

21st Century living project

This year-long study by Homebase, in partnership with the Eden Project, is exploring the challenges and opportunities households face when adapting their homes, behaviours and lifestyles to 21st Century living. The 100 households participating in the project have been given a detailed household survey and tailored advice to help them live a greener, and often cheaper, lifestyle. They have received a report on their energy use, waste, water consumption and lifestyle, and £500 cash to spend on eco-products or services to cut their energy use and encourage more sustainable behaviour.

The families are being supported by an interactive website where families can share information and experience, as well as receiving advice and information from the 21st Century living team, including the Energy Saving Trust, Waterwise, WRAP and the University of Surrey.

Despite household costs and environmental issues being high on the agenda, the survey of our 21st Century homes at the beginning of the project in August 2008 found that:

- Only 7% of those surveyed had loft insulation higher than 250mm (Government recommends this should be at least 270mm)
- Only 8% use low energy bulbs throughout the house
- 35% have boilers more than 10 years old
- 19% leave the heating on when they are not in.

Since then, the households have been busy taking steps to save energy, save water and reduce waste, with 91% saying they have done something to save energy (74% to reduce waste, 62% to save water) during the course of the project so far. Over the next few months, the households will be growing their own vegetables, using more energy efficient electrical products and recycling their waste.

Fifty households have had thermal images taken of their homes so they can see exactly where they are losing the most heat and take steps to improve this with the use of insulation, draft proofing or even simply a curtain behind the front door.

When the project comes to an end in September, the findings and recommendations will be shared with producer groups, environmental organisations and the Government to help advance product efficiencies and create best practice for sustainable product development.

"It's an extremely positive project that aims to identify what works and what doesn't when it comes to greening up the household. The outcomes will fit perfectly with Eden's mission to explore our relationship with the environment and educate others so we can all enjoy a prosperous and sustainable future."

Tim Smit, Chief Executive, Eden Project.

"Homebase is delighted to be working with the Eden Project on this study. As a business, we have a large number of green initiatives in place, and we are always looking for ways to promote a more sustainable lifestyle to our customers and to provide them with the products, service and expertise that allow them to easily make greener purchasing decisions. We also plan to use the learning from the study to help inform our future product sourcing decisions."

Paul Loft, Managing Director, Homebase.

Case Study – Sara Keane and Marius McKee

Sara Keane and Marius McKee have just moved in together. Both divorced, their new house in Bath needed to have space for each of their two children from previous marriages, and all four are between the ages of 12 and 16. When they're all around, it's a busy family home.

The house needs quite a bit of refurbishment. With the help of the 21st Century Living Project they will be doing this as sustainably as they can. Over the year they'll be using a detailed home survey and a £500 contribution to make their house, and their habits, more sustainable.

Top of the list is insulating their unusual home, which is a mix of architectural styles spanning two centuries. They have just started insulating four rooms, which currently have just one layer of bricks separating them from the outside air. After doing a lot of research, they've chosen to spend their £500 on sheep's wool insulation, effectively putting a jumper on the inside of their house.

But they've been surprised by the findings of their new energy-saving monitor, which shows how much energy is being used when difference appliances, heating or lights are turned on.

As Marius says: *"We couldn't believe how much energy we were using when the spotlights in the kitchen were on; we would never have realised it without the monitor. We are going to get them adapted to be a lot more energy efficient."*

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