

Tenants' Climate Jury Report and Recommendations.

Section 1 - Introduction

In 2021, the Northern Housing Consortium (NHC) conducted a Tenants' Climate Jury involving 30 tenants from five northern social landlords. The process took place over 10 weeks with each tenant giving 30 hours of their time to the process.

The jury produced 10 recommendations in answer to the question:

“How can tenants, social housing providers, and others work together to tackle climate change in our homes and neighbourhoods?”

A full report of the work done by the jury, including their recommendations can be read here: <https://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Tenants-Climate-Jury-Report.pdf>

North Star have recently secured grants from the decarbonisation fund to carry out efficiency and environmental improvement works on 40 properties (with the possibility of 150 more imminently).

We formed a North Star Tenants' Climate Jury to take the recommendations made by the NHC's group and ensure they are applicable and fit for purpose for our organisation.

We did this by approaching those tenants who had (or were due to have) improvements done through the decarbonisation fund and other tenants who may be interested to form the Jury.

We followed a process, outlined in section 3, that mirrored the NHC's but, respected the work that had already been done and would create maximum benefit for North Star.

The process ran over 6 sessions with meetings taking place on Zoom in order to maximise involvement and engagement.

Section 2 – Meet the Jury

North Star's climate Jurors came from across our geography and brought a range of knowledge, skills and experience to the process.

They were:

Ann-Marie Basnett-Roberts
Paula Rogers

Gillian Rathbone
Graham Eason
Susan Oladujoye
Kelly Atherton
Sharon Harland
Keith Goldthorp

The Jury would also like to thank Julie Menezes for her input to the first three sessions.

In our first meeting we explored people's reasons for being involved in the Jury and they included wanting to improve the environment for future generations, being really clear on what the impact of carbon reduction by organisations is and understanding how these measures can help with rising costs of living.

Section 3 – The process we followed

Session 1

This session was used for on-boarding, induction and scene setting.

It began with allowing everyone to get to know each other and why they are there.

It featured an introduction to North Star's approach to its environmental responsibilities, the pressure from government and our current work delivered by Chris Harris, Asset Manager at North Star.

The session also featured input from Liam Gregson who led the NHC work.

Main Learning points

- De-carbonisation targets are challenging and expensive
- There are multiple definitions of some of the key terms we are working with. E.g., Carbon reduction vs. carbon capture and its impact.
- Technology is moving quickly and whilst it is expensive now, it may come down in price in the future.

Session 2

Session 2 built on the information shared with the original jury on the impact of climate change globally, nationally and locally. David Scriven from Middlesbrough Environment City attended to answer questions on de-carbonisation, carbon capture and the impact

This session also featured more detail on the De-carbonisation Fund work that has been done by North Star so far and the kind of technology that has been explored. This was delivered by Andy Moses, Asset Management Surveyor.

Main learning points

- North Star stock can be difficult to retrofit due to its age
- Carbon capture is much effective than carbon off-setting, which has its own cost.
- One of the major impacts of climate change is the reducing amount of habitable space in the world and the subsequent migration as a result.

Session

Session 3 focused on reviewing the original NHC recommendations and adjusting them where necessary to better fit North Star's purposes. To do this review the group asked themselves the following three questions:

- Is it for North Star?
- Is it for now or for the future?
- Is there anything we would change.

The group also met with Sean Lawless, Head of Digital and Data who is leading the staff Time to Act Group to agree how the jury could continue its work once its recommendations have been made.

Session 4 and 5

Session 4 and 5 were used to continue the review work and also to continue looking at future arrangements with Time to Act.

Session 6

Session 6 was used to review the recommendations, the draft of this report and also to agree a method for consulting with the wider tenant base.

Session 7

Session 7 was used to finalise the report, receive any feedback from the wider tenant consultation and agree the future of the Jury.

Section 4 – Our Recommendations

Our recommendations are based heavily on the work done by the Northern Housing Consortium's Social Housing Tenants' Climate Jury. We are grateful for their support and for the hard work that informed the recommendations below.

The Jury intend these recommendations to reflect both their experience of North Star as an organisation and also, their experiences as tenants.

Recommendation 1

We agree with the Northern Housing Consortium's (NHC) Tenants' Climate Jury that change and installation programmes should be as quick as possible but, this speed should not come at the cost of quality. We recommend the highest quality technology should be used. Evidence of a process considering value for money when choosing components and suppliers should be readily available to tenants. We recommend that organisation maintain open-minded, as technology is developing extremely quickly in this space. We also recommend that the suitability of technology that has been installed be reviewed as part of the property condition survey. We are aware that the need to determine which technology is right for the properties will take time and recommend that this is not rushed.

We recommend North Star publish a clear timeline of activity that will see them achieve their energy efficiency and de-carbonisation targets. This should be written in clearly understandable language and regularly updated. This will allow tenants to hold North Star to account.

We recommend that North Star explore the possibility of developing a minimum service standards framework. This should include the expected timescales of work, the amount of notice given to tenants before work is carried out and the instances in which compensation will be paid and at what level that would be.

Recommendation 2

We agree with the NHC Jury that work should be independently inspected. We feel that at least initially, this should be done by third parties with the relevant experience to do so. As work progresses, we recommend that North Star explores the possibility of training tenants to fulfil this role. We would expect tenants to assess the impact and suitability of the technology as well as the impact on tenants, rather than any technical elements of the work.

Recommendation 3

We agree with the NHC that communication around disruption, timescales and the impact of the work to be carried out is key.

We recommend North Star begins working with tenants now to raise awareness of this impact and what it may mean for them and their homes.

We feel there is a need to ensure that tenants feel involved in the decision being taken about their homes and are fully aware and supportive of the changes being made. Tenants should be kept fully informed during works and a full programme of aftercare and learning how to use the equipment effectively, should be developed.

We recognize that North Star has a number of older properties that will be more challenging to retrofit effectively. Where North Star's plans for these properties may differ to others, every effort should be made to inform the tenant and be clear about the reasoning.

We recommend North Star establish a forum (either new or from existing tenant involvement structures) in which tenants can share their experiences, have questions answered and problems resolved.

Recommendation 4

We recommend North Star create a clear communication plan that details how the information around changes to tenants properties will be conveyed. This plan should be sensitive to the needs of all tenants considering at least the following:

- Different media to ensure as many people are reached as possible e.g. Social media, email, text messaging, post etc. We recognize the cost of this but, feel it is important to ensure that people are as informed as possible.
- Communication should use as many different formats as possible. For example some people will respond better to videos rather than written explanations. However, we recommend that wherever possible North Star seek to have conversations face-to-face with tenants as this will allow for the most understanding to be achieved.
- We recognise that this work, by its nature, involves the use of a lot of technical language. We recommend that North Star pay particular attention to ensuring this language and associated acronyms etc. are clearly explained at all times. The Climate Jury have started their own glossary of terms and are happy to share this. We recommend that North Star updates this to reflect any new terms.

Recommendation 5

We recommend North Star support and encourage its contractors to develop their workforce to respond to the challenges of decarbonization and the new work it creates. They should be encouraged to develop tenants and people in the communities North Star works in to gain these skills and jobs. Contractors should also be encouraged to engage with schools to ensure young people are informed about the opportunities open to them as well the reasons the work is being done and the impact it can have on households. Wherever possible this work should be done in partnership with tenants and North Star staff.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that once North Star has successfully implemented its decarbonisation approach and can demonstrate the positive impact it is having for both tenants and the environment; the organisation should promote the work it has done and position itself as a pioneer of a new way of living, happy to share its learning. We recommend North Star prioritise being the best rather than the first.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that any retrofit work is carried out in as few visits as possible to minimize disruption and also recognize the speed required to address climate change. Wherever possible tenants should be given as much say as is possible in how this work is scheduled.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that tenants whose homes are undergoing any form of retrofit work be given options to minimize the disruption. These options should consider individual household need including, but not limited to:

- Pet owners
- Children and dependents
- Mobilities
- Proximity to local services and/or employment
- Proximity to family and friends

Recommendation 9

Where possible North Star should establish working examples and mock-ups of the technology being installed. This could include virtual tours and

digital solutions.

North Star should pay particular attention to the available support and instruction materials (e.g. how to videos and interactive manuals) that are already available from contractors providing the technology.

Recommendation 10

North Star should have its green credential 'nailed to the mast'. This would include having a clear green mission statement and also the plan for tackling the issue as mentioned in recommendation 1.

Section 5 – What happens next?

The Jury will present this report and our recommendations to senior staff and the board of North Star. It is our hope that these recommendations will inform and shape the future strategic direction of North Star's green and de-carbonisation work.

The Jury plan to form, with the staff Time to Act group, a panel that will, as its main purpose, aim to hold North Star to account on its recognition and implementation of these recommendations.

We hope this report provides a clear and tenant-led steer on how to approach one of the major challenges of our times.

If you have any questions about this report, its content or the work behind it please do contact the Jury via the North Star communities team on communities@northstarhg.co.uk.