

Securing a bright future for all

With the launch of its new skills academy, Green Home Systems aim to futureproof employees' skillsets and continue lifting households out of fuel poverty, writes Ann Wallace

A GROWING awareness of climate change and increased demand from householders for zero carbon living are the drivers behind a Scottish firm's ambitious plans for the future.

Green Home Systems, which is based in Ayrshire, is making its mission clear with the launch of a new skills academy and a strengthened commitment to developing its Whole House Retrofit approach to energy efficiency.

Managing Director Steven Easton explains: "There are houses still being built today which will require upgrading to carbon net zero, because current building standards are not strong enough."

"For example, there are properties being built with gas boilers inside them – and within 10 to 20 years, I would be very surprised if gas boilers were being used anywhere."

"A Whole House Retrofit looks at the property as a complete project, rather than simply attending a bit of wall insulation there."

He adds: "It is the way our industry is heading, and it is what customers want."

This approach, points out Mr Easton, allows for a "mapped out journey" for each property. "There is no point, for example, in putting in a really efficient heating system if the building has no insulation," he explains.

"Our approach allows us to map out a journey for each property, establishing a series of objectives and timescales, taking into account a whole range of factors such as the age of the property and the materi-



als used to build it. Very few companies in Scotland can do this. "Getting that wrong can cause not only damage to the property, but ill-health to the householder, so it's important to develop a strategy which ensures everything happens at the right time, in the right order."

Mr Easton founded Green Home Systems with his brother Peter in 2014. The company now employs 25 staff and 25 contractors and has recently moved into new premises in Irvine in North Ayrshire.

In the last six years, the firm has grown rapidly, installing more than 10,000 energy efficiency measures across the country, lifting 7000 homes out of fuel poverty and preventing 500,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions.

"We are proud of what we have achieved in a relatively short space of time," says Mr Easton. "As energy efficiency specialists, our mission is to eradicate fuel poverty and end climate change."

"We have expanded every year since setting up the business, in terms of staff numbers, geographical reach and the range of products and services we offer."

"We are now gearing up for a significant period of further growth on the back of heightened awareness of the green

economy and a rising demand for our services."

The firm has recently expanded its senior management team, with Alastair Macphie and Steven Porch joining in the roles of Financial Director and Operations Director respectively.



Green Home Systems is an accredited installer and assessor of insulation requirements

The Ayrshire-based firm can help householders generate their own energy to cut utility bills

“The new Academy will offer engineers the chance to upskill and adapt to changing technologies

and will play a key role as we continue to expand the business across the UK," says Mr Easton. The lack of specialist contractors in a rapidly changing industry is a challenge facing energy efficiency specialists across the country, he agrees.

"We hope our new Green Home Systems Skills Academy will offer existing heating engineers the chance to upskill and adapt to changing technologies, while also providing great opportunities for young people in the emerging green economy."

"We aim to develop apprenticeship opportunities, providing raw talent with a route into renewable energy, in addition to supporting experienced staff willing to forge new career paths."

He adds: "This is a real passion project for us, and we are very keen to work with our local authority to help promote and develop opportunities within the green economy here in Ayrshire."

Green Home Systems works closely with private and social landlords to help them meet their energy efficiency obligations, installing measures for both small and large-scale landlords, from those with just a single property to more complex organisations with extensive portfolios.

The company is also keen to engage with families living in fuel poverty.

It is estimated that around 6.9 million households across the UK live in fuel poverty and a total of 20.7 million homes fall below energy efficiency standards.

Rising domestic energy costs cause particular problems for health and wellbeing, particularly of the elderly, with many unable to afford to put their heating on. It is an increasing problem for younger people and families, too, who struggle to pay the rising costs of utility bills.

"By installing adequate levels of insulation and upgrading heating systems energy efficiency of the nation's housing stock can be improved and the cost of utility bills can be reduced, lifting households out of fuel poverty," explains Mr Easton.

"As an accredited installer and assessor we are able to access grant funding of up to 100% of the total cost, which means that not only will people save money with a more energy efficient home, they may not have to pay for the upgrade."

He adds: "Making the decision to change insulation, upgrade a heating system and more can be a daunting process, and our customers put a lot of trust in us."

"We have a responsibility to them, but also to the climate and to the country. Fuel poverty and climate change go hand in hand." ■

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