

East Herts Council

Home Energy Conservation Act Further Report 2013

March 2015 Progress Update Report

Introduction

The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA) recognises local authorities' ability to use their position to significantly improve the energy efficiency of all the residential accommodation in their areas. Since the Act originally came into force East Herts Council has supported the delivery of insulation and heating improvements to domestic premises in the district through a variety of measures.

In July 2012 the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) published a revised guidance under HECA for local authorities in England to produce a summary report on the measures they propose to take to achieve continued domestic energy efficiency improvements. At the same time DECC removed the requirement to report on detailed specific local data and statistics. The first of these reports, known as a "further report", was published in 2013.

This subsequent report aims to provide an update on progress made during the last two years together.

Background

East Herts Council is committed to reducing energy consumption and improving energy efficiency in all residential properties. This has the benefit of reducing fuel poverty and cutting carbon dioxide emissions, which is one of the main contributors to climate change.

Hertfordshire's overall CO₂ emissions decreased by 18% between 2005 and 2014 in the three sectors of industry and commercial, domestic and road transport (www.decc.gov.uk). East Herts current performance on emissions is 5.3 tonnes total CO₂ per capita (DECC, 2014 statistics*). This represents a significant reduction of 22% in total per capita emissions since 2005 and is reflective in part of a consistent and continuing effort to promote and deliver projects to improve energy efficiency both local and national.

In relation to fuel poor households, currently 7.5% of households in East Herts are considered to be fuel poor (DECC 2014 statistics**), which is in line with the

Hertfordshire. However, the average hides a wide range of fuel poor household from 2.5% to 17.5%, with the higher proportion of fuel poor households being found in the off gas more rural properties. The number of fuel poor has been increasing nationally, mainly due to the impacts of the economic climate and rising fuel prices.

The Hills Fuel Poverty Review identifies the links between fuel poverty and health deprivation. While the health of people in East Herts is generally better than the England average, fuel poverty is a concern for the Council. Data provided by the Public Health Observatory (2014) indicates that there were approximately 90 excess winter deaths (EWD) in East Herts in winter 2012/13. Fuel poverty and the absence of a warm well heated energy efficient home can play an important part in the level of excess winter deaths, as EWD varies from year to year and appears to be partly correlated with winter temperature.

East Herts Council has recognised the importance of helping its residents fight fuel poverty and has identified combating fuel poverty as one of its key visions.

* Note emissions data is produced two year in arrears.

National Targets

The requirement to improve the energy efficiency of homes stems from the legal requirements to reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions set out in the Climate Change Act 2008 and the government's Carbon Plan, published in 2011. The Carbon Plan sets the following targets in relation to housing:

- o reduce greenhouse gas CO₂ emissions by 29% by 2017, 35% by 2022, and 50% by 2027 – for buildings this means a reduction between 24% and 39% lower than 2009 levels by 2027;
- to insulate all cavities and lofts, where practical, by 2020;
- By 2030, between 1 – 3.7m additional solid wall installations and between 1.9 - 7.2m other energy efficiency installations;
- By 2030, 1.6m - 8.6m building level low carbon heat installations such as heat pumps (Government modelling suggests that 21 - 45% of heat supplies to buildings will need to be low carbon); and
- By 2050 emissions from UK buildings to be “close to zero”.

Activity in East Herts 2013 -15

Action	Completion date	Progress Update
1 -Local Energy Ambitions		
1.1 East Herts Council signed up to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change in 2009, as part of its Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. The Council, in partnership with other Hertfordshire authorities, will consider signing up to "Climate Local" to demonstrate its ongoing commitment	2014	The Council continues to remain committed to reducing carbon emissions as a signatory to the Nottingham Declaration. It produces a detailed annual audit of activity on progress towards its Climate Change emission reduction target.
1.2 The Council will continue to signpost residents to national and local support available for energy efficiency and tariff reduction.	Ongoing	Detailed guidance provided on the East Herts website and further specific advice is provided to residents by telephone.
2- Green Deal and ECO		
2.1The council is an active member of the Herts Sustainability Forum (HSF), which continues to explore the feasibility of establishing a Herts Green Deal consortium for local authorities within the county. The council will also look to join with partners to make bids to appropriate external grant opportunities should these become available.	Ongoing	Whilst the HSF decided not to establish a specific Herts Green Deal, due to the complexity of the scheme, the Council has continued to work with partners on a range of energy efficiency activities and will continue to do so. However, it is expected that the Green Deal is likely to be significantly revised at a national level.
3 - Feed in Tariffs		
3.1 The council continues to provide advice and information support to residents wishing to install their own PV systems	Ongoing	Guidance is provided on the East Herts website and further specific advice is provided to residents by telephone.
3.2 Take up of renewable solar in the domestic sector has been relatively low. The council will consider the potential for future schemes aimed at encouraging the installation of such renewable technologies.	2015	Solar technology has been increasingly embraced by the domestic sector due to the popularity of Feed in Tariffs. Data is currently being collated at a county level on assessing

		the number of local solar installations.
4 - Renewable Heat Premium Payment		
4.1 The council provides advice and information support to residents on the Renewable Heat Premium Payment.	Ongoing	Guidance is provided on the East Herts website and further specific advice is provided to residents by telephone.
4.2 Take up of renewable heat measures in the domestic sector has been low. The council will consider the potential for future schemes aimed at encouraging the installation of such renewable technologies.	2015	Renewable heat remains considerably less popular than solar power, due to the level of national subsidy available and perceived complexity of schemes. At the moment the Council does not offer additional specific grants for Renewable Heat; however advice and guidance is available via the Council web site and by telephone.
5 - Home Insulation Initiatives		
5.1 The council will deliver renewed effort to encourage the take up of basic insulation measures across the housing stock	2013	Partnership with local energy efficiency company was investigated to provide free loft and cavity wall insulation to local residents, however, due to the availability of free schemes through national utility companies becoming available the Council has instead taken the opportunity to promote these to residents.
5.2 The council will consider an awareness raising or promotional programme with a focus on the installation of hard measures as the best way to significantly reduce energy use over the long-term.	2014	Partnership with local energy efficiency company was investigated to provide free loft and cavity wall insulation to local residents, however, due to the availability of free schemes through national utility companies becoming available the Council has instead taken the opportunity to promote these to residents. In addition the Council has applied for national funding for

		several specific projects e.g. EWI for park homes and a central heating scheme for currently off gas areas. Results of whether East Herts has been successful in these competitive applications is awaited
5.3 The council will refresh its £20,000 Home Insulation Grant programme in the wake of the closure of national schemes in order to provide 50% grants for home loft and cavity wall insulation measures and in particular will permit loft insulation tops ups and the cost of loft clearance / access boarding within permitted grant claim costs.	2013	New grant scheme launched. 50% grants available for loft and cavity wall insulation available for maximum of £200 and £300. Applications for top-ups and loft boarding accepted subject to specific conditions.
6 - Fuel Poverty		
6.1 The council will consider the best way to achieve targeted tackling of fuel poverty given the projected ageing population, the recent rise in levels of fuel poverty in the District and the fact that many poorly insulated properties do not have mains gas as the primary heating fuel.	2015	Later in 2015 the Council intends to commission external consultants (BRE) to undertake a private sector housing condition review and this will provide information on location and housing types for which targeted action is most required
6.2 The council will produce an update to its existing Affordable Warmth Strategy in the light of new guidance on fuel poverty expected to be published by the Government in 2014	2015	Publication of the Governments Fuel Poverty Strategy was expected in 2014 but has been delayed. The council is aiming to produce its own fuel poverty strategy in 2015 based on the Governments strategy document once this is published in 2015. However, detailed interim reports on potential activity to alleviate fuel poverty have been presented to the Council's Environment Scrutiny Committee in September 2014 and February 2015
6.3 The council will promote and advertise fuel	Ongoing	HCC Fuel tariff switching

tariff switching initiatives to local residents as a way of encouraging residents to ensure they are achieving the best value fuel supply		promoted to residents via web site and district magazines. A report to Environment Scrutiny Committee in February 2015 suggested options for further expansion of community switching schemes and such schemes will be kept under review.
7 - Zero Carbon Homes		
7.1 The Council supports the Government target of ensuring all newly built homes to be zero carbon by 2016	2016	The Government is currently reviewing the Code for Sustainable Homes with a view to the amendment of the 2016 zero carbon target.
7.2 The Council will facilitate the construction of Zero Carbon Homes through its Planning conditions and policies	2016	The Government is currently reviewing the Code for Sustainable Homes with a view to the amendment of the 2016 zero carbon target.
7.3 The Council will continue to promote "Hertfordshire Building Futures: A Hertfordshire Guide to Promoting Sustainability in Development." to provide guidance on potential energy efficiency measures for new build and home extensions that are available to help maximise sustainability together with practical tips to meet policy requirements.	Ongoing	Hertfordshire Building Futures continues to be promoted to local developers, with the Council working with HCC to ensure that the information remains useful and relevant.
8 - Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's)		
8.1 The Council will consider the potential collation of energy efficiency data in relation to the energy efficiency ratings of residential accommodation within the District as information becomes available	2015	The Council intends to commission external consultants (BRE) to undertake a private sector housing condition review and data from EPC's for domestic premises will form part of the information used in the review process.
9 - Private Rented Sector		
9.1 The Council will continue to respond to complaints from tenants in the private rented sector under the Housing Act (2004) and will require landlords to meet minimum standards.	Ongoing	Ongoing – as required.

9.2 The Council attends Landlords' Forums and works with lettings agents on an occasional basis to disseminate information and to raise awareness of Landlords' duties to provide minimum standards and to advise of the assistance available.	Ongoing	Ongoing – as required.
9.3 The council will continue to robustly enforce the requirements of the Housing Health and Safety Rating Scheme in tenanted properties to reduce the hazard of excess cold.	Ongoing	Ongoing – as required.
10 - Vulnerable Residents		
10.1 Following two successful years of the Hertfordshire Keep Warm Stay Well partnership, where in 2012/13 East Herts shared in £400,000 of government funding enabling the provision of some 86 home energy efficiency visits across the district and signposting to external assistance for vulnerable residents, we will continue to work together with partners across Hertfordshire and bid for funding when available, in order to extend the scheme for future winter seasons.	Ongoing	National funding was cut for the KWSW initiative but the project had been re-launched a using local funding through Herts County Council and rebadged as Herts Healthy Homes. HHH is now a year round campaign focusing on energy saving and keeping warm in vulnerable household during the autumn/ winter period and keeping active/ cool during the summer. It has strong backing from health partners.
10.2 The council will look to deliver seasonal energy efficiency advice and information through health centres, GP surgeries and at flu clinics.	2014	This initiative is now being progressed through the Herts Healthy Homes project, with direct liaison with all local health professionals, GP's, district/community nursing and pharmacies.
10.3 The council will continue to make available grants under its decent homes grants programme to ensure that the homes of vulnerable residents are brought up to an appropriate standard where necessary.	Ongoing	Ongoing as required.
11 - Promotion of Energy Efficiency and advice		
11.1 The Council will continue to promote home energy efficiency measure through dedicated pages on the Council web site, occasional articles in Link magazine, social media, stands at events, leaflets, posters and bin hangers.	Ongoing	Promotional activity will remain an important element of disseminating information to local residents. Information on energy efficiency grants and

		Herts Healthy Homes Scheme delivered through use of bin hangers to households across the District - Christmas 2014.
11.2 The Council will continue to work with local community and environment groups in order to network home energy efficiency advice to local residents	Ongoing	Links continue to be developed with local community groups within the District and in particular through contacts the Local Transition Town networks.
11.3 The council, as an active partner within the Herts Sustainability Forum, will deliver home energy efficiency advice through the Forum's bespoke environmental campaigns website www.greenourherts.org.uk	2014	Information now provide on web site.
11.4 The council, as an active partner within the Herts Sustainability Forum will take part in domestic home energy efficiency campaigns as part of the Forum's Green Our Herts ongoing environmental awareness and advice campaign	2014	Information now provide on web site along with specific promotional campaigns.
1.5 The council will promote the advantage and encourage the use by local residents of local oil buying clubs	2015	Basic information promoted via usual outlets however there is intention in the future to develop a coordinated specific local project
12 Partnerships		
12.1 The council will continue to work with national and local partners to improve the energy efficiency of home in the district. Partners include: Herts Healthy Homes, Carbon Action Network, Eastern Region Fuel Poverty Forum, Heca East, Herts Sustainability Forum. National Landlords' Association, Groundwork Hertfordshire, Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire District Councils, East Herts Town and Parish councils, local community and resident association groups.	Ongoing	East Herts continues to actively participate in local and regional partnerships where such work will assist the improvement of energy efficiency standards in the District.