



NORTHERN COMMUNITY POWER: A COMMUNITY BUILDING APPROACH TO ENERGY

OVERVIEW

From previous work carried out in 2012/13, Northern Community Power CIC (NCP) identified that there was a lack of understanding of the potential for community energy to address issues of fuel poverty and the financial sustainability of community buildings. Representatives from community centres in the local area did not always have the capacity, or confidence, to follow up on the recommendations from energy audits carried out on their community buildings.

SOLUTION

An energy audit assessed the energy performance of the Cedarwood Trust building in Meadow Well, North Shields and the behaviour of its users. It included a renewable energy options appraisal and recommendations for energy efficiency. NCP used the audit as a live case study in a workshop to raise knowledge and awareness in participants from other community centres. This enabled them to have the confidence to be able to take the next steps in moving forward with their own energy audits, leading to more energy efficient and financially viable community buildings.

OUTCOMES

The energy audit led to the creation of a useful, practical document with recommendations for a range of simple measures and behavioural changes to increase the energy efficiency of the centre. It also made recommendations for longer term, higher cost measures. The audit and the workshop gave the Cedarwood Trust a greater understanding of how to save money and energy in the building and also a greater confidence in helping its service users to take energy saving information home with them. The challenge for the organisation is now to find funding to implement the recommendations in the audit. Fourteen participants from nine other community centres in the area attended the half day workshop.

The workshop and resulting discussions with participants led them to develop a greater

understanding of what was involved in an audit, how it could help them and how they could implement the recommendations.

Several are now pursuing their own projects and a number of groups are now talking to each other and sharing information. NCP is now working with three of the groups who attended the workshop, on separate projects; it is in the process of forming an energy network which includes five of the attendees and a further two of the groups are pursuing projects of their own.

There was also wider community interest in the scheme, with several businesses offering roof space for solar installations which could be used to fund work on the community centres. NCP is now in the process of assessing the feasibility of this although the changes in the Feed in Tariff in late 2015 may impact on this work.

OBJECTIVES

To carry out an energy audit of a community building and use this as a 'live' case study within an introductory workshop on energy efficiency for neighbouring community centre representatives. This would guide participants through measures to reduce energy costs, increase the efficiency of homes and community buildings, and initiate discussions on the community building approach to energy.

MORE DETAILS

Project title:	A community building approach to energy
Group name:	Northern Community Power
Theme:	Reducing energy use and generating energy
Area of benefit:	North Tyneside, Tyne & Wear
Date:	Dec 2014-Dec 2015
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A PIECE OF ADVICE

NCP found that recruiting groups to come and benefit from the free workshop was more difficult than expected. They had to invest a considerable amount of time explaining what it was trying to do, before it was successful in actively engaging the community centre representatives