

***Under strict embargo until 00.01hrs, Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2009***

**BRITISH COMMUNITIES COMPETE TO SEE WHICH IS GREENEST IN £2 MILLION CHALLENGE**

*- Conservationist Ben Fogle backs the British Gas competition -*

Fourteen British communities will go head-to-head, competing to become Britain's most innovative "green community", as British Gas kicks off its Green Streets community energy challenge today.

The communities have been awarded a total of £2 million in funding by British Gas and will take part in a year-long challenge to see who can do the most to cut energy use, lower carbon emissions, generate their own energy and increase engagement in these activities amongst members of their own community. The winner will receive a £100,000 prize to spend on a local environmental project of their choice.

The fourteen projects that have been chosen to take part in the Green Streets challenge are spread across the country, and include: a group in Suffolk that has saved the local lido from closure and now plan to install heat pump and solar technology to provide heating for the pool; a group in Lincolnshire planning to install renewable energy technologies in four community buildings which provide nurseries, family and community services; and a group in London working with the local school to install solar panels on the roof and measures to help the community reduce energy usage by 20 per cent.

The community groups are a test-case for a new innovative community-led approach to saving and generating energy and provides an opportunity to trial new technology. In Llangattock, Wales, for example, the rural community will be installing a micro hydro system to provide electricity for homes in the village. With some of the proposals including ideas that have never been tried before, British Gas and the community groups will be learning together. One example of this is the Beccles community who will employ heat pump technology using a river as a heat source for their outdoor lido. All of the different groups will help shape British Gas's approach to the growing market in local energy generation and assist the country's leading energy supplier to understand how this can be replicated right across the UK.

The Green Streets challenge will also work with some of the most remote communities in the country to test renewable technologies. The residents of Eilean Eisdeal, a small rural island in Scotland, are looking to secure the future of their village hall by installing a wind turbine and a ground source heat pump.

Explorer, conservationist and community activist Ben Fogle, who is backing the campaign, said: “If Britain is going to meet its tough carbon reduction targets, we need to look at new ways of helping people cut their energy consumption and reduce emissions. There is a groundswell of communities wanting to learn how to save money and go green by developing plans around saving and generating energy locally. Green Streets taps into this demand, and will help create a blueprint for building a more sustainable future.

“The range of communities involved is fantastic. From solar panels near a lido, to a wind turbine to power floodlights for a sports facility, there is a breadth of technology being used by a diverse group of communities up and down Britain. Ten years on from my experience on Taransay, I’m particularly excited to see a remote Scottish island installing technology which will help the community towards a more sustainable existence.”

All the projects are supported by at least twenty local residents who will be attempting to lower their energy usage. Throughout the year, the Green Streets communities will be judged on their ability to reduce energy use, generate local energy and engage the local community.

Before work on installation begins, British Gas will provide energy assessments for all the community and residential buildings involved in the project to assess their current energy performance and to provide recommendations on how to spend the funding most effectively.

Gearoid Lane, Director of Communities and New Energy, British Gas, said:

“We believe it is people at a local level who will help revolutionise the way that energy is generated and consumed in the UK. The British Gas Green Streets project is about helping people act as trailblazers to inspire others. The communities involved in our new challenge will provide us with vital insight as we grow our locally-generated energy business and provide great new ideas for saving and generating energy that will benefit the country as a whole.

"We know small groups can make a big difference, and we hope these projects will benefit their communities for generations to come."

British Gas will be working in partnership with the fourteen Green Streets communities to deliver these projects and gather learnings throughout the challenge. Each project will be supported by a team of British Gas experts, including British Gas engineers who will be volunteering their time. The team will oversee the implementation of the new technology and support the community over the course of a year. British Gas has also enlisted the Institute of Public Policy Research (ippr) think-tank to independently monitor the progress of the projects and set them challenges in saving, generating and engaging the people about energy issues.

## **ENDS**

### **Notes to editors:**

More detail on the Green Streets initiative can be found at [www.britishgas.co.uk/greenstreets](http://www.britishgas.co.uk/greenstreets)

### Filming opportunities:

Filming opportunities are available on 18<sup>th</sup> January at the following locations:

- Hyde Farm Climate Action Network in Balham, South London
- Transition Town Horncastle – Green Babies and Toddlers in Lincolnshire

Residents with Smart Meters installed in their homes will also be available at both locations for filming.

### For media enquiries:

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## **About the Final 14 Green Streets communities**

From an initial 100 applications, applications were shortlisted and asked to pitch for funding in community-selection meetings with an independent panel of judges.

- Tackley Village in Oxfordshire has ambitious plans to save and generate energy, which include installing solar PV panels on the community owned and run village shop and using the energy generated to power two churches.
- Transition Town Horncastle – Green Babies and Toddlers plans to install energy saving and renewable energy technologies in four community buildings which provide nurseries, family and community centres.
- The Meadows Partnership Trust, a community group in Nottingham, plans to convert an abandoned pub into an eco restaurant and coffee shop, which is powered by solar thermal and solar PV panels.
- Richmond Council in partnership with Richmond Environment Network and Ham United Group plans to transform the area of Ham and Petersham into a model village by bringing together schools, a local library, and community buildings, and to show renewable technologies in action to educate the wider community.
- The village of Casterton in Cumbria plans to install a biomass system in a local school and install measures in local homes, including 'hard to treat' homes, such as insulation for solid walls.
- The Bradford Bandits BMX Racing Club plans to install a wind turbine to power the floodlights at the local Peel Park BMX track and help to educate local residents and install efficiency measures in their homes.
- Hyde Farm Climate Action Network in London SW12 will work with the local school to install solar PV on the roof which will help it reduce their energy usage by 20 per cent and inspire the pupils and parents, as well as continuing to educate their network of 200 households on energy efficiency.
- Friends of Beccles Lido in Suffolk plan to save their lido from permanent closure by installing a ground source heat pump to heat the pool, and get more people involved by recruiting local households to receive energy efficiency measures.

- Sustainable Moseley in the West Midlands who have plans to install micro generation technologies on a local school, mosque, church and housing association using a well established network to spread the word.
- Climate Friendly Bradford upon Avon plan on turning a wide range of local homes into demonstration projects for green energy and insulation installations.
- Villagers in Ingram, Northumberland, have plans to install solar PV panels on their Village Hall and measures for local homes, which are mainly off grid, some for gas and for electricity.
- Llangattock Green Valleys in Wales are looking to install a 7kw micro hydro scheme in a local stream and work with the villagers to increase energy efficiency in homes.
- The residents of Eilean Eisdeal in Scotland, a small rural island, are looking to secure the future of their village hall by installing a wind turbine and a ground source heat pump that will sit under sea water in a disused quarry.
- REAP – the residents of Keith, Banffshire, wish to equip their village hall with a biomass boiler, enabling them to share heat energy with a neighbouring school building currently heated by oil.