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# Energy-saver is a hit in Alness

By Shirley Hastings

**AN AMBITIOUS** energy saving scheme in Alness has been such a hit that plans are afoot to roll it out across the rest of the ward.

The West Alness SAVE (Save and Value Energy) project aims to cut household bills in a part of Alness by five per cent before the end of the year, in order to help folk save money and cut down on the town's carbon footprint.

With 200 homes to visit during the course of the project, community energy advisor Brid McKibben said she was confident, given the reaction from locals, that it would be an achievable target.

The scheme has quickly found favour with householders since it was launched last November. Such has been the response that the project is looking to train another four

## Four advisors to receive training on cost-cutter

locals as energy advisors by the end of the year.

Miss McKibben explained: "We have been doing very well. From the houses visited so far there are very few where we haven't had an effect. The main thing is getting the information out there and making people realise they're not simply about to face a lecture — that's not what we're about.

"We are looking to get local people trained to carry out visits in a bid to keep the information in the community."

Anyone taking on the task will have to complete a four-day City and Guilds course which will be paid for.

In total around 30 homes

have been visited by Miss McKibben so far.

"Our deadline for this project is October," she said. "I think it will be an easy target to reach by then."

Supportec by energy supplier Scottish and Southern Energy, the year-long project is costing £43,000 with a bonus payment of £10,000 to be spent in the community if the target is reached.

"We are hoping to be able to extend it for another year at least and increase the geography to cover the rest of Alness and perhaps the rest of the ward," she said.

Very simple steps can help folk save money, according to

Miss McKibben.

"It's actually fairly easy to help people save money once they understand the basics like how to work their heating timers," she said.

"What I am finding is some people often don't take the time to sit down and work out how it operates and instead of using the timer are using a thermostat and leaving heating on 24 hours a day."

According to the trained engineer, using timers properly can save over £200 a year for some people. In a few homes she has even successfully got householders onto a social tariff whereby they are entitled to 20 per cent discount from

their energy supplier if they are spending more than 10 per cent of their income on fuel bills.

One of the project's main priorities at the moment is working with residents to increase their insulation in homes.

"Many people automatically think it is too expensive to consider but in many cases they can get the insulation free through their energy supplier she added," she said.

The next few weeks will see the initiative's first newsletter land on the doorstep of homes which will be followed by some of Miss McKibben's first cold calling visits. Until now she has only attended the homes of those who have already made contact with her.

Anyone in the West Alness area can call in to see Brid in the Westend Community Centre. They can also phone the project on 07920 437 526 or email [brid@westalnesssave.org.uk](mailto:brid@westalnesssave.org.uk)