Energy Efficiency Upgrades

and Available Funding

for Cambridgeshire Residents

Cambridgeshire County Council

action on energy
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
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Energy Efficiency Upgrades and Available Funding for Cambridgeshire Residents

Introduction

This document is intended to provide guidance for Cambridgeshire residents on domestic energy efficiency and renewable energy upgrades and on available sources of funding to support the costs of this.

Energy prices are rising and likely to continue to do so in the long term. Improving the energy efficiency of your home now will reduce the impact of this on your energy bills for years to come. What's more around 21% of UK carbon dioxide emissions come from domestic energy use. So reducing the amount of energy we use at home is critical for tackling climate change.

To meet the UK's target of Net Zero carbon emissions by 2050 will require virtually all heating of buildings to be decarbonised. This means moving away from traditional gas and oil boilers to low carbon heating systems like Air, Ground and Water Source Heat Pumps that extract energy for heating from our surroundings.

As part of this transition the Government has proposed banning the installation of domestic oil boilers from 2026 in favour of heat pumps. Heat pumps work most efficiently on homes with better insulation standards, although where this is not achievable high temperature heat pumps still offer a low carbon heating option.

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How can I improve the energy efficiency and lower the carbon footprint of my home?

Turning down the heat

Turning down your main thermostat just one degree will cut your heating bills (and emissions) straight away, and you may not feel any difference.

How?

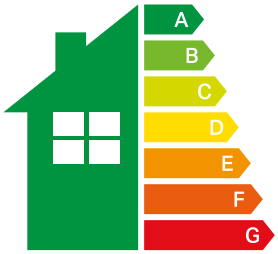
If your home has a central heating system you can use the main heating thermostat to reduce the temperature setting for the whole house. Try turning the temperature down by one degree and wait for a day or two to see how it feels. If you're still feeling comfortable, continue to turn it down until you reach a point where it starts to feel too cold.

Make a note of the setting where you still felt comfortable – this is the temperature setting for you and your household. If most of the house is comfortable, but some areas are too hot or too cold try adjusting the radiator valves in these areas to compensate.

In most cases, families are happy with a setting somewhere between 18˚C and 21˚C but you may need it warmer if there are any older people or people with health conditions living in the property.

Remember that it can sometimes be worth putting on an extra layer, like a jumper or slippers to feel comfortable rather than turning up the heat. It is definitely cheaper.

Check your Energy Performance Certificate



The Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for your home includes both an assessment of its current energy efficiency and advice on energy efficiency measures to improve this. You can check your home's EPC at **https://www.gov.uk/find-energy-certificate.** The website also provides a tool to find a local, accredited EPC assessor to produce a certificate if your home does not have a current certificate.

The EPC assessment process is a simple standardised process. If you require more a more detailed assessment you may prefer to contact a PAS 2035 certified contractor (see page 10).

Draught proofing

About 12% of the heat is lost through draughts in an average British home. While it is important to let some fresh air into your homes to reduce condensation and damp, this is best done in a controlled way - like opening a window for a couple of hours every day, even in winter.

Most work to tackle draughts can be done yourself and at relatively low cost, making this a cheap way of making rooms more comfortable, easier to heat and also reduces heating bills and emissions.

How?

Draughts happen where there are unwanted gaps in the construction of your home, and where openings are left uncovered. You'll find draughts in any gaps that lead outside (for example around doors and windows). While it is important to block most of these, be careful in areas that need good ventilation. These include areas where there are open fires or open flues and any rooms where a lot of moisture is produced, such as the kitchen, bathrooms and utility rooms.

Draught-free homes feel comfortable at lower temperatures. This means that by reducing draughts in your home you can turn down your thermostat saving even more on your energy bills. Draught-proofing around windows and doors can save around £20 per year.

LED lighting

LED (Light Emitting Diode) lights are a more efficient form of lighting than fluorescent lights or old fashioned filament bulbs. Switching to LED lights can significantly reduce the electricity you need to light your home. LED lights also typically have a longer lifetime than other types of bulb.

How?

LED bulbs are widely available at hardware stores supermarkets and online. They are a direct replacement for fluorescent or filament bulbs, just make sure to select the correct type (screw or bayonet) and diameter of fitting for the bulb you are replacing. Some dimmer switches can cause flicker with LED lights so you may want to choose an LED bulb that is stated to be suitable for dimmer switches or consult an electrician about changing your switches.

Insulation

Up to a quarter of your heating energy could be lost through an uninsulated loft. Most homes have some loft insulation, but often only 100 mm of mineral wool, rather than the recommended thickness of 270 mm of mineral wool (or equivalent in other materials). Existing insulation can be topped up to bring it to the recommended depth.

Around a third of heat loss in uninsulated homes is through walls. Homes built from the 1930s to the 1980s usually have uninsulated cavity walls. Insulating cavities will reduce heat loss. Older properties tend to have solid walls. These can be insulated by adding insulating cladding either externally or internally.

How?

If your loft is easy to access and has regular joists you may be able insulate it yourself using rolls of mineral wool, available from DIY stores. A first layer is laid between the joists and a second layer laid at right angles to the first. Do not lay insulation over electrical cables supplying showers or sockets unless this has been assessed and signed off by a professional. If your loft is more complex, contact an insulation contractor (see page 10).

An insulation contractor can also install insulation in cavity walls. This is done by drilling holes in the wall and blowing in insulation material. Care needs to be taken to ensure that airbricks and vents are not blocked or sealed when doing this so as to maintain ventilation and keep walls and floors dry.

Solid walls can be insulated either internally or externally. Internal insulation uses rigid insulation boards fitted to the wall or involves building a stud wall insulated with mineral wool. This tends to be slightly cheaper than fitting external insulation, but there is some loss of internal space. External wall insulation is fixed to the outside of a property and covered with render or cladding. An insulation contractor can advise you on options and costs.

For more information on insulation see
https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/energy-at-home/reducing-home-heat-loss/

Improved heating controls

As a minimum your heating should have a time controller, at least one room thermostat (to tell the time controller when the house is warm enough) and (if you have radiators) thermostatic radiator valves which reduce the hot water flow to the radiator when the surrounding air is warm enough. If you do not have these they can be fitted without changing other parts of your heating. Speak to an installer for advice about your options.

Many companies offer smart heating controls that provide additional functionality via internet connection e.g. allowing you to control your heating from a smartphone.

The Energy Saving Trust website has more information on heating controls
https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/thermostats-and-heating-controls

Low carbon heat sources e.g. heat pumps

Air Source Heat Pumps

Air source heat pumps (ASHPs) absorb heat from the outside air to heat your home and hot water. They can still extract heat when air temperatures are as low as -15°C.

Outside air is used to heat a liquid refrigerant. The pump uses electricity to compress the refrigerant to increase its temperature then condenses it back to release stored heat – a bit like a fridge in reverse. ASHPs still work well even when the outside air temperature is very low. They are generally very reliable sources of heat and require very little maintenance.

Air source heat pumps need electricity to run, but because they are extracting renewable heat from the environment, the heat output is greater than the electricity input. This makes them an energy efficient method of heating your home.

Grant funding is available towards the cost of installing ASHPs (see page 7).

Ground Source Heat Pumps

Ground source heat pumps (GSHPs) use buried pipes (either horizontally or in vertical boreholes) to extract heat from the ground. This heat can then be used to heat radiators, underfloor or warm air heating systems and hot water in your home.

Heat from the ground is absorbed at low temperatures into a fluid inside a loop of pipe (a ground loop) buried underground.

The fluid then passes through a compressor that raises it to a higher temperature, which can then heat water for the heating and hot water circuits of the house.

The cooled ground-loop fluid passes back into the ground where it absorbs further energy from the ground in a continuous process as long as heating is required.

Heat pumps have some impact on the environment as they need electricity to run, but the heat they extract from the ground, the air, or water is constantly being renewed naturally.

Grant funding is available towards the cost of installing GSHPs.

Solar panels

Solar panels use the suns energy to generate electricity.

This video from the Energy Saving Trust gives an introduction into how this works.
https://www.youtube.com/watch/?v=BdExvpDzAdA&feature=emb_title

Smart Export Guarantee

Electricity generated from solar panels is of most value to you if you consume it in your home rather than exporting it to the grid.

However, the UK Government ensures that householders can be rewarded for any electricity they do export by requiring energy suppliers to offer a 'Smart Export Guarantee': once the system is installed and they start producing more energy than the household needs, participants receive a payment for every unit they feed into the grid.

You can find information on the energy suppliers offering the best Smart Export Guarantees herer https://www.solarpanelprices.co.uk/articles/solar-panels/best-smart-export-guarantee-tariffs/

Installation

The Energy Saving Trust provides a useful guide on how to install renewable energy systems. This provides helpful tips for finding a reputable installer and getting a quote, but also for checking planning permission and building warrants as well as insurance policies and financial support options.

You can find more information here https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/solar-panels/

Battery storage

Domestic battery energy storage systems are now available. These enable electricity generated, e.g. from a solar PV system, at times when there is low electricity demand in the house, to be stored and then used later when there is more electricity demand. This helps get the most value from domestic renewable electricity generation by ensuring as much generation as possible is utilised to offset demand for purchasing electricity from the grid.

In principle battery storage can also be used to store electricity supplied at cheaper night-time tariffs, for use during the day. However, you would need a substantial differential between your daytime and night-time tariffs to payback the cost of the battery system from this alone. This is why battery storage is most commonly used in combination with renewable electricity generation systems.

To find out more visit https://www.cse.org.uk/advice/renewable-energy/battery-storage

Renewable electricity tariffs

Changing your energy provider can influence your environmental impact on a national scale.

There are many forms of renewable energy available to harness which range from wind, solar and wave power to tidal, biomass and hydroelectric power. All of these green ways of creating electricity are mostly carbon neutral.

Many energy companies now offer tariffs that incorporate renewable options. Ofgem research shows that comparing and switching energy providers can be a great way to save – with annual savings of around £300 available.

How?

As the owner or main tenant of a building or flat you should be able to switch your energy supplier at any time. Speak to your landlord if you're not sure. If you share a tariff with other tenants, why not ask around if the others would like to make the switch too.

Our Cambridgeshire Energy Switch is a great way to switch and save - and they only offer 100% green electricity tariffs. Visit https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/climate-change-energy-and-environment/how-you-can-take-action/home-energy/cambridgeshire-energy-switch

Ofgem offers a comprehensive guide on how to switch your energy supplier.

Visit https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/consumers/household-gas-and-electricity-guide/how-switch-energy-supplier-and-shop-better-deal

What funding is available?

The Boiler Upgrade Scheme

What is it?

A grant for homeowners to replace existing gas or oil boilers with low carbon heating such as Air Source Heat Pumps (5£k grant) or Ground Source Heat Pumps (6£k grant). In limited circumstances grants may be available for replacing an existing gas or oil boiler with a biomass boiler.

Who is eligible?

Homeowners with existing oil or gas boilers. You must have an Energy Performance Certificate with no outstanding recommendations for loft or cavity wall insulation. The grant must be used to completely replace oil and gas boilers at your property.

How do I apply?

Your chosen installer applies for the grant on your behalf and deducts the grant from the amount they charge you for the installation. Installers need to be accredited to the Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS).

You can find a suitable installer via the MCS website https://mcscertified.com/find-an-installer/

Where do I find more information?

The Government have published a leaflet aimed at homeowners about the scheme at **https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1077385/boiler-upgrade-scheme-bus-leaflet-may-2022.pdf**

The scheme is administered by Ofgem. For details about the scheme, primarily aimed at installers, visit **https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/environmental-and-social-schemes/boiler-upgrade-scheme-bus**

VAT relief on Energy Saving Materials

What is it?

The Government removed VAT from energy saving materials being installed in all domestic properties in its 2022 Spring Statement. This will apply for materials installed up until 31st March 2027.

Energy saving materials include insulation, draught proofing, heating controls, Air Source Heat Pumps, Ground Source Heat Pumps, biomass boilers, solar panels, wind turbines and water turbines.

Who is eligible?

Anyone paying to install energy saving materials at a domestic property in Great Britain.

How do I apply?

You do not need to apply, the supplier of your energy saving materials will simply not apply VAT to these materials when you are billed.

Where do I find more information?

Details are set out in VAT Notice 7086 on the Government's website:
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/vat-on-energy-saving-materials-and-heating-equipment-notice-7086

Sustainable Warmth (Local Authority Delivery & Home Upgrade Grant schemes)

What is it?

Grants for lower income households to improve energy efficiency taking a "fabric first" approach, focussing on improving insulation standards first. It can deliver energy saving measures such as:

- Cavity wall insulation
- Loft insulation
- Solid wall insulation
- Draught-proofing
- Air Source and Ground Source Heat Pumps
- Solar PV

The grant can cover 100% of the costs of upgrading owner occupied homes and two thirds of the costs of upgrading privately rented homes, with the landlord contributing the balance. Grant funding cannot be used to bring private rented properties up to mandatory minimum efficiency standards, although it may be used to upgrade beyond such standards.

Maximum grant available depends on the home's current Energy Performance Certificate band, fuel type and ownership.

Who is eligible?

Funding is available for homes with:

- an Energy Performance Certificate rating of D, E, F or G and
- household income of £34,500 or less per annum; or
- a household in receipt of means-tested benefits

How do I apply?

Sustainable Warmth is administered by Local Authorities who have been successful in applying for funding. Cambridgeshire City, District and County Councils have secured grant funding and have contracted Aran Group to deliver assessments and grant funded installations.

Interested Cambridgeshire residents can contact Aran direct on: 0800 5877795 or 01284 812520, sales@araninsulation.co.uk or via Aran's website for more information or to arrange an assessment. Email subject lines should read "5321 – 'your property address' "

Where do I find more information?

The Cambridgeshire Councils' Sustainable Warmth grant funding is being delivered under the Action on Energy brand.

Find out more at: https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/climate-change-energy-and-environment/how-you-can-take-action/home-energy/action-on-energy

Energy Company Obligation (ECO4)

What is it?

An obligation on medium and large energy suppliers to upgrade energy efficiency of low income homes e.g. via the installation of insulation or the upgrade of inefficient heating systems. The fourth round of the obligation (ECO4) will run from 2022 to 2026.

Who is eligible?

Homes must be in receipt of means-tested benefits to be eligible for ECO4 funding.

Owner occupied homes must have a current Energy Performance Certificate rating of D-G. Social housing or privately rented homes must have a current Energy Performance Certificate rating of E-G

How do I apply?

Obligated energy suppliers contract third party installers to deliver energy efficiency upgrades to meet their obligations. Installers may approach households directly. If you are approached you should ask to see their Trustmark accreditation (this is mandatory for all measures delivered under ECO other than connection to District Heating) and registration number.

You can contact any of the obligated energy suppliers (you are not limited to contacting your own energy supplier) direct to ask about ECO funded upgrades.

A list of obligated suppliers and their contact details is provided on Ofgem's website at: https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/eco-supplier-contact-details

Where do I find more information?

The scheme is administered by Ofgem. Details about the scheme are available on their website **https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/environmental-and-social-schemes/energy-company-obligation-eco/support-improving-your-home/faqs-domestic-consumers-and-landlords .**

How do I find a reputable installer?

Trustmark

Trustmark is a Government endorsed quality scheme to provide confidence in the skills of tradespeople across a range of trades. Several Government funding schemes stipulate that works must be conducted by Trustmark approved installers.

You can use their website https://www.trustmark.org.uk/ to search for endorsed installers in your area.

PAS 2030 & 2035

PAS 2035 is an industry standard specification and guidance on retrofitting homes for improved energy efficiency. It includes procedures for assessing appropriate measures to install and required qualifications, roles and responsibilities of installers. PAS 2030 is an accompanying standard focussing on installation and handover of energy efficiency measures. Some Government funding schemes stipulate that works must be conducted by PAS certified installers. You should seek a PAS certified contractor if you want a whole house assessment of the most suitable energy efficiency measures to install.

MCS

MCS (the Microgeneration Certification Scheme) certifies equipment and installers of low carbon energy technologies such as solar PV, Air and Ground Source Heat Pumps etc.

Their website https://mcscertified.com/ allows you to search for certified installers of selected technologies nearest to your area.

Action on Energy

Cambridgeshire Councils are procuring contractors under their “Action on Energy – Cambridgeshire” initiative to deliver domestic energy efficiency upgrades for both grant funded work and able to pay customers.

Solar Together – Cambridgeshire

We are working in partnership with Cambridge City, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils for the second time, on an innovative scheme to offer homeowners high-quality solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, to help deliver our vision of a zero-carbon county. It is a group-buying scheme, which brings Cambridgeshire households together to get high-quality solar panels at a competitive price, helping you through the process and keeping you informed at every stage.

We have partnered with independent experts in group-buying, iChoosr Ltd, to bring this opportunity to Cambridgeshire’s homeowners.

We have already participated in the very successful Autumn 2020 scheme which saw just under 1000 completed installations.

Do you already have solar panels installed? You can also register to have battery storage added to your existing solar panels to maximise the benefits of your system.

Register your interest on the Solar Together website.

Benefits of collective purchasing

Planning permission

Solar PV installations are considered a 'permitted development' and will generally not need planning permission. However, in some cases, such as in Conservation Areas and on Listed Buildings, planning permission may be required. For planning advice please contact your local district council planning department.

Further information is also available from the Planning Portal online at: https://interactive.planningportal.co.uk/

How it works

1. **Registration:** you can register for free and without obligation on the Solar Together website **https://solartogether.co.uk/cambridgeshire/home.**

   To register, you simply provide details about your roof, such as its size and orientation.

2. **Auction:** an 'auction' will be held annually on or around the 15 March where our pre-vetted solar installers will submit bids for the work. The more people that register, the better the deal should be for each household. The installer with the most competitive package will win the auction.

3. **Personal recommendation:** you will then be emailed your personal recommendation based on your registration details. This includes your costs and specifications of your system.

4. **You decide:** the decision is then yours whether you want to accept your recommendation. There is no obligation to continue. You will have until the 13 May to decide and will be invited to an information session.

5. **Installation:** if you accept, the winning installer will contact you to survey your roof and set an installation date. All installations are planned to be completed by the end of October.

Helpdesk support

Telephone and email support are on-hand throughout the whole process, which, together with information sessions, will allow households to make an informed decision in a safe and hassle-free environment.

Find out more

For more information, visit the Solar Together website **https://solartogether.co.uk/cambridgeshire/home**, where you can register for the scheme and get in touch with our helpdesk.

About iChoosr

iChoosr was founded in 2008 and is privately owned by two co-founders. Before it entered the UK energy market in 2012, it focused on group-buying schemes in the Netherlands and Belgium. It now works with community leaders helping households select energy and solar power suppliers. As in the UK, its operations continue to grow across Europe, North America and Japan.

How can I better understand my own carbon footprint?

Carbon footprinting apps & websites

There are a number of apps and websites available to help you estimate your own carbon footprint.

https://www.footprintcalculator.org/ is a website that uses a brief questionnaire on your lifestyle, home and travel to estimate your carbon footprint and ecological footprint in hectares. It does not go into great detail about your home energy consumption.

The World Wildlife Fund has a downloadable app “WWF My Footprint” available from **https://www.wwf.org.uk/myfootprint** , App Store and Google Play. The app uses a (slightly more detailed) questionnaire about your lifestyle, home and travel to estimate your carbon footprint. The results include recommendations for reducing your footprint.

The Impact website **https://impact-tool.org.uk/** allows you to search for the average household carbon footprint of your ward, parish or Local Authority area. All you need to enter is your postcode.

If you want a more specific assessment of the carbon footprint from your home energy use, you can calculate this yourself. This is relatively easy – you’ll need to know your energy usage in kilowatt hours (kWh), or litres for heating oil, which you can find on your energy bills.

Simply multiple consumption for each type of energy you use by the relevant carbon conversion factor and add up the results for all of the energy types you use.

This will tell you the carbon footprint of your energy use in kilograms of CO_2 equivalent ($kgCO_2e$).

Fuel	Carbon conversion factor (kg CO2e per kWh of fuel)
Natural gas	0.18316
Burning oil (kerosene)	0.24677 (per kWh) or 2.54014 (per litre)
LPG (propane)	0.21449 (per kWh) or 1.55709 (per litre)
Coal	0.34462 (per kWh) or 2.88326 (per kg of coal)
Electricity – UK grid average in 2021(this gets lower each year)	0.21233

EXAMPLE calculation

Annual electricity consumption Annual carbon emissions from electricity consumption	1,072 kWh = 1,072 x 0.21233 = 228 kgCO_2e
Annual natural gas consumption	5,353 kWh
Annual carbon emissions from natural gas consumption	= 5,353 x 0.18316 = 980 kgCO_2e
Total annual carbon emissions from energy use	= 228 + 980 = 1,208 kgCO_2e

Where can I go for more advice and information?

Simple Energy Advice

Simple Energy Advice is a Government endorsed website providing advice on home energy efficiency including technologies and available grant funding.

Find out more at: https://www.simpleenergyadvice.org.uk/

Energy Savings Trust

The Energy Saving Trust is an independent organisation providing guidance and advice to homeowners and businesses on improving their energy efficiency and reducing their carbon footprint.

Their website provides a comprehensive range of guidance on domestic energy efficiency measures and renewable energy such as insulation, heating controls, solar PV and heat pumps.

Find out more at: https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/

MCS website

MCS (the Microgeneration Certification Scheme) certifies equipment and installers of low carbon energy technologies such as solar PV, Air and Ground Source Heat Pumps etc. Their website provides information on all of the technologies they certify and how to go about requesting an installation.

Find out more at: https://mcscertified.com/

Action on Energy

Action on Energy is an initiative set up by Cambridge City, Cambridgeshire District and County Councils to support domestic energy efficiency upgrades. The Councils have secured grant funding for upgrades to lower income homes with E to G Energy Performance Certificate ratings and are procuring installers to deliver upgrades on such homes. The Councils' installers will also be available for able to pay customers to use for upgrading their homes.

Find out more at: https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/climate-change-energy-and-environment/how-you-can-take-action/home-energy/action-on-energy

Centre for Sustainable Energy

The Centre for Sustainable Energy are a charity who share advice, knowledge, experience and deliver training on sustainable energy. Their website includes: advice leaflets and videos on insulation, heating controls etc and news updates on energy policy etc. News updates include articles and webinars providing advice to homeowners.

Find out more at: https://www.cse.org.uk/

Ofgem

Ofgem implement Government regulation that applies to gas and electricity suppliers. Their website also includes consumer guidance on switching energy suppliers, getting a smart meter, Government support for vulnerable consumers e.g. Winter Fuel Payment, Cold Weather Payment, Warm Home Discount, and Household Support Fund. Ofgem have also been appointed to administer Energy Company Obligation and Boiler Upgrade Scheme funding for Government.

Find out more at: https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/

Climate Change Committee

The Climate Change Committee is an independent body set up to advise Government on carbon reduction targets for the UK and to report to Parliament on the Government's progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and climate change adaptation.

Their website provides information about the challenge of climate change and policies that have been implemented to address it.

The website also publishes their advice to Government on setting carbon reduction targets ("Carbon Budgets"), their reports to Parliament ("Progress Reports") and research ("Supporting Research") they have commissioned to inform this.

Find out more at: https://www.theccc.org.uk/

Gov.uk

The Government's website includes information on Government energy policies including funding schemes. The Department for Business Energy & Industrial Strategy are responsible for policy on energy and climate change.

Find out more at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-energy-and-industrial-strategy

Pages on specific policies on funding schemes and the proposed ban on installation of new oil boilers are:

https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/phasing-out-fossil-fuel-heating-in-homes-off-the-gas-grid

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-you-may-be-eligible-for-the-boiler-upgrade-scheme-from-april-2022

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-warmth-protecting-vulnerable-households-in-england

https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/design-of-the-energy-company-obligation-eco4-2022-2026

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/vat-on-energy-saving-materials-and-heating-equipment-notice-7086

Visit the link below to find out how you can save money and reduce your carbon footprint **www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/climate-change-energy-and-environment/how-you-can-take-action**