



The Telegraph

DIY firms allowed to send staff into homes and push their own products in Green Deal scheme

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B&Q staff are to be allowed to enter homes, decide how to make them more energy efficient and then sell their own green products to householders, under a new Government scheme.



Photo: Christopher Pledger - B&Q is in the vanguard of the companies expected to profit from the initiative as the company has already forged strong links with the Coalition

The DIY giant is one of a number of businesses set to reap multi-million profits from the new Green Deal, which will see homeowners borrow up to £10,000 to fit boilers, insulation, double-glazing, doors and other eco-friendly features.

However, there will be fears that private sector energy assessors employed by B&Q and other firms may exaggerate the measures needed in the property to maximise their profits.

These green assessors are also under no obligation to offer homeowners any products other than those sold by their company.

Although the Green Deal is set to be launched in October, The Sunday Telegraph has today revealed that opposition is growing amongst Tory ministers.



B&Q is in the vanguard of the companies expected to profit from the initiative as the company has already forged strong links with the Coalition.

Last week, Nick Clegg, the Deputy Prime Minister, announced that the DIY firm had been recruited to run a pilot where B&Q cleared homeowners lofts before installing insulation. Unwanted items were then taken to the charity shops by the B&Q workers.

Ministers also picked the DIY giant to run a trial of the scheme in south west London last year which saw 70 homes fitted with insulation, draught-proofing, boiler upgrades and solar panels.

The Green Deal has the potential to be very lucrative for the retailer. B&Q sells an array of solar panels, with some costing nearly £5,000. Some of its radiators cost as much as £1,000, with boilers priced at around £600.

Homeowners will also be able to buy double-glazed doors and windows, which could easily cost several thousand pounds.

One senior energy industry source said: "There will be strict rules about the initial assessment - what the energy assessors can say needs to be done to the property to make it more energy efficient. But what will be less-regulated is the sales process that will follow.

"The Government feels that existing consumer protection laws will be able to ensure consumers are given a fair deal. We will not know for sure whether consumers are getting a fair deal until the scheme has been up and running for some time."

To pay for these eco-friendly upgrades the Green Deal will allow homeowners to borrow up to £10,000. This will effectively create a second-mortgage, which will pass to the next owner if the property is sold.

The Government hopes that outlay on green upgrades will save the homeowner money in the long-run by reducing their energy consumption and thereby cutting their heating bills.

However, there is no guarantee that the improvements will leave the household better off.

Unless homeowners are offered a good deal that is easy to understand by a company that they can trust, they are likely to remain sceptical about its value.

"Some homeowners are also worried about the potential impact on the future saleability of their properties, or do not like the idea of incurring a debt."

The Department for Energy and Climate Change maintains that the Green Deal is vital to help the UK meet its commitment to slash carbon emissions under the Kyoto Treaty.

The government hopes as many as possible of Britain's 26 million homes will be fitted with insulation, new boilers and other energy efficient measures under the scheme, which is set to launch in October.



Consumer Focus, the statutory consumer organisation, said: "It is essential that the government requires Green Deal providers to set out their offers, including the costs and potential savings, in a clear, comparable format.

"As the proposals stand, consumers risk being confused by offers for Green Deal plans that present costs and savings in different formats, have different ways of handling unexpected costs and different use of small print.

"Obviously, consumers are interested in potential energy savings, but they are also interested in comfort and are aware of rising energy prices."

The Government is poised to decide in the coming weeks which other companies will be allowed to deploy energy assessors under the scheme.

While B&Q is considered a certain to participate, others companies expected to participate include British Gas, Homebase, Wickes and EDF Energy.

Conservative ministers have grown increasingly sceptical of the plan in recent months and have tried to claim that policy was the brainchild of Chris Huhne, the Energy secretary who recently left the Cabinet. A growing number of Tories within the government are keen for the entire scheme to be scrapped.

Link:

www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/9204767/DIY-firms-allowed-to-send-staff-into-homes-and-push-their-own-products-in-Green-Deal-scheme.html