

## **9th November - Warm Up Bristol review with Bristol Energy Network member groups**

### **Bristol City Council (BCC) and Bristol Energy Network (BEN) Member Groups -**

Present: Mareike Schmidt (BCC), David Tudgey (Easton Energy Group - BEN), Zoe Banks (Easton Energy Group - BEN), Dan Weisselberg (Bristol Green Doors - BEN), Roger Sabido (Ambition Lawrence Weston - BEN), Susan Nicholls (Bishopston, Cotham, Redland Energy Group - BEN), Simon Hobeck (Totterdown Energy Group - BEN)

#### **1. What has happened with Warm Up Bristol and what is Bristol City Council doing now?**

Bristol City Council (BCC) apologises for the situation with Warm Up Bristol.

Following the collapse of Warm Up Bristol the council are now managing the scheme in-house. The Mayor has taken the decision to protect the deposits of residents and step in between Climate Energy and installers to take on the role as coordinator for the programme. Stepping into the role, BCC has set up processes to work with installers. BCC priority has been to ensure, firstly, that the works that have been started but not completed are safe and secure, complying with health and safety requirements; and then, that all outstanding works are completed by Christmas, with priority being given to householders who are elderly, disabled, or with children.

There are ~380 outstanding customers who have works that have been started but not completed. These BCC will aim to have completed by Christmas. To complete this work, BCC currently have 14 installers still working with them, from those who were on the scheme previously with Warm Up Bristol, (around half are local installers). They do not plan to start new work until January 2016, (there are 1300 customers overall including those that have works in progress), and planning for new sales is not contemplated until then. Further planning needs to be done for new sales, how to roll this out for the whole city while controlling costs, including how to recruit installers. (BCC's "scorecard" process for appointing installers does not work here.)

In the original scheme BCC placed itself between its partners Climate Energy (CE) and Bristol Energy Network (BEN), with its member groups, with regards to responding to customers' experience and realizes it relied too much on CE feedback. The gap was huge between what CE reported and that BEN members groups reported, and BCC had felt the balance was somewhere between the two.

Currently BCC have sent letters to all residents that have signed a deposit and asked residents to return the documents.

BCC are not taking on any liabilities for previous works. BCC currently have a staff of seven available for this task, and are recruiting 10 more, (advertising posts on LinkedIn by requesting CVs plus a cover letter, only). With these additional staff, the team will be organised to support customers, with 3 "Clerks of Work", or installation Project Managers, assigned to the Green Deal Communities areas Horfield, Totterdown, and Easton. The plan is to have a team of 18 BCC staff working closer together to avoid a repeat of the CE mistakes. The focus will be on customer care and good quality installations. There is no retrofit guide adopted for work to be planned and inspected against, but one will be drawn up. Training will then be available to installers, and could be extended to training being given in Romanian and Polish, and the intention is to institute a "Bristol Kite Mark" for

installations. Installations will be managed by Martin Crandon (previously CE), and one person responsible for customer service. There will be two full time customer service telephone staff.

BCC feel they need a process to manage a client's (householder's), expectation of an installation and what it can be expected to achieve. Without this BCC is vulnerable and the process is needed to limit this vulnerability.

BCC would like community groups to support the above, especially by operating a mediation process for the existing customers to resolve issues outstanding over the work - resolving disputes and identifying vulnerable clients.

#### BEN member's response:

The conditions under which installers are recruited to the jobs, and the conditions under which labour is employed will have a strong influence on the quality achieved and the behaviour of the sub-contractors. Stably employed local sub-contractors are far more likely to take responsibility for the manner and quality of the installation and have a much greater investment in the continued success of the project. BCC are in an immensely powerful position to influence these issues through the contract they use to recruit installers.

BEN expressed concerns that customers may have been missed due to complexity of the forms sent out to residents and that follow up events need to happen in each of the areas to follow up previous consultation. The complexity of the form has the potential to be particularly difficult for vulnerable householders.

We see a potential role in supporting customers in the wards where there are community groups, i.e. Totterdown and Easton. Easton Energy Group has now expressed interest in the clerk of works role to support customers.

Concerns were raised that quality could be compromised by trying to complete all works by Christmas and that it is better to complete all outstanding works to a high standard before considering relaunching the scheme.

#### What are the next steps?

1. Process to be reviewed prior to relaunch. E.g. To include a sign off by a council officer / installer and householder, with potential role for community groups to support the customer?
2. Bristol City Council are launching Bristol Best Practice guidance to act as the guide for future works with the planned launch of a Bristol Kite Mark
3. Installers to go through specific training which would also be provided in Romanian and Polish to ensure that it was implemented correctly within firms employing tradesman from these countries.
4. BCC aim to relaunch the scheme in January next year - community groups will be invited to be part of this re-launch.
5. BCC to run monthly contractors and installers update meetings

- a. at which BEN could be present. These could establish a mechanism for feedback. Consecutive sessions on renewables and energy efficiency could be run.
- b. MS to produce a digestible update and send to BEN for feedback. This update will then be published and shared by all.

## 2. General discussion on the Warm up Bristol scheme

### BEN members responses:

1. We are pleased to see that BCC intends to continue the scheme into next year however are cautious about re-launching without ensuring first that existing customers have been dealt with.
2. It is in all our interests to see that all customers have a positive experience in contrast to what was experienced by so many before.
3. Bristol Energy Network members would be keen to influence the kitemark going forwards and suggest sharing the document for comment.
4. Currently community groups have received no referral fees and have no information to be able to invoice for the numbers who have used a referral code. Groups did not receive any information from BCC or Climate Energy throughout the scheme despite asking throughout.
  - a. How can we get the information?
  - b. How can we get remunerated for the work done?
5. Going forwards in future partnerships with BCC, community groups would like a different structure to the referral fee as this did not properly recognise the role played by communities which need resources to undertake the activities.
6. Community groups to input into relaunch of the Warm Up Bristol campaign provided that BCC have ensured that the outstanding works have been completed to a satisfactory standard.
7. Installers best practice - previously issues with installers were raised with BCC such as how workers for the scheme were being treated, hours they worked etc.

### Agreed Actions

1. To have a follow up with community consultations in Easton, Horfield and Totterdown to ensure residents understood the forms and are supported.
2. Mareike to review
  - a. extending the contract with Easton Energy Group at the show home to support local residents;
  - b. and to review how BCC can fund works carried out by community groups e.g. attending meetings, supporting residents etc., given the commitment being required.
3. Need to look at how to ensure all customers have been reached who have a contract with Climate Energy.
4. Regular monthly meetings with BCC and community groups - next to be scheduled in December - minute taker from BCC to produce and circulate after the meeting. (Suggested Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday).
5. Mareike to find out how many referrals community groups have had on their own