

# Mark Johnson



**Name:**  
Mark Johnson

**Position/occupation:**  
Operations Director,  
London Warm Zone,  
Warm Zones Ltd.

**Residence:**  
Havering.

“Londoners need to understand that shifting to a more sustainable lifestyle is not only needed, but will be to their benefit.”

Mark Johnson started his career in sustainable development working in an Energy Saving Trust Energy Efficiency Advice Centre on a graduate scholarship 10 years ago. He arrived for a 10 week placement, became the centre manager and has been hooked on sustainability ever since.

Warm Zones was set up in 2001 as a pilot funded by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) aimed at mitigating fuel poverty. The London Borough of Newham was the only area in London originally covered by the programme. Seven years on and supported by EDF Energy, the London Warm Zone has expanded far beyond its original ambit. The programme now covers 18 boroughs and manages projects delivering energy saving measures such as insulation, heating systems and income advice.

For Mark, the best thing about London is the variety and diversity the city offers, but the worst is the self-absorbed attitude of Londoners. He believes a sustainable, vibrant London in 2050 depends on taking a thorough approach to setting things up to succeed today.

## Sustainability experience

Working for London Warm Zone has allowed Mark to convert sustainability ethos to actual delivery and his career highlight has been taking the original pilot seven years ago and developing it to a sustainable development programme, recognised as best practice through out the energy industry. “We have developed Warm Zones into the UK’s most holistic, private sector energy programme. All our funding goes on delivering positive changes to thousands of homes.”

“We changed from a pure fuel poverty focus to a more complete approach of doing anything we possibly can to assist make people’s homes and lives more sustainable” explains Mark. “If we were already going into someone’s home to provide advice on heating and insulation, it made sense to inform them of other services that were also available to them.” As a result, London Warm Zone now delivers over £12 million worth of measures across a range of households in London including sub-regional decent homes programmes, fire safety checks, installation of renewable energy sources (such as solar panels) and income maximisation advice through a dedicated Benefits Team.

Partnerships with Bartlett School of Architecture at University College London and Yale University in the United States have led to groundbreaking research in health and safety in the home and delivery of renewable energy technologies.

## The sustainability challenge

For Mark, sustainable development means more than the climate change message that has dominated the headlines recently. “Sustainable development is about living and using resources in a way that minimises harm to yourself and to the world around you in order to ensure future supplies meet future needs - what you eat, how you act - looking at things in a more balanced way. If we continue to live unsustainably, there are serious economic, social and environmental ramifications.”

“The majority of Londoners live in private sector housing, yet private sector housing is often overlooked in sustainability plans in favour of new developments or socially owned housing for which investment is both easier to deliver and to justify. Private sector homes are often in the worst state of repair (adding to wider problems such as fuel poverty and social exclusion) and are identified as the sector responsible for the greatest levels of carbon dioxide emissions’.

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Through a bit of thought and effort in their day-to-day lives, Mark believes people can make a real difference. “Londoners need a basic understanding of the sustainability issues facing the planet and their city to help them switch to more sustainable habits. Small actions such as turning off your computer are as important as larger initiatives pushing to completely remove unsustainable options (such as older, energy inefficient lightbulbs). Many people already know they need to act and want to live a more sustainable lifestyle but they need to understand why this shift is needed.”

“London faces particular sustainability challenges in three areas - educating people to change their perceptions on sustainability and how they choose to live; on decent housing; and on the wider environment, encompassing not only buildings but cleanliness and the state of Londoners health in relation to their physical environment. One of the key groups we need to educate are project managers as they are often focussed on completing their own specific objective in order to receive grant funding – they need to be encouraged to move outside this narrow focus to avoid real opportunities to embed holistic, sustainable outcomes being missed. If we get this right, and help organisations to work in partnership, we can do a lot of good in spreading positive sustainability practices.

“The 2012 Olympic Games provides a great opportunity to promote London as a truly sustainable world city. The presence of the Greater London Authority as a regional co-ordinating body with a pro-active approach to sustainable development, that is willing to force the agenda, is also an advantage London has over other cities.”