KINVER'S HOME ENERGY MOT – WHAT DID THE THERMAL CAMERA FIND?

The Kinver Climate Action Group has been offering free home energy 'MOTs' to Kinver households over the past winter. Here, Eunice Lord from the group highlights some of the most common issues they've identified.

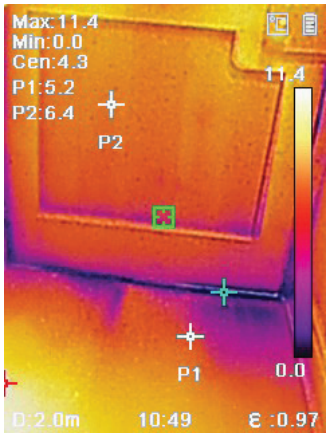
Kinver's Home Energy MOT has just completed its third winter. If you've not heard about us, read on. And if you've already been one of our clients, thanks for having us – we hope you found it useful.

The Home Energy MOT is entirely free. It's provided by the Kinver Climate Action Group, with the aim of helping local people cut their energy bills, and feel warmer and healthier. We use our thermal camera to spot where the heat's escaping and together we work out priorities for action. Plus, thanks to a grant from South Staffs Council, we have some give-aways.

So… here are some of the things we've found.

Stop the draughts

Starting with the 'quick and easy' options, we always check for draughts from windows and doors. If we can see cold areas spreading from the foot of a doorway, it's a sign that cold air is seeping in.



A note on thermal pictures: check the scale on the right of each picture – the coldest areas are dark blue, the warmest yellow, in this case, 0^0 and 11^0 degrees, respectively.

Ventilation and damp

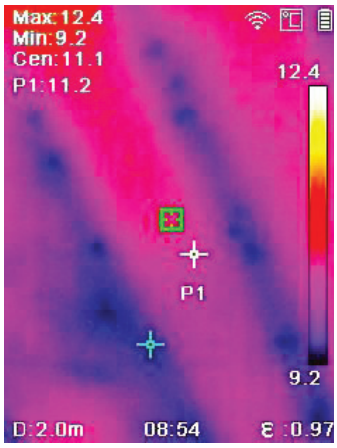
Problems with condensation and damp seem to be on the rise, especially with all the wet weather and high heating costs. This can lead to mould and health issues.

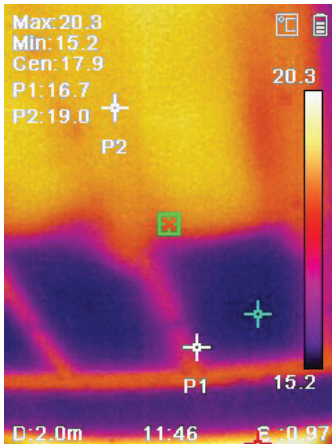
Our camera can spot the cold corners where warm, moist air condenses. To help people manage ventilation, we have free moisture meters. And we can pay towards a dehumidifier, which extracts water from the air, and keeps all the heat inside. Of course, some fresh air is still needed!

Does loft insulation need upgrading?

You can spot when the original insulation hasn't been topped up, because it's laid between the joists, and they show through as colder (pictured below left). The MOT project can contribute towards the cost of material for upgrading loft insulation to current standards. It's proving to be a really popular offer.

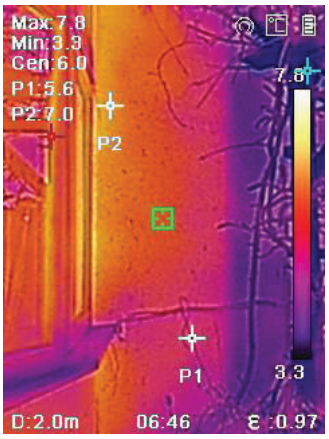
It's also surprising how often gaps and unevenness in loft insulation show up – sometimes it's not been put back after works, sometimes it just wasn't spread well. In the picture below right, the insulation hasn't been unrolled all the way to the eaves.





Walls – cavity or solid?

Most modern homes have cavity walls, and since the 80s these are mostly filled with insulation. It works well. This picture, taken from outside on a frosty morning, shows that the old solid wall (centre), is letting out more heat than the new, insulated cavity wall of the extension (on the right) – in fact it's about as leaky as the (double-glazed) window at the left of the picture.



If you have cavity walls but they are not filled, it's well worth doing, and not too costly.

Thanks to South Staffordshire Council, Staffordshire County Council, and Marches Energy Agency for supporting this project.

Windows – and curtains!

Windows are great leakers of heat. Even with the best double glazing, windows are usually colder than walls. As the camera shows, curtains – especially floor length drapes – can be remarkably effective both in avoiding cold feet and in cutting bills.

And to end: some good news!

- We plan to continue to offer this service next winter. If you would like to book a Home Energy MOT, or to find out more about them, contact us at **info@kinverclimate.co.uk**
- The government's new Warm Homes Plan is set to provide serious funding to help people upgrade their homes to reduce energy bills.
- And last but not least: cutting our energy usage also cuts our carbon footprint – helping to reduce the extent of climate change for our children.