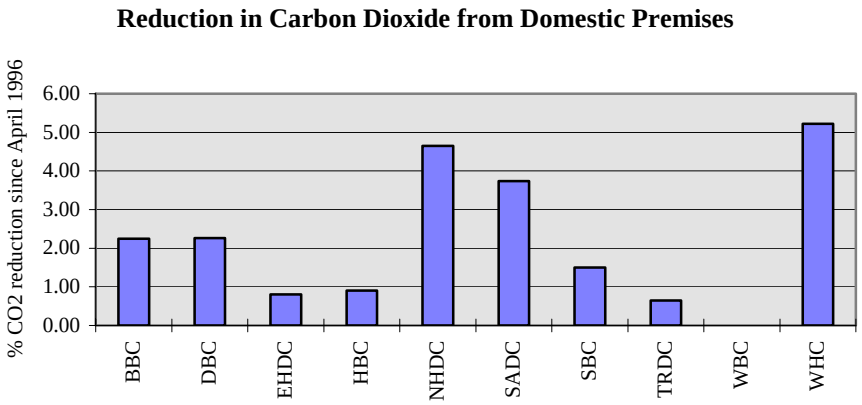
ENERGY

Introduction

The Government have indicated a strong and continuing commitment to reducing the greenhouse gases which contribute to Global Warming and lead to destruction of habitats. In order to reduce these emissions it is necessary to cut down on the burning of fossil fuels. This can be done in two main ways: increasing energy efficiency and decreasing the use of non renewable fuels. The thrust of legislation so far is to reduce energy by raising awareness rather than setting standards.

Indicator 1: Energy Efficiency in Homes - reduction in $C0_2$ emissions



For those authorities showing a nil return no data was available at the time of publication

In 1996 the Home Energy Conservation Act came into force. Its purpose was to encourage energy efficiency improvements in dwellings, hence reducing energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions. It set a target of 30% reduction in $C0_2$ emissions from dwellings over the following ten years and gave local councils a specific role in achieving this.

All district and unitary councils were required to draw up a plan stating their local target and setting out how they planned to achieve it. All the district councils in Hertfordshire have submitted their plans and have started taking action to carry them out. Many of the Hertfordshire councils had already started to take action by making energy efficiency improvements in their own houses. Works included increasing loft insulation, insulating cavity walls, installing energy-efficient boilers, and fitting double glazing.

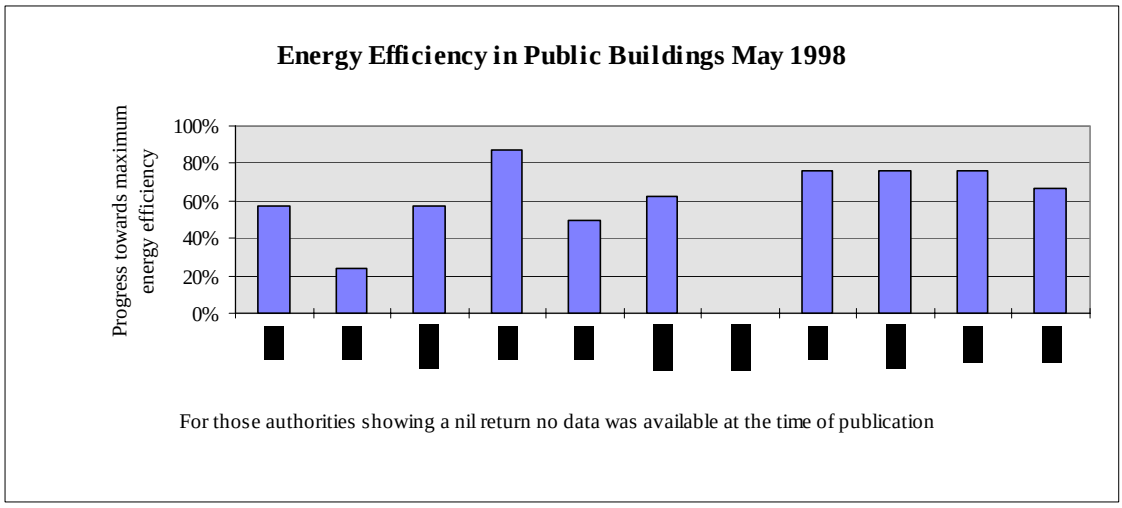
Councils submitted their second progress reports to the Government in August as required by the legislation. All reports showed that energy conservation work had been started and that progress on reducing $C0_2$ emissions had been made by all councils where data was available.

Many councils are starting to appreciate that some households prefer to take energy efficiency improvements to increase comfort rather than savings. Improvements in CO_2 emissions are also limited by the amount of houses without insulation. When these have all been insulated, progress towards the CO_2 reduction targets will slow, and there may be doubts as to whether targets are achievable. Work continues with most councils to provide energy efficiency advice to residents, various schemes are being run to assist energy saving measures in dwellings and publicity initiatives are being taken to spread the energy efficiency message.

Indicator 2: Energy Efficiency in Public Buildings.

A checklist of good practice for maximising energy efficiency in public buildings has been agreed by Hertfordshire Environmental Forum member authorities. This checklist includes a wide range of considerations such as:
Does the Council have an energy conservation strategy approved by members?
Is there a dedicated budget for energy conservation in homes?

The scoring indicates the level of progress towards maximising energy efficiency. It is hoped that this indicator may be developed to include actual reductions in $C0_2$ emissions.



Local authorities are responsible for a wide range of buildings including offices, workshops, depots, public halls, swimming pools, sports pavilions and leisure centres and the total energy usage of such buildings is very significant.

In view of this local authorities in Hertfordshire are closely examining energy used in all these buildings and means of reducing it. Leisure facilities are amongst the most energy intensive of council services and three authorities have already used modern technology to achieve savings:

- Three Rivers District Council installed a 76 Kilowatt combined heat and power (CHP) unit in its Sir James Altham swimming pool in South Oxley in 1992. CHP uses an engine which fires natural gas to generate electricity whilst recovering the heat for on-site usage
- There are two CHPs in North Hertfordshire: a 110 kW unit at Hitchin Swim Centre and a 98 kW unit at Letchworth Leisure Centre. The Leisure Centre installation also uses heat from the engine to operate a refrigerator cooling the fitness suite, cafeteria, reception area and bar.
- There is also a CHP unit at Grundy Park Swimming Pool/Leisure Centre in Cheshunt which is approximately 80 kW.

There is also a renewable energy site in Ware with a capacity of 3.88MW producing energy from sewage gas.

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