



Historic England

Building and Landscape Conservation

Reducing Energy Use in Traditional Dwellings

Prepared for Historic England by Chris Newman,
Parity Projects Ltd

Discovery, Innovation and Science in the Historic Environment



Reducing Energy Use in Traditional Dwellings

Analysis of Four Solid Wall Houses in Reading

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ISSN 2059-4453 (Online)

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Front cover: A terraced house in Reading, Berkshire.

SUMMARY

This report describes an in-depth ‘whole building’ analysis of energy use carried out in four traditionally built houses in Reading, Berks. The results were used to devise strategies to reduce energy use and carbon emissions for each household. These were then assessed in terms of their effectiveness and cost-efficiency. An important aim of the project was to understand better the costs and benefits of solid wall insulation in relation to other energy and carbon saving measures. The project demonstrates the benefits of a ‘whole building’ approach, and shows how the economics of specific energy and carbon-saving improvements vary from one household to another.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Reading Borough Council for its support in producing this report.

ARCHIVE LOCATION

Swindon

DATE OF REPORT

2017

CONTACT DETAILS

conservation@HistoricEngland.org.uk

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1 INTRODUCTION

In late 2013/early 2014, Reading Borough Council and English Heritage jointly funded Parity Projects to analyse energy-saving measures in four solid-walled properties in Reading. The aim was to investigate the relative merits of different wall insulation options, and how they compare with other measures in terms of effectiveness and cost efficiency. For each property a number of solid wall insulation thicknesses were evaluated for both internal, external and hybrid solutions. (The hybrid solution was for external wall insulation (EWI) on the rear of the properties and internal wall insulation (IWI) on the front).

Parity Projects used its proprietary Home Energy Masterplan tool to evaluate between 62 and 89 measures for each property. These included heating, hot water, fabric, lights and appliances along with the replacement of heating and hot water systems and changes in usage. The analysis was calibrated to the actual energy bills of the owners so that the results could inform them about the costs and benefits of going ahead with energy saving measures. Parity Projects produced the estimated prices based on its pricing database.

1.1 Parity Home Energy Masterplan

The modelling is based on BREDEM, with additional modules and functionality to allow heating, hot water, lighting and appliances to be included as they are actually used. It can therefore have different heating regimes applied, and can also be calibrated to actual bills when they are available. The software allows for the evaluation of a large range of measures, both individually and as packages, and has a large costing database so that many of the costs can be calculated (e.g. based on units, square meterage and works).

1.2 Packages of Measures

As the net effect of the combination of individual measures is often different to the sum of measures installed in combination, six packages of measures were evaluated for each house. In order to see what levels of improvement could be achieved without upgrading the walls, the first three packages excluded wall insulation.

‘Low Cost’

Relatively cheap measures that are easy to install e.g. chimney balloons. This package often has DIY and behavioural measures.

‘Medium Cost’

Typically measures that are less than £2,000 each and having paybacks up to 15 years when evaluated individually

‘Higher Cost and/or Longer Payback’

Measures that had a payback less than 25 years but cost not considered. This package is essentially the best that could be achieved without wall insulation.

‘plus Internal Wall Insulation’

Measures from the 'Higher Cost...' package plus internal wall insulation bringing the walls up to at least current Building Regulations

‘plus Internal and External Wall Insulation’

As above but with external on the rear elevation and internal on the front.

‘plus External Wall Insulation’

As above but with external on all elevations.

1.3 High Level Conclusions

The table below shows the % CO₂ savings for the maximum cost package without wall insulation, and then the packages with wall insulation. As you can see, the savings without wall insulation, although laudable, appear to be limited to below 40%, whilst the introduction of wall insulation options brings the savings up to around 60% across all the properties.

	House 1	House 2	House 3	House 4
Low cost	25%	10%	16%	6%
Medium cost	34%	36%	28%	22%
Higher cost...package	38%	37%	38%	34%
plus... Wall Insulation packages	57%	66%	58%	61%

1.4 Further Analysis

English Heritage decided to fund some further research into the impact of different heating regimes. The Parity Home Energy Masterplan tool allows for different heating regimes to be evaluated in the energy model built for a dwelling, so we have re-run the analysis for each house. This is the analysis that is covered in detail in the remainder of this paper.

2 HEATING REGIMES

Three different heating regimes have been applied to the houses, outlined below. They have been set to cover the average low to average high typical usage rather than the extremes. The heating profiles have been designed based on our observations of hundreds of households energy use patterns during our Home Energy Masterplan surveys.

2.1 Low Energy Use

This profile is designed to reflect a household that is out most of the day and is also happy to keep their house at a relatively low temperature.

Thermostat setting: 17°C																							
Weekday Heating Programme Times																							
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Weekend Heating Programme Times																							
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23

2.2 Medium Energy Use

This profile is designed to reflect a household that is out most of the day but keeps their house at a slightly higher temperature.

Thermostat setting: 19°C																							
Weekday Heating Programme Times																							
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Weekend Heating Programme Times																							
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23

2.3 High Energy Use

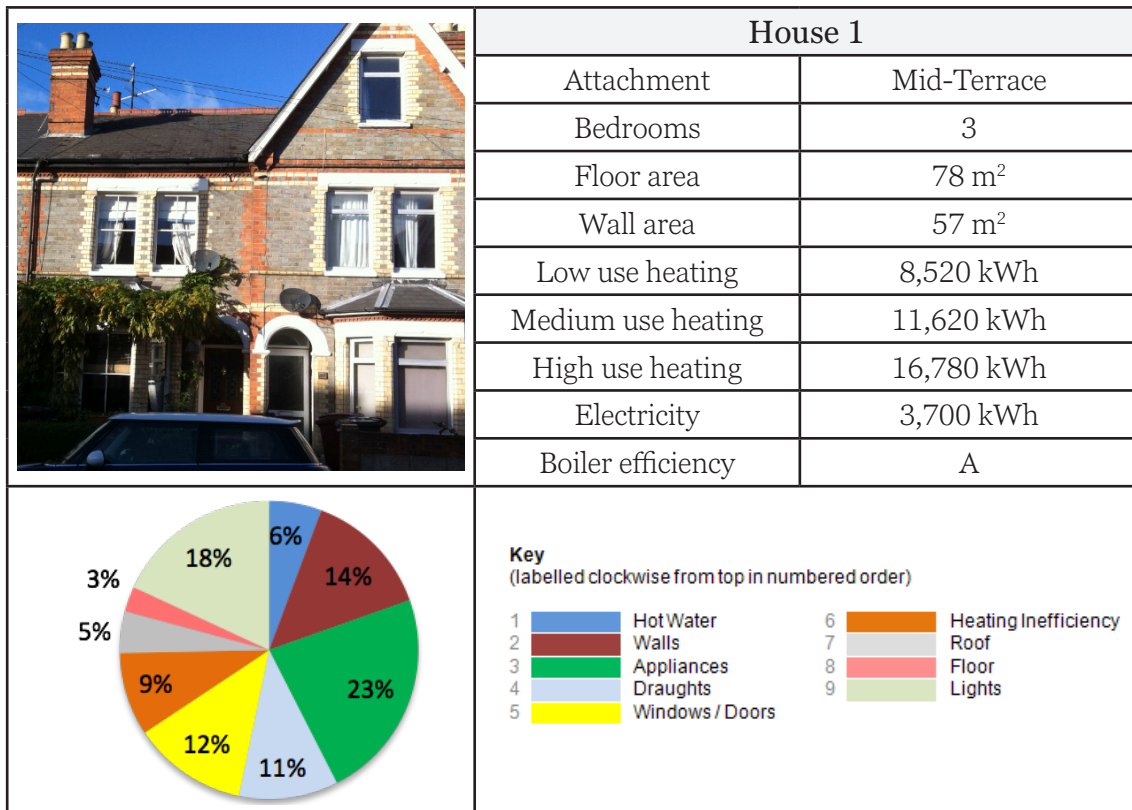
This profile is designed to reflect a household that is in most of the day and desires or requires a higher heating temperature.

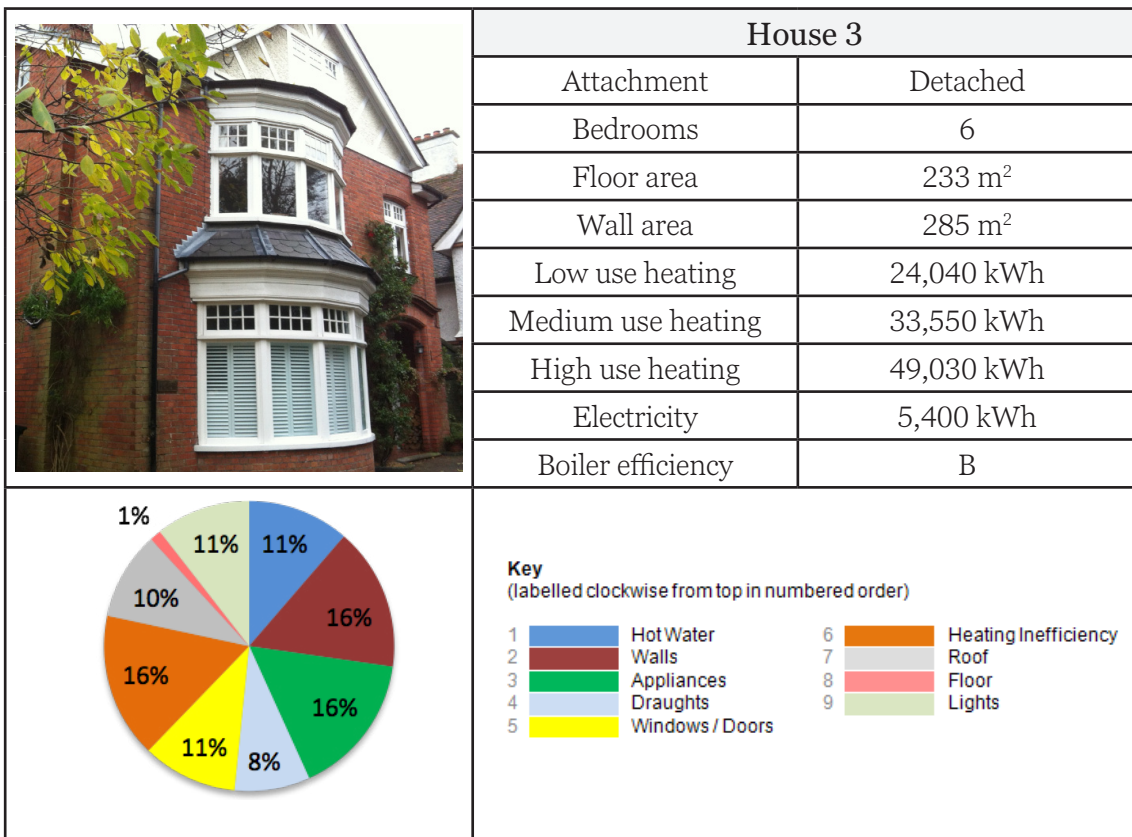
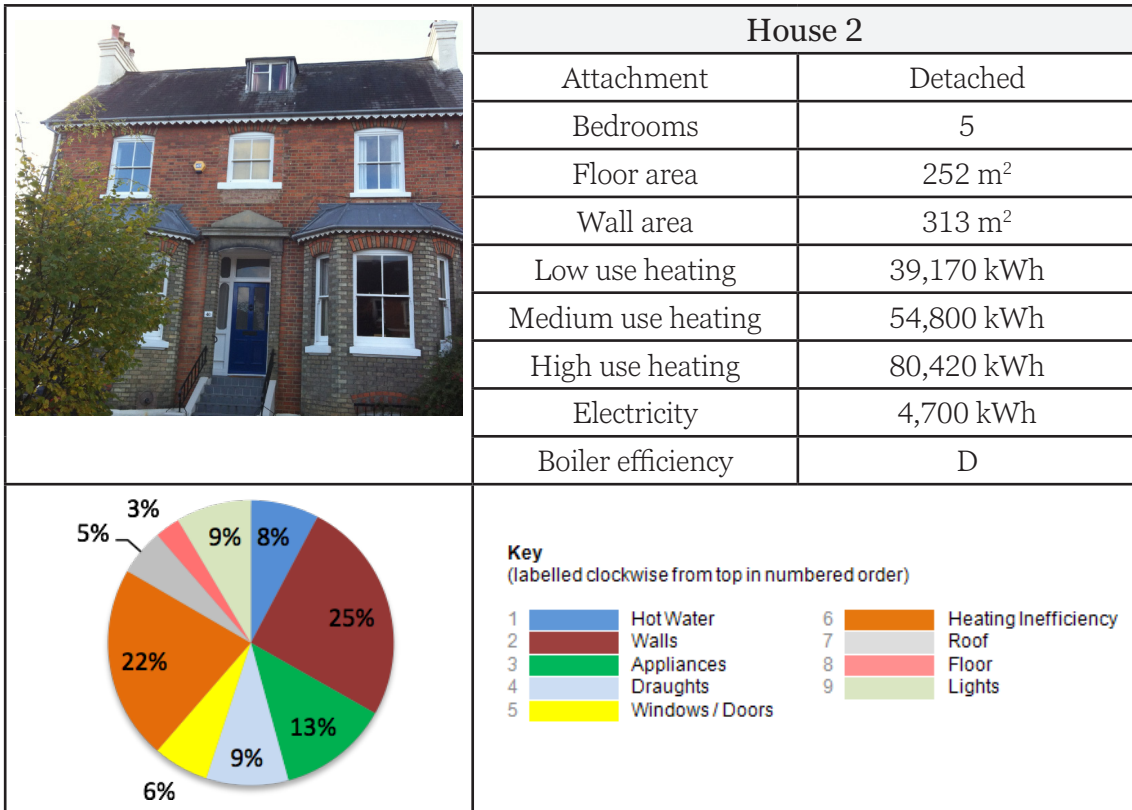
Thermostat setting: 21°C																							
Weekday Heating Programme Times																							
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Weekend Heating Programme Times																							
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23

3 THE HOUSES

The following tables give a high level summary of the four houses. Since these studies relied on the willingness of homeowners to participate in the project, it was not possible to perform analysis on all types of solid wall properties. However, there was some variety. One house is part of a terrace, one is semi-detached, and two are detached. They have between three to six bedrooms. All the houses are in Reading, and have gas-fired central heating and hot water systems. Since central heating with gas is cheaper than most other heating systems, the cost savings achieved by using energy saving measures will not be as high as in houses where more expensive heating systems are used. In all cases, the energy consumption in 'Low Use' for annual heating is predicted to be around 50% of the 'High Use' scenario. This indicates that significant savings can be made with either behavioral measures or the addition of improved heating controls.

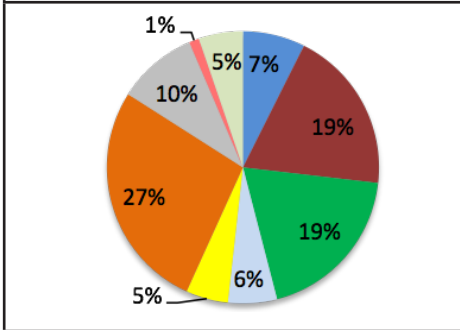
The orange 'heating inefficiency' segments in the pie charts on the following pages require some explanation. Most heating systems are not able to convert all the energy in the fuel source into useful heat. Direct electric heating is an exception: i.e., for every 1 kWh you put in, you get 1 kWh of heat out. Gas boilers range in their efficiency from below 65% to over 90%. This means that if a household uses 30,000 kWh of gas, somewhere between 16,000 kWh to 27,000 kWh is actually turned into useful heat, depending on the boiler efficiency. The orange section of the charts reflects the difference between the kWh in the gas coming in and the useful heat produced by the boiler.







House 3	
Attachment	Semi-detached
Bedrooms	4
Floor area	100 m ²
Wall area	154 m ²
Low use heating	21,300 kWh
Medium use heating	30,570 kWh
High use heating	46,700 kWh
Electricity	3240 kWh
Boiler efficiency	D



Key
(labelled clockwise from top in numbered order)

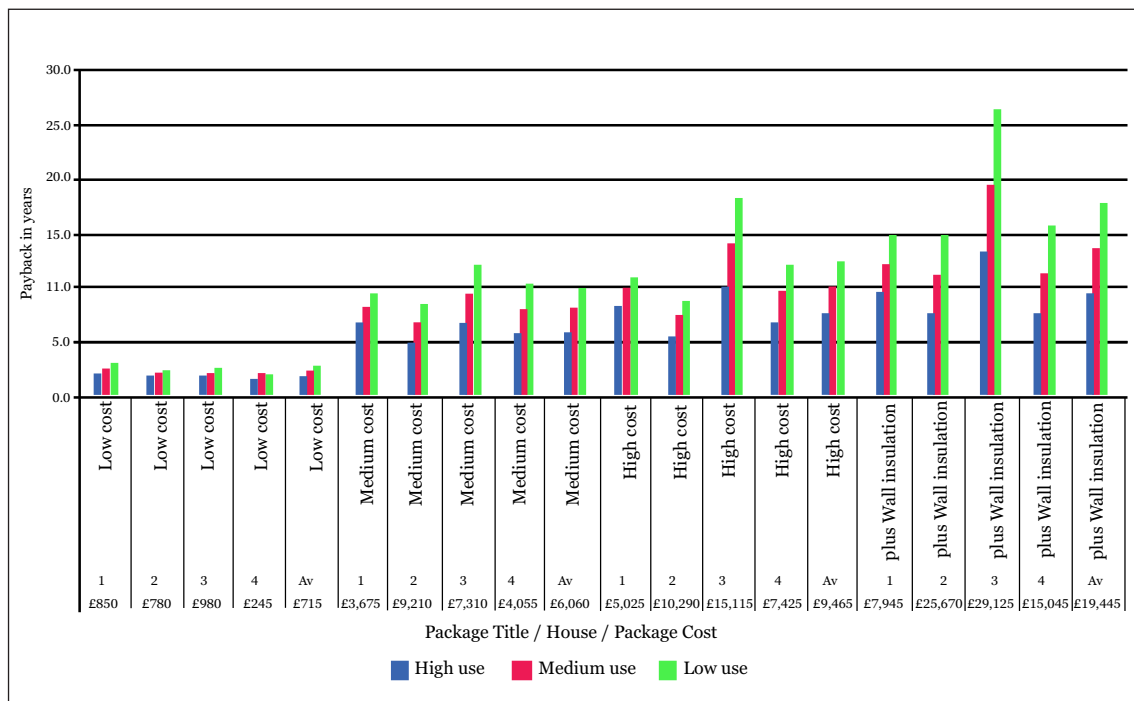
1	Hot Water	6	Heating Inefficiency
2	Walls	7	Roof
3	Appliances	8	Floor
4	Draughts	9	Lights
5	Windows / Doors		

4 PACKAGES OF MEASURES AND WALL MEASURES

The first graph below shows the economic paybacks for each of the packages for each house. Whilst we have analysed many options, to limit the amount of data overload to the reader we have selected the hybrid solid wall insulation package for this comparison. As might be expected, the payback periods on energy saving measures are longer where the heating use has been more frugal; there is less to be saved for the same capital outlay.

The key things shown in this graph include:

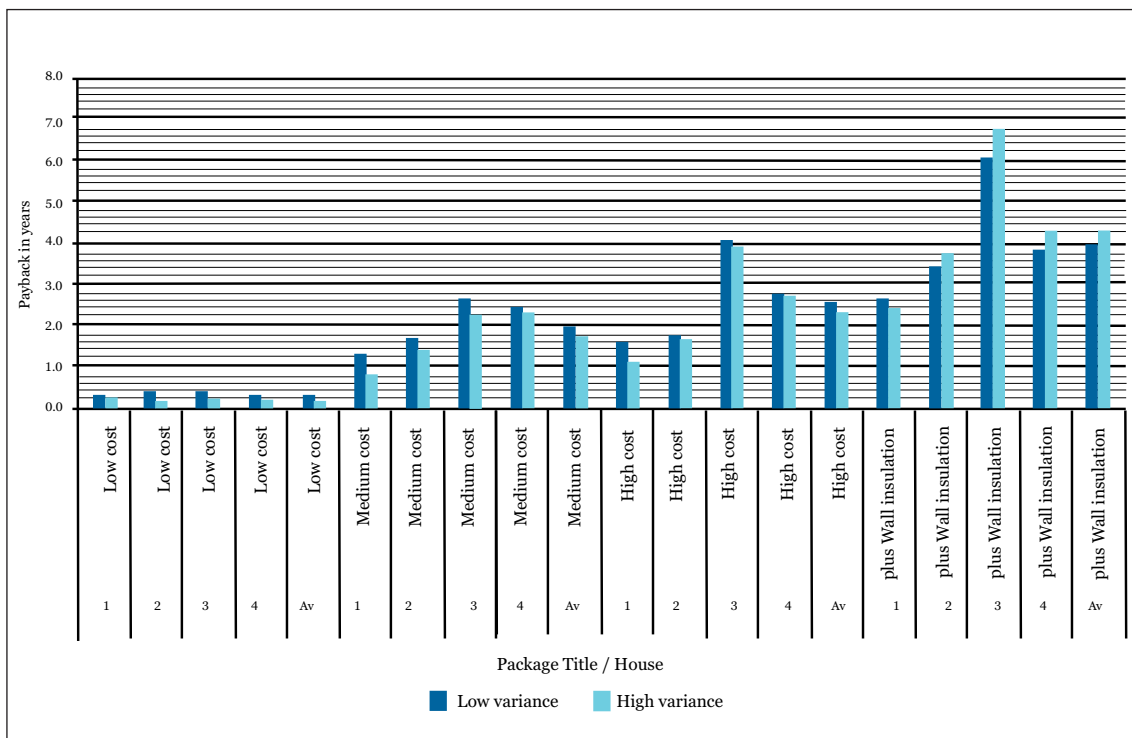
- The payback periods are significantly longer for the higher cost packages. It should be noted that the absolute savings will also be much higher for the higher cost packages, i.e. the occupiers would be expected to save more; the longer payback periods are a consequence of investing more capital to make those higher savings.
- The variance in savings increases markedly for higher cost packages, especially those including wall insulation options. This is shown and discussed further with the next graph.
- The key learning point is that it becomes increasingly important to understand the impact of client behaviour and lifestyle when determining the cost effectiveness of higher cost and larger intervention measures.



The next graph shows the variance in expected paybacks away from medium use scenario for the high and low scenarios. The idea is to show how much the occupiers' energy use patterns effect the paybacks.

Example: High Cost Package for house 3. The chart shows that someone living in that house with an energy profile similar to the high use profile should expect the package of measures to take around 4 years less time to pay back the capital invested compared to someone with a medium use energy profile. If they were more like the low use profile then they should expect the payback to be around 4 years longer than someone with a medium use energy profile.

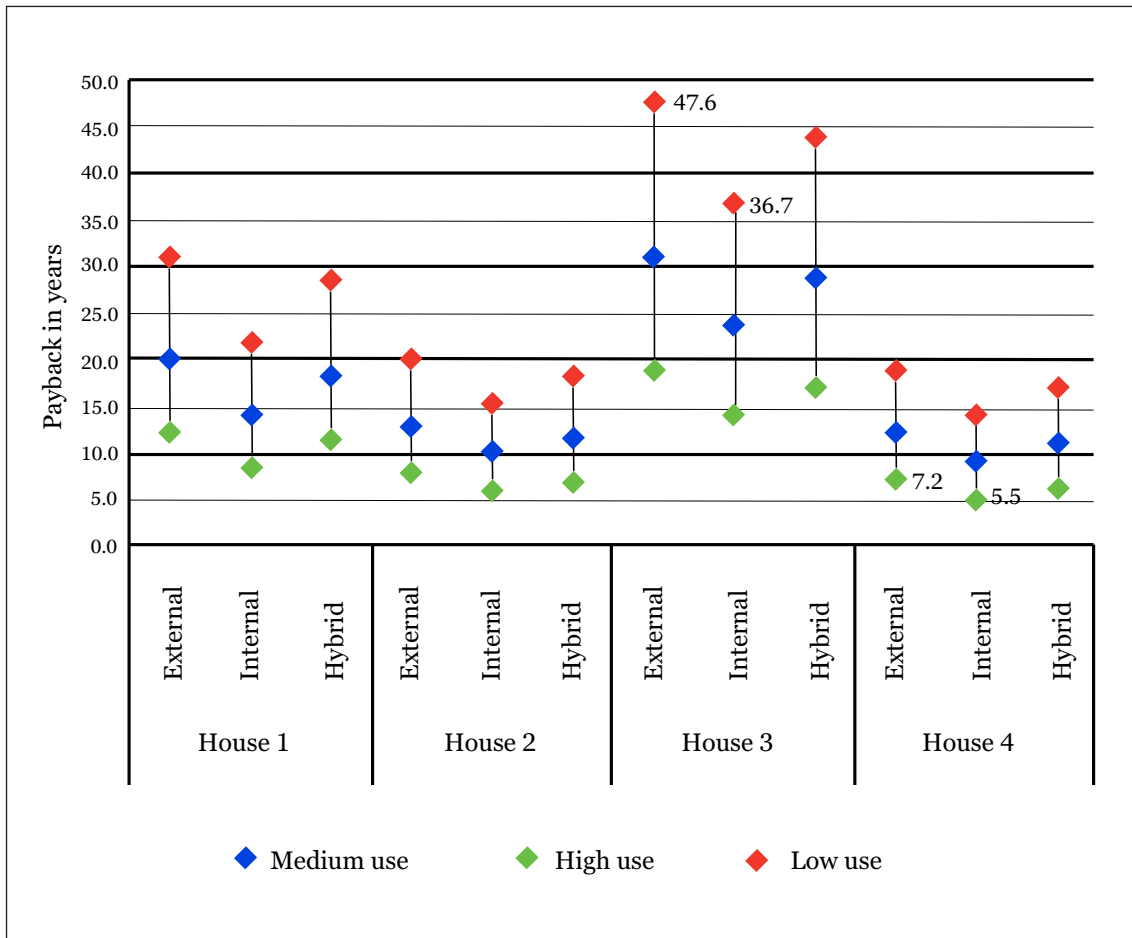
As can be seen, the variance is between 2.2 and 6.6 years across the 4 houses for packages, including wall insulation, with an average around 4 years variance. These will be significantly greater for more extreme high and low scenarios: e.g., people in fuel poverty.



The graph shows two things of significance:

- the expected paybacks of packages of measures cannot be accurately predicted without knowing the energy use profile of the occupiers. This lack of accuracy increases for more extensive packages of works.
- the energy use profile has a significant effect on the expected payback of measures. This would be even more extreme for very high and very low energy users. It is therefore imperative to understand the energy user profile when determining which measures are appropriate for a household.

If we now look more closely at the different wall insulation options, it can be seen that the range of economic paybacks is largest for the external wall option, second largest for the hybrid and smallest for the internal. This is a result of the relative decreasing costs for a level of performance that is virtually the same. It does, however, highlight that you can be more confident of the payback that a wall insulation measure will actually achieve if the cost is reduced; e.g. through concurrent working, doing some works as DIY, maturing market offerings and self-financed work.



The paybacks are also lowest for House 2, which is detached, and House 4 which is semi-detached, as both have a large area of solid external wall. The lower paybacks will also be partly due to the relatively inefficient boiler in this house. House 3 is also detached, but has a much more efficient boiler. Boiler efficiency is, therefore, a major factor in determining wall insulation paybacks.

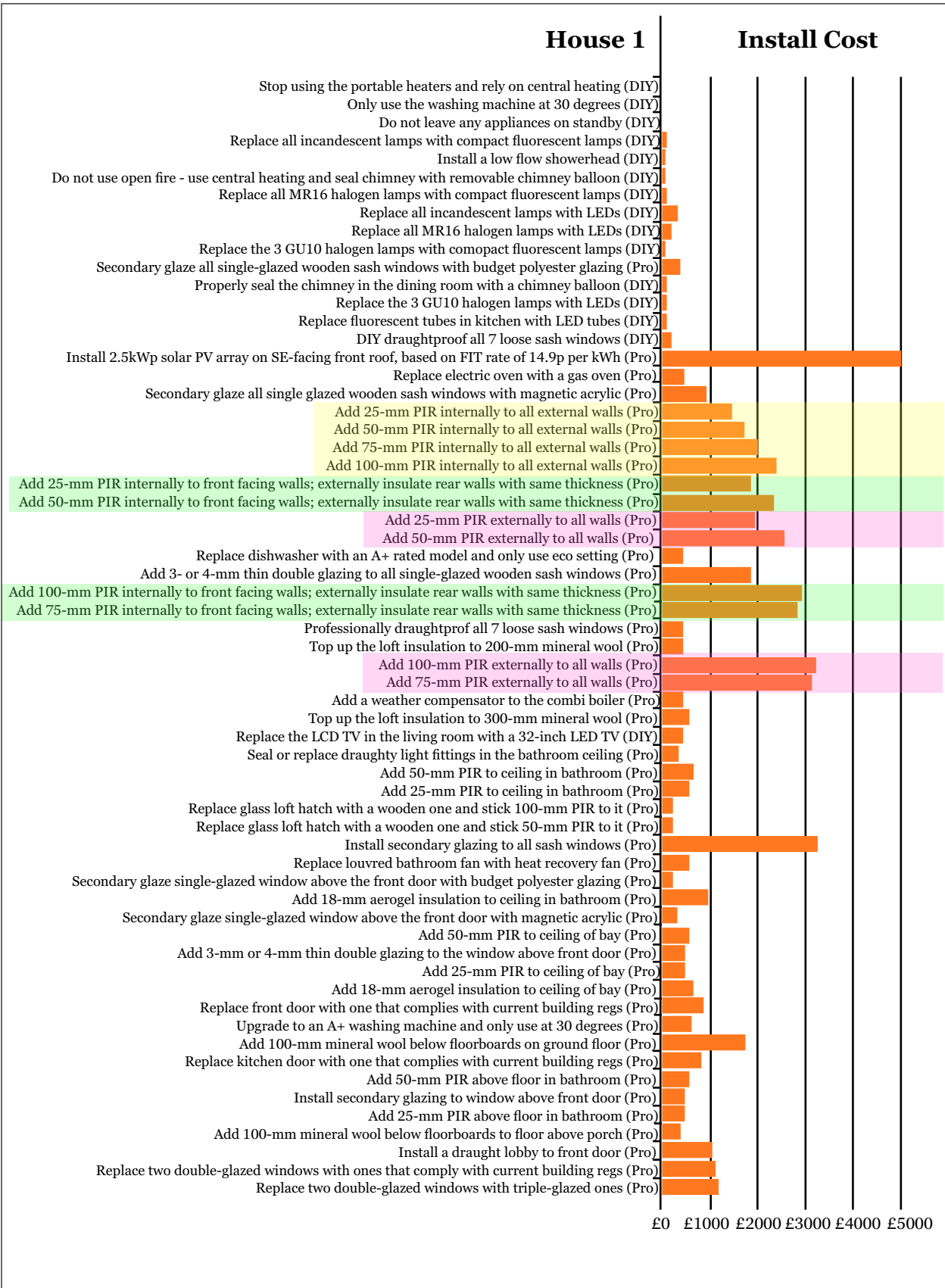
The range for external wall insulation is from around 7 to 45 years, and for internal insulation, from 5 to 37 years.

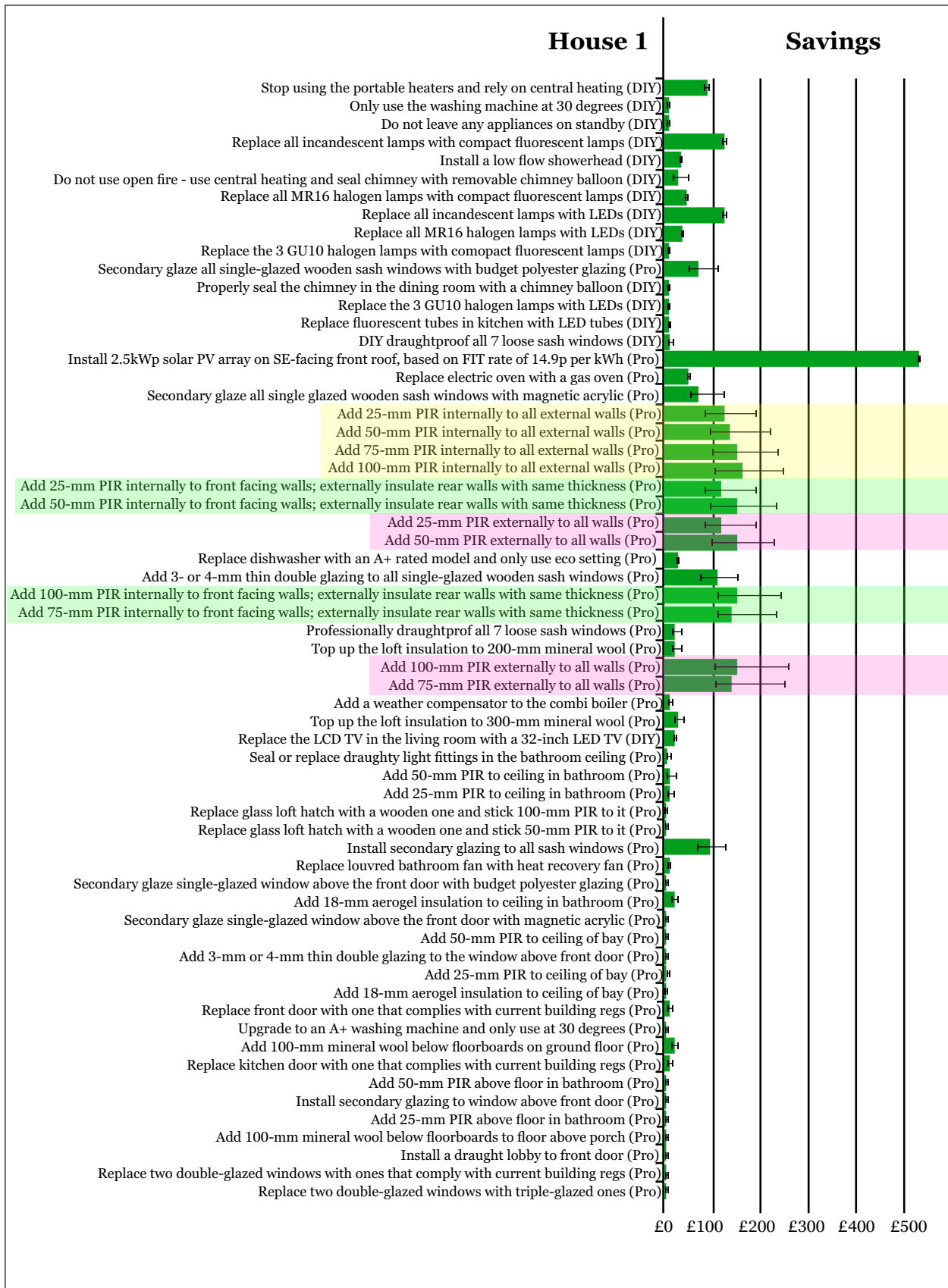
5 COMPARISONS OF ALL APPLICABLE MEASURES

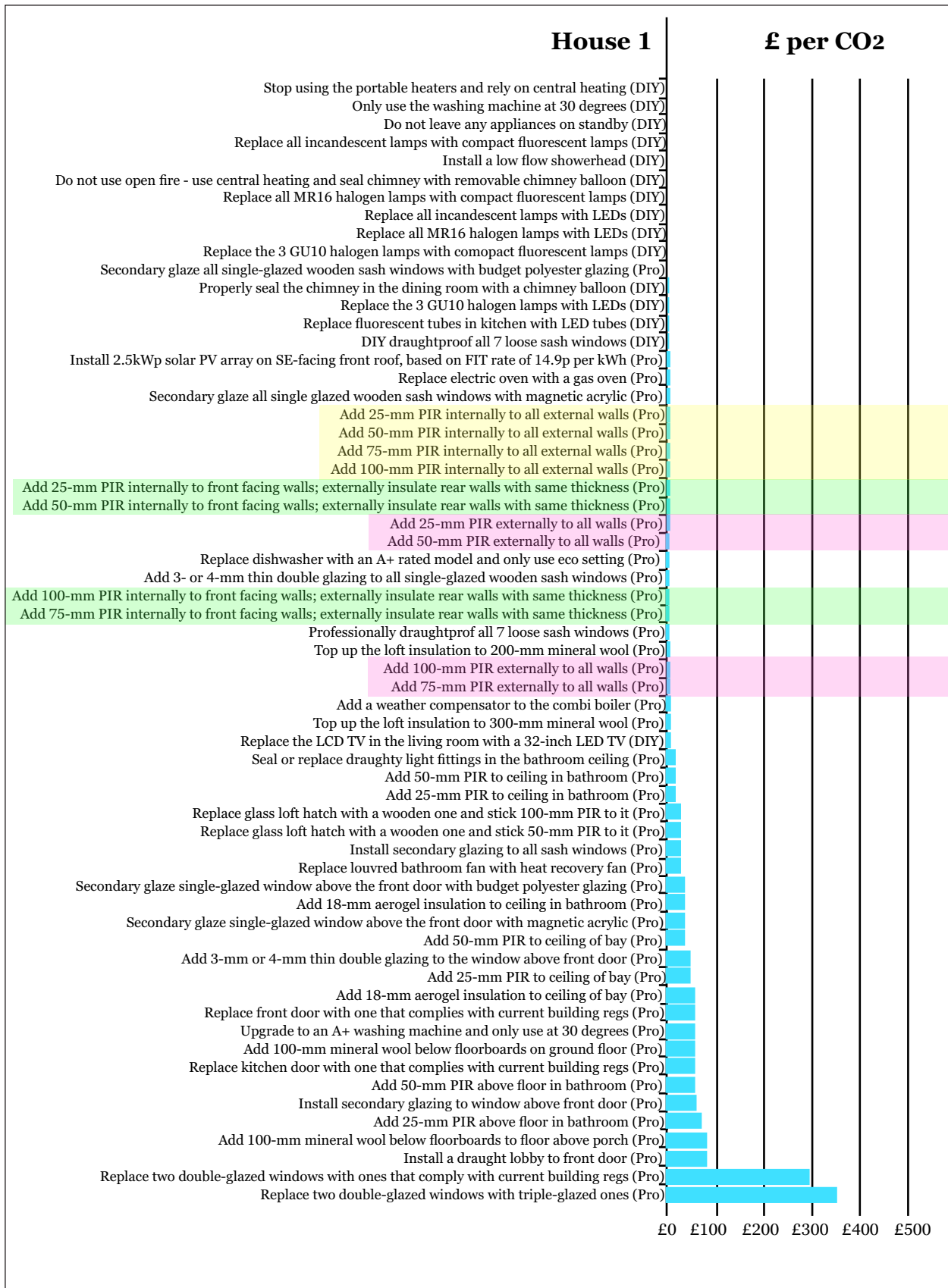
The following pages show the detail for all the measures evaluated in each house. We have highlighted the internal wall insulation measures in yellow, the hybrid wall measures in green, and the external wall measures in pink.

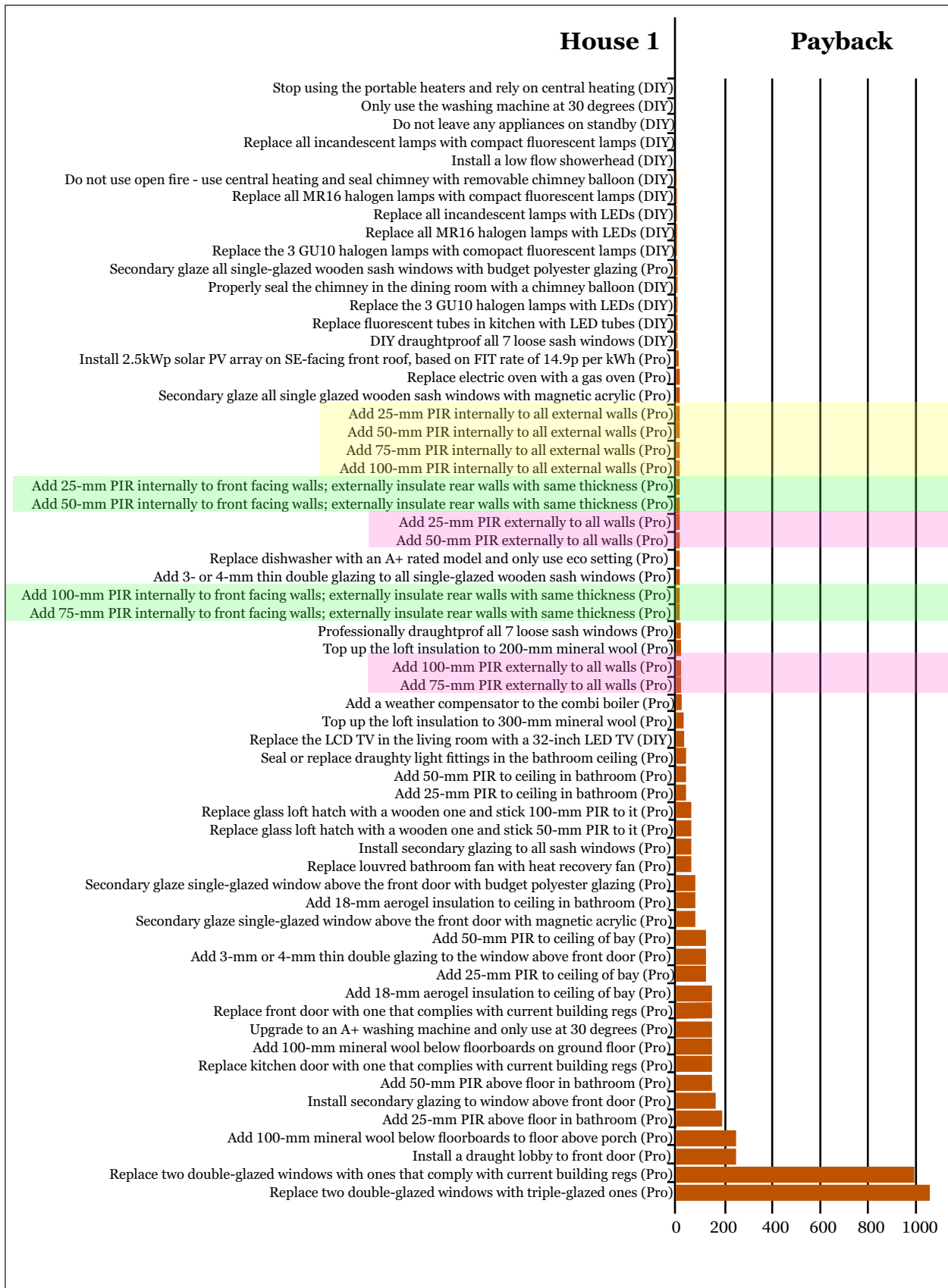
The measures have been ranked by increasing average payback across the three heating scenarios. Both the payback and £ per CO₂ figures are averages across the scenarios. The error bars on the annual savings figures show the range found across the different heating regimes: if you are heating your house more, you can expect to save more by insulating. It is of note that the error bars are greater for wall measures than non-wall measures. This means that the paybacks for wall insulation will be the hardest measures to determine accurately.

All the wall measures rank relatively high in terms of cost effectiveness, especially when DIY measures are excluded. It should be noted that this ranking is for the average and the error bars can be used to indicate where they may rank for low and high energy users. It should be noted that although the wall measures rank relatively high compared to the other measures, they may still not be cost effective in their own right.



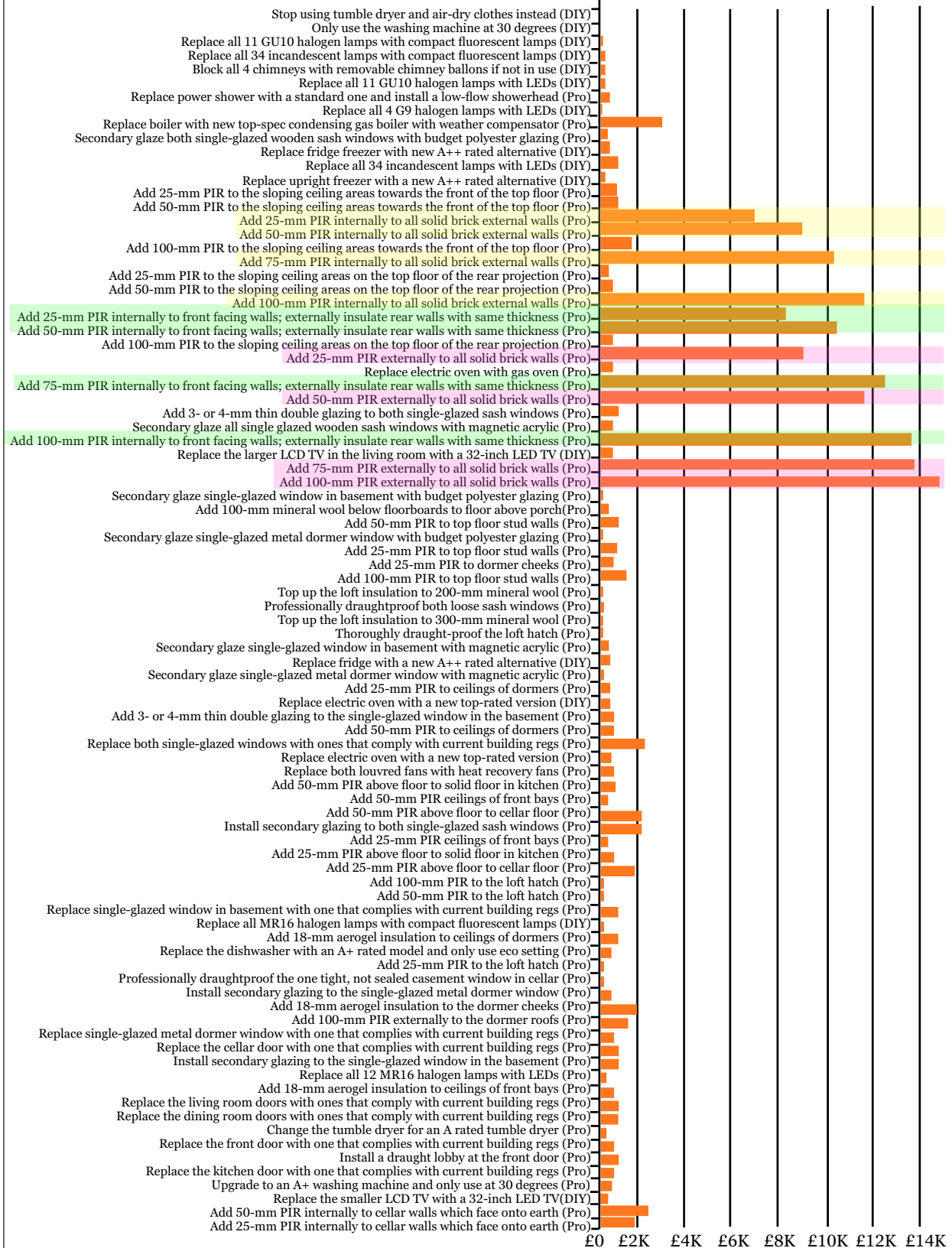






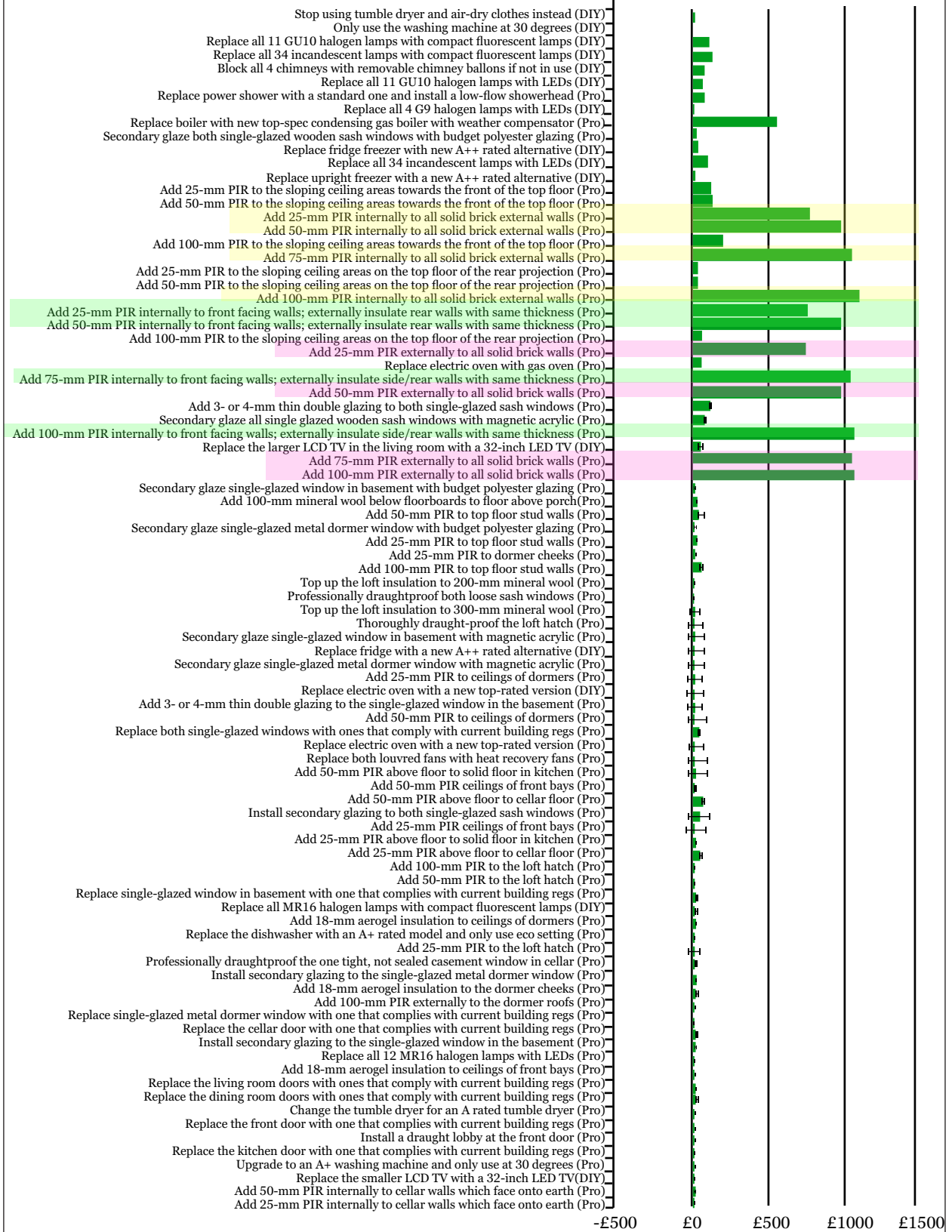
House 2

Install Cost



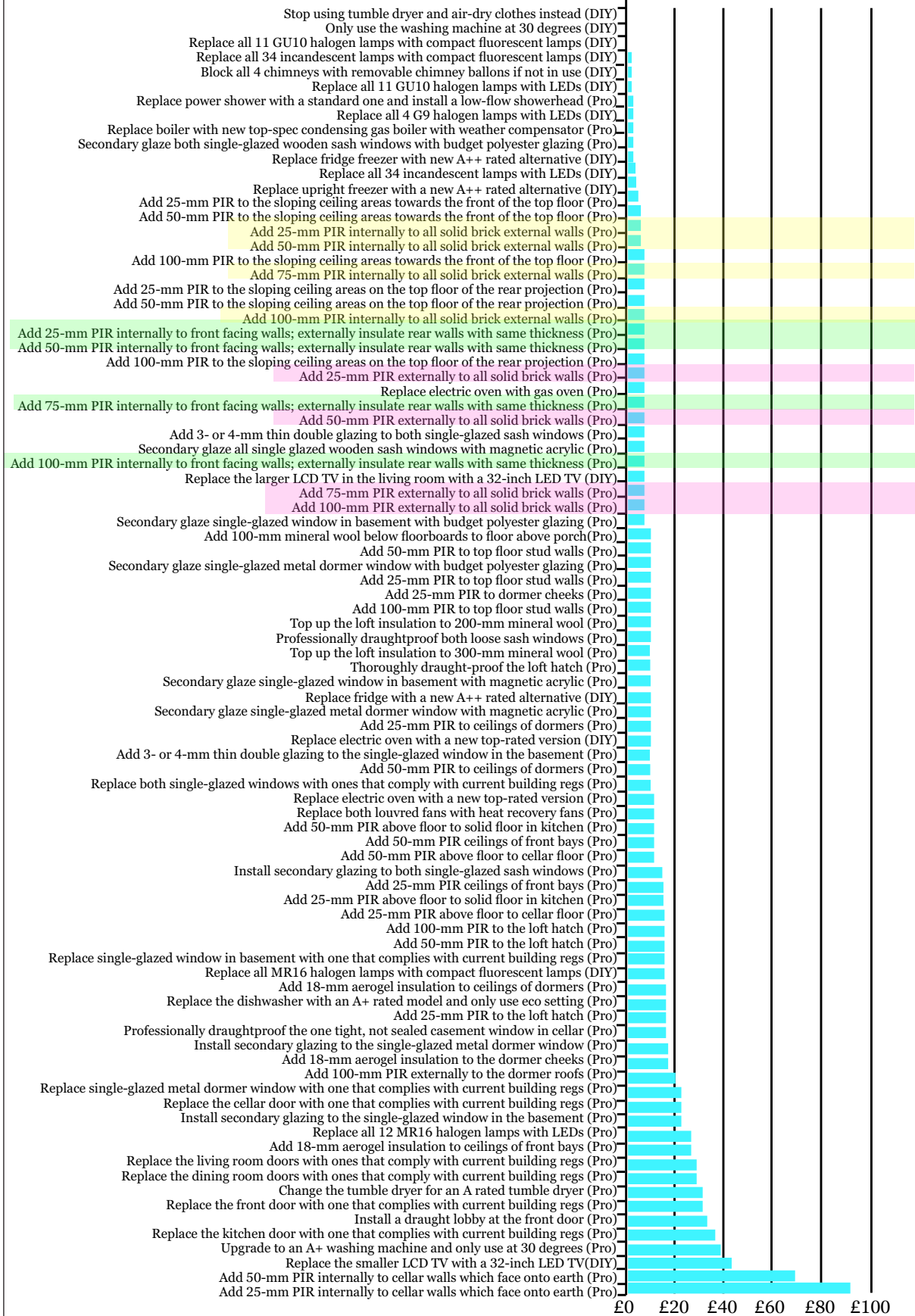
House 2

Savings



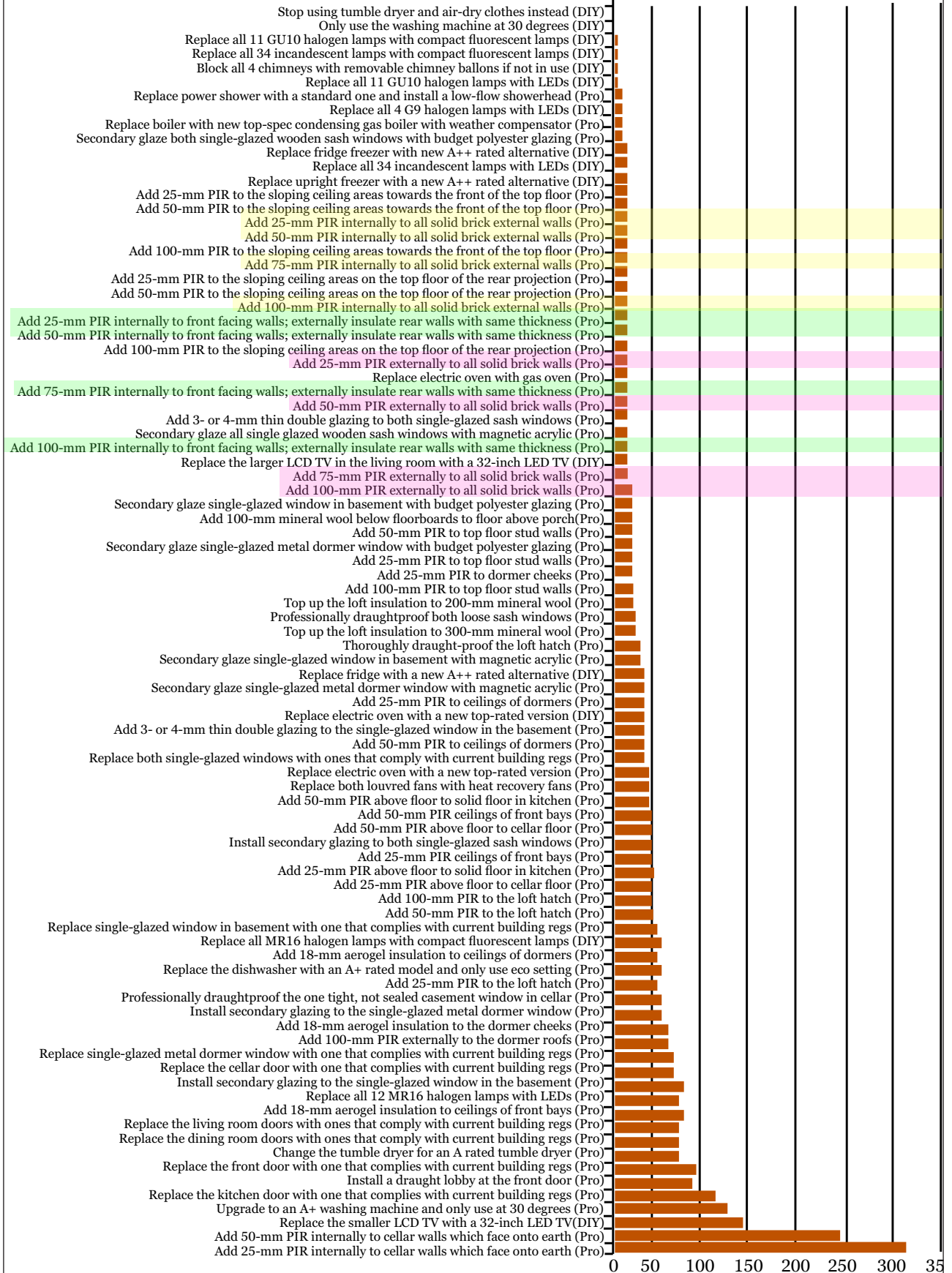
House 2

£ per CO2



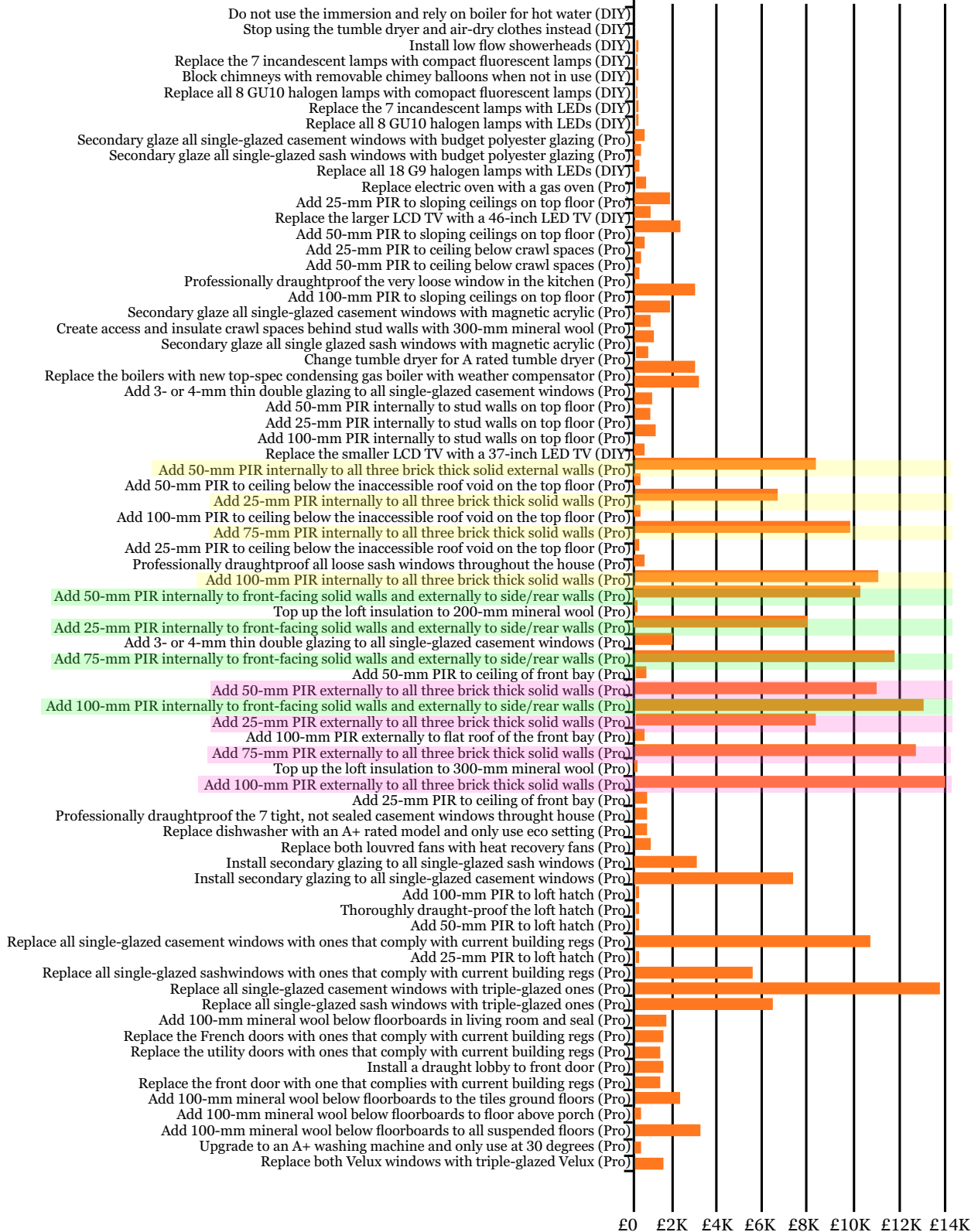
House 2

Payback



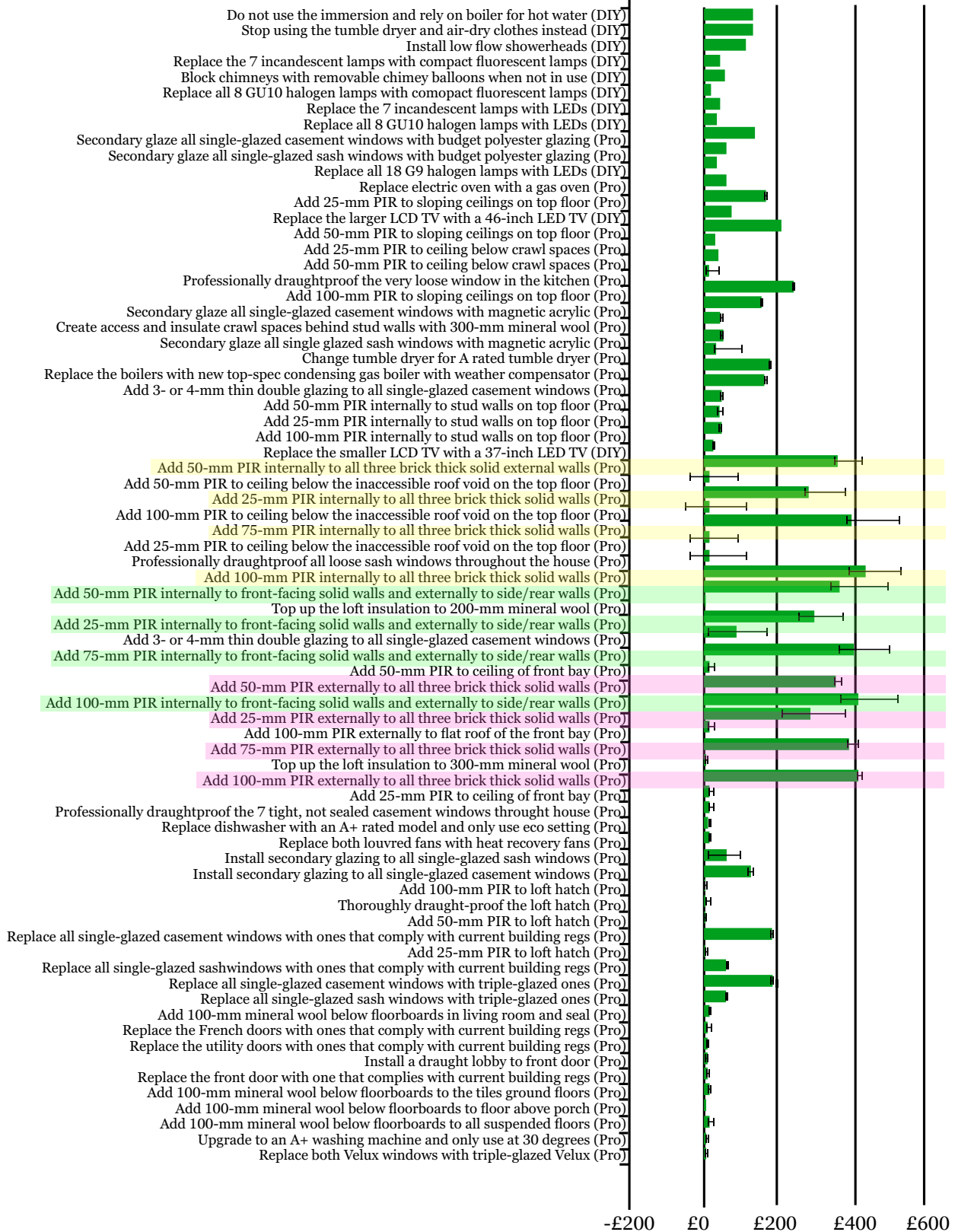
House 3

Install Cost



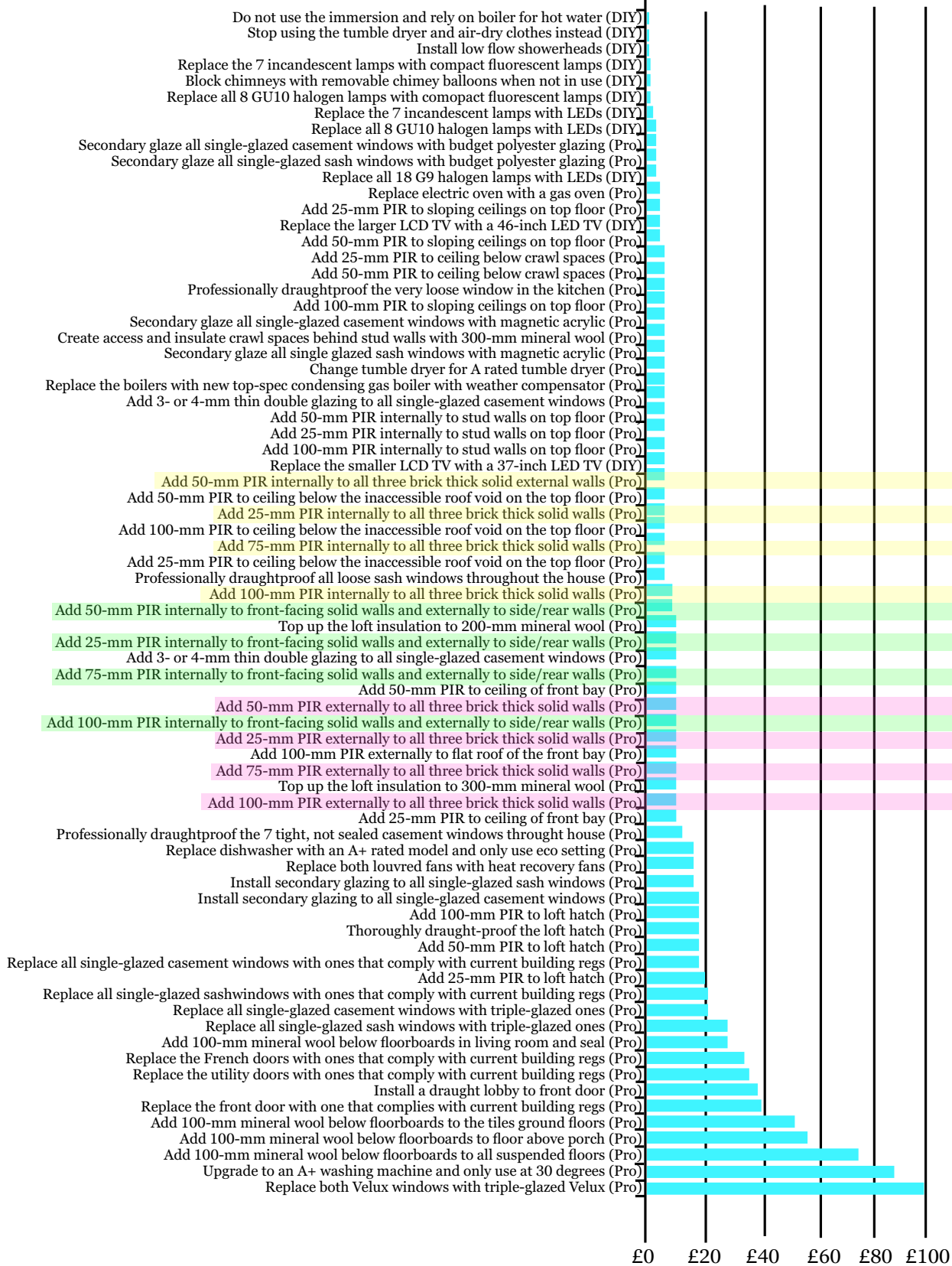
House 3

Savings



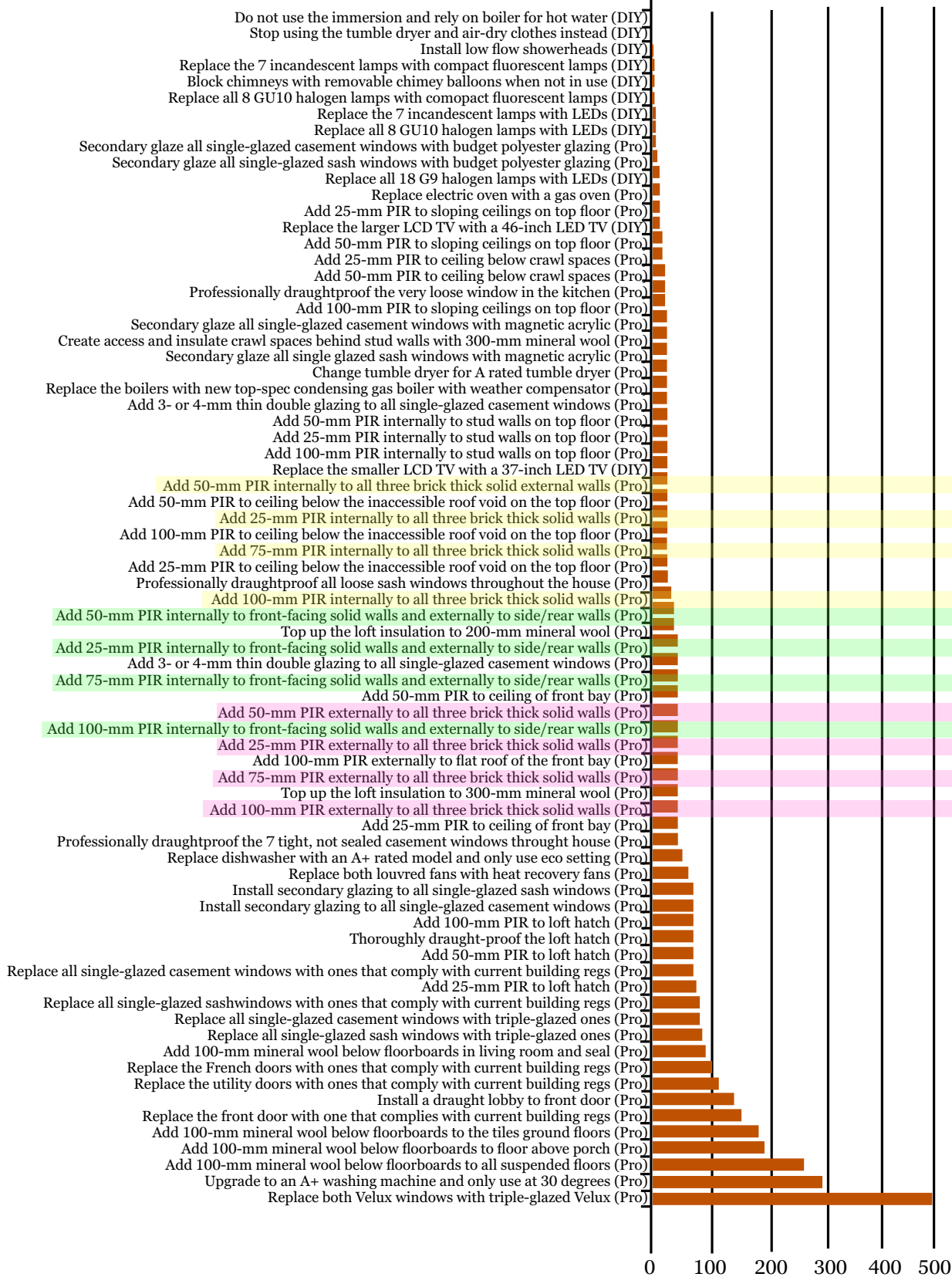
House 3

£ per CO2



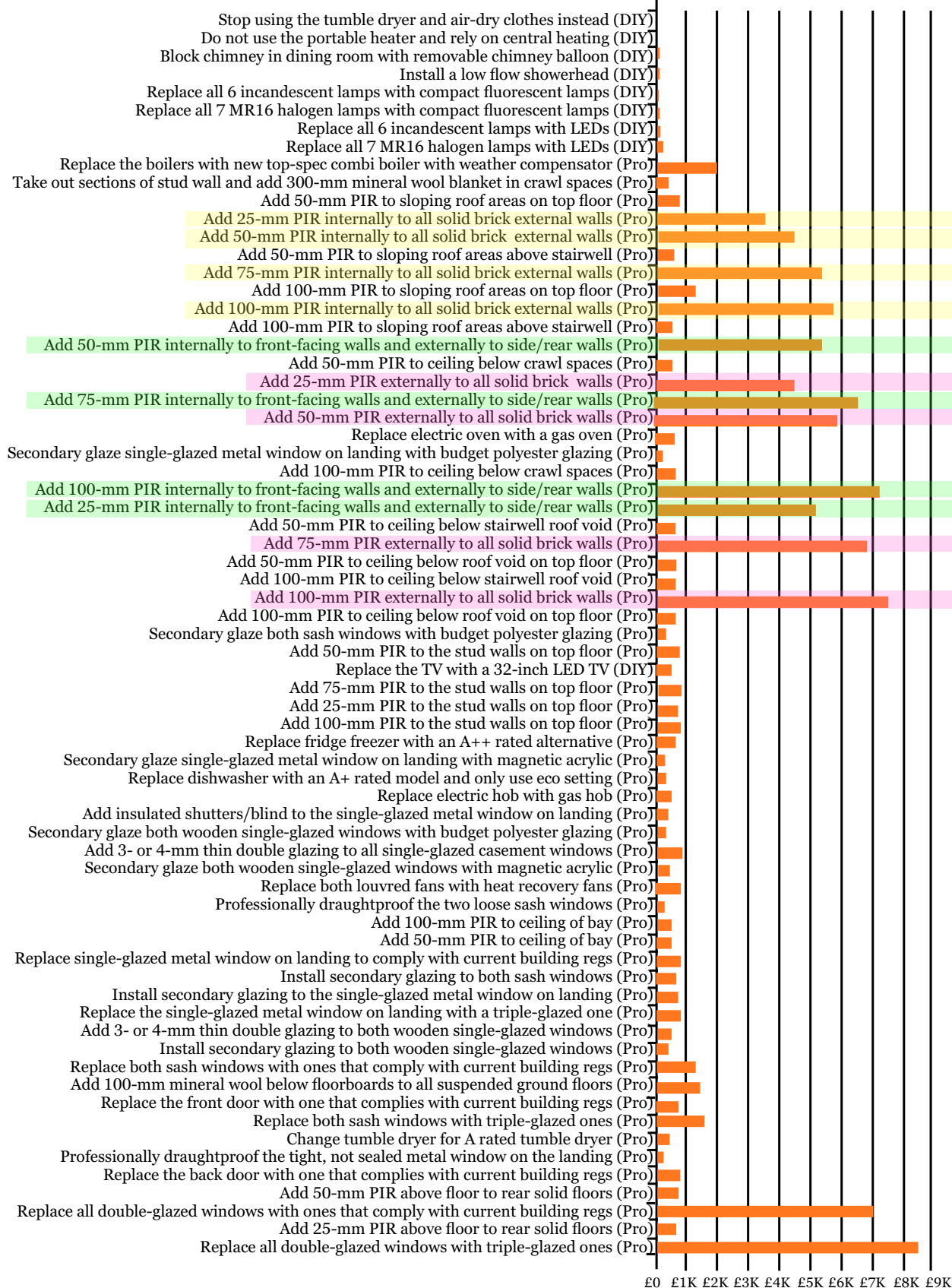
House 3

Payback



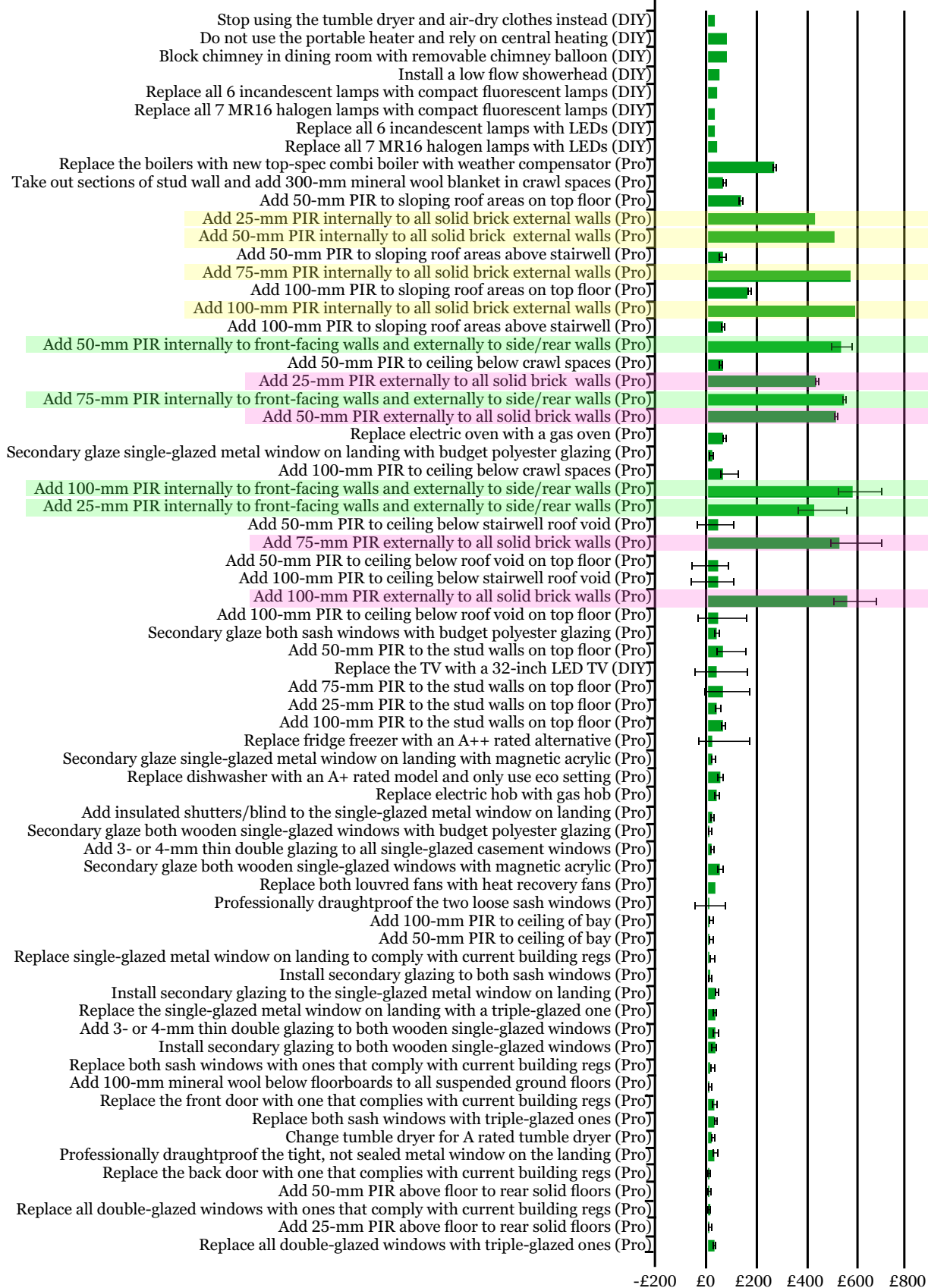
House 4

Install Cost



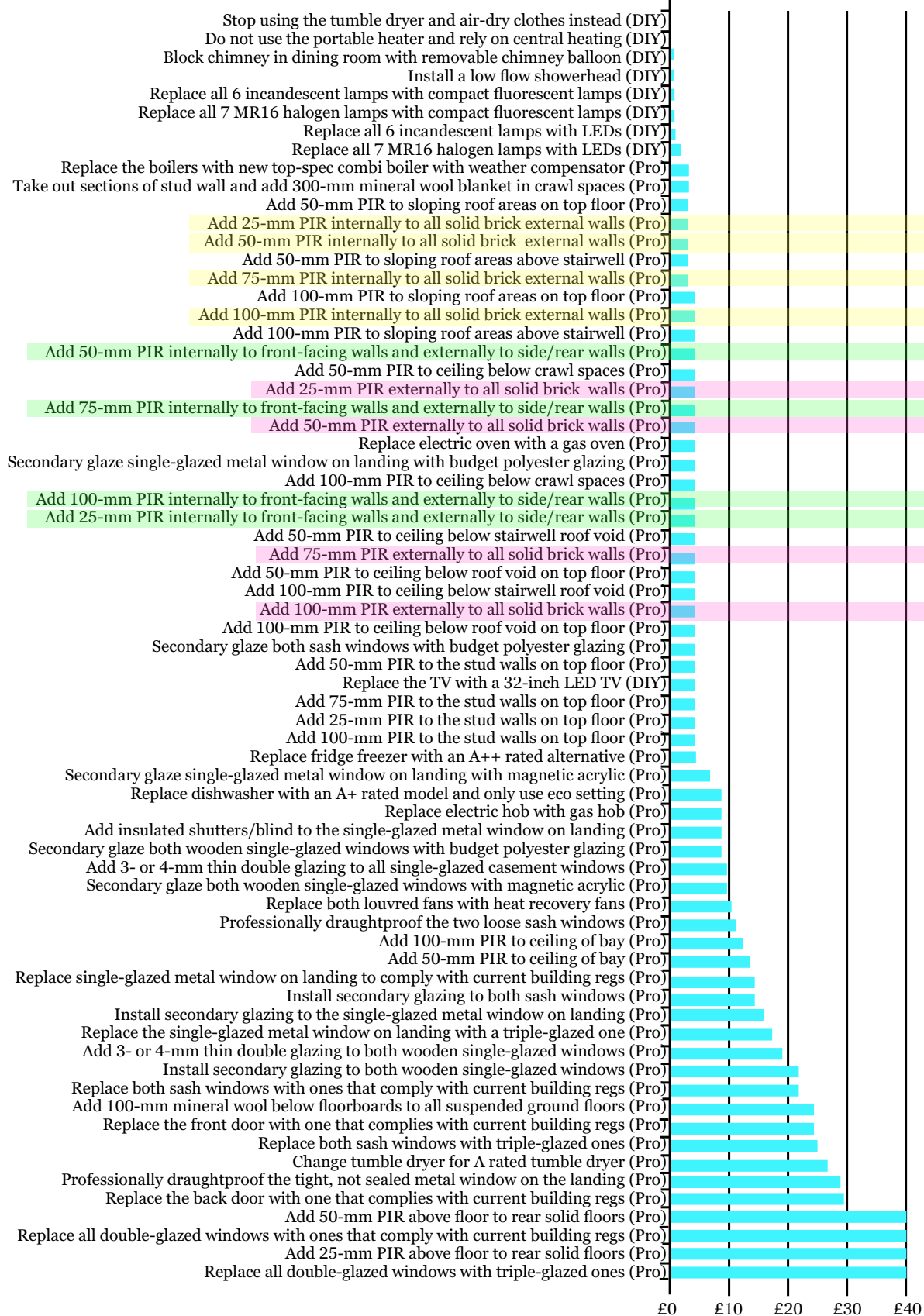
House 4

Savings



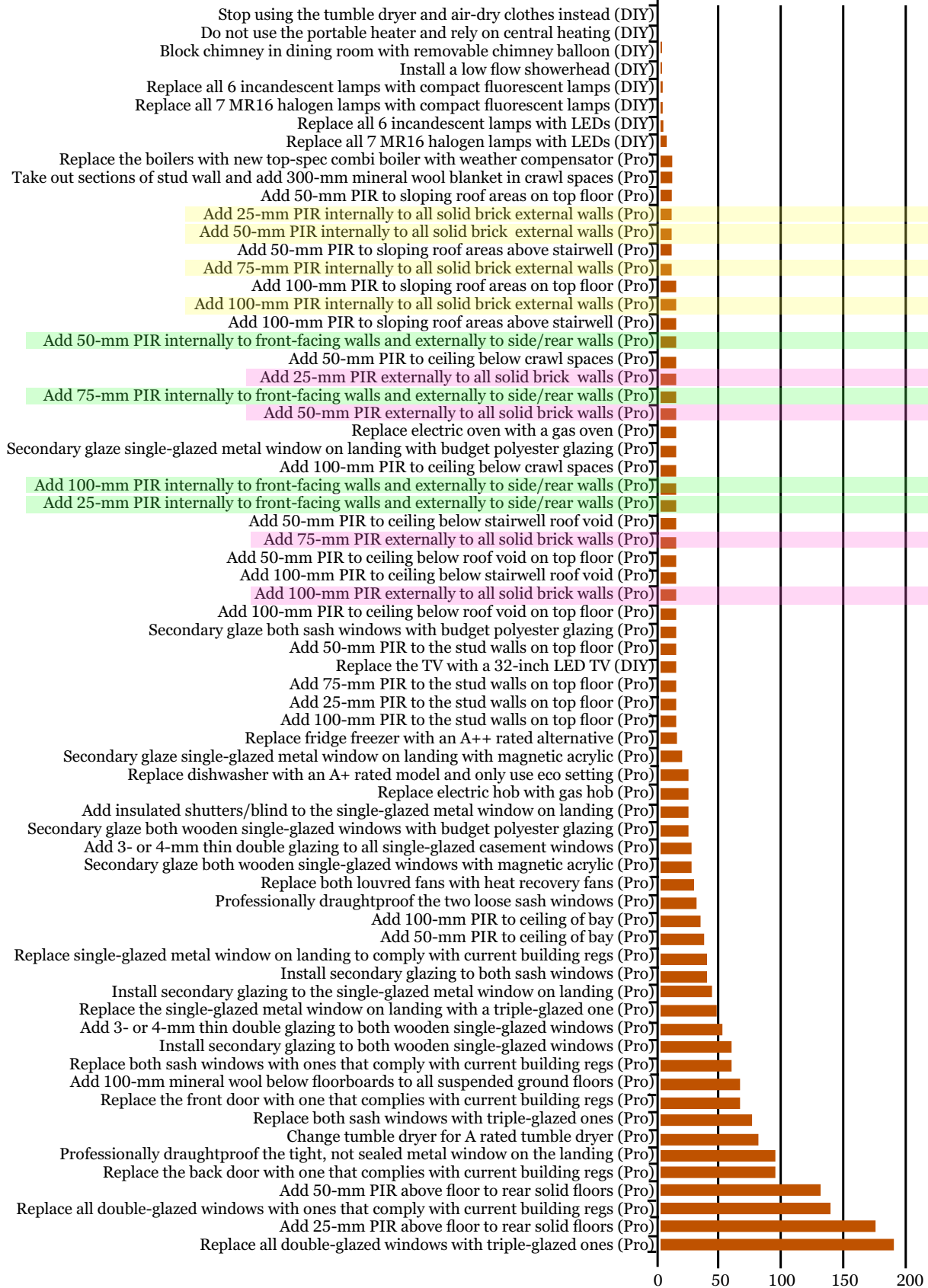
House 4

£ per CO2



House 4

Payback



6 LIMITATIONS

The additional analysis was designed to give a number of examples that would promote discussion. While not every variation can be covered, this section reviews the most significant of these.

Costs

There is a heavy reliance on the estimated installation figures used. In reality, there may be significant variance away from the figures, with the following examples for wall insulation used as an illustration:

1. Individual contractor prices will vary significantly.
2. The maturing of internal and external solid wall insulation markets may reduce prices.
3. The degree to which ancillary costs associated with wall insulation are included in the price or excluded: for example, if a wall already needs rendering, then the scaffolding and rendering may be deemed to be excluded. Similarly, if other measures are installed at the same time (for example, a flue for a wood burner or roofing works) then the cost of the scaffolding may be split. For internal insulation, an example would be if a room is due for redecoration, then some costs due to be incurred already may be excluded.
4. How much of the works is carried out by DIY. For wall insulation, a significant proportion of the cost is the labour, and so this element can be discounted if the works are carried out DIY.
5. ECO, Green Deal Cashback or other grants have not been included in the analysis.

Modelling

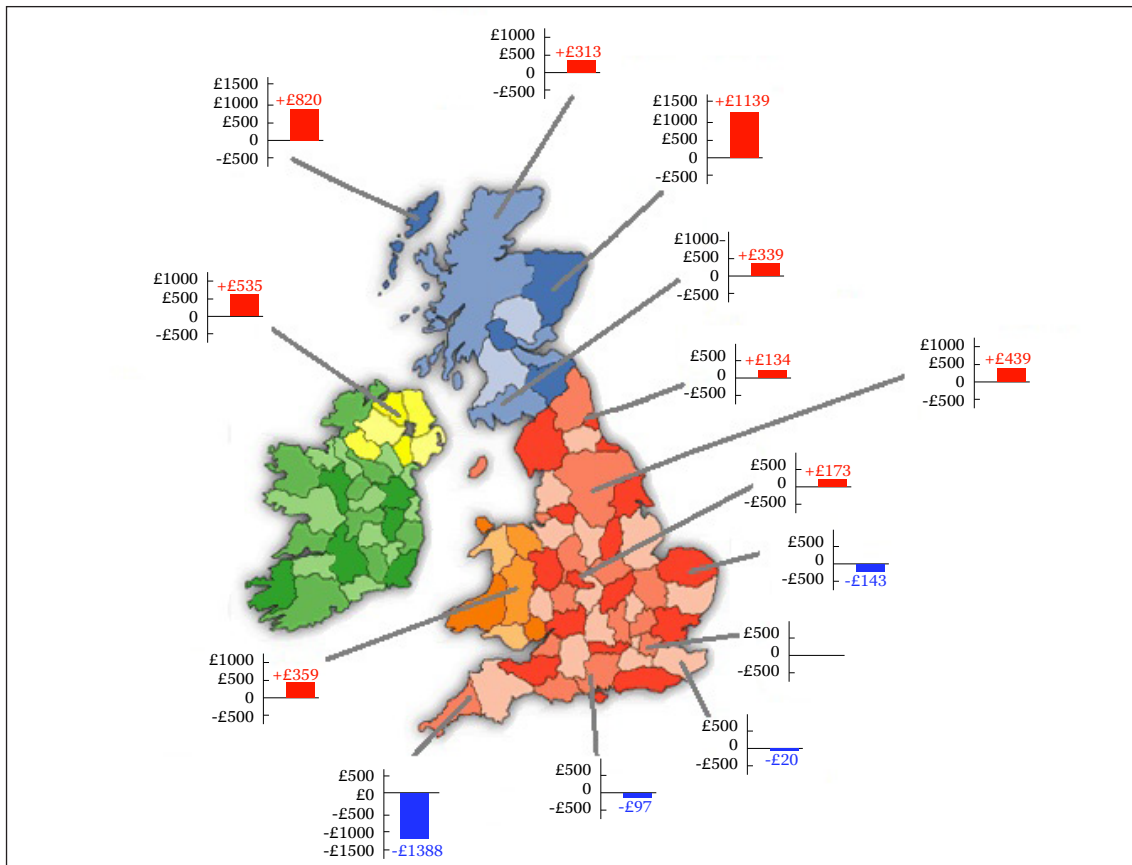
The model used is based on BREDEM, alongside standard assumed u-values for elements such as solid walls. It is therefore only as accurate as both the u-value assumptions and the modelling. Some assurance can be gained from the fact that when the modelled properties were compared to the actual bills of the property owners, there was a high degree of correlation.

Weather

Our modelling uses a standard weather year based on information supplied by ASHRAE. The impact of wall insulation and any other heating measures will be much greater during winters such as 2013 rather than one like 2014.

Location

We have modelled all the properties using location specific data from Reading. Similar properties located in other areas of the country will experience different climates, and so will have longer or shorter paybacks. The diagram on the right shows some previous analysis we carried out on a boiler upgrade to a hypothetical property located in a variety of locations in the country. The bars show the variance in the 20-year savings for the boiler depending on where the property is located.



The Rebound Effect

It is a well-known phenomenon that cost savings from energy efficiency improvements will often be invested in more heating. Whilst many take the view that this should be used to decrease the predicted savings, we do not. If a homeowner wishes to invest their savings in more comfort, then that is their right. This means that the savings may not be reflected by a corresponding reduction in bills, and so the paybacks may appear longer than they would be otherwise.

Specification and Detailing

The analysis did not take any account of detailing, or of the suitability of insulation. The model used conductivity values for polyisocyanurate insulation (PIR) in the analysis, as this is a common insulation material. The selection of PIR for the modelling was to allow for comparisons. It should not be taken as a recommendation that this type of insulation should be used for these specific properties or similar ones.

7 OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER

This paper has primarily focused on the cost and CO₂ effect of a range of measures applied to 4 example properties. Whilst these are important factors to consider when choosing a measure, there is also a range of other considerations that is important, and which we have outlined and discussed below:

Appropriateness to the aesthetics and heritage nature of the property and surroundings

This consideration may make external wall insulation inappropriate.

The impact of measures on moisture movements throughout the house and within the building fabric

It is important to determine what the building needs in terms of moisture management, both in terms of ventilation and permeability of building fabric. External factors such as location and exposure to wind, rain and sun, as well as specific building factors such as form, orientation and materials need to be understood.

Space constraints within the building

This may limit the thickness of insulations and type of plant that can be installed.

Security and noise considerations

Although windows are rarely cost effective to replace, there may be other reasons to consider upgrading them, such as increased security and noise reduction.

Comfort and health

Both of these are difficult to quantify, but improving insulation levels and appropriate ventilation can make a marked improvement on both.

Concurrent working

Concurrent working is a good way to save time and money, and minimise disturbance to building occupants. Measures that would not be cost effective if done on their own will be more so if performed while another measure is taking place at the same time. An example might be installing external wall insulation when the house needs re-rendering.

Dependencies

While it is important to carry out the most urgent measures first, sometimes the success and ease of installation of one measure depends on another measure. An example of this is installing suspended floor insulation before the walls are insulated and the floorboards can't be easily raised. While wall insulation would usually take higher priority, installing the suspended floor insulation first would mean that both measures can be undertaken easily.

8 CONCLUSIONS

The following are our key conclusions from both the previous work and this additional work focused on the impact of different heating regimes.

1. Significant CO₂ savings, i.e. above 40%, are probably not normally possible for solid walled houses without addressing the solid walls. If the walls are also addressed, then savings around 60% can be expected.
2. Solid wall insulation compares favourably to other energy measures, especially for high-energy users, and where costs can be minimised.
3. Paybacks on solid wall insulation can vary significantly, depending on the heating profile of the occupiers. The higher the heating use, the shorter the financial paybacks. Therefore, promoting specific paybacks to occupiers without understanding their heating profiles is likely to result in inaccuracies.
4. Paybacks can also vary significantly from one property to another, and will vary primarily based on the area of solid walls, the efficiency of heating systems, and the type of fuel used.
5. CO₂ and financial savings are only two of a range of factors that will determine whether solid wall insulation is worth carrying out.

APPENDIX A: RESULTS AGGREGATED BY MEASURE CATEGORY

Measure Category	Estimated Install Cost	Annual Fuel Cost Saving			Payback in Years			Annual kgCO ₂ Saving				
		Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High		
Property 1	APPLIANCE STANDBY	£ -	0	20								
	APPLIANCES	£247	27	88								
	LIGHTING	£99	3	184								
	HOT WATER	£40	1	136								
	DOORS	£800	£6.2	£10.7	201	128	75	15	24	41		
	DRAUGHTS	£316	£11.5	£18.8	101	67	41	31	47	77		
	FLOORS	£643	£4.4	£7.3	266	172	105	11	17	27		
	HEATING	£250	£11.7	£18.2	33	21	14	28	43	68		
	ROOFS	£ 371	£9.2	£15.1	85	55	33	22	34	57		
	WALLS	£2,398	£145.0	£237.1	25	16	10	352	545	890		
	WINDOW DRAUGHTS	£215	£14.2	£23.5	22	14	9	35	53	88		
	WINDOWS	£914	£20.2	£52.1	423	274	163	76	118	195		
	RENEWABLES	£5,000	£547.8	£547.8	9	9	9	1212	1212	1212		
	APPLIANCE STANDBY	£ -										
	Property 2	APPLIANCES	£308	41	62							
		LIGHTING	£244	20	204							
HOT WATER		£380	4	348								
DOORS		£840	£9.3	£16.7	155	94	53	21	35	62		
DRAUGHTS		£453	£30.5	£51.8	73	47	28	73	113	192		
FLOORS		£1,386	£20.5	£30.8	160	111	76	52	76	114		
HEATING		£3,000	£567.6	£823.9	7	5	4	1525	2107	3059		
ROOFS		£524	£33.9	£58.1	53	34	20	81	126	216		
WALLS		£8,066	£692.7	£1,140.7	25	16	10	1675	2571	4234		
WINDOW DRAUGHTS		£125	£4.7	£7.9	63	40	24	11	17	29		
WINDOWS		£704	£25.4	£43.0	54	34	20	61	94	159		
RENEWABLES												

APPENDIX A: RESULTS AGGREGATED BY MEASURE CATEGORY

Measure Category	Estimated Install Cost	Annual Fuel Cost Saving			Payback in Years			Annual kgCO ₂ Saving		
		Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
Property 3										
APPLIANCE STANDBY	£ –									
APPLIANCES	£361	£40.6	54	132						
LIGHTING	£114	£31.7	4	104						
HOT WATER	£40	£104.3	0	345						
DRAUGHTS	£433	£11.7	£17.6	£29.2	95	63	38	46	70	116
FLOORS	£1,718	£5.9	£9.0	£14.8	297	195	118	23	35	59
HEATING	£3,000	£135.5	£181.5	£256.3	22	17	12	494	665	942
ROOFS	£639	£30.2	£47.1	£79.5	43	28	16	113	176	296
WALLS	£8,525	£200.6	£307.8	£506.5	40	26	16	782	1194	1955
WINDOW DRAUGHTS	£273	£7.4	£11.3	£18.7	38	25	15	29	44	73
WINDOWS	£4,408	£65.1	£100.3	£167.0	476	271	143	255	391	652
RENEWABLES										
Property 4										
APPLIANCE STANDBY	£ –									
APPLIANCES	£295	£30.1	20	97						
LIGHTING	£61	£26.6	2	87						
HOT WATER	£40	£37.1	1	138						
DRAUGHTS	£310	£28.2	£45.1	£79.0	29	18	10	105	167	293
FLOORS	£900	£5.1	£8.2	£14.4	229	144	82	19	30	53
HEATING	£2,050	£192.2	£267.4	£400.3	11	8	5	714	993	1486
ROOFS	£485	£28.8	£44.2	£74.2	25	16	10	107	164	276
WALLS	£4,378	£260.1	£404.0	£682.1	18	12	7	966	1500	2532
WINDOW DRAUGHTS	£93	£1.1	£1.7	£2.9	108	71	42	4	6	11
WINDOWS	£1,312	£9.1	£14.5	£25.3	96	60	34	34	54	94
RENEWABLES										



Historic England Research and the Historic Environment

We are the public body that looks after England's historic environment. We champion historic places, helping people understand, value and care for them.

A good understanding of the historic environment is fundamental to ensuring people appreciate and enjoy their heritage and provides the essential first step towards its effective protection.

Historic England works to improve care, understanding and public enjoyment of the historic environment. We undertake and sponsor authoritative research. We develop new approaches to interpreting and protecting heritage and provide high quality expert advice and training.

We make the results of our work available through the Historic England Research Report Series, and through journal publications and monographs. Our online magazine Historic England Research which appears twice a year, aims to keep our partners within and outside Historic England up-to-date with our projects and activities.

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