

Tip at the Top

Turn any electrical appliance right off, as they can use nearly two 2/3 of power they would use if they were on. This will also save you 2/3 of the amount of money you spend powering them!

THE GREEN ISSUE

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Introduction

Hello and welcome to 'The Green Issue'. We are a newsletter that seeks to raise awareness of the environmental concerns facing us today and that offers easy and practical advice on how every one of us can change the future of the planet.

This week we examine how it is possible to reduce the energy used in your home by making a few home improvements; not only will these help reduce your carbon footprint they will also reduce your heating and electricity bills. Many of the changes mentioned will return your

financial expenditure within a couple of years by making you significant savings on your household bills.

We'll also be looking at the vast amount of energy wasted by leaving appliances on stand-by, and the significant difference turning electrical appliances off can make.

But, firstly, we are looking at the varying eco-policies of the three major political parties; and whether or not any of their policies are going to impact the high levels of carbon emissions produced by the UK.

Environment on the Political Agenda

As the Annual Party Conference season begins the Liberal Democrats have made a radical claim that Britain needs to be carbon neutral by the year 2050. This is in response to Labour's pledge to reduce carbon emissions by 60% by 2050; whereas the Conservatives hold the figure of an 80% reduction in place as a benchmark.

Party policies to create the necessary reduction in Carbon emissions vary dramatically.



One method all parties have discussed is the introduction of so called 'green taxes' on high polluting products or services: such as aviation. However, it is argued that the impact of such taxes will impact those on lower incomes significantly more than the wealthy; they are

more likely to stop lower income families taking their once a year trip abroad than business people taking corporate flights.

One area where carbon emissions can be reduced is within our homes- British homes are among the least efficient in Europe. Each party deals with this issue differently. The Liberal Democrats want new homes to be totally Green by 2011, with more stringent building regulations and penalties in place. Labour has spoken about 'personal carbon rationalising' and encourages people to offset their carbon emissions. Meanwhile, the Conservatives strongly favour a financial incentive for greener homes; such as reduced stamp duty and council tax rebates.

Whilst all these approaches vary the Liberal Democrats and Conservative policies focus on financial incentives, not on the conscience of the people. And as demoralising as it may sound perhaps this is the only way to make people take notice of the impact they are having on the environment.

Improving the Energy Efficiency of Your Home

In an ideal world all our homes would have a high rate of energy efficiency as standard and all we would have to worry about would be saving energy with the appliances we use. However, we do not live in an ideal world and all our homes are not as energy efficient as they could be. Whilst there are specific 'eco homes' available that do their utmost to have the least impact possible on the environment, often it is not possible for us all to buy or build such a home.

That is why it is vital that we are aware how to make our homes as energy efficient as possible, preferably spending the least amount of money possible!

Even moving to the newest of homes there are still many options that allow us to improve the energy efficiency of our homes; which will not only save you money on your fuel bills but also be a key selling point if you are thinking about marketing your home.

Approximately half of the heat lost from an average home is expended through the walls and loft, so it is vital to check that both of these areas are properly insulated. Without effective roof insulation you could be losing up to 15% of the heat from within your home through the loft.



Loft insulation works by trapping this heat within the home, having the same effect as a blanket, and keeping all the heat you are paying for within your home. The insulation (which usually consists of fibreglass matting) is laid over the floor of the loft, and this type of insulation can be easily completed by a confident householder (although specialist equipment and clothing must be worn).

In houses built after the 1920's most houses are constructed with two layers of block work on the external walls with a gap of air in between. If this gap is left unfilled then this can cause your home to lose a huge amount of energy. The solution to this problem is 'cavity wall insulation' in which this gap is filled with an insulating material, working in a similar vein to the loft insulation and reducing heat escaping through the walls of your property.

Another significant way that heat escapes in your home is from the hot water cylinder. This can easily be resolved by fitting your tank with a British Standard 'jacket' that will keep the water within it hotter for longer. The same can be done with hot water pipes, thus reducing the energy needed to heat water within your home.

Energy is also lost through the windows in our homes; a problem that can easily be solved through the installation of double glazing throughout your home. Double glazing works because the window is made of two sheets of glass, in between which air is trapped, thus creating an insulating barrier which reduces heat loss as well as noise levels.

It is also possible to install products that will actually stop energy from the grid being used within your home. Heating water accounts for approximately 20% of a household's energy costs, and there is a simple solution to reduce this figure and cut your carbon emissions significantly.

Installing solar panels with the purpose of heating water is a simple process which can be completed by professionals in about a day. Solar water heating uses energy from the sun to supply your home with hot water. Solar energy is collected via solar panels and then transferred through pipes to your hot water cylinder (which needs to be a twin coil hot water cylinder).

A startling way to reduce the amount of energy your home uses is to generate your own electricity. Currently the most effective way to do this is through the installation of a wind turbine specially designed for domestic use.

Wind turbines generate electricity by converting the rotation of the turbine blades in to electricity through an electrical generator. Wind energy is totally renewable, greatly reduces carbon emissions and is plentiful, and is an ideal solution to the needs of householders and businesses alike. Many companies can supply, and install, wind turbines, meaning that you can produce your own energy. This reduces both your carbon footprint and your energy bills!



As outlined above there are many ways to reduce the amount of energy used in your home, from simple steps such as increasing the insulation values within your property, through to the option of generating your own electricity. With all the solutions possible it really is time that everyone accepted responsibility for their carbon footprint and began to take measures to reduce it.

Saving Energy

The energy consumed in our homes is one of the single biggest contributions to global warming; almost half of the UK's carbon emissions come from energy we use every day, both in our homes and because of our travel habits.

In Britain today each of our homes holds an increasing amount of electrical gadgetry: flat screen televisions, laptops and digital radios, for example, and many of these products use considerably more energy than their traditional counterparts. We have a wealth of equipment that makes our lives more comfortable, however the impact that such apparatus has on the environment is startling.



It is estimated that by 2010 electrical appliances will be the single biggest user of domestic electricity, and that this figure is set to rise along with the amount of electrical equipment in our homes.

Apart from the energy consumption of such appliances whilst they are in use, there is also the added issue of the energy used when they are on 'stand by'.

I recently purchased a flat screen television that does not have an 'off' switch. In order to turn the television completely off one has to turn it off at the wall. It makes you wonder why, considering the high awareness of the issues of Global Warming, that such products are still being manufactured. In some televisions the energy used by being on stand by is nearly two-thirds of the electricity it would use if left on.

It must be time, therefore, to say "good bye" to stand-by; and save money as well as significantly reducing the carbon emission from your home.

Household Products *Care for your Laundry & the Environment*

In my own household I use my washing machine at least once a day. Due to the hardness of the water in my area I need to use at least 100ml of washing detergent per load. This means in one week I use at least 700ml of laundry detergent, but what impact does this have on the environment?



It is often hard to find, and even harder to recognise, the ingredients that are present in many brands of detergent. Therefore it is difficult to assess the impact that such products have on the environment. However, it is possible to ascertain that inclusions such as artificial fragrances are slow to biodegrade and are harmful to aquatic wildlife and environment. Synthetic ingredients can also cause allergic reactions in those with sensitive skin; thus it is always best to try to use a detergent that is made using natural ingredients.

Conventional detergents consist mainly of petrochemical surfactants which are not only harmful to aquatic life but are also based on finite oil supplies. It is much better to choose a product that is based on plant surfactants which are both renewable and have a minimal impact on aquatic life.

There are many of these products available, produced by companies such as Ecover that specialise in 'green' household products.

ECOVER[®]
Effective Cleaning - Ecologically

Ecover produce a biological washing powder (which despite popular belief is not actually proved to increase allergies) and using this biological washing powder could enable you to turn the temperature of your washing machine to 30 degrees; helping the planet further.