

# Three Rivers District Council Home Energy Conservation Authority (HECA) Progress Report 2015-2017

## Introduction

The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA) recognises that local authorities are uniquely placed to assess and improve the energy efficiency in residential accommodation. A report was published in 2013 setting out how Three Rivers District Council would achieve this. A progress report is required every 2 years. This report sets out how Three Rivers District Council has progressed since the last HECA report and also sets out actions and priorities for next 2 years for home energy conservation.

## Background

Three Rivers is a blend of countryside and quiet villages mixed with bustling small towns.

A majority of the housing in the area is either made up of old original small towns and villages or is part of two major development phases, one of which was the building of 'Metro-land' homes in the 1920s and 1930s when the Metropolitan Railway came to Moor Park, Rickmansworth, Chorleywood, and then Croxley Green and a similar style of homes in Oxhey Hall. The other major development, South Oxhey, was built by the London County Council in the 1950s and 60s. More recently, old industrial brownfield sites have been converted and redeveloped with modern homes and there have been gradual additions and infill to settlements.

## Strategic Overview

One of the key themes in the Council's Strategic Plan for 2015-18 is to be Clean and Green – to maintain a high quality local environment and reduce the eco-footprint of the District. Specifically, this includes objectives to reduce Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions and increase the use of renewable energy.

The Three Rivers Housing Strategy seeks to improve the standard of housing including improving energy efficiency and affordable warmth across all tenures.

The Council's Green Expectations Strategy (March 2015) seeks to tackle the effects and impacts of climate change and to improve sustainability and the environment. The strategy includes objectives to:

- Minimise greenhouse gas emissions from new developments in the District in line with our Local Plan
- Encourage the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from existing properties in the District in line with our Home Energy Conservation Act priorities.

Further to the strategy, the Council has committed to taking action in a changing climate by signing the Local Government Association Climate Local Commitment.

## Three Rivers Home Energy Efficiency Progress

### Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) Emissions

The latest data for 2012<sup>1</sup> indicates that the per capita domestic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions rate for Three Rivers was 2.5 tonnes per person. This is a slight rise on the previous year, and in line with a national rise, and is still 10 percent lower than the 2.8 tonnes per person reported in 2005. However this is higher than the national average of 2.2 and the Hertfordshire average of 2.3. This may in part be due to the type of properties in the District, with a higher than average proportion detached or semi detached and a smaller proportion of flats or terraces<sup>2</sup>.

### Fuel Poverty

Fuel poverty is now recorded using the low income and high cost (LIHC) definition. Under this definition of Fuel Poverty, a household is considered to be fuel poor if:

- it has required fuel costs that are above average (the national median level)
- were it to spend that amount, it would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line.

The District has a lower than average level of fuel poverty of 8% of households. This is compared to the average for England of 10.4% of households.<sup>3</sup> However, it should be noted that this level varies across the District from between 4.6% and 11.2%. The District is generally affluent but it does contain some areas which have multiple indices of deprivation, including one Lower Super Output Area within the highest 15% of deprived areas nationally. There is some correlation between fuel poverty and deprivation, as the more deprived areas also often have a higher than average fuel poverty level and the area with the highest level of fuel poverty is in an area of high deprivation. However, even a very affluent area in the District, in the lowest 1% of deprivation in the country, is estimated to contain 7.7% of homes in fuel poverty. This is in part because areas with modern, energy-efficient homes will have lower costs and therefore be less likely to experience fuel poverty. Conversely, areas with older housing stock are likely to have higher costs for fuel and therefore those in that area with a lower income are at risk of fuel poverty.

There has been some recent variation in the rate of Excessive Winter Deaths<sup>4</sup> in the District. The most recent data for 2012/13 estimated that there were 70 excessive winter deaths, a large and worrying increase compared to an estimated 30 to 50 in the preceding 7 years. Nationally, that year saw a rise of 29% on the previous winter. After a comparatively warm winter in 2011/12, the winter of 2012/13 was the coldest since 2009/10. It is also noted that the number of excess winter deaths for local areas are relatively small. Calculations based on small numbers of events are often subject to random fluctuations. There is no consistent pattern across local areas in England and Wales. So one local area may have a really high level one year, compared with neighbouring areas, but then will be about the same or much lower in other years. It will therefore be important to continue to monitor this to determine if it is a random fluctuation or a higher trend which will need further action.

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<sup>1</sup> Local and Regional CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions Estimates for 2005-2012

<sup>2</sup> Census 2011- Accommodation Type, Households

<sup>3</sup> Sub Regional Fuel Poverty England 2013, Low Income High Costs (LIHC) Definition, DECC

<sup>4</sup> Excess winter mortality data, England and Wales, 2013/14 (provisional) and 2012/13 (final)

## Energy Efficient Measures

As of March 2015, 506 Green Deal Assessments had been undertaken in the District although there were no active Green Deal Plans. Six Green Deal Home Improvement Fund vouchers were issued and 778 energy efficiency measures, in 659 households, received ECO funding<sup>5</sup>.

In 2013/14 Three Rivers District Council, in partnership with Watford Borough Council and Watford Community Housing Trust, installed external wall insulation to 118 'hard to treat', 'Wimpy no fines' homes.

429 new homes were built in TRDC in 2013-15 all of which were required to submit a 'CPLAN Energy and Sustainability Statement'.

As part of the Herts Healthy Homes initiative, 110 vulnerable households in Three Rivers have received a free energy efficiency advice home visit since 2013. The Council's long running 'Beat the Killer Cold' campaign also gives some extra help to pensioners in need in the District.

Promotion of energy efficiency included an 'Energy Vampires' scheme and competition in October 2014 and *Green Homes Together* offers including a fixed price boiler offer and loft and cavity wall insulation. Home energy efficiency advice was provided for example on the Council website, on the bespoke 'Greenourherts.org.uk' website, in *Three Rivers Times* delivered to all households, through social media, leaflets and posters, at events and in the Environment Newsletter.

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<sup>5</sup> DECC Data Tables – Green Deal, ECO and Insulation Levels up to March 2015.

## Progress and Action Plan

In order to improve home energy efficiency in the District proposed actions and priorities from 2013-15. Progress against these actions are indicated below and future actions for 2015-17 are set out:

Key:



Good progress



Limited progress



No progress

Action	2013-2015	Timing	Progress 2013-2015	Action 2015-17
Zero Carbon Homes	All new homes to be zero carbon by 2016. To show that these will be met, Three Rivers is leading the way by requiring applications to submit a 'CPLAN Energy and Sustainability Statement' demonstrating the extent to which sustainability principles have been incorporated into the location, design, construction and future use proposals, and the expected carbon emissions.	Ongoing	 <p>429 new homes were built in the District in 2013-15 all of which complied with C-Plan requirements</p> <p>It was announced 10/7/15 that the government does not intend to proceed with the zero carbon 'Allowable Solutions' carbon offsetting scheme.</p>	Future applications will continue to be assessed through C-Plan to ensure they comply with the policy to demonstrate that development will produce 5% less carbon dioxide emissions than Building Regulations Part L requirements (2013) as set out in the Three Rivers District Council Local Plan.



ECO	<p>We are partnering with Watford Borough Council and Watford Community Housing Trust to install external wall insulation utilising ECO and DECC Fuel Poverty Funding to properties in the District.</p> <p>We will consider further partnerships with local social housing providers and other partners to utilise ECO funding where appropriate.</p>	<p>Feb to August 2013</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p></p> <p>Under the scheme 118 homes were externally insulated by March 2014.</p> <p></p> <p>A new partnership with Thrive Homes and Watford Borough Council was established to externally insulate a further 170 homes. Due to the change in ECO funding this project later secured DECC Green Deal Communities funding as well as additional funding provided by the partners.</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>To be completed September 2015.</p>
Warm Homes for Healthy People	<p>Following 2 successful years of the Hertfordshire Keep Warm Stay Well partnership, including home energy efficiency visits, we will continue to work together with partners and bid for funding when available.</p>	Ongoing	<p></p> <p>110 vulnerable households have received a free energy efficiency advice home visit since 2013.</p>	Ongoing and continued monitoring of Excessive Winter Deaths.
Hertfordshire Building Futures	<p>Guidance is available to help maximise sustainability and practical tips to meet policy requirements in 'Building Futures: A Hertfordshire Guide to Promoting Sustainability in Development.'</p>	Ongoing	<p></p> <p>Guidance is signposted.</p>	Ongoing

<p>Promotion of energy efficiency</p>	<p>The Council promotes home energy efficiency through a variety of ways including a bespoke environmental website <a href="http://www.ourclimateischanging.com">www.ourclimateischanging.com</a>, Three Rivers Times which is delivered to all homes, electronic newsletters, social media, noticeboards, forums, stands at events, leaflets and posters.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	 <p>Continued promotion including an 'Energy Vampires' campaign and promotion through rebranded 'Green our Herts' website. Promotion of Green Deal Communities solid wall insulation scheme to targeted communities.</p>	<p>Ongoing - A key objective in the Council's Green Expectations Strategy (March 2015) is to encourage the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from properties in the District.</p>
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