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Leeds City Council is a first-prize winner in world's leading green energy awards

Leeds City Council was tonight awarded a first prize in the world's leading green energy awards in recognition of its ground-breaking Fuelsavers programme that has significantly reduced fuel poverty and CO₂ emissions by rolling out energy efficiency to its housing stock.

The Award was presented to Leeds City Council tonight at the Ashden Awards ceremony at the Royal Geographical Society in London alongside three other UK winners. Handing out the awards, Sir David King, former chief scientific advisor to the government, said: "I've had my spirits raised by what I've seen here at the Ashden Awards. Climate change is the biggest challenge we have ever had to face. We need individual actions like these."

The Ashden Awards is a UK-based charity that works to increase the use of local sustainable energy worldwide. They find, reward, and publicise the work of leading sustainable energy programmes working in the UK and across the developing world.

Leeds City Council, in Yorkshire is the second largest local authority in the UK, with a long track record in addressing fuel poverty and promoting sustainable energy. The Fuelsavers programme has improved the energy efficiency of Leeds' housing by over 21 per cent since 1996 and saves around 88,000 tonnes of CO₂ a year. It helps 25,000 households annually through insulation, improved heating and glazing upgrades. A new programme provides home energy assessment visits to 32,000 homes targeting the poorest wards in the city. The award was given 'for a sustained commitment to energy efficiency which has significantly reduced fuel poverty and cut carbon emissions'.

On receiving the £30,000 prize, Alan Jones, manager of the Leeds Fuelsavers team, said: "I would like to thank my team for the hard work and dedication they have put in to delivering the Fuelsavers programme, establishing the right procedures and processes over many years. This is the bedrock that has led Leeds to assist many thousands of households to achieve affordable warmth."

Arun District Council, second prize winner, has upgraded 99 per cent of its social housing stock with insulation and double glazing, despite a limited budget for sustainable energy work. Staff in the authority's offices have used posters, quizzes, car pools and office bikes to reduce energy use. [See case study: http://www.ashdenawards.org/files/reports/arun_district_council_case_study_2008.pdf]

The other three UK winners were: Cornwall-based **Kensa Engineering Ltd** – designing DIY kits for installing heat pumps; London charity **Global Action Plan** – training workplace teams to get energy-saving messages across to over 86,000 employees; and **Ringmer Community College** – a secondary school where pupils led a gamut of energy saving initiatives to support the installation of solar panels and a wind turbine.

Other second prizes were awarded to:

Business: Dulas, Mid-Wales, an employee-owned company pioneering renewable energy technology for over 25 years. They design and install small hydro-power schemes, solar photovoltaic systems, wind turbines, and wood-fired heating. They have also designed and sold a life-saving solar-powered refrigerator for storing vaccines in developing countries.

Charity and Community: Energy Agency, South Ayrshire, who used part of the profits from a wind farm to help those on low income in rural areas to draught-proof and insulate their homes – and help reduce crippling winter fuel bills.

Sandhills Primary School, Oxfordshire, used a pupils' watchdog energy team to help the school caretaker minimise energy consumption for heat and light. Pupils organised competitions and they helped raise funds for the wind turbine that is going to supply up to a quarter of the school's electricity needs.

HRH The Prince of Wales, Patron of The Ashden Awards, personally congratulated the winners at a separate meeting. A Clarence House spokesperson said: "The Prince of Wales was deeply encouraged to learn of the solutions demonstrated by the Ashden Awards that can reduce our dependency on a carbon economy. His Royal Highness was particularly impressed by the local sustainable energy initiatives recognised and promoted by the Awards, which not only meet the needs of communities, but tackle climate change and further sustainable development."

Sarah Butler-Sloss, Executive Chair of the Awards said: "Leeds has stepped up to the huge challenge facing large city authorities in helping those in greatest need. Unfortunately with the growing fuel shortages, fuel poverty is set to increase so getting energy saving messages out to the public and offering affordable energy efficiency will become increasingly important."

Currently around 40 percent of the UK's carbon dioxide emissions come from heating, lighting and powering buildings and around 4.5 million people are living in fuel poverty, a figure that is growing.

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For further information on the 2008 Ashden Awards UK winners and finalists (including case studies), contact:

Monica M Hicks T: 020 84 59 60 12 m: 077 59 51 96 97 email: monica.hicks@ashdenawards.org
or Juliet Heller T: 01621 86 80 83 m: 079 46 61 61 50 Juliet.heller@ashdenawards.org

Download online photos:

Awards ceremony: http://www.ashdenawards.org/winners_2008_photos

Winners with HRH The Prince of Wales http://www.ashdenawards.org/winners_HRH_2008

International projects: <http://www.ashdenawards.org/photos>.

Download broadcast quality film footage of projects and the Awards ceremony:

http://www.ashdenawards.org/broadcast_films

NOTES TO EDITORS

- 1 The Ashden Awards are a UK-based charity that work to increase the use of local sustainable energy worldwide. They find, reward, and publicise the work of leading sustainable energy programmes working in the UK and across the developing world. For further information, including details on past winners, funders and supporters go to: www.ashdenawards.org The 2008 winners were announced at the Ashden Awards at 7pm on Thursday 19 June at the Royal Geographical Society, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7, hosted by Anna Ford and addressed by Sir David King and Wangari Maathai.
- 2 First prize winners receive £30,000 and second prize winners receive £15,000 to expand their sustainable energy programmes. The School prizes are £15,000 and £5,000.
- 3 Project summaries and case studies are available from the Ashden Awards Press Office. Photographs for each project are available on the Ashden Awards website, see: http://www.ashdenawards.org/media/uk_photos/2008
- 4 The international winners from Brazil, China, Ethiopia, India, Tanzania, and Uganda are in the UK for the ceremony. To interview projects please contact international press officer: Ilana Cravitz tel: + 44 (0) 20 89 85 37 24 mob: + 44 (0)78 25 51 08 81 ilana.cravitz@ashdenawards.org Press release on the international winners is at: http://www.ashdenawards.org/media/international_winners_2008
- 5 Entries for the 2009 Ashden Awards opened on 19 June 2008. Initially, expressions of interest should be lodged by 21 October 2008 for UK Awards, 28 October 2008 for International Awards and 2 December 2008 for UK Schools Award.