

# Home energy efficiency: the way to create thousands of ...

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*This post is by Colin Hines, convenor of the Green New Deal group and was originally [on the Green Alliance blog](#). It is reproduced with his permission:*

Linking tackling of the coronavirus crisis with solving the climate crisis is now being called for on all sides, from the UK's Foreign Secretary [Dominic Raab](#) to the [IMF](#).

*The need for such an approach to become an urgent political and public priority, and hence succeed, was highlighted by the recent ominous warning from [Lord Deben](#), chair of the Committee on Climate Change (CCC), of the possibility of a business as usual, post lockdown surge in carbon emissions.*

*The only way to avoid this is if tackling climate change is seen as the best way to rescue the economy from the effects of the virus. The key question is what initiatives can dramatically reduce carbon emissions whilst clearly benefiting a huge range of people in all parts of the country.*

### ***Energy efficiency can also tackle the jobs crisis***

*It requires policies that are popular with the public and they must be seen to clearly address the burgeoning unemployment crisis country wide, providing secure long term jobs, particularly for younger people. The CCC's emphasis on making [all homes energy efficient by 2050 will help to achieve that since it would require up to 20,000 homes and buildings to be transformed every week for the next thirty years.](#)*

***A huge number and range of jobs are required to install, service and update this massive retrofitting programme. The roles needed include plumbers, electricians, carpenters, builders, solar PV roof fitters, engineers, building scientists and researchers. Also to ensure local expertise, safety and community acceptability, the involvement of local authorities, unions and neighbourhood groups will be vital.***

***Finally, a national skills and training programme will be necessary for both young people and older workers in need of reskilling. These should be both***

**college and industry-based and rigorously designed to ensure a high standard of both installation and programme management. This will involve a large expansion of relevant departments in further education colleges, technical colleges and universities.**

**Such a nationwide ‘jobs in every constituency’ project would also boost domestic manufacturing. An inadequately recognised job generator is the fact that gas heating in more than [20 million homes](#) will need to be replaced predominantly by heat pumps, that’s hundreds of thousands required annually. This points to the need for the government to make bailing out the [manufacturing](#) and [steel](#) industries conditional on devising detailed feasibility studies into how they will provide for this huge decades-long domestic market.**

### **Scotland is ahead of the game**

This incredibly ambitious programme will of course need time to build, but it need not start from scratch. The government should look to what is already happening in Scotland which has a comprehensive energy efficiency programme designated as a [national infrastructure priority](#), **addressing as it does the climate emergency, fuel poverty and the need to increase economic activity everywhere.**

**The practicalities of achieving these goals across the whole of the UK were recently addressed in the Energy Efficiency Infrastructure Group’s comprehensive roadmap, [Rebuilding for resilience](#), which showed how the nation could quickly expand its existing energy saving capacity and which training programmes and funding mechanisms would be necessary to do so.**

Of course, a key question that will inevitably be asked is how will such an enormous country wide initiative be paid for? The government’s response to the coronavirus has been to turn on the spending taps, possibly to the tune of [£300 billion](#). **Expanding this to tackle climate change is made easier by the government’s ability to borrow money at negative interest rates. Green quantitative easing could also help to ensure that we can pay to make 20,000 buildings energy tight every week. Over time there will also be higher tax takes from the industries and workers newly involved in such an enormous programme.**

**The final difficulty is introducing such a huge programme in the time of coronavirus. Ross Armstrong, managing director of Warmworks, the managing agent of largest energy efficiency scheme in the UK (Warmer Homes Scotland), has already agreed an approach with the Scottish Government as to how that scheme, which has helped almost 20,000 homes across Scotland over the last five years, can be restarted to allow safe working and appropriate physical distancing. Warmer Homes Scotland will resume work in people’s homes from this week and help thousands of homes**

***over the coming months to save energy and money off their bills.***

***As as we wait for a vaccine, now is the time for national and local government to prepare for a new nationwide energy efficiency programme. Warmworks' experience in Scotland indicates that a programme of this type could be up and running within a year, creating jobs, skills and apprenticeships across the country.***

***Such a programme, that can improve home comfort and lower bills for so many, as well as providing jobs for decades in every MP's constituency, especially for the young, would provide much needed hope for the future. It will help put the nation back to work, our homes and businesses on track to a zero carbon future, and place tackling climate change back where it belongs, centre stage.***