

## EQUANS pioneers a diversity charter for the Heat Network Industry

3 years ago



EQUANS, part of the ENGIE Group, has led the introduction of a diversity and inclusion charter for the Heat Networks Industry Council (HeatNIC); supporting growth in the sector as it strives for low carbon heating solutions.

The HeatNIC comprises heat network operators and energy firms that deliver heat to almost 500,000 UK customers as an alternative from gas-boiler heating.

The new diversity and inclusion charter, which was led by EQUANS, sets out HeatNIC's ambition to promote diverse, inclusive workplaces through proactive action and will be an essential step in ensuring the successful and fast-paced growth of the sector.

District heating currently accounts for around 2% of all heat generated in the UK. However, the Government's Heat and Buildings Strategy sets out the government's intention to scale up low-carbon heat networks and create a step-change in low-carbon heat network market growth. To meet this unprecedented growth, as many as 35,000 new direct jobs in the sector will need to be created by 2050.

This growth of low carbon heat networks and the transition to net zero heating will require a skilled workforce, specialised in the installation, operation and maintenance of low carbon heat generation, systems, and networks. But in addition to the technical work force, it will need expertise in a wide range of areas including commercial, legal, communications and customer service.

Charlotte Large, Strategy, Policy and Innovation Director for EQUANS UK & Ireland, and chair of the HeatNIC Jobs & Skills working group, said: *"If we are to diversify how we heat our homes and buildings, then we must diversify our industry. It is critical that we recognise bringing more diversity and a wider*

*range of people with different backgrounds, skills, and perspectives into the industry, makes us more creative, more efficient, and will ultimately help us to be successful in delivering the net zero transition.*

*“The Heat Networks Industry Council members have committed to the terms of the charter and are actively working to ensure an inclusive and diverse workforce. We hope that the wider sector will join us in this commitment.”*

Michael Lewis, CEO of E.ON UK and Co-Chair of HeatNIC, said: *“As co-chair of HeatNIC I am delighted to see the members make this commitment to diversity and inclusion through the charter. The heat sector is fundamental to meeting the UK’s Net Zero ambitions with 35,000 new jobs expected to be created in the industry. It is critical that a diverse and inclusive workforce is at the heart of decarbonising heat in the UK and facilitating the growth of the industry.*

*“The seven commitments in the charter are an excellent way for members to embed, monitor and promote diversity and inclusion at all levels in their organisation and I congratulate the members for demonstrating leadership in this area.”*

The D&I charter will be adopted by signatory companies, which will have to honour seven commitments, comprising:

- Create an inclusive environment in our workplaces
  - Achieve best practice in recruitment, retention, and career progression practices
  - Actively promote diverse representation at events
  - Collect data and monitor their organisation’s progress
  - Lead by example and support the development of good diversity practice by collecting and sharing examples of practical activities that contribute to progress with other signatories
  - Develop and adopt future protocols that support practical implementation of the aims of the charter
- 
- Commit to senior leadership responsibility for Diversity & Inclusion commitments and initiatives

The Heat Network Industry Council is also launching, alongside the D&I charter, a workforce survey to collect information on the makeup of the heat networks workforce, skills and training gaps and D&I statics, strategies, and commitment. Companies that collect and monitor in depth detailed data on their workforce are more likely to act on their findings.

The independent survey is being undertaken in partnership with the ADE, BEIS and with support of the National Skills Academy for rail.