



Newsletter September 2013

Switch Update

The last meeting was held on 5th September and was chaired by Mike Owen, Merthyr Valley Homes.

Cardiff and The Vale of Glamorgan Councils have set up an energy switch project called 'Cyd Cymru. In the interest of a unified, all-Wales approach, the 'Energy Switching Wales' scheme will now be joining with the Cyd Cymru scheme. The group was asked if they felt this was the correct approach. The response was unanimously positive.

Funding and Project Board

Dylan Owen from Cardiff Council explained that Cardiff and The Vale obtained £100,000 of Welsh Government funding to run the scheme. The management and back end function of the switch will be facilitated by an external agency as none of the organisations involved have the capacity to take this on.

A new project board has been set up in order to accommodate representatives from across Wales. At the meeting, Jonathan Morris (NPT Homes) and Lynne Sacale (Cantref) volunteered to join the board. The steering group will meet on 17th September.

Dylan stated that there may be some money available to recruit experts in procurement and customer buying patterns.

Legacy

The legacy of the scheme will be to bring the fuel poverty agenda to the forefront of peoples' minds. We should be conscious that energy suppliers offering poor deals because they perceive customers as 'high risk'. We aim to roll the scheme out in tranches, starting in November. CIH's i2i team will manage communications to the group in the short term.

A question was asked as to whether smart meters will be provided as part of the scheme. Dylan confirmed that this had not been finalised but would be addressed as part of the procurement process. Mike asked that we ensure that people in arrears can also switch.

Branding

The scheme will run across Wales under the Cyd Cymru banner. Individual organisations will be able to add their own branding in much the same way as the recent 'Your Benefits Are Changing' campaign and it is suggested that organisations use the same partner organisations to help distribute the message about switching. It is hoped that the cost of branding can be added to the tender for a switch provider in order to avoid hidden costs later on. Dylan will ask Cardiff Council's Communications Team to draft branding for the 22 local authorities in Wales as a proof of concept. Part of the value of the scheme lies in customers receiving advice and assistance from a trusted source (i.e. a landlord or council), and that they feel reassured that any

profit made will be put back into the local community. Landlords will need to ensure that profits are distributed in communities and the project board will instruct solicitors to draft an agreement to reflect this. The profit for the landlord is around £50 per switch, and as it will be distributed amongst the interested parties it is unlikely to be a huge amount.

Your Role in Collective Switching

Lynne Sacale from Cantref suggested that smaller organisations may wish to work jointly on the scheme e.g. – A West Wales collective. Dylan was asked if we had considered joining a larger, British scheme such as one in Greater Manchester. It was felt that an all-Wales scheme, tailored to Wales would be more beneficial. In addition, the timescales for these projects do not run concurrently.

In other schemes such as the Eden Project's, there has been a significant drop-off in interest since the initial advertising campaign to tenants. It is vital that the time between someone's initial interest, and then receiving an offer, be as quick as possible. Ideally this should be within six weeks.

The project group will be selecting a switch provider soon. Once a provider has been chosen, the marketing campaign can be rolled out. Awareness should be raised through the normal channels – newsletter, payslips, door knocking etc. BBC Wales has already publicised the switch and will do follow progress reports.

Next Steps

It is intended that there will be a launch event in October with all interested parties invited for information and to officially 'sign up'. No decision has yet been made on the date or venue. Updates and supporting documents will be sent via email newsletters or hosted on i2i's website:

www.cih.org/i2i/collectiveswitching

Contact

For more information or to add your organisation to the mailing list please contact:

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