

Thornhill Community Energy Project

96% of people who responded to the satisfaction survey said that they were satisfied with the help they had received from the Energy Efficiency Advisor



Radian properties

81% said having an energy monitor in their home had **permanently** changed their behaviour towards electricity use

Thornhill residents help to save the environment

Thornhill Plus You (TPY) is a 10 year regeneration programme which covers approximately 4500 homes in Thornhill, Southampton.

Local residents requested that the TPY Board (which is made up from elected residents, city councillors and agency representatives), provide support and education to those in the community at risk of fuel poverty. They also wanted to reduce the community's carbon footprint especially in light of fuel prices increasing year on year.

TPY allocated funds and the Thornhill Community Energy Efficiency Advisor project was born.

Funded for 1 year from March 2010 to February 2011, the community would be provided with a dedicated Energy Efficiency Advisor, Michele Exton.

The aim: Residents would have improved provision and access to energy services and products. This would help them reduce their household running costs and contribute to a reduction in instances of fuel poverty while simultaneously helping the community to reduce their carbon footprint through saving energy and improved energy efficiency.

The vision: TPY wanted the community to be fully informed and actively engaged in the project so that as many residents as possible could benefit. This energy efficiency project is expected to continue beyond the project into the future, therefore, a lasting legacy of best practice energy saving and efficiency advice would be **supported by a network of volunteer resident Community Energy Champions (CECs)**. They can also provide other communities with an example of best practice.

The action: Due to the considerable acclaimed experience in the area of sustainable energy efficiency and community development Radian has, the housing group was awarded the project to manage.

This project was to benefit the whole Thornhill community not just those who rent from Radian. The project would also link up with other TPY local projects and the Southampton Local Area Agreement Heat & Energy Saving Strategy.



Southampton City Council properties



Denise: “It’s so good when people give you the chance to tell them how they can save energy and money and then come back to you to tell you how much they are saving each week from taking your advice. When I first joined the group as a

Community Energy Champion, I didn’t have much confidence and now a year later, my nerves are gone and I can talk to anyone - I even enjoy making public speeches!”



Michele Exton, with Paul Ciniglio, at the project’s launch showing the OWL energy monitor to invited guests

135 OWL Energy Monitors were distributed by Radian to provide each household with a detailed analysis of their electricity use

Did the project achieve what it set out to do?

Raising awareness, community engagement and improved community cohesion has been achieved on several levels by:

- Holding a formal launch and attending monthly networking meetings
- Producing and distributing project leaflets
- Getting articles published in local newspapers and newsletters
- Updating the community website
- Attending established community events and setting up new ones
- Attending parent and baby/toddler groups which were found to be particularly successful
- Setting up energy workshops and holding a competition at the local primary schools
- Lending energy monitors to residents
- Establishing the network of resident volunteer CECs

There was also an improved provision and access to energy services and products to reduce household running costs. This contributed to a reduction in instances of fuel poverty and improved local economy and health. This was achieved by:

- Giving energy efficiency advice
- Providing energy monitors and power down plug strips to residents
- Providing residents with the advice to access cheaper energy tariffs

Overall, feedback from the project’s satisfaction survey suggests the community’s carbon footprint has been reduced and people have changed their electrical use habits **permanently** - testament to the project’s success.

The project was also able to identify properties where further savings and energy efficiency could be made such as increasing insulation, providing life style advice, mould treatment advice and grant information.



Wendy: “Since I have been involved as a Community Energy Champion, I have been surprised and impressed that my 5 year old son Charlie has picked up so many good energy saving habits!”

Kris: “Being a Community Energy Champion is really rewarding for me as it means that I can help change the lives of families in Thornhill.”



“I can help them to save money by advising them how to be more economical with their electricity and gas and at the same time, reduce their carbon footprint.”

Training: The CECs undertook important training offered by various groups, such as:

- **Finding Out About Energy** – provided by the Energy Saving Trust (EST)
- **Fuel Poverty Awareness** – provided by Southampton City Council (SCC) and the Environment Centre (tEC)
- **Using Night Storage Heating Efficiently and Effectively** – provided by Dimplex
- **Meters, Bills and Appliances** – provided by tEC
- **Energy Efficiency Grants** – provided by tEC
- **Heating Controls and Mould in the Home** – provided by SCC & Radian
- **Credanet Heating Systems** – provided by Southern Electric
- **Meters and Energyplus Care Helpline Advisors** – provided by Scottish & Southern Energy & SCC
- **Retrofit Reality seminar and tour of Innovation Park** – provided by the British Research Housing Group (BRHG)
- **Engaging Residents on Climate Change workshop** – provided by Sustainable Homes
- **Energy Monitors to Help Residents Keep in Control of their Electricity Bills** – provided by Radian



Privately owned properties



One of the CEC training sessions

Gwyneth: “Being an Energy Champion has enabled me to help other residents to save money and show them how to use their heating systems etc. Alongside this, I have personally benefited by having cavity wall insulation and reducing my electric use within my own home by borrowing an energy monitor.”



First Wessex properties

In addition to the project’s monitors, Radian provided additional monitors to their own residents.

Judy: “I wasn’t sure about becoming a CEC at first but I have enjoyed it more and more as I have gone along and I have learnt so much.”



88% said having an energy monitor in their home had changed how they used their appliances

The future: While Radian was still managing the project, it was handed over to the volunteer Community Energy Champions (CECs). An exit strategy was developed and future funding requirements were identified and will hopefully be secured at the end of March 2011.

The CECs are now continuing to provide the community with a lasting legacy of best practice energy saving and efficiency advice.

Lessons learnt: The project’s duration of one year created some difficulties which can be learnt from, however, there were also positive lessons learnt:

- Meaningful monitoring of resident’s energy use was not possible in one year as there was insufficient time for data to accumulate and there was no previous year baseline data with which to make comparisons to
- It was essential that financial support to enable the network of volunteer CECs to continue the legacy after the project ended, was identified and found. This funding was necessary to pay for phone calls, internet access, printing, continuing training and replacement batteries for the energy monitors.
- By working with partner agencies and companies, resources were maximised via free training and support for/at events and value for money achieved.
- The development of a workable exit strategy which the resident volunteers could commit to is essential if achievements of the project are to be further developed and expanded.



Working with



Radian would like to thank the following partner agencies and companies for providing training:

the Environment Centre (tEC)
The Energy Saving Trust (EST)
Southampton City Council (SSC)
Scottish & Southern Energy (SSE)
Southern Electric
Dimplex

Radian would like to thank Thornhill Plus You for funding the project and Thornhill Primary School, Hightown Primary School and Kanes Hill Primary School for supporting and taking part in the ZapCarbon competition

Radian would also like to thank the resident volunteer Thornhill Community Energy Champions and Thornhill’s community groups who have supported the project

If you would like to know more about this project or wish to gain advice on setting up your own project, please contact Radian’s Sustainability & Innovation Manager, Paul Ciniglio on 0300 123 1 567 or via email on paul.ciniglio@radian.co.uk. You can also visit www.radian.co.uk to see copies of all our case studies.

