

Peers to vote on law that could see people forced on to hydrogen boilers

Peers are set to vote on a law that would give gas distribution networks (GDNs) the power to force people on to hydrogen boilers without their consent.

The Energy Bill, which is due to appear in the House of Lords on Tuesday, grants GDNs the same powers of entry used to force-fit prepayment meters and the [Government](#) has been accused of being “unable to learn its own lessons”.

Also proposed is a hydrogen levy which could see consumers paying more on their energy bills from 2025 to fund hydrogen production, although the Government said policy developments on the levy are still ongoing.

Some homeowners in [Whitby](#), [Ellesmere Port](#), and [Redcar, Teesside](#), where hydrogen trials have been proposed, said they do not want hydrogen and are concerned it is less safe, less energy efficient and more expensive than gas or electric heat pumps.

Forcing households on to hydrogen heating is scarily reminiscent of some of the dynamics in the recent prepayment meter scandal, which was rightly deemed an outrage

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Up to 2,000 homes in each area are subject to the proposed trial, which Baroness Worthington has called “villages of the damned”.

Cadent, the GDN for Whitby, and Northern Gas Networks, the GDN for Redcar, are submitting rival bids this month to test the feasibility of a home-heating grid run without natural gas.

If successful, a trial will begin in 2025 and last two years with funding supplied by energy regulator Ofgem.

Under the proposed new legislation, GDNs will have the right to enter anyone’s home for any reason connected to the trial if they live within the marked zone.

The Government said no-one will be forced to use hydrogen and anticipates that GDNs would only use powers of entry as a last resort “and only once all other attempts to contact property owners and reach an agreement are exhausted”.

A Department for Energy Security and Net Zero spokesperson said: “The hydrogen heating village trial will deliver essential evidence to inform the Government’s strategic decisions in 2026 on the role of hydrogen in decarbonising heat.

“No trials will take place without strong local support. This will be a critical factor in the final selection of the trial location, and the rights of consumers will be protected before, during and after the trial.”

Northern Gas Networks said it would have to enter someone’s home if they refused to be taken off gas because it would stop

the trial from going ahead safely.

We will work with each trial participant to identify what works for them and their home or business, with a choice between hydrogen and electricity

Cadent said it would only enter someone's home to ensure their safety using powers already possessed by gas companies to protect people from leaks.

Both GDNs said electrical alternatives are available to those who do not want hydrogen boilers.

Sarah Biermann Becker, senior investigator at Global Witness, said: "Forcing households on to hydrogen heating is scarily reminiscent of some of the dynamics in the recent prepayment meter scandal, which was rightly deemed an outrage.

"And by adding further costs on to already unaffordable bills, from which energy companies stand to benefit, it is clear that this is a Government totally unable to learn its own lessons.

"Hydrogen heating will be expensive, dangerous, and bad for the climate."

For the hydrogen trials to be safe, all the appliances and pipes in every home in the trial area would either have to be changed to run on hydrogen or be disconnected from the gas grid

A spokesperson from Northern Gas Networks said: "The residents of Redcar are our priority. This is a Government-led project to demonstrate the role gas networks can play in decarbonising home heating.

"We will work with each trial participant to identify what works for them and their home or business, with a choice between hydrogen and electricity."

A Cadent spokesperson added: "We continue to proactively

engage with the residents of Whitby, listening to the broad church of opinions that come from right across the community and this feedback will be reflected in the submission we make to Government.

“As we collectively work towards the decarbonisation of heating we believe that a range of technologies and a diverse choice of energy sources will be required, and these must be delivered through a collective effort, in a way that works for customers and their needs.”

Professor David Cebon, from the University of Cambridge and the Hydrogen Science Coalition, said: “The Government’s own safety assessment stated that it isn’t safe to pipe hydrogen into homes without prior safety checks and changes to the pipework.

“So, for the hydrogen trials to be safe, all the appliances and pipes in every home in the trial area would either have to be changed to run on hydrogen or be disconnected from the gas grid.

“If any household refused to collaborate, then in theory the current draft of the Energy Bill gives gas companies the right to forcibly enter their homes.”