



## Engagement Strategy for increasing household insulation Funding

Rossendale  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# 1. Introduction

The purpose of this Strategy is to increase community engagement within the context of boosting home insulation funding, working alongside a number of project partners, which will be vital as we aim to be Net-Zero by 2030 as promised by our Climate Change Strategy. Our Climate Change Strategy includes not just Council, but also the wider borough's emissions also, so it is vital that we work together with our residents and community organisations and this importance is reflected in Section 3.4. of the Strategy that promises to work together in partnership to achieve this reduction.

Housing is a major emitter of CO<sub>2</sub> in the Borough, which will need significant reductions if this goal is to be met. This will be a challenge to the Council, due to the U.K.'s reliance on gas to heat our homes, and the barriers in place that are hampering energy diversification efforts. As can be seen from Figure 1, emissions from heating have remained stable in the Borough, whilst electricity has seen reductions over this time period, as the electrical grid has introduced a greater number of renewables into the energy mix. This is more difficult when looking at domestic heating, as there are issues with not only our reliance on gas, but also a result of low energy efficiency of our in both Rossendale and in the U.K.

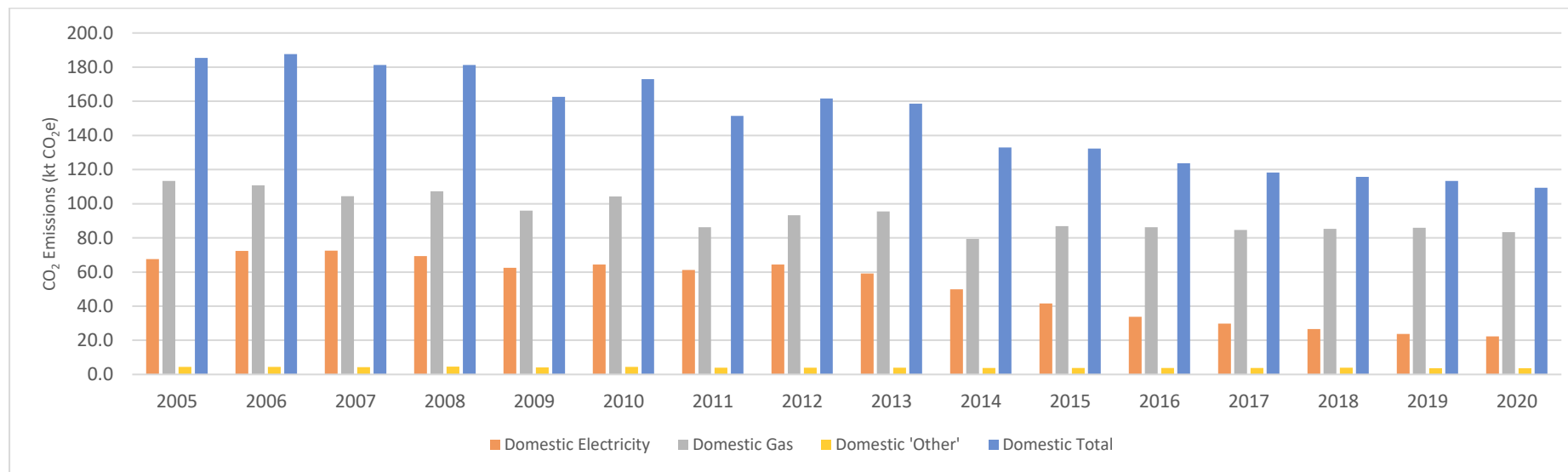
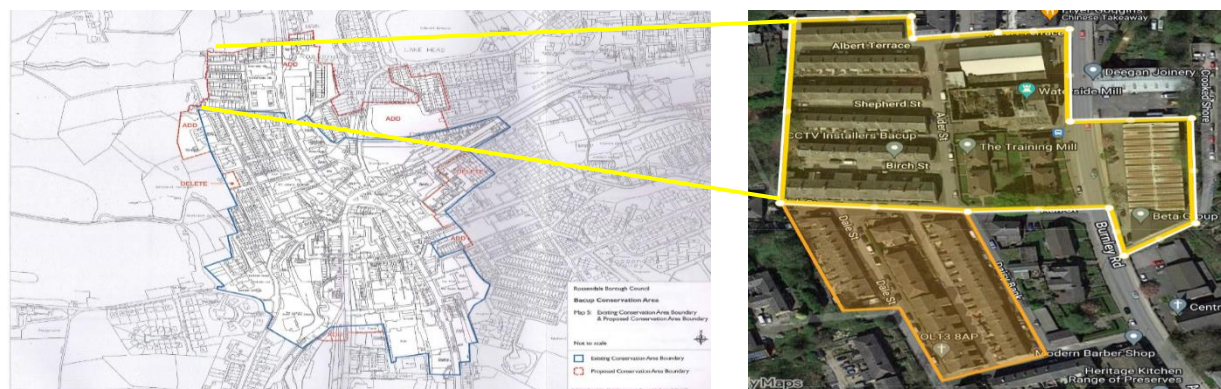


Figure 1: Domestic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, Rossendale – 2005 – 2020 (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, BEIS, 2022)

In terms of domestic properties, energy efficiency presents a significant challenge in the Borough due to the age of the properties. Around 37% of the properties were built before 1900<sup>1</sup> - compared to 15% nationally – that will have poorer standards compared to modern buildings. Age is the most significant factor associated with energy efficiency, ahead of fuel and property type. Almost all homes built since 2012 have high-energy efficiency ratings compared with 12% of assessed homes built before 1900 in England.<sup>2</sup> This correlates to the poor EPC ratings across the Borough, with around 60% of homes being D or E rated<sup>3</sup> and so are more inefficient.

We need to improve these numbers if we are to reduce impacts on the Climate. We believe this will only be achieved through engaging directly residents to identify barriers to home insulation improvements, but also to increase support to encourage residents to improve their homes. For this we have partnered with Rossendale Valley Energy (RVE), a local community organisation based in Bacup, and other organisations to attempt to boost this engagement. RVE have been running the ‘[Decarbonising Rossendale](#)’ Project, a feasibility study looking at opportunities for a community energy company that could be run locally and provide much more affordable energy prices, which is vital to the success of our Net Zero ambitions. Currently, this has investigated the possibility for Net Zero-suitable terraced street areas, which make up a majority of homes in the Borough, and are often older and less efficient. We have been involved with this project where possible, having formed a successful partnership that has secured Innovate U.K.’s Phase 1 of Net Zero Living: Pathfinder Places and Strategic Innovation Funding (SIF). SIF focuses on the terrace street and takes the feasibility work to the next stage, investigating the potential for a smart energy system in an terraced street area of Bacup (Figure 2) that comprises of a range of renewable technology alongside community energy techniques and grid reinforcement, with the end goal being lower energy prices and fuel poverty alleviation. We hope that this will provide a model for other areas in the borough, and throughout the rest of the U.K., to replicate and be a solution for Net Zero ambitions.

Figure 1 – Area of Bacup targeted for the Rossendale Valley Energy Net Zero Terrace Street



<sup>1</sup> Local Government Association (2022), Understanding Local Housing Markets. <http://resi-analysts.com/wp-content/uploads/LGA/Reports/Rossendale.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> ONS (2022), Age of the property is the biggest single factor in energy efficiency of homes. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/ageofthepropertyisthebiggestsinglefactorinenergyefficiencyofhomes/2021-11-01>

<sup>3</sup> Local Government Association (2022), Understanding Local Housing Markets. <http://resi-analysts.com/wp-content/uploads/LGA/Reports/Rossendale.pdf>

Therefore, this strategy will seek to align itself with the engagement approach made by RVE, which will signal our intent to continue our partnership in order to drive towards Net Zero by 2030.

## 2. Strategy Objectives

As stated, Rossendale Borough Council has been working alongside RVE on a number of projects that involve community at the heart of delivery. As renewable heating, in particular, will require whole house retrofit, it will be vital that the Council engage with the community to encourage this change in behaviour. RVE, having worked in the Bacup community for many years, are a vital partner in delivering this engagement alongside the Council.

This document outlines Rossendale Borough Council's Local Authority Engagement Plan for local consumers and stakeholders as part of the Net Zero Terrace SIF project. It clearly defines Rossendale Borough Council's role and process for engagement, as well as the process for potentially providing council assets for integration into schemes and procurement options. The Council has already undertaken a review into the suitability of solar PV on a number of assets in the Bacup, so we are aware of the potential in this area; however, any use will be subject to discussions with the appropriate colleagues and management within the Council. Furthermore, should the Council procure solar PV on behalf of any community organisation, this should align with the Council's current procurement rules.

To assist with this, the Council will seek to do the following:

### 2.1. Working in partnership with RVE

There is currently funding available to qualifying households; however, there are a number of qualitative barriers to uptake. Similar to other funding schemes, awareness of these are often the biggest barrier to uptake. These is particularly true, as the Council is not responsible for these schemes and, therefore, residents may not know where to look if they were interested in these schemes. Furthermore, there are likely to be barriers in terms of mixed tenure in the area of investigation, as many buildings in this area appear to be private rented tenants. This will required a coordinated approach where we raise the profile of these schemes where possible. This will be done through the following:

- Promote the various insulation funding pots through our social media channels.
- Work alongside the communities team to bring this topic into local community meetings.

- Align ourselves alongside RVE’s engagement approach (Figure 3). This will form part of a longer-term approach, from beyond the Alpha phase and ideally into the Beta phase. As people see Councils as a recognisable name, it may be beneficial to jointly attend events or places where stalls are acceptable, which may encourage residents to make that initial contact and then RVE can begin their engagement method.

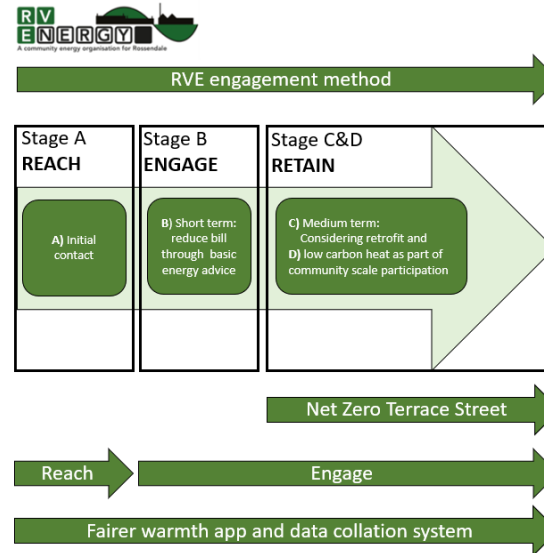


Figure 3: RVE Engagement Approach

- We will assist RVE, where possible, through the various timescales associated with stages A-D, through our use of the Fairer Warmth App. This will look at the results of initial investigation about the subject area, to better understand the proportion of households within this area that are suitable for available funding. Additionally, we can pass on the details of the residents to our insulation funding provider if they agree to their data being shared. Alternatively, if they do not wish to go for funding or their circumstances present issues, the Council can ask if the residents would permit RVE contacting them to discuss energy bill reduction or energy use reduction advice.
- Work alongside RVE to set up engagement activities for the terrace street areas. This will include:
  - Use of available Council platforms, such as Parity Projects, which are able to map areas where residents are likely to qualify for current and future funding.

- Use of Council community mailing lists, social media platforms and meetings to promote funding, engagement with residents, so it'll be important to bring these community organisations together. This can use either pre-existing materials produced by our insulation funding provider or RVE.

## 2.2. Working Partnership with Centre for Energy Equality (CEE)

Funding can have a large impact on local air quality, for example, Local Authority Delivery 1b and 2 phases have delivered a reduction of 9.14kt of CO<sub>2</sub>, but we need more people to take up these schemes and, therefore, they need to be aware of their availability. To aid with this, the Council has been working alongside CEE since late 2022, who have developed the Fairer Warmth App, an app that allows users to download an App or visit a website, and asks residents about their tenure, installed household insulation measures, and their economic situation. Based upon the answers given, qualifying residents are then informed and directed to potential funding. RBC and project partners have trialled this app already within the borough, which were encouraging, but we believe this will be vital at driving take-up of insulation funding.

- Initial results from the trial period appear to be 80 users, 22 of which could qualify for the available funding pots, demonstrating that there are residents who are unaware of available funding streams. This is limiting our aims of a Net Zero Borough, so we will need to work alongside both of the project partners.
- In terms of our work with CEE, further analysis will be required to investigate if these residents' homes are appropriate for current or future insulation funding.
- Continue to monitor for future funding, for example, as Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS) is expected to widen the number of residents who qualify for funding, and in turn will require greater work alongside both project partners to signpost qualifying residents to the correct providers.
- It will also be necessary to try differing tactics to encourage uptake of the App. These will include:
  - Door-to-door engagement. Some people won't be comfortable using technology, so door-knocking can be a useful mechanism to help these residents to complete their home survey. It will also stop partial
  - Engaging actively with the community via events, either on our land or out in the community itself, with RVE. This will provide a recognisable face to the community and help bridge any uncertainty residents feel about giving their information to a company they don't recognise.
  - Explore the possibility of doing mail-outs to the subject area and beyond, to demonstrate our ongoing partnership with CEE. This can again put a recognisable name alongside CEE, which will hopefully drive up engagement.
- Continue to work alongside the Council's current insulation funding provider, providing them with the data provided by CEE. It will also be necessary for RVE to be part of this process and aid the resident through the process, so that they feel supported.