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# Sale of the century for home micros in Harrow

Harrow Council is offering its residents wind turbine and solar panel installations for just £500.

Homes in the north London borough are being checked for suitability after a small local advertisement drew 425 expressions of interest in the Heating Harrow Greener Scheme.

The solar thermal and micro-wind systems will be subsidised by Low Carbon Buildings Programme grants and a £250,000 council fund.

The scheme will run on a rolling basis until 2008-09 and aims to complete at least 50 installations a year.

Southern Electric Contracting, part of Scottish and Southern Energy, is supplying the units and project managing the scheme while London-based heating and electrical installer Dawsetway carries out the surveys and installations.

The two micro units are the 1.5kW Swift turbine, manufactured by Renewable Devices, and the AES solar panel.

The £250,000 fund will be used to promote the offer and pay for a project officer. The remaining money will be used to ensure the £500 price.

All private sector homes in the borough are eligible. Owner-occupiers can apply directly and tenants through their landlords.

The Heating Harrow

Greener Scheme team is working with the council's planning department to fast-track the installations as permitted developments, with an initial aim of 50 installations by March next year.

The department completed a new guidance document on solar and small wind in November.

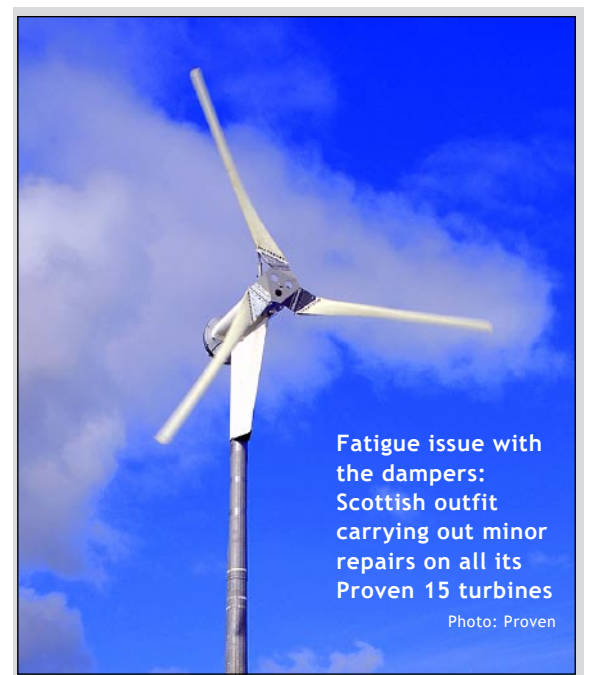
It lays out in what circumstances solar and wind turbines are permitted developments in the borough and sets out how householders can obtain permission.

Harrow Council has committed to reduce its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 31% by 2011, from a 1995 base, by taking part in the Home Energy Conservation Association.

The council decided to move towards renewables after figures showed that an emissions reduction of just 12.9% had been achieved by March 2005.

Meanwhile, the council is reviewing its planning policies for new developments with the aim of having a 20% on-site renewable energy rule in place by June next year. Current guidance simply encourages the use of micros.

Harrow Council has already installed a wind turbine and solar thermal panels to improve the carbon footprint and energy efficiency of its own estate.



**Fatigue issue with the dampers: Scottish outfit carrying out minor repairs on all its Proven 15 turbines**  
Photo: Proven

## Proven 15 turbine on hold as manufacturer fixes fault

A technical fault with the Proven 15 wind turbine has led to a temporary shutdown of all the installations of the model across Britain.

Scottish manufacturer Proven said that the halt was motivated by safety concerns and that a minor repair on each turbine would take but a few hours to complete.

This programme is currently being carried out and Proven is working on the necessary design changes. At present the company has an estimated 30 operational pre-production models of the 15kW capacity machine.

The problem is understood to be a fatigue issue with the dampers, the mechanism

that makes the blades turn away from the wind as it gets stronger.

The Proven 15 is still on target for a full launch early next year. Proven's Windcrofting scheme, which will see the model installed under a variety of merchant wind arrangements, will not be affected by the fault, the company said.

The 5000-turbine project is planned to be launched in the second quarter in 2007 and will take up a large proportion of Proven's production capacity next year.

One source said: "I have been installing wind turbines for a long time. Proven is not alone in having difficulty in bringing out new turbines. They'll work it out."

# Micro technologies face exams to get into Elephant & Castle

Southwark Council's regeneration team is planning to test Proven 6kW and Quiet Revolution 6kW wind turbines to help developers in the zero carbon Elephant & Castle programme meet stringent energy standards.

The team is providing bidders with estimated costings and carbon abatements for separate renewable technologies. The Proven and Quiet Revolution trials will add to that data.

Modelling of solar irradiation under the future sitings of the new buildings is also underway to discover how rooftop panels and solar glazing can contribute to on-site targets.

The move towards small-scale energy will help developers cope with the double requirement of a zero net carbon increase for the overall development and the Mayor of London's on-site renewable rule, which will be up to 10% or 20% when construction begins in 2010.

Each plot developer will decide on a mix of building-mounted electrical renewables that are "CHP compliant". Every site will have to plug into a planned CHP system with an expected capacity in the region of 6MW of electricity and 10MW of heat.

The district energy network will be the most significant contributor to carbon neutrality, even when initially gas fired, and will count towards the mayor's on-site renewables requirements



## Ecopod puts Londoners in the picture

Southwark Council has launched a futuristic renewable energy information centre (above) that will update passersby about the borough's regeneration projects. The 'Ecopod' is a recycled shipping container fitted with sustainable timber, created by engineering

studio XCO2. It is heated with a woodpellet boiler while PV panels power electronic displays about projects in the London borough.

The centre received European funding to promote the Cross River Tram, linking north and south London, which Southwark Council

strongly supports. The Ecopod is currently situated outside Fusion Leisure Centre, near the Elephant & Castle roundabout.

Excess electricity will be sold to the grid and there is scope to connect it to two small wind turbines.

Photo: Southwark Council

if it switches to a different fuel.

This could be biomass as supply chains spring up in the capital or fuel cells or other new technologies as they emerge. If the switch to renewables is made the development could become 'carbon negative'.

The CHP plant is set to be commissioned when the first major

plot development is completed in 2010.

A Southwark regeneration team member said: "We are anticipating that a renewables contribution will be made by having embedded renewables supplying energy as part of the district system."

A multi-utility services company that is now at the bidding stage will supply energy from

the CHP plant along with broadband and sustainably abstracted non-potable water.

Southwark Council has narrowed down the process to 14 participants, which will be asked to form consortia and submit their bids to provide the utility services in spring of next year.

A borehole will provide the water for the development and there are also plans to provide renewable cooling for the commercial core and potentially the London Underground service.

The 170-acre regeneration project will see the building of 5300 new homes and more than 1 million square feet of retail, leisure and office space. The overall aim is to achieve a 270% increase in floor space without increasing carbon emissions.

## SUSTAINABILITY AIMS

- Zero carbon growth: no increase in carbon emissions by the time the development is completed.
- Carbon negativity: reduce carbon emissions below current levels in the long term.
- Carbon emissions from total energy needs of the completed development reduced by at least 10% by on-site generation by renewable energy.
- 20% reduction in consumption of potable water and 100% of non-potable demand met by sustainably abstracted groundwater.
- Waste separation at source and automated waste collection by vacuum system.
- High-speed fibre-optic data connection to every address.

## Briefs

- The London Development Agency is looking for energy consultants as it sets up a giant framework agreement for buying expert knowledge.

A two-year agreement with up to 75 participants is designed to help the agency deliver its programme in line with its sustainable procurement policy.

The specialist consultancy panel will include those with experience in the fields of sustainable communities, sustainable energy, climate change and use of low carbon technologies among a range of other areas of regeneration expertise.

- The government published the GLA Bill proposing an enhanced package of powers for the Mayor of London and London Assembly on 29 November.

The bill brings forward legislation to implement many of the outcomes of the review of the mayor and Assembly's powers, announced in July.

It proposes increased devolved powers in areas of planning and housing and puts a duty on the mayor to tackle climate change. The bill in full is available at:

[www.communities.gov.uk/glapowers](http://www.communities.gov.uk/glapowers)

- The London Development Agency and consultancy Atkins have launched LESS, the London Environmental Support Service, to help small to medium-size businesses go green.

More information can be found at:

[www.less-online.com](http://www.less-online.com)

# Whitehall ekes out LCBP householder kitty with monthly cap on payouts

Monthly caps have been applied to householder Stream 1 Low Carbon Buildings Programme grants to cope with high levels of demand.

The Department of Trade and Industry, which funds the programme, is also holding discussions to see if grant levels for each technology need to be reduced to make the money stretch to June 2008.

The total fund available has been increased to £12.7 million by a recent re-allocation from other funding streams.

Officials said the cap of £500,000 a month is being applied with immediate effect to make sure the household sector is supported with grants until "wider measures to promote

• The successful bidders in Phase 2 of the £50 million Low Carbon Buildings Programme have been selected.

The DTI declined to name the companies participating in the framework agreement on the grounds that unsuccessful bidders still have time to raise objections.

All bidders, successful or not, have now been informed. The official announcement is expected around mid-December.

microgeneration take hold" in the summer of 2008.

Under the new system, unsuccessful applications will be asked to resubmit for the following month.

It has yet to be decided how to deal with unsuccessful applications if grant sizes are reduced before an application is resubmitted.

Meanwhile, all non-completed applications for Stream 1 community

grants will be moved to Phase 2 of the LCBP, the £50 million framework agreement for public and not-for-profit organisations.

Already awarded community grants will, however, be treated as per agreed conditions.

This move was designed to free up further funds for households. More information will appear soon on a dedicated website.

[www.lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk](http://www.lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk)

# BWEA mulls ditching micro-wind

The British Wind Energy Association is considering whether to continue representing the small wind sector in the wake of abandoned merger talks with the Renewable Energy Association.

BWEA chairman Chris Shears confirmed the group is looking at the issue. "The most important thing is how micro-renewables, including micro-wind, is best represented," he said.

Shears argued that issues affecting micro-wind might be more closely aligned to those affecting other small-scale technologies such as solar PV and solar thermal rather than

industrial scale wind power development.

He said the BWEA currently has one member of staff working half time on micro-wind. "It is a sector that needs strong and effective



representation," Shears said.

The BWEA will discuss its options at a meeting in mid-December but a decision will probably not be made until the first quarter of 2007.

REA chief executive Philip Wolfe said his association already covers micro-wind in its

REAL assurance scheme and is happy to represent the sector.

One small wind turbine manufacturer said BWEA would lose part of its heritage if it dropped micro-wind.

"It would be sad and regrettable. The BWEA in its early days in the 1970s was made up of nascent small wind manufacturers, academics and what you might call the industrialists.

"At the same time, it would not surprise me if it did happen. It has been a problem for them; not all of the BWEA's own making but partly because they took their eye off the ball," he said.

# Northern Ireland halfway through home grants pot

Nearly half of the money for the Household Programme offering renewable installations for homes in Northern Ireland has been pledged.

Director of Energy at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment Jenny Pyper said: "DETI has already committed just over £3.1 million of grant aid to allow 1210 private householders to install a range of renewable energy systems.

"It is our aim to have up to 4000 homes in Northern Ireland with renewable energy

technologies installed by 2008."

The scheme was launched in July as part of the £59.2 million Environment and Renewable Energy Fund.

Meanwhile, Action Renewables has been formally re-appointed to carry on delivering the scheme.

The DETI and Veridian group joint venture had previously handled the grant applications with a helping hand from the Energy Saving Trust and the Northern Ireland Energy Agency, pending the full tendering process.

## Biomass briefs

• Highlands and Islands Enterprise has pledged a £5.5 million grant towards wood pellet giant Balcas' plans to construct a £24 million CHP plant in northern Scotland that will sell electricity to the grid and manufacture wood pellets.

Northern Ireland-based Balcas expects to employ around 40 people at the planned facility at the former Alcan smelter site in Invergordon, north of Inverness.

Construction is set to start next year and there is likely to be an opportunity for local homes and businesses to connect up to heat and hot water supplies.

• The £7.5 million Scottish Biomass Support Scheme opened for expressions of interest late last month. The scheme was unveiled earlier this year and will run through to 2008, providing public and private organisations

with grants of up to £400,000 to achieve a strategic transformation of the market.

• Sustainable Energy Ireland has appointed consultancy Byrne Ó Cléirigh to help it develop an Esco arrangement for the Dundalk Sustainability Zone's biomass district heating and 1.8MW wind turbine.

A report will outline full costings of the renewables scheme, including a calculation of the level of subsidy likely to be required by the Esco.

• Bradford Council's executive committee is meeting this week to approve additional funding for the refurbishment of Grade II listed Keighley library. Plans include the retrofitting of solar panels and the installation of a biomass boiler.

# Hefty bill for retrofit company after trade descriptions case

Making false claims about solar thermal products has cost a retrofit company a total of £67,000 in fines and prosecution costs.

Bournemouth Crown Court late last month ordered Simplee Solar Ltd, based on the Ferndown Industrial Estate in Wimborne, Dorset, to pay £40,000 in fines and £27,000 in costs after finding the company guilty of seven offences under the Trade Descriptions Act 1968.

The successful prosecution was brought by Dorset County Council's Trading Standards Service after a number of complaints.

The company had supplied one solar hot water system to a Dorset

consumer with a promotional flyer falsely claiming that up to 70% could be knocked off total energy bills.

It also claimed the product could support a household central heating system.

The flyer, sent to the consumer in July or August 2004, read: "Question: Can I save money on my energy bills? Answer: Yes, up to 70% of your total energy bills."

It also stated: "Question: Can solar heat my central heating system? Answer: Yes, with a Simplee Solar System'."

These statements were found to be false or misleading and constituted breaches of the act. A further five

offences were committed in January to September 2005 when mail shots were sent to consumers in Dorset, Devon and Bournemouth.

The letter advertised the Simplee Solar system and stated: "You could save up to 40% on your total energy bill."

This statement was also found to be false by the court.

Dorset County Council head of regulatory services Bill Jaggs said: "Claims about potential financial savings and the performance of a system heavily influence decisions to buy a solar panel system, which may cost at least several thousand pounds.

"Consumers have a legal right to expect claims made by

businesses about their products and services are not misleading.

"The solar energy industry is a booming modern market and it is unacceptable to have it undermined by firms trading unfairly."

He added that the Trading Standards Service will continue to challenge claims made by solar businesses in order to protect customers.

Aggressive marketing is estimated to make up more than half the solar thermal retrofit market, but the number of companies breaching trade descriptions law is unknown.

The case is understood to be one of the first successful prosecutions of its kind.

## Briefs

- Solarcentury has added Derry Newman, former managing director of Sony UK, and Alan South, former head of design consultancy IDEO Europe, to its senior management team. Newman joins as chief operating officer and South as chief innovation officer.

Chief executive Jeremy Leggett said: "To have the commitment of two senior industry executives adds considerable weight behind the photovoltaic industry."

- Preliminary work on the GLA building's solar system is underway and the installation phase is expected to commence in the New Year.

Installer Solar Technologies is awaiting landlord approval to start work on its 50kW rooftop PV and 14kW of solar glass panels for the London Assembly building.

- Global solar power generation will increase by 25% in 2007, according to investment management company BlackRock's report 'New Energy Technologies – moving into the mainstream'.

The study is bullish about the global low carbon sector from an investor's viewpoint but warns of a high correlation with volatile oil prices.

- Shell and Saint-Gobain have set up a joint venture called Avancis to develop and manufacture next generation thin-film technology. The initial annual capacity of a new plant, expected to be in northern Germany, is planned be 20MW of solar panels based on so-called CIS technology.

## News round-up

- The Carbon Trust has launched a new initiative aimed at reducing emissions arising from business supply chains.

The organisation will help businesses identify the footprint of their different products following in-house research that shows that 66% of consumers want to know how carbon friendly are their goods and services.

Pilot projects with Walkers and Trinity Mirror have already identified potential annual savings for the two businesses of £2.7 million and 28,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

- EDF Energy has launched its 'Energy Efficiency Toolkit', a

practical guide designed to help businesses understand, identify and implement strategies to save energy in office or commercial properties.

The energy supplier estimates that UK businesses can make energy savings of up to 20% without the need to make new investments.

In the summer, EDF Energy supported a programme with Canary Wharf Group plc, which saved the equivalent of nearly 30,000kWh of energy over one weekend.

- The Co-operative Bank's annual Ethical Consumerism Report showed that in 2005 the sector was worth £29.3 billion, for the first time overtaking the retail market for tobacco and

alcohol, which stood at £28.0 billion.

Green home expenditure, which incorporates energy efficient electrical appliances, green mortgage repayments, small renewables and green energy was up from £3.8 billion to £4.1 billion.

- Some 30% of Cornish businesses plan to generate their own energy in future, according to research by PFA Research and Enterprise Edge. It said: "89% feel concerned about environmental issues, whilst 30% plan to generate their own energy in future, with wind and solar power being the more popular options."

Cornwall has the

lowest carbon emissions in the South West but the survey also found that 34% of businesses had done nothing about energy efficiency.

- The Wood Energy Visitors' Centre on Brook Hall Estate on the outskirts of Londonderry opened last month.

The new centre will host displays and presentations on wood energy, pellets and other energy crops from biomass.

- Voller Energy Group is claiming a major milestone in the development of its fuel cell auxiliary power units after successfully integrating a complete fuel processor and 1kW fuel cell system ahead of schedule.

## Briefs

- Yorkshire Housing Group unveiled its £7.5 million low carbon development on Primrose Hill in Huddersfield late last month.

The development is part of Kirklees Council's involvement in the Suncities initiative, bringing together EU and DTI funding for the UK's largest domestic solar power project. The 79 affordable new homes are expected to gain 'very good' and 'excellent' EcoHomes ratings.

- Carrick Housing Association has retrofitted approximately 130 ground source heat pump systems on its homes. Another 70 are to be installed by the end of this financial year. The group has also installed six air source heat pumps to evaluate their potential for use on a larger scale.

- BRE and partners the University of Limerick and Limerick Institute of Technology have launched BRE Ireland. The collaboration aims to establish a new, independent and authoritative Irish body that will set the standard for sustainability, innovation and enterprise in Irish construction.

- Awel Aman Tawe, the community energy developer in south Wales, has been awarded £290,000 to develop a new headquarters packed with sustainability measures at Cwmllynfell. The new centre will become operational following major repair to a rundown building just south of the Brecon Beacons national park.

# Thames Gateway feasibility study to light route to zero carbon goal

Communities Secretary Ruth Kelly unveiled the Thames Gateway Interim Plan late last month, laying the foundations for a development that will see 160,000 new homes spring up in east London and beyond over the next 10 years.

Kelly said: "Our ambition is to make the Thames Gateway a low and then zero carbon development, with no net emissions from new development.

"Arup and Turner & Townsend are currently working on a feasibility study to achieve this goal."

New environmental technologies and the development of low carbon business will definitely be part of the

development, and the feasibility study has been asked to find a "significant role" for distributed power generation.

The Interim Plan highlighted the Thames Gateway Parklands as having a role in offsetting emissions and the current CCGT (combined cycle generating turbine) Barking power station as being suitable for significant carbon saving measures.

The plan also notes that measures such as the forthcoming Planning Policy Statement on Climate Change and the Code for Sustainable Homes will set the direction for a progressive tightening of

building regulations, which all new development will have to meet.

Kelly has previously made clear that she regards the region as a test-bed for action against climate change in new developments as well as existing building stock.

Arup and Turner & Townsend are currently working on the Low Carbon Feasibility Study for the development.

The Department for Communities and Local Government and the Thames Gateway Strategy Partnership will use the study to define policies and actions to achieve the ultimate goal of making the entire region carbon

zero. The study will quantify what low and zero carbon means in practice for the Gateway.

It will also assemble an across-the-board emissions baseline incorporating homes, businesses, transport, water supply, embodied energy, grid electricity use and waste management.

Initial findings were published as part of the Interim Plan, giving more indications of the approach that will be taken. The Low Carbon Feasibility Study interim report is available, along with other publications making up the Thames Gateway Interim Plan, at:

[Click here](#)

## Construction methods go head to head

Work is progressing on SmartLife, the Cambridgeshire development that will pit different construction methods against each other.

Every step of the construction process is under the microscope to assess issues such as build speed, build quality, the sustainability of the construction process, and the post-occupancy performance of the resulting houses, including energy efficiency.

The BRE-led scheme will compare four different house-build methods and processes scientifically ensuring that like is always compared with like.

The project will see 106 new homes constructed in March and Chatteris, and is



expected to get a minimum of EcoHomes 'very good' rating.

The work is being funded by the Housing Corporation, English Partnerships, Fenland District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, and the Department for Local Government and the Communities.

Three innovative

construction systems are being used:

- the Fusion StlF panelised steel frame system,
- the Pinewood Structures panelised timber frame system, and
- the Polarwall Insulating Concrete Formwork (ICF) system.

Traditional brick and block will also be in evidence.

- A Sheffield regeneration development (pictured left) has shot up in just three weeks thanks to WAVE panels.

Affordable housing specialist Avebury has adopted the prefab insulated structural sustainable timber panel system to improve thermal efficiency, cost-effectiveness and construction times.

The housing association is keen on lower heating costs for residents and the system can help attain high EcoHomes standards.

Eighteen units are being built in the second phase of the £1.6 million project, a partnership between Avebury, South Yorkshire Housing Association, Sheffield City Council and the Housing Corporation.

Photo: Avebury



## Dragon's den in Yorkshire

The Alternative Energy Company is seeking added investment to the tune of £200,000 to expand its marketing operations. The Yorkshire company, formed in 2005, develops on-site wind turbines (pictured) and power inverters aimed at industrial and commercial premises.

The company presented its plans at the Connect Yorkshire Investment Forum, a one-day event that gives the region's emerging technology companies an opportunity to pitch their businesses to a group of potential investors.

Photo: Alternative Energy Company

## Oxford schools good to go

Sandhills Community Primary School near Oxford has won permission to install a 12m, 5kW turbine in its grounds.

The school expects to raise the £30,000 cost through grants and donations, and to save around £1000 a year in energy costs. The scheme provoked some objections on the grounds

it lies in a green belt area. A nearby school in Berinsfield, also in the Oxford green belt, recently celebrated the official launch of its 15m-high turbine with a visit from Boris Johnson.

The turbine will save Berinsfield Community Primary School £1200 each year and generate 12,000kWh of electricity.

## Briefs

- Welwyn Hatfield Council's planning committee has agreed to Tesco's plans for two onsite turbines at the company's headquarters in Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire.

It is the latest in a string of approvals under the retail giant's deal with North East energy consultancy TNEI. At least another 40 applications are understood to be in the pipeline.

- Digging for the foundations of three large turbines in Avonmouth started this week. They will supply Bristol Port Company from next year with a significant proportion of the dock's energy requirements.

The turbines will save around 10,000 tonnes of carbon emissions a year and represent manager Ecotricity's largest merchant wind power project to date.

# B&Q slams Britain's hit-and-miss planning regime for turbines

DIY giant B&Q has railed against inconsistency in the response to planning applications for Windsave turbine installations and staunchly defended its performance claims.

Giving evidence to a committee of MPs last week, chief executive Ian Cheshire said: "There is a lack of consistency across the country and one of the major barriers is that we couldn't tell (our customers) the situation on planning.

"We have everything from Eastleigh who are refunding the £150 for an application if a wind turbine is successfully put up to Sunderland who are charging £1500 for an application because they don't want you to put it up."

He added: "The same, I am afraid, is true of Low Carbon Buildings Programme grants.

"The grant arrangement is very opaque for people to get

a handle on. If we could have more consistent, clear schemes and consistent practices across the country we could do a lot more to help communicate (about microgeneration).

"But people are starting from a very low base of knowledge and are looking for one single point of reference, and that is one thing that we think we can absolutely provide."

Asked about performance claims that have generated controversy in some quarters, Cheshire said that "a fair amount of work" had been done with Windsave before the launch.

"All the turbines we sell are subject to a survey and if there is not enough wind in a location we don't sell it.

"In fact, 20% of the orders we have taken have been cancelled because the surveys

reveal that it is not an appropriate location."

On what to expect from the installation, he said: "Where there is a wind supply the calculation is best expressed as over the course of the year we think the turbine will produce 1000kW (hours) and the average UK household consumes around 3000kW, hence the 30% saving."

He said 100 customers will have their turbine's performance monitored.

Cheshire did concede that sell-back would be helpful and that technology would improve over time. He said B&Q advertising on its range of green products, which also includes solar

panels, is estimated to have reached 73% of UK homes.

Cheshire was giving evidence to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, which is running a series entitled 'Climate change: the citizen's agenda'.

## Store chain to raid its own shelves

Over-the-counter solar panels and wind turbine retailing pioneer B&Q may soon be using the microgeneration products on its own rooftops.

The nationwide store chain is working out a detailed carbon footprint of its operations with a view to setting targets for reducing it.

Chief executive Ian Cheshire said: "Working parties are looking at all aspects of our energy use, primarily

technologies that we know already work.

"We have looked at solutions that bring down energy usage over the years and microgeneration has become more economic and has come into play."

B&Q is planning to open a new store in New Malden in the London Borough of Merton, which has a 10% on-site renewables rule.

Cheshire said: "The New Malden store, which will open late in 2007, will have a wind turbine

built into it, and a series of roof-based technologies and heating technologies that are all designed to be very low carbon impact.

"We think it is a good mix of self-interest in saving money on bills while showing that these technologies work."

He added: "But the real challenge for us is what to do with our 330 stores around the country, some which are fairly old. We are looking at ways to retrofit."

## Briefs

- The discussion forum about Building Regulations compliance and enforcement closes for responses on 13 December. The Achieving Building Regulations initiative will inform the way regulations are managed, maintained and improved over time.

[Click here for details](#)

- The EU's 'Action plan on Energy Efficiency' adopted last month has been criticised by Friends of the Earth for failing to set binding targets. The plan emphasises the potential of reducing energy consumption by 20% by 2020 but "ministers constantly fail to agree concrete steps".

- Friends of the Earth has called for increased tax incentives and grants to boost micros ahead of the Chancellor's Pre-Budget Report on 6 December.

- Ofgem is hosting a seminar entitled 'Microgeneration – Small is Beautiful?' on Wednesday, 13 December.

# Cooper calls for joined-up planning and regulation for green housing

Housing and Planning Minister Yvette Cooper has called for more debate on how building regulations and planning policy can work in tandem to move all new housing developments towards zero carbon.

She was addressing the Town and County Planning Association ahead of the launch of the new Code for Sustainable Homes and the Planning Policy Statement on Climate Change, expected this month.

Cooper said: "Building regulations have a number of advantages in that they are uniform, mandatory standards that provide a clear framework for developments.

"But we can't deliver

zero carbon homes in all circumstances through building ever thicker walls and have to take into account variation between different areas, including scale."

She said that a recent trip to Sweden had shown her that in some circumstances external sustainable heat sources are a more effective option than so-called passive solar homes that require no form of heating generation.

Building regulations have to work together with planning policy to get the right result, she argued. Cooper said she wants the UK construction industry to lead the way in affordable low carbon development rather than

lag behind Scandinavian countries, where prices of energy efficient homes are far lower.

Cooper was speaking at the launch of Planning Policy Statement 3, a housing policy document on delivering affordable housing. The Town and Country Planning Association welcomed PPS 3 as a step in the right direction.

Chief executive Gideon Amos said: "Giving a clear lead on higher design standards whilst giving more flexibility to local communities on how they wish their towns and cities to develop, sends absolutely the right signal to housing providers, planners and developers. The government has

rightly removed crude and artificial measures such as centralised rules on density, and the shape of development locally, in favour of the opportunity to tackle climate and biodiversity head on, whether this is through urban, suburban or new settlement development."

PPS 3 will be followed by the Planning Policy Statement on Climate Change and the new Code for Sustainable Homes, which will set out more details on low carbon buildings and sustainable energy, including plans to move towards zero carbon development.

[Click here for PPS 3](#)

## Power industry to flesh out export reward ideas

The electricity network strategy group is expected to reveal its proposals on how energy suppliers can improve microgeneration export reward arrangements later this month.

There has been some

slippage at the stakeholder group, which was originally scheduled to report back at the end of October.

The outcome will be a key step for the industry and was given further urgency through the

Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Bill, passed earlier this year.

This gave government powers to change both supply and distribution licences in order to impose a reward scheme that ensures electricity

is acquired and that exports are suitably rewarded.

The bill gave government the right to impose a scheme if none had emerged within 12 months after it became law late last summer.

## leader

### Case closed for the rogue trader

The successful prosecution of Simplee Solar for making false promises about its solar thermal products is a welcome result. The message to rogue operators is clear: the Trade Descriptions Act has teeth and the long arm of the law extends to green products as well as any other.

Unethical or illegal practices run the risk not only of TV or radio exposure but also of court appearances and large fines. Dorset Trading Standards is to be congratulated on the successful pursuit of their duty to protect customers.

No industry wants players who give it a bad name and honest operators, like those affiliated to the Solar Trade Association, can breathe a sign of relief. But the fact is that aggressive marketing and hard selling still tarnishes the solar

thermal retrofit industry. Will this ruling at Bournemouth Crown Court make a difference to that? The jury is still out.

- **The decision by the DTI to apply monthly caps on payouts under the Low Carbon Buildings Programme is the right one. Rather than let the money run out, the household sector must be sustained for as long as possible even if that means the dreaded "rationing" that has long been the bogeyman for householder installers.**

This further intervention seeks to rectify the fundamental anomaly of having £50 million go to the public and not-for-profit sector, dwarfing the amount originally allocated to householders, or businesses for that matter. The question of whether the problem could have been foreseen, prevented or even corrected earlier is now academic.

### Cracking code

The publication of the Code for Sustainable Homes, expected in just over a week, will be a major step for the industry. This will eventually see publicly funded housing projects abide by the code's top Level 5, which will be nearly impossible without using microgeneration.

Current regulations are already strict, and significant orders of microgeneration equipment are being placed by housebuilders and social landlords. The code will open up a whole new market for the sector but a point of division remains.

Some want quicker implementation of higher standards to grow the small renewables sector quickly. Others argue that the capacity simply to keep up with the standards is not there. As so often the middle way may prove the best.



**Crown for King's Waterfront:** the Arena and Convention Centre is the heart of the £390 million mixed-use King's Waterfront development in Liverpool

Photo: Liverpool Vision

# Revolution on Liverpool's docks

Five Quiet Revolution wind turbines will be the flagships of a highly sustainable development in Liverpool's docklands.

Regeneration company Liverpool Vision narrowly won planning permission to erect the 6kW units to help power the sizeable Arena and Convention Centre (ACC) on King's Waterfront, just south of Albert Dock, which recently became a World Heritage Site.

The city council's planning cabinet voted in favour by six to four late last month and the developer has now bagged the go-ahead for a range of measures planned to cut the venue's predicted carbon emissions in half and reduce electricity needs by a fifth.

A close reading of the decision reveals that planning officers were

keen on the turbines' "bold and confident design" and endorsed Liverpool Vision's presentation of the machines as public art.

Earlier discussions with the council's planning manager led to plans for traditional three-blade turbines being dropped in favour of the helical XCO2 model.

Perhaps more significantly, the planning committee rejected an objection that the turbines did not present the most cost-efficient route of cutting the 1200 square-metre purpose built venue's energy requirements by 10%.

That means the 20m, £300,000 wind turbines will be more than green totems or sculpture, even if they will significantly enhance the skyline of the waterfront when Liverpool assumes its

European Capital of Culture mantle in 2008. The planning team even suggested the turbines evoke the heritage of the docklands in its heyday, littered as it once was with free-standing lifts and cranes.

"These turbines are not," reads the planning officer's report, "dissimilar in their form and arrangement to their historic counterparts."

ACC chief executive Bob Prattey said he is pleased with the decision to grant planning permission. "The wind turbines have been selected, after a considerable search, for their sculptural qualities and their low noise output.

"They will help the Arena and Convention Centre become one of the greenest venues in the country."

The venue will also

have a local power plant supplied by ScottishPower that will be the mainstay of carbon reductions.

Prattey said the plant was specially designed for its efficiency. "It is 40% more efficient than conventional equipment making the most of heat recovery systems to cut fuel bills."

Staff will be trained to "reduce, reuse, repair and recycle" after the building is completed in January 2008 and rain falling on the vast roof space will be harvested, reducing the water needs by 7.5%.

The £146 million venue is currently under construction and on schedule. Building Contractor Bovis Lend Lease recently completed the installation of a 200-ton, 80m long steel truss that will form the first main component of the

structural spine of the arena roof. The venue's architectural design links together two separate buildings along with a multi-purpose hall to give added flexibility to event and exhibition organisers.

The arena will pack conferences with delegate numbers ranging from 2000 and concerts with up to 10,000 revellers.

The ACC is the centrepiece of the £390 million mixed-use King's Waterfront project, which is itself the largest development of several on the city's waterfront, including the Museum of Liverpool.

The area is jointly promoted by Liverpool Vision, English Partnerships, the Northwest Development Agency and Liverpool City Council.

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