

## WREN – energy efficiency loft and cavity walls

### About the project

Wadebridge Renewable Energy Network (WREN) is a non-profit community energy group established in 2011.

WREN has recently formed the Wadebridge Energy Company (WEC). WREN holds the following aims: Build community and energy resilience; Increase community-owned renewable energy; Reduce the number of residents in fuel poverty; Retain the financial benefit locally; Contribute to the alleviation of climate change.

The aim of the WREN Loft and Cavity Walls project is to move the town of Wadebridge into a low-carbon economy and turn energy generation from an individual liability to a collective asset.

The project is focused in Wadebridge and the surrounding parishes (Wadebridge and Padstow areas). The current housing stock in the area takes 45% of its energy from the mains gas, and with individuals on lower than average salaries, the number of people in fuel poverty in the region is relatively high.

The project is a community owned project which aimed to improve energy efficiency within the area by installing loft and cavity walling installations, with WREN acting as trusted brokers.

WREN's main form of outreach is through its shop which is run by 20 volunteers and is open to the public from Monday-Saturday each week. The public come in to the shop and ask questions about how to save energy and how they can get involved in WREN's energy efficiency schemes. WREN have approved installers and are able to provide free installations for households. As an added incentive those who have received an installation also receive 25 wrens (a local currency). Many shop keepers and businesses in Wadebridge have kindly agreed to donate 10% of the Wrens they receive, so for every Wren25 redeemed, £2.50 will go directly in to the WREN Community Fund. The Community Fund is then used to benefit the local projects, so money spent in Wadebridge stays in Wadebridge. And because Wrens can only be spent with local, independent traders, they benefit the local economy rather than see profits disappear up country.

### Successes

Thus far there have been 200 loft and cavity wall installations and overall a very positive response from the community. Lower energy bills and the savings in CO2 have meant that there has been generation of £1 million pa for the local economy and targets of increasing energy outputs have continually been met.

The project success has meant that the project is set to continue indefinitely.

### Challenges

The main challenge have included the continuous changes in government schemes and adapting to these changes in a timely manner.

### Involvement

Community involvement has been via the shop and at local events. There have been 1100 members who have paid up for the loft and cavity walls scheme. WREN are currently looking into running shared offers on renewable energy, and have people involved via the community fund.

### Learnings

The WREN team found that there is often cynicism surrounding energy schemes which are free as people are naturally distrusting of them, and therefore, gaining peoples' trust can be quite a challenge. This struggle to engage has been overcome by community outreach and particularly with the existence of the WREN local drop-in shop. WREN's personal customer service approach is unique and in that sense provides an advantage over the bigger companies that are often deemed as

untrustworthy and faceless. WREN keeps in touch with the community through monthly editorials in local media and competitions e.g. a light bulb competition in which people win led bulbs to replace incandescent bulbs. Exhibitions in local town halls were also a success in establishing face-to-face contact with the community. Outreach services have encouraged people to change their energy tariff.

### Funding

The project was funded by grants and referral fees, and received government incentives via the 'Green Deal'.

### Legacy

The project's success is set to continue for the foreseeable future.

### Contact

Name: Dominic Comonte

Email: [dominic.comonte@wren.uk.com](mailto:dominic.comonte@wren.uk.com)

Telephone: 01208 812 992

Website: <http://www.wren.uk.com/>