

## Chale Community Project

Green energy generation builds  
lasting change on the Isle of Wight

### Background

67 houses on the Spanners Close Housing Estate in Chale on the Isle of Wight have been updated with green energy generation technology in the last six months.

The Ellen McArthur Foundation (EMF) and Southern Housing Group (SHG) worked in partnership to secure funding from the Department of Energy and Climate (DECC) to retrofit the houses and reduce fuel poverty, and act as a blueprint for other communities. The estate comprises of social rent residents, with a mix of terraces and semi-detached properties and flats built in the 1970s, a community almost completely dependent on electricity for all their fuel needs.

Eaga won the contract to supply and fit air-source heat pumps to each home. In addition, the community benefitted from Eaga's Clean Energy Programme, which fitted 62 homes with Solar PV panels at no cost to the project. These were funded by the Feed in Tariffs (FITs) which incentivise green energy generation.

EMF has funded a further five Solar PV panels. The financial benefits of these five panels, through the FIT's programme, will be fed back into a community fund for use on further sustainability projects in the Chale community.

### The process

The project has been a joint effort between three main partners:

- Southern Housing Group – the housing association which owns and manages the estate
- Eaga – the green support services company
- The Ellen MacArthur Foundation – an independent charity working to inspire people to re-think and re-design for a sustainable future

Along with DECC, each of these partners has provided significant staff time and funding to deliver the project. This commitment has been critical to ensure the new technologies were adopted, residents were supported along the way and learning could be transferred to other projects.

The Footprint Trust, a local organisation promoting the benefits of sustainable living, is also working on the

project offering support to residents through household visits, looking at ways they can reduce their household bills through simple actions.

To support the adoption of new and very different technology, the project team established a team of 'Community Contacts'. These people were trained in how to use the Air Source Heat Pumps and what to expect from them and the Solar PV Panels.

As one project manager said:

“Perhaps the greatest single piece of learning is that projects of this type are not about the introduction of new technology. Rather it’s about the process of leading people.”

Having a local person employed and working in a small office at the entrance to the estate helped resolve resident queries as they emerged.

## Positive impact

The impact of this project could be measured four ways: Energy Efficiency, social cohesion, fuel poverty and job creation.

The installation process finished at the end of October so the evidence is currently mainly anecdotal, although energy generation data for the PV Panels indicates they are delivering to expectations.

One local resident, among the first to be fitted with an Air Source Heat Pump and Solar PV, recorded that his electricity bill for September 2010 was less than his bill for all of August and September 2009. If this were sustained it would represent the targeted 50% reduction in household bills, which would suggest a comparable reduction in carbon emissions.

Almost every resident is reporting, now the cold weather is kicking in, how he or she is able to use more rooms in their home. Gone are the days when the whole house gathered together in the one room that was kept warm.

One resident said:

“This project has also bought a lot of people out of their homes and into the community. It’s provided a great opportunity for us all to look out for each other, and will make it easier to do this in the years to come.”

For more information visit:

[www.chalecommunityproject.org](http://www.chalecommunityproject.org) [www.eaga.com](http://www.eaga.com)



In addition to these benefits eight residents were trained in understanding renewable technologies. With the increased interest in the project, its potential and the plans being developed by other Housing Associations, it is hoped that some of these people will find work in the retrofit industry.

As a direct result of this project the local community are enthusiastic about the improvements to their quality of life, already developing a ‘Phase Two’ to the project. Furthermore, two other local housing associations are developing plans to refurbish over 300 homes with a range of different renewable technologies and energy efficiency measures. Through Eaga’s Clean Energy Programme work is already starting on the installation of 1,000 Solar PV panels over the next year, on housing association properties in the Isle of Wight.

