

## Accepted Manuscript

Title: Enabling a self-sufficient energy efficient retrofit services sector future: A qualitative study

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PII: S0378-7788(17)31147-7  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enbuild.2017.09.072>  
Reference: ENB 7991

To appear in: *ENB*

Received date: 31-3-2017  
Revised date: 29-8-2017  
Accepted date: 25-9-2017



Please cite this article as: Luke Gooding, Enabling a self-sufficient energy efficient retrofit services sector future: A qualitative study, Energy and Buildings <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enbuild.2017.09.072>

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## Enabling a self-sufficient Energy Efficient Retrofit Services sector future: a qualitative study

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### Abstract

The Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Services (EERS) sector has over the past five years undergone unprecedented change. Firstly, the introduction of the Green Deal saw the provision of national domestic energy efficiency measures placed in the hands of the private retrofit industry, which had previously been accustomed to government financial and administrative assistance. Then, secondly, when the implementation of the Green Deal failed, with limited uptake and unattractive finance arrangements, the EERS sector, was left without any policy provision to enable increased levels of retrofit. Furthermore, this uncertainty in government assistance is compounded by the lack of long term government planning, now that the UK's process of departing from the EU common market has commenced.

Therefore, moving forward from this point, the need to generate an EERS sector which is capable of being self-sufficient outside of a policy incentive scheme is a priority. This research provides insight from EERS sector practitioners as to the barriers presently in place halting progress towards self-sufficiency, and suggested strategies to remove these limitations. Key findings suggest policy presence within the retrofit industry has created complacency, meaning training and heightened professionalism towards generating and retaining business is important. In particular the importance of quality marketing methods and customer care strategies are considered key. This skills enhancement also needs to be focused upon in terms of producing an industry where individuals can train and enter a professional and achieve a lifelong, rewarding career. Customer habits and types also need to be understood more widely by practitioners, with the concept of general home improvements, being linked to energy efficiency measure installment, being a key central strategy in need to adoption.

### Introduction

To reach the UK's target of reducing domestic property carbon emissions by 80% by 2050 from 1990 levels (Boardman, 2012; Fawcett, 2014; Killip et al, 2014), the housing stock within the UK needs energy efficient measures retrofitted at a significant scale (Eames et al., 2014). Retrofit policy strategies have in the past adopted a strategy of focusing on 'low hanging fruit' retrofit measures, or 'easy-wins' to enhance property efficiency, loft insulation being one key area (Rosenow and Eyre, 2014). The effect of this strategy choice upon the Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Services (EERS) sector, is that property improvements have yet to be completed to any significant level (Gooding and Gul, 2017; Gooding and Gul, 2015; Dowson et al., 2012; Kelly, 2009). This differential between energy savings which are realised and the potential savings which could be gained as it caused a considerable UK housing performance gap (Barr et al., 2005, Pelenur and Cruickshank, 2012).

To reduce the above mentioned gap and to grow the numbers of installed retrofit measures, in early 2013 the UK government opened the Green Deal (GD) loan scheme to provide funds for energy efficiency improvement measures, to assist home owners and tenants in reducing residential carbon emissions (Gooding and Gul, 2016; Rosenow and Eyre, 2013). The GD was situated at the head of the 2013 coalition government's political approach, with the scheme being labelled 'flag-ship'. This

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