

BESA urges Shapps to clarify energy policy

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The [Building Engineering Services Association](#) (BESA) has welcomed the creation of a new government department dedicated to delivering energy security and net zero but urged its Secretary of State Grant Shapps to accelerate investment in energy efficiency.

Shapps was appointed to lead the new department as part of Rishi Sunak's first ministerial reshuffle, which saw the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) split into three departments.

The Prime Minister said the new Department for Energy Security and Net Zero would be tasked with "securing our long-term energy supply, bringing down bills and halving inflation".

The government is also legally required to update its Net Zero Strategy by the end of March and BESA believes it should take the opportunity to clarify where it stands on energy efficiency in the built environment.

"Putting net zero and energy security together makes sense," said BESA's technical director Graeme Fox. "They go hand-in-hand and one of the quickest ways to achieve both is to step up efforts to improve the energy performance of the built environment through a national programme of building retrofits.

"Investing in energy efficiency measures, scaling up the roll-out of heat pumps by bringing forward the promised funding, and driving investment in training to plug our green skills gap can all be done at speed," he said.

Ambition

The Association urged the government to bring forward the £6bn promised by the Chancellor Jeremy Hunt from 2025 to help building owners cut energy use by 15% compared with current levels. It also said the

government would have to increase heat pump subsidies to achieve its long-stated ambition of growing the market to 600,000 installations a year by 2028.

“These are quick wins that could get our lagging net zero programme back on track, improve energy security and start cutting people’s bills,” said Fox. “We are miles away from the 600,000 heat pumps a year target, but we could get there with some serious and focused support.”

Speaking at last week’s BESA President’s Lunch, broadcaster Tom Swarbrick – who was political adviser to Theresa May during her time as Prime Minister – said the government made a legally binding commitment to deliver net zero by 2050 “with absolutely no plan for how it would be delivered”.

He said May saw it as a fitting legacy from her time in office “but nobody had any idea how to do it”.

Fox also pointed out that it was May who scrapped the Department of Energy and Climate Change in 2016 and said that the time since had been marked by a lack of direction on energy policy.

The Association, therefore, urged Shapps to move quickly to clarify how the government expected to deliver its legal commitments and to “hit the ground running by backing energy efficiency”.

“This must be more than a political gesture. It is an opportunity to bring real focus to strategies that the government already knows about, and which can dramatically reduce our dependence on fossil fuels for heating and cooling in buildings – so bringing both energy security and net zero closer,” said Fox.