

Southmead Energy and Retrofit Special

Energy and Retrofit Edition inside Issue 84 Autumn/Winter 2025



HEALTHY HOMES, HOPEFUL PLANET

By: Ella Tainton
Climate and Nature Action Coordinator
Southmead Dev Trust

We have finally hit the Autumn after one of the UK's hottest and driest summers. The evenings are starting earlier, and we are having to consider raincoats, jumpers, and central heating. Like me, you might be someone who resists firing up the boiler until the depths of Winter, but is that the best thing to do?

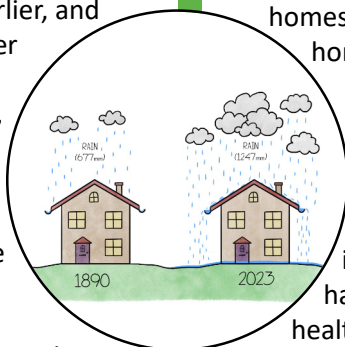
In Southmead's Community Climate Action Plan residents highlighted important priorities around energy and buildings. These included wanting to feel supported to improve energy

efficiency and reduce bills, make upgrades at home, see more renewable energy being made locally, and for community buildings to be environmentally friendly. All of this can support us to have warmer homes in winter and cooler homes in Summer.

Here at the Trust we felt that these things were important and interesting to explore in more depth. How we feel at home and in our community spaces has a big impact on our health and wellbeing.

A changing climate also means we are more likely to see heatwaves, storms, and "wind-driven" rain. These can all take a toll on our homes and

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health through damp, flooding, and overheating. We want the community to feel like they have the tools to deal with the changes we are experiencing.

We received funding from Innovate UK to be part of the Transforming Energy Together project. Our aim was to explore what the residents of Southmead want and need in relation to energy. What could support residents to make changes at home? What are the challenges to taking action? What cool things have residents done already? Are there ideas which could improve our homes and streets?

Our partners on the project were the Centre for Sustainable Energy and Bristol City Council, along with two other community organisations - Eastside Community Trust and Knowle West Media Centre. Together we have been collecting stories and information and sharing resources to understand our residents' experiences (you can see a breakdown of

everything we have done in Southmead on the next page).

At the end we will have a long list of project ideas so we can start looking for investment and get started on making our homes and community feeling more comfortable and resilient. In Southmead we would like to focus on retrofitting homes, green skills for young people, and making Greenway Centre fit for the future. More widely in the community there were lots of good ideas like car park solar canopies, rain gardens, and planting more trees for shade.

We were super lucky to find two residents who were keen to strike up these conversations so we could reach even more people. We hired Amy and Tom just before Christmas and they have done a fantastic job of popping up and knocking doors to listen to our views as well as giving out 500 thermometers and hygrometers for residents to understand more about their homes. You can find more from



them on pages 4 and 5 and read more about their experience on the project.

It has been a real privilege to listen to everyone's stories and experiences, both positive and negative, about our homes and the action residents have taken. Collecting this is vital when we make project plans. I have also loved working with our young people to introduce green skills, make a film to celebrate The Ranch, and explore what sort of future we want for ourselves and the community. They are creative, driven, and caring – just what we need for the future world!

This special edition of The Mead is to share a few updates about the project. You will find some tips for monitoring and managing your home on pages 7, 8 and 9. You can also find more information from key partners on pages 6, 11 and 12 who can provide energy and retrofit advice in Bristol.

For more info on our Climate and Nature work do get in touch with me, tel: 0117 950 3335 or email: ellatainton@southmead.org

What is "retrofit"?

This is a really good question. You might have heard this word in the news or amongst friends and be feeling puzzled. But did you know you have probably thought about retrofit already?



"Retrofit" is any improvement made to an existing building to make it use energy better.

This includes things which make a building easier to heat, keep it warm for longer, and replaces fossil fuels.

Draughtproofing, LED lightbulbs, using appliances carefully, adding ventilation, double glazing, insulation, repairing cracks and roofs, solar panels, and heat pumps all count as retrofit!

What did we do?

We wanted to hear from residents all over the estate. This means we could listen to lots of different experiences and views about homes and energy.

We did this with...



19

pop ups
including pubs, cafes,
The Ranch and
shopping streets



20

green skills
sessions at
The Ranch



hosted

5

Bristol Energy
Network events



23

interviews
with residents and
professional partners



164

responses to two
questionnaires



door knocked

7

streets
(over 400 houses!)

What did we find?

People want warm
homes in winter and cool
homes in summer

Every home is different
and needs its own plan

There has been mixed
experiences of retrofit and
working with contractors

It feels more difficult to
make changes if you rent
your home

Saving money on
energy bills is a priority

Support is needed to
find and understand
the correct information



Knowing which contractors
to trust can be a challenge

Understanding more about
how our homes work is an
important first step

Learning some
practical skills would
be valuable at all ages

People want to make changes
to their council houses but have
to ask the council's permission

People are
interested but find
the cost offputting
or unaffordable

Solar panels are great
but need protection
from pigeons!

Celebrating Ten Months of Tom

By: Amy Price
Climate & Community Engagement
Worker, Southmead Dev Trust

My brief yet memorable time at the Trust has taught me a lot about the Southmead community and the ongoing energy crisis that we are collectively tackling within our homes.

Getting out and about, communicating and listening to the voices of Southmead, with my colleague Tom, has enabled me to connect and empathise with residents. A core part of our engagement has been trying to understand the wants and needs of this area and arguably, most importantly, make sure that Southmead residents feel heard.

We have been collecting your thoughts and experiences about energy at home. We wanted to hear from as many people as possible. The results have been very varied, and at times surprising and humbling. They show some of the true stories of Southmead and that it really is built on community and connection.

We all need help at home, whether that be financially, the need for more information, or to make changes so home is more homely. Our attempt to tackle such issues through

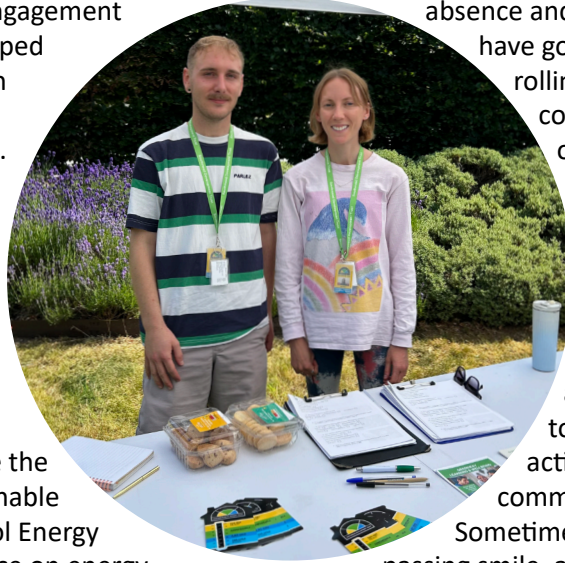
a combination of groups, pop-ups, and door-knocking engagement has hopefully helped residents through signposting and connecting peers. It has also generated lots of ideas which the Trust can explore as future projects.

We have linked up with organisations like the Centre for Sustainable Energy and Bristol Energy Network for advice on energy support, running workshops and helping us knock doors. While Bristol Tree Craft, Rising Arts Agency, and Students Organising For Sustainability's Blue Influencers have run interactive sessions at The Ranch, to introduce and develop young people's green skills, and consider what home and environment means to us.

It is important we continue having these

conversations in Tom and mine's absence and we hope we have got the ball rolling. The Trust is a community-driven organisation so we encourage everyone to keep coming to the centres, sharing their experiences, and working together to take action in the community.

Sometimes all it takes is a passing smile, a wave, or friendly hello in the café to start that process, so do not be shy!



Making a big jellyfish art installation out of recycled materials with Emily from Bristol Tree Craft. These are now hanging in the trees at The Ranch!



Testing the water from the river Trym and pond dipping with Emily from Students Organising For Sustainability's Blue Influencers. Emily also organised a beach trip where lots of our young people enjoyed a day in Brean!



and Amy at Greenway Centre

By: Tom Sollars
Climate & Community Engagement
Worker, Southmead Dev Trust

Working at the Trust has given me the opportunity to explore a whole new sector in climate and community engagement. Before, I worked as a shop assistant, hospitality worker and teaching assistant. This role has helped me to combine all the skills I have learned into a 'green job'.

A long aspiration of mine has been to secure a job in the green sector, but I found this challenging due to my financial and educational history. Barriers such as time and money made it hard for me to realise myself as a green advocate, but the Trust saw the passion I had for the cause and offered me a role.

During my time at the Trust, I have made new friends in my colleagues, discovered amazing Southmead events like the Festival (did you see our amazing model house?) and explored our

beautiful ward more widely than ever before. I have always loved chatting to people and I am a self-proclaimed chatterbox! A highlight of my role has been organising pop-ups and door knocking events to understand peoples lived experience of energy usage within their home.

Since I live in Southmead, this has been very personal to me and lots of what residents have said has resonated deeply. I hope that my time on the project has helped people to understand what they are able

to do to reduce energy use, or given them the knowledge to request it from their housing provider.

My time spent at The Ranch illuminated

how the struggle that I experienced in finding a green job, or aligning my skills with green careers, is still a thing for young people today. Part of our efforts have been to ensure that young people start to make these connections and understand that all jobs can be made greener, and all their skills are transferable. There has been lots of interest in gardening, making,

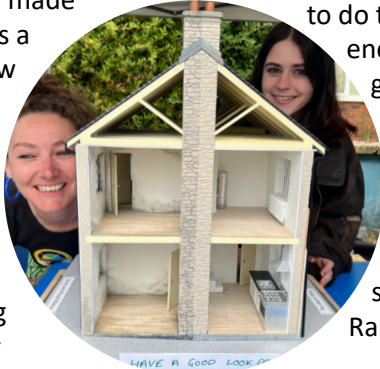
and they have been co-creating a film with artists at

Wednesday night youth sessions.

There has been so much value in including the community in our decision-making. With a

historic council estate

being our base, we have been sure to be aware of barriers that could prevent people from moving to renewable energy or retrofitting their homes. Our vision is to work with the community to create something we can all be proud of, projects which are people and planet friendly.



Keep a look out for the film on our website www.southmead.org, or for a showing at The Ranch or Greenway Centre

A big thank you to Rising Arts Agency for collaborating with us on this project!

Huge credit goes to
Rising's Facilitators
Ellayah Woodward-Lindsay
Molly Casares
and Filmmaker
Leo Kirby

rising.org.uk



Contact us for energy advice

We can help you:

- ☉ Access funding and grants to make your home warmer.
- ☉ Save money on your gas, electricity or water bills.
- ☉ Make your cold, damp or draughty home warmer and healthier.
- ☉ Fix or upgrade your heating system.

For a free home energy health check, call **0800 082 2234**, email **home.energy@cse.org.uk** or fill in the form by scanning the QR code:



*“I learnt so much and the knowledge I gained has made me feel so relieved. **A warm bungalow at last.**”*

Extract from a letter from a caller to the energy advice line.



St James Court
St James Parade
Bristol BS1 3LH

0117 934 1400
cse.org.uk
info@cse.org.uk

We're a charity (298740) supporting people and organisations across the UK to tackle the climate emergency and end the suffering caused by cold homes.

Our Home Energy Team offers free advice on domestic energy use to people in central southern and southwest England.

Contact us:

PHONE 0800 082 2234

EMAIL home.energy@cse.org.uk

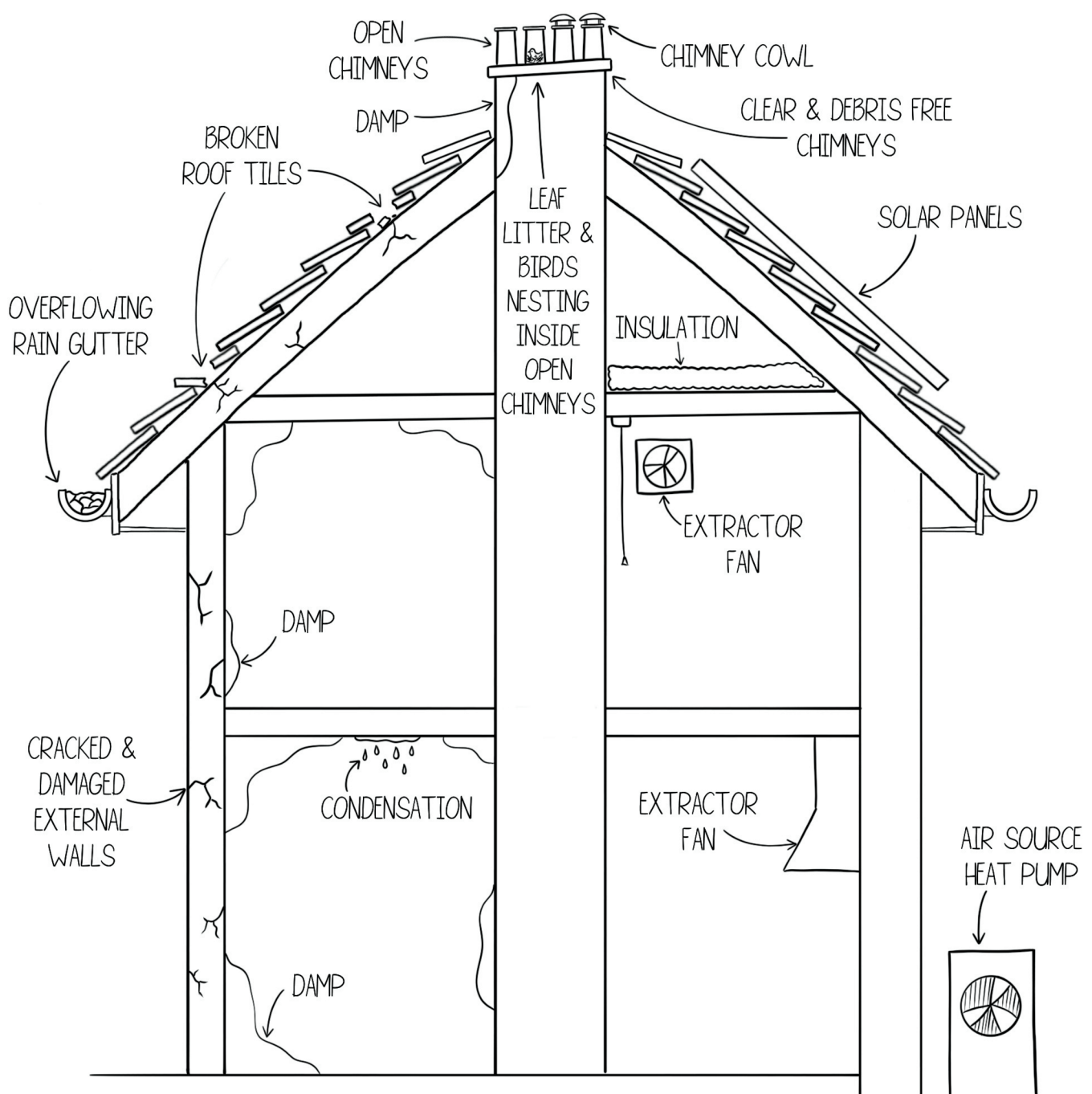
Professional retrofit advice focuses on the “fabric first approach”.

This means we repair and look after the structure of the whole building before adding technology like solar panels and heat pumps. These technologies can be amazing but they will work best when your home is not leaking heat and energy.

If we look at the whole home we might see some actions that need doing. The Centre for Sustainable Energy has made this handy picture where we can see an unmaintained home and the issues it can cause on the left. The retrofitted version can be seen on the right.

Unmaintained home

Retrofitted home



Understanding your home is the first step to improving it

Here are a few things you can keep an eye on at home, why it is important to do so, and a couple of solutions for how to tackle them. Some issues will be too big to fix by yourself but you will have more information and have some tools to try as a first step.



Humidity

Humidity is the level of moisture in the air. The ideal level is 40 - 60%.

High levels can mean damp and mould are more likely to grow. Low levels can cause dry skin, colds, a scratchy throat, and itchy eyes.

Use a hygrometer to find out which rooms have high moisture levels and how this changes after certain activities.

- 1** Use extractor fans and open windows in rooms like kitchens and bathrooms where cooking and showers cause lots of moisture
- 2** Cook with lids on your pans and create lots of air flow, especially if you have to dry clothes inside
- 3** Use a dehumidifier and condensation absorbers in rooms with consistently high levels



Temperature

An ideal temperature is between 18 - 21°C.

Very cold and very hot temperatures can make physical and mental health conditions worse. Heat can also interact with certain medications. This can make us less able to regulate our temperatures and more likely to sunburn.

A thermometer or thermostat can tell you what temperature a room is.

- 1** Check for draughts and use excluders, letter box covers, and caulk to cover these
- 2** Curtains and shutters can keep you warm AND cool. Keep them closed on hot days so your rooms stay out of direct sunshine
- 3** Check for insulation in your loft. Do you have it? Is it thick enough? There are DIY options with different materials available
- 4** Adjust radiators in each room to keep a steady temperature



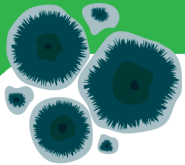
Air Quality

The ideal level for carbon dioxide (CO₂) is below 1500ppm.

We spend an increasing amount of time indoors. Poor indoor air quality is damaging for health and improving our air is a priority for health services.

Levels of CO₂ are increased when we cook with gas or burn things like wood or cigarettes. The best way to improve this is ventilation (planned air flow).

- 1 Use extractor fans and open windows in the kitchen when cooking on a gas hob
- 2 Use a monitor to see whether you have consistently high levels of CO₂. This will be shown as a number with 'ppm' afterwards
- 3 Keep your air bricks and vents open and unblocked to maintain planned air flow
- 4 Keep the use of aerosols and air fresheners to a minimum



Damp and mould

Damp and mould are impacted by the level of humidity and ventilation (planned air flow) in a building.

There are different types of damp. Condensation happens when temperatures change and moisture gathers on surfaces. Penetrating and rising damp are caused by moisture moving through the fabric of the building.

- 1 Fix leaks, clogged gutters, and external cracks with the correct materials to stop moisture getting in
- 2 Keep your air bricks and vents open and unblocked to maintain planned air flow. Open windows each morning for 10-20 minutes
- 3 Try to keep a steady temperature by setting your thermostat at home to avoid big changes
- 4 Regularly check corners, cupboards, and behind furniture for visible signs



Trades and contractors

We have heard that doors get knocked in Southmead a lot by salespeople, especially for solar panels, boilers, and windows.

It can be hard to know who to trust and what is acceptable when making changes to your home. There is advice out there from places like the Centre for Sustainable Energy and Retrofit West. Do research and make informed choices!

- 1 You do not need to say yes on the doorstep, ever! If people knock on the door, it is ok to say no
- 2 It is ok to ask questions and be sure about what you want before starting
- 3 Find out how many years a company has been in business and how long they have specialised in this type of work
- 4 Ask if they have accreditation and if you can have evidence of it

Residents Take Action on Energy

BY: LUCY LIFTON

BRISTOL ENERGY NETWORK

Our Energy Champion programme supports local people to take action around their energy issues at home, and enables them to engage around energy issues within their communities. Through the offer of a free thermal imaging survey, practical workshops, and volunteering opportunities, participants have been able to learn about how they can reduce energy issues in their home, and share practical advice with others.

Di is one of the Southmead Energy Champions who Bristol Energy Network has been supporting. She spoke to us about her experience of the programme.



Initially, she was offered an Energy Trace, a thermal survey which identifies cold spots and draughts in a home, as well as seeking out the underlying causes around things like damp and mould.

For Di, the thermal imaging survey confirmed that many of the steps she had already taken, like upgrading windows and doors, were working well. It also uncovered small areas for improvement, like minor gaps and draughts, which Di has since tackled.

Following on from the Energy Trace, Di was invited to our four-part workshop series which took place at Greenway Centre.

Inspired by the clear and helpful advice, she signed up to volunteer,

and has attended community events at Greenway Centre and SPARKS in town, sharing her knowledge and expertise with members of the public.

If you are inspired by hearing about Di's experience, Bristol Energy Network is offering free DIY draught-proofing kits so you can get started. There is a handy guide included to show you how to apply all the materials around your home. You can get in touch with Ella to collect these from Greenway, email: ellatainton@southmead, or call 0117 950 3335.



“

The Energy Trace was fantastic. It was great to follow the Energy Tracer around and see the contrast of hotter and colder areas on the screen. Knowing that the improvements I had made were effective was such a relief. I would really recommend it to anyone.

The workshops are worth their weight in gold. They're great for meeting local people, hearing their stories, and learning things you can actually go home and try.

Volunteering has been an amazing experience. At first, I was not thinking about the bigger picture, but through the workshops, I realised how much I could contribute. The more volunteering I do, the more confident I become. My brain is like a sponge – the more I learn, the more I feel equipped to help.

I have always been conscious of saving energy but the workshops were full of surprises, like how effective secondary glazing can be. I've also applied the knowledge about draught excluders and radiators on internal walls. It is amazing how little changes can add up. Look after your pennies, and the pounds look after themselves.

”

Location: Southmead Repair Cafe, Greenway Centre, BS10 5PY

Date: Saturday 25th October 12:00 — 15:00



RETROFIT IN TRANSIT

**TRAINING FOR A LOW-CARBON
BUILT ENVIRONMENT**



Come along for free retrofit advice and to learn about how you can start paying less for your energy and have a healthier, more sustainable home!

Retrofit in Transit is designed to give homeowners the ability to get hands-on with home energy improvement measures, such as ventilation, heat pumps, and insulation.

Refreshments are provided!


**THE Green
REGISTER**
OF CONSTRUCTION PROFESSIONALS



Price & Booking:

Free to attend, No booking required

Contact Information:

Eve Payne, evpayne@southmead.org, 01179503335

Make your home **cheaper** & **greener**

Book a free advice call or home visit



retrofitwest.co.uk