

Expert Q&A

Giving householders the opportunity to ask questions of experts in a group setting

How it works

This is a simple but effective method that allows people to access bespoke information to help them explore their retrofit options, without the upfront cost of a retrofit assessment. Meetings are held, in person or online, that give householders an opportunity to ask questions of experts in a group setting. These Q&As can also be recorded as webinars or videos.

Why it works

Many people are unsure what retrofit is, or how general retrofit advice applies to the specifics of their house. Every home is different, with different underlying issues, and generic advice is not always suitable – particularly in traditional building retrofit. Free energy advice and information often leaves people with more questions, but there's also low appetite to pay for expert retrofit advice; some people cannot afford it, while others lack confidence that it will give them the information they need. Small group events allow people to ask questions about specific scenarios, and can combine expertise from different fields (such as retrofit and heritage conservation) to give holistic responses.



Image © Bath and West Community Energy

What you'll need

- Experts on the specific topic(s) chosen for the event
- A target audience and effective marketing strategy to promote the event to them
- A plan for how the event will run, including any online platforms, online booking, and how you will manage questions
- If offline, a suitable accessible venue for the target audience
- If offline, you may need a laptop, projector, speaker and roving microphones, and amplification
- Consideration of event timing to meet audience needs
- A call to action and additional signposting towards next steps

Case studies

Green Heritage Homes LEAD, delivered by Bath and West Community Energy (BWCE) and Bath and North East Somerset Council, used small in-person Q&A sessions with a Conservation Officer and a Retrofit Assessor, to help people in Bath – which has a high concentration of traditionally built homes, listed buildings and conservation areas, all within a World Heritage Site – to better understand how sometimes competing requirements of heritage conservation and high impact retrofit can work together effectively and enable planning permission. **Not-Yet-Green Open Homes** is another form of expert Q&A, developed by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) as part of the **Green Open Homes West LEAD**.



Top tips

- ✓ Evening webinars and in-person training with experts both work well. In-person events are also an opportunity to demonstrate materials.
- ✓ Events that combine expert Q&A with community champions, who can talk from personal experience, can work very well.
- ✓ Help people feel comfortable posing questions; this may mean having small, informal group discussions, or opportunities to submit questions for staff/volunteers to read out.
- ✓ Ensure questions and answers can be clearly heard by everyone attending, and test any technology beforehand.
- ✓ Q&As are a chance to help people understand how general advice applies to their house, but lay ground rules and have a plan for what to do if individual audience members dominate the discussion for their own sole benefit.
- ✓ Events can be pitched/tailored to specific types of home, technology or other factors that fit the local area, to make the content hyper relevant to people attending. For in-person events, consider finding a venue with features and issues similar to local homes, such as a traditional building in a local style, as this can add interest and discussion points.

Resources

- Other relevant LEAD Toolkit contents (see [South West Net Zero Hub](#)): **Green Heritage Homes LEAD** (project summary), **Green Open Homes West LEAD** (project summary), **(Not-Yet-) Green Open Homes** (method), **Community Champions** (method)
- [How to Organise & Run Online Events](#) guide by Community Energy England
- [The Best Live Q&As Have These 5 Things in Common](#) by Social Tables

About LEAD

LEAD is managed by South West Net Zero Hub and funded by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. The programme is trialling innovative approaches to retrofit advice for underserved groups and harder-to-treat homes. Find out more [here](#).

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