

Home Energy Conservation Act Report 2019

Swindon Borough Council

Energy Saving and Carbon Reduction initiatives

1. What scheme(s) has your local authority implemented in support of energy saving / carbon reduction in residential accommodation (such as owner-occupied, privately rented and social housing) or non-domestic properties since 2017?

Warm & Safe Wiltshire provides an energy efficiency advice service to help domestic households to access energy efficiency measures, reduce energy use, save money on energy bills, and access support to manage fuel debt and apply for financial support for energy bills. Considerable success has been achieved with promotions based around the Warm Home Discount rebate.

SBC offered a £1000 insulation grant for solid wall insulation. This was promoted to owner occupier households in areas where council owned non-traditionally built properties were being improved.

Less efficient non-condensing gas boilers in its social housing stock are replaced with high efficiency appliances and distribution systems when necessary. Quantum night storage heaters are fitted where gas central heating is not possible.

The least energy-efficient SBC homes (mainly non-traditional construction) will have their thermal insulation upgraded as part of a comprehensive package of measures including heating, roofing and amenity improvements which aims to deal with up to 2,000 properties over 10 years.

Non-domestic energy projects have been focused on technologies, we are currently rolling out LED lighting upgrades across our non-domestic estate. There is also a boiler replacement scheme underway, to replace the oldest and most inefficient boilers with newer models.

2. What scheme(s) is your local authority planning to implement in support of energy saving/carbon reduction in residential accommodation (such as owner-occupied, privately rented and social housing) or non-domestic properties in the next two years?

Warm & Safe Wiltshire is contracted until April 2020. We are looking at options for extending the work past that point. There will be continue to be campaigns around the Warm Home Discount and keeping warm in winter, as well as greater collaboration with the health sector to identify people requiring support.

For owner occupied properties we are also looking at a greater use of enforcement powers under the Housing Act 2004 to enable improvement works for cash poor occupiers with embedded capital in their property. Those applicants who cannot access funding for energy improvement works through supplier schemes and who

appear vulnerable or in high need are now referred to the enforcement team for a HHSRS assessment and consideration for further intervention.

SBC owned homes will continue to be improved as part of annual maintenance and upgrade programmes mentioned previously.

We are planning to continue LED lighting upgrade rollout, we have identified many assets that would benefit from the upgrade.

We are also planning an extensive rollout of a new energy monitoring platform to enable site managers to identify local efficiencies. This will support and drive a behavioural change exercise trying to encourage energy savings across the organisation.

3. What businesses, charities, third sector organisations or other stakeholders do you work with to deliver the scheme(s)?

The Warm & Safe Wiltshire service is provided by the Centre for Sustainable Energy, a charity, and it engages with many other third sector partners within the borough. It also links with health services including the Great Western Hospital and the Fire Service. SBC will also engage directly with appropriate partners to raise awareness of the Warm & Safe Wiltshire service, including Swindon Citizens Advice, Foodbanks, Age UK Wiltshire, Swindon Clinical Commissioning Group, and other such organisations.

Contracts are tendered through council procurement rules, we work with the successful companies.

Local Communications Strategy

4. Does your local authority provide any advisory service to consumers (and businesses) on how to save energy?

The Warm & Safe Wiltshire energy advice service is provided for domestic households only. This service is promoted through partnership working and council media streams where appropriate. Awareness raising campaigns are carried out to drive people to the service where advisors are then able to help with their queries.

No advisory service is offered to businesses.

Local Green Supply Chains

5. Does your Local Authority promote the use of energy efficient products amongst consumers (and businesses)?

This work would be part of the advice provided to consumers through the Warm & Safe Wiltshire energy advice service, rather than promoted alone. Businesses would not be recipients of this advice.

Domestic Private Rented Sector (PRS) Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards

The Minimum Energy Efficiency Regulations (the Regulations) apply to all privately rented properties in England and Wales. As of April 2018, all such properties are legally required to have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of at least an E before they can be let on a new tenancy. This requirement will then extend to all such properties by 1 April 2020, even if there has been no change in tenant or tenancy (please see BEIS's published [guidance documents](#) for the full details on the standard).

The PRS Regulations give enforcement powers to local authorities, and authorities are responsible for ensuring landlord compliance within their area.

6. What method or methods does your authority use to communicate with landlords and tenants about the standards and other related issues?

There is ongoing engagement work with agents. Whilst there has been no direct targeted communication with landlords to date, capacity does exist to directly mailshot and email known landlords.

7. Do you directly target landlords of EPC F and G rated properties?

There has been minimal direct targeting to date, but we are preparing to do so through matching of the EPC database and known rented property lists.

Financial Support for Energy Efficiency

8. What financial programmes, if any, do you have to promote domestic and non-domestic energy efficiency or energy saving?

Private sector

We have no grants or other programmes exclusively targeting energy efficiency, but houses for disabled facilities applicants are improved for energy efficiency and adequate heating as part of the DFG process.

We have also recently updated our Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy to enable greater enforcement in owner occupied properties (including for Works in Default) where significant Category 1 hazards are identified under the HHSRS but the occupier is unable to improve the property. Such occupiers often have significant capital in their property, but no simple means to draw on that capital. Using enforcement powers where appropriate in these cases enables the Council to carry out works to improve these properties whilst securing the monies used as a charge on the property.

Some funding was awarded through the Warm Homes Fund to the Warm & Safe Wiltshire service to help hard to reach fuel poor off-gas households, with a small

proportion allocated for an emergency fund for heating support across Wiltshire and Swindon.

Social Housing

The energy efficiency of SBC owned homes is improved (where possible and financially viable) through ongoing annual maintenance and upgrade programmes. There are no funds specifically targeting energy efficiency.

Fuel Poverty

9. Please describe the scope of your local authority's fuel poverty strategy, and the support that is available for low income and vulnerable households to help tackle fuel poverty in your local area. Please also provide a link to your strategy if published.

https://www.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/3971/swindon_affordable_warmth_strategy_2018-2020.pdf

Swindon Borough Council and its partners will continue to develop co-operative approaches to tackling fuel poverty. Activity is focussed on the three key aims of this strategy:

- To raise awareness of fuel poverty and affordable warmth among all stakeholders.
- To encourage and support households to achieve affordable warmth.
- To improve access to schemes, financial support and advice related to affordable warmth through improved networks and referral systems.

The Key Objectives of the strategy are:

1. Maintain and improve relationships with agencies, organisations and other interested parties in order to promote affordable warmth and deliver new partnership initiatives.
2. Provide information on and access into national funding programmes for affordable warmth measures.
3. Deliver the Swindon Energy Matters gas and electricity tariff comparison and switching service to Swindon residents.
4. Facilitate take-up of national Warm Home Discount rebates for eligible residents.
5. Strengthen the health focus of affordable warmth work in Swindon, including establishing a health and housing referral network for health professionals to refer residents into.

Support is provided through the Warm & Safe Wiltshire energy advice service, covering energy saving measures, heating measures, and financial support for energy bills including Warm Home Discount applications, Surviving Winter grants, tariff switching, and energy debt relief.

10. What steps have you taken to identify residents/properties in fuel poverty?

Much work has been done over the years to identify residents in fuel poverty. Current work links with the actions in the Affordable Warmth Action Plan found here:

https://www.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/3972/swindon_affordable_warmth_action_plan_2018-2020.pdf

We will work with partner organisations across Swindon to identify people in fuel poverty and refer then to the Warm & Safe Wiltshire service. Campaigns are carried out at various times of the year, especially over the winter months, to reach people who may be struggling with their energy bills, pushing them towards the advice service. We also work with health and social care professionals to provide a referral route for their clients who need assistance.

11. What measures or initiatives have you taken to promote fuel cost reduction for those in fuel poverty?

We have focussed on financial incentives for fuel bill relief in recent years as there has been very little support available through the Energy Company Obligation for energy saving and heating measures. The Warm Home Discount in particular has been a good way of engaging people and helping them to not only access this rebate but to access some of the other support services we offer. We help people to compare tariffs and switch suppliers, and also help them get off prepayment meters if that is appropriate. We sign them up for the Priority Services Register for added protection. There are some local initiatives like the Surviving Winter grants that we can also help people to apply for. Benefit checks are included in order to make sure people are getting all the entitlement they should be.

Alongside this we also offer advice and guidance on using and controlling heating systems (including home visits where appropriate), managing energy use and combating condensation and damp issues.

We refer people into Energy Company Obligation schemes where they are eligible or available for energy saving or heating measures.

12. If you have taken measures or initiatives to promote fuel cost reduction for those in fuel poverty, what partnership with business or energy providers have you undertaken?

Partnerships with Energy Suppliers and Businesses are currently managed by the Centre for Sustainable Energy who manage the Warm & Safe Wiltshire service.

We have a partnership with a comparison service to provide an independent price comparison service for gas and electricity tariffs for the Swindon Energy Matters programme.

The Energy Company Obligation

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 recently introduced ECO “[flexible eligibility](#)” (ECO 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 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.

13. Please provide a link to your local authority published Statement of Intent (Sol) for ECO flexibility eligibility:

https://www.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/3588/swindon_borough_council_statement_of_intent_version_2.pdf

Smart Metering

14. Please provide a brief statement outlining your current or planned approach to:

Engage and support your residents (including those in vulnerable circumstances or with pre-payment metering) to promote take up of smart meters and achieve associated benefits (e.g. ability to control energy use, identify best value tariffs)? Please detail any work undertaken or planned with local/community groups, housing associations, micro businesses, Smart Energy GB under their Partnership Programme and energy suppliers.

There has been minimal activity so far to promote the SMETS1 meters when we are also encouraging people to compare tariffs and switch suppliers, as if a resident does switch tariffs there is then a high chance the smart meter would not work.

We are looking to engage residents in the smart meter rollout once the SMETS2 meters are being installed. In particular we are looking at our own social housing residents for whom we will have routes to engagement already, highlighting the benefits of avoiding estimated bills and easier top up options for prepayment customers. This will link with our Warm Home Discount campaigns which we hold each winter.

15. Please provide a brief statement outlining your current or planned approach to:

Integrate your approaches to delivering energy efficiency improvements in residential accommodation with the opportunities presented by the installation of smart meters, drawing upon materials from the [Smart Meter Energy Efficiency Materials Project](#) or other sources of independent information.

The benefits of smart meters will become part of the overall advice package offered through the Warm & Safe Wiltshire service. There are no plans to link this with delivery of energy efficiency improvements as there are too few measures being installed via ECO for reasons mentioned already.

16. Please detail any:

Existing relationships with energy suppliers to help ensure that the opportunities presented by vacant properties under your control are effectively utilised (i.e. gaining access to install a smart meter).

We will explore the installation of smart meters (once SMETS2 meters are routinely being installed) as part of the void property process for our social housing properties.

Future Schemes or Wider Initiatives

17. Please outline any future schemes or wider initiatives not covered above that your local authority has carried out or is planning to undertake to improve the energy efficiency of residential accommodation or businesses in your area, for example, within your Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Energy Strategy.

We have recently used Communities money to set up and run a Migration Project targeting an area of the Borough subject to much recent inward migration. All properties in this area have been proactively visited and, where necessary, inspected under the Housing Health & Safety Rating System.

The Swindon and Wiltshire LEP Energy Strategy priorities are:

- Smart grids and mitigating constraints
- Hydrogen technology innovation and deployment
- The transition to new energy vehicles
- Low carbon growth

Under the S&W LEP Low Carbon Growth priority there are actions around energy advice and information for SMEs and an SME energy efficiency investment fund to help SMEs to take up energy efficiency measures and low carbon technology.

General low carbon ambitions are also detailed in the SBC Local Plan 2026 under Theme 5.

https://www.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/3988/swindon_borough_local_plan_2026.pdf

We have an internal energy management system for Non-Domestic properties, this promotes measurement, reporting and continual improvement towards energy reduction.

The 2019 Home Energy Conservation Act report has been submitted online to the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) as per their issued HECA 2019 Reporting Guidance. This is a summary version of the report based on the questions asked in the survey. For more information on this report, please contact:

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