

By now, everyone on Skye will have received a letter from The Highland Council, telling them about the **Universal Home Insulation Scheme**. This is a Scottish Government scheme, offering **loft** and/or **cavity wall insulation free of charge** to anyone living on Skye. While it may not be of interest if you live in a Housing Association property (or in Lochalsh, which isn't covered by the Scheme), it is well worth encouraging friends or relatives to take up the offer.

But energy efficiency is about more than just insulation; our experience of going round and inspecting over **70 properties** across **Skye, Lochalsh** and **Raasay** has shown us that lifestyle is a significant element in energy consumption. There are a number of issues that come up time and time again which, with a few small changes would make a big difference.

Hot water heating: many households heat their water for far too long and to a higher temperature than necessary. A constant supply of scalding hot water is, for most households, unnecessary and very costly, so ensure that the thermostat on your hot water tank is **set to 60 degrees** and that your water heating is **on a timer**, and not at the **'always on'** setting.

Furniture blocking radiators: a radiator with a large sofa in front of it is going to heat the back of the sofa, but little else. It can sometimes be difficult to fit everything in, but you should make sure that you don't end up blocking the main source of heat in the room. Likewise, if your radiator is under a window, ensure that the curtains are drawn behind it, keeping the heat in the room.

Old, inefficient boilers: an old boiler that is maybe only 80% efficient, means that for every £100 you spend on fuel, £20 is wasted. A new boiler might seem like an expensive purchase, but it is an investment that will be paid back through reduced energy costs.

Large expanses of glazing: we live in a beautiful part of the world, and don't want anything to get in the way of a beautiful view. And, when it is dark for so much of the time in winter, we want to make the most of the daylight. However, unless you have **high quality glazing**, windows mean heat loss, so ensuring that you have shutters or a **thick pair of curtains** to close over the windows in the evening will

help to keep the heat in your house. And don't forget about **glazed doors** too.

High electricity usage: inefficient appliances such as fridges or washing machines, TVs, gamestations or computers left on **stand-by**, or electric heaters used for lengthy periods can all make hefty demands on electricity. It is important to understand, therefore, exactly what you are using and when.

The Energy Advice Service administered by **Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association** is here to help you identify where you might be losing heat and wasting energy. Insulation can help, but it is only part of the solution; if you have a draughty house, old windows, inefficient appliances or heating controls you don't understand, there are lots of ways you could be wasting energy **and** money.

Our service is **free** and we will help you to look at every aspect of your energy use. We can also advise about the use of **renewable energy**, install **energy, electrical appliance and humidity monitors** and, in the near future, will be able to do **thermal imaging surveys** in your home.

Over the last couple of months, we have identified **over 50 people** who are eligible for the **Scottish Government's Energy Assistance Package**, which can mean reduced electricity tariffs, insulation and draft proofing measures, or installation of a central heating system.

With the cold weather setting in, now is the time to act.
Phone **01478 612035** to ask for a free home visit.