

# Lewes ECO Open Houses 2013



# Summary

- Overview of Lewes event
- Why eco open houses?
- Choosing houses
- Visitor feedback
- Practical examples
- LEOH website
- Organisational experience
- Conclusions



# Lewes event

- Organised by Transition Town Lewes energy group
  - Country properties aided by local orgs - Barcombe Energy group and Hassocks Keymer Ditchling Transition
- Previous events 2009, 2010, 2012.
- Two weekends
  - Lewes Town 14/15<sup>th</sup> September
  - Surrounding villages 21/22<sup>nd</sup> September
    - Mostly off grid props – heat pumps/biomass
- 16 houses (9 new this year), open 10-1, 2-5
- Mostly drop in Sat and Sun, some hourly tours, no booking
- Mostly interesting refurbishment, plus some new build
- This year 900 house visits recorded
- 54% of visitors said they would implement similar measures, plus 34% seriously considering
- Next year may include practical workshops on cost effective measures

# Why ECO Open Houses?

- Challenges

- Climate change

- 80% CO2 emissions reduction by 2050
    - Housing accounts for around a quarter
    - UK housing has room for improvement

- Fossil fuel depletion

- Transition Town priority of Resilience
    - Renewables and conservation reduce demand

- Saving energy/money

- Scarcity is driving up energy prices
    - Money is not the first priority, but DECC/Gov't focus on this

- Response

- Inspire and Facilitate change

# Choosing houses

- Contact via
  - architects, householders, renewables installers, friends of friends...
- Low emissions - ideally 60%+ reduction
  - visit first, plus ask for latest energy bills
- Interesting technology/ideas
  - inventive solutions
  - practical/low cost tips
- Refurbishment preferred to new build
  - priority is improving existing, not 'Grand Designs'
  - but new build attracts visitors...
- Fresh houses attract interest year on year
  - 9 this year, but normally <50%
- Be choosy
  - don't make up numbers with poor examples



# Lewes ECO Open Houses 2013



# Visitor questions

- Talking through their **own ideas/problems** with householders
- Big demand for **advice/support**
- Is **DIY** possible?
  - e.g. Magnetic sec. DG, LED changes, SWI?
- What did it really **cost**?
  - e.g. SWI? Has PV fallen in price?
- Which **contractor** did it and were they reliable?
- What does it **cost to run**?
  - e.g. Pellet boiler, heat pump
- Was it **disruptive**?
  - e.g. SWI, underfloor insulation
- What does it **look** like?
  - SWI, LEDs, Sec. DG



# Practical information

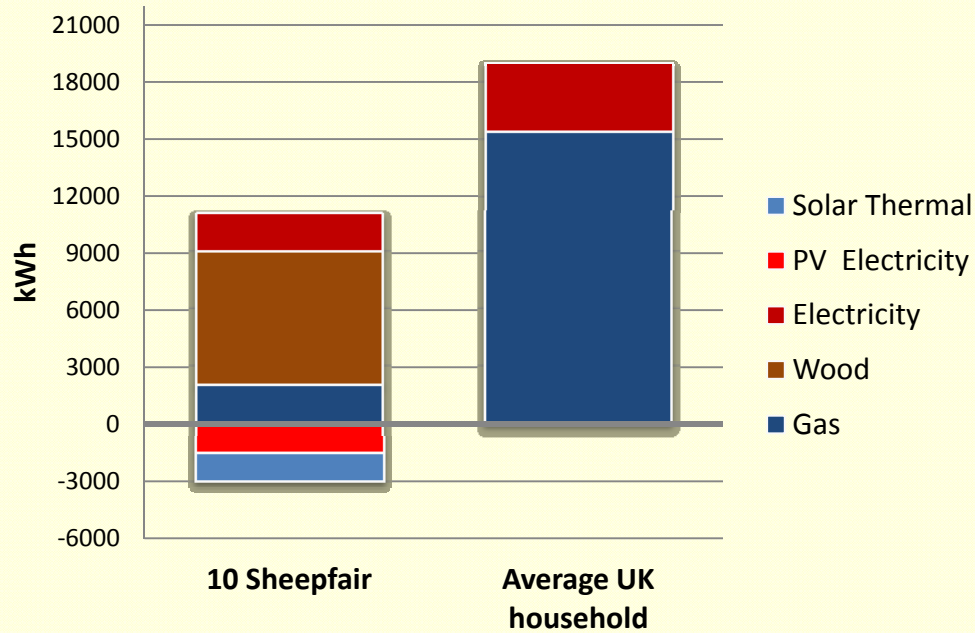




# LEOH Website

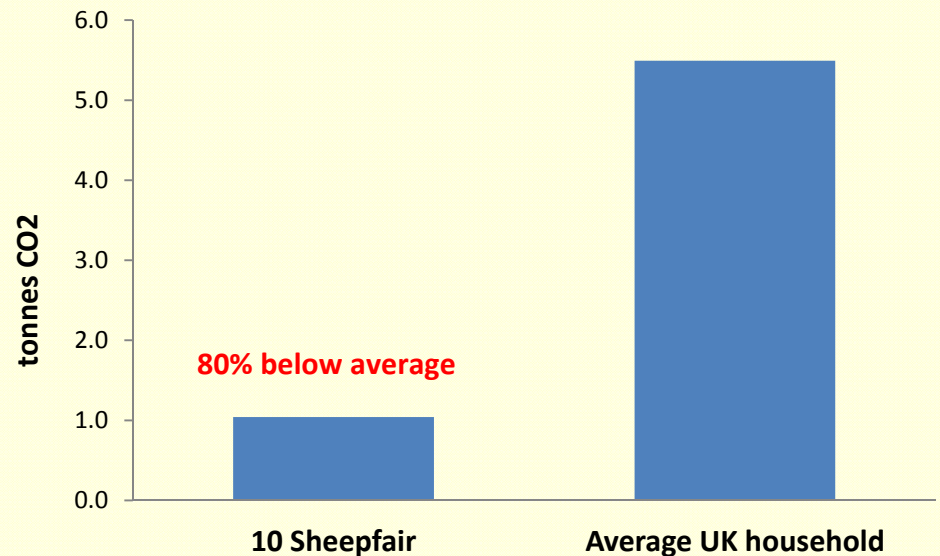
- New this year  
[www.lewesecoopenhouses.org.uk](http://www.lewesecoopenhouses.org.uk)
- Information about current and past events
- Reference all year round
  - Case studies (past and present)
  - Information about grants/subsidies/finance
  - Database of local professionals
  - DIY Information sheets plus useful links

Energy use and Generation vs Average



Case Studies - How do houses perform compared to average?

Net CO2 Emissions vs Average





# Our experience

- Very satisfying
  - Householders and volunteers really enjoy meeting interesting and committed visitors
  - Visitors are very enthusiastic and complimentary
- Budget
  - Relies very heavily on donated time.
  - Grants tricky to find for an established event – we failed to get any for event costs this year
  - Expenditure
    - Brochure design £800 (but this year donated)
    - Printing £1100
    - Website £1100 (partly donated)
    - Insurance £150 (next year hope to get free via Heritage Open Days)
  - Income
    - Brochure ads £300 x 4 = £1200 (will do more next year)
    - Visitor donations £250
    - Website development grant £500
    - Surplus from previous year £600
- Volunteers
  - Hard to raise numbers in small community (Lewes population 5000)
  - Time commitment can fall heavily on a few – but growing success attracts new people
  - Funding for organisers' time would help enormously to raise numbers
- Publicity
  - Brochure is important for publicising event. Distributed in local cafes, tourist info, libraries, etc.
  - Essential to get articles/announcements in local press.
    - Eg we had articles in Sussex Express(weekly), Brighton Argus monthly supplement, Viva Lewes (important free monthly events and news magazine). We could not afford to pay for any ads and relied on news interest to get published.

# Conclusions

ECO open houses can

- **Inspire** action and **Facilitate** change

Visitors want

- Chance to **talk over their plans**
- **Practical advice/cheap solutions/great ideas**
- **Local contacts**

Organising involves

- Heavy **time commitment /good numbers** to spread load
- **Funding**
- But is **very satisfying**



# Neil Williams

## Transition Town Lewes – Energy Group

