



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Net Zero Buildings Council

10:00 to 11:30 Wednesday 30 June 2022
Third meeting

Attendees

Ministerial

- Lord Callanan, Minister for Business, Energy and Corporate Responsibility (BEIS)
- Eddie Hughes MP, Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing (DLUHC)

Participants

- Stuart Baseley, Executive Chair, Home Builders Federation
- Brian Berry, Chief Executive, Federation of Master Builders
- Viki Cooke, Co-founder and Chair, Britain Thinks
- Rob Gross, Director, UK Energy Research Centre
- Kate Henderson, Chief Executive, National Housing Federation
- Jeremy Hipkiss, Group Sales and Marketing Director, Barratt Developments
- Julie Hirigoyen, Chief Executive, UK Green Buildings Council
- Ian Hughes, Director of Policy, Local Government Association
- Greg Jackson, Chief Executive Officer, Octopus Energy Group
- Sadie Morgan, Board Member, Homes England; Founding Director, dRMM Architects
- Guy Newey, Strategy and Performance Director, Energy Systems Catapult
- David Pinder, Chair, Green Construction Board
- Howard Porter, Chief Executive Officer, BEAMA
- Mike Reynolds, Managing Director, Vattenfall Heat UK
- Peter Smith, Director of Policy and Advocacy, National Energy Action
- Barnaby Wharton, Director, Future Electricity Systems, RenewableUK
- Charles Wood, Deputy Director, Policy, Energy UK

Officials

- Selvin Brown, Director, Net Zero Buildings - Domestic, BEIS
- Catherine Adams, Director, Net Zero and Greener Buildings, DLUHC
- Net Zero Buildings Council Secretariat
- Ministerial and private office support

Apologies

- Karen Boswell, Managing Director, Baxi
- Ian Calvert, Chief Executive Officer, Association for Decentralised Energy
- Dean Finch, Group Chief Executive, Persimmon

Actions

- Government to consider comments made about EPCs and energy efficiency measures as part of the EPC Action Plan
- Government to consider comments on planning regulations and their interaction with retrofit work
- Members to explore working groups to tackle specific issues, including putting together a showcase of energy efficiency and retrofit best practice examples from across organisations and industries.

Readout

This discussion does not reflect Government policy

Opening remarks

Lord Callanan welcomed Council members and introduced the session on support for consumers to help them make energy-efficiency improvements to their homes, particularly in the present context of high energy prices. He welcomed the opportunity to meet participants and the opportunity for them to share their thoughts and expertise.

Item 1: New members

Lord Callanan welcomed participants who were attending the council for the first time, as delegates for members.

Item 2: Policy context

Selvin Brown, Director of Net Zero Buildings Domestic, BEIS, addressed the group, making the following points:

- The importance of the customer journey in taking up energy-efficiency measures and the need for a robust support service
- The Heat and Buildings Strategy made a clear commitment to improve energy-efficiency information and advice to the public.
- Over £6.6bn has been committed in funding for decarbonising buildings, but what is missing is comprehensive customer information.
- Given the scale of Government decarbonisation ambitions, support for consumers needs to significantly increase. Collaboration between Government and the Net Zero Buildings Council (NZBC) is essential to make this happen. Work is actively ongoing to move the Simple Energy Advice onto

a gov.uk website, with a digital call centre and face-to-face pilots to make contact with hard-to-reach customers, starting in the spring.

The meeting was then opened for wider discussion.

Key messages from points made in the discussion were:

- **Advice services to support those struggling with energy costs**
High prices mean there is now strong motivation for the public to think about low-cost ways they can lower their energy bills. Householders are thinking about how to get the most value for money, so are likely to go online for advice. This is an opportunity to give the right advice at the right time. For the service to be successful, it needs to work with trusted partners to create buy-in.
 - Local authorities have a key role to play as they understand their communities best.
 - Health authorities can identify customers with critical needs.
- **Collaborative working from this forum**
The NZBC contains a wealth of expert knowledge that can be brought together to create long-term plans to refurbish homes.
- **Lack of public awareness and uptake of energy-efficiency schemes**
Members made the point that visibility of Government-funded energy-efficiency schemes has been low. There are also barriers to engagement: only 5% of eligible households take up measures under ECO, and response to the capital schemes has been less than anticipated, even when there is no cost to consumers. Recent polling revealed that less than 30% of the population are willing to invest in energy-efficiency measures for their home. Schemes need to be more accessible and simpler.
- **Exploring other barriers to uptake**
Consumer concerns include whether heat pumps will heat their home as efficiently as a gas boiler; how much disruption installation will cause; and whether new technology will reduce their bills. There may be a risk that confidence in heat pumps might be eroded by an expectation that hydrogen boilers will be a viable alternative. There are signs that some consumers are choosing to wait for hydrogen-ready boilers to come to market.
- **The importance of case studies**
A bank of case studies is essential to show the positive experience of retrofit and build consumer trust. Social housing providers can play a key role in sharing positive messages about energy efficiency.
- **Simple energy-saving tips for consumers**
Every home with a gas boiler can reduce heating costs by between 10% and 20% by lowering their boiler flow rate. This is easy to do and does not reduce the home's warmth.
- **Bringing EPCs up to date with decarbonisation**

Many landlords with small portfolios are reporting they cannot afford to make improvements to properties to improve their EPC rating and may sell up. There is a need to move to EPC-linked mortgages in future to improve property energy ratings. Present EPCs need updating to reflect retrofit benefits on property value. DLUHC is developing an EPC Action Plan and will feed these comments into that work.

Conclusion:

- Lord Callanan thanked members for their wide-ranging comments and insights. The meeting was then closed.