

Home Upgrade Grant Helps Rural Resident Switch From Electric Heating



Client situation

When Jennifer bought her countryside house, she knew it needed a lot of updating. Built in the 1950's as a farm-worker's property in the village of Shoscombe near Bath, it originally had a coal-fired back boiler for the heating system. However, with a reduced capability to work she needed reliable hot water and efficient heating in every room as soon as possible to allow lodgers to move in and help supplement her income.

Whilst the house was being re-wired, she opted to have an electric boiler installed to run the radiators. This worked well to keep the house warm but was expensive. Jennifer was aiming to save up for solar panels to make it even more sustainable, as and when she could in the future. However the electric boiler turned out to be extremely expensive to run in autumn and winter, with one of her winter bills topping over £740 for a month. She ideally wanted a greener source of heating and was aware of all the limitations of the fully electric system. She had started to think about researching alternatives, when a neighbour let her know about the Home Upgrades Grants.

She says, "On finding the house, I loved the space and location but knew I'd need lodgers as soon as possible to supplement my income and start to repay loans for some of the renovation work. Then the cost of energy and cost of living increased dramatically, putting enormous pressure on me. A greener source of heating appealed but I didn't think I could afford to replace the whole heating system. The grants are fantastic and I was overjoyed when I finally found out that I qualified for it and was able to switch to renewables."

Home Upgrade Grant scheme for air source heat pumps

Jennifer applied for the grant and was hopeful to be eligible for solar panels as well as the air source heat pump. However, the council's initial survey specified that she would need cavity wall insulation and new ventilation before they could change the heating system. Jennifer says, "I was really impressed with the grant scheme and how it's helping people who don't have lots of money make the switch to greener energy. It's particularly useful for people living in villages off the mains gas network, so will help replace oil, coal and other older heating systems."

The Home Upgrade Grants are offered through the Bright Green Homes project which will fund and support eligible households to install a range of insulation and low carbon technologies including:

- External Wall Insulation
- Cavity Wall Insulation
- Loft Insulation
- Underfloor Insulation
- Air source heat pump
- Solar PV
- Double glazing and energy efficient doors

These measures are available to households who meet the following eligibility criteria:

- A combined annual household income of £30,000 per year or under
- A valid Energy Performance Certificate with a rating of D, E, F or G
- The property must not use gas central heating (people who use solid fuel or electric heating systems.)
- Live in Bristol City Council, BANES or North Somerset areas.

Each house is allocated a budget once the survey is complete. After the council had arranged for the other sub-contractors to complete the insulation and ventilation, Gregor Heating came in to survey the heating system. Jennifer recalls, "We did have to be patient while Gregor liaised with the council, agreed what was within the budget and then the council got back in touch to book in the work."

Scope of works for Gregor Heating

After surveying the house, Gregor Heating came up with a plan to install the air source heat pump on the back patio, under the kitchen window. Although it does take up some outside space, Jennifer is happy there's still room to sit on the patio. The hot water cylinder went in under the stairs, in the same place as the previous hot water tank. However, that meant Gregor Heating had to carefully plan the pipework routes for them to be boxed in

To suit the space, Gregor Heating fitted a separate buffer behind the cylinder, which was more work to fit, but utilized maximum space within the cupboard.



"I was really impressed with the service all the way through from Gregor Heating. They kept in touch and although it did take time, they were great. We had a second survey once the quote was confirmed where Gregor came back to check everything and finalise the plans for the installers."

Impressive communication and great after-care

Jennifer found the team from Gregor worked hard to keep the disruption to a minimum. They did have the heating off for a number of days, and on one day, every room in the house was affected because of fitting the new, larger radiators. Some of the radiators are so much larger, it has changed the space available, especially in the utility room. However, Jennifer was expecting that. Since the install, she says, "Through the whole process, the people from Gregor Heating were really clear on what would happen and why. Their communication was great, and they tidied up well, which we really appreciated. They offered a high level of service and were happy to come back to check everything.



The aftercare was really important to them, as well as getting the job over the line and I felt they went the extra mile to make things right for our house."

Jennifer did need time to adjust to the new heating system, as she explains, "We are quite exposed in the village in this valley and it does get very cold. We have a log burner but I try not to have it on at all because it's not great for the environment, and the cost of fuel for it. At first we did have the fire on when the air source heat pump was installed as there was a cold snap and because we had to get used to a different way of heating the house. It's low and slow rather than gaining instant heat. But we've got used to it now and it's warm enough. I'm hopeful it will save quite a lot of money too, compared with electric heating."



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The installers were nice, polite guys and the whole Gregor team went the extra mile to make things work for us. They were well-organised and provided a professional service. I'd definitely recommend them to others because, with the commissioning and handover, they were so knowledgeable and really clear, explaining what was going to happen and why. Which I really appreciated. They said if there were any problems or any questions, they were very happy to come back out and see us.

Jennifer

