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Home Energy Action Together

Project Completion Report



CUMBRIA STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP
THE PARTNERSHIP VOICE FOR CUMBRIA



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General Background

South Lakes Action on Climate Change *Towards Transition* was awarded funding from the North West Regional Development Agency, the Cumbria Strategic Partnership and Cumbria County Council, to undertake a home energy project in Kendal, Cumbria.

The project revolved around asking householders to undertake up to three 'asks': to switch to a green electricity tariff, to complete a Home Energy Check (HEC) and to install a free smart meter for a trial period.

The project took place between October 2009 and January 2010, with planning for the project occurring in earnest between July and October 2009. The project was managed by one project coordinator who was funded for seven days, and an additional team of approximately 12 volunteers.

The target area was Kendal Castle Ward in Kendal. It comprised around 530 households. Total cash budget for the project was £3,400.

During the project five planning and evaluation meetings were held by the volunteer group, as well as several meetings with the Energy Saving Trust and South Lakeland District Council.

Targets & Objectives

The specific objectives of HEAT were as follows:

- To get 50 households to switch to a green electricity supplier.
- To get 100 households to complete a HEC.
- To get 50 households to install a smart meter for a trial period.

Project Timeline

The project proceeded as follows:

Sept -Oct	Planning for the project and publicity.
Nov	Initial letter delivered to target area, followed by going door to door over the target area to engage households
Nov-Dec	Ring interested households and Deliver smart meters
Feb	Ring households to complete an evaluation and collect smart meters.

Progress Summary

During October a letter was delivered to all households in Kendal Castle explaining the project and what it was about. The following week a team of 12 volunteers went door to door asking households to take part in the project. The area had been selected by the Energy Saving Trust based on the data they held for Kendal from past responses to mail shots.

A freepost card was designed (see appendix) for householders to fill in on the doorstep or to complete and post if they were not in when we knocked. In addition, the Energy Saving Trust supplied 120 HEC's, along with freepost envelopes to return them in and 120 energy saving booklets and leaflets to hand to those interested.

The Ward information stated that Kendal Castle had 799 households. However, as we went door to door we counted only 530.

Around 270 householders were in when we knocked. Of these, 87 decided to take part in the project (32% response rate). Of the remaining 260 households, only 15 returned the freepost card (6% response rate). Overall we achieved a 19% response rate.

Of those people whom we met on the doorstep that decided not to take part commonly said that they had already installed loft or cavity wall insulation. Typical responses included:

My husband installed a water meter and now nags me to turn this and that off so I can't be bothered with another one.

We have already installed cavity wall and loft insulation so there isn't much else we can do.

I've already filled in one of those home surveys.

We've done it all mate.

Of the 102 households who decided to take part in the project, 49 said they would be interested in more information on switching to a green tariff, 81 said they were interested in completing a HEC and 75 requested a smart meter. Information on switching tariff and the HEC's were given out on the doorstep. For those that posted returns we rang them up and gave them the information on green tariffs and posted the HEC's to them. Those households that requested a smart meter were rung up and delivery times arranged. The meters were then delivered by volunteers and left with the households for two months.

Evaluation

With a response rate of 19% over our target area and 102 households signed up, we felt that we had achieved very good level of engagement and were broadly in line with our objectives.

To assess the level of success of the project, all households who took part were asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire over the phone (see appendix). We also took the opportunity to arrange a time to pick up the smart meters if they had borrowed one. The aim of the survey was to give us a rough qualitative idea of the success of the project. A more detailed analysis is outside the scope of this project.

Results were as follows:

	Interested in Green tariff	Interested in HEC	Interested in smart meter
No Homes	49	81	75
% of no. homes who responded	48%	79%	74%
% of total no. of homes in target ward	9%	15%	14%

	Switched to green tariff	Completed a HEC	Received a smart meter
No Homes	6	31	60
% of no. homes who ticked that box	12%	38%	80%
% of total no. of homes in target ward	1.1%	5.8%	11%

Of the 102 people contacted, 17 could not be contacted. A further 5 said that they had decided not to take part after all. This left 80 households who completed the survey (78%).

Only six households reported switching to a green tariff, out of the 49 who said they were interested in more information. This was a disappointingly low result. The reasons most people gave for not switching can be summarised by the typical responses below):

Never had the time to do it/forgot about it, happy with existing supplier, costs more.

Of the 81 households who said they were interested in receiving a HEC, 31 reported filling one in. Of these, eight said they had not received a reply, with the remainder confirming that they had received a reply.

Those that had not filled in their HEC typically reported their reasons for not doing so as follows:

Already got cavity wall and loft insulation, I already feel I know what to do and am aware, have done one before, haven't got round to it/forgot about it.

The Energy Saving trust reported to us that they had received 24 HEC's. On the question of whether they had acted on anything received from the Energy Saving Trust only 13 people answered or were asked this question. Responses were as follows:

Done most of stuff already (4)

Too expensive so didn't do anything (2)

Have taken action as a result (3 - loft and cavity wall insulation, boiler)

Am going to act in the future (4 – loft and cavity wall insulation, boiler)

Finally, of the 75 households who requested a smart meter, 60 had them delivered. The remainder were unable to be contacted and so did not receive anything. Responses to energy use as a result of using the smart meters were as follows:

	Made no difference	Made some difference	Made a lot of difference	No response/couldn't work out how to use
No homes	4	8	22	26
% of number of homes that received meters	7%	13%	37%	43%

Typical comments were as follows:

We found the meter useful to recognise what appliances were using the energy and how much some of them gobbled up. In practice we are reasonably careful about turning things off and unplugging where we can. Our children have flown the nest and they tended to be more profligate!

Didn't understand what to do with it. No one explained it.

Found it helped quite a bit to alert them to things left on/on standby.

Took daily readings and was more conscious of turning lights off etc.

We systematically worked our way around the house switching all off and then each individual item to work out its cost. This has really made us look at how we use things.

We estimated carbon saving from those households who switched to a green tariff, took action on their HEC report and received a smart meter at 50 tonnes CO₂e. This takes into account direct emissions only. Details of how we calculated this are available at www.slacc.org.uk/projects.php in the original HEAT project outline. The carbon savings do not take into account any wider changes due to the effect of the project and publicity surrounding it. It should also be noted that these savings are year on year savings (i.e. over 2 years this comes to 100 tonnes CO₂e).

Future Projects

The two most successful aspects of HEAT were dispensing smart meters to households and encouraging them to complete HEC's. Switching to a renewable supplier seemed to encounter a wide range of barriers, and more careful thought needs to be put in to overcoming these.

The actual number of people completing HEC's was relatively low. When we met with the EST to discuss which area to run the project, we decided to pick Kendal Castle as that was where the EST had had the greatest response rate (13%) to mail shots of HEC's. We decided that this would mean there would be strong interest in switching tariff and receiving a smart meter. The downside is that many households had already completed a HEC, as was evidenced as we went door to door. Also, many households who expressed interest in a HEC realised when they received it that they had completed one before.

Another factor in this is undoubtedly the time it takes to complete and the difficulty of completing them. Future projects will need to take this into account, possibly by filling them in with the householder. This makes the project more labour intensive and also increases the amount of time spent on the doorstep, both of which are also critical factors which will inhibit what can be achieved.

Take up of smart meters was very good, and feedback was also good. A possible way forward is to dispense smart meters first, and ask people to complete HEC's upon picking up the smart meters. This may result in a higher completion, as people will have already committed themselves to the project and will have received something free, making them more likely to feel that they should complete a HEC.

Another alternative is a model currently being trialled in Staveley by Sustainable Energy Network Staveley (SENS). Two members of SENS are currently trialling a similar version of HEAT on their own street (approx. 50 houses). SLACC *Towards Transition* has provided the smart meters as well as materials and advice to support the project. In this case support is available to householders from a resident on their own street. We are very interested in seeing how this works, as it is potentially readily repeatable and relatively easy to implement once the smart meters have been purchased. The project is due to start next month (March 2010).

Another potential model is currently being trialled by Cumbria Action for Sustainability. SLACC *Towards Transition* have lent 20 smart meters to support a school project CAFs are undertaking, working with schoolchildren and through them their parents, lending out the smart meters and combining it with work in school. This project started in February and is due to finish in March, and we are also keen to find out how successful it is.

Other potential models to follow are to lend smart meter packs, including HECs, to Kendal Library to lend out to residents. A similar scheme has operated in another town, and once we have all the smart meters back we will be approaching Kendal Library with this in mind.

A more targeted approach could also be developed along the lines of social marketing, focusing and targeting a particular audience with the aim of changing a specific behaviour. Having a large number of smart meters and willing volunteers means we are in an excellent position to try out a variety of different approaches in the short and medium future.

Dr Sonny Khan

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Appendices

Publicity

The project developed several strands of successful and well timed local publicity during its course.

In the week leading up to volunteers going door to door, a prominent front page article about the project was covered in The Citizen, a free local newspaper delivered to the Kendal castle area, along with accompanying picture (see below). A similar article with picture was also run at the same time in the Gazette. During the weekend of going door to door, Radio Cumbria provided excellent weekend coverage of the project during its news bulletins.



Free digital meters to try out

HOMES in Kendal are to be offered free meters on a trial basis as part of a new community project to get residents going green. Volunteers will be knocking on 150 doors and handing over smart meters as part of Home Energy Action Together (HEAT) with the aim of encouraging residents to switch their current electricity tariff to green energy, to get advice on energy management in their homes and to install a free smart meter to manage energy use in the home.

The project is the brainchild of South Lakes Action on Climate Change Towards Transition and



TRIAL: Kendal Castle resident Kate Sykes with a digital wireless smart meter

project co-ordinator Sonny Khan, said: "Most people want to reduce the energy that is wasted at home but are not necessarily sure what they need to do. We are

aiming to work with residents to identify how they can best achieve a modern, energy efficient house with the minimum of fuss.

"By installing a digital, wireless smart meter, switching their electricity to a clean renewable tariff and completing a simple home energy check we will be able to bring homes up to 21st century standards of energy efficiency".

Volunteers will go door to door on November 7 and 8.

More information is on 0800 512 012 or go online to find out more at www.energysavingtrust.org.uk.

Media publicity had a definite effect, as many people we spoke to on the doorstep reported hearing about it on the radio or seeing it in the paper.

During the project we were also contacted by Phoebe Spence, from the Community development Team at Stockport Council, who was doing research on green communities for Neighbourhoods North West (www.neighbourhoods-nw.co.uk). She was keen to find out more about the project and met with and interviewed several volunteers. She was keen to get as much detail as possible in order to present the project as a case study at the BASSAC (www.bassac.org.uk) conference on 4th March.

Budget

Smart Meters	1950.70
Management Fee	975.00
Printing & Publicity	477.30
Freepost	76.70
Misc	14.00
Total	£3493.65

In Kind (£)	
Management time (unpaid)	96.42857
Volunteers	
Meetings	350
Door to Door	224
Phone Calls	49
Deliveries/pick ups	70
SLDC	
Staff Time	50
Printing (letter, smart tasks)	50
EST	
Staff Time	240
Printed materials	£300
SLACC General Funds (cash)	93.65
Total	£1459.65

Total Project Cost	£4811
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Total project cost is significantly lower than that budgeted for. This is mainly due to overestimates for the amount of in kind contributions from the Energy Saving Trust and SLDC. Both organisations supported us comprehensively during the project, though we overestimated the amount of in kind support that would be required. Volunteer time was also about £800 below what we thought it would be.

Initial Letter



Towards Transition

Home Energy Action Together

Tel: 01539 740694

Email: slacc@slacc.org.uk

Dear Resident

Home Energy Action Together (HEAT) is a local volunteer led project aimed at getting 150 homes on KENDAL CASTLE to take action on energy management.

On the weekend of 7th and 8th of November volunteers will be visiting homes in the area to explain more about the project, how it can benefit you and what is involved. If you are not in at the time we will post a card through your door which will explain how you can get involved. We will be wearing identification badges which will be clearly visible.

We will be asking you to join your neighbours and other homes in your area in taking one or more of the following home energy actions:

- Join the **Big Switch** to renewable energy.
- Find out how you can improve the **energy efficiency** of your house.
- Install a free **smart meter** for a fixed period to manage and monitor energy use in your house.

We are aiming to work with the first 150 homes who sign up to one of the three actions. If we have not visited your home or you have not received a card by 10th November this means we will not be doing so as we have already reached our quota. If this happens to be the case but you are keen for us to work with you, then please get in contact so we can make arrangements.

South Lakes Action on Climate Change – *Towards Transition* is a not-for-profit, Kendal based organisation consisting of volunteer members of the community. Our aim is to provide a free and valuable service to you, whilst at the same time improving the energy efficiency of your house.

We hope you are looking forward to getting involved and we look forward to meeting you soon.

Warm regards

The HEAT Team

South Lakes Action on Climate Change – *Towards Transition*

Green Energy Tariff

The flow chart used for giving out this information is available to download from:

www.slacc.org.uk/projects.php

Freepost Card

The freepost card is available to download from: www.slacc.org.uk/projects.php

Evaluation Questionnaire

The evaluation is available to download from: www.slacc.org.uk/projects.php