

**Home Energy Conservation Act (1996)**

**Bracknell Forest Council Report**

**Year ending 31st March 2021**

**Name of Local Authority-** Bracknell Forest Council

**Type of Local Authority** - Unitary

**email address for enquiries:** [Energy@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Energy@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

**Headline and Overview**

Does your Local Authority have a current strategy on carbon reduction and/or energy efficiency for domestic or non-domestic properties?

Yes, contained within our over-arching strategy:

[Climate Change Strategy \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](#)

Schemes Overview	
What scheme(s) is your Local Authority planning to implement in support of energy saving/carbon reduction in residential accommodation properties in the next two years?	<p>Energy Suppliers have an obligation (ECO3) to help householders cut their energy costs with insulation and cutting carbon emissions. Local Authorities can make declarations to help their vulnerable residents on low incomes. Bracknell Forest has issued a Statement of Intent for our residents in support of the current ECO3 (referred to locally as LA-Flex or Help to Heat). The scheme offers the widest range of eligibility for residents wishing to install cavity wall or loft insulation.</p> <p>We will continue to bid for Government funding and promote any successful schemes accordingly. Any such successes will be highlighted on our web pages</p>

	<p>under Grants and Subsidies / Government funded schemes. We currently have some funding secured through Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery phase 2 (GHG LAD2). This funding can support the installation of energy efficiency measures in poor energy efficient homes (EPC rating below 'D') for residents either with a disposable household income under £30,000 (gross) or in receipt of certain means tested benefits.</p> <p>We have secured Public Health funding to promote our Warm, Safe and Well scheme. This scheme focuses on residents who have a major health issue and are living in homes in need of heating or safety improvements. Installed measures can include insulation and replacement boilers.</p> <p>We will also continue to promote our Warm Homes fund until March 2022. The scheme enables us to install affordable heating in fuel poor households who do not use mains gas for their primary source of heating.</p>
<b>Costs</b>	
What has been, or will be, the cost(s) of running and administering the scheme(s), such as the value of grants and other support made available, plus any other costs incurred (such as administration) as desired?	<p>There is one FTE officer dedicated to supporting residents' access to the various funding schemes.</p> <p>There is an annual revenue budget to cover administrative costs associated with such support. This includes items such as marketing, printing, and postage. For the financial year 21/22 this budget is £13,700.</p> <p>Government funded schemes can include an allocation towards administrative support costs. During 2020/21 our Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery phase 1A (GHG LAD 1A) funding included an administrative spend of £14,671.80.</p>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	
What businesses, charities, third sector organisations or other stakeholders do you work with to deliver the scheme(s)?	<p>We liaise with local charitable organisations to help signpost residents towards our grant funding schemes.</p> <p>We also liaise within the council across services supporting our most vulnerable residents to help directly target those who are most in need of support.</p>

	<p>We engage with private landlords and social housing organisations.</p> <p>We work with a range of national, regional and local contractors and installers in various trades to support the various schemes we are able to offer.</p> <p>We also work in tandem with energy supply companies.</p>
<b>Outcomes</b>	
<p>What has been, or will be, the outcome of the scheme(s)? These outcomes could include energy savings, carbon savings, economic impacts such as job creation and/or increased business competitiveness or societal impacts such as alleviation of fuel poverty and/or improved health outcomes etc.</p>	<p>The retrofit energy efficiency measures we were able to deliver under GHG LAD 1A during 2020/21 saved our residents an estimated £250,000 in reduced fuel bills and reduced the carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2e) emissions from the targeted homes by 114 tonnes CO2. The work completed under that scheme helped transform those living in Park homes properties in particular.</p> <p>All of the schemes that we promote and offer are targeted at improving the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating associated with each home. A SAP is a standardised measurement of the energy efficiency and CO2 emissions associated with the home. A SAP calculation indicates a score from 1 to 100+ for the annual energy cost based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The elements of structure</li> <li>• The heating and hot water system</li> <li>• The internal lighting</li> <li>• The renewable technologies used in the home.</li> </ul> <p>The higher the score the lower the running costs, with 100 representing zero energy cost. Dwellings with a rating in excess of 100 are net exporters of energy.</p> <p>Whilst we primarily target low SAP rated properties to improve their energy performance (especially those housing vulnerable residents who may be in poor health), energy efficiency upgrades on all properties help improve the overall average SAP rating for homes within the borough. Our current average SAP rating across all tenures is 67 (SAP band 'D'). Our aim is to achieve SAP of 70 (band 'C') as an average across all domestic properties in the borough within the next year. The UK government target is for every home to have a SAP of at least 70 by 2030.</p>

	The scale of government funding promised over the coming years suggests there will be increased opportunities to further improve the energy efficiency of many more of the borough's least efficient dwellings. This should help lift more residents out of fuel poverty but also provide an economic boost for local contractors seeking to increase and upskill their workforces to help deliver the household improvements.
<b>Communications</b>	
Does your Local Authority provide any advisory services to customers on how to save energy? • If yes, please briefly outline how this is undertaken.	Yes, we have dedicated sections within our <a href="https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/energy-efficiency-in-the-home">Energy efficiency in the home   Bracknell Forest Council (bracknell-forest.gov.uk)</a> web pages that act in an advisory capacity. These include advice and guidance for residents considering switching their energy supplier; sign posters to the various energy efficiency schemes that we offer; home energy efficiency tips and guides to current and emerging renewable energy technologies.
How do you communicate or encourage energy saving amongst domestic consumers and/or local businesses?	Electronically through social media posts, press releases and/or website messaging. We target market to selected homes based on alligning information we hold on our property database against eligibility criteria associated with the current funding schemes we have available. We also promote articles via the borough's newspaper (Town & Country).
<b>Local Green Supply Chain</b>	
Have you made any assessment, or undertaken any analysis of the existing capacity in your local energy efficiency retrofit supply chain to support the decarbonisation of buildings by 2050? If Yes, please summarise the outcomes.	No, we have not undertaken any formal assessment but we do discuss capacity issues with a number of existing installers to better understand their capacity for work.
What actions are you taking, if any, to upskill and/or grow the local energy efficiency installer supply chain? This could include the facilitation of training, and local installer networking opportunities.	We haven't taken any direct action on these aspects beyond enlisting our Energy Sustainability Officer to train as a Retrofit Coordinator.
What actions are you taking, if any, to promote energy efficiency and the installer supply chain to consumers, and encourage	We routinely distribute letters notifying residents of our Statement of Intent (LA-Flex) scheme.

households to consider energy retrofit? If no action is taking place in either of these two areas, please let us know of any barriers you have encountered.	<p>We signpost any residents who make direct enquiries to ourselves towards Trustmark accredited installers.</p> <p>As an authority we have current planning requirements in place with regards lowering carbon emissions and installing on-site renewable energy generation within new residential developments.</p>
How effectively is your LA able to engage (Trustmark/PAS2035/PAS2030 certified) installers?	We have a number of Trustmark/PAS2035/PAS2030 registered installers certified locally and have not had any issues in engaging a sufficient number.
Do you have any plans to develop policies or initiatives in this space over the next five years as part of supporting your local decarbonisation efforts?	We have an emerging Local Plan awaiting adoption (expected 2022) which will set zero carbon standards for all new builds through the reduction of carbon emissions and increased energy efficiencies supported by low carbon technologies. This will help support our local authority target to reach new zero emissions by 2050.
<b>Social Housing</b>	
What action, if any, has your LA taken to install energy efficiency or low carbon heat measures in social housing?	We have a very low social housing stock and low carbon heat solutions are currently not suitable for these handful of properties. We do offer support and advice to the borough's largest social housing provider to help them assess what could be achieved.
Have these been installed to a satisfactory quality? What actions (if any) have your social housing partners taken?	Our largest social housing provider intends to place a bid for phase 1 funding with the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) in the next year.
Do you have easy access to the information/knowledge within your organisation that you would expect to need for social housing retrofit projects? (e.g. stock condition; property data; approach to procurement; alignment with existing internal maintenance/upgrade plans; tenant engagement and management plans; costings)	The details we hold on our in-house property database refer to all housing tenures. We therefore liaise directly with our largest housing provider on SAP ratings and recommendations of works to improve their lowest banded properties. In return they update us with the details of any completed retrofit works they complete themselves so that we may update our database accordingly.
If no, would it be easy/difficult to obtain this information?	N/a
Have you experienced any challenges to retrofit, including during any previous	N/a

government schemes you have taken part in (e.g. supply chain, funding, tenant cooperation, mixed tenure, split incentive, policy clarity, etc)? Please provide some detail. Have social housing partners reported any challenges to retrofit?	
How does your LA currently/how will your LA in future plan to go about identifying suitable housing stock and measures for retrofit?	We continue to monitor and update our in-house property database. We liaise with our colleagues in Housing with regards ensuring the data we hold on our limited stock is up to date. We review the funding streams, eligibility criteria and renewable technologies that are available to determine whether any of our stock could benefit from retrofit measures.
How do social housing partners identify suitable stock? By the same measures or via a different method?	<p>The Housing Association's within the borough may identify their poorest energy efficient dwellings either by consulting with ourselves for details on our in-house database or by utilising other data sources such as the open EPC register.</p> <p>Our largest social housing provider plans to undertake a full property portfolio assessment during 2022/23.</p>
What considerations would make you more or less likely to apply for government funding? If known, what is the opinion of your social housing partners?	Simplicity is the key. It is right to target the least energy efficient properties (E, F and G), but the ambition should be to improve each as much as possible rather than the government setting an average maximum spend per property. Current average maximum spend limits have proved insufficient for 'fabric first' measures such as external wall insulation. With additional Trustmark certification requirements being added to future funding schemes it will become increasingly difficult to deliver suitable retrofit measures within allowed spend limits.
To what extent are social housing tenants willing or unwilling to undergo retrofit, and what are the barriers and facilitators to their participation? If known, is this the same opinion across all social housing tenants or is it different with HA and ALMO tenants?	Unknown.
Does the approach to retrofit change for leaseholders in mixed tenure blocks?	Unknown.
What encourages them to co-operate?	N/a
<b>Domestic Private Rented Sector (PRS) Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards</b>	

Is your authority aware of the PRS Minimum Efficiency Standards regulations requiring private rentals in England and Wales to meet a minimum energy performance rating of EPC Band E as of April 2020, unless a valid exemption applies?	Yes we are.
Which team within your authority is responsible for, leading on enforcement of the PRS minimum standard? Please provide the contact details of the person leading this team	The Public Protection Partnership (PPP) – a shared service (Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing) covering Bracknell, West Berks and Wokingham councils. <a href="mailto:tsadvice@westberks.gov.uk">tsadvice@westberks.gov.uk</a>
What method or methods does your authority use to communicate with landlords and tenants about the standards and other related issues?	Various methods – the PPP promotes awareness through its own web pages <a href="https://www.publicprotectionpartnership.org.uk">Housing standards - PPP (publicprotectionpartnership.org.uk)</a> They carried out their own targeted inspections with landlords of a selection of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in March 2020 and found them to be compliant.
What barriers, if any, does your local authority face enforcing these regulations (e.g. identifying non-compliant properties/landlords, budgeting/resourcing, any legal issues)?	Resourcing has been an issue for a number of years but the PPP now have a dedicated team of officers working on housing issues.  Much of the proactive HMO work planned for 2020 and 2021 has been postponed due to Covid; this should be picked up again next year.
Do you directly target landlords of EPC F and G rated properties to enforce these regulations? If yes, how? If no, please explain.	Under a business as usual approach a random selection of landlords are contacted to discuss the requirement and assess their compliance. The PPP has previously found 100% compliance from the premises targeted.
<b>Financial Support for Energy Efficiency</b>	Please set out your answers to the following questions by tenure (owner occupied, privately rented, or social housing)
What financial programmes, if any, do you have to promote domestic energy efficiency or energy saving? If applicable please outline the budget (and % of the budget that is used), where such funding is sourced and where it is targeted.	Aside from government funded schemes and the ECO3 initiative which are covered separately below we have participated in the Warm Homes fund. This scheme was funded by the National Grid and the council were one of 5 local authorities offering it. The collective budget allocation (for all 5 authorities) was £1.4M which runs until March 2022. It enables us to install affordable heating in any tenure of fuel poor households who do not use mains gas for their primary source of heating.

	<p>Furthermore we received a Public Health funded budget allocation of £108,000 for 20/21 and 21/22 to support our Warm, Safe and Well scheme. This scheme focuses on residents who have a major health issue and are living in homes in need of heating or safety improvements. Again this is open to all tenures. At the end of 20/21 just 20% had been spent owing to COVID-19 issues.</p> <p>We also offer Flexible Home Improvement Loans (FHIL) to home-owners over the age of 60 to help improve the safety and comfort or energy efficiency of their homes. There is no specific budget allocation for this scheme.</p>
What future investment for energy efficiency or low carbon heat measures do you have planned, and when are these investments planned for?	We intend to bid for any future BEIS (government) funding announcements.
<b>Fuel Poverty</b>	
Does your Local Authority have a Fuel Poverty Strategy?	No.
What steps have you taken to identify residents/properties in fuel poverty?	<p>Based on (2019) Government data we only have 5.3 % homes recognised as living in Fuel poverty (one of the lowest rates in the country). Our in-house property database helps us identify the least energy efficiency dwellings. We actively manage updates to the database and at the end of 20/21 had energy efficiency information for 48,256 homes (93% of all homes in the borough).</p> <p>We work with colleagues within the council to identify families with low incomes to whom we can target market availability of schemes to help alleviate fuel poverty.</p>
What blockers, if any, have there been in identifying households in fuel poverty?	Data protection requirements can sometimes act as a blocker. We may struggle to identify all eligible households.
How does fuel poverty interlink with your local authority's overall Carbon Reduction Strategy	<p>It doesn't specifically interlink beyond the stated ambitions within both our climate change strategy and our council plan to support our most vulnerable, low income families.</p> <p>Our climate change strategy is supported by an accompanying action plan which details work schemes connected with reducing carbon. All of our domestic housing initiatives are listed within that action plan.</p>



Please highlight any fuel poverty issues specific to your area.	<p>There will always be those residents who do not wish to engage with us. These can include older residents, those whose first language may not be English and those who simply aren't interested.</p> <p>In addition, we have over 1,000 Park Homes in the borough (over 2% of our total dwellings). These are typically energy inefficient constructions but as we understand it, current proposed eligibility criteria for future government funding seems to make it harder for us to support retrofit measures in such properties. The new Trustmark regulations eliminate Park Homes as their lofts cannot be insulated.</p>
What measures or initiatives have you taken to promote fuel cost reduction for those in fuel poverty? Include information on partnerships with local businesses or energy providers you have.	<p>We have highlighted behavioural changes to help reduce heat consumption both via our web pages and through media messaging.</p> <p>We also highlight an energy supplier switching tool on our web site.</p>
<b>Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery</b>	Of the £2bn Green Homes Grant scheme introduced in summer 2020, £500m was assigned for Local Authority Delivery (LAD). LAD enables Local Authorities to bid for grant funding to support low income households in their area with energy efficiency and low carbon heating upgrades. £200m was made available through Local Authority grant competitions in 2020, known as phases 1A and 1B and £300m was allocated under Phase 2 between the five regional Local Energy Hubs.
Has your Local Authority Participated in GHG: LAD? If yes, please indicate which phase you participated in and briefly outline the project.	<p>We received £900,000 via GHG LAD 1A and delivered 127 energy efficiency measures to 87 homes.</p> <p>We were unsuccessful with a bid for GHG LAD 1B.</p> <p>We received an allocation of £227,000 via GHG LAD 2. We are currently waiting to hear who our Managing Agent for delivery of these projects will be.</p>
If no, please indicate what barriers prevented you from participation in the scheme.	N/A
Would your Local Authority be in a position to manage the delivery of upgrades through a scheme such as LAD in 2022?	Yes

If yes, please indicate the anticipated number of homes that could be upgraded per year.	Capacity is always dependant on the scale of funding secured, but based on our successes with GHG LAD 1A we would estimate being able to upgrade 100-150 homes per year.
If no, please indicate what barriers would prevent you from delivering upgrades in your area.	N/A
<b>The Energy Company Obligation (ECO)</b>	The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is an obligation on energy suppliers aimed at helping households cut their energy bills and reduce carbon emissions by installing energy saving measures. Following the Spring 2018 consultation, the Government set out in its response that ECO3 will fully focus on Affordable Warmth – low income, vulnerable and fuel poor households. The ECO “Local Authority flexible eligibility” (LA Flex) programme allows LAs to make declarations determining that certain households in fuel poverty or with occupants on low incomes and vulnerable to the effects of cold homes, are referred to ECO obligated suppliers for support under the Affordable Warmth element of ECO. LAs involved in the LA Flex programme are required to issue a Statement of Intent that they are going to identify households as eligible, and the criteria they are going to use; and a declaration that the LA has been consulted on the installation of measures in a home.
Has your local authority published a Statement of Intent (Sol) for ECO flexibility eligibility? (Y/N)	Yes
Please answer the following questions to help us to understand LA Flex delivery in more detail: How many declarations were issued for low income vulnerable households?	1,054
How many declarations were issued for Fuel Poor households?	69
How many declarations were issued for in-fill?	None
What is the highest income cap published in your Sol?	£35,000
If you have used an income over £30k gross, what reason have you given	Higher housing and living costs in the south-east England region.

Do you charge for declarations to be signed?	Not at present
If so, please state how much?	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Smart Metering</b>	
Please provide a brief statement outlining your current or planned approach to promote smart meter take up and supporting residents to achieve benefits.	We do not actively promote smart meters beyond an awareness / information item on our web pages.
Please provide further information on activities relating to smart metering, including but not limited to:	
a. Integrating approaches to delivering energy efficiency improvements in residential accommodation	No specific integrated approach
b. Arranging for smart meters to be installed by energy suppliers in vacant social housing premises.	We do not actively promote this as we have very few council-owned social housing properties.
c. Using social landlords to promote smart meter uptake	We do not actively promote such activity.
d. Including smart meters in landlord licencing schemes	We do not have a landlord's licensing scheme.
e. Supporting residents who have had appliances condemned for safety reasons	Whilst we can offer advice and assistance regarding replacing items such as gas boilers any (financial) assistance we can provide always depends on the individual's situation. <i>Note: this advice/assistance is not directly linked to specific smart metering</i>
f. Other supporting activities	
<b>Future Schemes and Wider Incentives</b>	
Please outline any further schemes or wider initiatives not covered above that your local authority has carried out or is planning to undertake to improve energy efficiency in residential accommodation.	We will be bidding for any future funding to support energy efficiency improvements. This will include GHG LAD 3 (Sustainable Warmth) and the Home Upgrade Grant, plus the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund from the Government plus further redress funding from utility suppliers. We are currently training a Retrofit Co-ordinator to better understand how the new Trustmark standards will be applied.

	<p>Our ambition is to achieve SAP Band C (69) as an average rating across the borough by the end of 21/22, through a combination of continuing to deliver measures and grants that we are currently engaged with such as: Statement of Intent, LAD bid 2, Warm homes Grant and the Warm, Safe And Well scheme. The on-going combination of these works enables us to help a range of occupants in a positive way to reduce their energy costs and to improve our average SAP ratings.</p> <p>Our in-house database holds data on 93% of properties across the borough and is the key to driving up our SAP ratings. It helps us identify the least energy efficient properties enabling us to target these for the range of grants we can offer. We currently have an average SAP band rating of 'D' (67). The database is updated with improvements both from our largest housing provider (over 1,656 this last year) and ourselves. Our 21/22 ambition is to continue to improve our property stock knowledge to over 96% of all properties.</p> <p>The new emerging Local Plan will focus on renewable and low carbon energy options for new housing to be built from 2023, improving on the current policy of 20% on- site renewable energy requirement. The new plan may provide funding streams from the developers if they are unable to meet the new zero carbon targets. It is hoped these funds can then be used to improve the lowest SAP rated, worst performing energy properties subject to the owner's agreement.</p> <p>The Local plan details all major new build residential developments should be net zero carbon for emissions. If the developer demonstrates that this is not viable, a minimum of a 35% improvement in emissions is required plus a financial contribution to offset remaining carbon emissions to zero.</p> <p>Minor new build residential developments should be built to a level of minimum 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate, as defined in Part L the 2013 Building Regulations. An Energy Statement submitted in support of an application needs to set out how the development will comply with the carbon reduction requirements and how emissions will be monitored effectively to ensure compliance continues.</p>
--	--

