

Press Release - 1st September 2014

Norman Baker MP launches Lewes Eco Open Houses 2014

Lewes MP Norman Baker today officially launched Lewes Eco Open Houses, which will be held over the weekends of 13-14 and 20-21 September. Sixteen homes in Lewes, Barcombe, Ditchling, Rodmell and rural areas, will be open to the public to see how you can save money on energy and water bills, whilst staying warm and comfortable and reducing your carbon footprint. With fuel costs rising and changeable weather patterns increasing, the Eco Open Houses trail is an invaluable way to see first-hand how to make your home cheaper to run and more comfortable.

During the launch event, a mix of local councillors, householders, volunteers and event organisers proudly cut the green ribbon at the Eco Open House of Neil Williams of 8 St James Street, Lewes. Neil explained how he had eco-renovated his Victorian terraced home on a modest budget, which included high levels of solid-wall and under-floor insulation, low-cost magnetic secondary glazing, and a wood-burning stove. The cost of the refurbishment was £4,500 and energy use and bills have been cut by 50%. As one of the 16 houses on the trail, Neil's home is an inspirational visit brimming with cost saving ideas.

Neil's introduction was followed by launch special guest, Lewes MP Norman Baker.

Mr. Baker said, "The Open Houses event is a grass-roots movement which gives a unique chance to learn from the practical, real-life experience of others in the local community. A quarter of the UK's carbon emissions come from energy used in the home so there is good potential to save carbon. And many people are struggling to pay their energy bills and stay warm, so there is an urgent need to find ways to save energy and cut fuel bills."

Kirsten Firth, volunteer press coordinator on the Eco Open Houses team, rounded off the launch by thanking all the event partners and the 16 householders who will generously open their homes to the public in September. She said, "There's a real momentum building. The Lewes Eco Open Houses event has been running for 5 years and has expanded from one to two weekends. New houses are added to the programme every year – 6 new houses in 2014. Last year there were over 900 visits to the houses and more than half of the visitors said they are planning energy-efficiency improvements to their own homes."

The inspiring homes on show in 2014 range from renovated Victorian cottages to 1960's conversions and stunning architect designed new-build properties. Properties in the villages and countryside feature exciting off grid measures such as air, ground and water source heat pumps, as well as being examples of good eco building. This year it even features a sustainably managed woodland, Bonny's Wood, which is normally closed to the public. All the houses have drastically cut their electricity, gas and water bills as well as carbon emissions.

The event is part of Community Energy Fortnight which encourages the growth of community

owned renewable energy. A Community Energy Fortnight conference, Powering Our Communities, the Community Energy South Discussions, is taking place on Friday 19th September at the Linklater Pavilion in Lewes. This event showcases local community energy initiatives, encouraging new groups to take up community energy, scaling up our low carbon future and making local green growth jobs.

It is free to visit any of the houses and all are welcome and you can just turn up. On arrival you can learn about a whole range of eco-renovation ideas from better insulation to heating controls, solar thermal, rain-water recycling, to ecological and permaculture garden design. More details are on the website www.lewesecoopenhouses.org.uk [1] and in brochures available in Lewes Tourist Information Centre, the library, shops and cafes. Come along and be inspired!

ENDS Editor's notes

1. Lewes homes will open on the weekend of 13-14 September 2014, and Barcombe, Ditchling and rural homes will open on the weekend of 20-21 September. Further information available on website www.lewesecoopenhouses.org.uk [1]

2. The event is organised by Transition Town Lewes Energy Group in collaboration with Barcombe Energy Group and Hassocks, Keymer, Ditchling Transition.

<http://www.transitiontownlewes.org/> [2]

<http://www.barcombe.org/energygroup/index.htm> [3]

<http://www.hkdtransition.org.uk/> [4]

3. The 2014 event is funded by Green Open Homes and the Federation of Open Homes Networks and we also gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Lewes District Council.

<http://www.greenopenhomes.net/> [5]

www.lewes.gov.uk [6]

4. More photos available from website gallery – www.lewesecoopenhouses.org.uk [1]

5. The Community Energy Fortnight conference, Powering Our Communities, is organised by Community Energy South. It takes place on 19th Sept at the Linklater Pavilion, Lewes. Further details and booking at <http://www.communityenergysouth.org.uk/events/> [7]

Links:

[1] <http://www.lewesecoopenhouses.org.uk>

[2] <http://www.transitiontownlewes.org/>

[3] <http://www.barcombe.org/energygroup/index.htm>

[4] <http://www.hkdtransition.org.uk/>

[5] <http://www.greenopenhomes.net/>

[6] <http://www.lewes.gov.uk>

[7] <http://www.communityenergysouth.org.uk/events/>