

With local authorities and housing associations facing acute pressure to upgrade millions of social homes in line with modern net zero and thermal performance standards, retrofitting energy-efficient windows and doors will offer a vital way forward, say the people at Rehau.

Retrofit Right – Making Social Housing More Energy-Efficient

Rehau, the window profile and other plastics manufacturer, has produced the Retrofit Right – Making Social Housing More Energy-Efficient report.

It explores how the sector can decarbonise 4.4 million UK social homes across the UK – mostly built between 1945 and 1980 – in line with legislative requirements and available funding. It confronts the scale of this challenge by demonstrating the crucial nature of

informed specification of window and door systems.

The report also underlines the importance of these key components in affecting heat loss in residential properties, detailing relevant standards, regulations and metrics such as those governing thermal performance, noise attenuation, security and ventilation.

Retrofit Right also goes on to emphasise the importance of local authorities establishing, bolstering and maintaining supply chains to ensure the specification of high-quality components in these retrofitting efforts.

As explained by Martin Hitchin, CEO at Rehau UK:

“Third-party supply-chain support is also key to bridging knowledge gaps and easing workloads within the social housing sector that may be exacerbated by the scope of the required works.

“The UK’s residential sector is under great pressure to reduce emissions in line with net-zero targets, including a 78% drop in emissions by 2035 and carbon neutrality by 2050,

“As social housing is publicly owned, there’s undoubtedly additional pressure on local authorities to decarbonise and to ensure that every pound spent





window.rehau.com/downloads/2007644/retrofit-right-whitepaper.pdf

works as hard as possible to achieve the desired energy efficiency improvements. For strained local authorities and housing association teams, this combination of raised expectations and the sheer scale of decarbonising millions of social housing properties make this a daunting challenge.”

Specifying right

Hitchin continues: “As major sources of heat loss within properties, windows and door systems have a key role to play in improving the thermal performance of social housing. This is why we launched this latest report as it provides valuable advice on how to approach the frame specification and upgrading process, complying with relevant standards and regulations and the importance of medium retrofits in achieving these goals.

The right stuff

Retrofit Right details the importance of selecting sustainable materials such as coextruded polymer and advises social housing stakeholders to go beyond the point-of-purchase when selecting new frames. As part of this, the report explores how 20 years of advancements

in frame design, including improvements in areas such as solar gain and airtightness have made polymer frames more energy efficient.

With an average lifespan of 35 years, combined with appropriate recycling infrastructure, frames in this material are a sustainable, long-lasting material.

As the report emphasises, commercial fenestration professionals who can showcase these credentials to social housing decisionmakers may generate more potential business leads.

Maintenance

The Retrofit Right – Making Social Housing More Energy-Efficient report also encourages decisionmakers to explore data-driven technologies including integrated digital ID cards for individual frames to streamline later maintenance, inspection and material procurement works for local authorities and housing associations.

Using innovations such as Rehau’s Window.ID, expert frame specialists can be quickly contacted via an App. As mentioned in Retrofit Right, this can significantly shorten repair and replacement processes, allowing housing associations and local authorities to

save money and resource by reducing the number of visits to affected properties.

Hitchin says: “Material considerations and performance standards of frames are undoubtedly key for local authorities and housing associations carrying out retrofitting projects. However, those selecting components should also see how added services can streamline ongoing maintenance works, including breakages and installing additional accessories.

“Innovations such as Window.ID provide quick access to key data and fenestration experts, greatly reducing the need for time-consuming inspection or measurement appointments. As detailed in Retrofit Right, these innovations can allow housing associations and local authorities to save money by reducing the number of visits to affected properties, ensuring efficient and effective maintenance.” **i**

Pictures: Rehau advises fenestration professionals and social housing stakeholders alike to read this latest report and take on board its insights ahead of future retrofitting works. It can be accessed via the link above.

How much do your customers really care about your carbon footprint? Do you, as a business owner, really understand and implement a sustainable ethos for your own company? Simon Scholes asks the big questions and explains how to improve environmental performance and reap financial rewards.

Making Environmental Credentials Pay

Wherever you stand on environmental issues, the impact of your business on the planet will have significant commercial implications going forward, Simon Scholes recently told The Installer Magazine.

Understanding and implementing the right processes is a critical step for any installation business that wants to steal a march on its competition over the next few years.

Tender requirements

46 per cent of respondents to the UK Net Zero Business Census Report 2024 stated that they had received customer or tender applications that required carbon footprint data. In other words, becoming sustainable and carbon efficient will give you commercial advantage. Indeed, environmental credentials will often be in the first triage of criteria when assessing tender applications. And this expectation is filtering down into smaller, local companies – a sector where many window companies sit.

Where do you start?

While switching to electric vehicles and taking advantage of window recycling schemes

are significant steps forward, the reality is that they barely scratch the surface of regulatory expectations.

Simon Scholes is a window industry veteran with a particular expertise in sustainability and carbon accounting. He recently took over the reins of a boutique environmental agency, Oakdene Hollins, which is adept at crafting accessible and affordable ways to integrate carbon accounting into smaller companies.

He says: “There are so many expectations and very little support when it comes to putting the right measures in place, which means that many small businesses have no idea where to start. While local business advisory organisations can lay out the regulations and cookie-cutter solutions, this is rarely adaptable across a wide range of industries. The window industry has its own foibles which we know how to address.”

Using his experience within the industry, Scholes is ideally positioned to provide a clear-cut pathway for window companies to follow towards fully integrating carbon accounting practices.

“We have already done the hard work many times across





Pictures: Electric vehicles and recycling old windows... Simon Scholes of Oakdene Hollins says there are things you can do to assess where you are now and then use a multitude of different aspects to improve your environmental credentials one step at a time – and see positive improvements to your bottom line as a result.

www.oakdenehollins.com

different sectors and know exactly what is required for window companies to meet their regulatory and market expectations," adds Scholes. "There is no need to re-invent the wheel. You can simply allow us to tailor our knowledge according to your particular set-up to make sure you are working steadfastly towards that position as a trusted, sustainable partner."

Trust

The word 'trusted' is key – many companies risk falling foul of making green claims when inadvertently misleading their audience about genuine green credentials.

"The business advantages and benefits of carbon accounting will soon overtake the pain of having to implement it in the first place," says Scholes. "The key is to remember that this is a process and the start of a road that will become integral to your business. Over the weeks, months and years, you will begin to enjoy tangible improvements to your overall business operations."

Show me the money

Such benefits include cost savings from emissions reductions, favourable brand recognition and growing cooperation within supply chain expectations.

Scholes says: "The use of energy in the UK is under the spotlight and love it or hate it, window companies have to take notice and change the way they do business. However, the long-term benefits will outweigh the short-term pain."

Simon says:

- It will place you favourably on specification and supply-chain lists over and above non-compliant competitors.
- It will force you to address energy consumption and make considerable savings and efficiencies.
- It will elevate the public perception of your company and your brand and position you as a sustainable leader among your peers.
- It will supply you with a constant flow of positive marketing messages.

"Carbon accounting does not have to be expensive and restrictive. In fact, it is quite the opposite," concludes Scholes. "Look upon it as efficiency engineering, with the additional advantage of positive environmental impact" 

