

Final Project Report

Summary

In 2018, FDT's community engagement revealed strong support for developing a scheme to help address fuel poverty and increase energy efficiency within Funderne. Due to this demand and the climate change crisis, 'Energy Efficient Living' was selected as one of six priority projects which would be the focus of the Trust's activities in its initial years in September 2019.

With the majority of Funderne households reliant on fossil fuels and with COVID-19 significantly increasing the number of people claiming Universal Credit*, FDT would like to build capacity to progress with a project that seeks to address these challenges by tackling fuel poverty and increasing energy efficiency within households to lead Funderne towards carbon reduction. This will not only contribute to the 2045 net-zero target set by the 2018 Climate Change Bill by reducing Funderne's environmental impact but support a rural community towards sustainability and enable households to increase future economic resilience and their overall health and wellbeing.

With Funderne's rurality, its ageing population (in 2018, it had more older households (all members over 65) than the Scottish average)), and poor connectivity, FDT recognise the need to provide dedicated on the ground support to actively engage residents who otherwise would be unlikely to seek support themselves. The graduate played a key role in this community engagement.

With sustainability as one of FDT's key underlying values, the graduates work will help move FDT towards its aim to become a leading climate action community by reducing carbon emissions and reaching Scotland's net zero emissions target by 2045. The graduate supported FDT in reaching their sustainability goals through projects in home energy efficiency, sustainable travel and community energy.

Graduate role

The initial stages for the Graduate were to complete the City and Guilds Energy Awareness Course and research other community fuel poverty/energy efficiency schemes. This was to ensure the graduate had good understanding and knowledge on the subject before offering advice to the community. The graduate produced a detailed research report on the need within Funderne to decrease fuel poverty/increase energy efficiency. After the research project was completed and distributed to all directors, the graduate then organised potential methods and mechanisms of project delivery. The graduate reached out to organisations that work in this field and developed partnership working with many local and nationwide organisations.

Now that the graduate had done all the preparation, it was time to launch the project and start engaging with the community. The graduate produced a leaflet to go out to every home in Funderne detailing the project and what it offers. The graduate also made use of member emails, social media and local community events to get the word out on the project.

The graduate offered home energy advice over the phone during lockdowns and then offered home visits when restrictions allowed. The graduate worked closely with the community to support them to make energy improvements at home. This often resulted in insulation instalments, DIY draughtproofing, renewables (Solar PV) installs and other energy saving behaviours being adopted. The graduate also referred community members onto other schemes to support their needs, such as

the fuel bank foundation which prevented some community members from being left without any fuel to heat their home.

Review of Objectives

Outputs:

1.Project terms of reference document	Attached
2.Energy efficiency survey report and analysis	Attached
3.Engagement of 50% of FINDERNE households	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of households received the leaflet • Social media: reach = 2301 + engagements = 107 • Membership emails = 428 opens + 149 clicks • Attended 6 Community Events = <30 • Held several drop-in sessions at Logie Steading = 12 • Door-to-door leaflet distribution
4.A Report of possible funding streams	Attached
5.Written report outlining steps for developing a Community Energy Saving Strategy for FDT projects and community buildings	Report on renewable heating systems for Brockloch site attached. Zero Waste Scotland were contacted and the graduate assisted applications for funding to improve energy efficiency of community buildings.

Outcomes:

1.Deliver energy efficiency measures for 20% of households engaged with	The total number of engagements was 159 people. There were 8 energy efficiency instalments recorded after the graduate's contact. It is difficult to quantify the number of people that made changes in their energy efficiency behaviours, however it would be expected that the project will have influenced a far greater number than 20% of engaged households to improve energy efficiency measures.
2.Reduce fuel/power consumption by 10% on properties that have energy efficiency measures in place	Homes that had insulation measures installed such as cavity wall, floor and loft insulation will have saved between 15 – 33% of heat loss in the home, therefore requiring less energy. For homes that installed renewable technologies such as solar panels, it is expected they will have saved around 20% of energy usage.
3.To increase FINDERNE Development Trust's membership by 5% in 12 months	Three new members have joined during the graduate's placement which increased the membership by 2.24%.
4.Increased community awareness and involvement with the Trust, connecting isolated households	The graduate attended community events and helped to increase awareness of FDT and their projects. He also did home visits in isolated households and encourage them to attend local

	events as well as offering energy advice. The graduate was involved in other FDT projects such as the broadband project where he was offering advice to the community, producing mapping and engaging with contractors to ensure the most remote houses get access to fast internet.
5.Opportunities for carbon reduction identified for FDT projects e.g., renewable heating systems and power generation for affordable housing development and community hub	The graduate was the main contact on behalf of FDT for the Brockloch renewable heating study. The contractor was in regular contact with the graduate and was key in arranging meetings and checking the report findings.

Project performance analysis

The outputs and outcomes set at the start of the project were mostly met by the graduate. Initially, when the project launched the graduate was busy with home visits and calls/emails about energy advice. However, interest in the service began to reduce as time went on, despite the graduates' efforts to boost awareness. Throughout the placement, the graduate assisted households in improving insulation, accessing emergency fuel funds, accessing funding, offering good energy habit advice and referring onto other schemes. During difficult times around covid restrictions, the graduate used social media, phonecalls and emails to get the word out when he was unable to be physically present. The number of clicks and views on the posts he made on social media and the website would suggest that the number of people who made home energy improvements in Finderne during this project is far higher than was measured in the data.

Risks and Challenges

The project was launched during covid restrictions which proved to be well-timed to support people whose earnings had been impacted the pandemic. However, it was also a challenging time to launch the project as many things, including the Energy Awareness Course were postponed and caused a delay in getting the project started. The covid restrictions continued to hinder the graduates attempts with community engagement but he was able to overcome most of this using remote ways of contacting community members which proved successful. Another challenge brought about by covid was the backlog of cases that had built up for installers who couldn't do the work during restrictions. This meant that community members had to wait long periods of time to get a quote from installers and even longer to get the work done. The graduate was able to organise communication between houses getting similar work done in the area which encouraged installers to act sooner as they were able to get multiple jobs done in a day or two.

One of the main risks when launching the project was that the people experiencing fuel poverty would not put themselves forward or were not aware they are fuel poor. The leaflet was distributed to every household in Finderne and included a self-assessment survey in order to encourage people to evaluate their home energy usage and whether or not they might be eligible for support. This was successful in getting people to come forward, however most of the queries were about energy advice and funding and not about struggling to afford fuel. This may be because there are not many people experiencing fuel poverty in the area or that we still need to overcome the prejudices involved with fuel poverty.

Successes and Best Practices

The project achieved many successes and would put much of that down to the partnership working with organisations such as Home Energy Scotland (HES) and REAP who supported the graduate throughout the role. As the trust was not offering funding from its core funds towards household's energy improvements, it was crucial that the graduate was able to use effective referral methods to enable community members to access the funding they were eligible for. The graduate's home visits and referrals were followed up in the HES referral reports to ensure that the household had been contacted and that the relevant discussions had taken place.

The attendance of community events was also a good way to meet community members who might not have put themselves forward for the service otherwise. Many of the graduate's home visits stemmed from meeting community members at the community events.

Although many energy efficiency measures were discussed with community members, the three most popular measures adopted after meeting with the graduate were:

1. Cavity Wall Insulation (Polystyrene and Polyurethane Foam)
2. Draught Proofing (doors, windows and floorboards)
3. Solar Panels (PV and Thermal)

Financial Summary

The project was funded by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) who covered the salary of the graduate's role for a 12-month period. Additional expenses for the project included 2x shared leaflet mail outs which was covered by the trust's funds at a combined cost of £346 + £171 = £517. Banners and posters were also purchased to be used at community events at a cost of £155.

- Total project costs from core funds - £672.00

Transfer Operations

The graduate's role will come to an end on the 20th of January and there will be no ongoing tasks to transfer or roles to fill. The information that the graduate gathered and put up on the website will remain for the community to go back and read if they want to. The website containing the energy advice will have to be monitored and updated on a quarterly basis to ensure it meets current standards.

The graduate would like to thank the FDT Directors and staff for their support and dedication in getting the project up and running successfully. It has been a pleasure to have been a part of the Finnerne Community and meet so many people championing rural development.