

# Wessex Home Improvement Loans

Winter 2010

What Have We done?

What Are We Doing?

What Are We going To Do?



## Latest Autumn Activity Results

In September we reported our lending activity to date:

£3,344,655 Home Improvement Loans -634 homes made decent

£43,740 Disabled Facility Loans to date, 8 loans

£110,410 Loans to Landlords, currently 11 loans

£7,000 Renewable Energy Loans , to date 2 loans under our established scheme.

We have already reached the landmark figure of £3 million lent since the scheme began 5 years ago.

The figure now stands at £3,547,005

This edition of the Newsletter comes at a time of change and challenge following the recent Government Spending Review.

Excellence in quality standards has always been a hallmark of WHIL service and we are committed to ensuring that councils and clients alike continue to benefit in this way, especially as we will also be delivering in Wiltshire from the beginning of 2011.

But with changing demands and reduced resources, our additional commitment is towards improved cost effectiveness and even greater efficiency. Our sector is learning that constant change is here to stay and we must adapt to that reality to ensure a sustainable future.

Best Wishes,

*AJ Wallace*



# What are we doing?



## Working with Transition Towns– Renewable Energy Loans

### 2010 Updates

#### Renewable Energy Loans

Enables clients to generate their own electricity  
Current referrals: 10  
Value: ££35,068

#### Loans to Landlords

More Landlords across the South West are finding out about loans for dilapidated or empty properties.

Current referrals: 8  
Value: £92,000

#### Home Improvement Loan

Our signature loan scheme, with loans increasing as clients complete their works before the winter sets in

Current referrals: 358  
Value: £2,067,345

#### Disability Facility Loans

To assist with client's needs in their home environment

Current Referrals: 5  
Value: £49,360

#### First Time Buyer Repair Loan

To help make essential repairs affordable

Current Referrals 2  
Value: £27,200

#### Park Home Loan

Affordable loan to update heating and insulation

Current Referrals: 8  
Value: £40,000

Rebecca Caley is the 'new girl' in our team of Loans Advisors. Referrals continue to increase in her area of the Devon Partnerships, and South Hams has presented us with a scheme for a new and innovative use of the Wessex loan.

Transition Town Totnes is exceptionally active and engaged with its community. Last year the group won a significant grant fund from the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) to demonstrate the 'greening' of neighbourhoods, through raising awareness, education and changing behaviours for carbon reduction.

The scheme required Transition Town Totnes to develop and work with groups of households in a leading capacity towards the carbon reduction in a street or neighbourhood.

Further to this the aim is the further transition to domestic generation through the installation of solar photo-voltaic units.

The Totnes Transition Town Group were able to secure a bulk purchase price through BECO, and have since successfully helped participating households to afford the installation by making a grant of £2,500 to each home owner.

Those assessed to be unable to afford their household contribution can access an enhanced grant, 3,500 and if necessary can be referred to South Hams District Council for a Wessex Renewable Energy Loan. to complete the works.

The loan value is established at a limit of £3,500 repayable over 5 years. As soon as the installation is complete, the unit begins to generate and their electricity bills will show both income and savings from the Feed in Tariff, all of which helps to make the low cost loan even more affordable.

Estimated income from both generation *and* savings is believed to be around £416.56 per annum from a 1.1kWp system. Annual expected CO2 savings per household can be approximately 389(kgs)<sup>1</sup>

At the time of writing, 10 loan applications have been received and more applicants are anticipated over the next few weeks.

Kate Wiltshire, Development officer says, 'It's great that we are able to make a Wessex loan available in this innovative way. This kind of partnership, using all the relevant expertise, can really make a scheme work for the whole community'.

Mary Popham, Group Support Worker for Transition Town Totnes said: "We are delighted to be working with Wessex because its enabled households who wouldn't otherwise be able to participate in the scheme to put solar pv on their roofs.. Because its also affordable for low-income home- owners, they are able to access the Feed in Tariff, which is real assistance for them".

The Somerset West Partnership will also be tackling hard-to-treat homes with complex insulation and will also include renewable energy in their Affordable Warmth Strategy



## Mr and Mrs Davis of Shepton Mallet,...

a very happy 'ever after'!



Andy Meldrum, Loan Advisor in North Somerset and Mendip was delighted to be invited back by Mr & Mrs Davis to view the result of their Home Improvement Loan:

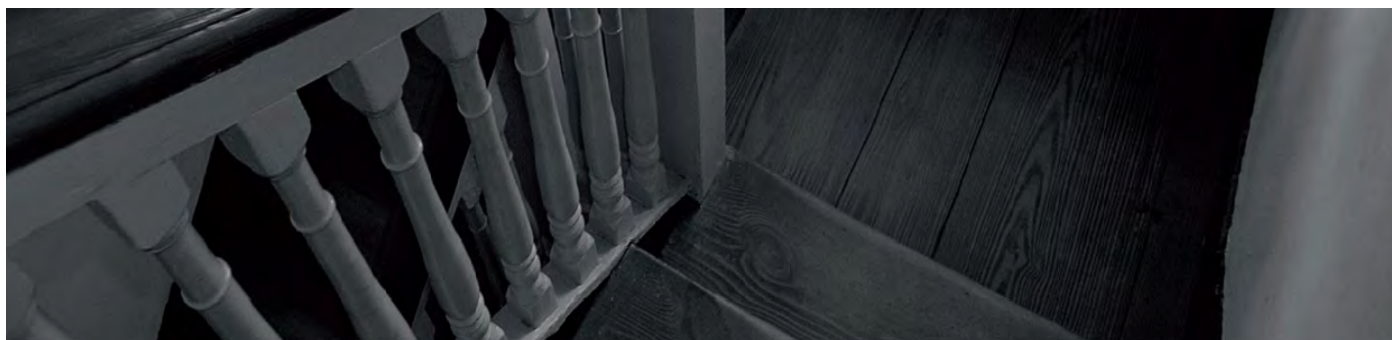
“This was a case which nearly never went through as after my first visit they were undecided about a loan and cancelled the case! Mrs Davis later called me and asked if the case could be re-opened and is now so grateful of the assistance we could give them. They knew they couldn't borrow money from anywhere else. New windows and doors have been installed”.

“Before this, Mrs Davis had to wipe all the windows down continuously throughout the day because of the condensation and at her age it was getting more and more difficult. The house is now free from this and so much warmer that they use their front room again and aren't embarrassed to have friends over! “

They have also had a stair lift installed.

“At first they didn't want it but now they only wish it was done ages ago! They have a friend who can't manage stairs (she lives in a bungalow nearby) so Mr & Mrs D would always go out and see her., as they now have the stair lift for their own needs, their friend can also visit them knowing she too can get to the loo upstairs!”

## Loans to Landlords Scheme well received by Landlords Forum



Kate Wiltshire, our Development Officer ,has been kept busy making presentations interest groups and each Local Authority 'Landlords' Forum' .

“The response has been very encouraging, and I hope we have been able to impress upon Landlords all across the areas that we can provide affordable finance to renovate properties, whether as a loan to bring an empty property back into use or to improve existing private rental stock.”

The loan scheme for Landlords has proven to be a useful tool in the Landlord's Accreditation process, by which a variety of policies have provided landlords and their tenants with 'added value' for participating in the scheme. This can include advice on safety measures, insurance, issues over tenancy agreements and fast tracking Housing Allowance applications.

Extended tenancies are equally valued by tenants and landlords alike; by encouraging people to settle, gives them added security and commitment to a community and the ability to access work and education.

“I have been able to speak to landlords all across the South West, including the Torridge area; some landlords also had properties in North Devon, where the scheme has already been established for some time, and has been really successful. I have also met groups in the Somerset West Partnership, the Mendip Landlords Forum, held recently in Frome, at the YMCA Foyer, where we were able to meet some of the young people who live there. It was really encouraging to see the excellent working relationship developed by the Council, the YMCA and local landlords to assist young people moving on to independence or further education. Other events included the South Somerset Landlords Forum, and also West Dorset Landlords, both of which were very well attended with the venue full to capacity! Its great to spread the word!

**Landlords all across the South West are benefiting from the Loans to Landlords and Empty Property Schemes.**

**11 loans have been made to date with a total value of £110,410.00**

**This is more Private Rental Properties made decent.**



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## What are we going to do?

The following extract, in the words of our Chief Executive, Andrew Wallace, is from an early newsletter which illustrates 'where we were' and brought a thoughtful moment in the office...

*"It is early days and we are aware that there is some considerable activity going on, particularly in the Bristol area, which is likely to lead to a healthy number of referrals in the near future. As it stands, we are currently processing 2 loan applications under our 'Loan Trial' banner (both in the Mendip area) with a further 4 live applications – 1 in South Somerset and 3 in South Gloucestershire."...*

Where we are now is a very different world!

We plan to keep you updated with a quarterly newsletter, not least because the pace of change is rapidly increasing.

Our work for financial inclusion is as important as ever, with our responsibility and reputation for responsible lending in an economic environment that is far from certain for financially vulnerable people.

We hope to continue to meet the challenges for Local Authority policy makers by providing new and innovative schemes that are both sustainable and achieve a significant social impact.



## Reaching People Who Really Need Us!

The Wessex Home Improvement Loans is a unique scheme to deliver financial inclusion to vulnerable groups.

We try to ensure that the people who need us can know how to find us!

This means always ensuring that there are ensuring leaflets at all client contact points; in Libraries, GP surgeries, Citizens Advice Bureaux. It means keeping you informed about all our work across the South West.

Our clients can be the hardest of all to reach, and to try to spread the word we are using every opportunity to speak to them.

In the meantime, please use our newsletter to learn more about our work and pass it on to other people or groups.

By increasing referrals we keep the loan scheme keeps revolving, and our Marketing Strategy is helping to support this. By print, local radio and maybe even TV, we will be letting people know how to access the help they need.

If you have any individual marketing needs, please contact Kate Wiltshire, our Development Officer on 07824 848721 or email her :-  
kate.wiltshire@wessexhil.co.uk