

UK plumbing and hard FM market set to reach £32.5bn by 2029 as sector moves to the forefront of decarbonisation

4 hours ago



New research from Barbour ABI has valued the UK plumbing and hard facilities management contractors market at more than £27 billion in 2024, with forecasts suggesting it will grow to £32.5 billion by 2029. The findings highlight the increasingly critical role played by plumbing contractors and hard FM providers as the UK accelerates efforts to decarbonise its ageing building stock.

With more than 80 per cent of the buildings expected to be in use in 2050 already built, retrofitting has become a national priority in the journey towards net zero. While public attention often focuses on insulation and heat pumps, the research points to plumbing and hard FM contractors as a less visible but essential force enabling large-scale retrofit across both residential and non-residential buildings.

Barbour ABI identifies several factors driving growth across the sector. These include government incentives such as the Boiler Upgrade Scheme and the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, the rise of smart buildings and digital plumbing technologies, and increased investment in infrastructure and non-residential assets such as data centres, which underpin the UK's artificial intelligence ambitions. There is also sustained pressure to improve the efficiency of public buildings, housing stock and commercial premises.

The research notes that smart homes are becoming increasingly common in urban areas, creating growing demand for integrated plumbing and FM systems that meet expectations around sustainability, performance and convenience.

Despite the growth outlook, the sector faces significant challenges. Labour shortages remain acute, with many plumbing contractors operating as small businesses or sole traders and a large proportion approaching retirement age. This is creating opportunities for new market entrants and driving demand for apprenticeships and upskilling initiatives.

At the same time, hard FM providers are being asked to deliver more integrated and technologically advanced services. Clients are increasingly seeking bundled solutions that span multiple building systems, including energy management, waste handling and grounds maintenance. This shift is accelerating innovation and encouraging closer strategic partnerships across the supply chain.

Barbour ABI forecasts market growth of 16 per cent by 2029, positioning plumbing and hard FM contractors as a strategic enabler of the UK's net zero ambitions rather than a purely maintenance-led function. The report suggests that suppliers, facilities managers, technology developers and investors should pay close attention to the sector as retrofit programmes gather pace.

Anne Williams, Editor of the report, said:

"This report offers a granular assessment of the UK plumbing and hard FM market at a time when policy, regulation and infrastructure investment are reshaping demand profiles across the built environment. By focusing on the structural drivers behind sector growth – from carbon mitigation requirements to smart asset management and lifecycle performance – the report supports informed strategic planning for both market entrants and incumbent operators."

The Plumbing and Hard FM Contractors Market Report by Barbour ABI provides detailed market sizing, growth forecasts and segmentation between domestic plumbing contractors and hard FM service providers. Drawing on primary and secondary research, it examines the impact of economic pressures, regulatory change, technological innovation and regional construction output on market performance.

Barbour ABI said the report is designed to support organisations navigating the evolving market with clear insight into trends, opportunities and future demand.