

Warmer Chard and Surrounding Villages – Post Project Report

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Purpose of the Report

To inform members about the results and outcomes of the 'Warmer Chard and Surrounding Villages' project as requested by Members when project funding was approved.

Public Interest

The Warmer Chard and Surrounding Villages project set out to help the people of Chard and surrounding villages to reduce their energy bills, lower Chard's carbon footprint, and make an impact on fuel poverty. This report reviews the project and what it achieved.

Recommendations

1. That Members note the content of the report.
2. That Officers continue to work with Home Energy Centres Chard to develop and provide energy advice services.

Background

In August 2016 Area West Committee (AWC) approved a grant of up to £7,260 for the Warmer Chard & Villages project; to be delivered in partnership between the Bristol based Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) and Home Energy Centres Chard (HEC Chard), with CSE as the lead party. AWC also asked for a report on the outcome of the project to be brought to AWC.

The project had two aspects: (i) to deliver home energy advice to residents, and (ii) to build the skills and capacity of HEC Chard so that energy advice services would continue to be delivered after the project had finished.

Project delivery

The project ran from October 2016 to February 2017. While many elements of the project were delivered CSE were not able to deliver and were not paid for some parts, due to the short duration of the project. The duration was the result of the time taken to develop the collaborative project proposal involving HEC Chard, limitations on CSE's match funding and the reporting requirements set by Area West Development.

CSE's final report states: "The projects activity has been condensed into a five month period (October to February) which didn't allow time to sufficiently plan and arrange a greater depth to householder engagement. More time would have also allowed the partners to deliver more combined marketing activity. Because of these issues (particularly the limited resources and timescale) CSE felt that the focus of our support should be on building local capacity, specifically HEC Chard's ability to deliver outreach to local households in the long-term, rather than the short term goal of in-depth support to a small number of households."

The table below summarises the components of the project showing what was delivered and what the actual costs were. Many components were delivered for less than the budgeted amount and the final amount paid to CSE was £3,384.53 being 50% of the total eligible project expenditure of £6,769.05.

TASKS	Forecast	Delivered	Cost
Project Management			
Project Management & administration	700.00	Y	700.00
Monitoring, evaluation & reporting	630.00	Y	630.00
Promotion	420.00	Y	462.00
Training			
CSE: develop two Energy Essentials courses	700.00	Y	700.00
CSE: training HEC Chard	700.00	Y	685.00
CSE: 8 Energy Essentials training to community groups	1,400.00	N	
CSE: Energy Switching Workshop	525.00	N	
City & Guilds training for two HEC Chard volunteers	1,934.00	Y	1,396.00
Chard volunteer training expenses	685.00	Y	362.72
Advice			
CSE Home visits (minimum 15)	1,680.00	N	
CSE in-depth case work and referrals to other agencies	2,380.00	Y (part)	681.33
HEC Chard home visit expenses	450.00	Y (part)	90.50
Direct support for the Centre			
Factsheets with HEC logos + artwork	550.00	Y	228.00
Draught-busting kits + artwork	400.00	Y	273.50
Home visit kits and fuel poverty packs + artwork	440.00	Y	not charged
Equipment to support the HEC Chard centre (PC, printer, essential software & hardware, display boards)	1,000.00	Y	560.00
Total	14,594.00		6,769.05

CSE & HEC promoted the project using social media, newsletters, leaflets and events. 4,500 leaflets were delivered to households in targeted areas of fuel poverty, with 500 more distributed to libraries, medical centres and housing offices. Events included:

- Five advice events for local householders
- Four Energy Essentials training courses
- Four open afternoons at the Home Energy Centre in High St, Chard.
- Weekly drop-in sessions in Chard

The project provided support to around 45 households, with some receiving more than one service:

- Telephone support (CSE service) to 18 households
- Advice and support at events attended by 27 households
- Home visits to 13 households

A further 14 households expressed an interest but could not be supported within the timeframe of the project.

CSE reported that of the 27 households helped 16 were of pensionable age while 11 were of family age.

Surrounding Villages

Area West Committee directed the project to include the villages surrounding Chard and to include enquiries from the whole of Area West.

The project events and activities took place in Chard. To raise awareness CSE used a professional leaflet delivery service to deliver 4,500 leaflets to Chard and surrounding villages including Knowle St Giles, Chaffcombe, Tatworth, Cricket St Thomas, Wadeford, Combe St Nicholas and Buckland St Mary. Leaflets were distributed between 31st Jan and 6th Feb 2017, and produced just 6 direct responses.

Of the 27 households supported, 19 were from Chard and 8 were from the surrounding villages.

Further detail is available in Appendix A.

Lessons learned

The project has identified some learning which is summarised here:

- Effective delivery requires longer timescales.
- Householders often need multiple interactions to overcome inertia and implement changes.
- Harder to engage communities may no longer be receptive to leaflets or mail-drops.
- Working with landlords directly can achieve good outcomes for clients.
- There are challenges to installing measures directly in people's homes (insurance, training, costs, logistics) suggesting this would be more effectively delivered through other services.
- Involving the local press with local councillors or the MP can build community interest.

CSE's experience from this and other projects suggests the need for a sustained and innovative approach, which may be over multiple projects, to gain trust and engage householders.

Further detail is available in Appendix B.

Legacy

The project successfully increased the capacity of HEC Chard to continue to deliver support in Chard and surrounding villages.

- The 14 leads which could not be dealt with within the project have been followed up.
- HEC Chard volunteers received 'Energy Essentials' training from CSE and have successfully run training events for other local organisations.
- Two volunteers received City & Guilds Energy Advisor training with one qualifying.
- A computer, software & printer have been provided and are in use.
- Home visit kits and draught proofing packs have been provided.
- HEC Chard branded advice sheets and leaflets have been provided.
- Four new volunteers were attracted to join HEC Chard.

HEC Chard delivery is continuing through a weekly drop-in clinic in High St in Chard. While home visits are still available the majority of enquiries are dealt with through advice and distribution of energy saving equipment.

The project has contributed to the local economy in that funds released through energy savings can now be spent locally. For example an average saving of £10 per month, per household helped, would release £3,240 per year into the economy.

Future

HEC Chard is committed to continuing delivery and would appreciate support to do so:

- Endorsement by SSDC to increase uptake from leaflet drops and promotion.

- Partnership working, for example with SSDC, SPARK, CAB and other community organisations. (SSDC's contractual relationships can be used to put training in place and drive referrals, and if SSDC are seen to be 'embracing' HEC Chard it will make it easier for other groups to make referrals and share leads.)
- Involvement in future environmental health initiatives, for example work with landlords to new support them to meet the new April 2018 legal obligation for their rented dwellings to be energy-efficient to at least EPC band E.
- Support to handle GDPR (the new data protection regulation)
- Help to recruit volunteers.
- Help to give volunteers some recognition for their contribution. (It is getting harder to recruit and retain volunteers.)
- Support to access further funding (HEC Chard have ongoing expenses for promotion to hard-to-reach groups, volunteer expenses and running costs.)
- Support to replenish supplies of information sheets and energy saving equipment to distribute, for example draught excluders and window film.

It is also worth noting that HEC are a potential source of knowledge and training for SSDC, for example through their experience of working with hard-to-reach groups.

Financial Implications

The project has been completed and there are no future financial implications for Area West budgets. For information only: £7,260 was allocated to the project, of which £3,384.53 was paid to CSE and £3,875.47 returned to the AW Community Grants budget.

Council Plan Implications

The project delivered against the following areas of the SSDC Council Plan:

Focus 2 – Environment:

- Deliver campaigns and projects that help householders and businesses (including the Council) to cut energy use and adapt to climate change.
- Promote the Green Deal and similar schemes that enable householders and businesses to make existing buildings more energy efficient.

Focus 3 – Homes

- Work with partners to combat fuel poverty.
- Continue to work with partners to bring private sector housing up to Decent Homes Standard.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

The project raised awareness and reduced energy consumption in Chard and surrounding villages by improving energy efficiency in resident's homes.

Equality and Diversity Implications

The Warmer Chard project was open to all and was promoted to a wide range of groups and members of the community. Home Energy Centre Chard is accessible and the project's home visits enable wide participation.

Privacy Impact Assessment

None arising from this report.

Background Papers

Report to Area West Committee 17th August 2016
Warmer Chard Interim Report 16th December 2016
Warmer Chard Final Report June 2017

Appendix A – Project Achievements

From CSE Final Report

Since the launch of the joint initiative the following achievements have been made.

HEC Chard support for local residents

Twenty seven residents of Chard and the surrounding area have received advice from HEC Chard on a variety of topics. *The following summarises the primary nature of the advice provided:*

- Using their night storage heaters (6)
- Secondary glazing for windows (4)
- Tackling mould and damp (7)
- Switching energy tariff (10)

Events and outreach:

- Five events run for local householders (including the medical centre and the library) and four open afternoons run at the HEC high street offices. In total these events have supported 21 people with energy advice
- Four energy essentials training courses have been delivered
- Home visits have been delivered to 13 households
- The leaflet drop resulted in a total of 6 enquiries. These enquiries included:
 - Three households being assisted with tariff switching
 - One household being assisted with night storage controls
 - Two households being assisted with mould and damp
- There are a further 14 households who've expressed an interest in support and would like further advice (outside of the timeframe of delivery for this project)

The following measures and low-cost interventions were given to householders:

- Draught-proofing kit, including letter box covers, door strips and tape (7)
- Window secondary glazing film (4)
- HEC Chard branded information sheets covering lighting, night storage heaters, insulation (45)

CSE support for local residents

Despite the switch of resources to building capacity and support, CSE has provided the following support to 18 local residents:

- Eighteen households have received phone based advice and support including:
 - Two with advice on use of heating controls
 - Nine referred to the Priority Service Register
 - One with advice and support to claim additional benefits
 - One with advice on Wessex Home Improvement Loans
 - One referred to social services to make necessary home adaptations
 - Seven referred for funded insulation works
 - One referred for a boiler upgrade
 - One with advice about solid wall insulation
 - Two given advice on Warm Homes Discount
 - Six with advice on energy tariffs and water discounts
 - One with advice on water efficiency

Marketing and promotion

The project carried out the following activity to raise awareness of the project locally:

- HEC Chard spoke to local food banks to make them aware of Warmer Chard, how to refer and the support available.
- HEC Chard spoke to local landlords to make them aware of the support available – this has led to positive engagement with a landlord following a home visit. Once the landlord had been made aware of the issues in the property they rectified them immediately.
- CSE and HEC Chard worked together to produce and distribute a 3-fold colour leaflet.
- Door to door distribution of 4,500 leaflets to areas of high fuel poverty and deprivation
- Distribution of further 500 leaflets to libraries, medical centres and Housing offices.
- Both CSE and HEC Chard have used Facebook and Twitter to market events and activities to householders in Chard. Sponsored posts allowed the project to target residents of Chard but this produced a minimal response. A more sustained period of Facebook engagement could have significantly improved reach i.e. promotion via other local Facebook groups and pages
- CSE used Search engine optimization (SEO) analytics to raise the profile of the Home Energy Team's website with people in Chard.
- HEC Chard e-newsletter promoted events, activities and gave out advice on energy efficiency.

Capacity building – supporting HEC Chard to provide local advice

Key achievements include:

- Two HEC Chard volunteers were funded to attend and booked on to City and Guilds energy advisor training.
- CSE delivered two 'Energy Awareness' training sessions for HEC Chard volunteers. HEC Chard has subsequently conducted 4 training sessions locally. This also created 4 more volunteers for HEC Chard.
- HEC Chard purchased a computer using the SSDC funding.
- CSE provided HEC Chard with 6 home visit kit packs.

Further information as requested by South Somerset District Council

Which villages/areas were leafletted and what languages were provided

4,500 leaflets were distributed by a specialised leaflet-distribution company, who charged based on address location. The villages to included Knowle St Giles, Chaffcombe, Tatworth, Cricket St Thomas, Wadeford, Combe St Nicholas and Buckland St Mary.

Leaflets were in English and were distributed as below between 31st Jan and 6th Feb 2017, and produced just 6 direct responses.

Postcode	# Leaflets
TA20 1	1000
TA20 1	700
TA20 3	550
TA20 4	850
TA20 5	450
TA20 6	550
TA20 7	600
TA20 8	300
Total	4500

Further 500 leaflets distributed by volunteers to foodbanks, libraries and outreach events, who contributed their travel costs at no charge as no budget had been allocated for leafletting.

Response from the areas – numbers from villages/areas of Chard

Warmer Chard support:

- 6 enquiries actioned from the leaflet drop into Chard TA20
- 21 enquiries actioned from Warmer Chard outreach events
- Responses/actions to help 27 households - Chard 19, Villages 8

Ethnicity/language of those helped

CSE telephone support: White British

Warmer Chard support: The language for the leaflet text is English. Ethnicity of those helped unknown as to original region/country but English is the language in which they were helped

Age of those helped

CSE telephone support: Fifteen of eighteen helped were over 65

Warmer Chard support: Of the 27 households helped: 16 pension age, 11 family age

Notes:

Decision to use leafletting was decided after the December report to make best use of remaining time. There was no budget allocation for marketing (e.g. leaflets, advertising) as it was understood that referrals would come in from CSE Helpline and CSE interaction with local community groups and from SSDC Decent Homes.

- Not specified by SSDC which are Chard's Villages but thought to be Knowle St Giles; Chaffcombe; Tatworth, Ckt St Thomas; Wadeford; Combe St Nicholas; Buckland St Mary
- No specification by SSDC of requirement to obtain age and ethnicity details so estimated as either pension or family age. Ethnicity anecdotally British.
- No specification/requirement for any other language.
- Volunteers are all only English-speaking and no project budget item was included for cost of translators/interpreters

Appendix B - Lessons Learned

From CSE Final Report

Chard is an area with high levels of deprivation and fuel poverty. For a project such as Warmer Chard to flourish the whole of the community needs to embrace the project. Building trust takes time and will require the participation of the full community over a sustained period of time. Further work is needed to ensure the full involvement of the GPs, health visitors, schools, community centres, local businesses etc. The project has begun to make the links necessary to engage the local community but the delayed start and subsequent end of the WISH project undermined the potential for delivery.

The project has identified some learning which should be useful for future projects:

- Effective delivery requires longer timescales. Due to the delay in the confirmation of funding the project had five months in which to operate. The planning of winter activity usually takes place in the summer months and activity was therefore compressed into a shorter period.
- Relating to the above point. Planning activity also requires networking with frontline workers and other community groups. The project did not have sufficient time for this.
- There has been an increase in awareness of HEC Chard which has led to greater engagement with volunteers.
- Working with landlords directly can achieve good outcomes for clients. HEC Chard spoke to a landlord following a home visit and once they'd been made aware of the issues in the property they rectified them immediately.
- HEC Chard has been able to use a range of engagement channels to speak to people face to face. These have been particularly effective e.g. stands at events, open afternoons.
- Tapping into support from other agencies is key to making sure that a householder gets all the support they need i.e. Citizen's Advice, local authority Decent Homes officers, Wessex Loans etc.
- Market rates for energy measures remain low but support is still available from energy efficiency installers and it's always worth making referrals.
- There are challenges to installing measures directly in people's homes. Additional insurance would be needed for advisors or volunteers to fit low cost measures i.e. light bulbs or draught proofing. Both HEC Chard and CSE would like to do this in the future.
- New approaches are needed for effective marketing in deprived communities. Household are regularly targeted with leaflets and flyers. A future project should use new techniques to increase engagement; however, this will cost more and would require additional funding.
- A Chard specific A4 booklet featuring the SSDC logo could be created for future marketing. This may be more effective than an A5 leaflet.
- Energy savings from householders can produce a real economic benefit to the local community i.e. householders have more to spend in the local economy.
- Involving the local press can build community interest. The involvement of a local councillor or the MP can support this as the project becomes more news worthy.