PIONEER PLACES MILTON KEYNES – KICK STARTING LOCAL GREEN DEAL ACTIVITY

Average EPC rating of 60
184 Domestic Green Deal Assessments

2000 Unique Website Visits

813 Doorstep Surveys
5 Green Homes Recruited

6 Green Deal Events
33 Business Advice Visits

693 Green Deal Measures Recommended

Cost of Recommended Measures £1.5 Million
16 Non-Domestic Green Deal Assessments

INSIGHTS FROM THE NATIONAL ENERGY FOUNDATION

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WHAT IS PIONEER PLACES?

The Pioneer Places programme is an initiative funded by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) which aims to promote Green Deal to householders and businesses through the offer of free energy surveys.

What is the Green Deal?

The Green Deal is an innovative financing mechanism that lets homeowners and businesses pay for energy-efficiency improvements through the savings on their energy bills. The scheme was developed by Government and is being rolled out by industry and will pay for measures including:

- insulation - e.g. solid wall, cavity wall or loft insulation
- heating upgrades
- draught-proofing
- double glazing
- renewable energy generation - e.g. solar panels or heat pumps

https://www.gov.uk/green-deal-energy-saving-measures

The National Energy Foundation (NEF) managed the programme within the Milton Keynes area, alongside Milton Keynes Council. The programme comprised both short and long term objectives with an initial drive to increase awareness and demand for Green Deal (GD) within the Milton Keynes community and in the long term establish a local Green Deal supply chain to meet this demand.

To ensure uptake of GD measures, activity focused on promoting GD to householders and businesses across the local authority area via 6 local events (over a 12 week period), show homes, newspaper and community communiques and by exploring promotional activity at community level by working with community groups. To aid with the future delivery of Green Deal in the area, activities were undertaken to help local trades understand the opportunity available to them. Council staff were also given additional training and further education colleges were approached about the possibility of offering training related to Green Deal.

APPROACH

The Milton Keynes Pioneer Places project consisted of a multilevel approach to promoting Green Deal within both the domestic and non-domestic sectors. The three main areas were Surveys, Promotion and Communications and trade up-skilling and guidance.

SURVEYS

Surveys were carried out in three different formats –

Doorstep Home Energy Survey

In total 813 ‘doorstep’ surveys were carried out in Milton Keynes. Student workers and community volunteers went door to door starting in 4 key target areas. Householders were asked to complete a short questionnaire about their property and energy bills. After the results had been processed, the householders were then sent a report which
contained advice about improvements that could be made to their homes. The surveys lasted approximately ten minutes so provided an efficient means to establish if the Green Deal could be appropriate for a household. The surveys were co-ordinated by the Sustainable Home Survey Company and the National Energy Foundation.

GREEN DEAL ASSESSMENT – DOMESTIC

Milton Keynes householders were offered the chance to have free Green Deal assessments carried out on their properties. The surveys were promoted on the ‘Building Retrofit Network’ website (www.retrofitnetwork.org.uk), local newspaper adverts, leaflets, events and the doorstep surveys. Householders were able to book surveys through a dedicated phone line, email address, a website contact form and at events.

In total 184 assessments were completed by qualified assessors from organisations including the GDAA and Bierce. Assessors were assigned to the individual properties where they carried out an advice visit and detailed survey. After the visit all householders received a Green Deal Advice Report (GDAR) either by post or email. The advice report consists of a standard Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) and an occupancy assessment.

GREEN DEAL ASSESSMENT – NON-DOMESTIC

Non-domestic Green deal assessments were made available to business and property owners across Milton Keynes. In total 16 assessments were carried out on a range of premises such as schools, shops and warehouses.
PROMOTION AND COMMUNICATION

To raise the profile of the Green Deal in the area, a Milton Keynes wide marketing campaign was launched. The main activities included;

EVENTS

Six events took place in five different Milton Keynes locations. The main aim was to raise awareness of the green deal and allow the public to speak to someone face to face about energy saving and their options under the Green Deal.

1. Newport Pagnell Farmers Market - A weekday outdoor event aimed at Newport Pagnell householders.

2. Future Wolverton Energy Show – A weekend Community event promoting energy efficiency and Green Deal.

3. Xscape – A weekday event at a combined shopping and leisure complex.

4&5. The Centre MK – Two weekend events held in one of the largest shopping centres in the region.

6. West Bletchley Council Offices – A weekday event based at a drop in session for householders of Bletchley.

LEAFLETS

To help promote Green Deal in Milton Keynes, 3 leaflets were produced: a trade leaflet and two leaflets for domestic properties.

Green Deal Trade Leaflet – Provided information to local trades on becoming an installer and contact details for further help. They were distributed at events and local trade shops.

Green Deal Domestic Leaflet – Provided householders with information about the Green Deal and the free surveys on offer across Milton Keynes. Leaflets were distributed at events and the area specific leaflets were delivered door-to-door in the target areas.
BUILDING RETROFIT NETWORK (BRN) WEBSITE

A completely new website was commissioned to provide a new recognised platform for the Green Deal across Milton Keynes (www.retrofitnetwork.org.uk). The BRN is a partnership between Milton Keynes Council, The National Energy Foundation and Orbit Group. The website received almost 2000 unique visitors during its first few months of operation.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media was used to promote the Green Deal activities in Milton Keynes. Both Facebook and Twitter were used to promote events and raise awareness of what was on offer.

LOCAL NEWS

Local media outlets were used in two ways to promote the Green deal activity in Milton Keynes. Editorial pieces were produced for both online and printed version of the local news and adverts were placed in the local newspaper and on the newspapers website.
GREENHOMES

Across Milton Keynes, five ‘Green Homes’ were recruited in conjunction with the SuperHomes network (www.superhomes.org.uk). Three of these homes opened to the public during SuperHomes week (16th – 24th March 2013) to show the general public what improvements are effective and possible. To complement the open days a number of video flythroughs were created which show the homeowners discussing their improvements and close-ups of the various aspects of the houses that have been upgraded.

INFORMING BUSINESSES

To help Local Businesses fully take advantage of the opportunities presented by the launch of the Green Deal a number of advice visits were delivered. These visits were aimed at any trades that could be involved in the Green Deal delivery process and contained advice on the process for becoming an installer or sub-contractor to a ‘Deal Provider’ (companies that are registered and able to offer Green Deal finance). In total 33 advice visits were carried out across the Milton Keynes area.

TRADE UPSKILLING AND GUIDANCE

GREEN DEAL UPSKILLING WORKSHOP

To help Milton Keynes Council’s staff understand the opportunities and likely impacts of the Green Deal three half day training sessions were delivered to the Council’s Planning, Building Control and Housing Officers. Approximately 30 members of staff attended these workshops over the three sessions.

Green Deal - Background

- Helps remove upfront costs of making energy saving improvements, such as insulation, heating and lighting
- It allows bill payers to pay for some or all of the improvements using the savings they make from their energy bills
- Available to businesses and householders
- Benefits: reduced bills, reduced fuel poverty, improved tenant affordability and improved comfort
- Launched 28th January 2013
TRAINING FOR FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES

To help Further Education Colleges better understand the opportunities for training arising out of the introduction of the Green Deal we contacted all eleven colleges that are within a 30 mile radius of Milton Keynes. Each was offered the opportunity of a visit to find out more about the Green Deal and what it might mean to them. Of these, four colleges received a visit, Aylesbury, Moulton, Amersham and Barnfield (Luton) and follow up information. During their visit the colleges were presented with an overview presentation of the Green Deal and the routes to become an accredited training provider.

LOCAL PLANNING AND BUILDING REGULATION GUIDANCE

In a bid to help improve the level of guidance available to local householders about different improvement options and their respective merits, the National Energy Foundation has worked with the MK Planning Department and Building Control unit to develop guidance documentation tailored to the demands in Milton Keynes.

The first phase of this work has focussed on drafting guidance on energy upgrades to windows and doors in conservation areas. This seeks to present what upgrades are most applicable and what must be considered from a local planning approval and regulation sign off perspective. In recognition that similar guidance is commonplace, we have developed a simple yes/no decision tree that presents clear pathways that local householders, planning officers and building control alike can all use to ensure consistency in decision making is achieved across the region.

To complement this guide, a series of other similar documents are planned, including but not limited to; floor insulation, wall insulation, roofs and renewables. These will be presented in the same format as the windows and doors guidance, allowing for easy access and consumption.

OUTCOMES

The activity of the Pioneer Places project across Milton Keynes was a positive step towards driving interest in the Green Deal. The main success of the project came through surveying and promoting the opportunities to local trades. Interest from the public has continued long after the project ended with many householders still calling to see if they can have a free Green Deal assessment. Although the timescale of the project was relatively short, it created a great deal of interest in the Green deal across Milton Keynes.
The doorstep home energy surveys provided a useful tool for pre-screening potential Green Deal ready households. The information gathered included building fabric details, household details including energy bills and the resident’s opinions on the environment. In the future this process could be used to quickly assess the housing stock of an area to ensure that the most appropriate households receive full Green Deal assessments.

In total 813 doorstep surveys were carried out across Milton Keynes. The surveyor time needed to achieve this number of successful surveys was higher than originally anticipated due to a number of factors including the time of day that surveys occurred, adverse weather conditions and lower interest in participation than anticipated. The householders that took part were generally happy to give answers to all of the questions asked. The presence of Milton Keynes Council as the lead partner gave householders peace of mind that their data would be treated confidentially.

Tablet computers were used to survey householders, which makes the process much quicker than using traditional paper survey techniques.
Properties were not targeted specifically. When surveyors went into an area they were given a list of streets to ‘door knock’ but were asked to observe any signs requesting no cold calling. One of the questions asked was the tenure of the property. Shown below is the tenure split for all households who had a survey. Our sample compares favourably with the split in tenure for Milton Keynes as a whole, with the largest sample of properties belonging to the owned or private rented sector.

Asking householders about property tenure is a fundamental question for a Green Deal screening survey. This is due to the differences in the Green Deal for owner occupiers, private rented and housing association or council owned properties. Householders were also asked about any government support received by any members of the household. This is particularly relevant for any ECO (Energy Company Obligation) funding the household might be able to claim for measures being installed.

Householders were also asked if they knew how much energy they were using. Householders could have responded with a yearly figure or monthly figure and we asked for either a cost or a figure in Kwh. Almost a quarter of householders had no idea about their energy use and a further 70% weren’t sure but had some idea, which left only 8% of householders who knew exactly how much they were using/spending.

Shown below is the percentage of people claiming government benefits for each type of housing tenure. Of the 813 people surveyed, 23% chose not to answer this question. The highest proportion of people receiving government support were living in council owned properties which suggests that councils should be taking advantage of the ECO opportunities available to their tenants. Almost 50% of the private rented households surveyed were also claiming some form of government benefit; this could represent a key opportunity for engaging private landlords about the funding available to them to improve the efficiency of their properties.
WALL CONSTRUCTION

Although Milton Keynes is perceived to be a new town, many older buildings were present before the new estates were created, for example in the area of Wolverton the housing type is predominantly Victorian terraced. This has led to pockets of solid walled properties across the town.

These types of properties were often overlooked in previous government schemes as they are harder and more expensive to treat. We concentrated our doorstep surveying in some of the areas of Milton Keynes that had a high incidence of solid walled properties, of the solid walled properties surveyed 91% were uninsulated.
Full green Deal Assessments

In total 693 measures were recommended to 184 different households across the Milton Keynes area. The households had a total of 22 different measures recommended from air source heat pumps to cavity wall insulation. The measure recommended to the largest number of households in their Green Deal Advice Reports was a new condensing gas boiler. If external and internal wall insulation are counted together they would be the 4th most frequent recommendation with almost double the number of recommendations that cavity wall insulation received.

Average household energy savings were predicted to be much higher for households that were recommended some form of solid wall insulation as one of their measures, the average saving was £396 compared with only £191 for all other households.

If all of the households that had surveys installed all of the measures recommended in their advice reports, the costs of works would be between £1.5 and £2.8million. This is of course highly unlikely, but even if only a fraction of the measures were installed this would still represent a boost to the local and national installers and supply chain.
The average EPC rating from all assessments was 60 which is in band D, if all house had the recommended improvements carried out this could be raised to an average of 82 which is in band B. This would equate to average real term yearly savings of £258 per household on their energy bills.

A number of properties fell within the lower EPC bands of G, F and E showing that these properties were particularly poor in terms of energy efficiency. However the potential EPC improvements suggested could move all but one of the properties out of these bottom three bands.
One of the Green Deal’s main aims is to help people carry out whole house retrofit with a number of different measures installed at the same time. 83% of those who received a survey had more than one measure recommended on their report, and 32% had between 5 and 10 individual measures recommended.

Green Deal advice reports give estimated costs for the recommended measures and for the amount that households can expect to save on their annual energy bills. A high and low estimate is given for the cost of the measures due to the variation that can occur in the price of measures. A comparison of the estimated cost of measures in relation to the estimated annual savings was made to determine if the highest cost measures would produce the largest projected savings on annual bills. This was generally seen to be the case with both the low and high estimated costs.

Some outlying points were observed for example one report had a package of measures with an estimated high cost of £43,500 but the annual savings were only £150, this would equate to a payback period of 290 years if no subsidies were used. This sort of anomaly clearly doesn’t meet the Green Deal’s Golden Rule.
In total 33 businesses received advice visits or telephone support with 8 participants particularly interested in the whole process and pursuing things further. Word of Mouth was the most common method that the business heard about the project. This highlights the importance of local groups and networks for promoting this sort of scheme to businesses as many do not have the time or resources to look for opportunities and are also more likely to trust a colleague in the same trade.

The trade sector most interested in the opportunities presented by Green Deal appears to be the Plumbing and Heating sector. From the Green Deal Assessments carried out it seems that the demand from customers links with the elevated interest from this particular trade as the most commonly recommended measure was a new boiler.

The businesses had a variety of reasons for wanting advice about Green Deal for example some had already looked into becoming installers and wanted help with the next steps, others hadn’t heard of it before and wanted to know the business case for exploring it further.
KEY LEARNING

WHAT WORKED BEST?

SURVEYS

The doorstep surveys provided a cost effective, quick way of gauging people’s suitability for Green Deal without needing to go through the expensive time consuming full survey. During a ten minute interview with a resident, much of the key information needed to determine if their property was suitable was achieved.

Many householders were very impressed with the Green Deal assessments and appreciated the time that knowledgeable assessors spent with them explaining aspects of the Green Deal and potential improvements for their homes.

PROMOTION AND COMMUNICATION

Local Paper advertising attracted a large proportion of those wishing to have a full Green Deal assessment. As well as the advertising space the project also received editorial exposure with articles in the printed newspaper and on the newspapers website. The local paper is free and is delivered to a large number of householders across the whole of Milton Keynes.

How did you hear about Pioneer Places?

TRADE UPSKILLING AND GUIDANCE

A clear need for households to have access to clear and concise planning guidance was identified particularly in areas where different planning rules apply for example conservation areas. The guides will be simple enough for households to follow without needing an in depth knowledge of planning regulation and will provide viable options that abide by specific regulations.
WHAT DIDN’T WORK?

SURVEYS

One of the largest constraints on the success of the surveying was the timescales imposed on the project. The original idea would have been to run the doorstep surveys for a number of weeks and then offer Green Deal assessment to the households most suitable for the Green Deal. However the limited timescales of the project required that both surveys ran concurrently which didn’t allow for the doorstep ‘pre-screening’ surveys to fully reach their potential.

The full Green Deal assessments proved to be very popular with householders across Milton Keynes, however there were a number of reasons for this apart from people wanting to actually have Green Deal work carried out. For example, some were just curious about the efficiency of their properties or wanted an EPC for selling the house in the future.

PROMOTION AND COMMUNICATION

Events could be seen to be the least successful part of the marketing and communications programme for Pioneer Places Milton Keynes. In total 6 events were held across Milton Keynes in a variety of locations including shopping centres, farmers markets and a local energy show. All though mild interest was shown by the public at these events for the staff time needed to run the events it was not a cost effective option to promote the project across Milton Keynes.

TRADE UPSKILLING AND GUIDANCE

A key hurdle for offering support to FE colleges was being able to talk to the right people at the college which proved very difficult and time consuming. Despite identifying a key gap in training required for Green Deal it seemed that the colleges had very little time to think about potential new services.

MILTON KEYNES HOUSEHOLDERS VIEWS

During the project there were two main opportunities to ask Milton Keynes householders about their opinion on topics such as the Green Deal, energy efficiency and the project itself.

DOORSTEP SURVEYS

Householders were asked to say what they believed were the most important reasons for being energy efficient, they were allowed to agree with as many options as they wanted. The top reason was that people wanted to reduce their energy bills followed by having a warmer home and then finally reducing their carbon footprint. However 72% of those surveyed agreed that all three reasons were important to them.
Householders were also asked about their knowledge of the Green Deal. The surveys took place in February and March 2013 which was after the January 2013 official launch of Green Deal. A high proportion of householders (65%) had never heard of the Green Deal before and a further 15% had only heard the term but nothing else. Only 5% of householders had a full understanding of the Green Deal.

**GREEN DEAL ASSESSMENT FOLLOW UP CALLS**

To help understand people’s attitudes towards Green Deal and to evaluate the success of the activities carried out in Milton Keynes a series of follow up calls were carried out with householders that received a full Green Deal assessment. In total 111 calls were made, 51 of these calls resulted in successful calls where the phone was answered and the resident answered some or all of the questions.

The key information that was gained from the follow up calls includes:

- Of the people surveyed following their Green Deal assessment, 58% are now considering making improvements to their homes.

- 53% of people who are considering making improvements are planning on using Green Deal finance to pay for the work.

- 68% of people planning on making improvements would like to carry them out in the next year.

- Of the people surveyed 72% were considering installing 1 or 2 measures with 14% considering 3 or more measures. 14% of those surveyed were unsure of the measure they would like installed.
Boilers and Windows were the most popular measures households wished to install with 39% considering a new boiler and 32% considering improvements to their windows. 10% of those surveyed were planning on installing solid wall insulation.

53% of those surveyed are thinking more about their energy use and have changed their behaviour as a result of the assessment.

92% of people were happy with the overall process from booking their survey through the assessor visit and receiving the final report.

A number of householders who tried to contact Green Deal providers during the project came across the same response, that finance was not available yet. All though the issues have now been resolved a number of people were potentially put off by this early delay to the start of Green Deal.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further inflation on the Pioneer Places Project, Green Deal, or energy efficiency opportunities for homeowners and business, please contact:

info@nef.org.uk or telephone 01908 665555