

# GOT AN OPEN CHIMNEY?

**Reduce your energy bills in one easy step!**

People often underestimate the impact an open, occasionally used chimney has on their energy bills – but it is possible to tackle this in one easy, cheap DIY step!

## How much difference can you make to your energy bills?

Clearly we need a chimney if we are going to use a fire to heat our home, but in a typical household there will be times in winter when a fire is not lit or there is a second fireplace which is only used occasionally.

Considering how many chimneys there are in Britain, we don't know very much about their impact on our energy bills. Limited tests indicate that a single open unused flue may increase the total air flow through a typical three bedroom home by 20-30% - so by reducing the heat lost up your chimney, you could be saving loads of money!

## How do I reduce the air flow up my chimney?

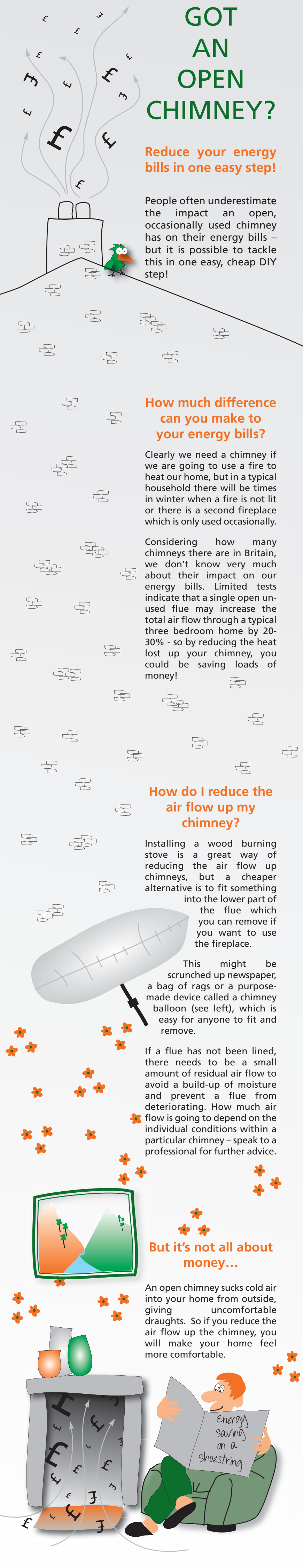
Installing a wood burning stove is a great way of reducing the air flow up chimneys, but a cheaper alternative is to fit something into the lower part of the flue which you can remove if you want to use the fireplace.

This might be scrunched up newspaper, a bag of rags or a purpose-made device called a chimney balloon (see left), which is easy for anyone to fit and remove.

If a flue has not been lined, there needs to be a small amount of residual air flow to avoid a build-up of moisture and prevent a flue from deteriorating. How much air flow is going to depend on the individual conditions within a particular chimney – speak to a professional for further advice.

## But it's not all about money...

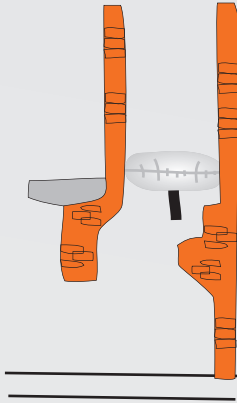
An open chimney sucks cold air into your home from outside, giving uncomfortable draughts. So if you reduce the air flow up the chimney, you will make your home feel more comfortable.



## Installing A Chimney Balloon

A chimney balloon is a reusable inflatable bag you put into position and then inflate via a long tube. When you want a fire, just deflate and remove it.

Before you put the chimney balloon in place, ensure the fireplace is cold and check there are no sharp protrusions from inside of the flue which may damage the balloon. Partially inflate the chimney balloon then put into position in a parallel section of the flue within easy reach of the fireplace. Then fully inflate using the tube attachment.



To allow some residual air flow, you may wish to leave a small gap at one side of the balloon.

**For a video on how to use a chimney balloon, see [cumbriagreenbuild.org.uk](http://cumbriagreenbuild.org.uk)**

**DON'T FORGET! If you want to use your fireplace, you will need to remove the chimney balloon first – but don't forget to put it back afterwards!**

## Draught Proofing

Draught proofing your home can reduce your energy bills - think about things like:

- Windows
- External doors – including your letterbox!
- Loft hatch – insulate it and fit a catch to stop it moving in windy weather
- Where floor boards are uncovered, seal gaps between floor boards and around room edges
- Fill gaps around where pipes and cables go through floors and external walls.
- Using heavy curtains on windows and doors, together with using draught excluders will also make a big difference.

*Information on draught proofing available at <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/In-your-home/Roofs-floors-walls-and-windows/Draught-proofing>*

However, always ensure there is adequate ventilation to provide good air quality and supply for any heating appliances.



## Top Energy Saving Tips on a Budget

- Get your loft properly insulated – you should have around 300mm of insulation in your loft. If you have less than this, put some more insulation in! The hassle of clearing out the loft will definitely be repaid by your lower heating bills! You may be eligible for free or discounted insulation - contact your local council for advice.
- Cavity wall insulation – if you have cavity walls and your external walls are rendered, you will definitely see a benefit if you have them filled. Again, check this out with your local council.
- Use your curtains! Close fitting heavy curtains will reduce heat loss through older windows significantly. Use a close fitting track, rather than a curtain pole to reduce heat loss and draughts.
- Too much moisture in your home will make it feel colder. Reduce how much moisture you are producing and you can turn down the thermostat and still feel as warm. Tackle this by things like avoiding drying washing indoors, using lids on saucepans when cooking and make sure you ventilate your kitchen and bathroom adequately when they are being used.
- Central heating controls – this one does involve spending money, but thermostatic radiator valves and improved controls and thermostats can reduce bills by 15%.
- Be more aware of your electricity use - use low energy lights, switch lights off when not needed, don't leave things on stand-by or use your washing machine on a lower temperature – or borrow an electricity monitor to help you understand your energy use better.

## Cumbria Action for Sustainability

Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS) is a local charity which promotes sustainable development across Cumbria. We educate people, initiate and support local sustainable projects, and maintain a network of people working towards sustainability. For more information on the work of CAfS and the services it offers see [www.cumbriagreenbuild.org.uk](http://www.cumbriagreenbuild.org.uk).

This leaflet has been produced as part of the SENS LEAF project, funded by the Department for Energy and Climate Change. SENS is the Sustainability and Energy Network in Staveley, a community group set up in 2007 to take action on sustainability projects in the village. The SENS LEAF project involves research into reduction of draughts by the use of chimney balloons and other targeted energy efficiency advice. For more details, see [www.sustainablestaveley.org.uk](http://www.sustainablestaveley.org.uk)

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