

# Net Zero Skills and the impact on local authorities

- Finding funding
- Working with partners
- How LAs can support upskilling for net zero

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# Agenda

1. Intro: Skills gaps & the role for Local Authorities
2. Learning from the Retrofit Skills projects:
  - Greater South East Hub
  - North West Hub
3. Key lessons
4. Conclusions for Local Authorities



# Skills gap and the role for Local Authorities

## Skills for net zero are needed within Local Authorities and across the labour market

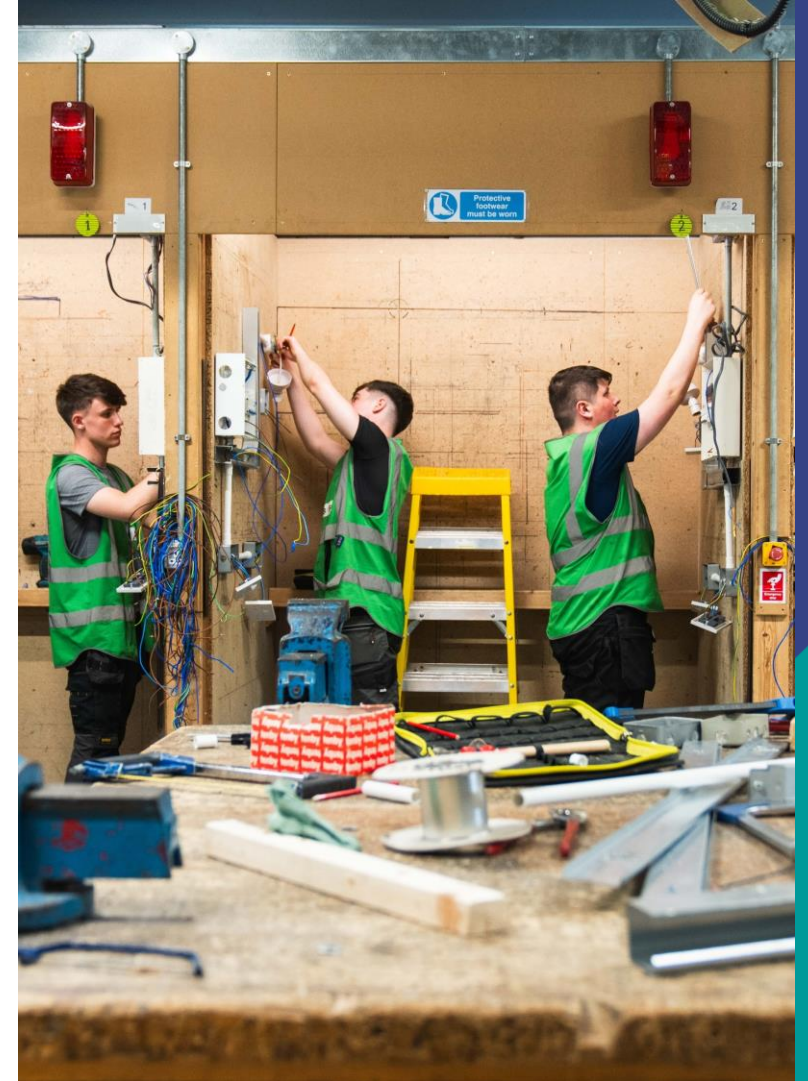
- To meet the challenge of achieving the government's 2050 net zero target, there is clearly a need to increase the training provision in all roles throughout the decarbonisation journey, however..
- demand for training from the industry depends on consumer demand for low carbon technologies so need to bring the community with us.
- Retrofit training infrastructure is relatively immature and needs to grow quickly
- Local authorities also need to upskill to be able to deliver and integrate net zero needs into projects

## Local Net Zero Hubs are a programme funded by DESNZ set up to support Local Authority capacity

- Net Zero Hubs can help support project delivery, local energy planning, routes to financing, technical expertise and consultancy, innovation and help connect for collaboration.

# Learning from Retrofit Skills Pilots

- To achieve carbon reduction targets in the next decades, the country will need to undertake substantial decarbonisation of its housing stock through retrofit. This in turn necessitates a construction workforce of sufficiently numerous and skilled workers to engage in retrofit work.
- In 2024, the five Hubs across England delivered a Retrofit Skills Plan & Pilot programme, with funding from the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ)
  - Retrofit Skills Plans were created to assess of the current state of the retrofit workforce and identify the necessary steps to develop the local workforce to be able to achieve net zero targets
  - The Hubs were also funded to pilot implementation activities identified in the plan
- The Retrofit Skills programme is undergoing evaluation by the Department to determine next steps.



# Greater South East Retrofit Skills Pilots

GSENZH took a place-based approach and went out to strategic bodies for local plans and solutions

Five areas were successful in the bidding process:

**East Sussex, Hertfordshire, South London, Surrey and Buckinghamshire**

– all with different socioeconomic backgrounds, skills challenges and plans/ideas

## Greater South East Plan

- five individual area plans consolidated into one

Pilot teams carried out in-depth research into the local retrofit landscape to:

- identify and engage **key stakeholders**
- estimate retrofit requirements through analysis of the **housing stock**
- analyse the **supply chain** populations e.g., trades and specialist roles
- evaluate current **training provision**
- articulate the key issues and challenges faced by the sector

Plans developed by area teams; Energy Systems Catapult contracted to consolidate the plans into a wider narrative.

ESC later worked with pilot teams to draw together implementation intelligence into an evaluation report



# Greater South East Retrofit Skills Plan findings

## Housing stock

- variation of stock across the GSE pilot areas, e.g.: East Sussex – lower level of energy efficiency in homes than national average (31% vs 47% EPC A-C) and older housing stock alongside coastal deprivation

## Retrofit sector

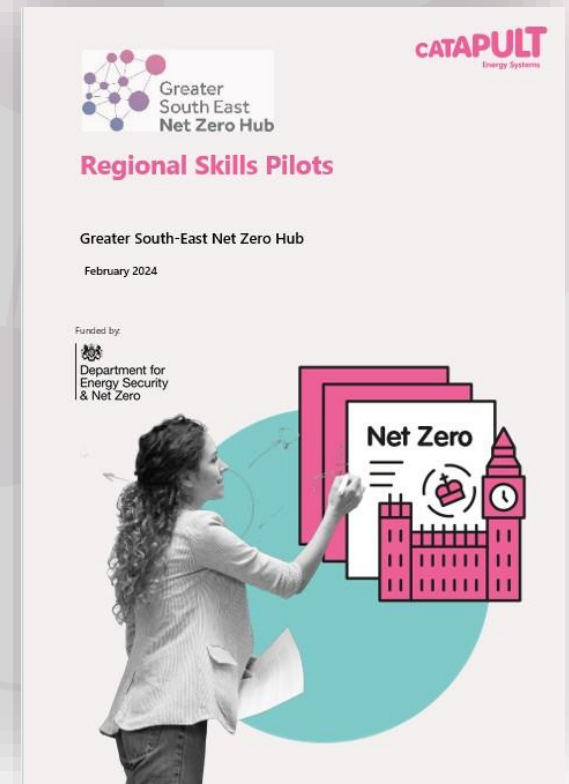
- differences between areas in terms of maturity of retrofit supply chain
- key supply gaps but a lack of capacity in SMEs to upskill staff – plus perceived/actual lack of demand to drive the required investment
- accreditation is often viewed as time consuming and costly
- businesses do not always know where to look for funded retrofit work/procurement routes

## Public sector/government

- lack of local in-house technical skills and capacity to manage retrofit projects
- no central marketing/advice which creates a lack of confidence for consumers/low demand

## Skills provision

- scarcity of qualified and experienced tutors across all areas
- demand – courses put on but often little to no take-up
- funding driven by national policies rather than local demand (hence the need for local pilots!)



# Greater South East Skills Pilot Delivery

Local Pilots have...

- **upskilled local tradespeople** in fundamental technical skills including solar PV, PAS-based retrofit qualifications, water regs, insulation and heat pump installation
- delivered **introductory retrofit awareness** courses to inform the wider construction sector
- supported the development of **training provider networks**
- **recruited tutors** to address shortages and enable more provision to be rolled out
- delivered **training to local authority staff** in both PAS roles and technical trades
- **awareness raising** activities and a breadth of **resources** provided across a wider stakeholder network, such as careers advisers in schools and colleges; housing association staff; DWP job advisers
- developed **one-stop-shop** portals to increase local awareness and provide guidance
- funded **business growth grants** for employers to drive uptake and awareness
- awarded **training provider grants** to colleges, boosting the number of courses and learner places
- provided female and BAME individuals with **specialist employability support** - now being run as a 12-month pilot, with council match funding
- created **retrofit roadmaps** and taskforces to drive action beyond the pilot period

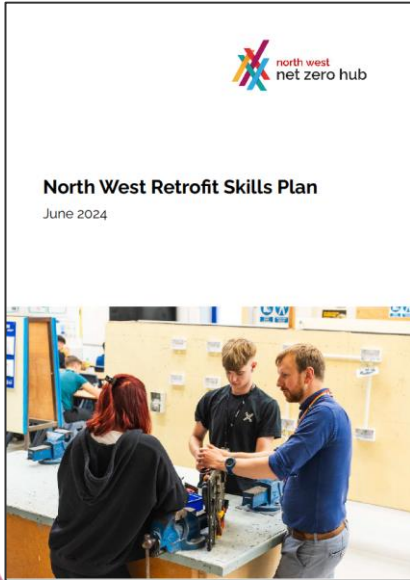


## Headline outcomes:

- **5 regional retrofit skills plans**
- **campaigns reaching est. 28,000 stakeholders**
- **500+ training places and qualifications provided**
- **2 retrofit web platforms created**
- **13 events held with over 1,000 attendees**



# North West Retrofit Skills Plan



All documents can be found online here;

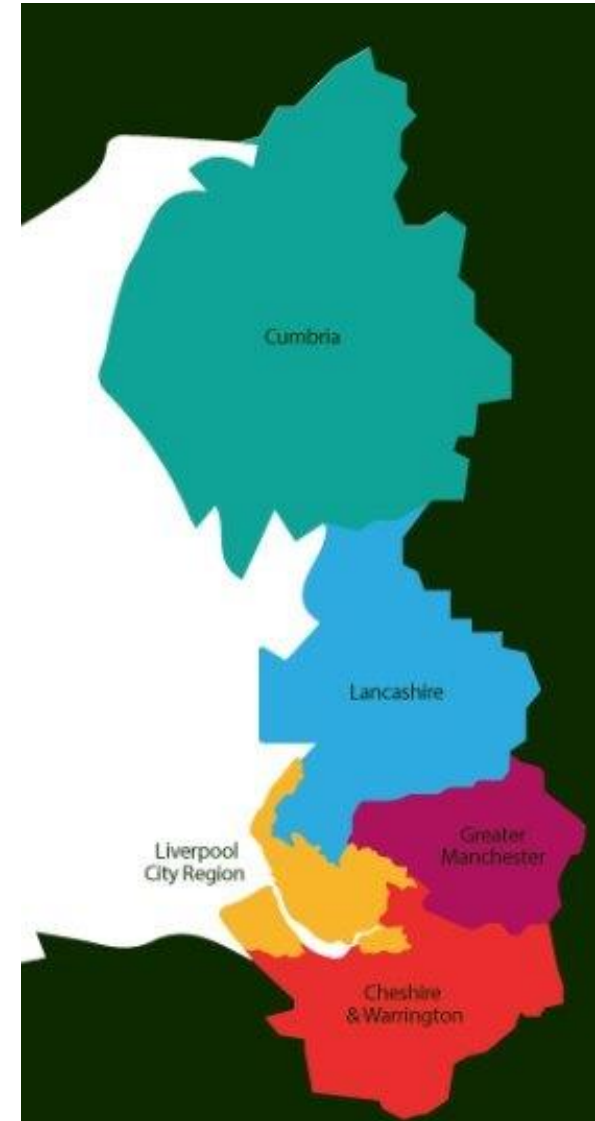
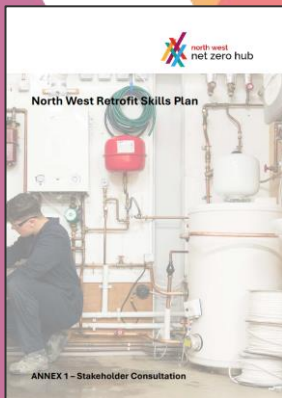
<https://nwrouetonetzero.com/retrofit/> -

The North West Hub worked with the five subregions to develop a plan reflective of the needs of the region.

Local & Combined Authority Skills leads, retrofit delivery leads and many colleges & other skills stakeholders supported the creation of the plan.

Key strengths of creating a plan;

1. It created a consistent strategy for a region
2. It allowed us to recognise subregional strengths alongside where national or regional strategies could support locally led initiatives
3. It connected people across a wider geography to learn and collaborate
4. It allowed a funding audit and analysis of where further work was needed.





# North West Retrofit Skills Plan

The plan created five priority areas for action and suggested projects to address the priorities.



## Key findings;

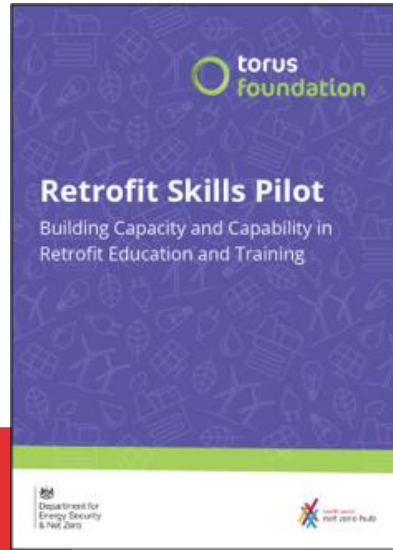
1. The proportion of the construction sector delivering retrofit work is low.
2. Retrofit needs a skilled workforce.
3. The current pace of EPC improvement needs to be maintained but there needs to be growth in key sectors;
4. Low-carbon residential heating.
5. Retrofit co-ordination and retrofit assessment.
6. The NW education and skills sector has varied facilities, course design and equipment and needs more consistency.
7. There are currently insufficient numbers of learners that progress into work.
9. There needs to be an up-take in reskilling training for the existing workforce
10. The construction sector in the NW is one of the least diverse regions.
11. There needs to be work to support businesses grow alongside grants

Priority areas	Future Projects
<b>A: Upskilling the existing workforce</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reskilling the existing workforce for retrofit installation and maintenance</li> <li>2. Creating a high-quality retrofit co-ordinator / assessor workforce</li> </ol>
<b>B: Growing the future workforce</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Informing and inspiring young people about future careers in the retrofit sector</li> <li>4. Increasing the number of people progressing from FE into the construction industry</li> <li>5. Increasing the number of apprenticeships in plumbing and heating</li> </ol>
<b>C: Increasing diversity in the workforce</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Support to retrofit employers in diversifying their workforce</li> </ol>
<b>D: Building capability on the demand side</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Business support for retrofit market entry</li> <li>8. Improving retrofit procurement, demand aggregation and visibility</li> <li>9. Retrofit client-side skills programme</li> </ol>
<b>E: Developing training capacity</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Collaboration to develop regional / sub-regional centres of excellence promoting innovative approaches to retrofit</li> <li>11. Retrofit content entitlement in construction training</li> <li>12. Retrofit education workforce development</li> </ol>

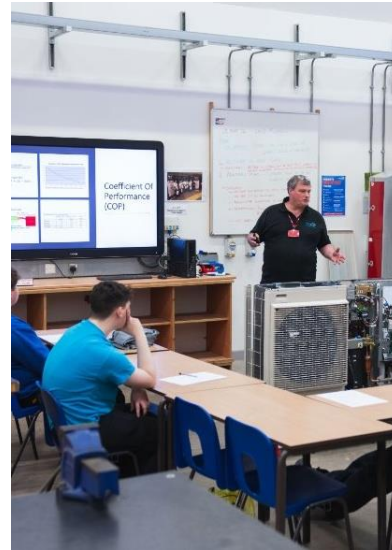
# North West Retrofit Skills Pilots



Investment in **college training facilities** including **heat pump** technology, & diversifying systems across suppliers



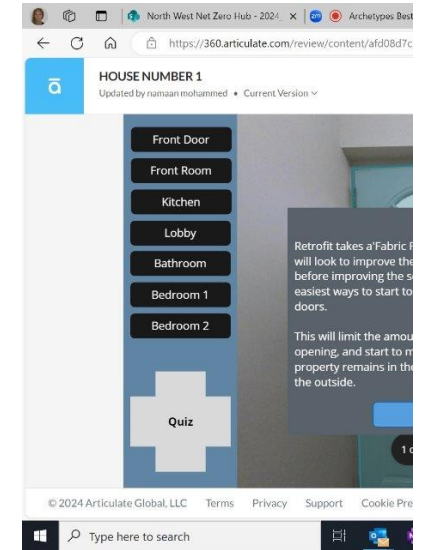
Improving the connection between employment and skills by engaging more **unemployed** people in retrofit careers.



Engaging with **employers** in retrofit, understanding their training needs to **upskill** and providing intro courses for retrofit.



Staff **Continuing Professional Development** and knowledge sharing sessions between colleges



Creating **virtual reality** learning environments for **retrofit coordination and assessment**

# Learning points

1. Working in partnership was key to success of the pilot projects:
  - sharing and collaboration between training providers can support and build a retrofit skills community
  - engaging with local businesses is essential to drive and inform demand for upskilling
2. Pilot teams achieved a great deal but could have delivered more with a longer funding period:
  - takes time to mobilise teams and build relationships with stakeholders such as businesses, training providers and supporting organisations
  - raising the profile of skills in the sector and enabling people to embark on learning is a long-term activity
  - colleges and training providers require longer-term visibility of future funding for them to invest time/money/equipment and for staff to be able to commit time
3. Having a shared vision and an initial funding pot for retrofit skills has driven up activity and provided momentum, spearheading further engagement
4. Timing of delivery is crucial for delivery partners and wider stakeholders
  - limitations around delivering a series of events in a concentrated amount of time
  - delivering events for schools in the run up to exam season was challenging
  - working flexibly to accommodate employers is needed e.g. short courses or 1 day/week courses
  - building capacity in colleges requires planning

Overall, the key success factors were having place-based plans and solutions, and these being delivered via partnership working across a range of stakeholder agencies and organisations.



# Conclusion

## Finding funding

- Creating a skills plan or strategy can help join up stakeholders and funding initiatives, as well as identifying the gaps.
- Use your procurement to maximise social value for net zero
- Leverage other sources of funding where possible

## Working with partners

- Work collaboratively in your region to build knowledge and capacity for skills training
- Collaborative working can also support supply and demand – creating centres of excellence in colleges is one way of doing this.
- Suppliers are keen to support training in net zero – see what they can offer your project teams, and consult widely!
- Involve a wide range of stakeholders - think big!

## How LAs can support net zero skills

- Design programmes with a whole systems approach – think through how investment in delivery programmes can support local skills and training initiatives.
- Think about what skills your internal team needs to deliver;
  - Reach out to your Hubs and environment teams for support
  - Promote and encourage teams to take carbon literacy training, and look at free sources of training like [Net Zero Go](#) to support knowledge and learning in your project teams



# LOCAL NET ZERO HUBS

MAKING NET ZERO PROJECTS HAPPEN

