

Highland Energy Review

7

March 2008



Another busy year for the HEEAC

It has been yet another very busy year for the Highland Energy Efficiency Advice Centre providing energy advice to members of the public across the Highland area. Operating from its offices in Inverness the HEEAC has been in contact with over 3000 people providing information on energy efficiency measures, heating systems, fuel tariffs, renewable technologies and grants all helping people to cut fuel bills and make their homes warmer.

Last summer you may have seen the advice centre out and about especially if you have been present at some of the music festivals that have taken place in the Highland area such as The Tartan Heart Festival held at Belladrum near Beaulieu and The Outsider held at Rothiemurchus near Aviemore. The festivals represent a great opportunity for the advice centre to meet with the public and provide advice on energy efficiency and information on the increasingly popular topic of renewable technologies. Also the events can tie in very well with the Advice Centres aims as the festivals often have a underlying 'green' or sustainable theme and some become a carbon neutral event.

Despite the often dreadful weather, and the inevitable mud baths, the advice centre was very pleased with the level of interest shown by visitors to these events especially with regard to renewable energy technologies. The stand also included working examples of a photovoltaic panel, producing electricity, and a small wind turbine. Probably the most common request for information was for solar water panels

which can make a significant contribute to the hot water demands of a home and was perhaps a reflection on the willingness of the homeowner to consider adopting some of these new technologies.

Another key event for the HEEAC was national Energy Saving Week which took place in October. Working with the Highland Council Sustainable Development team the objective was to get everybody thinking about how they use their energy how they can possibly save some of it. A two day event at Highland Council headquarters aimed at council staff and Members included a range of displays covering various topics such as energy efficiency in the home, the wide range of energy efficient light bulbs now available and renewable energy technologies.

To encourage council staff and Members to think about how much carbon they are producing a prize draw was organised. Entrants had to work out their carbon 'footprint' for heating and lighting their homes using an online carbon footprint calculator. A carbon footprint calculator allows you as an individual, or

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Another busy year for the HEEAC (cont.)

your whole household, to calculate the amount of carbon dioxide emitted as a result of your daily actions such as heating your home or driving your car. It's a useful tool to help you realise that your behaviour has a direct link to, and an impact on, climate change.

Also on display were number of low carbon emission rated cars including hybrid types which combine a petrol engine with an electric motor to increase the fuel economy. Cars are now rated from A to G for carbon emissions in the same manner as, for example, a fridge freezer is for energy efficiency (see also article on back page).

Also as part of the activities a 'University Challenge' style quiz called 'Universal Challenge' was held where two teams of council staff were tested on their knowledge of energy efficiency and climate change.

To have a go at working out your carbon footprint and what measures you could take to reduce it visit <http://actonco2.direct.gov.uk>



Prize draw winner Nigel Rose of Highland Council Finance Service receiving a 'wind-up' media player from Councillor John Laing, Chair of the Transport, Environmental and Community Services Committee. Also pictured is Alastair Campbell from the Highland Energy Efficiency Advice Centre.

New energy efficiency project launched in West Alness

The West Alness SAVE (Save And Value Energy) Project was launched on 12th November 2007 by Russell Ogg from Scottish and Southern Energy Efficiency Team who together with the Highland Council's Fuel Poverty strategy team are trying to alleviate Fuel Poverty throughout the Highland area. The HEEAC were also present at the launch to give local residents advice on saving energy.

The aim of the project is to work with the residents in West Alness to save energy in their houses and reduce fuel bills. The residents groups who applied for the funding decided to do this by employing an energy advisor, Brid Mckibben.

Brid completed the Energy Awareness City and Guilds course and started her home visits in late November. So far she has been to 50 houses. The most common advice she has asked for is how to use the timer controls for central heating. Brid says "Some folk have them on constantly and some not enough. Most people do not have the time to sit down to work out how to use them but once demonstrated, they are easy to use".

Another tip concerns the controls of the storage heaters. A lot of households have inherited these types of heaters and cannot afford to change them. It is important they are used correctly to keep costs down.

For the houses she has visited, Brid has been able to reduce the amount of time boilers are running unnecessarily by a total of 50 hours per day. That translates so far to a massive reduction of 7½ days of boiler time per residence over the winter months.

Brid has also referred 60% of her clients on for insulation assessment with many of these referrals qualifying for free installation. Other advice is house specific and what Brid can do is look round your house with a fresh pair of eyes to see where you may be losing energy and spending more money on fuel than you need to.

It is hoped these home energy visits can be extended to the whole of Alness and eventually the whole of the Highland region. But that depends on getting the number of visits up to 200 before October. If you are interested in any advice Brid can give, she based in the West End Community Centre, Firhill, Alness and can be contacted at 07920 437526 or brid@westalnesssave.org.uk. You can read the first newsletter to find out more about the first few months of the project by visiting www.westendcommunitycentre.org.uk.



Helping to reduce your fuel bills

Caol energy saving event a great success

As part of the Lochaber Energy Champions Project an energy 'drop-in' event was held at Caol Community Centre on the 13th February. The event, which was supported by staff from the Highland Energy Efficiency Advice Centre, was very well attended by the local community and was timed to take place during Scottish Energy Awareness Week. Over 60 visitors to the event were able to get advice on saving energy and pick up free energy efficiency light bulbs and also PowerDown adaptors. These energy saving devices are for use with a desktop computer and will shut down the power to peripherals such as the screen or printer when the computer is not in use. This helps to prevent leaving these items on stand-by therefore saving energy.

The Lochaber Energy Champions project is a joint partnership



Energy Champions Jo Cowan of Age Concern Scotland and Colin Findlay of Lochaber Community Care Forum (left) from the Lochaber Energy Champions project with participants at the event. Picture Iain Ferguson, The Write Image

between The Highland Council, Highland Energy Efficiency Advice Centre and Voluntary Action Lochaber. Its key objective is to provide energy advice to the Lochaber community through local volunteers and particularly to those who may be in fuel poverty.

Looking for energy advice?

The Highland Council provides free and impartial energy advice and information from their Highland Energy Efficiency Advice Centre. They can give advice on:

- Cutting your heating costs and fuel bills.
- Dealing with dampness and condensation.
- Getting up to 20% off fuel costs if you are considered to be in 'fuel poverty'.
- Making improvements to your home so that it is more energy efficient.
- Information on the different types of heating system
- Grants funding to help with energy efficiency improvements.
- How to select fuel suppliers and switching to the best payment method.
- Using renewable technology for heating and hot water systems.

Phone Highland Energy Efficiency Advice Centre on
Freephone 0800 512 012
or log onto www.highland.gov.uk/energy-advice

Action 4 Sustainability – teaching young people about sustainable living

In an age when the climate is changing, and the planet is becoming increasingly vulnerable to raised temperature and extreme weather, the need for humans to learn to live within the planet's means - or live sustainably - has never been so great. Young people especially need to learn about how to reduce their impact on the planet, and what climate change will mean for them in the future.

One project which has been working since its inception in late 2004, to help young people to understand about living sustainably, is Action 4 Sustainability, the Highland-based project of UK-wide volunteering charity CSV (Community Service Volunteers). In 2004, programmes to support sustainable living, such as the international Eco Schools award scheme, were being carried forward by only a scattering of schools in Highland. Elgol Primary in Skye, and Dochgarroch Primary near Inverness were at that time the only two to have been awarded the coveted Green Flag. 38 schools were registered to the programme. Now, there are 166 schools registered to the programme, with 36 having achieved bronze awards, 18 with silver awards, and 13 with the prestigious Green Flag award.

Having a Green Flag means that a school can demonstrate a range of eco activities are being carried out by most of the school pupils. It also means that decisions about what is to be done are made by (and led by) the pupils themselves, and that they're including the wider community in their activities. Activities that can help pupils reduce their impact on climate change cover a range of topics. Chiefly, they could be involved in reducing energy and water use, reducing their overall consumption of resources,



recycling the rest (particularly composting), and even installing micro-renewables.

The schools that succeed the best at doing the Eco Schools programme make it as fun as possible, so everyone is inspired to be involved. Some Eco Committees think of great names like Room Raiders (Broadford Primary), Eco Detectives (Dochgarroch Primary), Eco Wombles (Maryburgh Primary). For any further help on getting an Eco Schools programme up and running, see the national website www.ecoschoolsscotland.org, and for local support, see www.action4sustainability.org.

Article provided by Elanor Gordon, Project Co-ordinator, CSV Action 4 Sustainability.



How 'green' is your driving?

Road transport, including our cars, is responsible for about 25% of the total UK CO₂ emissions. The car that you drive and the way you drive it can make up a significant proportion of your personal carbon footprint. You can reduce your car use by walking, cycling or using public transport, however, when you do use the car there are ways in which you can cut down on the fuel you use and therefore the CO₂ emissions and your impact on the environment.

Smart driving

Small changes the way in which you drive can cut back on fuel consumption. For example when changing gear make sure that the engine is running at between 2000 and 2500 revs per minute. Changing gear when the revs are too low, or too high, reduces the cars efficiency. Also think about your speed. Sticking to the speed limit is not only safer but also reduces your fuel consumption. For example travelling at 70mph can use 9% more fuel than at 60mph or 15% more than at 50mph.

Another way of saving fuel is to switch the engine off if you are stuck in traffic or a queue for more than a minute or so. Modern cars use virtually no additional fuel to start and are also designed to be driven off straight away so don't waste fuel waiting for the engine to 'warm up'. On the maintenance side check your tyres regularly to make sure they are at the correct pressure. Under-inflated tyres are not only dangerous but they also increase fuel consumption. All these points may seem to potentially only make a small difference but they can add up to measurably reducing your fuel bills and CO₂ emissions.

More information on driving economically can be found at www.ecodrive.org and to help you work out your fuel consumption the HEEAC can provide you with a simple fuel consumption calculator. Give the HEEAC a call on FREEPHONE 0800 512 012 to request one.

Buying a fuel efficient car

If you are thinking of buying a new car choosing one with a smaller engine can reduce your CO₂ emissions. Think about what you require the car for and then aim for the car with the lowest CO₂ emissions that meets your requirements. You can find information on a cars fuel



economy by looking at the fuel economy label which should be on display on all new cars in showrooms.

Cars are now rated from A to G for carbon emissions in the same manner as, for example, a fridge freezer is for energy efficiency. An A rated car has carbon emissions of less than 101g/km and is free of road tax (Vehicle Excise Duty), whereas a G rated has carbon emissions greater than 225g/km and attracts a annual road tax rate of £400. The road tax system is to be revised in 2009 where thirteen CO₂ emission bands are to be introduced for cars and a special first year rate will be applicable to encourage buyers to purchase greener cars from 2010.

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