

# Green Communities Case Study

## Hyde Farm Climate Action Network



Carbon reduction and community building. Those were the aims of Hyde Farm residents when they started the Hyde Farm Climate Action Network in autumn 2006.

The network hasn't disappointed. They've done everything from organising events to give their neighbours information on saving energy to running a community garden. They've even had a visit from the Prime Minister.

They've brought people together too. In just two and a half years, the network has built up an impressive 250 members on their estate in Balham, South London. They reach a further 1,600 households in the area through their work with schools.

### Hyde Farm Climate Action Network and the Energy Saving Trust

The Energy Saving Trust has supported the Hyde Farm Climate Action Network since autumn 2008. Through the Green Communities local support programme, the local Energy Saving Trust advice centre has provided the network with in depth advice and support to help Hyde Farm develop a programme to save energy and put it into action.

Working with the Energy Saving Trust, the network has done everything from organise events for the public to training for their members.

### Hyde Farm Climate Action Network's achievements

Hyde Farm Climate Action Network has organised several events to share energy saving ideas. The group has close links with local schools and was able to use the school hall to host their events. These include 'Draught-Busting Saturdays', where the Energy Saving Trust and other experts showed people how to draft-proof their homes. People who came along have draft-proofed a total of around 80 windows and doors.

The network has also organised events to let people know about loft insulation. These inspired reluctant residents to take action, as they were able to find out that that loft insulation wasn't as difficult to fit as they had thought. The Energy Saving Trust organised a contractor to give quotes for insulation to interested residents.

Advisors also brought low cost energy saving devices to sell at all these events. These included energy efficient light bulbs and hot water tank jackets, which were provided to the group for free.

The Energy Saving Trust offered Hyde Farm homes a Home Energy Check too. Residents fill out a questionnaire, and are given a report on how they can save

energy and what measures are most important to help them do so.

The group is now retrofitting 10 homes with measures like solid wall insulation (where insulation is fitted to the interior or exterior wall because there's no wall cavity). One of the retrofitted homes was so impressive that Gordon Brown came to see it, and the BBC filmed his visit.

Members of the Hyde Farm Climate Action Network were keen to find out more about saving energy and to support others to reduce their carbon footprint. So the Energy Saving Trust helped them find funding for and apply to do City and Guilds energy advice training. They secured funding for this from Awards For All, a Lottery grants scheme.

They made other helpful suggestions too, such as having a 'street leader' scheme, where one resident on each street is responsible for giving their neighbours information about network activities. This gets neighbours in contact and creates a sense of community.

The network's community garden is another great achievement. Situated in the grounds of a disused church, the network uses the garden to encourage people to grow food at home, reduce their food miles and stay active. They've demonstrated how to make compost and given away seed potatoes from the garden.

The network hosted a forum for the national Low Carbon Communities Network, the body that brings together and supports local climate change groups all over the UK, in October 2008.

Susan Sheehan of the Hyde Farm Climate Action Network is delighted with the

group's impact. She says: 'There's anecdotal evidence that people are recycling more and are pleased with the reduction in their energy bills after introducing energy saving measures.

'The sense of community is crucial – people say they feel safer and more relaxed when they walk around at night because they know so many more neighbours.'

### Hyde Farm Climate Action Network's challenges

The network's hasn't reached this stage without meeting bumps in the road. Hyde Farm is mostly made up of Edwardian and Victorian houses, and is a conservation area. This means homes can be difficult to alter. Refurbishment is subject to strict regulation, and there are practical problems too. For example, few properties have cavities in their walls, making it hard to fit insulation.

The network got around these difficulties by concentrating on easy-to-fit measures to begin with, such as draught-proofing and loft insulation. Now they're more established, they're taking their activities to the next stage by retrofitting homes.

Another problem the network encountered was a more positive one: many members are very enthusiastic and knowledgeable about saving energy. So they've often had trouble deciding which of their many good ideas to pursue.

Their solution was to hold a meeting where they played a game provided Every Action Counts, an organisation which supports community groups. The game let them see what their priorities should be – they decided to do draught busting and

insulation first – and what they could leave until further down the line.

### **The future for Hyde Farm Climate Action Network**

The Hyde Farm Climate Action Network is really enthusiastic about taking their work to the next level. They hope the 10 homes they're retrofitting will act as templates for other similar houses in the area to make changes. They're also going to encourage more residents to take up a local loft insulation installer's offer of a survey and quote.

The network is also planning an open evening in November. Hyde Farm residents will be able to come along and meet representatives from the Energy Saving Trust and other organisations and contractors that can give them advice on reducing their carbon footprint.

### **Contact information**

Susan Sheehan

07961 342247

[www.hydefarm.org.uk/](http://www.hydefarm.org.uk/)

[www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/community/greencommunities@est.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/community/greencommunities@est.org.uk)  
0844 848 0077