



BUSINESS
IN THE
COMMUNITY

REPORT

RETROFITTING IN ABERDEEN

ACRONYMS

Acronym	Full Term / Meaning
BITC	Business in the Community
CARES	Community and Renewable Energy Scheme
CIC	Community Interest Company
CIOB	Chartered Institute of Building
CITB	Construction Industry Training Board
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
ECO	Energy Company Obligation
EPC	Energy Performance Certificate
GBIS	Great British Insulation Scheme
LHEES	Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy
MCS	Microgeneration Certification Scheme
NESCol	North East Scotland College
NESCAN	North East Scotland Climate Action Network
NESFIT	North East Scotland Retrofit Hub
NHS	National Health Service
PAS 2035	Publicly Available Specification 2035
PV	Photovoltaic
RICS	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
UKSPF	UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Summary

Aberdeen faces a pressing challenge: while retrofitting buildings is central to Scotland's net zero vision, local demand for retrofit remains low, public trust has been eroded by mixed quality installations, and the construction workforce lacks consistent capacity in specialist retrofit skills. At the same time, many buildings, particularly older granite domestic structures, continue to underperform, contributing to fuel poverty, poor thermal comfort, and heightened vulnerability to climate risks. These challenges limit the city's ability to decarbonise at the pace and scale required.

Retrofitting matters for Aberdeen for three connected reasons.

First, it is essential for improving health, wellbeing and comfort: cold, damp, and poorly ventilated homes drive illness, stress and high energy bills, particularly for vulnerable households. Second, a significant proportion of Aberdeen's non-council housing stock falls below key energy-efficiency thresholds, meaning large sections of the city could require fabric upgrades and low carbon heating. Third, retrofit represents a significant economic opportunity, skilling local tradespeople for long term, future proof work while reducing energy vulnerability for residents.

Research conducted with local organisations, professionals, and community building managers shows that a domestic street level demonstrator, although favoured in principle, would be impractical at this stage. Varied tenure, mixed archetypes, low resident availability, the need for majority consent, and limited organisational capacity make it unlikely to succeed as a first step. A more viable approach is needed to build momentum, confidence, and community engagement.

A community building demonstrator provides that stepping stone. A publicly accessible site can host visitors, showcase retrofit in real time, support phased improvements, upskill the workforce, and generate trust by allowing residents to see and understand retrofit as it happens. It also offers a replicable model that aligns closely with Aberdeen's common domestic building archetypes. Following a structured assessment of 50 sites, Powis Community Centre emerged as the most suitable candidate due to its granite domestic style construction, strong community use, and readiness for engagement.

The recommendations call for selecting and retrofitting a community building that reflects Aberdeen's housing types and can host ongoing public and workforce engagement, with Powis Community Centre identified as the preferred demonstrator. Training should be aligned with NESCol and NESFIT so that skills development is built directly into the retrofit process, supported by a dedicated revenue fund for engagement, communications, and workforce activity. Together, these steps create a practical foundation for scaling retrofit in Aberdeen and strengthening both community trust and local capability.

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Introduction

Cold, damp and poorly insulated buildings across the UK continue to contribute to preventable illness, stress, and economic vulnerability.

National evidence links cold, damp and poorly insulated homes to excess winter deaths, heat-related deaths and significant NHS costs. Aberdeen mirrors these national challenges: much of its housing stock, particularly outside the council owned sector, remains inefficient, heavily reliant on gas, and vulnerable to both winter cold and increasing risks of summer overheating.

Retrofitting buildings offers significant benefits for residents and communities. Done well, retrofit improves comfort, indoor air quality, lighting, acoustics, and safety. It can reduce inequalities by lowering energy bills, increasing the resilience of homes, and improving health outcomes. Yet despite decades of retrofit activity across the UK, delivery has been inconsistent. Many installations have failed to perform as expected, resulting in lost savings, public mistrust, and reputational damage, particularly around wall insulation. For Aberdeen, these dynamics undermine progress toward the city's climate ambitions and inhibit householders from engaging with retrofit opportunities.

Local and national evidence suggests that the narrative around retrofit must shift from abstract carbon reductions to tangible and relatable outcomes that matter to householders: warm, healthy, resilient homes and neighbourhoods.

At the same time, communities need opportunities to shape retrofit programmes, understand how they work in practice, and see clear benefits before they commit.

This review applies that lens to Aberdeen's context. The paper explores how retrofit can support Aberdeen's wider energy transition while improving outcomes for residents, community organisations and the local workforce. The work draws on desktop research, interviews with professional stakeholders, and site visits to community buildings across Aberdeen.

The research identifies several barriers to retrofit, including low public trust stemming from historic poor-quality installations and inconsistent performance, and limited resident appetite due to concerns about disruption, weak financial incentives and uncertainty about benefits. Aberdeen's mixed housing archetypes make it difficult to apply scalable or uniform retrofit approaches, while workforce skills remain uneven, with gaps across both specialist retrofit roles and core trades. Policy and funding conditions are also volatile, reducing confidence in long-term planning. Finally, accessibility challenges, such as multi-tenure blocks and residents who work offshore or have limited availability, further complicate delivery.

Given these constraints, and following extensive engagement with local stakeholders, the research concludes that a domestic street level retrofit demonstrator, while potentially valuable in the future, is premature for Aberdeen at this stage. Issues around tenure, consent, limited demand, and varying construction types make implementation difficult and risk limited impact. Instead, this analysis considers whether a community building demonstrator could serve as a realistic and effective first step.

A publicly accessible community building offers a controlled environment in which retrofit measures can be installed, demonstrated, monitored, and explained. It provides opportunities for residents to observe retrofit in practice, for tradespeople to gain hands on experience, and for partners to build a shared understanding of what high quality whole building retrofit involves. Crucially, it creates a replicable model that can support future domestic retrofit programmes.

The following sections summarise the evaluation of potential community buildings, identify the strongest candidate for a demonstrator, and outline how such a project could support skills development, community engagement, and Aberdeen's broader just transition objectives.



Demonstrator Approach

Scotland's climate legislation sets a 2045 target for net zero emissions, and buildings are central to achieving this transition. In Aberdeen, most council owned homes already meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing; however, the majority of privately owned dwellings remain below EPC Band C and continue to rely heavily on gas heating. This signals a substantial retrofit need across the city's domestic stock.

At the time of writing, a range of UK and Scottish Government schemes support building retrofit, including insulation programmes, area based schemes, and funding mechanisms for social housing and community energy projects, but these are complex, subject to frequent change, and often targeted toward households experiencing fuel poverty. While essential, the schemes do not yet offer a comprehensive or stable pathway for whole home retrofit at scale across mixed tenure urban areas.

Alongside government programmes, Aberdeen has seen waves of retrofit activity through heat network expansion, external wall insulation programmes, and targeted social housing upgrades. These have delivered improvements, but benefits have been uneven and public confidence has been affected by inconsistent quality across the UK, particularly historical issues with wall insulation.

Resident experience and appetite for retrofit

Insights from surveys within Aberdeen and across Scotland highlight mixed perceptions and barriers:

What residents value most	Key barriers
Trusted, easy to access advice	Upfront affordability concerns
Lower energy bills	Disruption caused by works
Clear financial incentives	Limited understanding of retrofit benefits
Guidance on the most appropriate measures	Lack of trust due to past poor installations
	Tenure constraints (private rental, shared ownership)

Survey learnings suggests that while many householders were satisfied with recent insulation work, a significant minority were dissatisfied reinforcing the need for visible, high quality, well managed demonstrations of good retrofit practice.

Assessment of a street level demonstrator

A street level domestic retrofit demonstrator was explored with professional stakeholders across Aberdeen, drawing on examples from England where street by street approaches are being tested. The feedback suggested that Aberdeen is not yet ready for a domestic street demonstrator.

The assessment found several constraints that make a street-level demonstrator impractical at this stage. Many council homes already meet EPC C and are therefore ineligible for major funding schemes, while some housing association properties have undergone partial retrofit, limiting the value of a whole-home demonstration.

Demand among householders is low, with limited appetite for measures beyond insulation and restricted engagement capacity within local organisations. Practical access is also difficult, as many residents work offshore, are not often available, or are reluctant to engage with formal outreach efforts. Even where streets appear uniform, mixed ownership and varied construction types introduce significant coordination challenges. Logistical and financial barriers, such as the need for decanting and the perception that disruption outweighs benefits, further reduce feasibility. Current budgets prioritise proven, cost-effective measures over more experimental neighbourhood-scale projects, and the diversity of Aberdeen's housing stock limits opportunities for scalable replication.

Taken together, these factors indicate that a domestic street-level demonstrator would carry high risk, require substantial resources, and is unlikely to achieve the engagement or visibility needed to stimulate wider residential demand.

Rationale for a community building demonstrator

Stakeholder consultation strongly suggests that a community building is a more effective starting point for Aberdeen.

A community demonstrator offers several advantages as a first step toward scaling retrofit in Aberdeen. Community buildings provide easy access for both residents and tradespeople, allowing people to observe works in real time and enabling guided learning and ongoing engagement. Many share construction characteristics with Aberdeen's dominant housing archetypes, particularly granite, making the lessons directly transferable to domestic settings. They also offer a controlled environment where retrofit can be delivered in phases, performance can be monitored, and feedback can be incorporated as the project evolves. Because community buildings are widely used by diverse groups, they offer high visibility and help demystify retrofit processes. They also create practical opportunities for hands-on workforce development, supporting craftspeople, apprentices, and those training for PAS 2035 roles. Demonstrating high-quality retrofit in a familiar, trusted place helps rebuild public confidence after years of mixed results in the sector, while generating insights that can form the basis for future neighbourhood- or street-level initiatives. A retrofitted community building would also become more resilient to climate risks, such as overheating and flooding, and achieve at least EPC Band C.

For these reasons, a community building demonstrator provides a realistic, strategically sound way to build the skills base, increase public trust, and generate the momentum required for wider residential retrofit in Aberdeen.

SECTION TWO

Selection of the Community Demonstrator

Methodology

The selection process for a community demonstrator building followed a structured, multi stage methodology:

Stage 1

Longlist creation (50 buildings)

Sites were identified through NESCAN Hub, Aberdeen City Council, the Community Planning Partnership, and mwclubb Architects. The longlist covered diverse building ages, types, and geographies.

Stage 2

Questionnaire screening (14 buildings)

A structured questionnaire assessed building usage, management capacity, repair needs, energy systems, and retrofit readiness. 14 responses advanced to the next stage.

Stage 3

Interviews & site visits (10 buildings shortlisted)

Ten buildings agreed to interviews and site inspections examining fabric, layout, condition, and stakeholder engagement potential. Buildings lacking sufficient engagement or feasibility information were removed.

Stage 4

Scoring against criteria

Buildings were evaluated against: **Suitability** – Alignment with typical Aberdeen housing archetypes; condition; replicability of retrofit lessons. **Need & Impact** – Potential to engage residents, attract participation, and generate wider demand for retrofit; and **Engagement** – Commitment, capacity, and readiness of operators to host an ongoing demonstrator.

Stage 5

Final Shortlist (3 buildings)

The highest-scoring buildings in Stage 5 were Powis Community Centre, Ruthrieston Community Centre, and Cairncry Community Centre. The detailed shortlisting materials including responses to questionnaires, site visits and interviews are supplied separately. These sites demonstrated the strongest combination of technical suitability, community reach, and organisational engagement. Aberdeen City Council was also invited to contribute data to aid the selection process.

Comparison of Finalist Buildings

Building	Criteria		
	Suitability	Need and impact	Engagement
Powis Community Centre	Powis Community Centre, originally constructed as a domestic property, closely resembles surrounding homes in scale and granite construction. This makes it an excellent exemplar for demonstrating domestic retrofit approaches. Its need for upgrades further strengthens its suitability for meaningful demonstration.	The building is heavily used, and its location in an area with higher deprivation means improvements in comfort, energy demand and wellbeing would be particularly valuable. Its position within an Aberdeen's Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES)-identified area, and proximity to existing heat-network infrastructure, indicates potential for future integration.	Engagement at Powis is strong. The management team recognises the need for retrofit, and the Powis Residents Group has a proven record in community-led environmental improvement, demonstrating the capacity to support and host a demonstrator.
Ruthrieston Community Centre	Ruthrieston is a traditional granite building whose construction matches much of Aberdeen's housing stock. Although originally a school with larger internal spaces, the core fabric and retrofit principles remain directly transferable. Its layout also supports either whole-building or room-by-room approaches.	The centre is well used but in deteriorating condition, with a recent closure caused by wiring failures highlighting the urgency of investment. The building has also been discussed for potential demolition; a retrofit demonstrator here could show the value of refurbishment consistent with national planning priorities.	The building is well managed by an experienced committee that has secured Just Transition Participatory Funding. They have shown clear motivation and readiness to participate in a whole-building retrofit initiative.
Cairncry Community Centre	Cairncry, built in 1995 with cavity-wall construction, reflects the most common local housing archetype, making its retrofit directly relevant to nearby homes. Although interior spaces differ from domestic rooms, many measures remain transferable.	Located in an area with low SIMD scores, the centre hosts essential services including a warm space, café, food bank and wellbeing activities, generating high footfall and visibility. Its proximity to a priority LHEES cluster, including major public buildings, suggests potential for future heat-network alignment.	Cairncry is well managed, with staff who clearly understand the benefits of retrofit and show strong willingness to support demonstrator activities and community engagement.

Site Descriptions

Powis Community Centre

Powis, Scotland's first recognised community centre, is a granite building with a domestic scale that closely mirrors surrounding homes, strengthening its value as a demonstrator for transferable retrofit techniques.

The centre serves a community experiencing higher levels of deprivation, meaning improved thermal comfort and reduced energy demand would bring strong social benefit. It is heavily used and supported by an active residents' association with experience in environmental and greenspace initiatives, providing a strong platform for engagement and co-creation.

Powis lends itself to a phased, floor-by-floor retrofit approach, allowing staged learning and performance monitoring. Within an LHEES-identified cluster and near Aberdeen University's heat network, Powis could play a role in future heat-network expansion.

The site faces no flood risks but could require gutter upgrades to accommodate projected rainfall changes.

Ruthrieston Community Centre

Ruthrieston is a traditional granite building originally constructed as a school. Despite larger internal spaces, its underlying fabric corresponds to much of Aberdeen's granite housing, making it highly relevant for demonstrating insulation and ventilation strategies suited to heritage buildings.

The centre is widely used but in need of major upgrades; the recent closure due to wiring failures highlights the need for intervention. Its potential demolition creates a timely opportunity to demonstrate the benefits of refurbishment over new build, aligning with national planning priorities.

The building is well positioned for a room-by-room retrofit approach. Although not in a heat-network priority area, the site offers opportunities for greenspace improvements, including replacing an ageing timber outbuilding and adjusting front-area barriers to improve access. There is some surface-water flooding risk, and gutter upgrades could be required.

Cairncry Community Centre

Cairncry is purpose built with cavity-wall construction, matching the predominant housing archetype across Aberdeen and making it an excellent demonstrator for approaches applicable to surrounding residents.

While internal spaces differ from domestic layouts, retrofit principles for fabric and ventilation remain transferable. Located in an area of significant deprivation, the centre delivers essential community services and experiences very high footfall, offering strong visibility for retrofit works. It is close to the number-one LHEES priority cluster centred on the Royal Infirmary, providing potential for future heat-network connection.

Cairncry is especially suited to a comprehensive whole-building retrofit. Although the site offers limited greenspace opportunities due to surrounding car park areas, it is near major public buildings and housing blocks that could benefit from integrated planning. There is some surface-water flooding risk from a steep grassy bank behind the building.

Consolidated Project Cost Summary

Building	Indicative Pre-feasibility Project Cost
Powis Community Centre	£734,624
Ruthrieston Community Centre	£598,730
Cairncry Community Centre	£615,906

Note: Detailed breakdown of estimated costs may be requested.

High Level Cost Drivers

Across all three buildings, cost differences are driven primarily by the extent and complexity of required fabric insulation (particularly for traditional granite walls), the scale of window and door replacement, ventilation system upgrades, and the degree of building repair needed prior to retrofit. Building age is a major factor: older granite buildings require higher cost natural materials and careful sequencing to avoid moisture risks, while newer cavity wall structures (like Cairncry) require fewer repairs and simpler detailing. Contractor overheads, contingencies, and professional fees contribute proportionately across all sites, and overall costs increase where phased retrofit or listed building constraints apply.

A full payback assessment has not yet been carried out. If the demonstrator proceeds to a business-case stage, the next phase would include detailed modelling of costs, projected energy savings, and realistic payback periods to inform potential funders.

SECTION THREE

Retrofit Skills

Delivering high quality retrofit in Aberdeen requires both a skilled craft workforce and professionals trained in the standards and roles mandated under PAS 2035. While there is emerging activity in the region to address skills gaps, current provision remains uneven, and many workers do not yet have the competencies needed for large scale, whole building retrofit. A community demonstrator offers an opportunity to align local skills development directly with real retrofit activity.

The Five PAS 2035 Retrofit Roles

PAS 2035 sets out five mandatory roles for publicly funded retrofit projects. These roles ensure consistent quality, risk management, and post installation evaluation.

Retrofit Assessor

Conducts whole dwelling assessment and supplies data for design and risk analysis, including building condition, occupancy patterns, ventilation, and energy performance.

Retrofit Coordinator

Oversees the project from initial assessment through installation to evaluation. Manages risk, ensures compliance with PAS 2035, and coordinates all other roles.

Retrofit Designer

Prepares the detailed retrofit design, selecting appropriate measures and ensuring compatibility with the building's construction type and moisture profile.

Retrofit Installer

Carries out the physical installation of retrofit measures. Must follow PAS aligned installation standards and quality assurance procedures.

Retrofit Evaluator

Monitors and evaluates the building after installation, assessing effectiveness, comfort, energy use, and any unintended consequences.

These roles are often fulfilled by a combination of professionals and qualified tradespeople. In practice, a single individual or organisation may hold multiple competencies.

Key Local Training Providers

Retrofit related training in Aberdeen is emerging but still developing. Three organisations currently form the core of the local skills ecosystem:

NESCol (North East Scotland College)

NESCol is preparing to deliver fully funded courses for qualified plumbers and heating engineers, particularly around heat pump installation and maintenance. Courses such as the BPEC Domestic Air Source and Ground Source Heat Pump (Level 3) qualification help installers meet Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) competence requirements. These offerings support the region's shift toward low carbon heating technologies.

NESFIT CIC

NESFIT was established specifically to strengthen the retrofit supply chain in Aberdeen. It collaborates with NESCol and local architects to deliver introductory retrofit skills courses, including foundational training for contractors, professionals, and new entrants. NESFIT previously delivered sold out foundational courses supported by British Gas funding, signalling latent demand for retrofit upskilling.

Aberdeen Training Centre

The centre provides training and assessment for electricians, plumbers, heating engineers, and new entrants. Its provision includes:

- Foundational technical courses for newcomers to the sector
- BPEC Level 3 Heat Pump Technology training for experienced installers
- Free courses in heat pump installation for specific manufacturers (e.g., Daikin, Vaillant) through partnership arrangements
- Together, these providers offer a starting platform for retrofit learning, but coverage is not yet sufficient to meet anticipated demand for large scale retrofit across Aberdeen.

Barriers in the retrofit skills pipeline

The research highlights several barriers that currently limit the readiness of the retrofit workforce. Training pathways are fragmented, with courses delivered by multiple providers that vary in quality and are not always aligned with PAS 2035 requirements. Availability of skilled tradespeople is uneven, with electricians, joiners, plumbers and bricklayers in short supply due to high demand and limited training capacity. Many tradespeople also lack consistent retrofit competencies, particularly in managing moisture-sensitive buildings, traditional fabric, ventilation, and whole-building principles. Workforce development is further constrained by dependence on government-driven demand, as training uptake fluctuates with shifting funding cycles. Skills gaps persist around domestic heat pumps, where many installers are not yet MCS-qualified or familiar with the building-fabric requirements needed for effective installation. Finally, there are limited opportunities for hands-on learning, as workers rarely have access to live whole-building retrofit environments. Together, these barriers underscore the need for a practical, real-world learning setting, one that the proposed community demonstrator is well placed to provide.

Funding Options for Retrofit Skills Development

Several funding sources can support skills development as part of the demonstrator project. These include:

Course specific funding

Through government programmes such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (already supporting NESCol's upcoming heat pump courses).

Industry linked funding

From private partners (e.g., British Gas previously supported NESFIT retrofit training).

Potential alignment

With Just Transition funding streams, particularly where skills development contributes to community benefit and economic resilience.

CITV training grants

Available to registered employers for a range of retrofit aligned short courses and qualifications.

To maximise impact, skills funding should be integrated into the demonstrator's retrofit schedule, enabling structured learning as works progress.

To summarise, Aberdeen has the foundations of a retrofit skills ecosystem but still faces significant capacity gaps. The PAS 2035 framework requires a trained and coordinated workforce, and local providers, NESCol, NESFIT, and Aberdeen Training Centre, are well placed to expand provision. A community demonstrator offers the practical setting needed to deliver hands on training, strengthen the skills pipeline, and build a more confident, capable workforce for future domestic retrofit across the city.

Strategic Support for Retrofit

Achieving the aims of the proposed community demonstrator requires not only capital funding for building works but also revenue support for community engagement, skills development, and coordination. The current funding landscape for retrofit in Scotland and the UK is active but shifting. This section summarises the funding environment in three parts: current funding, future funding, and partnership opportunities most relevant to the demonstrator.

Current Funding Landscape

At the time of writing, several schemes may support elements of the demonstrator project. While many retrofit schemes target fuel-poor households or social housing, several mechanisms could apply to a community building demonstrator:

CARES (Community and Renewable Energy Scheme)

CARES provides capital grants for low carbon energy technologies in community buildings, such as solar PV, heat pumps, and energy storage. Although it does not fund fabric-first retrofit measures, it remains a strong candidate for supporting the energy system components of the demonstrator (e.g., heating upgrades, renewable technologies).

SME Loan and Cashback Scheme

This scheme provides loans and cashback for Scottish SMEs, charities, and not for profits for a range of low carbon and energy efficiency measures. Depending on the governance structure and eligibility of the community building, it may offer partial finance for building fabric improvements or prescribed retrofit measures.

Local authority alignment (Aberdeen City Council)

Aberdeen City Council has explicit intent to improve energy performance in the city's buildings and may be willing to support a demonstrator project that aligns with the LHEES. Council support may not be purely financial, coordination, technical support, or alignment with local programmes would add material value.

Learning and skills funding

NESCol and NESFIT already access UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) support for delivering low carbon heating skills programmes. Continuing or expanding this alignment could fund the training component linked to the demonstrator.

Future Funding Landscape

The next two years are characterised by policy and funding uncertainty, but several forthcoming changes could create additional opportunities:

UK Government consolidation of retrofit schemes

UK Government retrofit policy is currently centred on the Warm Homes Plan, published in January 2026. The Plan brings together a range of grant, loan and local-authority-led programmes aimed at improving the energy efficiency of homes and accelerating the transition to low-carbon heating. While the Great British Insulation Scheme has now closed and ECO4 is due to conclude at the end of 2026, the evolving funding landscape may create new opportunities for retrofit-related capital investment, skills development and community-based demonstrator projects.

Scottish Government upcoming regulations and support

The Scottish Government has published draft proposals for future building energy-performance and clean-heating requirements. Although the timing and final scope of legislation remain subject to parliamentary approval, the direction of travel points to increased demand for retrofit skills, investment and delivery across Scotland.

Just Transition Fund (North East & Moray)

The fund includes both capital and revenue allocations for 2026/27. Given that the demonstrator directly supports skill-building, community resilience, and decarbonisation, it is well aligned with the Fund's objectives and is one of the strongest future funding options.

Research and innovation funding (Innovate UK)

Innovate UK programmes, Net Zero Heat, Net Zero Living, and Local Authority partnerships, explicitly support scalable retrofit models, demonstrators, and new financing approaches. The community demonstrator could form the foundation of a competitive proposal, especially if tied to future street level or neighbourhood retrofit ambitions.

Strategic Partnership Opportunities

To maximise impact and widen the funding base, the demonstrator could be positioned as a collaborative project drawing multiple partners into a coherent programme. Opportunities include:

Community Building Network (across Aberdeen)

Site visits revealed that several community buildings are already undertaking retrofit in fragmented ways. A coordinated network could:

- Share learning from the demonstrator
- Support co creation and joint engagement
- Strengthen bids for shared or sequential funding

This network could be supported by revenue funding proposed in **Recommendation 3**.

Skills and Training Partners (NESCol, NESFIT, Aberdeen Training Centre)

These organisations have established delivery capability and track records of successful collaboration. Involving them early allows:

- Training pathways to be embedded into the retrofit programme
- Use of the building as a live demonstrator for practical learning
- Potential co funding of course delivery

Professional Institutes and Academia

Architectural, surveying, and construction bodies (e.g., CIOB, RICS, university departments) may offer support through:

- Professional CPD integration
- Knowledge Transfer Partnerships
- Student and graduate involvement
- Research contributions on whole building retrofit

Linking the demonstrator to domestic retrofit pathways strengthens the research case.

Industry and Supply Chain Partners

Manufacturers (e.g., heat pump suppliers), contractors, and local SME installers may contribute in kind support (equipment, training, labour), demonstration technologies, and technical expertise. This could reduce project costs while strengthening industry capacity in Aberdeen.

To summarise, the funding environment for retrofit is evolving but offers clear and targeted opportunities for the demonstrator project. CARES and SME loans can support energy system upgrades; skills funding can flow through existing training providers; and future opportunities from the Just Transition Fund and Innovate UK could underpin both capital and revenue needs. Strategic partnerships, with community organisations, skills providers, professional bodies, and industry, will be essential to maximise impact, secure diverse funding streams, and establish the demonstrator as a credible, scalable model for domestic retrofit in Aberdeen.

Indicative savings potential and business-case outlook

A first-pass review of the shortlisted buildings' energy data suggests that a well-designed retrofit could meaningfully reduce running costs, although savings could fall below the theoretical heat-loss reduction potential. For example, at Powis Community Centre, early observations indicate scope to cut heating demand by up to 25%* even before full fabric measures are introduced, while electricity use appears disproportionately high (potentially due to portable electric heating) highlighting the need for confirmation and monitoring. In technical terms, whole-building upgrades could reduce heat loss by as much as 80%,* but in real operating conditions this is more likely to translate into a 50-60%* reduction in energy costs, given electricity's higher unit cost and the likelihood that a warmer and more usable building may be occupied more intensively.

Detailed modelling and short-term environmental monitoring would be required to confirm likely savings and estimate a realistic payback period, but the initial indicators are sufficiently positive to justify examining the business-case potential of the demonstrator as a financeable project.

**Subject to detailed modelling and monitoring.*

Conclusions & Recommendations

Retrofit activity in Aberdeen has grown over recent years, with many homes and several community buildings already benefiting from energy efficiency improvements and a small but committed skills ecosystem emerging across the city. Yet significant challenges remain. The policy environment is shifting, electricity costs remain high, and public trust in retrofit, particularly after past issues with insulation quality, continues to be fragile. Skills provision is patchy and uneven, with many tradespeople lacking experience in whole house approaches, moisture sensitive construction, or low carbon heating integration. These factors make it difficult for residents, community organisations, and installers to navigate retrofit with confidence.

The work undertaken for this report demonstrates that to build momentum for domestic retrofit in Aberdeen, the city needs a practical, tangible, and community centred way to rebuild trust and strengthen capability. The proposed community building demonstrator directly addresses this challenge. By situating retrofit in a publicly accessible space, it allows residents to observe works firsthand, provides a controlled environment for training and learning, and generates transferable insights for wider-scale implementation. It also creates a focal point for collaboration across the city, connecting community organisations, skills providers, local authorities, and industry partners in a coherent programme.

This approach offers clear value: it is achievable in the short term, visible and relatable for residents, and capable of strengthening the workforce needed for future domestic retrofit. It builds on existing enthusiasm while addressing the critical gaps, skills, trust, engagement, and practical understanding, that currently limit progress. Above all, it provides a replicable foundation for the wider ambitions of Aberdeen's just transition.

A detailed assessment of financial payback has not yet been undertaken, as it requires building specific modelling and environmental monitoring. If the demonstrator progresses to a full business case development phase, the next stage would include comprehensive analysis of costs, projected energy savings, and realistic payback periods to inform funding decisions.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

It is recommended that a community building be identified to act as a demonstrator to stimulate demand for retrofit in Aberdeen. The community building selected for the project should be similar in archetype to typical homes in Aberdeen, and have the capacity to host residents and the local workforce to witness and learn from the retrofit works on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation 1a: It is recommended that Powis Community Centre be selected as the demonstrator site.

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that training opportunities throughout this project be aligned with community engagement and opportunities to upskill the workforce and build on the nascent partnership between NESCol and NESFIT.

Recommendation 3

It is recommended that a revenue fund be established to support the retrofit capital project in order to facilitate a retrofit network for Aberdeen City as part of a co creation approach; support the design and implementation of a long term communications and engagement plan, and, to enable the local workforce to be upskilled.



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