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Fact Sheet Series:

Park Homes

Introduction

This guide provides a brief overview of the possible actions that can be taken to improve the overall energy efficiency of park homes. As they are constructed differently from modern brick built houses, park homes can experience high heat loss and as such they require special consideration. If you live in a park home it is possible that you are restricted to more expensive heating fuels such as liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), which can costs over three times the cost of mains gas, as park home sites often do not have mains gas available. Some park homes typically also have relatively poor standards of insulation and are therefore more expensive to heat. The simple energy efficiency improvements described in this fact sheet can therefore deliver real savings in fuel costs to park home residents.

What can be done?

There are a few things that residents can do to make their homes more comfortable in the winter months. These range from less expensive options, such as draught proofing, to more expensive options such as wall insulation. Anyone undertaking major works on a park home should bear in mind the remaining life-span of their home, and make their own assessment regarding the cost of any works compared to how long they will be able to benefit from them.

Metering

Many park homes do not have their energy supplies metered individually and may benefit from the introduction of metering and "as-used" payment systems. You could discuss this with your park landlord and their utility company to ensure you are receiving the best tariff for your circumstances.

Wall Insulation

External wall insulation greatly reduces the rate of heat loss and reduces the effects of thermal bridges (localised areas of heat loss) within the wall construction. The reduced rate of heat loss improves the inner wall surface temperatures and helps to reduce problems of condensation and mould growth. External wall insulation can be expensive and is best considered if you are refurbishing your home. However, if insulation is applied at the correct thickness (minimum of 50mm) fuel costs can be reduced by 30%.

Flexible insulation lining, a type of internal wall insulation, can also be considered. This insulation is bought on a roll and is less expensive than external wall insulation. However, the savings you can expect will be less compared to other types of wall insulation. Flexible linings can also help prevent mould growth and condensation (please note that it is also important to ventilate a home properly).

Roof Insulation

If you already have a pitched roof you should ensure you have 270mm (10.5 inches) of loft insulation installed as around 25% of the of heat generated in the park home is lost through the roof. If you have a flat roof and you are refurbishing, then you could consider replacing it with a pitched roof which can be properly insulated. However, this is a relatively complex and costly option. Alternatively a flat roof can be insulated with flexible thermal lining materials and some small energy savings will be made.

Under floor Insulation

Rooms can sometimes feel cold due to strong draughts rising up from gaps from the floor. Thick underlay and carpet would have a significant effect on reducing draughts. Under floor insulation could also be an option. Park homes often have purpose made ventilation points in the floors and these must not be covered over when installing under floor insulation.

Draught Proofing

Draught proofing is the process of filling unnecessary gaps in the building to reduce heat loss and discomfort due to draughts. You can draught proof windows, doors and letter boxes. The materials used for draught proofing include foams, brushes, sealants and thin sections of rubber, plastic or metal. However desirable it may be to exclude draughts, there should always be sufficient ventilation to prevent the property becoming stale and stuffy, although most properties are sufficiently "leaky" to allow for this, even after draught proofing. Adequate ventilation is essential where fossil fuel burning appliances are used to enable fuels to burn safely and efficiently, and to allow waste gases to be removed. Inadequate ventilation can increase the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Hot Water Tank and Insulation

Fitting a British Standard "jacket" to your hot water cylinder will cut heat loss by around 75% and save you money. They can be found in any good DIY store and are cheap and easy to fit. If you already have a jacket fitted to your hot water cylinder, check that it's at least 75mm (3") thick. If not replace it with a new heat saving one.

Upgrading Heating Systems

It is important to ensure that your heating systems are efficient. If you are thinking about replacing your heating system then you should consider an energy efficient replacement (SEDBUK[1] A rated where possible). It is recommended that oil or gas boilers are serviced every 12 months to maintain the appliance efficiency.

Improve Heating Controls

A good central-heating system will have a variety of controls to make it efficient and to make it work to suit you. These include a programmer/timer, room thermostat, thermostatic radiator valves, boiler thermostat and water cylinder thermostat. Turning your room thermostat down by 1°C could cut your heating bills by up to 10%. Also your cylinder thermostat shouldn't need to be set higher than 60°C/140°F.

[1] SEDBUK: A system enabling the fair comparison of the energy performance of different boilers.

Double Glazing or Secondary Double Glazing

By trapping air between two panes of glass, double-glazing creates an insulating barrier that reduces heat loss, noise and condensation. If you're on a budget, secondary glazing could be an option. It's less expensive than replacement double-glazing and will still save money by cutting heat loss and draughts.

General Energy Efficiency

By simply following the low cost/no cost energy saving tips below, you should save energy and money immediately:

- Close your curtains at dusk to stop heat escaping through the windows.
- Always turn off the lights when you leave a room.
- Don't leave appliances on standby and remember not to leave appliances on charge unnecessarily.
- If you're not filling up the washing machine, tumble dryer or dishwasher use the half-load or economy programme.
- Only boil as much water as you need (but remember to cover the elements if you're using an electric kettle).
- A dripping hot water tap wastes energy and in one week wastes enough hot water to fill half a bath, so fix leaking taps and make sure they are fully turned off.
- Use energy saving light bulbs. Just one can save you £100 over the lifetime of the bulb - and they last up to 12 times longer than ordinary light bulbs.
- Have energy efficient appliances: You can reduce your bill by choosing energy-efficient appliances when you are replacing your old electrical and gas appliances.

What do I do next?

Contact the Kent Energy Centre on 0800 358 6669 for free and impartial advice and up to date information on costs and available grants on the above energy saving measures. Homeowners should always consider planning and building regulation implications when considering the options described in this fact sheet. Additionally we would always recommend seeking expert advice before deciding which options to implement.

Energy Saving Recommended: Look for this logo when you purchase new products and it will help you save energy and help prevent climate change. Products, which carry the Energy Saving Recommended logo are independently tested and meet strict criteria on energy efficiency.

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