

Edinburgh Trade Union Council promotes retrofitting campaign

Edinburgh Trade Union Council (ETUC) is pushing for retrofitting older homes in the city hoping to tackle energy poverty, create jobs and address climate change.

Retrofitting properties would improve energy use in older homes and more efficient heating would be less costly to tenants and owners, while minimising the use of fossil fuels.

The campaign aims to persuade both The City of Edinburgh Council and The Scottish Government to provide funding necessary to carry out the work which could cost billions. The goal is initially for Edinburgh Council to retrofit council homes, with the same resources then provided by the government for social and private sector housing landlords to do the same.

As energy consumption and climate change affect the UK as a whole, campaigns like this are being implemented to tackle the issue.

At an online meeting on Tuesday convened by ETUC, Ellen Robottom, of Leeds Trade Union City Council, called for a similar campaign in Leeds last year. She is helping to write a publication being produced by the Campaign Against Climate Change Trade Union Group which will be published this year.

She said: "A deep retrofit in many buildings can reduce energy demand by as much as 80%...we need a UK wide mass campaign for policy framework to enable this to happen, because it needs a lot of funding."

After successful schemes in countries such as Denmark and Finland, the campaign is part of a wider project for a green economy as one of the themes of COP26, which will take place in Glasgow this November.

Glasgow Trade Union Council is also keen to promote their retrofitting campaign. Giving the opportunity to put more pressure on local councils and the government to address the challenges around climate change.

The retrofit, if carried out, is set to create a large number of jobs, apprenticeships and training schemes for the construction sector. The sector currently has an ageing workforce, with less than 3% of those women and many in poor employment schemes. The campaign aims to recharge the industry and provide a large focus on training.

Professor Linda Clarke, Director of the Centre for the Study of the Production of the Built Environment at the University of Westminster, said: "This campaign is not just about job creation but is also a chance to transform and improve employment and working conditions in construction."

There are currently an estimated 25% of households in Scotland living in fuel poverty, meaning the retrofitting of homes could significantly help these families in particular, lower energy bills.

The union hopes the campaign will be one of many initiatives on the road to creating a greener economy.