

HECA “Guidance 2012” Further Report: Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council

Following the 2012 guidance issued by the Secretary of State under Section 4 of the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995, a “further report” regarding energy conservation in our area is required by DECC by 31 March 2013. Although Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils are separate ECAs (Energy Conservation Authority), because this function is now delivered as a shared service between both Councils we request the right to issue the following as a joint report to DECC.

It includes data obtained from the DECC website, information collected locally and where appropriate, information and activities shared with neighbouring ECAs.

Summary

Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils understand the importance of home energy conservation and the influence the council has with its residents. We will make all reasonable efforts to support the installation of energy conservation measures in the areas, and where applicable in our own stock in Redditch; and continue to encourage householders to take advantage of appropriate Government and other national initiatives as well as local projects that support improved energy efficiency, namely the new delivery frameworks for the Green Deal (GD) and Energy Company Obligation (ECO).

We will support the principles of “Climate Local” by recognising that the council has a vitally important role to help residents and businesses capture the opportunities and benefits of action on climate change. These include saving money on energy bills, generating income from renewable energy, attracting new jobs and investment in ‘green’ industries, supporting new sources of energy, managing local flood-risk and water scarcity and protecting our natural environment and its resources. We have developed a joint [Climate Change Strategy](#) across both Councils. However, we are not considering signing up formally, because tight internal resource demands mean that the increased reporting requirements involved are not justifiable, especially as we already have a recognised strategy in place.

The Councils recognised from the outset that considerable effort was needed to turn around our high energy consuming behaviour to become more sustainable, and we have made important progress towards our ultimate goal of achieving a significant reduction in energy use throughout residential accommodation across the district and borough. We have been working through a number of channels, including as partners in our local Affordable Warmth group and [Local Strategic Partnership \(Better Environment Theme Group\)](#) and collaborating more widely with countywide [Warmer Worcestershire](#) and Green Deal groups. In the latter, we are working together with other councils to ensure we can offer a package of energy efficiency measures that benefit both our residents, business and our local economy through the use of our local skill and supply base.

Adverse social impacts associated with energy costs also seem to be growing. The incidence of fuel poverty across the district is increasing with some rural areas experiencing fuel poverty levels as high as 27%; these are often in areas previously perceived as being affluent. Excess winter deaths are also higher in the Bromsgrove areas than in other parts of the county and this is now one of the districts key priorities recognised through the JNSA. Excess summer deaths are also likely if we experience the summer temperature rises predicted. We and our community will strive to limit these impacts by working with neighbours and partners across both the district and the County to put in place the measures needed to make a difference.

Reducing our need for energy has so many benefits that it is impossible for us not to take part in this agenda. We have a large stock of aging homes that leak heat and waste energy, and residents are finding it difficult to maintain a comfortable affordable home. Residents and businesses need help and guidance to improve their properties not just for the current occupants but for further generations to come. We also need to make sure that homes that may be affordable at the moment remain affordable when energy prices rise as they inevitable will. Most of the solutions are already available and our role will be to continue to make our householders aware of these through local advice, local support and local examples.

Our vision is that through leadership, our Councils engage fully with national and local initiatives, and ensure that our residents and local businesses prosper by taking advantage of all that is available to support them. This Council has an enviable record of achievement in delivering energy efficiency programmes, including large scale external wall insulation in some of our most deprived social housing communities, and a heat recovery system for our new Abbey Stadium, an award winning innovation project reusing waste heat from the adjacent Crematorium which reduces Redditch Councils heating energy demand at the new leisure centre by 42%. This project demonstrates our seriousness about addressing climate change issues, especially reducing our reliance on fossil fuels. We are also reducing both Councils' carbon footprint by sharing services and being more efficient, for example through route optimisation.

The details of some of our most notable achievements to date are included in the following pages of this report, but in short it is our intention to meet this "follow on" requirement under the Home Energy Conservation Act by continuing in the same vein.

2. Background and achievements to date

As required under the original HECA Guidance, both Councils identified the potential to improve home energy efficiency by 30% over a 15 year period from 1996-2011 and local monitoring showed that this had been achieved this by the **12th HECA** update report, figures from which are shown below. We have not been required to undertake any reporting since 2011

	% improvement	Energy saved (GJ)	Carbon saved (tCO₂)
Bromsgrove DC	29.58	1,376,770	84,243
Redditch BC	30.69	1,034,253	99,240

The measures originally assessed included wall and roof insulation, double glazing , draught proofing, replacement high efficiency boilers, improved heating controls, additional hot water cylinder insulation and temperature controls, low energy lighting, publicity materials and property specific advice.

Under HECA, the Councils reported that we would set up an Energy Efficiency Advice Centre to work with the Energy Saving Trust to provide free and impartial information and advice to householders in the area. The organisation was registered as an independent company in August 1998 and registered charity in May 1999 and is known as “Act on Energy”. Both Councils continue to have in place a service level agreement with Act on Energy to deliver on these commitments.

The improvement information reported under the original guidance was gathered independently by Act on Energy and included in the annual report together with an action plan for the following year, of which DECC have copies. A self completion householder questionnaire was sent annually to homes selected at random and the proportion of each improvement measure identified by householders as being carried out in the previous 12 months was applied to the baseline report figures as an estimate of the level of improvement during that period.

The council continues to work with Act on Energy to promote national initiatives, devise and manage local energy saving projects and provide a free local energy advice service to householders in the area; particularly important now that the Energy Saving Trust has ceased having a local presence.

The Councils promoted local initiatives for insulation contractors to access CERT energy supplier funding and refer appropriate people to the Warm Front Scheme up until 31st December 2012. We will continue to promote local and national schemes including Green Deal and ECO.

3. Time table for revised Energy, Carbon and Fuel Poverty strategies

The Councils, along with other partners in the Bromsgrove and Redditch Affordable Warmth Action Group work together to ensure residents are able access to warm and affordable homes through local delivery of Worcestershire County's Fuel Poverty Strategy and Action Plan. We are also partners in the countywide 'Warmer Worcestershire' group, which ensures that health needs linked to fuel poverty are addressed at both local and county levels, providing an effective vehicle for the delivery of the Cold Weather Plans using the Warm Homes and Healthy People Fund. We are also an active partner in the Worcestershire Climate Change Partnership and Worcestershire Partnership Environment Group, who are responsible for the delivery of Worcestershire's Sustainable Community Strategy.

These strategies will be renewed over the coming months to take account of the current situation, including more recent data and changes to the definition of fuel poverty and information available from DECC. We will align our targets where appropriate to match the Government's objectives in the Carbon Plan, subject to current funding constraints.

The extension of HECA resulting from the latest UK-wide guidance leads to renewed targets of a reduction in buildings CO2 emissions by 24-39% from 2009 levels by 2027. The Councils recognise however that they have little direct access to improve buildings other than their own, but accepts that they have a responsibility to advise households of their options for saving energy and promote up-take of all appropriate national and local schemes.

Therefore, the Councils are fully engaged with the Green Deal/ ECO processes and will be deciding in the coming months whether our best option is to deliver these alongside other Worcestershire Council's, or as Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils under the BES framework. In the interim, we have ensured that our residents continue to be able to access energy efficiency measures through impartial advice from our energy partners Act on Energy.

4. Data obtained from DECC website

CO₂ data

Using data published on the DECC website in September 2012, the Councils have reported to have reduced the emissions in the domestic housing sector for 2010 as follows (note this excludes industrial, commercial, transport and land use emissions):

	Total emissions (ktCO₂)	Emissions per capita (tonnes)	% reduction since 2005
Bromsgrove	232	2.48	6.05%
Redditch	173	2.20	7.06%

The Councils are pleased that there has been a reduction in CO₂ in the domestic sector although the emissions per capita are greater than the local and national average. This is not surprising considering the local demographic with large numbers of rural, older homes off the mains gas network in Bromsgrove. The Authority will continue to support schemes that promote and install energy saving measures in homes: in particular engaging with energy suppliers delivering ECO support under the Rural Obligation in Bromsgrove and Affordable Warmth and Community Carbon Saving branches of ECO across both areas.

Fuel Poverty Data

The 2010 sub-regional data indicates the following levels of fuel poverty, which are higher than the county average but lower than the regional average:

	% Fuel Poverty	Number of households	No. of LSOAs > 25%
Bromsgrove	17.7%	6,707	4
Redditch	16.5%	5,517	3

However, Bromsgrove does not have any areas which come under the lowest level of deprivation in the national top 15%, therefore will not be able to access the Affordable Warmth Obligation of ECO funding. In Redditch, there are nine such areas: Winyates, Woodrow (3), Church Hill, Batchley (2), Abbeydale, St Georges. This gives Redditch significant potential to leverage in external ECO funding to complete works in these areas.

The Councils are aware of the situation regarding fuel poverty in the district and have a local delivery partnership through its Affordable Warmth group as well as being

active in the Worcestershire Affordable Warmth group (Warmer Worcestershire). This group includes other agencies such as NHS, Age UK, Act on Energy and other interested parties particularly representing rural communities. There are a number of local initiatives planned including joint projects with NHS and the county mobile library service, the provision of information and advice at the autumn “Flu Clinics”, and providing support for the formation of rural oil buying clubs.

The Authority continues to be active in promoting energy efficiency and are continuing to resource a number of local schemes aimed directly at relieving fuel poverty and making energy more affordable to all households. Further to this, we have received some funding from DECC to undertake some piloting work, the first part of this scheme is to provide two show-homes locally.

5. Support for Green Deal and other government initiatives

The Authorities have looked in detail, and continues to do so, at the various options for engagement with Green Deal. We do not feel that within current resource constraints it is appropriate for us to become a Green Deal Provider.

The Authority does not consider that it has the necessary skills or resources to become a Green Deal Partner to deliver measures or make assessments and would rather utilise those existing local organisations preparing to provide the required services.

We do recognise that we have a role to play in supporting the Green Deal and it is our intention to promote Green Deal to our local communities by adding our branding and reputation to Green Deal activity in the area.

Having appointed consultants to look at the available options for us in detail, we are now in a position of considering two. The first is to engage in a County-wide promoter role; however, we also have expressed an interest in joining with the Birmingham Green Deal scheme and will be exploring this option over the current months. Both Councils are engaged with two separate LEP's, one in Worcestershire and the other in Birmingham, due to our close geographical proximity to both LEP's.

We are anxious that whichever Green Deal Providers are supported and promoted, they utilise local companies and build on the existing skills within the district rather than rely on delivery through external organisations. There are a number of local business and organisations already focused on becoming Green Deal Installers and Assessors and we will engage with Green Deal Providers who are able to use these local resources.

Alongside Green Deal, we will also promote the Energy Company Obligation by engaging with all energy suppliers who can provide financial assistance to householders in the district. Bromsgrove Council is predominantly rural with large areas off the mains gas grid and older solid wall properties. Redditch however is a new town with a much newer housing stock. We see considerable benefit in promoting the Carbon Saving Obligation to support improvements to many of the older properties in the district. Many of these are also suitable for renewable technologies, particularly where mains gas is not available, and we see the Feed in Tariff and Renewable Heat Incentive key to encouraging greater take up.

The areas have pockets of fuel poverty although it is not generally recognised as suffering from this problem. This is a particular issue for rural areas where fuel poverty is not widespread but concealed within otherwise affluent areas making it difficult to identify. For this reason the Authority works with other agencies, particularly Act on Energy and the health sector, to provide a referral service for those who suffer ill health as a result of cold homes.

6. Existing and proposed further initiatives and partnerships

The Authorities are a key member of the Act on Energy Local Authority Consortium Group which identifies and shares best practice in energy efficiency with the other authorities in Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Coventry and Solihull. This has been active since 1998 and now includes 11 ECAs and 2 first tier authorities and gives the member authorities the opportunity to replicate successful projects which have proven benefit in improving energy efficiency.

The Council supports the Warmer Worcestershire Network with neighbouring authorities, NHS and other partners which provides some additional funding for health and well being projects which support our fuel poverty agenda.

The Authority is also represented on the Carbon Action Network (previously the HECA Forum) by Act on Energy who also chairs the West Midlands CAN and reports to all regional members.

7. Communication strategy

A marketing and communications strategy has been developed which outlines the measures we will be taking to ensure we promote and provide guidance to all households within the district. This will ensure we achieve maximum take-up and engagement with the energy efficiency schemes available

Activity	Purpose	Timing
Council staff training	Ensure all staff are aware of the LAs desires and objectives to promote energy efficiency including in its own buildings	Annual
Senior Officer training	Ensure that all department heads within the council are aware of the duties we have to reduce CO ₂ and fuel poverty and cooperate with appropriate initiatives	Annual
Partner organisation meetings	Include energy efficiency as an agenda item for all meetings held with external partners	As appropriate
Develop a poster campaign	Create campaign branding, print and distribute posters to council and other buildings	Within 3 months
Media release	Send press release to local media, including council publications and website, outlining the council policy on energy efficiency	Immediate
Promotion	Work with partners to promote all energy related initiatives through normal partner activities such as presentations, exhibitions, events and home visits.	Within 3 months
Private sector householders	Encourage RSLs to consider private sector households when developing stock improvement schemes	Within 6 months
Social housing tenants	Provide advice to tenants on the efficient use of the equipment provided	Within 12 months
Private rented sector	Provide information on energy efficiency at Landlord Forum meetings	As appropriate
Signposting	Identify all energy efficiency activity available in the area and signpost householders to appropriate support organisations	Within 6 months

8. HECA Action Plan showing activities, outcomes, partners and timeframe

Object	Action	Outcome	Lead/Partners	Delivery date
HECA Further Report	Collate energy information	Submit and publish report	Ceridwen John (BDC & RBC) Act on Energy	31 March 2013
Partnerships	Identify and contact potential partners	Distribution lists for interested partners	Ceridwen John (BDC & RBC) Act on Energy NHS Worcestershire AgeUK	31 March 2013
Government initiatives	Support Green Deal through joint work with other LA's and partners	Identify GD Providers, agree level of support and promote GD services	Ceridwen John (BDC & RBC) Worcestershire LA's? Act on Energy	On going
Energy Suppliers	Identify ECO opportunities	Installed measures Fuel poverty reduction	Ceridwen John (BDC & RBC) Act on Energy Energy Suppliers	On going
Promotion	Deliver communication plan	Council staff, other partners and householders aware of HECA plan and energy efficiency objectives	Ceridwen John (BDC & RBC) Act on Energy Local media	On going

Local initiatives	Identify other local energy efficiency projects	Support provider in delivering projects	Ceridwen John (BDC & RBC) Act on Energy Local contractors Energy Suppliers Local supply chain	On going
Council initiatives	Support/fund targeted projects Undertake communications as per section 7.	Increased project activity delivering measures and reducing fuel poverty	Ceridwen John (BDC & RBC) Elected Members	On going
Monitor and review	Record and collate data from activity	Refine action plan	Ceridwen John (BDC & RBC) Act on Energy	On going
Follow on Report	Repeat action plan with variations as determined necessary	Submit report to DECC and publish locally	Ceridwen John (BDC & RBC) Act on Energy	31 March 2015