

Draft Charter for Districts and Unitaries

Best Practice for trading standards around ECOflex/other retrofit grant schemes

Summary

After examining the various different approaches employed by local authorities to delivery of both Statement of Intents and signing of declarations, and in consultation with council representatives from the relevant departments and Trading Standards, the Cosy Devon partnership has proposed a working charter to ensure a ‘best practice’ approach to recommending and vetting energy agents, and their sub-contractors.

The charter is a voluntary set of commitments for councils who administer retrofit schemes and is designed to clearly communicate the standards signatories will uphold in the development of current and new retrofit projects.

The Charter outlines a commitment by signatories to ensure energy agents and their sub-contractors engage respectfully and sensitively with the communities which fall under each council area, and make a positive contribution to the regions in which they operate.

The delivery of retrofit grant schemes has been troubled at times by bad practice on the part of energy agents and their sub-contractors (canvassers, installers). This could impact negatively on the popularity of grant schemes and campaigns promoting retrofit. Retrofitting properties in the county is an essential part of the Devon Climate Emergency’s net zero plan and so urgent action is needed to reduce instances of bad practice

Charter Governance

The Commitment

Signatories to the Charter agree to honour the commitments set out in the charter governing best practice when onboarding contractors to carry out retrofit works for their respective councils.

Public Display of Commitment

Devon County Council will publish an up-to-date list of all signatories on their website. All signatories will publish and maintain up-to-date, signed copies of the charter on both their corporate and project websites.

Eligibility

Signatories to the charter must be involved in the development and delivery of retrofit projects in their statutory areas.

Changes to the Charter

The charter will be reviewed on a periodic basis, in order to reflect changes in best practice. Signatories will be consulted on any proposed changes. Final changes will be decided and amended by DCC, and a notice period for implementation of agreed changes given.

Honouring the Charter

Signatories are expected to honour the charter and are solely responsible for managing any concerns raised with them.

Partners may approach any signatories with concerns that the council in question is not committed to honouring the charter and reserves the right to:

- Remove signatories
- Request that the signatory ceases to display the charter on their corporate and project websites and any other public or private forums
- State on their (DCC's) website that the council in question is no longer a signatory and the date they were removed.

BEST PRACTICE CHARTER FOR RETROFIT PROJECTS

We commit to ensuring that retrofit schemes in our area are carried out according to best practice and agree to do the following:

1. Align Statements of Intent so they are consistent and make clear that:

- (a) rogue practices (Misleading / fraudulent claims, door-knocking houses with No Cold Caller stickers / signage) will not be tolerated
- (b) reps are transparent and provide customers with paperwork to confirm their identity, who they're working for, and whether customers personal details will be sold on [also see 6(a)]
- (c) Ensure companies provide evidence of their accreditations as required (e.g. PAS for Eco-Flex)

2. Remove council logos from the Declaration forms to reduce the risk that reps claim it shows they are working with the Local Authority

3. Require Suppliers to confirm the name of the company that carries out canvassing or sales leads generation activities.

4. Use a common form of wording, as agreed by charter signatories, to describe the council's relationship to the grant scheme and the installer / marketing company for the companies to use.

5. Inform Suppliers they have a responsibility for the actions of their contracted marketing and/or lead generation companies used.

6. Take reasonable precautions and due diligence when outsourcing marketing functions to ensure companies do the following:

- (a) Adhere to the National Cold Calling Protocol
- (b) Comply with Trading Standards legislation, GDPR and EPC
- (c) Train staff on legal requirements
- (d) Provide regular refresher training
- (e) Keep records of staff training

6. Ask Suppliers to formally acknowledge that they will abide by the Statement of Intent

7. Only sign off Declarations after the work has been done OR if before work is completed check with the Consumer they're happy work has been completed to an acceptable level.

8. Warn Suppliers that Declarations will not be signed off if repeated verifiable complaints* are received (including those made to other councils) about either the Supplier or sub-contractors

9. Act together so that if one council refuses to sign off a Suppliers Declarations then all charter signatories will do as well.

10. Regularly provide updates to Charter signatories on actions taken with Suppliers and any complaints being received

11. Maintain / introduce a list of 'Boarded' good local installers (possibly in conjunction with Trading Standards Buy With Confidence scheme) and only sign off Declarations from these companies.

12. Actively work to use local traders when possible to support the local economy.

12. Ensure council communications team follow Devon, Somerset & Torbay Trading Standards social media accounts so councils are quickly aware of rogue traders and other related matters.

Signature

Print Name

On Behalf of

Date