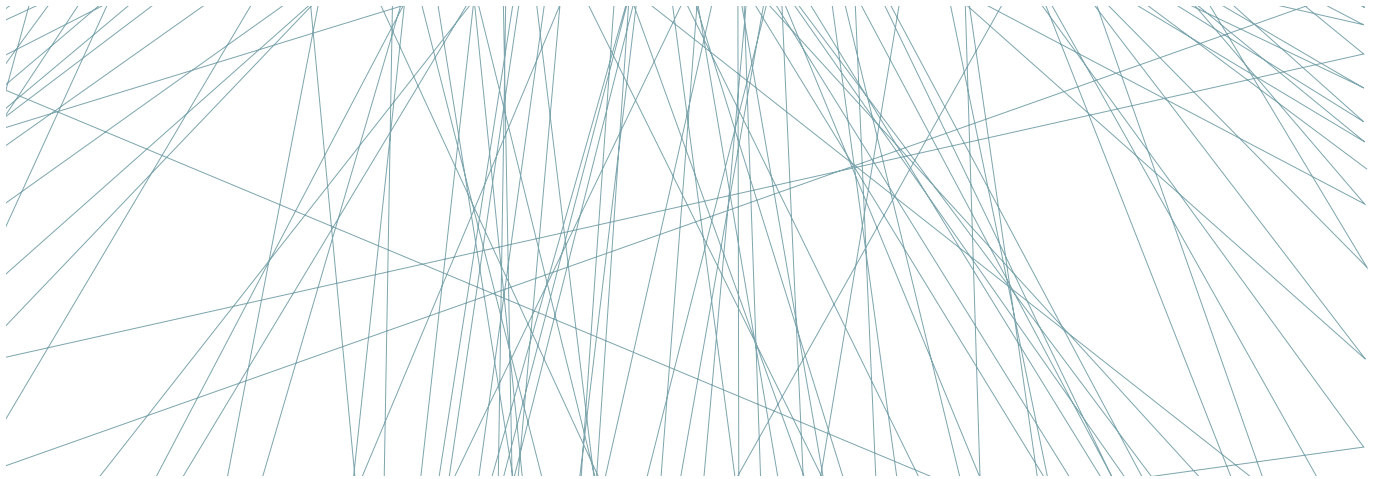


# Prosiect GAE

A Community Action Research Project  
Engagement & Perceptions of the Green Deal  
and Energy Company Obligation in Gwynedd





## About the Author

Grant Peisley is a Sustainable Communities Consultant and Founding Director of the social enterprise Datblygiadau Egni Gwledig (DEG). Grant works with communities throughout Wales helping them to take ownership of the services that are important to them. He has worked with communities taking co-operative ownership of shops, cafes, pubs, petrol stations, health services and increasingly their energy future via renewable energy generation and energy efficiency schemes.

Datblygiadau Egni Gwledig (DEG) provides communities with the confidence, knowledge and ambition to take ownership of their future through projects such as:

- **Reducing energy use, fuel costs and dependence on unsustainable fuels**
- **Strengthening the local economy**
- **Generating sustainable electricity and heat**

DEG facilitates a network of community energy groups in Gwynedd, Môn and Conwy and hosts events to connect communities, share skills and experiences and co-ordinate the local community energy sector.

DEG provides information on what is possible, what has been achieved elsewhere in our area and best practise from community energy groups across Britain. Helping with:

- **Identifying opportunities for communities**
- **Getting people involved**
- **Project planning and development**
- **Locating expertise**
- **Raising finance to make projects happen**

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YnNiLlyn



# Summary

Prosiect GAE was a Community Action Research Project looking at how to maximize the opportunities provided by the Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation (ECO) in Gwynedd communities.

The purpose of the project was to collaborate with a number of organisations working closely within their communities to understand more about the reasons behind poor performance of the Green Deal and ECO in these areas, and identify what actions could improve the situation.

The project was implemented in four Community First areas in the county working with local partners from the following community organisations:

- **Blaenau Ffestiniog Green Town Initiative (Y Dref Werdd)**
- **YnNi Llŷn, Llŷn Peninsula**
- **Cymdeithas Tai Eryri Energy Wardens Project, Caernarfon & Bangor**

295 questionnaires were completed, with roughly an equal amount of returns received from each of the four areas plus 29 online returns via Survey Monkey.

Participants showed they are energy aware, predominately own their own homes, pay energy bills by direct debit, have made efforts to reduce energy use already and wish to make more. However, there are some significant perceived barriers inhibiting greater energy efficiency, including cost and a lack of trusted information.

There is a lack of awareness for support services that aim to help people use less energy and reduce their energy costs. Only 21% have contacted services and only 4% of residents participating in this project have taken up the services on offer. There is a clear need for more information to overcome apathy, make the process clearer and simpler.

More than three quarters of residents asked did not know what the Green Deal is and only 18% understand it. These results are even starker taking into account earlier findings showing this population are very interested in energy efficiency and consider reducing their energy bills very important. Of these 18% who understand the Green Deal, most have considered taking up the services offered (15% of total). This suggests that by increasing awareness and understanding a greater uptake could be achieved.

This lack of awareness and scarcity of information<sup>1</sup> is leading to assumptions that exclude some residents from attempting to access the Green Deal. Bad experiences by some of the few who have accessed the services available are leading residents to say they do not trust the scheme or that it is not designed to help them. Residents have repeatedly claimed the system is not clear and is too complicated. Feedback received suggests a need for more assistance and local, trusted information to aid uptake.

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*1. 64% of participants had not seen any advertising for the Green Deal*

# Introduction

Prosiect GAE was a Community Action Research Project looking at how to maximize the opportunities provided by the Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation (ECO) in communities in Gwynedd.

The impetus for the project came from the Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC) figures in "*Domestic Green Deal, Energy Company Obligation and Insulation Levels in Great Britain, Quarterly report*" (December, 2013) which suggested there has been little interest in the Green Deal assessments across Britain but especially in Gwynedd (73 in the Arfon and 24 in the Dwyfor / Meirionnydd constituencies during the year 2013).

The purpose of this project was to collaborate with a number of organisations working closely within their communities to understand more about the reasons behind the poor performance of the Green Deal in these areas, and to identify what actions could improve the situation.

## Objectives

Prosiect GAE had four broad objectives.

1. Research and identify the reasons for Gwynedd residents not taking up the opportunities provided by the Green Deal and ECO.
2. Identify how barriers can be overcome and what steps can be taken to maximize the ECO and Green Deal spending especially in the private sector.
3. Provide advice to residents on energy bills and raise awareness of the contribution behaviour change can make to reduce energy bills.
4. Consider how alternative financial models outside the Green Deal system could add value to the Energy Efficiency improvement actions.

This report responds to the first three objectives above. A separate report was produced by Robert Owen Community Banking Fund which looked at how alternative financial models could be utilised in Gwynedd.

### Timetable

Due to time constraints of the funding for the project, the schedule was tighter than would be desirable for a community project of this nature. The project ran over six weeks from February 24, 2014 - April 4, 2014.

A draft report was submitted in April 2014 and this report finalises the project.

# Method

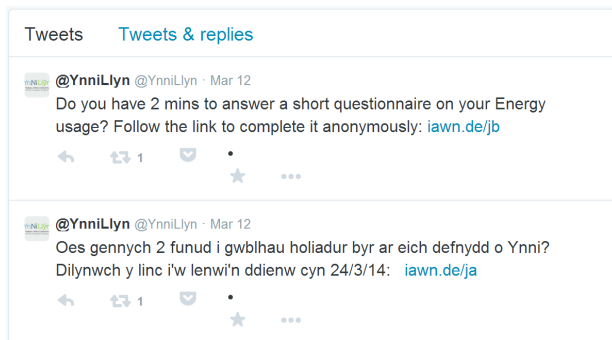
The research was undertaken in 4 different areas - the Arfon Community First<sup>2</sup> areas of Caernarfon and Bangor, Blaenau Ffestiniog and Pen Llŷn (Botwnnog, Aberdaron a Tudweiliog). The project was operated in partnership with

- **Blaenau Ffestiniog Green Town Initiative**
- **YnNi Llŷn**
- **Cymdeithas Tai Eryri Energy Wardens Project**

A three stage approach was designed to gather data from as many people as possible in the short timeframe. The approach facilitated a narrowing focus from broad awareness raising to individual consultation. Each stage was structured to ensure commonality across areas and equal measure of outcomes.

## Stage 1

This stage provided initial engagement via a broad brush approach with leaflets designed and distributed, press releases in local community newspapers and raising awareness to local groups.



The purpose was to get the message out about the project, energy efficiency support and importantly the upcoming open events/drop-in clinics. Social Media was used and included links to complete the project questionnaire online via Survey Monkey (*see example above*).

## Stage 2

Open events were structured with presentations about the support mechanisms available for helping people to lower their energy bills. Behaviour change approaches were shared and one to one advice was offered to increase understanding of ECO and Green Deal and gather information about why people haven't engaged with these mechanisms.

Drop-in sessions were available for individuals to attend to discuss their energy usage and receive advice about means for reducing bills. These sessions were run in partnership with other services such as Bangor University's GIFT project, Tai Eryri's Energy Wardens, NYTH/ NEST, and local renewable energy / energy efficiency installation companies (*see image opposite*).

From conversations at the drop in events, facilitators recognised individuals to ask to attend Stage 3 events.

Asking attendees to complete questionnaires whilst at open events and drop-in sessions was key to gathering information for this final report.

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2. Communities First is the Welsh Government's community focused tackling poverty campaign



### Stage 3

Individuals identified at Stage 2 were invited to attend small focus groups to explore in more detail why they hadn't engaged with existing energy saving schemes such as ECO and the Green Deal.

Structured one-on-one interviews following the questions laid out in the questionnaire were held with local residents that had not otherwise engaged with the process. This was completed by knocking doors, stopping people passing on the high street and via a mail list from previous research to provide a greater representation of views about why people aren't engaging with energy saving schemes. Mailings included a freepost return envelope to facilitate questionnaire returns.

Therefore, via questionnaires (hard copies and online), one-to-one interviews, and focus groups a range of qualitative and quantitative data was generated to provide a picture of local resident's awareness of their energy use, their interest in energy efficiency, awareness of support schemes for reducing energy use, experiences of contacting these services and reasons why residents had not taken up the services on offer.

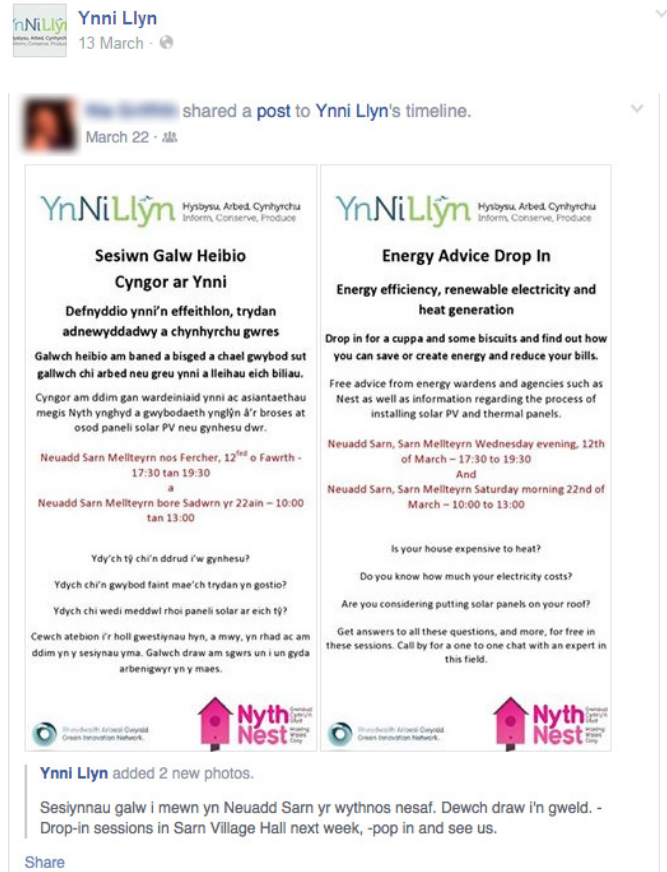
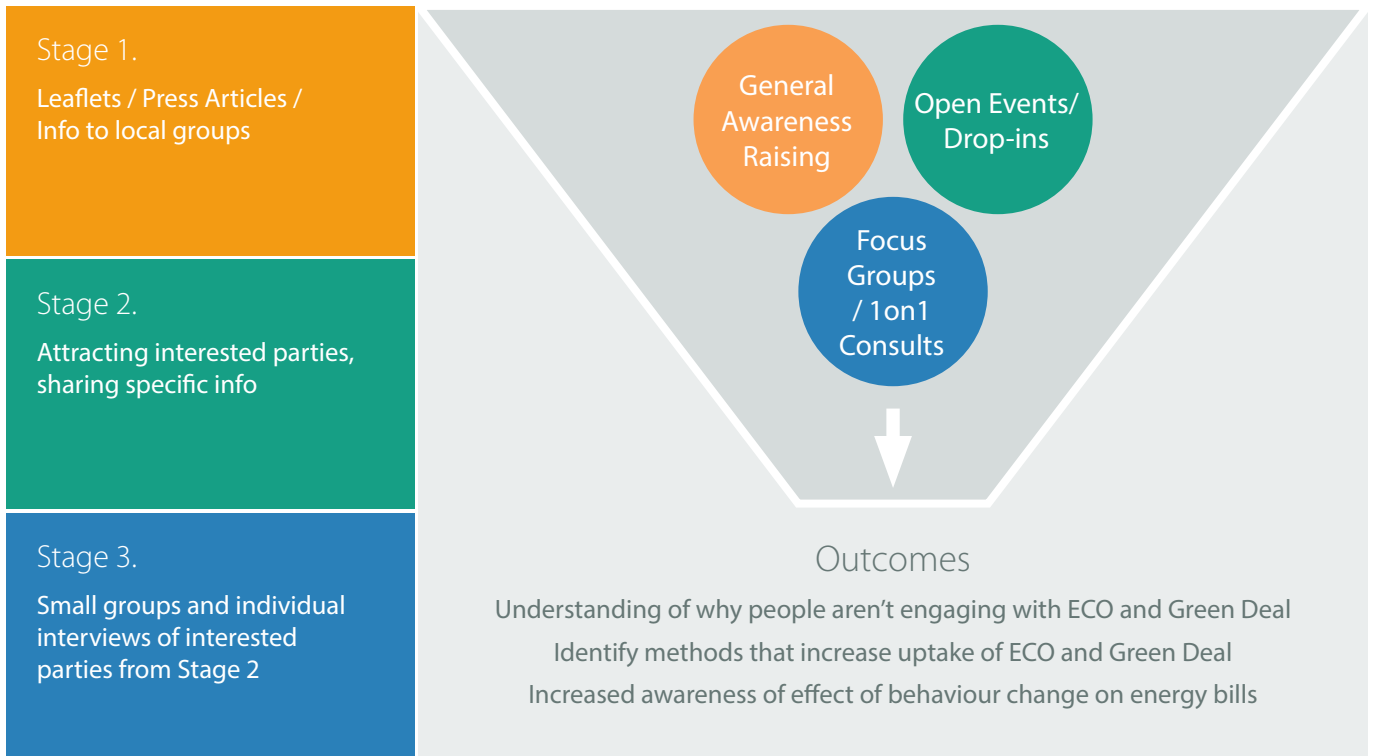


Figure 1. Illustrates the narrowing focus of the three stage approach deployed



# Results & Discussion

## Questionnaires

A total of 295 questionnaires were completed, with roughly an equal amount of returns received from each of the four areas plus 29 online returns via Survey Monkey.

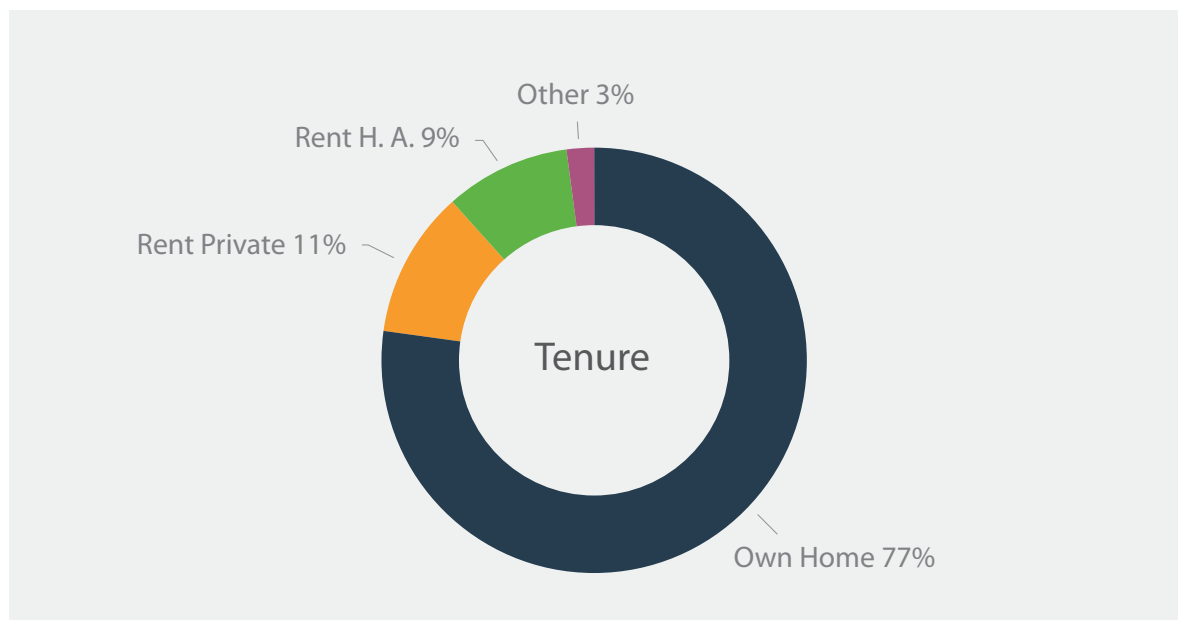
### Context

Five main questions were asked to gather contextual data about those participating in the survey.

#### Housing

Over three quarters of respondents owned their home (n=226; 77%). 20% rent from either a private landlord or a housing association (n=33 & n=27 respectively). Whilst 1% reported some other form of tenure including part ownership, renting from a trust, and one was living with their parents.

Over three quarters of respondents owned their home



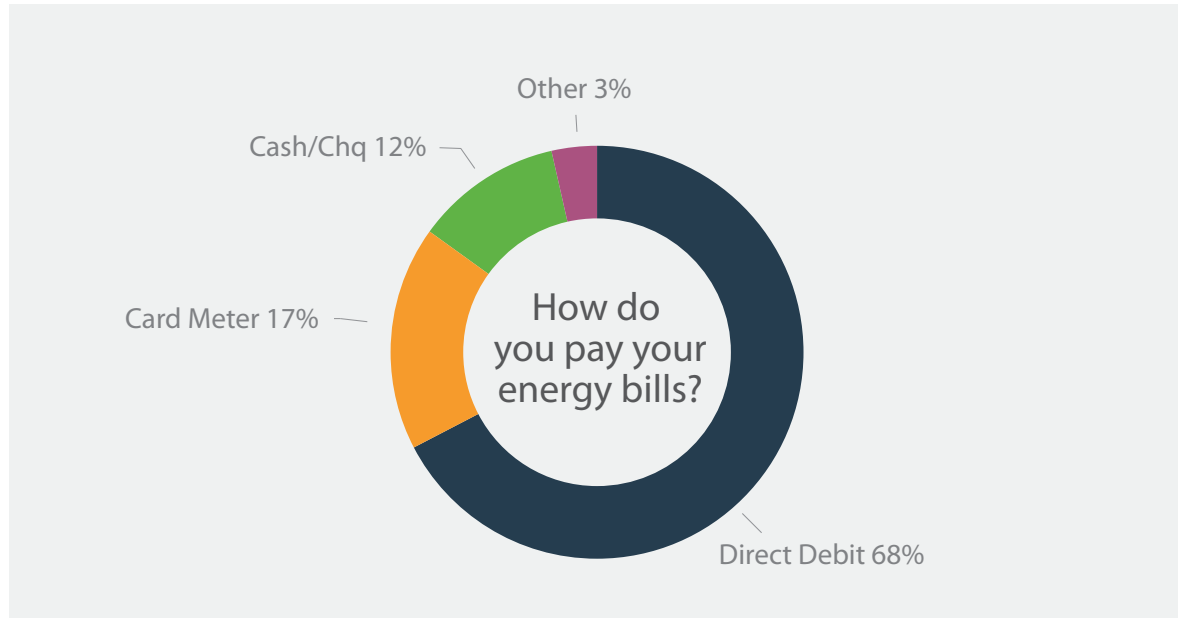
#### Payment Method

The majority of participants (68%; n=197) pay their energy bills by Direct Debit. 51 participants reported that they pay via a Card Meter (17%) and 12% (n=34) pay via cash or cheque. Cash or cheque often referred to payment for energy delivered to the house such as wood logs, coal, and oil; it appears that this was sometimes a secondary fuel used to top-up during cold weather.



This form of payment was often on top of direct debits for electricity.

The chart below indicates 3% said they pay via some other form such as token meter, pre-payment, payment card or payment at the Post Office.



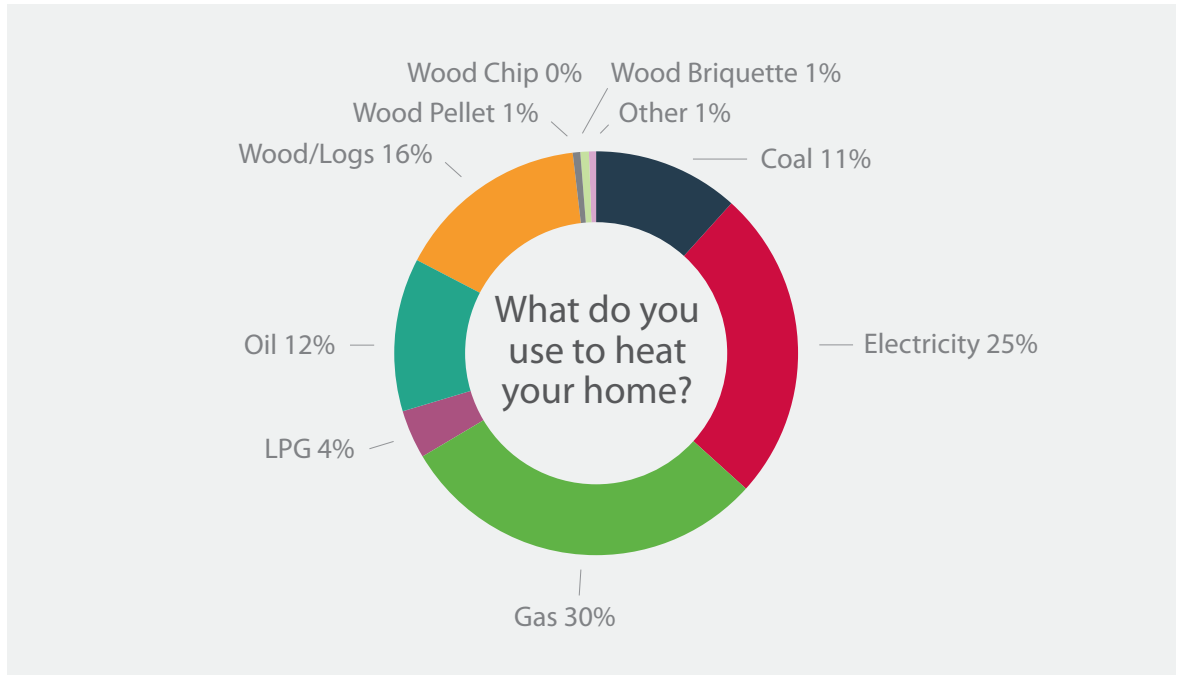
The majority of participants pay their energy bills by Direct Debit

#### Fuel used

Participants were asked to report all fuels used to heat their homes therefore participants were able to select more than one fuel type. Gas (n=162) and Electricity (n=137) were reported as the main means of heating participant's homes. 55% of participants used at least one of these fuels. The next main fuel type was Wood Logs (16%; n=85). Oil and Coal had similar levels of use (12%, n=64 & 11%, n=62 respectively). 22 respondents reported using LPG (4%) and 3 each for Wood Pellets and Wood Briquettes (1%). Other forms of fuel reported included gas thermal, scrap wood, and "*heat from the sun through panels and windows*".

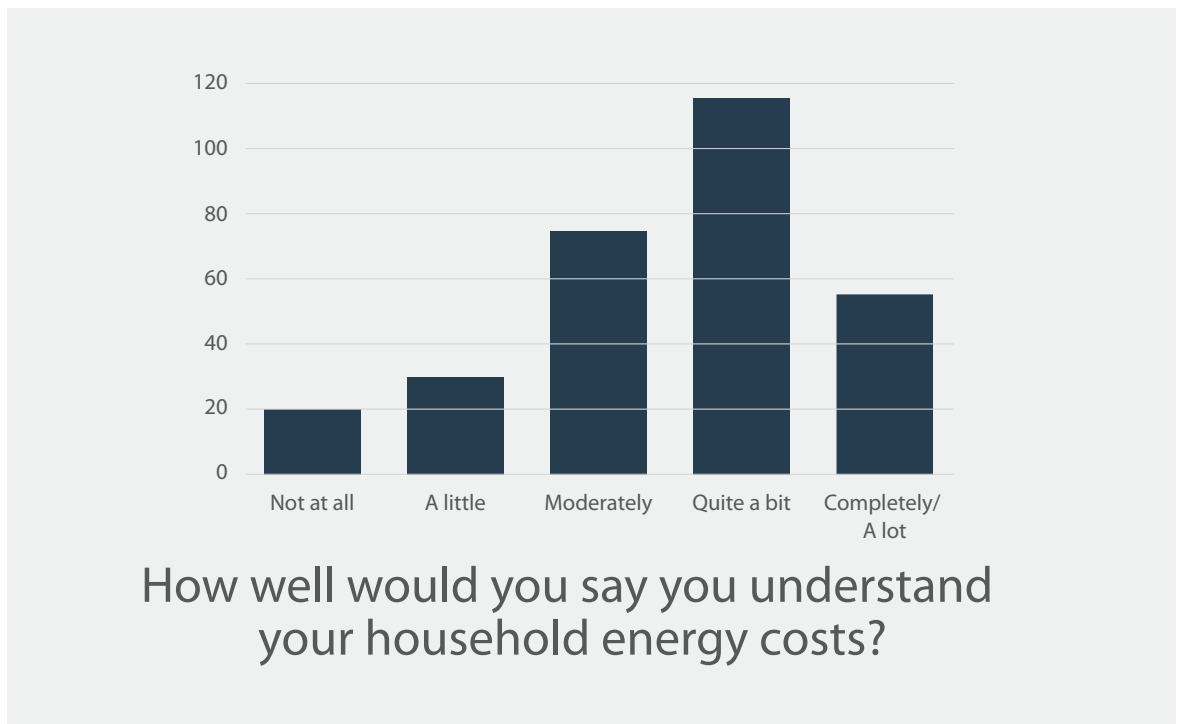
Gas and Electricity were reported as the main means of heating participant's homes.

The chart below illustrates the responses received.



### Understanding of Costs

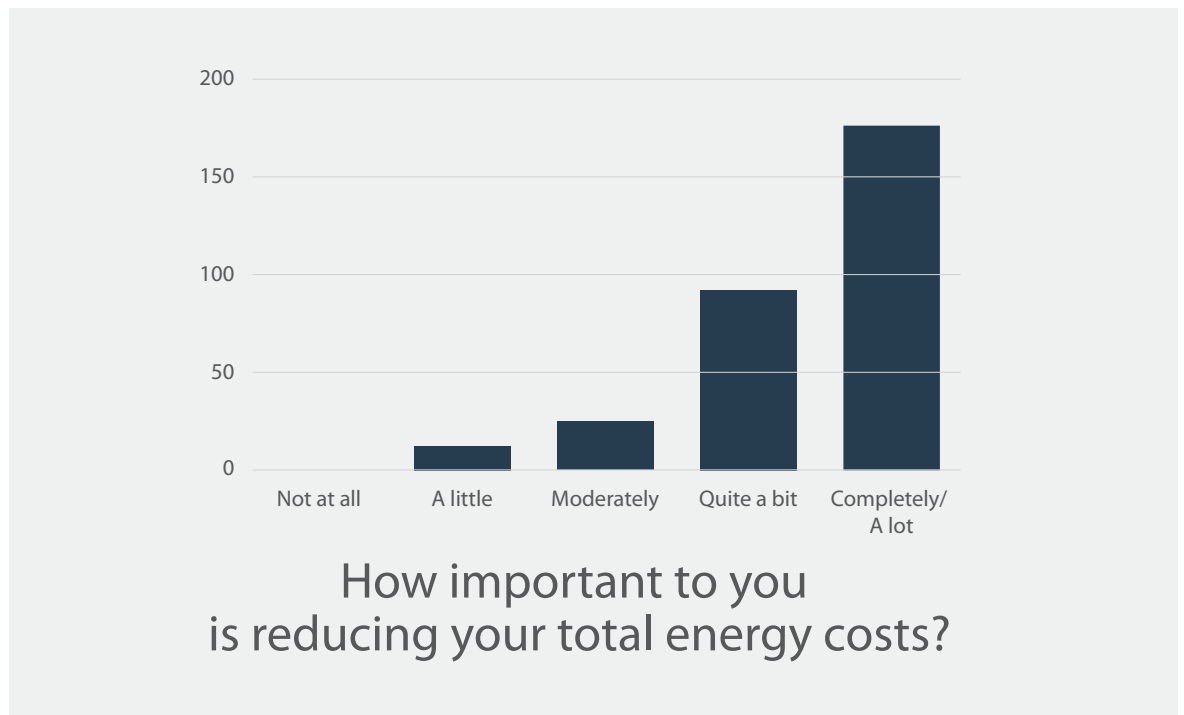
Overall, respondents reported having a good level of understanding of their energy costs with 58% reporting 'quite a bit' or 'completely' understanding (n=116 & n=56 respectively). Yet, more than 1 in 10 had 'a little' (n=30) or no understanding (n=19). The chart below illustrates responses.



## Reducing Costs

Respondents said that reducing their energy costs was very important to them. 58% responded with the highest level of importance (n=172), whilst a further 30% (n=88) gave the next level down. As shown below, only 4% said that reducing their energy costs was less than moderately important (n=11).

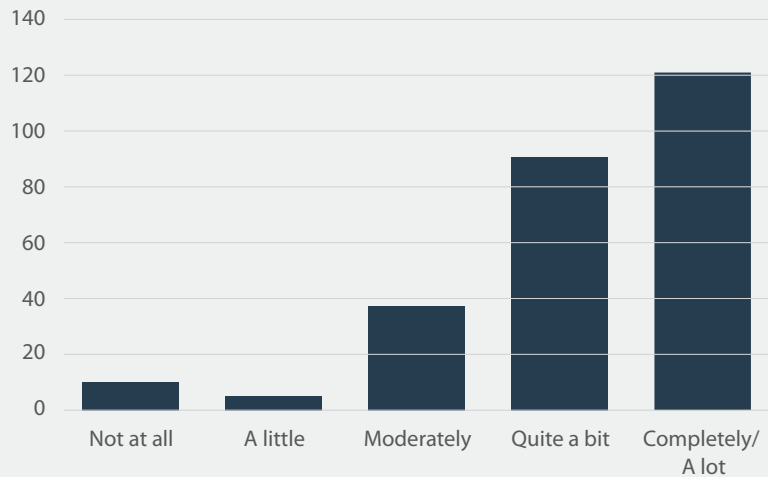
Respondents said that reducing their energy costs was very important to them



## Energy Efficiency Interest

Those taking part in the questionnaire said that they were very interested in Energy Efficiency. Nearly half of those taking part said that Energy Efficiency was "Completely / A lot" of interest to them (49%; n=141). A further 32% said it was "Quite a bit" of interest (n=91). With only 7% reporting less than a moderate interest (n=20).

Participants told us they have been proactive in trying to reduce their energy costs and be more energy efficient with 83% having taken steps to save energy or use less energy.



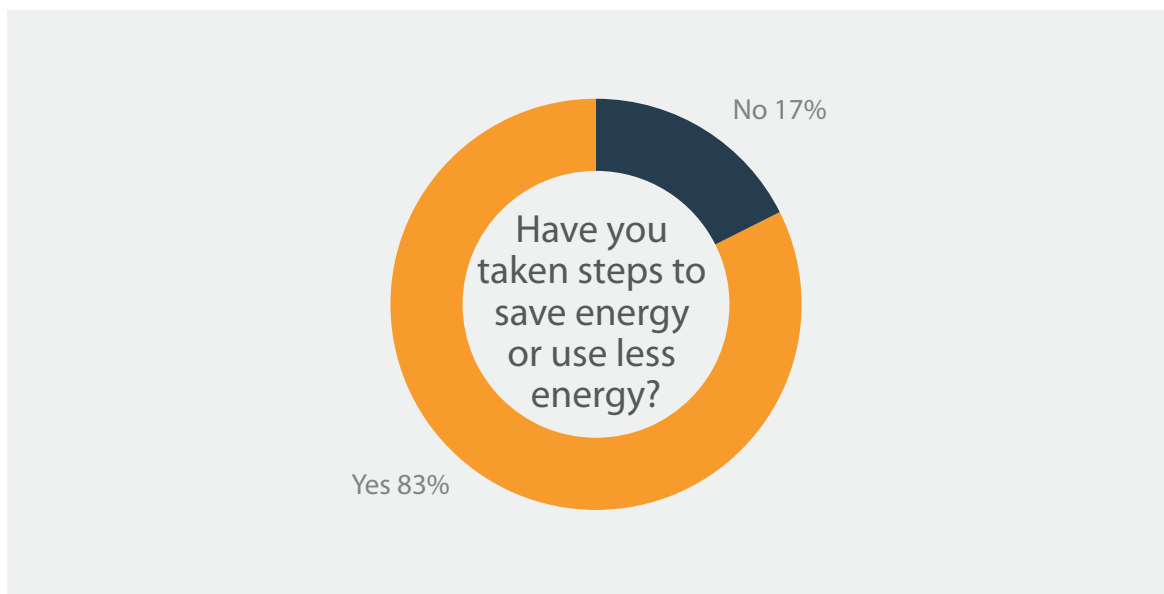
## How interested are you in energy efficiency?

209 participants provided details of the steps they have taken to reduce their energy use. Participants told us that they have improved their housing via insulation, double glazing, draft-proofing and installing new boilers and low-energy bulbs. Insulation was the most popular measure taken, including wall, loft and cavity insulation (118 instances). 40 participants spoke of low-energy bulbs and 20 referred to changing their boiler. Some referred to having PV's and solar thermal installed, yet much of the steps taken referred to behavioural measures.

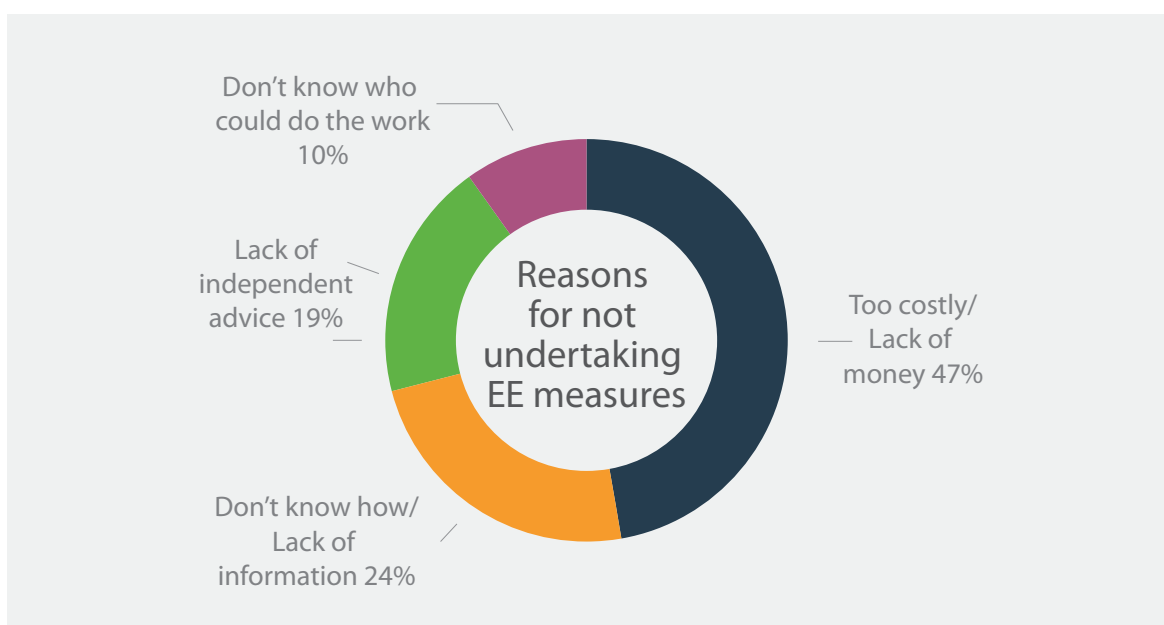
The most common behavioural change measures referred to were wearing more jumpers, and monitoring use. Although only 10 responses mentioned Smart meters, many referred to other forms of monitoring such as *"Turning off heaters in rooms that are not in use"* or *"Trying to turn lights off more"* and *"Bod yn wybodol"*, *"mwy gofalus o ble mae trydan yn cael ei ddefnyddio"*<sup>2</sup> (Being aware, more careful of where electricity is used). This was supported by such steps as reducing room temperature, turning thermostats down and reducing the hours heating is used. Other steps being taken in our communities that have been repeatedly reported include *"turn gas fire off"*, *"Turning off appliances at the mains when not in use"*, *"switching lights off as much as possible"*, *"Only ever boil enough water in my kettle as needed"*, as well as comparing prices and switching providers (*"Check best prices on comparison sites"*).

One in four said that they lacked the information to be more energy efficient and this was compounded by an apparent lack of independent advice.

<sup>3</sup> Translation has been provided for responses received in Welsh with the original Welsh included for verification



Yet, for many there were further steps they would like to take. Nearly half of the participants told us that cost was the main barrier to taking further steps (47%; n=97). One in four said that they lacked the information to be more energy efficient (24%; n=49) and this was compounded by an apparent lack of independent advice. 19% (n=39) said this was stopping them using less energy. Whilst 10% claimed not to know who to ask to do the work needed to help them save energy (n=21).



51 participants offered further information about why they had not undertaken energy efficiency measures. Other reasons for not undertaking energy efficiency measures included being a tenant, lacking the time to research or not being sure that changes would have the desired effect. Two responses spoke of insulation creating too much *"mess and bother"*. Whilst others reflected that making these changes is *"too much hassle"*, (*"gormod o drafferth"* (Too much trouble), *"Rhy gymleth"* (Too complicated), *"ofnadwy o drafferthus"* (Terribly troublesome)) and that their experiences to date have not been positive. For example, one respondent wrote

*“Profiad gwael o gyngor gafwyd yn flaenorol”* (Bad experience from advice previously obtained), another *“Wedi cael ‘green deal assessment’ - ofnadwy o drafferthus - dwi wedi talu ers Tach a ddoe ges i’r aroddiad (Mawrth)”* (Had a ‘Green Deal assessment’ - terribly troublesome - I paid in Nov and yesterday I got the report (March)). There was also a reflection of the difficulty in treating old, stone houses with one participant stating *“Would like solar panels but cannot get good enough property energy rating for feed in tariff.”*

## Discussion

The contextual questions have given us a clear picture of participant’s desire to reduce their energy use and related costs.

Participants showed they are energy aware, predominately own their own homes, pay energy bills by direct debit, have made efforts to reduce energy use already and wish to make more. However, there are some significant perceived barriers inhibiting greater energy efficiency, including cost and a lack of trusted information.

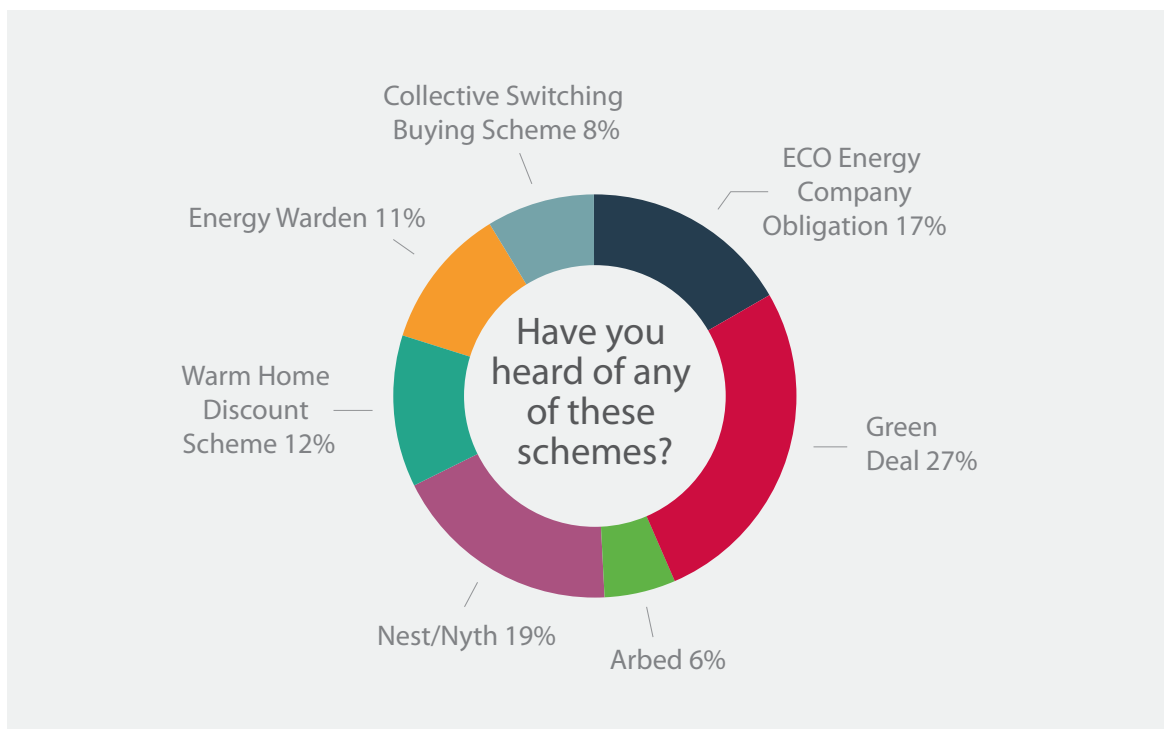
### Support Services – Awareness

Three questions were asked about awareness and contact with energy saving support schemes.

#### Awareness

The Green Deal was the most recognised scheme yet only 27% of responses indicated awareness of the scheme (n=109). The Welsh Government’s Nyth/Nest Scheme was the next most recognised scheme with just under 1 in 5 having heard of it (19%; n=76). 17% knew of the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and 12% knew the Warm Home Discount (n=68 & n=50). 11% were familiar with Energy Wardens, 8% with collective switching/buying schemes and 6% Arbed (n=47, 35 & 23 respectively). Four respondents offered other information including information about schemes run by the Coop and Ecology Building Society, Energy Saving Trust, Age Well, and the Citizens Advice Centre.

The Green Deal was the most recognised scheme yet only 27% of responses indicated awareness of the scheme



### Contact with Services

59 participants, or 1 in 5, said they had contacted one of the services above (21%) but only 4% had gone on to accept the support offered. 11 respondents said they had taken up support with Nyth/Nest, 4 with an Energy Warden, 3 have tried collective switching, 2 through their energy supplier (Scottish Power & British Gas), 1 Warm Home Discount and 1 Green Deal<sup>4</sup>. Some of the respondents had used multiple services, consequently there were more instances of contact with services than respondents that had contacted services.

In response to why they had not contacted services, 78 participants replied with many saying they were unaware, required further information, or didn't know who or how to contact services

(27 responses). Typical responses were "*Ansicr ynglyn a beth sydd ar gynnig*" (Unsure about what's on offer), "*Not enough knowledge of what it entails*", "*Not aware how to*" & "*y system ddim yn glir*" (The system isn't clear).

Another common response was that despite previous responses highlighting the importance of reducing energy costs and interest in reducing energy use, people lacked interest in contacting these services. Typical responses here are "*not felt the need*", "*dim diddordeb*" (not interested), "*heb ddod rownd i wneud*" (Not got around to doing it), "*no patience*", "*lack of motivation*" and "*apathy*".

<sup>4</sup> Further exploration later in the questionnaire suggests that more than this have taken up support



It also appears, from responses provided, that people are acting on assumptions that they do not qualify for support. For example, participants said *"don't think I'm entitled"*, *"can't get any help"*, *"don't believe I qualify for assistance"*, *"Green Deal not operative"*, *"Don't think we are eligible..."*, *"not applicable"* (to certain area)". This may be due to a lack of information about the schemes and not knowing who to contact.

Perhaps what should be of most concern is the number of people referring to having bad experiences when contacting services or having negative attitudes to these schemes, such as *"ECO[was no help]"*, *"no, quite unhelpful"*, *"Ilog y Fargen Werdd yn anffafriol"* (unfavourable interest in the Green Deal), *"useless – particularly greed<sup>s</sup> deal"*, *"rhy drud"* (Too expensive), *"Nid oedd gan Nyth ddiddordeb rhoi cyngor o gwbl i mi gan nad oeddwn ar fudd-daliadau means tested"* (Nest had no interest at all to advise me because I was not on means tested benefits), *"Wnaethon nhw adael fi lawr yn arw"* (They let me down badly).

## Discussion

There is a lack of awareness for support services that aim to help people use less energy and reduce their energy costs.

Only 21% have contacted services and only 4% of residents participating in this project have taken up the services on offer. There is a clear need for more information to overcome apathy, make the process clearer and simpler. Service providers need to improve the experience for customers as this is damaging the image of the services and potentially reducing uptake further.

### Green Deal

The final section of the questionnaire asked four questions specifically about the Green Deal.

#### Understanding the Green Deal

131 respondents, almost half, said they had not heard of the Green Deal (47%)

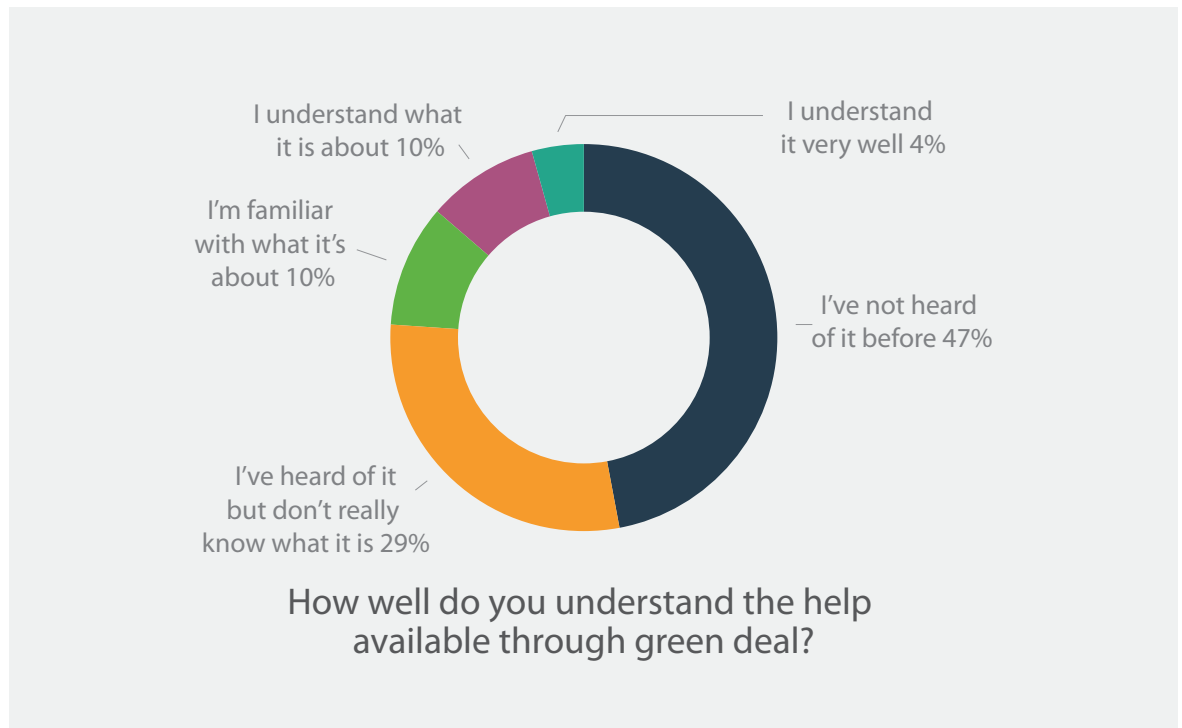
More than three quarters don't know what the Green Deal is (76%, n=212). Only 14% understand it, with 4% (n=12) saying they "understand it very well".

Yet, 15% (n=38) of respondents have considered taking up the Green Deal. When asked why people hadn't considered taking up the Green Deal we were told (78 responses), apart from having not heard about it (36% or 28 responses), that people have assumed they aren't eligible (10 responses), 7 participants said that the condition of their house was not suitable. For example, *"I have a very old stone built cottage"*, *"Because of the unique construction of the house"*,

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5. Mis-spelling is the participants and appears purposeful

*"house would not score well in assessment", "Ddim yn gallu insiwleiddio ty cerrig"* (unable to insulate a stone house).

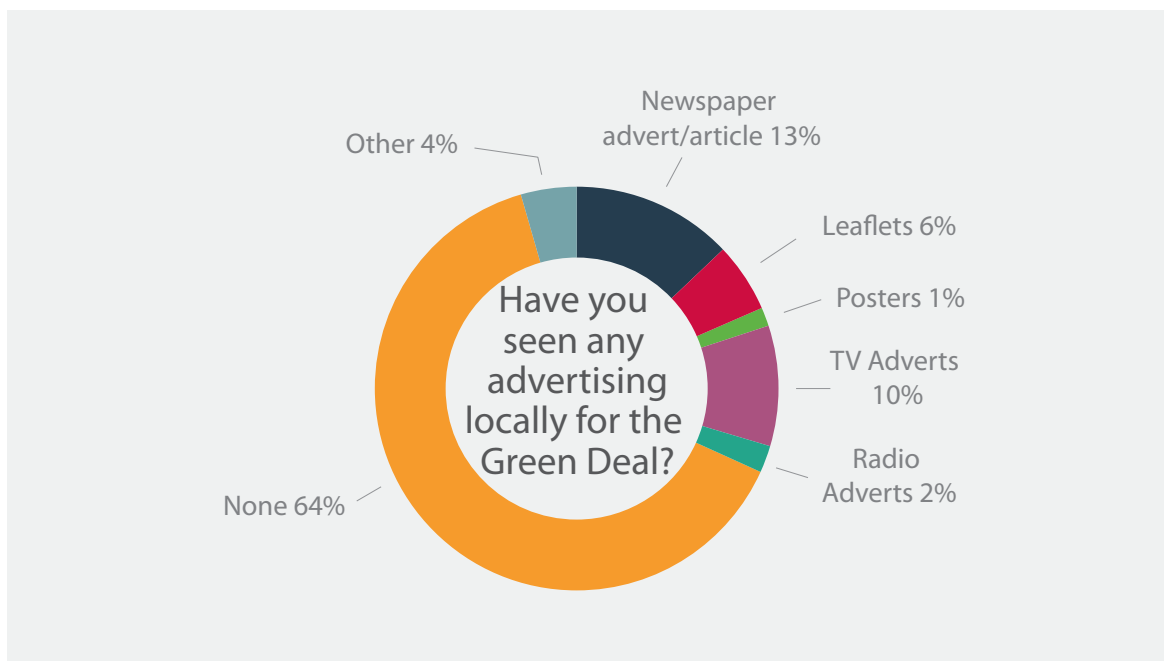


Other reasons that were repeated for not taking up the Green Deal relate to how the scheme works. For example, *"cheaper to save and pay up front for measures, process too complex for me"*, *"Eisiau gwneud gwaith a thalu amdano yn syth nid yn fisol drwy fy miliau trydan"* (Want to do work and pay for it directly not through my monthly electricity bills), *"Ddim yn fanteisiol yn ariannol. Ddim a ffydd mewn cynlluniau fel hyn"* (Not financially advantageous. No faith in schemes like this), *"too complicated"*, *"Dwi'm yn meddwl bod o'n gwneud lot o synwyr"* (Don't think it makes much sense), *"Doeddwn i ddim yn hollol siwr os oedd y cynllun wedi'w sefydlu'n iawn, a dydw i heb weld unrhyw wybodaeth i'm ddarbwylllo i geisio"* (I wasn't sure the scheme was set-up properly, and I haven't seen any information to convince me), *"would not necessarily offer what I wanted. The 'loan' would affect house resale value"*.

#### Green Deal Awareness

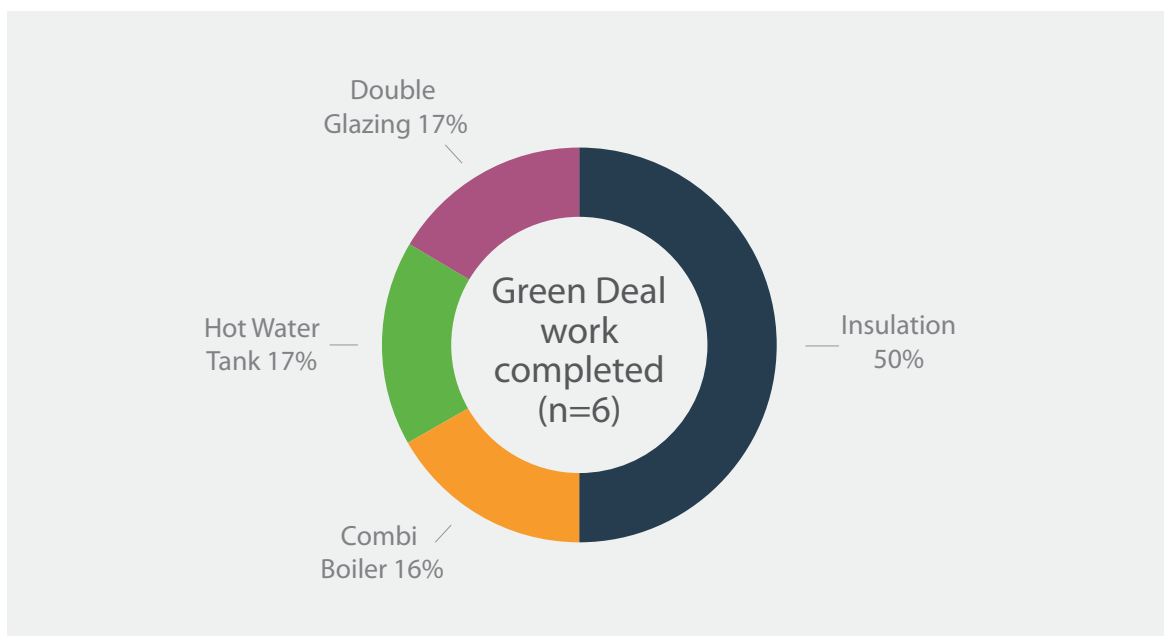
64% of respondees said they had not seen any advertising for the Green Deal locally (n=181)

13% said they had seen advertising in a newspaper (n=36), 10% had seen a television advert (n=28), 6% had seen a leaflet (n=16), 4 had seen a poster (1%), and 6 had heard a radio advert (2%). Others had seen something on the internet (n=7), 1 in a magazine, 2 had received cold calling and 1 referred to a local information evening hosted by Y Dref Werdd.



### Green Deal Assessment

5% of respondents had completed a Green Deal Assessment (n=13). 10 respondents gave further information. 6 have completed works recommended including 3 who have had insulation, 1 combi boiler, 1 hot water tank and 1 double glazing.



Those who did not complete work said they hadn't because *"can't qualify for any further help"*, *"nothing recommended"*, *"the boilers on offer from the gas company British Gas were too small for my house"*. One respondent was not sure if they received a Green Deal assessment or a Nyth/Nest assessment.

105 participants provided information about why they had not completed a Green Deal assessment. One in two (52%; n=55) of these had not heard of the Green Deal before completing the questionnaire or didn't have enough information to have a Green Deal assessment.

Other reasons not covered above include:

*"Ddim yn siwr sut oedd modd talu'r benthyciad yn ol os yn defnyddio 'solid fuel' gan gwmnïau bach lleol ac yn talu amdano ar ffurf siec. Anodd mesur arbediadau gyda system wresogi fel hyn. Hefyd ddim yn hoffi'r syniad o fod mewn dyled i gwmni mawr sydd yn gweithredu am elw"* (Not sure how it's possible to pay the loan back if using 'solid fuel' from small local companies and pay for it by cheque. Difficult to measure efficiencies with heating systems like this. Also do not like the idea of being in debt to a large company that operates for profit.)

- *"we think we are not eligible for the scheme. Possibly local contact person would help promote information locally and encourage people to look into service."*
- *"Can't get a surveyor to visit the property despite promises"*
- *"lack of faith in scheme. Don't know who's doing them locally or how much they cost."*
- *"told I didn't qualify"*
- *"rhy gymleth"* (Too complicated)
- *"ddim yn cynnig arian/benthyciad am insulation outerwall - y system ddim yn glir"* (not offering money / loan for outerwall insulation - the system is not clear)
- *"Waste of time. Extortionate Interest Rate!"*

## Discussion

There is a stark lack of awareness of the UK Government's flagship energy efficiency scheme, the Green Deal, in the four areas assessed. More than three quarters of residents asked did not know what the Green Deal is and only 18% understand it. These results are even starker taking into account earlier results showing this population are very interested in energy efficiency and consider reducing their energy bills very important. Of these 18% who understand the Green Deal most have considered taking up the services offered (15% of total). This could suggest that by increasing awareness and understanding a greater uptake could be achieved.

This lack of awareness and scarcity of information is leading to assumptions that exclude some residents from attempting to access the Green Deal. Bad experiences by some of the few who have accessed the services available are leading residents to say they do not trust the scheme or that it is not designed to help them.

Residents have repeatedly claimed the system is not clear and is too complicated; further evidencing a need for more assistance and local, trusted information to aid uptake.

# Focus Groups

Three focus groups covering the four areas, one from each of the partners, were undertaken for the project. A guide to running focus groups was produced for each of the partners and a number of specific tools for this project produced including a facilitator's guide, a note taker form and debrief form. Each group was asked to invite individuals they had met at open events and drop-in sessions to return for a more in depth conversation about the questionnaire. Each group provided a report and details are summarised below.

## Findings

The findings from the focus groups were surprisingly similar and supported the main findings from the questionnaire. A selection of representative quotes are provided here. Responses received in Welsh are recorded here in Welsh. Findings have been grouped under headings below.

## Housing stock

*"The biggest problem in this area is solid walls"*

*"There are technical difficulties to insulate terraced houses because of solid walls"  
"Rooms already so small inside that internal insulation is not practical"  
"Additional problem is holiday homes either side of the house which are not heated in winter and not much heated all year round"*

*"There are two types of people, those bothered by insulation and those not. Owners of holiday homes, second homes, and private rented accommodation are just not bothered to invest to save"*

*"Os di tŷ ar rent dw i ddim yn debyg o wario ar bethau fel yr uchod – dim gwerth ei gwneud am amser a all fod yn fyr ac a fydd yn fydd i'r perchennog yn unig."*

Cold draughty house despite double glazing

*"Mam un yn gwario £1500 bob blwyddyn ar wresogi un stafell"*

*"Yn aml mae yn amhosib i gynnau'r tan am fod y gwynt yn chwythi o'r cyfeiriad anghywir a'r mwg yn dod yn ol i'r stafell ac ati"*

The issue was highlighted by those in new houses who told us *"Mae yn dy newydd bron a gwresogi'r tŷ yn rhad ac am ddim o fis Mai hyd at fis Medi."*

*"Houses are not simple to insulate locally" Yet, we also heard "Insulation is key, more than anything else". "If you have insulation, it is much warmer, so you don't need heat"*

## Confusing schemes

On more than one occasion participants would refer to one scheme and then when questioned realise it was actually a different scheme

We heard from facilitators that people thought they knew what “ECO” meant – ECO is a generic term - not Energy Company Obligation.

*“Angen mwy o wybodaeth manwl am sut i ddeall y pethau a all fod yn gymhleth ac felly yn creu ofn ar bobol rhag gofyn am gymorth ac yn methu cymryd y camau bach cyntaf i fagu hyder.”*

*“Mae yna ofn gofyn am fod y peth mor gymhleth ac ofni dim deal”*

## Service received

*“Wedi ffonio rhyw un yng Nghaerdydd am gyngor yn y Gymraeg ac wedi cymryd awr i gael ateb i’r cwestiwn.”*

*“Wedi cael profiad da yn ddiweddar (ar ôl sesiwn Sarn<sup>6</sup>) gyda cyngor o gyfeiriad Nyth”*

*“Os da chi angen cysyllti efo ECO neu Green Deal neu Nyth be bynnag mae’r swyddfeydd ar gau pan fo pobol adre ar ôl gwaith.”*

## Lack of information / trusted information, local assessors,

In one focus group the feedback on the Green Deal was stark. When asked what they thought of the Green Deal the four responses received were *“Be di’r Fargen Werdd.” “Dim wedi clywed sôn.” “Wedi clywed dipyn bach ond ddim yn deall dim amdano.” “Wedi clywed yr enw a dyna hi.”*

The lack of information extended beyond not knowing about support schemes but to understanding the technology available and how to use it “

*Angen mwy o arbrawf a gwybodaeth am be di’r ffordd orau i rheoli gwres” “Cadw tanc o ddŵr poeth yn llawn ac yn boeth trwy’r amser neu ei roi ar Timer – be di’r ffordd mwyaf effeithiol.”*

We heard that some participants had experience of the Green Deal website attempting to locate *“local assessors but they’re actually not [local], they’re only people prepared to work locally. They’re from afar and know nothing about Blaenau Ffestiniog”* This also restricts people from taking part *“Ofn ar hen bobol i adael unrhyw un i fewn i’w tai ond ddim ond yn trystio ffrindiau a phobol adnabyddus leol”*

One participant said they had heard media reports which imply *“corruption”* with assessors receiving payments from suppliers they recommend in their reports.

*“Angen mwy o wybodaeth i denantiaid”*

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6. This refers to one of the open events hosted by YnNi Llŷn

## Cost of Green Deal

*"It's OK for young people but who in their 60s and 70s will want to take the risk of a loan to be repaid"*

Pay assessment upfront "puts a lot of people off" "If you're young and no secure job you can't pay the initial assessment especially because you're not saving actual cash money"

One participant says she wouldn't take-up the Green Deal because she wouldn't want the debt on her house.

*"Y peth pennaf sy'n rhwystro pobol di angen pres i wneud be bynnag mae angen i wellhau'r sefyllfa yn sylweddol"*

However, it was not all negative, it was noted that the *"Green Deal is good for people with poor credit records who can't get loans"*

Also the effect of local drop-in sessions were highlighted with comments about accessing services like *"Wedi meddwl galw (gwasanaethau am cymorth) ar ôl y sesiwn ddydd Sadwrn diwethaf yn Sarn."* & *"Wedi cael profiad da yn ddiweddar (ar ôl sesiwn Sarn) gyda cyngor o gyfeiriad Nyth"*

## Improvements

*"Make it simpler, plain language, described in pictures, friendly information."*

*"It would be better if there were schemes organised by the local authority / building inspectorate. They'd be more trustworthy"*

*"Step 1 To make the Green Deal more accessible would be to drop the cost of the assessment"... "Step 2 would be to lessen the interest rate from 7-8%. Actual loans are much cheaper"*

*"Angen defnyddio Energy Monitors i gael gweld lle mae nhw'n defnyddio trydan teclyn wrth declyn"*

Agor swyddfeydd lleol allan o oriau gwaith.

Trefni drop in sessions rheolaidd am gyfnod o 6 wythnos e.e. bob bore Sadwrn

Trefnu mwy o drop in sessions.

Be am gynnal drop in sessions yng nghanolfan hamdden Pwllheli pan mae'r mamau/tadau yn aros i'w plant tra'n nofio ac ati.

Gwahanol fathau o gysylltu yn drawiadol i wahanol bobol e.e. Energy Wardens yn iawn i nifer ond nid efallai i henoed oni bai fod y person hwnnw yn rhywun adnabyddus.



# Analysis

The contextual questions have given us a clear picture of participant's desire to reduce their energy use and related costs. Participants showed they are energy aware, predominately own their own homes, pay energy bills by direct debit, have made efforts to reduce energy use already and wish to make more. However, there are some significant perceived barriers inhibiting greater energy efficiency, including cost and a lack of trusted information.

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There is a lack of awareness for support services that aim to help people use less energy and reduce their energy costs.

There is a lack of awareness for support services that aim to help people use less energy and reduce their energy costs. Only 21% have contacted services and only 4% of residents participating in this project have taken up the services on offer. There is a clear need for more information to overcome apathy, make the process clearer and simpler. Furthermore, service providers need to improve the experience for customers as this is damaging the image of the services and potentially reducing uptake further.

There is a stark lack of awareness of the UK Government's flagship energy efficiency scheme, the Green Deal, in the four areas assessed. More than three quarters of residents asked did not know what the Green Deal is and only 18% understand it. These results are even starker taking into account earlier results showing this population are very interested in energy efficiency and consider reducing their energy bills very important. Of the 18% who understand the Green Deal most have considered taking up the services offered (15% of total). This could suggest that by increasing awareness and understanding a greater uptake could be achieved.

More than three quarters of residents asked did not know what the Green Deal is and only 18% understand it. These results are even starker taking into account earlier results showing this population are very interested in energy efficiency and consider reducing their energy bills very important.

This lack of awareness and scarcity of information is leading to assumptions that exclude some residents from attempting to access the Green Deal. Bad experiences by some of the few who have accessed the services available are leading residents to say they do not trust the scheme or that it is not designed to help them. Residents have repeatedly claimed the system is not clear and is too complicated; further evidencing a need for

# Recommendations

1. More information about services and easier to understand information about how the services work is desperately required if we are to improve the engagement levels with local residents of north west Wales.

2. This information needs to be delivered by local, trusted organisations and individuals. Drop-in sessions held by local community organisations to engage people in this project inadvertently turned out to be an effective way of sharing information and motivating residents to act.

3. It is recommended that national schemes engage with and fund local ambassadors who in turn can engage with local residents, share information objectively and in a format more appropriate for the local audience.

4. The structure of the Green Deal with its upfront assessment costs, lending at commercial rates, and creating debt that remains with the house if sold has been shown by this research to be unattractive at best and inaccessible to many local residents.

5. Greater effort is required by service providers to meet customer expectations. Disappointing experiences have diminished the power of word of mouth referrals which could prove invaluable for services such as the Green Deal.

# Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the committed groups of local residents who run the two community energy initiatives involved in this project – Y Dref Werdd & YnNi Llŷn. Furthermore, without the engagement of Tai Eryri's Energy Wardens, in two of the four Community First areas surveyed, this project would not have been able to represent such a diverse population across such a wide geographic area. A huge thank you goes to the Energy Wardens for their enthusiasm for the project and to YnNi Llŷn and Y Dref Werdd for their determination to complete the work on such tight timescales.

Finally, an enormous thank you to all the participants who took the time to complete the questionnaire, attend drop-in sessions, open events and focus groups – sharing their opinions and experiences that make this report possible.

# Appendix

## Questionnaire

**Prosiect GAE** - researching how homes in Gwynedd could save more energy.

Prosiect GAE – is a project researching how homes in Gwynedd could save more energy.

By filling in this questionnaire you will help us get a picture of how existing support is reaching people like you. There are only ten questions spread across three sections, so you should be able to complete the questionnaire in about 5 minutes.

This first section is about your energy costs.

**Your Energy Costs**

With the rising costs of electricity and gas, saving energy or energy efficiency seems to be a hot topic, meanwhile household energy costs and bills from suppliers can be confusing.

1. Please answer the questions below by choosing one response for each line.

a. How interested are you in energy efficiency?

|            |          |            |             |                    |
|------------|----------|------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 1          | 2        | 3          | 4           | 5                  |
| Not at all | A little | Moderately | Quite a bit | Completely / A lot |

b. How well would you say you understand your household energy costs?

|            |          |            |             |                    |
|------------|----------|------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 1          | 2        | 3          | 4           | 5                  |
| Not at all | A little | Moderately | Quite a bit | Completely / A lot |

c. How important to you is reducing your total energy costs?

|            |          |            |             |                    |
|------------|----------|------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 1          | 2        | 3          | 4           | 5                  |
| Not at all | A little | Moderately | Quite a bit | Completely / A lot |

d. Do you:

Own your own home    Rent Privately    Rent from a Housing Association    Other, please specify:

2. How do you pay your energy bills?

Direct Debit    Card Meter    Cash or Cheque    Other, please specify:


3. What do you use to heat your home? (Please tick as many as apply)

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coal        | <input type="checkbox"/> Wood logs              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electricity | <input type="checkbox"/> Wood chip              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gas         | <input type="checkbox"/> Wood pellet            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LPG         | <input type="checkbox"/> Wood briquette         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oil         | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, Please specify: |

4. Have you taken steps to save energy or use less energy?  No  Yes (List the steps you've taken below)

5. If you have identified steps you could take which you have not undertaken, what are the reasons?

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Too costly / Lack of money           | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know who could do the work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know how / Lack of information | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify:           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of independent advice           |   |



**Energy Saving Support Services**

This section is about support available to reduce your energy costs.

6. Have you heard of any of these schemes? (Please Tick)

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ECO - Energy Companies Obligation | <input type="checkbox"/> Warm home discount scheme          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Green Deal                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Energy Warden                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arbed                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Collective Switching/Buying Scheme |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NEST/NYTH                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify:             |

7. Have you contacted any of the services listed above?  No  Yes – Who have you contacted?

a. Have you taken up support:

Yes – With whom?

No – Please explain why not.

**The Green Deal**

The section is about the Green Deal, the UK Government's main scheme to help people insulate their homes.

8. How well do you understand the help available through the Green Deal?

|                             |   |                                   |                               |                           |
|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1                           | 2   | 3                                 | 4                             | 5                         |
| I've not heard of it before | I've heard of it but don't really know what it is | I'm familiar with what it's about | I understand what it is about | I understand it very well |

a. Have you considered taking up the Green Deal?  Yes  No – If No, why not?

9. Have you seen any advertising locally for the Green Deal? (Please Tick all those you've seen)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper advert/article | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio adverts          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leaflets                 | <input type="checkbox"/> None                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Posters                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TV adverts               |   |

10. Have you had a Green Deal Assessment?

Yes – Please tell us what work you had done, or say why you have not taken up the recommended work:    No – Please tell us why not:

Thank you taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Would you be willing to discuss these issues further as part of a focus group? If so, please let us know. If you have filled in the questionnaire on your own please return it to:

|   |                                  |                         |
|---|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| • Martins Electrical, Blaenau Ffestiniog (Ffestiniog) (Pen Llŷn) (Caernarfon) | • Llys Gwilym, Llan Ffestiniog   | • Afallon, Tanygristiau |
| Y Dref Werdd:   | 830328 or roryfrancis@live.co.uk |                         |
| YnNi Llŷn:  | www.ynnyllyn.org                 |                         |
| Tai Eryri Energy Wardens:   | www.taieryri.co.uk               |                         |

