processing capacities and can be built quickly to provide an immediate, turn-key solution with minimal impact on infrastructure and surroundings.

- SEaB Energy is a producer of compact turnkey AD systems



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