



BRIEFING DOCUMENT

Monday saw the kick-off event for #OurNorth Net Zero - the Northern Housing Consortium's (NHC) programme of activity for members to come together and build the connections and confidence to lead on decarbonisation in the North of England. Around 120 NHC members joined the webinar from housing associations, local authorities and ALMOs from across the region.

Tracy Harrison, Chief Executive at the NHC, introduced the session. The Government has made a strong commitment to reaching Net Zero through investment in clean energy and green infrastructure. That means investing in our existing homes, 85% of which will still be standing in 2050. A quarter of all carbon emissions across the North are from our existing homes, which are older and colder than the national average, and upgrading these homes to make them fit for the future will be essential if we're to reach Net Zero.

Retrofitting has the potential to significantly contribute to government's Net Zero ambition helping the levelling up agenda, reducing fuel bills and making long-term reductions on demand for NHS services. Tracy added that the Consortium were pleased to see the Chancellor announce an initial allocation of £50m for a Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund although added that this pilot scheme must soon be followed by the full £3.8bn committed to the Fund in the Conservative Manifesto. Tracy explained that for the NHC, it was great to see the Chancellor acknowledge the job-creating potential in particular of home retrofit. [Net Zero is an NHC priority for recovery](#), because we know that retrofit across all tenures could create 20,000+ jobs in the North,

Global Climate Action & the Race to Zero

NHC Executive Director (Policy and Public Affairs) Brian Robson sets out what's in store for members as the NHC launches #OurNorth – Net Zero. He said...

Our members are at the heart of everything the NHC does, so it's only natural that we want to support you through the challenges and opportunities presented by reaching Net Zero. We've been engaging with members to understand how we can best do this, and we've learnt lots – thank you!

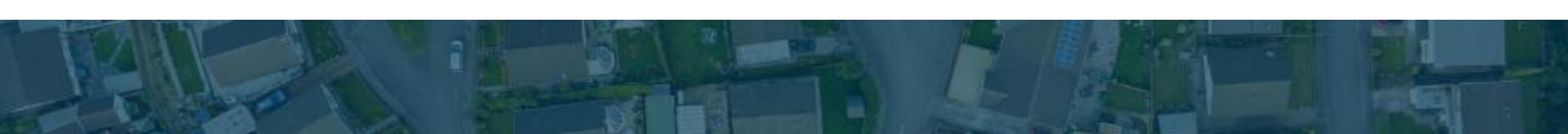
I'd summarise our insights in five points: it's not if we do this, but how. Over 60 of our council members have already declared climate emergencies, and housing associations are planning for Net Zero. Secondly, the evidence base is plentiful, but it's complex and dispersed. We need to cut through that for members and those we're seeking to influence. Third, our homes are older and colder, and low values can make investment harder to justify. But we're an ambitious part of the world, and there is local and national political support behind this agenda: Net Zero and Levelling-Up are a potentially salient combination. Next, decision-makers – at central government, in city regions and in our member organisations – are looking for solutions. Finally, we know that decarbonisation can deliver a range of benefits. This isn't just about being greener, it's also about being healthier and wealthier.

The NHC is in this for the long-term. Our member-led board has agreed that this will be a core policy objective for us for some time to come. Our long-term aim is to ensure that homes and lives are improved through the decarbonisation of the North's existing housing. Over the rest of 2020, we are looking to deliver on two outcomes through #OurNorth – Net Zero. We want NHC members to feel connected and informed and we want to contribute to securing the policy and resources you need to decarbonise homes in your communities.

To help us secure the policy and resources necessary, we're commissioning two research projects – one looking at the economic impact of decarbonisation, particularly around the jobs and skills opportunities it offers; and a high-level evidence tool that will present the relative costs and benefits of different interventions to different types of home. We're aiming to make both these projects useful to decision-makers and to our members.

The #OurNorth - Net Zero launch event we held on July 13th marks the start of the activity we have planned to build NHC members' connections, confidence and knowledge. On November 3rd, we'll hold our flagship Northern Housing Summit online for the first time. Our headline speaker is Lord Deben, Chair of the Committee on Climate Change. In the run-up to the Summit, we're running a series of webinars on aspects of the Net Zero challenge – enabling members to connect with each other and hear from experts. In response to sector leaders, who said they'd value a safe place to discuss these challenges with peers from other organisations, we'll be running Action Learning Sets which will be specifically focused on Net Zero challenges. Finally, our executive engagement programme, Influence North, will offer Chatham House opportunities for executives to come together with influential voices on the Net Zero agenda.

Of course, our commercial arm, Consortium Procurement, will be providing a range of procurement solutions to meet member's needs. Any surpluses generated from this activity are ploughed back



into the NHC's influencing and member engagement work. So, every time you select one of these solutions, you strengthen the voice of housing in the North. The whole NHC team is really excited about aligning our member engagement, influencing and procurement activity around a common challenge like Net Zero. Members are at the heart of everything we do – so do let us have your feedback, your suggestions for webinar topics, and share your positive practice with us. Let's use our collective voice and capacity to crack the Net Zero challenge.

All Northern Housing Consortium #OurNorth - Net Zero webinars are free for NHC members – the first is on September 9th and will consider how we turn the ambition behind climate emergency declarations into policy and action. Book your place using this link:

https://www.mynhc.org.uk/event/general?id=Climate_Emergencies_-_Ambition_Policy_Action3247105678

Matthew Phillips, Team Lead: Global Climate Action, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Leading on the coordination of climate commitments from around the globe through the UN's Global Climate Action Portal, Matthew is soon to be seconded to London to support the Race to Zero campaign - part of the diplomatic push to increase decarbonisation ambitions in the lead up to the COP26 international climate change summit in Glasgow, November 2021. The campaign aims to get organisations outside of government to join the race to decarbonise.

Matthew discussed the Race to Zero campaign and its emphasis on the role of stakeholders outside of national governments in achieving Net Zero carbon emissions by 2050 at the latest, with insight into the international movement Northern Housing Consortium members form an integral part of.

Five years ago, governments across the world got together and agreed collectively to keep global warming below 20C to prevent runaway climate change. Explaining that this agreement is currently in jeopardy, Matthew detailed the treaty's mission statement, invoking a whole-society approach and bringing all constituencies together around the target of Net Zero by 2050. Maintaining the targets of the Paris Agreement – to keep global temperature rise this century well below 20C above pre-industrial levels and as close to a 1.50C limit as possible - is paramount at a time when our interconnected world is more vulnerable than people may have thought pre-COVID.

UNFCCC's current objective is to build momentum and they have they have built the biggest alliance ever with almost 500 cities and nearly with 1000 businesses signed up, with all actors covering 53%

of global GDP and almost a quarter of all CO² emissions. The project aims to cover 70% of global GDP by COP26 next year, diversifying the list of those involved as the campaign progresses.

An ‘alliance of alliances’ of expert bodies in their fields, Matthew stressed the importance of maintaining a robustness on what net-zero means for the scheme. As such the UNFCCC have a four-point minimum criteria for those pledging to cooperate to reach Net Zero by 2040 or earlier, putting in place an operational plan to bring a creditable alliance, demonstrate how they are on the road to achieving their goals, and finally publishing and reporting on annual progress to validate whether the campaign is on track.

Finally, Matthew explained how you can join the ‘race to zero’, with different sectors represented by different initiatives – some for business, cities, universities etc. It is a genuinely inclusive programme and is seeking to add new sectors this year.

Of particular interest to attendees – under the campaign the ambitions of specific regions are represented by the [Under 20C Coalition](#). In the United Kingdom, Bristol City, Greater Manchester City, and the devolved Governments of Scotland and Wales are individual signatories.

Tracy Harrison thanked Matthew for his presentation and expressed the parallels between the ambitions of those involved in the campaign and the social housing sector in the North. Whilst primarily being at the ‘pledge’ stage, there is great appetite within the sector to commit to Net Zero and decarbonisation efforts at great pace.

Jamie Driscoll, Mayor, North of Tyne – Keynote

The metro Mayor of the North of Tyne Combined Authority provided the keynote address in the webinar, stating that one of his first acts as Mayor was to declare a climate emergency. Once we hit 2-3°C there will be a huge impact on global food output, as well as mass migration as a result. There will be disruption to the global economy that will overshadow anything we’ve ever seen.

Referencing the cliff-hanger scene of the Italian Job to highlight the precarity of the current climate situation, Jamie explained that the creative solution that the film hints at is what we now need. Stressing the importance of the situation he said that the planet is ‘match-funding’ our efforts through a feedback loop: as we heat the planet the consequences in turn exacerbate the situation. When people realise their position – the coach teetering over the edge – and that this isn’t just about individual responsibility but how we reshape our system and economy then we’ll identify a system which will get us to Net Zero.

The Mayor offered praise to the efforts of industry, citing that emissions have been dropped consistently for a while – business is getting itself together. We have not seen reductions in

transport emissions – they stubbornly persist. In the domestic realm emissions are very high, particularly through the demands of space and water heating. The NTCA have allocated the funding for our Green New Deal and will support the offshore industry to decarbonise, people to retrain in job in renewables and firms to make transitions. Through a partnership deal with the United Nations, climate change teachers have been working in schools throughout the region. Not all of the North currently benefits from devolved arrangements but there is a deal in the pipeline, and while the authority don't currently enjoy devolution on transport they hope to realign with the South of Tyne area and rectify this, seeking to make transport in the region Net Zero in ten years.

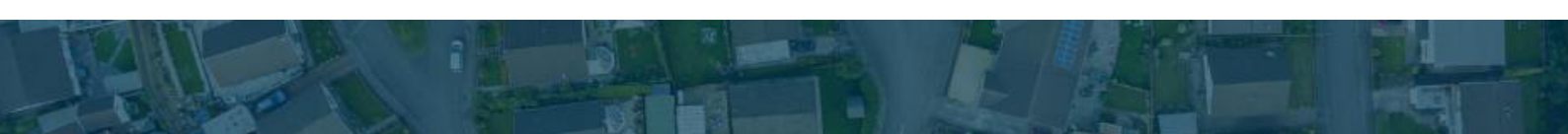
On retrofit, Jamie explained the complex problem we face. There are problems in owner occupied and PRS homes as well, with the financial cost to repair causing inaction. There are 26 million retrofits needed nationally – meaning we need to retrofit one home every 40 seconds to reach our goal by 2050. There is simply no capacity at this stage – we need major investment in the supply chain. 13% of homes in the region are non-decent, causing various physical and mental problems. North of Tyne are trying to demonstrate 'at-scale' MMC solutions, including laminated timber homes and believe that businesses will step up if they believe that the solution is viable. Driscoll welcomed the voucher scheme as possessing some merit but warned the belief that if you give vouchers then the market will step up is not necessarily true and wouldn't produce best value, calling for an holistic plan. Driscoll called for policy to shift, with stamp duty implications for homes which aren't friendly to net-zero goals. Planning legislation could ensure that homes are south facing and that new estates are bus-friendly.

Looking to the next spending review he explained that the NTCA would call for more money for public transport, particularly with more digital solutions. They'd like to see significant investment in skills and education and a commitment on housing and more than anything else we want fiscal devolution.

The Northern Housing Consortium Member Panel

Gail Teasdale is chief executive of Broadacres, a rural housing association spread across North Yorkshire. Their agenda is making their 40% off-gas stock more sustainable, with their 2018 corporate strategy informed by feedback from residents who reported cold homes, aiming for all homes to be SAP C and fitting over 100 air source heat pumps. Speaking more broadly Gail explained that technical solutions to the problems we face exist, it's the appetite to act which does not.

Paul Shevlin is chief executive officer at Craven District Council, a smaller rural authority covering 460 square miles. Their aim is a tall task with unique problems, including a lack of public transport



and poor refuse infrastructure. Paul warned of the ability of rural authorities like his to achieve zero carbon targets under current funding constraints.

Energy efficiency has been improved within Paul's patch through grant schemes with Yorkshire Housing in a project which should provide a third of the council's energy needs through a biomass generator. As tourism comprises a large proportion of the areas GDP and demand here has brought EV charging ports. Paul explained that incentivisation is the best way to bring about positive change, explaining that culture and habits don't change if you make it difficult for people, for example good cycling and walking routes will attract people. Craven has huge issues within the PRS, especially with fuel poverty and that this will present a significant problem in retrofitting houses in the district.

Alan Boddy, Executive Director at Livin gave a practical explanation of how they've began their journey. Across their 8,5000 properties, 75% of residents struggle to pay their bills. This in turn costs Livin £8.5 in repairs and £6.2m in capital works to counteract their older, colder stock. Their retrofit ambitions have a £170m funding gap but they've adopted an invest to save approach and believe that they will see handsome returns here and as such they've developed a thorough 23 point strategy to enable the housing association to tackle the issue.

Ian Thompson, executive director and corporate lead on climate change at Magenta Living discussed the housing association's recent focus on the climate change agenda. They have carried out a zero-carbon study which provided a large cost to reach net-zero by 2050 but also a spurred a plan to begin their journey. The plan has an initial ambition to hit EPC C across all properties by 2030 and their road map priorities the early years, particularly of pilot work and the immediate adoption of strategic KPIs. Ian echoed the need to incorporate the Net Zero agenda into HAs wider plans, citing duplication of work and future retrofitting as being highly detrimental.

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