

Report for Ebico Trust on Lang Toun Energy Savers

Period covered – August to October 2011

*This report was prepared by
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Summary

Our project is going well. Since the previous report we have extended the opening hours of our advice centre. We have given energy-efficiency advice to more than 500 people since the project started, and we have carried out 6 home handyman visits to make energy-saving home improvements for people struggling to pay high fuel bills. We also won an award for our work in the community!



University of the Third Age 28/11/11

Our activities and outcomes

Advice centre – our project target was to open the centre for two half days each week, with an aspiration to increase it to three half days. Thanks to our dedicated volunteers, and members of staff working additional hours in a voluntary capacity, we are now able to regularly open on three half days a week - Friday afternoon and all day Saturday. This has been particularly useful for those visitors who are not able to come in on a Saturday.

We have had 360 visitors to the centre so far and have given in-depth energy advice to 143 households. We have carried out 'Home Energy Check' questionnaires for 73 homes, which allows us to refer people to government schemes such as the Energy Assistance Package. The Energy Assistance Package offers benefit and tax-credit checks, access to free or subsidised loft or cavity wall insulation and, for eligible clients, free heating system improvements and additional insulation measures worth up to £6,500 per house. Of the people we did Home Energy Checks with 26 were on

benefits, 36% of the total, and many more were elderly – this shows that we are reaching people at risk of fuel poverty.

Outcomes of our advice sessions range from people learning how to programme their heating to people getting a new boiler, heating controls or insulation. Our advice is tailored to individuals and their circumstances, but it all allows people to keep warm affordably and take more control of their energy consumption.

'Loved my trip to the centre. Helpful staff.'

'After visiting the advice centre I added pipe lagging and covered my boiler with an insulating jacket. I felt the house warming up instantly and I have no doubt my bills will be reduced come the end of the month. When I to add the other measures suggested I think I will be saving even more, which I am over the moon with. I really appreciate the help Greener Kirkcaldy has given me.'



In-depth advice in our centre

Home visits – we offer a home visit to assist people where their home needs some specialist advice, or where a person is unable to visit the centre. A home visit will also be made before a handyman visit, to provide advice, agree on measures to be installed and to measure up. Sometimes there are no measures which the handyman can undertake. In these cases we advise on jobs which are outwith the scope of the handyman scheme, such as wall insulation and heating upgrades.

Handyman – our handyman service offers free draughtproofing, pipe insulation and other simple measures to people in fuel poverty. The aim of this pilot project is to carry out handyman work in 30 homes. We launched the handyman service in mid-September and we have already carried out work in six homes. We have learnt that there is a demand for this service, but it is difficult to reach the people who would benefit most from it. To target the service we have increased our contacts with referring organisations like WRVS, health visitors and Red Cross. We are also promoting the service at our outreach events, particularly those for elderly people and carers.

'The handyman came on time, wore slippers so he didn't leave muddy footprints and left

everything tidy. Draughtproofing my front door has made my whole house much less cold.'

'I found the handyman to be professional but friendly and he explained everything he was doing. My home feels warmer now and my heating bills are less.'



Our first home handyman installation on 19/9/11

Drop in surgeries and work with groups –

Our surgeries and talks are aimed at groups which are likely to contain people in fuel poverty. We have done seven of these, for an over 50s club, a local Age Concern group, Dysart Kirk Guild, (a church group in an area with a high risk of fuel poverty due to the housing stock), Fife Carers Centre (which offers support to carers), a University of the Third Age group, a group of Adam Smith College students and a joint surgery with Fife Council in Templehall, at which council staff offered safety checks on electric blankets and we gave energy advice.

The outcomes from this work are diverse. People come up afterwards and say that they are going to programme their heating, or get/improve loft insulation, or get a jacket for their hot water cylinder. Many also tell their friends and family about our services.

Other events – since May we have attended 20 other events , such as a family day at the local football club and Doors Open Day at a local historic building, giving advice to around 350 people and ensuring our project is more widely known. These events were organised by our volunteers, and helped promote Greener Kirkcaldy and Lang Toun Energy Savers to a wider group of people.



Doors Open Day 11/9/11

Monitoring and evaluation

Our advisors keep records of all project participants, including a log of what advice we give, any referrals we make to other agencies or schemes, and what energy-efficiency measures we expect the household to take up. Our previous project evaluation work has found that the uptake of our advice is around 50% - i.e. people act upon around half of our advice. We intend to carry out telephone and online surveys of a sample of Lang Toun Energy Savers participants over the next few months, to determine the uptake of advice in this project. These surveys also give us the opportunity to offer additional advice and support.

This evaluation will allow us to measure the impact we are making on fuel poverty and also to estimate our carbon savings and the improvements to people's comfort. We will provide more information on this in our next report.

Volunteers – we have continued to retain and recruit volunteers. They have carried out a number of activities including running events and giving advice in the centre. Without these volunteers we would be unable to do as much as we do. Our volunteers have given more than 720 hours since the start of the project. In addition, because of our limited funding, our staff work often work extra hours in a voluntary capacity in order to meet the needs of the public.



'Greener Kirkcaldy allows me to give back to the community and help those people in the area who struggle to keep their house warm and their bills low. The success of Greener Kirkcaldy is being felt in the area and as our profile grows so does our ability to instigate positive change, which is a great thing for the town.' - Fraser Nicol, one of the Greener Kirkcaldy volunteers (pictured above).

Press and publicity

We regularly feature in our local paper and radio station. This brings people to the project and ensures that we reach a wide cross section of the community.

Green group's tips to cut fuel bills

Meet Dr DIY

GREENER Kirkcaldy is launching a new campaign this Saturday, giving advice on how to cut fuel bills. 'Dr DIY' is an informal event being held in their advice centre on the High Street to show people how best to insulate their homes for the winter. David Hansen, project co-ordinator, said: "Simple things like radiator panel or room thermometers can cut a fuel bill by 10 per cent.

"We want to get people in and think about these kind of appliances, which are cheap and easy to install." The event is just one of the many put forward by the organisation since its inception in 2009.

Initially the charity was funded by the Government's Climate Challenge Fund but lost out when bidding for its second year. It is now funded by EBICO, a not-for-profit energy company.

"The funding means we can continue, albeit on a lower scale," David said. "We were able to keep the advice centre open by moving further along the High Street, but we had to cut our opening hours, and it meant cutting staff hours too.

"But we're still very positive and have a number of ideas in the pipeline. "We intend to apply for more allotments, we're looking into the possibility of opening Kirkcaldy's first vegetarian cafe."



THE DOC WILL SEE YOU:
Sandy Finlayson, handyman and energy advisor launches Dr DIY (4311011) Pic: Neil Doig

Whilst attending the 'Dr DIY' event people will also be able to learn about Greener Kirkcaldy's 'home handyman' service. David said: "Someone can come to your home and fit things like draught excluders on doors or letter boxes. "It's little things like this that can make a huge difference."

Coverage of the launch of our home handyman service (Fife Free Press, Sept 2011)

We keep in touch with our supporters and members using a mailing list of 600 people who we send regular emails to and we update our website and our 100 Facebook friends regularly.

<http://www.greenerkirkcaldy.org.uk>
<http://www.facebook.com/greenerkirkcaldy>

Our award

In September we won the Scottish area of the Future Friendly Awards 2011. The awards celebrate groups and individuals from across Britain and Ireland working on sustainability projects in their communities. We traveled to London for the award ceremony, which was a great opportunity to speak to other groups about our work.



Presentation of our award to Greener Kirkcaldy volunteer Graham Jaques, by Irwin Lee of Proctor & Gamble and Gabby Logan

Conclusion

Lang Toun Energy Savers continues to reduce fuel poverty in Kirkcaldy by giving energy advice, working closely with partner organisations. The project is popular and well-trusted locally. Lessons learnt have been applied to improve the project and steer it to be better.

David Hansen
Project Coordinator
19/12/11