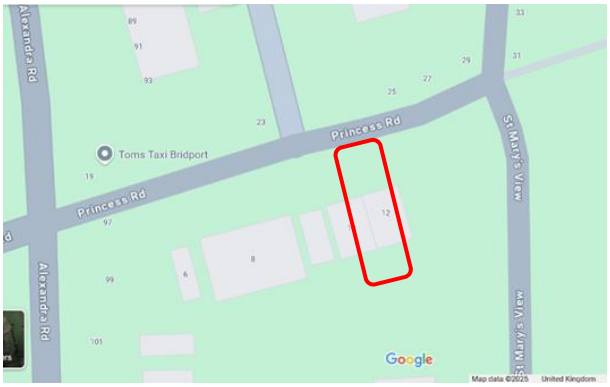
Proposal for Community-Led Housing initiative – 12 Princess Road, Bridport.

1. Introduction

Wessex Community Assets (WCA) and Dorset Community Energy (DCE) have explored, with Bridport Area Community Housing (BACH), the potential to work with Dorset Council on the retrofit and subsequent letting for temporary accommodation of 12 Princess Road, Bridport. The compulsory purchase of the house has recently been completed by the Housing Standards team, and options for the next stage are currently being considered.

The house is semi-detached, 3 bed. A house a few doors away sold in March 2023 for £270,000.



There is a garden to the side and the rear:

The proposal is for the house to be leased to BACH for 25 years, ideally at a peppercorn rent. The house would be retrofitted to an exemplary standard, with DCE acting as the accountable organisation for the retrofit contracting process, with technical support being provided by WCA. This would include training and volunteering opportunities, in particular for people not currently in employment or training. The house would then be rented back to Dorset Council as temporary accommodation, before being given back to the Council after 25 years.

2. Partner experience

WCA has worked with Dorset County Council and Dorset Council for 20 years, first on the setting up of Wessex Home Improvement Lending (now Lendology CIC) and then the development of an enabling service for community land trusts (CLTs). WCA has supported 12 CLTs in West Dorset including Symene, Bridport Cohousing, Powerstock and Dorchester. WCA worked with Dorset County Council to set up DCE in 2013. BACH was established with support from Bridport Town Council, Dorset Council and WCA, as a key recommendation of the Bridport Area neighbourhood Plan process.

In 2017, WCA was commissioned by Dorset Community Action to research the potential to use local materials in construction, and subsequently developed a partnership called Raise the Roof. The aim of the partnership was to explore how affordable housing (both new build and purchased & refurbished) could be linked with modern methods of construction, natural materials and training opportunities. Partners include the University of Plymouth, Assemble Studio, Common Practice Studio, Bridport Town Council, Bridport Area Community Housing. A number of construction training workshops have been organised, including for unemployed people, with the building of small non-permanent dwellings as the focus. Raise the Roof has also supported the self-build training elements of the Bridport Cohousing common house.

3. Retrofit Training

In researching the feasibility of a “One Stop” Retrofit Hub for Dorset homeowners, it was clear from the start that a key focus would be skills training for construction workers and installers, given the skills gap across the county. One element of this would be training for existing companies on the supply side. However, WCA and DCE have also noted the successful development across the country of training programmes linked to refurbishment of empty properties. These may have been purchased directly by the social enterprises providing the training, or be made available by partners such as housing associations or local authorities (which retain ownership).

4. Examples of existing training organisations in England

- B4Box, Manchester: https://b4box.co.uk/

Three-year multi-trade skills apprenticeships. 500 properties retrofitted.

- Brixham Yes, Devon: https://www.bxyes.org.uk/

Provide affordable flats for young people; prospective tenants involved in retrofitting.

- Canopy, Leeds: https://www.canopyhousing.org/

Self-help housing: homeless people work with volunteers to retrofit properties.

- Giroscope, Hull: https://giroscope.org.uk/

Buys and renovates empty properties, and offers volunteer and work placement opportunities.

- Granby4Streets, Liverpool: https://www.granby4streetsclt.co.uk/

Retrofit of 11 houses, led by volunteers and also offering local training & employment opportunities.

- Growth Path, Birmingham: https://www.growthpath.org.uk/

4-week Introduction to Construction course, leading to CSCS qualification. Longer term supported traineeships.

- Latch, Leeds: https://www.latch.org.uk/

Purchases empty houses and refurbishes them, with work done by Latch staff and unemployed trainees.

- Green Meadows, Nottingham. https://www.greenmeadows.uk/community-retrofit-house

Running a series of practical DIY workshops for people in the community to retrofit the house, including plastering, insulating roofs, floors and walls, heat pumps.

5. Outline of proposed training programme for 12 Princess Road

DCE and WCA would coordinate the overall retrofit process, working with a main contractor and local skills tradespersons. The training programme would be integrated into this process, with two main elements:

- Introductory courses for 4 weeks

The programme would offer introductory courses to young people – on the lines of the traineeships offered by Latch and the introductory course offered by Growth Path. Skills taught would include painting and decorating, plastering, joinery, installing insulation, fitting kitchens and bathrooms. This could lead to a CSCS card.

- Traineeships for 6 months

These traineeships could be based on the longer term programme offered by Growth Path and could be linked to Level 1 qualifications.

For future retrofit projects, the aim would be to offer multi-skill apprenticeships for 1-3 years. This would follow the model developed by B4Box in Greater Manchester, and would include 1 day at Weymouth College to study for Level 2 & 3 qualifications.

6. Opportunities to develop a longer term training programme

The programmes developed to support the Princess Road project could be further developed and offered in the long term. There is great potential to create social value and empower unemployed individuals through hands-on construction, carpentry, and plumbing training programs focused on refurbishing and retrofitting empty homes. This would address two critical issues in Bridport and the wider Dorset region: the skills gap in the construction industry and the housing shortage. Through practical, skills-based training, there is the potential to transform vacant properties into affordable housing, while generating sustainable social and economic impact for local communities.

There are a number of potential market opportunities and associated funding streams:

- Training Contracts with Local Councils and Government Grants: Funding to support skills development programs aimed at reducing unemployment.
- Construction and Housing Industry Sponsorships: Partnerships with construction companies, which may fund specific training cohorts to meet their workforce needs.
- Retrofitting Contracts: Local councils or housing associations could pay for retrofitting services, utilizing the trained workforce.
- Community Workshops and Courses: Offering affordable or grant-subsidised training courses for community members who may want to upskill in construction trades independently or learn DIY skills for retrofitting their own homes.

7. Staffing requirements for a training programme

WCA is working with University of Plymouth and Cast Ltd to define job descriptions for a Project Manager for retrofit and construction projects that incorporate training and volunteering. The following would be the key employees required:

- Project Manager & Retrofit Coordinator: Oversee property retrofit projects, ensuring they align with budget and quality standards. Manage training programme and trainers.
- Training Instructor : Certified multi-trade professional, ideally with experience in construction, carpentry, and plumbing to provide on-the-job training and mentorship.

8. Integrating training into retrofit

Action on Empty Homes offer the following advice, relevant to the integration of training into retrofit programmes:

Scheduling of works: Building works that involve training usually take longer than when carried out by a skilled workforce, due to:

- the time taken to explain and train can slow progress;
- there may be trainee induction and performance reviews and assessments;
- and there may be attendance issues which can take time to resolve.

The extent of additional time required will depend on how many trainees there are, the planned rate of turnover (how long the trainees stay), and the existing skill level of trainees on entry to the scheme.

Scheduling of recruitment: It is important that trainees are able to 'start on site' shortly after expressing their interest and being recruited. This means it's important to have a realistic start-date and arrangements in place for the building works ahead of actually recruiting trainees. People can lose interest or become anxious if delays are extended.

Health and Safety: Trainee and voluntary workers must be provided with the same level of health and safety protection as employees on paid contracts.

Potential problems: Typical issues include non-attendance of trainees; misconduct, personality clashes; delays in work scheduling; bad weather stopping works and so on. If the training scheme/s include people with vulnerabilities or support needs, then there must be proper agreements in place between partners, including with contractors, about how any problems will be reported and who will take the lead in resolving them

9. Resources required to provide training

DCE and WCA would ensure access to the following resources:

- Premises for storage, and in later stages administration and teaching
- Equipment
- Health & Safety policies and procedures, and including PPE
- Curriculum & Trainers
- Materials for retrofitting

10. Indicative retrofit costs

Retrofitting a semi-detached house that's been vacant for 25 years involves various elements, each with associated costs. Below is an overview of these elements with estimated costs based on current UK data:

Garden Clearance and Landscaping

- *Garden Clearance:* Removing overgrown vegetation and debris typically costs between £500 and £2,500, depending on the garden's size and condition.
- *Landscaping:* Basic landscaping, including lawn re-turfing and planting, can range from £1,500 to £5,000. More extensive designs with features like patios or ponds can increase costs significantly

New Windows

- *Double-Glazed Windows:* Replacing all windows in a semi-detached house with A-rated double glazing averages around £15,000.

New Doors

- *External Doors:* Installing new uPVC or composite front and back doors typically costs between £1,000 and £2,000 per door, including materials and labor.

Loft Insulation

- *Standard Loft Insulation:* Adding or upgrading loft insulation costs approximately £930 for a semi-detached house, with potential annual energy bill savings of around £270.

External Wall Insulation

- *Solid Wall Insulation:* Applying external insulation to solid walls ranges from £10,000 to £12,500 for a semi-detached house.

Replastering

- *Internal Replastering:* Replastering walls and ceilings throughout a house can cost between £3,500 and £6,500, depending on the property's size and condition.

Painting and Decorating

- *Interior Painting:* Painting the interior of a semi-detached house typically ranges from £2,000 to £4,000, depending on the number of rooms and paint quality.

Bathroom Fit-Out

- *Complete Bathroom Renovation:* Installing a new bathroom suite, including fixtures, tiling, and labor, generally costs between £4,000 and £7,000.

Kitchen Fit-Out

- *Kitchen Renovation:* Fitting a new kitchen, including cabinets, appliances, and installation, typically ranges from £8,000 to £15,000, depending on specifications.

New Electrics

- *Full Rewiring:* Rewiring a semi-detached house to current standards usually costs between £3,500 and £6,000.

Air Source Heat Pump

Installation Cost: Installing an air source heat pump typically costs between £10,000 and £13,000. With a £7,500 government grant, the out-of-pocket expense can be reduced.

- *Resized Radiators and Pipework Plumbing:* If needed, the cost ranges from £1,500 to £3,000.

4kW PV Panels and Battery Storage

- *Solar Panels:* Installing a 4kW solar panel system costs around £6,100, with an average payback period of 11 to 14 years.
- *Battery Storage:* Adding battery storage to a solar panel system can increase costs by approximately £4,000 to £6,000.

Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR)

- *Installation Cost:* Implementing an MVHR system in a semi-detached house typically ranges from £3,000 to £6,000, depending on the system's complexity and property size.

Professional Services:

Retrofit Assessment

- *Cost:* A retrofit assessment generally costs between £600 and £900, depending on the property's size and complexity.

Retrofit Design

- *Cost:* Professional retrofit design services can range from £500 to £2,000, influenced by the project's scope and specific requirements.

Retrofit Coordination

- *Cost:* Engaging a retrofit coordinator, who oversees the project to ensure compliance with standards like PAS 2035, typically costs between £800 and £3,300 plus VAT.

Site Management

- *Cost:* Site management fees can vary widely but often constitute 5% to 15% of the total project cost, depending on the project's complexity and duration.

Summary of indicative retrofit costs

Retrofit Element	Estimated Cost Range	Provisional sums
Garden Clearance	£500 - £2,500	£1000
Landscaping	£1,500 - £5,000	£2000
New Windows	£15,000	£15000
New Doors	£1,000 - £2,000 per door	£2000
Loft Insulation	£930	£930
External Wall Insulation	£10,000 - £12,500	£10000
Replastering	£3,500 - £6,500	£5000
Painting and Decorating	£2,000 - £4,000	£3000
Bathroom Fit-Out	£4,000 - £7,000	£5000
Kitchen Fit-Out	£8,000 - £15,000	£10000
New Electrics	£3,500 - £6,000	£5000
Air Source Heat Pump	£10,000 - £13,000 (before £7,500 grant)	£4000
Radiators & pipework	£1,500 - £3,000	£2000
4kW PV Panels	£6,100	£6100
Battery Storage	£4,000 - £6,000	£5000
MVHR	£3,000 - £6,000	£4000
Retrofit Assessment	£600 - £900	£800
Retrofit Design	£1000 - £2,000	£1500
Retrofit Coordination	£1000 - £3,300 + VAT	£2000
	Sub-total	£84330.00
Site Management	10% of total project cost	£8433
	Total	£92763.00

Training equipment costs

Item	Number	Cost Net	VAT
Scaffold tower	1	1000	200
Stepladder	2	200	40
Concrete mixer	1	300	60
Circular saw	1	324	65
Circular saw stand	1	100	20
Makita driver, drill, batteries, charger	4	1000	200
Nail gun	4	600	120
Hand router	3	300	60
Makita LED worklights	2	180	36
Hammers	10	150	30
Chisels	10	100	20
Saws	10	50	10
Rulers & Carpenters pencil	10	80	16
Clamps	20	300	60
Buckets	5	15	3
Spades	5	50	5
Tape measures	10	60	12
Spirit level set	1	100	20
Cable reel	2	50	10
PPA: Glasses	10	50	10
PPA: Hard hats	10	150	30
PPA: Yellow tabards	10	50	10
PPA: Gloves	10	30	6
PPA: Ear protectors	10	50	10
PPA: Safety harness for working at height	5	150	30
First aid kit	2	60	12
Toolbelt	10	70	14
Trestles	12	240	48
Total		**5809**	**1157**

12 Princess Road: Initial financial appraisal

Weekly Rent: 1 3 Bed House				Annual		
LHA Rate	Market Rent	80% market rate		LHA Rate	Market Rent	80% market rate
£207.12	£300.00	£240.00		£10,770.24	£15,600.00	£12,480.00
Allowance voids and bad debts:						
Management:						
Repairs:			5%	£538.51	£780.00	£624.00
Insurance:			5%	£538.51	£780.00	£624.00
			Net rent:	**£9,693.22**	**£14,040.00**	**£11,232.00**

No initial purchase cost + £100,000 repayment over 10 yrs		Notes
Development cost	100000	*Loan*
Project management	10000	*Grant funded*
Cost of finance p.a. (5%)	£9,634.00	*Loan repaid over 15 years*
Surplus per year	£59.22	
Surpus per year x 25	£1,480.40	*Not adjusted for inflation*

Job descriptions

Project Manager & Retrofit Coordinator: Oversee property retrofit projects, ensuring they align with budget and quality standards. Manage training programme and trainers.

Core responsibilities involve:

- Supervise and manage onsite retrofit projects.
- Working closely with contractors and suppliers and making sure the project is finished within the allotted budget and timeframe.
- Making sure that all work is completed in line with the programme of works whilst ensuring highest standards of health & safety are observed and followed.
- Responsible for overseeing the installation of energy-efficient measures and ensuring that the building meets sustainability standards.
- Working with and to Building Control regulations and requirements as well as all other statutory and mandatory regulations/legislation and requirements including best practice.
- Working to drawings and specifications.
- Ensure works are installed to PAS2030/MCS requirements.
- Providing clear and concise communication on progress and activity in both technical and clear simple terms
- Control project execution plans and delivery structured updates to the client.
- Manage, review and monitor risk, program, plant, quality, cost.
- Promote and follow good Project governance through the policies and procedures laid out by Dorset Community Energy.

Skills & Experience:

- A minimum of 5 years previous site management experience
- Sound knowledge of the Construction industry
- Experience of working in multiple refurbishment project settings/projects
- A valid SMSTS qualification = E
- CSCS card in site management = E
- NVQ level 6 in site management/construction = D
- A recognised building/trade qualification = E
- Asbestos Awareness Certification = E
- Must hold current valid driving license = E
- Recognised qualifications and or work experience regarding Fire Assessment surveying and remedial works = D

Training Instructor : Certified multi-trade professional, ideally with experience in construction, carpentry, and plumbing to provide on-the-job training and mentorship.

- Work with the Construction Manager to develop an overall retrofit training plan in order to support trainees and volunteers to complete the work.
- Provide training and development opportunities for construction trainees and volunteers.
- Teach construction skills including but not limited to carpentry, plumbing and electrics along with the appropriate use of equipment and tools through demonstrations, instruction and monitoring performance and skill level.
- Teach appropriate ways to handle technical retrofit problems and how to troubleshoot them.
- Responsible for worksite safety of trainees and volunteers, and the learning of safety procedures and proper construction techniques.
- Where appropriate, to deliver Level 1 and 2 core skills and knowledge, to prepare learners for their end point assessment.
- To track and monitor learners progress by ensuring that formative and summative assessment methods (mock tests, reflective learning, self-directed study) are effectively undertaken to prepare learners for distinction status.
- To communicate effectively with learners, potential employers and parents that provides assurances that learners are making progress in accordance with employer expectations by monitoring feedback and satisfaction rates.
- Ensure implementation of all policies and procedures on the worksite.
- Supervise professional tradespersons when they are on site.
- Responsible for ordering correct quantities of materials and having materials delivered on time.
- Maintain and develop new connections to suppliers.
- Negotiate prices for materials in conjunction with the Construction Manager.
- Oversee tool/equipment inventory, management and repairs.

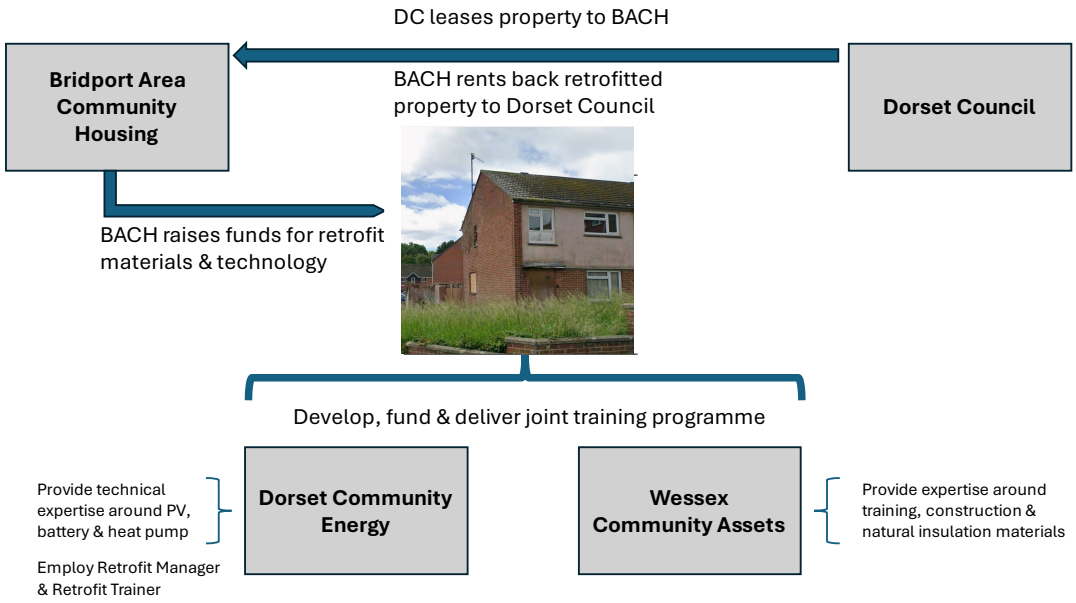
Qualifications:

- Level 3 Award in Education (AET) - Essential
- Assessor Course (A1) - Desirable
- VTCT Level 3 Certificate on Assessing Vocational Achievement (QCF) – Desirable

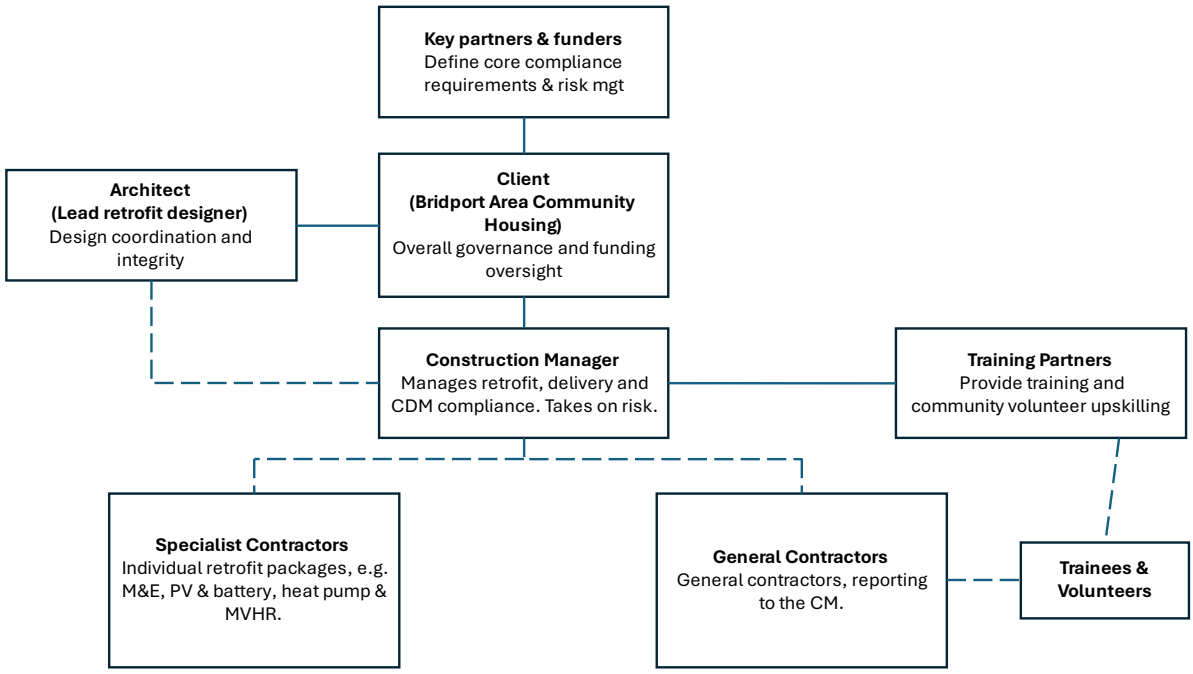
Experience - Ability to demonstrate successful:

- Delivery of Training Programmes in Construction and or Roofing
- An understanding of government funding and associated quality assurance
- Extensive experience of designing and delivering training programmes
- Experience of mapping learning needs analysis
- Experience of working in construction or the flat roofing industry
- Offer support to trainees facing personal or financial challenges, improving program retention and completion rates.

Relationship between the different project partners



Retrofit using a Construction Management approach



Bridport Area Community Housing

WESSEX COMMUNITY ASSETS

DORSET COMMUNITY ENERGY

Draft Business Canvas

RESOURCES

- Skilled trainers & retrofit coordinators
- Workshop/training sites (e.g. empty homes)
- Tools, materials & PPE
- Curriculum & training accreditation
- Funding and grant support
- Community networks and referral pathways

PARTNERS

- Local authorities
- Housing associations
- Social enterprises (e.g. Latch, Canopy, B4Box)
- Construction & retrofit companies
- Education providers & colleges
- Charitable foundations
- Trade bodies (e.g., TrustMark, PAS 2035)

ACTIVITIES

- Deliver hands-on training in retrofit techniques
- Refurbish empty or underused properties
- Develop & maintain curriculum aligned with industry needs
- Mentor, support & certify trainees
- Collaborate with partners on projects
- Provide wraparound services (e.g. employability coaching)

VALUE PROPOSITION

- High-quality, practical retrofit training
- Pathways into employment in green construction
- Revival of empty homes into habitable, low-energy dwellings
- Empowerment of communities through co-creation and DIY retrofit
- Accredited, multi-trade apprenticeships & traineeships

PROMOTION/ MARKETING CHANNELS

- Partnerships with local authorities & job centres
- Community outreach & events
- Social media & local press
- Referrals from housing/ support organisations
- Schools & colleges
- Website and online application

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

- Supportive, community-led approach
- Ongoing mentorship and support
- Alumni networks
- Strong social mission and impact tracking

CUSTOMER SEGMENTS

- Unemployed and underemployed people
- Young people (16-25)
- People with lived experience of homelessness
- Local councils / housing organisations
- Community groups
- Employers seeking skilled retrofit workers

COST STRUCTURE

- Staff wages (trainers, coordinators, mentors)
- Property acquisition/lease & materials
- Insurance, tools, safety equipment
- Accreditation and curriculum development
- Transport, admin, overheads, monitoring & evaluation

REVENUE STREAMS

- Grant funding (government, lottery, trust funds)
- Local authority training contracts
- Apprenticeship/traineeship subsidies
- Revenue from retrofit works
- Sponsorships & donations