

Gone With The Wind

Executive Summary

Gone With The Wind is a feasibility study developed to test the effectiveness of a tailored marketing message compared to general standard energy efficiency message. The tailored message highlighted the fact that homes in windy locations are 'harder to heat' and developed to assess whether such a bespoke and exclusive marketing message is more effective than the standard energy efficiency message.

The research targeted 4,000 householders living in exposed windy locations. 2,000 at West Kirby in Wirral and 2,000 at Formby in Sefton. Only half in each region received the windy campaign message. The other half received a standard energy efficiency awareness message.

This study was led by a partnership comprising of Energy Projects Plus, lead Partner and Project Manager, Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council as the Lead Local Authority Partner, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council and Merseyside Energy Efficiency Advice Centre. Support was also provided by Merseyside Local Energy Support Programme.

The "Windy" campaign held 3 focus groups meetings from already existing local groups that helped choose the best marketing strap line and design for the marketing leaflet.

The study comprised of a two-phase survey. Phase one was a mail out to the whole target areas encouraging residents to complete a home energy survey and receive direct advice on action they could take. Phase two was a follow-up survey to phase one respondents to gauge the level of action already taken and determine the level of action likely to be taken as a result of the advice received.

Phase two was undertaken because the study partners felt that typical energy efficiency awareness campaigns are mostly informative and attempt to drive people to action, but do not assess peoples' future intentions or issues likely to affect future actions. It was felt the introduction of a second phase or a follow up questionnaire could make a greater difference to action and help determine the potential carbon savings that could be achieved by individuals.

Phase one attracted an overall 12% response rate, which is approximately 5% higher than previous general energy efficiency mail outs. Phase two, which targeted phase one respondents, achieved a 37% response rate.

The study has identified that the main barrier to taking action is the perceived cost of work. A significant number of respondents rated trusted local schemes, independent advice and grant funding as important or very important. This informs the conclusion that the creation of new, or increased marketing of existing, trusted local schemes that are supported by independent advice and grant funding to reduce the cost of work would increase the level of action taken.

The study also demonstrated that there is considerable potential, and interest, in energy efficiency and renewable technologies.

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Although the study has concluded that the windy message had little impact on the marketing of energy efficiency or renewable technology measures this does not mean that other tailored messages in other areas will not work.

Working with two local authority partners has been a valuable exercise that will inform future activities in the area, including the assessment of current schemes and the creation of new programmes to promote energy efficiency and renewable technologies.