

# Environment & Community Panel

Freebridge Community Housing Update

# Net Zero by 2050

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As a country we have a commitment to achieve net zero by 2050, and as West Norfolk's largest housing provider Freebridge has a vital role to play in this. Not only in terms of how we run our business, but also in the decisions we make now which will impact our current and future generations.

Collectively, we have the opportunity to do things better than we have done before, and the decisions we make will be made with the consideration of the impact of reducing our carbon footprint.

As part of our journey towards 2050 and becoming a carbon neutral business we have committed to improving the EPC rating of our housing stock to a minimum EPC C by 2030

In order to achieve this target, we are building a retrofit strategy, with the first stage getting underway in 2023.

# Research and Improvement

In the past year we have made considerable strides towards achieving our efficiency and sustainability goals.

In 2023 we introduced a new Research and Improvement team to create the strategies and innovations that will lead us towards our Net Zero 2050 target, demonstrating our commitment to long-term improvements and plans for the environment and our tenants' wellbeing.

The Research and Improvement team is dedicated to horizon scanning for opportunities that will aid us in these objectives.

This includes monitoring bills that are currently progressing through Parliament that may affect us and our tenants, the committees in which they're discussed, as well as constantly scanning for funding opportunities that will allow us to bring retrofit works to more of our properties.

# Achieving Net Zero

Steps towards achieving Net Zero



## Future Homes Standard

New build homes will meet future homes standards and wherever possible will be built with sustainable heating options moving away from fossil fuels as a form of heating.

Where this isn't possible, homes will be built with future proofing in mind in preparation for the transition away from fossil fuels.



## Emissions

In addition to reducing our building emissions, we will also reduce the emissions and carbon impact from our fleet vehicles.

This will be achieved through our new scheduling systems and plans to transition from petrol and diesel vehicles to EV's.



## Energy

Move the electricity contracts of our sheltered schemes, offices, communal and commercial spaces to suppliers who offer 100% Green renewable tariffs.

# Achieving Net Zero

Steps towards achieving Net Zero



## Decarbonising

Decarbonisation of our housing stock, office and commercial buildings. Replacing heating systems with low carbon technology while utilising renewable energy generation where possible.



## Knowledge

Continuing to educate and train our colleagues giving them the knowledge and skills to make sustainable business decisions, raising their awareness of their own contributions on a personal basis to inform their behaviours and improve their individual carbon footprints.



## Upskill

Upskilling our operative team to deliver property retrofit measures to reduce the reliance on specialist external contractors.



## Procurement

We will also consider the social value and environmental impact when awarding contracts, working with suppliers to benefit our long-term sustainability strategy.

This further demonstrates our consideration of environmental impact in all our decisions in relation to our assets and resources.

# Wave2

# What's happened so far?

Having been successful in our Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2.1 fund application, this allowed Freebridge to take our first steps on our retrofit journey.

Our £2.7 million project, of which 48% is funded by SHDF will improve the energy efficiency of 99 homes between April 2023 and March 2025, reducing the environmental impact these properties have whilst creating warmer and more efficient homes for our tenants.

Taking a fabric first approach we are ensuring that the properties provide the correct levels of insulation prior to installing Low Carbon Heating technology in the form of ASHP's alongside renewable energy generation, Solar PV to reduce the running costs of the new heating systems.



**£2.7million  
project, of  
48% is  
funded by  
SHDF**

**By the end of Y1**

**56**

**Retrofit surveys will  
have taken place**

**35**

**properties will have been  
completed by 31st March**



**EPC's that are D & E's should  
rise to EPC B's & C's.**



## Feedback to far from tenants

**“Previously I was only being able to afford to heat my living room, with electricity costs of around £8 per day. Since the upgrades I’m now heating my whole home to a constant temperature all day for less than it was previously costing me, my home is now a much more comfortable place to live.”**

**“I was happy with my existing heating, and it was working well, I wasn’t sure what was proposed would benefit me. I was worried about the disruption that would be caused from the works, all the workmen were kind, friendly and very tidy. My home is now warmer than it has ever been and it’s warm all day and is costing me less than before, thank you. I’m going to tell my neighbours how good the new heating is and they should go for it if they have any concerns.”**

## Feedback to far from tenants

**“ I didn't want any work to be done on my home, I didn't see the need or want the disruption, I'm not great with technology and didn't understand how the proposed systems would work, it sounded like it could be very complicated. Freebridge sat with me explained everything in simple terms that were easy to understand as well as what would happen and when. They also allowed me to take my time and not make a final decision until neighbours had theirs installed so I could see how it all worked and how they found the new heating, I've only heard positive things and I'm now excited to be having mine completed in the next few weeks.”**

**“ My whole house is now much warmer than it was before and it is so much easier to keep the temperature consistent, with simple and easy to use controls. The warmer home has really helped with my arthritis which always gets worse when it is cold.”**

**Next...**

# Next...

1

While this is the first stage of our retrofit plans we have been continuing to plan for future stages.

Over the past few months, we have been building relationships with external organisations to investigate how we can partner and work together to utilise funding opportunities to help on our retrofit journey.

2

We are hopeful that on top of the Wave 2.1 works, in 24-25 we will also be able to deliver on improving some of worst performing properties in our stock, part funded through the ECO 4 scheme, improving the quality of our stock.

We also continue to work closely with our planned works team to give consideration to how works can improve the efficiency and EPC rating of as many properties as possible through all available avenues.

3

It is anticipated that the SHDF Wave 3 scheme will be announced later this year, we will look to build on the work and learnings from our Wave 2.1 project in order to apply for Wave 3 funding to improve a far greater number of properties.

Works to identify properties likely to be included in an application will start taking place in the next few months.

As we progress towards 2035 we will look to increase the number of properties we retrofit and improve EPC ratings through a mixture of capital funded, grant funded and planned works funds.



## Tenant's Homes

Following our full Stock Condition Survey, we will be working on our least energy efficient properties and In the year ahead, to make properties more energy efficient we will

- Delivering a component replacement programme
- Carrying out insulation, roof and heating works
- Fitting window and door replacements
- Ongoing support fund

Support Fund Issued. April 23 - to date (Energy and Food)

**£69,285**

Energy support during winter plan (1/12/23 - to date)

**£18,511**

PLUS - Scheme energy support

vouchers issued for food and energy

**1322**

# **Introducing Dairy Way**





**21.87  
acres**

**3**

**Between 1 & 3  
hectares New  
Wetland  
Habitat**

**5**

**New Native Woodland  
& Meadow Grassland  
Planting**

**New Habitats  
Diverse wildlife**

**Community Access  
Access to Nature &  
Education catchment,**

# Benefits

## Habitat and Biodiversity Enhancements Working for Nature & the Environment

At the heart of the strategy would be the creation of new managed native woodland and wetland habitats.

Existing and new landscape features would be incorporated that would benefit and encourage wildlife and strengthen the local ecological and biodiversity eco-systems.

Areas of rich meadow planting within the spaces would further increase biodiversity and encourage pollinators such as bees, beetles, butterflies and moths. There would also be the opportunity of installing bee hives and bird and bat boxes across the site

## Connecting People with Nature Health & Wellbeing

Being outside is fun and having access to open spaces, nature and wildlife has major benefits for our physical and mental health and sense of wellbeing.

A new park would provide such a space, that can be enjoyed by the whole community. New footpath walks with interpretation boards will offer a direct connection to nature a space to walk, relax & educate. We would like to look at introducing a new 'natural play space' within the existing Queen Elizabeth Avenue Children's Play Area, and the introduction of a 'Trim Trail' along the existing cycle path encouraging and promoting active lifestyle choices and sense of wellbeing

# Benefits

## Community & Education Educating for our future

Although subject to planning, there is the potential to delivering a new Community and Education Hub building on the site.

Designed to sit sympathetically within its landscape setting, the building could provide a multi-functional education space, that can be used by schools, local community groups and visitors to explain the background, purpose and environmental benefits of the park and how it is helping to address the challenges to our changing climate.

There is the opportunity of encouraging and involving the community in shaping the park and in the longer-term future management.

## Freebridge Community Housing Towards NetZero

The site would provide Freebridge with a significant and diverse range of ways to deliver impact to 'Build Better Futures'.

The land has the right balance of location and criteria for woodland activities that can unlock impact in both carbon reduction, sustainability and community wellbeing. The site also creates a direct opportunity for carbon capture and carbon offsetting through new tree planting, wetland areas and biodiversity and habitat enhancement projects

Through collaboration between business investment into the wellbeing economy and the local community, this underutilised piece of land within the heart of the community provides a unique and exciting opportunity for us to deliver a project that could contribute towards real long-term environmental and community change and benefit.

The land purchase brings a wide range of carbon reduction and community benefits that align with the Freebridge objectives



***Any questions?***