

## Energy performance in older homes

*By Richard Copus FNAVA FNAEA (Honoured) CPEA, Director of Woods Estate Agents & West Country Regional Executive for the NAEA...*



Eco-responsibility can make many of us feel guilty when looking at older properties. The regular Es and Fs on the EPC graph can have a sobering effect. But this effect should only be temporary, and there are lots of good reasons for that.

Like much in our lives these days, the energy performance graph is yet another thing thrown at us by bureaucrats and is compiled by energy assessors using a tick box format. Whilst having good intentions, the EPC inevitably falls down when dealing with anything “outside the box”, and most older homes fit into that category.

So, what older properties are eco-friendly? Most of them, actually. The majority of houses in South Devon over a hundred or so years old are built of solid stone under slate roofs. Stone is like a storage heater. Those of us who live in barn conversions with two foot thick stone walls are used to coming back from holiday and freezing for 3 days whilst the central heating slowly warms our homes up - very bad! But once a stone house is warm, it takes very little extra energy to keep the warmth topped up. Insulate the loft effectively and a stone house will be using more, but not much more, energy than a modern, thermostatically sealed home.

Cob and thatch are the best insulators you can have, and it is arguable that far more modern homes should be built this way.

Modern houses are built to be almost completely sealed - not necessarily a healthy thing as nasty bugs can proliferate. Old houses are often draughty, but it is not difficult to draught-proof them. The old snake draught-proofer beneath the front door and heavy, lined curtains in listed buildings where double glazing is not permitted can work wonders!

Double glazing does a lot to decrease use of fossil fuels, and it needn't be ugly. Cheap upvc double glazing can knock thousands of pounds off your house, but sensitive units will save you money on fuel bills and increase your property's value.

Over the last few years, wood effect frames have been developed that look almost identical to the real thing, and most double glazing firms produce UPVC sliding sash windows with mouldings and external glazing bars (the beading that divides the panes) which are of a high aesthetic standard. Many (not all) planning authorities now accept double glazing in wood frames in listed buildings, as long as the frames are identical to what they are replacing. Living in an old house need not be nearly as basic as it used to be!

So don't feel guilty about buying an old house! If it is dated and it does not have effective energy-saving requirements, use this to reduce the price you are prepared to pay for it. The saving can be used to make the necessary improvements and you can rest assured that you are doing your bit for the environment whilst living in the state to which you always wanted to be accustomed!

Wood's has six offices in Devon and works together with over 100 other **team** agents across the Westcountry to sell more property for clients. To contact Richard, pop into the Copus Wood's office at 1 East Street in Ashburton or call 01364 654006. To find your nearest Wood's office, visit [www.teamprop.co.uk](http://www.teamprop.co.uk) or [www.woodshomes.co.uk](http://www.woodshomes.co.uk).