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Consortium calls for realistic approach to eco-development in the North

The Housing Green Paper sets out Government's target for all new homes to be zero carbon rated by 2016, and for the creation of 10 new 'eco-towns' of between 5,000 and 20,000 homes. The Northern Housing Consortium has challenged this idea, suggesting that, in the North, some consideration should be given to at least one of these eco-towns being based on an existing township. Last week, Yvette Cooper, during a live web chat, responded to the Consortium's question on this issue, conceding that there is scope to use the ideology behind eco-towns to upgrade existing developments, and welcoming proposals from the region as to how this could take place.

John Moralee, Chief Executive of the Northern Housing Consortium, commented, "The Green Paper has focussed heavily on new homes. Whilst proposals for new zero carbon homes are extremely welcome, there is little mention of the energy efficiency of the existing stock in the green paper – the North has high numbers of pre-1919 stock, which is much more difficult to bring up to modern energy efficiency standards. We need to ensure that proper consideration is given to the impacts, effects and long-term sustainability of the existing stock. Furthermore, with the land availability issues faced in the North, there are few local authorities within our membership who have the capacity to create entirely new towns to meet these eco standards."

NHC recently published a new report, "Accommodating a Greener Future", featuring case studies on the measures that housing providers across the North are beginning to undertake in order to refurbish their existing stock and help them achieve greater energy efficiency in their new and existing housing stock and combat climate change. John Moralee added, "This publication is intended to give housing organisations ideas and inspiration for what they can do to protect the environment and move towards more carbon neutral homes and communities, and to share some of the best practice that's out there. The North has an enviable track record in terms of the innovation that's been brought to regenerating outdated stock and meeting the needs of 21st century consumers, and increasingly, this will have a strong environmental focus to it. We look forward to working with our members to produce proposals in response to Yvette's invitation."

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