

Case Study 7: Village Energy Days



This case study forms part of Community Action for Energy, a major programme designed to promote and facilitate local community-based energy projects. The programme is an initiative for the Environment, Education & Community group of the Energy Efficiency Partnership for Homes.

Village Energy Days

Introduction

This case study provides an overview of an initiative promoting energy efficiency via events in villages around Daventry, Northamptonshire. Residents visit a local venue to get advice about practical energy efficiency measures. Energy Days are preceded by energy efficiency teaching in local schools.

When?

The first Village Energy Day was in 1999 and the project is ongoing.

Who's involved?

The main person responsible for the organisation of the Energy Day is Daventry District Council's Home Energy Conservation (HECA) Officer. The Centre for Research, Education and Training in Energy (CREATE) became involved in April 2000 to deliver the schools aspect of the project. The project also involves local energy suppliers, installers and manufacturers.

How is it funded?

Energy Days are funded by Daventry District Council's Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) budget. The installers, manufacturers and energy suppliers give their time free of charge.

What are the targets and aims?

Energy Days target all residents of the larger villages around Daventry.

The objectives of the project are:

- to increase community awareness of energy efficiency
- to promote the take-up of energy efficiency measures in the home
- to develop ongoing energy education programmes in local schools
- to meet HECA and Local Agenda 21 targets set by Daventry District Council.

How was it implemented?

Daventry is a large rural district in Northamptonshire consisting of many small villages which span the M1 motorway. The Home Energy Conservation Officer, given the task of promoting energy efficiency to residents in the district, came up with the idea of organising Energy Days in several of the larger villages, as a way to encourage local communities to take up energy efficiency measures in the home. About eight different communities are targeted each year (from September to April).

“Village Energy Days are a great way to involve the whole community in thinking about energy issues. They're really effective for raising awareness, as well as being an enjoyable day out.”

Dave Malone, Home Energy Conservation Officer, Daventry District Council



Village Energy Days

Before each event:

- the Home Energy Conservation Officer attends local community groups to tell them about energy efficiency and invite them along to the Energy Day. He also hand-delivers letters to each home in the village inviting residents to come
- CREATE approaches the local primary school (and secondary school if appropriate). Groups or classes are taught about energy efficiency and encouraged to take the energy efficiency message home to their parents. The class then prepares a presentation to give to their parents and the community at the Village Energy Day



- local schools send leaflets home to parents about the day and the fact that some of their children will be taking part
- local community groups spread the word through local newsletters and word of mouth
- posters and leaflets are displayed around the village
- local installers contact everyone in the village to check they have received their letter and reinforce the message about the Energy Day.

On the day of the event, villagers can visit a local venue, e.g. the village hall, and obtain information about practical energy efficiency measures they can undertake in their own home, plus available grants and discounts. Residents receive a free low-energy light bulb for completing a Home Energy Check.

Visitors also get involved in the school presentations, which have included looking at how energy efficient their village is, taking part in a large floor game looking at energy and water efficiency in the home, listening to an 'electric' orchestra of sounds certain home electrical appliances make, and looking at demonstrations of how energy efficient their homes could be.

The Local Agenda 21 Coordinator attends the event, to inform people about other environmental work/issues they can be involved in, and boiler manufacturers, installers and energy suppliers give free advice about their products and discounts available.

Achievements

The Village Energy Days so far have been very successful for all involved.

- they have been well attended by local people even when the weather has been horrendous. At least 20% of village residents regularly attend the Energy Days
- Daventry District Council has increased its knowledge of home energy efficiency in the district via the completion of Home Energy Check forms
- approximately 50% of residents attending the Energy Day take up measures via grants and discount schemes
- there has been increased awareness amongst young people about home and school energy efficiency – so far over 500 young people have been involved in the events.

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Key success factors

- making and sustaining community links before the Energy Day takes place
- having some 'freebies' on offer
- the children's presentation to parents and the wider community on the day provides a 'show' particularly appreciated by the older residents
- the HECA Officer has negotiated some very good deals with energy suppliers and manufacturers and therefore can offer substantial discounts on energy efficiency measures for most people living in the village, regardless of income.

Lessons learnt

- early development work with the community is essential to ensure a successful event. Going into schools and local groups at least a month before helps to spread the word and increase the attendance on the day
- involving local school children in promoting the energy efficiency message is crucial as they have an important influence on adults
- incentives, such as discounts and free low-energy light bulbs, are good crowd-pullers
- it is important to ensure that the venue/site used for the event is suitable for all your requirements. For example, one of the venues used for the event in Daventry was very large and had poor acoustics which meant that many people couldn't hear the children's presentation.

Next steps

The intention is to organise more Village Energy Days in 2002 and 2003.

Further information

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