

Case Study

Furlong Innovations

Introduction

Many homes across the UK have modern combi-boilers, which come with the promise of instant hot water on demand. Unfortunately, they often fail to live up to this 'instant' promise. This results in a great deal of waste water, as taps are run down the drain until the water is hot. Energy is also wasted in heating this waste water up to the point where the flow reaches the desired temperature for use.

The project

Furlong Innovations have addressed this problem by creating the CombiSave, a small, thermostatic valve device that measures the temperature of water leaving the boiler, and controls the flow to optimise the warm-up period. Once the water in the boiler reaches the set operating temperature, CombiSave releases it. This means that the water flow is slowed to a level that allows the boiler to heat water much more rapidly.

CombiSave is an easily fitted green product that delivers a genuine solution for the end user, who gets quicker hot water and less waste. Government backed independent tests confirm possible savings (based on a household of 4) of 54,000 litres of water, 2,400 kW of gas and 0.5 tonnes of carbon per year.

Taking the wider view, environmental savings are significant: CombiSaves fitted in 50,000 homes could save a whole reservoir of water in a year, associated treatment costs, plus 12,500 tonnes of CO₂.

How the Energy Innovation Centre Helped

Like many innovators, the team at Furlong also had their regular work to do, and in the first instance, the Energy Innovation Centre was simply used as a quiet place to work, away from the distractions of their business.

However, as the project developed, the Centre were able to play an active role in guiding and supporting Furlong through the complex process of protecting their idea, planning their business, testing their product and even finding a manufacturer.

"The Energy Innovation Centre made sure we were protected with patents and intellectual property rights from the start - things we might never have thought of," explains Lisa Thomson of Furlong. "They didn't just tell us what to do, they helped us to do it. Their experience was invaluable and yet delivered in such a friendly, helpful way. I never felt like I was asking a stupid question."

The Energy Innovation Centre also used their contacts to put Furlong in touch with other agencies that could offer their project support, including EnviroLink and Lancaster University.

From a quiet place to work on their raw idea, Furlong used the Centre to fully progress their innovation through every stage, launching their product onto the market in December 2010 and picking up an Energy Innovation Award along the way.

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