

PRESS RELEASE

Acis homes powered by the sun

Lincolnshire based housing association Acis Group has launched an innovative project to pilot the introduction of a new technology to help fuel poverty amongst its tenants by using energy from the sun.

Acis, who own and manage over 5,200 homes across Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire, is piloting the use of photovoltaics – known as PV – on 12 homes across Lincolnshire.

PV is a method of generating electrical power by converting solar radiation into direct current electricity via solar panels. The converted electricity can then be used to run household appliances and lighting. The panels work in conjunction with the light intensity of the sun, meaning PV doesn't need direct sunlight to work. Although a clear day is ideal conditions for the panels to be at their most effective, some electricity can still be generated on a cloudy day.

The pilot includes seven homes at Blyton, two each at Newton-on-Trent and West Rasen, and one at Northorpe. Each site was identified by using certain criteria, with all properties having no access to the gas network. This means tenants generally pay more for their fuel, which is often in the form of oil, storage heater or solid fuel.

Clive Atherton, Asset Management Technician for Acis, said:

“All the electricity produced by via the panels is available for tenants to use. Generating electricity to power appliances means tenants don't have to buy as much electricity from their energy supplier, resulting in a reduction to annual electricity costs.”

With solar power being one of the most widely available energy sources, using it to power homes not only offers financial reward but has a positive impact on the environment. The project began in May this year and included

surveying potential sites and consulting with the tenants involved. Installation of the PV began on in July and Acis has kept in regular contact with tenants to gain feedback on PV performance and check meter readings.

Contract Liaison Co-ordinator for Acis, Andrea Gaffney, commented:

“We consulted with our tenants before, during and after the installation to keep them informed every step of the way. Once the systems had been installed, we encouraged them to review the way they use energy in their home to make the most of the energy generated. For example, photovoltaic panels only generate electricity during daylight hours so it’s a good idea to stagger the use of electrical appliances throughout the day, rather than using them at night. This means the amount of electricity bought from energy suppliers can be minimised.”

Acis tenant Mr Neave, of St Martin’s Close in Blyton, said of the pilot:

“From start to finish it’s been A1. There’s been no problems at all, very clean and efficient. All I can do is give them ten out of ten. The panels themselves look fine, they don’t impose. I’m doing what I was advised and using electricity during the day when I can as this is the best time to use it.”

For PV to work effectively, panels must be south facing and free from over shading. Once installed, the panels require only low level maintenance to keep them in working order. Following the completion of the pilot, Acis will analyse the results to assess whether the scheme was a success and if the option to increase the use of PV is viable. If the results are positive, it’s possible that Acis could implement a wider PV project across a larger number of homes.

Nigel Reed, project manager of the PV pilot, said of the scheme:

“As well as looking to combat fuel poverty, the project will also assess the potential of generating extra revenues via a government tariff system which can be reinvested in improving homes and services for all Acis tenants.”

Acis Asset Management Technician Andrew Tucker added:

“We continually explore new technologies with the emphasis on reducing our customers’ fuel bills to make homes more affordable to run and to help combat fuel poverty. We also actively support the government’s commitment to reduce carbon footprints and using solar panels to produce electricity reduces of the use of fossil fuels that produce harmful greenhouse gasses.”