

# Future of Rural Energy (FREE) initiative

**18<sup>th</sup> November 2013**  
**Rural Services Network AGM**





free



*Campaigning for Warm Homes*



Commission for  
Rural Communities  
Tackling rural disadvantage

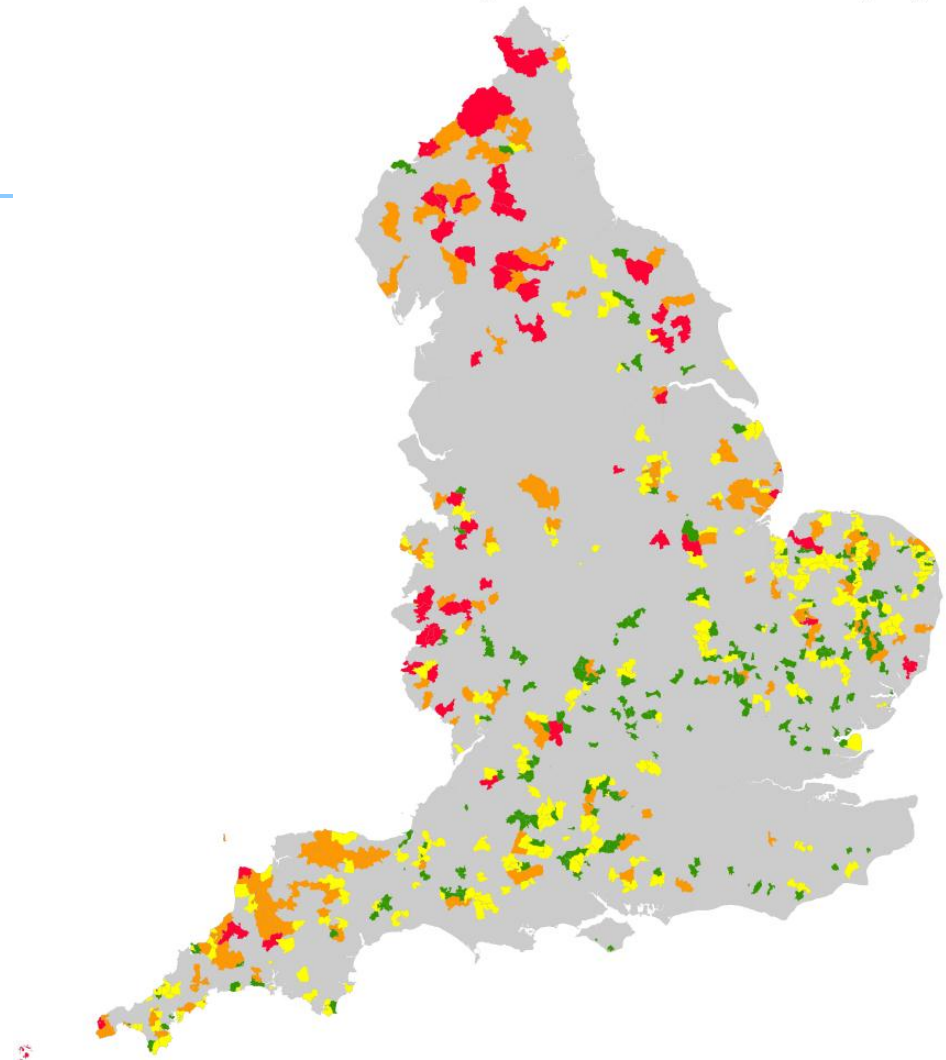


- 2.6 million fuel poor households in England
- 500,000 live in rural locations
- Greater numbers of fuel poor are urban, but problem is more acute in rural areas
- Rural fuel poverty gap is higher than average
  - £588 rural vs £361 urban
- More likely to be fuel poor if:
  - Property has non-cavity wall
  - Without dual fuel access
  - Living in properties built before 1964

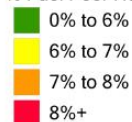
# Year 1: Building Knowledge

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1. Research
2. Off-mains gas fuel poverty mapping
3. Energy advisor training
4. Creation of bespoke resources
5. Rural energy roadshows
6. Reporting
7. Lobbying



% Fuel Poor Households within LSOA (Lower Super Output Area)



LSOA's partially or completely on mains gas

Source:  
Calor Non Mains Gas Database (2006)  
English Housing Condition Survey (2003)  
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# Characteristics of Rural Fuel Poverty

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- **Dispersed hidden nature**
  - Isolation of households, reluctance to admit problems, area based indicators ineffective.
- **Under-occupancy**
  - Retired people, large homes, unable/unwilling to downsize.
- **Housing stock**
  - Hard to treat, solid floors and/or walls, listed buildings, conservation areas, planning restrictions
- **Private rented/tied accommodation**
  - Concerns landlords will increase rent, unwilling to complain.
- **Lack of benefit take-up**
  - Not aware of options, stigma
- **Lack of electricity switching**
  - Lack of awareness/access to switching information

# Key issues identified:

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- **Lack of understanding** of rural fuel poverty by Central Government
- **Lack of credible information** and formal assistance schemes
- Rural fuel poverty does not always align with **social deprivation**
- **Difficult to engage** with rural communities
- **Local knowledge** is vital – where and how to focus activity
- **Bespoke solutions** applied at a local level
- **Holistic approach** is required

# Year 2 – Village Energy Audits x 8



- **Collected community housing, energy and social data** from across rural England
- **Facilitated delivery of tangible practical help** where possible
- Produced a **suite of reports** profiling village housing, energy and social demographics
- Results used to **inform policy developments**

## **Opportunities identified:**

- Energy **bulk buying** schemes
- **Insulation** opportunities – solid wall, cavity wall, loft
- **Renewable energy** heating systems
- **Financial entitlement** check

# Barriers to Improvements

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- **Lack of knowledge** of existing assistance schemes
- **Prohibitive increased cost** of delivering practical measures
- **Difficulty of successfully engaging** with rural communities
- **Complexity of rural buildings** - design, fabric, and heating systems
- **Hidden nature of rural fuel poverty**
  - Most in need of assistance less likely to seek proactive help
- Homes with affordable warmth issues often **also require assistance in additional areas**
  - Health, finance, transport and employment



# Year 3 - Establishing a Legacy

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- **Continued work of Year 1** – further roadshows and mentoring support
- **Followed up on Year 2** – Village Energy Audits
- **Energy Champions** project
- **NEA and ACRE national conferences**
- Funded formal **City and Guild ‘Energy Awareness’** qualification for rural energy workers
- **‘Pass it On’ training** – simple tips to share with neighbours
- **Calor Home Energy Check** – [hec.calor.co.uk](http://hec.calor.co.uk) in conjunction with EST
- **Energy efficiency policy briefings** - produced for rural fieldworkers

- **Community Led Planning Toolkit**
  - produced to promote the development of energy champion projects in rural areas
- **ACRE Rural Affordable Warmth & Energy Efficiency guides**
  - <http://www.acre.org.uk/Resources/Community+Guides>
- **Government rural fuel poverty taskforce**
- **National Rural Energy Conference**
  - Dec 2013
- **Joint policy briefing for Government with NEA**

- Rural communities are currently **at best being left behind, and at worst ignored**, in the drive for energy efficiency improvements.
- **Previous assistance schemes have not been effectively delivered into rural areas** in spite of both significant insulation opportunities and the high proportion of vulnerable residents
- **Additional resources required** to address level and depth of fuel poverty in rural areas
  - **Green Deal** – slow start
  - **ECO** continuing to fail to deliver

- **Urgent action is required** to tackle rural energy efficiency and fuel poverty issues
  - **‘one size fits all’ solutions will not be effective** due to the dual challenges of engaging with rural communities and providing effective solutions to the complexities of rural energy options and housing types.
- Need to **work proactively at a community level** and secure the assistance of **trusted local individuals and networks** to engage with rural householders.

# Questions?

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