

# Sustainability Newsletter

Issue 6 Autumn 2019

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## Early preparations make for a greener Christmas.



Now is a great time to be planning ahead for your greener Christmas celebrations. There are numerous ways you can reduce your impacts this Christmas.

Give some thought now to what gifts you will buy your loved ones, the food you will be eating, transport needs and little things like choosing recyclable wrapping paper and cards. How about making your own cards or gift bags? Could you reduce the 'stuff' you buy by giving tickets to an event or activity? With a little thought now you can ensure you have a greener Christmas and show your friends and family how small changes make a big difference.



# BUSTING THE HOME HEATING MYTHS

**Most of us now have the heating on in our homes for some of the day. How you use your heating will have a major effect on your bills, your levels of comfort and on your environmental impact. What are the facts?**

**Myth:** I've been with my supplier for many years and I benefit from being a loyal customer.

**Truth:** If you haven't switched your energy tariff in the last 2 years, you are most likely paying much more than you need to for your energy. Sadly, energy suppliers tend to reward *new* customers rather than loyal customers. Make sure you use an Ofgem accredited switching service to find a better deal:

[www.ofgem.gov.uk/consumers/household-gas-and-electricity-guide/how-switch-energy-supplier-and-shop-better-deal](http://www.ofgem.gov.uk/consumers/household-gas-and-electricity-guide/how-switch-energy-supplier-and-shop-better-deal).

**Myth:** It's cheaper to leave the heating on all day at a low temperature than set it to come on at certain times.

**Truth:** False. It's cheaper and more effective to put the heating on only when you need it. You will be wasting money

and burning fuel unnecessarily otherwise.

**Myth:** Turning the thermostat up heats the room quicker.

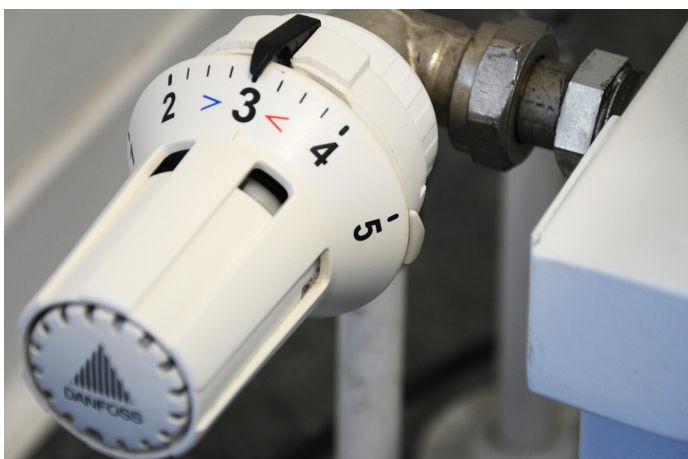
**Truth:** The thermostat maintains a constant temperature of the room. Turning it up doesn't mean it heats up any quicker because boilers only have one speed. It will just eventually get hotter and you'll probably then need to open the windows! Room thermostats monitor the warmth in specific rooms and adjust the boiler operations accordingly. Your room thermostats should be set to the lowest comfortable temperature. Guidelines suggest 18-21°C. You don't need to turn your thermostat up when it is colder outside, as the house will still be heated to the same temperature.

**Myth:** By heating my water all day I ensure I have a constant supply when I need it.

**Truth:** Water heated in the morning should stay hot until midday provided the tank is insulated properly. It's more efficient to heat your water for 30mins in the morning and in the evening than leave it on all day. The only exception is if you are on an Economy 7 or 10 tariff, then it's cheaper to heat the water at night.

**Myth:** It's more efficient to use an electric heater in the room I'm in than use the central heating.

**Truth:** Electric heaters are the most expensive way of heating any home. It is always cheaper to put the central heating on and preferably turn down the thermostatic radiator valves in rooms you are not using.





# GET INVOLVED WITH LOCAL TREES

## Become a Tree Warden

For a number of years now the District Council has been involved with the Tree Warden Scheme, a national initiative coordinated by the Tree Council. The District currently has around 50 volunteer wardens, and new recruits are always needed.

Tree Wardens get involved in a range of activities, from practical projects such as planting and caring for trees, to gathering information about local trees and creating imaginative projects to encourage others, including schoolchildren, to value their local trees and woods.

Wardens are also active in the District, acting as the eyes and ears of their neighbourhoods and reporting on matters such as the condition of trees, pests and diseases, and safety issues.

Other activities include leading guided walks, giving talks to local community groups and spearheading Tree Council initiatives such as the Ancient Tree Hunt, National Tree Week and seed gathering.

You don't need to be an expert on trees to become a tree warden. It's a great way to learn more about trees with like-minded people.

## Sponsor a Tree

If you don't have space in your garden to plant a tree, you can still support tree planting in the District. The Council, in partnership with the Civic Society, runs a tree sponsorship scheme.

For between £150-250, a tree can be planted on your behalf in one of the District's Parks or Open Spaces. And the Civic Society will produce an illustration of your chosen tree with a dedication or message to loved one. The illustration will be included in the Tree Sponsorship Book, available to view at the Civic Centre.

If you would like to volunteer your services as a Tree Warden, or for further information about tree sponsorship, please contact us at [trees@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:trees@stalbans.gov.uk) or ring 01727 866100.





## Attention: Herts Warmer Homes closes soon

Herts Warmer Homes is a county-wide scheme that uses funding from energy suppliers and District and County Council's to help people stay warm in their homes.

The scheme provides new boilers, boiler repairs and insulation, to those who are identified to be vulnerable and at risk from the cold.

Eligibility is assessed by looking at income, health, vulnerability to the cold and current energy efficiency of the home.

Often the people who need help the most do not put themselves forward

for help so we urge people to look out for neighbours, friends, relatives and contacts who could benefit and might not know about the scheme.

The scheme is closing early in 2020 so please ensure that you refer yourself or others to the scheme soon.

It takes some time for surveys to be completed and installations completed, so we advise applying before it gets very cold.

To find out more and apply, contact **Herts Warmer Homes on 0300 123 4044**



## Save paper by switching to electronic Council Tax billing

You can now save waste by opting to receive your bills electronically through your [MyStAlbans account](#). Simply sign in to your account, follow the instructions to link your Council Tax account and select the option to receive your bills via email.

You can also check your balance, download bills, make payments, or inform us if something has changed.

We now have over 5,000 residents signed up to ebilling. This is helping us to save paper, reduce printing and postage costs and

reduce waste. Please help us reduce waste by signing up today via your My StAlbans account.

Further information about setting up a 'MyStAlbans' Account is available at [www.stalbans.gov.uk/mystalbans](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/mystalbans).



# News Bites

## Understanding where the heat loss is in your home

'Sustainable St Albans' loans out thermal imaging cameras to local residents who wish to understand where the heat is leaking out of their home.

They are easy and free to use. Just book onto their free information session for some basic training on using the camera and to understand what you see. You may then borrow a camera overnight.

Sessions are held in St Albans and Harpenden through the winter months.

Visit

[www.sustainablestalbens.org](http://www.sustainablestalbens.org) for times and details.



## A new scheme Playing Out comes to St Albans

Wouldn't it be nice if children could play together on the streets like in the good old days? Well now they can!

'Playing Out' is a grassroots movement being run by 'Sustainable St Albans'. The aim is to help neighbours organise road closure days so that residents can come together to meet, chat and play.

This is a great way to get to know your neighbours and make new friends. Streets might organise games and activities together or simply socialise while the children

play.

Interested residents should submit their applications a few months before the actual road closure. There is no cost to residents and a street can be closed on no more than eight occasions a year.

For further information visit:

[www.sustainablestalbens.org/get-started/playingout/](http://www.sustainablestalbens.org/get-started/playingout/).

This newsletter contains information about living more sustainably and is brought to you by the Sustainability Team at St Albans City and District Council. The information provided is not an endorsement of any of the products, sources of information or organisations mentioned.

For inquiries or comments, please contact [sustainability@stalbens.gov.uk](mailto:sustainability@stalbens.gov.uk).