

Groundbreaking heat network achieves consumer protection scheme registration

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Heat Trust, the consumer champion for people living on communal and district heat networks, has successfully registered its first networked heat pump site under its consumer protection scheme.

The pioneering low-carbon heat network, operated by Kensa Utilities, uses underground boreholes and pipes to harness stored solar energy from the ground and feed it to a small ground-source heat pump in each home. This heat pump upgrades the heat to warm homes and heat water.

After a successful pilot scheme proving the effectiveness of the infrastructure, Kensa Utilities hopes that its innovative system will eventually form an alternative to the UK's existing gas network and contribute significantly to decarbonisation efforts.

Kensa's network is the first of its type to register with Heat Trust and paves the way for similar networks to join the consumer-protection scheme, which is setting the foundations for future statutory Ofgem regulation of the heat networks sector.

Similar to the regulations set for gas and electricity suppliers, Heat Trust's scheme rules set minimum standards to ensure that heat network customers are guaranteed satisfactory service and protections by their heat suppliers. This includes fair treatment, support for vulnerable customers, transparent billing and communications, and access to the Energy Ombudsman if things go wrong.

With the UK government backing heat networks as a sustainable energy solution, and with formal regulation on the horizon, registration with Heat Trust not only protects consumers but helps heat network suppliers get regulation-ready.

Stephen Knight, Managing Director of Heat Trust said: “The registration of the first ground-loop type heat network with Heat Trust is a significant milestone and signals wider adoption of vital consumer protections and service standards, creating a more trusted sector.

“Government research estimates that by 2050, 20% of the UK’s heat demand will be met by heat networks. As heat networks of this type become more widespread, Heat Trust registration ensures that customers remain front and centre in the industry’s journey to more sustainable heating sources.”

Wouter Thijssen, Managing Director of [Kensa Utilities](#) added: “It is fantastic to be the first networked heat pump project registered with the Heat Trust with our Heat the Streets project.

“Achieving registration of this innovative heat network with Heat Trust is a big step forward in demonstrating our commitment to delivering reliable and efficient heating infrastructure that customers can depend on.

“This landmark project provides a blueprint for the decarbonisation of heating in the UK. Our model replicates the gas network with a pipe in the ground, a flat rate standing charge to consumers and a little white box in the house.

“Consumer protections and high service standards are crucial in the effective transition towards full implementation of these networks, so we are excited to lead the way for other networks to follow suit in becoming Heat Trust registered.”

Heat Trust is committed to registering more networks to its scheme during the lead-up to regulation, with the aim of ensuring consumer confidence in heat networks as an effective source of sustainable heating.