

St Mary's Church, Addington: the Footprint Group

The ancient St Mary's Church in Addington, just south of London, is more than just a place to worship. It's a hub of thriving community activity in the village too. Hundreds of people are involved in groups organised through St Mary's, from the badminton club to the local nursery school.

In 2006, the church added the Footprint Group to its list of activities. The group was set up to save energy in Addington, and bring people together through environmental projects.

The group started its energy saving drive within the church, asking the Environmental Officer for the Diocese of Southwark to carry out an audit of the building to see how it could cut its carbon footprint.

The whole congregation became involved. The group launched an annual 'Harvest Challenge', encouraging simple actions for every family such as recycling or using fabric bags instead of plastic ones. St Mary's Reverend, Dr Jeanne Males, has also talked regularly about the environment and sustainability in her sermons.

But the Footprint Group wanted to do more than just educate their congregation. They wanted to get the whole of Addington trying to save energy, and that's where the



Energy Saving Trust came in.

'There were plenty of opportunities to save energy within our community. There are always wine bottles to recycle after communion! But we wanted to find out more and do more, so we were pleased to work with the Energy Saving Trust,' said Rev Males.

The Footprint Group and the Energy Saving Trust

In February 2009, the Energy Saving Trust chose Addington to take part in its Green Communities local support programme, which provided communities with in depth advice and support from their local Energy Saving Trust

1

One of only 100 churches to be awarded eco-congregation status.

2

331 homes installed loft or cavity wall insulation

That's a lifetime CO₂ saving of around 6,106.5 tonnes.

3

652 households

Contacted for installations, advice, Home Energy Checks or new boilers.

advice centre to help them reduce their carbon footprint.

The Footprint group had previously received support from the Energy Saving Trust's Community Action for Energy (CAfE) programme. Through CAfE St Mary's received recommendations on their project from an energy expert. This aided the group in securing funding from the Islington Climate Change Partnership.

With Green Communities local support the Energy Saving Trust was able to supplement this advice and offer a more intensive period of help from a community outreach worker, so the group could really get their teeth into supporting Addington to reduce its carbon footprint.

The Footprint Group's achievements

With the help of Green Communities local support and the strong leadership of Rev Males, the Footprint Group accomplished a huge amount in Addington.

First came a formal carbon reduction plan. This involved the whole community coming together to decide what steps to take to reduce their carbon footprint, starting with the easiest, cheapest measures. It also allowed the community to monitor and track their progress against their plan at subsequent meetings. Then the group put on a community event to show people how they could go about cutting their own environmental impact.

Free Home Energy Checks for Addington residents were next on the agenda. The Energy Saving Trust surveyed homes across the village, reporting back to their owners on what they could do to save energy. They also publicised grants available to make homes more energy efficient.

The Energy Saving Trust was able to provide Footprint with

information on other organisations and networks that could help them. St Mary's is now part of the Eco-Congregation movement, which connects churches trying help the environment. The Energy Saving Trust even helped the group by giving them tips on an eco-garden they had set up on a disused plot of land.

'As well as the obvious environmental benefits, I think saving energy is an activity that brings the community together and we hope it will continue for a long time to come,' said Rev Males. 'Continuous energy saving activity of the larger community helps influence the actions of individuals. For example, our secretary receives lots of items for us to sell online for fundraising. Now she always recycles the boxes they arrive in.'

The Footprint Group's challenges

The carbon cutting process wasn't all straightforward for the Footprint Group. The group relied on their busy volunteers' time, so progress on their projects could often be slow.

The group also found that some people were reluctant to spend money on energy saving measures because they weren't sure what benefit it would have for them. Their solution was to let villagers try before they bought. With the help of the Energy Saving Trust, Footprint set up a 'light bulb library', where villagers could get free energy saving light bulbs to test.

'People don't want to spend a lot of money on an energy saving light bulb if they don't know what they're getting,' said Rev Males. 'With the library, borrowers can test out the

light bulb at home before buying their own. We've had an enormous amount of interest.'

Saving energy is an activity
that brings the community
together



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