

## Retrofitting

### Fitting solar panels to Whitleigh Court to reduce carbon usage and tenant bills...

Retrofitting has become something of a buzz word, but it remains a huge challenge, especially when you realise that housing in the UK accounts for 27% of carbon emissions, and the social housing sector includes over 4.5m homes. Devon and Cornwall Housing group have adopted a proactive strategy to reduce the carbon footprint of our homes.

Whitleigh Court, a sheltered housing scheme, was chosen to fit solar panels on the roofs (with estimated hot water savings to the tenants of between 15 and 25%) and to install duo heaters into each unit. And under the government's low-carbon building programme, qualifying projects such as Whitleigh Court, can receive a 50% grant, making green technology, more affordable technology.

The project took approximately two months during which time no one had to leave their homes. Residents are delighted with the results and maintenance of the panels is very low with the solar fluid needing only to be checked every three years.

The challenge still remains to retrofit other existing properties, not just in terms of cost and planning, but in ensuring that homes and people suffer as little disruption as possible while work is undertaken. Sixteen family homes in Plymouth are next on the list, with savings expected to be even greater than they are at Whitleigh.

Ensuring our properties are energy efficient ensures that not only do we reduce our carbon usage but that our tenants make considerable financial savings due to lower energy use.

