

Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board

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Report title: Eco Bicester retrofit programme - Bicester insulation scheme	
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report informs the Strategic Delivery Board of the delivery of the Eco Bicester insulation scheme which ran between August 2010 and September 2012. It summarises the main issues, the outputs and the take up by Bicester residents. The insulation scheme has been the key element of the Eco Bicester retrofitting programme and the report identifies opportunities to continue the retrofitting of homes in Bicester.

2. Background

- 2.1 Retrofitting of the existing housing stock in Bicester was identified by the Board as an early priority in the Eco Bicester Project. £500,000 (five hundred thousand pounds) for retrofitting projects was identified and a three year scheme to provide loft insulation and/or cavity wall insulation was approved by the Board in July 2010. The Eco Bicester insulation scheme produced marketing materials including leaflets and posters for a local campaign and was designed to promote the Eco Bicester concept to existing residents. It was supported by Cherwell District Council (CDC) staff both within the Eco Bicester Project Team and others in Communications, Housing and Environmental Services and managed by the United Sustainable Energy Agency (USEA) and operated under the "Cocoon Your Home" service. Approved local contractors have been used throughout the scheme providing local jobs for local people.
- 2.2 The Eco Bicester project team coordinated the scheme with input from the Community Liaison Officer working alongside CDC's Environmental Services team to promote it with other Council initiatives such as recycling and reducing food waste. This project team approach continues.
- 2.3 Under the scheme, fully installed cavity wall insulation (CWI) and loft insulation was offered at a reduced price made available from eco town funding. As a result, Bicester householders paid £49 per measure. In some cases, eligible residents known as "Priority Groups" received free insulation and installation due to funding available from energy companies through the Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) until December 2012. It was expected that for every pound spent on this project an additional two pounds of investment (through owner's contributions and CERT funding) would be drawn in. However final figures show that £2.20 of external investment was drawn in for every pound of eco town funding.
- 2.4 Regular reports have been provided to the Board during the scheme's operation. For example, in October 2011, the thousandth installations were reported. The announcement of the Government's Green Deal has meant the scheme has ended a year short of the initial three

year programme. In October 2011 it was agreed to include Bicester's community halls in the scheme and carry out comprehensive canvassing of the main residential areas of Bicester.

2.5 From June 2012 an improved offer (zero cost to householders) was launched due to further CERT funding prior to the Green Deal. Cherwell District Council (CDC) became the only local authority in the UK to provide free insulation to residents. Despite this offer, take up did not increase significantly and some of the reasons for this are explored below. In September 2012 the scheme closed to new customers to ensure referrals were delivered by December 2012. From February 2013, the retrofitting of the Bicester housing stock will continue to be available through the Government's Green Deal and local initiatives to promote energy efficiency and reduction of carbon emissions.

2.6 Green Deal

The Government will launch its Green Deal programme on 28th January 2012 following announcements at the end of 2012. The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) ran a Local Authority funding competition in November 2012 and following a successful bid in partnership with BioRegional, the Eco Bicester Project has won funding (£280,000) for a local scheme to promote the Green Deal in Bicester as part of the Pioneer Places Fund. In order to comply with the award the funding needs to be allocated and used by the end of March 2013.

2.7 Collective Switching

In November 2012, the CDC Executive agreed to progress with a collective switching scheme and iChoosr has been appointed as an intermediary to deliver the scheme. An application for DECC funding ("Cheaper Energy Together") to support an Oxfordshire wide collective switching project was recently unsuccessful and the scheme will continue to be delivered by the individual local authorities with iChoosr. Registration for the scheme is scheduled to take place in February and it is proposed to promote the scheme in late January using the Eco Bicester Demonstration Building. The first auction is expected to take place in April 2013.

3. Review of the Eco Bicester Insulation Scheme

3.1 The table below provides a summary of the scheme.

Bicester Insulation Grant Financial Summary			
	USEA Cocoon Your Home scheme	Free Scheme from Sept '12	Summary
Households referred to grant	1742	365	2107
Households installed under grant	1359 (122 Priority Group)	68 (5 under Bicester grant)	1427
Measures installed	1701	68	1769
Estimated Carbon Saved (tonnes per annum)	237	9	246
Estimated Carbon Dioxide Savings t pa	869	35	904
Estimated CERT Grant for Installed Measures Only	£316,815	£20,400	£337,215

Source: United Sustainable Energy Agency (USEA)

- 3.2 Local companies have been used to carry out the installations and a Banbury based consultancy (Green Puzzle) was actively engaged in a comprehensive canvassing programme. This has provided opportunities for employment, skills development and training for local people and contributed to the development of the low carbon economy in the area.
- 3.3 The scheme has reached a wide proportion of the Bicester residents and provided insulation to vulnerable and low income families (priority groups) including those in receipt of eligible benefits and pensioners over the age of 70. A plan showing the extent of the scheme and installations in Bicester is contained in the Appendix. It provides a record of the homes with insulation and the data has been added to the Cherwell mapping system. GIS mapping information on cavity wall installations (CWI) has been updated using Local Authority Building Control records and data from the Cavity Insulation Guarantee Agency (CIGA). The map produced from Cherwell mapping service provides a useful tool to identify the homes that have benefited from the scheme. The total number of recorded cavity wall insulations in Bicester is set out in the table below:

Cavity Wall Insulation records for Bicester		
Ward	CWI	%
Bicester North	527	30
Bicester West	478	27
Bicester Town	184	9
Bicester East	323	18
Bicester South	275	16
Total	1,707	100

- 3.4 By July 2011, after almost nine months of the schemes operation, approximately 500 homes had been insulated with referral numbers continuing to increase, when a summer campaign promoting the benefits of insulation in keeping cool in the summer was launched. The opening of the Eco Bicester demonstration building also had a positive effect in promoting the benefits of good insulation to the community, and visitors being encouraged to retrofit their homes. Throughout the scheme's operation, members of the Eco Bicester team promoted the scheme at community events including the annual CDC compost give away.
- 3.5 In the first year of its operation (October 2011), the scheme had delivered over 1,000 installations with the continued success in some part attributable to neighbourhood canvassing of target areas and a competition to be the 1000th household to benefit from the scheme. By March 2012 approximately 10% of Bicester's homes had been insulated reflecting the effective management of the scheme working with USEA and other partners to organise promotional activities, good use of contacts, networks and equipment (thermal imaging camera). The scheme has reached out to a wide range of Bicester residents. For example, all households in Bicester receiving Council Tax benefit were contacted to make them aware of the offer (free insulation), as well as promoting the scheme through a local 50+ magazine. This allowed the Eco Bicester project to reach groups that would potentially benefit most from a reduction in energy costs.
- 3.6 In June 2012, Southwold community centre was insulated after receiving Eco Bicester funding. This encouraged two other community halls to express an interest in applying for funding and it is anticipated insulation will be installed in the first quarter of 2013.
- 3.7 In the final few months of the scheme (summer 2012) the take up of insulation measures began to slow suggesting that the early adopters had been reached and that it would be more difficult

to maintain previous levels of take up. Free insulation was only offered to all households in Bicester for a limited period and this may account for the low take up. A large amount of referrals and installations had already been made through the scheme, which may have led to new referrals being very low.

- 3.8 The Government's announcement on Green Deal may also have been a factor in lower numbers of measures being installed as well as competing schemes being made available through providers including British Gas, Tesco and others. This may have led to some confusion and misunderstandings among residents and could have contributed to slower take up. Going forward, it will be important to clearly communicate future retrofitting schemes including the Green Deal.
- 3.9 A large part of the delivering the scheme was down to detailed planning and promotion of activities. Existing networks and resources within Cherwell District Council were used effectively including Housing, Environmental Services and, Communications. Extensive marketing campaigns were carried out by USEA and CDC, including press releases, flyer distribution, Google adverts and neighbourhood canvassing carried out by Green Puzzle. The table below shows results of the promotional campaign in terms of the percentage of installations:

Promotion Source	%age of installations
Referral	23
New Technology including social media	6
Print	7
Canvassing	36
Media	21
Undefined	6
Mail out	1

Source: United Sustainable Energy Agency data

- 3.10 Lessons have been learnt on the methods of communication and promotional material produced by the Project Team with support from CDC Communications team. It was clear other offers were becoming available in 2012 and the scheme had to compete with other providers installing insulation measures. This has made the recording of baseline information difficult to measure accurately. For example, there was some negative feedback from some residents in the Highfield area when officers and BioRegional followed up of the Local Energy Assessment Fund (LEAF) GLEE (Grass Roots Bicester Leads Energy Efficiency) project. The GLEE project in February and March 2012, promoted of energy efficiency but was also able to promote the Eco Bicester insulation scheme through door stepping and awareness raising workshops. Community TV was used for the first time in the Eco Bicester project to raise awareness of the benefits of insulation and the offer available. Heavy promotion during the winter of 2011/12 played an important role in the continued increased number of installations.
- 3.11 A final promotion in September 2012 highlighted the end of scheme and introduced the Green Deal, through door stepping and offering a £100 incentive (made available through USEA). The scheme closed in October 2012 but given the lag in installations it did not officially end until the end of 2012. The contract between CDC and USEA has been terminated and the unspent funding is being recovered from USEA.

3.12 CO₂ saving

The scheme has delivered real benefits in terms of carbon reduction by improving the energy efficiency in the existing housing stock. USEA has estimated that 870 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide will be saved each year. Given a typical Bicester home emits on average three tonnes of carbon dioxide per year, this reduction in CO₂ is equivalent to the emissions of 290 homes. By comparison the CO₂ emissions for a typical UK resident is 12 tonnes per year and on this basis it is estimated the scheme has saved the equivalent of approximately 73 residents annual carbon footprint. In addition over 2,000 households have been engaged and this provides a legacy for future retrofitting initiatives and a test of effective engagement tools.

3.13 Summary

2107	Households referred to grant
1769	Measures installed
1427	Households insulated
342	Household who had both measures installed
127	Free installations

3.14 More than 10% of Bicester's homes have been insulated in two years as a result of the Eco Bicester insulation scheme. The figures for installations in Bicester make up approximately 70% of Cherwell District Council's installations over four years. The Bicester figures also equate to approximately 5% of USEA's year nationwide insulation programme. The local promotional material and staff input resulted in a high conversion rate from referrals into installations (78%).

3.15 Approximately £184,000 of eco town funding has been used to retrofit residential properties in Bicester (£4,500 was used for community halls). Approximately £317,000 of CERT funding was used and householder contributions were approximately £93,000. In total, £590,000 was invested directly into Bicester's housing stock attracting £2.20 of investment for every £1 spent on this project, which is more than expected when the scheme was launched in 2010.

3.16 It is estimated that a combined annual energy bill saving of £265,350 will be made by the households with insulation installed through the scheme.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Members are asked to:

1. Note the contents of the reports in terms of the delivery of retrofitting homes through the Eco Bicester insulation scheme
2. Recognise the benefits of the scheme, particularly in terms of engaging the local community and the attracting investment in the housing stock
3. Support the proposals to deliver the retrofit programme through the Green Deal to continue to provide local employment opportunities, skills and training
4. Support the retrofitting of two further community halls to take place in the first quarter of 2013.
5. Support the work to promote a local Green Deal programme for Bicester to be delivered through the funding received from DECC