

(Not-Yet-) Green Open Homes

Using real-life examples in the community of retrofitted homes (Green Open Homes) or homes that are not yet, or only partially, retrofitted (Not-Yet-Green Open Homes)

How it works

Green Open Homes are events where people can visit homes in their local community to hear real-life stories about other people's experiences of the retrofit process, and to see examples of a range of retrofit measures in situ, without sales pitches. Usually these are one-day events run by community groups, but can run over several days or be professionally coordinated by a charity or other organisation (where funding is available). Typically, 5+ households take part, with large events including as many as 50 households. Some households and events open homes to any visitors; others require pre-booking or invitation-only.

Not-Yet-Green Open Homes are events where people can visit homes – such as traditional buildings – that have not been retrofitted, or only partially. It's useful to choose a building with typical local characteristics or experiencing common problems. An expert leads a guided tour of the home, pointing out opportunities for repairs, maintenance and sympathetic retrofit to improve the home's energy performance, as well as any poor examples of retrofit works that may negatively affect the building. The event is promoted in collaboration with a community organisation.

(Not-Yet-) Green Open Homes events are often complemented by an information event in a public building in the community.



What you'll need

- An understanding of the local community, to ensure your approach and messages are a good fit for the audience
- For Green Open Homes, willing homeowners with examples of existing retrofit works
- For Not-Yet-Green Open Homes, an expert to lead a guided tour and at least one host home
- Organisers with time to plan and coordinate the event, along with a clear plan including marketing and how you will manage delivery
- Funding for marketing materials, volunteer expenses and insurance
- Volunteers and resources to enhance and reinforce information about retrofit and next steps

Case studies

The Green Open Homes Network, run by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE), was established with Bristol Green Doors in 2013 and supported over 10,000 home visits in three years. Not-Yet-Green Open Homes was a new approach trialled by CSE with LEAD funding in 2023-25, to help demonstrate retrofit options for hard-to-treat homes where retrofit is missing or only partly in place.

Why it works

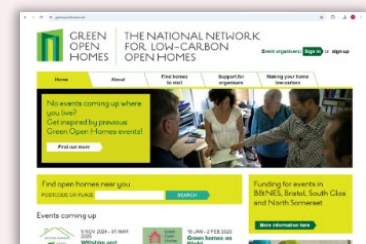
Green Open Homes is a proven method based on behaviour change theory. Events are a good place to start local conversations – they can be engaging, relatable and reassuring, and help shift social attitudes and norms around retrofit. Real-life stories and information shared by hosts are trusted, and help make retrofit feel accessible. Local examples can address problems that are common to similar buildings in the local area, such as hard-to-treat homes, and can help with myth-busting for technologies such as heat pumps. Evaluation of such events repeatedly shows that many visitors go on to install retrofit measures in their own home ([Berry et al, 2014](#); [CSE, 2013](#)).

Top tips

- ✓ Green Open Homes events take a lot of work – make sure you can give it enough time and resources
- ✓ Give Not-Yet-Green Open Homes a try – these events have been hugely successful, despite initial scepticism in some host communities
- ✓ Not-Yet-Green Open Homes can make retrofit feel more accessible, and put less pressure on homeowners to have the ‘perfect’ home
- ✓ Empty properties (e.g. between tenants) make great Not-Yet-Green Open Homes examples as problems can often be more freely discussed
- ✓ Use visual examples to help motivate visitors around repair and maintenance, as well as retrofit – where relevant, show the impact of mould, damp and broken gutters
- ✓ Check homes are suitable for your event, and are not promoting poor practice (such as ‘super homes’ with damp problems)
- ✓ Information events in public buildings can be a good alternative or complement to either type of Open Homes – often people who are reluctant to open their own home are happy to share their story here

Resources

- The [Green Open Homes National Network](#) website contains extensive resources covering every aspect of event delivery
- The [Retrofit Basics online course](#) (3 x units, each under an hour long) is freely available on CSE’s YouTube channel and is an excellent entry point for event volunteers and hosts to help support good practice advice during events
- Bath and West Community Energy (BWCE) [videos](#) on Green Open Homes events
- Other relevant LEAD Toolkit contents (see [South West Net Zero Hub website](#)): **Green Open Homes West LEAD** (project summary)
- SWNZH LEAD Webinar Series: [Innovations in domestic retrofit advice - Retrofit, Planning and Historic Housing](#) 22 Oct 2024 (39:41 to 59:09) (see also [full slides](#)); [Innovations in domestic retrofit advice - Retrofit, Engagement and Communication](#) 11 Dec 2024 (41:33 to 1:03:52) (see also [full slides](#))
- [Green Open Homes project profile](#), [further information](#) and a [Case study of a Not-Yet-Green Open Home](#) on CSE’s website



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 hard-to-reach groups and hard-to-treat homes. Find out more [here](#).

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