

RCCE

TRADING
COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY

OIL BUYING SCHEME

Information for Local Volunteer Co-ordinators



RCCE Registered Charity No. 1097009 Registered Company No. 4609624

RCCE Trading CIC Registered Company No. 6786377

What's the scheme about?

RCCE Trading CIC 's Oil Buying Scheme is designed to help purchasers of central heating oil to make savings by buying in bulk. By operating county-wide, the scheme makes it possible for new or existing local community oil-buying groups to make the most of their collective purchasing power.



Who is behind it?

Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) - a long established local charity that works to support community-based action across the county (such as village halls, community-run shops and parish plans) - is running the scheme through its trading arm RCCE Trading Community Interest Company (CIC). The membership fees will pay for the administration costs of the scheme and any surplus will be go towards supporting the core activities of RCCE.



How does it work?

Householders pay an annual fee of £20 (£30 for community organisations / buildings, £100 for businesses) to join the scheme. We negotiate with nationwide oil companies that supply premises in Essex and get the best price.

Once a month, local community-based co-ordinators are asked to let us know which members in their area want to order oil and how much they want. Once we have negotiated the price, we tell the co-ordinator when the delivery will be and how much the oil will cost. Because we are buying for large numbers of customers, we can negotiate hard on the members' behalf.

Members can order as often (or as seldom) as they want. And unless you are only using a tiny amount of oil, we are confident that the annual membership fee will be considerably less than the savings you make.

The scheme is very community-based and we are looking for local co-ordinators willing to put in an hour or two each month to help get the scheme off the ground in their village or neighbourhood and keep it ticking over.

What does a local co-ordinator have to do?

To start with the local co-ordinator will use whatever means suits them to tell people in their community about the scheme – this may be by email, face to face, or with leaflets through the door. Experience suggests that the 'village grape-vine' is very effective once word gets out! People join the scheme by paying an annual membership fee directly to RCCE's trading company, RCCE Trading CIC.

Once the scheme is operating

(which will be as soon as there are any members in your local area)

The co-ordinator's job involves only 3 simple steps:-

1) Collect Orders

Each month, ask your local members if they want to order heating oil and how many litres they will want. You will have the list of members in your community so you will know exactly who to contact.

You may be able to do a lot by email, but you will also need to cater for those who don't use it, so we also provide you with an order form that you can leave in a convenient place that you think is right for your community – it could be the village hall, shop, parish council meeting room. It's up to you.



2) Place the Order

Contact RCCE Trading CIC by an agreed monthly deadline to tell them how many people want to order and how much oil they want. We would normally expect this to be done electronically and provide a simple order form.

3) Inform your Members

RCCE Trading CIC will tell you roughly when the deliveries will be made that month, by which supplier and at what price. You will pass that information on to the people who are ordering oil and the oil supplier will contact them directly to tell them exactly when to expect their delivery.

Next month you do it again!

What does a co-ordinator NOT have to do?

- ♦ *Negotiate prices with oil suppliers*
- ♦ *Handle any money, either for membership or oil purchases*
- ♦ *Maintain membership records*
- ♦ *Get involved in problems between oil supplier and customer*

What kind of person will make a good local co-ordinator?

No special skills are needed but you must be

- ♦ *reliable*
- ♦ *well organised*
- ♦ *have access to internet/home computer*

and even better....

- ♦ *interested in carbon reduction*
- ♦ *be part of/known in the local community*



What's in it for me?

The local co-ordinator will get **FREE** membership of the scheme – so you will have the advantage of savings on your oil purchases without any up-front cost. We hope that you will also find it rewarding to be doing something useful in your local community and to be helping towards reducing your village's carbon footprint.

And we hope you might enjoy doing it!

What if things go wrong?

Well, first of all, we hope it won't. The system is very straightforward so the risk of problems isn't high. But the local co-ordinators are the key – you need to be accurate and reliable in passing information between your members and RCCE Trading CIC.

We will do all we can to prevent any mishaps, and will take any problems very seriously. We have a complaints policy in place, so you can be sure we are committed to getting this right. If it isn't, we need members to let us know so we can put it right and avoid it happening again.

Surely it's not very environmentally friendly...

The tankers that deliver heating oil may only do about 8 miles to the gallon when they are full. If oil delivery routes are more rational – and a tanker can offload all its oil in just a small geographical area – it is saving a lot of 'oil miles'. Our aim is to get oil deliveries across the whole of the county organised in a much more streamlined way and to minimise the carbon footprint of what is, inevitably, a fuel-guzzling business.



But we certainly aren't aiming to encourage people to buy more oil than they were before! We are deeply committed to sustainability and we want to encourage others to think about renewable energy.

Just one more thing...

RCCE is used to working with volunteers and knows that sometimes people take things on that they can't continue. But other than in emergencies, we would like to ask local co-ordinators to commit to giving at least three months' notice if they want to stop doing it and, if possible, to recruit someone locally who will follow in their footsteps.

How do I volunteer?

Contact us by email: oil@essexrcc.org.uk or tel: **01376 574340**. Someone from RCCE will get in touch with you, and we will do our best to answer any questions you may have.

This is what happens in one community

Judith, the co-ordinator for one local pilot scheme, explains how it works in her village ~

'Out of about 160 users of oil in the village, 100 have joined the local buying scheme. Because people use oil at different rates and order in different quantities, the number of people who want to order in any one month varies – sometimes it can be as low as 10 sometimes as high as 70.

About 96% of the local members are on email so it's easy to contact them; for the remaining four I put a paper order form in the village shop. Most months there are only 1-4 who use the paper system.

I pick the order form up on an agreed date, combine it with my electronic list and contact the Community Council. Then I will get in touch with that month's buyers to tell them the cost and the dates. It's very straightforward, and only takes me an hour or so each month and benefits the community in many ways.'

About RCCE

Rural Community Council of Essex is a registered charity which has been working to support rural communities since its formation in 1929. We help communities come together to identify their own needs and priorities, providing them with the skills, resources and expertise in developing practical solutions. RCCE strives to provide a voice for rural communities, representing their interests to government at local, regional and national level.

We can

- ♦ *Provide you with advice on a wide range of rural issues*
- ♦ *Keep you informed on the problems facing rural communities*
- ♦ *Send you details of RCCE events, newsletters and information sheets*

Our trading arm, RCCE Trading CIC, has been set up to support the activities of the charity and you can find more information about us and what we do by visiting our website www.essexrcc.org.uk. If you would like to support the work of RCCE, you can join the charity's membership scheme.

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