

## ● public sector: *focus on leicester*

Leicester has long been active in energy conservation. Now, it has come up with a new scheme to encourage further cuts

# Leicester aims for 50% cuts

**T**hink of a city in the UK, then think of energy efficiency and the chances are that the word 'Leicester' will come to mind. The East Midlands city has a track record in this field which puts most others to shame.

In 1990, Leicester was designated the UK's first Environment City and in 1993 its Home Energy Strategy was developed, aiming to reduce energy consumption in both the private and public sector and specifically to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to 50 per cent of the 1990 level by 2025.

And earlier this month, Leicester City Council launched Energy Sense, a new programme designed to encourage people to cut their energy usage in half by the year 2000.

The programme claims to be the first of its kind in the UK and takes the form of partnership consisting of Leicester City Council, the Energy Saving Trust, the European Union, The Co-operative Bank, De Montfort University, Leicester Energy Agency and the Leicester Energy Advice Centre. It is being run in conjunction with the European Union. A sister project is planned for Barcelona.

**T**he principal aim of Energy Sense is to improve the energy efficiency of 15,000 homes throughout Leicester. If the target is achieved, Leicester's annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will be reduced by 65,000 tonnes - a nine per cent reduction.

Domini Gunn, project manager, explained: "With Energy Sense, we are trying to change the way people think about and use energy in the home."



▲ Free home energy audits are being offered under Leicester's Energy Sense campaign

She points out that after transport, domestic energy is responsible for the highest levels of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and by positive action, levels can be cut dramatically.

"Energy Sense is about saving money and using energy at home sensibly and with care.

"Just by turning off lights, nudging down the heating one degree and thinking about how appliances like the washing machine and kettle are used can save £47 per year - and that's without spending a penny of extra money," Gunn declared.

The partnership is offering free energy audits to home owners so they can see how much money could be saved on heating and lighting bills. The scheme also offers advice on financing should a household wish to

make long-term energy saving measures. These could include loft insulation, an energy efficient heating system or energy-saving light bulbs - all of which "will save considerable amounts of money over the years and reduce the level of wasted energy and CO<sub>2</sub>."

Local MEP, Sue Waddington, and city council chief executive, Rodney Green, have set the ball rolling, signing up for energy audits, and Gunn hopes that the residents in the first stage pilot areas of Evington, Knighton and Stoneygate will soon follow suit and the scheme will go city-wide after three months.

**M**oreover, the council has plans to launch a discount card which will give participants money-off on energy efficient appliances, such as boilers, washing machines and lighting.

Gunn's philosophy is simple but illuminating. "The way we use energy is very much about how we like to live - in the colder weather, some people like to have the heating up high and stay in T-shirt and jeans, while someone else would keep the heating constant and wear a jumper instead.

"What we want people to do is think about how they use energy while staying comfortable. We are certainly not encouraging people to sit in the cold!"

At a future date, the council plans to launch an energy discount scheme, whereby participants in the audits will be issued cards offering cash-back on energy-efficient products.

Gunn is presently engaged in encouraging retailers in DIY goods and electrical white goods to join in the scheme.

Although it is a tripartite scheme where everyone benefits - the consumer, the retailer and the council, Gunn admits it has been hard work convincing the big retailers to participate. But the idea is certainly radical.

She concludes: "The current reserves of the energy we use will not last forever. We need to conserve supplies and actively look for alternatives.

"By reducing our energy consumption today, we can ensure that existing energy reserves last longer and that the levels of noxious emissions are dramatically reduced."

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