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GROWING USE OF DISTRICT HEATING SYSTEMS MAKES GOOD GUIDANCE ESSENTIAL

With the growing trend for district heating systems in the UK, the BPF Pipes Group has launched useful new guidance to promote best practice among design consultants, specifiers and installers.

The district heating concept is a relatively new one in the UK, comprising one or more central heat sources instead of individual boilers. By pumping hot water or steam through a network of pre-insulated underground pipes it delivers heat from the point of energy generation to the end user. Generating heat in one central plant can be more economical than production in multiple smaller ones (such as individual households), which is one of the reasons why district heating is growing in popularity in the UK.

Like all systems using pressurised pipes, good design and installation ensures safety and maximises the long-term performance of such systems. The BPF Pipes Group is therefore keen to encourage best practice through the use of correct procedures, and the guidance covers key aspects, such as design codes, distribution pipework, British and European Standards and designing, installing and commissioning district heating systems using polymer pipes.

Polymer pipes from BPF Pipes Group members are already well proven for this type of application, offering a number of advantages over traditional materials like steel, and combining simple, cost-effective and secure long-term installation with good performance. They are typically supplied in 300-metre+ coil lengths, which minimises the number of joints required and also enables specialist installation techniques such as ploughing in, pulling through and horizontal directional drilling. The flexibility of polymer pipes is also an advantage, as they can be routed around other services and obstacles without requiring additional joints and can accommodate ground movement in service.

Coiled polymer pipe systems are already familiar to installers in the UK, as the safety requirements and best practice techniques for transport, storage and site handling are similar to those for water pipe systems.

Franz Huelle is chair of the BPF Pipes Group's drafting panel and is also technical manager—building technologies at Rehau. He commented: “District heating systems can significantly reduce carbon emissions through using low carbon and renewable heat sources and this guidance on the use of polymer pipes is intended as a clear reference for designers and installers. Our members additionally provide technical information and support to encourage best practice across the industry.”

The guidance is available at <https://www.bfppipesgroup.com/support-downloads/guidance-notes/>

A list of BPF Pipes Group members can be found at <https://bfppipesgroup.com/application-groups/ag2-building-services/>

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PHOTO CAPTION: District heating systems are growing in use in the UK

Contacts

Media information:

Bridget Summers, Footprint PR, 01723 447424, bridget@footprintpr.org.uk

BPF Pipes Group:

Caroline Ayres, BPF Pipes Group, 01932 343409, carolinea@plasticpipesgroup.com

About the BPF Pipes Group

Part of the British Plastics Federation, the BPF Pipes Group is a trade association representing manufacturers and material suppliers of plastic piping systems across the UK. Committed to sustainable construction, its aims are to provide a forum for the exchange of technical expertise between member companies and to promote the importance of plastic as a pipework material, for the full spectrum of above and below ground, pressure and non-pressure applications. It also plays a key role in initiating and disseminating research and informing and influencing the standards bodies pertaining to plastic pipe systems. It works closely with the BPF and TEPPFA, the European Plastic Pipes and Fittings Association.