

Ocean wins National Energy Efficiency Award

In the week Gordon Brown's government announced significant investment to improve insulation and energy efficiency of homes, Cornwall's Ocean Housing Group were in Coventry receiving the Corgi Award for energy efficiency at this year's national plumbing and heating show.



Ocean's maintenance subsidiary, Ocean Services, was selected from 55,000 private and public sector installers for the coveted national title of Energy Efficient Installer of the Year.

Ocean Group Chief Executive, David Renwick said: "The real winners are Ocean's residents. Over the last eight years we have invested 51 million pounds improving their homes. Long before the buzz words 'credit crunch' and 'fuel poverty' existed, our building and modernisation programmes have aimed to provide our clients with 'affordable warmth'". Ocean cannot control all of the reasons behind fuel poverty, such as rising energy prices and low household income. We can, however, improve the energy efficiency of our homes, with the aim that residents can afford to heat them to a comfortable level."

Since starting trading in February 2000, Ocean has targeted the least energy efficient homes first to improve insulation and to reduce running costs for residents. Some 2,300 homes have benefited from double glazing, 1,700 from central heating and 3,300 from loft and cavity insulation.

Ocean is also running a pilot scheme for solar and ground source heating in a number of new and existing properties. David commented: "Technology is constantly evolving and it is our job to keep abreast of the latest developments. We always have to weigh up the installation cost of the new technology against the financial benefits for our residents. As an example, the ground source heating requires bore holes of up to 80 meters into the ground, which doesn't come cheap. So we will be monitoring the effectiveness of these new systems over the winter months, to gauge whether they are a good use of Ocean's resources."

Ocean has a statutory duty to produce affordable warmth and sustainable development strategies, but David believes it has gone a step further: "We haven't just fulfilled our obligations as set out by the Housing Corporation. We have embraced the challenge of energy conservation and affordable warmth, as it brings real tangible benefits to our residents. "Back in 2000, who would have predicted energy prices rising sky high? There is no easy fix to such global problems, but thanks to Ocean's commitment to modernisation, we can ensure our homes remain as energy efficient as possible. We will continue to explore new technologies for heating Ocean homes that are efficient, affordable and minimise the impact on the environment."

Phil Smith, Managing Director of Ocean Services, said: "We are absolutely thrilled to have our efforts recognised by such an important trade association and believe that our attention to high quality maintenance services has been a key factor in our success."

Judy Sturtridge, Chair of Ocean's Tenants Panel welcomed the news: "We are delighted that Ocean's work over a number of years to keep people warm and comfortable in their homes has been nationally recognised. Ocean's residents will continue to work in partnership with the organisation to maintain this momentum at a time when heating and energy costs are rising rapidly."