Power in the City

Transcript E04: Hitting home

Intro

Britt: Hi, and welcome to Power in the City. This is a podcast about the everyday and on the ground ways that people are responding to the climate emergency.

[electro ambient sounds based on household noises]
Mix of voices from the episode:
It's freezing in my house at the minute.

These houses they become poorly, don't they, cause they're not being heated as they should be.

With the cost of living and the rise of fuel prices, it is really important to make sure that people are doing as much as they can in their homes to make them as energy efficient as possible.

If you insulate a building well, you're going to be reducing carbon emissions and therefore reducing heating bills.

Hannah: The first season is based in Oldham and has five episodes. My name is Hannah.

Britt: And I'm Britt. - Hannah, do you actually know that Oldham is not a city?

Main episode

Britt: Hi Alex.

Alex: Hi, Britt. How is it going?

Britt: Good. Welcome to Power in the City

Alex: Thank you so much for having me. I'm really excited to be here with you today.

Britt: Alex is my colleague at Carbon Co-op and Alex is a journalist, so he's actually the real deal. We're excited to have you.

Alex: The hype is not warranted , but thank you.

Britt: We let Alex loose in Oldham together with Melissa, our local researcher to find out... Do you wanna maybe explain?

Alex: Sure. Yeah. Well, we've been hearing a lot about energy bills recently. Many of us have been struggling with them for the best part of a year now. So with them being so high and all of us being so frigging cold all the time, I thought it would be good to use this episode to talk about the home, what we're doing about them, to make them warmer and more affordable.

And lo and behold, we talk to people in Oldham and they're doing loads about it.

Britt: Alright, like putting on lots of layers? Jumpers?

Alex: Well, more insulating the home to make that warmer. So it's like wrapping a blanket around your entire house rather than putting a blanket on yourself. So in a sense, you're not wrong.

Britt: Oh, wow. I mean, Oldham - isn't Oldham really cold? Like isn't it even colder than the rest of the uk?

Alex: Yeah, even colder than Manchester, which is saying something. And as well as keeping you warm and reducing your bills, insulating your home is probably one of the best things you can do for the planet too, because you're reducing the amount of fossil fuel intensive energy needed to heat it.

It's something like 18% of UK emissions come from our homes, which is really, really extraordinary when you think about it. But mostly. Insulating your home will keep you warm. That's the important thing.

Ibrahim: They used to put the gas cooker on just to try and keep the kitchen warm because the house got that cold.

Alex: This is Ibrahim. I'm speaking to him in the neighbourhood of Westwood in Central Oldham.

Britt: Oh, we are at the Millennium Center again.

Alex: Exactly. Yeah. The Millennium Center, if you don't know, is a large terracotta brick building on Feather Stall Road. Terrace housing surrounds it along with some new builds.

Britt: Yeah, we were there for the walking episode. What a brilliant place.

Alex: Yeah, they're doing so much great work at the moment. Ibrahim has become a bit of an energy champion in his neighbourhood.

Ibrahim: My name is Ibrahim. I work for the Millennium Cultural Center, and part of my job is to sort of work on different projects and every project that we work on is directly linked with working with the community and bringing about active change in some way or another, or just improving the lives of people that are living in our communities now.

Alex: One of the ways Ibrahim is serving his community is by looking at how people can make their homes more energy efficient and more comfortable. We sat in on one of the workshops they held with local residents on what it's like living in their homes right now.

Workshop participants: My name's Zake. I've got two objectives for attending these sessions. One is to make my own house energy efficient. I've tried to address a lot of the issues, but I still do have draught problems. So maybe we can learn what to do about those. And the second thing is we support a lot of people in our community as part of our youth organisation.

Alex: I think it's really interesting that Zake mentions he's tried doing loads of things himself to sort out his draught problems and also that he clearly understands that other people in his community are going through the same thing and that the community coming together is really important.

Workshop participants: What is the coldest part of the home? If you think just, just walk yourself. You got home from work, you walk in, or you just came back from school or whatever it is.

Kitchen.

So you are saying kitchen? Anyone else?

My, my kitchen and my porch. Porch, kitchen and bathroom.

Alex: They also start to really dig down into why the house is as cold as it is.

Workshop participants: So why do you think your kitchens are really cold?

Yeah, I probably have more droughts there. Cause of holes and pipes and things like that. I think the kitchen has less things that can absorb and retain the heat. Living room or the bedrooms are warmer cause they absorb a lot more heat.

Alex: Now I'm really struck by how much the people of Westwood know about their homes as energy systems and it's clearly a great educational resource for them.

Workshop participants: If you've got any like um, ventilation bricks. There are two kinds of ventilation bricks. Would the ventilation brick that's like at the very bottom of your house be in the thermal envelope?

No, no, no. Cause that's, that's for air underneath the house. That has to, that has to stay open.

That's so important. Don't go blocking those up. Otherwise, you'll get rot and mold on your floor and you definitely don't want that to happen.

Alex: The term thermal envelope they're referring to here is kind of like the layer around a building that controls its temperature, and that's the most critical building element for keeping it warm.

Britt: Aha. Here comes the jumper - or the layers.

Workshop participants: So what we have is we have like a water layer. So there's like a break.

The water membrane. Like a damp proofing layer.

Yeah! So, so I remember because when we did the landscaping...

Isn't it quite a new house?

Seventies.

Oh, okay. Yeah. So that's different.

Yeah. So then he literally, and he said, so like two bricks, he said, oh, whatever you do, don't build up to your water level. And then it's just concrete. But I don't like concrete cause it's freezing - the kitchen. It's freezing. And if it was timber floor, then I think it'd be warmer.

Mark: When we talk retrofit in the building aspect, we talk about the energy efficiency.

Alex: This is Mark Cox, a site manager at B four Box, which is a construction company based in Stockport.

Mark: Obviously, retrofits means to take something old and bring it up to the new standards.

Alex: I couldn't really have put it better myself. It's a bit of a trend term, isn't it? Retrofit. So it's good to hear from the horse's mouth what it actually means.

Mark says, all it really means is in retrospect fitting something new to an existing thing. So this could also be done to a car, let's say, but in the construction world, the term is used for a specific type of refurbishment that substantially improves the energy efficiency of a building and in particular reducing the amount of energy we spend on heating or cooling it and rectifying one of the issues we hear identified in the workshop.

Mark: Now, it might be external wall insulation, internal wall insulation, ceilings, floors. You know, there might be stuff for ground source to go in.

Alex: Mark refers to heat pumps here, which are kind of an efficient form of electric heating that can be fitted.

Mark: It's about the energy efficiency and the saving money, but also the comfort you want to feel that comfort in your home, don’t ya?

Britt: Oh, that's so true. Comfort. That's so important.

Alex: Mark and his colleague Orianne Landers, another site manager at B4Box, tell me how important this work is especially now that fuel prices are so high and people just don't turn their heating on at all anymore. They're worried for people's health and they're worried for the building's health as well.

Mark & Orianne: Houses, they become poorly, don't they? Because they're not being heated like they should be. And then the houses get worse. Get damp.. Yeah, they get damp, they get cold. That then leads to people developing illnesses as well.

Aileen: So it's a bit like being a doctor.

Alex: This is Aileen, the founder of B4Box.

Aileen: If you said to any doctor, build me a new body, it would look amazing. But what doctors get is bodies that have had things that have happened to them. So they need diagnosis and then they need all manner of things. It is the same with the building.

The diagnostics matter and then what you do with the building matters and it's highly skilled because you don't wanna make any problems worse. So an example of that would be, if you insulate a building, well, obviously you're going to be reducing carbon emissions and therefore reducing heating bills and basically reducing fuel use, but you could create a different problem if you're not careful, such as damp, mould or infestation of little critters.

Britt: Oh, I love that analogy of the doctor.

Alex: It's amazing, isn't it? It really shows just how important this is and I think captures the care and attention we should see with retrofit.

Mark & Orianne: It's not like a standard thing that you do cuz every house is completely different and some just need more work than others.

So we'll just go off the survey that Mark does and see how hard we have to rip out or not rip out. Yeah.

So yeah, obviously every archetype is different. Every property, the fabric of every building is different. The people that have lived in the property are different. You might have had an old person in there who's been on their own, sometimes you can have, you might have had a family or five or six. So, repairs, upkeep of the property, they are always different.

Britt: Oh yeah. That's so insightful, isn't it? Because of course every property is different, but also every person's way of using that property is different. So I guess that makes really clear how sensitive that is as a job to get that right and to make it

so that people continue to be comfortable or, or are more comfortable than they were before using that house. Living in that house.

Alex: Yeah. And, and just to make sure that the house works for them. Ultimately we've seen there's an appetite to do something to make homes more energy efficient in Oldham. So what's holding people back? I asked Ibrahim.

Ibrahim: So cost is like the first one. More than anything, cost would be the first one. Cause in an area which is one of the worst deprived, you know, in terms of multiple deprivation, you've got many, many low income households. I think people don't have the luxury of spending that money on retrofitting.

Alex: He gives one example to illustrate the kind of financial situation some households he works with are in.

Ibrahim: They've got two boys, two girls and their parents, so six people living in a two-bed house. So I think they use the downstairs room as a bedroom, so like a pullout sofa. The father works, the mother, she's put herself through education and she's doing some skills and classes to try and get into employment.

Alex: And he explains the family had damp in their home and despite throwing thousands of pounds at it, they just couldn't work out what was causing it.

Ibrahim: Every time they brought someone in to identify the problem, they couldn't identify it, and they just gave him a job. So the roof guy said, oh no, it's just your roof. It means taking off and redoing again. So they paid for that for no reason, and that would've cost them like 5 or 6,000 pounds. Then somebody said, oh no, you need to do the pointing again. So they literally repoint the whole side wall. So literally, you know, their scaffolding built up and they had all that.

And then they did the whole inside where they sort of stripped it all down to the bare brick and then all up again and it was completely mouldy and damp. And it was only much later that they brought in different people and eventually one person, he's a contractor and he's a family friend of the actual family.

So I reckon he just gave genuine advice cause he wasn't looking to make any money from the job. And he actually said, look, looking at your house, and he did measurements and everything and he said, look, you've got no cavity wall on this side of the wall, so it's just a bare wall, and then that's the inside of your house.

So you've literally got no cavity. So that's why your house is getting damp. No matter how much you sort of try and point the wall and stuff, there's just no barrier between your house and the outside.

Alex: And I think it's really interesting just to give us a flavour of the quality of housing that people are living in at the moment in Oldham, as well as the lack of knowledge or lack of trust in people's social circles. Ibrahim explains that funding from either national or local government would really help get the worst homes warmer.

Ibrahim: I think if it came in the form of a partial grant or if the council said, what we'll do is we wanna retrofit the property, we're willing to give you 80% or 70% or 60%, and the remaining 40%, we can create a sort of payment plan. I think if there was something of that structure, it would work.

Alex: Now these government grants do exist to some degree. They kind of come in and out periodically, but they're not really being accessed as much as you'd hope because people don't know about them or they don't know if they're eligible. It's difficult to work out if they're eligible.

It's difficult to find the people to do the work, and often you need to fund it upfront. So, for example, the government's Green Homes grant was scrapped, having reached just 10% of the 600,000 homes then chancellor Rishi Sunak promised would be improved.

Britt: That is such a massive problem, isn't it? I mean, if you think about the kind of work that we do at Carbon Co-op and we work with householders who are what we call early adopters, like people that have the bandwidth have the time or also have the little bit of extra money to be able to, um, you know, work with their house and take that time, even they say, wow, this is a really complex, and like, you know, who's the right contractor and can I do it in stages and where do I start and where do I end and the interruption in my house? All of these things are massive, aren't there? And imagine if you, you know, have a big family and job and education and all of that going on, how are you possibly gonna be able to also research a grant and find out how to spend that money on your home? Uh, it's almost impossible.

Alex: Yeah, totally agree. Ibrahim then tells me about another barrier, which is people living in rented accommodation.

Ibrahim: If they're living in a council property or property, which belongs to a housing association, then well, that then comes down to the housing association, but for those that private rent, then that's not gonna happen.

Cause private landlords in this area are notorious for creating a standard where it's 'take it as it is, or you can leave.

Alex: As someone who rents, I know exactly what he's getting at here. However, one of the stories he tells me really stands out.

Ibrahim: We had one property where the porch was unusable because the roof had been leaking for so long that it had partially collapsed.

The water was leaking onto the floor, which meant that the floor, the concrete was brittle and it was cracking. And the whole porch was a wooden construction, so the whole timber was rotting. But the landlord wouldn't fix the property because the couple that lived there, they were quite elderly actually. He wasn't fixing it because he was saying that, 'oh, well they're falling back on their rent, so I'm not going to, I'm not to fix anything'.

Britt: God, that's awful.

Alex: Right, and that's before we've even begun to consider the language and cultural barriers many people in Westwood encounter.

Ibrahim: A lot of the times, a lot of people or residents, they just don't understand what's happening when, when their bills are really high.

Or also a lot of the times you'll have younger children who will do a lot of the communicating. So if you need to ring the council, metering or energy provider, it's normally a child that's talking on behalf of the parent.

Children, obviously, depending on their age, might not be able to grasp the understanding and depth of what they need to talk about and discuss. So it just helps if there's a place where people can come and just get free advice, free help. We're there to sort of just help them along the way and, you know, give them as much support as possible.

Alex: So this is why retrofit isn't happening. So what are some of the solutions? Well, Ibrahim told us the Millennium Center will be running what they call 'energy cafes' on Saturdays soon to help people get this free advice that he's talking about, and sort of seize the opportunity to make their homes warmer when it arises.

Ibrahim: So we can visit people's homes, do a quick assessment of their home, and give them really individual bespoke advice on how they can sort of make their

homes more energy efficient. It's also linked up with the Oldham council and Housing Associations, so we would be able to signpost them and link them up to other services.

Which will be beneficial to them would also help them with sorting their bills out, you know, if they need to call, um, their bill provider and talk about, you know, what tariff they're on or you know, if they're having trouble making payments, you know what supports, so what support is out there for them? So we've got different services available.

Britt: Oh, that's brilliant. I think it's so important that all the different groups, you have the people from the community working together with housing associations, working together with the council to create these connections of trust between the different elements and work on it together.

Alex: Yeah, definitely these kind of community assets that can really help people, I think. I think a really important thing to bear in mind here as well is, you don't have to go the whole hog and do a deep retrofit and make it super energy efficient, which does cost tens of thousands of pounds. You can do stuff that can save you energy and can bring the performance of your home up.

Mark & Orianne: Or sometimes that's not relatively a lot of money. You know what? Sometimes it might just be, you know, a little bit of loft insulation. Done correctly, tops up. Um, some draught proofing. No, there is some basic stuff you can do just to make your home feel like a little bit warmer. Yeah, or a little bit of air tightness.

Them little measures are done, and then further down the line, you could maybe look to do a few more. You know, some people might not have it all done at once and want that upheaval so it might be, that means in four or five stages, you know, we'll do some little insulation measures and draught proofing and some air tightness.

Then they might go down the route of, you know, a bit of further, like, you know, that might be external wall insulation, new windows. Then they might start, you know, building towards the end where they might want ground source or air source heat pumps, some PV.

Britt: Ah, yeah, I like that message. Um, people are more in control maybe than they think of how they implement this over time.

Alex: Yeah, exactly. I feel it's so important to give people the sense that they can, they can move in the right direction with these kinds of small scale, low cost measures or dipping your toe in the water, as Orianne puts it.

Ibrahim mentioned housing associations and I began to wonder whether there was anything we could learn from the local social housing sector. After all, in the last episode we talked to First Choice Homes, Oldham about all the wonderful work they were doing with Solar Power. I spoke to Clare Onward Homes, which has homes in Oldham.

Clare: I'm Clare Rainsford. I work for an organisation, a social housing landlord called Onward Homes. So we have over 30,000 homes across the Northwest and my job is sustainability manager, so that means I get involved in all sorts of things in terms of corporate sustainability and carbon footprint to actually retrofit for homes, funding, all manner of things.

Alex: In terms of sustainability, Clare gave us a sense of what kinds of buildings a social housing provider like Onwards is managing and some of the complexities that throws up.

Clare: It's a real mixed bag. We've got new homes as well, which are, you know, highly energy efficient to then some older ones, which are grade two listed buildings.

We have other listed buildings, which could be 19 hundreds or even 18 hundreds, those sorts of things. So it's a real mixed bag. And those are the hard to treat properties. What do you do with them, particularly if there are restrictions on them as well, and solid wall properties as well.

Alex: And we got some really interesting insights into why it's so difficult insulating old historic buildings.

Clare: Those are really tricky because you can't start putting insulation externally on, you know, beautiful exteriors of buildings. So how do you do that internally? You can do that, but then how do you make sure you don't lose space?

Britt: It sounds like quite a big logistical challenge actually.

Alex: It does, doesn' it? Now, I came to Onward Homes because I'd heard they were submitting a joint bid with other social housing providers in Greater Manchester for government money to fund retrofit.

Clare: We've just put a bid in through the Greater Manchester Combined Authority for something called Social Housing Decarbonisation funds.

Alex: Now just to demystify this, the 1 billion pound social housing decarbonization fund comes from central government and enables housing associations to provide

upgrades such as external wall insulation to council homes in their area with an energy performance certificate rating of C or below.

Britt: Energy Performance Certificate?

Alex: Oh yeah. They're the kind of rainbow coloured ratings you get when you buy or rent a property. So running from A which indicates a good level of thermal performance all the way down to G, which means it's really, really bad.

Speaking to Clare, I started to get a real sense that collaboration and collective action in the sector would be key to scaling up retrofit.

Clare: We've come all together as a collective across homes, loads of other homes in Oldham and Greater Manchester. To actually ask the government for money to help us support the work that we're doing.

Alex: And she expands on some of the benefits for housing providers of working collectively.

Clare: We were sharing information with some of the other providers in Oldham, the wider GMCA as well, you know, what's practical, how can we make sure that we're tackling areas as a whole, rather than doing things piecemeal and we get the cost benefits of working together.

And also it was a huge amount of help from GMCA in terms of pulling all the partners together, making sure that all the information was in the correct format and so on.

Alex: So really interesting things there about economies of scale, which we'll touch on in a bit. But something else that really came through speaking to Clare was that housing providers will also have to collaborate with householders because going into someone's home and making changes to it, that's gonna require consent.

Clare: It's a real mixture depending on the neighbourhood, how people want to engage. When we have a neighbourhood and they've been super engaged, you know, it's anything from Facebook, we've got the consultation events, we've got the customer champions, and they're very much integral to the whole process. So it's, yeah, it's super critical. Cause in terms of delivering a program of retrofit, gaining access to properties is key.

Britt: This is actually what Simon also spoke about in the solar episode from First Choice Homes, who also do a lot of retrofit and he was saying it's so important that people have trust that this might be a good thing happening in their home.

And so the first experience of the people doing their homes is then really important to pass on to other people. That this was good and was a good process.

Alex: Yeah. It it travels by word of mouth.

Britt: Absolutely. And again I think there is a lot of space for people like Ibrahim in that process who can develop that trust.

Alex: Absolutely. And as Claire explains, not engaging with people can mean that they miss out.

Clare: If we can't gain access, that can throw a whole program out, because then we have to go somewhere else. It'll also mean that we might have one house that hasn't benefited from retrofit and yet others have, which again can affect others.

Alex: So the social housing sector is getting its act together to retrofit homes. But what about people who privately rent or owner occupiers? What help is there for them?

Jonathan: I'm Jonathan Atkinson. I'm one of the co-founders of Carbon Co-op. I've mostly focused on retrofit and energy efficiency, both in terms of helping people with advice and signposting, but also being involved in project managing some quite large construction schemes that we've run over the years as well.

Alex: Now Jonathan tells me about some of the problems we see when social housing tenants have retrofit, but private rented or owner occupiers don't.

Jonathan: So in some areas you'll have houses that were owned by the council, but through things like the right to buy and other kinds of mechanisms some of those properties are now owned by owner-occupiers.

Conversely, you'll also get areas where in past times housing associations have bought properties and some properties have remained in the hands of owner-occupiers. So you'll typically get in a city like Manchester and other cities this term pepper port. So in a given area, some properties will be owned by a housing provider and some won't be.

Britt: Okay. So in essence, what Jonathan seems to be saying is if you don't have the money saved up and you're not a social housing tenant, you miss out on insulating your home.

Alex: Precisely, and that's unfair he says.

Jonathan: There's lots of energy justice and kind of social justice reasons why just because people live in different tenures and in different kind of properties, one neighbour, their landlord is a social housing provider, the neighbour next to them, it's a private rental. Is there any kind of difference in the lived experience of those people, in their kind of wealth, in their privilege? Because they live in a similar street, they're likely to have similar kinds of experiences, and yet we are seeing neighbour one, they are eligible neighbour two, they aren't eligible and there's an unfairness to that.

And there are practical problems with this as well. In a pepper pot circumstance where you can only tell certain numbers of people on a street that they are eligible and others are not, what you start to get is suspicion of like, why am I eligible and other people aren't. You also lack that kind of friends and family effect where, oh, I've told my neighbour about this scheme and they said, well, we are not, we are not eligible, so we are not doing it. And I am eligible, but now I'm thinking, should I be doing it? So, so you get a lower uptake and there's a fantastic academic called Professor Brenda Boardman, who's done fantastic work in this area and looked at successive waves of engagement with an area where to start with only 50% of people are eligible for a scheme, and then 50% of the those reply to engagement activities, and then 50% of those sign up to works.

And suddenly you're down to very low numbers. And, and we know that there are certain critical scales for delivering retrofit in terms of organising the work and making it effective, critical scales.

Britt: What does that mean?

Alex: Now hold your horses, Brett. That's coming.

Jonathan: When fewer houses on a street sign up there are barriers then to the supply chain. What you'd want to do in an area is you'd want a builder or a contractor to go house by house, working through the street, potentially working on a number of houses at the same time, setting up a site at the end of the road, being able to store materials, aggregate labour have a fixed point of work.

You know, the people who are doing the work, they know where they come in every day, they're not moving around. All those things mean that you gain economies of scale really by doing lots of properties together. And it makes, it just makes more sense as well from, from a wider environmental point of view.

Alex: This goes back to the problem Ibrahim alludes to about there being a lack of a trusted contractor base in the area and Carbon Co-op are piloting what they call an area-based scheme, which looks like another really interesting project.

Jonathan: We are focusing a scheme within a certain area of Levenshulme in South Manchester, and what we're doing there is saying if you live in these streets, you might be eligible to take part in this. In this scheme, what we will be offering is a set of improvements to your property. Insulation to the walls, solid wall insulation, potentially PVs, potentially windows and air tightness works to improve the energy efficiency.

The first wave of this project is likely to be around 12 properties, but then we are looking to extend it much broader throughout that area,

Alex: And they're also gonna be helping people get the money to fund this.

Jonathan: When you are trying to find the finance, what that means is bringing different money from different sources. So a housing provider will have some money to improve houses in a certain area. The local authority may have some money, the government may have some money. Even people like the local energy board, the distribution network operator, they may have some money as well.

It does mean a bit of legwork and what you are trying to do is bring together funds from disparate sources so that you can offer a very simple kind of package at the front end.

Alex: And then there's that difficult question of finding builders to do the work.

Jonathan: On the other side, what we're doing is working with a team of architects to design the work and design a specification for the work. Then we're going out and we're talking to builders and contractors, and we're talking to one in particular who is a, a social enterprise, who works in the local area, who's able to both do the works and also train up local people as well.

Britt: So retrofit can create local jobs as well. That's amazing.

Alex: Yeah. Food for thought. I think we could create something like 467,000 jobs in retrofit. What? Including hundreds of thousands of trade oriented jobs like carpentry, plastering, joinery. Jonathan had some final thoughts on how other people, say in Oldham, might replicate Carbon Co-ops area based scheme.

Jonathan: The first thing to do is to assess an area to find out which is the right area, both technically in terms of the housing stock, but also in terms of the people.

You really need to involve people right from the off to make this a success. So it's talking to both local community organisations, the local authority, very importantly, but also local people as well, individuals and a lot of that has to be done by getting out there onto the streets, talking to people and understanding what their needs are and what their benefits are.

Britt: This is so often the thing that we just don't think enough about: the skill of engagement, the skill of, you know, the thing that Ibrahim knows how to do. For example, how to build trust, bring people together, like it's said, the soft skills, but maybe they're not really that soft.

Alex: Yeah, exactly. It's both a social and a technical challenge in a sense. But this seems like a really promising collaborative approach to tackling that.

And what Jonathan says about this being community oriented, grounded in the community, really chimes with something Aileen told us.

Aileen: If I was your audience now, I'd be thinking, yeah, but that's not scalable, is it? And the answer is, of course it is. Because it looks like top down is the way you scale, but for this activity, I would argue it's gotta be bottom up. It's got to be community by community. In fact, it's gotta be house by house and therefore there's something about moving to volume in the decarbonization of housing that starts with the granular expression of how is this working best for the house, for the householder and for the workers who work on it and for the people who are being trained on it. You get that right and it's repeatable from the bottom up and I think that the scale up that will result from that will become easier by there being some very good collaborative models being developed, rather than the simplistically top-down volume approach, which won't take account of some of the better innovation that's happening.

Alex: So it seems counterintuitive, but scaling up she says means doing it by person, by person, home by home, neighbourhood by neighbourhood.

Britt: That's really interesting. And she also speaks about, which so many people speak about, the power of a really good collaboration, the power of a really good

partnership between the people commissioning the work, the contractors, the people working in it, the homeowner, all of that as a sort...

Alex: of an ecosystem.

Britt: Yeah. Exactly. Yeah, that makes a lot of sense, doesn't it? I mean, I know you said it's counterintuitive, but in a way, , I actually think it is intuitive. Mm-hmm. .

Alex: Yeah. When you think about it for a bit. Yeah.

Britt: Yeah. When you think about it also from the scale of a human being, which is quite important, I think, in order to get these things right.

Have we come to the end?

Alex: Yes, we have come to the end, but I think some final thoughts from me are that retro retrofit seems a long way away for a lot of people who are really cold in expensive to run homes and there doesn't seem to be any help out there for them, but I think there are definitely - and there's no pun intended here - green shoots emerging in Oldham particularly and in Greater Manchester more broadly in the form of what we've seen really. Energy Cafes giving people these small positive steps to feeling empowered. Builders, like B4Box giving people advice on approaching things in stages. Social housing retrofit programs, getting money from the government. And area-based schemes catering to everyone, so no one's left behind.

So like you say, it's a massive challenge and it's gonna require a lot of collaboration from a lot of people and it will cost a lot, but I think the foundations are there. I don't know if you have any thoughts.

Britt: No, I agree with you, I'm leaving this episode feeling really quite hopeful and positive, so thank you so much, Alex. That was great.

Alex: No problem. Thank you very much for having me. It's been a pleasure.

Outro

Power in the City is produced by Carbon Coop and funded by the Electricity Northwest Powering Our Communities Fund, ICLEI Action Fund and UCL Grand Challenges.

This episode was written and produced by Alex King and hosted by me, Britt Jurgensen, local research and interviews Melissa Kelly Shore, sound design and post production by Barry Han.

You can find a list of all episode contributors and lots of additional information and links in the show notes.

Tune in for the next episode on the 23rdd of February, 2023. It's about work.