

A different kind of utility

How bespoke heat network partnerships outperform standard utility models to secure long-term value for developments and communities.



A different kind of utility: how heat networks differ

While most development teams are familiar working with utilities such as water, gas and electricity, heat networks are different. They're not just infrastructure; they're assets which can influence how a place performs, economically, environmentally and socially, and bring strategic benefits, from supporting net zero goals to enhancing customer experience and bolstering energy resilience.

Selecting the right partner, and building the right heat network partnership, is essential. At Vattenfall, we partner with developers, local authorities and housing associations in UK cities looking to break free from fossil fuels; we design, build, operate and maintain low carbon heat networks which can deliver large-scale decarbonisation.

We're working in partnership with Related Argent at Brent Cross Town, an £8 billion new neighbourhood in north London. As the energy services company (ESCO) for Brent Cross Town's heat network, we have a 47-year concession agreement to deliver heating and cooling to the town's 6,700 homes and 3 million sq. ft of commercial space.

The nature of our partnership with Related Argent has undoubtedly enhanced the success of the heat network – supporting the town's strategic objectives, embedding robust and future-ready infrastructure into the project from an early stage, and delivering better experiences for residents and tenants.



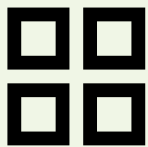
Learn how a different approach to procuring heat network services - distinct from the short-term, fragmented models often seen in other utilities - can unlock lasting value for your development.



An end-to-end partnership to secure strategic goals

In traditional utilities such as a gas or electricity supply, separate companies handle different stages of delivery: generation, distribution, supply. Heat networks can follow a similar path, with different contractors delivering each stage of the network's lifecycle. **Or, you can choose to procure a simplified approach - an ESCO who manages the end-to-end lifecycle of the heat network, from heat generation to network operation and customer service.**

At Brent Cross Town, as a partner delivering end-to-end support, we have secured several benefits for Related Argent's development team and their residents:



Consistency across design

As we oversee key stages across the heat network's delivery, there are fewer handovers required, reducing the risk of misalignment, miscommunication or conflicting priorities between project stages.

This consistency improves the performance of our network, securing a reliable supply and smoother experience for our customers.



Simplified delivery

For Related Argent, coordination is simplified, offering them a single point of contact with our team who understand the full picture of the heat network.



Aligned objectives

Our end-to-end responsibility enables us to maximise the benefits that the heat network can bring, aligning key stages of the project with the network's strategic ambitions - a heating and cooling supply that is reliable and fairly priced for customers, whilst supporting the town's net zero ambitions. We're invested in the success of the project and the wider development of the local area for the long term.

Key takeaway

In other utilities, it's common to engage different partners for each stage of infrastructure delivery. Heat networks offer a simplified model; choosing an end-to-end ESCO partner for your heat network unlocks simplicity, drives consistency and optimises the strategic benefits that heat network technology can provide.



Exceptional service and lasting value with long-term partnerships

When a developer connects to a gas or electricity supply, the engagement with the utility is often brief: design in the utility's infrastructure, connect, move on.

When partnering on a heat network, you can similarly choose short-term contracts with various partners, **or you can maximise the opportunity to enter into a long-term heat network partnership and realise major benefits:**



High-quality, fair price

Installing heat network infrastructure requires heavy, up-front investment from ESCOs like Vattenfall; as an ESCO, we look for long-term partnerships so we can install infrastructure of the highest quality – delivering a strong, reliable supply to our customers – with the reassurance that we can gradually recover our capital and keep costs fairly-priced for customers. We aren't looking for short term fixes.



Responsible, future-looking decision-making

Our typically multi-decade role as ESCO ensures that long-term thinking is put at the core of every decision made. At **Brent Cross Town**, we're operating the heat network across a 47-year commitment; every decision we make on the network is guided by long-term results, rather than short term gain. With this approach, our customers are reassured they will receive a high-quality service from us that they can trust for decades to come.

Key takeaway

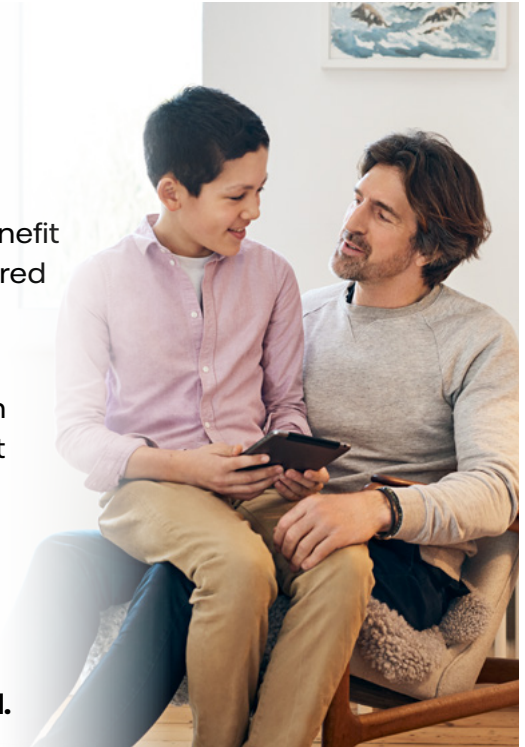
In contrast to many of the short-term delivery contracts seen in the wider utilities sector, choosing a long-term heat network partner brings greater accountability and alignment with your development's goals. Our long-term partnership at **Brent Cross Town** has delivered infrastructure that is built to last, delivered at a fair cost, and secured for the future.

Surpassing expectations for customer experience

Customers of traditional utilities such as electricity and water benefit from established consumer regulation. Utility providers are required to fulfil clear expectations and are uniformly held accountable.

Heat network regulation is still evolving, with Ofgem's oversight expected to begin in early 2027 to ensure fair outcomes for both developers and customers. However, responsible ESCOs haven't been waiting for regulation; they've proactively prioritised and developed expert customer service by themselves.

To realise the full range of benefits that heat networks can offer to customers - a reliable supply, fairly-priced with an all-inclusive service - and potentially exceed incoming regulations, choosing the right heat network partner is crucial.



Proactive support

At **Brent Cross Town**, we're not waiting for regulation to require us to deliver an expert customer service. We've proactively registered the Brent Cross Town heat network with Heat Trust; they provide consumer protections to heat network customers, and hold us accountable for important matters such as emergency response and billing, ensuring our customers receive smooth customer service and are fairly treated.



Thorough service

Our expert customer service feeds into all areas of customer experience. Our customer contracts are written to the Plain English Campaign's standards, certifying that these documents are simple for customers to understand. We're also regularly on-site and visible, meeting customers face-to-face within **Brent Cross Town** and building lasting relationships.

Key takeaway

Heat network customers don't yet benefit from the same regulations as other utilities. At **Brent Cross Town**, we have proactively established an expert customer care service that doesn't wait for regulation. Choosing a heat network partner who puts customers first - not just when regulation demands it, but because it's the right thing to do - will ensure an optimal experience for residents and businesses.



Ready to find out more?

By taking a bespoke approach to your heat network partnership - rather than simply duplicating other utility models - you can secure long-term value for your development and your community.

Talk to us about our plans to deliver large-scale heat networks in London and the wider UK.

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