TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

AFFORDABLE WARMTH STRATEGY

MARCH 2003

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AFFORDABLE WARMTH STRATEGY

Introduction

The inability to afford adequate warmth in the home affects the health and well being of many people, particularly the elderly and vulnerable. The impact on our health of a cold or damp home, or the worry about paying fuel bills cannot be under estimated.

Where a household has to spend more than 10% of disposable income on fuel to keep warm, that household is accepted by the Government as being in fuel poverty. Neighbourhood Energy Action (a fuel poverty charity) estimate that there are approximately 5 million (roughly 1 in 5) households in fuel poverty in this country. Due to the high proportion of elderly residents in the area, the Tendring district may have a higher proportion than the average of fuel poor. The solution to fuel poverty is to provide affordable warmth. This is done by a combination of physical measures (thermal insulation and efficient heating) together with awareness raising (information, advice and training).

Tendring's Affordable Warmth Strategy represents a multi-agency approach to tackling the social and health problems that arise when high fuel bills, cold homes and low incomes coincide. The development of the strategy has brought together a broad range of local agencies and public services because it addresses fuel poverty, social exclusion, energy efficiency and environmental improvement.

The strategy development was facilitated by a specialist consultant, Optima Energy. The strategy development process assessed the actions taken to date to assist the fuel poor, considered what the key issues are in preventing further actions from being undertaken and suggested a plan for future activities. The project was carried out between September 2002 and March 2003. The Affordable Warmth Strategy forms an intrinsic part of our work to achieve these goals, combat fuel poverty and to improve the health of the people in Tendring.

Further information concerning the UK energy efficiency policy and programmes is annexed at page 19.

Tendring Community Strategy

The Community Strategy sets out a vision of how the district can be improved over the next 5 years and was prepared by the Tendring Local Strategic Partnership comprising all major public organisations in the region, as well as local community and business representation.

The Community Strategy encompasses the social, economic and environmental aspirations for the district and sets out partnership delivery plans under five key themes. One of the themes is Sustaining our Environment, a priority for which is to seek to reduce energy consumption in the district. Another theme entitled Sustainable and Affordable Housing has an aim of improving the fitness standards of accommodation available, part of which deals with energy efficiency and thermal insulation.

Tendring's Corporate Plan

The Corporate Plan sets out the direction and priorities of the Council and identifies its overall vision to improve the quality of life for all those who live in, work in and visit Tendring through improving services to the community and by the social and economic regeneration of the District. The Council has identified 4 corporate priorities to assist in the achievement of the vision.

- Improving services to the customer.
- Delivering our Community Strategy commitments.
- Promoting social and economic regeneration.
- Securing decent and affordable housing for the people in Tendring.

The Council is committed to helping deliver information, advice and the promotion of energy efficiency to help towards securing decent housing in the area.

The Affordable Warmth Strategy will raise public awareness about the benefits of energy conservation and encourage the provision of energy efficiency measures which will help to achieve one of the 2003/04 Best Value Performance Plan actions to improve energy efficiency in private houses by 3%.

Tendring's Housing Strategy

The production of an Affordable Warmth Strategy was one of the priorities set out in the Council's Housing Strategy for 2002 – 07 for private sector housing as well as being one of the actions identified in the Best Value Review of Environmental Services.

Private House Condition and Energy Efficiency Survey

Reliable up to date information on local housing conditions and the circumstances of the district's residents is vital. It provides us with an insight into the nature and extent of local housing problems and it helps the Council decide how best to deal with those problems.

In 2000 the Council employed a specialist consultant to carry out a comprehensive survey of 1,000 privately owned homes in the district. The information provided by the survey (which did not include Council homes) provides an accurate assessment of the condition of all private housing in the district and has been used to inform the Council's strategy for tackling unfitness, assisting private sector renewal and dealing with energy efficiency improvements.

The survey disclosed that the average Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) for energy efficiency for private sector dwellings in the district is 39, which is lower than the average SAP rating in the UK, which is 44.

SAP is a Government defined method for producing an energy rating for a domestic dwelling. It takes into account the factors that affect the building's energy efficiency, most significantly the fuel used, the type of heating and water heating systems installed and thermal insulation levels. The SAP rate is measured on a scale of 1 – 100, the higher the energy rating the greater the energy efficiency. The 2000 survey indicated that 8.4% of properties have a SAP rating less than 10; 5.5% have ratings between 10 and 20; 33% between 20 and 40 and 53% above 40.

Fuel Poverty and Vulnerable Households

Fuel poverty occurs when a household is unable to afford adequate warmth due to the combined effect of low household income, inadequate and expensive forms of heating and inefficient thermal characteristics of the home. In other words it is a combination of cold homes, low incomes and high fuel bills.

Fuel poverty disproportionately affects specific groups, most notably older people on low incomes; lone parents, especially those with young children; disabled people; unemployed people, especially those under 25; and the long term unemployed.

The factors which contribute to fuel poverty often reinforce each other. For example people experiencing fuel poverty are or are more likely to spend long periods of time in the home and therefore need to consume more fuel. They also tend to have little capital to invest in energy efficiency measures or improved heating systems. This combination of poor housing and inadequate heating often contributes to poor health.

Other features of fuel poverty include large debts to utility companies. Because people on low income are more likely to get into fuel debt, many are required to pay for fuel by prepayment meters as an alternative to disconnection. Tariffs for prepayment customers are higher than those for credit/direct debit customers, which further compounds disadvantage.

Deregulation of the gas and electricity industries has brought further concerns for groups vulnerable to fuel poverty. Evidence suggests that low income consumers have benefited least from the introduction of increased competition and market forces. There is a fear that fuel suppliers in the competitive gas and electricity markets will principally be interested in supplying more affluent consumers, resulting in higher prices for low income consumers.

Strategy Development

Strategy development was facilitated by a specialist consultant working in close liaison with key Council Officers, external partners and the Housing Portfolio Holder.

Briefly the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA) required local authorities (referred to as Energy Conservation Authorities [ECA]), to report on energy consumption levels in the residential sector as at 1 April 1996 and to produce strategies which would improve energy efficiency in those dwellings by 30% over the next 10 to 15 years.

ECAs are required to produce annual returns to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs reporting on the annual percentage improvement in energy efficiency across tenures and report on practical actions taken and planned to improve energy efficiency.

The strategy development process reviewed the actions undertaken from the first Home Energy Conservation Act Report (1996) to date, considered key issues impeding further progress and suggested a plan for future activities.

The review was carried out across the following areas:

- Specific programmes
- Infrastructure

- Fuel poverty and health
- Energy advice provision
- Information and promotion
- Education
- Training
- Finance
- Partnerships
- Renewable energy initiatives
- Monitoring

and under the following headings:

- Achievements since the 1996 Home Energy Conservation Act Report
- Key issues
- Suggested strategy for the next 12 months

About Tendring's Residential Properties

Tendring covers 130 square miles and has a population of approximately 138,555. The total housing stock is 64,196 and is made up as follows:

Council stock	3,496
Housing association	1,972
Owner occupied	54,055
Private rented	3,494
Other (derelict, vacant etc.)	1,179
Total	**64,196**

75% of the population live in the 5 main urban/suburban areas. Over 32% of the population are over 60 years old, approximately 90% of the housing stock is in the private sector. As yet the number of residents living in fuel poverty is unknown.

Activities To Date

- The Local House Condition and Energy Efficiency Survey 2000 identified the average SAP rating for private sector dwellings in the district to be 39. The SAP rating for the public sector is 59. These figures would indicate that the majority of the fuel poor are likely to be found in the private sector.

- In 1997/8 the Council received a HECA Action Grant of £54,000 for a three part scheme to promote energy efficiency, training and discounted condensing boilers in the district. This scheme was successfully implemented.

- £50,000 was "ring fenced" for Home Repairs Assistance in years 2000/01 and 2001/02 specifically to enable loft and cavity wall insulation measures to be carried out for those who did not qualify for the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) and yet were fuel impoverished groups.

- In April 2002 the Council entered into a 3 year agreement with the Essex Energy Efficiency Advice Centre for the provision of free energy advice to householders in the district. Although useful there has not been a great deal of activity specifically targeted at the fuel poor.

Based on the activities undertaken so far and the perceived gaps, the following action plan has been formulated. The actions consolidate the Council's position concerning energy efficiency matters relating to private sector housing and provide a framework to offer advice and assistance to the elderly, vulnerable and the fuel poor.

AFFORDABLE WARMTH STRATEGY – ACTION PLAN

Key Actions:

1.	**Work with Essex Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (EEEAC) the fuel companies and others to maximise the Energy Efficiency Commitment (EEC) Grants in the district.**
2.	**Work with key organisations in the district and Warm Front to maximise the take up of Warm Front Grants.**
3.	**Raise awareness about the availability of help and advice for energy efficiency and carry out training in conjunction with EEEAC, Warm Front and others, to ensure that Council Officers, Councillors and staff from key partnering organisations are able to provide accurate and consistent energy advice.**
4.	**Develop an effective range of promotional activities to raise energy efficiency awareness throughout the district.**
5.	**Develop a simple leaflet on energy efficiency grants and discounts to be available at key public access points throughout the district and produce an energy advice pamphlet.**
6.	**Within the Essex HECA (Home Energy Conservation Act) Forum, encourage the development of a monitoring strategy for improvements in energy efficiency for public and private sector housing.**
7.	**Review progress on the key actions and other actions listed in the strategy on a quarterly basis.**

Legend

AC	Age Concern
BG	British Gas
ECC	Essex County Council
EEC	Energy Efficiency Commitment
EEEAC	Essex Energy Efficiency Advice Centre
HA	Housing Associations
HtA	Help the Aged
HECA	Home Energy Conservation Act
HECA Forum	Forum of Officers (from Essex authorities) dealing with the Home Energy Conservation Act responsibilities
NHER	National Home Energy Rating
OFGEM	Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Utility Regulator)
PCT	Tendring Primary Care Trust
SAP	Standard Assessment Procedure (to measure energy efficiency)
TDC	Tendring District Council
THIA	Tendring Home Improvement Agency
WF	Warm Front

Key Actions:

Key Action 1.

Work with EEEAC, the fuel companies and others to maximise the Energy Efficiency Commitment (EEC) Grants in the district.

Achievements since 1996 HECA Report

- Energy saving measures and information has been provided by Shore Energy.
- The primary partnership to date is with the Essex EEAC which provides free impartial energy efficiency advice to Tendring householders.

Key Issue

- A need to assess and maximise the value generated from partnerships.

Suggested strategy for next 12 months

Objective:

1. Capitalise on existing partnerships and to develop new ones.

Actions (some of these are covered in other key areas)

	Action	By Whom	By When
1.	Maintain close liaison with EEEAC, Warm Front and Fuel suppliers to maximise the implementation of the energy efficiency commitment programmes.	WF TDC PCT EEEAC	Ongoing
2.	Continue to promote Warm Front Grants.	TDC PCT WF	Ongoing
3.	Continue to explore the possible provision of piped gas supply to Jaywick with British Gas, Transco and others	TDC BG	Ongoing
4.	Encourage a change in working practices in the Health Authority and Social Services to encourage provision of information about energy efficiency measures to eligible client groups whenever possible.	TDC PCT ECC EEEAC	Sept 2003
5.	Raise awareness of affordable warmth issues within client groups and workers in Age Concern and Help the Aged.	TDC WF AC HtA	Sept 2003
6.	Promote EEC funded measures for Housing Associations within the Decent Homes initiative and provide energy advice to tenants.	EEEAC TDC HA	Sept 2003
7.	Continue to promote energy efficiency awareness and provide information about Warm Front Grants through the Landlords Forum.	TDC WF EEEAC	Aug 2003

Key Action 2.

Work with EEEAC, key organisations in the district and Warm Front to maximise the take up of Warm Front Grants

Achievements since 1996 HECA Report

Take-up of Warm Front and EEC grants are actively encouraged in the district.

Key Issues

- Maximise take up of Warm Front grants and funding for energy efficiency measures for the private sector.
- Continuing/increasing funding especially for private sector.

Suggested strategy for next 12 months

Objectives:

1. Maximise the take up of Warm Front Grants in the private sector.

2. Maximise the take up of Energy Efficiency Commitment Grants and other discounts.

3. Provide loans/grants for energy efficiency measures through the forthcoming Financial Assistance Policy for Private Sector Housing.

4. Maintain budget for energy efficiency improvements in the Council's own housing stock as required by the Decent Homes initiative.

	Action	By Whom	By When
1.	Work with EEEAC, Warm Front and partnering organisations to maximise the take up of Warm Front and EEC grants.	TDC WF THIA EEEAC	Ongoing
2.	Work with fuel utilities to maximise grant opportunities in both the public and private sector.	TDC EEEAC	Ongoing
3.	Secure budgetary provision within the 2003/04 Housing Investment Programme allocation for discretionary grants/loans for energy efficiency measures.	TDC	July 2003
4.	Maintain public sector energy efficiency improvement budget for 2003/04.	TDC	April 2003

Key Action 3.

Raise awareness about the availability of help and advice for energy efficiency and carry out training in conjunction with EEEAC, Warm Front and others to ensure that Council Officers, Councillors and staff from key partnering organisations are able to provide accurate and consistent energy advice/information.

Achievements since 1996 HECA Report

- Presentations made to the Landlords Forum by Warm Front concerning Warm Front Grants.
- There have been no specific staff training programmes in the district.

Key Issues

- Warm Front Grants are not available to households who are just above the benefits level whom may well be suffering from fuel poverty.
- It is very difficult to reach those on low incomes in the private rented sector.
- Training is essential to ensure that the Council and relevant partners are providing accurate and consistent information and advice to the public at large and particularly to the elderly and other vulnerable groups.

Suggested Strategy for next 12 months

Objectives

1. Ensure that Council staff and staff from external partner organisations are adequately trained to provide accurate and consistent energy advice and information to the residents in the District.

2. Raise awareness amongst health professionals about the availability of help and advice, particularly Warm Front Grants.

3. Encourage private landlords to improve heating and thermal insulation in tenanted properties.

	Action	By Whom	By When
1.	Carry out an assessment of the training needs of Council staff, Councillors and staff from relevant partner organisations (e.g. social services, PCT).	TDC All	April 2004
2.	In partnership with Warm Front, hold a series of one-day/half day energy awareness workshops for Council staff, Councillors and staff from relevant partner organisations.	TDC WF All EEEAC	April 2004
3.	Target senior management in Social Services and other relevant departments to obtain a commitment for training key front line staff about energy efficiency.	TDC ECC	Sept 2003
4.	Organise a training day at local Hospital(s) regarding energy efficiency, fuel poverty and other housing issues.	EEEAC TDC WF PCT	Sept 2003
5.	Implement a priority referral system so that Warm Front and/or EEC eligibility can be checked before hospital discharge vulnerable patients.	PCT WF EEEAC	Sept 2003
6.	In partnership with EEEAC and Warm Front, arrange training for health visitors and social workers.	EEEAC TDC WF PCT ECC	Aug 2003
7.	Occupational Therapists to distribute Warm Front Grant leaflets when visiting clients.	EEEAC ECC WF	ASAP
8.	Occupational Therapists to highlight thermal insulation and heating improvements on referrals to TDC.	ECC	June 2003
9.	Continue to promote energy efficiency awareness and provide information about Warm Front and other Grants through the Landlords Forum.	TDC WF EEEAC	August 2003

Key Action 4.

With EEEAC develop an effective range of promotional activities to raise energy efficiency awareness throughout the district.

Achievements since 1996 HECA Report

1. In 1997/8 the Council received a HECA Action Grant of £54,000 for a three-part scheme to promote energy efficiency, training and discounted condensing boilers in the District.

2. Leaflet drop regarding EEC Grants and EEEAC contacts undertaken during Electoral Registration Canvass.

3. Advertisements broadcast on local radio, Dream 100, regarding EEC Grants.

Key Issues

To develop an effective range of promotional activities throughout the district.

Suggested Strategy for next 12 months

Objectives:

1. Actively market specific energy efficiency measures to target groups of householders at appropriate times.

2. Ensure that householders have information available to make informed investment choices about energy efficiency.

3. Create a focused campaign to attract publicity and joint funding.

	Action	By Whom	By When
1.	Produce a simple leaflet on energy efficiency discounts and grants, using material from the Optima 'Advice and Education' database.	TDC EEEAC	Sept 2003
2.	Include articles on grants/energy efficiency etc. in local press.	TDC	Ongoing
3.	Include regular articles in Tendring Matters.	TDC	Ongoing
4.	Provide sustainability links to the Council website, www.tendringdc.gov.uk to include information on TDC grants, other energy efficiency material and renewable energy.	TDC	April 2003
5.	Ensure that appropriate information is at key points which the public can access e.g. libraries, doctors surgeries, council office receptions, citizen advice bureaux, job centres etc.	TDC WF EEEAC	Ongoing
6.	Investigate use of Council Tax mail out to provide recipients with details of Warm Front Grants.	TDC WF	April 2003
7.	Contact estate agents to supply simple information on energy efficiency measures, their benefits and costs to house buyers and tenants.	TDC	April 2004
8.	Deliver talks to a wide range of community groups.	TDC WF	Ongoing
9.	Investigate using the franking machine in the Council mailroom to provide energy efficiency messages.	TDC	April 2004
10.	Promote alternative measures to cavity wall insulation for solid wall properties.	EEEAC TDC	Ongoing
11.	Promote energy efficiency measures at the Tendring 100 Show.	TDC EEEAC	14 June 2003

Key Action 5.

Develop a simple leaflet on energy efficiency grants and discounts to be available at key public access points throughout the district and produce an Energy Advice pamphlet.

Achievements since 1996 HECA Report

- Service Level Agreement signed with Essex Energy Efficiency Advice Centre in order to promote provision of free impartial energy efficiency advice to householders in the district.
- Energy efficiency leaflets delivered by canvassers whilst delivering electoral registration forms (2002).

Key Issues

To make energy advice as available as possible over the whole district.

Suggested Strategy for next 12 months

Objectives:

1. Ensure that there is full range of energy advice available for the private sector.

2. Provide private sector with energy advice when the opportunity arises.

3. Provide Council tenants with energy advice.

	Action	By Whom	By When
1.	Produce a leaflet on energy efficiency grants and discounts.	TDC EEEAC WF	Sept 2003
2.	Set up system to ensure tenants are provided with energy advice when they move into Council homes or when they have new heating system installed.	TDC	Sept 2003
3.	Produce Energy Advice pamphlet using material from the Optima 'Advice & Education' database resources database.	TDC	Sept 2003
4.	Provide impartial energy advice through the Essex Energy Efficiency Advice Centre and promote Free phone number 0800 096 6356.	EEEAC	Ongoing

Key Action 6.

Within the Essex HECA (Home Energy Conservation Act) Forum, encourage the development of a monitoring strategy for improvements in energy efficiency for public and private sector housing.

Achievements since 1996 Report

- NHER profiler purchased.
- Survey of private sector stock carried out in 2000.
- Survey of Council Stock carried out in 2002.
- TDC energy efficiency programme for Council properties. This refurbishment programme has resulted in an average SAP of 59 for Council properties. The following measures have been carried out in the 3,494 Council properties.

Loft insulation	100% of possible properties
Cavity wall insulation	100% of possible properties
Solid wall insulation	15% of possible properties
Central heating	most have had new (gas where possible) central heating systems installed
Double glazing	2,800 properties have had double glazing installed

Public sector stock – SAP 59 (Housing Associations unknown)

Energy efficiency of Private sector stock – SAP 39

Key Issues

- The Council is using a variety of systems to evaluate the energy efficiency of the housing stock. The Council needs to choose an effective, integrated system (to include fuel poverty indicators) to give performance indicators to identify those in fuel poverty and to monitor year on year progress.

- The Council currently has no definitive way of tracking progress in the private sector cumulatively.

- How will progress with eradicating fuel poverty be measured?

Suggested strategy for the next 12 months

1. Develop an integrated monitoring strategy for the public and private sectors including tracking fuel poverty.

2. Develop performance indicators for all areas of the energy efficiency strategy.

	Action	By Whom	By When
1.	Develop comprehensive monitoring strategy for the private sector in partnership with the Essex HECA Forum and EEEAC.	TDC HECA Forum EEEAC	March 2004
2.	Develop a series of simple performance indicators for all areas of the energy efficiency strategy.	TDC HECA Forum	March 2004

Key Action 7.

Review progress on the key actions and other actions listed in the strategy on a quarterly basis.

Suggested Strategy for next 12 months

Objectives:

1. Maintain corporate commitment to energy efficiency.

2. Focus resources on to the fuel poor.

3. Maximise the use of existing resources for energy efficiency.

	Action	By Whom	By When
1.	Energy efficiency reports reviewing actions presented to Housing Portfolio Holder on quarterly basis.	TDC	Ongoing
2.	Maximise usage of material in Optima 'Advice & Education' database.	TDC	Ongoing
3.	Provide appropriate staff with access to energy advice and education, particularly the public sector.	TDC All	Ongoing

Key Action 8.

Renewable Energy Initiatives

Achievements to date

There is a project being developed for solar water heating for Jaywick.

Key Issues

- Currently renewable energy is not included in the remit of HECA. However, TDC recognises the importance of incorporating renewable energy into its energy strategy to assist the Government in achieving the UK CO_2 emissions reduction targets. The Council also recognises the Government's commitment to renewable energy.

Suggested Strategy for the next 12 months

Objectives:

1. Raise awareness in the District of renewable energy.

2. Implement renewable energy initiatives.

3. Increase the uptake of switching to renewable energy tariffs.

	Action	By Whom	By When
1.	Discussions with planning officers on planning policy on Environmental Issues to enable small scale and larger renewable projects to be considered.	TDC	March 2004
2.	Discussions with planning officers on how to encourage the building of eco houses in the private sector with new partners, possibly mixed development schemes.	TDC	March 2004
3.	Examine the implications of switching the Council's electricity tariff to a green energy tariff.	TDC	March 2004
4.	Explore renewable energy projects: small scale wind turbines, methane, individual houses. Promote the Eastern Solar Club for providing domestic renewable advice.	TDC EEEAC	March 2004

Key Action 9.

School Initiatives (Junior Schools)

Achievements since 1996 HECA Report

1. Since 1997/98 there has been no specific programme aimed at schools.

Key Issues

To develop a range of activities in local schools to raise awareness about fuel poverty and to encourage grant awareness and up-take via school children.

Suggested Strategy for next 12 months

Objectives:

1. Offer material from the Optima 'Advice and Education' resource database for national curriculum schools projects in the District.

2. Raise awareness in teaching profession of energy efficiency.

	Action	By Whom	By When
1.	Promote British Gas Think Energy Scheme in local schools	TDC	March 2004
2.	Communicate with school governors via the Head Teacher through letters and newsletters	TDC	March 2004
3.	Ensure Internet access to Think Energy is available via link to their web site from TDC web site	TDC	March 2004

UK Energy Efficiency Policy and Programmes

The following information has been included to inform about key legislation, policies, funding mechanisms and reporting duties in relation to HECA, fuel poverty and climate change.

The driving forces behind energy efficiency

The key issues that are driving energy efficiency currently are:

- **Climate Change**
- **Fuel Poverty**

Key government programmes set up / adapted to address climate change and fuel poverty

1. HECA
2. UK Fuel Poverty Strategy
3. Best Value
4. Decent Homes
5. Warm Front
6. Warm Zones
7. Energy Efficiency Commitment Programme
8. Energy Saving Trust Programme
9. Community Energy Programme
10. Community Renewables Initiative

Climate Change

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has reported that our current level of Carbon Dioxide Emissions (CO_2) in the world's atmosphere is 370 parts per million (ppm). If we reach 550 ppm we will have hit a critical level, at which point the consequences of climate change will be catastrophic. Our current rate of increase of CO_2 emissions is 1.5 ppm, which gives us 120 years to reach this critical level. However if 'developing' countries increase their CO_2 emissions to those in Western Europe or the United States this time will be greatly reduced.

The Kyoto Protocol established targets for reduction of greenhouse gases emitted by industrialised countries. Many countries, including the UK, have signed up to this Protocol. The Kyoto UK target is to reduce 1990 levels of greenhouse gas emissions by 12.5 % by 2008/12. The UK however has made a voluntary agreement to reduce 1990 levels of greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2010.

The bad news is that currently we are not on track to achieve the 20% target. In addition the IPCC has reported that we really need to be making a 60% CO_2 reduction by 2050, globally to have any impact on climate change. This level of reduction will not be impossible to achieve without the use of renewable energy, even if we are as energy efficient as possible.

Fuel Poverty

Fuel poverty is a complex issue that needs to be tackled across the board. Some five million households in Great Britain spend, or need to spend, 10% of their income on fuel in order to heat their homes to the temperature recommended by the World Health Organisation (21º C in the living room, 18º C in other occupied rooms), and are therefore considered to be suffering from fuel poverty. Some estimates put the figure higher. Indeed, around one million households spend up to 30% of their income on fuel, while the average is just 4% - 5%.
Many, but not all, of the 'fuel poor' are pensioners; often single pensioner households, mainly reliant on the state pension. The 1996 English House Condition Survey shows that those aged 60 and over account for around half of all fuel poor households; those with young children account for 17% of the total; and single parents 10%. Many pensioners do not heat their homes adequately, either because they cannot afford to, or because they fear they will get into debt.

Fuel poverty is caused by several, interrelated factors:

- low income
- the condition of the property
- the efficiency of the heating system
- the size of the property
- the price of fuel.

Local Authorities are now expected to report on how they are addressing fuel poverty in their authority.

Relevant Government Programmes

1 The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA)

HECA 1995 required Local Authorities (called Energy Conservation Authorities - ECAs for the purposes of HECA), to report on energy consumption levels in the residential sector as at 1 April 1996, and how they were going to increase the energy efficiency in those dwellings by 30% over the next 10 to 15 years. The Act did not require the Authorities to commit to achieving any targets set.

Progress Reports

Since the first HECA reports, local authorities have been required to produce annual returns to DEFRA to report on progress made in HECA. The authority has to report on the annual % improvement in energy efficiency across tenures and report on practical actions taken and planned. Progress in tackling fuel poverty also needs reporting, although there is no single agreed performance indicator for this. Reporting generally has also become far more performance orientated. The ECA has to report on the SAP energy ratings of their own stock in their annual Best Value reviews. In addition private and public sector SAP information has to be reported in annual HIP returns. Decent Homes reporting also includes an energy efficiency element.

This has three key implications:

1. ECAs need to continue with their activities to energy rate their own stock, to produce the Best Value Performance Indicator. Energy databases set up to assist this process will therefore have ongoing value.
2. Energy ratings are now just as important in the private sector stock and ways need to be developed to collect and maintain this information.
3. It is essential for ECAs to develop and use performance indicators to demonstrate the range of their activities and to monitor their effectiveness in both the private and public sectors.

Despite the ongoing review of the role local authority regarding energy efficiency, the 2001/02 Progress Report was almost identical to previous last years Reports.

Home Energy Conservation Bill 2001

The Home Energy Conservation Bill 2001 was a Private Members Bill designed to be a Bill to make further provision about:

- energy conservation
- the eradication of fuel poverty
- providing for the establishment of a registration and licensing scheme for houses in multiple occupation.

In short, it proposed that:

(a) each ECA be required to employ a HECA Officer responsible for meeting the 30% target,
(b) the government establish a standard reporting procedure for progress,
(c) the Government be able to indicate an amount of HIP allocation to be spent on pursuing the target
(d) ECAs will have to commit to achieving energy efficiency targets they have set, and in time scales they have set
(e) mechanisms be put in place to get the energy efficiency of HMOs increased.

It would have applied to England and Wales. The Bill failed in July 2002, but it was clear that it had widespread support across all parties. It is expected to be put forward again as a Private Members Bill in Autumn 2002.

2 UK Fuel Poverty Strategy

The Government's Fuel Poverty Strategy sets out measures to ensure that no low-income or disabled household will be in fuel poverty by 2010. The targets are to be achieved through activities addressing the main causes of fuel poverty, including:

(a) Programmes to improve the energy efficiency of fuel poor households, for example the Warm Front Team (based on the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme) and investment by local authorities and registered social landlords.
(b) New programmes including Warm Zones, a £10 million micro-scale CHP (Combined Heat and Power) pilot scheme involving 6000 households, a £5 million renewables pilot scheme for rural areas without gas, increasing gas connection into rural areas
(c) Continuing action to maintain the downward pressure on fuel bills, ensuring fair treatment for the less well off, and supporting the development of energy industry initiatives to combat fuel poverty.
(d) Continuing action to tackle poverty and social exclusion recognising that these are multi-dimensional problems.

In HECA Progress Report, local authorities have to report on their policies and proposals for tackling fuel poverty, and on their achievements. The emphasis is on reporting actions to help reduce fuel poverty in their communities through improved energy efficiency – in their own housing stock, and also in relation to other housing sectors – and on results achieved, in particular to ensure that their communities get their full share of the Warm Front resources.

Currently ECAs do not have to monitor, survey or report detailed fuel poverty statistics. They do however have to report SAP data via their annual Best Value Performance reports and HIP returns, as discussed below.

3 Best Value and HIP Reporting

As part of Best Value Local Authorities have to report on the average SAP of their own stock each year. Annual HIP reports also require the following information:

- Average SAP of Private Sector dwellings and the proportion of properties with a SAP < 30
- Average SAP of the public sector stock
- Energy efficiency component of the Decent Homes Standard (public sector stock)

4 Decent Homes

The criteria for determining whether a home is decent includes "whether a property provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort" as one of four essential components of a decent home. The majority of homes which fail to reach the standard do so because they fail the Thermal Comfort criterion. 83% of homes in 1996 did not satisfy the Thermal Comfort standard and the % is thought not to have dropped drastically since then. This means that the current Government drive to eliminate non Decent Homes will further drive improvements in energy efficiency. Detailed Guidance on the Decent Homes Standard was issued in March 2002 and can be found at: http://www.housing.dtlr.gov.uk/information/dhg/. In essence, to be Decent a home must have programmable central heating and a certain amount of insulation.

5 Building Regulations Part L

The Building Regulations which came into force on 1 April 2002 for the first time cover the energy efficiency of existing dwellings. For example:

- If windows, doors or roof-lights are to be replaced, these must have an average U value of 2.0 or less and be draughtproofed.
- Any new or replacement boilers must reach minimum levels of boiler efficiency. To achieve these efficiencies may require the replacement of the programmer, room thermostat, cylinder thermostat and the provision of a boiler interlock and fully pumped circulation.

- If material alterations are taking place, for example substantially replacing any of the major elements of a roof, replacing the structure of a floor, replacing complete exposed walls or their external or internal surface finishes, insulation to achieve the U-value for new dwellings is required. In practice this could mean having to use insulated drylining instead of wet plaster, or insulated external cladding instead of re-rendering.

6 Warm Front

The Warm Front Scheme (previously known as HEES) is targeted at people who are most at risk from ill health caused by fuel poverty: the elderly; families on low incomes; the disabled; and the chronically sick. The scheme focuses on households least likely to qualify for other sources of assistance: the owner occupied and the private rented sectors.

The scheme operates at two levels, Warm Front and Warm Front Plus. The grant available for installing insulation and improving household heating under Warm Front is £700 for households using cheaper forms of heating (mains gas, solid fuel [enclosed appliance], oil or off-peak electricity). For households using more expensive forms of heating (on-peak electricity, solid fuel [open fire], bottled gas or paraffin) the grant is £1,500. Warm Front Plus provides a grant for those eligible over 60 for a central heating system (through an operating lease) and insulation measures up to a maximum of £2,500.

The scheme began Warm Front installations in June 2000. Warm Front Plus came on-stream later in the autumn of 2000.

7 Warm Zones

The Warm Zones pilot programme is a new Government initiative, exploring whether all the various English fuel poverty schemes can be co-ordinated, enhanced and made more efficient in terms of delivery. To date Warm Zones have been established in five pathfinder areas with a varied mix of authority type and demographic make-up. Initial estimates of the level of fuel poverty in the Zones ranges between 17% and 45%.

The five 'pathfinder' zones are Hull, Newham, Northumberland, Sandwell and Stockton. Northumberland Warm Zone corresponds to the County Council, comprising six District Councils. The other Zones correspond to the Metropolitan Councils in those areas. Each Zone has its own staff team of up to ten persons. A not-for-profit company, Warm Zones Ltd has been formed to act as a central co-ordination body and is reporting directly to the relevant Government departments.

The aim of the Warm Zone programme is to facilitate the efficient, integrated and appropriate delivery of practical measures to alleviate fuel poverty and improve domestic energy efficiency in defined areas. The pathfinder zones will indicate how quickly fuel poverty can be eradicated; early assessments consider three years to be an achievable goal.

What the programme does in effect is to blitz a zone in a methodical targeted way ensuring that fuel poverty is alleviated in all properties in that zone within a three-year programme. The 'Zone' will establish a programme to deliver this. For example in one Zone this is being achieved by setting up a team of 'advisors' that visit every

household in the zone, to establish whether there is fuel poverty in that household. The property is surveyed to find out what measures can be implemented. The measures are then implemented, funded by whichever available grant is most appropriate. The households are visited on a ward-by-ward basis prioritising those wards that are most likely to have fuel poverty first. So the emphasis is changing from the individual 'finding out about available grants on an ad hoc basis, and then having to apply to various bodies to obtain the grants', to the grants and measures 'seeking out' the individual household. This approach also means that the paperwork for the individual is minimised. The 'Zone Team' sorts out which is the appropriate funding. Also since this approach is using a ward-by-ward approach, if fuel poverty is apparent in the majority of a street, the measures will be applied to that entire street. So some households just outside the fuel poverty threshold will also be addressed.

8 Energy Efficiency Commitment Programme

Energy Efficiency Commitments (EEC) ran from 1st April 2000 to 31st March 2002. Ofgem set a standard for EEC of £1.20 per year per customer per fuel. This money was put into a pot for fuel companies to spend on energy efficiency programmes aimed at the fuel poor and the fuel rich. In practice this has meant that fuel companies have been running discount schemes for insulation measures, heating and low energy appliances that all householders could apply for.

The Energy Efficiency Commitment Programme for 2002 – 2005 started on 1 April 2002, with approximately 3 times the level of funding of EEC 50 % of energy savings will be targeted at customers on benefits. DEFRA estimates that energy companies will spend £500m on energy efficiency measures over the three-year period. Working with fuel suppliers to get this money spent is now a key activity for local authorities.

9 The Innovation Programme

Provides support for Local Authorities and their project partners to promote and implement innovative approaches to reducing carbon emissions in their local areas. Initiatives can be innovative in terms of the technologies used, approach, process or methodology taken. Partnerships are very important and this programme allows other appropriate agencies to lead on an innovative project, as long as there is at least one local authority actively involved in the project. Funding and technical support are provided at two stages to help carry out feasibility studies and to implement projects.

10 Community Energy Programme

The £50m Community Energy Programme will enable applicants to bid for a capital grant for the refurbishing of existing community heating schemes or installation of new schemes. The £50 million funding is spread over two years, with around £5 million set aside for the opening 'Pathfinder' bidding round. A further £15 million will be available in 2002/3 with bidding deadlines in May and September. £30 million will be available in 2003/4.

Those eligible to apply for funding include local authorities, housing associations, hospitals and universities. Low cost heat and electricity link several buildings to one heat source to benefit all in them. The 'Pathfinder' round will be used as a blueprint for further bidding rounds. Community Energy is managed by the Energy Saving

Trust and the Carbon Trust. It applies to England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Community Energy will help to:

- tackle climate change by reducing carbon emissions by 150,000 tonnes per year
- tackle fuel poverty, by providing low-cost heat and electricity to 100,000 people on low income, taking many of them out of fuel poverty;
- provide low cost heat and electricity to hospitals, universities and other community buildings;
- meet the Government's target of at least 10,000 megawatts of installed Good Quality combined heat and power capacity by 2010.

11 Community Renewables Initiative

This was launched on 28 February 2002 and will help local people and organisations devise and implement renewable energy developments, which are environmentally sensitive, have support of all stakeholders and are appropriate to the circumstances of the locality. In each of 10 different areas of England, a partnership of organisations has been formed to help localities devise their own ideas and developments for renewable energy. Called Local Support Teams, these partnerships involve local councils, energy experts, government bodies, and other specialists. They will provide free advice and training on all the topics associated with renewable energy:

- feasibility studies;
- funding;
- technology issues;
- planning;
- environmental assessment;
- public participation

On a national level, training events and seminars will be available to all participating in the initiative, and a website will provide illustrated examples, a discussion board, and information guides.

12 Energy Saving Trust Initiatives

The Energy Saving Trust (EST) has many energy efficiency initiatives. Those particularly relevant to HECA and Local Authorities are:

(a) **Practical Help for Local Authorities** provides a free advisory service by phone and via their Web Site. The web site is aimed at all UK local authority officers and members who have an interest in sustainable energy issues, including HECA, renewables, energy management, climate change and environmentally friendly transport.

(b) **Energy Efficiency Advice Centres (EEAC)** provide various levels of support for local authorities and the general public. The most basic service (not free) to local authorities is to provide a telephone helpline to residents in their Authority. Residents can phone up the EEAC who will take them through a series of questions about their home and personal circumstances. They will then send them a report suggesting which energy efficiency measures they should take up, that are appropriate to their home and what grants and discounts are available. They will also send a list of Government Approved energy efficiency contractors in the area.

(c) The **Local Authority Support Programme** has been set up to assist local authorities to deliver their HECA and other energy responsibilities. 2 extra staff are provided, based in the local EEAC, to help co-ordinate energy efficiency and sustainable energy activities among the local authorities in that area. A key element of this project is for the extra staff to help authorities to take a more strategic approach to energy matters across the areas they serve, and to help implement an action plan for energy efficiency and sustainable energy activity. There are currently 20 such projects. For a full list go to: http://www.practicalhelp.org.uk/content/lasp.htm. Some of these are also piloting advice giving on renewables.

(d) **Energy Efficiency Recommended** Contractors and installers can apply to the EST to get an Energy Efficiency Recommended Logo and accreditation. This has been set up to improve the quality of works carried out, and assure residents of the quality available.

(e) **Website - www.saveenergy.co.uk**. Residents accessing this website can find out what grants and discounts they are entitled to after completing a short questionnaire on line. The website also has tips on saving energy efficiency.

Conclusion

At the start of HECA they were some energy efficiency grants available for those on benefits. There were, however, very few financial enticements for the fuel rich. Currently every householder in the UK can apply for some grant or discount for the key energy efficiency measures including insulation, improved heating and low energy appliances. No one need spend more than £2 on a low energy light bulb, and everyone should be able to get loft and cavity wall insulation carried out for 50% of normal costs. In addition, Building Regulations cover the energy efficiency of existing as well as new housing. Therefore the work of ECAs has changed. They need to now put most of their resources into promoting energy efficiency and those grants and discounts to increase the up take of energy efficiency measures. This may require promoting energy efficiency in different ways to different residents to try and reach the motivator for that individual householder whether it be comfort, health, saving money, improving the value and life of their property, or improving the environment. It will also involve working with relevant partners to make it easy for residents to apply for grants / discounts and assure them of the quality of work carried out.