

WIRRAL COUNCIL

**HOME ENERGY CONSERVATION ACT 1995 –
BIENNIAL PROGRESS REPORT**

MARCH 2015

1. INTRODUCTION

Wirral Council published its first Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) 1995 Report in 1996 and provided annual reports to Government as required until reporting was suspended in 2009. Wirral Council however continued to collate data and calculate carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and energy consumption reductions until the original 15-year timeframe for HECA had ended in 2011, as it provided information for other reporting purposes. By 2011, energy efficiency activity in Wirral had reduced energy consumption by the equivalent of 30.15% of the 1996 baseline, with the target being 30%.

In 2012, the Secretary of State for Energy & Climate Change issued guidance to local authorities in preparing “further” reports under HECA for 31st March 2013, which can be found on the Council’s website, and for subsequent biennial progress reports.

This is the first of those progress reports. The report updates the context for improving energy efficiency in the Borough, taking account of deprivation and fuel poverty levels and the impact upon health of cold homes locally. The indicators used within the “further” report of 2013 are updated. Finally, the report provides an update on current activity by the Council in reducing CO₂ emissions from housing and informs stakeholders on progress against actions stated within the 2013 report.

2. SETTING THE SCENE

2.1 THE HOUSING STOCK IN WIRRAL

Wirral Council is a metropolitan unitary authority with a population of 319,783 and 140,583 households¹. It is situated within the county of Merseyside and the Liverpool City Region. The Borough is located on the Wirral peninsula and has the Irish Sea to its north, the River Dee to the west, the River Mersey to the east and it shares a land border to the south with Cheshire West & Chester Council. Principal towns within the Borough include Birkenhead, Wallasey, Moreton, West Kirby, Hoylake and Heswall.

The split of housing tenure in the Borough is as follows²:

Tenure	Number	Percentage
Owner occupied	94,843	67.46%
Private rented	22,275	15.84%
Social rented	21,329	15.17%
Shared ownership	713	0.51%
Rent free	1,423	1.02%

The Council transferred its remaining housing stock to Wirral Partnership Homes (now trading as Magenta Living) and Beechwood & Ballantyne Community Housing Association in 2005.

2.2 DEPRIVATION AND FUEL POVERTY IN WIRRAL

Wirral has extremes of income levels; one particular lower super output area (LSOA) within Bidston & St James Ward is the 24th most deprived in the country whilst others are amongst the most affluent. The rate of child poverty in Wirral in 2010 was 24.4%, equating to 17,155 children³, which is above both the North West and UK averages.

There are 72 LSOAs in Wirral which fall within the 25% most deprived areas nationally. This equates to around 35% (49,000) of all Wirral households.

In 2012, Fuel Poverty affected an estimated 15,542 Wirral households (Low Income High Costs indicator). This is equivalent to 11.2% of all Wirral households and is slightly less than the Liverpool City Region (LCR) average (11.9%) and North West (NW) average (11.3%) but higher than the English average (10.4%).

The Government adopted the Low Income High Cost (LIHC) indicator in 2013 as the official measure of fuel poverty. Two years' data is available for this

¹ Tables H01 and P07, Census 2011, ONS

² Table KS402EW, Census 2011, ONS

³ HMRC, August 2012.

indicator and the trend between the two years is shown in Figure 2.1. The longer-term trend using the old 10% indicator, which is still reported annually by the Government, is also shown (Figure 2.2). Both show a downward trend in recent years.

For both the old and new definitions of fuel poverty, please refer to the Glossary.

Figure 2.1

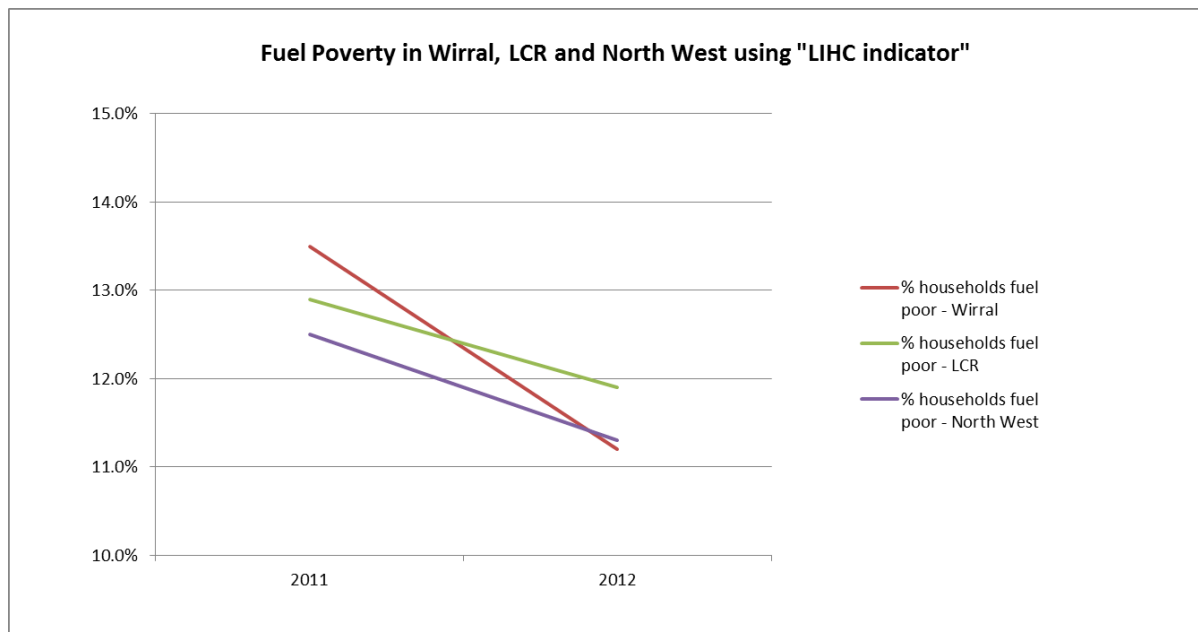
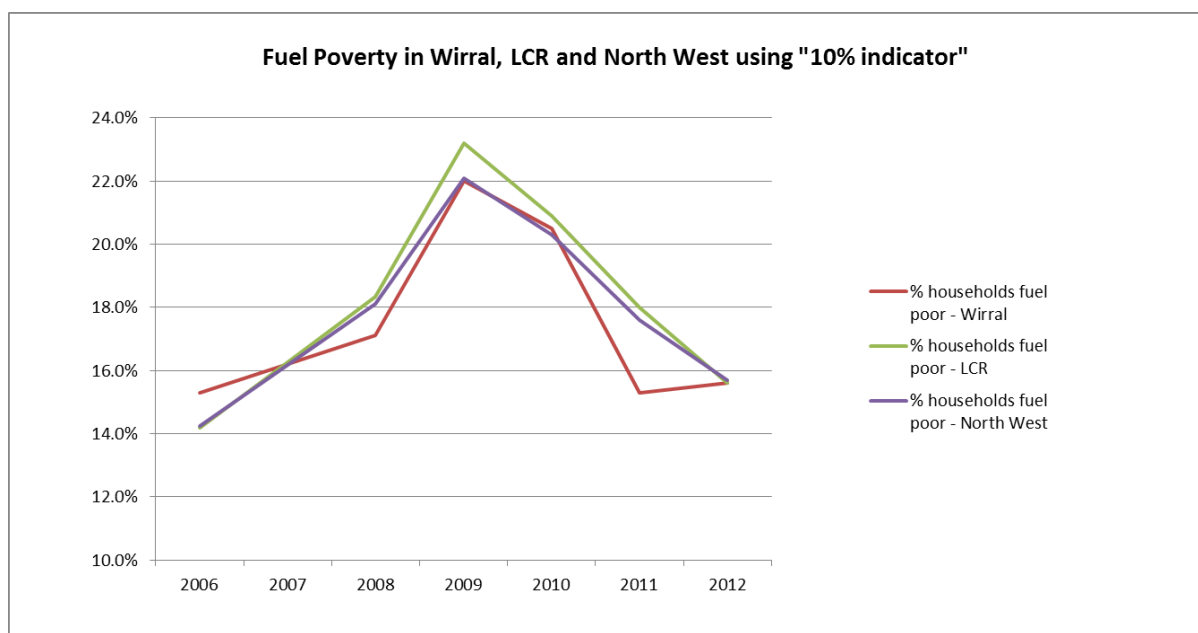
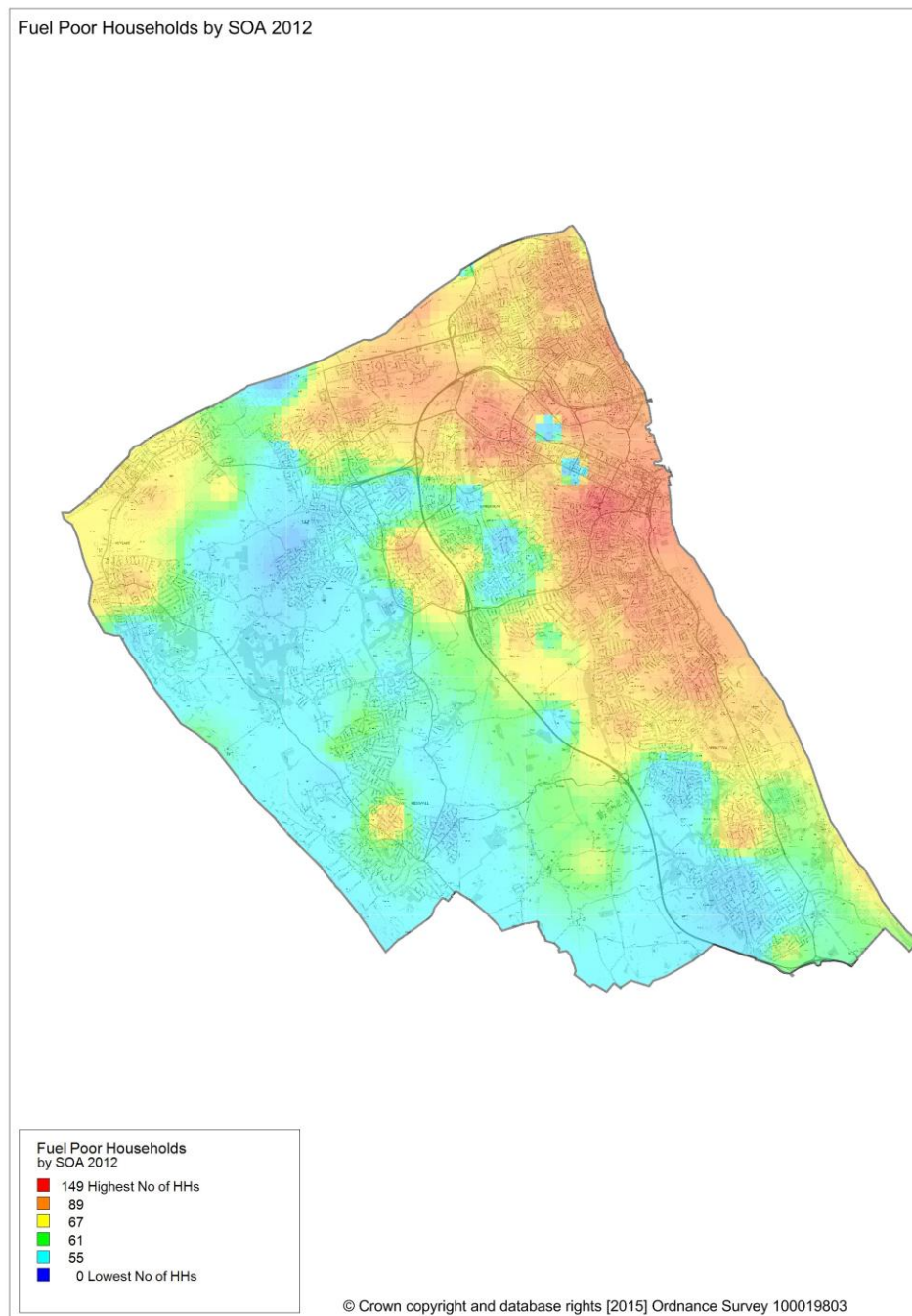


Figure 2.2



Within Wirral in 2012, fuel poverty ranged from 23.8% in Birkenhead West LSOA within Birkenhead & Tranmere Ward, to 3.7% in Oxtan North West LSOA in Oxtan Ward. There is only one mile between these LSOAs which demonstrates the contrast between different parts of the Borough within small geographical areas. Levels of fuel poverty by LSOA can be seen in the map in Figure 2.3, which shows similar trends to those of deprivation and child poverty, with high levels concentrated within the Birkenhead and Wallasey Parliamentary Constituencies.

Figure 2.3



Fuel Poverty in Private Housing

In 2013, the Council commissioned a Private Sector Stock Condition Survey. Amongst the requirements of the survey was to report on fuel poverty levels using the LIHC indicator. The average rate of fuel poverty amongst households living in private housing in the Borough was found to be 14.2%.

The survey used actual sample data on household income, housing costs and energy efficiency levels, in contrast to the proxy indicators used by the Government in their statistics. The survey highlighted geographic areas which hadn't previously been considered as having high rates of fuel poverty. The highest rates were found in the Birkenhead and Wirral South Parliamentary Constituencies (17.9% and 16.1% respectively), inside the former Housing Market Renewal Initiative area (18.8%) and in Heswall, Rural and Birkenhead settlement areas (23.6%, 18.7% and 18.1% respectively). High housing costs in Heswall settlement area and Wirral South Constituency are the main reasons behind high rates of fuel poverty in these areas. Poor energy efficiency levels played a part in the high rates in the Rural settlement area including properties being off the gas network.

Other findings showed that fuel poverty was:

- Higher in the private rented sector (18.9%) than in the owner occupied sector (13.2%);
- Highest in homes built before 1919 (24.9%);
- Highest where the head of household was aged under 25 and where they were 65 and over (27.1% and 26.7% respectively), where the head of household was retired (24%) and where there were two or more persons in the household aged over 60 (32.5%);
- Affecting 47.3% of low income households.

2.3 THE IMPACT UPON HEALTH OF COLD HOMES

The impact of cold homes on the health of their occupants is well documented. Illnesses such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and Heart Disease can be exacerbated by cold and damp homes, resulting in increased GP visits and hospital admissions.

Wirral's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) clearly presents these links and the potential harms to health as a direct result of the Borough's poorer quality housing. The JSNA states that in Wirral, non-decent dwellings and Category 1 Hazards are most associated with pre 1919 properties, the private rented sector and both converted and low rise purpose built flats. Category 1 Hazards are also strongly associated with properties occupied by those under 25 and households on lower incomes or in receipt of benefits. Wirral's 2013 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey confirmed a statistically significant correlation between housing conditions, household health and health service contact and suggests a relationship between the factors.

Older housing stock contains higher levels of poor quality, deteriorating stock, which is often home to some of the most vulnerable people and in Wirral strongly correlates with areas of lower life expectancy. Figures 2.4 and 2.5 below demonstrate the stark changes in life expectancy between the stations along Wirral's railway lines.⁴

It is thought that 10% of Excess Winter Deaths (the number of deaths occurring in the winter months compared to the rest of the year) could be attributable to fuel poverty⁵. Wirral had an average of 230 Excess Winter Deaths per year between 2008/09 and 2012/13, meaning around 23 deaths could be attributable to fuel poverty. Wirral's 5-year average is now the highest since 2000/01.

Area-based fuel poverty schemes in areas of high deprivation, through initiatives such as Warmer Wirral, will therefore have a beneficial effect on reducing health inequalities and potentially on life expectancy. The Wirral Healthy Homes scheme also assists by providing a referral pathway for front-line health workers who identify a link between their patients and the poor quality of their homes.

⁴ <http://info.wirral.nhs.uk/>

⁵ Ch 3.3, Para 37, "Fuel Poverty – the problem and its measurement", Prof. John Hills, October 2011

Figure 2.4

Female Life Expectancy at Birth by Wirral Railway Station, Overlaid on IMD 2010 Deprivation Score, by Wirral LSOA, 2008 - 2010 Pooled

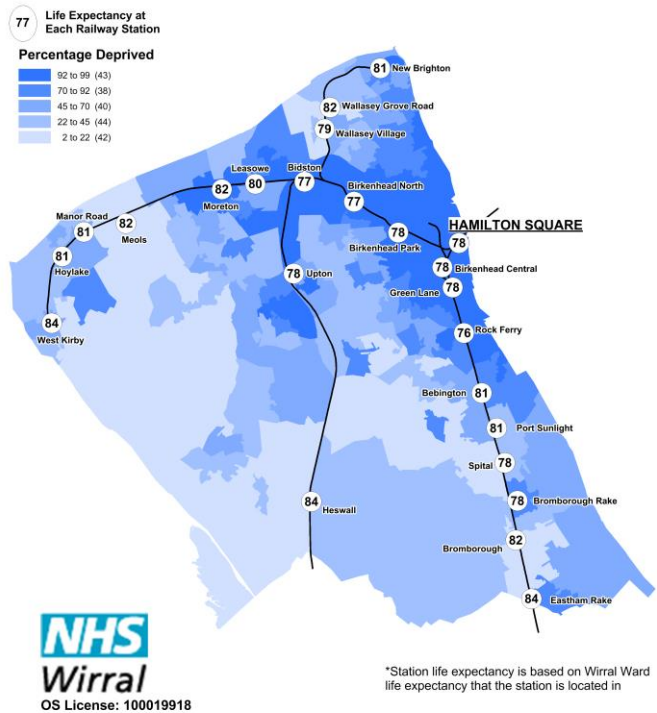
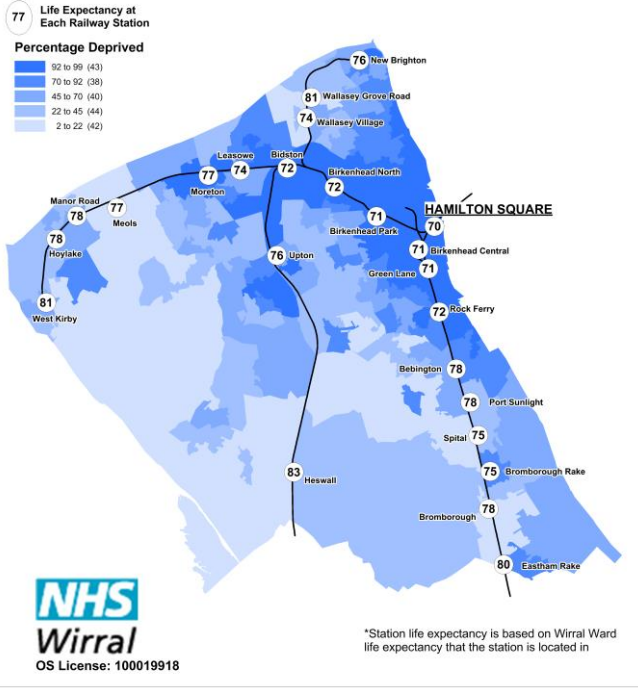


Figure 2.5

Male Life Expectancy at Birth by Wirral Railway Station, Overlaid on IMD 2010 Deprivation Score, by Wirral LSOA, 2008 - 2010 Pooled



3. ENERGY USE AND CARBON EMISSIONS

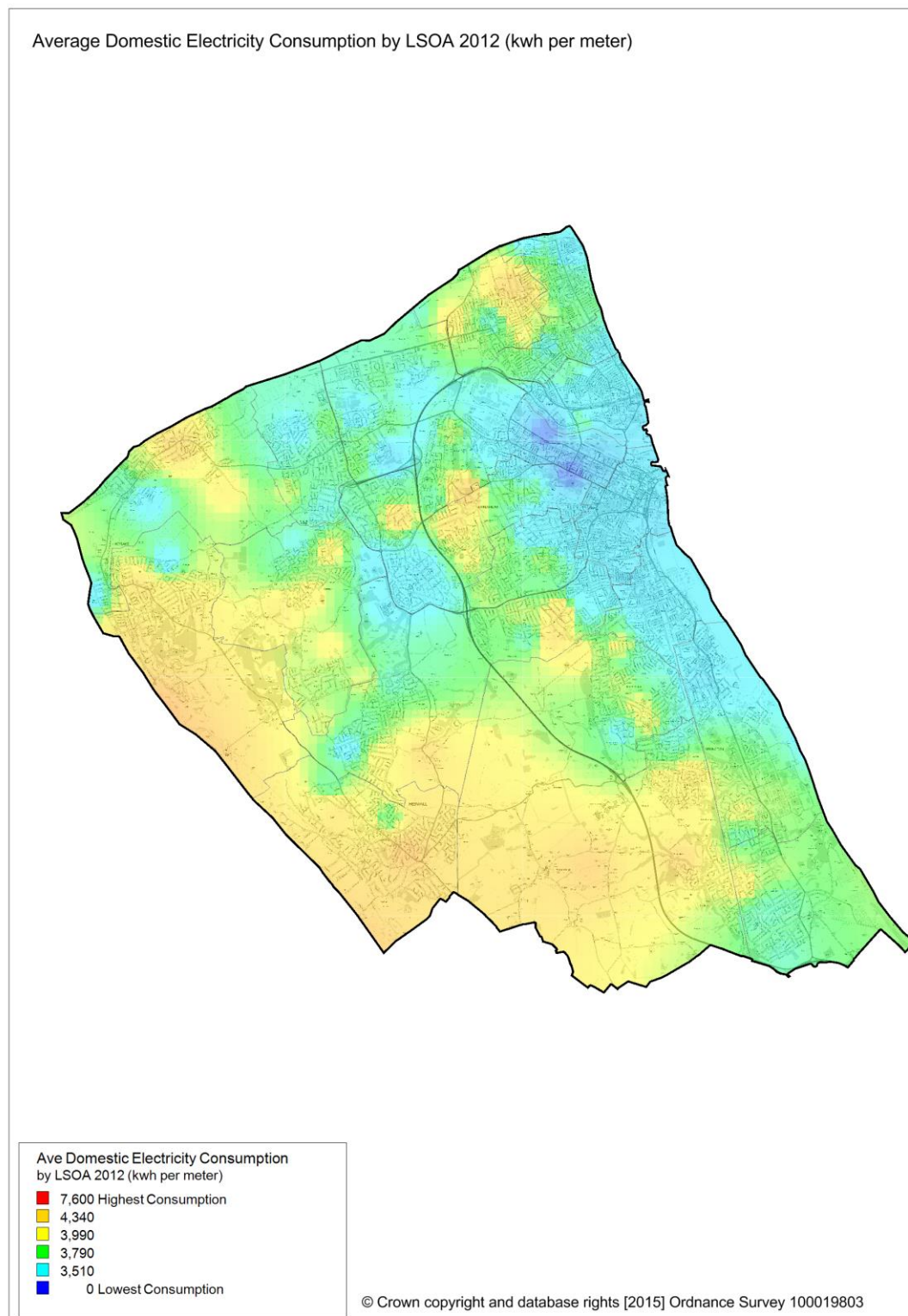
3.1 Electricity and gas consumption in the domestic sector

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 show the estimated distribution of electricity and gas consumption in the domestic sector in Wirral in 2012, in kilowatt hours (kWh) per Lower Super Output Area (SOA). On the whole, areas of higher consumption mirror more affluent areas and areas of lower consumption mirror those of lower income. This happens for a range of reasons such as:

- The Borough's older housing stock is generally smaller and requires less energy to heat and mainly lies in areas of low income;
- Those with lower incomes and in fuel poverty may under-heat their homes; and
- Those with lower incomes may be more aware of their consumption, in part due to a greater prevalence of pre-payment meters and therefore reduce their energy use.

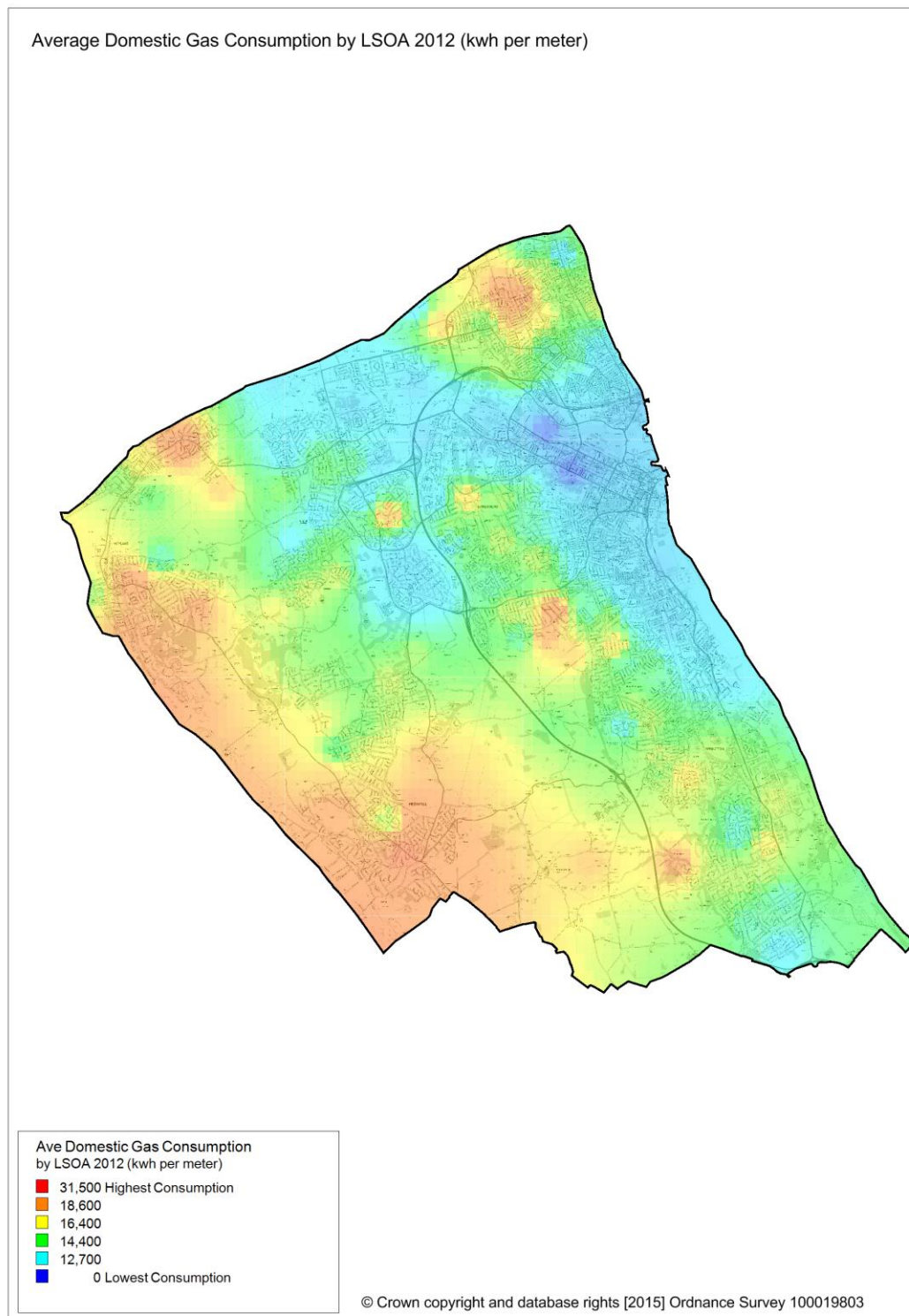
A greater potential to reduce energy consumption therefore lies in the west and south of the Borough as well as parts of mid-Wirral and Wallasey. These areas have lower deprivation levels and therefore energy efficiency promotional work will focus on the Green Deal, Feed-in Tariffs and the Renewable Heat Incentive, as well as behavioural change.

Figure 3.1⁶
Map of average standard electricity consumption per LSOA



⁶ Department of Energy & Climate Change

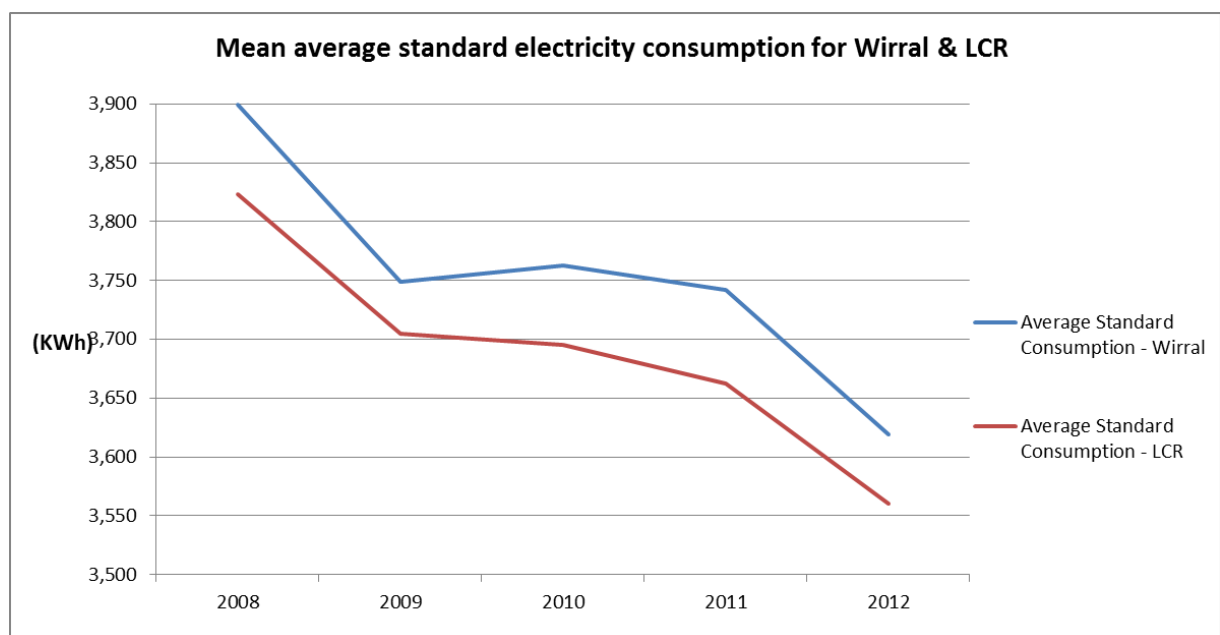
Figure 3.2⁷
Map of average gas consumption per LSOA



⁷ Department of Energy & Climate Change

The graph in figure 3.3 below shows estimated standard domestic electricity consumption in Wirral compared to the Liverpool City Region (LCR) from 2008 to 2012. Average standard electricity consumption is higher in Wirral than in the LCR. The overall trend has been one of a decrease in consumption in Wirral and the LCR; consumption decreased by around 7.2% in Wirral and 6.9% in the LCR.

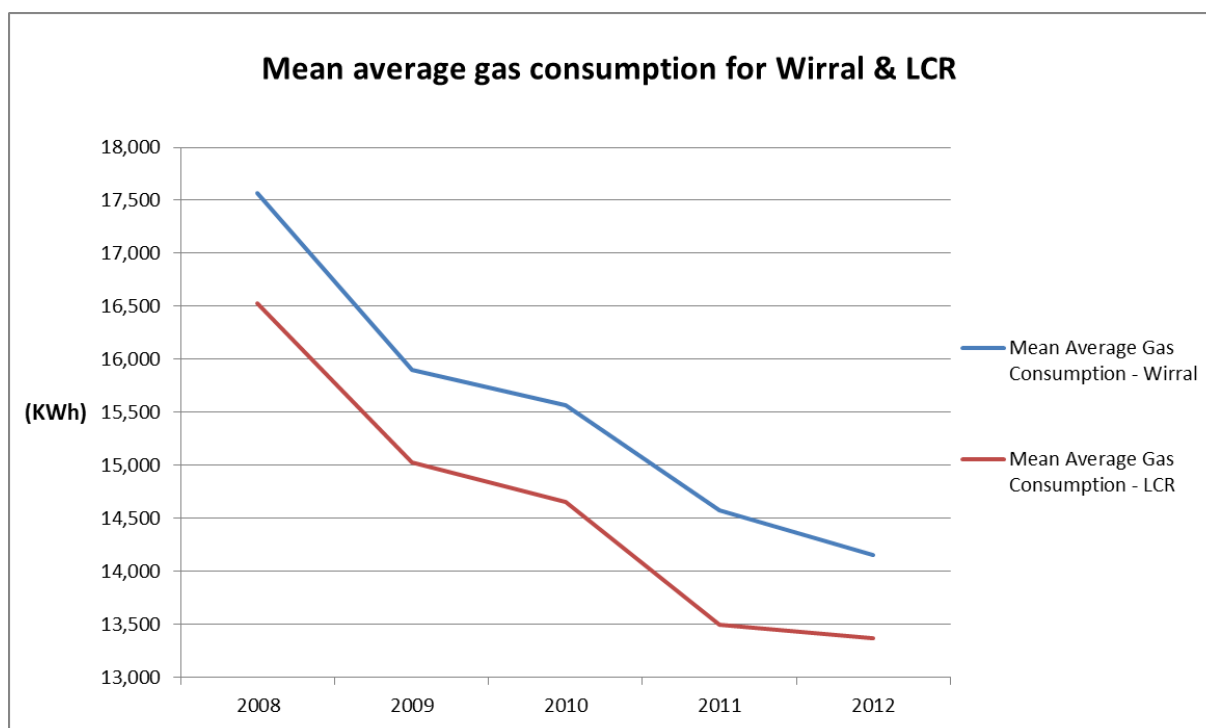
Figure 3.3⁸



Average gas consumption in the domestic sector is also higher in Wirral than the LCR, as can be seen in figure 3.4 below. However the downward trend in consumption in Wirral is mirrored in the LCR; consumption in Wirral has reduced by 19.4% and in the LCR by 19.1%

⁸ Department of Energy & Climate Change

Figure 3.4⁹



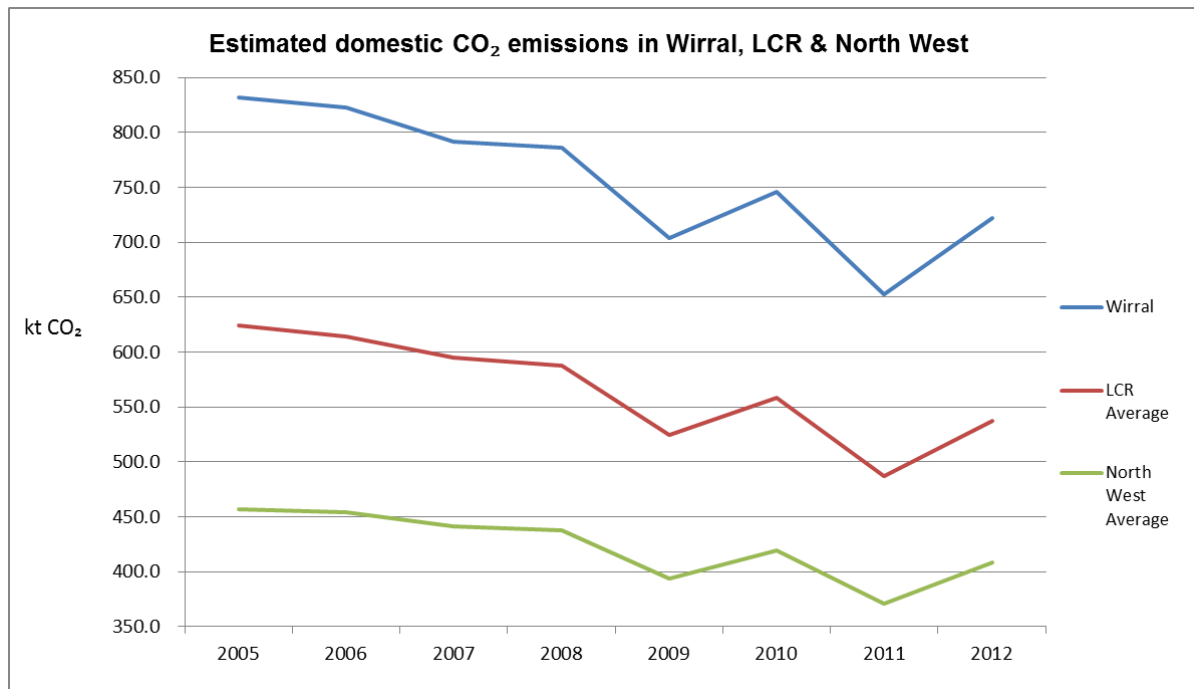
3.2 Carbon dioxide emissions

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is the main greenhouse gas pollutant. Government energy efficiency programmes are aimed at reducing CO₂ emissions. In the UK, 31% of CO₂ emissions are attributed to the domestic sector; in Wirral it is 46.5%. Local variations occur mainly because of the economy and geography however Wirral's figure demonstrates how vital it is to reduce domestic energy use to reduce Wirral's overall emissions.

As can be seen in Figure 3.5, Wirral has significantly higher estimated domestic CO₂ emissions when compared to the LCR and NW. When ranked with other local authorities, Wirral is within the top 20% of NW local authorities for CO₂ pollution from the domestic sector however when comparing CO₂ emissions per capita, Wirral has slightly below average emissions.

⁹ Department of Energy & Climate Change

Figure 3.5¹⁰



The overall trend in emissions between 2005 and 2012 has been downwards, showing a 13.3% decrease over the period compared to an average 10.5% decrease in both the LCR and in the North West. The uneven pattern is due to several factors; for example one of the reasons for the increase in emissions between 2011 and 2012 is due to an increase in residential gas use as 2012 was colder than 2011. Another reason is that there was an increased use of coal for electricity generation.

¹⁰ Department of Energy & Climate Change

4. THE CURRENT ENERGY EFFICIENCY LEVEL OF WIRRAL'S HOUSING STOCK

4.1 Energy efficiency rating of homes

The energy efficiency of housing is measured by using the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) on a scale of 1 – 100, with 100 being the most energy efficient. SAP can be related to the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of dwellings as follows:

SAP	EPC band
92 +	A
81 to 91	B
69 to 80	C
55 to 68	D
39 to 54	E
21 to 38	F
1 to 20	G

In 2013 when the last Wirral Private Sector Stock Condition Survey was carried out, private sector dwellings had an average SAP of 63¹¹, significantly better than the 2012 national average of 57. Social housing landlords provide the Council with their SAP ratings on an annual basis however these are sometimes averages across the stock or use different versions of SAP. The average energy efficiency of Wirral's social housing stock is therefore unknown but can be estimated based upon Wirral's largest social housing stock holder, Magenta Living, which holds 53% of Wirral's social housing.

Figure 4.1 – Average SAP by housing tenure

Housing Tenure	Wirral average SAP
Owner occupied (2013)	62
Private rented (2013)	64
Social rented (2014)	71

Figure 4.1 above shows SAP broken down by tenure. SAP levels are highest in the social rented sector, mainly due to the success of the Decent Homes Programme in Wirral and energy companies part-funding much of the energy efficiency improvement work through their obligations.

SAP levels in the private sector have increased significantly in the past 10 years, also mainly due to obligations placed on the energy companies. The average energy efficiency of the private rented sector is now better than that of the owner occupied sector. This could partially be due to there now being almost twice the rate of private rented dwellings built post-1980 than in the owner occupied sector.

¹¹ Using SAP 2009 version.

Figure 4.2 below shows the difference in the average SAP of privately owned dwellings between Wirral's Settlement Areas. It is noticeable that the Commercial Core, which is centred on the Wallasey and Birkenhead docks, has a high average SAP. This is likely to be due to the higher number of dwellings in this area being located in new-build or refurbished apartment blocks. The lowest average SAP is seen in the Rural settlement area. The dates of construction of dwellings in this area are similar to the Borough average and so the reason for this lower SAP rating could be due to a higher number of properties not on the gas supply network, therefore reliant on more expensive forms of heating. This however is not reflected in the LSOAs with the highest estimated rate of off-gas properties (see section 4.2.2) so further investigation will be carried out.

Figure 4.2 – Average Private Sector SAP by Settlement Area

Settlement Area	Average SAP
Wallasey	61
Commercial Core	70
Birkenhead	62
Bromborough & Eastham	65
Mid Wirral	64
Hoylake & West Kirby	62
Heswall	62
Rural	58

4.2 Current and potential insulation and heating

4.2.1 Insulation

Loft and cavity wall insulation levels in the social housing stock are good and so this report focuses on the private sector stock.

The 2013 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey provides information on the main energy efficiency measures installed. The information substantiates the improvement in the average SAP over the last 10 years. There are very few dwellings without loft insulation, two thirds are insulated to above 200mm thickness and the number of uninsulated cavity walls has reduced significantly. The numbers are as follows:

Empty cavities = 26,207 (36.1% of private stock)

Lofts with no insulation = 353 (0.3%)

Lofts with less than 100mm thickness of insulation = 4,386 (3.6%)

Lofts more than 200mm thickness of insulation = 75,546 (61.4%)

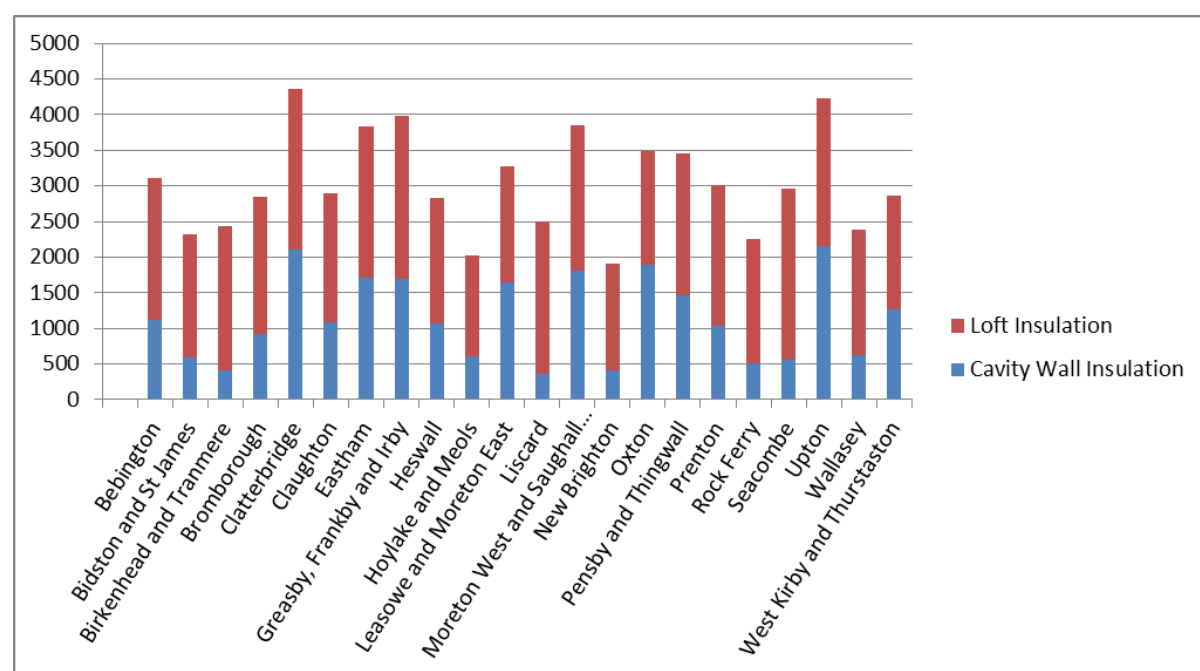
Due to the success of energy company programmes to 2013, in conjunction with the Council's Warmer Wirral Insulation Programme from 2010 to 2013, the potential for installing loft and cavity wall insulation has decreased significantly. 51,692 loft and cavity wall insulation measures were installed in

Wirral from April 2008 until December 2012¹². It appears from the figures above that there remains potential for cavity wall insulation however it is unknown how many of these are “hard-to-treat” which have been excluded from assistance under previous schemes.

Figure 4.3 demonstrates the extent to which the Council Wards have benefited from both the Energy Efficiency Commitment and the Carbon Emissions Reduction Target funding. Based on the activity already undertaken, some Wards show greater remaining potential for loft insulation, for example Hoylake & Meols and New Brighton. However, the Council’s Warmer Wirral Free Insulation Programme found wards such as New Brighton had large numbers of dwellings with no lofts. It should be noted that wards where cavity wall insulation installations are lower, for example Liscard, could reflect the higher number of solid walled properties within that Ward.

Figure 4.3

**Number of insulation measures installed using energy company funding
2002 – 2012 by Council Ward**



There are estimated to be around 65,000 un-insulated solid wall properties in Wirral¹³. The majority are pre-1919 terraced housing located in the east of the Borough where there is a concentration of deprived LSOAs and where fuel poverty levels are highest. These areas will therefore be the focus of initiatives where the primary insulation measure will be solid wall insulation. The Council will work with the energy companies and RPs to direct activity to those areas most in need of energy efficiency improvement.

¹² Energy Saving Trust, Homes Energy Efficiency Database, May 2013

¹³ Wirral Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2008

4.2.2 Heating

The majority of homes in Wirral have some form of central heating. 86.8% of Wirral households had central heating in 2001¹⁴; by 2011 this had increased to 96.7%¹⁵.

Most dwellings in Wirral are connected to the gas main and there are few “off-gas” properties. It is estimated that approximately 5,000 Wirral households are not connected to the gas network. The LSOAs with the largest concentrations of properties not connected to the gas network are Bromborough Rake (25%), New Brighton North (22%), Wallasey Harrison Park (21%) and Birkenhead Park East (20%)¹⁶. These LSOAs contain high concentrations of high and low-rise flats with electric heating and could be targeted for future energy efficiency campaigns.

The social sector has benefited from the Decent Homes Programme and the majority of properties have modern boilers. There is potential however within this sector for some small scale district heating where in the past there’s been communal heating.

Larger scale district heating is possible and can be centred on areas of greatest heat demand. Figure 4.4 below shows the demand for domestic heat in the Borough and unsurprisingly shows concentrations of demand in the urban areas, especially within Wallasey and Birkenhead¹⁷. As identified in the Liverpool City Region Renewable Energy Capacity Study 2009, the Wirral Waters development offers an opportunity to integrate district heating into a large new commercial and domestic development, which is surrounded by areas of high residential heat density that could benefit from connecting into a heat network and where there are higher than average levels of fuel poverty.

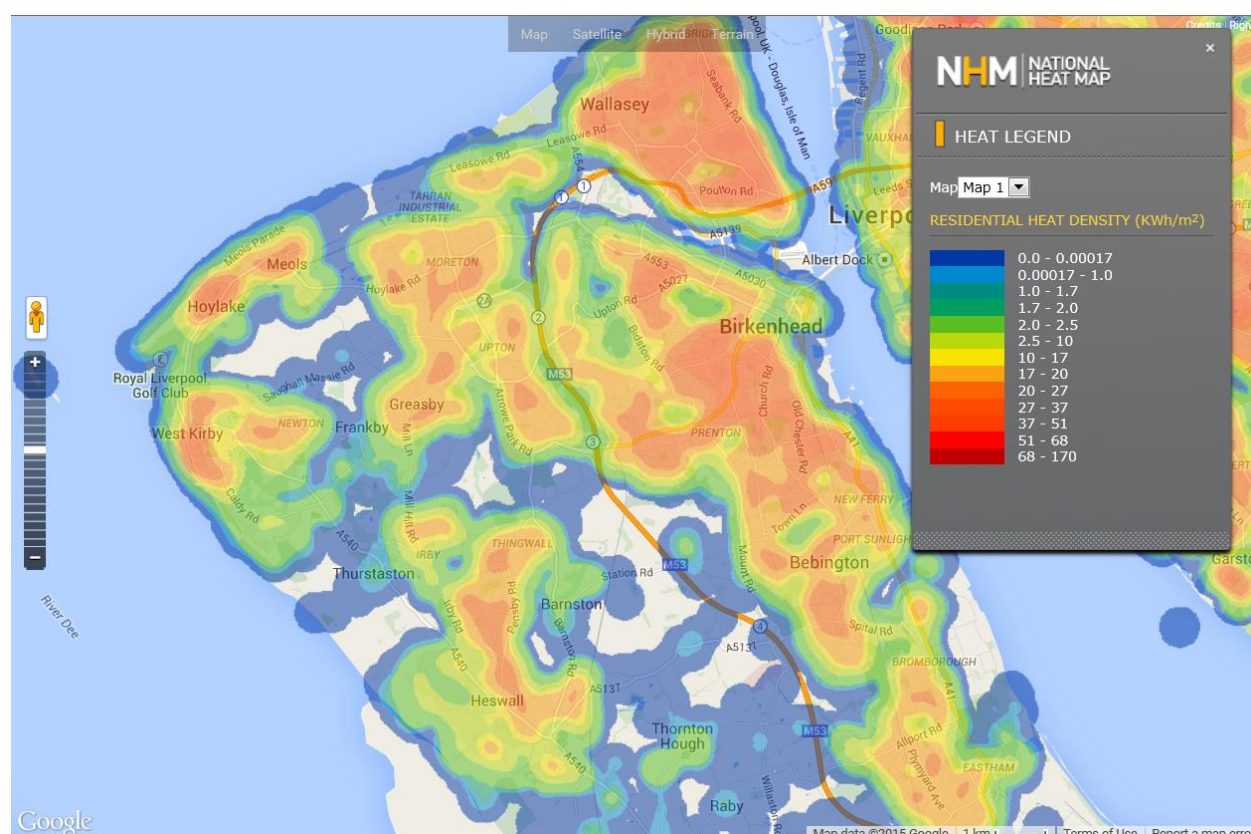
¹⁴ ONS, 2001 Census

¹⁵ ONS, 2011 Census

¹⁶ LSOA estimates of households not connected to the gas network (2012 data), DECC, March 2014

¹⁷ <http://ceo.decc.gov.uk/nationalheatmap/>

Figure 4.4 – Residential heat density in Wirral



4.2.3 Energy Company Obligation 2013 to 2014

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) has been the main source of funding for energy efficiency improvements in Wirral since it began in January 2013. The three components of ECO are the Carbon Saving Obligation (CSO), the Carbon Saving Community Obligation (CSCO) and the Home Heat Carbon Reduction Obligation (HHCRO), all of which are explained in further detail in the Glossary. To date, CSO and CSCO have concentrated on insulation improvements, with CSCO focussing on solid wall insulation in deprived areas. HHCRO is only available to households in receipt of certain benefits and has mainly funded boiler replacements.

Figure 4.5 below shows the number of measures installed with ECO funding in Wirral and its Parliamentary Constituencies.¹⁸ The benchmark figure is ECO measures installed per 1,000 households; the Liverpool City Region average is 90.5 with Wirral's slightly less at 87.8. Wirral exceeds the North West and English averages (80.9 and 47.9 respectively). Within Wirral, the high rate in Wallasey Parliamentary Constituency reflects the British Gas ECO programme which operated in parts of the Constituency until July 2014.

¹⁸ DECC, Green Deal and ECO Statistics.

Figure 4.5 – ECO measures installed January 2013 to December 2014

Area	No. of CSO measures	No. of CSCO measures	No. of HHCRO measures	Total no. of ECO measures	ECO measures per 1,000 households
Birkenhead	759	1,024	1,516	3,299	82.4
Wallasey	1,754	1,980	1,800	5,334	140.4
Wirral South	409	125	722	1,256	40.5
Wirral West	699	833	765	2,297	76.3
Wirral	3,621	3,968	4,803	12,386	87.8

4.2.4 Green Deal

The Green Deal began in early 2013 but is taking longer than envisaged to gain momentum. The Council promotes the Green Deal, in particular the Green Deal Home Improvement Fund (GDHIF) which provides intermittent grants for energy efficiency improvements and a strong financial incentive to install solid wall insulation (see Glossary for full details).

The statistics provided by DECC provide local numbers of live Green Deal (GD) Plans and numbers of Green Deal Assessments (GDA). The number of live GD Plans is low for the whole country (4,721 as at 31st December 2014) with only 14 of these being in Wirral. The benchmark of GD Plans per 100,000 households shows Wirral's rate of 9.9 performing better than the English average (9.4) but below the North West average (13.8).

GDAs are needed to access Green Deal loans as well as in most circumstances to access the Renewable Heat Incentive. Either an Energy Performance Certificate or a GDA is required to access the GDHIF. The benchmark statistic of GDAs per 1,000 households shows Wirral's rate at 13.4 performing better than the English average (12.8) but below the North West average (17.0).¹⁹

Figure 4.6 below shows the number and rate of live GD Plans and GDAs in each of Wirral's Parliamentary Constituencies.

Figure 4.6 – Live Green Deal Plans and Green Deal Assessments lodged January 2013 to December 2014

Area	No. of GD Plans	GD Plans per 100,000 households	No. of GDAs	GDAs per 1,000 households
Birkenhead	3	7.5	644	16.1
Wallasey	8	20.3	639	16.2
Wirral South	1	3.2	294	9.5
Wirral West	2	6.6	318	10.6
Wirral	14	9.9	1,895	13.4

¹⁹ DECC, Green Deal and ECO Statistics

Local statistics are also provided on the number of Green Deal Cashback vouchers issued (this scheme ended in July 2014) and the number of Green Deal Home Improvement Fund vouchers issued (this began in July 2014 and is released in quarterly tranches of funding). The benchmark statistics of Cashback and GDHIF vouchers issued per 10,000 households shows Wirral's rate at 25.5 and 9.9 respectively, performing better than both English averages (6.2 and 4.8 respectively) and both North West averages (11.1 and 7.6 respectively).²⁰

Figure 4.7 – Green Deal Cashback vouchers and GDHIF vouchers issued January 2013 to September 2014

Area	No. Cashback vouchers	Cashback vouchers per 10,000 households	No. of GDHIF vouchers	GDHIF vouchers per 10,000 households
Birkenhead	62	15.5	46	11.5
Wallasey	25	6.3	50	12.7
Wirral South	50	16.1	20	6.4
Wirral West	39	13.0	24	8.0
Wirral	176	12.5	140	9.9

4.2.5 Renewable Energy

The installation of renewable energy generation in Wirral homes has focussed in recent years on photovoltaic (PV) panels. This is due to the Feed-in Tariff (FIT) with its attractive rates of return on people's investment as well as the ease of installation. Other than PV, only one Micro-CHP and two wind turbine installations have been installed that receive FIT payments. The table in figure 4.8 below shows the number of commissioned PV installations in Wirral from 2010/11 to 2013/14.²¹

Figure 4.8 – Number and capacity of Wirral PV installations under the FIT

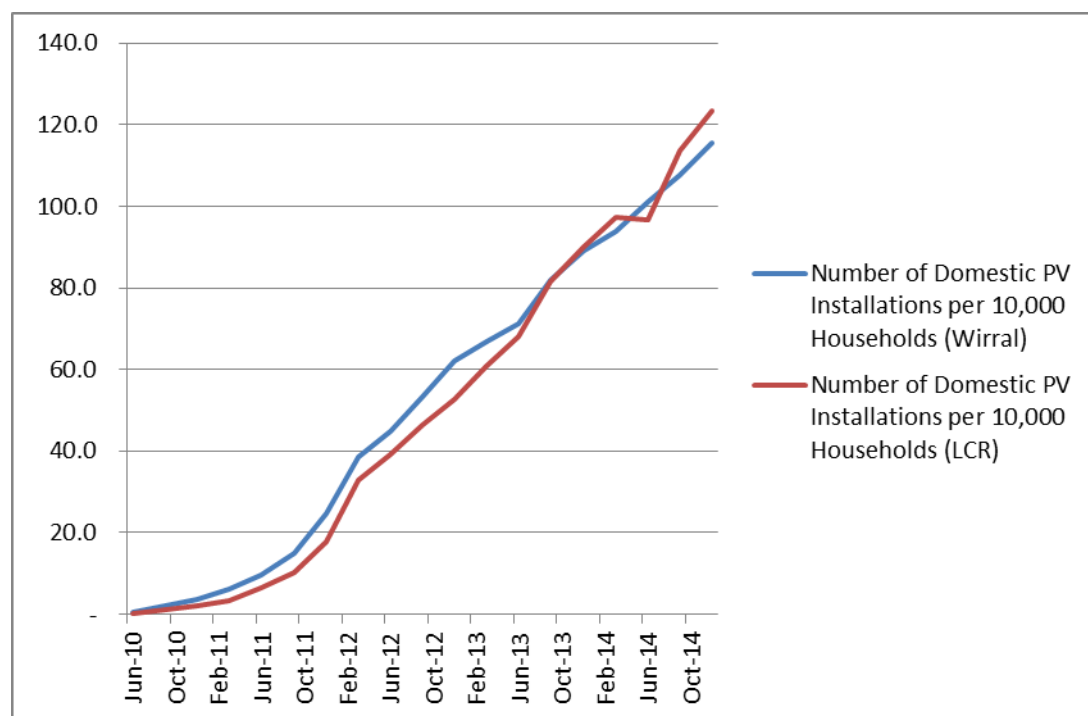
Year	Number	Declared Net Capacity (kW)
2010/11	99	259.27
2011/12	566	1,667.21
2012/13	348	1,138.16
2013/14	400	1,348.05
TOTAL	1,413	4,413.69

²⁰ DECC, Green Deal and ECO Statistics.

²¹ OFGEM, Feed-in Tariff quarterly reports.

Figure 4.9 below shows a steady increase in installation of PV in Wirral's homes, almost mirroring the rate in the Liverpool City Region as a whole. Despite reductions in the rate paid per kWh from early 2013 onwards under the FIT scheme, the installation rate has remained relatively constant.

Figure 4.9 – Domestic PV installations per 10,000 households



In April 2014, the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) began in the domestic sector. The domestic RHI is an incentive scheme where participants receive tariff payments for the heat generated from an eligible renewable heating system which is heating a single dwelling. Payments are made over a 7 year period and tariff levels for each eligible technology have been calculated to bridge the financial gap between the cost of renewable and off-gas heating systems.

Until April 2015, applicants are able to claim for eligible systems which were installed after 15 July 2009. In contrast to applications under the FIT scheme, applications for RHI payments have been low. To the end of January 2015, 20 successful applications were made for Wirral installations and 70 across the Liverpool City Region.²²

²² DECC, Non-Domestic RHI and Domestic RHI monthly deployment data

5. LOCAL ENERGY EFFICIENCY AMBITIONS AND PRIORITIES

The Council has been engaged in operating and commissioning energy efficiency improvement programmes as well as awareness-raising activity since HECA began in 1996. Specific ambitions and priorities have been clearly set out in a range of strategic documents and action plans recognising both the importance and alignment of energy efficiency programmes and the green agenda including Wirral's Housing Strategy, Affordable Warmth Strategy, Child Poverty Strategy and Climate Change Strategy. Specific work undertaken through these priorities includes:

- Partnering and promoting energy company insulation programmes and Warm Front;
- Installing 25,000 insulation measures and reducing CO₂ emissions by 9,000 tonnes annually through funding the Warmer Wirral Free Insulation Programme from 2010 until 2013. Around £2.8m was provided from the Council's budget, which generated around £5m CERT funding from British Gas;
- Ensuring Warmer Wirral offers additional assistance for households through energy efficiency advice, benefit entitlement checks, fuel tariff advice and water saving packs;
- Delivering Affordable Warmth Strategies since 2004;
- Procuring a local freephone energy saving advice line operated by Energy Projects Plus;
- Operating an interest-free Cosy Loans scheme for energy efficiency measures which assists around 70 households per year;
- Funding a Cosy Homes Heating upgrade programme for householders on benefits that are ineligible for HHCRO;
- Driving forward a new Climate Change Strategy for Wirral which was launched in December 2014; and
- Supporting area-based energy efficiency improvement activity by Registered Providers to be delivered and aligned with the Council's priority programmes

These programmes and others, including those of our Registered Provider partners, have assisted the Council in meeting its previous HECA target as well as helping towards national CO₂ reduction targets.

Wirral's Affordable Warmth Implementation Plan is due to be reviewed in 2015 and will adapt to the changes in the national funding regime for fuel poverty alleviation programmes as well as changes in local circumstances.

The Council has partnered with Liverpool City Region local authorities in producing a Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP) which provides a joined-up approach in reducing carbon emissions across the region and is helping to expand the low carbon economy locally. The SEAP also provides a link to the Liverpool City Region Deal with Government on the low carbon economy and specifically states working with Government on the Green Deal Go Early pilot schemes, which were delivered in 2013. The low carbon housing agenda is co-ordinated through Project Viridis, a partnership of the six City Region local

authorities and Registered Providers of social housing with the greatest stock in the area. Of those with stock in Wirral, this includes Magenta Living, Riverside, Regenda, Venture, Plus Dane, Your Housing Group and LHT.

Going forward over the next 15 years, it is envisaged the Council will continue its role in facilitating activity in the following ways:

1. Information, advice and signposting;
2. Ensuring the Borough accesses its fair share of ECO;
3. Directing activity to areas of high fuel poverty which will benefit most from energy efficiency improvements;
4. Continuing to deliver an Affordable Warmth Implementation Plan, with reviews every 2-3 years;
5. Promoting Green Deal and ECO in areas where energy consumption is above average;
6. Engaging communities with a street-by-street approach to encourage take-up of ECO, Green Deal and other Council assistance available;
7. Working collectively as part of the Liverpool City Region to align improving energy efficiency in residential accommodation with the low carbon agenda and local economy.

Following the end of the Warmer Wirral Insulation Programme, the Council reviewed its energy efficiency activity due to reductions in local authority budgets as well as the ending of the Carbon Emissions Reduction Target. A budget option was agreed by Cabinet in December 2013 to provide £60,000 annually towards the co-ordination of domestic energy efficiency and fuel poverty reduction activity. This option was endorsed by 73% of the 6,500 residents who responded to the Council's budget consultation (with the alternative option being to remove funding for this type of activity altogether). This however may be subject to further budget options in future years given that budget savings are required until at least 2018/19.

6. TIME FRAME FOR DELIVERY AND NATIONAL AND LOCAL PARTNERS

The Action Plan below states the main action areas set out in 2013's Further Report with an update for each action as of March 2015.

ACTION	DETAIL	TIMING
i) LOCAL ENERGY EFFICIENCY AMBITIONS AND PRIORITIES		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council will publish a new Climate Change Strategy to assist the Government target to reduce CO₂ emissions by 80% by 2050. <i>Update: Wirral's new Climate Change Strategy was launched in December 2014. HECA plays a key role in many of the Strategy's actions.</i> 	2013
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will sign-up to the Local Government Association "Climate Local" initiative. <i>Update: Wirral Council signed-up to Climate Local in 2014.</i> 	2013
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council is committed to delivering actions within the Liverpool City Region Sustainable Energy Action Plan and the Liverpool City Region Deal with Government. <i>Update: The Council is assisting the LEP in delivering actions, such as mapping of heat demand, through the Viridis Partnership.</i> 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council will continue to deliver the Wirral Affordable Warmth Implementation Plan 2012-14 to reduce fuel poverty in the Borough and formulate a new plan to begin in 2015. <i>Update: The Plan has continued to be delivered throughout 2012-14 and is due to be refreshed in 2015.</i> 	2015

ii) MEASURES WE ARE TAKING TO RESULT IN SIGNIFICANT ENERGY EFFICIENCY IMPROVEMENTS OF OUR RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION		
Green Deal, ECO, Feed-in Tariff and Renewable Heat Incentive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will build upon and learn from the Liverpool City Region Green Deal Go Early Pilot, particularly with regards to the local market for Green Deal Assessments and the local appetite for energy efficiency improvement loans. <p><i>Update: The Council delivered on its Green Deal Go Early commitments by testing the market. Although there was an extremely tight deadline, the project found there was a great interest in (free) Green Deal Assessments however the vast majority of applicants didn't commit to financing improvements with an interest-free loan.</i></p>	2013
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will utilise the local Cosy Loan scheme to support Green Deal applicants who cannot meet the Golden Rule or for whom the Green Deal may not be the most appropriate route. <p><i>Update: Cosy Loans continue to be available although all but one loan in the past two years have been for replacement boilers.</i></p>	2013
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will work with the Liverpool City Region Project Viridis partnership to explore a delivery vehicle for ECO and Green Deal locally. <p><i>Update: An ECO Framework has been procured by Liverpool City Council which can be utilised by any of the Viridis partners. The intention is to utilise the Framework for ECO referrals and any projects requiring ECO funding.</i></p>	2013-14
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wirral Council will publicise the Green Deal and ECO through its website, working with Development Control to provide the most appropriate advice for the local area, as well as through new and existing communication channels. <p><i>Update: Both Green Deal and ECO are publicised through the Council's website and continuously through other channels such as Wirral's Fuel Poverty Newsletter.</i></p>	2013
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As at 31st March 2012, 554 domestic renewable electricity systems have been 	2013

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council will continue to provide and support impartial, independent advice on energy efficiency and fuel poverty-related assistance. <i>Update: The Council funds advice provision through the Warmer Wirral programme via Freephone telephone advice and face-to-face on the doorstep as well as at community events. Energy Projects Plus is currently contracted to provide this programme. Funding has been secured to expand and strengthen this activity in areas where the Selective Licensing of private rented properties is to take place later in 2015.</i> 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under the “Safe & Warm in Winter” campaign, we will build upon our experience in co-ordinating assistance to provide help for those households most vulnerable to cold weather. <i>Update: Wirral Council and its partners have delivered a Safe & Warm campaign each winter. In Winter 14/15, Wirral West Constituency Committee funded a campaign specific to that area which included the provision of Winter Warmth Packs and face-to-face advice to around 300 people.</i> 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council will develop new mechanisms to assist vulnerable households in changing energy suppliers to benefit from cheaper tariffs, including the development of a collective switching campaign with City Region partners. <i>Update: Wirral Council is part of the Liverpool City Region Collective Switching initiative managed by Energy Projects Plus in partnership with Energy Helpline. There have been three collective switches since 2013 plus one in progress at the time of writing. The previous switches have resulted in 3,365 Wirral households registering, 618 households switching and an average saving in the last switch of £206 per year. Between Collective Switches, a “Switch Now” campaign operates which directs people to a Freephone number and website for a price comparison.</i> 	Autumn 2013
Zero Carbon Homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under the Core Strategy to be adopted by April 2014, new housing development, including extensions, conversions and changes of use, will be permitted where the 	April 2014 – onwards

	<p>proposals can be demonstrated to achieve water efficiency standards equivalent to Levels 3 and 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes (2009) and where viable contribute towards the provision of Zero Carbon development. This will reduce carbon emissions associated with hot water use.</p> <p><i>Update: The Government's Housing Standards consultation in late 2014 set out their proposals for water efficiency standards. They are likely to confirm in early 2015 that local authorities can only set an increased standard for water efficiency if they provide evidence of need and test the viability of the proposed standard to check that it will not harm the proposed levels of development in the area. Once the Government has confirmed what evidence is needed, Wirral Council will review its intentions and its ability to introduce a local standard.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will work with RPs to encourage their new-build standards to meet Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 and above. <p><i>Update: From April 2011 to January 2015 in Wirral, 579 social properties have been built to Level 3 and 27 to Level 4. Further to the Government's intention to abolish the Code, BRE are proposing to introduce another similar standard which when launched the Council will encourage RPs to use. The Homes & Communities Agency no longer require new-build homes which they fund to meet the Code for Sustainable Homes.</i></p>	Ongoing
Energy efficiency data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will assess private sector housing energy efficiency standards across the Borough using a Stock Condition and Home Energy Survey. <p><i>Update: A Private Sector Stock Condition Survey was carried out in 2013 and the report published in 2014, which provided many of the statistics in Sections 2 and 3 of this update report.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will continue to monitor energy efficiency standards and improvements in the social housing sector using the annual Wirral Area Mapping Project data collection. 	<p>Autumn 2013</p> <p>Each spring</p>

	<p><i>Update: SAP ratings and energy efficiency improvements in the social housing sector continue to be collected and monitored on an annual basis.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will monitor nationally available home energy data for Wirral to assess trends and influence energy efficiency activity. <p><i>Update: ECO and Green Deal statistics are collated and monitored quarterly and data on CO₂ emissions, energy consumption, the FIT and RHI are collected annually.</i></p>	6-monthly
Increasing standards in the Private Rented Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will maintain minimum energy efficiency standards for the properties of agents and landlords that are part of the Council's Landlord Accreditation Scheme. <p><i>Update: this continues in the updated standards which require an EPC minimum rating of "E", pre-empting the 2018 target.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will assist private landlords with advice provision on the improvement of their properties to an EPC rating of "E" or preferably above to meet the 2018 legal requirement. <p><i>Update: The Government's consultation on the proposed private rented energy efficiency standards was publicised through the Council's Landlord Linkup newsletter. Each newsletter also contains an article on the assistance available to landlords in order to improve the energy efficiency of their properties. The Council continues to provide telephone support to landlords on this matter also.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to offer support to households through Wirral Healthy Homes in order to improve housing standards and in particular reduce excess cold hazards. We will also work closely with the Clinical Commissioning Groups to develop new referral pathways into Wirral Healthy Homes from GP surgeries. <p><i>Update: Wirral Healthy Homes continues to be funded by Public Health and supported by the Community NHS Trust and provides a strong health improvement focus as well as improving housing standards. From April 2015, Public Health will be funding three posts</i></p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>2013</p>

	<p><i>to increase the reach of the project. Referral pathways from GP surgeries will be set up in 2015.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where necessary, we will take enforcement action on private landlords where they refuse to remove Category 1 Excess Cold Hazards from their property. <p><i>Update: Notices continue to be served by Wirral Council on property owners, including HMO landlords, where Category 1 Excess Cold hazards are identified.</i></p>	Ongoing
iii) MEASURES WE PROPOSE TO COST EFFECTIVELY DELIVER ENERGY EFFICIENCY IMPROVEMENTS IN RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION BY USING AREA BASED / STREET-BY-STREET ROLL OUT		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will work with RPs and other partners to explore the potential for district heating schemes. <p><i>Update: Wirral's largest RP, Magenta Living, has delivered a number of district heating schemes, particularly in its refurbished high rise flats. They are currently working on a proposal for district heating for some of its stock in Pensby. The latest costs were unviable however Magenta is currently exploring alternative options. As part of the Liverpool City Region Sustainable Energy Action Plan, the LEP are currently working with local authorities and RPs to establish Energy Opportunity Zones where there is potential for district heating.</i></p>	2013/14
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will rank the 15% most deprived Lower Super Output Areas for street-by-street intervention activity through the Carbon Saving Communities Obligation (CSCO), based on estimated levels of fuel poverty, child poverty, type of housing stock, area regeneration and the amount of previous energy efficiency activity. <p><i>Update: This was completed in preparation for the continuation of CSCO roll-out by British Gas into other areas however the changes to ECO meant that the scheme was no longer cost-effective and had to end. Without large amounts of capital funding which the Council doesn't have to contribute, CSCO activity is now limited to RP stock where the RP can provide the majority of the funding.</i></p>	April 2013

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council will lead on CSCO activity within highest ranked LSOAs where the majority of recipients are living in the private sector and will ensure properties owned by Registered Providers of Social Housing (RPs) within the LSOA are also included. <p><i>Update: Due to the changes introduced in ECO in 2014 which led to a substantial drop in the amount of CSCO funding available, the Council was unable to take this forward. However, the Council is still directing fuel poverty awareness activity in selected LSOAs which will lead to an increase in uptake of HHCR0 measures in these areas. A multi-tenure approach is taken with RP partners, providing other non-improvement types of support to RP tenants, e.g. Collective Switching and Fuel Debt Advice.</i></p>	To begin by summer 2013
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council and its RP partners will aim to facilitate improvements to at least 1,000 properties per year. <p><i>Update: Between October 2012 and July 2014, 2,170 households received energy efficiency improvements under the British Gas CESP / ECO scheme in Wallasey across all tenures. RPs also delivered schemes to their own stock outside of this, including Magenta Living who delivered solid wall insulation programmes to around 900 properties between April 2012 and mid-2014. Due to the changes introduced in ECO in 2014 which led to a substantial drop in the amount of CSCO funding available, the Council and the RPs were unable continue to take this action forward beyond mid-2014 and have therefore reduced the target to 200 per year. Despite the reduced availability of ECO funding, RPs continue to invest their own funds, seeking ECO or ERDF funds where appropriate, to lead on energy efficiency improvement schemes to their own stock. It has been confirmed that Public Health will fund a small number of solid wall insulation grants for low income households in Selective Licensing (of private rented properties) areas in 2015/16 and 2016/17.</i></p>	April 2013 onwards
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where RPs are planning area-based energy efficiency improvements to their own 	April 2013 onwards

	<p>stock through the CSCO or other funds from the Energy Company Obligation, the Council advocates that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> where feasible the RP prioritises those properties in the Council's highest ranked LSOAs; and an offer of the same energy efficiency improvements is made to private sector households and other RPs with stock in the same geographical area. This would be co-ordinated through the Council and requires RPs to notify the Council of their intentions as early as possible in the scheme's planning. <p><i>Update: RPs have tended to direct their area-based energy efficiency improvement schemes based on the low energy efficiency of the properties in conjunction with general estate investment and regeneration priorities. With the majority of schemes this has coincided with Council's priorities for investment in areas of high fuel poverty and child poverty. It remains the Council's wish to see private sector households receive improvements at the same time as neighbouring RP stock however with reduced and inconsistent funding available to private sector households take-up is likely to be low.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council will fund the co-ordination of street-by-street energy efficiency and fuel poverty intervention in a minimum of two areas per year with the aim of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Providing impartial advice and information to households on what type of energy efficiency measures are needed and suitable for their home; Forming partnerships with RPs and private landlords with stock in the areas to ensure a multi-tenure approach and forming partnerships with local community groups including schools to increase participation; Working with an energy company partner to provide funding for the measures through ECO or CSCO or by signposting to Green Deal Loans; Providing re-assurance to households that any grant offers are genuine and the works will meet nationally recognised standards; Providing other support and assistance needed to reduce energy bills such as through behaviour change or switching energy suppliers and providing assistance 	<p>To begin 2013/14</p>
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	<p>with fuel debt issues, referring onwards for benefit entitlement checks and ensuring other aspects of housing standards are addressed;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Acting as a key contact during the energy efficiency improvement works; and 7. Working with the householders post-installation on how best to adapt their lifestyle and energy consumption behaviour to benefit fully from the improvements. <p><i>Update: The Council is currently funding a 2nd consecutive year of Warmer Wirral activity to target fuel poverty alleviation measures on a street-by-street approach. The contract is being delivered by Energy Projects Plus and includes all of the above. Funding has been secured to expand and strengthen this activity in areas where the Selective Licensing of private rented properties is to take place later in 2015.</i></p>	
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7. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Carbon Emissions Reduction Obligation (CERO)

The CERO focuses on the insulation of solid and hard-to-treat cavity walls, which are primary measures under this obligation. Other insulation measures and connections to district heating systems are also eligible if they are promoted as part of a package that includes solid wall insulation or hard-to-treat cavity wall insulation.

Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT)

CERT required gas and electricity suppliers to achieve targets for a reduction in carbon emissions generated by the domestic sector between 2008 and 2012.

Carbon Saving Community Obligation (CSCO)

CSCO focuses on the provision of carbon saving measures to domestic energy users that live within an area of low income or a rural area.

Code for Sustainable Homes

The Code for Sustainable Homes is an environmental assessment method for rating and certifying the performance of new homes. It is a Government owned national standard intended to encourage continuous improvement in sustainable home building.

Collective switching

Collective switching is when consumers get together to negotiate a better tariff with their gas and electricity suppliers. There is no set model for how individual schemes operate, though a third party usually facilitates them.

Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP)

CESP required gas and electricity suppliers and electricity generators to deliver energy saving measures to domestic consumers in specific low income areas of Great Britain. CESP was designed to promote a 'whole house' approach and to treat as many properties as possible in defined areas.

Core Strategy

The Core Strategy will replace the strategic policies contained within the Unitary Development Plan for Wirral adopted in February 2000 and will provide the long term direction for future development and investment within the Wirral over the next fifteen years and beyond. When adopted in April 2014, the Core Strategy will contribute towards decisions on individual planning applications and will be used to guide the identification of site specific land allocations.

Cosy Home Heating Grants

Cosy Homes Heating Grants are managed by Wirral Council. They help owner occupiers or private tenants, on certain welfare benefits, to improve their heating systems and where the household does not qualify for the Home Heating Cost Reduction Obligation scheme.

Cosy Loans

Wirral Council offers interest-free loans to homeowners and private landlords and tenants to help make their homes more energy efficient. The scheme is managed by Wirral Methodist Housing Association on behalf of the Council.

Decent Homes Programme

The Decent Homes Standard was introduced by the Government in 2001 and is a standard by which mainly social housing is measured. The Decent Homes Programme funded improvements to social housing to meet the Standard, which meant that by 2010 most social housing properties had basic insulation and adequate modern heating.

Energy Companies Obligation (ECO)

ECO is a government energy efficiency scheme for Great Britain. It sits alongside the Green Deal and places obligations on larger domestic energy suppliers to deliver energy efficiency measures to domestic households, with a focus on vulnerable consumer groups and hard-to-treat homes.

Energy Efficiency Commitment (EEC)

EEC required gas and electricity suppliers to achieve targets for a reduction in carbon emissions generated by the domestic sector between 2005 and 2008

Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)

A domestic EPC is required whenever a property is sold or rented. It is based on SAP (see below) and presents the energy efficiency of dwellings on a scale of A to G. The most efficient homes are in band A. The certificate includes recommendations on ways to improve the home's energy efficiency.

Feed-in Tariff (FIT)

The Feed-in Tariff is a Government policy to accelerate the uptake of renewable electricity systems. It provides regular payments up to 25 years for technologies such as photovoltaic panels, wind turbines and hydro power.

Fuel Poverty – LIHC indicator

The “Low Income High Costs” indicator adopted by the Government in 2013 has the following definition: a household is considered to be in fuel poverty if:

- they have required fuel costs that are above average (the national median level);
- were they to spend that amount they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line.

Fuel Poverty – 10% indicator

The Government still reports on this indicator although it is no longer used as the official indicator for England (it is still used in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). The definition is as follows: a household is said to be in fuel poverty if it needs to spend more than 10% of its income on fuel to maintain a satisfactory heating regime (usually 21 degrees for the main living area, and 18 degrees for other occupied rooms).

Green Deal

The Green Deal is a market-led framework, which aims to improve energy efficiency throughout Great Britain. Central to this framework is the introduction of a new Green Deal financial mechanism, which allows businesses and individuals to make energy efficiency improvements to their buildings at no upfront cost. The costs of the measures are paid for out of the resultant savings on that consumer's electricity bill.

Green Deal Home Improvement Fund

In July 2014, the Government began to release tranches of funding to assist and motivate households to install energy efficiency improvements. The highest grant under the fund is for solid wall insulation.

“Hard-to-treat” cavity wall insulation

Primarily, this includes cavities with a gap of less than 50mm which have been excluded from previous cavity wall insulation schemes due to the risk of penetrating damp from glass fibre insulation and therefore haven't been guaranteed. These walls can be filled with polystyrene beads which lower the risk of penetrating damp and are now covered by guarantees. Other hard-to-treat cavities include low-rise flats over three stories high and buildings of mixed solid / cavity wall construction.

Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) 1995

The first HECA guidance on the implementation of HECA said "the Secretary of State formally regards 30% as significant and that Energy Conservation Areas should show a strategy for making at least substantial progress towards a 30% improvement in [the] energy efficiency [of the domestic building stock] in 10 – 15 years from 1 April 1996". "Energy Conservation Areas" are top-tier or unitary authorities. The Government issued new guidance in July 2012.

Home Heating Cost Reduction Obligation (HHCRO)

Under HHCRO, energy suppliers must deliver measures which result in cost savings and which improve the ability of a householder to affordably heat their home. HHCRO focuses on low income and vulnerable householders, living in private housing (generally), where residents are in receipt of specific benefits and meet other related conditions (the "affordable warmth group")

Homes Energy Efficiency Database

HEED is operated by Energy Saving Trust and was designed and implemented to help monitor and improve the energy efficiency of the UK's housing stock. Data from HEED is accessible via an online portal and can provide reports to various geographical levels on insulation and renewable energy measures installed through national funding programmes.

Lower Super Output Area (LSOA)

LSOAs were developed by the Office for National Statistics following the 2001 Census and are geographical areas of no less than 400 households and 1,000 people.

Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI)

The RHI for households began in April 2014 for renewable heat systems such as solar thermal panels and heat pumps. It provides regular payments in a similar way to FIT payments.

Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP)

SAP is the Government's Standard Assessment Procedure for Energy Rating of Dwellings. SAP is adopted by Government as part of the UK national methodology for calculation of the energy performance of buildings. It is used to demonstrate compliance with building regulations for dwellings (Part L in England and Wales). SAP is expressed on a scale of 1 - 100, 1 represents a poor standard of energy efficiency while a SAP of 100 represents zero energy costs.

Warm Homes Healthy People Fund

In 2011/12 and 2012/13, the Department of Health provided funds through a competition for local authorities to assist with the local delivery of the Cold Weather Plan for England.

