

# A comprehensive community based programme

# Leicester (UK)

## GENERAL ASPECTS

Leicester is the chief town of Leicestershire. A city with 294 000 inhabitants, it has the largest Asian community in the UK. Originally a Roman settlement, the city is a focus of communications in central England. A green city, it became a highly industrial town, noted for hosiery. Now services form the largest sector.



## BACKGROUND

Leicester has a long tradition of environmental activism having run many environmental projects since the 1970s. It had already run a series of projects to improve energy efficiency in the municipal stock of social housing before 1990 which had saved a total of 90 000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per year.

In 1990 Leicester was appointed Britain's first "Environment City". Leicester then committed itself to a process of consultation with different environmental interests via an organisation called "Leicester Environment City Trust". This organisation promotes discussion research and consultation and is composed of 8 working groups focusing on individual environmental issues. They developed strategies for the city for each of the sectors concerned including energy. The Trust was merged into a new charity, Environ, that promotes sustainable lifestyles.



18C New Walk , Leicester

Municipal policy has a target of reducing the city's energy consumption by 2025 to half that of 1990 and to ensure that 20% of the energy derives from renewable sources by 2020. The action plan proposes to achieve this by initiatives in the field of cogeneration, renewable energy, waste, transport and energy efficiency, particularly in housing. These proposals have been supplemented by the adoption of the city's Local Agenda 21 and Community Plan.

Liberalisation in the UK has been complete and there is fierce competition between suppliers at all levels, large users, small business and the domestic customer. The vast majority of this competition is based on price although a market for green electricity has developed. If local authorities are going to compete with this price based advertising, they too have to campaign actively and imaginatively to promote energy efficiency and renewables. This is precisely what Leicester has been doing.

# ACTION UNDERTAKEN

## Action in housing

Environ with the support of Leicester City Council, opened a pioneering "Eco-House" in a park in Leicester. This 70-year old traditionally built house operates as a show house open to the public. It has been adapted to incorporate many improvements designed to raise its environmental performance. It demonstrates to residents how they can improve the performance of their house even when it is relatively old. This is an essential issue in a town where one third of the housing stock is over 80 years old.

Leicester's action on housing was built on a firm foundation of action in their own stock of social housing. The energy performance of housing in the city had risen from around NHER 3 to around NHER6 before full market opening.



Following liberalisation the UK government set up a body to promote energy efficiency activity, the Energy Saving Trust, funded jointly by a levy on energy sales and Government grants. This organisation has funded a programme of action in local energy efficiency advice centres which covers the entire country. In addition they have funded programmes (so-called HECA Action) to promote energy saving in housing under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 which require local authorities to plan for a reduction in energy consumption of 30% by 2010. A major motivation of this saving is to reduce fuel poverty, defined as a household spending more than 10% of its income on energy.

Delivery of these programmes has frequently been conferred on energy agencies and these have often taken on the responsibility for adjoining areas. Thus Severn and Wye Energy Agency now covers all of Gloucestershire and Milton Keynes covers South Bedfordshire. Leicester Energy Agency was set up in 1996 in cooperation with Leicester De Montfort University. It is based in premises on the main market square in Leicester and is host to Leicester Energy Advice Centre and Leicester and Northamptonshire and Energy Efficiency Centre and Energy Agency and so covers a wide surrounding area.

There is a national "Home Energy Check" questionnaire that is available free to enable householders to assess the performance of their home. It enables the Advice Centre to provide advice tailored to the householder's particular needs. This can include advice on sources of funding, low energy consumption appliances, approved companies to carry out improvements and sources of clean and renewable energy. Some low energy appliances are sold cheaply at the Advice Centre, for instance low energy light bulbs and efficient power points for refrigerators.

The City is continuing a programme of energy auditing within the municipal social housing stock which is used to prioritise their programme of improvements.

In the private sector a Home Energy Strategy programme has been launched. This includes training for the building trade, the financing of initial energy efficiency audits for housing, advice for private individuals and subsidies for work carried out. In addition the agency runs an information campaign "save energy in the home".

Regulation plays a role in maintaining a high energy performance in the housing sector. Planning regulations cannot require a higher standard of construction than that in the nationally determined "Building Regulations" although high performance can be indicated as a favourable consideration in the UK's discretionary planning system. Nevertheless the authority can and do require developers who purchase land from the local authority to develop to a NHER rating of 9.9.

A solar club has been set up by LNEECEA and Environ to provide training to individuals who wish to install their own solar thermal panels and which also sells the equipment on preferential terms.

## Action in the home

Leicester Energy Agency has developed a programme to promote energy saving technology. Equipment producers and suppliers can become "Energy Sense" partners and customers can obtain a reduction from these partners by showing an "Energy Sense" card.

The Turning the Tide Campaign has been set up to counteract a lack of awareness of environmental matters and is run in partnership with the neighbouring cities of Nottingham and Derby. A campaign has been run on energy in which it was possible to purchase reflective radiator panels at cost price. The campaign is run in cooperation with the local media – TV, radio and newspapers.

Environ provides free training for people on a wide range of issues relating to energy. Introductory sessions on energy conservation are held. Programmes of five afternoon sessions at the Eco House are devoted to questions of heating lighting insulation and subsidies available for energy saving activities. These people are called energy advocates and are able to advise others on the energy efficiency of their own homes and can spread this information to their network of contacts. This training is also given in depressed neighbourhoods in the city to encourage them to save energy and therefore costs.

Leicester Energy Advice Centre has promoted renewable energy with its "Plug into Green Energy" campaign. This draws attention to the benefits of purchasing sustainably produced power and of saving energy - the cheapest energy is that which is not needed.

Leicester has indicated that it will copy Merton Council which requires all new development over 1000m<sup>2</sup> to provide 10% of its energy from renewables. This pioneering new planning regulation was accepted by Government in November 2003.

## The industrial sector

The industrial sector is also a target for information activities. Large companies are targeted via the National Energy Efficiency Office in each region as part of a national campaign. They have created the "Leicester Energy and Environment Group" as a vehicle to deliver to these companies.

SMEs are approached by the city's Energy Agency through a mobile conference centre "Energy User Cruiser" in cooperation with the national energy agency, ETSU, financed by the Government's "Best Practice Programme" This provides training for employees and is designed in particular to develop savings by changes in behaviour.



## Utility Supplies

The City Council has purchased green electricity for its main council offices and for two other smaller offices (including the energy agency). This amounts to 15% of its total demand. However it has also installed a number of small CHP schemes and renewable generation schemes in the city amounting in total to 9% of the Council's total supply. Leicester is keen to promote sustainable energy across all the city. In November 2003 it got Government support for a pioneering city-wide district heating network which will incorporate an element of biomass (in the UK district heating has not been well developed).

## Monitoring Energy Use

Leicester Energy Agency is responsible for monitoring and paying energy bills for other departments on their behalf and can therefore monitor excessive use. It is thus able to propose and manage energy efficiency investments which it does on behalf of the other departments. This monitoring system has been very successful in increasing interest in energy efficiency investments. Recently the Agency has set up an advanced continuous remote monitoring system of water and energy use. Meters are connected to the Agency's offices by radio link. The Council has set up targets to save energy in its energy policy (see above) and the Energy Agency's role in monitoring energy use in the municipal stock is an essential tool for meeting these targets.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Leicester has used a broad ranging and hard sell approach to sell energy efficiency to the citizen. It has backed this up with resources and has kept its programme, established long before liberalisation and in a different political climate, going hard and strong. This has borne fruit in terms of improved performance and continued commitment. The support from the municipality has been broad ranging and has included other regulatory controls and not simply subsidies. It has allowed the local authority to lever out support from other sources, even though it has no priority for EU funds and is still, in international terms, a relatively prosperous city.

The United Kingdom approach has given a high priority to local action in which the local authority or local authority sponsored body (e.g. an energy agency) acts as a coordinator of the various players in delivering energy efficiency in the housing sector. There is an active national "HECA" network and complete coverage of local and regional energy advice centres. This is funded by a levy, the "Energy Efficiency Commitment", which is charged as a flat fee per domestic customer per fuel.

## LESSONS FOR PUBLIC POLICY MAKERS

If local authorities are supported and given a secure source of funding, they can deliver energy efficiency services at local level, particularly in the housing sector. But this requires long term commitment. There is nothing so demoralizing to a local authority than to have the budget increased and then cut according to the whim of political fashion. The best way to do this is to have a firm financial allocation affected to action in this field with a clear allocation to action by local authorities or local level organisations.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

### Leicester Energy Agency

Don Lack

2-4 Market Place South

UK-Leicester LE1 5HB

Te: + 44 116 299 5133

Fax: + 44 116 299 5137

E-mail: [Donlack@energy-advice.co.uk](mailto:Donlack@energy-advice.co.uk)

Case study prepared by Energie-Cités as part of Task 9 of the International Energy Agency DSM Implementing Agreement, Municipalities and Energy Efficiency in a Liberalised System. The cooperation of the Leicester City Council is gratefully acknowledged.

