

Independent Energy Consultants: A Guide for Commercial Organisations Seeking Clarity, Value and Long-Term Results

Executive Summary

As UK businesses face mounting pressure to decarbonise, the need for clear, commercially grounded energy advice has never been greater. Yet too often, organisations are guided by contractors or manufacturers whose recommendations are shaped by sales incentives rather than operational need. This white paper explores the increasingly important role of independent energy consultants specialists who offer impartial, ROI-focused advice across complex estates and evolving technologies.

It outlines the risks of conflicted advice, including a real world example where a major UK holiday company installed voltage optimisation equipment without independent oversight, resulting in costly remedial work. It also highlights how independent consultants improve internal communication, ensure compliance, and help organisations navigate the scale of the UK's decarbonisation challenge, particularly across the retail, wholesale and leisure sectors.

The paper concludes by reinforcing the value of independence in energy strategy and showcases how businesses like Hawley Energy have structured their services to eliminate bias and deliver long-term value.

How Independence is the key to success in sustainability

As the UK energy landscape becomes more complex, commercial organisations are under increasing pressure to reduce consumption, meet compliance obligations and demonstrate progress toward net zero. In this environment, the role of the independent energy consultant has become more important than ever.

Unlike technology vendors or sales driven brokers, independent consultants are not tied to specific products or rebate schemes. Their advice is shaped by data, not commission. This impartiality is critical when designing strategies that must balance cost, compliance and operational impact.

In recent years, a growing number of contractors have begun presenting themselves as consultants. While this may appear convenient, it introduces a clear conflict of interest. When the same party is responsible for both specifying and installing equipment, the risk is that recommendations are shaped by what is easiest to deliver or most profitable to supply, not what is best for the client. This blurring of roles can lead to suboptimal outcomes, inflated costs and missed opportunities for long-term savings.

Continued..

A clear example of this came when one of the UK's largest holiday companies engaged a voltage optimisation manufacturer directly, bypassing independent consultancy. The result was a nationwide rollout of equipment that had not been properly assessed for site specific suitability, compliance or operational context. An independent consultant, Hawley Energy was later brought in to review the installations. Their engineers visited each site to evaluate whether the units were appropriate, safe and delivering value. In doing so, they identified multiple instances where the installations raised concerns under the Health and Safety at Work Act, electrical regulations and/or basic operational logic! The additional cost could have been avoided had the client sought impartial advice from the outset.

Outsourcing energy consultancy to a truly independent specialist can offer significant advantages. It reduces overheads by removing the need for inhouse specialists, while expanding access to a broader knowledge base. Independent consultants typically work across multiple sectors and technologies, giving them a wider view of what is possible and what is proven. Their insight is not limited to the technical landscape they also understand the commercial, regulatory and behavioural factors that influence success.

One of the most overlooked benefits of working with an external consultant is the improvement in internal communication. Energy efficiency is rarely the responsibility of a single department. It touches finance, estates, procurement and sustainability. Independent consultants often act as a neutral conduit between these teams, providing structured updates and ensuring that everyone is working from the same set of facts. This helps avoid duplication, accelerates decision making and ensures that energy strategy is aligned with wider business goals.

A good consultant will also take responsibility for staying current with emerging technologies. From heat pumps and solar PV to EV infrastructure and building controls, the market is evolving rapidly. It is unrealistic to expect internal teams to keep pace with every development. Independent consultants bring a diverse team of specialists who can assess new technologies objectively and recommend only those that are genuinely fit for purpose.

Continuous Monitoring and Auditing are also essential. Energy Efficiency is not a one off project but an ongoing process. Independent consultants can provide regular site audits, exception reporting and metering analysis to ensure that savings are sustained and new opportunities are identified. This is particularly valuable for organisations managing large or complex estates, where usage patterns vary and small anomalies can have a big impact.

Continued..

For organisations with ambitious net zero targets, independent consultants can play a central role in long-term planning. They can lead on the design and specification of projects such as LED lighting upgrades, EV charger rollouts and heating system decarbonisation. By managing the specification process, they ensure that contractors install the right equipment for the client, not just the equipment that offers the best rebate.

The scale of the challenge ahead is significant. The UK Government's Heat and Buildings Strategy confirms that around 30 million buildings, including homes, workplaces and public sector sites that will need to be decarbonised by 2050. Of these, approximately 1 million are non-residential buildings, which includes the vast footprint of retail and wholesale premises. These sectors alone account for a substantial share of the UK's energy use and emissions, with the wholesale sector responsible for 18 million tonnes of emissions in 2021, most of which stem from supply chain and operational activity.

Decarbonising these estates will require major investment in lighting, refrigeration, heating, logistics and controls. The British Retail Consortium and the Federation of Wholesale Distributors have both committed to net zero targets by 2040, but the path to delivery is complex. Independent consultants can help businesses navigate this complexity, ensuring that capital is deployed where it delivers the greatest return and long-term resilience.

This guidance builds on themes explored in the white paper 'How the Green Agenda Hijacked the Need for Energy Efficiency for Businesses', which highlighted how shifting political priorities can distract from the commercial logic of energy efficiency. As Independent consultants Hawley Energy will help you cut energy costs, avoid expensive mistakes, and build a more resilient business, without the sales pressure.

One example of this commitment to independence can be seen in the evolution of Hawley Energy. Founder Andrew Hawley recognised early on that combining consultancy with installation created a perception of bias, even when advice was well intentioned. In response, the business stepped away from the installation market entirely, streamlining its offer to focus solely on impartial consultancy. This decision removed any doubt about the objectivity of its recommendations and reinforced its role as a trusted advisor to commercial clients.

Conclusion

The path to net zero is not just a technical challenge, it's a strategic one. With over a million non-residential buildings in the UK requiring decarbonisation, and billions in investment at stake, the quality of advice businesses receive will shape their success for decades to come.

Continued..

Independent energy consultants offer more than technical expertise. They bring objectivity, cross-sector insight and a commitment to outcomes, not commissions.

Independent Consultants help organisations avoid costly missteps, align internal teams and make confident, data-driven decisions.

As this paper has shown, the risks of relying on conflicted advice are real and avoidable.

Whether reviewing a retrofit, planning a capital programme or navigating compliance, independence is not a luxury. It's a necessity.

For businesses seeking clarity in a crowded and often confusing marketplace, the message is simple: **choose advisors who are free to put your interests first!**

Written by: Andrew Hawley

Date: 8th July 2025

If you'd like to find out more, you can check out the Hawley Energy Website and click on the Contact Us page, call them on +44 (0) 01484 929545 or email hello@hawleyenergy.co.uk

If you're reviewing your energy strategy, planning a retrofit, or simply want a second opinion, let's talk. We'll help you cut through the noise, avoid costly missteps, and build a plan that delivers real, measurable value.