

# Green Homes

York Quakers meet the challenges of sustainability  
A Report by the Sustainability Group

***Our homes, particularly heating them, contributes hugely to our carbon footprints, and F/friends in York AM have been passionate about addressing this issue for years.***

## Initiatives

Here are some of the diverse ways that people have already 'greened' their homes:

- Switching to an energy company that supplies electricity and gas wholly or mainly from renewable sources, such as Ecotricity, Good Energy, Bulb and many others.
- Installing solar panels, at home and on a son's roof, or buying a house with solar panels already fitted. Using appliances when the power is being generated or adding a battery.
- Reducing the amount of electricity used by switching to LED lighting, replacing an old freezer, boiling water only as needed, switching off lights not needed.
- Keeping heat in the house by insulation, double glazing, draught proofing, thick carpets.
- Reducing the heating used by turning down the thermostat, reducing the heating hours, only heating the rooms being used, installing an efficient controller.
- Cutting down on hot water use by replacing the bath with a shower, no longer showering every day, washing up just once a day, even having cold showers.
- Changing an old gas boiler for an energy efficient one or switching to an electric powered Air Source Heat Pump.
- Changing a gas cooker for an electric one.
- Putting on more clothes instead of turning the heat up, using hot water bottles and more blankets.
- Downsizing to a more energy efficient home, cutting car use at the same time.

- Building a low-energy Passivhaus using sustainable materials as far as possible.
- Using environment-friendly paints for decorating.
- Recording energy use monthly to keep consumption in mind and track whether efforts to reduce energy use are making a difference. Some are doing this manually, others are using a Smart meter or Hive controller.

**Challenges** Many people have already done the ‘easy wins’ in greening their homes and are finding the next steps more challenging:

- Making further energy efficiency improvements to an old house will need radical and costly changes. Is this affordable without any grant schemes to help?
- Deciding the most sustainable way to heat a rural home, in one case currently using oil and wood, and in another using wood, LPG and coal.
- Deciding if/when to change from gas to all-electric.
- Sourcing sustainable, dry wood for a wood burner.
- Assuming the roof faces the optimum direction, deciding whether to install solar PV. Without any feed-in tariff the payback time will be long, but the environmental benefit will be high.
- In rented and leasehold properties, persuading the landlord to invest in sustainability works.

**Thoughts** And here are a couple of ideas from F/friends to think about:

- Walking and cycling keeps you warm as well as healthy.
- One person is seeking others interested in developing a community of small, affordable, sustainable off-grid homes, with shared facilities, woodland and permaculture, and space for micro-industries.

“ ” In F/friends’ own words:

‘Perhaps the most important thing that we do at home with sustainability in mind is read our gas and electricity meters on the 1st of each month, and keep a record. This helps us to keep energy consumption always in mind, and also helps us get a sense of whether our efforts to reduce consumption are making a difference.’

'I don't use more heating and lighting than I need (wear warm clothes indoors and out).'

'A wood-pellet boiler, although potentially carbon-neutral, is only as environmentally friendly as the source of the wood.'

'We are delighted with our solar panels and are pleased that we are making a small contribution to reducing our carbon footprint in this way.'

Prepared by:  
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