

11th May 2007

HOW GREEN IS YOUR HOME?

Since the start of the North Staffordshire Warm Zone programme, January 2007, more than 5,000 households have taken up the Warm Zone offer of help to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

With climate change in the news more and more and with the Home buyers' report just around the corner, North Staffordshire Warm Zone is asking households to think about how green their home is.

From June 1st energy performance certificate (EPC) becomes part of the compulsory home information pack when selling homes.

Mark Meredith, Elected Mayor of Stoke-on-Trent said: "This is a great scheme to encourage people to cut their home carbon emissions and fuel bills. Going green will make for a healthier lifestyle for the individual, their home and our planet."

Tracy Hine Director of North Staffordshire Warm Zone said "The introduction of the Energy Performance Certificate represents a very positive step forward."

The certificate provides an energy rating for the building, showing its energy efficiency and its environmental impact on a scale from A-G (where A is the most efficient and G the least efficient), in graphical format. It also contains recommended ways to improve the building's energy performance.

The Energy Performance Certificate is part of new measures to improve property efficiency. It includes suggestions to enable homeowners to improve the energy efficiency of the building.

This can mean lower energy bills for the occupiers, and could make homes more attractive to potential purchasers.

Home owners can improve the energy efficiency of their home by either making changes to the building, or simply changing their behaviour to save energy.

North Staffordshire Warm Zone can give advice on both of these areas.

Installing energy efficient measures - Here is a list of some of the measures that the certificate might recommend that the Warm Zone scheme can offer:

Free low-energy light bulbs - These last up to 12 times longer and use around 80 per cent less energy than traditional filament bulbs.

Free or discounted loft insulation - Fitting insulation that is at least 250mm thick could cut heat loss by around 30 per cent.

Free or discounted cavity wall insulation - If you have unfilled cavity walls, installing insulation could cut heat loss by over 30 per cent.

Behaviour changes - There are also simple ways that you can improve your energy efficiency, simply by changing how you use your home:

Check that your heating system thermostat isn't set too high (21 degrees C in the living room is suggested), and use the timer or programmer so you only heat your home when necessary.

Make sure your hot water isn't too hot. Your cylinder thermostat shouldn't need to be set higher than 60 degrees C/140 degrees F

Turn off lights when they aren't needed, and don't leave appliances on standby. Remember not to leave chargers (e.g. for mobile phones) turned on when you aren't using them

Even comparatively minor changes in energy performance and the way we use our homes have a significant effect in reducing energy consumption - and therefore carbon emissions.

The North Staffordshire Warm Zone scheme is aimed at homeowners and those living in privately rented accommodation in the warm zones and people that work are also eligible for the scheme.

People in the areas are being encouraged to register to have their homes surveyed to identify where improvements could be made. It means that for the first time people will be given the kind of user-friendly information they need to reduce both the environmental impact of their homes and their energy bills.

Tracy Hine Director of North Staffordshire Warm Zone said "Blurton is the next ward to be visited by our Warm Zone Team. Residents will be receiving a letter in the next couple of days telling them about the scheme.

Home Visitors will be calling on homes in Blurton in the next couple of weeks they wear uniforms bearing our Warm Zone logo and carry an identity card showing our logo and their photo.

They will visit households and ask a series of questions on their doorstep after which the data collected will be assessed to determine whether or not they qualify for the free or discounted measures.

A surveyor will then visit a few weeks later and all being well, arrange for the necessary work to be carried out"