

RISE

Retrofit information,
support & expertise

Embedding Sustainability and Retrofit at Amplus

Case study

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Introduction

Amplius was formed through the merger of Longhurst Group and Grand Union Housing Group. It owns and manages more than 37,000 homes across the Midlands, East and Southeast of England.

Fallon Warren, Head of Environment and Sustainability at Amplius, spoke to us about leading the organisation's journey to embedding sustainability and retrofit.

About Fallon Warren

With an extensive background working in social housing and for local authorities, homeless charities and in private housing, Fallon developed an interest and specialism in retrofit and sustainability by completing mid-career training in building surveying and retrofit coordination. Her passion for integrating sustainability into the housing sector has led her to bring decarbonisation tools to the forefront of many Amplius functions, including assets, estates, facilities and resident management.

She has worked to optimise operations in these areas to obtain environmental compliance, while resident satisfaction and the ambitions of other stakeholders are achieved.

In this case study, Fallon talks us through some of the approaches she's adopted, including taking steps to move forward with a sustainability strategy alongside ensuring quality project delivery.

This publication aims to share insights, good practices, and lessons learned from relevant retrofit, sustainability and warm homes projects. It is intended for informational purposes only and does not constitute recommendations or endorsements of specific suppliers, products, or services within the sector.

The Head of Environment and Sustainability role at Amplius

Fallon joined Amplius in the new role of Head of Environment and Sustainability in early 2024. As a new role, there was lots of potential to embed sustainability policy and practice in the organisation's operations. Since then, Fallon has encouraged operational colleagues to develop their relevant interests and skills through training, including RISE workshops. Some colleagues have also undertaken PAS 2035-approved qualifications, and new roles have been created to fill skills gaps.

The team, which now functions independently, is empowered to, and accountable for, overseeing the decarbonisation of Amplius' housing stock through retrofit. Fallon is now looking at the organisation more strategically.

Working in collaboration with stakeholders from across the organisation, she has helped raise the profile of environment and sustainability at Board level.

This has led to improvements in the way sustainability is reported, cultivating an active interest in the area from Board members and other leaders within the organisation, and ensuring they are now more informed about the benefits of retrofit at a property-by-property level. To achieve this level of engagement, Fallon invited Board members on site visits to understand the condition of the housing and the potential impact that retrofit could have on each property and the residents' lives.

What is important for good retrofit?

Fallon believes to develop a successful business case and deliver a good retrofit project; you need to ensure many factors.

These include:

- **Informed client base:** Make sure that you have an understanding and appreciation for retrofit, including being able to navigate the jargon and understand the requirements for successful retrofit delivery
- **Collaborative approach:** Don't be afraid to collaborate. Even with contacts right across the UK, their input can help to improve the way we retrofit and support the introduction of other mechanisms to decarbonise and achieve net zero. Working together to share lessons learned, success stories and innovative practices will mean that the sustainability sector in its broadest sense can move forward effectively
- **Informed engagement:** Establishing a team of technically minded and expert staff supports engagement. Make sure that when the team engages with any resident or stakeholder, they do so with confidence and authority. This means that the engagement strategy is as important as the retrofit project itself. By being able to answer customers' questions as simply as possible will aid the engagement process and the overall project through enhanced customer buy-in
- **Comprehensive insight:** This includes knowing your facts. How much will it cost? What is the scale of the project? What is the return on investment? How long will the project take? What regulations are you adhering to? How will you get funding? Having informed answers to these questions helps to build a strong relationship with your internal and external stakeholders
- **Quality data and collection methods:** A data-led approach to each property will help identify the opportunities and gaps in your housing stock and build a picture of retrofit priorities across the portfolio. From Fallon's perspective, clear reporting and monitoring methods has also led to better quality data for the organisation to use moving forward

How do you get support from external stakeholders?

Fallon has ensured that Amplus has worked closely with local authorities, other housing associations and local community groups to really understand the needs of people working and living in the areas where retrofit is being carried out. A neighbourhood and community focused approach has been successful in ensuring that Amplus has been able to incorporate local peoples' voices into its strategies and operations.

Fallon says that local buy-in is also enhanced by working with the [National Retrofit Hub](#) and the regional energy community groups closer to Amplus' direct operations. This helps to identify new approaches and understand the delivery methods of other housing associations and property owners.

How do you get support from internal stakeholders?

Experience is key to getting support for your team's work. Fallon said that previous project successes, delivery experience and an understanding of the positive impact of retrofit on residents helped her to illustrate the opportunities afforded by retrofit.

Following success in this area, she was able to enhance the profile of Amplus' net zero goals and decarbonisation targets.

Communicating these alongside - and as the context for your retrofit proposals - is something Fallon believes helps to paint a compelling case for support from senior stakeholders.

Three top tips for gaining support for sustainability work

To end this case study, we asked Fallon for her three top tips to get support for your retrofit and sustainability plans. She said:

1. **Use basic language:** Make sure to adjust technical terminology to language that residents understand. For example, rather than using 'retrofit', we use 'energy efficiency improvements'. This is based on our customer engagement insight that the type of language used is key to retaining residents' interest.
2. **Secure Board buy-in:** We built our team's profile within the organisation and demonstrated our relevance to other departments, customers and the Board

members. This kickstarted a cultural shift of aligning sustainability and retrofit with the organisation's vision and values. For Amplius, this has included introducing environmental, social and governance (ESG) reporting to support our wider move towards sustainability.

3. **Carry out early engagement with stakeholders:** Establishing an informed knowledge base that could be easily communicated helped us with early engagement and buy-in. It meant questions could be answered authoritatively and gave us confidence to help others learn about, understand and be persuaded by our retrofit and sustainability ambitions. From this foundation, we could then use our communication methods and messaging to ensure effective communication with important stakeholders.