

GREEN

Community pilot scheme to recession-proof their homes and help do their bit for the environment



UNIQUE: The initiative has been a huge success so far

SICK of shivering your way through a draughty house every winter? Is your lagging jacket well past its sell-by date? Are you tired of forking out for huge home-heating bills?

Now's your chance to get smart – and save some cash – with the help of others living in your community.

A unique new scheme is offering householders the opportunity to recession-proof their homes – and get some money



BY ESTHER MCCARTHY

back from the State – with a little help from their neighbours.

The body is giving communities the chance to pool their resources and buying power in a bid to make their homes warmer, more comfortable and less expensive to run.

With the downturn in the property market increasing, homeowners are looking at how they can make their castles more cosy, without the hassle involved in finding



THE SMART CHOICE: Workers fit solar panels to an eco-friendly house

the right contractors.

And a new pilot scheme has been introduced in the Dublin suburbs of Drumcondra and Glasnevin which, if successful, could soon go countrywide.

Energy Smart Community aims to set up a mini co-op between homeowners and their neighbours, enabling them to use people power to secure the best deals in making their homes more energy efficient.

Independent

The independent body aims to be a one-stop shop which gives advice on how to keep the elements at bay, source the best contractors and supplies for the work and help homeowners get the

grants they're entitled to from the State. It even works with local Credit Unions to source discounted loans for the work needed.

The scheme is the brainchild of Codema, Dublin's Energy Agency, which has been working with the City's Council for the past decade.

The organisation is committed to improving the energy efficiency of Dublin homes and workplaces and acts as energy advisor to the local authorities and the private sector.

According to Suzanne Morgan of Codema, IDRA (Iona and District Residents Association) invited Codema to attend their AGM and as a result found that this was the ideal area to kick-off the scheme – which it's hoped will be expanded

MAKING YOUR HOME MORE ENERGY SMART

WARM ROOM: An energy-saving starter pack. It lets you heat by design a little, but now

expect to get 30 per cent of this back through grant repayments. THE WARM HOME: An ideal

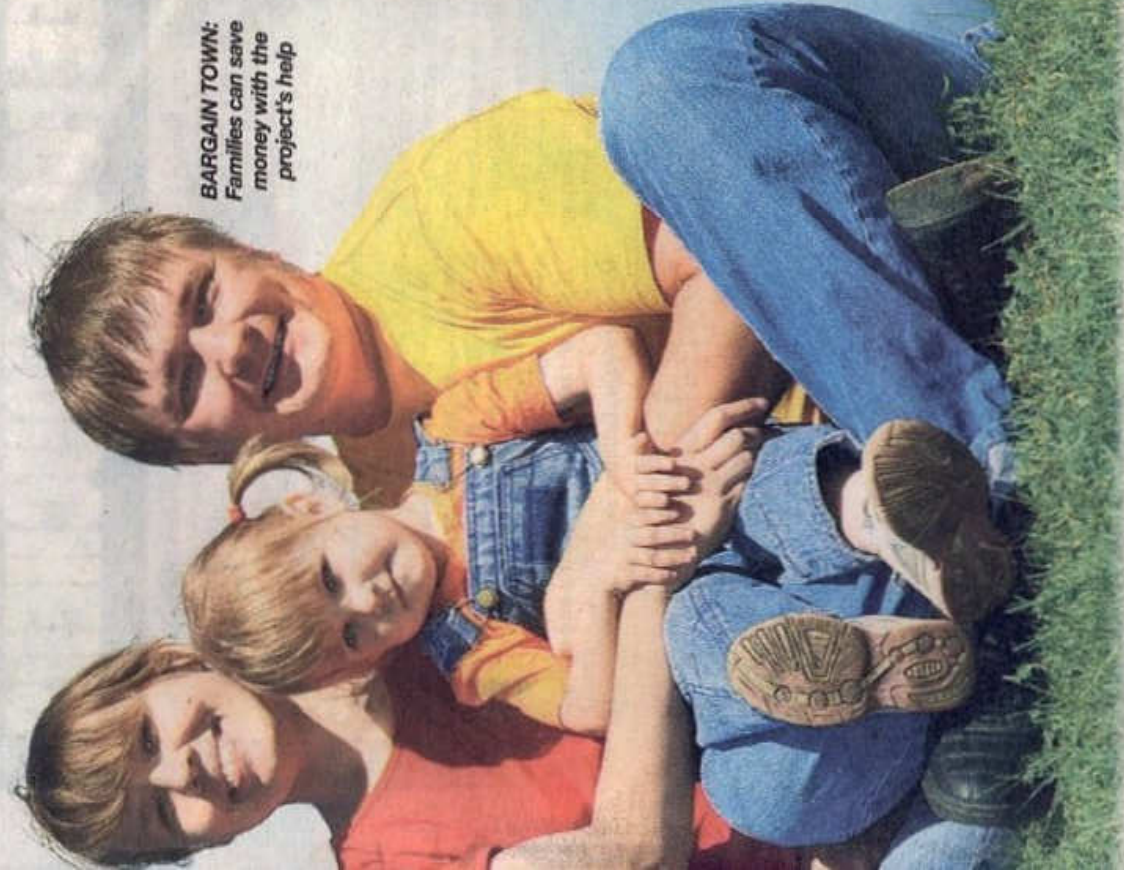
THE ENERGY SMART HOUSE: This gives homeowners the chance to waste as

HOUSES

BARGAIN TOWN:
Families can save
money with the
project's help

THE SIX STEPS TO A WORKING SCHEME

- 1 The organisation helps you start an energy smart cluster in your area.
- 2 You get an assessment and a building energy rating (BER) for your home. Recent studies showed that over 60 per cent of Irish houses would benefit considerably from energy-efficient renovation.
- 3 You choose from a list of improvements specific to your home.
- 4 You decide what to do and the organisation puts the combined jobs out to public tender.
- 5 You apply for the grant and sign a contract with the winning contractor.
- 6 Coderna assesses the quality of the work and helps with finalising grants.



in the coming months.

"There is a very strong sense of community in that area and the majority of people are home owners", she explained.

She added that the people-power element of the scheme enables individuals to take on work by giving them the know-how to go about it.

"The Energy Smart Community is completely independent of all contractors and suppliers, so our only interest is in getting the best price possible for you through a competitive group tender process. We act as facilitators and remove the hassle for the homeowner."

Reductions

Teaming up with your neighbours, she said, can save as much as 45 per cent off the total cost involved – not to mention the long-term reductions in energy bills.

Environmental

owners.

He has previously worked in forward-thinking environmental projects such as Ireland's first eco-village in Cloughjordan, in Co. Tipperary.

"I feel that people are interested in making their homes more energy efficient, but there's a huge lack of knowledge in how to go about it," he said.

"What we want to do is take the hassle out of trying to do it on your own and the power of bulk purchasing back into the customers' hands. There are grants available and over a number of years, the pay-back for homeowners in reduced energy bills is huge.

"It's also a way of helping to galvanise a community spirit and we've been very encouraged by the reaction of homeowners in

Drumcondra."

A home energy saving information evening will

