

AMDEA

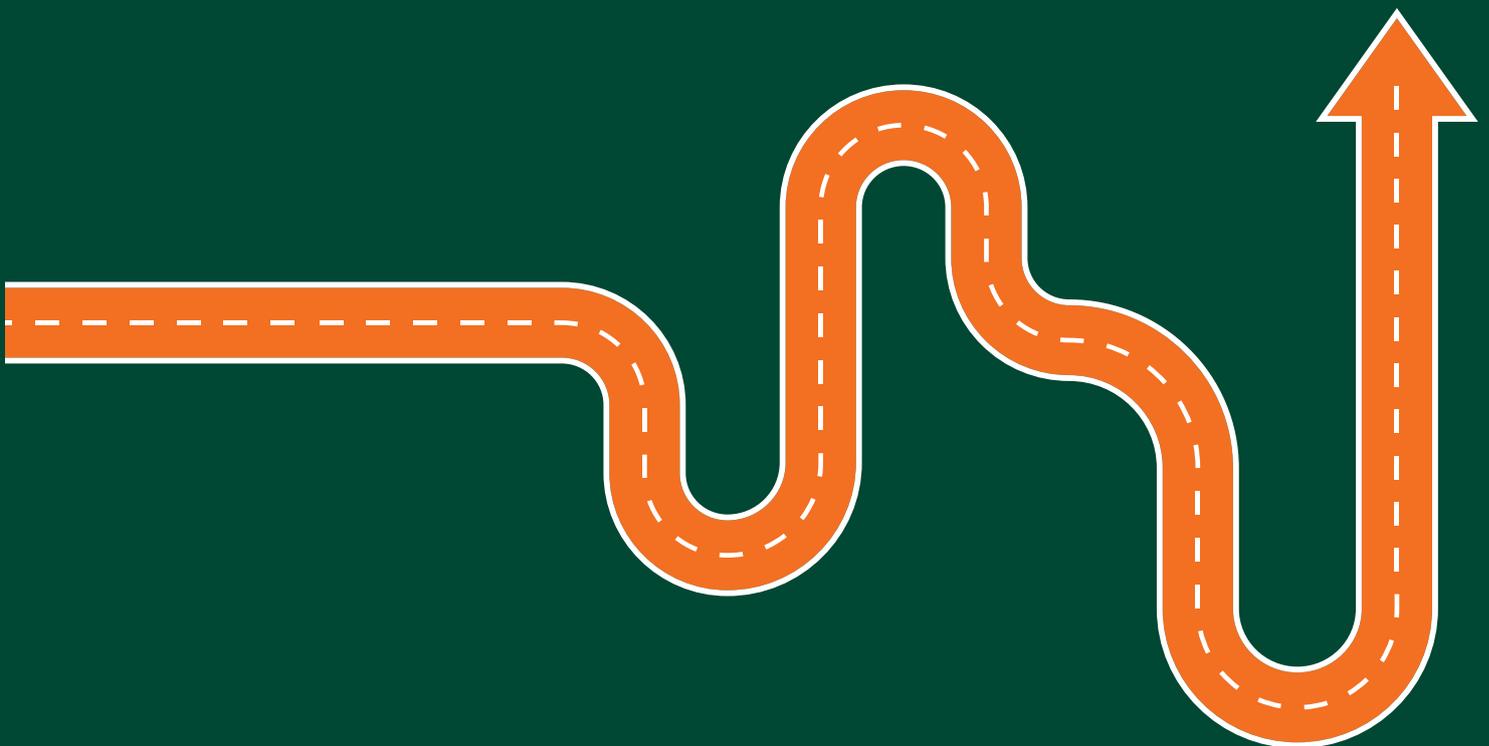
The Association of Manufacturers
of Domestic Appliances



AMDEA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Roadmap to a Sustainable Appliance Future

in partnership with City St George's
University of London





AMDEA Annual Conference May 2025

The Roadmap to a Sustainable Appliance Future

In partnership with City St George's University of London

Two key themes were explored across two panel discussion sessions:

1. How can we make appliances' 'cradle to grave' more sustainable, and support the circular economy?
2. How will new technologies enable greater sustainability?

Welcome and introduction

PROFESSOR RAJKUMAR ROY, Executive Dean, School of Science and Technology, City St George's University of London



The conference kicked off with a welcome from Professor Rajkumar Roy, who explained how the university has been working with AMDEA on its annual conference for several years – he said he was delighted to see how the event has grown, with increased attendance this year.

“Sustainability is a buzzword – it’s everywhere”, said Professor Roy, adding: “I hope today’s discussions bring out some of the challenges in achieving sustainable home appliances or sustainable appliance design, repair, maintenance, and disposal. “The whole lifecycle aspect of sustainability is important – often we don’t do enough on that.”

Maintenance and repair

“I’ve also looked at research to see how we can make machines self-repairing – imagine in the future how some aspects of a machine could be repaired by itself,” he said.

“I try to learn from how biology works – our bodies are regenerating all the time. Our organs

recreate themselves if they are damaged – especially the liver, which can recover. We want to study those biological phenomena and see if we can apply them to mechanical engineering in repairing systems.”

He said progress was being made, but that we aren’t yet at a point where we can create a machine that can repair itself.

‘We need to think about we prolong the life of our home appliances and how we recycle them. Enhancing sustainability is not an option – it’s a must’

Professor Rajkumar Roy, Executive Dean, School of Science and Technology, City St George's University of London

Other research is looking at self-repairable materials, as well as the reconfiguration of robots, said Professor Roy.

“Our research is about enabling customers to repair some parts of home appliances – this has a direct implication for sustainability. I hope today you talk about sustainable materials and ethics in sustainable and responsible innovation.

“Enhancing sustainability is not an option – it’s a must. We have to achieve it to minimise material consumption, and, as a result, minimise energy consumption and reduce cost – overall, it improves our net zero performance as a company and as a nation. That’s something we need.”

Opening Keynote Speech

PAUL HIDE, AMDEA CEO



In his opening keynote speech, AMDEA CEO, Paul Hide, highlighted how the annual conference is an important milestone in bringing together a wide range of manufacturers, stakeholders and circular economy experts to reflect and

consider our joint progress towards delivering net zero homes, and how far we have come since the last conference. “We will discuss the priorities, opportunities and challenges both in the near future and on the pathway to 2050,” he said.

He explained how the appliance industry is making great strides when it comes to achieving net zero.

“We all recognise that achieving a fully circular economy – one with net zero impact from creation to disposal – is no small task. But as an industry, we stand firm in our commitment to making it happen. The progress we’ve already made is undeniable,” said Mr Hide.

Know Watt’s What

He added: “AMDEA has, for more than three years, focused on educating appliance owners and users via our Know Watt’s What householder sustainability messaging.”

Know Watt’s What is AMDEA’s campaign to support an increase in appliance users’ awareness of how to use products at their most efficient and the impact this can have on their household energy and water consumption.

“We continue to work hard to spread this message as wide as possible and encourage all manufacturers and channel partners to promote

and sell these key sustainability messages – information that many customers now demand from their suppliers and service partners,” said Mr Hide.

He added that AMDEA is committed to supporting extended product life through maintenance, repair and spare parts, refurbishment and used appliance marketplaces, but all with a major focus on safe repair and resale.

“Our biggest challenge will be ensuring that repairs are done correctly and safely, using parts that meet the safety specifications,” said Mr Hide.

“Electrocution, injury and fires are all risks if repairs are undertaken by those without the required minimum levels of knowledge and training.”

In the 29 million UK homes, there are at least 130 million large appliances and over 300 million small appliances. More than 98% of UK homes have at least one large appliance.

Register My Appliance

Mr Hide also highlighted the benefits of AMDEA’s Register My Appliance campaign – an initiative for householders to register all their appliances, so that manufacturers can reach owners in the rare event of a safety intervention requirement.

Government needs to support the acceleration of net zero homes

Mr Hide said appliances have a big role to play in supporting the achievement of net zero homes.

Estimates suggest that within the 29 million UK homes, there are at least 130 million large appliances and over 300 million small appliances. More than 98% of UK homes have at least one large appliance.

Annual UK sales exceed 11 million large appliances and 40 million small appliances. This equates to a UK market worth close to £8bn a year, supporting many thousands of UK jobs.

AMDEA has called on the UK Government to address four key issues in the home appliance sector which it believes will help accelerate the move towards the net zero home:

- Offering standardised messaging and information on providing savings for the consumer.
- Extend the Green Home-type grant schemes to include purchase incentives towards ‘Best in Class’ energy and water-efficient appliances.
- Incentivising repair over replacement.
- Supporting and incentivising R & D.

Changing business models

“We recognise that this changing world will require a change in business models,” said Mr Hide.

“If we keep our appliances for longer, will that mean fewer appliances are sold in a mature UK marketplace? Quite possibly – appliance reliability has increased significantly over time, and the average life of large household appliances is commonly 15 years or more.”

Responsibility

AMDEA’s responsibility is helping to deliver a net zero action plan across the full supply chain, from sustainable raw material and precious mineral sourcing, to carbon and water-neutral manufacturing, net zero delivery to the customers’ home, net zero impact in use and then full recyclability and material recovery at the end of the maximum useful life – a true circular economy, said Mr Hide.

He highlighted how it is the usage phase of appliances that has the largest impact on energy consumption.

“Appliance manufacturers have made great strides in improving energy and water efficiency. Today’s fridge-freezers typically use 40% less energy than those in use in homes just a decade ago and manufacturers have improved the efficiency of water consumption of washing machines by a huge 40% reduction in the past six years, so we are already seeing big improvements in the efficiency of modern appliances over those bought not so long ago,” said Mr Hide.

However, he said how people use their appliances is key, as are education and awareness building.

Concluding his speech, he told delegates: “We’ve come a long way and today is a moment to reflect on the real progress we’ve made. The future we envisage – a carbon-neutral industry and net zero homes – is absolutely within our reach. “In fact, for some, that future is arriving faster than anticipated. What we do next matters, and together, we will continue driving meaningful change.”

‘We’ve come a long way and today is a moment to reflect on the real progress we’ve made. The future we envisage – a carbon-neutral industry and net zero homes – is absolutely within our reach’

Paul Hide, AMDEA CEO

“There is much to be hopeful about. This isn’t just about policy or industry goals – it’s about the choices we make every day, the innovations we support, and the partnerships we build.

“Each of us – manufacturers, policymakers, retailers, and consumers – has a role to play in accelerating this transformation. Together, we can turn ambition into action and ensure net zero homes are not just a vision for the future, but a reality we create.”

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- Changes to the Green Home-type grant schemes, including ‘Best in Class’ energy and water-efficient appliances and purchase incentives.
- Incentivising repair over replacement.
- Supporting and incentivising R & D.

Opening Address

MAGGIE PHILBIN, OBE, Conference Chair, broadcaster and technology journalist



Maggie Philbin thanked AMDEA for inviting her back to host the conference – she chaired the last one, in 2023 – and, for the benefit of the younger members of the audience, she explained how she used to be a reporter on the BBC technology show, *Tomorrow's World*, in the '80s and '90s. "I've spent a lot of time predicting the future," she said.

Ms Philbin is a co-founder of an organisation called TeenTech, which works with around 15,000 young people every year, and helps them to understand the opportunities in the science, technology, and engineering industries, how they can develop the right skills and personal qualities needed to work in those areas, and how they can influence the future themselves.

Ethical

As part of a project called TeenTethics, TeenTech has been asking more than 700 young people across the UK what they want in terms of ethical innovation.

The study showed that sustainability is important to young people – they want to know where materials are coming from, where products are being made and how waste can be minimised.

They also want manufacturers to be honest and transparent – to not misrepresent their products, to own up if there's an issue, and to not steal other people's ideas.

To find out more, visit www.teentech.com

TeenTethics: Young Persons' Code for Ethical Innovation: Sustainability

- We ask you to design and make your products without harming or degrading our natural environment, climate or living things.
- Products must be fully sustainable for now and in the future.
- Design and manufacture products that are accessible and which last.
- Use more sustainable materials and renewable energy, even if the cost is higher.
- Minimise waste and manage it efficiently.
- Make recycling more accessible.
- Prioritise recycled and recyclable materials.

TEENTECH®

TeenTech Charity

TeenTech help young people understand opportunities in contemporary industry, no matter what their gender or social background. Their engaging, sharply-focused initiatives reach students aged 8-19 and are carefully planned to involve teachers and parents as they are the main influencers in career decisions. Over 300 companies and 40 UK universities work with TeenTech, helping deliver their exciting programmes to students across the UK.



PANEL SESSION ONE:

How can we make appliances' 'cradle to grave' more sustainable and support the circular economy?



Kevin Brown
CEO, Pacifica Group



Scott Butler
CEO, Material Focus



Stephen Cummins
Head of Energy-Related Products, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ)



Chris George
Commercial Director, Electrolux UK and Ireland



Korrina Hegarty
Senior Policy Director, APPLiA



Dr Steph Kipling
Science Team Manager, Which?



In the first panel session, chaired by Maggie Philbin, experts discussed how we can make the journey of appliances from ‘cradle to grave’ more sustainable and support the circular economy.

Ms Philbin asked each panel member to share why they care about sustainability.

Korrina Hegarty, senior police director of APPLiA, the trade association representing home appliance manufacturers in Europe, said sustainability was important to her because of all the work she is involved with dealing with European legislation and looking at the circular economy – from the beginning of an appliance’s lifecycle through to its use and its recycling.

Hot topic

Chris George, commercial director of Electrolux UK and Ireland, told delegates that because the brand is Swedish and is more than 100 years old, it has been thinking about sustainability long before it became a hot topic in the industry – he highlighted the company’s credentials when it comes to sustainability, including being named European Climate Leader for the third year in a row by the *Financial Times*, for its work to reduce carbon emissions.

“Sustainability is a topic that matters to us – it’s at the heart of how we are as a company, and how we behave,” said Mr George.

Information

Dr Steph Kipling, Science Team Manager at Which?, the UK consumer champion, said the organisation she works for has offered consumers information on products’ sustainability for a long time, including how to use appliances efficiently, and maintain and repair them.

Material Focus has made it easier for 10 million more people to recycle their electricals over the past few years.

“When we introduced our Eco Buy recommendation in 2020, it was a natural step forward in giving our readers and consumers more of what they wanted from Which? – product recommendations,” she explained.

“We know consumers are interested in using their products efficiently and sustainably, and we can offer them a wide range of information to support that, for example how much appliances cost to run,

based on energy consumption data from our lab testing, combined with consumer usage data from surveys.”

Ms Kipling said Which? also gathers first-hand information from consumers, including how long they’ve owned their appliances, what faults they’ve experienced, and whether they’ve repaired or replaced the products.

“In many cases, consumers are more concerned about the energy use of their appliances than how well they perform, so they are prioritising sustainability,” she added.

Mission

Scott Butler, the CEO of Material Focus, said his organisation is on a mission to create a world in which materials are never wasted – this involves looking at technical information, including critical raw materials, but also consumer research, and working with local authorities and communities.

Material Focus has made it easier for 10 million more people to recycle their electricals over the past few years and through its HypnoCat marketing campaign and media coverage has raised consumers’ awareness of recycling.



Significant

Stephen Cummins, head of Energy-related Products, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), said he cares about sustainability because products that use energy account for 55% of the UK’s total non-transport energy use – that’s a significant contributor to carbon emissions and it’s relevant to his department’s agenda in terms of net zero.

There are 39 pieces of energy-related product regulations that Mr Cummins’ department is responsible for, and his team keep a close eye



on developments in the EU, as well as try and encourage the transition to less energy-intensive products.

Engage

Maggie Philbin asked Mr Cummins about energy legislation affecting manufacturers, and how important is it to engage with everyone involved as early as possible in the process.

“It’s really important – there are things that we have to do through the regulation-making process. We are obliged to consult on all ecodesign regulation – it’s mandatory and it makes good sense from a policy point of view,” said Mr Cummins.

Pacifica Group employs around 300 engineers and carries out 400,000 repairs a year on major domestic appliances.

Kevin Brown, CEO of Pacifica Group, the repair organisation, highlighted how it works with manufacturers to effect repairs when appliances break down, predominantly during the guarantee period. It employs around 300 engineers and carries out 400,000 repairs a year on major domestic appliances.

“We play quite an important part in trying to increase the length of time consumers keep hold of appliances,” he said, adding that it is working with AMDEA and the supply chain to raise awareness that consumers do have an option to get their faulty appliances repaired or replaced, and to ensure that parts are recycled.



He added there were three main things to highlight – firstly, with feasibility and compliance, early engagement ensures manufacturers have sufficient time to adapt their products and processes to meet new sustainability standards.

“We don’t want to create problems in terms of the supply chain,” said Mr Cummins, adding that the second area to look at was innovation and collaboration – working with manufacturers from the outset can drive innovation, and they can provide helpful insights into the practical challenges and obstacles they face, he explained.

Finally, it’s about market readiness, said Mr Cummins – early involvement helps manufacturers prepare for market changes and ensures that sustainable products are available to consumers when new regulations come into effect.

“It can also help to build and enhance consumer trust and confidence in the changes that we’re trying to make.”

Headache

Ms Philbin said different legislation and labelling requirements for products in the EU, Ireland and Northern Ireland could create a headache for manufacturers.

“Most people will say sustainability is very important, but in hard times, when they’ve got to make choices, people will choose less sustainable solutions on a cost basis”

Chris George, Commercial Director, Electrolux UK and Ireland

Compelling

She then asked Electrolux’s Mr George to tell her what he thinks is the most powerful story the industry has to tell consumers – he said that there are two stories. The first, he said, was about how the products are made – be compelling, but also be honest, open and transparent, and tell consumers about clean energy and zero-waste factories.

Secondly, we have to give consumers compelling reasons as to why they should make sustainable choices and to use technology in our products to help them to do so, said Mr George, adding that we need to demonstrate how much people can save over the lifetime of an appliance by investing in energy efficient models versus repairability.

“Most people will say sustainability is very



important, but in hard times, when they’ve got to make choices, people will choose less sustainable solutions on a cost basis,” he said.

Ms Philbin asked Mr George why the latest and most sustainable appliances are often more expensive than other products.

“I think that’s a really valid point,” he replied. “With our product roadmaps, we try and democratise the technology – helpful innovations will start at the higher end, but it depends how quickly we can cascade that all the way through our product portfolio, so it’s accessible to more people at more price points.”

He added: “It’s how we get to the point of creating sustainable solutions that fit with great storytelling and are compelling to consumers, at the right price.”

Ms Philbin asked Which?’s Ms Kipling what pushes consumers’ buttons when it comes to home appliances in terms of their sustainability.

Ms Kipling said: “The obvious answer is buttons that are easy to push, but we won’t go down that road... So, our main way of showcasing sustainable products to our readers is our Eco Buy recommendation – we know that consumers are interested in more sustainable appliances.”

Repairable

Ms Philbin posted a question to Pacifica’s Kevin Brown: what can we do to make appliances more repairable?

“The partners that we work with are very data-hungry – they want to know everything that goes wrong with an appliance, because, ultimately,

According to a Which? consumer survey, two thirds of people asked said that knowing more about a brand’s environmental practices would influence their buying decision.

In the process of creating the Eco Buy recommendation, Which? surveyed its readers and asked them what was important to them to know about appliances – Ms Kipling said people were interested in finding out more about factories, adding that two thirds of those surveyed said that knowing more about a brand’s environmental practices would influence their buying decision.

She added that when making a sustainable buying choice, consumers want to know three key things about a product:

1. How long is the product going to last?
2. What resources – energy, water, etc – does it use?
3. How repairable is it?

The Eco Buy recommendation isn’t just about sustainability, said Ms Kipling – product performance is also important.

“The product still needs to work well – if they buy a product that doesn’t work well, they will throw it away and buy a new one. The whole thing has gone out of the window... “The Eco Buy recommendation is a combination of good performance and good sustainability credentials.”

Which? also shows appliance running costs on its website, based on a combination of lab testing data and consumer usage, said Ms Kipling.

the factories want to produce appliances that are reliable,” said Mr Brown.

“The more information we can gather on-site about how and why an appliance has broken down means we can feed it back to the manufacturer and they can work that into the manufacturing process and make things better.

“Ultimately, every major domestic appliance is repairable, but it’s the availability of the spare parts that’s critical. We’re repairing some appliances that are 25 years old and the parts are still available.”

He added: “We’ve got to collaborate and focus on how we create customers for life – even if we could just extend the lifespan of the 130 million appliances in the UK by one extra year, think about the amount of energy and carbon that could save. It would be tremendous.”

‘We’ve got to collaborate and focus on how we create customers for life – even if we could just extend the lifespan of the 130 million appliances in the UK by one extra year, think about the amount of energy and carbon that could save.’

Kevin Brown, CEO, Pacifica Group

Ms Philbin asked Mr Brown what percentage of the 400,000 repairs Pacifica carries out per year requires a highly-skilled person and what percentage doesn’t. Are there enough engineers out there to repair super-smart appliances?

“Our single biggest issue is ‘creating’ an engineer – we have circa 300 engineers employed and every month we have between six and 10 trainees in our training school,” said Mr Brown. “The reason we have a training school is because when someone is at school and a careers office says, ‘What would you like to be?’, no one says, ‘an appliance repair engineer.’

“As an industry, for years we’ve pinched each other’s engineers, so, in the end, we bit the bullet and we built our own training school, so now we train all of our engineers.



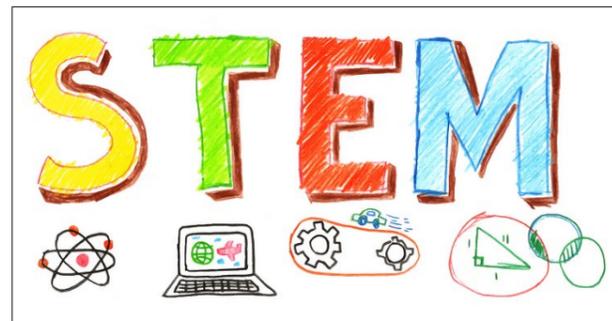
“Out of those 300, we’ve trained 100 ourselves. The major factor that we look for in an engineer is their customer service skills – we can teach them the engineering skills.

“I think the Government has a big part to play – on the way here, I was reading an article on the BBC that said graduates are finding it increasingly hard to secure a position. On average, our engineers will earn a lot more than a graduate going into their first position out of university.”

Net Zero

Replying to this, Mr Cummins said: “I did a School Outreach event recently and I had young people queuing up to ask me how they could get a job working with net zero – they’re interested in the technologies, and they want a way in and the opportunity, so there’s a market there.

“They are interested in STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics] roles and transition, but the challenge for us all is to harvest that interest and put it to good use.”



Legislation

Miss Philbin asked APPLiA’s Ms Hegarty if the EU had an ideas on the repair front, and whether there was any legislation coming up that could make a difference.

“Repair is a big area where there have been innovations in legislation – traditionally, ecodesign has been focused on energy efficiency, but now the shift has moved to material and resource efficiency – how to make products more reusable and repairable, how to use less resources, and more recyclable and sustainable materials,” said Ms Hegarty.

She added: “There is a new Right to Repair directive that will place repair above replacement as a priority for manufacturers – if the consumer



comes back with a product that’s not functioning then a repair will have to be the first option that is given. Spare parts and repair information have to be made available – it depends on the product – for seven to 10 years.”

‘Ecodesign has been focused on energy efficiency, but now the shift has moved to material and resource efficiency – how to make products more reusable and repairable’

Korrina Hegarty, Senior Policy Director, APPLiA

These are at two levels, said Ms Hegarty – one is for consumers to be able to carry out simple repairs and maintenance, and the other is for professional independent repairers.

“That’s a real step forward in encouraging repairs,” she said. “In terms of ecodesign, the shift towards more reusability and recyclability will mean products are designed in such a way that will make them more sustainable – the aim of the EU is to make sustainable products the law, and by 2030, it wants to make sure products are sustainable if they possibly can be.”

However, said Ms Hegarty, you have to appreciate that there are trade-offs on where you put the emphasis on sustainability – manufacturers have to look at their sustainability goals in terms of products and to make sure the appliances are still affordable for the consumer.

You can’t make fully repairable products and fully durable products, she added.

Waste

Scott Butler of Material Focus said when his organisation was set up, it was to stop people binning too many electricals because it was a waste of resources, and there was an increased risk of lithium-ion rechargeable batteries going in the wrong place.





“I think we’ve done a really good job of doing that, but the next phase for us is to get more people aware of the other things they could do in relation to their appliances – that’s reuse and repair,” he explained.

One thing that we need to do as a society is to get as many people to recognise the value of the technology they use, but also value the materials that make it work, he said, alongside all the good work that’s being done on repair, reusability and durability.

‘The UK’s largest electrical retailer has made takeback core to its business proposition for consumers and is offering cashback when people buy a new product – we would urge more retailers to offer takeback’

Scott Butler, CEO, Material Focus

Ms Philbin said that Material Focus has to work with different stakeholders, including local authorities, businesses, and consumers, and she asked Mr Butler who were the most challenging.

“I love all of them equally – I couldn’t say,” was his reply, but he added that there can be tension – producers have commercial priorities and concerns about competitors, and there has been a big increase in online marketplaces: “You have organisations, companies, producers and retailers that have invested in the UK for a long time and they’re seeing overseas marketplaces and producers access their markets without the same guidance and conditions.”

Mr Butler said local authorities are having a difficult time financially and consumers are living in an increasingly noisy and crazy world, where

everybody is trying to sell to them all the time.

Support

Ms Philbin asked Electrolux’s Mr George what he would like to see the Government do to support sustainability in the industry.

He said he is looking for consistency in messaging and the framework, and that both the industry and the consumer need to be incentivised – consumers expect brands and Government to be doing things, so that the consumer is simply carried along on the journey, added Mr George: “From a consumer’s point of view, how are we creating a story that’s going to keep them engaged?” he asked.

APPLiA’s Ms Hegarty said we have can good legislation in place, but it needs to be properly implemented and enforced, otherwise we don’t see the added value of it.



“If we put a lot of effort into designing a product that’s sustainable, let’s make sure that it gets to the consumer, that it works properly, has good performance and that we understand the trade-offs,” she said.

Information

Ms Kipling of Which? said it was important to offer the consumer clear information and options – if someone’s appliance breaks down, they want to know how much it’s going to cost to repair or replace it, how long it will take, and can the spare part be sent quicker than a new product?

Pacifica’s Mr Brown called for the Government to reduce taxes for the appliance industry – he



pointed to the example of the renewable tech energy sector, like solar panels, where VAT is 5%.

“Our sector should have a reduction in tax to create a bigger differential for the consumer and make it more appealing,” he said.

Mr Brown added: “The Right to Repair regulation need to be increased from 10 years to 15 or 20 because the average lifespan of an appliance is 15 years.”



Consistency

Responding to some of the panel members’ suggestions for Government, Mr Cummins of the DESNZ said there was definitely something to say for consistency and clarity when it comes to messaging and the story we need to tell consumers, particularly about cost – he said recent announcements on heat pump technology have centred on lifetime savings.

“Regulation is the bread and butter of what we do – since 2021, we have had the Right to Repair regulation on the statute book here in Great Britain for some products, and we’re following what the EU is doing with a lot of interest – the direction of travel under the current administration will be to look to align with a lot of what the EU is doing, if possible,” said Mr Cummins. He added that this would be music to the ears of a lot of people at the conference.



Mr Cummins said offering incentives is very important, but that we are in a difficult fiscal environment. On tax reductions, he said that could be looked at, but added there could be other funding options available to accelerate the transition to more sustainable products.

Circular Economy

Responding to an audience member’s question on how we can create a network for a circular economy, Mr Butler of Material Focus said it was about to launch a £1m Circular Electricals Fund for the UK, which involves several projects.

He added that connections, knowledge sharing, and collaboration are central to a circular economy, but it will take time to achieve this.



APPLiA’s Ms Hegarty also commented – she said that from an EU perspective there are already a lot of programmes on circularity that are funded by the European Commission, including one on recycled plastic in appliances.

Ms Hegarty said APPLiA has suggested to the European Commission that it sets up a formal platform between manufacturers, recyclers, and other players to make sure everyone is working together – she said that there a lot of commendable projects happening but that it can be difficult to see the results. A more formal and joined-up approach could help this, she said.

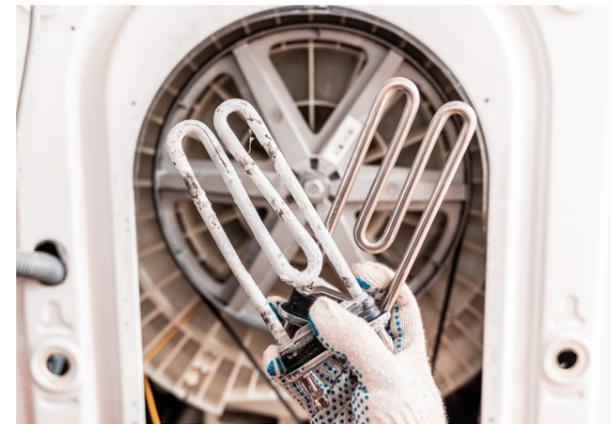
Collaboration

Pacifica’s Mr Brown said there is a lot of good collaboration between responsible companies happening, but that there’s not a lot of awareness of it.



“We work with a lot of manufacturers to try and repair appliances, and we have reduced our carbon footprint to 2.4kg per repair,” he explained.

“When we take a spare part out of a consumer’s appliance and replace it, we work with waste suppliers – every fridge door that we remove goes back to our waste supplier, and 99.1% of it gets recycled. Plastics from some of those doors are going back into the supply chain to make new appliances.”



Retailers

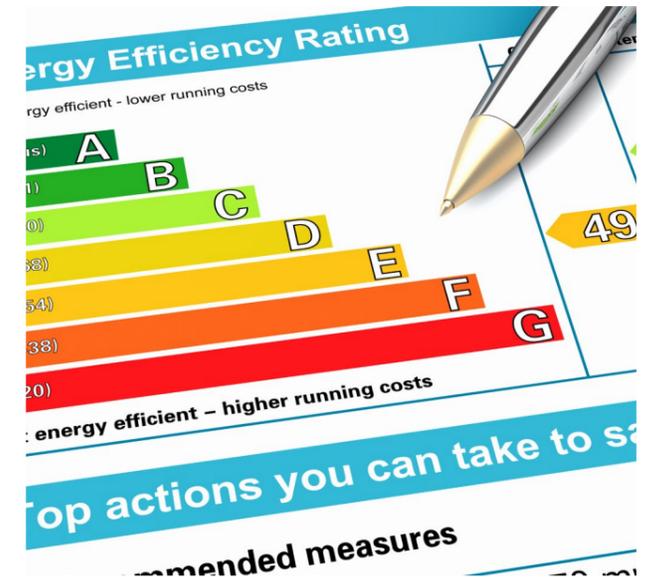
Audience member and freelance journalist, Sean Hannam, asked the panel what role retailers should play in the journey towards a more sustainable appliance future.

“They’re really important and a big part of the customer journey – it’s often where people experience the products or learn about them,” said Mr Butler, adding that many retailers display sustainability or eco ratings on their websites.

“We have a great retail programme in the UK – the UK’s largest electrical retailer [Currys] has made takeback core to its business proposition for consumers and is offering cashback when people buy a new product, which drives footfall. Others are following suit – we would urge more and more retailers to do more to offer takeback to the consumer.”

He added: “That retailer [Currys] also has the largest repair centre in Europe, which it’s operating off the back of that takeback, so business models are developing, evolving and growing and they have circularity and sustainability at their core – retailers talking to their consumers is essential.”

Commenting on the question, Mr Cummins of the DESNZ said energy labelling was very important, but that there’s an awful lot of information that needs to be put on a label.



“Every time there’s a regulation, it has to be reflected on the label – we have to get the balance right between having that information but also disseminating it, so that it makes sense to people – that’s a continual challenge for us, and we’re constantly looking at ways in which we can improve that,” he said.

Which?’s Ms Kipling agreed with Mr Butler and Mr Cummins and said that having information such as the running cost of an appliance available to consumers when they’re shopping for products is key, as retailers are often the first point of contact.

Retailers are also the first place a consumer goes back to when an appliance goes wrong, she said.



Ridiculous

Audience member Andrew Mullen, sustainability and regulatory affairs specialist at Beko, highlighted how Mr Cummins of the DESNZ had mentioned the importance of energy efficiency and energy labelling, but he said manufacturers and retailers were in a currently ridiculous situation with tumble dryer energy ratings, where the EU has moved on, but it now means there are different ranges for both GB and Northern Ireland.

“It’s something we’ve been raising with Government for a very long time, and it’s been really frustrating getting you to listen,” he said. “How can you address that and make it right?”

Responding, Mr Cummins said: “That’s a fair challenge – it’s a good question. It’s the nature of every sector with the EU exit – ecodesign isn’t an exception. To a certain extent, we’re working it out as we go along – it’s been a learning curve for everybody.”

“Northern Ireland is a unique environment because EU regulations continue to apply – there’s a particular sensitivity and dynamic there. We have to enforce new EU regulations in Northern Ireland because we are obliged to do so.”

He added: “We’ve made provisions to do that, and that bit of legislation has just gone through Parliament. On tumble dryers, we are catching up with what the EU is doing – we will be consulting very soon on aligning with the EU. That consultation

will hopefully be coming out this month – we recognise that there is a particular point this year where the EU regulations come into effect, but our regulation won’t have hit the statute book in time, so we are working closely with our colleagues at OPSS to address that with a short-term fix.

“We’ll be saying a bit more about that in due course, but we’re aware of the challenge and we’re looking at trying to do it better going forward – it’s no small thanks to APPLiA and AMDEA that we’ve got the details on the EU’s workplan, so we can try and keep pace with it and anticipate where there might be challenges down the road.”

Finally, Mr Cummins said: “Keep talking to us – it’s really important for us to hear the issues and the challenges that you are seeing coming down the line – we can adapt if we know there are problems.”



PANEL SESSION TWO:

How will new technologies enable greater sustainability?



Hannah Gibson
Founder, Diverse Integration



Steve Macdonald
Business Director, Freestanding, Haier UK and Ireland



Minhal Mahmood
PhD Student, City St George’s, University of London



Craig Melson
Director, Climate and Environment, techUK



Camilla Young
Programme Director, Next Gen QR Codes, GS1

In the second panel session, chaired by Maggie Philbin, experts explored how new technologies will enable greater sustainability in the appliance sector.

Ms Philbin asked each of the panellists to introduce themselves.



Minhal Mahmood said he is a PhD student at City St George's, University of London, who is being funded by AMDEA for his research project: Self Engineering of Smart Domestic Appliances using AR and VR Technology.

Hannah Gibson is the founder of Diverse Integration – she is focused on disability inclusion and helping businesses understand the real needs of disabled people.

In her introduction, she said she wants to look at what the appliance industry can do under the banner of sustainability to make more accessible products that can empower people to go out into the world and contribute: "I believe this will have a huge positive impact on the economy of the sector."

Experience

Ms Gibson is visually impaired – she suffers from a hereditary eye condition called Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP). She told delegates that she has had a lot of experience using home appliances and explained how some of them had fantastic features, but that there was still a lot of work to be done to empower people in their own homes – she wants to raise awareness of this.

Craig Melson is the director of climate and environment for techUK – the trade association for the tech sector, which includes producers, but also looks at issues in the wider ecosystem, such as security and data, consumer tech, AI privacy, health and finance tech.

He said techUK is interested in how devices become more circular and how digital tech can contribute to sustainability.

Steve Macdonald, who is the freestanding business director of Haier UK and Ireland, which owns Hoover, Candy and Haier, said he launched the first connected kitchen in 2015, under the Hoover brand.

'We've been talking about repairability, maintainability and recyclability – we should also be talking about suitability. People change, and as they do, products should be able to change with them. That will increase the longevity of how long someone can use an appliance for'

Hannah Gibson, Founder, Diverse Integration



Smart home

This year, Haier is introducing its first smart home, which includes energy devices, such as batteries, heat pumps and EV chargers, as well as domestic appliances.

Mr Macdonald said he also has insights on the future of home appliances, including waterless washing machines, AI and self-repairing products.

GS1's programme director for next gen QR codes, Camilla Young, explained how the organisation she works for is mostly known for administering barcode numbers globally, but that it is making a major change and moving from barcodes to QR codes.

It is possible to add additional information to QR codes, including batch numbers, use by dates and serial numbers, she said – this can help with product recalls and enable brands to be more transparent about the sourcing of a product. Ms Philbin highlighted how when she presented *Tomorrow's World* she demonstrated the first supermarket barcode reader.

She asked Hannah Gibson, founder of Diverse Integration, if the developments in QR codes could benefit visually impaired users of home appliances.



Benefit

"I think it could be a huge benefit – the QR code is a fantastic idea. There are a lot of visually-impaired people that are using the tech already with mobile phones – the key is digital accessibility. When you use a QR code, will the text and the images be compatible, and will it be able to prioritise the information you're looking for?" asked Ms Gibson.

Ms Young of GS1 said it was important to look at digital accessibility and explained how PDFs aren't particularly accessible with a screen reader – there are new technologies being created to help visually-impaired people find a QR code on packaging.

Ms Philbin asked techUK's Mr Melson how use of new tech like the QR code could help the circular economy.



'I'm looking at how we can use AR and VR for self-engineering, and I'm integrating the sustainability factor into my project – predictive maintenance is a part of extending an appliance's lifecycle'

Minhal Mahmood, PhD Student, City St George's, University of London

He said that QR codes can send users to helpful sources of information, like YouTube videos on how to carry out basic maintenance on an appliance, or how to safely dispose of it.

"COVID has resurrected the QR code – when they first came out, people thought they were weird, but they were perfect for the coronavirus," said Mr Melson.

"Going to where the consumers are is the smartest thing to do, and for circularity it's not about trying to come up with new things – it's about how you can seamlessly connect to the consumer and give them the information they want, in the way that they're used to getting it," he said.

QR code

Ms Young explained how you can use one QR code to show different information to different people, depending on who is scanning it with what device.

Ms Philbin asked Haier's Mr Macdonald what he thinks is the most promising tech that's in use now or on the horizon that is going to make a difference to sustainability.

"What's happened in the last 10 years has been based on connectivity – we're seeing the benefits of that now," he replied, adding: "I think you'll find that AI will be very significant over the next 10 years and that will probably link together to provide benefits to the end consumer."

He added: "To give you an idea of what we've been able to achieve from 2015 to 2025, in Europe, we have about 10 million users of our app [hOn] – in the UK, it's about 1 to 1.5 million users who are regularly looking at the app and using the products. "We as an industry have started to develop products that connect, which, ultimately, should be able to save money."

Optimised

He explained the benefits of a smart home – how you can connect a heat pump to a battery, so the system can be optimised to take advantage of electricity at the correct price tariff, depending on the time of day.



Mr Macdonald said that kind of technology is emerging now and that in the future – potentially the next year or so – AI could enable you to press a button and optimise your house.

"Whether that will be in everyone's house is another matter," he added. "Sometimes we need to democratise some of this technology – it may be more expensive to start with, but once it starts to flow through, we'll start to see significant benefits."

Ms Philbin said it would be sad and ironic if people who can afford to pay upfront for more expensive tech in the home are able to save money on household bills, while those who can't afford the initial outlay end up paying more for their utilities.

"Sadly, we've all realised that there's a two-tier society today – the haves and the have-nots – that's



something that the Government and all of us need to think about. The difference between the two is getting bigger and bigger – you can see that in the health service and in our industry," said Mr Macdonald.

"I like the conversations today, where we're talking together to try and get solutions, rather than being apart – when you're more divisive it becomes more problematic."

'When we talk about sustainability, it's in the widest possible sense – it's about considering how we make society more sustainable'

Maggie Philbin, conference host

Mr Melson said techUK had investigated how local authorities can use their buying power and their social housing estates to get smart appliances, solar panels and heat pumps installed in properties, so residents can benefit from the savings.

Ms Philbin replied: "When we talk about sustainability, it's in the widest possible sense, and it's about considering how we make society more sustainable – for a long time, there's been an acceptance of the gap between the haves and the

have-nots and that it's the norm. It doesn't have to be like that."

She asked Minhal Mahmood, PhD student at City St George's, University of London, to tell us more about the research he was doing.

AR and VR

"I'm looking at how we can use Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) for self-engineering, and I'm integrating the sustainability factor into my project," he said. "I'm almost at the end of my second year, and I'm going into the write-up phase – predictive maintenance is a part of extending an appliance's lifecycle."

He added that AR could guide an appliance user on how to repair a product without any prior knowledge of it, while VR visualises something virtually and that can then be implemented in the physical space.

Ms Philbin said it would be amazing if AR and VR could let someone see what the problem with an appliance was and then they could have a go at fixing it with VR initially – effectively practise before they attempted the repair for real, reducing the risk of causing themselves any harm by electrocution, for example.



Globally, there are 1.3 billion people with disabilities – one in six. In the UK, that figure is 16.8 million – one in four people, which is 25% of the population.

The global market for the Purple Pound – the spending power of disabled households – is worth six trillion pounds. In the UK, it's £274 billion.

Businesses lose £2 billion a month from not having accessible products and services, and 75% of people will click away from a purchase because it's not accessible.

"I have implemented a risk-based 'traffic light' system," said Mr Mahmood, which could enable a consumer to identify whether a certain task is suitable and safe for them to attempt.

Ms Philbin asked Ms Gibson how manufacturers could work with her to look at the ways in which products are designed and the information that's made available, so appliances can be used by a much more diverse community than they currently are.

Disability

"The big mantra in the disability sector is

'nothing about us without us' – there are a lot of assumptions about what people with disabilities need," said Ms Gibson, adding that co-creation is important – working directly with disabled people in the design process.

"There's a huge amount of education needed on the size of the market of people with disabilities – it's not obvious."

Ms Philbin asked her for the size of that market and pointed out that it could appeal to manufacturers from a commercial point of view.

"Globally, there are 1.3 billion people that have a disability – that's huge. It's one in six," she said. "If we just look at the UK, it's 16.8 million – that's 25% of the population, which is one in four people.

"The reality is that 80% of disabilities are invisible – people aren't aware of them."

Ms Gibson said if we could use technology to help those people and their families at home, it could have a huge 'trickle down' effect on the economy.

She added: "We've been talking about repairability, maintainability and recyclability – we should also be talking about suitability.

"People change, and as they do, products should be able to change with them. That will increase the longevity of how long someone can use an appliance for."



Ms Philbin asked Ms Gibson how easy it is to have conversations with manufacturers and wholesalers about the potential for designing and producing inclusive products and the market that's out there.

Political

She said it was tough and that certain political agendas were creating a negative spin around DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion), but if you look at the number of disabled people in the world, that makes the discussions easier – the global market for the 'Purple Pound' (the spending power of disabled households) is worth six trillion pounds, and in the UK it's £274 billion.

Businesses lose £2 billion a month from not having accessible products and services and 75% of people will click away from a purchase because it's not accessible, said Ms Gibson.

"That costs over £11 billion – the stats are huge. And look at the aging demographic, which is the fastest-growing demographic in the UK – the value of that market is £300 billion. By 2040, people in that bracket will spend 63p of every pound spent."

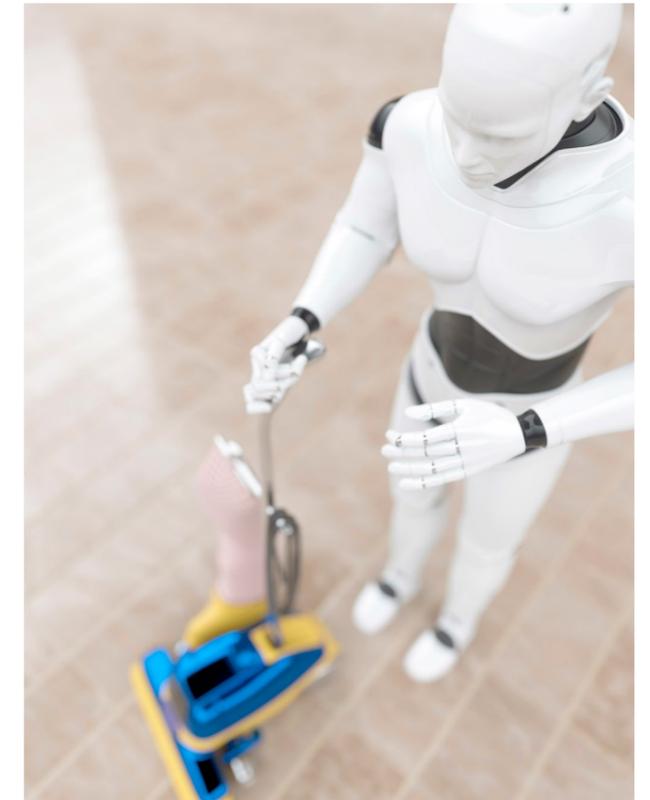
"As soon as you get over 50, you start to develop minor disabilities, like visual and hearing loss, and loss of mobility and dexterity," she added.

"When you start talking about the commercial benefits, as well as the social impact, that's when organisations get more interested."

Excited

Ms Philbin asked Ms Gibson if there was any tech that she felt excited by that she could tell Mr Melson of techUK about, so he could recommend it to the companies and organisations he works with, so they could consider adopting it.

Ms Gibson said she would love to have a housework robot, adding: "That's nothing to do with my disability – I just want it to do my housework.



She replied: "There's a quote... 'The real voyage is not in seeking new landscapes, it's in seeing with new eyes...' I feel that we have a lot of what we need in terms of technology and innovation, but there's a huge gap to bridge – the fear that a lot of people have about adopting new technology. I think what's exciting is the potential of what we can do collectively to bridge that technology phobia gap."

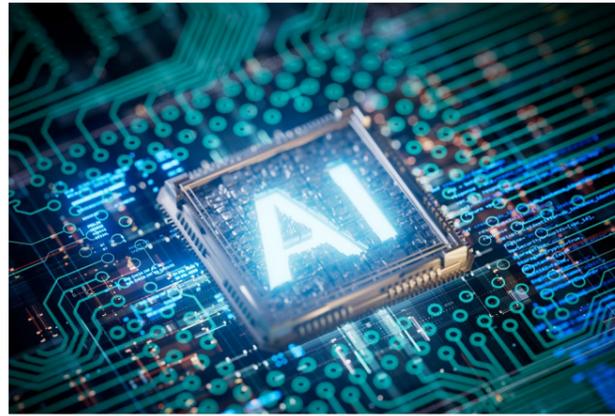
'AI is extremely resource-intensive, from both an energy and a water perspective. We need to think about how we make things simpler'

Camilla Young, Programme Director, Next Gen QR Codes, GS1

Mr Melson said techUK has tracked consumer sentiment around smart home tech – what interests or excites them and what they dislike.

He said that a few years ago, there was a huge rise in smart speakers – Alexa-type devices – but that had now dropped off, as most people who wanted one had one, and they don't need replacing every couple of years.

“People are excited by AI-powered home technologies – using some of the things we see in industrial and commercial facilities, but in the home, so it makes things as easy as possible for consumers,” he added.



Smart

Ms Philbin asked Mr Mahmood if there was a danger of tech like AI becoming too smart for its own good.

He said that had played a part in his own research, but that he wouldn't say it was too smart, as the tech is still empowering the user to do what they should be able to do: “I'm not allowing AI to be too smart and I'm very cautious about letting it mislead people with information – I'm putting rules-based scenarios in place.”

He added that there was a huge debate over digital twinning and how we define it – a digital twin is a virtual representation of an object or system designed to reflect a physical object accurately.

Ms Young of GS1 commented: “There is such a thing as technology that gets too smart. We're talking about sustainability, but AI is extremely resource-intensive, from both an energy and a water perspective. We need to think about how we make things simpler and how we create simple solutions to some of the problems. One of the things I like about QR codes is that they're a very simple solution.”

She added: “If you're trying to explain to someone how to fix an appliance, the way the world is going, we'll also be turning to an AI chat bot to answer that question. If I could scan a code and see a video of someone showing me exactly what to do with an appliance, I won't need to go down that route of asking AI, and we'd save a lot of resources – time and energy.”

Mr Melson of techUK said that if you make tech too smart, then it can become too expensive – it needs to be affordable and repairable.

On AI, he said it's very resource-intensive when the infrastructure is being built, but once it's in place it's a useful asset and that the carbon intensity of the user base will go down.

Adaptable

Haier's Mr Macdonald referred to Ms Gibson's UK statistics on people living with disabilities and commented: “Fifty or 60% of houses need to have products which may be adaptable or adaptive.”

He asked her whether current washing machines with LCD screens, sleek fascias, and fewer buttons may not be suitable for some disabled people.

Ms Gibson said that may cause problems for users, adding: “There are lots of things you have to design for – compliance and style. Even though I can't see my washing machine in great detail, I still want it to look sexy, stylish and modern, but, at the same time, I still need to be able to use it.”

She said that when she recently went to a large electrical retailer to buy a new washing machine and asked to see all the accessible products, there was only one brand and model available.

“The physical aspects of a product are so critical – especially when you've got multi-generational and multi-ability households. We need products to look great and be accessible – that's totally achievable.”

‘A lot of manufacturers are doing stuff to make their products more accessible, but they're not marketing it – I think that's because they don't understand the size of the market’

Hannah Gibson, Founder, Diverse Integration

Mr Macdonald said that the modular design of products could be an option, with additions or alterations to an appliance made by using 3D printing.

“I love that idea,” said Ms Gibson and added that this would need to be considered early in the design process, as well as at the point of sale and during the after-sales service process.

“A lot of manufacturers are doing stuff to make their products more accessible, but they're not marketing it – I think that's because they don't understand the size of the market.”

She added: “There's another important thing to think about – only 20% of people out of that 16.8 million were born with disabilities.



“Most disabilities are acquired during your working life – anyone here could be affected tomorrow. It can happen to anyone at any point in their life, and why should you have to go out and buy a whole new kitchen because it's happened to you?”

‘AI will be very significant over the next 10 years and will probably provide benefits to the end consumer’

Steve Macdonald, Business Director, Freestanding, Haier UK and Ireland

Potential

One of the audience members, Arun Roy, who is a patent attorney, said there's a huge potential for connected smart appliances, but if they don't have a good user interface and aren't accessible for people with diverse needs, the worst-case scenario will be that the smart features won't be used, and the appliances will end up as e-waste sooner than they would've done otherwise.

“The industry is blending traditional mechanical and electrical technology of home appliances with smart digital technology, but what plans does the industry have to make smart, connected products sustainable to they keep working well for the long-term?” he asked.

Mr Melson said that when a lot of internet connectivity was added to existing tech over the past five to 10 years, it was quite crudely done and not interoperable, but now the ecosystems have

converged and improved, there's more innovation and integration, and so products are more user-friendly and less likely to become e-waste.

Haier's Mr Macdonald said there needs to be more education on how people use their new appliances, such as heat pump tumble dryers, in the most effective and economic ways.

GS1's Ms Young agreed, saying more information needs to be made available to people, but in a much simpler way, so it's easy to understand.

Information

“Accessibility isn't just about disabilities – it's about people consuming information in different ways. I don't want to read a manual that's in five languages and tells me stuff that's not interesting,” she said.

Mr Macdonald said information on how to use and maintain appliances can be provided by apps but that the supply chain, including manufacturers and retailers, isn't doing a good enough job at letting people know.

Audience member Daniel VandenBurg, who works for the Office of Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), said when it comes to a consumer repairing an appliance using AR or VR, where does the liability lie if the person hurt themselves or the product still doesn't work.

“It depends on who you talk to – there is an issue on how we manage it,” said Mr Macdonald. “We need to have some common sense, but the problem is that a lot of legislation doesn't think about that.”

Added Mr Melson: “OPSS is the regulator – you tell us. Sometimes there can be too much of a risk of letting the industry interpret something.”

He said more guidance was needed, and the OPSS needs to be clear on where liability starts and ends.

Mr VandenBurg said research is currently being done into AR and VR and that the OPSS might have some of the answers further down the line.



Closing Keynote Speech

Sir Jonathon Porritt, CBE – environmental campaigner and writer



Sir Jonathon Porritt, CBE, gave a frank closing keynote speech, which included a stark warning on climate change.

“You probably think it’s quite bad,” he said. “That’s why your trade association [AMDEA] is pushing hard on sustainability with its

roadmap, but I very much doubt there will be more than three or four people in this room who understand how bad it is.”

He added: “Where would you get the information you need today to understand how bad it is? It’s very difficult.”

Last year, every single factor that could help us get back in balance with climate change went in the wrong direction, he said – the volumes of gas, coal and oil consumed all went up in 2024 and new investments in fossil fuel also increased, Sir Jonathon explained, while government subsidies in those areas also went up.

‘There is a lot of ambivalence amongst consumers, as well as confusion, indifference and total apathy – they are not being led to the water to enjoy all the information that’s made available by the industry’

Sir Jonathon Porritt, CBE – environmental campaigner and writer

Concentrations of CO₂ in the atmosphere also increased, as did annual emissions, he pointed out.

He said it was too late to avoid dramatic disruption in the global economy and all our lives, but that it’s not too late to avoid a total irreversible decline and collapse in human societies around the world: “We still have an opportunity to redress that awful prospect and deal with it.”

In 2024, 85% of investment into new energy sources went into renewable energy.

Confusion

He also criticised the state of politics – both in the UK and the US – and urged policy makers and politicians to cut back on their rhetoric and regulatory confusion.

Sir Jonathon described policy making as ‘dysfunctional,’ and said it is struggling to tackle the issues involved with a low-carbon and net zero economy, as well as meeting diversity and inclusion challenges: “Policy makers just don’t seem to be on the case in the way that we might want – that leads to a lot of regulatory confusion.”

He said policy makers should stick to efficiency, circularity, and durability, which is what AMDEA’s roadmap is focused on.

“If we made those national and global priorities, some of the debate about net zero would become much easier for people to get their heads around,” he suggested.

He said many appliance manufacturers were still being let off the hook when it comes to full circularity – when there is no waste at all – through poor policy making and regulations.

On the US and Trump’s presidency, he said we are currently seeing an ‘unparalleled geopolitical scene of chaos’ – the like of which he has never seen before in his 50 years working in sustainability – he described it as ‘insane.’

Trump has ‘massively hammered’ the diversity, equality and inclusion agenda, he added, which will affect supply chains.

Opportunity

On a more positive note, Sir Jonathon said the

appliance industry has a great opportunity to improve the environment by using efficient technology, but it needs to provide clarity.

“There is a lot of ambivalence amongst consumers, as well as confusion, indifference and, sometimes, total apathy – they are not being led to the water to enjoy all the information that’s made available by the industry,” he said.

‘I hope we can look towards a world where appliances are more expensive at the point of purchase, but we pay back that increased investment through a longer lifetime of efficient, well-maintained operation’

Sir Jonathon Porritt, CBE – environmental campaigner and writer

“There are no easy answers on the consumer front – there never have been and, trust me, there never will be.”

He said durability and longevity are the cornerstones of what makes the appliance industry so important to the cause of sustainability.

“I hope we can look towards a world where the appliances we buy might become more expensive at the point of purchase, but we pay back that increased investment through a longer lifetime of efficient, well-maintained operation.”



Key Takeaways and Themes from the AMDEA Annual Conference 2025

- The appliance industry is making great progress when it comes to achieving net zero.
- The usage phase of appliance has the biggest impact on energy consumption.
- Consumers are concerned about the environmental credentials and performance of their products.
- There needs to be more consistency and clarity from Government on both sustainability messaging and industry legislation.
- A changing world will require changing business models.
- The industry needs to collaborate on how we extend the life of appliances – reuse and repair are key, but so is safety.
- More retailers need to look at offering takeback schemes for consumers.
- Many appliance manufacturers are ignoring the huge potential of the accessible market – creating and selling products for users with disabilities.
- Appliances need to be adaptable and adaptive to cope with people’s differing needs – especially as consumers get older.
- Products need to look great but also be accessible, as well as sustainable.
- AI can bring benefits, but it’s resource-hungry tech: do we need to look at simpler and more sustainable solutions?
- If you make tech too smart, then it can become too expensive – it needs to be affordable and repairable.
- There is more education needed for consumers on how they use and maintain their appliances.

List of participating organisations at the 2025 Conference

The Roadmap to a Sustainable Appliance Future

Aga Rangemaster	EUH Consulting
BSH	GAMBICA
BEAMA	Glen Dimplex
Beko International	Gower College
BFIPR	GS1 UK
BIRA	Haier Europe
British Plastics Federation	REPIC
British Standards Institute	Hertfordshire Trading Standards
Centre for Research in Just Transition	Hisense
City St George's University of London	Hitachi Europe
CLASP	IBECCS
CoVentures	Insinkerator
Creative	Institute of Measurement Control
CTSI	Intertek
Currys	KBSA
DR Kitchen Appliances	Kenwood
D Young & Co LLP	Liebherr
Department of Business and Trade	London Fire Brigade
Department of Energy Security and Net Zero	Material Focus
DeLonghi	Midea
Diverse Integration	Numatic
Domestic & General	Office for Product Safety and Standards
Dualit	Pacifica
Dyson	Samsung
Ecogenesys	SCALA Architecture
EEE Safe	SharkNinja
Electrical Safety First	Smeg UK
Electronic Components Supply Networks	Square Trade
Environment Agency	Restart Project
	Vestel UK
	Which?
	Xeros Technology Group

Thank you to our exhibitors



About AMDEA

AMDEA is the UK trade association for manufacturers of large and small domestic appliances, representing over 85% of the domestic appliance industry, rising to 90% of white goods brands.

Members' products include most of the UK's top selling brands of major white goods, other large and small kitchen appliances, heating, water heating, floor care, waste disposal and ventilation equipment.

For more information on AMDEA and to access all of our publicly available reports and publications, visit www.amdea.org.uk

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