

Greener Homes

The way we run our homes can have a huge impact on the environment and our energy bills. There are things that we as householders can do to lessen our environmental impact. These include:

- Installing loft and cavity wall insulation, draught proofing and double glazing. More eco-friendly alternatives are now available, including insulation made from sheeps' wool. All private households also qualify for a 100% Cavity Wall Insulation grant, regardless of income or other circumstances. There is no catch and you will never have to repay the grant, however not all homes are suitable and once the government funding runs out the scheme will end.
- Generating heat through renewables. The Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive is a Government-funded scheme which pays back money towards renewable heating costs. These include heating water through solar panels, ground- and air-source heat pumps and biomass boilers.
- Generating electricity through solar photovoltaic panels or wind turbines. The government-funded Feed-In-Tariff paid out for electricity generated using these technologies, but the scheme stopped accepting new applications after 31st March 2019.
- Using wood burners, stoves and open fires for heat generation. However regulations were tightened this year and the burning of coal and wet wood was banned in order to reduce air pollution.
- Switching to a 100% renewable electricity and carbon offset gas supplier. The two suppliers scoring highest in the latest Which? report were Octopus Energy and Pure Planet, both of which supply 100% renewable (no nuclear generated) electricity.
- Improving the efficiency of water systems with low-flow showers and taps, insulated tanks and hot water thermostats.

The Committee on Climate Change (CCC) published 'UK housing: Fit for the future?' in February 2019. The report concludes that the Government needs to take action in five areas NOW (i.e. over 2 years ago) to improve the UK's housing stock and help achieve long-term emissions reduction targets. This includes:

- Enforcing standards, ensuring compliance with those standards and closing the 'performance gap'
- Delivering a step-change in construction skills
- Retrofitting existing homes so they are low-carbon, energy-efficient and resilient to a changing climate
- Ensuring new homes are low-carbon, ultra-energy efficient and climate resilient, with sustainable transport options
- Addressing urgent funding needs.

In 2019 the Government announced that fossil fuel heating systems such as gas boilers are to be banned from new homes by 2025 and replaced with technology such as solar panels and air source heat pumps. However, detailed information regarding the proposals seems not to have been published yet and there is no evidence that they are adopting all of the measures identified by the CCC. We can encourage the Government to adopt the recommendations in the CCC report by writing to them with our concerns. A useful website is www.writetothem.com. By entering your postcode, the contact details of your local councillors and MP are given.