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## Low Carbon Communities – March 2011 news

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This is the third of our quarterly updates about the Low Carbon Communities Programme launched in April 2010 with LAA1 reward grant funding. Though we have sustained a 50% budget cut, projects are continuing until September this year. Your comments and ideas are welcome. [susie.ohlenschlager@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:susie.ohlenschlager@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

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### ***Saving energy and cutting costs***



The energy incentive grant administered by USEA (the United Sustainable Energy Agency) with a reduced budget of £75k is now fully committed. 757 households have already had loft or cavity wall insulation installed, saving an estimated 412 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year, with a further 47 households waiting to have the work undertaken. This grant has been very successful in encouraging residents to have energy saving measures installed, with most reporting increased thermal comfort.

*“Very pleased with the insulation and I have noticed that my house feels much warmer upstairs.”*

*“Quick, clean and fast service - very satisfied with result. Excellent value for money.”*

Additional discounts are still available from Cherwell, West Oxfordshire and Vale of the White Horse District Councils. To find out about insulating your home contact Cocoon on 0800 80 48 777 or [www.cocoonyourhome.co.uk](http://www.cocoonyourhome.co.uk)

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As a result of the cold spell at the end of 2010, more residents have been seeking advice about saving money on energy. As well as dealing with increased calls on the Affordable Warmth Helpline we have given advice at day centres, lunch clubs, coffee mornings, childrens’ centres and information days. Most people want advice about how to reduce their energy bills so they can afford to keep their properties to the recommended temperatures (21°C in the living room, 18°C in any other occupied room).



We have also held training sessions across the county for frontline services including Age UK staff, and customer service teams from South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils. Staff are trained about the signs of fuel poverty, the effects on health and possible solutions. Anyone looking for advice on keeping their energy bills down should contact the Affordable Warmth Helpline on 0800 107 00 44.

[Kelly.gardiner@usea.org.uk](mailto:Kelly.gardiner@usea.org.uk)

[jan.deacon@usea.org.uk](mailto:jan.deacon@usea.org.uk)

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## ***Big Carbon challenge - Carbon Reduction Competition***

ORCC and Climate-X-Change are pleased that six community groups have taken up the **Big Carbon Challenge**, sponsored by Cottsway Housing Association and supported by Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership and LAA1 reward grant funds.



Cropredy, Hailey, Shrivenham, East Hendred, Eynsham and Charlbury will compete to drive down the carbon emissions of their competition group. Entrants were trained on the weekend of 15/16 January in the *Carbon Conversations* method of low-carbon living and will soon be undertaking climate action activities in their communities.

The competition runs from January until May, with the winners announced in June. Prizes from a £1500 fund include those for the group with the biggest collective carbon reduction and the group that demonstrates the most effective community climate action strategy. ORCC and Climate-X will be on hand to mentor the groups as the competition progresses.



Elsewhere, the *Low Carbon Communities* work continues. The Community Led Planning route continues to provide climate action 'leads'. Signposting is a valuable tool, showing people in one community what's happening in others. As the *Runaway Climate Challenge Conference* showed in November, an inspiring talk about what's worked in one place can be a powerful spur to action in another.

[Tom.McCulloch@oxonrcc.org.uk](mailto:Tom.McCulloch@oxonrcc.org.uk)

[jo.hamilton@ouce.ox.ac.uk](mailto:jo.hamilton@ouce.ox.ac.uk)

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## ***Going solar***

Oxfordshire County Council has been investigating opportunities for installing solar PV (photovoltaic) panels on its buildings, and held a market testing day with Oxford City Council in 2010 to get a better understanding of the solar PV market. Capital has been approved for 200kW worth of solar PV systems for non-school sites.

We have recently launched a tender process to appoint contractors to supply and install solar PV systems on our non-school sites. This framework contract will also be open to schools, enabling them to take advantage of the economies of scale. Several schools have already expressed an interest in installing solar panels. Potential up-front funding sources are being confirmed alongside a process for dealing with Feed in Tariffs and repayments.

[jane.reddick@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:jane.reddick@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

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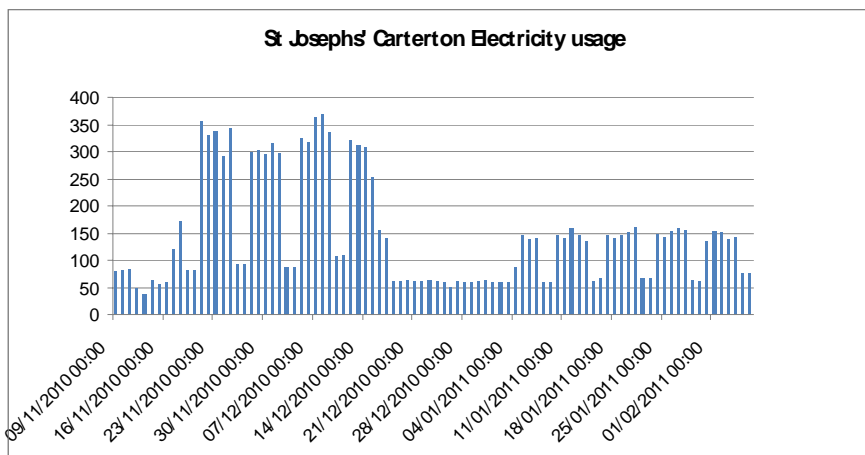
## ***Saving energy in schools***



*PV panels installed at Barley Hill school with the help a Low Carbon Communities Programme grant*

The Energy Busters project has been busy over the past three months, visiting seventeen Primary schools, three secondary and two Special needs schools.

In over 90% of visits we've met with the Eco groups or school council representatives setting up energy spies or, in the case of secondary schools, energy monitoring in various departments giving a competitive edge to energy saving.



In six of the schools, we've organised the setting up of energy spies to coincide with the installation of a current cost meter that relays real-time energy usage to a small monitor; this allows the children to view the usage easily and make comparisons between different times of the day.

During re-visits we are then able to download stored information into an excel spreadsheet. St Josephs' in Carterton has done really well and managed to reduce their energy usage since our visit (see graph). Others are continuing in their efforts to reduce energy consumption through continued behaviour change.

**Contact us to find out about booking the Energy Bus for your school or a local community event: [energybusters@northmoortrust.co.uk](mailto:energybusters@northmoortrust.co.uk) or tel. 018765 409 406.**

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