

Examples of 'Ask Me a Climate Question' Enquiries Received and Answers Given

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PLEASE NOTE THAT THE ADVICE GIVEN IN THESE ENQUIRIES MAY NOT BE OUT OF DATE

1) Offering Advice to Householders. Received July 2011

Hi Caroline,

Please can I ask for your help and advice again!?

I represent a community organisation in [REDACTED] called [REDACTED]. We are engaged in community-led renewable energy projects and also community-led energy reduction and management programmes in our town of around 7000 people. We are driven by the need to reduce our community's carbon footprint and to respond to peak oil and energy security issues. Our aim is to make our town energy resilient, greatly reducing CO2 emissions and moving away from a reliance on fossil fuels towards a more sustainable energy future. We are also actively involved in community-owned energy generation projects such as wind turbines, large (up to 50kW) PV installations and in the future renewable heat installations.

We are not very old as an organisation and have started to think about how we can best serve the community and achieve our goals. One of the things we are continually asked about is "Can you recommend a reputable supplier of xxxx?" where xxx could be PV installations, or renewable heating systems or thermal cladding.

We do not have the resources to do our own analysis of suppliers (large such as E.ON, or small such as more local PV installers). Do you know of any independent analysis which has been done which would help us assess which suppliers to recommend? We want to be professional (but independent) in our assessments and base our recommendations on a number of areas of analysis. Any help you can give would be very welcome. We will also talk with CSE in Bristol and CAT in Wales. Can you suggest any other organisations which might be able to offer help and advice?

Many thanks & best regards

[REDACTED]

Our Response

Hi [REDACTED]

Many thanks for your email. I think this is a really important question – and it's going to become more and more relevant to groups like yours as more people look to install these kind of products – especially as some are quite fledgling industries.

This is what I've found out for you:

1) Renewables:

There are a number of ways in which people can increase their chances of getting a good quality renewable from a reputable company:

- In order for a renewable installation to be eligible for FITS payments both the product and the installer need to be certified by this scheme: <http://www.microgenerationcertification.org/>. Aside from ensuring that you are eligible for FITS, using products and installers registered with this scheme should guarantee quality of product and service (this scheme existed before the FITS payment). You can find out more about making sure your installation will be eligible for FITS on the Energy Saving Trust's website: <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Generate-your-own-energy/Sell-your-own-energy/Feed-in-Tariff-scheme#FrequentlyAskedQuestions>.
- You could also check if a company is a member of this scheme: www.realassurance.org.uk.
- This is the trade association for solar products: <http://www.solar-trade.org.uk>. For wood burning stoves: www.hetas.co.uk/. For other technologies check out their section on the EST website: <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Generate-your-own-energy>.
- People should ask about **guarantees**. For instance, a good pv system will often be under warranty for 15-20 years with a life expectancy of 25 years. However, it's worth noting that the inverter on a pv is not usually included in this warranty and will usually only be guaranteed for about 5 years, with a life expectancy of 8-10 years.
- People might also ask you about the quality of **Rent-a-Roof schemes** were a company install a panel on your roof for free, you get the free electricity bills and they take the FITS payment. Attached is a factsheet which CSE in Bristol assembled on this topic – it lists questions you should ask a rent-a-roof company before agreeing to use their scheme. As an aside on this topic, to be honest, if a person can find a way to pay for the panels themselves – even with a loan - I think it's worth it, as the FITS payments are worth far more than the free electricity. The Guardian carried this article on this topic last September: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/sep/30/free-solar-panels-not-bargain?INTCMP=SRCH>.
- You could also talk to others who have had installations about their experiences and to see if they were happy with the company they used. I would be happy to place a short news item in my next e-newsletter asking people to get in touch with Synergy Southwell to tell you about their experiences. **Just let me know if you'd like me to do this.**
- As with any large purchase people should always get a **number of quotes** before going ahead with work.
- The EST have recently produced a number of 'Buyer's Guides to....' for different renewables, including this one: www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Resources/Publications/Renewables/A-buyer-s-guide-to-renewable-and-low-carbon-technologies. You can find others for specific technologies through this search page: www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/google/search?SearchText=A+buyer%27s+guide+to .

2) Thermal Cladding

I don't know lots about finding approved installers for this kind of this, but the EST suggest people go for an installer approved by one of these companies:

- www.nationalinsulationassociation.org.uk
- www.inca-ltd.org.uk/register-members.htm

3) Loft and Cavity Insulation

Most local councils have an approved scheme loft and cavity insulation whereby the council work with one or more installers to offer subsidised insulation, and this should guarantee quality. The scheme Newark and Sherwood is Warm Streets, see the last page of this document: www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/ppimageupload/holding/Image39084.PDF.

3) Giving out advice as a group

I would suggest that any information/advice you give out to people in [REDACTED] comes with a **disclaimer** that as a group you're not recommending a company or products, you're just signposting people. You can see an example of a disclaimer from another community groups on this brochure: <http://www.wfeg.org.uk/pdfs/wfeg-solar-500.pdf>.

Also, your local CVS might be able to help you write suitable disclaimers: www.nandscvs.org/.

It would worth everyone in the group agreeing a stance/approach on this so that you're all 'singing off the same hymn sheet' when you're talking to people on behalf of the group.

4) If as a group you wanted to get more involved in helping people to purchase these kinds of products, then you could consider a setting up a scheme like one of these two, which both focus on pv:

- www.goodenergy.co.uk/what-we-are-doing/good-energy-republic/2011/02/24/update-transition-town-marlow-100-solar-project and <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/nov/21/innovator-philip-ditchfield-100-solar-project-marlow>.
- www.wfeg.org.uk

In Marlow the first 29 people to install paid full price for their panel. When household no.30's installation was complete the first 29 got a 12% refund. No's 30-99 pay the reduced price of 88%, and if they manage to reach 100 then no's 1-99 will get a further 8% refund and no.'s 100+ only pay 80% of the full cost. Only house's within a certain mile radius of Marlow are eligible – the idea is that part of the reason the company involved can offer a discount is because they can schedule several installations in a small geographical area at the same time.

In Whittington and Fisherwick they've actually negotiated a deal where everyone gets a discount from the start without a no's of installations takings place first. You'll see from their brochure that they've negotiated really good prices. They're also asking people for a voluntary

donation to their group in return for the time the group spent setting up the scheme – so this has the potential to be an earner for Synergy Southwell too.

MEA has done work with WFEG in the past and I might be able to put you in touch with someone from the group who would be willing to talk to you (f they're not too busy organising their installations!)

5) One more thing:

- MEA runs a Renewables Referral Scheme. We can arrange for some companies to come and quote for the product you want. If you're interested please contact my colleague Tim Baldwin: tim@mea.org.uk. We suggest that you also get some other quotes from elsewhere – as with any big purchase you should get a few quotes before going ahead with the work.

Hope all of this helps and please let us know how you get on.

Kind Regards
Caroline

2) Saving Energy In a Church Building. Received August 2011

Enquiry:

Good afternoon Ms Harmon,

I have been given your name and e-mail address by [REDACTED]. I am an elder at our church [REDACTED] have been given the daunting task of trying to reduce our energy losses and reduce our carbon footprint. Unfortunately our church was built when energy saving was not a high priority in the design of the building. Our buildings are used by local groups including scouts, badminton, tumble tots and a youth drama group as well as ad hoc events.

[REDACTED] suggested I contact you to establish whether there is any financial assistance available for us to start on this quest and if so what the procedure would be to apply for assistance.

Despite times being difficult at the moment I look forward to hearing from you. Should you need more information please get back to me.

Best wishes
[REDACTED]

Our Response:

[REDACTED]

Many thanks for your email. Energy saving can be daunting as you say, so it's best to break it into manageable chunks, not all of which will require funding.

1) **The first step is to find out how much energy you are using.** MEA has a free web tool called We Save: www.wesave.org.uk. You can input meter readings for your electricity and gas usage (if you are connected to the gas) and it will tell you how much energy you are using on average each month. You can also print out graphs of this usage – so you might want to print these out periodically and put them on a notice board or somewhere else prominent to show members of your church how you are progressing in using less energy. You can input historic data to allow you to build up a picture of how much energy you've used over for instance, the last two years, **to give you a baseline from which to work on using less energy.** Once you know what you've been using you'll know what is a realistic target to aim for. You can input as much data as you have – I would suggest getting out old energy bills and inputting any accurate meter readings you can find on them. Then make it someone's responsibility to take regular readings from now on and input them into We Save.

Alternatively (or as well as) you could try using a real-time energy monitors. These are available to borrow for free from all Derbyshire libraries. These can provide a very visual idea of how much energy you are using and the best ones allow you to download data to a computer and print off graphs, for example this one: www.efergy.com/categories/efergy-Shop/cid-CK00000754.aspx

While you're doing this you should also **check that recent bills are based on accurate meter readings** and make sure it is someone's responsibility to check each bill as it arrives in the future to see if it is estimated or accurate. If it is estimated then you should always take a reading straightaway and phone the energy company with this reading: estimated bills tend to work in their favour not yours! While this won't necessarily help you reduce your energy usage it will ensure you are only paying for what you use and keeping the rest of your funds for other things.

You could also potentially save money by switching tariffs – although you can almost always save a lot more through energy efficiency.

2) Once you know how much you're using, you can start taking small steps to reduce your energy which won't cost anything to implement. For instance:

- Is the heating set to be on at times when the building is actually being used, or is it coming on at other times? It's worth periodically checking this as you may find that times at which the building is being used change slightly over time.
- Does someone change the heating settings in autumn and spring to reflect the changing seasons? This is the kind of thing we all do at home, but it can get forgotten about in a community building used by lots of people.
- As and when your light bulbs blow you could replace them with energy saving ones – by doing it as they blow you spread any small extra cost for these bulbs over a period of time. A wide range of bulbs is now available, especially online:

There are lots of other small things like that you can do and if you encourage everyone who uses the building to do them they will all add up in terms of energy saving. You could visit www.est.org.uk for more tips.

3) You could then begin thinking about things which will cost more money, but will pay for themselves in reduced bills and then save money either quite quickly (e.g.: insulation and draught proofing) or over a longer period of time (renewables, new heating system etc).

Again, www.est.org.uk has lots of information about these kinds of measures. You can also download free fact sheets from MEA's website: www.mea.org.uk/resources/fact-sheets.

4) Funding:

Unfortunately there's not lots out there at the moment, but here are a few possibilities:

- EDF Energy's Green Fund has provided grants of around £17,000 to over 260 community buildings for the installation of low carbon technologies. It's very competitive, but someone has to win. Applications are due by 31 August: www.edfenergy.com/products-services/for-your-home/our-services/green-energy-fund.shtml
- www.energysshare.com – the first round of this programme closed recently, but more rounds are promised. The key to success is getting lots of people in your local community to become 'supporters' of your project on the Energy Share website.

- <http://www.planlocal.org.uk/videos/submenus/submenu-funding.html> - these short videos suggest types of funding you might not have thought of. It's quite focused on renewable energy, but some of the ideas could apply to energy efficiency.

5) Useful resources:

- <http://www.london.anglican.org/resources/Blocks/12303/Generic%20Solutions%20-%20Publication.pdf> – the Anglican church buildings surveyed for this report vary in construction date from 1350 to 1995, so there should be at least one that is a reasonably similar age to your own building! Lots of innovative ideas for making church buildings more efficient.
- <http://ew.ecocongregation.org/resources/module7> - a document about greening church buildings.
- Getting your congregation on board is crucial – especially for things that involve behavioural change such as switching off the lights and turning off the heating when it isn't needed! All of these resources are aimed at Christian audience:
www.shrinkingthefootprint.org (this site has lots of links to other resources),
<http://ew.ecocongregation.org>, www.arochoa.org/gb-en/resources.html,
www.tearfund.org/en/get_involved/campaign/climatechange/.
- www.sechurba.org.uk/site/other_cases/ - Case Studies from a project MEA ran.
- www.acre.org.uk/news/2011-news/news-2011-get-generating-guide - a an easy read with lots of case studies.
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-shropshire-14189887> – a church which got a loan for renewables and will pay it back with FIT payments and will use income generated after that for other things. My colleague may be organising a study tour to this church. If you're interested in attending his contact details are: Simon Ross: simon@mea.org.uk.

A few months later we were able to direct this person to a new funding pot: specifically for community buildings looking to become more energy efficient:
www.cse.org.uk/projects/view/1166 (which as since closed!)

3) Funding For Energy Efficiency Measures for A Gym

I have just bought a Gym in [REDACTED] called [REDACTED]. it's an old building and I'm looking for some help to improve the energy efficiency for both the Carbon Footprint and to improve profit.

I don't fit any of the grants under Carbon Trust Fund as Sole Traders have to have 3 years accounts, no luck with Green Grants Machine. I'm meeting Business Link next week for generic advice but I thought you might know of other routes – do DCC do green energy audits ? any other funders that may be able to help ?

Thanks

[REDACTED]

Our Response:

We were able to put this enquirer in touch with a project at the University of Nottinghamshire which, at the time, was providing free audits.

4) Grants for an Inefficient Community Building

Do you know of any available funding for a very inefficient community hall needing insulation, up grading of boiler etc.

Thanks

██████████

Our Response:

Hi ██████████

Unfortunately there's not lots of funding out there at the moment, but here are a few possibilities:

- <http://www.energysshare.com/fund/> - here's a list of possible funders. Awards for All in particular is designed to be easy to apply to, can be for up to £10K, has a fast turn around (you hear within about 8 weeks fo applying) and is primarily for capital items, so this could be ideal.
- <http://www.energysshare.com/> – the first round of this programme closed recently, but more rounds are promised. The key to success is getting lots of people in your local community to become 'supporters' of your project on the Energy Share website.
- Apex can do insulation for community buildings as well as domestic. It's worth getting in touch with Wayne about this to see what prices he can offer – especially as they might be able to do it while their installers are in the area anyway doing homes which might cut down the cost a bit. How fast it pays for itself will depend on the usage of the building – if they only use it once a week it might take quite a while, but if it's used a lot it could be worth them trying to pay for this without a grant if possible.
- EDF Energy's Green Fund has provided grants of around £17,000 each to over 260 community buildings for the installation of low carbon technologies, often including new boilers and insulation. It's very competitive, but someone has to win! The last round closed on 31st August and since then they seem to have refocused on renewables. There are two rounds per year, so the next is likely to be in Feb. although there are no dates on their website yet: www.edfenergy.com/products-services/for-your-home/our-services/green-energy-fund.shtml
- <http://www.planlocal.org.uk/videos/submenus/submenu-funding.html> - these short videos suggest types of funding they might not have thought of. It's quite focused on renewable energy, but some of the methods of funding could apply to energy efficiency. They could consider installing a pv panel with a loan and, once the loan is paid back from FIT payments, using future FIT payments to fund things like a new boiler and insulation.

Things they could do without funding:

- Monitoring energy usage often helps people to begin reducing it. They could use www.wesave.org.uk which will allow them to print off graphs of usage and display them on a notice board within the building to encourage people to use less energy.
- They should check that their bills are based on accurate meter readings. I've been to community buildings where the treasurer/manager has a meticulous record of meter readings, but I've also been to buildings where no one has measured the meter for years!
- They should also look into switching tariffs and see if their provider offers a community organisation tariff.
- Is the heating set to be on at times when the building is actually being used, or is it coming on at other times? It's worth them periodically checking this, especially if the use of the building changes.
- Does someone change the heating settings in autumn and spring to reflect the changing seasons? Again, I've come across community buildings where they do this and others where the heating is on winter settings all year round!

Useful Resources

- www.acre.org.uk/news/2011-news/news-2011-get-generating-guide - including some case studies about energy efficiency in community buildings.
- I'm attaching a case study of a village hall which installed insulation.

Hope that helps
Caroline

A few months later we were able to direct this person to a new funding pot: specifically for community buildings looking to become more energy efficient:
www.cse.org.uk/projects/view/1166 (which as since closed!)

5) Funding for Renewables for a Community Football Club

Hi,

can you supply me with possible funding streams which could contribute to photovoltaic panels to be installed on the club house of [REDACTED] Community Football Club, which has community club status.

Regards
[REDACTED]

Our Response:

Some Possible Funders

- <http://www.energysshare.com/> - The first round of this new scheme has recently closed, but future rounds have been promised. Energy Share involves a group like the football club registering on the website and then people can log onto the site and 'support' their chosen scheme. In the first round the groups with the most 'supporters' have progressed to the next round of applications for funding. This could work well with a football club as all the children/families/individuals involved could sign up to support the club's bid for funding.
- <http://www.energysshare.com/fund/funding-page/> - a list of potential funders.
- <http://www.scottishpowergreentrust.co.uk/content/>
- www.biglotteryfund.org.uk - Lottery pots are worth looking at, especially Awards for All which is relatively easy to apply to.
- <http://www.open4community.info/nottingham1/Default.aspx> - a local database of funders.
- <http://www.nottinghamcvs.co.uk/help-groups/funding> - info on funding for groups in Nottinghamshire.

Of course, if the group install their panels soon they will be eligible for FIT payments, which should allow them to recoup the cost of the panels and more.

Local Orgs.:

- www.rushcliffecvs.org.uk – Local CVS. I've dealt with Rushcliffe CVS before through the work I did in Kinoulton and they were really helpful. They can help groups find funders and fill out funding applications. It's worth subscribing to their e-newsletter – through these newsletters I've found out about funding training courses they've run.

Useful Resources:

- http://www.acre.org.uk/Resources/ACRE/Documents/Renewable_Energy_Guide.pdf - this is a really good basic guide to renewable energy and community-owned renewables with some links in the 'Further Resources' section to funders. I've found the case studies especially useful.

- www.planlocal.org.uk/videos/submenus/submenu-funding.html - seven short videos on different funding options. They cover charitable grants, donations from energy companies, traditional bank loans, selling shares to the community and lots of other funding options, some of which I'd never thought of! Well worth watching.
- www.planlocal.org.uk/downloads/group/further-resources/page:2#listTop - at the bottom of this page there is a link to a pdf called 'Further Information and Resources' which lists a number of funders and funding websites.

PVs on other football clubs:

www.therenewableenergycentre.co.uk/press-room/barnsley-fc-reds-go-green-with-solar-europa-pv-panels.html / <http://www.solareuropa.co.uk/barnsley-football-club-go-green-with-solar-europa> - the club might be interested to read about Barnsley FC's renewables.

Low Carbon Planning Events:

The club may also be interested in some free events MEA is running in October in conjunction with CSE, the organisation which produced the Plan Local website. Each community group represented at the event will receive a pack containing hard copies of a lot of what is on the website and some DVDs with all the films on.

The two closest to Keyworth are in Newark on 7th October and in Leicester on Sat 29th October. Both are free, but you need to pre-book and we're expecting them to be popular - flier with booking details attached for both events.

The day will be very interactive with lots of practical exercises and will include a session on funding options.

Educational Resources:

The club may want to do some educational work with the children and young people they work with on why they want renewables. Some of the resources listed here may help: www.everybodys-talking.org/schools-area/resources

6) Ideas for a Speaker for an Event

Dear Caroline

The Energy Group have tried various ways to drum up interest in climate change issues over the past few years but we remain a very small group.

We are considering having an open meeting in the Spring to try to get more people interested and wondered whether you know of an inspirational speaker that you could recommend. We are thinking someone who has been involved in community energy projects and possibly has a slide presentation of things done, but we are open to ideas.

Thanks and regards

Xxxxxx
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Our Response

Hi [REDACTED]

a few ideas:

I ran a conference for community groups in Nottinghamshire just over a year ago and we invited **Incredible Edible Todmorden** (www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk) and **Whittington and Fisherwick Environmental Group** (www.wfeg.org.uk) to send keynote speakers. Incredible Edible are focused on food growing, not on energy, but they were very engaging - they had everyone laughing a lot, but also very informative and inspirational. Mike Kinghan from WFEG had a good powerpoint presentation about the work done in their group – most of which is energy related and all very interesting - they have set up a very successful bulk purchase pv scheme which has seen more than 50 installation completed and also carried out an annual carbon footprinting exercise in the village several years running. He spoke frankly about what has and hasn't worked for them and what they would do differently if could go back and start a project again.

Back in October I helped organise some Low Carbon Planning events around the East Midlands and we had someone from a local renewable project at each event:

- **North Kilworth Community PV project:** www.northkilworth.com
- **Tutbury EcoPower:** www.tutburyecopower.co.uk
- **Torrs Hydro:** www.torrshydro.org

We also looked at having Sustainable Youlgrave come and they were willing– if they had come it would have been to talk about their feasibility study for anaerobic digestion.,

Powerpoints from the events can be found here:

www.planningforclimatechange.org.uk/engaging-communities-in-low-carbon-planning-%e2%80%93-four-events-across-the-region/.

For the Nottinghamshire event we did have small budget to pay speaker's groups - not sure if they normally expect payment. For the Low Carbon Planning events we didn't, but we did provide travel expenses - and I think it would only be fair to pay a speaker who is coming for free their travel expenses.

You could also try this database, it's searchable by region: www.climate-speakers.org.uk.

Hope that helps and do let me know how you get on.