

28th April, Hester's Way Community Centre, Hester's Way, Cheltenham.

Attendance

Jeremy Tuberville, Housing Officer, Fosseyway HA
Tony Hayes, Property Services Manager, Wyedean HA
Chris Winter, Housing Manager, Oxbode HA
Ruth Kirkup, Housing Asset Manager, Stroud DC
Mark Sutton, Contract Officer, Stroud DC
Sandra Hickman, Tenant Representative, Stroud DC
Kevin Dawes, Manager, Cheltenham Tenants Federation
Pippa Stroud, Housing Enabler Officer, Tewkesbury Borough Council
Paul Simpson, Sales Development Manager, Domestic and General Insulation
Rachael Capener, Tenant Involvement Officer, Cheltenham Borough Homes
Shirley Goodey, Key Account Manager, Powergen
Roger Sparks, Housing Enabling Officer, Cheltenham Borough Council
Heather Watts, Energy Efficiency Development Manager, Scottish Power
Catrin Maby – Director, Severn Wye Energy Agency (catrin@swea.co.uk)
Kaye Welfare – Energy Advice Manager, Severn Wye Energy Agency (kaye@swea.co.uk)
Dinyar Baria – Project Manager, Severn Wye Energy Agency (dinyar@swea.co.uk)

Action Points

- 1) 'Easy to Use' heating controls to be investigated and reported back to forum.
- 2) The issue of tenants reporting deficiencies in insulation themselves. How is this managed by RSLs – Procedures for mopping up outstanding insulation jobs etc. This could be a future forum discussion point.
- 3) Ground Source Heat Pumps – work with Stroud DC to investigate feasibility and costs with installers/energy suppliers – Report back results to forum.
- 4) Dinyar to update forum on changes to funding (including low carbon buildings programme)
- 5) Lifetime running cost analysis of technologies to landlord & tenants– Dinyar to investigate different software currently available and to report to the next forum.
- 6) Dinyar to co-ordinate training requirements and sessions for staff and tenants.
- 7) Dinyar to investigate humidity meters and their practical use in advice giving.

Forum Notes

Catrin welcomed the attendees to the forum and gave a presentation about the SHARE project.

The meeting was then opened up to a group discussion facilitated by Tony Hayes, Wyedean Housing Association. The main issues raised were...

Heating controls

Difficultly with pensioners using them. Sometimes badly located and difficult to see.

CBH, who contract Connaughts to fix and maintain central heating, instruct installers to tell tenants how to use heating they have just fitted. However, it was questioned the appropriateness of a heating installer to give advice.

Controls (or location of controls) are not usually specified as part of the specs for new central heating systems.

It was discussed about using controls specifically designed for ease of use. Hortsman produce some that are used on Warmfront installations.

Action – Dinyar to investigate options for heating controls and to report back to next forum.

Some RSLs reported that they receive some erroneous calls about heating. i.e. the boiler shutting down when its reaches a temperature set on a thermostat.

Usual problems with Storage Heaters input and output controls reported as well.

Also reports of electric and gas meters being badly situated and difficult to read. Alternative ways of measuring the meters were discussed (even using periscopes!!)

It was suggested that advice should be given to new tenants when they move in. Or left at void properties.

Also suggested that people should be advised to ask a neighbour (who may have a similar heating system). These neighbours could be trained to train others.

The timing of advice was also considered important as part of the awareness campaign.

The Certification of Buildings was brought up as an issue for future. However it was commented that there is such a large shortage of social housing and long waiting lists, it was unlikely that tenants would have a choice between homes anyway.

The issue about tenants themselves bringing up issues of lack of insulation in their properties was also discussed. (i.e. whom they should contact in the RSL, what would happen, how this fits into Decent homes work).. **This should be brought up in future forums as a discussion point.**

Other technologies were discussed including...

Ground Source Heat Pumps (Stroud DC with the assistance of SWEA are inviting installers to do a feasibility study on 24 sheltered housing properties.
Feedback to be given back to the forum.

Wood Pellets (briefly talked about supply and demand issues in Gloucestershire)

Wet Electric Central Heating – it was discussed that this may be less cost effective and tied people into a suppliers that offered E10 (S&S) or Staywarm (Powergen) that suit this heating method.

Extensions of gas networks in rural parts of Gloucestershire and the cost of connections was discussed. With increasing prices, is gas still a sensible long term option for social housing?

With the new technologies, the issue of costing and payback times was discussed. The issues about combing Low Carbon Buildings programme money with EEC funding was also questioned for future developments (still to be decided). Also issues about spreading the payback of measures across the whole stock and not just individual properties.

Whilst this was mentioned as something that could be bought up as a topic for future meetings or training sessions, Dinyar should brief forum members on updates on an on-going basis.

Energy cost forecasting – It was noted that it was difficult to make lifetime comparisons (for both tenants and landlords) between the costs of technologies. DB noted that ‘calculator’ software was available out there (Fuel Prophet). It was discussed that this could be either a training event of topic for future forums.

Dinyar to look at alternatives out there, understand them and determine their appropriateness for forum members.

How to insulate Wimpey No-Fine properties (concrete constructions) was also raised. There are some of these hard to treat properties in Princess Elizabeth Way in Cheltenham.

Condensation problems were also raised. It was targeted as an important training and awareness need. CBH noted that extractor fans were excluded from specifications for kitchen and bathroom renovations due to costs.

Roger Sparks (CBC) noted the availability of cheap versions of humidity meters. **Dinyar to follow up to investigate the feasibility of using them for training and awareness purposes.**

After Lunch, Dinyar went through some ideas for future forums. These included,

- 1) Affordable Warmth Strategies – Addressing the problems of Fuel Poverty
- 2) Options for heating properties off gas networks (we could just concentrate on one technology, if appropriate)
- 3) An update on funding options.
- 4) Rules and Regulations (New Building regulations, Housing Health and Safety Rating System etc).
- 5) Stock Assessment and the Management of Information

Attendees were invited to offer their own ideas. The topic of the next forum will be decided on by the attendees via e-mail after the meeting.

After a brief overview of the training available with SHARE, training forms were handed out. The results are listed below.

Training Requirements in order of importance.

Staff	Rank
Standards : Decent homes, Eco homes	1
Condensation Damp	2=
Low Energy Retrofit	2=
Renewable Energy Technologies	4
Supply Issues	5=
Insulation Methods and materials	5=
Heating controls	7
Energy Advice to residents	8
Non-heating appliances	9

Residents	
Heating controls	1=
Condensation Damp	1=
Supply Issues	2
Non-heating appliances	4=
Energy Advice to residents	4=
Renewable Energy Technologies	6
Insulation Methods and materials	7
Standards : Decent homes, Eco homes	8
Low Energy Retrofit	9

Dinyar to start to co-ordinating dates and times for training sessions.

Ideas to encourage tenants to attend training sessions and to generate awareness included activities on buses, mobile libraries, mobile police stations, village pubs. Attendees were encouraged to offer ideas about the locations of training sessions and awareness campaigns.

Finally, Heather Watts from Scottish Power, gave a talk on Energy Efficiency Commitment (EEC) and took questions regarding recent changes.