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Briefing No.5 on replicating The CHEESE Project by franchising

Working with trusted local community organizations, we have developed over six years the highly successful C.H.E.E.S.E. Project CIC (Cold Homes Energy Efficiency Survey Experts), which uses a unique thermal survey system to reveal energy loss from homes. Our aim is to combat climate disruption and fuel poverty, using our own *internal* Heatview® survey protocol, Heatview® software and camera equipment, and a sophisticated bespoke booking and management system.

First Thermal Ltd has been set up to *socially* franchise CHEESE to replicate the Project, developed in Bristol (and first in Malvern), throughout the UK. We have surveyed over 500 homes to date and have won 4 awards including the industry-leading Big Pitch Award for Innovation at [Futurebuild 2020](#). We are now seeking pilot franchisees with whom to replicate our business UK-wide.

How it works

With a low-cost Heatview® survey (around £200 + VAT) which takes over 2 hours, householders are enabled to save up to 1/3 of their energy loss with DIY methods and as little as £100. This gives rapid payback in comfort, health and cash. It also engages them to progress to deeper, dearer energy-saving actions, called retrofit. Most importantly, knowing what is precisely wrong with a home *first* leads to highly cost-effective, targeted retrofit and a saving in expense. We are disrupting the traditional, one-remedy-fits-all, top-down retrofit approach fostered by government and which has failed to attract and satisfy customers.

Heatview® surveying requires unique software, training, understanding of construction, a defined survey protocol with follow-up, and considerable responsibility. But the rewards are great. We have compared our thermal surveys with others offered by the industry, on the same home, and ours give far more useful information to householders.

"Far more accurate and empowering than any Energy Performance Certificate."
"The single most useful intervention I have had in my home since I started doing improvements."
Survey customers' testimonials.

We train Energy Tracers from the community, requiring no prior qualifications. They inspire two thirds of the householders we survey to begin energy-saving remedies within a month.

How you can get involved

We are developing our franchise business model which we hope to have defined by Spring 2022. It is important to appreciate from the outset that a franchisee is given a precise proven business plan to follow and has to replicate exactly what the franchise contract and detailed operations manual stipulates. One of the pre-cursors to awarding a franchise will be that the candidate takes the British Franchise Association's free on-line Prospective Franchisee Certificate [course](#) to understand what being a franchisee involves. We suggest this is a good starting point if you wish to move forward with us.

Our Franchise Model

We will:

- Operate as a Social Franchise - we are doing it for social impact first
- Charge a moderate franchise fee of £5,000 for franchisees, to make it accessible to local climate groups or consortia of groups. This covers our costs of training, development, administration, etc. Training is free for the franchisee
- It will be wise for a prospective franchisee to have around £10,000 capital to cover survey management and start-up costs unless these can be provided by an existing management structure
- Provide free training to CPD standard, with no prior qualification required
- Supply, on-hire, our unique Heatview® thermal camera and Blower Door, for £10 a day + VAT
- Charge a management fee of 15% on all paid-for surveys
- Require that you conduct a proportion of surveys for free to those on low incomes
- Provide you with a sophisticated online booking, payment and invoicing system to handle the administration of surveys
- Supply branding and advertising materials
- Charge a further 1% fee on paid-for surveys to cover national marketing etc.

Our requirements for franchisees include:

- Be a legal entity that can take legal responsibility towards the contract and your customers
- Be independent of the building industry and building retrofit work
- Community based social enterprises, probably not-for-profit (such as a Community Interest Company or Charity)
- A grouping large enough to handle a territory that will provide ongoing customers at scale and employ a salaried survey manager for at least 2 days a week
- Have sufficient investment or grant to pay the franchise fee
- We do not, however, exclude sole operators.

The advantage of being a franchisee is that you have a detailed, proven, profitable business model to follow and training and support to make it work.

(Please note that we are NOT offering courses in how to do your own DIY thermal imaging. Because that is far less effective.)

Mike Andrews, CEO. March 2022

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