

Saving Energy in Traditional North East Homes

Conference Q&A – 50 questions

- 1. Will the slides be available at the end of the meeting?**

Some of the speakers have made their slides available and these are uploaded to <https://www.savingenergyaberdeen.co.uk/conference/>. All recordings and useful links are also available on this page.
- 2. What is the strategy/ legalities for dealing with Granite City Centre flats with different owners/renters?**

The legalities depend upon the title deeds of the property, the website <https://underoneroof.scot/> has lots of information and advice. There is also information and advice developed as part of the European Funded ACE Retrofit project on the Saving Energy Aberdeen website.
- 3. Could we hear a bit more about the enhanced EPC assessment for granite building homeowner?**

Patrick McCurdie, Policy Manager, Scottish Government advised that EPC reform is being currently being reviewed, a consultation was carried out earlier this year, the consultation document can be viewed [here](#). Proposals for tailored specialist advice for the technical challenges for owners/landlords of Traditional homes in 2022.
- 4. Who will the consultation involve for the EPC metric reforms?**

Patrick McCurdie advised that the Enhanced EPC Assessment design process will incorporate liaison with bodies such as RICS, RIAS, PAS 2035 energy assessment teams to ascertain the challenges for Traditional houses.
- 5. Please could Patrick define 'cost-effective' in the requirement to meet EPC band C?**

Patrick McCurdie advised that there will be a support process to guide homeowners and landlords to meet EPC band C. There are ongoing Scot Gov consultations on areas such as a 'price cap' or a 'payback' test where energy savings will measure against costs of installations for Traditional buildings.
- 6. How will people know who to consult about the correct way to improve energy performance (eg insulation) without creating long term problems to the fabric of the building.**

You can search for qualified retrofit assessors and co-ordinators within your area on the TrustMark website, <https://www.trustmark.org.uk/homeowners>
- 7. When something is imposed under force of law, the providers tend to ratchet up their prices. How will this be controlled to make the measures affordable and accessible to homeowners?**

The Scottish Government is very much aware of this and will review further auditing processes for retrofit.
- 8. Does Aberdeen city council offer grants to retrofit and who do you contact**

Please contact SCARF, partner organisation for Aberdeen City Council to get help of what funding is available for homeowners. Tel: 01224 213005

9. Who would undertake a retrofit assessment in Aberdeenshire?

You can search for qualified retrofit assessors within your area on the TrustMark website, <https://www.trustmark.org.uk/homeowners>

10. Is Whole House retrofit offered/available in Aberdeen?

Yes, as question 9, please consult the Trustmark website.

11. Has the amount of manhours and tradesmen to carry out this work been estimated - the scale of work is enormous.

Matt Clubb, Architectural consultant responded: The scale of the challenge is enormous. The Construction Leadership Council estimate an additional 400,000 people need to be working in the sector in the UK. Their proposal for a National Retrofit Strategy is worth a read if you're interested in this, you can read it [here](#). We certainly need to start building the skills base in the North East ASAP.

12. We had a company called "Union Technical" who are working with Aberdeen Council and offering 'funding' to replace my existing gas boiler with a more efficient one.

Union Technical are in partnership with SCARF to provide ECO eligible works to improve energy efficiency for private homeowners in Aberdeen. For further details on this and to check if you can get a free impartial survey, please contact Union Technical or SCARF as per their leaflet or website.

13. Will you be talking about available grants to help with costs?

Yes, Neil Stuart, In Home Specialist discussed grants & loans in Part 2, please contact Home Energy Scotland free on 0808 808 2282

14. Is Icynene (a foam based insulation) an alternative to Areogel for insulating behind lathe/plaster walls, in roof spaces and under floors?

We shall focus further on insulating materials in Conference 2022. Moses Jenkins advised some good methods of 'breathable' insulating in his presentation in Part 1. Please also refer to HES publication which can be found [here](#).

15. Does the retrofit assessor carry out the EPC?

Yes, in Part 2 we discussed the Retrofit Assessment including an EPC and Condition Survey.

16. Is there an indication of how many properties would still fall below EPC band C after improvements (cost effective etc) are made?

It hard to predict where we will be in a few years. The Retrofit Advisor role is pivotal, to explain the benefits of making improvements and where to start your energy efficiency journey.

17. EPC band C in a hundred year old west end granite flat. I just don't see it being possible. Listed building, conservation area, I'm not allowed to even consider double glazing!

In Part 1 Moses Jenkins, HES discussed double glazing installed in the original frames. Argon Gas filled slim line double glazing is possible to be installed in the original frames, along with a refurbishment of the window itself. A further measure to increase the EPC score SAP rating is to install Solar PV and Battery.

Matt Clubb, architectural consultant responded, have you investigated "Heritage Glazing units"? I've installed them in a Grade B listed building, and they are endorsed by HES. An old case Study [here](#)

18. Do you also consider embodied carbon in buildings (especially mid century blocks such as those in central Aberdeen)?

Scottish Government and specialists have weighed up the difference between new materials and new houses. Retrofit is by far the best solution for older housing stock such as Traditional granite/stone.

19. How safe is installing a heat pump in the exterior of a granite flat above ground floor?

Martin Callachan; Retrofit Advisor/Co-ordinator advised yes this is safe although for maintenance it is best to be on the ground if possible, no issues other than ensuring Title Deeds allow (if the block is shared or factored).

20. What happens if the property is listed and/or in a conservation area? Will you require Listed Building consent for the likes of heat pumps and new windows as they are changes to the fabric of the building? And how 'desirable' is having a heat pump stuck on the side of a listed building?

A Retrofit Advisor will advise you. All dwellings are different so specific advice is required. Please contact our speakers to provide advice and develop your medium term retrofit plan. You can search for qualified retrofit assessors and co-ordinators within your area on the TrustMark website, <https://www.trustmark.org.uk/homeowners>

21. I have discovered that there are no firms in the Aberdeen area who do cavity wall insulation - this is very frustrating as our 1960 semi in Aberdeen requires the cavity to be refilled as we can look down the cavity from our loft and can see that the existing white wool filling has settled or disappeared altogether! Can you advise who I can contact to get the work done.

There are a number of installers based elsewhere in the UK that carry out insulation works within the Aberdeen area. ACC do not promote any one installer or product, please contact Home Energy Scotland free on 0808 808 2282 for advice on accredited installers who cover the Aberdeen area.

22. Is there a real solution for heating traditional homes? Heat pumps require a good level of insulation. Most alternative energy forms conflict with maintaining original features as they require invasive methods to support the required insulation levels.

All our speakers advised a fabric first approach; therefore, recommend insulation improvements first to lower your energy consumption. Heat pumps may still be feasible in some cases. District heating would be a good solution for many areas if connection becomes available. There is new research into microwave electric boilers, which can be retrofitted into existing gas or oil-fired systems, therefore new technologies are coming. National Grid are working towards introducing hydrogen into the gas grid with the aim of decarbonising the grid. If they are successful, then homes currently supplied by gas could easily switch to hydrogen.

23. Any views on biomass? So far discussion appears to be about heat pumps.

Biomass may be a suitable solution for some rural areas but not in high numbers. We need to consider that trees & plants being alive are much better for reducing carbon.

- 24. We have an upstairs flat and by retrofitting wall insulation, the already small kitchen would shrink significantly. Also, the interior stair into the property is on the outside wall and I cannot see how this insulation could be installed here. Will there be help available for queries such as these?**

Moses Jenkins, HES discussed a thin breathable material such as 10mm Aerogel in his presentation in Part 1, perhaps suitable for these situations although expensive. Depending on the construction type, blown insulation into the cavity (behind the lath and plaster, or drywall) maybe an option. Again, please contact a retrofit advisor as every situation is different.

- 25. Can I find out if there is any quality checking after work is completed under an energy grant to ensure the work is being completed satisfactorily?**

The benefit of appointing a retrofit advisor/co-ordinator is that they will inspect every measure, ensuring your improvement process is undertaken to an appropriate quality standard. There are also some tips on the Saving Energy Aberdeen website about finding a contractor and ensuring they have the correct accreditations and guarantees, [here](#)

- 26. What are the noise levels associated with air/ground-source heat pumps?**

Regular servicing and maintenance is necessary for optimum operation. Home Energy Scotland can provide advice on heat pumps, please refer to: <https://www.homeenergyscotland.org/meet-our-heat-pump-heroes/>

- 27. Insulation behind lath and plaster & IWI - is there still a void space for breathing? Does this increase the chance of moisture from bridging?**

Filling the cavity between solid wall and lath and plaster will remove the cavity but use of hygroscopic and permeable insulation should retain breathability of the wall. It may however be more difficult to establish the exact width of the cavity and remove any debris build up which would reduce the performance of the insulation behind lath and plaster and could form potential thermal bridges. It is also recommended to note that this process is not easily reversible and should be only considered with an aid of experienced installers and Retrofit/Architectural professionals to identify wall properties and any issues at the outset. This could be achieved through intrusive and non-intrusive investigations including thermal imaging survey of the wall and WUFI modelling for better understanding of the moisture routes through the wall.

- 28. Does installing internal insulation on granite buildings increase the chances of damp/condensation?**

Moses Jenkins, HES discussed breathable wall options in Part 1. Martin Callachan, Retrofit Advisor also commented if done correctly with the right product, there should not be any issues. Wood fibre board can offer a solution as it is permeable. The fine science is not having the insulation too thick, to ensure moisture can pass and evaporate naturally.

- 29. Can you share a list of companies that could perform a survey to see the heat loss in our granite house?**

Stewart Little, CEO IRT Surveys Ltd. presented in Part 2. <https://irtsurveys.co.uk/>

- 30. How can you get a thermal image of your property and what is the cost?**

Stewart Little, CEO IRT Surveys Ltd. advised in Part 2 that yes, an individual can get a thermal image undertaken, although most cost effective for a group of properties.

31. Is there anyone in Aberdeen part of a District/Communal heating system network?

Yes, there is a district heating network in Aberdeen, operated by Aberdeen Heat & Power. They supply district heating to Council properties and some private properties. Please find more info on their website. <https://www.aberdeenheatandpower.co.uk/>

32. Any advice on the potential installation, energy efficiency and maintenance of green roofs?

Stewart Little, CEO IRT Surveys Ltd. advised that they do little for energy efficiency.

33. Looking at assessments today it appears that EPC E is what an insulated and double glazed granite house achieves. Is EPC C feasible without significant retrofitting? eg internal wall insulation.

It is shown through wider research of the solid wall properties that the EPC ratings do not fully represent actual performance of the solid wall buildings such as granite. Solid walls tend to store a significant amount of heat, therefore roof and floor insulation, secondary glazing/ shutters options as discussed by Moses Jenkins, HES in Part 1 should be given a priority when considering upgrades in domestic solid wall properties. The EPC ratings are based on estimates of the cost of energy rather than carbon impact.

34. Party walls could cause problem if property on other side not insulated but property on other side gets interior insulation installed?

If installed correctly, detailed eliminating thermal bridging issues, installation of insulation to party wall should not cause problems. Condition of the whole wall should be assessed, and any issues eliminated prior to any improvements.

35. When redoing a kitchen it should be mandatory to improve the insulation in the external walls

When insulating walls in only part of an external wall in a granite property, it is important to choose the correct breathable insulation type as this could cause wider moisture/condensation issues. It is better to insulate all external walls at the same time.

36. What happens if the property is listed and/or in a conservation area? Will you require Listed Building consent for the likes of heat pumps and new windows as they are changes to the fabric of the building? And how 'desirable' is having a heat pump stuck on the side of a listed building?

Yes, any work to the listed property and property in a Conservation Area must be communicated to the Planning Department who then either advise on the appropriate level of information they can assess and approve or advise when the Listed Building Consent is required. Discussions with the Planning Department may be required to provide a justification to the proposed solutions and if reversible and not altering historic character of the property, may be approved. Category A listed property will have much more stringent rules than Category C.

37. Will this not create a drive to sell older properties / impact the housing market adversely and risk people being unable to sell old stock.

The value of period properties goes beyond the energy efficiency and cost of heating. There is also the carbon impact of building new being far greater than older properties energy efficiency measures. Energy improvement of solid wall properties is not new and research done by many Scottish Universities, HES and other organisations has been ongoing for many years.

- 38. Isn't sheep's wool insulation prone to mouse damage?**
Moses Jenkins, HES advised sheep's wool is not prone to mouse damage.
- 39. A list of companies that are experienced in working with different aspects of older buildings would be useful.**
We shall discuss Traditional Granite homes supply chain in our next Conference 2022.
- 40. Are there case studies for homes that have undertaken deep retrofit projects so we can get an idea of costs involved?**
Home Energy Scotland provide advice on measures costs and funding options 0808 808 2282.
We shall include granite property case studies in our next Conference in 2022.
- 41. Since the best way to insulate granite walls are still under discussion, surely the Scottish Governments dates for reducing EPC ratings are unrealistic, especially for the first dates for landlords?**
Patrick McCurdie, Policy Manager, Scottish Government discussed in Part 1 that there will be further need for specialist advice for Traditional properties such as granite homes. The EPC reform review is taking this into account.
- 42. I have a middle floor flat in a 1880's granite block. I would love to insulate as getting my flat about 15degC is difficult. The walls are lath and plaster - how do I insulate them without it all ending up falling downstairs (other owners not interested) or making damp an issue?**
Matt Clubb, Architectural consultant responded: The most straight forward solution is to insulate internally. But if internal space is at a premium then you could consider insulating the cavity, but it must be carefully designed to ensure ventilation to the cavity in the other flats is not disturbed. You are best to contact a Retrofit Advisor/Coordinator, matt@mwclubb.co.uk.
- 43. How do you deal with insulation for heat going up when in a ground floor flat? I can't go and put loft insulation in the upstairs neighbour's lounge floor.**
Matt Clubb, Architectural consultant responded: Ideally getting everyone in the building to install insulation is the best solution, it can bring down cost for all and reduce the energy demand in all the flats. But failing that you would need to insulate below the ceiling or between the ceiling joists, although it depends on the construction type as to what options are available.
Sustainable Renovation Guide: <https://www.thepebbletrust.org/sustainablerenovation.asp>
- 44. Any chance of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire councils working collaboratively on the thermal imaging for residents?**
Stewart Little, CEO IRT Surveys Ltd responded; we have thermally surveyed about 35,000 homes in Aberdeen over the years. All council owned. Aberdeen City Council last carried out a full city survey in 2014. This was an aerial survey and the images can be viewed here <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/thermal-image>.
- 45. Why can't you do the same for individuals houses as you do for the council? Accumulate the requests and carry out the work all together?**
Stewart Little, CEO IRT Surveys Ltd responded; we would love to, we just need a handful of passionate folks willing to do it and we will.

46. Where can I find these energy saving tips Martin Hall just listed in a format that I can give to my tenants?

Best to contact SCARF directly on 01224 213005 and they will be able to share with you the most suitable format of energy saving tips for your tenants. We also have tips on the Saving Energy Aberdeen website [here](#)

47. Is SCARF available to everyone or is it primarily there to support low income households?

Yes, SCARF offer a free energy advice service available for anyone in Aberdeen/shire. Please see their website: www.scarf.org.uk or phone 01224 213005.

48. A key question is who are the main contractors that are interested in retrofit work?

We shall discuss the supply chain in our next Conference 2022.

Please contact Home Energy Scotland for accredited contractors in the North East Area.

49. What financial assistance is available for those who do not qualify for benefits?

Neil Stuart, In house specialist, Home Energy Scotland discussed all funding options available in Part 2 including the Interest Free Home Energy Loan with cash back and Private Rented Sector Landlords Interest Free Loan. Contact Home Energy Scotland 0808 808 2282 <https://www.homeenergyscotland.org/find-funding-grants-and-loans/interest-free-loans/>

50. Thank you for organising this event, when will the next conference be held?

We shall promote our next Summer Conference 2022 on:

<https://www.savingenergyaberdeen.co.uk/conference/> Please keep checking for details.

Thank you for attending our November 2021 Conference.