



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Net Zero Buildings Council (NZBC) Minutes
16:15-17:45 Wednesday 23rd March 2022
Second meeting

Attendees

Ministerial

- Eddie Hughes MP, Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing (DLUHC)

Participants

- Brian Berry, Chief Executive, Federation of Master Builders
- Emma Pinchbeck, Chief Executive, Energy UK
- Greg Jackson, Chief Executive Officer, Octopus
- Guy Newey, Strategy and Performance Director, Energy Systems Catapult
- Howard Porter, Chief Executive Officer, BEAMA
- Ian Hughes, Director of Policy, Local Government Association
- Jeremy Hipkiss, Group Customer and Change Director, Barratt Homes
- Karen Boswell, Managing Director, Baxi
- Kate Henderson, Chief Executive, National Housing Federation
- Stuart Allison, Strategy Director, Vattenfall Heat UK
- Simon McWhirter, Director of Communications, Policy & Places, UK Green Building Council
- Rob Gross, Director, UK Energy Research Centre
- Sadie Morgan, Board Member, Homes England; Founding Director, dRMM Architects
- Stewart Baseley, Executive Chairman, Home Builders Federation
- Viki Cooke, Co-founder and Chair, BritainThinks

Apologies from

- Lord Callanan, Minister for Business, Energy and Corporate Responsibility (BEIS)
- Ian Calvert, Association of Decentralised Energy
- Peter Smith, Director of Policy and Advocacy, National Energy Action

Officials

- Jessica Skilbeck, Director Portfolio and Affordability, BEIS
- Catherine Adams, Director Net Zero & Greener Buildings, DLUHC
- Net Zero Buildings Council Secretariat
- Ministerial and private office support

Actions

- Participants to provide any further views on themes for future NZBC meetings
- Secretariat to circulate participants' contact details, subject to their consent
- Relevant members to share research mentioned with ministers

Readout

This discussion does not reflect Government policy

Opening remarks

Minister Hughes welcomed the Council and said he was looking forward to discussion on the skills challenge arising from decarbonising heat and buildings, and how different sectors and government can work together to build the workforce capability to deliver the carbon reductions that will be needed. He highlighted the Spring Statement announcement on cutting VAT on energy-saving materials such as solar panels, insulation, and heat pumps.

Item 1. Remaining member introductions

Participants who did not get the opportunity at the first meeting were asked to introduce themselves, along with their views on headline challenges around heat and buildings decarbonisation and hopes for the Council. Notable topics raised were:

- The importance of action in local areas in different parts of the country, and the challenge of taking these differences into account and integrating into the policy delivery framework.
- Making the kind of changes needed for energy efficiency and decarbonisation as easy as possible for consumers
- The question of what the NZBC, as a group, can do to galvanise action on energy efficiency, ahead of next winter.

Item 2. Roundtable

Jessica Skilbeck, Director, Portfolio and Affordability, BEIS, addressed the group, making the following points:

- Since the Heat and Buildings strategy was published in October and the spending review settlement alongside it, there has been an increased focus on security of energy supply, and the impact of rising gas prices on consumers.
- In terms of energy efficiency improvements, while the case for change had grown stronger, individuals may no longer feel able to prioritise this work given other household cost pressures.
- Key questions around the skills challenge include
 - How we can assess likely demand for skills and roles, including at a local level
 - How we can retain and grow the employment capability that will be needed in a tight labour market, and retain these roles in the longer term,
 - From a consumer perspective, how can we support property owners and consumers with advice to make the best choices for their circumstances and ensure that systems are delivered to a high standard.

The meeting was then opened out to discussion between all members.

Key messages from points made by members in the discussion were:

- **The value in working at a regional/ sub-regional level to reflect the different building stock, industries, and communities in different areas.** There are important opportunities to work with local partners and through local structures to take into account the different needs and advantages of each local area, and to engage residents alongside.
- **Taking a whole house approach – the need to establish how skills requirements overlap between trades and work with builders to identify the skills and capacity needed.** Engaging builders is vital for upskilling and growing the market for home decarbonisation and retrofit, to ensure they see decarbonisation as priority and direct the skilled tradespeople they work with accordingly.
- **The role of energy providers and systems manufacturers to train skilled fitters who can also maintain products.** The development of heat pump installer roles is important for building the market, as well as apprenticeship opportunities for new heating technology skills.
- **The need for a system of assurance on the quality of the fitters, builders and others involved in energy efficiency work.** Standards, and effective enforcement of those standards, are vital for creating transparency within industry and minimising bad work that in turn reduces consumer confidence. A process of bringing together retrofit, energy performance requirements and credited product and installation standards would help provide clarity and aid understanding of the whole system.
- **The need to develop consumer confidence and knowledge about products, to help build the market.** Taking account of different consumer groups and their needs would be needed to simplify the home decarbonisation process as much as possible for consumers, as well as considering incentives. There are opportunities to use local-level resources to build up trust in the community, which will help individuals feel more confident to decarbonise their homes.
- **The need to build market confidence that there will be demand for green energy and energy efficiency.** Certainty through policy signals is important for industry to plan and co-operate. International experience shows that the key aspects of success in home decarbonisation are the quality of the installation, the skills base, and information provision.

Conclusion and Next Steps

- Minister Hughes thanked members for an informed and expert discussion and invited members to get in contact to suggest further themes for future discussions at the Council.
- The meeting was then closed.