

## British Gas goes green to win new customers

By Alistair Osborne

Last Updated: 2:38am BST 20/04/2007

Green may be the colour you go when you get your latest British Gas bill, but the company is hoping for a different kind of association as it bolsters its environment-friendly credentials.

The Centrica subsidiary is launching a new business aimed at winning customers concerned about their carbon footprint or eager to save money by reducing the energy they waste. It will be run by Gearid Lane, previously Centrica's director of energy procurement.

British Gas New Energy will compete in a market the company values at several billion pounds a year selling rooftop solar panels, energy-efficient boilers and credits to offset customers' personal carbon emissions.

Sam Laidlaw, Centrica chief executive, said: "Most UK homes are poorly insulated and the energy loss and emission levels from them are much higher than they could be."

New initiatives from the company that jacked up gas bills by 22pc and a further 12pc in 2006, before a 17pc reduction this year, include launching a service providing Energy Performance Certificates.

Giving an energy-efficiency rating, these certificates will become mandatory for anyone selling homes in the UK from this June, affecting 1.4m sales a year.

British Gas plans to have 500 of its engineers trained by May to do EPC surveys, with the going rate expected to be £100, though British Gas is yet to set its price. It also expects to extend its current scheme with 44 local councils - where customers get a £100 discount on their council tax for insulating their lofts and cavity walls - into fitting solar panels.

At present, British Gas is working with six local councils, including Salford, Braintree and Runnymede, on schemes that allow council tax reductions of up to £500 to customers installing solar panels.

Centrica and British Gas also pledged to cut their corporate environmental impacts, including a 10pc cut in energy usage in their buildings by the end of 2007 and a reduction in company car fleet emissions.

The Audi A8-driving Mr Laidlaw has also bought offsets to ensure he is carbon neutral when it comes to his personal emissions.

Centrica shares were unchanged at 389¼p.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/main.jhtml?xml=/money/2007/04/20/cngas20.xml>