

HECA Report 2020/2021

Introductory Questions

Three Rivers District Council

- Type of Local Authority : District
- Name, job title and email address of official submitting report

Joanna Hewitson, Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy Officer, joanna.hewitson@threerivers.gov.uk

Headline and Overview

- Does your Local Authority have a current strategy on carbon reduction and/or energy efficiency for domestic or non-domestic properties?

We have just completed our Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy, and are in the process of completing an action plan. This strategy references the necessity for carbon reduction in the housing stock, but the strategy for this has not commenced. We will be working out the route to zero and then this strategy will arise from that.

- If yes, please provide a link: Climate Change Strategy

- **If no, are you planning to develop one: Yes**

- What scheme(s) is your Local Authority planning to implement in support of energy saving/carbon reduction in residential accommodation properties in the next two years?

We are fully supporting the Green Homes LAD delivery with funding to improve around 150 properties in LAD1b and further funding coming from LAD2 for 35 homes (tbc).

We support EcoFlex and have a statement of intent.

- What has been, or will be, the cost(s) of running and administering the scheme(s), such as the value of grants and other support made available, plus any other costs incurred (such as administration) as desired.

We have secured one grant combined with Watford Borough Council for £1.758m, and our partner Watford Community Housing Trust is investing a further £700,000. This will improve approximately 107 homes in Three Rivers.

Our second grant is combined with Hertsmere Borough Council for £920,000 and this will improve approximately 25 homes in Three Rivers.

We are using 12.5% of these grants for the permitted administration and ancillary funds. We have allocated £20,000 specifically for Local Authority costs and the remainder is to support our delivery partners.

- What businesses, charities, third sector organisations or other stakeholders do you work with to deliver the scheme(s)?:

EcoFlex is delivered by our partner organisation YES Energy.

One Green Homes Grant bid is being managed by E.ON and our second Green Homes Grant LAD1b is being delivered by the National Energy Foundation. In order to find residents to benefit from the scheme we are working with local food banks, CAB, together with two Housing associations – Thrive and Watford Community Housing. We are also promoting the scheme through the Local Strategic Partnership.

- What has been, or will be, the outcome of the scheme(s)? These outcomes could include energy savings, carbon savings, economic impacts such as job creation and/or increased business competitiveness or societal impacts such as alleviation of fuel poverty and/or improved health outcomes etc.

The target for GHG is to raise homes which are either D,E,F,& G to an EPC C standard. At present we are at the beginning of the scheme and so do not have any understanding of what the savings will be.

Due to the current pressure on supply prices and demand for accredited contractors it is going to be difficult to deliver large fabric measures such as external wall insulation as this, in most cases cannot be installed for less than £10,000 in our area.

We have created one internal post using GHG funding to pay for an officer to administrate the projects. Our installer has appointed 3 young people through the kick-start programme and are anticipating the need to recruit and 20-30 staff members to meet demand. In addition our managing agent has recruited one post.

Communications

- Does your Local Authority provide any advisory services to customers on how to save energy? No advisory service, information can be found on the Council's website. The CAB can also provide this information and guidance on our behalf to residents when needed.

- If yes, please briefly outline how this is undertaken.

- How do you communicate or encourage energy saving amongst domestic consumers and/or local businesses?

Energy saving measures are being communicated through our social media and website. We are in the process of developing a new action plan which will increase the advice on a wide range of sustainability issues. We need a new grant scheme for the "able to pay market" such as the now ended GHG voucher scheme in order to tackle domestic carbon emissions. For businesses we are in the process of planning an engagement event, to promote energy saving.

Local Green Supply Chain

- Have you made any assessment, or undertaken any analysis of the existing capacity in your local energy efficiency retrofit supply chain to support the decarbonisation of buildings by 2050? If Yes, please summarise the outcomes.

No – just under pressure from trying to find competitive contractors for GHG.

- What actions are you taking, if any, to upskill and/or grow the local energy efficiency installer supply chain? This could include the facilitation of training, and local installer networking opportunities.

None we do not have the resource for this, but our principal installer has commenced a comprehensive training programme insuring all their operatives have NVQ Level 2 and have commenced training in low carbon heating.

- What actions are you taking, if any, to promote energy efficiency and the installer supply chain to consumers, and encourage households to consider energy retrofit?

None specifically other than the work we do with GHG and Eco flex.

- If no action is taking place in either of these two areas, please let us know of any barriers you have encountered.

We do not have resource for this kind of work. Climate Change Strategy Officer is executing the GHG and if the Government introduced a new scheme we would promote it, but we need a “hook” to engage residents on retrofit.

- How effectively is your LA able to engage (Trustmark/PAS2035/PAS2030 certified) installers?

Effectively through our partner organisations NEF and E.ON and it will be used on LAD2.

Do you have any plans to develop policies or initiatives in this space over the next five years as part of supporting your local decarbonisation efforts?

We have plans to make a plan! We have just had a PEAT analysis done of all the domestic housing stock in our District so we know the size of the challenge. It is clear in the next 5-10 years we need to tackle fabric first, then a strong push on decarbonisation, once the national grid starts to decarbonise.

It is important that technologies such as air source heat pump are widely available with the resource to install and maintain. We do need long term planning from Government with long term funding which will give the manufacturers and contractors the confidence and time to upskill and start manufacturing. Schemes which are rushed cause more damage than good, because suppliers lose confidence.

As a small District Council we need a good incentive scheme to build a campaign to tackle the 87% of owner occupied properties which are the worst performing tenure in our District. Finally it would be helpful if Government could make landlords raise standards to an EPC of C rather E, as this does trickle through resulting in improvement of stock.

Social Housing

What action, if any, has your LA taken to install energy efficiency or low carbon heat measures in social housing?

The only measure the LA has taken is to encourage our two main housing association providers to take part in the GHG LAD1B and LAD 2 schemes. One is retrofitting approximately 40 properties in the District as part of LAD1B and the other 25 as part of LAD2

Have these been installed to a satisfactory quality? 37 completed to date to PAS2030 standard..

What actions (if any) have your social housing partners taken?

Watford Community Housing Trust (WCH) have not undertaken any retro fit heating systems; however, they have been completing EWI and cavity wall insulation which is a large contributor to energy efficiency.

Thrive are installing Sedbuk A rated boilers on their replacement programmes, and are reviewing trialling air source heat pump. They are reviewing provision of heat metering on communal schemes as they are redeveloped.

- Do you have easy access to the information/knowledge within your organisation that you would expect to need for social housing retrofit projects? (e.g. stock condition; property data; approach to procurement; alignment with existing internal maintenance/upgrade plans; tenant engagement and management plans; costings)

WCH we have an asset management database which is continually updated.

Thrive hold stock condition data and general asset data, along with a full repairs history for all properties. They have full specifications for any works procured.

- If no, would it be easy/difficult to obtain this information?
- Have you experienced any challenges to retrofit, including during any previous government schemes you have taken part in (e.g. supply chain, funding, tenant cooperation, mixed tenure, split incentive, policy clarity, etc)? Please provide some detail. Have social housing partners reported any challenges to retrofit?

WCH are experiencing difficulties with contractors not available to work to PAS2035 standards.

Thrive see the challenge to retrofit at the moment arising from the knowledge gap. This is driven from the supply chain being nervous to upskill and invest when funding schemes are operating on very short deadlines for application and implementation periods. With a lack of confidence in future funding schemes there is nervousness to invest. Thrive find it difficult to budget when they do not know what the options are going to be. In addition the lack of supply chain preparedness simply drives inflation and reduces opportunities for retrofit

- How does your LA currently/how will your LA in future plan to go about identifying suitable housing stock and measures for retrofit?

We have undertaken a housing stock analysis with the Energy Saving Trust (EST) and now have a data base of all properties in the district and their condition, including some limited information on household income. This is currently helping drive the targeting for the GHG, and no doubt will be a bedrock to any future plans.

How do social housing partners identify suitable stock? By the same measures or via a different method?

Thrive have recently carried out a big analysis exercise of their stock energy ratings, this identified data gaps and poor EPCs. Some new EPC's were commissioned and using the all the EPC data, a

cloning exercise was undertaken to ensure the total stock requirements were identified. This has informed a medium term business plan and preparedness to apply for funding opportunities

- What considerations would make you more or less likely to apply for government funding?

We will apply for further funding, however if the individual property allowance was higher it would make it more attractive. Due to inflationary pressures on all aspects of the supply chain £10,000 is insufficient to tackle a fabric first approach on semi-detached and detached solid wall properties.

If the government launched a scheme for those not in fuel poverty, similar to the voucher scheme but executed by Local Authorities I would anticipate the outcomes would be much improved than the voucher scheme. We would be keen to apply.

An increase on the income cap would widen the scope of the scheme and enable more participants. Persuading residents to take part is a challenge.

Finally if Local Authorities knew there was going to be a continuous programme of funding we could employ an officer on a permanent basis, rather than short term contract with all the uncertainty that delivers. This would enable us to develop a strategy to decarbonise across the whole District not just those in fuel poverty.

If known, what is the opinion of your social housing partners?

WCH believe the government need to make the funding easier to apply for and for contractors to carry out this work, and Thrive would like a longer term commitment to funding, rather than the current short term approach, would allow for longer term planning and preparation for funding proposals.

- To what extent are social housing tenants willing or unwilling to undergo retrofit, and what are the barriers and facilitators to their participation?

WCH have reported that most residents are quite happy for retro fit to be undertaken; it is only a very small proportion of customers who do not like change or prefer not to be disturbed Thrive are similar, who report that a percentage of elderly tenants refuse a proportion of refurbishment works as they don't want the upheaval, some of these properties include full central heating installs.

- If known, is this the same opinion across all social housing tenants or is it different with HA and ALMO tenants? N/A
- Does the approach to retrofit change for leaseholders in mixed tenure blocks? What encourages them to co-operate?

For leaseholders, it always boils down to their expected contributions, Thrive have noted an increase in this during the past year following the pandemic, where they are challenging how necessary works are, and enquiring about how to fund their contribution.

Domestic Private Rented Sector (PRS) Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards –

- Is your authority aware of the PRS Minimum Efficiency Standards regulations requiring private rentals in England and Wales to meet a minimum energy performance rating of EPC Band E as of April 2020, unless a valid exemption applies? **Yes**
- Which team within your authority is responsible for, leading on enforcement of the PRS minimum standard? Please provide the contact details of the person leading this team.

Environmental Protection Gregory.Pilley@threerivers.gov.uk **lead on minimum standards for PRS. The Housing Supply Team are currently running a project to identify any EPC's that fall below minimum standard for properties that are part of the Council PR Scheme, the RDGS.**

- What method or methods does your authority use to communicate with landlords and tenants about the standards and other related issues? **We have a landlord's forum, and information on our website.**

- What barriers, if any, does your local authority face enforcing these regulations (e.g. identifying non-compliant properties/landlords, budgeting/resourcing, any legal issues)?

We do not have the resources to follow an active policy of enforcement, just reactive.

- Do you directly target landlords of EPC F and G rated properties to enforce these regulations?

If yes, how? If no, please explain. **Due to lack of resource our process is reactive, we would firstly try an informal route, but if this does not work we resort to enforcement under the powers available.**

Financial Support for Energy Efficiency

- What financial programmes, if any, do you have to promote domestic energy efficiency or energy saving? If applicable please outline the budget (and % of the budget that is used), where such funding is sourced and where it is targeted.
For

Apart from the GHG we have an annual budget of £19,500 for Energy Efficiency from which the Council provides top ups to the ECO funding. In 2019/2020 a total of £11,157.00 was provided as top ups towards 12 installations.

- What future investment for energy efficiency or low carbon heat measures do you have planned, and when are these investments planned for?

We will continue the Energy Efficiency budget as described above and will be bidding for funds from Sustainable Warmth for some off gas properties, another round of owner occupied, and more funds for social housing providers.

Fuel Poverty

- Does your Local Authority have a Fuel Poverty Strategy?

We do not have a strategy but are actively trying to implement the Green Homes Grant to areas of fuel poverty. We are also working with Hertfordshire County Council on a county wide poverty strategy which will consider this.

- What steps have you taken to identify residents/properties in fuel poverty?

We have had a study done by Energy Savings Trust and the southeast Energy Hub have provided some data. We have analysed this data to identify target areas for the GHG.

What blockers, if any, have there been in identifying households in fuel poverty?

None.

- How does fuel poverty interlink with your local authority's overall Carbon Reduction Strategy?

Tackling fuel poverty will be part of reducing the carbon emissions of dwellings in the District.

- Please highlight any fuel poverty issues specific to your area.

We have a high percentage of solid wall semi-detached and detached properties which are expensive to retrofit with EWI costs in excess of the £10,000 GHG

- What measures or initiatives have you taken to promote fuel cost reduction for those in fuel poverty? Include information on partnerships with local businesses or energy providers you have.

We have been actively marketing the Eco funding, and working with CAMB to identify those most in need.

Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery

Of the £2bn Green Homes Grant scheme introduced in summer 2020, £500m was assigned for Local Authority Delivery (LAD). LAD enables Local Authorities to bid for grant funding to support low income households in their area with energy efficiency and low carbon heating upgrades. £200m was made available through Local Authority grant competitions in 2020, known as phases 1A and 1B and £300m was allocated under Phase 2 between the five regional Local Energy Hubs.

- Has your Local Authority Participated in GHG: LAD? If yes, please indicate which phase you participated in and briefly outline the project.

As described above we have the following:-

Scheme 1 LAD1B: 215 homes split with Watford Borough Council which will install EWI on 87 Watford Community Homes and aiming to retrofit a further 128 owner occupied homes. The socially rented part of the project is 50% complete and the marketing to recruit the owner occupied has recently commenced.

Scheme 2 LAD1B: 25 homes for Three Rivers in a joint project with Hertsmere Borough Council. We are targeting primarily owner occupied sector and private landlords. We have a sufficient pipeline of leads to fulfil our District's quota of 25 properties for this scheme, but will struggle to have the work completed by the end of September.

Scheme 3 LAD2: we understand we should be receiving sufficient funding from the South East Energy hub to retrofit 35 homes, 25 of which will be for Thrive and the remainder owner occupied.

If no, please indicate what barriers prevented you from participation in the scheme.

• Would your Local Authority be in a position to manage the delivery of upgrades through a scheme such as LAD in 2022? If yes, please indicate the anticipated number of homes that could be upgraded per year.

Yes it is crucial we continue to tackle fabric first in our effort to reduce emissions. This year's work is ambitious, but hope that we develop a successful process for recruiting homes so that we can continue. We are aiming for 20 off gas properties a further 100 owner occupied and anticipate we could tackle this amount annually. In additional we would like a scheme to tackle "non fuel poverty" households" too, as it is imperative we provide an incentive tackle all homes in our District.

If no, please indicate what barriers would prevent you from delivering upgrades in your area.

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO)

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is an obligation on energy suppliers aimed at helping households cut their energy bills and reduce carbon emissions by installing energy saving measures. Following the Spring 2018 consultation, the Government set out in its response that ECO3 will fully focus on Affordable Warmth – low income, vulnerable and fuel poor households.

The ECO "Local Authority flexible eligibility" (LA Flex) programme allows LAs to make declarations determining that certain households in fuel poverty or with occupants on low incomes and vulnerable to the effects of cold homes, are referred to ECO obligated suppliers for support under the Affordable Warmth element of ECO.

LAs involved in the LA Flex programme are required to issue a Statement of Intent that they are going to identify households as eligible, and the criteria they are going to use; and a declaration that the LA has been consulted on the installation of measures in a home.

• Has your local authority published a Statement of Intent (Sol) for ECO flexibility eligibility? (Y/N)

Yes

Please answer the following questions to help us to understand LA Flex delivery in more detail:

• How many declarations were issued for low income vulnerable households?

All declarations need to meet a certain criteria, low income, benefits and/or health conditions which made worse by the cold. Currently the declarations we have in are based on the work needed to be undertaken to the properties of vulnerable residents, we have had 11 total declarations 2019-2021 please see the breakdown below:

2 Cavity Wall Insulations

5 Gas/Boiler

1 Gas Central Heating

3 Loft Insulation

• How many declarations were issued for Fuel Poor households? See above

• How many declarations were issued for in-fill? See above

• What is the highest income cap published in your SOI? £20,000 or less

• If you have used an income over £30k gross, what reason have you given?

• Do you charge for declarations to be signed? If so, please state how much? N/A, we do not charge for signed declarations

Smart Metering

- Please provide a brief statement outlining your current or planned approach to promote smart meter take up and supporting residents to achieve benefits.
- Please provide further information on activities relating to smart metering, including but not limited to:
 - a. Integrating approaches to delivering energy efficiency improvements in residential accommodation
 - b. Arranging for smart meters to be installed by energy suppliers in vacant social housing premises
 - c. Using social landlords to promote smart meter uptake
 - d. Including smart meters in landlord licencing schemes
 - e. Supporting residents who have had appliances condemned for safety reasons
 - f. Other supporting activities

We do not have any schemes to promote smart metering

Future Schemes and Wider Incentives

- Please outline any further schemes or wider initiatives not covered above that your local authority has carried out or is planning to undertake to improve energy efficiency in resident accommodation.

TRDC spearheaded a joint venture with Countryside Properties to redevelop South Oxhey in a Phased residential-led mixed use development including retail, and services with 659 dwellings, 161 of which are Affordable (a mixture of social rented and shared ownership). The project aimed through regeneration, to help tackle deprivation affecting South Oxhey, particularly in relation to improving access to education, skills and training, employment reducing crime, improve housing stock quality and reduce inequalities through the provision of targeted services in more efficient ways. Phases 1 and 2 are complete with work on the final phase (Phase 3) underway.

