The Bristol Method

how to cut the carbon footprint of a city’s housing stock

In it for good
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Introduction

In 2008, the UK Government passed the Climate Change Act, setting a legally binding target to reduce the UK’s greenhouse gas emissions by 80% against a 1990 baseline.

In Bristol, the council agreed a Climate Change and Energy Security Framework in February 2010, aimed at improving the city’s energy security and reducing its GHG emissions. The Framework established a target of reducing the city’s CO₂ emissions by 40% and energy use by 30% by 2020 against a 2005 baseline. While the city is on target to meet the 40% target, the council as a corporate entity met the 40% target early in 2015. These targets have since been updated, with Bristol’s end goal being to become a carbon neutral city by 2050.

A third of the UK’s greenhouse gas emissions result from heating and power in our homes so reducing domestic energy demand is absolutely critical if we are going to meet these stretching targets.

Bristol City Council has explored how best to cut the carbon footprint of the city’s building stock, helping residents and businesses make their homes and offices warmer and more energy efficient, as well as investing in the council’s own properties.

This module explains the council’s Warm Up Bristol scheme which is designed to cut the carbon footprint of Bristol’s private residential building stock.

By 2020, Bristol aims to be carbon neutral
What is Warm Up Bristol?

Warm Up Bristol is one of the most ambitious energy efficiency schemes in the UK, with a goal of making 30,000 homes warmer and more energy efficient over a four year period.

It provides quality energy improvements to homes, meaning that less energy is needed to heat and power them. This saves residents money on their bills while helping to achieve the city’s emission reduction targets. It also provides a boost to people who work in the retrofit sector, and is already creating new jobs.

There are numerous social benefits from schemes like this, such as a reducing pressures on Public Health through helping to get people’s homes up to a better living standard. There is an additional benefit of supporting the local economy and businesses is the region by ensuring that 75% of the work is done by SMEs.

The council is incentivising energy efficiency measures through the Warm Up Bristol programme with grants from the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) and funding via the Energy Company Obligation. An Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is a government scheme that obligates larger energy suppliers to deliver energy efficiency measures to domestic premises in Britain.

The Warm Up Bristol scheme was launched in October 2014 and is designed to offer something for everyone, always ensuring that residents are given the best offer available at that point in time. The funding available varies depending on where you live in the city as well as your personal situation (such as your income level and whether you receive benefits).

It is worth noting here that in addition to this programme for private homes, Bristol City Council also has an intensive investment scheme for social housing which is currently in the process of improving the insulation of 30 tower blocks and 3,200 homes across the city.

Previous schemes:

Warm Up Bristol is the successor to The Bristol Home Energy Upgrade (BHEU) scheme launched in December 2012 to enable people to reduce energy use in their homes and help them cut their bills. This scheme was designed to test the Green Deal, offering grants to help homeowners upgrade their heating systems or install solid wall insulation. Where the grant did not cover the full cost of works, householders were able to take out a ‘pay as you save’ loan, with repayments linked to the expected fuel bill savings. Nearly 200 households were helped by the scheme.
What are the different offers?

There are three strands to the scheme which target different groups.

1. **City-wide offer**

   This campaign aims to raise awareness of the funding available to people throughout the city to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. There’s something for everyone with 45 different energy efficiency measures on offer ranging from solid wall or loft insulation to double glazing and draught proofing.

   This scheme began using both Green Deal Finance and the Energy Company Obligation to make energy efficiency improvements more affordable to residents. However, following Government policy changes to the Green Deal in 2015, the scheme is now reliant on the Energy Company Obligation and any other grant funding available. Residents will always be offered the best deal available but, typically, householders will be expected to contribute some of the cost of these measures. The council is currently investigating additional funding mechanisms to assist homeowners and private sector landlords for the remainder of the scheme.

2. **Green Deal Communities**

   The council secured additional, limited funding (£5.3m) from the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) to improve properties in three key areas of the city – Totterdown, Horfield and Easton.

   These areas were selected as they had a high proportion of hard to treat properties (such as homes with solid walls) and would be best to pilot a ‘street by street’ approach to private sector retrofit.

3. **Landlords and tenants – Private Rented Sector**

   DECC also provided funding for a pilot scheme specifically targeting the Private Rented Sector (PRS) which is limited to £2m.

   The scheme offered landlords with eligible properties incentives to significantly reduce the cost of energy efficiency home improvements such as new boilers, new heating systems and draught proofing.

   The benefits to landlords include providing better living conditions to tenants, potential increases in the rental value of their property and staying ahead of potential new regulations on renting out low energy rated properties. Tenants also benefit from warmer, cosier homes which are cheaper to heat.

   Bristol City Council is working with North Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council to deliver the PRS scheme across the South West.
How is Bristol funding Warm Up Bristol?

The council made a successful application to the European Investment Bank (EIB), under the European Local Energy Assistance (ELENA) Programme, for a grant of £2.5m to establish a large-scale energy investment programme. Bristol used this seed funding to pay for staff and resources to create the vision for the Warm Up Bristol programme as well as other energy efficiency initiatives across the city.

The team identified two schemes launched by the UK government which could help Warm Up Bristol reduce the cost to residents who want to make energy efficiency improvements to their homes.

- The Green Deal was a UK government policy launched in January 2013 which provided a delivery framework and financial mechanism for the installation of energy efficiency measures in Britain’s homes. During 2015 the Government closed their Green Deal Finance scheme meaning that this was no longer a financing option for new customers.

- The Energy Company Obligation (ECO), which was launched in 2013 places legal obligations on the larger energy suppliers to deliver energy efficiency measures to domestic energy users.

The Department of Energy and Climate change (DECC) also provided £7.3 million of grant funding to enable two pilots in Bristol: the landlord scheme and the Green Deal Communities scheme. These schemes have enabled Warm Up Bristol to engage residents and increase awareness around the benefits of retrofitting energy efficiency improvements so that Bristol can transition into a programme that is not reliant on grant funding to operate going forward.

There is also a contribution from homeowners to fund their energy efficiency home improvements. This is done on a quote basis depending on the types of measures that the customers choose.

Two happy residents of the Warm Up Bristol scheme

Thermal imaging of a Bristol house.
Who has Bristol City Council teamed up with?

One of the scheme’s greatest strengths is the broad team of organisations which are working to support it.

Left to right: Community Champion Pinder Juttla, Secretary of State Amber Rudd, Energy Service Manager Mareike Schmidt, Mayor of Bristol George Ferguson and Project Manager Kate Watson

Within the council, the Energy Service has worked closely with colleagues in the Housing Delivery Service, who manage the council’s social housing properties and associated energy efficiency projects. The Energy Service manages all of the requirements to access the Energy Company Obligation funding for the department to ensure the most use out of Housing Revenue funds.

The Energy Service also worked with two other councils – North Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council – as joint partners on the private landlord scheme. This provided greater marketing opportunities and a chance to make a bigger impact on the Private Rented Sector across the wider South West region.

In 2014, Climate Energy was procured for a four-year period, ending in 2018. Climate Energy’s function was to help engage local businesses and SMEs as well as making sure good quality suppliers wanted to work on the initiative.

The council also teamed up with EDF Energy as a funding partner under the Energy Company Obligation.

Engaging the city’s community groups have been crucial to the scheme’s success to date. By working with grassroots organisations, the council has been better able to engage with hard to reach groups, including those without easy access to services or people who speak another language.

The Easton Energy Group involvement in the scheme is an excellent example: it has been working in the Easton area with residents for the past six years so a firm groundwork had been laid in the area. Volunteers had been educating people about the benefits of energy efficiency home improvements long before anyone heard about the Warm Up Bristol scheme.

On a city-wide scale, the council worked with the Bristol Energy Network, an umbrella organisation for most of the community energy groups in the city. One of the objectives of the Bristol Energy Network has been to help establish local energy groups across the city. Since working with the Warm Up Bristol programme, it has helped establish the Totterdown and Greater Fishponds Energy Groups and will support emerging groups in other areas too in 2016 and beyond.

In autumn 2015, Climate Energy, the delivery partner for the scheme went into administration and the Council is now delivering the scheme in-house with a focus on quality installations, tight controls and customer service.
“Warm Up Bristol gives a huge opportunity for us to address householders’ energy needs and costs. We are working with local communities with the ambition to engage residents right across the city. This is a cause that is central to our Green Capital legacy and will lay a vital part of the foundations for Bristol to be the most sustainable city in years to come.”

Mayor of Bristol, George Ferguson

“It makes sense to help more families install energy saving improvements now, so that they see the benefits of lower bills and a warmer home for years to come.”

Amber Rudd, Parliamentary Secretary of State at the Department of Energy and Climate Change
How is Warm Up Bristol being communicated?

To get people to apply for the available funding, the council needed to build awareness of the Warm Up Bristol scheme and give people a clear call to action to get in touch and access information about what’s on offer.

For the scheme to be a success, the council needs to drive people to call the Warm Up Bristol telephone number (0117 35 21180), visit the [www.warmupbristol.co.uk](http://www.warmupbristol.co.uk) website or get in touch via a tweet, in order to establish what’s available. The communications team has been seeking to raise awareness of the scheme and its benefits, and make sure people know how to take the first steps to applying.

A letter has been delivered to strategically targeted areas and advisors from the council’s delivery partner, Climate Energy, has conducted face-to-face visits.

Communications tools:

**Website:** The Warm Up Bristol website – [www.warmupbristol.co.uk](http://www.warmupbristol.co.uk) – has been a crucial part of the campaign, containing general information which encouraged people to contact the team to find out more.

**PR:** Bristol’s status as European Green Capital 2015 has helped the scheme gain traction in the media, and news coverage at launch was significant. Energy is a key theme for the year and Warm Up Bristol is one of the most tangible ways that householders can take action to make their homes greener.

**Word of mouth:** One of the real strengths of Bristol City Council’s partnership approach is the number of motivated, informed people that are spreading the word in their local area. By educating local community groups and offering a small referral fee, there are now knowledgeable people able to talk face-to-face with local residents.

**Social Media:** Building a strong presence on social media has been key to engaging new customers and staying in touch with existing ones. Using Twitter has allowed the communications team to target specific customer segments through a range of digital campaigns. It has also enabled rapid response and troubleshooting advice for customers in need.

**Street parties:** Streets Alive is a charity which helps communities to organise street parties. It supported Bristol City Council to stage a community event in Easton to launch Warm Up Bristol, as well as helping the Easton Energy Group set up a series of local ‘street meets’ designed to engage people in the scheme in a fun and relaxed way. Between October and December 2014, eight ‘street meets’ took place in Easton and the charity is currently developing a toolkit to help community groups hold their own.

**Demonstrator homes:** Easton has a high numbers of suitable solid wall properties and an active community energy group. Prior to the launch, a competition was held for residents within the area to win external wall insulation for their homes. This helped to build interest and awareness ahead of the scheme’s launch date. The competition winners now form part of a ‘Demonstrator Street’ where visitors can see what solid wall insulation looks like.
Show home: the council has also opened a Warm Up Bristol show home in Easton to show people how you can make an older home warmer with energy saving insulation and other measures. The Easton Energy Group manage the property, opening it to visitors three days each week and hosting events such as ‘knit and natter’ sessions or lessons on how to make your own draught-proofing sausage dog!

“Fuel poverty is sadly a very real concern for many Bristol residents so this show home is displaying some practical and affordable options to keep energy bills low – fighting fuel poverty and reducing our carbon footprint as a city. We’re working hard to make fuel poverty a thing of the past and whether you are a property tenant or owner-occupier, there are actions you can take. Warm Up Bristol is aimed at offering help and advice as part of our Green Capital commitment.”

Councillor Mark Bradshaw

“With some insulation measures it’s hard to visualise how the finished product will look, so coming to the show home gives people the opportunity to see the measures for themselves before they decide to go ahead. Visitors will also be able to try out our hand pedal-power light to physically feel how much energy is used to power old incandescent light bulbs and energy saving bulbs.

Dave Tudgey from Easton Energy Group
What challenges has the project faced?

The Warm Up Bristol programme was carefully planned to ensure success. However, there were some issues that had to be overcome before launch.

Planning and Set Up

**Securing funding:** The project brings together a wide range of funding opportunities including a grant from the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC), Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding as well as homeowner contributions based on individual circumstances. The aim has been to provide best value for local people in a changing political landscape.

**New technologies:** Solid wall insulation is a good solution for what are known as ‘hard to treat’ properties. However it is a more complicated intervention than loft or cavity wall insulation, requiring scaffolding and taking longer to install. Its benefits are also less well-known in the UK, meaning that considerable work was needed to educate people. The Warm Up Bristol Show Home in Easton has been key in overcoming this challenge as residents can see first-hand the difference solid wall insulation can make.

**Getting the message out:** The council created simple marketing material, encouraging people to contact the Warm Up Bristol team to find out more about what is available specifically for them. Targeted leaflets were created for the three Green Deal Communities areas and private landlords/tenants. The intention has always been to keep the messaging simple, engaging and above all, accessible for all.

**Making energy matter:** In a time of rising energy costs, the topic of energy efficiency has become more important than ever before. The council’s aim has been to make the scheme stand out from other insulation and energy efficiency campaigns to really engage people. Efforts have been made to keep things interesting by using fun images or real people and a colourful palate. The team also committed to use language that people can easily understand and relate to. This means talking less about energy-efficiency, carbon savings, environmental performance etc and more about good health, lower heating bills and warmer, cosier homes.
Year one delivery

As with any major project or scheme, there are a number of factors that can change over time. These factors are unforeseen but can have a big impact on the running of a scheme like Warm Up Bristol.

Changes to government policy: The Green Deal Finance scheme came to an end in the summer of 2015, meaning that this was no longer a financing option for new customers of the scheme.

External Delivery Partner: During the Autumn of 2015 the project’s delivery partner, Climate Energy, unexpectedly went into administration. This meant that the council had to manage uncompleted works and ensure that customers who had signed contracts did not lose any deposits paid. The main priority was reducing any potential impacts for both customers and the installers working on the scheme. Swift action was taken to understand the full impact of this event and a multi-channel approach was used to get in touch with all stakeholders in order to keep them up to date.

The team also worked with ward councillors and a network of community groups to make sure that there was support available for people in their local area, holding public meetings across the city to reassure the public about their deposits and home installations.

The management takeover of the scheme by the council has meant that the team has more control over installers and the customer experience, which has so far resulted in tighter quality control and better customer journey.

After one year of delivery, the scheme is estimated to have saved approximately 15,000 tCO₂ – the first step on the journey to becoming a carbon neutral city.
How would I replicate it elsewhere?

Gather information: Before creating a plan of action, it is necessary to know what the problem is. In March 2013, Bristol City Council purchased data about the Energy Performance Certificates of properties in the city and subsequently developed a Housing Stock Model to identify the most urgent energy needs of the city.

Develop a strategy and set targets: On that basis, the council developed a programme which could be applied city-wide, and agreed criteria to measure success.

Get funding: After securing EU funding, the Bristol team submitted funding requests to DECC in September 2013 and January 2014, following which £7.2 million funding was granted.

Gain council approval: In January 2014, the plans were put in front of Bristol City Council’s Cabinet for formal approval.

Establish a governance process: In Bristol, key decisions are made by the Capital Board, which meets once a month. The Energy Service Programme Board feeds into this along with the information that it receives from the council’s Housing Programme Board. There is also a Warm Up Bristol Board where key funding and delivery stakeholders contribute. This Board meets on a quarterly basis.

Engage stakeholders: In Bristol we have found that engaging with key stakeholders and community groups prior to launch has been very beneficial. The council will continue to engage with local community groups throughout the life of the scheme to ensure people are informed, engaged and supportive.

Develop and agree a delivery plan: Bristol conducted a procurement process to find a delivery partner, Climate Energy, and an ECO funding partner, EDF energy.

Launch it: The project commenced in late summer 2014 with an official launch event in October 2014. The fully refurbished Show Home opened in December 2014.

Measuring success

The Warm Up Bristol Programme will run until the end of 2018. The scheme’s success will be measured in the following ways:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Target</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. people signed up to the scheme</td>
<td>Maximum number signed up (as determined by available funds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. properties undertaking a Green Deal Assessment</td>
<td>Maximum number signed up (as determined by available funds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer satisfaction</td>
<td>An average score of 4.5 out of 5 on customer feedback surveys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. houses visited</td>
<td>180,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. home improvement measures fitted</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with SMEs</td>
<td>75% of work to be done by SMEs</td>
</tr>
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BRISTOL 2015

European Green Capital is a prestigious annual award designed to promote and reward the efforts of cities to improve the environment. Bristol is the first ever UK city to win the award.

European Green Capital is run by The European Commission, recognising that Europe’s urban societies face many environmental challenges – and that sustainable, low-carbon living is vital to the future of our cities and our people.

The award was first won by Stockholm in 2010. Since then, Hamburg, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Nantes and Copenhagen have carried the torch. Bristol has now handed the title to Ljubljana, the 2016 European Green Capital.

THE BRISTOL METHOD

The Bristol Method is a knowledge-transfer programme aimed at helping people in other cities understand and apply the lessons that Bristol has learned in becoming a more sustainable city, not just in 2015 but in the last decade.

Each module of the Bristol Method is presented as an easy-to-digest ‘how to’ guide on a particular topic, which use Bristol’s experiences as a case study. The modules contain generic advice and recommendations that each reader can tailor to their own circumstances.

The Bristol Method modules are published on the Bristol 2015 website at www.bristol2015.co.uk/method

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