



## Workshop Notes: Engaging your Community in Energy Saving & Retrofit

**Jacob Hall, Centre for Sustainable Energy**, gave a brief overview of the Access Project – research recently completed to understand the range of community groups engaged in energy saving and retrofit and the nature/scale of their activities. (See separate slide presentation).

In summary:

- 80 community organisations found to be currently involved in retrofit work
- Majority involved in domestic retrofit
- Majority are grant funded – Local Authority, Hubs, LEAD or Redress funding
- Focussed on energy justice/ combatting climate change
- Benefits: Local knowledge and trusted local voices
- Range of approaches from individualised to 1 stop shop
- Place based – street or area
- Fewer organisations doing non-domestic retrofit
- Other options – training up local people to deliver retrofit
- Retrofit survey tool

**Tim Crabtree, Dorset Community Energy**, described a feasibility study for a retrofit survey which they are currently undertaking, funded by a grant from the Community Energy Fund.

Initially started with energy advice. Connected with **People Powered Retrofit** (Manchester based set up by Carbon Co-op)

Assessment Tool

Also talking to **Lendology**, who offer low cost loans to householders

Under the Healthy Homes Dorset scheme there are grants available, such as HUG (Home Upgrade Grant), for low income families however this only covers 10-20% of population in Dorset.

### Challenges:

- There are hardly any retrofit designers/co-ordinator in Dorset – builders are not interested
- How do we train up young people? Colleges are only set up to deal with new build construction.
- Materials – most are very carbon intensive and made of oil – often cause more problems in older buildings which are designed to be breathable.
- Working with other partners – how to bring natural materials into it - involves changing regulations.



## Working Together to Accelerate Community Energy

22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024



### Useful contacts specialising in retrofit for old buildings:

Steve Cole, Centre for Sustainable Energy – [steve.cole@cse.org.uk](mailto:steve.cole@cse.org.uk)  
Tywi Centre <https://www.tywicentre.org.uk/>

**Thomas Crabtree, Sustainable Investment Business (SIB)**, advised of a new fund they are setting up, the **Energy Resilience Fund for non-domestic retrofit**, which will launch in the next couple of months. Highlighted that the benefits of retrofitting community buildings are more about making the building more comfortable so that more people can use it. Often the energy bills don't come down even if there is better insulation.

**Mike Andrews, The CHEESE Project CIC**, believes that top down schemes will not work and that domestic retrofit needs to be done from the community level. The CHEESE project sets out to determine what is wrong with the property through thermal imaging surveys. This can empower people and show them where to start. Often significant improvements can be made at very low cost. **Retrofit West** are currently offering 70% discount on surveys. CHEESE Project has found it very difficult to get Councils interested in doing surveys – it's a huge issue.

**David Saunders, Resilience Network**, described their different approach to retrofit using community solar installations to generate an income stream to fund retrofit - 'Energy first' rather than 'Fabric first'.

**Nick Murry, Zero North Wiltshire** asked about access to the community – how do you find and contact people?

**CHEESE Project** - do free surveys to those in fuel poverty but need grants in order to fund this. You don't have to spend a fortune to make a big difference.

**Roger Sabido, Ambition Community Energy CIC**, has used approach of walking down the street with a thermal imaging camera and then knock on doors.

**Nick Murry, Zero North Wiltshire**, also mentioned Cotswold District Council scheme – [Net Zero Carbon Toolkit](#).

**Adrian Oldman, Transition Stroud** - they have tried several times to set up a rooftop solar scheme but have been badly let down by installers. It's a difficult market in which to sell trust. Stroud has a lot of wealthy older people who would benefit from solar retrofit. Transition Stroud are currently trying to work out how to build back up – envisage taking a fee from the bulk buy.

**CSE** - There are also various 'Green Open Homes' schemes designed to get local people interested in retrofit by having the opportunity to visit a home that has had successful retrofit (or one that needs upgrading to show what is possible).

Further info at <https://www.greenopenhomes.net/>

North Somerset: <https://www.cse.org.uk/my-community/open-homes-events/>

Wiltshire: <https://www.cse.org.uk/my-community/community-projects/west-of-england-local-energy-advice-demonstrator-lead/>



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### Other challenges for retrofit:

- Renters are scared that if landlords do retrofit they will put the rent up.
- Issue with free cavity wall insulation (houses built in 1985)
- Dry lining issue with new builds

**Retrofit Centres** – there are several now operating e.g. [Retrofit West](#), covering Bristol, Bath & NE Somerset and S. Gloucestershire (WECA region).

Retrofit West has done well on engagement. Their next KPIs will be around delivery.