

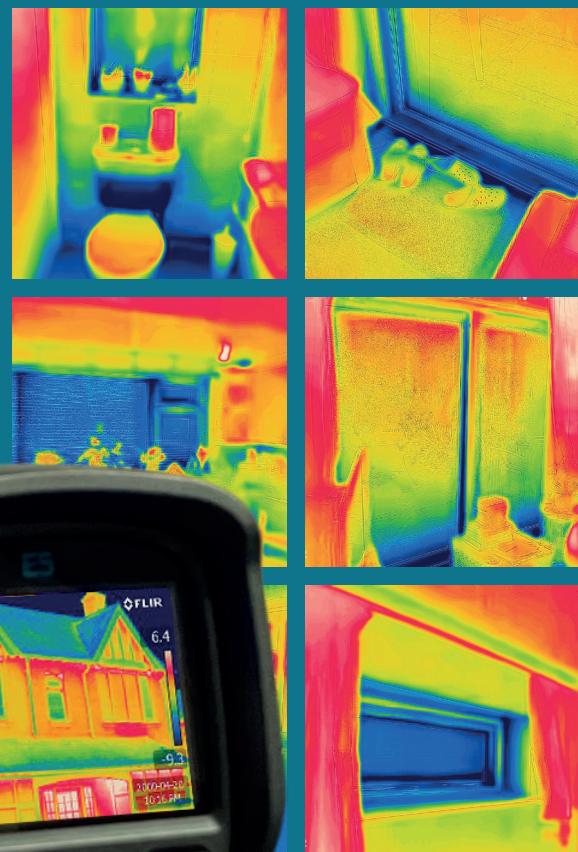


Running a thermal imaging campaign

A practical guide for community groups

Thermal imaging helps people see where heat is escaping from their homes. Led by trusted local groups, it can spark useful conversations about energy efficiency and practical next steps.

You don't need to be an expert. We help you get started and point you in the right direction.



How to book a thermal imaging camera

Download templates for forms, surveys, risk assessments and more

Download promotion materials



Links to trusted advice and funding support

Two thermal imaging cameras free to borrow for Low Carbon Hub Community Groups

Thermal imaging for communities

Thermal imaging works especially well when it's led by trusted local groups. Community organisations are well placed to reach people in their own streets and neighbourhoods.

Thermal imaging uses a special camera to show temperature differences on the outside of buildings. Warmer areas appear as reds and whites, cooler areas as blues and blacks. On a cold evening, these images can reveal patterns of heat loss that are hard to spot during the day, such as draughts around doors and windows, missing insulation, or areas where heat is escaping more quickly than expected.

When people see thermal images of their own home, energy efficiency becomes easier to understand. Cold rooms and high heating bills start to make sense. That can be reassuring as well as motivating, because it shows that these problems usually have clear causes and practical ways to improve them.

For community groups, thermal imaging is not about inspecting homes or telling people what to do. It's about starting conversations, building understanding, and helping neighbours feel more confident about what they might want to do next, in their own time.

How we support community groups:

- a clear, practical guide to running a project
- ready-to-use templates and materials
- example wording for residents and participants
- links to trusted advice and support services

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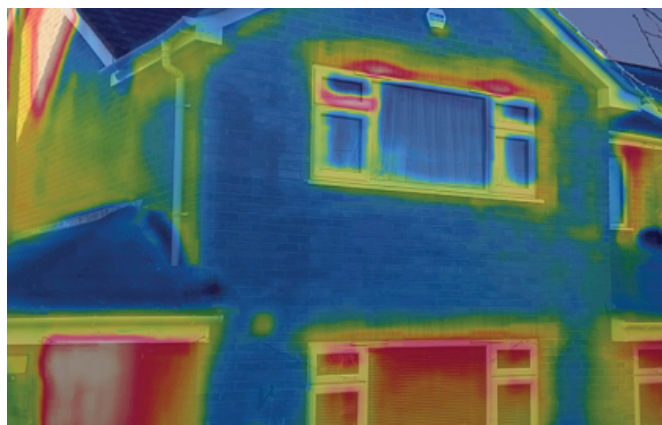
More examples, images, and downloads are available in the Thermal Imaging Hub.

"Seeing the image made it real. We finally understood where our heat was going."

Maureen,
homeowner



For downloads and more info see our thermal imaging web page at: lowcarbonhub.org/energy-saving-advice/thermal-imaging-camera/



Running a thermal imaging campaign

Planning your campaign

There's no single right way to run a thermal imaging campaign. Groups take different approaches depending on their capacity, volunteers, and how they want to engage locally.

The most successful campaigns are well planned, realistic about time and energy, and clear with residents about what to expect.

Timing matters

Thermal imaging works best on cold, dry evenings, usually from late autumn to early spring. Aim for nights below about 5°C, with no rain or fog, and go out at least two to four hours after sunset, once the day's heat has gone and homes are warmed inside.

Be realistic about how much you can cover. If you're taking several images per home, most groups manage three to six houses in an evening. Simpler street surveys can cover more, but remember that reviewing images and giving feedback takes time, especially if you plan to offer personalised reports.

Working in small teams helps. Groups of three or four make it easier to take images, keep notes, and keep things running smoothly. Keeping the project manageable helps volunteers stay motivated and makes the experience better for everyone.

Choosing which homes to survey

Groups usually take one of two approaches:

- Surveys by request, where residents opt in
- Surveying a street or area from public space

Both approaches have advantages. The right choice depends on your time, capacity, and goals.

Practical tips, example letters, and opt-out wording are available in the Thermal Imaging Hub.

Surveying safely and confidently

Thermal imaging surveys are generally low risk, but usually take place outdoors, after dark, and around homes and streets.

Key principles:

- work in pairs or small group
- wear high viz clothes and be aware of traffic
- stop if anything feels unsafe

Letting residents know what to expect

Clear communication builds trust and avoids confusion.

Before surveying, residents should know:

- when imaging is likely to take place
- how long it takes
- that they don't need to be present
- how and when they'll receive feedback

It's also important to explain that thermal cameras do not see inside homes or through walls.

Preparation tips and example messages are available in the Thermal Imaging Hub.

Booking a thermal imaging camera

Low Carbon Hub supports community groups to access thermal imaging cameras. Details on how to book a camera, what's included, and what to expect are available in the Thermal Imaging Hub.

Two thermal imaging cameras free to borrow for Low Carbon Hub Community Groups

What happens next

Sharing results with residents

Groups usually share thermal images in one of two ways:

- written feedback, sent by email or post
- in-person feedback, at an event or one-to-one conversation

Many groups use a mix of both. The right approach depends on volunteer time and how much follow-up you want to offer.

Community groups are not expected to provide professional analysis. Thermal images show patterns of heat loss, not exact causes. Your role is to explain what the images might be showing, reassure residents, and help them think about possible next steps.

What residents can do next

Thermal images are a starting point, not a diagnosis. Encourage residents to begin with simple, low-cost actions that improve comfort, such as draught-proofing, topping up insulation, or improving window coverings. For people who want more support, it's usually better to point them towards trusted local advice services than to list every possible scheme.

Capturing what happens after

Understanding what people do next is an important part of thermal imaging projects. It helps community groups learn what works, and helps improve future support for households.

Simple feedback forms are available to download and share with residents. These can be given out on the night, included with written feedback, or sent as a follow-up a few months later. They give residents an easy way to tell us whether they've taken any actions, are planning improvements, or would like further help.

For downloads and more info see our thermal imaging web page at: lowcarbonhub.org/energy-saving-advice/thermal-imaging-camera/



Community Action Groups

A network of community groups working across Oxfordshire. Visit to find local groups, resources, and ways to get involved.

cagoxfordshire.org.uk

Low Carbon Hub

Supporting practical, community-led action on energy and climate. Visit for guidance, projects, and local support.

lowcarbonhub.org

This guide was originally compiled in 2018 using resources developed by several Community Action Groups in Oxfordshire, including Sustainable Didcot, Greening Chinnor, Low Carbon East Oxford, Low Carbon Headington, and Local Environmental Action Florence Park (LEAF).

It has since now been updated to reflect current practice, language, and support available to communities. The original guide was supported through funding from Low Carbon Hub, and we thank all contributors for sharing their experience.