

Community Skills for Climate Change

Transition West Bridgford

°Climate east
midlands



Background to the Community

Transition West Bridgford was created in June 2008. Activity on the theme of eco homes started in May 2010 with the first Eco House Open Day. Interest in that event led to the creation of the Eco House Group. To date, events laid on for the group include a series of 5 seminars on different aspects of low energy or sustainable homes, a second open homes day in May 2011, and of course the Eco Houses Under Construction project that is the focus of this case study.

Project Aims

The Eco Houses Under Construction project was devised to continue the process started with the open days and the seminars. The main aim was to provide members of the public with opportunities to see green new build and low energy refurbishment work in progress. The theory behind this idea is that seeing completed projects is inspiring, but seeing them in progress is more informative because the real energy efficiency features are usually invisible by the time the work is complete. To this end, more

than 8 on-site talks across 5 homes were arranged, rounded off with an exhibition event bringing together all the projects and the experts who contributed to them.

Achievements

During the project, the Eco House Group has grown from 100 to 170 members, with high levels of attendance and obvious interest at the different events.

It is clear from the feedback that the events have increased home-owners' knowledge about low energy houses, and that many are seriously planning ahead to carry out significant work on their own homes. What is particularly interesting is the number of people living in "hard to treat" solid wall homes who are now considering major work that includes insulation or even whole house low energy retrofit.

Another achievement is the wider interest that this project has generated, which led to a presentation about the project at the AECB (sustainable builders' association) annual conference in September 2011.

Project
Eco house under construction

Grant
£5859

Impact on the Wider Community

Research by the Energy Saving Trust and others indicates the importance of exemplars. It is perhaps no surprise that West Bridgford is an area where a few home-owners have already started to insulate their solid wall homes – over 10 years ago, Gil Schalom and Penney Poyzer led the way with the radical low energy refurbishment of their typical West Bridgford Victorian semi. With the information and contacts available through the Eco Houses Under Construction project, a steady trickle of low energy refurbishers is now emerging. Their network of friends and family (and others in the Eco House Group, and readers of the wbecohouses blog) will be influenced by them when they radically improve the efficiency of their own homes.

Publicity in the local press has attracted a significant number of new members to the group, and is another way that awareness of the potential for improvements is being raised across the West Bridgford



www.climate-em.org.uk/projects/community-skills

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community. Publicity across wider networks (to green groups, members of professional bodies like AECB and IEMA, and employees in nearby councils) is also attracting people to the project.

Challenges Faced / Lessons Learned

Perhaps the biggest challenge for this kind of project lies in trying to carry out the funded project in a restricted timescale. Building projects are notorious for being delayed, and both the new build and the refurbishment project experienced delays at some point. In this case, the two projects complemented each other in that one was active while the other stalled, and vice versa.

For others considering replicating this project, a longer funding timescale would be very useful as this would give a better chance of following individual homes' progress from start to finish.

At the outset of the project, there was the concern that there was a need for extra public liability insurance to cover visitors to events held on site. It would seem that this depends on the policy – some cover all visitors automatically regardless of their purpose for being there, others may require extra cover.

Early on, it was thought that hiring protective clothing/footwear would be necessary. However, the group were fortunate to have a Health and Safety expert to advise them. (While hard hats look the part, it is more important to check that "things that could fall from height" are put away, for example.) Likewise, people are better off being asked to bring their own sturdy footwear rather than

being issued with steel toe cap boots that they don't need and may not fit.

Feedback indicated that visitors wanted to see more than two projects to get a broader picture across a wider variety of housing types and options. The group had the contacts needed to track down suitable examples that were in progress or recently completed, and the project benefitted from the addition of one new build example and a number of extra refurbishments.

Regarding publicity, there was no "magic bullet" for attracting people to our events. The Eco House Group have an email list of people who have attended the previous events, and one group email to them invariably gained enough responses to run an event. To grow the group though, every press release or poster to the general public or to "green" groups resulted in a handful of new members.

In the Future?

As the building work on the two building projects at the centre of this project is ongoing, the home owners themselves are keen to continue to open their homes as the work progresses. The refurbishment project is an "Aspiring SuperHome" on the SuperHomes database (www.superhomes.org.uk). On completion, energy use should be cut by at least 60%, and it will join the other SuperHomes in holding regular open days for the public.

Having teamed up with the local AECB group, members of the Eco House Group will have further opportunities to attend these events (designed originally for AECB



professionals to learn from each other).

Further funding applications have and will be made to build on the progress to date of the Eco House Group. They are also thinking seriously about setting up a social enterprise to put these projects on a more sustainable footing as they cannot run indefinitely on a purely voluntary basis.

Contact Information

Eco Houses Under Construction

Tina Holt

E: info@wbecohouses.co.uk
www.wbecohouses.co.uk

Useful Web Addresses

Climate East Midlands

www.climate-em.org.uk

Groundwork East Midlands

www.eastmidlands.groundwork.org.uk

Planning for Climate Change

www.planningforclimatechange.org.uk