

Paper Abstract – Northumbria Research Conference 2011

Teaching old dogs new tricks: Sustainability in Local Authority Sheltered Housing

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The UK's population is ageing, and meeting the housing needs of an increasingly elderly population is a key challenge which the nation currently faces. However, it has been suggested that this challenge also presents an opportunity to ensure that housing for older people leads the way in terms of space standards, design quality, place-making and sustainability. It has been suggested that with regards to sustainability in particular, there is a lack of skills and knowledge amongst procuring bodies such as Local Authorities which is resulting in these opportunities not being fully exploited.

This paper will report on the experiences from a recently completed Knowledge Transfer Partnership between Northumbria University and North Tyneside Council. The project set out to increase technical knowledge and skills in the Local Authority with regard to specifying and operating low carbon renewable energy technologies, and enhancing building sustainability. Applied to a multi million pound Private Finance Initiative project to remodel the authorities entire sheltered housing stock, findings suggest that the knowledge and skills transferred to the local authority have resulted in building designs which surpass regulatory standards, and have the potential to provide some of the most sustainable sheltered housing in the UK.