



# Environmental Audit Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP  
Minister of State  
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy  
1 Victoria Street  
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By email

11 December 2020

## **Energy efficiency of existing homes: Feedback from our survey on the Green Homes Grant**

Dear Kwasi,

Thank you for appearing before the Committee at our hearing on energy efficiency in existing homes. I mentioned at the hearing the Committee has conducted a survey to understand the views of those that have tried to access the Green Homes Grant. I am writing to inform you of some of the issues raised from the survey in advance of our final Committee report.

The Committee conducted its online survey between 2 and 16 November 2020 which was promoted through the Select Committee Engagement Team, to relevant petitioners to the Petitions Committee and through the Committee's newsletter and social media. It also appeared on the Money Saving Expert Forum. The survey received 510 responses and 414 of those had accessed the grant. Those who had not accessed the grant did not progress through to answer later questions. 295 (71%) were homeowners and 115 (28%) were landlords.

The survey was conducted prior to the Government announcing the year long extension to the scheme, and we acknowledge that respondents are from a self-selecting pool. Nevertheless, we consider the results to be illustrative and hope it is useful to you and you will be able to use it to improve the scheme through its extension.

Principally, 86% of respondents rated their experience with the Green Homes Grant as either somewhat poor or very poor (60% as very poor).

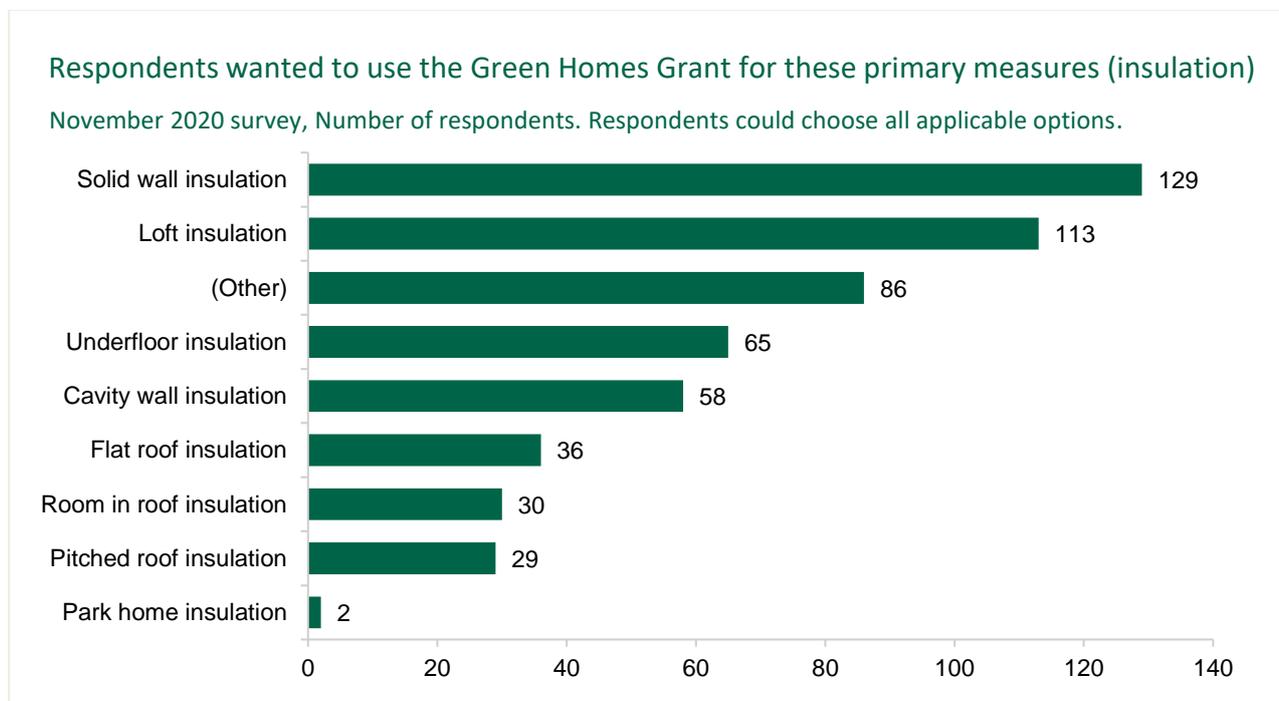
Over 90% of respondents used the Green Homes Grant eligibility calculator, with 57% finding it either somewhat helpful or very helpful. However, after checking eligibility and applying, many experienced delays in hearing back from the scheme:

- "I've been waiting for nearly a month now to hear back whether my application has been accepted or not."

- “I applied on the day it opened but still haven't received a single update about my application. My installer is waiting to start but can't because I need the voucher.”
- “they [the installer] were unable to schedule work until the voucher had been received, this delayed the process.”

At the time of the survey, only 5.6% (or 23 respondents) had had their application approved.<sup>1</sup> Only a single respondent had completed their work and received a voucher, two and a half months into the start of the scheme and four and a half months before its then end date. In some cases, the delay in notifying applicants of their grant outcome caused the quotes obtained to expire. Quotes were also expected to fulfil an onerous checklist which were not specified at the point of application, leading to quotes expiring. For example, quotes would only be accepted if they included the number of hours required for the job and detailed the access to utilities.

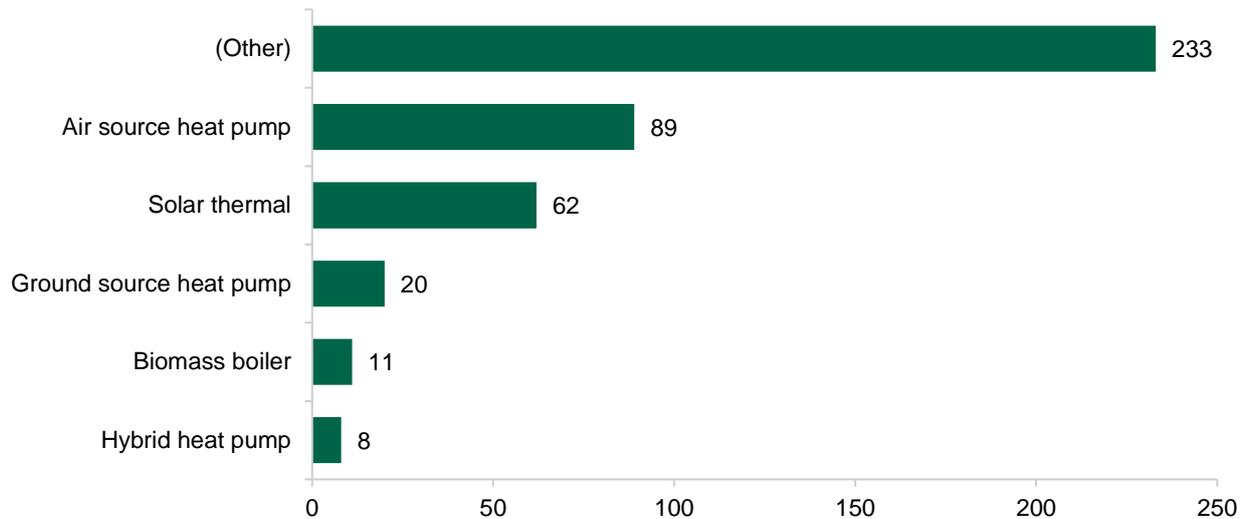
Homeowners must install primary measures before receiving the same funding towards secondary measures. Respondents told us which primary (insulation and low carbon heat) and secondary measures they wanted to install:



<sup>1</sup> The total of those who have, received a voucher (1), completed work (1) or are about to start work (21).

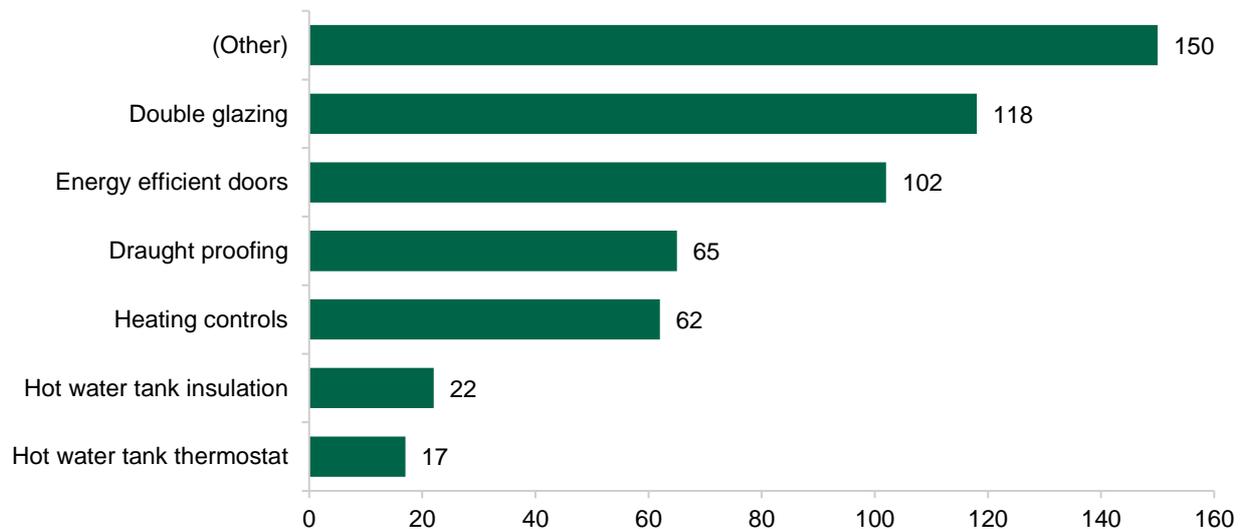
### Respondents wanted to use the GHG for these primary measures (low carbon heat)

November 2020 survey, Number of respondents. Respondents could choose all applicable options.



### Secondary measures survey respondents wanted to use the GHG for

November 2020 survey, Number of respondents. Respondents could choose all applicable options.



Many respondents signalled that they wanted to install measures not included in the scheme. A total of 10 respondents (2.5%) said they were able to install the measures they required. Brian Berry, chief executive at the Federation of Master Builders told us that the scheme was confusing, particularly the distinction between primary and secondary measures, and could be simplified.<sup>2</sup> Jenny Holland from the UK Green Building Council told us that there was an issue with sequencing, since draught-proofing, heating controls are all secondary measures, but it

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<sup>2</sup> [Q249](#)

would not be wise to install those after putting in a heat pump which require homes to be energy efficient.<sup>3</sup> Respondents told us:

- “Most of my rental properties are rated D, I am limited in applying for the grant because primary measures are either already done or too expensive.”
- “The secondary measures are much more useful but inaccessible [...] as the primary measures are simply too costly.”
- “I have a listed building so cannot install any of the primary measures, but I was unable to find any information on listed buildings and whether we could go straight to secondary measures.”
- “I have already installed all the primary measures with the exception of a ground or air heat source pump. These can cost up to £20,000 and our small cottage has no room for the equipment let alone any garden requirements. So our double glazing requirements (to replace a wooden front door) are negated because there would be no balance of monies left to help with secondary measures.”

In addition to delays in the application process, over 75% found it somewhat difficult or very difficult to find a TrustMark registered contractor. We heard evidence from TrustMark who told us it has just over 1,200 businesses that are now PAS accredited and are able to take part in the scheme.<sup>4</sup> The Federation of Master Builders told us that of its 7,400 members, 180 registered companies had expressed an interest but to date, only three have been accredited.<sup>5</sup> A number of respondents told us that contractors they had hoped to use were either not aware of the scheme or did not want to sign up to it:

- “It appears that the scheme was rolled out without contractors being given the opportunity to register themselves with the scheme [...] many companies did not know yet if they were eligible”.
- “I know a qualified contractor who still struggles to get into the scheme because it is too complex and unclear making it unachievable”.
- “Many local traders are unaware of the scheme and have therefore not had the time to become certified in the relevant areas to become a TrustMark trader”.

Contractors who are registered with the scheme have often been inundated with requests for quotes:

- “The distinct lack of tradesmen in the area is a problem as not many are members of the TrustMark scheme, those that are have therefore been overwhelmed with requests.”
- “I contacted 24 different tradesmen on the website to try to get a quote. Only two came back and one of the quotes runs out next week”.
- “I contacted over 17 TrustMark firms. All of them refused me saying they had either decided not to continue with the scheme, or that they had been overwhelmed by the take up and could not take any more enquiries”.

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<sup>3</sup> [Q68-72](#)

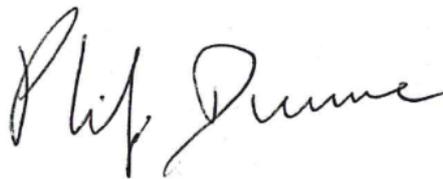
<sup>4</sup> [Q242](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Q244](#) 18 November 2020

We have heard evidence from the Federation of Master Builders that supports these claims. Brian Berry said the Green Homes Grant was announced before there was any consultation with the building industry. Russell Smith from Retrofitworks and George Munson from Leeds City Council said, even with the year extension, the scheme will not be enough to drive development of the supply chain.<sup>6</sup> The market needs certainty because small companies are not going to invest unless they know there is a long-term market. We urge you to consult and engage with installers and contractors to emphasise the benefits of joining TrustMark and the Green Homes Grant supporting SMEs in the process.

We look forward to hearing what improvements you will be making to the scheme now it has been extended to March 2022. We would welcome short term action being taken on resolving the primary and secondary measures, streamlining the quotation process and ensuring enough registered installers are available. I would welcome a response by 22 January 2021 outlining the action being taken to improve the scheme. This will help to inform our final report which will be with you next year to provide you with recommendations for a long term programme to retrofit homes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Dunne', written in a cursive style.

**Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP**  
**Chairman of the Environmental Audit Committee**

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<sup>6</sup> [Q184-188](#)