SHAL's Community Chat (energy efficiency)

Monday 16 August 2021

Simon White led a chat about how we're improving the energy efficiency of our homes.

Why are we having this chat?

It's all art of the bigger picture. The government want all homes to have an energy efficiency rating of C or higher by 2030 – and the country to have net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Did you know from 2025 the government will ban all gas and oil boilers in newbuild homes – and the Welsh government has banned it from October 2021?

We know many of our homes are rated D or lower, mostly the ones in rural areas that don't have mains gas as they have inefficient heating systems and may also have poor insulation.

Did you know we have 119 homes off mains gas, 34 with oil boilers and 45 with solid fuel appliances?

The government has also published a Clear Air Strategy that identifies domestic fuel burning heating systems as a leading cause of air pollution and poor health.

We're renewing Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) for our homes and finding many of them have a lower rating than previously reported. For example, homes surveyed in Woolavington over the last year have an average rating of D, compared to an average rating of C in those we haven't renewed yet.

We also talked about our response to reports of condensation and mould in our homes following the ITV investigation. Simon confirmed we:

1. Inspect insulation levels
2. Renew the EPC (and complete recommendations if possible)
3. Check and upgrade ventilation if required
4. Give advice on how to minimise condensation and mould

What are we doing?

We're doing it to provide warmer, healthier and happier homes. We're not doing all this work to look good and win awards – and we're not doing it just because we're getting funding.

At the moment the government have various funding schemes available. We have worked very hard to secure this funding as part of a group with the local authority and other housing providers. Both the criteria and the application process are complex and change frequently. The criteria and deadlines haven't always considered the challenges the pandemic and lockdowns have thrown our way. Also, we can't get funding if the household income is over £30,000. That doesn't mean we won't do the work just because we don't get funding.

We've not always been successful. However, we continue to consider all funding available so we can do this essential work and continue to invest in improving other things like bathrooms, kitchens, doors.

Did you know we've set aside £300,000 of our money this year to do this work and once the work's complete we can claim up to 40p for every £1 spent on each project?

We also want to help people understand the changes – and the benefits. Some people are positive, some negative. We live in a world of information overload and not all of it is helpful – or even correct. We all need to help each other get things right.

The group was overwhelmingly positive about what we're doing. They agreed we're being open and transparent about what we're doing (and why) and about all the work going on "behind the scenes.". One commented we don't "sugar coat things" and we "speak the truth."

What difference is it making?

We're identifying the least efficient homes and considering the following:

1. Internal wall insulation
2. PV panels
3. Air source heat pumps

A poorly insulated home loses heat and gets cold no matter what sort of heating it has. Our priority is to install internal wall insulation as it ensures any heat you produce (and pay for) stays in your home and isn't absorbed into the external walls and lost outside. External wall insulation may stop cold air getting into a home but it doesn't prevent heat being lost outside.

Here are two examples of the improvements we've made:

	Before	**After**
3 bed home in Thurloxton		
EPC rating	F	A
Estimated yearly energy cost	£1,884	£851
Estimated yearly energy used to heat the home	6,926 kWh	4,992 kWh
3 bed home in Woolavington		
EPC rating	E	B
Estimated yearly energy cost	£1,381	£885
Estimated yearly energy used to heat the home	8,586 kWh	7,011 kWh

We've had good feedback from those who have had this work done. We will be sharing these storied with you.

Air source heat pumps

We discussed how we will all have to start living differently in the future and how this is all part of the bigger picture – including electric cars.

We all agreed it's a big change and change can be scary. We agreed it helps to talk through the change and give people time to get their heads around it, including the changes to how they pay to heat their home.

For example, you may see a slight increase in your electric bill but you'll no longer have oil/solid fuel bills to worry about. Also, the heating system is cleaner and healthier – and your home is warmer. Air source heat pumps are a completely different way of heating a home. Rather than an "On/Off" system like gas central heating it runs constantly to maintain an ambient temperature. The system can be turned down but shouldn't be turned off.

We need to help everyone understand this – and understand the research we've undertaken and the pilots we've done.

One tenant shared their experience of getting a smart meter and changing from a gas hob to an electric one. They didn't like it at first but now agreed they wouldn't go back to how it was before.

If we've approached you about possibly making these changes to your home please email Lee@shal.org or call him on 01278 442014 and we can get your questions answered and help you find out more.

Next up

September – Rusty Road 2 Recovery

September – Annual General Meeting (AGM)

October – How we re-let our homes

November – Help & support for disabilities

If you'd like to have a chat please drop us a message, email Lee@shal.org or call 01278 442014.