

Briefing

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Europe's largest low energy area is taking shape

An ambitious project of constructing 750 low energy buildings in Egedal Municipality is now halfway completed, and it has already been an inspiration for others and brought about a legislative change in 2007 to encourage all Danish municipalities to copy the initiative.

In 2003 the City Council of Egedal Municipality decided unanimously to become the pioneer-municipality within energy savings, and earmarked an urban area - Stenlose South - for low energy buildings.

“The project was originally initiated out of environmental concerns, but when we started doing the math we quickly saw the financial advantages – and even more so today if the energy prices will continue to rise,” says Ms. Mona Dates Jørgensen, Chief Planner at Egedal Municipality.

The City Council decided that the best way to save energy would be to focus on the building process and thus save energy from the start, instead of trying to persuade people to change their behaviour.

“With low energy buildings, people don't have to sacrifice anything in order to save energy - like taking the bicycle instead of the car - they just have to live in a house that's better insulated,” says Mona Dates Jørgensen.

Groundbreaking initiative

In the year 2007, the national legislation was changed to make it easier for Danish municipalities to make legal requirements for low energy buildings. However, back in 2004 Egedal Municipality had to make a detour and purchase the land in Stenlose South and re-sell it to the citizens.

This was the first time a Danish municipality had gone that far in energy saving initiatives. Chairman of the Egedal City Council committee for technic and environment, Mr. Willy R. Eliassen, who was mayor of the municipality when the initiative was decided, says:

“It was ground-breaking that we as City Council could agree on making energy and environment requirements for a whole urban area. We hope to inspire others as it is a real advantage for our citizens and the environment. The fact that the municipality sat at the top of the table and took responsibility as a land owner means that things are now really happening on the low energy arena.”

Rockwool Award 2007

The Rockwool Group decided to honour the initiative of Stenlose South with the annual Rockwool Award 2007. Managing director of Rockwool A/S, Johan Prior Knock, says:

“We wanted to acknowledge our respect for the dedication and foresight being shown with the Stenlose South project. When considering the increasing climate challenges, it's initiatives like this which must be given every support possible. The project is a big source of inspiration and a contribution to a development that's valuable to both society and the construction industry.”

Reducing pollution even further

Recently, the Egedal City Council took another energy savings step by deciding that all future buildings within the municipality will be required to be built as low energy class 1, the strictest within Danish legislation. The only exceptions are privately built single family houses.

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Combined with the Stenlose South project, this means that 2.5 percent of all citizens within the municipality will live in low energy buildings by 2009. This will result in energy savings of approximately 2 million kWh. The extent of the reductions should be seen in relation to the size of Egedal Municipality: 40,000 citizens and 16,000 existing homes.

For further information: www.egedalkommune.dk or contact Thomas Nordli, Rockwool International A/S, phone +45 46 56 03 00.