

SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES	Agenda Item No. 4
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Report of the Executive Director of

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MAKING VILLAGES ENERGY SUSTAINABLE

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities with an update on options for making villages energy sustainable, following a request made by the Commission. It specifically focuses on a pioneering EU-funded project based in Glington and Peakirk, which it is hoped will have future links to the wider rural area.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 This report is for information only.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 3.1 The EU-funded project directly contributes to the Sustainable Community Strategy Environment Capital aspirations.

It also contributes directly to the Sustainable Community Strategy, 'creating strong and supportive communities' due to the considerable community involvement in the work.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The city council has secured co-funding from the Regional Development Fund through the INTERREG IVB NWE Programme which will be used to increase environmental awareness and reduce carbon emissions in the villages of Glington and Peakirk. Between now and December 2014, the funding will be used to deliver capital investments as well as hands on practical support, contributing to the development of an EU-wide zero carbon certification system for communities.

Overview of the EU project: In October 2010 the city council was approached by the University of Applied Sciences in Birkenfeld, Germany to work with them to develop and deliver a project designed to produce a zero carbon certification scheme for residential communities. The lead partner has coordinated partners from across north west Europe, all of whom are focussing on different aspects of carbon reduction, to feed learning into the development of a central certification scheme. In Peterborough we were keen to use the funding stream to bring in additional revenue to provide additionality to existing funding allocations. To achieve this Peterborough's project within the scheme focuses on street lighting and environmental behaviour change within the communities of Glington and Peakirk.

The villages of Glington and Peakirk were selected because there is already a community green group operating. This group has aspirational project ideas and have already delivered significant community engagement activity including events and household Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) assessments. The group are also happy to commit volunteer time to support the project delivery.

In November 2011 the first full partner meeting took place in Germany to kick off the project, and in September 2012 Peterborough City Council appointed a Community Carbon Reduction Officer to co ordinate and oversee the deliverables.

Peterborough's element of the project: Throughout this project we will be working with European partners who are able to provide particular expertise in the areas of green financing, greenhouse gas balancing, and other innovations. We will also be learning lessons from other examples of community led action which has seen significant progress in relation to achieving the UK's low carbon aspirations (see LCCC review background doc). We will use Material and Energy Flow Analysis to assess the primary sources of CO2 in the villages and will seek opportunities to 'close the loop' where possible.

The project will contribute directly to 'Zecos' – a new European zero carbon certification system. It will be of direct benefit to the communities of Glinton and Peakirk, reducing their CO2 output and increasing their resilience to climate change. Materials produced (e.g. thermal imaging of different types of dwellings), methods developed (e.g. village wide energy audits, information dissemination between rural parishes) and lessons learned will be applicable more widely to the city's rural and semi rural communities, contributing to the City Council's Rural Housing Strategy.

Other activities which Rural Communities could undertake relating to energy

The above project is an intensive project on two specific communities, with the view that the successful elements could be rolled out to other communities in future years.

However, in the meantime, other activities which rural communities could undertake in the near term to help reduce energy use, increase renewable energy production and/or reduce fuel bills are:

Community bulk oil buying schemes, collective energy purchasing, installing renewable energy technologies (individual households or as part of a community energy co operative); improved housing insulation (awareness of this could be raised by taking thermal images of houses if volunteers to do so are forthcoming); energy audits of schools and other public buildings; monitor domestic energy consumption by borrowing an energy monitor from any Peterborough library including the mobile library; ascertain eligibility for home improvement grants such as loft and cavity wall insulation. .

The Climate Change Team can offer advice on all of the above initiatives and are happy to discuss other ideas that you may have: climatechange@peterborough.gov.uk

5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 The EU project is specifically focussed on the villages of Glinton and Peakirk due to the funding restrictions. We will endeavour to use other resources to spread lessons learned to the wider rural community.

However, this report sets out other ideas which rural communities could undertake to help on energy related issues.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial or legal implications to this report.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 Not applicable.

8. NEXT STEPS

8.1 There are no follow up actions for the Commission regarding this report.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

9.1 <http://www.zecos.eu/>

Rural Housing Strategy September 2012:

<http://www.peterborough.gov.uk/pdf/env-cc-rural%20Housing%20Strategy%20Sept12.pdf>

Low Carbon Communities Challenge Interim Report:

<http://www.lwec.org.uk/sites/default/files/lccc-interim-report-2010-11.pdf>

Previous Scrutiny report:

<http://democracy.peterborough.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=9076>

10. APPENDICES

10.1 *None.*

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