

NOT EASY AS 123: BRITS BAFFLED WHEN IT COMES TO THE CARBON FOOTPRINT OF THEIR HOME

- **Eight in ten don't know energy rating of home and 40% clueless over EPC ratings, poll reveals**
- **Despite growing eco-agenda, more than half of Brits aren't planning on making homes greener**
- **Nationwide urges government to incentivise people to make enhancements to homes as poll reveals close to half of people would make changes if there was a financial benefit for them**
- **Nationwide Building Society pledges up to £1bn in new green mortgage lending initiative**

As the green agenda gathers pace, more than eight in ten Brits are clueless over the energy rating of their home, according to a new poll from Nationwide Building Society.

Some 82 per cent of people in the UK have no idea how green their home is, or isn't, while over two in five (44%) say they didn't know what an EPC rating – Energy Performance Certificate – is, despite the energy efficiency rating having been in place for 13 years.

The research, which polled 2,000 British adults, also shows that while more than half (54%) of Brits aren't planning to make any green improvements to their homes in the next year, 47 per cent would be more likely to do so if they were offered incentives by the government.

Nationwide, which believes incentivisation is the most effective way to help people make their homes greener, has pledged to make £1 billion available in new mortgages, offering preferential rates for EPC A-rated homes and cheaper loans for green home improvements. This is why Nationwide is asking the government to review council tax so that it offers incentives for greener homes.

As the government announced its New Homes Ombudsman to improve the quality of housing coming to market, Nationwide is also calling for an adaptation and extension to the outgoing Help to Buy¹ scheme, so that it encourages developers to build more sustainable homes with higher EPC ratings. The Society is pushing for a new 'Help to Green' scheme to replace Help to Buy from 2023, as it believes this would encourage developers to build more energy-efficient homes due to demand from buyers receiving additional support.

Nationwide hopes that combined efforts will go some way towards driving down emissions, with 15 per cent of the UK's carbon emissions coming from the UK's homes and the energy they use.

The research also found that despite the increased interest in sustainability, around half (49%) of Brits aren't worried about the impact of their personal carbon footprint. Most haven't yet made significant purchases to change to their lifestyle, with 98 per cent of drivers not currently driving electric cars.

However, despite a lack of concern around individual impact, many are taking smaller steps to make a difference. These include:

- Three quarters (75%) having switched to energy-efficient light bulbs
- Almost two thirds (65%) having loft insulation
- 44 per cent having electric showers

Bolder moves to reduce the carbon footprint of houses is still a long way off though, with just two per cent saying their homes use air source heat pumps for energy and just seven per cent having solar panels.

Joe Garner, Nationwide Building Society's Chief Executive, said: "Our social purpose is to help people into a place fit to call home, but it's equally important that we also look at how homes contribute towards emissions as part of the bigger picture.

"By growing our understanding of our individual impact, we can start to make a positive difference. However, as our research shows, real change will only be achieved if there is incentivisation. This is why on behalf of our members we are calling for government, housebuilders and lenders to work together to make a significant contribution towards achieving a net-zero carbon footprint. Our suggested reforms are about creating meaningful incentives for people to green their homes and that starts with an understanding of their EPC rating."

Notes to editor

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc.

Total sample size was 2,198 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 5th - 6th February 2020. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

Nationwide has more than 1.5 million homes on its mortgage balance sheet and announced earlier this month it will make £1 billion available for borrowers to reduce the carbon footprint of their homes, which was welcomed by The Green Finance Institute.

The £1 billion will be available to kickstart green home improvements and retrofitting by offering members:

- A new range of green mortgages at preferential rates if buying a new-build EPC A-rated home; and
- Preferential rates, starting from 1% for the first two years, when borrowing up to £25,000 – to kickstart green home improvements and retrofitting.

Footnotes

1 Help to Buy is the name of a government programme in the United Kingdom that aims to help first time buyers, and those looking to move home, purchase residential property.