



Community Regeneration Project

Bringing energy efficiency to schools, homes and businesses

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 did this project begin?

The project was launched in September 2001 and is understood to be ongoing.

Who's involved?

The lead organisation was Global Action Plan (GAP). It worked 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 was 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 was targeted at private householders, primary and secondary schools and local businesses. It aimed 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 had a dedicated, full-time project officer, supported and advised by a steering group and Global Action Plan staff. Project partner organisations provided specific support based on their expertise. For example, home energy advice was provided by Devon Energy Efficiency Advice Centre and the University of Exeter is monitoring the project.

The work in schools is based on tried and tested models already established by GAP, 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.

The project worked with local businesses by training one representative from each company to be an 'environment champion'. One-day workshops educated 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 undertook home visits. This face to face contact gave 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 were on low incomes, so often found that they are eligible for grants towards energy efficiency measures.

The project as a whole was promoted through posters and flyers, mailings and presentations to community groups, and coverage in the local press. The local authorities' networks of committees was also used to spread the word.

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.

Five 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.

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.

LESSONS LEARNT

- 1 clear and agreed roles for partner organisations and others involved in the project are essential, particularly in the early stages
- 2 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
- 3 good pre-launch planning ensures easier and more effective implementation
- 4 incentives such as energy efficient light bulbs and clockwork equipment, given as prizes at community events, help to crystallise thinking about actions
- 5 capitalising on existing models, activities and expertise is an efficient approach
- 6 monitoring and evaluation is important to measure, and celebrate, success, and must be incorporated into early project planning.



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Community Action for Energy (CAfE) is an initiative of the Energy Saving Trust that promotes and facilitates local community based energy projects. This case study is one of a series showcasing the most exciting and innovative of the 2500 projects that are part of the CAfE network.

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