

Open Forum 11(1982)

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Geraldine Newbrook:

And talking of money, how much do you pay for your heating? Like most of us, too much I suspect. Well you could try living in Pennylands, one of the estates at Milton Keynes. One hundred and seventy seven of the houses there are special. They're passive solar dwellings, whatever that means. OU researcher Jeremy Chatfield showed Roy Leonard round the site.

Roy Leonard:

What do you actually mean then by passive solar houses?

Jeremy Chatfield:

A passive solar house is one that is fairly well insulated, it's facing south, it's not over shaded by other houses and it's had the living areas rearranged to put most of the living areas on the south face where you want the heat. An ordinary house picks up a great deal of its heating requirement from the sun in any case. By insulating the house you make more use of the sun, whether you make it an explicitly passive solar house or not. Our houses just make that little bit much more out of the sun than an ordinary house and it's to see, our experiment is to see whether it's worthwhile architects spending their time designing passive solar houses rather than just plonking them down randomly. We've taken ordinary houses and we've insulated them. They are randomly orientated and over shaded houses as you would find on just about any council estate in the UK. We've taken houses very similar to those, built them from scratch, because we wanted them to be facing south and not over shaded so that's the next step up.

Roy Leonard:

How long has the scheme actually been in operation?

Jeremy Chatfield:

We've been collecting data really for this heating season, starting in October '81 because until then there just weren't enough people in the houses to show any statistical significance. At the moment the contract runs until March 1983. We hope for one year extension to take us to March '84 which will give us the 1982/83 heating season as our proper experiment.

Geraldine Newbrook:

Roy then asked Jeremy if the OU ran the scheme alone.

Jeremy Chatfield:

The scheme is being performed in cooperation with Milton Keynes Development Corporation and it was Milton Keynes Development Corporation architects that designed the estate and the project is sponsored by the Departments of Energy and Environment through Milton Keynes Development Corporation who then have sub-contracted the monitoring work to The Open University.