

PRESS RELEASE 15th March 2008

ENLIGHTENED IDEA PUTS TOTNES AT THE FOREFRONT OF UK SUSTAINABLE TOWNS

Driven by Transition Town Totnes and the Totnes & District Chamber of Commerce, local shops and businesses in the high street have been undergoing free lighting audits, and getting expert advice on how to change to energy efficient lights to make real savings. A hotel in Totnes has found it can save over £7,000 a year just by switching to energy efficient bulbs... and the bulbs will pay for themselves within the first year!

Retail businesses use a lot of lighting to display their goods and shop windows to best effect. However this can be very costly for a small business in terms of electricity use. Switching to energy efficient (e-e) bulbs can save up to 80% of this cost. But many retailers are concerned that e-e bulbs don't give the right light, or look as good as the current filament ones. To address this issue, TTT have arranged for Giles Boardman of Plymouth-based Efficient Light, who is an expert in e-e lighting, to visit every business in town and discuss individual needs. He takes along a set of samples so the shop owner can see the effect of different bulbs and deal with any concerns about light quality or aesthetics.

All but one business have said they will definitely or probably act on the advice and achieve the savings which amount to about £1,000 per year on average, with pay back on the new bulbs within 6-9 months. Of course the other saving to be made is with lighting-related carbon emissions, which will also reduce by about 80%. If every business in town signs up for an audit and then acts, significant carbon savings will be delivered with little effort and with major cost savings.

The second campaign underway is looking to reduce the environmental impact of the town overall, by having most Totnes businesses switch to green energy. As well as carbon savings, cost savings are also possible. TTT are asking every organisation to send a copy of their most recent electricity bill to the TTT office at 43 Fore Street. From this the current tariff and contract period can be determined. The large majority of business users are supplied with fossil fuel based electricity. However the cost of green or renewable energy is getting more competitive and in many cases can be cheaper than the current tariff.

This delivers two great outcomes – greater demand for renewable energy leading to increased capacity being built and ultimately, reduced carbon emissions (as the electricity comes from hydro or wind power for example rather than coal) and for some, cheaper energy. The more businesses that join this campaign the better, as then TTT can go to the green energy suppliers direct and look for even better tariffs based on a bulk switch over. So far it appears most businesses are keen to switch to green if the costs don't increase – in fact cost savings appear possible for about half of the 20 organisations who have submitted invoices so far.

Paul Wesley, chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, is delighted with the results. "This is a great opportunity for us to put Totnes firmly on the map as leading the way to a sustainable town centre. This joint project clearly shows the value that the Chamber can add to the town's businesses. When we work together in this way it is amazing what we can achieve, and then we also benefit from the increased publicity about the town. It's fantastic to have some positive news to broadcast".

Fiona Ward of TTT Business Projects says "both of these projects show how easy it can be for companies to save money, while also having a significant effect on their carbon emissions. People often wonder what they can do to help address the issue of climate change – this is a perfect example and we are here to help. Any business that wants to be involved can call me on

07922 165 564 or email me at FionaWardTTT@googlemail.com and we'll do the leg work for you."

Future projects for business include energy efficiency audits and action plans, trade waste recycling, business resource exchanges and plastic bag minimisation as well as rollout of the Oil Vulnerability Auditing service. TTT also plans a major campaign to help householders switch to green energy.

ENDS

Notes for Editors

1. For further information on the campaigns please contact Fiona Ward on 07922 165 564 or FionaWardTTT@googlemail.com
2. Transition Town Totnes is a community initiative that is developing an Energy Descent Plan for Totnes to mitigate the impact of Peak Oil and Climate Change. Further information can be found at www.transitiontowns.org/totnes.
3. For further information on Totnes & District Chamber of Commerce please contact Paul Wesley on 01803 866 406 or thepaulwesley@btinternet.com
4. For Giles Boardman please call 0800 043 8893 or email him at giles@efficientlight.co.uk Website is www.efficientlight.co.uk.