

Letter from the Editor

Some of the initiatives BVT undertake are truly ground-breaking, and that is true of the eco house, in Selly Oak Road. Environmental matters are very much at the forefront of all our minds, and the Trust is proud to be at the cutting edge with that project.

New technology has been occupying our thoughts too, and you can read more about our new-look website in this edition. News from Shropshire comes under the spotlight on Pages 6 and 7, whilst we discover that anti-social behaviour is an age-old problem on Page 12.

And as ever, Outlook is all about interaction with readers. Details of how to enter the Gardening Competition are in this edition, as is the opportunity to tell us what you think about Outlook.

We look forward to hearing what you have to say.



● Alastair Flint

If you have a story for Outlook, would like to write a letter, have a comment to make or ideas for a feature, we would love to hear from you.

Please contact the Outlook editor Alastair Flint on 0121 415 6406 or email alastairflint@bvt.org.

Going green



● David Bellamy poses with BVT Chairman Roger Cadbury at the eco home

Conservationist David Bellamy was on hand to officially open BVT's eco friendly home for public viewing.

The eco home is in Selly Oak Road, Bournville, and it is now one of the UK's oldest refurbished 'green' homes. The two storey mid-terraced house was built in 1929.

Last year, it was decided that the property required substantial improvement and upgrading before it could be re-let. It was therefore chosen to pilot a 'green' initiative which aimed to discover what environmental features are suitable - and unsuitable - in a family home.

After refurbishment, the property now contains over 50 eco-friendly features, and it's one of the very first homes of its age to receive the Government's "Eco Homes Excellent" accreditation.

Roger Cadbury said: "My grandfather established his sustainable village in Bournville over 100 years ago. This was followed by our sunshine homes to attract the maximum sunlight in the 1930s. More recently, we built the largest solar village of its time in Rowheath. I am sure George Cadbury would have approved of this latest "green" initiative.

"It's just as important for older existing housing stock to be as well maintained and energy efficient as new build. It's up to all of us to reduce our carbon footprint."

The day-to-day living in the innovative environment will be monitored against a 'control' home. The features that 'work' will be included in future maintenance programmes by BVT.

David Bellamy, said: "Bournville does it again; state of the art homes now as green as they can be, ready for the lucky tenants.

The tenants now enjoying living at the property are Ann and Jared Smith and their two children. Before moving into the house the family said they already lived a lifestyle of recycling and this would continue when they moved into the house.

Showing how 'footprint' can be reduced

BVT commissioned BN Kaushal Limited (BNK) to refurbish the Selly Oak Road property. BNK were selected for this particular scheme based on the experience they have gained in carrying out similar projects in the Midlands. They also came with the recommendation of Richard Baines, Director of Sustainable Development for the Black Country Housing Group, who is highly knowledgeable in the environmental sector.

In line with the Government's proposal to make all new build homes in England carbon neutral by 2016, BVT wanted to demonstrate how the carbon footprint of current housing stock could be reduced.

Inside the house, features include internal and external wall insulation, low energy light bulbs in every room, and underfloor heating powered by a ground source heat pump. Outside, environmentally friendly features include solar panels which will heat the home's water. Additionally, double glazed timber windows have been used for better energy efficiency, and the wood was sourced from sustainable managed European forests.

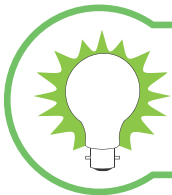
The project was supported by a number of suppliers and manufacturers. Lecico supplied the low water consumption bathroom fittings, Bosch provided the solar



● Peter Roach, chief executive of BVT, Margaret Allen, director of the Housing Corporation and Sir Duncan Michael, board member at the Housing Corporation

panels, Chamois Kitchens equipped the kitchen, and British Gas is supplying the 'green' energy.

The house has an organic garden with a vegetable plot, fruit trees and a greenhouse. And, in order to attract wildlife to the garden, there is a bird table and bird box, and a log pile which will attract insects and butterflies. Local Year Nine schoolchildren from King's Norton Girls' School helped design the garden and suggested what features should be included in the house.



The main objectives of the refurbished property are to:

- Reduce the energy requirement of the home by improving its thermal performance.
- Reduce the dependency of the home on non-sustainable energy sources.
- Minimise the environmental impact of the home as it is upgraded.

How to make your house more energy efficient

Over 1,000 people expressed an interest in how to make their homes more environmentally friendly after visiting BVT's eco house.

Bob Stanton, Head of Housing at BVT, said: "People appeared to have travelled huge distances, from as far away as other parts of the UK to the USA, just to see the eco home for themselves."

However, most people seemed unaware where to turn in order to seek advice on how to reduce their energy bills and make their homes more efficient.



In the future, every house sold will be judged on its energy efficiency and homeowners will be asked to grade their homes in the obligatory Home Information Pack. Many of the visitors of the house said it was "inspirational" and most wanted information on particular features. Even local MP, Lynne Jones, commented: "There were lots of good ideas for us to copy!"

For more information about the eco house, contact us for a special brochure, available from: dianethornton@bvt.org.uk or telephone 0121 415 6404.

You can discover how environmentally efficient your home is on the Energy Savings Trust (EST) website at www.est.org.uk or contact your local Energy Efficiency Advice Centre on 0800 512 012.