

## Tyneside Gives a Warm Zone Welcome to USA Visitors

A Government backed initiative to tackle fuel poverty in Newcastle and Gateshead has passed on its energy saving experience to senior energy experts from one of the top ten utility companies in the United States.

The Warm Zones of Newcastle and Gateshead joined together to host a visit from Tim Stout, Vice President of Energy Efficiency and Laura McNaughton the Manager of Residential Energy Efficiency who both work for National Grid in the Boston area of North America.

The company serves close to 4 million electricity customers over 29,000 square miles in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and New York State as well as providing gas distribution services to over 500,000 customers in New York State. It has invested more than \$1 billion in its award winning energy efficiency programs which have resulted in customer bill savings of \$1.9 billion and a significant reduction in greenhouse gasses equivalent to taking 178,000 cars off the road.

Even with such an impressive record, the visitors still had a lot to learn from the way fuel poverty is tackled in the North East. Fuel poverty is a miserable condition where more than ten per cent of a household's income is spent simply trying to keep warm. The visitors saw at first hand how fuel poverty is being reduced by the installation of cavity and loft insulation in thousands of Tyneside homes. They also saw how the Zone's carry out benefits checks to ensure that householders are claiming what they are entitled to.

The 2 day stay on Tyneside also included a visit to the Warm Zone mobile exhibition unit at Trinity Square in Gateshead where the visitors had the opportunity to meet the public and learn about the community and education initiatives used to raise customer awareness. They also attended a cavity wall insulation installation in Newcastle's West End.

Vice President Tim Stout was very impressed with what he saw. "This is a fantastic project which really helps the communities it serves" he said. "There are many aspects that we can look at that will help increase energy efficiency when we return home".

Karen Hindhaugh, Gateshead Warm Zone Director said: "The fact that the visitors from overseas have visited the Warm Zone highlights how important our work is. "

"By insulating homes and improving heating we are helping people save money, save energy and do their bit for the environment. By combining this with our comprehensive benefits entitlement service, we can best ensure that everyone in Newcastle and Gateshead can enjoy a warm and healthy home"

The Newcastle and Gateshead Warm Zone's are not for profit organisations working in partnership with Scottish Power, National Grid and the respective councils and housing companies of Newcastle and Gateshead. Over the duration of the project, more than 200,000 homes will have been visited in Newcastle and Gateshead and it is thought that over 75000 households will benefit from free energy saving measures.



*l to r : Warm Zone Directors David Connor and Karen Hindhaugh with visitors Tim Stout and Laura McNaughton*