

Ocean tackles climate change and fuel poverty

Ocean Housing, with partners Cornwall Council, is aspiring to produce the most innovative homes for pensioners, with the lowest fuel bills in the country and some of the lowest carbon emissions achievable in new homes.



Over the past five years, Ocean has developed a range of homes setting new standards in design and comfort and the proposed St Austell scheme will be a further major step in tackling climate change and fuel poverty.

Ocean Housing Group has been awarded a £ 3 million grant from the Department of Communities and Local Government towards its new £ 5 million supported housing scheme in St Austell. The DCLG award is a significant early step in the Government's investment in the St Austell Clay Country Eco Town.

Chief Executive, David Renwick, welcomed the announcement that Ocean has been chosen to progress the Government's Eco Town strategy: "We are planning a cutting edge eco-sensitive building that will meet and exceed the Government's sustainability targets for the Eco-towns. In partnership with Cornwall Council we will be constructing a new supported housing scheme that reaches new levels of sustainability for housing of this type."

Ocean's latest housing developments already reach eco town standards and David is confident that this new scheme will take raise the bar even higher: "We will be using the latest technologies to provide the most advanced insulation and heating," he said. "Our aim is to make fuel poverty for our residents a thing of the past."

To achieve this goal Ocean has commissioned PRP Architects, a nationally renown practice with a recognised expertise in the design of specialist accommodation for older people and a deep understanding of the climate change agenda. "At the heart of this project is our commitment to raise the quality of affordable housing for some of our most vulnerable residents," explains David. "The existing accommodation has reached the end of its life and we will be replacing it with a building that promises to be one of the most advanced of its type in the U.K. and which will achieve remarkably low heating costs.

"As well as an ecologically sound scheme, we will be creating a high quality building with landscaped grounds that family and friends can also enjoy when visiting residents. We are currently looking at design features that will enhance the lives of our residents including a glazed winter garden and more practical ideas such as charging points for electric vehicles and buggies." David acknowledges in the short term there will be a tremendous upheaval for residents: "Our top priority is to provide a comprehensive support network to help residents through the whole process. We have a dedicated team of housing staff who have discussed our plans with residents and are helping to organise their temporary move to suitable interim accommodation."

Ocean is preparing the planning application this spring, with a view to starting work in the autumn and the new homes being ready in late 2011.