



Almost Eco House -Chris Tyacke

Elaine So Chris, can you tell us when and why you decided to an eco-friendly house here in Central Brittany ?

Chris Well we decided about eight years ago. We've always been concerned about older people being, um, short of energy due, due to cost and also the effect on the environment with fossil fuels etcetera. And so we decided we'd build an eco-friendly house in Central Brittany, um, although, at the time, there was a sort of lack of knowledge in Central Brittany regarding eco-building so really we had to start from scratch and see what we could do to make the house as efficient as possible.

Elaine. How did The planning of the build go? Were there problems and did y..., how did you find your builder?

Chris. Well we found, um a French builder. They were pretty good. They understood what we wanted to do and the type of design house we wanted. Um, we decided to go for a bungalow because we wanted to use the south-facing side of the roof as a solar array to generate power although that would be installed at a later stage. But initially we wanted to have Geothermal heating because that would be extremely efficient and cost effective long term.

Elaine. How long did the build actually take then?

Chris. It took about 12 to 18 months, French building tends to go in stages, uh, you can't really rush them, but, uh, no, it, it worked out fairly well.

Elaine. And how does it work on an eco-friendly basis as regards saving on heating and electricity ?

Chris. On heating it, it's pretty good we, uh___. With Geothermal, come the autumn /winter you basically switch it on, and you set the temperature and it runs for 24/7. We had it set at 20 degrees and it cost us about.. initially about 300€ a year to run. Now it's about 350. But it's a very even, steady heat, it's extremely comfortable.

Elaine. Do you get any income back from EDF?

Chris. Well a couple of years ago we had photovoltaic panels fitted by EDF. We've got a six kilowatt array on the south-facing roof which is about 24 panels and that gives us an income from EDF which more than offsets what we pay EDF for our electricity consumption.

Elaine. Have you any plans to develop your living in a very nearly sustainable house?

Chris. Well we always nibble around at the edges. We've LED lighting in which actually reduced the power consumption quite a bit on lighting. We've purchased a couple more solar panels for the garden to run pond pumps, the electric fencing for the chickens etcetera and so we're always looking at ways to improve the house efficiency.

Elaine. Do you help with taxes because it's a new build.

Chris. We did on the solar panels. We didn't on the Geothermal because at the time it wasn't our permanent residence so we dipped out on that one I'm afraid.

Elaine. What advice would you give to anyone who's perhaps thinking of doing a self-build which will be as sustainable as possible ?

Chris. I think research, uh, you have to hit the Internet and, um, find out all the information you can and find a builder who is sensitive to your ideas and knows what sort of goal you're trying to aim for.

Elaine. Thank you very much Chris, that's been very helpful I'm sure to our listeners who might be planning to build their own, and the best of luck with all your other schemes of self-sufficiency.

Chris. Thank you, you're very welcome.

