



GREEN
OPEN
HOMES

Project summary

What are Green Open Homes?

A Green Open Homes event is an opportunity to ask a neighbour about an energy saving improvement that they've made, and see if it might work for you.

On an event day, householders who have made low carbon improvements to their homes open them up to share their experiences with neighbours and others. They are an excellent way for people to find out about the reality of getting solar panels, insulation, triple glazing, or new heating options without talking to a salesman.

Visitors can ask the residents whether the installation was a hassle, and how much they're really saving on their energy bills as a result. These events are an effective way of inspiring people to take action to make their homes more energy efficient. Events come in all shapes and sizes, take place over one day or several weekends, and might feature as few as six or as many as 40 homes.

About the project

In 2013, the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) awarded funding to the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE), working in partnership with Bristol Green Doors (a national leader in running local low carbon open homes events) to set up a national Green Open Homes network to stimulate more activity and provide support for low carbon open homes events across the country.

The aim was to help new open homes events and networks get off the ground all around the country, to increase people's feeling that making energy saving improvements is 'normal in my neighbourhood'. For groups who already ran small open homes events, our goal was to help them flourish, to make the events bigger, easier to deliver, and have more impact.



Our approach

The website

GreenOpenHomes.net acts as a national, searchable directory of open homes events. Organisers can create their own event pages on the site - they enter into a template all the details their visitors need, including profiles of their participating homes and generating an interactive event map.



The guides and other resources

We produced a collection of 18 guidance notes for would-be event organisers, which are downloadable from the website. We also made them into a hard copy 'organiser handbook'. The guides cover everything from event planning to funding, from recruiting hosts to advice on insurance and marketing.

Alongside these, we provided examples of marketing materials, free graphics and photos, press release templates, and we sent out 20,000 copies of visitor feedback postcards to be used at events.



The roadshow

We ran four roadshow events in October, in Newcastle, Leeds, Stoke-on-Trent and London. People who had run open homes events shared their experiences and advice; we provided more information about the support, funding and resources available. Attendees enjoyed networking with one another.

The newsletter

A regular network update is sent out by email to 134 individuals at 70 organisations. The newsletter highlights good practice on topics such as publicity and evaluation, and signposts groups to useful resources on the website.

Funding and expert support

To launch the Green Open Homes network, we ran a competition to award grants and expert support to groups wanting to run a new green open homes event. Groups could apply for grants worth £500-£20,000. A total of £180,000 was awarded. The 43 successful groups also received advice, guidance and mentoring from CSE and Bristol Green Doors.



To read more about the groups who received an award, download our **Case Studies 2013-14** document from www.bit.ly/1nktV2T



The project in numbers ...

Number of organisations we supported: **49**

Events established or revived: **27**

Number of homes taking part in events: **607**

Total number of visitors to events: **10,106**

Visits to the website ('sessions'): **20,210**

Website pageviews: **92,980**



What the visitors said...

Only **64%** of visitors said they knew anything about eco-renovation before they came to an event. But **88%** found their visit useful, and **70%** said they now had a clear idea of how they might tackle improvements to their own home. Most encouragingly, **71%** of visitors said they now intended to install energy saving or low carbon technologies in their home in the next five years, with **77%** saying they would try to save energy at home by changing their habits.

"It was an inspirational two hours that will definitely shape the way we continue with our renovation."

"We'd been looking into solar PV for a while, and after seeing an example today and talking to the owner at length, we've decided to go ahead."

"All the owners answered our questions patiently and informatively. We found that since we have the capital to invest, what we really should be considering is 'why aren't we doing this?'"

"I've had a thoroughly inspiring day – and I'm ready to go back and do it all to my own house!"

"Singularly the most positive aspect was that you're talking to real people who are not trying to sell you something."

Case study

Colchester Green Homes

Number of homes opened: **19**

Number of visitors: **316**

The Colchester Green Homes event was organised by En-form and held over every weekend throughout May 2014.

This proved to be a good arrangement as it allowed visitors to see more homes, created momentum for the event that built over the month and it allowed the development of mini clusters of open homes.

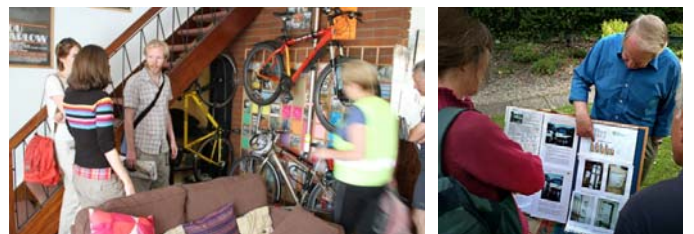
Prior to the event the group held a 'Host and Volunteer Day' that consisted of a tour of the homes together with presentations about the day, a question and answer session and homemade refreshments. It was a great chance for all the hosts to interact and share tips. It provided a better quality of induction as it included an actual tour and a presentation from a homeowner of what to expect.

In addition to making it an annual event, En-form is seeking to make it an Essex-wide project, joining in with other local groups to share skills and resources.

81% of event organisers said they intended to run another event; the other 19% were not sure.

CSE's recommendations for supporting further national green open homes activity

- 1 Do allocate funds for local events – some of the startup costs are very difficult for first-time organisers to raise
- 2 Increase awareness of the Green Open Homes movement through national publicity
- 3 Allow plenty of lead-in time for the planning and publicity of local events – a year's planning makes for a good event
- 4 Offer a flexible package of support – different organisers need different sorts of help
- 5 Help event organisers to connect and learn from one another
- 6 Investigate the potential for a formal membership organisation that allows green open homes events to be 'accredited'



The Green Open Homes network was managed by the Centre for Sustainable Energy and Bristol Green Doors, and funded by the Department of Energy and Climate Change.

Photos: all © CSE, partner organisations or participating groups



3 St Peter's Court
Bedminster Parade
Bristol BS3 4AQ
0117 934 1400
www.cse.org.uk
info@cse.org.uk

We are a national charity that shares our knowledge and experience to help people change the way they think and act on energy.

(Reg charity 298740)