

Birmingham Energy Savers Scheme

Carillion Community Engagement

Introduction

The Government's Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation (ECO) schemes aim to make dramatic improvements to the energy efficiency of the UK's built environment. They are also creating opportunities for new work and new jobs – a lifeline for individuals, and for small and medium sized building contractors, across the country.

In order that householders, the construction industry and the UK economy more broadly benefit from these opportunities, the right skills and qualifications must be in place for high quality and reliable work to be delivered under the schemes. The Green Skills Alliance (a partnership between AssetSkills, CITB-ConstructionSkills and SummitSkills) is working with businesses which are leading the way to share knowledge about working under the Green Deal schemes.

Carillion Energy Services is driving the training and development of its staff and supply chain to become Green Deal ready, and is already reaping the rewards.

Making the most of Green Deal Opportunities

In December 2012, Carillion was chosen by Birmingham City Council as a partner on the 'Birmingham Energy Savers' scheme. This is an eight year programme to improve the energy efficiency of up to 60,000 households across the city, together with schools and other non-domestic Council properties.

Carillion began preparing for Green Deal and ECO opportunities well in advance of the schemes being launched. Key to this preparation is ensuring that people with the right skills are available to them.

As a result, Carillion – along with the contractors in its supply chain – has been able to hit the ground running and make the most of the earliest commercial opportunities. Carillion won the Birmingham Energy Savers contract in December 2012, and has continued to recruit and train employees and supply chain partners to deliver this contract.

Birmingham Energy Savers

Carillion provides the first point of contact for customers of the scheme, followed by a visit from its assessors to identify how best to improve the energy efficiency of a building and whether it is eligible for this work to be financed under the Green Deal or ECO schemes. Carillion then works with partners on its supply chain framework to install the energy efficiency improvement measures.

At the start of the programme the Green Deal Financing Company was not yet in place, so work was financed by 'Go Early' funding made available by Government to help kick-start the Green Deal. To date, Birmingham Energy Savers has largely been marketed to owner-occupiers.

Work has already been completed in domestic and non-domestic properties including schools, community centres and tower blocks. Much of this has focused on improving insulation and boiler systems under the ECO scheme, work which can often be delivered very quickly.

Birmingham has a high proportion of hard to treat 1920s houses, as well as buildings of historical significance which require particular treatment by installers with specific skills. Training and qualifications have been critical to the success of Carillion's work.

Training and Qualifications

Carillion has put in place a programme of training for its Green Deal and ECO workforce, comprising both existing employees and a number recruited specifically for work under the schemes. The business has also provided training for its supply chain to ensure that the right skills and qualifications are in place.

Assessors

Most of the first group of Green Deal Assessors established by Carillion has completed their course with flying colours. They have all been trained on the ABBE (Awarding Body of the Built Environment) course, though in future they have identified that for others with relevant experience such as Domestic Energy Assessor training, the appropriate training may be a shorter City and Guilds course. These provide the same level of qualification, but with different starting points. Carillion expects that further Green Deal Assessor roles will be recruited from candidates with Green Deal Assessor qualifications already in place, and Carillion will then provide extra elements of training to build on this strong base. There are also 4 other awarding bodies that have developed the course.

The knowledge and expertise of the Green Deal Assessors is critical to the success of the programme. Carrying out full Green Deal Assessments in customers' properties, the assessors look at eligibility for ECO work at the same time. Customers therefore avoid two separate assessments, and can be advised on the most appropriate route for them and their property.

As part of this process, there are considerations that an assessor must explain clearly and objectively to the customer – for example, customers that commission work under the ECO scheme may no longer be able to access work financed by the Green Deal. It is very important that each assessor has the knowledge and skills to make sure that customers understand exactly what they are choosing and the implications of their decisions.

Office staff

The office-based staff are key to Carillion's Green Deal and ECO work, acting as a contact centre, scheduling system and administrative support team. This workforce has been trained from scratch, and many of them have been recruited out of unemployment.

Of 53 staff directly employed by Carillion, 26 were previously unemployed (of whom four were long term unemployed) and 16 had jobs that were at risk of becoming redundant. Of the total staff directly employed, eight are young people.

Along with training programmes created by Carillion, the business has worked with a local college to provide the training and qualifications for Carillion office staff. As well as specifically targeted pre-employment programmes to enable them to prepare for the role, courses are in place to give employees a robust knowledge of how the Green Deal and ECO schemes work as well as the measures that they cover. This means they can offer objective advice to those making enquiries.

Carillion continues to prepare for the future, and is taking on apprentices both for Green Deal Assessment work and as office staff.

Supply chain installers

Carillion has worked closely with the Green Skills Alliance to identify skills gaps in its supply chain for delivering work under the Green Deal. As a result, it is helping subcontractors to upskill into these areas. For example, a shortage of external wall insulation skills and qualifications has been identified, so 11 unemployed individuals are training for qualifications in this area to access jobs and work placements within supply chain companies.

The upskilling of contractors is a huge advantage, providing those contractors with the chance to win and deliver Green Deal work. It is also a real benefit for Carillion, which is able to call on their services for delivery of its contract with Birmingham City Council as well as further energy efficiency work opportunities.

Working with Green Skills Alliance

Carillion has been supported by the Green Skills Alliance in its preparation for Green Deal and ECO work, both prior to the company winning the contract for Birmingham Energy Savers and throughout the contract to date. Specifically, the Green Skills Alliance has helped Carillion to understand and act on:

- The skills and qualifications requirements for Green Deal and ECO work;
- The schemes' models and the bid processes for work opportunities; and
- The requirements for preparing its workforce and supply chain.

As well as receiving guidance about the skills and qualifications needed, Carillion has also benefitted by attending supply chain events arranged by the Green Skills Alliance. It has also used the Green Skills Alliance partner websites as a resource for its own staff, its supply chain and its customers.

For more information about Birmingham Energy Savers, please visit:

<http://www.energysaverspartnerships.co.uk/birmingham>