

Project type: **Home energy auditing**

Name of example: **Lightfoot Energy Service**

Lightfoot Energy ([www.lightfoot.org.uk](http://www.lightfoot.org.uk)) is a Community Interest Company based in Bishops Castle, Shropshire. Its aim is to help local people understand how they use energy and identify where they can save money. A key mechanism for achieving this is Lightfoot's Household Energy Service (HES), set up to provide independent and tailored advice to homes, community buildings and businesses in the Marches using a network of volunteer energy assessors.

### **The project**

Established in the mid 1990s, Lightfoot's Household Energy Service trains and works with over 50 voluntary energy assessors to deliver household energy surveys, as well as a team of technical experts who produce reports, recommendations and financial and technical advice. The volunteers visit homes to carry out a visual survey of the property and interview the householder to gather data and understand how the residents use energy in their home and their travel behaviour. Volunteer assessors spend 1-2 hours with the householder carrying out the walk-around energy audit and interview, and when conditions are favourable they use a thermal imaging camera to take pictures of heat loss from the property.

HES then passes the data to their technical experts for analysis and deliver a tailored report for the householder highlighting where energy and cost savings can be made in their home, promoting behaviour change as well as the installation of energy efficiency improvements. The report outlines priority areas for energy use reduction, projected annual savings and information about grants, renewable energy subsidies and details of local suppliers.

Outside of their immediate geographical area, the group also offers the option to complete a DIY energy survey via post. The householder receives a tailored report based on suggestions to save energy in their home similar to the reports produced for the walk-around audits, although the quality of these DIY survey reports rely entirely on the information supplied by the householder.

### **Achievements**

To date, around 1,500 households have taken part in HES. Evaluation of a random sample of 51 home energy surveys undertaken in 2012 showed an overall drop in household carbon emissions of 13% since the home energy assessment. Emissions from heating, lighting and appliances showed an average 16% drop while transport-related emissions fell by an average of 9%.

HES is now being developed to be rolled out as a 'social franchise', with all the training, support and materials provided for other groups to replicate the project themselves. Lightfoot believes this offers the opportunity for greater impact and measurable data to support the model of behavioural change.

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## Lessons learned

The role of suitably trained and enthusiastic volunteers in encouraging behaviour change as part of the energy audit process has been key to the success of the scheme. Alison Davies, Manager of Light Foot Enterprises CIC, says “it is the volunteer surveyors’ expertise in guiding the householder through the measures needed to reduce their energy use and create a cosy home that is a critical factor in the success of the programme. We pride ourselves on being impartial and independent”.

## Resources

People



Lightfoot employs one part-time Coordinator for HES and one part-time Administrator for the overarching Lightfoot group as well as their many local volunteers (who need to commit to 1.5 hrs per survey and follow up support), and contracted technical experts (also committing to 1.5hrs per survey report).

Technical skills



The voluntary surveyors are given full training by Lightfoot Enterprises CIC and do not need any prior knowledge. The contracted technical experts must be accredited Domestic Energy Assessors.

Finances



The main funders in the early years were public and private sector grants. In 2010, HES won a £300,000 ‘Big Green Challenge’ innovation award from NESTA to reduce carbon emissions through their community-led response to climate change. The cost of undertaking surveys and producing reports was initially met by this funding for nearly two years. Now operating independently of external funding, the group find that charging for the surveys is necessary to ensure continuity of the service into the future. A Home Energy Survey and bespoke report from HES now costs around £50 for a typical three-bedroom home. External funding and grants are needed in particular to provide the service for those in fuel poverty.

Project partners



The group work with local organisations and community groups, community and parish councils.

## Green Deal potential

There are strong links between this project and Green Deal and these are being taken into account as Green Deal develops. However, the HES energy survey service, with their focus on behaviour change and tailored support, takes a more holistic household approach than a Green Deal Assessment. Volunteers will not be trained as Green Deal assessors, although that option may become available in the future. Requirements for the Green Deal will mean that any installations benefitting from the Green Deal will need to be recommended by an accredited Green Deal Assessor/assessment (an EPC plus an occupancy assessment).