

Case Study 10: Community Energy Project



This case study forms part of **Community Action for Energy**, a major programme designed to promote and facilitate local community-based energy projects. The programme is an initiative for the Environment, Education & Community group of the Energy Efficiency Partnership for Homes.

Community Energy Project

Introduction

This case study provides an overview of an integrated community-based project in Stoke (near Plymouth) and Buckland (near Newton Abbot), Devon. The project aims to achieve energy efficiency improvements and associated carbon dioxide emission reductions in local schools (primary and secondary), households and businesses, through initiatives ranging from intensive, structured programmes for schoolchildren to home energy visits.

When?

The project was launched in September 2001 and is ongoing.

Who's involved?

The lead organisation is Global Action Plan (GAP). They are working in partnership with Devon Energy Efficiency Advice Centre, the Centre for Energy and the Environment at the University of Exeter and Teignbridge, Plymouth and Devon councils.

How is it funded?

The project has received funding from the Energy Saving Trust's Innovative Carbon Reduction Pilots scheme, the Landfill Tax Credit scheme and the European Commission.

What are the targets and aims?

The Community Energy Project is targeted at private householders, primary and secondary schools and local businesses.

It aims to:

- engage 700 households, four schools and ten businesses
- carry out 700 home energy visits, complete 100 Home Energy Checks and establish active monitoring of energy usage in 70 households
- provide the local community with the knowledge, skills and systems it needs to continue progress beyond the lifetime of the project
- achieve an average of 5% carbon dioxide emissions reduction per household per year over ten years by implementing home energy efficiency improvements.

How was it implemented?

The emphasis of the Community Energy Project is on directly engaging the people of Buckland and Stoke in making energy savings in their homes, schools and workplaces. By working simultaneously with different sections of the population, the project is creating a community-wide movement towards better energy efficiency.

The project has a dedicated, full-time project officer, supported and advised by a steering group and Global Action Plan staff. Project partner organisations provide specific support based on their expertise. For example, home energy advice is provided by Devon Energy Efficiency Advice Centre and the University of Exeter is monitoring the project.



Community Energy Project

The work in schools is based on tried and tested models already established by GAP (such as the Small Change and Action at School programmes), with adaptations to reflect local circumstances. The project officer visits schools to provide basic training and raise awareness through group discussions and games. Both staff and students learn how to undertake basic energy audits to measure and monitor the school's energy consumption. They then decide how best to address energy wastage (for example, by switching off lights in unused rooms or improving the roof insulation). At this stage the message is taken to the rest of the school and out to the wider community, for instance by holding a curriculum week or an energy-themed community event. The project also encourages schools to use the local media to publicise their results. Pupils take Home Energy Check forms home to their parents, along with a letter offering a free subscription to *ergo*, GAP's environmental lifestyle magazine. Two out of the four local schools have undergone such training to date.

The project works with local businesses by training one representative from each company to be an 'environment champion'. One-day workshops educate them about improving energy, waste and water efficiency and cutting costs, and motivate them to go back to their organisation to implement changes.

To address energy savings at home, the project officer or Devon Energy Efficiency Advice Centre staff undertake home visits. This face to face contact gives the householder a more personalised and in-depth understanding of their energy use than they would get from simply completing a Home Energy Check. Many of the householders visited are on low incomes, so often they find out that they are eligible

for grants towards energy efficiency measures.

The project as a whole is being promoted through posters and flyers, mailings and presentations to community groups, and coverage in the local press. The local authorities' networks of committees are also being used to spread the word. There are plans to have a permanent information display at a local community centre and, ultimately, to stage a celebration event for the whole community to enjoy their achievements.



Achievements

Since September 2001 the Community Energy Project has:

- established a partnership, steering group and network of contacts throughout Stoke and Buckland
- delivered structured programmes in schools, including training days
- put in place a framework for advisory visits, Home Energy Checks and monitoring.



Case Study 10: Community Energy Project

Key success factors

- elements of the project are replicated from previously tried and tested schemes
- there is direct access to the expertise and experience of local partners and Global Action Plan staff
- by including other environmental issues, such as water efficiency and waste reduction (as featured in the work with businesses), the project capitalises on different funding opportunities
- the involvement of various sectors of the community contributes to a sense of momentum and 'reciprocity', i.e. individual improvements form part of a bigger picture
- the launch was preceded by a feasibility study and a business plan that helped to clarify issues and structure the full project.

Lessons learnt

- clear and agreed roles for partner organisations and others involved in the project are essential, particularly in the early stages
- adequate human resources are crucial: schools, businesses and other groups benefit most from programmes where they have direct and reliable access to facilitation and support
- good pre-launch planning ensures easier and more effective implementation
- incentives such as energy efficient light bulbs and clockwork equipment, given as prizes at community events, help to crystallise thinking about actions
- capitalising on existing models, activities and expertise is an efficient approach
- monitoring and evaluation is important to measure, and celebrate, success, and must be incorporated into early project planning.

Next steps

It is anticipated that links will be established with related projects in the region, for example incorporating the project into a wider European Commission-funded carbon reduction project.

Further information

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