

# Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Eco Homes Open Week 2nd - 10th March 2013



## A Guide for Householders Opening Their Homes



Organised by the Community Climate Action Network and Marches Energy Agency  
Funded by the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Local Authority Energy Partnership

## Background Information

The first ever Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire-wide Eco Homes Open Week is taking place in March 2013!

*Imagine lots of homes in the area which have installed eco-features opening their doors to the public for a few hours over the course of a week to help inspire others to improve their own homes. Imagine visiting a few of them yourself and seeing renewable technologies and energy saving products in action in real homes. Picture yourself opening up your own home and explaining to others what you've done, how and why.*

Got it? Well that's what we're doing!

We're helping to organise this event at the request of members of the **Community Climate Action Network (CCAN)**. The CCAN is made up of more than 300 individuals representing more than 80 climate change-focused community groups, plus a range of third sector organisations and local authorities, in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. It is funded by a number of local authorities in the two counties who work together as the **Local Authority Energy Partnership (LAEP)** and delivered by local charity **Marches Energy Agency**. More information about the services the CCAN currently offers can be found here: [www.everybodys-talking.org/communities-area/community-support](http://www.everybodys-talking.org/communities-area/community-support).

All of our services are based on feedback from members of the network about what support they need and want. Recent feedback has shown that people are keen to visit inspiring examples of eco-friendly homes. We're also aware of climate change focused community groups in the area who have organised open days of eco homes within one town or borough and we'd like to help more of you to do the same.

The event has also been inspired by smaller-scale events in areas of the two counties, and similar events in other parts of the country.

### What is an EcoHome Open Day?

An Eco Home Open Day is a chance for householders with homes that have some significant environmentally friendly features to open them up to the public so that others can come and learn more about how to make similar improvements to their homes. It's a bit like an Open Gardens Day, but you'll be showing off your solid wall insulation or your solar panels instead of your sunflowers or chrysanthemums!

### What kind of homes are we looking for?

We're looking for homes that offer something inspiring from an eco-perspective. They don't need to be purpose eco-built, out-of-this world, Grand Design-worthy homes – indeed we would rather most of them were a bit more ordinary – but they do need to offer something more unusual than just low energy lightbulbs and loft or cavity wall insulation. Some examples of what you might have done to your home include:

- Installed **solid wall insulation**. Under the forthcoming Green Deal (which will be launched in early 2013) and ECO (which will be launched in Autumn 2012) the government are hoping that lots of people will install solid wall insulation. You could help this initiative by sharing your own experience of installing solid wall insulation.

- **Renovated a whole house or room or built a house.** If you've started from scratch, or with the shell of an old building, you might have lots to show people.
- Made improvements on a **tight budget.** We don't just want expensive high-tech solutions on show.
- Installed **renewable technologies.**
- **Made a rented home more eco friendly.** Perhaps you've a renter, or a landlord, who has found ways to improve a house that work for both the householder and the owner.
- **Incorporated a lot of waste materials** into your improvements that would have otherwise ended up in landfill.
- **Produced a lot of your own food** in your garden. If you could provide a short tour about how and why you've done this, we'd love to include it.

### **Why not become a Superhome?**

If you have made significant changes to your home you might like to consider contacting the Superhomes network to see if your home qualifies to join the network: [www.superhomes.org.uk/get-involved/join-superhomes/](http://www.superhomes.org.uk/get-involved/join-superhomes/). Being a 'Superhome' isn't a requirement for being part of the CCAN Eco Homes Open Week but it could be useful for you to join anyway.

Most Superhomes open to the public in March or September, so if you do join you could open your home once between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> March and advertise it through both the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Eco Homes Week and the Superhomes website.

**Everyone who wants to take part will need to fill out the application form within this guide and your involvement in the event won't be confirmed until we have received this form.**

### **What will we do?**

Marches Energy Agency will:

- Provide you with this guide to help you open up your home to the public.
- Advertise this event through the project's website ([www.everbodys-talking.org/ecohomes](http://www.everbodys-talking.org/ecohomes)), monthly e-newsletter, Twitter and Facebook.
- Work with Local Authorities in the area to publicise the event in the local press.
- Provide copies of a poster you can use to advertise the events
- Provide a personalised leaflet for your house (if you fill out a form about your house and send it back to us with some photos) to give out to visitors.
- Provide a short feedback form which we would ask you to ask visitors to fill in. There will be a prize draw attached to the feedback form to encourage people to fill it in.
- Provide a short feedback form for you to tell us about your own experiences of taking part.

NB: MEA cannot attend your Open Day ourselves, or assist beyond providing the help described above. Our aim is to provide resources that will help householders and community groups to organise open home events for themselves.

### **What are we asking you to do?**

- Send us details of the home you intend to open using the form provided below.
- OPTIONAL: Fill in the Personalised Leaflet Proforma and send it to us with a few photos (we will use this to create a personalised leaflet about your home for you to give to visitors).
- Open your home for a minimum of two consecutive hours during the Eco Homes Open Week. You're welcome to open it for longer if you wish.
- Publicise the project locally. Template publicity materials can be downloaded at the bottom of this page.
- Prepare your home for being open to the public. More detailed advice on this can be found in the next section of this guide.
- Open your home to the public.
- Ask visitors to fill out feedback forms and return these to MEA after the event. We provide a freepost address for this. All visitors filling out a form will be entered into a prize draw.
- Take a few photos of your event and send them to MEA after the event. These may be used on our website and in future publicity.

If you would like to take part we need you to fill out the application form (and proforma if you would like a leaflet) below and return it to us by **15<sup>th</sup> February 2013**. This will allow us time to include your project in the publicity we produce.

## Advice on taking part in the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Eco Homes Open Day

### Before the Event

- **Decide on your opening hours.** If you intend to open for most of one day (say 10am-4pm) we would advise creating a lunch rota for those involved, or closing between 12pm and 1pm to allow yourself a break. Weekends are likely to be the most popular option, but you could also consider weekday evenings. Remember: if all the events take place on the weekends then not everyone will be able to visit your home as well as all the others that are open.
- **Decide which features of the house you would most like people to see.** You then have two options:
  1. **Prepare a short 10 minute tour** you can take people on. You might like to write down on cards what you plan to say at each feature – you might not need to refer to them (especially the fifth time you do it!) but it will help you to think through what you want to say and it won't hurt to have them in your pocket just in case you need them!
  2. **Create a display at each feature** and arrange for someone (another member of your household, a friend or neighbour) to be at each feature to both explain the feature and ensure people stick to the route through the house that you want them to take. We would advise against allowing people to wander freely around any room in the house!
    - As well as explaining what you practically did, please also explain why you did it. Your motivation may have been simply to save money, or you might have a deep concern for the environment. Either way, visitors are likely to be interested in this and you have a great opportunity to inspire them to begin their own journey towards a more environmentally friendly home.
    - It's okay to talk about what went wrong as well as what went right. Did you have difficulty sourcing the right materials? Were they harder to install than

- you expected? Has something not performed as well as expected? Would you do things differently if you were doing them again?
- You could also create a short handout to give to people to take away. This is entirely optional depending on if you have the time to prepare it.
  - Remember to allow time and space for people to ask questions and don't underestimate how long this might take. If you are giving tours allow at least 10 minutes for questions – if they don't have any you'll get a ten minute break!
  - Do you have samples of any materials that are now hidden? For instance, if you have installed internal solid wall insulation it won't be visible. Do you have a sample of the material to show people?
- **Decide if you would like to take a donation on the door.** This could be used to cover costs you incur (printing out signs, providing coffee and tea if you intend to) or you could donate it to a local charity or to your local eco-community group. You don't have to do this, and we do not want homes involved in this event to make a compulsory charge, but a donation system might ensure that only people who are genuinely interested in your home's eco-improvements attend.
  - **Find volunteers to help you on the day.** We recommend that at least three people are on hand at all times; if you have four you can take it in turns to have a break. Jobs will include greeting people on the door, taking them on a tour, giving out refreshments (optional) and asking people for donations and filled out feedback forms.
  - **Advertise your event!** MEA will be posting information on our website ([www.everybodys-talking.org](http://www.everybodys-talking.org)) and working with Local Authorities in the area to get information in to the local press, but we also need you to do as much as you can locally. You could:
    - Place posters and fliers in local venues: the library, cafe, shops, community centres, schools etc
    - Amend and send out the template press release attached to this guide.
    - Tell all your friends and ask them to tell other people.
    - If you are part of a local eco-community group ask them to advertise the event through their networks.
  - **Warn the neighbours** – especially if you think the road may become congested with parked cars. Of course, you should invite your neighbours to visit your home too – they may not mind lots of cars if they get to have a nosey in your house!
  - **Consider if there are any risks or hazards in your home** that people need to be aware of – low ceilings or doorways, steep stairs etc. On the day you will need to point these out to people.
  - **Check your insurance policy.** MEA and the LAEP are not providing insurance for this event and cannot accept any liability for your event or anything that happens during it. You need to ensure that your own insurer will cover you in the event of an incident.

### On the Morning of the Event:

- **Place any small valuable items in a locked** room within the house. Close off any areas were you don't want people to go.
- **Make your home as inviting as possible** from the outside – use our template posters to make it obvious you are hosting an Open Day.

### During the Event:

- Try to **have three or four people on hand to help you** – enlist some friends, relatives or neighbours. If you're part of a local community eco group you might be able to help each other with this. **DO NOT** open your home on your own.
- If you're doing a tour, you will need to have someone on the door to meet people and ask them to wait in a holding area (maybe the living room) until the next tour starts. Someone else will need to be doing the tours. You might have a third person giving out drinks and biscuits.
- Please ask people to spend five minutes filling out a feedback form at the end of their visit. As this is the first time we have organised this event it is vital that we get feedback. This will help us to secure funding for future events and to improve any future events. Everyone who fills out a form will be entered into a prize draw to win a free Green Deal assessment of their home.

### **After the Event**

- **Have a well deserved break!** Many people who have run Eco Home Open Days have said that they are very rewarding, but also exhausting, especially if all day. Plan a relaxing evening: prepare your tea the evening before so that all you have to do is heat it up, or have something really easy to hand to cook.
- **Fill out a 'Household Feedback Form'**. We don't just want feedback from those who visit your home, we also want to find out about your experience of opening up your home and the support we're providing.
- Remember to **send completed feedback forms to MEA** to the following Freepost address:

Freepost RRXE-UETC-BZZJ  
 Marches Energy Agency  
 The Pump House  
 Coton Hill  
 Shrewsbury  
 SY1 2DP

- Remember to **email any photos to MEA** for use on our website and in future publicity.

## Case Study

*Tina Holt* is a member of Transition West Bridgford. The group set up an initiative called the Eco House Group, through which several open house days or individual house visits have been organised for the public since the first event in May 2010.

### How did you organise your open day?

The key features of each home were summarised for inclusion on leaflets, blogs and emails which were handed out locally (events, shops, etc) or emailed to our networks.



On the day we lined up extra helpers to meet and greet, or provide technical information and guide visitors away from areas not open to the public.

A simple disclaimer was displayed at each house, and household insurance was checked by each homeowner. For some events, insurance cover was arranged by Transition West Bridgford to cover all the homes involved.

### How successful have your events been?



On the first open day, we had around 70 visitors to seven homes (several visiting more than one home), and since then have had anything from 10 to 40 visitors to any individual house. Generally we have found that 10-12 at a time is a sensible maximum for a large house, and less for a smaller house.

Feedback suggests that home owners and visitors have all enjoyed the experience. At times we've invited the installers of insulation / technologies to speak about their installation, and on other occasions not. Some home-owners created displays of work in progress (e.g. to show insulation that is hidden when the work is finished), and these have attracted a lot of interest. Having samples of materials used is also of interest to visitors.

Find out more: [www.wbecohouses.co.uk](http://www.wbecohouses.co.uk).



## Case Study

### Transition Chesterfield

*Colin Harrison* is a Secretary of Transition Chesterfield. The group organised open days in 2009 and 2010.

#### Tell us a bit about your open day.

Several members of Transition Chesterfield who had made environmental improvements to their homes opened them to the public. The days chosen were timed to coincide with the weekend of the annual Heritage Week (in September), to take advantage of the extra publicity this would bring. The improvements ranged from simple bulk water storage (for garden use) to a large straw-bale extension.

#### What have you learnt from running your events?



The first year was very successful, with even the simpler installations having a steady stream of visitors throughout the opening periods. An appointment system was considered and discarded as being too restrictive, although this did mean that often visitors would arrive when an explanation of the modifications was already under way, involving a lot of repeated information; possibly starting each tour at regular intervals would overcome this problem. However, as most of the visitors went to several of the sites it would

seem slightly impractical. In retrospect having at least two people at each location for all the open periods would appear to be essential. If we run a day again we will probably arrange visits to individual homes over a slightly longer period, rather than all in a weekend - this should widen the choice of sites considerably.

