

## GREENING FULFLOOD: POETS ESTATE ENERGY REDUCTION STUDY – METHODOLOGY 2011/2012

November 2011     Greening Fulflood (GF) Committee decided to extend the Fordington Avenue Pilot Project to another area of Fulflood. Volunteer sub-group of 7 people set up.

- Sub-group met, decided to cover a larger area, i.e. Poets Estate = 5 roads, an area close to where the majority of 7 volunteers lived.  
All houses built 1960s therefore all of comparable build: 16 -32 houses per road.  
Total 106 houses – a mixture of detached, semi-detached, terraced.  
6 volunteers were each allocated one road; longest road shared between 2.
  - Outline Timetable agreed:  
Early January deliver introductory letters + collect 1st electricity & gas readings.  
Early March collect 2nd electricity and gas readings.  
April-May record and analyse results; feedback results to participants.  
Follow-up with individual participants regarding questions or advice as required.  
Prepare and circulate report to participating houses.
  - Initial Tasks allocated:
    - All 6 volunteers to suggest title for project. Agreed to call it: “Poets Estate Energy Reduction Study”.
    - 2 people to draft letter of introduction to project, circulate for comment, print before Christmas (see document A attached).
    - 1 person to design form for recording house information + readings and circulate for comment (see document B attached).
    - 1 person to create online Google form for entering information/readings – for all to test.
    - 1 person to draft list of points to be made orally on first house visits (7/8 Jan) & circulate for comment.
    - All 6 volunteers to deliver letters 2/3 January.
    - All 6 Volunteers to follow up with visit to each house w/e 7/8 January to explain project and collect 1<sup>st</sup> readings.

December 2011

- Letter finalised; signatures collected on master copy; letter printed (including some spare copies, e.g. for GF Committee meetings etc as required).
- After Christmas letters collected by 6 volunteers from 1 member’s house.

January 2012

- 2/3 January: all letters hand delivered (or later that week) by 6 volunteers to their respective houses.
- 4 January: briefing meeting held before follow-up visits to:
  - Check everyone had hard copy of recording sheet for 7/8 January house visits.

- Copies of Fordington Ave project reports (including bar graphs) given to each volunteer to demonstrate how results of 2 sets of readings would be given to participants.
- List of information to convey on doorstep distributed electronically.
- Brief announcement of Poets Estate Energy Reduction Study to be put on GF website (by volunteer i/c website).
- 7/8 January: follow-up visits by 6 volunteers to their respective houses, to explain the project, ask if they wished to participate, and collect 1<sup>st</sup> electricity & gas readings. Undertake additional follow-up visits to catch people at home as necessary. Not all people contacted. Not all people agreed to participate. 50 out of 106 houses agreed to participate and provided 1<sup>st</sup> readings (only 46 houses subsequently provided 2<sup>nd</sup> readings as well).
- Information recorded included; date of visit; road name and house number; name and email address (or telephone number) of contact person in each household; type of house (detached, semi-detached, terraced, end of terrace); electricity & gas readings and related details (imperial or metric units. *Figures beyond decimal points were omitted.*
- 17 January: sub-group meeting held to check:
  - Each volunteer OK with inputting readings on online Google form
  - Whether/when to hold next briefing meeting before early March 2<sup>nd</sup> readings collected. Agreed no need to meet.

#### March 2012

- 6 March: reminder email sent to all 6 volunteers to collect 2<sup>nd</sup> readings asap in March by whatever means was possible and practicable (by email or in person).
- 2<sup>nd</sup> readings collected into late March. (One set of readings still awaited on 16 April.)
- 1 Volunteer entered all readings electronically onto one spreadsheet.

#### April/May 2012

- 19 April: sub-group meeting held to:
  - Review all collected data
  - Identify houses with queries where readings looked implausible or very high or very low. – required a follow-up visit or email. Results of enquiries emailed to Volunteer to revise spreadsheet and recirculate
  - Agreed that 2 volunteers to draft letter/report (no more than 2 sides of A4) with results/graphs of 46 participating houses and circulate for comment. Fordington Ave Project Report used as a guide. (NB It was not possible to obtain the 2<sup>nd</sup> set of readings from 4 of the houses in a timely manner, so we had to exclude them, resulting in the final set of 46.)
- 3 May: further sub-group meeting held to consider draft Report and agree comments for 2 drafters to incorporate.
- 8 May: revised draft Report circulated for comment

- 10 May: revised draft Report discussed at GF Committee meeting with agreement to keep it simple. All references to house types were omitted because results inconclusive and too complex across the whole estate.
- 11 May: Report finalised by 2 drafters following discussion at GF meeting. Each participating household to receive a Report including their own electricity and gas consumption figures to compare with bargraphs of electricity and gas consumption for all 46 households. All individual electricity and gas readings remained confidential. Participants invited to seek help and advice from the volunteer for their road.
- Each Volunteer was responsible for inserting electricity and gas consumption figures and follow-up contact details on the tailored individual reports for their respective households
- 20 May: Deadline for hand delivery of Report to all 46 participating households (see attached document C).

#### August 2012

- 30 August: sub-group met to review state of play following circulation in May of Report to 46 participating households. Agreed to:
  - Prepare a Report for all 106 households in the Poets Estate to include any changes made by the 46 participating households as a result of being part of the Poets Estate Energy Reduction Study and any conclusions drawn by the Sub-group.
  - 6 Volunteers to decide whether they needed to contact their participating houses again or whether they already had sufficient information about what changes, if any, each had made. Some emailed contacts and/or visited the houses again for a further discussion.
  - Each volunteer to give all their detailed feedback for houses on their road to coordinator of feedback (volunteer) by 17 September.
  - 6 volunteers to draw to the attention of each participating household (by email or telephone):
    - (1) Insulate Hampshire's offer to provide free insulation for lofts and cavity walls, for which the deadline to express interest was 30 September.
    - (2) WinACC's offer of free insulation material for those wishing to install/top up their own loft insulation material, for collection from Western Primary School on 22 September.
  - In due course prepare a Press release and a further report suitable for the GF website and/or wider circulation.

#### October 2012

- 5 October: sub-group met to consider first draft of feedback document. Discussed draft and made suggested amendments for second draft of what would become a Report for distribution to the whole Poets Estate (all 106 houses).
- 19 October: sub-group met to discuss 2<sup>nd</sup> draft. Further alterations suggested and a different drafter took over further revision.

- 29 October: sub-group met to:
  - Consider 3rd draft: only minor alterations to be made. Final draft to be circulated for approval.
  - Arrange for 1 volunteer to explore whether there were sufficient GF funds to cover cost of printing Report (200? copies in colour, 2 sides of A4) or from another source to pay for printing. Then to seek GF Committee approval by email. Failing that, to seek approval at next GF Committee meeting on 22 November.
  - Aim to circulate Report to all 106 Poets Estate households well before Christmas.

#### COMMENTS/REFLECTIONS ON THE METHODOLOGY:

1. **Timing of Study:** Initially we chose the coldest 2 months (avoiding Christmas), i.e. early January to early March when energy consumption was highest (mainly on heating plus lighting). Arranging a briefing meeting after Christmas/over New Year was not possible because of absences among the 6 volunteers. We avoided holding a briefing meeting of the sub-group in December before Christmas.
2. **Collection of 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Readings: Email v. House Visits; Time of Day**
  - For some volunteers, house visits were a more successful and faster way of obtaining the electricity and gas readings from the majority of participants, rather than relying on people replying to an email.
  - For other volunteers, the majority of houses responded effectively to emails.
  - Volunteers needed to be prepared to be flexible and find a way to secure the readings to suit the individual household.
  - But house visits were more time-consuming for each volunteer. Volunteers who were retired therefore generally found it easier to make house visits, and follow-up visits, to catch people at home, than people who were working.
  - Some volunteers undertook two follow-up visits to some houses in order to secure both sets of readings.
  - Visits on Saturday and Sunday afternoons were more successful than mornings in terms of finding people in and prepared to take a little time to give us readings.
  - With the 1st readings there was pressure to secure as many sets of readings as possible to achieve a larger number of participants. This would make it a larger study and therefore increase the possibility of reducing even more the carbon footprint of the Poets Estate, thereby helping more households to achieve savings in their energy consumption.
  - For both sets of readings there were some inaccuracies. It is important to emphasise to both volunteers and participants that NO decimal points should be included in the readings. The inclusion of decimal points was the cause of some of the inaccurate readings.

- **For the 1st readings**, the letter of introduction to the Poets Estate Energy Reduction Study warned householders to expect a visit, to explain the Study and if willing to participate, to collect both first readings as well as some contact details. On the first house visit each Volunteer took with them a copy of the signed letter which included the easily recognisable GF logo. No pressure was put on householders to participate. For some the timing was bad (bereavement, illness, selling house); for others they had decided not to take part after reading the introductory letter. Some said they would participate but would email readings later which then failed to materialise. The majority of readings (42 out of 46) were taken during the first week of January. The other 4 were collected between 14 January and 8 February.
- **For the 2<sup>nd</sup> readings**, we failed to fix a weekend for collecting these. Amongst the volunteers we had just said “first week of March” but then the 2 coordinators failed to remind all 6 volunteers in good time so as to get a specific weekend into diaries. We also failed to communicate the dates to the participating houses which meant they did not know when to expect our visit. *We might have had an easier job collecting the 2nd readings if we had been warned about holiday absences and/or known which times of the week/day to avoid in order to catch people at home.* All the 2<sup>nd</sup> readings were collected during March (3<sup>rd</sup> -29<sup>th</sup>). The majority of readings (29 out of 46) were collected during the week 11-17 March.

### 3. **Use of Google Spreadsheet for Collecting Readings:**

- Not all Volunteers offered this Google option to their participants. Those who did found that, for some participants, this appeared to be one hurdle too far, as they opted to give the reading in an email. Thus most Volunteers collected the readings on house visits and then entered each reading themselves on to the Google spreadsheet.
- The Google spreadsheet was devised to present two separate databases: one for house details – street name, house number, house type ( detached/semi-detached/terraced) and contact details (name plus email of tel.no.); the second for the 2 sets of electricity and gas readings, entered by street name and house number.
- There were some teething problems but these were ironed relatively quickly by the spreadsheet volunteer in liaison with each of the other volunteers. This does *not* require a high level of computer literacy, but it does require an experienced IT practitioner who can communicate effectively with others having problems.

### 4. **Collection of House-Type Data (detached, semi-detached, terraced, end-of-terrace):**

- Initially we set out to collect and use house-type data in the Study.
- Subsequently we discovered there was no clear association between energy consumption and individual house types. This was because there were so many other factors that we were not recording which would affect energy consumption, e.g. length of day-time occupation, numbers of occupants, number of rooms. House type was just the easiest data to collect (without any discussion with occupants). Therefore, although we had collected the house-type data which we plotted on 2 graphs (for electricity and gas) – see attached document D – we did not include these two graphs in the final Report on the Study.

- We decided not to collect other data, but rather to keep the Study more manageable and simpler. Collecting two sets of electricity and gas readings had proved challenging enough without adding further questions and complexities.
- Despite the relative simplicity of this Study our experience has demonstrated that the actions and behaviour of many households have changed as a result of their participation in the Study, i.e. their carbon footprint will be reduced and savings in energy consumption should be achieved in due course.

November 2012