
A 5 Point Plan to a ‘No Regrets’ Net Zero Retrofit Strategy

Developing a Net Zero retrofit strategy without regret. All straightforward in the world of sound-byte isn't it. ‘No Regrets’, ‘Fabric First’, ‘Worst First’ and so on.

Then we have the reality of taking a critical view of our housing stock, often with a limited dataset and out-of-date information which is held in multiple locations with duplication and cloning thrown into the mix.

The social housing sector are committed to the notion of hitting a minimum EPC band C by 2030 and then to achieve Net Zero by 2050. This in itself can make a ‘No Regrets’ approach a difficult proposition because the measurement of an EPC band and of carbon impact are fundamentally different.

We need to think about the band C target as a milestone to be reached by 2030 as a part of the longer-term journey towards Net Zero. This will change the way we plan our improvement strategy.

In simple terms, design our retrofit improvement planning for Net Zero and work backwards. This gives us the visibility of where we want our homes to be and what they will look like and will better inform the decisions we make today around improvements.

An example might be that if we were designing a Net Zero home and looking to insulate the loft, we may decide upon installing 450mm of loft insulation, whereas if we were planning to get a property to an EPC band C we might be recommending 250mm of loft insulation. If we know that we will eventually need 450mm, then installing that measure prior to 2030 not only supports our band C targets but also saves future duplication of time, effort, and money further down the line.

Getting hold of the data to inform our decision making.

This is all much easier to plan if we have a quality assured data profile of our whole stock – which, in reality, most housing providers don't currently hold. The best investment over the next 12 months and beyond is on data acquisition.

There are multiple sources from which we could source a sufficient dataset to return an energy rating and carbon score.

Whether housing providers conduct this work internally with data analysts or work with organisations who provide this expertise, it is time well spent to end up with 100% of stock providing an energy rating. This will allow us to ask questions of that dataset, such as ‘What does a retrofit plan look like for each of these homes and how much will it cost?’

This starts to build confidence in not only what our homes will need to look like but also informs our skills needs internally. If for instance, it looks like we are going to have 3,000 air source heat pumps installed across specific stock over the next 20 years, where are the engineering skills to

support this? Do frontline staff need to have appreciation training on some of these technologies, ought we be starting to inform tenants on the future of housing and how heat pumps work? It's all hugely valuable insight for how we map out the future shape of our organisations.

We are then able to do financial cross checking, such as what would the financial impact be over the next 20 years if I don't even consider low temperature, low carbon technology for at least the next 10 years? Is this an achievable strategy? Once you start asking these questions of your energy analytics software and internal expertise you can then work towards a Net Zero improvement plan that you can stand by.

Even where we are applying for funding from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and have specific heat demand targets to meet and particular property types to target, it still shouldn't stop us making sure that we are considering a 'No Regrets' approach before we submit the bid. Knowing what we want the property to eventually look like will assist in a stronger bid application and will stand the property in better stead for its next phase of improvement.

A 5 Point Plan to a No Regrets Net Zero Retrofit Strategy

If you are yet to embark on the Net Zero journey, the 5-point-plan below is a good place to start:

1. **A dataset for 100% of your stock that returns an energy rating.** It's a tough job but it's an essential investment. Whether this is an internal project, or you work with a specialist organisation like Sava, it should be the first piece of work you undertake.
2. **A single version of the truth.** If you use an asset management system, work to integrate your newly cleansed dataset into your asset database. It means that every time you make any property improvement in the future, it will inform your energy data and will recalculate your energy rating accordingly.
3. **Net Zero is our target, band C is just part of the journey.** Build an improvement strategy that visualises the future of your stock and work back towards an incremental improvement plan that is costed out, achievable and avoids the 'regrets' of duplicated effort.
4. **Invest in specialist analytics software.** Invest in a powerful calculation engine that runs your improvement planning software and helps map out and inform your retrofit journey – such as Sava Intelligent Energy.

5. **Knowledge is power.** Low carbon technology is inevitable. Speak to manufacturers,

attend training sessions, consider having some of your team attend retrofit co-ordinator training. Start to think about how you help educate tenants. They will need to understand this new technology to ensure they do not fear it.

Here at Sava, we provide free technical webinars specifically designed to improve your knowledge of energy analysis and maximise the value you get from your property data. You can view our upcoming webinars here: <https://sava.co.uk/software/technical-webinars/>.

Please feel free to get in touch with us at technology@sava.co.uk to find out how we can help you to develop your Net Zero retrofit strategy through our software and consultancy solutions.