

Future of Rural Energy (FREE) initiative

18th November 2013
Rural Services Network AGM





free



Campaigning for Warm Homes



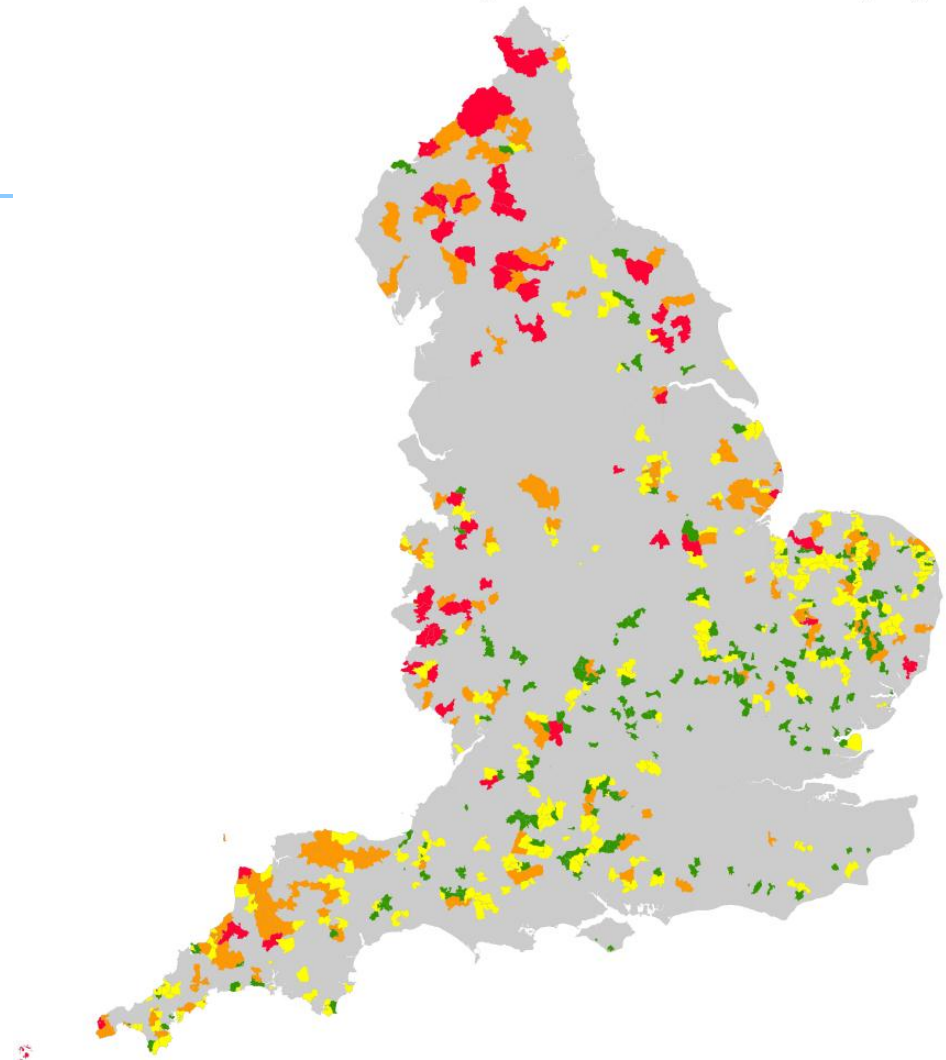
Commission for
Rural Communities
Tackling rural disadvantage



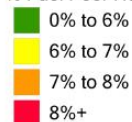
- 2.6 million fuel poor households in England
- 500,000 live in rural locations
- Greater numbers of fuel poor are urban, but problem is more acute in rural areas
- Rural fuel poverty gap is higher than average
 - £588 rural vs £361 urban
- More likely to be fuel poor if:
 - Property has non-cavity wall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

Year 1: Building Knowledge

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

- **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:

- **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

- **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



- **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 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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