New York's innovative plan to slash building energy use by painting the city's roofs white reached a major milestone late last week when the mayor, Michael Bloomberg, coated the one millionth square foot of rooftop with whitewash.

The Mayor's Office said that under the CoolRoofsprogramme, which kicked off in May this year following a six-month trial, 1,500 volunteers including employees from 17 companies had painted the roofs of 105 buildings.

Speaking from the roof of the Betances Development in the South Bronx, the mayor said that the initiative would bring long-term environmental benefits to the city, which this year coped with record summer temperatures.

"We are tapping into the incredible spirit of volunteerism in our city. Harnessing that energy to tackle some of the challenges government can't solve on its own includes reducing the city's carbon footprint," he said. "By simply applying a reflective, white coating, we can reduce rooftop temperature by up to 60 degrees, which translates into reduced cooling costs and carbon emissions."

According to the Mayor's Office, a simple coating of reflective white coating can reduce air conditioning costs in one-storey buildings by 50 per cent, in two-storey buildings by 25 per cent and in five-storey buildings by up to 10 per cent. In addition, the paint can help to extend the life of the roof by reducing heat stress.

The mayor is keen to continue the programme, with research suggesting that coating all eligible roofs in the city could result in a one degree reduction in ambient air temperature during summer months. The city has experienced a number of summer blackouts in recent years as people become increasingly reliant on air conditioning.

1. What are some benefits of New York's CoolRoofsprogramme?
2. What does the mayor mean when he says, "We are tapping into the incredible spirit of volunteerism in our city."?
3. Do you think the CoolRoofs project can make a significant impact on energy use? Why or why not?
4. Do you think a CoolRoofs project would be successful in Italy? Why or why not?

Fonti : http://www.nyc.gov/html/coolroofs/html/how/how.shtml