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GREEN PROSPERITY CASE STUDY SEPTEMBER 2024

## LOWER CARBON, BETTER JOBS? STORIES FROM THE HEAT PUMP FACTORY FLOOR

**Where:** Belper,  
Derbyshire

**What:**  
Manufacturing low-  
carbon heating  
systems

**Employer:**



**Trade Union:**

**community**

**Private investment:**  
~£50m

**Jobs supported:**  
>300

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Photo courtesy of Vaillant.  
Special thanks to Vaillant,  
Community, Stephen  
Tomlinson, Shanielle  
Jowett and Mark Wilkins.

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Many of the boilers in UK homes are assembled in Britain. One of the biggest manufacturers is Vaillant, with over 150 years' experience making boilers. Now workers in their UK manufacturing facility in Belper are leading the way to a low-carbon future.

Stephen Tomlinson has worked here for 20 years. As “lead hand”, he’s responsible for the smooth running of the factory floor. He’s also a union rep, representing factory employees in meetings with senior leadership. In 2021, Vaillant sought his views on plans to invest millions in the future of the business. Their plan would transform an existing warehouse into a state-of-the-art heat pump manufacturing line, making Vaillant the first boiler manufacturer to make heat pumps in the UK. Working with Stephen, they developed a strategy to offer existing production staff training to work in the new facility.

**“It was a massive positive, and people on the boiler lines saw it as an opportunity to expand their skills. Now everybody wants to be involved in that next step.” – Stephen Tomlinson**

With the move to heat pumps came new, highly skilled roles. New qualifications in skills like brazing and specialist F-gas handling are among the opportunities



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now on offer. Stephen is the first to admit the work on the heat pump line is interesting, and offers new and satisfying job roles in the factory.

Since the new facilities opened, Vaillant have also taken on new employees. Shanielle Jowett joined Vaillant in 2022 as a production operative. In the two years since, she's taken every training opportunity she can. Now she only has the Level 3 F-gas training to go before she can take a heat pump through every step of the production line from start to finish. Her pride in her work is clear to see.

*“I have been offered so many opportunities. It gives me a lot of job satisfaction knowing I am helping sustain the environment for future generations.” – Shanielle Jowett*

For Vaillant, this investment has put them in a strong position to benefit from a growing UK heat pump market. The next step in their £50m investment plan is to open a new site in nearby Derby, another response to anticipated future heat pump demand. But policymakers still need to do more to reach a mass market. Consumers need more affordable finance options, and faster progress on reducing electricity prices. A clearer roadmap which provides policy certainty is crucial, according to Mark Wilkins, Vaillant's Training & Technologies Director.

*“Policy certainty, investment incentives, and support for skills and supply chains are all critical priorities.” – Mark Wilkins*

Vaillant's experience proves the UK can attract investment in low-carbon manufacturing, providing good quality, well-paid jobs. A clear plan for decarbonising homes could ensure this production line is only the first of many.

### **E3G Green Prosperity recommendations**

Green investment can create economic opportunities for businesses, workers and communities – when it is done right.

To attract investment:

- > **Provide policy certainty:** Publish an industrial strategy backed by clear sectoral roadmaps.
- > **Unlock private finance:** Create an attractive, stable environment and confidence in future demand.
- > **Invest in skills and supply chains:** Support key supply chains and training pathways.

To ensure working people benefit:

- > **Support through the transition:** Ensure workers can access funded training and support to take on new roles.
- > **Give workers a voice:** By working with trade unions.
- > **Improve conditions:** Make sure green jobs come with matching or better pay and conditions.