

Response to existing homes consultation

Response developed on behalf of the Bollington Carbon Revolution by Nicola Percival, Project Leader. The Bollington Carbon Revolution is part of Bollington Civic Society, Registered Charity No. 501544

▪ **Have we captured all the key barriers to action?**

Yes, we believe that all the barriers are represented in the paper.

▪ **How should the barriers be prioritised – i.e. which are more significant and why?**

We believe one of the most significant barriers is the willingness and motivation for home owners to act, coupled with the lack of information. The subject of climate change is part of our daily lives, with continuous media attention, however, there seems little information available to householder on how they can make improvements to their homes, and where to go to for advice. Page 18 of the consultation document mentioned the “hassle factor”. People lead busy lives and struggle to find the time to make energy improvements to their homes. They also lack the knowledge of how to make their homes more energy efficient, and where to go for information on investment required, pay back and suppliers. We believe this barrier is one of the hardest to overcome, and one of the most significant, and therefore should be made a priority.

▪ **Do you know of any other case studies and examples of good practice?**

There is a large network of low carbon communities across the country, but little of the work of these groups is mentioned in the consultation document. These are groups of people who have volunteered their time to motivate and advise people within their communities to reduce their carbon footprint, and many have made a measurable impact on their community, reporting the tonnes of carbon dioxide that they have helped residents save through home energy efficiency improvements and lifestyle changes. These groups operate at little or no cost and should be recognised and invested in so they can reach out to more households and have a greater impact. There are a number of examples with perhaps the best known being Ashton Hayes and the Transition Towns.

The Bollington Carbon Revolution is one example of a local carbon reduction club. Bollington is a small town, population circa 7000 in Cheshire, 20 miles South of Manchester. Since forming in September 2006 the group has made a number of achievements, some of which are laid out in the [first report](#), including:-

- Launching a £200 energy efficiency cash back scheme in conjunction with Macclesfield Borough Council
- Commissioning a hydropower feasibility study using funding from Cheshire County Council
- Holding a range of energy efficiency awareness events
- Piloting the Global Action Plan EcoTeam programme with plans to roll this out to 60 households in the next year.

For further information on current activities, which include a one day eco-refurbishment course for local residents later this autumn, visit the Bollington Carbon Revolution [website](#).

- Which of the solutions contained in the literature review do you feel best overcome the key barriers and why?

Page 20 of the consultation document stated that many householders are requesting a “one-stop-shop” that would take them from advice and information on measures through to implementation. On page 24 there is then the suggestion that local authorities can play a key role in communicating energy saving schemes to householders as they are trusted by the public.

We believe that the solution is to invest in the current network of local carbon community groups. These people are passionate about climate change, and will give their time for free. They are embedded in the community, and therefore can access community groups and local effective communication methods very easily. However, as they are all volunteers they have existing day jobs, and we believe many groups would benefit from having a part or fulltime co-ordinator working for them to help them take their work further. Consider the leverage factor – relatively small amounts of money multiplied by the volunteer contribution of time and commitment will produce far better value for money, and particularly so if they get some professional guidance as well.

This can be illustrated by taking the example of the Bollington Carbon Revolution, which has a core group of 8 volunteers, with around a further 15 contributing on an ad hoc basis. Each member brings a different set of key skills and contributes anywhere between 1 and 14 hours per week, both during the weekends and in the evening. If we had a dedicated resource who could carry out the day to day tasks such as co-ordinating the activities of the volunteers, identifying and completing funding application forms, speaking with local businesses, schools and other stakeholders, running the planned local energy advice centre and carrying out planned home energy audits, the work of the group could be extended significantly to reach more householders and provide a better quality service, and dramatically increasing the results

Page 25 of the consultation document makes reference to some community schemes, and correctly states that this has not been followed through to any significant degree. We believe that the Government are missing a key opportunity in making a small investment which will significantly contribute to behavioural change. Conversely page 30 states that Climate Challenge Funds from Defra and the Scottish Executive have supported numerous local and community projects to improve domestic energy efficiency and to change attitudes and behaviour. We would question whether existing support goes far enough in what is such a successful model in creating behavioural change.

A community based approach, where a local co-ordinator is employed by a carbon reduction charity such as the Bollington Carbon Revolution, could deliver on the following recommendations listed in pages 40 - 43 of the consultation document:-

- Instigate a major education and awareness programme demonstrating the benefits of moving up the EPC bands.
- Provide a ‘one stop shop’ for householders where people can access information on the measures suitable for their home, understand costs and savings, and arrange for a trusted installer to undertake the work.
- Focus should be on practical support, not simply raising awareness.
- Messages should be tailored to audiences and localities.
- There should be clear links to community and individual change, and wider change in other sectors.

- Trusted intermediaries. Where there are issues of trust between the consumer and the supply chain, these can be overcome by the participation of trusted intermediaries.
- Area based approaches. Street by street approaches allow rapid change and lower costs per property through bulk buying and the mobilisation of one contractor for a whole street.
- Focusing on one house at a time on the other hand is slower and more costly, but can lead to the most appropriate suite of measures being installed.
- Promotion of exemplar refurbishment schemes to consumers.

Closing remarks

We hope that this consultation response is of interest and would be happy to provide further information on any aspect of our work..

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