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Press release

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techUK report explores potential benefits and challenges of data centre heat integration in UK district heating networks

LONDON, 26 February: As the global community intensifies its focus on sustainability and energy efficiency, the intersection between technology and environmental responsibility becomes increasingly significant. As a result, techUK is today releasing a new report shedding light on the potential benefits and challenges associated with integrating data centre heat into district heating networks in the UK.

The report, 'Warming Up to Efficiency: Understanding the Potential Benefits and Pitfalls of Data Centre Heat Export in the UK', delves into the opportunities, barriers, and successes of reusing data centre residual heat, offering insights for stakeholders across industries. District heating networks, renowned for their low-carbon heating solutions, stand as a platform to harness surplus heat generated by data centres. However, effective implementation hinges on addressing several critical factors.

techUK emphasises the necessity of optimising data centre energy consumption before embarking on heat export, stressing collaboration between data centre operators and heat network providers. Challenges such as seasonal fluctuations, variable energy demand, and infrastructure proximity must be navigated to ensure efficient heat distribution.

The report underscores the importance of sustainability considerations and regulatory frameworks in advancing towards net-zero objectives. It calls for government clarity on participation criteria, heat availability, quality standards, and infrastructure guidelines to establish a standardised and scalable approach.

Luisa Cardani, Head of Data Centres at techUK, said:
"The utilisation of data centre heat for district heating networks in the UK holds significant promise, particularly from sustainability and corporate social responsibility standpoints. By embracing a circular economy model, data centres can redirect surplus residual heat to local networks, optimising resource utilisation."

"Addressing the challenges ahead is imperative for the successful integration of data centre heat into district heating networks. Stakeholders must collaborate to ensure long-term viability and alignment with sustainability goals."

Key unaddressed issues highlighted in the report that the industry is currently facing include:

- Determining participation criteria for suitable data centres;

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- Addressing varying heat availability and demand;
- Establishing quality standards for supplied heat;
- Ensuring alignment with sustainability goals;
- Addressing infrastructure needs and financial incentives.

techUK remains committed to working with relevant stakeholders to develop a robust framework facilitating the seamless contribution of data centres to heat networks, ultimately benefiting communities with affordable and sustainable heating solutions.

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

The full report can be downloaded here.

About techUK

techUK is the technology trade association that brings together people, companies and organisations to realise the positive outcomes of what digital technology can achieve.

With over 1000 members (the majority of which are SMEs) across the UK, techUK creates a network for innovation and collaboration across business, government and stakeholders to provide a better future for people, society, the economy and the planet.

By providing expertise and insight, we support members, partners and stakeholders as they prepare the UK for what comes next in a constantly changing world.