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PRESS RELEASE - PHOTOCALL

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Victorian house transformed for a solar panel era: Westminster's first Green MP opens ground-breaking 'eco-retrofit' in Brighton.

On Monday 5th September at 10am The Right Honourable Dr. Caroline Lucas MP, Westminster's first Green MP, will officially open The Nook, retrofit project as part of Eco Open Houses 2011 at 3 Lovers Walk, Brighton BN1 6AH.

When The Nook was built, Queen Victoria was still on the throne. But what was a draughty period property has been transformed, thanks to pioneering renovation techniques, into one of Brighton's greenest homes.

The Nook, a large, multiple occupancy, detached Victorian house owned by Two Piers Housing Co-operative and before renovation was rated as energy band 'F', typical for a house of its age.

Dr. Caroline Lucas, MP for Brighton Pavilion and Westminster's first Green MP, welcomes the project:

"The annual Eco Open Houses event is a great chance for people to see for themselves the innovative work being done in Brighton and Hove to increase the efficiency of our housing. Improving the energy performance of the buildings we live in is a win-win opportunity – through comprehensive retrofits and investment in renewable energy solutions, we can help reduce energy bills and slash climate emissions at the same time. I very much look forward to attending this year's event and cutting the ribbon on The Nook project on Lovers Walk, which will showcase the successful efforts of BBM Sustainable Design and Earthwise Construction to address the challenge of bringing an old property up to scratch."

The house has been renovated as part of the national 'Retrofit for the Future' pilot project, launched by the Technology Strategy Board, to improve energy efficiency in social housing across the UK.



A holistic package of measures was designed by award-winning eco-architects BBM Sustainable Design and the building work was undertaken by Earthwise Construction.

The extensive energy efficiency measures that have been installed are: wall, ground floor and roof insulation; a condensing gas boiler; a mechanical ventilation system with heat recovery and a solar thermal system. The insulation for the project was supplied by Kingspan Insulation.

"For the past couple of months we have been showering and washing dishes with solar heated water, we have only had to boost the system with the boiler a couple of times" Sheila Finch, The Nook Tenant

Previously energy bills were over £1,500 a year and with all the measures in place it is anticipated that they will drop to less than £750, with a dramatic reduction in CO₂ emissions.

ENDS

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Notes to editors:

- Energy bands are used in Energy Performance Certificates and are measures from A to G, with G being the lowest.
- Technology Strategy Board is the UK's national innovation agency. Their goal is to accelerate economic growth by stimulating and supporting business-led innovation.- The Nook is one of eighty seven social housing projects across the UK to be selected by the Technology Strategy Board to take part in their 'Retrofit for the Future' programme. The programme received £17 million of government funding to test low carbon building technology in existing social housing. For more details see: www.innovateuk.org/
- Two Piers Housing Co-operative is a permanent ownership housing co-operative, Brighton's largest housing co-op. two Piers provides affordable housing for 68 single people and single parents in shared and self-contained flats and houses in several locations across the city. For more details see: www.twopiers.coop
- Earthwise Construction are a Brighton based green building company that offer a comprehensive eco design, build and consultancy service to home owners, architects, building developers and public bodies across the South-East. Earthwise was the lead partner for the Nook renovation project. For more details see: www.earthwiseconstruction.org
- BBM Sustainable Design is an award winning eco architectural practice based in Lewes. Their previous projects include The Bridge Community Centre and Creative Media Centre in Hastings and the House That Kevin Built. For more details see: www.bbm-architects.co.uk
- Eco Open Houses is an award winning annual event in Brighton and Hove run by Brighton & Hove City Council, Brighton Permaculture Trust and Low Carbon Trust that aims to inspire the uptake of energy efficiency by opening up houses that demonstrate best practice in the area. The public are either given a tour of the houses by a householder or a professional that worked on the project, or they 'drop-in' for an informal look around. The Nook will be opened as part of the Eco Open Houses event. For more details please see: www.ecoopenhouses.org
- Kingspan Insulation is a Division of Kingspan Group plc, one of Europe's fastest growing building materials manufacturers. Kingspan Group was formed in the late 1960's and is a publicly quoted group of companies with its headquarters in Kingscourt, County Cavan, Ireland. Kingspan Insulation is consequently able to draw on the many resources and support of a focused, innovative group. For more details see: www.kingspaninsulation.co.uk