

Home Energy Conservation Act
Report of Stratford on Avon District Council - 2017



I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine:

(A Midsummer Night's Dream (2.1.255-60). William Shakespeare).



Introduction

Stratford-on Avon District Council covers the southern-most half of Warwickshire. The area is 374 square miles, and is noted for its association with William Shakespeare. The above quote shows that the area inspired the world's greatest playwright, and we take protecting this heritage seriously.

Visitors to the area come not only for cultural and historical reasons – but also for its rural nature. However, whilst it is an attractive area for visitors – we are mindful that there we have responsibilities to our residents, and to communities beyond. Some of the issues our residents face include:

- Nearly a third of the area (31%) is off the gas network, making heating costs very high.
- The attractiveness of the area leads to high house prices, and this leads to a high level of rented accommodation and recourse to park home properties. Both areas bring their challenges for thermal efficiency.
- The historic and attractive nature of the buildings creates a large number of 'hard-to-treat.' This is true not only in the tourist centres, but also in smaller communities where the visual nature of buildings are protected.

This report sets out the following:

- The background for this report
- The Current Situation - Where are we now?
- Achievement since last reporting period 2015 – 2017
- List our future plans for 2017 – 2019 and beyond

Background Information for this HECA Report

The Government requires local authorities in England to provide an update report every two years setting out the energy conservation measures that the Authority considers practicable, cost-effective and likely to result in significant improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in the area.

This report builds on previous reports setting out how Stratford-on-Avon District Council intends to help householders take advantage of financial incentives such as the Energy Company Obligation (ECO), Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI), Feed in Tariff (FIT) and any other schemes that became available. In addition it will also provide information on funding sourced and provided by the council.

Summary

Since HECA was first introduced Stratford-on-Avon District Council submitted annual reports to the Secretary of State from 1997 until 2011 defining any progress made towards the assumed target of a 30% improvement in energy efficiency in domestic property in our district. With the introduction of additional specific targets under Local Area Agreements we delivered programs and works for energy efficiency, fuel poverty and carbon reduction.

We are now in our third reporting stage for the revitalised HECA and this report will detail projects and work we have delivered since the last report in 2015 and will also detail our plans for the next two years to address home energy related issues across our district.



The Council sent the local energy advice charity in 1998, and we continue to value this relationship. Through this partnership, Act on Energy supports us in our duties under HECA, and our support for them enables them to continue to provide information, advice and guidance to residents alongside creating a referral network to local contractors who can access ECO and other funding sources, this included Green Deal Finance until its demise in 2015. Their expertise gives us up to date advice with issues such as the introduction of Green Deal in the Energy Act 2010 and the further energy supplier obligations under ECO.

The network Act on Energy have created will provide on-going help to ensure that we continue to make available the appropriate improvement measures to our residents. We are committed to ensure all changes are seamless and cost effective.

The Council does not have the resources to employ a full time HECA Officer and the appointed officer shares this responsibility alongside other duties. The Officer is supported through a service level agreement with Act on Energy to provide information advice and guidance to both our staff and residents. This is delivered through a combination of telephone support, community events and home visits providing an end to end journey for residents and ensuring some of our most vulnerable households are supported throughout their energy journey.

The relationship represents excellent value for money – as it creates an economy of scale. Stratford District Council’s arrangement has been replicated by 12 other local authorities. The service level agreements are specifically written to support local authorities to deliver their obligations under HECA. This provides not only financial benefits, but also gives opportunity for sharing best practice, and peer to peer support.

The Council is also a partner within the wider ‘Warm and Well in Warwickshire’ Partnership which has been operating since 2010. The Partnership provides a number of services such as help and advice, practical support such as, boiler and heating replacement, emergency heaters, boiler servicing and additional support for loft and cavity wall insulation, benefit checks to maximise income and practical services from local agencies including home visits, snow clearing, shopping and transport.

The group is co-ordinated by Warwickshire County Council and Act on Energy, and utilises the services of agencies across the county. The network has also been successful in bidding for funds through Public Health England, and most recently NEA Warm and Healthy Homes Fund where we worked with the wider partnerships of Worcestershire and Solihull.

Strategic Ambitions

The Council’s Corporate Strategy (2015 - 2019) sets the strategic context for our energy conservation and fuel poverty work. Our Corporate Strategy provides the vision for the Council and sets its main objectives for the next few years. It is set by the Council as community leaders working in partnership with a number of organisations.

There are three main objectives:

- A flourishing local economy
- People and their environment
- Responsible community leadership

Within these main objective a number are related to our work on domestic energy. They include the following:

- A flourishing local economy: The Council will work with partners and local businesses to create jobs through business retention, growth and new inward investment from the UK and abroad.
 - To positively embrace the Local Enterprise Partnership to influence its plans, priorities and impact upon our District.
 - To support further development of the Broadband infrastructure across our district which will assist businesses with the connections they require.

- People and their environment: The Council will work with partners to protect the character of the environment and support activities to improve the health and wellbeing of our local communities.
 - Embrace the landscape and environmental protection provided by our Core Strategy when considering new developments.
 - Promote Health and Wellbeing including playing an active role in the Warwickshire Health and Wellbeing Board.
- Responsible Community Leadership: The Council will support our communities and the diversity of local interests within them. When opportunities arise, we shall embrace innovative solutions to provide the best results for residents and the Council.
 - Supporting vulnerable people; especially those becoming homeless, those adjusting to benefit changes and those needing supported accommodation.
 - Work with our partners to improve the District's infrastructure including broadband, transportation, education, utilities and emergency services.
 - Identify opportunities to improve access to local services, especially for those in remote communities Seek opportunities to work with our partners to achieve benefits for our residents. Expand our programme of sharing services with other councils.

In addition, the Stratford-on-Avon District [Housing Strategy 2015-2020](#) document includes a number of actions aimed at addressing energy use. The Action Plan sets out 23 high level actions under three Aims:

- **Aim 1:** To support communities including increasing the supply and choice of good quality affordable homes for local people.
- [Aim 2: To improve existing housing and help people live as independently as possible.](#)
- **Aim 3:** To prevent homelessness and reduce the harm caused by it

It is under aim two that many energy related actions are most relevant. Aim two recognises the importance of warm homes and how improving residential energy efficiency is particularly important in tackling fuel poverty. Eliminating fuel poverty is the overall objective of South Warwickshire's Affordable Warmth Strategy.

Partnerships

To ensure that we can reach the wide and varied homes across the district and are able to continue our important progress towards our goal of achieving a significant reduction in energy use in domestic homes across the district. It is important to continue and further develop our work with partners and use a number of different channels to ensure we reach out to all of our residents in a joined up and effective way. Some examples of our partnerships include:

- ***South Warwickshire Affordable Warmth Group***

This is a partnership that focuses on the south of the County with a lead been taken by the two district Councils of Stratford and Warwick. The group is currently chaired by Stratford and includes community partners as well as those in the statutory sector. This helps us to deliver a co-ordinated approach to addressing fuel poverty. The group has also been successful in accessing funding and two of our third sector partners. For example, Act on Energy and Citizens Advice were able to bid for funding from British Gas to deliver a GP focused projected

with Prime GP to ensure some of the GP's most vulnerable patients were able to access a variety of support from health checks, benefit checks through to physical energy efficiency measure and energy advice.

- ***Warm and Well in Warwickshire***

This group aims to deliver reductions in fuel poverty through improved energy efficiency across the housing stock. The membership of the group consists of the five district Councils, County Council, Act on Energy, Age UK, Warwickshire Welfare Rights, CAB and Warwickshire Public Health.

- ***Local Authority Consortium Groups***

We are a key member of the Act on Energy Local Authority Consortium Group and Association of Local Energy Officers which identify and share best practice in energy efficiency with other local authorities on both a regional and sub regional basis. These groups not only allow us to share experiences but enable us to feed into consultations and provide a link through to BEIS through the ALEO Executive.

- ***Registered Social Providers***

We endeavour to work with our social housing providers to support residents with a combination of behavioural advice looking at aspects ranging from switching, energy debt through to smart meters. The principle RSL in the area is Orbit Heart of England Housing, but we also work with Warwickshire Rural Housing Association, Stonewater and Bromford.



Achievements since the last reporting period 2015 – 2017

Over the last two years we and partners have undertaken a number of activities to improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty. Many of these initiatives provide information, advice and guidance through a variety of sources including attendance at flu jab clinics, advice surgeries to give bespoke advice on managing fuel bills, energy efficiency products, grants available, training for councillors, officers and partners, community presentations, connecting with rural communities in partnership with the mobile library service.

A summary of some of the more major projects is set out below:

- ***Funded Heating Support***

Through the 'Warm and Well in Warwickshire' Partnership we have received funding enabling us to support some of our most vulnerable residents with either first time or replacement central heating systems. In our district, it has supported 33 residents with new heating systems and improved their EPC SAP ratings. In addition to this we have been able to support residents with additional funding for heating through our Home Repair Assistance Fund.

- ***Park Homes Energy Support Projects***

As a rural district with an aging population we have a number of park homes sites. We have been working alongside partners across two of the main sites providing a variety of energy advice. This has initially been focused on energy saving, switching suppliers and helping tenants to access the Warm Homes Discount.

One site is located within the area of the South Warwickshire GP Project and over the next few months we hope that additional physical measures will take place including heating and external wall insulation.



Pictures of an information event – which focused on external insulation. This also involved our partners P3 who provided wider advice on income maximisation.



- **Orbit Housing**

Orbit Housing owns approximately 6,500 properties in the District. The majority of these were originally owned by the District Council, but were transferred into a newly created RSL, which subsequently became part of the Orbit Group. As part of the transfer agreement, the Council required that all properties have up to date loft insulation, cavity wall insulation and double glazing. This ethos of making the properties affordable to live in persists and Orbit undertook EPC surveys of all their stock – in order to target energy poor properties.

In the last year alone, Orbit has undertaken 324 external wall insulation installations. They understand that this is saving tenants approximately £100 per annum on fuel costs. It has also has a beneficial effect on lifestyle issues.



Orbit has invested heavily in meeting the challenges of solid wall properties by delivering a programme of solid wall insulation.

The photo on the right shows the 'before and after'.



Snitterfield Advice Project – with Warwickshire Rural Housing

This project was formulated after a request from the Parish Council who was concerned about rising energy costs in an area where there is no mains gas. We worked with the Parish Council, the social housing provider Warwickshire Rural Housing Association and Act on Energy to provide an information session for residents. We will continue to work with these partners to ensure that we can maximise the support we give to residents.

Warwickshire Rural Housing has checked that lofts meet current standards, and where they don't, they have been topped up to current standards. They have also employed thermal imaging and borescope investigations to ensure that the cavity wall insulation is adequate.

We also engaged with the social landlord to correct the notion that tenants were not allowed to change energy suppliers – and some have been supported to switch.

Providing Information, Advice and Guidance

As a Council we feel that advice provision for residents is essential and recent findings contained within the Bonfield Review has highlighted both the importance and value of energy advice. For us that advice is delivered locally through our energy advice partners [Act on Energy](#), who offer a combination of quality telephone advice through to community based and even in-home support. This enables us to be confident that residents are accessing the very latest advice and have access to the right support to allow them to make ongoing decisions about energy usage. This includes switching energy suppliers through to taking physical measures. They have provided advice/support to over 1700 homes since our last report.



The event pictured above shows a community hall based event which was well supported. This provided advice for winter living – and was supported by 9 partner agencies.

We have also undertaken a number of projects where we have gone door to door. This project was in Studley.

- **Private Landlords**

We provide regular updates on energy policy and energy efficiency opportunities through our landlord's forums. We have recently run a session on the forthcoming PRS Energy Efficiency Regulations and our landlords are encouraged to access our local support line run through Act on Energy. In addition we are offering landlords who have properties rated in band F and G to have an energy advice visit so that they can access advice on what measure could practically be installed to improve the energy rating of those properties

The Current Situation - Where are we now?

This section gives details of energy related data and how we are working to address the issues raised by these statistics.

Carbon emissions

In 2014, 7.6 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) was emitted per person in Stratford. This is a 16% reduction compared to 2005. However, this is the highest proportion across the county, and is higher than the Warwickshire and England averages. This can be attributed to a number of factors. Homes in rural areas are often harder to heat and keep warm than those in more densely populated urban areas.



The roof at the Council Offices – where we continue to lead by example

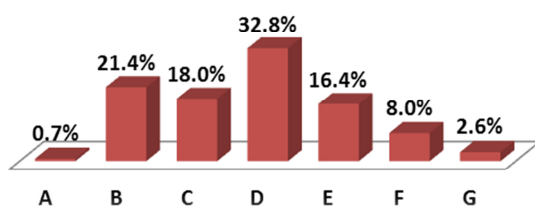
“How far that little candle throws its beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty world”.
(William Shakespeare)



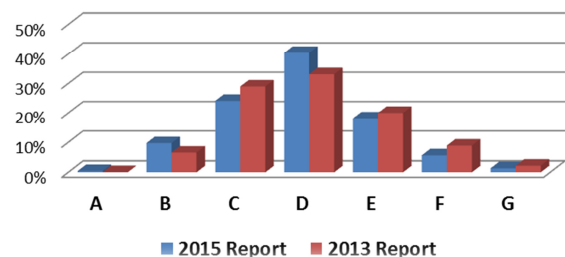
Energy Performance Certificates

Unfortunately we are unable to undertake a full EPC analysis as we are waiting for this information to become available from DCLG. We have looked at banding data currently available which illustrates that majority of EPC's in the district are in band D. We have an ever expanding number of properties in a B rating this is predominantly due to new buildings. We aim to focus on those properties in band E-G over the next few years.

Stratford- SAP bands 2015-17

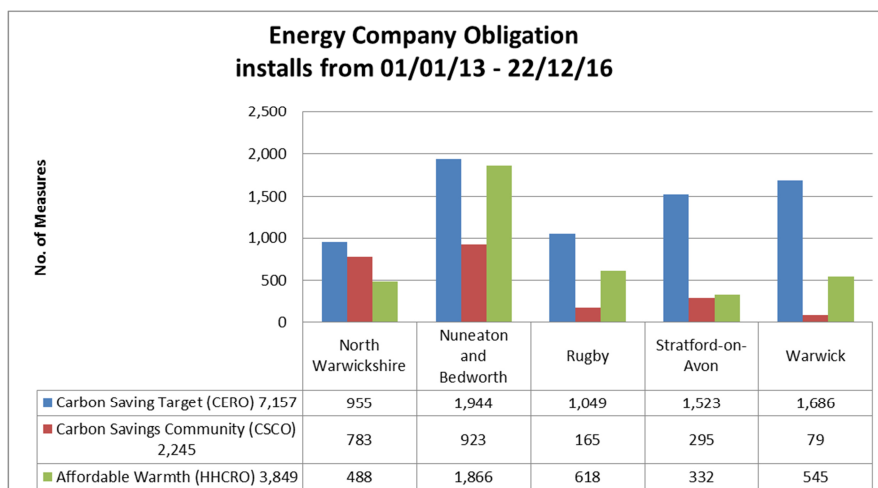


Average EPC band change since previous report



Energy Company Obligation

We have worked with partners to help deliver ECO across our district we have promoted the importance of energy saving measures to residents with a specific focus on the fuel poor. Although we have had a reasonable take up of HHCRO measures, but the fact that we are a rural area with many properties off the mains gas network is a challenge. We want to ensure that we work with partners on the new ECO obligations to ensure we can support those living in rural and potentially off gas areas who so far have received less grant assistance. This links to our aspirations under the ECO: Help to Heat Flexible Eligibility as detailed further in this report.



Fuel poverty

In 2014, 6,356 households (12.1%) in Stratford were fuel poor; this has risen from 10.5% in 2013. This is above the Warwickshire (10.7%) and national (10.6%) averages.

| LA Name | 2013 | | | 2014 | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|--|--|
| | Estimated number of households | Estimated number of Fuel Poor Households | Proportion of Fuel Poor Households (%) | Estimated number of households | Estimated number of Fuel Poor Households | Proportion of households fuel poor (%) |
| North Warwickshire | 25,922 | 2,786 | 10.7 | 26075 | 2696 | 10.3 |
| Nuneaton and Bedworth | 52,927 | 5,900 | 11.1 | 53229 | 5203 | 9.8 |
| Rugby | 42,036 | 4,574 | 10.9 | 42291 | 4393 | 10.4 |
| Stratford-on-Avon | 52,143 | 5,497 | 10.5 | 52467 | 6356 | 12.1 |
| Warwick | 58,918 | 6,514 | 11.1 | 59254 | 6429 | 10.8 |

Fuel poverty at local level uses lower super output areas (LSOAs) which are small areas covering around 1500 residents. The LSOAs with the highest proportion of fuel poor households are some of more rural areas such as Long Compton. We are aware that rural areas in our district and those living in old and poorly insulated homes are most vulnerable to cold. They are predominantly paying higher fuel cost, and also have houses that are potentially experiencing higher levels of heat loss.

Our Future plan for 2017 – 2019 and beyond

Despite sustained the success we have had over the period of the HECA legislation, we do acknowledge the words of St Jerome, "Good, better, best. Never let it rest. 'Til your good is better and your better is best." We are not an Authority that wants to rest on our laurels.

To contribute towards our long term strategic ambitions, we are planning a number of actions and initiatives going forward, to improve energy efficiency, reduce fuel poverty and improve health, housing and lifestyle choices.

The majority of our initiatives are highlighted in our action plan but some of the key actions are detailed below.

Challenge and Opportunities from New Developments

Over the next ten years, two major new communities will be established. Over the next two years, we will identify how this can be delivered sensitively to minimise harm to our existing communities, and also provide for cost effective energy usage too. As part of this process, we applied to have one of those communities designated as a 'Garden Village' – and this application was successful. This will enable us going forward to provide new developments whilst protecting our existing heritage.



Developing existing structures in sensitive areas – whilst meeting current living needs.



What we are protecting

Delivering the Energy Company Obligation

We are aiming to deliver energy efficiency measures through the Energy Company Obligation (ECO). This will involve developing a partnership approach to deliver the 'flexible' element to allow us to support fuel poor households who are not in receipt of benefits and low income households whose health could be adversely affected from living in a cold home. We intend to make a formal declaration of our Statement of Intent that will guide our future delivery.

Private Rented Sector Energy Efficiency Regulations

We will continue to work with partners through a combination of our Landlord's Forums, events and press. This will highlight the changes in regulations and details how we as a council will legislate for this alongside other district and county partners.

We will use direct mailshots to target landlords with properties in bands F and G.

Information, Advice and Guidance

This is a critical aspect of the energy journey for many households and without it, residents find making the appropriate energy decisions more of a challenge. This is especially true in this rural area, as some of our most vulnerable residents maybe digitally excluded or socially isolated. We will continue to offer the following support services through our energy advice partners Act on Energy:

- Freephone energy advice line
- Community based support ensuring we reach our most rural communities
- Energy clinics offering switch advice
- Smart metering – offer advice and support on the roll out of smart meters through dedicated community events
- Warm Homes Discount – promotion of the scheme with a specific focus on our Park Homes
- Home visits for the most vulnerable in our community
- Working with partners to ensure we provide a one stop advice provision and onward referrals. This will build on our already excellent relationships with the Fire Service, GP's and third sector.

White Label Energy Suppliers

We are a partner within the County Council's process to provide a white label offer for residents across the county. A local white label can engage customers through offering distinct tariffs, provide higher levels of customer service, and have different sales channels. As a Council, we will work with other local authorities and Housing Associations to build upon our trusted brand with residents and tenants to develop a customer base. This will enable us to meet customers individual needs as well as provide a platform to meet wider social objectives.

One of the key advantages of the white label company that is proposed for the area, is that it will provide an income stream for further reinvestment in social energy projects in the area.

Extension of Gas Network

An ambition is to try and support communities to join the gas network where possible in order to see a reduction in their energy costs. The new settlements may provide an opportunity for larger scale improvements, but we will also seek to influence smaller scale extensions.

External Wall insulation

We will work with individuals and organisations to try and further assist those in solid wall properties – as they have not benefited as much from grant assistance as those in properties with cavity wall insulation.

Conclusion

This report gives us an important opportunity to reflect the on-going, sustained good work done through the council and its partners – and provides us with an opportunity to recommit ourselves to further actions that will benefit residents of the Stratford District area and beyond.