Green Index highlights UK’s need for improvement in Renewable Energy Use

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Green Index highlights UK’s need for improvement in Renewable Energy Use

London is falling behind worldwide leaders in the index for renewable energy and carbon emissions

- *New ‘Green Index’ ranks 20 major worldwide cities on eight key categories related to an environmentally friendly future.*
- *London falling behind in terms of renewable energy use, air quality and carbon emissions.*
- *Berlin scores particularly well for its high recycling rates, minimal traffic congestion, and bicycle friendliness.*
- *The government has abandoned the Green Homes Grant as it aims to reach a target of zero carbon emissions by 2050.*
- *Further information on the rankings can be found at: (https://www.cityplumbing.co.uk/blog/how-does-the-uks-green-living-compare)*

The recent abandonment of the Green Homes Grant is a new blow to the country’s green future, as the UK aims to reach the government’s target of hitting zero carbon emissions by 2050. A new ‘green index’ from energy efficiency experts City Plumbing highlights how the country is falling behind the worldwide leaders in terms of energy sustainability and renewable energy use.

The index ranked 20 major worldwide cities on eight key categories areas that will need to be embraced in order to secure an environmentally friendly future, from renewable energy use to carbon emissions, traffic congestion, bicycle usage, walkability, the quantity of available green space (such as parks), air quality and recycling.

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London falls into the bottom half of the ‘Green Index’. Highlighting the work that is still to be done if the UK is to meet its carbon neutral target, with key areas for improvement highlighted in renewable energy use, air quality and carbon emissions. With only 9% of energy used in the capital coming from renewable sources, it is falling far behind the top ranked city of Rio de Janeiro which boasts 44% renewable energy use.

With such reliance on non-renewable energy sources, it is perhaps no surprise to see London also ranks poorly for its carbon emissions and air quality. However, there is better news when it comes to available green space, walkability, and recycling.

A third of the city (33%) is comprised of parks or gardens and 80% of residents able to walk to education and healthcare services without the use of a car, while 43% of London’s waste is recycled in some capacity too.

The data reinforces the considerable impact that moving towards carbon neutrality through energy efficient home improvements could have on the capital, enabling them to ‘catch up’ to higher performing areas of green living.

According to the Committee on Climate Change, 14% of the country’s carbon emissions come from heating our homes, and there are several energy efficiency solutions that can help your home utilise energy that is either renewable or much less harmful than traditional solutions.

Air Source Heat Pumps capture heat from the air using the refrigeration cycle. They then provide heat to properties through radiators, underfloor heating and hot water via suitably sized cylinders.

Underfloor heating can distribute heat evenly around a room and will often reduce the usage of traditional heating systems that are more damaging to the environment.

Biomass boilers offer a similar output to conventional boilers, however rather than burning gas or oil, biomass boilers burn natural fuel sources such as wood pellets, wood chips or logs to provide heat to a property’s heating and hot water circuits.

Solar Thermal systems are another method of reducing a home’s traditional energy usage, by collecting heat from the sun using solar panels/collectors which is then used to heat up water stored in the property’s hot water cylinder, avoiding the reliance on gas or electricity.

In terms of cities where London can take inspiration, our ‘Green Index’ highlights Berlin as the leading example of green living, and there is a common thread of renewable energy use across all of the top performing cities.

The German capital scores particularly well for its renewable energy use and high recycling rates, minimal traffic congestion, and bicycle friendliness. Berlin is the city with the highest recycling rate, with 65% of materials recycled in Germany.

Copenhagen is the second most ‘green’ major city in the world, scoring highly for renewable energy use, with Madrid coming in third place thanks to their renewal energy use, lack of traffic congestion and amount of green space on offer.

Dublin ranks as the 4th ‘greenest city’ thanks in part to having the lowest carbon emission footprint and best air quality of any of the other cities in the study.

What else is being done to improve the situation?

Some solutions have already been launched with the environment in mind. They include:

The Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) – This is paid to householders who generate heat through renewable technology (heat pump, biomass, solar thermal) and takes the form of a quarterly payment for 7 years. Homeowners, landlords, social housing providers and self-builders are eligible. The tariffs have evolved over the years to favour heat pumps, with air source in particular benefitting. Domestic RHI has been extended and is now scheduled to end 31st March 2022 at which point the Government are looking

to introduce the Clean Homes Grant which would provide upfront funding of a set amount, rumoured to be around £4000.

The Social Housing Sector is also aiming to increase energy efficiency within their housing stocks. Devolved governments have variations but essentially targets have been set for all social housing stock to meet a minimum EPC rating of C by 2030. The Climate Change Committee have recently proposed that this date should be brought forward to 2028 which, couple with the challenges of Covid, would mean an acceleration in programmes over this decade.

Steve Alldritt, Technical Director of City Plumbing's Energy Efficiency Team added:

"Acting with the environment in mind can sometimes feel like an uphill struggle, but there are things that we can do to enact real change.

"Some methods have become widespread in recent years, for example the push to re-use plastic bags when going to the supermarket is now very popular.

"Another way to help the environment is to install energy efficiency solutions inside your own home, with a number of different options available to homeowners such as ?Air Source Heat Pumps and Solar Thermal Energy.

"Energy efficiency solutions can help the environment by reducing the energy usage in your home. For example, underfloor heating can distribute heat evenly around a room, and will often reduce the usage of traditional heating systems that are more damaging to the environment."

For more information and advice about the alternatives available to the Green Homes Grant, please visit:

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Notes for Editors

For further information, please contact Rhys Thomas via rhys.thomas@wmg.uk.com.

Methodology & Sources

Each city in the index was ranked on the eight-individual metrics, giving an overall 'Green City' score used to find the overall ranking.

- Renewable energy generation
- https://data.worldbank.org/
- Carbon emissions
- http://citycarbonfootprints.info/
- Traffic congestion
- https://inrix.com/scorecard/
- https://www.tomtom.com/en_gb/traffic-index/
- Bicycle friendliness
- https://www.coya.com/
- https://www.toronto.ca/
- https://www.smartcitiesdive.com
-

- Walkability
- https://pedestriansfirst.itdp.org/
- Green spaces
- http://www.worldcitiesculturefforum.com/
- http://www.fao.org/
- https://urbanmobilityindex.here.com/
- Air quality
- https://www.iqair.com/
- Recycling rates
- https://recyclinginternational.com/

About City Plumbing

City Plumbing is an award-winning plumbing, heating, and electrical supplier for the trade.

It has grown to over 4,500 colleagues across more than 370 branches and sites across the UK and Ireland.

City Plumbing is part of the Travis Perkins group who are the UK's largest distributor of building materials, helping build Britain for over 200 years.

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