

Far South West Retrofit LEAD

Providing home visits and Whole House Plans to underserved households through an ambitious regional partnership enabling hyper-local advice across Cornwall and Devon

Activities

This project delivered **localised, in-person advice** by Retrofit Advisors from the community energy sector, in partnership with local councils and working with vetted installers. Targeted audiences included people who are digitally excluded, low-income households, and those living in hard-to-treat homes. Far South West Retrofit also commissioned **audience segmentation research** to help refine marketing messages.

The approach emphasised being **customer-led** rather than technically-led, with technically skilled Retrofit Advisors using their knowledge to tailor advice to the circumstances, means and lifestyles of householders, as well as the built characteristics and thermal performance of their homes.

Households received **free home visits** and a short report, which was followed up after six months. 96% of advice visit recipients said they would recommend the service. They were also offered the option to pay for a **Whole House Plan** offering detailed technical assessment of retrofit options for their home. Whole House Plan uptake was low due to cost, and the project team has continued to explore affordable alternative services, as well as business models to reduce reliance on grant funding.

The **management structure** of this project was innovative in a retrofit context, applying 'living systems' principles that enabled hyper-local delivery through a coordinated, regional framework – proving highly effective. Far South West was the largest LEAD project in the region, and enabled several small community energy organisations, with local trust and expertise, to access funding, which would not have been possible on their own. Community organisations were responsible for the customer journey, and took part in joint working groups and shared resources (e.g. a code of conduct, shared visual identity, and joint commissioning of segmented audience-targeted artwork and advice materials).



Image © Plymouth Energy Community

Key project information

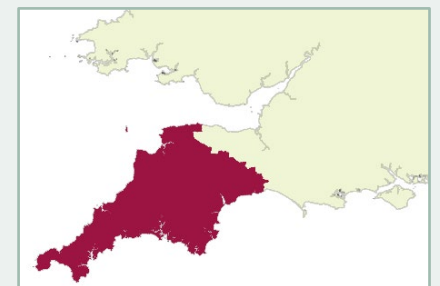
Awarded: £1,361,133

Duration: Oct 2023 to Mar 2025

Reach: Bespoke advice to 2,100 people, 11,000 people engaged overall

Lead partner: Plymouth Energy Community (PEC)

Supporting partners: 361
Community Energy, Community Energy Plus (CEP), South Dartmoor Community Energy (SDCE), Tamar Energy Community (TEC), Exeter Community Energy (EOE), Devon County Council, Cornwall Council, Plymouth City Council



Replication

- Partnership working can support hyper-local delivery, with small community energy organisations with local expertise able to take part and access funding.
- A 'living systems' approach to consortium management can be hugely successful in supporting delivery. It requires a progressive management style, with willingness to trust a non-conventional approach with partners.
- Community energy partners in this model must be experienced and professional, with a strong understanding of fuel poverty, retrofit and the PAS2035 process.
- Local authority partners need to work with the community energy sector as a long-term collaborator (not an alternative commercial contractor), placing value on advice that aims to help people whatever their circumstances, and committing funding to invest in services.
- Local authority partners and their logos give householders confidence to engage.
- Vetting contractors, and having a flexible approach to allow people to choose from a range of contractors, gave flexibility and confidence to householders around installation.

Resources

- The [LEAD Segmentation Report](#) by PFA Research and [Messaging Toolkit](#) by Analogy PR are on PEC's website
- The [Fairer Warmth](#) platform was used by other Far South West Retrofit partners, and is available as a paid-for service for community projects
- Other relevant LEAD Toolkit contents (see [South West Net Zero Hub](#)): **Home Visits** (method).
- Additional resources kindly made available by Far South West Retrofit partners: [Messaging Toolkit](#)
- Far South West Retrofit LEAD delivered the SWNZH LEAD Webinar Series webinar (20 Nov 2024) [Innovations in domestic retrofit advice - Power in Partnerships: collaboration and consortiums](#) (whole webinar) (see also [full slides](#)).

Contact this project

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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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