

# Young Energy Professional's Forum Site Visit – British Gas' HIVE Connected Homes

9 February 2017

## 'Creating a buzz about innovation the Hive interconnected home'

Yesterday I joined a group from the Young Energy Professionals (YEP) Forum for a trip to Hive HQ, near Tottenham Court Road, to learn about how tech and innovation is making the interconnected home a reality.

Put simply, Hive products and systems allow the customer to control their heating or appliances within their home remotely by either an app, tablet or laptop. As well as being able to control your thermostat to adjust the temperature or timing of when your heating comes on, smart plugs, motion sensors and even lightbulbs allow you to connect appliances across the home and control them through one app.

But we learnt it is not just being able to flick the lights on from the comfort of your sofa, or having your heating on a timer - the tech gets really clever which users create "recipes" where two or more smart products work together. For example, a motion sensor could be linked to a light or lamp with a smart plug so the light automatically comes on if you get up in the night and switches itself off again after a few minutes.

It was fascinating to hear about the rapid rise of the home assistant - Amazon's Echo or as you may know her, Alexa, and the Google Assistant, which is due to launch in the UK in the first half of this year.

This voice-control tech is taking home smart technology to a whole new level as built-in capabilities, or "skills", enable people to use their voice to control cloud-enabled smart home devices. So Alexa's Smart Home Skill can be used to dim lights or check the temperature on the thermostat.

The rate of increase in home assistants is quite incredible. Over 20m Amazon Echo have been sold in the US, and the number of Amazon Echo "skills" has increased from around 1000 in January 2016, to over 7000 today.

Smart tech may feel like something that we have all embraced, and many of us thinking nothing of watching programmes or streaming films on internet-enabled smart TVs, but the truth is few of us have yet to embrace it fully in our homes.

Research by Deloitte for Hive revealed 48% of people don't have any smart technology in their home - with a similar proportion saying that they felt that cost was



a barrier. So, the challenge is real. But like with smart meters, net promoter score - i.e. the number of people who would recommend it to friends & family, is high.

It will be interesting to see how this industry, still very much in its infancy, takes off as the technological developments, like home assistants, grow at such a staggering pace.

We had some brilliant presentations throughout the event from HIVE, boiler IQ and MyEnergy and we would like to thank those representatives for the effort put into the visit.

The YEP Forum would like to thank Adam Parrish and Tabish Khan at British Gas, not only for hosting this event, but also for their continued support of the YEP Forum.

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- For the YEP Forum