

UNDERSTANDING HOME RENOVATION DECISIONS - A Research Project -

Background to Our Research

Energy efficient renovations can lower energy bills, improve comfort by reducing drafts, and even increase a home's value. So why do homeowners prefer to spend their money on a new kitchen, redecorating, or a DIY project? There are many good reasons. Some homeowners may just not be aware of the potential for efficiency improvements. Others may be put off by the costs or the hassle. Efficiency is also largely invisible. Upgrading a boiler doesn't earn admiring approval from friends. Renovating for energy efficiency might improve domestic comfort and suggest thrift, but does it also evoke style or entertainment? Ultimately, homes say a lot about their occupants. People are different; so too are their homes.



The Aims of Our Research

We want to understand the decisions homeowners make to renovate their homes. We're interested in energy efficiency, but in all other kinds of renovation too. Here are some of the questions we're trying to answer: Why do some homeowners renovate annually and others never do? What triggers their decisions? How do renovations relate to the routines and identities of a household? We hope our research will help government design policies to encourage energy saving, and businesses offer better services to homeowners.

How We're Doing Our Research

Only homeowners know why they renovate. We're going to talk to all sorts of homeowners – those planning renovations, those who have completed renovations, and those who have no interest at all in renovating. We'll arrange to visit people at home to carry out in-depth interviews. We'll ask a large number of homeowners to

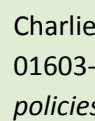
complete a survey on their attitudes and actions on renovating. We're also planning a type of experiment in which homeowners will tell us which of a series of hypothetical renovation stories they prefer.

Who We Are

We are a team of researchers at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, Norfolk. Our project on 'understanding home renovation decisions' runs from Oct 2011 to Sep 2013, and is funded by the UK Energy Research Centre. For further information about the project, please do get in touch by e-mail or phone:



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Our Research Partners: B&Q, and the Low Carbon Innovation Centre



B&Q and the Low Carbon Innovation Centre (LCIC) are our project partners.

-- B&Q are the UK's largest home improvement retailer and carry out thousands of home renovations each year. B&Q have also been trialling new ways of financing and encouraging energy efficient renovations. Their expertise and experience is a major asset for our research.

-- LCIC is based at the University of East Anglia and has worked extensively with local businesses and councils on energy efficiency and housing.



Our Research & the Green Deal

The Green Deal will be introduced in autumn 2012 to allow third parties to finance energy efficient renovations and homeowners to pay back the costs through a charge on their energy bills. The Green Deal has raised lots of interest among both existing and new potential providers of energy saving products and services. We hope our research will generate some useful insights about homeowners' renovation decisions which service providers can apply and build on. But we don't wish to over-promise. We are not evaluating the Green Deal, nor will our project run long enough for us to observe its enduring effects. Rather, we see the Green Deal as a natural experiment which will allow us to compare what homeowners say and do before its introduction, and immediately afterwards. Our initial sense is that the Green Deal may address specific factors which influence renovation decisions, like upfront costs and quality assurance. But our research emphasises broader questions about how people feel and think about their homes, physically, socially, and symbolically. The Green Deal is less likely to affect these broader conditions of renovating.

Interested in Our Research? Please Get Involved!

We welcome the opportunity to learn from your expertise. There is a wealth of experience and insight into home renovation decisions among service providers, both private and public. We do not want to reinvent any wheels. Please share your thoughts with us. You'll find our contact details overleaf. Here's some specific ways you can get involved:

anytime > Let us know who you are. We'll add you to our database of stakeholders. You'll then receive periodic updates of our research and any findings. We'll also invite you to any stakeholder events at which we'll present and discuss our findings.

anytime > Tell us which reports or studies you think we should read. Or just add your thoughts by e-mail or phone. We welcome any insights you may have into home renovation decisions.

spring 2012 > Provide input into our mapping / modelling of homeowners' renovation decisions. We're aiming to capture all the key variables and relationships in a statistical model which we'll then test using a large scale choice experiment later in 2012.

spring 2013 > Provide input into our market simulator tool which we'll build once our modelling work is complete. This will then allow service providers to test the effect of different ways for delivering energy efficient renovations. We want to make sure this tool is both useful and realistic.

summer 2013 > Come to our one-day conference workshop in London at which we'll share and discuss our research findings. We're sure it will be lively, and hopefully also provocative.

