

Invest in decarbonising social homes to create jobs, says sector champion

Thousands of green jobs could be created across the north of England if investment is targeted into the social housing sector, according to a North East-based membership body.

Sunderland-based Northern Housing Consortium has launched a report that suggests 77,000 new jobs could be created through decarbonisation of the North's housing stock – a move it says would also lower emissions, bring down household bills and improve living conditions. The report's authors call for long term commitment from the Government to grant funding to give contractors and housing providers the certainty they need to invest in energy efficiency upgrades.

About £500m per year up to 2030 and £1bn per year up to 2035 is needed to deliver at the right scale, Northern Housing Consortium says. It also calls for further devolution of funding so that mayoral combined authorities can lead energy efficiency efforts and 'net zero hubs' to carry out the function for those areas without devolution deals.

The report says: "So far, delivery of schemes and decarbonisation programmes in social housing has not been perfect. There have been issues relating to the high-level structure of funding streams, as well as smaller policy features, that make it difficult to strategically plan the decarbonisation of the housing stock and to deliver individual schemes."

In compiling the research, Northern Housing Consortium spoke to 50 people involved in decarbonising social housing stock, including those from affordable housing providers, in local government and mayoral combined authorities, from contractors

and in procurement.

On skills, the report suggests mayoral combined authorities should be given financial capacity to “develop and scale up support initiatives” to bring new people into the retrofit and construction workforce as well as input to Skills England’s initial strategy for post-16 education from social landlords.

Amongst other recommendations is a call for the Government to provide a new funding stream to replace homes that are not financially viable to decarbonise, with modern, zero-carbon, affordable homes as part of regeneration schemes. It suggests that in the meantime, up to 30% of the £11.5bn Affordable Homes Programme funding – which aims to deliver 180,000 homes nationally – should be allowed to fund replacement homes.

Tracy Harrison, chief executive of the Northern Housing Consortium, said: “There are nearly a million households in the North living in fuel poverty. Investing in energy efficiency improvements will significantly bring this number down, as well as playing a big role in helping us reach net zero by 2050.

“The social housing sector owns 1.3m homes in the North. It is the only housing tenure that has the organisational scale to significantly boost the supply chain and create thousands of new jobs. Investment in social housing is key to getting the infrastructure in place to roll out more energy efficiency upgrades to the private rented sector and homeowners.”

You can view the Northern Housing Consortium’s report [here](#).