

Getting the experts in

Getting experts on board at different stages of your planning can increase the success of your event. This guide details a range of organisations that you could approach.

This is one of a series of information sheets for community groups organising green open homes events. Find the rest at www.greenopenhomes.net

In this guide:

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Your local authority

Your local authority is an important potential supporter that can lend credibility to your event. Being able to promote its own energy efficiency, energy saving, or cost of living schemes is likely to encourage your local authority to get on board.

Some councils have funding streams to support community-based projects like yours, or they may be able to act as a partner on other funding applications. They may also be willing to support publicity, for example helping you with press releases and using media contacts to generate interest and boost visitor numbers.

If you decide to engage your local authority, contact the relevant team (e.g. the Sustainability Team), be clear about what help you're asking for, record who you speak with, stay positive and be persistent!

Energy advice agencies

Energy advice agencies will usually be interested to hear about your green open homes event and may be able to provide you with factsheets to give away or displays to engage visitors. They may also have the capacity to provide an energy advisor on the day to give impartial advice to visitors on energy efficiency, renewables and so on.

Although it's unlikely that an energy advice agency will be able to fund your event directly (though there's no harm in asking), they may be able to signpost you in the direction of potential grants or funding schemes, and possibly even check over any funding applications.

To find your local energy advice agency, check your local authority website or try searching online using the terms 'energy advice in [*your region*]'. Social housing

providers and your nearest Citizens Advice may also have in-house energy advisors you could contact.

Building experts

Having experts like installers, builders or architects at your event is a great way to provide visitors with access to detailed technical advice. Experts can answer questions about complex or expensive installations and could even provide a helpful reality check if visitors haven't properly thought through disruption or visual impact.

Try contacting the Association for Environmentally Conscious Buildings (www.aecb.net), which is a network of builders, architects and manufacturers who share best practice. But don't forget to think locally as well.

Be aware, however, that visitors value open homes events because they can hear the story of how 'someone like them' improved their home: they don't want to feel like they are in a salesroom. Remember, it's an 'open' home, not a 'show' home.

Community groups

And finally, don't underestimate how much help other community groups can be! There are numerous groups who have carried out open homes events up and down the country and some may even be local to your area. You might want to consider joining forces to extend the area you are covering.

Other organisations

Use the following list of organisations to help you find details of builders, architects, product information and free factsheets on energy saving improvements.

Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) – info.cat.org.uk
Information service and course provider aimed towards alternative technologies and sustainable building methods.

Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) – www.cse.org.uk/my-home
The domestic energy advice section of CSE's website.

The Federation of Master Builders (FMB) – www.fmb.org.uk
The largest trade association in the UK building industry. Find affiliated builders or useful templates such as building contracts.

The Green Register - www.greenregister.org.uk
An online register to find construction professionals skilled in sustainable building practices. Searchable by profession and region.

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) - www.architecture.com

Has a searchable list of affiliated chartered architects and can also answer questions on non-traditional methods such as straw bale buildings.

The Tywi Centre - www.tywicentre.org.uk

Traditional and heritage construction expertise, including advice on common issues in old buildings, training courses and a contractor database.

The Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance – www.stbauk.org

Develops policy, guidance and training to minimise risks and maximise benefits to traditional buildings.

UK Centre for Moisture in Buildings - ukcmb.org/

An independent organisation led by University College London that produces research and resources.

This information sheet was produced by the Centre for Sustainable Energy. We're committed to supporting low carbon retrofit by promoting open homes events and helping you get going with resources, practical support and funding.

You can find more advice at www.greenopenhomes.net.

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