

RC-UK Energy and Communities - HEAT and the CITY

Researchers at Edinburgh and Strathclyde universities have begun a major four year project examining the ways that cities could take advantage of efficient community heating.

Over 4 million UK households suffer fuel poverty, while businesses and public services face rising heating bills, as well as having to meet new energy-efficiency targets through the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC). Yet some industries in the centre of cities release large quantities of waste hot water into rivers, and power stations waste the heat produced in generating electricity.

Householders, businesses and public authorities could make savings on energy bills, and enjoy greater comfort – if cities introduced community heating schemes like their counterparts in northern Europe.

The **Heat and the City** project brings together researchers from social and engineering sciences to work with practitioners, community groups and policy-makers. The team aim to help solve the social, economic and technical challenges that must be faced.

First they will examine the experience of other Northern European cities, and of pioneering UK schemes like those in Aberdeen and Sheffield. Later they will focus on new Glasgow and Edinburgh plans for low carbon heat and energy efficiency. By working closely with city councils, businesses, community groups and social enterprises, the project aims to create a blueprint for sustainable heat in 'cold climate' cities. The team aim to be part of shared learning in relation to community leadership, management and financial expertise.

Public debate about energy demand and carbon emissions has been dominated by two perspectives. One puts the onus on government to pass legislation. The other puts the onus on individuals and households to change their attitudes and behaviour. This project examines the idea that solutions are most likely at the community level, and that city communities are the key to mobilising actors to achieve major change.

The project, a £1M collaboration between the Universities of Edinburgh and Strathclyde, is funded under the joint UK Research Councils' Energy Programme, and is an important example of innovative multi-disciplinary collaboration on the development of sustainable and low carbon heat systems in Northern European cities; it is one of only 7 successful bids for total funding of £7.5 million.

Jan Webb (Social and Political Science) will direct the project, with Edinburgh University colleagues David Hawkey (Research Fellow), Andy Kerr (Edinburgh Centre on Climate Change), Heather Lovell (Geosciences), David McCrone (Institute of Governance), Stewart Russell (Science, Technology and Innovation Studies), & Mark Winskel (Institute for Energy Systems), and with Strathclyde University colleague Richard Bellingham, Fraser of Allander Institute.

Further Information: www.institute-of-governance.org/major_projects/heat_and_the_city

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www.rcukenergy.org.uk

