

NE LHG branch report

LHG NE held its first AGM in January 2023. On a freezing cold day, with very slippery streets and pavements, a new Executive Committee was established, and we agreed a set of activities for the coming year. These will include:

- Visiting Gateshead's District Heating Schemes which use energy from rivers, old mine workings, and hydrogen to heat homes and offices across the borough
- Developing a housing guide for new councillors
- Examining the housing proposals set out in the draft devolution deal for the 7 North East authorities

Following the AGM, 20 people congregated to hear from Roberta Blackman Woods speak about what is needed in a transformative housing agenda for the North East. There was a lively discussion, covering

- the use of MMC (Modern Methods of Construction) and the difficulty caused by high costs for delivery and installation in the North
- the high cost of land, usually brownfield sites, because of sunken railways, gas canisters, old mine workings, and other industrial uses
- the need to reskill local authority departments e.g. enforcement, planning, architecture departments
- the importance of housing policy being seen as part of Economic, Industrial and Social policies, and regeneration of town and city centres as well as housing areas
- research being carried out between a number of our universities – involving engineering, design, electronics, planning and architecture departments, and others – notably to develop carbon-free building materials, and the technology needed for supportive living
- the need for diversification of housing providers, and reform of the sector to keep the best and transform the others

NE LHG Executive Committee for 2023-2024:

Chair: Sheila Spencer (North Tyneside CLP)

Vice-Chair: Cllr John Adams (Gateshead CLP)

Secretary: Lewis Young (Stockton North CLP)

Executive members: Jane Streather (Newcastle Central CLP)

David Smith (Sunderland Central CLP)

Ed Derrick (Newcastle Central CLP)