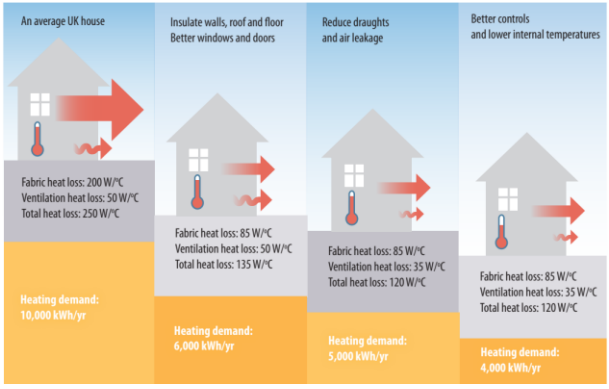
Power Down

What are the problems?

We need to stop using fossil fuels as soon as possible and we can do that by using renewable sources of energy instead. However that would require huge amounts of new infrastructure, taking up large areas of land and consuming even more of Earth's dwindling resources. The way we currently live requires more energy than we actually need, so we can make the transition to renewables faster, more economical and more sustainable by reducing our energy demands. Around 80% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions come from producing the energy we use for transport, buildings and industry.
In Dorset, 60% of our emissions come from residential and business buildings.



That means heating, cooling, ventilation, hot water, cooking, lighting and electrical appliances. The housing stock in Dorset is aged and poorly insulated. 66% of Dorset's 400,000 homes require some form of improvement to bring them up to an energy performance rating of C.

What can we do to help?

- Get free energy advice from a local organisation such as Low Carbon Dorset or Healthy Homes Dorset
- Search for organisations that offer free home energy surveys. In some cases the "retrofitting" work (insulation etc) is also free via government funding
- Insulating your own home is a relatively simple and cheap DIY job
- Use the tips in the Dorset Green Living Project to help reduce your energy use – https://weymouthclimatehub.com/dorset-green-living-project
- Consider whether you could afford to fit solar panels. They generally pay for themselves within about 10 years and there may be grant money available to help pay for installation
- Also consider whether you could install a heat pump. These are a very efficient method of heating your home and there is government funding
- Bear in mind that most of these measures will also save you money in the long term

What do you think?

- Do electric vehicles have a part to play in reducing energy use or carbon emissions?
- How much should the government fund retrofitting our housing stock and transitioning to heat pumps?
- Would you pay more for a house that already had solar panels and a heat pump installed?

What else can be done?

The UK government has had several attempts at setting up funding schemes for both insulation and heat pump installation. They have so far all been underfunded, badly administered and poorly advertised and therefore have failed. Whichever party is in power must try again with a more concerted effort to upgrade the country's housing stock.

Local councils must do all they can, within local plans and during the planning process for new buildings, to ensure zero carbon standards are met by developers. This could include a requirement to build to something like "Passivhaus" standards. They could adopt the models used in Leeds and Exeter to meet net zero standards at the same time as providing much-needed affordable and social housing.

We can reduce the energy used in our transport systems by improving and electrifying public transport infrastructure, by reducing the number of flights we make (eg with a frequent-flyer levy) and increasing "active travel" (ie walking and cycling more instead of using the car)

Keywords for further research

Zero Carbon Dorset; Dorset LEP; Bio Cities; Dorset Climate Action Network; Zero Carbon Dorset; straw bale houses; retrofitting; Dorset Green Open Homes; solar pv house; passivhaus; Bridport renewal corridor; Low Carbon Dorset; Ridgewater Energy; London Energy Transformation initiative; Milan vertical forest; Centre for Alternative Technology; Insulate Britain; smart meters and smart appliances

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All information on this leaflet comes from reputable sources. Visit https://weymouthclimatehub.com/wch-short-articles for references.

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