

# Consumer Engagement Steering Group Meeting – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009

## Working groups

The following working groups are proposed.

### Brand and product

- **looking at:**
  - i) how developers migrate and leverage their brand reputation in a market that has been niche to date
  - ii) development of brand messaging within the legislative framework (i.e. 2010, 2013, 2016)
  - iii) segmentation of home buyers
  - iv) acceptance of energy efficiency / renewable products
  - v) consumer acceptance of the look/feel of low/zero carbon homes
  - vi) what information/education is needed to enable people to use low/zero carbon homes effectively?
  - vii) maintenance of products

**Objective:** To determine the messaging and marketing techniques that will best engage consumers on zero carbon homes and associated technologies.

### **Proposed group members:**

- Helen Saunders - Crest Nicholson
- Sofia Gkiousou – Energy Retail Association
- Zoe Leader – WWF
- Jayne Lomas – Homes and Communities Agency (Design)

**Action:** Matt Robinson to specifically seek additional representation from housebuilders, consumer marketing team at the Energy Saving Trust. Matt will also speak to contacts – sourced via the Hub - in the energy efficiency and renewable industry.

### Cost

- **looking at:**

- i) issues surrounding affordability of low/zero carbon homes
- ii) financing – green mortgages
- iii) fiscal measures – incentives, grants, loans

**Objective:** To ascertain which financial / fiscal solutions are likely to increase consumer demand for zero carbon homes.

**Proposed group members:**

- Briony Turner – Homes and Communities Agency
- Laura Simons - Consultant

**Action:** Matt Robinson to pursue 'green' finance contacts through the Energy Saving Trust – and through the Co-Op bank.

**Labelling**

- **looking at:**

- i) role / value of labelling
- ii) what type of labelling will work best
- iii) what does it look like?

**Objective:** To establish whether the labelling of zero carbon homes would be likely to increase the awareness of and specifically the demand for them.

**Proposed group members:**

**Action:** Matt to speak with Energy Saving Recommended team at the Energy Saving Trust, and to follow up with contact at Which?

**Media**

- **looking at:**

- i) Channels to the consumer

**Objective:** To normalise / promote zero carbon homes through the national and local press, and consumer facing publications.

**Proposed group members:**

- Judith Gubbay – National Magazine Company
- Sarah Bullock - NextGen

**Action:** Matt Robinson to speak to contact at Guardian, Communications team at the Energy Saving Trust for additional representation.

## **Key issues raised by the Steering Group during the meeting**

### **The route to 2016**

- Idea that messaging and marketing needs to be developed in a staged approach between now and 2016 in order to reflect the changes in regulatory policy in 2010 and 2013.

**Action:** Matt and Margaret to review the COI 'Greenshift' document that includes conversations with people already living in higher code homes.

### **Tiers of information for the consumer**

- Important to develop a consistent, basic level of information for the consumer on low and zero carbon homes.
- BUT also needed are more in-depth tiers of information for those who want to know more.
- NEED to consider how those with a technical background, but who deal with the public i.e. installers of renewables talk to customers about their products. Are they using the right language?

### **Integration with self-build and refurbishment work**

- We need to incorporate learnings from self-build / refurbishment work.
- This will help get the general messages about 'greener' living out more widely
- AND encourage people rally around the issues.
- AND drive the suppliers.

**Action:** Matt Robinson to follow up with Neil Jefferson about his visit to a community in Liverpool who were involved in a refurbishment project.

### **Requests for exemplar homes**

**Action:** Matt Robinson and Margaret Egan to follow up with Jayne Lomas and Sarah Bullock regarding their work in this area. Matt to speak with Clive Turner (Zero Carbon Hub) to ensure integration of existing Hub exemplars.

### **What does a zero carbon home look like? What will it mean for the consumer?**

- Flows into the idea within the workplan of creating 'zero carbon home' concepts and testing consumer reactions.
- Question was asked "Why do we have to sell this to consumers if it's happening anyway?" The reason relates to the need to create consumer demand prior to 2016, not just consumer awareness. Ideally consumers would drive the change to lower carbon homes.

### **Allowable Solutions**

- Group didn't think it was that much of an issue – what is important instead is to explain to people what they're getting when they buy a low/zero carbon home.
- One area of interest may be if the allowable solutions include options that are 'visible' to the consumer i.e. shares in off-shore wind farms. Would this make them be less interested in homes that don't offer this benefit? i.e. ones where the allowable solution involved refurbishment work.
- No pre-disposition by Government to call these homes 'zero carbon'. This term has been useful to push the policy forward, but perhaps won't be as effective in pushing the product forward.