

District Heating

Washington area



Almost 1,019 households receive their heating and hot water from a district heating system in the Oxclose, Albany and Fatfield areas. As a resident, or a prospective new resident, of a property that has a district heating system, we understand that you may have many questions about how the system works as it differs from other conventional standalone heating systems.

This leaflet contains important information that will help and support you with the heating and hot water in your home.

What is district heating?

District heating is the supply of heat and/or hot water from one source to a group of buildings. In this case, your district heating system consists of a centralised boiler plant that delivers heat and hot water on demand to your home.

Households served by the district heating system in Washington are unlikely to have a gas supply to their homes and instead receive heating and hot water from pipes leading from a nearby plant room. To ensure that each household connected to the system only pays for the energy it consumes, the supply is automatically metered and connected to a prepayment meter.

What service will I receive?

Gentoo work closely with Switch2 and Richard Irvin Energy Solutions who have been appointed as the service providers. They manage and maintain the district heating system. Both companies provide a 24 hour helpline and maintenance programme that is available 365 days a year.

I have just moved in, how do I get started?

You will need to contact Switch2 on **0333 321 2010** to register the heating in your name. Following this, one of their engineers will visit the property to set up the supply and explain how it works.

If you are a Gentoo customer, this will be arranged on your behalf by the Gentoo team.

If you do not receive your welcome pack and are new to Switch2, you can call them on **0333 321 2010** or email **myaccount@switch2.co.uk**.

My heating or hot water doesn't work, what do I do?

If you have credit on your meter but no heating or hot water, a problem with the radiators or a leak to the system, you should:

- Contact Richard Irvin Energy Solutions on **0191 704 2501**.
- Select **option 1** for heating issues.

If you are calling out of the normal working hours (8am – 4.30pm, Monday to Friday) you will need to **press 0** and speak to an out-of-hours operator.

If you have a problem with your pre-payment meter, top-up payment card or the point of sale outlets, you should contact Switch2 on **0333 321 2010**.

For more information about Switch2, visit www.switch2.co.uk.

How can I save money in the winter?

Like any central heating system, the cost of paying for your heating rises in the colder months and reduces in the warmer months.

Rather than topping up less in the summer and more in the winter, Gentoo recommend that you build up some credit during the summer to help you through the winter months.

How do I pay?

Heating is paid for as part of a 'pay as you go' system. This means that you will not receive a bill.

There are two different types of meter. Depending on which one you have in your home you can pay in different ways. If you have a G3 or G4 meter, you can pay for your heating by topping up a smart card supplied by Switch2. You can top up at various outlets across the Washington area. These have been listed below:

- Oxclose convenience store - Oxclose Village Centre.
- Nicholson's Garage - Blue House Lane, Concord (open 24 hours, 7 days per week).

If you have a newer G6 smart meter you top up your smart card at any PayPoint outlet (**www.paypoint.com**), by visiting **www.switch2.co.uk** or by downloading the Switch2 Quickpay app. You can also access Quickpay and top up by visiting **www.quickpay.switch2.co.uk**.

If you lose your payment card Switch2 will charge you a £5.00 administration fee for a replacement.

How is the tariff calculated?

Gentoo purchase gas to fuel the plant room boilers at a bulk commercial rate and customers who purchase heating credits effectively pay Gentoo back for the gas that has already been purchased. There are associated charges with the maintenance of the boilers, pipework and metering that are also accounted for and included in the unit charge.

Energy companies also include maintenance charges in their unit cost along with Government implemented charges for the Energy Company Obligation (ECO). Gentoo keep costs to a minimum and any price increases are carefully considered. There has not been an increase in the tariff since April 2013 whereas energy companies tariffs rise on a regular basis.

Benefits of communal heating

There are many advantages of being part of a district heating system. They include:

- **More responsive** - Customers are part of a 24 hour monitoring and maintenance programme which can offer great peace of mind.
- **Back up boilers** - In a communal plant room back up boilers can work to maintain heating and hot water to homes. If one boiler fails the second one will ignite automatically so service isn't interrupted.
- **No bills** - As the Washington system is 'pay as you go' customers will not have to worry about quarterly bills.
- **System upgrade** - Gentoo has started to upgrade plant rooms throughout Washington. Some plant rooms have already had an upgrade of the machinery and are benefiting from new more efficient boilers.
- **Maintenance** - If you own your home, you don't need to buy or service a boiler, this will be taken care of by your heating supplier.

Frequently asked questions

Can I change my energy supplier?

You cannot change energy supplier if you are a district heating customer as Gentoo purchase your gas in bulk and distribute it to your home. Gentoo regularly check tariff deals to ensure that you get the best value for money.

What do I do if I have a disability or special need?

You can authorise a friend or family member to manage your account, you just need to let Switch2 know. They will also make sure that your needs are met in the case of an emergency.

Please contact them or log your special request via the vulnerability section on **www.my.switch2.co.uk**.

Why can't I pay by direct debit?

Providing a direct debit service would occur running costs. We understand the importance of keeping costs low and by retaining the current 'pay as you go' system we can continue to keep our rates as low as possible. The 'pay as you go' system allows you to only pay for what you use so you don't need to worry about incurring large bills.

I am not happy with the service, what do I do?

Gentoo, Switch2 and Richard Irvin Energy Solutions are committed to providing excellent customer service. If you are not happy and you haven't been able to resolve your issues with Switch2 or Richard Irvin Energy Solutions, please contact Clare McInroy, Neighbourhood Coordinator at Gentoo on 0191 525 6122.

Important information

Tampering with the heating system

It is very important that you do not tamper the system.

This includes the heating controls, meter, pipe-work and radiators. If, for example, you need to move a radiator (e.g. for decorating), you must contact your Neighbourhood Coordinator who will assist with your request. Please note that any remedial work required due to tampering with the system, may result in you being charged.

Communal heating fraud

Gentoo, Switch2 and Richard Irvin Energy Solutions are working together to eliminate the theft of gas from the district heating system. Gentoo will be notified of customers or service users that have tampered with the heating controls and meters within their home to fraudulently obtain free heating and hot water.

As it is a criminal offence, Gentoo will contact Northumbria Police and legal action will be taken. In addition, any customers found to have tampered with the system will risk serious action that could put their tenancy at risk.

If you or someone you know would like this information in large print, on CD or in Braille then please contact us.

If you or someone you know would like this information in another language, then please contact us. Interpretation services are available.

যদি আপনি বা আপনার জানা-শোনা কেউ এই তথ্য অন্য কোন ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করুন। দোভাষী পরিষেবা পাওয়া যাচ্ছে।
(Bengali)

如果您或您認識的人希望此信息是其它語言，請與我們聯繫。口譯服務可提供。
(Cantonese)

اگر شما و یا شخص دیگری که شما میشناسید میل هستید این اطلاعات را به زبان دیگری دریافت نمائید، لطفاً با ما تماس حاصل کنید. خدمات ترجمه موجود می باشد.
(Farsi)

如果您或您认识的人想要本信息以另外一种语言版本提供，那么就请与我们取得联系。我们还同时提供口译类服务。
(Mandarin)

Jeśli Państwo, lub jakaś osoba, którą Państwo znają, chcieliby otrzymać te informacje w innym języku, proszę się z nami skontaktować.
Dostępne są także usługi tłumacza ustnego.
(Polish)

For further information contact your local office:

Athenaeum: 0191 525 5001

Havelock: 0191 525 5002

Southwick: 0191 525 5003

Silksworth: 0191 525 5004

Houghton: 0191 525 5005

Washington: 0191 525 5006

www.gentooogroup.com

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