



Still can't kick the habit

The UK may be interested in saving energy but it doesn't seem to be able break bad habits, the latest Government survey of public attitudes towards energy reveals

The number of people in the UK supporting renewable energy, such as wind, solar and wave, has risen to 82 per cent, three per cent more than three months ago, according to the fifth Public Attitudes Tracker survey conducted by Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC). The quarterly survey is intended to track and understand public attitudes to priority areas of the Government.

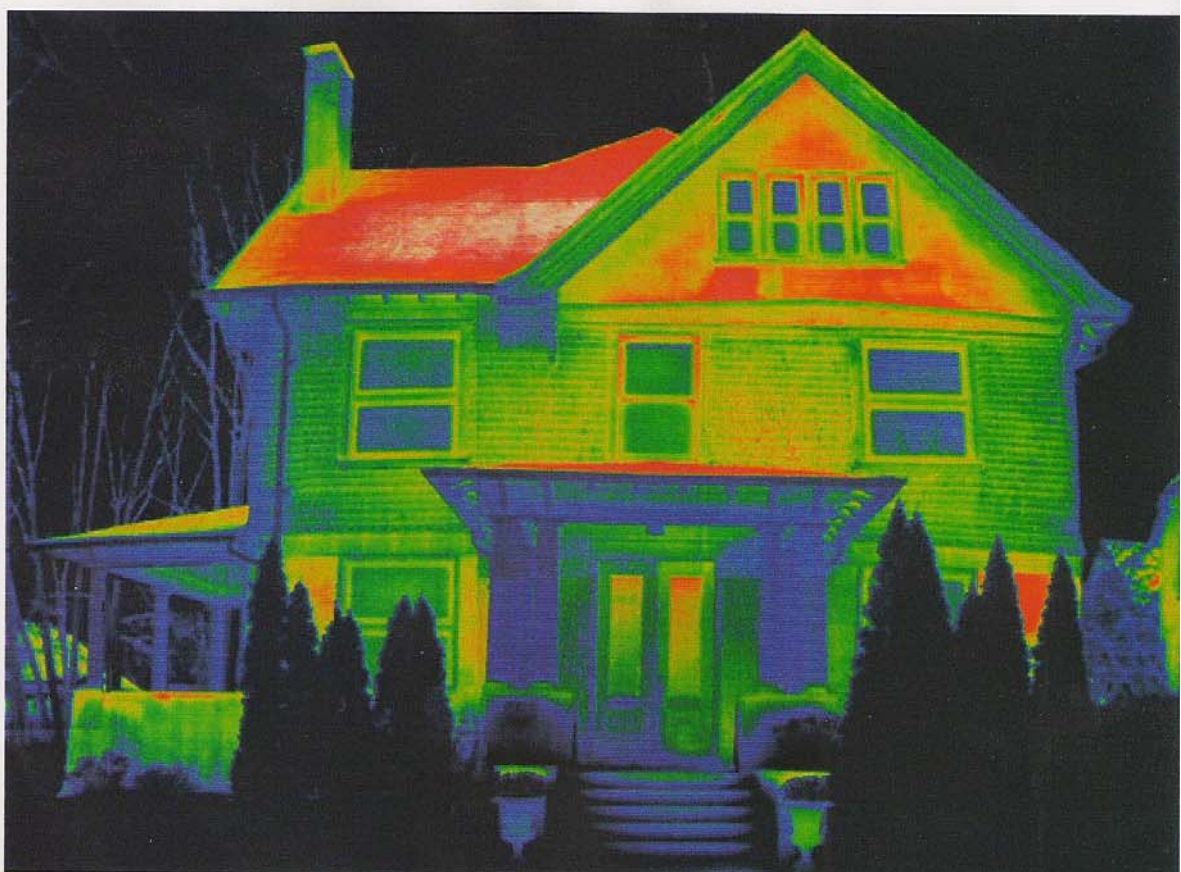
But the same poll reveals that energy wasting behaviour, such as leaving lights switched on when you are not in a room or boiling more water than you need to in the kettle, remain stubbornly high. Just 26 per cent of people admit giving a lot of thought to saving energy, despite energy efficiency being a priority policy of the Government and the launch in January of the Green Deal.

Household survey

Wave five of the 'DECC Public Attitudes Tracker' surveyed more than 2,000 households in March 2013 and revealed that 52 per cent of people admit to leaving the heating on when they are out for a few hours, compared to 25 per cent who said they did when the survey was first taken in early 2012. Those who say they leave lights on when they were not in a room stands at 52 per cent - the same as a year ago - while 67 per cent admit to boiling more water than required in the kettle, up from 64 per cent around a year ago.

The picture is slightly brighter for the Government when it comes to policies to help tackle rising energy bills. The number of people who have installed a smart meter has doubled from six per cent in early 2012 to 12 per cent now. The Government is planning to rollout 53 million smart electricity and gas meters to all UK homes and to two million smaller businesses from 2014, at an estimated cost of £11.7 billion.

Meanwhile, 27 per cent of people say they are now aware of collective switching initiatives - an increase of six per cent compared to when the first survey was taken. However, despite efforts by DECC to get people to switch energy suppliers, only 16 per cent of people have actually done so - a rise of just one



Although there is concern over rising energy bills just a quarter of people give a thought to saving energy

per cent over the same period. This is despite a record number of people now saying they are concerned about their energy bills - 59 per cent of UK adults compared to 56 per cent in wave one of the survey.

Despite the mixed picture, Energy

and Climate Change Secretary Edward Davey said the findings showed energy and climate change issues "are at the forefront of people's minds" and that the Government's low carbon energy policies had a clear public mandate.

"It comes as no surprise that energy bills are a concern, but the increase in collective switching awareness, as more and more people club together to increase their energy buying power, is encouraging."

"82 per cent of people interviewed for the study were supportive of renewable energy - a rise of three per cent from last year. This shows clear public support for Government to continue in its efforts of developing for low-carbon, home grown forms of energy."

Alongside a rise in public support for renewable energy, the tracker reveals that awareness levels in shale gas has grown from 42 per cent to 52 per cent since wave two of the survey, when the question was first asked. Compared to this, awareness in carbon capture and storage (CCS) has only risen by half that amount - from 36 per cent in wave one to 41 per cent now.

Network to provide funding

The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) will be providing £900,000 in 2013/14 to fund the creation of the 'Big Energy Saving Network' as part of the Government's response to the discussion document 'Ensuring a better deal for energy consumers.'

The Network will build on the work of existing support networks, but will seek to provide a clearer focus on encouraging vulnerable consumers to take action, by:

- developing and agreeing key messages;
- developing the capability of advisors through training on tariffs, switching and how to access energy efficiency programmes;
- identifying best practice in targeting and delivering outreach events to vulnerable consumers;
- working to identify other national and local organisations to extend the reach of advice provision;
- delivering switching, tariff and energy efficiency advice directly to consumers through suitably trained trusted intermediaries.