

SERVE Social Case Study for Retrofitted Homes

Case Study no.6

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Tipperary Energy Agency
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1. Case study basic information

The name of the householder in case study no.6 is Seamus O'Shea; he lives with his wife in a bungalow in a busy town in North Tipperary. The house is situated on a private site on one of the busy main roads into the town. The householder has been living here since 1970 and he feels that he will stay here for the foreseeable future.

“It’s absolutely brilliant ... this is an old house ... we didn’t realise what could be done to conserve the heat”.



The house was approximately twenty years old at the time of purchase; which estimates that it was built in the 1950's. Upon purchase in 1970, the windows were replaced and an extension was added, currently the area of the house is approximately 156m².

2. Situation of household before and after retrofitting

The O'Shea household had the following measures added to their home:

- Heating controls
- High efficiency boiler
- High efficiency cylinder
- Attic insulation

A wood burning stove was also installed but this was not done under the grant scheme. This stove replaced one of two open fires in the house; one still remains in the sitting room.

Energy consumption and costs comparison

Prior to the retrofit the house was predominantly heated by the oil central heating. Coal, briquettes and timber were burned in the open fires. The old oil burner was situated in a garage quite a distance from the house. The householder is very impressed with the new high efficiency boiler, which is now set up against the exterior wall of the house.

“The problem was we were heating the yard as well ... now it heats quicker, it's more efficient and the rads are very hot”.

The householder estimates that there is a 50% saving in the energy bills. Coal is no longer purchased and only a small amount of oil. Timber is sourced locally and stored in bulk for burning in the stove. Briquettes are still used but at a minimum, only to start the fire and not as a mode of fuel.

Quality of living-comparison

The house is quite old and was cold before the retrofit; bedrooms down the hall, away from the main heated area of the house, were always cold and now it is so much warmer and cosier.

“The farthest room from the central heating ... now when you go into it ... it’s unbelievable, there’s no real cold in it ... I can’t get over the boiler, it’s instant heat nearly”.

Other aspects

Combined with the poor insulation, and inefficient boiler, there was an issue with the windows. The householder was concerned that the beading at the window sills had contracted, it was recommended that the windows be replaced. However, once the householder was getting the SERVE grant, he was told it was possible to fix this problem, and the existing windows remain.

The householder would consider putting in solar panels at a later date but he feels at the moment he would have to do further research.



“I would think that it is a waste of good money and extravagant to take out those big windows at our age”.

3. Main reasons/motivations for household retrofitting

The householder first heard about the SERVE project when it was mentioned briefly at an active retirement meeting. He then looked up the information on the internet and contacted North Tipperary Co. Council. He certainly feels there was ample information available through the county council, and found the staff member extremely helpful at the beginning, when he knew very little about the project.

The householder feels that it was both the cold and the rise in energy consumption costs that led him to apply to SERVE. It was costing too much to heat the house and the amount of oil needed, had already led the householder to decide to upgrade the boiler. Availing of the grant allowed the householder to add the additional measures to the house.

Additionally, the fact that all tradesmen had to be registered under the SERVE project was a very important factor in this householder's decision to retrofit. Having had experience before with poor workmanship and difficulty with getting contractors to complete jobs, he was very impressed with the fact that only registered tradesmen could do the work under SERVE.

“The register of the tradesmen was a selling point for me ... it sort of guaranteed the work ... it took the onus off me”.

Now that there is a wood burning stove the householder feels that it is important environmentally because he is no longer reliant on oil. In fact the stove is used to heat an old large kettle, and the hot water is used to wash up during the day.

The householder is a supporter of the local economy, having worked in business for years in this town, he realises the importance of keeping jobs going in the town, provided the work is good of quality.

4. Main barriers/problems encountered

Financial problems

The householder had no difficulty in financing the work for the retrofit. Although he would recommend the SERVE process he does feel the amount of paperwork can be daunting for some.

“It gave you a great deal of confidence about your house ... you knew you were doing your bit for keeping it warm and keeping down expenses”.

Technical problems

There were no technical problems in the installation of measures in this house. The householder feels this is due to the quality of the workmanship by the registered tradesman under SERVE. There was a small issue with the heating controls, but the contractor came and fixed it straight away.

Other

There were no other problems encountered by this householder during the retrofit.

5. Overall satisfaction with installed measures

Subsidies

The householder in this case study was very satisfied with the grants received through SERVE. He considers it fortunate that he had not already upgraded the boiler before he heard about the project. The



grant allowed him to upgrade the house to a much higher standard than would have been possible otherwise.

The process of applying for and receiving the grant was a relatively smooth one. The householder did find there was a good deal of paperwork, but he dealt with it well.

“Take it bit by bit and line by line ... you find out it all works out very easily”.

Technical issues

The householder finds all the new measures installed in the house are working perfectly. The efficiency of the boiler is extremely satisfying. The old radiators were kept and although they take a little while to heat up, they hold the heat extremely well. Now the heating only needs to be turned on for an hour or two in the morning, and the stove is lit in the evening, that's all that is needed to keep the house warm. The householder finds the heating controls very useful and efficient.

“You can have the radiators on without the hot water ... it's more efficient than turning it all on together”.

Quality

The work involved in this retrofit was performed to a very high standard. The householder would recommend all the tradesmen involved. He feels high quality was due to the fact that all those involved in the retrofit had to be registered with SERVE. This gave the householder great ease and confidence in the process and has certainly proved fruitful.

“I never had to make a call because a tradesman didn't turn up ... ever”.

Value for money

The value of the house has certainly increased since the retrofit; the householder feels strongly that the new BER is a very important piece of paper.

“If we wanted to sell in the morning we could”.

6. Conclusion

The householder in case study no.6 lives with his wife in a private bungalow in a busy town in North Tipperary. He is extremely satisfied with all the measures installed in his house through the SERVE project. The house is approximately sixty years old and is now a very warm and comfortable home. The householders' decision to apply to SERVE was initially based on the fact that work needed to be done to the house and as a result of the grants available it was possible to do more work than anticipated. This householder found the

quality of work, the value for money, and overall experience of engaging in SERVE to be excellent.

