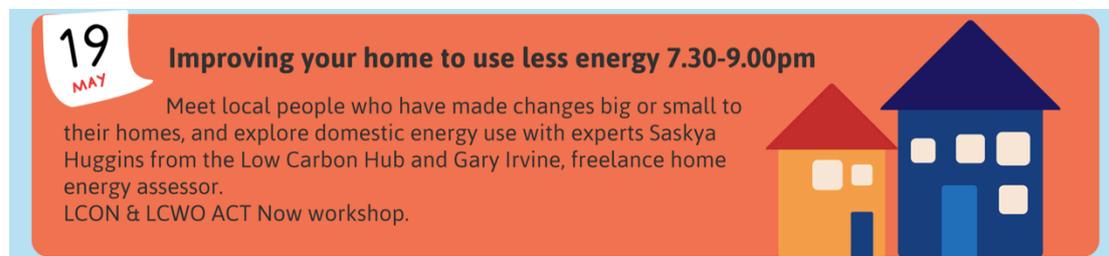


## Improving your home to use less energy

LCON and LCWO workshop of 19 May 2021 - Q&A and further advice

A banner with an orange background and a light blue border. On the left, a white speech bubble contains the number '19' in black and 'MAY' in red below it. To the right of the speech bubble, the text 'Improving your home to use less energy 7.30-9.00pm' is written in bold black. Below this, smaller text reads: 'Meet local people who have made changes big or small to their homes, and explore domestic energy use with experts Saskya Huggins from the Low Carbon Hub and Gary Irvine, freelance home energy assessor. LCON & LCWO ACT Now workshop.' On the right side of the banner, there are two stylized houses: a smaller yellow one with a red roof and a larger blue one with a dark blue roof. Both have white windows and doors.

**19**  
MAY

**Improving your home to use less energy 7.30-9.00pm**

Meet local people who have made changes big or small to their homes, and explore domestic energy use with experts Saskya Huggins from the Low Carbon Hub and Gary Irvine, freelance home energy assessor.  
LCON & LCWO ACT Now workshop.

We have compiled below the questions and answers from our event. For any further questions or comments for follow-up, please contact [julia.patrick@lcon.org.uk](mailto:julia.patrick@lcon.org.uk) or [mim@lcwo.org.uk](mailto:mim@lcwo.org.uk).

*Disclaimer: The information below has been compiled from various contributions to the event. Low Carbon Oxford North, Low Carbon West Oxford and other contributors are not in a position to accept liability for any loss or problems arising from use of any information or resources in this report or linked sites.*

### Behaviour

#### **Some further advice:**

One way you can cut your carbon footprint is by shifting when you use electricity away from peak times (4-7pm) and you can also look for times when renewable electricity is in abundance you can check real time carbon intensities here: <https://carbonintensity.org.uk> or via a lovely website called the baking forecast which tells you when its best to bake (or use electricity) in your home <https://shouldibake.com>

### Appliances

#### **General advice:**

When buying appliances you need to consider both the energy that went into making it AND the energy used to run it. If you are deciding which appliances to upgrade, start with the ones that you use the most for example, your fridge/freezer.

The way you then use your appliance can then have a huge impact on the energy you use. Using the eco setting, batch cooking, washing at 30, only boiling the amount of water you need in the kettle can all help.

#### **Are tumble dryers really evil?**

If you have the option to dry clothes outside that's always the best for money and carbon. However if you are going to use a tumble drier, use as high a spin cycle as you can on your washing machine to remove as much water as possible. The other benefit of tumble driers is they do reduce the amount of humidity in the home,

which can arise if you dry clothes on your radiators (which uses around 25% of the energy of a tumble drier) or clothes rack, so if you are using radiators or clothes rack, do it in a room where you can shut the door and open a window.

***Why are there no washing machines rated B or A?***

***Could you clarify the shift from A+++ to current rating system.***

If you have access to Which they have an article on energy efficiency in washing machine, and the bit before the pay wall explains what to look for on an energy performance label for washing machines.

<https://www.which.co.uk/reviews/washing-machines/article/energy-efficient-washing-machines-aDUNk3I9sAL4>

Information on the new energy efficiency label:

<https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/energy-labels-are-changing-heres-what-you-need-to-know/>

***Should we be turning our I-macs / pc off or just put it to sleep? Which uses less energy?***

Turning appliances off is better than standby - although standby is now restricted legally to draw minimum power - however collectively we now own so many appliances together they do make a sizeable difference, so turning them off is a good habit to get into.

***We need a new vacuum cleaner. any tips on what to look for buying a new one?***

Look for the energy performance rating to help guide you in your purchase. However there is a balance between the fact that a higher wattage vacuum cleaner will use more power per minute, but may be more effective at cleaning - so look for the lowest wattage appliance, which still has decent reviews!

***Is it more efficient to do the washing up, or use the dishwasher? I was surprised to find my dishwasher only uses 1kwh to run on eco.***

The washing up v dishwasher debate depends very much on your machine and washing up style! If hand washing you can reduce your energy use by using a washing up bowl, and using the washing order I learned at Brownies (start with the glasses, end with the pans) to make the water last as long as possible. However an efficient dishwasher on the eco setting, can use less energy.

***Is there a material - a kind of tape? - you can recommend to mend the cracked seal on our fridge?***

This Guardian article might be of interest for fixing your fridge if you want to try a DIY approach <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/jul/21/how-to-mend-an-inefficient-fridge>

## **Building fabric**

***How cost effective are outside air heat exchangers [air source heat pumps], or even (much more expensive) soil heat exchangers (ground source heat pumps)?***

It depends on what your current heating system is, if you are on gas and how energy efficient your home is - so very site specific.

Before you think about a heat pump, make sure you get insulated first. Take fabric first approach.

***Any tips on what to do with a one-pipe heating system? We have valves fitted but can't turn any single radiator off or they all stop putting out heat. And are there any advantages to keeping it to one-pipe if we replace our boiler with a heat pump?***

This is an old system and should ideally be replaced.

***What of photovoltaic roof tiles if you need to move the old tiles?***

PV tiles are a very interesting technology but I have seen very little sign of it being adopted to any large extent in this country. Worth exploring!

***What are the fire risks with internal insulation of solid walls? And do you get problems with clothes moth infestation with sheep wool insulation?***

***You say that gas boiler has to be replaced by air source heat pump. What about hydrogen heat?***

Trouble with hydrogen is also you've got to make it. More efficient to use electricity directly in homes.

***I have found it hard to find competent and reliable contractors. Do you have any recommendations, please?***

A lack of a skilled and experience workforce is one of the biggest challenges to retrofit in the UK - and especially in Oxfordshire. Ultimately we need to invest in training, but that doesn't help you with your immediate needs. To note that a combination of covid and the temporary reduction in stamp duty is making that even worse.

***Is cosyhomes struggling to deliver because of lack of builders etc available?***

That has been the biggest challenge, although the pool of contractors they have is steadily growing.

***Do you have any contacts/case studies for people who have done internal wall insulation and might be happy to chat? Since we are about to embark on IWI***

Tina Fawcett and Richard Blundel: <https://superhomes.org.uk/homes/oxford-headington-stapleton-road/>

Make sure you get professional advice.

***For Will: who are you getting your heat pump from, please? We have just got a quote from Optimum Energy Solutions.***

Steve Cross plumbing. I had asked around and they had been recommended.