

# HOUSING

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## MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

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March 2016



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Eco & Energy Efficiency  
Rainwater Products  
Roofing  
Security & Tenant Safety

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products

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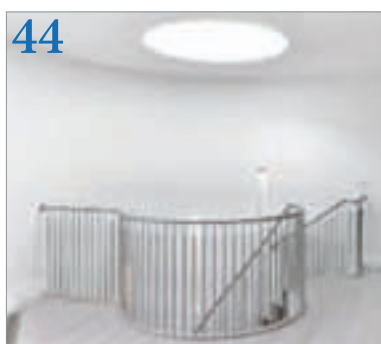




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# HOUSING

## MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

### Editor's comment

#### Interesting times ahead

Hidden in the dusty content of some very serious and dry reports, you can find the source of some interesting campaigns and rows. And that appears to be the case with the publication of three very different papers – the English Housing Survey, the Global Accounts for Registered Providers and the draft Merger Code.

The EHS revealed the continuing growth and popularity of the private rented sector, but also showed it includes 1.3 million substandard homes with such problems as damp, inadequate heating and poor insulation.

With more families turning to private rentals as their solution to the failing housing market, surely we need to find a way of improving the condition of properties which are damaging people's health. If the government can find billions of pounds to encourage home ownership schemes, what about helping to improve conditions in the private rented sector?

#### Investment & licensing

In more positive news for the private sector we are seeing growing interest from housing associations and institutional investors in entering the market while Grainger, one of the largest private landlords in the country, has announced ambitious growth plans and record profits as demand grows.

The Government has been shepherding the Housing & Planning Bill through its Parliamentary passage with claims it will clamp down on rogue landlords. Perhaps it should also allow boroughwide licensing schemes to encourage new investment in our older housing stock – much of it has celebrated its centenary, far beyond the age they were ever expected to reach.

Housing associations are busy looking for ways to diversify their businesses and to protect their balance sheets from planned 1 per cent rent cuts over the next four years. You would be forgiven for

thinking they are in rude health after reporting a combined operating surplus of a whopping £3 billion in global accounts published by their regulator.

#### Further cuts

And while they claim this huge sum is needed to pay for building thousands of new homes and is a reward for efficiency improvements, you can bet that George Osborne and his Treasury team will have social landlords firmly in their sights when looking for ways to cut the welfare budget and the Housing Benefit bill in particular.

Government ministers have been calling for HAs to reduce their costs and to employ fewer Chief Executives and we are currently seeing a big upsurge in merger activity, with planned deals set to create huge landlords to dwarf the charitable organisations many of us are familiar with. This is similar to the business rationalisation of 20 years ago which left us with far fewer building societies on our high streets.

The National Housing Federation as the trade body for HAs decided to be helpful by drawing up guidance to steer their members through the tricky process of deciding whether to merge or not, but it appears to have strongly divided opinion among boards and chief executives. A similar row broke out over its negotiations with Government on extending the right to buy to HA tenants. The NHF needs to tread carefully over the next few months.

Meanwhile the House of Lords has taken on the role of a white knight, as it challenges the Government over changes to its housing policies – the most contentious being extending the Right to Buy and introducing Pay to Stay, which could force more social housing tenants into the private sector.

Patrick Mooney  
News Editor



#### On the cover...

The March issue of Housing Management & Maintenance features WoodBlocX – Angel Lane, Stratford

Located in Stratford's regeneration area, within the London Borough of Newham, Angel Lane is student accommodation giant, Unite's latest London development. The site incorporates more than 700 flats, state of the art facilities and dedicated areas for study and relaxation. WoodBlocX innovative wooden brick system was specified for build, the second of Unite projects that WoodBlocX planters have been specified for. The brief was to create a contemporary design that echoed the architectural surroundings, whilst providing areas for different groups of people to relax and socialise.



## Detailed messages from HA global accounts

**T**ucked away in the detail of HA global accounts for 2015 are some interesting figures which reveal a mixed bag of messages about the performance of associations and their direction of travel.

The total number of properties owned and in management has increased by just 0.9 per cent, to 2,647,395 homes. The rise would have been greater, but 16,356 homes were lost, through sales, other disposals and demolitions. No stock transfers took place from councils in the year, so the percentage of HA homes that is owned and managed by stock transfer associations was stable at 44 per cent.

Income from rents rose by £536 million to £12.2 billion, while expenditure increased by £215 million to £9.4 billion. Costs fell as a percentage of turnover from 70.2 per cent in 2014 to 69.0 per cent in 2015. Most of this reduction came from a reduction in maintenance costs, despite the cost of labour and materials in the construction sector outstripping inflation.

The average cost of management per property increased by 3.8 per cent, far more than inflation to £1,034 and cost marginally more than the amount spent on repairs and maintenance. The rate of increase was down from the previous two years, but it is now costing associations over £80 more a year (up by 8.6 per cent) to manage their properties than in 2013, when the annual cost was £952.

### Management costs up, maintenance down

Stock transfer associations spend less than traditional associations on management which probably reflects the greater density of their stock in a smaller number of locations, so they can operate out of fewer offices on average and enjoy greater economies of scale.

The average spend on repairs and maintenance fell slightly to £1,017 per property, down by 0.4 per cent from the previous year, when the annual cost was £1,021.

Money spent on major repairs per home edged up slightly from £918 to £929, but this is well down from 2013 when the average spend on major repairs was £989 per property.

### Rent increases

The average rent increased by 3.7 per cent to £88 per week (2014: £85 per week). The increase in rent per unit was in line with the guideline limit for rent increase in 2014/15 which was 3.7 per cent (RPI at September 2013 of 3.2 per cent + 0.5 per cent).

**"The average spend on repairs and maintenance fell slightly to £1,017 per property, down by 0.4 per cent from the previous year, when the annual cost was £1,021"**

The combined rent and service charge per home increased to £97 per week. Service charge recovery rates are broadly comparable to the previous year at 83.3 per cent (2014 81.8 per cent), which remains of a concern as services are usually costed at a much higher recovery rate of around 95 per cent.

In 2015, £242 million of income came from non-traditional activities like student accommodation, nursing homes, market renting and supporting people services. The total amount of income from non-social housing activities in the year amounted to £879 million for the year, of which they made a surplus of £172 million.

Interestingly there is NO information on customer satisfaction contained within the accounts. While we might not expect this information in financial accounts, it is perhaps a missed opportunity for the HCA, as the social housing sector's regulator, no longer publishes comparative tables of performance.

The absence of detailed performance tables makes it impossible for tenants, government ministers and others to compare how well or badly associations are performing against other landlords.

## Welfare cuts hit plans for new sheltered housing care schemes

**H**undreds of new sheltered housing flats specially designed for the elderly and people with extra care needs have been delayed or scrapped owing to planned cuts in housing benefit, according to the BBC.

Investigations by the news broadcaster has found several housing associations saying that new schemes at planning and design stages are no longer financially viable.

The schemes, which provide flats for the elderly or people with learning disabilities, are more expensive to build and run because they provide additional essential facilities and support to residents.

### Impact

The National Housing Federation (NHF) has calculated that nearly 2,500 flats or bedspaces in shared accommodation have so far been scrapped or delayed as providers face losing an average of £68 a week per tenant.

David Orr, Chief Executive of the NHF, told the BBC: "There is a real impact now. New homes for people with support needs – vulnerable people – that would be being built have been cancelled."

Government ministers say they are reviewing the sheltered housing sector "to ensure it works in the best way possible" and that discretionary housing payments can be used to subsidise higher cost services. But this is an area of housing which has been facing funding cutbacks and financial challenges for at least the last 20 years.

The latest set of cuts will see housing benefit paid at rates closer to the private rented sector, but they are not due to come into effect for existing tenants until April 2018 although new tenancies could be hit as early as this year. The government has now announced a 12 month delay in the introduction of cuts while their likely impact is reviewed. This will delay the introduction until April 2017, but critics want the threat of cuts lifted completely.

### Nationwide

BBC News said it has spoken to four housing associations in different parts of the country who confirmed their plans had needed to change, with planned schemes either delayed indefinitely or completely scrapped. The planned schemes were for the elderly, those with learning disabilities or for older people with extra care needs.

A Yorkshire based HA, which has been working on the development of a new scheme for the past eight years has delayed the scheme's start on site as it says new funding rules will result in an annual loss of £100,000 which it cannot afford.

Over the Pennines in Manchester, another HA has stopped design work on a scheme which would have made a loss of £3.35 million over 40 years, because of planned changes in benefit rates.

## HMM Stats

The decline in home ownership over the last decade in England finally ground to a halt last year. In 2014-15, 63.6 per cent – or 14.3 million – of all households in England were owner occupiers, slightly up from 63.3 per cent the previous year. The proportion of homeowners had been on a downward path since reaching a peak of 70.9 per cent in 2003



# Students rent strike in London

Over 150 students at a top university have staged a rent strike claiming their accommodation costs have become unaffordable.

The students at University College London demanded a 40 per cent cut in their rent.

Cut the Rent campaigners say that rents at the university have risen by around 56 per cent since 2009.

The affected halls of residence were Ramsey Hall, which has 473 rooms that cost £158.97–£262.43 to rent per week, and Max Rayne House, which is one of the cheaper halls at the university, with 272 rooms that cost £102.97–£232.40 a week.

“The Cut the Rent campaign was set up last year at the university. It says it has previously raised the issue of spiralling costs with the university, as well as organising strikes against ‘unbearable’ living conditions”

## Campaign

The action follows a similar protest by UCL students last year against noise and a rat infestation. Students were collectively awarded £400,000 in compensation following resolution of that dispute.

The Cut the Rent campaign was set up last year at the university. It says it has previously raised the issue of spiralling costs with the university, as well as organising strikes against ‘unbearable’ living conditions.

Shelly Asquith, Vice President of Welfare at the National Union of Students said: “I take my hat off to the students at UCL who, for the best part

of a year, mounted a successful rent campaign. This is not unreasonable when the rent in London is more than 100 per cent of the maximum loans and grants available for students.”

## Ostrich effect

A spokeswoman at UCL defended the rent levels, saying the university’s rents are competitive for the location. She said: “While we understand the concerns around the cost of accommodation in London, it is inaccurate to suggest that UCL accommodation is making a profit for the university.

“All of the money that UCL receives in rent is ploughed back into residences. While the proportions may vary year to year, we invariably spend more on residences than we receive in rental income. Our rents are competitive in comparison with equivalent London institutions and far less than for comparable accommodation in the private sector.”

But the problem is affecting more young people than just students with a third of British 18 to 24-year-olds too scared to check their bank balance and suffering from ‘ostrich effect’ - preferring to stick their heads in the sand rather than find out how much money they have, or don’t have.

Research released as part of National Student Money Week found that 34 per cent of young adults expect to go into debt this year. Some 31 per cent admit they lose track of their spending and struggle to budget effectively, and 46 per cent say they lose sleep over the state of their personal finances.

David Webber, managing director of financial technology company Intelligent Environments, which compiled the research, said: “This ‘ostrich effect’ is one that must be turned around if young people are ever to regain control of their own finances. Greater visibility around spending habits will make people more aware of their bank balance, making it harder for them to go into debt unnecessarily.”

# Private landlord prosecuted over gas safety certificates

A private landlord was prosecuted after failing to provide gas safety certificates for two rented properties.

Harrogate Magistrates’ Court heard that following a complaint from a tenant, an Improvement Notice (IN) was issued to landlord Dean Taylor by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) for non-provision of a gas safety certificate for the gas appliances in his property.

Mr Taylor did not comply with that notice and during the investigation another of his properties was also found to be without a gas safety certificate.

Dean Taylor, of Gentian Glade, Harrogate, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 33 (1) (g) of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, also Section 36(3) and Section 36(6) of the Gas Safety Installation and Use Regulations. He was given 240 hours of community service and instructed to pay full HSE costs of £2,767 by Harrogate Magistrates’ Court.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Julian Franklin commented: “If you rent property out, you must comply with requirements of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations, including the need to have a gas safety certificate. Gas appliances should be regularly checked, as faulty appliances can kill.”



# Benefits freeze to hit tenants and landlords in the wallet

A national charity is warning about the impact of a four-year benefit freeze on the income levels of millions of families, many of them tenants.

The Children’s Society has estimated that low-income families could lose up to 12 per cent over the next four years as a result of plans to freeze child tax credits, working tax credits and jobseekers allowance. It says more than seven million children are living in families likely to be affected by the benefits freeze, due to be implemented from April.

These changes will almost inevitably result in cuts to the income of private and social housing landlords, as these families struggle to pay their

rent. Further changes might be announced in the next budget.

In its research paper, called The Future of Family Incomes, the charity provides a number of examples showing how different families will be affected by a variety of welfare changes with their incomes falling by between £239 and £771 a month.

As more tenants move on to Universal Credit as it is rolled out across the country, (UC combines all benefits into a single monthly payment) it is expected that problems with managing family budgets, will push up rent arrears. This in turn could push up the number of evictions which are already running at record levels.



## HMM team get muddy for charity



On 9 April 2016, the Housing Management & Maintenance team will be taking part in the Royal British Legion Major Series, a demanding 5K course full of military obstacles and thick mud!

All participants will wade through muddy streams, 'stench trenches' and negotiate 'vanishing bridges' and a number of other hurdles while raising money for the Kids Cancer Charity ([www.kidscancercharity.org](http://www.kidscancercharity.org)).

What our office-based staff can expect on the day could not be more of a contrast to the day-to-day routine of publishing trade magazines. As a result,

we are sure there will be great trepidation as the day arises, however, each member is fully committed to completing the event – culminating in a 50-metre water slide to finish.

We have set a target of £1,500 to raise, so please give generously to this great cause by visiting [www.justgiving.com/netmagmedialtd](http://www.justgiving.com/netmagmedialtd) or you can text a donation by texting NETM99 followed by the amount you'd like to donate (e.g. NETM99 £3) to 70070. Please note that it will say your donation has gone to Christian Lewis Trust – this is the original name of the Kids Cancer Charity.

## ARLA Conference & Exhibition

### 12 April

The Annual ARLA Conference and Exhibition is one of the biggest and most anticipated events in the private rental sector. The conference allows visitors to keep up-to-date with developments in the industry, as well as the latest changes to legislation.

It also offers an important networking opportunity as well as being a chance to see the latest innovations and products available for letting agencies at the exhibition, in between talks and seminars.

The conference has grown in size year on year,

and so this year is being held at a bigger venue – London's ExCel. 2016's event will also see keynote presentations from Rt Hon Michael Portillo and *Dragon's Den's* Deborah Meaden.

Registration for the conference, as well as the exhibition, opens at 8.30am. The conference then closes at 5pm, while the exhibition remains open until 6pm. Access to the exhibition only is free. Prices for the conference vary – please visit the website for more information, as well as a full programme for the day.

[www.arlaconference.co.uk](http://www.arlaconference.co.uk)

## Landlord Investment Show

### 13 April (Croydon)

The National Landlord Investment Show attracts visitors including letting agents, management companies, landlords (both prospective and current), developers, property service providers and investors. It's a road show that visits the UK's buy-to-let hotspots that was launched in 2013, when it visited five locations. It has grown bigger each year and in April it returns to Croydon – one of 15 locations – for the fourth year in a row. The locations include four National shows – two in London, one in the Midlands and one in Manchester.

The show aims to help those in the industry be successful in the buy-to-let market, and organisers believe that to do this you need to be informed and aware of market trends. The show aims to connect landlords and investors with the industry's top suppliers and hosts talks and seminars from expert speakers. It also offers visitors access to government bodies and associations.

The venues are carefully chosen from research that shows where there is huge potential for

landlords. Each show is therefore tailored to its locations, focusing specifically on both the issues the area faces and the potential it holds. This includes new buy-to-let opportunities and the latest on development in the area. The show's research also shows the local road shows attract those who are often too busy to attend national shows.

Seminars and talks will cover a variety of areas relating to landlords, such as taxation, legislation, evictions and legal issues, finance and buying at auction. The shows also offer a morning networking event – a half an hour slot before the show begins dedicated to allowing you to meet new like-minded people who are based locally. Attendees to the show will also gain five CPD points towards their landlord accreditation.

The Croydon show is open from 9am – 3.30pm and tickets are free. For a full list of dates and venues for the show, seminar details, a timetable for the day and to book tickets for any of the events, please visit the website.

[www.landlordinvestmentshow.co.uk](http://www.landlordinvestmentshow.co.uk)

## Events

### Association of Residential Letting Agents Conference

12 April, London  
[www.arlaconference.co.uk](http://www.arlaconference.co.uk)

### FIT Show

12 – 14 April, Telford  
[www.fitshow.co.uk](http://www.fitshow.co.uk)

### Landlord Investment Show

13 April, Croydon  
27 April, Dartford  
12 May, Maidenhead  
25 May, Stevenage  
21 June, London  
[www.landlordinvestmentshow.co.uk](http://www.landlordinvestmentshow.co.uk)

### Landlord & Letting Show

20 April, Liverpool  
8 June, Manchester  
13 July, Leeds  
12 October, Cardiff  
30 November, Coventry  
[www.landlordshow.info](http://www.landlordshow.info)

### National Federation of ALMOs Annual Conference & Awards

19 – 20 April, Birmingham  
[www.almos.org.uk](http://www.almos.org.uk)

### CIH South West Conference & Exhibition

20 – 21 April, Torquay  
[www.cih.org/events](http://www.cih.org/events)

### UK Housing Awards

26 April, London  
[www.insidehousing.co.uk/events](http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/events)

### RESI Awards

11 May, London  
[www.resiawards.com](http://www.resiawards.com)

### Student Housing

18 May, London  
[www.studenthousingevent.com](http://www.studenthousingevent.com)

### Facilities Show

21 – 23 June, London  
[www.facilitiesshow.com](http://www.facilitiesshow.com)

### CIH Housing Conference & Exhibition

28 – 30 June, Manchester  
[www.cihhousing.com](http://www.cihhousing.com)

### RESI Conference

12 – 14 September, Newport  
[www.resiconf.com](http://www.resiconf.com)

### NHF Annual Conference & Housing Exhibition

21 – 23 September, Birmingham  
[annual.housing.org.uk](http://annual.housing.org.uk)

### Homes

16 – 17 November, London  
[www.homesevent.co.uk](http://www.homesevent.co.uk)



# Booming private rented sector attracts HAs to the market

Several leading housing associations have sign-posted significant moves into the private rented sector, which is continuing to grow at faster levels than social rent or home ownership.

**“Social landlords across the country are linking with developers and new investors to diversify their product and earn higher incomes from market rent schemes. But it is also clear some properties will only be retained for relatively short timescales before being sold outright, if sales appear more profitable”**

Social landlords across the country are linking with developers and new investors to diversify their product and earn higher incomes from market rent schemes. But it is also clear some properties will only be retained for relatively short timescales before being sold outright, if sales appear

more profitable.

In the north west, One Manchester has appointed Keepmoat to build 172 homes for market rent in the south of the city, in their first venture into the private sector. Two separate schemes will provide 67 two bedroom flats and 105 two and three bedroom homes.

Dave Power, chief executive of One Manchester, said: “All the revenue generated will be reinvested into our work in the local area and our communities.”

## Busy market

In London, Network Housing Group has entered into a joint venture with property developer Stanhope to build private rented housing at sites across the capital.

Sites will be jointly purchased and developed as mid-market rental schemes, with Network providing management and maintenance services. Sites in Westminster, Brent and Harrow are currently being considered.

Vicky Savage, Executive Development Director at Network, said: “In our view London has a long-term unmet need for reasonably priced, well managed rented housing. We are delighted to be working with market leaders Stanhope and look forward to many projects over many years.”

Elsewhere in London, Essential Living a private rented sector landlord has completed its first deal

with Peabody, selling them 45 homes on one of its schemes alongside the 104 homes built specifically for private rent. Essential Living hopes to eventually develop 5,000 homes for long-term rent.

Dale Meredith, Executive Director of Development and Sales at Peabody, said: “We are delighted to partner with Essential Living on this landmark deal, which will provide much needed new affordable homes for Londoners.”

## Re-entry

Buoyed by all of this activity, Affinity Sutton has decided to restart its development of market rent schemes, some two years after leaving the sector. The landlord already owns 800 PRS homes and now plans to grow this to about 2,000.

Kerry Kyriacou, Group Director of New Business and Development at Affinity Sutton, said “Building up a PRS portfolio gives us the ability to hold an asset which we might do something with later, either sell or convert to social rent.”

Affinity Sutton intends to rebalance its development of affordable housing with other tenures, by cutting the former back from around 90 per cent of its new output to around 60 per cent with the remainder for market sale and PRS. Developments are planned in Manchester, Leeds and the West Midlands.

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# One million more private rented homes are needed

**D**emand for rented homes will rise by more than one million households over the next five years despite government measures to promote homeownership, according to property consultancy Savills.

The government has a target of building 400,000 new affordable homes for sale over the course of this parliament, but the Savills report says Britain still requires an additional 220,000 homes for rent a year.

Key points from the report, called Rental Britain include:

- The rental market will expand by more than one million households over the next five years despite measures to turn "generation rent into generation buy";
- The supply of rental homes is set to be constrained by the introduction of a Stamp Duty surcharge of 3 per cent on buy-to-let properties and the restriction on tax relief on mortgage interest payments. Both measures are likely to limit the ability of private investors to expand their portfolios. This presents a major opportunity for large-scale investors to step into the gap created by a fall in off-plan sales to buy-to-let investors;
- A mismatch between supply and demand will continue to underpin rental growth and attract increasing numbers of institutional investors. (Savills recorded investment deals worth a total of £2.6 billion in 2015 – a third of which was supported by institutional investment);
- The lack of available stock is prompting an increase in deals to forward fund development for rent; and
- Investors are looking beyond London to cities with concentrations of households in the rental market. This highlights the cities of Manchester, Reading, Edinburgh and Bristol as having the best investment potential.

## Demand growth

Changes in Government policy is expected to curb some of the demand for rented homes, but demand is such that researchers at Savills forecast that the sector will grow by 1.1 million households by 2021, even assuming the 400,000 homes for sale target is reached, the firm says in Rental Britain.

The economic recovery and ongoing low interest rates have failed to reverse the growing demand for rented housing. Instead, house price inflation has run ahead of wage growth and this has pushed homeownership further out of reach for many. This has coincided with the social rented sector shrinking by 2.8 per cent in the past five years, pushing more households into private renting.

According to the English Housing Survey, private renting has been growing by 17,500 households per month on average over the 10 years to 2014. Government housing policy, including its focus on Starter Homes, a greater number of Shared Ownership homes and access to larger equity loans through Help to Buy London, is seeking to reverse this trend by helping people access the property ladder.

"But demand for rented homes could still rise more sharply than we have forecast," says Susan Emmett, director, Savills residential research.

## Questionable target

"We would question whether policies can accelerate housebuilding enough to see the government's target of 400,000 affordable homes for sale reached in the timescale set. Given the overlap between the different schemes, each focused at similar parts of the market, it is possible that one scheme could simply replace the other



rather than providing additional homes.

"This analysis demonstrates that we still need to provide a substantial number of homes for rent. government policy should focus on supporting the development of new homes to rent as well as to buy."

Instead, as the need for rented homes grows, so recent policy announcements are set to constrain the supply of rental homes. The introduction of a stamp duty surcharge of 3 per cent on buy-to-let properties and the restriction on tax relief on mortgage interest payments are likely to limit the ability of private investors to expand their portfolios.

This presents a major opportunity for large scale institutional investors to step into the gap, with expectations that they will remain exempt from the tax changes and become increasingly attractive sources of bulk finance for developers.

## High price of waiting to buy is revealed

**T**he high costs of renting a home while saving for a deposit have been revealed in research, which also shows that many would-be buyers are giving up on the idea of ever owning their own home.

Figures from the Association of Residential Letting Agents (ARLA) show that UK tenants spent an average of 22 per cent of their wages on rent last year, and that first time buyers getting on

the housing ladder this year will have previously paid out an average of £52,900 to landlords.

The ARLA research, which is based on someone moving out of their family home at the age of 18 and renting for 13 years, shows that in North-East England a typical tenant will have spent £31,300 on rent before they can buy, while in London the figure is over double that at £68,300.

The figures, which were compiled with the

Centre for Economics and Business Research, suggest that someone moving into rented accommodation in London this year will spend an average of £91,500 on rent before buying their first home.

Meanwhile a fifth of those renting now have told ARLA they never expect to be able to afford to buy a home.

This coincides with research from accountants Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) which predicts the proportion of people owning their own home in London is likely to decrease from 58.7 per cent in 2000 to 39.5 per cent in 2025.

During the same timescale, the number of private sector tenants is set to increase from just 15.2 per cent sixteen years ago to a massive 39.5 per cent at the end of the period, with about 20 per cent renting from social landlords.

**"Figures from the Association of Residential Letting Agents (ARLA) show that UK tenants spent an average of 22 per cent of their wages on rent last year and that first time buyers getting on the housing ladder this year will have previously paid out an average of £52,900 to landlords"**



# Housing survey findings contains mixed news for rented sectors

While the nation's housing stock is in better condition overall than ever before, the private rented sector still contains over 1 million homes that fail to meet the Decent Homes Standard.

The latest findings from the English Housing Survey highlight that some form of government supported investment could be justified to improve conditions in the private rented sector. Intervention is most required to tackle damp, improve heating systems and to upgrade their insulation.

Help could come in the form of taxation incentives, which could complement the tough action to crack down on rogue landlords, outlined in the Housing & Planning Bill. With an increasing number of residents being families with children, the average private tenant is very different from the past.

## Decent homes

Overall a fifth of all dwellings (20 per cent or 4.6 million homes) fail to meet the Decent Homes Standard (DHS). This represents a significant reduction from the 7.7 million sub-standard homes in 2006, when 35 per cent of homes failed to meet the standard.

The private rented sector has the highest proportion of non-decent homes (29 per cent) while the social rented sector has the lowest (14 per cent). This is probably the result of government backed DHS funding in council housing and new building of HA homes since the 1980s.

In total 1.3 million homes in the private rented sector were non-decent compared with 578,000 in the social rented sector. This is almost certainly linked to the age of the stock and under-investment in certain components.

## Older houses

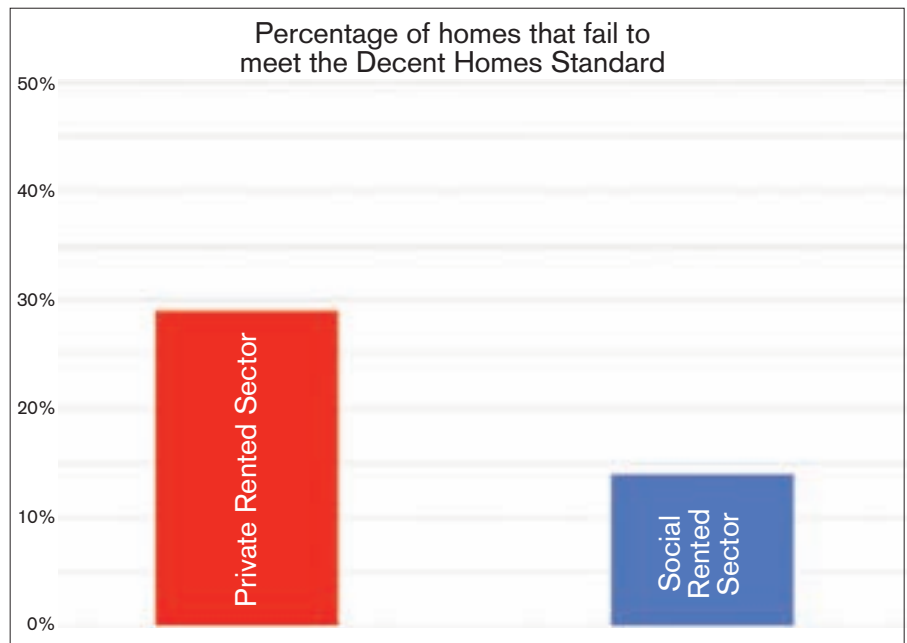
The private rented sector has the largest proportion of homes (33 per cent) built before 1919 compared with both owner occupied (20 per cent) and the social rented sector homes (7 per cent).

The private rented sector has a comparatively high proportion of flats made from converted houses (11 per cent). The proportion of low-rise purpose built flats was lower in the private rented sector (22 per cent) than in local authority (35 per cent) or housing association (34 per cent) stock.

About a million homes (4 per cent) in England have problems with damp, compared with 2.6 million (13 per cent) homes back in 1996. This represents one of the most serious problems given its impact on the health and well-being of residents.

Private rented dwellings are more likely to be older and therefore more likely to have defects to the damp proof course, roof covering, gutters or down pipes, which can lead to problems with rising or penetrating damp affecting at least one room in the property.

Some 9 per cent of private rented dwellings have some type of damp problem, compared with 5 per



cent of social rented dwellings and just 3 per cent of owner occupied dwellings.

## Insulation & heating

The energy efficiency of the English housing stock is improving and the average SAP rating of dwellings is now 61 points, up from 45 points in 1996. The SAP rating measures the overall quality of a property's insulation, from zero (the lowest) up to 100 (the highest). The owner-occupied and private rented sectors both have an average SAP rating of 60.

In general, the social rented sector was more energy efficient, in part due to the wider use of wall insulation, but also because of dwelling type. The social rented sector contains a higher proportion of flats, which have less exposed surface areas (external walls and roofs) through which heat can be lost, than detached or semi-detached houses.

The private rented sector has the lowest proportion of homes with central heating (85 per cent), followed by housing associations (88 per cent). Owner occupied and local authority homes had the highest rates (at 94 per cent and 93 per cent respectively).

Older, less energy efficient boilers are also more prevalent in the private sector. 15 per cent of private rented dwellings have a standard boiler rather than one of the more modern condensing boilers, compared with 11 per cent of social sector dwellings.

## Smoke alarms

While the majority of homes had at least one working smoke alarm, a quarter of households have never tested their smoke alarm.

Overall 88 per cent of households have at least one working smoke alarm but this varies by tenure. Private renters were least likely to have

“The latest findings from the English Housing Survey highlight that some form of government supported investment could be justified to improve conditions in the private rented sector”

at least one working smoke alarm (81 per cent), compared with 88 per cent of owner-occupiers, 92 per cent of local authority renters and 93 per cent of households in housing association properties.

Around a quarter (22 per cent) of households have never tested their smoke alarm. This also varied by tenure with private renters the most likely to have never tested their alarm (33 per cent). By comparison 27 per cent of social renters and 18 per cent of owner-occupiers have never tested their smoke alarms.

## HMM Stats

In 2014-15, the average age of a first-time buyer was 33, up from 31 a decade earlier. The average first-time buyer needed a deposit of £42,505



## Gas safety changes being mulled over

**T**he HSE is understood to be sympathetic to recently voiced concerns about the fairness and cost of the current rules, although the Housing Minister has not been persuaded to intervene in the debate.

To comply with the law, landlords must complete gas safety checks on heating and hot water appliances in all their rented properties every 12 months. Failure to complete the checks can result in prosecution by the HSE, but HAs face the added threat of a rating downgrade from the Homes & Communities Agency, despite having fewer legal tools than councils to resolve access problems.

This has been a growing area for action by the HCA in the last couple of years, based on concerns that overdue gas safety checks pose a "serious detriment" to tenants' wellbeing. It has resulted in more governance downgrades than any other issue, as well as unwelcome publicity.

### Access difficulties

Because housing associations sometimes have difficulty in getting access to all their properties (usually because of non-cooperation by tenants), they often schedule their gas safety checks for one or two months before they are due.

This can mean associations are carrying out six checks in a five-year period, plus doing checks between tenancies and before properties are re-let. While the cost of an individual service to a boiler or gas fire may be as low as £30, the cost to landlords with thousands of properties can be considerable, with legal costs an additional problem.

If the service and safety check is carried out early, the 12-month period starts again. The Gas Access Campaign, which represents 150 organisations in the sector, has argued this is costing landlords considerable sums each year and has pushed for HAs to have the same powers as

councils to obtain court orders to access properties quickly if necessary.

### Legal action

Councils can obtain a court order granting access within 24 hours of a tenant refusing access, whereas associations are faced with having to try other legal mechanisms such as obtaining an injunction or a possession order. These can be both time-consuming and costly, and they were not designed to deal with this particular problem.

The HSE is now considering introducing a system similar to a car MOT, where the annual check date for a property remains the same each year even if the actual check is carried out early. This means if the check is carried out a month early, another check is then not required for 13 months.

It is understood the HSE will weigh this up against the risk of gas safety checks happening less frequently than once every 12 months. A workshop with associations was organised for early March, to discuss the plans further.

If agreed the change would be subject to a formal consultation and require an amendment to the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations, a statutory instrument 'owned and enforced' by HSE, as well as needing ministerial approval.

## Pay to stay policy attacked by influential critics

**T**he controversial 'Pay to stay' rent policy could drive tens of thousands of tenants from their homes and result in councils only housing the poorest in society.

It is being labelled as both unfair and a disincentive to work. Among the bodies lining up to criticise the policy are the Chartered Institute of Housing, the Local Government Association and several influential members of the House of Lords, as well as Zac Goldsmith, Conservative candidate for the London Mayor. Opposition is likely to be aired to it during Parliamentary readings of the Housing & Planning Bill.

Under the new policy, council tenants earning more than £40,000 a year in London, and more than £30,000 elsewhere, will be required to pay the local market rate in the private sector, if they want to stay living in their council flat or house. If not, they will have to move and either rent or buy in the private sector.

The move is part of government plans to end what Ministers say are effectively subsidies for better-off council tenants. They estimate the subsidy is worth up to £3,500 a year for tenants with higher incomes. It is due to be implemented from April 2017.

Research carried out for the Conservative controlled Local Government Association (LGA) has found that over 200,000 households will be directly affected by the new policy and that as many as 60,000 families will be forced to leave their home, with 27,000 Londoners forced to move from the areas where they currently live.

### Defer call

And one of the scheme's biggest critics has called

for the policy to be deferred, to allow work on its impact to be carried out. Lord Kerslake said "When this was originally discussed in the coalition Government, it was intended to deal with the very small number of high earners on over £60,000. The current proposals will affect a lot more households with earnings of half that."

Lord Kerslake, who was recently Head of the Civil Service, called on ministers to put the plan on hold so that pilot schemes can be carried out. He said that he would table amendments to the Housing and Planning Bill to place the scheme at the discretion of local authorities and "provide adequate protection for tenants on the amount of rent they have to pay compared to their income".

The peer, who is now chairman of the Peabody Trust housing association, has warned that the proposals are part of a package that could "threaten the future of social housing".

"Pay to stay needs to be seen alongside the forced sale of council housing to fund right to buy for housing associations, the ending of permanent tenancies and the almost total end of funding for new social housing after 2018. Together, they threaten the future of social housing as we have known it."

### Key workers affected

The LGA report was produced by Savills. It found that higher rents in the private sector and soaring house prices in many parts of the south, mean that many council tenants who just exceed the income cut-offs will be left in a desperate position. Among the groups who could be affected are people like nurses, care staff, social workers, teachers who work part-time and

transport workers.

The LGA said the research showed that around 50 per cent of those tenants who would find themselves classed as high earners in the south-east, east of England and London would not be able to afford to pay market rents or take up a right to buy offer and would need to move out of the area.

Councillor Peter Box, housing spokesman at the LGA, said: "A couple with three children earning £15,000 each a year cannot be defined as high income. Pay to stay needs to be voluntary for councils, as it will be for housing associations."

### Possible relief?

Some hope of a respite was given by Housing Minister Brandon Lewis, who said that people who could afford to pay more in rent "should do so" – but it would be graded, so that those on lower incomes would not have to pay full market rates. This could mean increases are tapered in direct relation to income levels, but administering this could be difficult.

"We have always said we would consider carefully how much more people pay as they move through the pay scales, once they get over £30,000," he told the BBC. He said the government would "listen to what comes in before we make a final decision in the period ahead of us".

"We have been clear that our intention is that social rents would increase gradually as tenants' incomes rise above this threshold. Pay to stay better reflects tenants' ability to pay, while those who genuinely need support will continue to receive it."



# New PRS licensing scheme in East London

**T**ower Hamlets Council in East London is preparing to bring in a private sector landlord licensing and property registration scheme limited to just four wards of the borough, to ensure it complies with new government criteria.

The scheme will apply to all private landlords operating in the wards of Spitalfields and Banglatown, Weavers and Whitechapel from October this year. The wards are the closest to the City of London's banking and financial district where housing demand is at its greatest. It follows consultation between March and June 2015 and means private landlords will need to obtain a

licence from the Council before a property can be rented out.

The Council wants to use this landlord licensing scheme to tackle anti-social behaviour, deal with poor housing standards and to assist in improving the management of privately rented accommodation.

Following changes in the regulations made last year, councils can only bring in a scheme without specific government approval if it covers less than 20 per cent of the geographical area and less than 20 per cent of private rented stock in the borough. Nearby Redbridge Council recently failed in its bid to bring in a boroughwide licensing scheme.

Cllr Sirajul Islam, Deputy Mayor and cabinet member for housing management and performance, added: "It is vital that landlords in the borough are committed to renting out their properties within the confines of the law.

"The introduction of our new selective licensing scheme ensures that landlords who rent out their properties take all the steps required of them to protect tenants. Our scheme will enable long term stable tenancies which will be beneficial for both landlords and tenants."

## Limited scheme

Glenn McMahon, a member of campaign and support group Tower Hamlets Renters, said: "We're really pleased that Tower Hamlets will finally see a licensing scheme implemented, but disappointed it's limited to 20 per cent of the borough due to legislative changes made by the last government.

"However, we're glad to hear Tower Hamlets Council will seek to introduce borough-wide licensing for private renters living in shared accommodation at the earliest opportunity. Everyone deserves to live in a safe and secure environment and licensing is another step on the road towards that. We look forward to supporting the council in making tenants aware of their new rights and prosecuting rogue landlords when necessary."

## HMM Stats

The proportion of private renters who expect to get on the property ladder has fallen. In 2014-15, 57 per cent of private renters said they expected to buy a home at some point, down from 61 per cent

## Interactive map

The consultation considered whether to implement the scheme in four other areas of the borough – Blackwall and Cubitt Town, Bow East, Bow West and Millwall, but decided to omit these from the scheme at this stage. An interactive map on the Council's website will enable landlords to check whether their postcode is included in the designated area.

Mayor of Tower Hamlets, John Biggs, said: "This scheme is an important step in helping to protect the rights of Tower Hamlets tenants who live in the private rented sector. We are working hard to increase the number of homes in the borough across all tenures but want to make sure that this is not at the expense of good quality dwellings."

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# Possession orders down but evictions hit record levels

In a strange twist, official figures released for last year show that while court action against tenants for rent arrears has fallen, the numbers losing their home has risen to record levels.

Ministry of Justice figures show that in 2015 more than 250 tenants were evicted every day in England and Wales. This represents a growing trend in recent years of landlords taking firmer action against a backdrop of welfare benefit cuts and a huge growth in demand for rented accommodation.

The number of evictions increased by 53 per cent over the five years from 2010. In England, 19,093 evictions were by social landlords - housing associations and councils, while 5,919 were by private landlords.

A further 16,440 evictions were made through the "accelerated procedure", which can be used by landlords to evict tenants on assured shorthold tenancies. This figure more than trebled from 5,641 in 2010 to 16,440 in 2015.

## Bailiffs

In total 42,728 households in rented accommodation were forcibly removed by bailiffs - this is understood to be the highest number since records began in 2000.

Landlord claims to repossess their properties because tenants had fallen into arrears fell between 2002 and 2010, before rising to their current level - 53 per cent higher than 2010 and 2 per cent higher than 2014.

But even these frightening figures do not reveal the full picture as many tenants leave before this stage is reached - either to avoid the indignity of being "kicked out" or because they have reached an agreement to leave.

And where tenants live in the country has a big impact on having action taken against them, no doubt fuelled by higher demand and higher rental values in the South East of England.

Tenants in London were the most likely to lose their homes, as 16 of the 20 boroughs with the highest proportion of landlord repossessions are in

the capital, with Newham in East London recording the highest rate at 191 repossessions for every 100,000 households in the area.

## Possession claims down!

Meanwhile in what appears to be a counter intuitive set of figures, the number of possession claims started by landlords actually fell during the year to 148,043.

**"Meanwhile in what appears to be a counter intuitive set of figures, the number of possession claims started by landlords actually fell during the year to 148,043. Of these, 90,317 claims were started by social landlords, 20,063 by private landlords and 37,663 were accelerated claims"**

Of these, 90,317 claims were started by social landlords, 20,063 by private landlords and 37,663 were accelerated claims, which are usually only used by private landlords.

The Ministry of Justice figures show social landlords have reduced the number of possession cases they instigated from almost 108,000 claims in 2013, to 100,776 in 2014 and then down to 90,317 claims last year.

It is likely this fall in possession claim figures (back down to 2011 levels) is due to social landlords working more closely with tenants to prevent rent arrears building up in the face of welfare reform changes and in helping tenants to manage their finances better. Ongoing welfare benefit freezes and cuts will test the ability of landlords to collect rent, keep arrears down and cases out of the courts.

## Free Wi-Fi for silver surfers in Salford

Silver surfers in Salford can now benefit from free Wi-Fi. Housing association Salix Homes, which owns more than 8,300 properties across central Salford, has teamed up with Salford Council to have free Wi-Fi installed at its eight sheltered housing complexes for the elderly across the city.

The initiative comes after Salford was awarded £2 million from the Department of Culture Media and Sport to install free Wi-Fi access points in public buildings including libraries and community centres.

Studies have found that there are 7.4 million people in the UK who have never used the internet, of which 6.3 million are over the age of 55.

Sue Sutton, executive director of operations at Salix Homes, said: "In today's digital era it's more important than ever that we make it as simple as possible for our tenants to get online and more importantly stay online.

"Our aim is to get as many of our older tenants on the internet as possible, which we hope will help combat the feelings of isolation which are so common for older people and enable them to reconnect with their families and friends online.

"It's important that everyone, no matter how old you are has the skills to get online. It's wonderful to see how eager people are to take part and they are certainly proving you are never too old to learn."

Salix Homes has been running Silver Surfer basic IT sessions for tenants at its sheltered housing complexes, which have proved a real hit with the older generation who are eager to embrace the digital revolution and explore the online world.

Salix Homes tenant Hilda Ellis, 73, from Langworthy, said: "My family bought me a tablet computer because they said I had to get into the modern world, but I didn't have a clue what to do with it at first - I didn't even know how to turn it on.

"The IT sessions have been brilliant, I've learnt how to email and how to Skype and now I can use it to keep in contact with my family in Australia."

Councillor Gena Merrett, Assistant Mayor for Housing and Environment at Salford City Council, added: "Free Wi-Fi is fantastic news for people in sheltered accommodation and it will make a positive difference to their lives.

"The use of the internet has exploded in recent years and we want to make sure people have the connectivity they need. People can now communicate with family and friends for free, pay bills online and research prices before making a purchase."

## Five-year record of possession claims by social landlords

Year	Number
2011	85,519
2012	92,189
2013	107,893
2014	100,776
2015	90,317



## New pressure group lobbies for more housing and jobs in the north

A group of 20 housing associations operating in the north of England have formed a new group, Homes for the North, which will work on producing bespoke solutions for communities facing a raft of problems.

**“Among the early beneficiaries of their work could be students and recent graduates who are currently finding it difficult to get a suitable home and a job in the region”**

Among the early beneficiaries of their work could be students and recent graduates who are currently finding it difficult to get a suitable home

and a job in the region. The new group are looking at how to build homes to appeal to graduates based on a research project with northern universities.

Mark Henderson, Chief Executive of Home Group and chair of Homes for the North, said tackling the UK's housing problems started by recognising that a 'one size fits all' approach is destined to fail.

He added that the new group was keen to look at how to retain university graduates and young people in the region. It could look at offering shorter tenures for a younger, more mobile demographic, amid concerns that there is a lack of housing options for younger people in the north of England.

At the group's launch event, Mr Henderson said housing should be part of the devolution deals being offered by the Chancellor George Osborne, to “attract and retain the best and the brightest to work in the north”.



## NAPIT issues Amendment 3 update for consumers

NAPIT has created a leaflet for installers to present to their customers on the recent changes brought about by Amendment 3 to the 17th Edition Wiring Regulations relating to consumer units.

From 1 January 2016, it became mandatory for any consumer units installed or replaced in domestic properties to be made of or enclosed by a non-combustible material, ferrous metal such as steel. Existing plastic consumer units can be retained for alterations and additions, unless they show signs of thermal damage or the

manufacturer's design has been altered.

“As we spent much of last year preparing installers for Amendment 3, it seemed a logical step to also provide information for householders to get to grips with the changes,” said Frank Bertie, the NAPIT Trade Association Chairman and NAPIT Technical Director.

NAPIT's leaflet is available as a free download from the membership website for installers to print off as many copies as they need to distribute to current and potential customers: [www.napit.org.uk/downloads](http://www.napit.org.uk/downloads)

## Number of companies holding UK properties revealed by HMRC

Analysis of recently released official government statistics reveals the number of homes owned in company names. Since 2012, the government has sought to discourage owner occupiers buying in corporate wrappers (otherwise known as Non-Natural Persons or NNPs).

To disincentivise corporate purchases and, at the same time, raise much needed revenue for the UK economic recovery, the government introduced hefty tax charges on properties worth over £2 million. This included the introduction of a 15 per cent slab-style Stamp Duty payment and an Annual Tax on Enveloped Dwellings (ATED) which increases by price bands to as much as £218,000 per annum. In the December 2014 Autumn Statement, the government quietly increased the original rates by 50 per cent. It is also extending the properties captured to values starting from £500,000.

However, until the release of this latest data, which records the number of properties paying the ATED to December 2015, the extent of the perceived problem has been merely speculation. An analysis by London Central Portfolio (LCP) reveals that just 3,990 properties are owned by NNPs for owner-occupation nationwide, or just 0.02 per cent of the UK's total housing stock. Properties bought by NNPs for commercial purposes (e.g. rental and development) which do not pay the tax but are required to notify HMRC, amount to just 3,040 properties nationwide.

### The headline statistics:

- HMRC data shows that just 3,990 properties nationwide are currently owned in NNPs for owner-occupation.
- 63 per cent are valued between £2 million - £5 million, 23 per cent between £5 million - £10 million, 14 per cent above £10 million.
- The band for properties over £20 million, which would most likely be aligned to so-called 'oligarch mansions', includes only 230 properties.
- In terms of value, total ATED tax receipts for 2015 totalled £116 million to the benefit of the UK economy.
- The total number of properties bought over £10 million recorded by Land Registry since the ATED tax was introduced in 2012 has increased five times from 13 to 65.





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# Collegiate AC breathes new life into Derby's student accommodation offering

A former Derby council office block is being transformed into a residential development that will become the city's most luxurious student accommodation as part of an exciting new regeneration scheme.

Roman House, situated on Friar Gate in the

heart of Derby, has previously been home to the city council but will soon become home to a new generation of students studying at the University of Derby.

Fitting into a wider regeneration programme of the Cathedral Quarter, the change of use of the property has been granted following an alteration in the Permitted Development Rights (PDR) that allows former office buildings to be turned into residential dwellings.

Roman House will be managed by Collegiate AC and is part of a much-anticipated expansion by the company that sees them launch 11 new projects this year.

While Collegiate AC is prevalent in many of the top university cities throughout the UK, this will be the first Collegiate AC site in Derby. The scheme, exclusively available for 128 residents, will provide a new standard of student accommodation in the city, offering a wide range

of luxurious facilities. These will include an on-site cinema, private gym, social hub and seminar rooms, alongside high-speed broadband and Wi-Fi to ease every aspect of student life.

The newly developed Roman House will also place student security as a key priority, with features that include electronic door entry, an out-of-hours service, an on-site manager and CCTV to provide peace of mind round the clock.

Heriberto Cuanalo, CEO of Collegiate AC, explains how much they are looking forward to launching in Derby: "We are proud to be able to now offer students at the University of Derby the option of a luxurious student living experience, and see Roman House transformed into a desirable and sought-after city centre residential scheme. We are very much looking forward to welcoming the first residents to Roman House and hope they will love their new surroundings as much as we do."

"The newly developed Roman House will also place student security as a key priority, with features that include electronic door entry, an out-of-hours service, an on-site manager and CCTV"



## European reform extends the wait for social housing

Applicants for social housing will have to live in an area for four years instead of the current two, according to draft legislation on European reform.

The white paper, *The Best of Both Worlds – Our Special Status in a Reformed EU*, makes clear that the change in the "residency test" will not just apply to new migrants but also anyone moving within Britain. Its publication in late February follows the Prime Minister's negotiations with other European leaders to change the country's relationship with the European Union.

"This is aimed at ensuring that sufficient affordable housing is available to those among the local population who are on low incomes or otherwise disadvantaged and who would find it particularly difficult to find a home on the open market. We will extend this qualifying period to four years."

The Foreign Office says that existing guidance to local authorities already makes it clear they should require a potential tenant to live in the area for at least two years before they are considered for social housing with councils or housing associations.

## Grainger's profits on the rise

The country's biggest private sector landlord has made a busy start to the year announcing big increases in income, major changes in its future direction and selling off its German business.

Grainger plc, the UK's largest listed residential landlord says it is experiencing continuing levels of high demand for its wholly owned and managed private rented sector homes and strong growth in regulated tenancy rents.

Rental increases in the past year for owned and managed PRS homes averaged 7.8 per cent on new lets (excluding refurbishments) and 3.6 per cent on renewals. Including refurbishments, rents for new lets increased on average by 10.0 per cent. Increases for regulated tenancy properties, where biennial rent reviews have been completed in the period, averaged 6.3 per cent.

### Activity

Grainger reported that it received £39 million from the sale of vacant properties in 2015, compared to £26 million in the previous year. It also has a sales pipeline currently valued at £83 million.

Over the next four years to 2020, Grainger expects to invest over £850 million in its private rented business, through acquisitions, developments and refurbishments to its existing stock.

In a bid to simplify and streamline the business, Grainger is continuing to dispose of its properties in Germany. New rented schemes being developed in England include the building of 600 new private rented homes at Salford Quays and buying a 25 per cent equity interest in Kew Bridge Court, in west London.





# Mega mergers move forward while sector splits over code

The social housing sector is in at least two minds about the new merger code, while a number of big deals are proceeding which could significantly change the look of the HA sector for years to come.

Responding to pressure from government ministers and the Homes & Communities Agency (for HAs to improve efficiency and build more homes), the sector's trade body, the NHF, drew up a voluntary merger code to guide its members through the process. But just like its actions over the voluntary deal on extending Right to Buy to HA tenants, the NHF's members appear to be split on whether a good job has been done or not.

A survey of 107 HA chief executives by Inside Housing is showing:

- 30 per cent of HAs are very likely to sign up to the code;
- 27 per cent of HAs are likely to sign up to the code;
- 35 per cent of HAs are unlikely to sign up to

the code; and

- 8 per cent of HAs are very unlikely to sign up to the code.

The National Housing Federation claims they are neutral on the issue, but a sizeable number of organisations appear to think their trade body is actually in favour of mergers. Claims and counter-claims made on both sides are making this a heated debate. It is unclear how the government and HCA will respond if the merger code is rejected by a big minority of HAs.

While this debate goes on, several actual merger deals are taking shape and the potential size of the resulting businesses will see them dwarf many of the current big landlords. They could also see the new combined associations challenging the big volume house builders as developers.

## Mega deals

Publicly known deals affecting several hundred thousand homes include:

The biggest potential deal is between Affinity Sutton and Circle. If it proceeds it will create a new HA with 127,000 homes, a combined turnover of £750 million a year and plans to build 5,000 new homes a year. It has recently been announced that Keith Exford would be chief executive of the new landlord, with Mark Rogers as his deputy.

Mr Exford said: "The merger of Affinity Sutton and Circle provides a unique opportunity to create a truly national housing organisation with increased capacity to respond to the housing crisis and build more homes; contribute to the regeneration agenda and deliver major projects, at the same time as enhancing the lives of our residents and delivering excellent services."

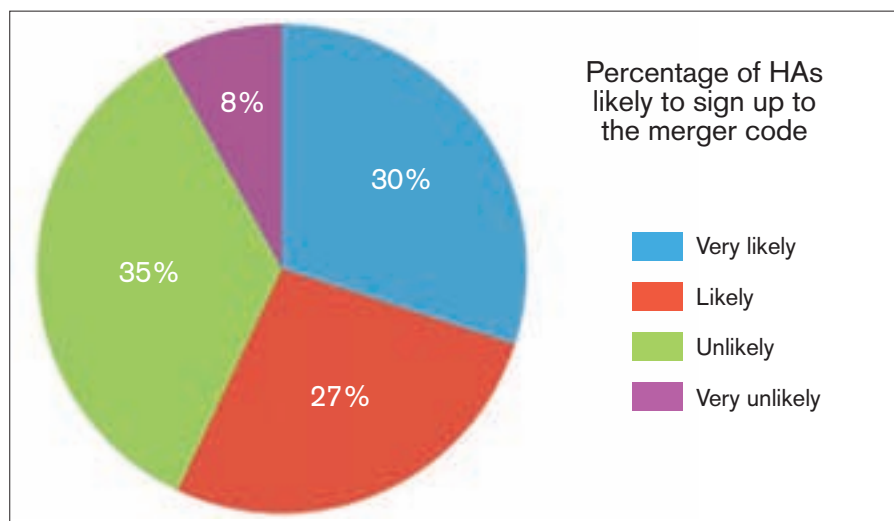
Also in merger talks to create a 56,000 home landlord and the largest social housing provider in the South West are Sovereign and Spectrum Housing Group. Sovereign has 38,000 homes while Spectrum Housing Group owns 18,000 homes and manages a further 45,000 homes through its maintenance company.

The two HAs have been exploring the merger since last year, after talks about stock swaps. It said that the "challenging policy landscape" meant it made sense to look at a merger. If both boards approve the move, the merger is expected to take place by the end of the year.

Just behind them in size terms would be the new 47,000 home HA to emerge from combining Genesis and Thames Valley. The merged organisation will build 3,000 new homes per year. Both boards have accepted the initial business case for the proposed merger and they are moving to the due diligence stage and looking at how to integrate the two organisations.

Neil Hadden, Chief Executive at Genesis, said: "We now move onto the next phase. Our focus must be and remains building more homes to address the housing crisis. That is the reason for this proposed merger."

The merger trend is also having an impact north of the border with tenants of 300 home landlord Barony, voting in favour of joining the very large Wheatley Housing Group, whose members provide homes for over 200,000 people and several members of Sanctuary Scotland are merging to form a single HA with almost 6,000 homes.



## Under-occupation rates fall in rented housing

The proportion of renting households who are under-occupying their homes has fallen to the lowest level on record.

Figures from the English Housing Survey show that 8.6 per cent of social housing households were under-occupying their homes by two bedrooms or more in 2014/15. This is roughly 338,000 households and is the lowest level since 1995/96 when the survey statistics were first collected.

In the private rented sector under-occupation levels have also fallen, but not by so much and they stood at 13.1 per cent, which is still equivalent to over 550,000 households.

But these welcome falls are not being replicated

by private homeowners, where more than half of owner-occupiers are under-occupying their homes at a level of 50.7 per cent – the highest figure on record.

The proportion of all households that are overcrowded remains at 3 per cent, the same level it has been for last three years.

It is too early to say whether changes in welfare benefit policies such as the bedroom tax, are having an effect on the figures. It could be that under-occupying rates are falling because more adult children are staying at home with their parents for longer because they cannot afford to move out.





# Legionella death from Council care home stay results in large fine

**R**eadling Borough Council has been fined £100,000 after being prosecuted by the Health & Safety Executive over the death of a pensioner, exposed to legionella at one of its care homes.

Mr Lewis Payne, who was 95-years-old arrived at the council run care facility, The Willows, for recuperation. He had previously been in hospital having suffered a broken leg and was attending The Willows to receive intermediate care before returning to his own home.

However, during his stay he began feeling unwell and was re-admitted to hospital where a test proved positive for the presence of Legionella. He

underwent treatment for the disease, but later died from pneumonia.

The court was told the council's arrangements had not been robust enough in a number of areas:

- The Legionella training for key personnel at The Willows was significantly below the standard required;
- There were inadequate temperature checks and some of those done with respect to Thermostatic Mixer Valves (TMVs) were done incorrectly;
- Showers were not descaled and disinfected quarterly as required; and
- Flushing of little used outlets was reliant on one member of staff and there was no procedure for

this to be done in the absence of that member of staff.

## Systemic failings

HSE said the failings were systemic and continued over a period of time, with a history of legionella problems at the home. Reading Borough Council admitted breaching Section 3(1) of Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and was fined £100,000 with £20,000 costs at Reading Crown Court.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Kelly Nichols said: "Reading's failings were systemic and continued over a period of time. There was a history of legionella problems at the home. The control and management arrangements were not robust and the legionella training of key personnel fell significantly below the required standard.

"The risks from legionella in nursing and care homes and the required control measures to manage those risks have been known and publicised in HSE publications since May 2000. It is really disappointing to find a local authority not managing those risks. It is important for all care providers to ensure they are managing the risks from hot and cold water systems with respect to both legionella and scalding risks especially due to likely exposure of more vulnerable people."



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# Social landlords punished for health and safety failings

**T**wo different social landlords have been taken to task for putting their tenants at risk over failings in fire safety and completing gas service checks on time.

London based ALMO, Lewisham Homes was fined £40,000 for failing to install secure fire doors and carry out regular risk assessments before a fire that caused the deaths of two women in a tower block. It also had to pay £23,407 in court costs.

Two hundred miles away in Lancashire, Bolton at Home, was criticised by its regulator, the Homes & Communities Agency, for failing to carry out gas safety checks on 160 properties despite identifying and reporting the problem itself.

## Lewisham fire

The Lewisham case arose when a tenant set fire to her flat on the 16th floor which then spread to a neighbouring flat and resulted in the deaths of two women. Two other residents whose flat had a self-locking fire door escaped unharmed. The tenant was sentenced to two counts of manslaughter and is serving a 16-year prison sentence.

At an earlier hearing, Lewisham Homes pleaded guilty to failing to maintain fire doors at some of the flats and failure to carry out regular risk assessments, in breach of the Fire Safety Order 2005. At the time of the fire in 2011, it had been over two years since a fire risk assessment had been carried out. Assessments are meant to be conducted annually.

At Woolwich Crown Court, Judge Justice Christopher Hehir ordered the ALMO to pay £40,000 plus £23,407 in costs. Justice Hehir said the fine was "much less" than he would fine "a large company generating profit" in recognition that the ALMO provides a "public good".

Justice Hehir said the failure to ensure all flats had functioning self-closing fire doors was a "thoroughly dangerous situation... which had in fact existed for some time". He said high-risk blocks of flats "can quickly become a death trap" when a fire breaks out.

The judge praised the ALMO for its "full co-operation" with the fire authorities and police investigation, and for its "full compliance" with the enforcement notice that was issued.

A spokesperson for Lewisham Homes said: "We accept our failings under the fire safety regulations and take residents' safety very seriously. We have

been determined to learn lessons and invested heavily year on year to continually improve fire safety, and have made significant progress over the past five years."

Since 2011, it has spent £10.8 million to improve fire safety standards, carries out regular reviews of risk assessments and has recruited specialist fire safety staff.

**"London based ALMO, Lewisham Homes was fined £40,000 for failing to install secure fire doors and carry out regular risk assessments before a fire that caused the deaths of two women"**

## Missed gas safety checks

In a regulatory notice, the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) said 18,000-home Bolton at Home breached the regulator's 'serious detriment' threshold for intervening on tenant-related cases.

In mid-October last year, Bolton at Home contacted the regulator to say it had found 160 of its properties to be without a valid gas safety certificate. As a result the landlord breached the regulator's 'home standard' and there was the potential for serious detriment to Bolton at Home's tenants.

"In some cases the certificates had been expired for a number of years," the HCA notice said. "The breach exposed a number of tenants to the potential of serious harm for lengthy periods."

Bolton at Home has since completed the outstanding gas safety checks and confirmed to the HCA that all of its properties now have valid certificates. The landlord has instigated an internal and an external investigation of the issue and has developed an action plan to make sure the situation does not happen again.

A spokesperson for the association said: "Our instant response was to gas service each property and instigate an independent investigation, which identified the cause to be a data issue. We have since put processes in place to ensure this does not happen again. The HCA has confirmed to us that no further action is required."

# Newark and Sherwood Homes invest in tech, enhancing customer service

**H**ousing provider Newark and Sherwood Homes has responded to its tenants and stakeholder's needs, investing in a brand new telephony system.

The new system aims to enhance Newark and Sherwood Homes' tenants and stakeholders experience when making an enquiry, helping to decrease the average waiting time for users.

The system's soft launch in December is already achieving benefits for customers by enabling calls to be answered more quickly and it is planned that the benefits will continue to grow as customers get familiar with the system.

Lynne Collier, customer access manager at Newark and Sherwood Homes, said: "We could not be more pleased with the new service, which is an excellent resource for our tenants and stakeholders."

**"The system's soft launch in December is already achieving benefits for customers by enabling calls to be answered more quickly and it is planned that the benefits will continue to grow"**

"When our customer access team was established in 2012 we inherited our previous system, which over time no longer met the growing needs of our tenants and stakeholders, who needed diverse responses through one telephony system."

The new system also marks a critical milestone in the development of Newark and Sherwood Homes, which is currently evolving its brand and website to further appeal to and support its customers.

Lynne added: "Thanks to the new system, we are able to better equip ourselves for every call, making sure we have all of the necessary information to hand to support our callers."

The new system has been divided into multiple subjects: repairs, housing, rent, Lifeline services and council enquiries.

## HMM Stats

Back in 2004-5, just 30 per cent of households in the private rented sector were families with dependent children, representing 700,000 households. Now there are around 1.6 million families renting privately in England, an increase of 912,000 more households with children in the private rented sector than a decade earlier.



# The Community Action Partnership (CAP)

The Community Action Partnership (CAP) is a joint initiative between British Gas and fuel poverty charity, National Energy Action. Over the past two years, the partnership has helped housing and community groups spot and help people struggling with energy bills.

Here Christine Tate, head of corporate responsibility at British Gas, talks about best practice for housing professionals so they can help residents have a warm and working home

**T**he first step is to identify who needs help. Housing management teams are well placed to do this, and there are a number of questions that you can ask to see if they extra support. For example:

- They may tell you they are worried they are about to get cut off
- They may make comments such as, "my house is damp" or "I always feel ill"
- They may only let you into one room, i.e. the room they are heating
- The curtains may be closed during the day to keep heat in
- Appliances do not appear to be working or are not plugged in
- Food items may be left on a window sill, rather than in the fridge, to keep cool

**"All energy suppliers have a responsibility to work with their customers to find a solution for those struggling with their bills"**

At British Gas we know that if people are in arrears with their energy provider, they are usually behind with other bills. That's why we work with Step Change Debt Charity, which helps people who are having difficulties paying their bills and need advice on how to manage their finances. So far, this has resulted in more than 7,000 referrals to the charity.

It's important to encourage residents to talk to their energy supplier if they are struggling in the first place to see whether they can help.

All energy suppliers have a responsibility to work with their customers to find a solution for those



struggling with their bills. We take this responsibility seriously. We contact customers as soon as we see any signs of payment difficulty and so we can help with budgeting and payment plans.

Support is also available from organisations such as the British Gas Energy Trust, an independent charity that exists to help people struggling with bills to clear their debts through grants and financial advice, regardless of whether or not they are a British Gas customer.

## What can housing professionals do to help?

We know that showing people how to use energy more efficiently can help, for example, by turning the lights off in an empty room or only wash clothes when there's a full load. Changing people's

behaviour in the home is often the most effective way to help a household manage their energy bills.

People can make changes to their home to make it warmer and more efficient. This includes using insulation strips on windows and doors, fitting covers to the keyholes and letterbox and using underlay with carpets.

There's also a range of financial support available to help eligible households maximise their income and manage bills.

Housing professionals should encourage residents to check they're claiming all the welfare and other benefits they are entitled to, such as the Home Heating Cost Reduction Obligation, through which eligible households can receive a more efficient, free replacement boiler.

## Making an impact

The housing sector plays a pivotal role in improving housing standards and reducing fuel poverty, no one organisation has either all the answers, or the resources, to tackle it single-handedly.

Over many years we've learnt that the most effective way to reduce fuel poverty is by working in partnership with a range of organisations – from energy suppliers and charities to local authorities and housing management teams.

By working together, we can make a real and far-reaching impact, and we hope that schemes like CAP will play a key part in alleviating fuel poverty for good.

For more information on the Community Action Partnership visit: [www.nea.org.uk/see-us-in-action/community-action-partnership](http://www.nea.org.uk/see-us-in-action/community-action-partnership)





## Groundbreaking training partnership launched

A groundbreaking new partnership between the Residential Landlords Association (RLA) and the TDS Charitable Foundation will help charities and other organisations offer free training on how to rent properties.

Developed by the RLA and funded by the TDS Charitable Foundation, the train2rent scheme will see groups such as housing associations, trusts and residents' groups given access to specially created training packs, including all the materials needed to deliver a course about renting a property.

There will be separate packs for landlords and tenants, which will include the course presentation and workbook, a timetable for the trainer and practical exercises.

The landlord resource will include details of legal responsibilities, Right to Rent checks, protecting deposits and starting and ending a tenancy.

The tenant resource covers topics including the legal rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants, how to find a property and different types of tenancies.

Robert Maccabe, training and development

manager for the RLA said: "The Residential Landlords Association is delighted to be working in partnership with the TDS Charitable Foundation on this project.

"This is a great opportunity for small organisations and groups to raise standards and created better working relationships as the private rented sector grows."

Commenting on the launch, Chair of the TDS Charitable Foundation Martin Partington said: "It has been a common theme in the bids we have received that small organisations have wanted funding to produce educational materials or host a workshop. The Trustees felt that our money was better spent commissioning a set of materials that these groups could use, free of charge, to deliver the same outcome.

"We are very pleased that tenant and landlord groups throughout England will now be able to benefit from the training packs, and approach their tenancies better informed."

The course applies to properties located in England and the licence to use the resources will last for 30 days. Visit [www.train2rent.co.uk](http://www.train2rent.co.uk)

## Prime central London property rises from the dead with stamp duty deadline boost

Leading online estate agent, eMoov.co.uk, has released its latest insight into the demand for prime central London property over the £1 million mark.

eMoov's Prime Central London Property Index records the change in supply and demand for property above £1 million across London's most prestigious areas, by monitoring the total number of properties sold in comparison to those on sale.

The latest index shows that the tattered corpse of PCL property demand has risen from the dead during the start of 2016, increasing by +16 per cent, now at 13 per cent overall. This is the highest level of property demand felt in prime central London since June of last year, with the market having cooled consistently since.

Despite the slow decline of London's high-end market in 2015, demand property in prime central London has been resurrected in areas ahead of April's Stamp Duty changes.

For those looking for a property over the £1 million mark, that's an additional charge of at least 13 per cent of the property's value, with April's impending deadline seeing many rush to secure a sale before the changes are implemented.

As a result, some pockets of prime central London have seen demand levels explode since the end of last year, with Maida Vale top of the pile in terms of change up +281 per cent, with demand now at 16 per cent. Primrose Hill has seen the

second highest change, up +169 per cent, closely followed by Chiswick where demand has increased +128 per cent. At 26 per cent, Chiswick is also the hottest spot in prime central London where property demand is concerned.

St Johns Wood (+119 per cent), Marylebone (+55 per cent), Knightsbridge (+48 per cent), Fulham (+28 per cent), Chelsea (+5 per cent) and Belsize Park (+5 per cent) have also enjoyed an uplift in demand since Q4 of 2015.

But it isn't just an increase in buyer activity ahead of April's changes. eMoov recorded that the level of stock across the major portals has more than doubled since the end of last year from 5,729 to 13,481, as savvy homeowners look to increase their property price potential, amidst the scramble to buy before April.

But it's not all good news for homeowners across prime central London, with a number of areas continuing to remain six feet under in the coldest depths of the market. Notting Hill has fared worse so far in 2016, down -42 per cent after a slight revival at the end of last year. Mayfair has seen the second largest drop (-36 per cent) and, with demand at just 5 per cent, is also the coldest spot in prime central London.

Belgravia (-16 per cent), Holland Park (-15 per cent), Fitzrovia (-15 per cent), Islington (-3 per cent) and Kensington (-1 per cent) have also suffered a drop in property demand.

## HMOs remodelled to meet new demand

Dorset's biggest private landlord has turned another of its 'houses of multiple occupancy' (HMOs) into self-contained flats as it continues to remodel its housing stock to meet local need.

DWP Housing Partnership invested £350,000 in the Westbourne property in Norwich Avenue West that now has 11 flats rather than multiple rooms with shared facilities.

In the last two years, the company has converted 75 bedsits and rooms housing over 100 tenants into self-contained units.

There is a growing number of local workers looking for homes and DWP is adapting its stock to supply that demand.

The accommodation brings newly refurbished self-contained rental properties into the reach of modest wage earners.

No tenants have been left without a home during this rolling programme of improvement which is set to continue.

Steve Wells from DWP said: "We are committed to updating our housing stock and turning HMOs into self-contained flats or back into houses.

"We are looking at the long-term future because it is better for ourselves and our clients if they stay longer in our properties, and we are encouraging this by providing the accommodation people want.

"Although the number of tenants we can accommodate in our remodelled HMOs will of course decrease, we are making up for that by building brand new purpose-built flats.

"The demand for our properties has never been greater and over the last five years we have invested more than £20 million in new developments and millions more converting our HMOs."





# Landlord satisfaction across UK highest in Wales

**M**ore renters in Wales are satisfied with their landlord than in any other part of the UK according to new findings from the National Landlords Association (NLA).

The poll found that 92 per cent of renters in Wales said they were satisfied with their landlord. Tenants in the East Midlands were second on the list, with 83 per cent satisfaction.

A stark regional difference in satisfaction exists on either side of the Pennines. Eighty two per cent of tenants in the North West were satisfied with their landlord whereas 67 per cent of tenants in the North East were satisfied with their landlord – the lowest satisfaction rate in the whole of the UK.

On average across the UK, eight in 10 tenants

(79 per cent) were satisfied with their landlord.

Richard Lambert, Chief Executive Officer at the NLA, said: "Good landlords make up the majority of the market so it's not surprising that the majority of tenants are satisfied.

"However, this is only part of the solution and both central and local government must also commit more resources to tackling poor standards and weeding out bad landlords".



"Private renting is far from the insecure, uncertain and unhappy picture that it is often made out to be, and these findings will help to reassure existing renters and those looking to make their home in the private sector.

"The NLA provides a range of training and accreditation opportunities for landlords in order to help them develop and improve standards, which is good news for the minority of tenants who are dissatisfied.

Region	Landlord Satisfaction
Wales	92
East Midlands	83
North West	82
South West	82
South East	80
Scotland	79
West Midlands	79
Yorkshire and the Humber	73
London	72
East of England	71
North East	67

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# Financial stability in the social housing sector continues

The social housing sector remains in a strong financial position with access to sufficient finance, according to the latest quarterly survey published by the Homes and Communities Agency on 2 March.

The survey shows registered providers' financial position on the 31 December 2015 and includes forecasts up to 31 December 2016. The quarterly survey is one of the ways in which the regulator monitors and reports on the financial health of the sector as part of its robust approach to supporting the sector's financial viability and helping to support providers' contribution to new housing supply.

The 2015/16 Q3 survey (October to December) reports that the sector has access to sufficient finance, with £14 billion in undrawn facilities and £5.6 billion held in cash, and with 97 per cent of providers having sufficient debt facilities to last for more than 12 months.

The sector continues to forecast strong operating cashflows. Cash interest cover over the 12 months up to 31 December 2016 is projected to be 184 per cent. Over this period forecast net operating cashflow is £5.7 billion. This includes £3.0 billion current asset sales.

Cash is forecast to reduce to £4.1 billion over the next 12 months, and most of the sector's forecast debt requirement over the next 12

months continues to be to fund development programmes. Cashflow forecasts show that the sector plans to invest £9.1 billion in housing supply over the next 12 months.

Figures from the survey demonstrate continued investor confidence in the sector. New facilities arranged in the quarter totalled £1.2 billion (September: £1.8 billion) of which 55 per cent came from banks; capital market funding contributed 45 per cent; two own name bond issues raised £500 million.

Fiona MacGregor, Director of Regulation at the HCA, said: "It is encouraging that registered providers continue to report that they have access to sufficient finance. The December Quarterly Survey shows that providers are forecasting investment of over £9 billion in additional housing supply over the coming year, so it will be important that providers ensure that secured facilities are available to cover their forecast drawdowns over the next 12 months.

"Providers are also forecasting a significant pipeline of properties for sale over the next 18 months both for shared ownership, and increasingly for outright market sale. We expect providers to manage their development pipelines carefully and will continue to monitor sales forecasts and seek assurance if a provider reports a large increase in unsold properties.

"In aggregate, providers continue to have headroom on available collateral, however, there have been significant movements in swap rates since December and individual providers must ensure they have sufficient available security should there be an increase in mark to market exposure.

**"The 2015/16 Q3 survey (October to December) reports that the sector has access to sufficient finance, with £14 billion in undrawn facilities and £5.6 billion held in cash, and with 97 per cent of providers having sufficient debt facilities to last for more than 12 months"**

"We continue to engage with these providers to seek assurance that they are managing the associated risks, in particular that they will be able to meet any potential additional cash calls."

## £600,000 facelift for Salford's 'steel' homes

A major improvement project to modernise more than 60 steel-built homes in Salford is gathering pace.

Housing association Salix Homes, which owns more than 8,300 homes in central Salford, is working alongside Oldham-based building specialists Emanuel Whittaker to transform 67 homes on the Weaste Steel estate.

The estate, built in 1948, is made up of pre-fabricated-style homes, known as British steel framed houses, which were designed and produced by the British Iron and Steel Federation (BISF).

The non-traditional method of construction became popular following the Second World War as part of a major homebuilding plan to address the housing shortage at that time, as the properties could be built much quicker than traditional brick-built houses.

The £600,000 renovation project will see the properties fitted with new kitchens, bathrooms, windows, doors, electrics and heating systems, as well as given an external facelift and re-painted.

Mark Foster, head of investment at Salix Homes, said: "These steel-framed homes in Weaste represent a real piece of history, but are in great need of modernisation, so this project marks a key milestone in our £22 million investment programme that we are delivering to homes and communities across the city over the next



two years.

"Unlike other types of pre-fab homes, these steel-framed houses were built to stand the test of time and have a similar life-expectancy to a traditional brick-built home, but after suffering from lack of investment over the years, we are confident that our improvement programme will ensure these properties are brought back into the 21st century, creating modern and desirable homes that our tenants can continue to be proud of."

Following the transfer of more than 8,300 homes from Salford Council to Salix Homes last

year, the housing provider is carrying out much-needed improvements to 2,200 homes in Salford over the next two years.

John Gallagher, director at Emanuel Whittaker, said: "Modernising these types of properties can be quite complex and requires a different skill set than usual, however, our knowledge and expertise means we are looking forward to tackling this challenging job.

"We will also ensure that we look after the needs of residents during the works to keep disruption to a minimum and maintain our 100 per cent satisfaction rates."



# HA surpluses soar to record levels

**T**he combined surpluses of housing associations has leapt to an eye-watering £3 billion, showing a level of financial strength that government ministers will say justifies action to cut rent levels. Headlines from the 2014/15 accounts for HAs registered with the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA), have shown a social housing sector benefitting from a prolonged period of historically low interest rates and rising house prices. Profits from house sales in particular – whether through the sale of shared ownership tranches or from outright sales – have boomed.

The 332 largest associations recorded a combined surplus (the sector does not like using the term 'profit') of £3 billion for the first time, a whopping 25 per cent increase on the £2.4 billion reported for the previous year. Of this huge figure, one third came from just 20 of the largest stock-owning associations.

Among the highlights from the combined or global accounts:

- Surpluses from all property disposals rose to £501 million from £324 million
- Shared ownership sales surpluses rose by 64 per cent to £239 million
- New homes built increased by 3 per cent% to reach 46,500
- Sales and demolitions amounted to 16,356, down by 5 per cent
- Investment in improving the existing stock reached £1.9 billion
- Rental income rose to £12.2 billion from £11.6 billion
- Borrowing rose to £63.4 billion from £59.3 billion
- The average debt owed on each HA home increased 5 per cent to £23,931

These results will encourage the government to seek more investment in housebuilding by HAs, as well as pushing for greater efficiencies and value for money. Some fear the Government might increase the annual 1 per cent rent cuts to 1.5 or even 2 per cent, creating considerable savings in the Housing Benefit bill.

## Surpluses defended

But HA chief executives and other social housing sector representatives have been quick to highlight that the vast majority of the surpluses are being invested into building more new homes and improving existing homes.

They are telling the politicians and anyone else who will listen, that the surpluses are necessary in order to borrow more money, to deliver on the Government's demands that they 'up their game' and build many more homes for existing tenants and others to buy.

Fiona MacGregor, the HCA's Director of Regulation said "The accounts illustrate the strong performance of the sector in 2013-14 continued into 2014-15. The sector has benefitted from a range of favourable economic conditions and it is encouraging to see the sector overall remained in a solid financial position."

The HCA published combined accounts for all



registered housing associations in England for 2014/15.

"Crucially, this meant that providers were able to focus on the delivery of their key objectives, directing their surpluses and additional private finance into delivery of around 46,500 new homes and investing almost £2 billion into the existing housing stock."

## Efficiencies

Perhaps mindful of criticisms from Government ministers about their performance and aware of suggestions they might be sitting on the surpluses, David Orr from the National Housing Federation defended his members, saying "Because they have made efficiency improvements, associations are better equipped to deal with the challenging financial years ahead."

These challenges will include coping with the annual 1 per cent cuts in rent levels through to 2020 and further cuts in their tenants' welfare benefits, as the Government tries to balance its public expenditure books.

Overall the sector's turnover increased by 4.1

per cent to over £16 billion. The majority of the increase came from the core social housing lettings activity, which was responsible for 84 per cent of turnover. The operating margin also increased from 26 per cent to 28 per cent as costs increased by less than revenues, supporting Mr Orr's statement on efficiency improvements.

Similarly there were a series of small improvements in a number of operating measures as rent losses due to empty properties fell from 1.8 per cent to 1.7 per cent, bad debts fell from 1.0 per cent to 0.8 per cent and current tenant rent arrears fell from 4.7 per cent to 4.6 per cent. As the speed of welfare reforms being introduced ramps up it will be interesting to see if this trend can be continued in this year and next.

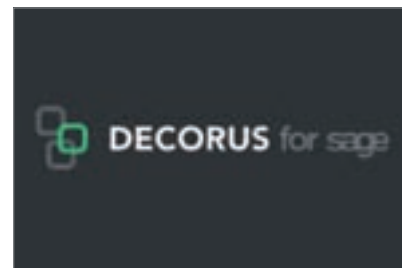
However, this is unlikely to stop the government from seeking further cuts in HA income from rents, while pushing them to increase output through building more homes for sale and rent. As regulator of the sector, the HCA will try to ensure these twin goals do not overstretch HA resources, making them vulnerable to future changes in financial conditions such as interest rate rises.



# Editor's Product Focus

## Visionbase Software

Decorus for Sage is property management software with a difference. Equipped with the tools to manage large portfolios efficiently and economically, its advanced features and integration with Sage make it a cost-effective addition to any team as financials are in a format recognised by over 90 per cent of accountants without any additional workload. The powerful functions in Decorus save time, money and resources allowing users to manage and grow their business. Visit the Decorus website for more information.



## Cistermiser

Combimate, the domestic scale prevention system from Cistermiser, not only eliminates hard water limescale from forming, it also protects against aggressive soft water corroding systems and appliances. The Combimate system can be installed to protect either a whole house supply or single appliance installations and has an auto-shut off feature. It can be used with any flow-through boiler. With just an annual Combiphos top up and no need to fit a separate drinking water tap, Combimate is a credible alternative to a traditional water softener.

## ABGO

ABGO is now distributing carbon monoxide (CO) alarms. Detecting CO is key to keeping you and your family safe. CO is an extremely dangerous gas that's emitted when fuels such as gas, logs or coal are burned inefficiently and a CO alarm are the only devices that will alert you to a CO leak and are now a legal requirement in all privately rented homes, after new legislation in October 2015. ABGO stock and distribute to the trade, oil, gas and solid fuel heating products and spares for the domestic, industrial and commercial markets.



## CRL becomes member of CML

Structural defects insurance provider CRL has become an associate member of the Council of Mortgage Lenders (CML). CRL elected to join the CML as part of its ongoing commitment to supporting good practice within the UK's property sector. In doing so CRL has become one of 90 associate members who collaborate, collect and share best practice on behalf of members with the organisations, government departments, and commentators who have an interest in the UK's £1.3 trillion mortgage market. Steve Mansour, CEO, CRL Management Limited, said: "CRL elected to join the CML as an associate member as part of its commitment to supporting the property sector generally. We intend to be extremely active associate members as we recognise the good work that the CML do in bringing the industry together, specifically in their role acting as the voice of the mortgage industry in the UK. CRL is committed to working with mortgage lenders to ensure that the best possible structural insurance options are available to all residential mortgage customers in the UK."

020 7127 5198 [www.c-r-l.com](http://www.c-r-l.com)



## VELUX® hits the road with national tour

Leading roof window manufacturer, the VELUX Group, is on the road to unveil its new white-painted roof window range to customers. The VELUX 2016 Tour will visit 250 venues across the UK from until late July to give installers and suppliers a first look at the new white-painted roof window range, developed to meet contemporary demand for an alternative to traditional pine. Installers attending the event can win over £75,000 of rewards and prizes on the day including a brand new Vauxhall Vivaro van worth over £20,000, Makita Drill Sets and iPad minis. Everyone who pre-registers and attends an event will receive an instant win scratch card with a guaranteed VELUX Reward worth between £5 and £50. For every VELUX white-painted roof window bought in April and May, customers will receive £25 worth of reward vouchers, redeemable at M&S, Argos, Pizza Express, Thomas Cook and Ticketmaster. The new white-painted roof window range from Velux will be available nationwide from April. To find your nearest event or to pre-register attendance visit the website.

01592 778 225 [www.velux.co.uk/2016tour](http://www.velux.co.uk/2016tour)



# Mapei announces its 2016 ceramic, resilient and EWI training course dates

**M**apei is pleased to announce its 2016 ceramic, resilient and EWI training course dates, which are available to view on its website. All courses are free of charge and will be held in the newly refurbished Mapei Training Centre facility in Halesowen, West Midlands.

The training courses take place between 9am and 4pm with complimentary buffet lunch and refreshments provided. Each particular course is designed to incorporate both theory and practical sessions and is delivered by Mapei Training Managers. At the end of each course all attendees will receive a Mapei certificate of attendance combined with a Mapei goody bag.

All courses are aimed at installers, distributors, contractors, specifiers and designers. British Standard requirements will be explained within each field for those specialists attending certain courses. Each course will include an introduction to the Mapei group, a Factory Tour and a full explanation of the product ranges, coupled with practical demonstrations across a variety of topics, tailored to fit the training session.

In addition to the general dates, Mapei will offer product knowledge training and assessment towards the TTA Tile Retail Apprenticeship Scheme. Mapei has also taken on students from NSPP Vocational Training to help further expand youngsters educational experience as well as inspire students to reach their potential within the EWI industry.

Trainees are able to develop core competencies by gaining more practical



experience of the products and application techniques. Mapei will also provide bespoke courses for individual companies based on specific requirements involving the use of Mapei products.

Mapei is committed to helping trainees continue to build their knowledge of preparation and their use of new and existing products through to the application process. The company strongly believes in professional development and will therefore continue to

offer training, free of charge. The practical element of the courses allows trainees to use both existing and new products, further expanding the trainees current range of knowledge and skills in a risk free environment.

## Ceramic training course dates:

- Monday 18 April
- Monday 16 May
- Monday 20 June
- Monday 25 July
- Monday 12 September
- Monday 24 October
- Monday 14 November

## EWI training course dates:

- Thursday 14 April
- Thursday 16 June
- Thursday 18 August
- Thursday 13 October
- Thursday 17 November

## Resilient training course dates:

- Tuesday 19 April
- Tuesday 17 May
- Tuesday 21 June
- Tuesday 26 July
- Tuesday 13 September
- Tuesday 25 October
- Tuesday 15 November

For more information on Mapei training dates or to book a place on the training courses please visit the website or contact Mapei directly. Places are limited so early booking is advisable.

0121 508 6970  
[www.mapei.co.uk](http://www.mapei.co.uk)





## Become a TTA Awards sponsor in 2016

There are superb sponsorship opportunities available at this year's The Tile Association Awards. These will enable companies to get pride of place for their brand at the tiling industry event of the year. The Awards are to be held on Saturday 14 May at St John's Hotel and Conference Centre in Solihull. They will recognise the cream of the industry's people, projects and products across 18 categories, in the course of a gala evening. Event sponsorship packages include many benefits, including complimentary tickets, numerous Awards Night branding opportunities, extensive pre- and post-event PR and also the chance to present an award at the event.



0300 365 8453 [www.ttaawards.com](http://www.ttaawards.com)

## Significant air risk in over 1/3 of homes

Vent-Axia, a leader in low carbon ventilation, has welcomed the raised awareness surrounding the importance of good indoor air quality following the latest findings which reveal the significant risk of polluted indoor air in our homes. According to BEAMA, over one third of UK homes are at an elevated or severe risk of having polluted indoor air. The My Health My Home survey revealed that 35 per cent of those surveyed potentially had this risk in varying levels. With many people spending the majority of their time indoors, improvements in indoor air quality must be seen as a priority. Continuous ventilation is a simple solution to air quality problems.



0844 856 0590 [www.vent-axia.com](http://www.vent-axia.com)

## Sentinel's SystemCare wins award

SystemCare, a free service and maintenance initiative from leading water treatment specialist Sentinel, has been named as the Training Initiative of the Year at the AGSM (Association of Gas Safety Managers) Supplier Excellence Awards 2015. At a glittering ceremony staged at the National Motorcycle Museum in Solihull, industry judges deemed SystemCare as the clear winner in a toughly fought category, highlighting the initiative's ability to ensure best practice water treatment amongst housing associations and installers. SystemCare has been proven to promote peak heating system performance. For more information, visit the Sentinel website.



01928 704330 [www.sentinelprotects.com](http://www.sentinelprotects.com)

## Accessible guidance

With the growing need to make homes adaptable, so occupiers can remain independent and in their own homes, new guidance is aiming to help get it right. 'Design Guidance & Considerations for a Domestic Accessible Toilet/Wetroom' has been produced and published by Clos-o-Mat. The white paper gives advice to ensure that, as occupier needs change, all aspects affecting the functionality and practicality of a bathroom, wetroom and toilet, are considered. The white paper can be downloaded free of charge from the website. It is the latest in a series of guidance documents produced by Clos-o-Mat.



0161 969 1199 [www.clos-o-mat.com](http://www.clos-o-mat.com)

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660mm	400mm	400mm
<p>Depth 300mm</p> <p><b>Elektra - BP</b> Instant combi + cylinder</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gives heating and instantaneous hot water 13lt/min at 65°</li> <li>- Fully double insulated</li> <li>- Eco &amp; comfort mode</li> </ul>	<p>Depth 300mm</p> <p><b>Elektra - C</b> Instant combi boiler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gives heating &amp; instantaneous hot water 8lt/min at 40-50°C</li> <li>- Fully insulated</li> </ul>	<p>Depth 300mm</p> <p><b>Elektra - N</b> System boiler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All components built in</li> <li>- Fully insulated</li> </ul>

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For more information please visit our website [www.electricboilerscompany.com](http://www.electricboilerscompany.com)



# Hot water cylinder insulation drives energy efficiency in the home

Kingspan Environmental explain the benefits of cylinder insulation and how it can help your housing stock be more energy efficient

**B**ased on an initial survey that revealed homes with higher SAP values were not necessarily reducing residents' energy costs, Sustainable Homes has followed up with a second investigation of over 500 homes from 13 Housing Associations that brings into focus specific reasons why, including the way people use hot water. If nothing else, the National Energy Study highlights that stored hot water is perhaps the preferred option for households that require frequent hot water supply, and indeed, a high flow performance from taps and showers. Even for smaller homes, the survey challenges conventional assumptions on efficiency.

While important for a world in general that is increasingly concerned with energy saving and the carbon footprint, it is perhaps an even more compelling argument for landlords, private and social, who take responsibility for helping tenants better control their energy consumption and avoid falling into fuel poverty. The main gist is that the way we use hot water, the way we manage draughts and our fear of thermostats and timers, determines how energy efficient we actually are. For example, the survey reveals that those who admit the least understanding of their heating system tend to be the highest energy users, concerned more about comfort than cost.

SAP methodology is not an exact science and the assessment is based on standardised

assumptions for occupancy and behaviour, not necessarily what happens in the real world. An Energy Performance Certificate may give an estimate of the building's typical annual spend of energy but ultimately is no guarantee of an efficient home. Sustainable Homes claims that the patterns of actual energy usage reveal a very different picture from a purely 'technical performance' standpoint.

**"The main gist is that the way we use hot water, the way we manage draughts and our fear of thermostats and timers, determines how energy efficient we actually are. For example, the survey reveals that those who admit the least understanding of their heating system tend to be the highest energy users"**

Despite scepticism from the boiler manufacturer's lobby, evidence from this study goes on to suggest that homes with combi boilers actually use 13 per cent more energy than homes

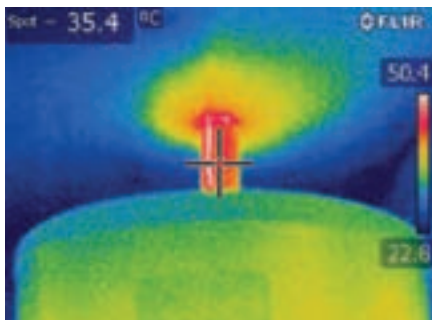


Built in expansion device saves energy and space

using system boilers fitted with a hot water cylinder, even those with low occupancy. One of the key reasons for this is that heat loss performance of unvented hot water cylinders has been vastly improved, with the best insulation thickness now measuring over 60mm. Also boiler efficiency is significantly reduced by being turned off and on, known as 'cycling', as happens with instantaneous hot water applications

Why is this important? Because, replacing the central heating system in a home is a significant expense for landlords and, while continued investment in energy efficiency is needed, SAP should not be the only guideline. Realistic energy usage patterns should also be taken into account by landlords genuinely concerned about fuel poverty and lowering residents' energy bills.

As far as the hot water system is concerned, it's



Thermal image showing heat loss from traditional top mounted hot water outlet



Thermal image of cylinder with side mounted hot water outlet



**“With heat loss performance such a critical factor these days, the insulation features of hot water cylinders become an increasingly important differentiator. The highest grade insulation materials and insulation thickness, can dramatically reduce heat loss over a 24 hour period, as does insulating the top of the cylinder where the hottest water is stored”**

about underlining the importance of calculating demand patterns, in terms of quantity and frequency, when specifying a new or replacement plumbing system. Hot water storage continues to be an integral part of modern day hot water system design, reinforced by a developing renewable energy market which requires stored hot water to harvest the energy and bank it for later use. A system boiler and indirect unvented hot water cylinder has significant 'green' credentials. The stored hot water can also be kept hot if necessary by an immersion heater, a secondary direct power source, in the vent of a boiler breakdown. It is, of course, not difficult to see the attraction of combi boilers when it comes to space and ease of installation but for family households with regular hot water demand, specifications should look at unvented hot water cylinders to provide the required hot water volumes and flow rates, often more economically.

With heat loss performance such a critical factor these days, the insulation features of hot water cylinders become an increasingly important differentiator. The highest grade insulation

materials and insulation thickness, can dramatically reduce heat loss over a 24 hour period, as does insulating the top of the cylinder where the hottest water is stored. Side positioning of the hot water outlet allows this and better design integration of the immersion heater and wiring centre will further improve energy efficiency at points which traditionally lose heat. Extensive pipework is also a potential inefficiency so easy plumbing connections will make a considerable difference, not least for access and servicing. An internal air gap device not only improves thermal efficiency and reduces heat loss but also does away with the need to fit a separate, space hungry expansion vessel.

As the energy efficiency of homes in the UK continues to improve, cylinder insulation ranks as one of the most important developments in the reduction in energy use. Design and material innovation from cylinder manufacturers may well contribute to better SAP scores, which is a good thing, but user education on energy wastage from heating water will also go a long way to improve comfort and reduce bills.



Insulation thickness is becoming a key factor in heat loss performance

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# Boiler pipe casing – undercover work

With the potential for local authorities and housing associations to save tens of thousands of pounds, just by changing the way heating system and boiler pipework are concealed on site, Encasement's Managing Director, Martin Taylor, provides a detailed insight on where and how the cost can be removed from the process

In any property, whether it's a new build or a refurbishment project, there will inevitably be some exposed pipework that will need covering for reasons of safety, in the case of hot pipes, or purely aesthetics.

However, for local authorities (LA) and housing associations (HA), where they primarily deal with older housing stock, which requires upgrading and annual maintenance, the high volumes of exposed pipework for heating systems, boilers, gas, mains water and waste can present a number of challenges.

Usually, due to the age of the properties and the nature of their construction, which predominantly uses concrete and brick, mechanical and electrical services need to be surface mounted, as they can't easily be concealed during installation.

Given that upgrading heating systems with more energy efficient solutions in older social housing stock is important to reduce emissions and energy consumption, while improving comfort for occupants, there is also a need to ensure that the updated system is safe and looks good too.

And it's at this point where LAs and HAs have the opportunity of either saving or wasting thousands of pounds on their annual repair, maintenance and improvement (RMI) budget, just by deciding which method to use when boxing in heating system and boiler pipework after installation.

## Suffering from exposure

So how exactly can something as simple as covering exposed pipe work with pipe boxing and boiler casings have such a potentially dramatic impact on RMI budgets?

Essentially, this can be broken down into four sections:

- Manufacture – How will the boxing be made?
- Materials – What materials will be used to make the boxing?
- Methods – How will the boxing be installed and secured?
- Maintenance – How easily can the boxing be removed and replaced for servicing?

Clearly, in each of the above processes, if costs can be removed or if time can be saved, then they will have a positive effect on reducing the overall budget required to achieve the end result.

Encasement's approach to product design has always been to develop more cost effective solutions that can save time and money on site, although in recent years, the company has also taken a more holistic view, as it became clear that often, the installation processes for traditional boxing can also be



time consuming and inevitably costly.

Furthermore, when maintenance, servicing or routine boiler inspections are required, this can also incur further costs as the boxing needs replacing or re-manufacturing after it has been removed. This issue has again influenced our thinking to develop a better and more cost effective solution.

To get a better understanding of each element, let's explore them in a little more detail.

## Manufacture

The traditional and still widely used approach for concealing pipework, is for boxing to be fabricated on site using wood or MDF together with nails, screws or adhesive, followed by a couple of coats of paint. Inevitably, this is a time intensive and costly solution, as escalating materials cost and labour rates are constantly increasing the overall cost of manufacture for each piece of boxing.

In 2011, Encasement initiated an ongoing study to quantify how much it costs to make a typical boiler pipework casing and the cost five years ago was £38. Today, this figure can regularly exceed £50, which seems excessive just to cover up some pipes. Also, there are issues with inconsistency of paint finish and

fabrication quality, which can easily detract from an otherwise professional heating system installation.

The Encasement solution is a whole lot simpler, quicker and delivers a cost saving of around £20 on every casing installed, as it is manufactured from pre-formed plywood to exact boiler dimensions. They are also pre-finished with durable melamine or laminate, so there's no painting required, which provides a consistent finish and saves even more time.

While a £20 cost reduction on its own is a decent saving, it makes even more financial sense when you consider that the savings reach £10,000 for every 500 properties where pre-formed casings are used.

## Materials

Often the materials used to manufacture pipe boxing and boiler casings aren't a major consideration, particularly for on-site abrication, yet they should be.

Apart from the health & safety considerations when cutting and fabricating MDF, there's also the question of





compliance with sustainable procurement policies that many local authorities and public sector bodies now have in place.

Has that piece of timber being cut, been sourced from sustainable forests? Has it been purchased in accordance with the EU Timber Regulations for illegal supply? Can the approval certification be easily accessed?

To meet this growing requirement, Encasement has already addressed the issue, as it is the UK's only manufacturer and supplier of pre-formed plywood boxing and casings that holds an FSC® 'Chain of Custody' certification from the Forest Stewardship Council.

Only FSC® certified timber is used in the manufacture of our boxing and boiler casings. In addition, every order despatched is accompanied with its FSC® certification, which means that the issue of compliance is automatically taken care of for users of Encasement's products. Also, as the company supplies so much FSC® boxing, it can purchase cost effectively, so there's no price premium for using FSC® compliant products.

## Methods

Clearly, the choice of 'Manufacture' and 'Material' have a direct impact on the 'Method' of installation and again this is an area where the use of site made boxing and boiler casings has a negative cost implication compared to pre-formed solutions.

Typically, once a plumber or heating engineer has completed a boiler installation, they will move on to the next flat while a joiner will set about the fabrication and fitting of a wood or MDF 'site-made' casing. Obviously, due to the different skills required, two different people are required to complete the job, which takes time, as mentioned earlier.

If, however, a pre-formed boiler casing is used, which has already been supplied to the correct dimensions, which only requires on-site trimming to height, then there's no need for fabrication and the freestanding casing just slides into place underneath the boiler, which can be done by the heating engineer.

Also, the use of moulded rubber edge strips on the base of the casing means that it removes the need for mastic sealant, which save even more time and money, while also having an influence on the final category – 'Maintenance'.

## Maintenance

The 'whole life' costs for site made casings escalate significantly, when routine maintenance visits are factored in to the equation.

In the majority of cases, site made casings are damaged or destroyed during their removal, as the screw heads are filled and painted over, making them impossible or extremely time consuming to dismantle, while mastic sealant around the edges also needs to be removed.

As pre-formed casings are self-supporting and have no screws to hold them together, they can be easily removed and replaced in just a matter of seconds, dramatically decreasing the time that maintenance engineers need to be on site, with a corresponding reduction in



associated cost.

Also, the complexities of managing routine maintenance and inspection increases when site made casings are used. In some cases a joiner is required to remove site made boxing in advance of the maintenance work being carried out by a service engineer. The joiner then has to revisit the property after the maintenance is complete to refit the casing or construct a new one.

## Case closed!

Apart from the disruption for the tenant and the extended time period to complete a simple process, the cost associated with transport and

labour for three site visits by skilled staff are considerable. Alongside this, the task of scheduling and co-ordinating such an operation on multiple properties is extremely complex.

As a result it's a 'no-contest' when assessing pre-formed boiler pipe casings against site made alternatives. The comparative fitting costs alone should ensure that the decision to use pre-formed casings is an easy one to make. Yet, when the FSC® compliance and maintenance aspects are factored in too, it becomes, to quote one of Encasement's customers, "...a no-brainer."

01733 266889  
www.encasement.co.uk



## Wakaflex® Uni-Outlet

The new Haus Profi Wakaflex® Uni-Outlet from Klobber has been designed to provide a flue for gas boilers and can be used on pitches from 17.5 to 45°. Available in six diameters from 25 to 125mm, it is made from durable heat, UV and shrink-resistant EPDM and is a cost-effective option for use with all types of clay and concrete tiles, slates and metal roofing systems. Used with Wakaflex lead-free flashing it provides the perfect combination for quick, effective and lasting installation without the need for a specialist roofer to do the work on double lapped tile and similarly complex roofs. For more information, please visit the company website.



0845 600 4427 [www.roof-flashing.info](http://www.roof-flashing.info)

## Housing association reduces costs to zero

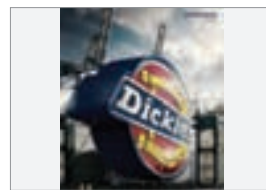
Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) has eliminated maintenance costs for heating systems at 13,000 homes by using SystemCare from water treatment specialist, Sentinel. Deploying a treatment plan based on Sentinel's high quality cleaning chemicals, inhibitors, and test kits, as well as a bespoke training programme, this forward-thinking housing association has subsequently managed to negotiate a 10-year warranty with its preferred boiler supplier. SystemCare is Sentinel's failsafe, added-value service that combines best quality products with free audit, training and support packages tailored to suit requirements.



01928 588330 [www.sentinelprotects.com](http://www.sentinelprotects.com)

## Dickies 2016 new look catalogue

The new Dickies 2016 catalogue is to be launched in March with nearly 200 pages of fresh photography on core lines. With new graphics, icons and pictograms it is easy to follow and it is packed with a number of exciting new products and ranges with style, functionality and quality being paramount in driving the Dickies business forward. With over 90 years' experience in workwear manufacturing, generations of workers have found Dickies to be a brand they can trust. Details of all the new items will be uploaded in March to the website and the new catalogue will then be available to download, or to order in print visit the Dickies website.



0191 258 2758 [www.dickiesworkwear.com](http://www.dickiesworkwear.com)

## Nationwide Window's GQA Centre

Leading public sector and new build door and window supplier, Nationwide Windows Ltd is delighted to announce that it has become a GQA Approved Centre for training. Operations Director Daryl Cashmore said: "At Nationwide, investment in our team is a vital part of our ongoing success. After talks with GQA Qualifications we began the application process and – based on our technical competencies, processes, facility, equipment, health and safety, and other factors such as our CSCS membership – we are now able to offer assessment and training under the guidance of one of the industry's most recognised bodies."



01788 569 228 [www.nationwidewindows.co.uk](http://www.nationwidewindows.co.uk)

## CPD looks at hybrid heating and cooling

The latest free CPD-Accredited guide from Mitsubishi Electric looks at the challenges faced by our built environment due to increasing legislation, the drive for energy efficiency and the need to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The building services sector is beginning to find new ways to heat, cool and ventilate our increasingly airtight buildings. What's needed is an approach that combines the very best of traditional 4-pipe Chiller systems with the efficiencies and flexibility of 2-pipe VRF (variable refrigerant flow) air conditioning. This free guide looks at the pros and cons of existing options while examining alternatives.



01707 282880 [www.mitsubishielectric.co.uk](http://www.mitsubishielectric.co.uk)

## FILANO RUST joins award-winning range

Fila has introduced a new 'trouble-shooting' treatment to its award-winning surface care range. New FILANO RUST is designed to remove new and old oxide deposits from a range of surfaces, including stone and ceramics. The solution has a highly viscous consistency, making it ideal for application onto horizontal and vertical surfaces, inside and outdoors – from delicate countertops and hearths, to outdoor paving slabs. FILANO RUST removes oxide tarnish from stone, marble, granite, agglomerates, porcelain and ceramic, terracotta and concrete. Its non-acid formula makes it particularly suitable for delicate surfaces, including polished marble and acid-sensitive limestone. After 15 minutes contact, the treatment turns from a clear colour to deep purple, which indicates a reaction with the rust. Excess product is then wiped off and the surface rinsed with clean water. FILANO RUST is available in 75 ml units and is safe to use in domestic home and contract environments. It is offered alongside Fila's range of surface care solutions, which includes surface cleaners, protectors and enhancers.



01584 877286 [www.filasolutions.com](http://www.filasolutions.com)

## Wilo pumps are key to energy efficiency

Wilo small circulating pumps continue to gain market share as they are specified and purchased for new heating systems and replacement heating system projects where energy efficiency is key.



The Wilo Yonos-PICO is simple to fit and offers up to 90 per cent energy savings over old uncontrolled pumps of which there are still millions operating across the UK.

Take a trip to Wilo's website to find out more about these excellent green pumps.

01283 523 000 [www.wilo.co.uk](http://www.wilo.co.uk)



# Safety first

Residents at Bridge House in Camden have benefitted from work between specialist contractor Mila Window and Door Maintenance and pioneering award winning Jackloc® window restrictors.

The 37-unit block of flats has recently undergone a repairs and maintenance programme to its windows and doors, but on first inspection it was discovered that there was a bigger issue to address than just their condition - the bottom cill height of the large Tilt and Turn opening windows was below what Mila Maintenance saw as a safe height for preventing potential falling and a solution was required to address the problem.

Speaking for Mila Window and Door Maintenance Business Development Manager Will Chan explained further.

"We were asked by the client to survey the site to see what repairs and maintenance actions were required on the Tilt and Turn windows which were in situ with a view to carrying out the work as a part of a planned maintenance contract".

"When we got to site however we realised there was a previously unforeseen problem, the bottom cill height below the windows was only 700mm from the floor and posed a serious safety issue. On windows installed today there would be an intermediate transom to prevent the risk of falling out of the windows when they were in the open position, but these frames had been installed long before the new legislation came into being".

"As a specialist contractor we had seen this issue before and were able to use our experience and expertise to identify an appropriate solution to prevent residents or their



children inadvertently falling from open windows. We have worked extensively with Jackloc an industry leading supplier of restrictors and safety locks and their product was the obvious solution for us to recommend in this situation. We discussed the issue and the proposed solution with the client and were given approval to commence the works".

In total over 100 Jackloc® window restrictors with security screws were fitted to ensure that the windows could not be accidentally opened by the residents or visitors to their flats, and in all the communal areas especially on the ground floor to ensure that windows could not be opened from the outside to allow unauthorised access to the building.

Tristan Cooke Managing Director of Mila Window and Door Maintenance takes up the story "It is a prime example of the importance and value of using a specialist contractor for this kind of work".

"Only through our experience were we able to immediately identify that there was a potential issue with regards to safety in this kind of environment, and through that same experience we were able to recognise the solution which was available".

"We work with Jackloc® extensively and we know their products are well designed and proven to be fit for purpose for the application required. Understanding the product and particularly how it is installed is really important – in fact correct installation is critical to its proper functionality over the life-time of its guarantee".

"When we visit any site we do so with a



thought process that we have a duty of care to the residents into whose homes we are going and are going to work in. It is this principle which ensures that we always carry out the most thorough surveys possible and guarantees that when we report back to the client they are going to have a full and honest assessment of the windows and doors in the homes they manage".

Mila Window and Door Maintenance has been working in social housing, schools, and commercial building sectors for nearly 30 years and has carried out over 1.1 million repairs.

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Mila are specialists in high rise window refurbishment





# Salvation Army Housing Association transforming lives of the community

**S**AHA (Salvation Army Housing Association) was set up during the 1950s in order to manage the administration of housing newly retired officers. Since then, the charity has evolved and is committed to "Transforming Lives" of the community, a key part of that being to help house the multitude of people in need.

The Old School in Ashford, Kent, is a Grade II Listed property that provides housing through the SAHA. The buildings needed upgrading as the thin cavity double glazed windows were draughty and unable to retain the heat efficiently. Providing a suitable solution for this required some consideration, as the primary windows could not be replaced. However, an answer was found with Selectaglaze secondary glazing which is fitted to the room side of the window, is a reversible adaptation and approved by most Heritage bodies for use on Listed buildings.

Many of the windows were shaped with gothic style curves and trefoil, which presented Selectaglaze with an interesting challenge. The use of a 3D digital measuring device allowed the openings to be modelled with precision which enabled the best possible fit for the bespoke units. This together with high performance seals helped to virtually eliminate unwanted draughts and provide a more comfortable living space for the occupants.

An added benefit of secondary glazing is the reduction of outside noise. When there is a 100mm cavity between the primary and secondary windows a sound reduction of about 45dB is achievable.

Over 100 secondary units were installed using five different Selectaglaze products, all in the slim-line range which are ideal for Heritage projects. They introduce minimal sightlines and are designed to be as unobtrusive as possible.

Selectaglaze has a wealth of experience working on all manner of



building styles, from Listed to new-build. Established in 1966 and Royal Warrant Holders since 2004, it has an extensive product range to suit most buildings to aid in making them; warmer, quieter and safer.

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Condensation, mould, fuel poverty and bad indoor air quality

## Easy does it...

Clarissa Youden, associate director of Total Home Environment discusses how you can reduce building maintenance and fuel poverty, while offering dramatic health benefits

**S**o you've got old housing stock, with complaints of mould, condensation and high heating bills. While a bit of remedial work – insulating the loft and filling cavity walls – has done a little to alleviate things, nothing's really changed. Residents are still grumbling, falling back on payments as they prioritise heat over rent. And what's worse, there's even more remedial decoration work than there was before. So why is this happening?

Firstly, the properties are probably still incredibly leaky, with thermal bridging going on all over the place. Even with small five millimetre gaps in insulation, significant heat loss will still occur and you might as well have not bothered. Secondly, the windows are single or if you're lucky double glazed, but because the last refurb was 30 years ago, they're probably failing. Furthermore, it's likely some of the trickle vents have been shut by residents as many people find them too draughty,

but they'll still run appliances like the tumble dryer. Extractor fans also help deal with condensation, but when was the last time they were cleared of dust, let alone replaced? This lack of adequate ventilation is causing excess condensation, mould growth and awful indoor air quality.

The solution is to make the properties completely airtight, insulate them up to the hilt, put triple glazing in and provide complete whole home heat recovery ventilation to keep the air inside clean and healthy. This approach is termed as the EnerPhit Standard – the PassivHaus strategy for retrofit properties which leads to considerable improvement in thermal comfort, structural protection, cost-effectiveness and energy efficiency.

*Continued overleaf...*

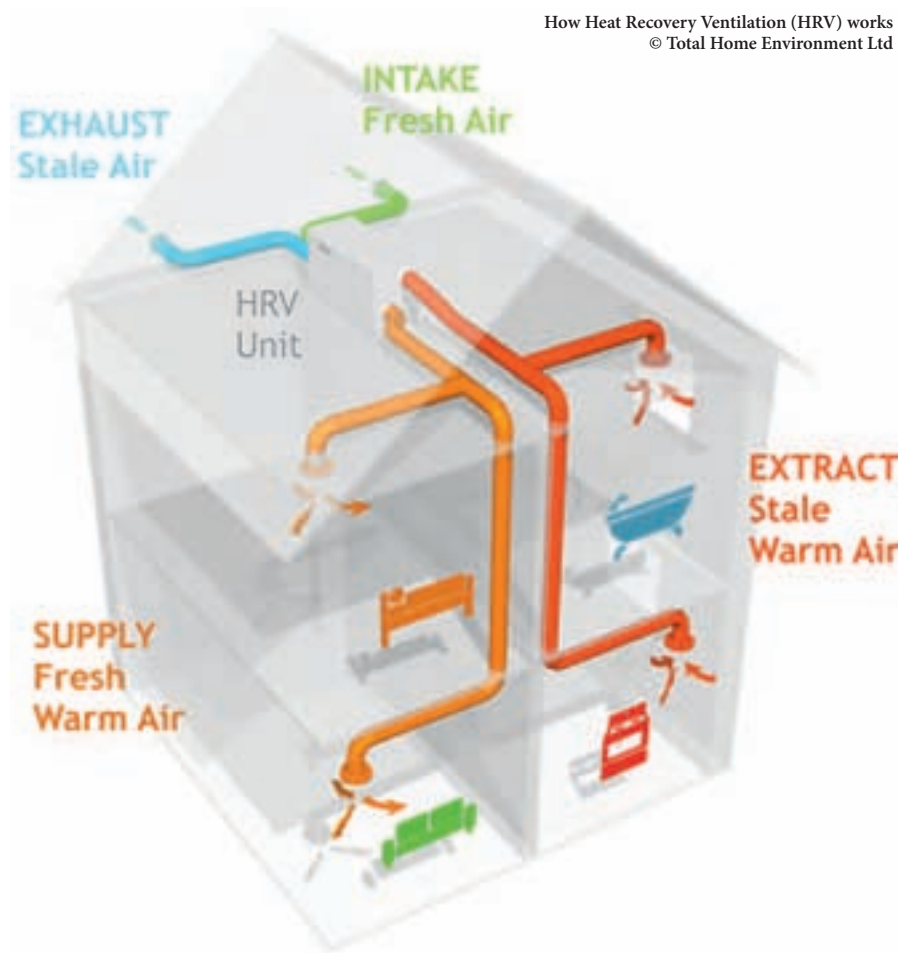


Condensation, mould, fuel poverty and bad indoor air quality

“The solution is to make the properties completely airtight, insulate them up to the hilt, put triple glazing in and provide complete whole home heat recovery ventilation to keep the air inside clean and healthy. This approach is termed as the EnerPhit Standard - the PassivHaus strategy for retrofit properties”



How Heat Recovery Ventilation (HRV) works  
© Total Home Environment Ltd



## What is heat recovery ventilation (HRV)?

Whole house ventilation is completely controlled to provide the correct amount of fresh air, when it's needed and with great heat recovery. A fan unit located remotely continuously extracts stale air out of wet rooms, while drawing fresh filtered air from outside. They pass each other in a heat exchanger (not mixing) and up to 96 per cent of the heat from the stale air is transferred to the fresh air being put into the habitable rooms of the home. It gets rid of all the VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds) – a cocktail of chemicals that leaches out of sofas, carpets, laminates, cleaning detergents etc. The main benefits of heat recovery ventilation include:

- Constant fresh air, filtered for pollen
- VOC's/CO<sub>2</sub> removed for a healthier environment in which to breathe

- Heating bills reduced by about a third
- Quiet operation
- Decreased humidity levels, so less inviting for dust mites
- No condensation, so mould and mildew don't grow, prolonging the life of the building fabric
- Exceeds Building Regs

Things to look out for in an HRV system, if you want to put what's said on paper, into practice:

- PassivHaus certification
- EC motors
- Automatic summer bypass
- Heat recovery figures over 85 per cent
- Rigid metal ducting where possible, which is best for airflows and hygiene
- Correct ductwork insulation
- Controller with 24/7 timing, temperature monitors, SD card for data monitoring, anti-tamper lock out switch.

Something else to contemplate in your retrofit is your heating strategy. If the heat-loss calculations still show a need for a formal heating system despite a retrofit plan, you can get your properties off electric or oil by investigating sustainable heat sources. This would include things like air-source heat pumps or biomass boilers where you can get money back with the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI). It would certainly be worth it, if a gas boiler needs replacing, as air-source heat pumps can be at least three times more efficient. Also, with renewable heating there are no yearly gas certificate updates required and you won't have the worry of possible carbon monoxide poisoning situations. If you have to keep the current heating

## Case study – Grandy's Croft

### Project:

1960's block of six community housing flats in Solihull

### Brief:

With minimal disruption to residents:

- Regenerate to nearly zero carbon
- Eradicate fuel poverty
- Reduce internal maintenance
- Regenerate local community

### Aims:

- Achieve 85 per cent savings on heating bills
- Obtain EnerPHit certification
- Prove all-in-one approach can work for large-scale roll-out

### Retrofit Solution:

OWLS (Off-Site Wrap-Around Large Scale Retrofit)

### Partners:

Total Home Environment (HRV), Beattie Passive (TCosy), Encraft (energy consultants), Solihull Community Housing (owners) and Coventry University (monitoring)

### Summary:

A deep retrofit providing a new external insulated fabric, with new triple glazed windows and doors and mechanical heat recovery ventilation. Pre-monitoring of energy usage, temperatures and indoor air quality to continue into post-installation to assess actual impact of retrofit.



If you want to put paper into practice make sure you have control

system, you can always reduce your reliance on it by providing air-to-water heat pumps just for domestic hot water, which means the formal heating system doesn't need to be on in the warmer months. Some air-to-water heat pumps even have a secondary coil allowing connection to solar panels for free hot water – so if you've got lots of roof space, solar thermal panels may be a consideration. Depending on how far you're going with your retrofit, there are even compact service units on the market which provide HRV, some providing space heating and domestic hot water all in one unit.

These EnerPHit principles are firmly grounded in the drive for sustainability and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels. We desperately need to make the fabric of our old housing stock better, but in doing so we need to combat the 'cling-film effect' by providing adequate ventilation for clean indoor air, without losing heat. Obviously, to alleviate fuel poverty, the more heat we recover, the less we need to generate.



# Simplifying window replacement

The most important three days this year in the management of window replacement programmes - The FIT Show, 12-14 April



**H**igh quality windows and doors are one of the key elements not only in tenant satisfaction but also in the performance and security of a property. Fortunately these days it is difficult to find a poor window or door, the principle element in any failure continuing to be poor installation.

For private and social landlords the cost of replacement windows and residential doors has never been more competitive, while the choice has never been so varied. And as legislation continues to tighten in respect of energy and security performance, especially in the public sector, it is crucial for landlords and their officers to ensure they are both aware of the legislated

requirements as well as the availability of appropriate products.

The Fabricator Installer Trade (FIT) Show is a solution to those needs: The event first appeared in 2013 and since then has become the essential UK showcase for the industry, to sell to itself of course, but more importantly to show, quite literally, what it is made of to specifiers of new buildings and of course, to those tasked with the replacement of windows and doors for residential buildings of all types. As such the organisers of the event insist that one or two days spent at the event can significantly solve a specification programme compared with months conventionally finding and interviewing potential suppliers.

Paul Godwin, Managing Director of The FIT Show makes the case: "With 180 exhibitors taking part in four halls at The FIT Show we are presenting a cross-section of the window and door supply market that is simply not available through any other means. An Internet search will simply not reveal the breadth and depth of suppliers simply because it is not structured to do so. The FIT Show will focus all of these companies in the same place, at the same time and all under the same roof. They are showing literally hundreds of brand new windows and doors, the components, hardware, glass systems – everything – most of which are being seen for the first time anywhere in the world.

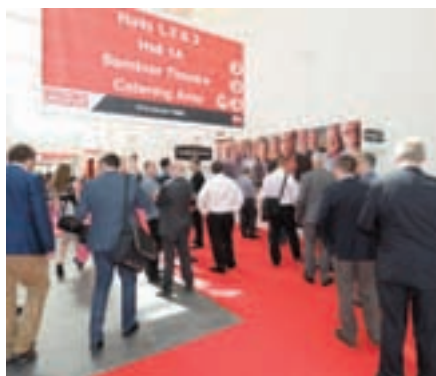
**"The FIT Show is designed to allow professionals to focus their attention on everything glass and glazing in a short, sharp and highly focused burst"**

"The event also offers the possibility to meet suppliers face-to-face, to create relationships with companies to ensure a full understanding – partnerships in fact – that have proven to be more beneficial in long term business relationships."

Essentially, The FIT Show is designed to allow professionals to focus their attention on everything glass and glazing in a short, sharp and highly focused burst. Is it going to be worth your while? Most of the major brands of windows and composite doors and their derivatives available in the UK will be on show, together with legions of hardware and other components suppliers and, in increasing numbers, commercial manufacturers and suppliers of finished products.

After almost two years since the last FIT Show the industry has clamoured to develop hundreds of new products and systems in time for the April show, including at least four new window systems that have previously never been shown there,

*Continued overleaf...*





## fit show preview

three of which will remain closely guarded secrets until the event.

A company well established in the commercial sector, Profile 22 is rumoured to be unveiling not one, but two new window systems, while Residence 9, which has made a name for itself with a system that mimics the 19th century flush sash, is said to be bringing to market a derivative of that product.

In addition to the new products that are known to be coming to market, this year's event is remarkable for bringing together the majority of systems brands, presenting an opportunity for major specifiers to speak to them all under the same roof in the same three days, something that has not been possible for more than a decade.

Composite door producers will be at The FIT Show in their droves this year: With their basis in the public sector, manufacturers of composite residential doors have flourished in terms of numbers and also prosperity as private homeowners have latched on to the unique combination of performance and aesthetics provided by these products. Thus the choice of private and public sector landlords has also increased exponentially while prices in many cases have softened.

The upshot is that a day – or two preferably, with so much to see – at The FIT Show will offer an invaluable insight into the latest that the window and door industry has to offer, a focus that no amount of internet surfing could achieve; a truly worthwhile investment in time for any housebuilding professional. A years-worth of work in a couple of days? Perhaps not, but a very good place to start.



**The Fabricator Installer Trade (FIT) Show takes place at The International Centre Telford on 12th, 13th & 14th April 2016.**  
**Register now for fast entry: [www.fitshow.co.uk/25/reg](http://www.fitshow.co.uk/25/reg)**

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08443 356 668 [www.floodcheck.co.uk](http://www.floodcheck.co.uk)



## Flood proof skirting boards

With recent weather events hitting the headlines, thoughts have turned from cleaning to rebuilding and renovating those properties devastated by flood water. One readily available suitable product is ThermaSkirt from Discrete Heat – an aluminium alternative to conventional timber and MDF skirting boards, that not only is impervious to being submerged, but actually provides the central heating as well, replacing conventional radiators in the process. Fitted in a matter of hours, and usually using the existing radiator pipework, ThermaSkirt is an ideal solution for those that require new skirting boards or are looking to become prepared for the inevitable.

[info@discreteheat.co.uk](mailto:info@discreteheat.co.uk)



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[Lisa.Shirley@f-ball.co.uk](mailto:Lisa.Shirley@f-ball.co.uk)

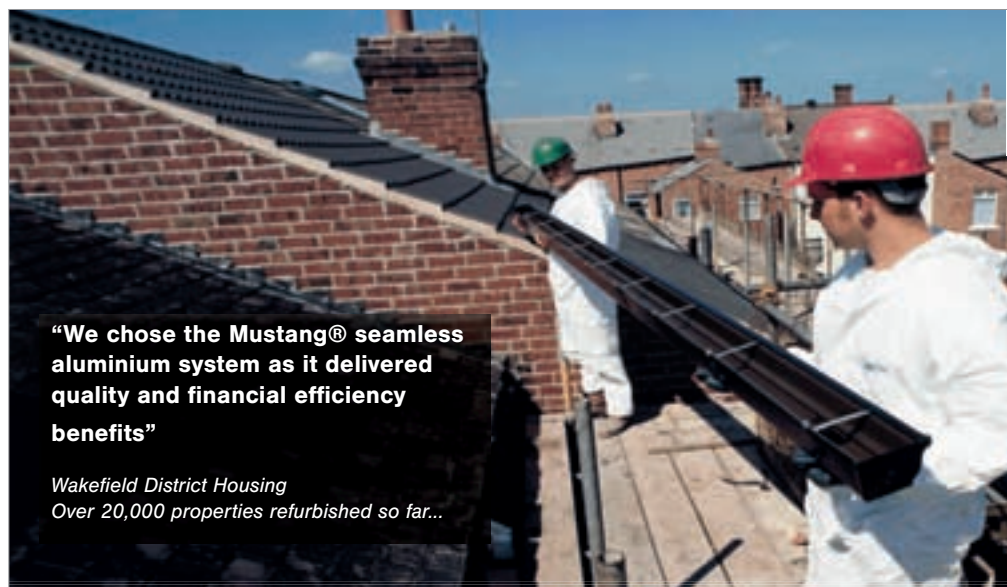



## SAV FlatStations selected project

SAV's LoadTracker CHP units and Danfoss FlatStation heat interface units have been specified by consulting engineers XCO2 Energy for use in the 'Aylesbury Site 7' development. FlatStation units will be installed in 162 apartments served from a central energy centre housing the two LoadTracker XRGi 20 modulating CHP units. LoadTracker units will play a key role in sustainability, serving a district heating network while also generating low carbon electricity. As well as ensuring consistency of heating and hot water supply for residents, the FlatStations will further underpin central plant efficiency by maintaining low return water temperatures.

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# Maintaining aluminium guttering

Martyn Reed, the technical director of ARP Ltd in Leicester is keen to discuss the benefits that aluminium can offer as a rainwater and roofline solution

**W**ith the government looking to deliver a strategy of building affordable housing, improving the quality of rented housing, helping more people to buy a home, and providing housing support for vulnerable people through local authorities and developers, there has been a huge increase in the number of manufacturers working with green sustainable materials.

When it comes to maintaining or refurbishing homes, builders are often challenged to use good quality sustainable building products that can

improve cost, save time and achieve targets as set by government. In a typical installation, uPVC rainwater gets fitted by default against other material systems, and while not disputing any environmental credentials of uPVC systems, they will not deliver the design life of 40-60 years, as offered by aluminium.

Aluminium is a very versatile and abundant material. It has many uses in and is visible in a multitude of everyday items. Furthermore, it is 100 per cent recyclable, with no loss of property and so presenting itself as a leader with the modern 'green' thinking generation. Considering that aluminium rainwater has between 33 per cent and 40 per cent recycled content (90+ per cent with seamless systems) the environmental impact is significantly reduced.

Where aluminium comes into its own, is in its ability to help deliver an enhanced aesthetic design. We can see when viewing many of the 'homebuilder' programmes on TV, the ambitious way in which both architects and clients are looking to deliver a modern and bespoke style,

**"When it comes to maintaining or refurbishing homes, builders are often challenged to use good quality sustainable building products that can improve cost, save time and achieve targets as set by government"**

which is unique from the norm.

There is often a requirement for homes which are being maintained in Green Belt or Conservation areas to use eco-friendly building material, therefore aluminium rainwater systems provide the ideal choice, due to their eco-friendly credentials and longer lifecycle.

Further, with the extensive use of RAL colours in external building products e.g. window frames







and other architectural fittings, house design now allows matching or coordinating colours to be used. A building's appearance can be dramatically transformed which can give it "curb appeal" especially when it comes to attracting clients. Traditional thinking goes out of the window and it is now common to see both rainwater products and roofline systems blending in to the building envelope and providing aesthetic appeal.

Often there is debate over cost versus quality. There are different types of aluminium rainwater systems, so whether a pressed, roll-formed, extruded or cast profile is required, there is almost certainly a product that will suit any budget, providing a cost effective and high performance solution.

In looking to provide the one million homes by 2020, it is quite likely that there will be an increase in the number of multiple occupancy dwellings split between both public and private ownership. Generally designed to be over two storeys high, these builds will have maintenance programmes in place and will make whole life time cost consideration of any installation an important commercial factor. The use of aluminium for roof drainage and on the eaves as fascia/soffit and coping provides a 'fit and forget' solution over the design life period, being easy to install, light and long-lasting, which also reduces the need to incur replacement material costs compared to other systems that may fail.

More recently, we have seen that changing environmental conditions in the UK are producing more storms and increased rainfall intensity. Leaking gutters can cause extensive damage, not only to the brickwork but also the interior of the property resulting in costly repairs. Rainwater systems provide a defence against this damage, which is often neglected, or given lower priority within the projects budget. Having a product that can either offer a jointless/seamless system or one where there is a reduced thermal movement will greatly reduce the chance of maintenance and repair costs getting out of hand.

Manufacturers have stepped up to the mark by offering a variety of interactive tools. The use of 'Rainfall Calculators' makes it easy for architects, engineers and installers to evaluate current drainage abilities of actual roofs, therefore making the planning and developing of projects a lot easier than it used to be.

In summary, using aluminium as a rainwater drainage option should be considered as an alternative to other types of systems as they both a cost-effective and high-performance solution.

### Gutter maintenance

- Gutters should be checked twice per year and cleared
- Gutters and pipes should be kept clear of obstructions
- Rainwater systems should be washed down annually and inspected for damage
- Any damage discovered should be rectified and touch up paint applied if required



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## Improve your property with skylights

Sunsquare is a designer and manufacturer of bespoke skylights to be awarded a BSI Kitemark in the industry. As an expert in his field, MD of the company Justin Seldis talks through the legislation concerning installation for landlords

**P**roperty maintenance will inevitably sometimes mean replacing or upgrading elements of your housing stock, rather than simply working on improving existing features. If you're carrying out maintenance work on the roof, adding a rooflight can create a stand-out feature that will impress both current and future tenants. Planning permission can be a sticking point when it comes to making alterations to any property. But with skylights, wrangling over approval is less common than you might think.

This is usually because a skylight falls in as part of an already agreed extension, or it's a replacement of an existing window. However, just because it is rare to come up against objections, doesn't mean it doesn't happen. It is always important to seek advice before you go ahead with making any changes.

In England and Wales, the insertion of new roof windows is subject to the current limits and conditions stipulated by the government's Planning Portal. This comes under Schedule 2, article 3, part 1, class C permitted development.

It states that:

1. Any alteration cannot project more than 150 millimetres from the existing roof plane.
2. No alteration can be greater than the highest part of the existing roof.
3. Side-facing windows must be obscure glazed with any opening to be made 1.7 metres above the floor.

If your project fails to comply with one or more of the above, then your development won't be permitted and a second application would need to

be resubmitted following amendments to your plans.

Generally pyramid or lantern skylights are more of a problem as they stick above the parapet and can create an eyesore to neighbours.

**"It is always important to seek advice before you go ahead with making any changes. In England and Wales, the insertion of new roof windows is subject to the current limits and conditions stipulated by the government's Planning Portal"**

If the property in which you want to install a new skylight is a listed building, or in a designated conservation area, then you should check with your local planning authority before carrying out any work.

Additionally, there may be specific types of planning restriction that mean certain works which could normally be undertaken will be the subject of control.

It's important to note that planning laws in Scotland are rather different than those in England and Wales.

Planning permission for roof windows is often required for even the most straightforward of skylight designs and Scottish property owners should contact their local authority to work out the best way forward.

Similarly, homeowners in Ireland should also contact their local authority for advice because failure to obtain permission where it is required can result in penalties - including imprisonment.

Building regulations are an issue quite separate to planning permission and should always be taken seriously. After all, the removal, addition or alteration of a skylight can have a detrimental impact on a roof which can, in turn, make a building unsafe.

Even if planning permission is not required, building regulations cannot be ignored.

By law, any building or structural modification work must comply with building controls which stipulate minimum standards for design





**“To install a rooflight in a roof you will often need to cut part of one or more of the roof’s rafters or joists away. You will need to fit a new support for the cut ends of the rafter or joist in question”**

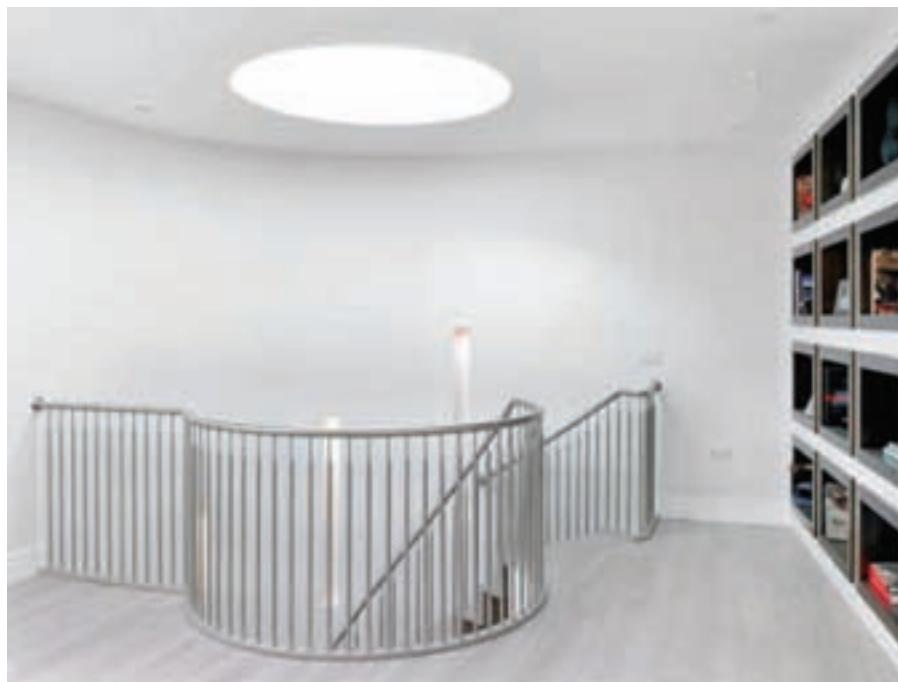
and safety.

There are two sets of building regulations for roofs - work on an existing roof and the construction of a new roof.

Be sure to pay particular attention to Parts J and L of Building Regulations; these deal with energy efficiency, thermal insulation and the protection of buildings against the threat of fire.

Approval under the Building Regulations will generally be needed for the installation of a new rooflight for the following reasons:

- To install a new rooflight, the roof structure will often need to be altered to create the opening.
- The roof will have to be able to carry the weight of the new skylight. If the roof is not able to do so it will need to be strengthened prior to installation.
- Any rooflight installed must prove it has sufficient insulation against heat loss with effective energy performance.
- In the event a skylight is in close proximity to a boundary, its fire performance must also be taken into consideration.



To install a rooflight in a roof you will often need to cut part of one or more of the roof’s rafters or joists away. You will need to fit a new support for the cut ends of the rafter or joist in question. Adjacent rafters or joists may also need strengthening, as they will be supporting the load transferred from the cut rafters or joists.

Any room that a skylight is designed to serve will also need to be well ventilated. This can be

achieved using the skylight itself for both rapid and background venting.

In terms of energy performance, any window or door must comply with the minimum requirements of the Building Regulations in relation to the amount of heat that can pass through a window or door, including the frame.

This is known and measured as a U-Value. This U-Value should not be exceeded.



## The roofers best kept secret

The roofers best kept secret is finally out. Aquaseal Liquid Roof from Everbuild – a Sika company – is a new, 1-component, easy to use, all weather roofing system, ideal for waterproofing flat and pitched roofs. Creating a solid waterproof membrane which covers the entire area without any seams, Liquid Roof is applied in two coats straight from the tin and has a moisture triggered curing system to allow fast curing. Liquid Roof is completely rain resistant after just 10 minutes and will even cure if a pool of water forms on top of it, perfect for the unpredictable British weather. Suitable for use on a variety of substrates including concrete, mortar, brick and stone, Liquid Roof can be used on new roofs as well as refurbishing old. Available in slate grey colour in 7kg and 21kg tins, Liquid Roof will leave you with a professional looking, fully waterproof roof in just five easy steps. For further information on Aquaseal Liquid Roof or any other products from the Everbuild or Sika ranges, contact your local representative, call the sales office, or visit the company website.

0113 240 2424 [www.everbuild.co.uk](http://www.everbuild.co.uk)



## Why choose Dryseal over ‘wet-lay’ GRP?

Fast becoming the specification choice for a growing number of Housing Associations, Dryseal is the unique component based fibreglass or glass reinforced polyester (GRP) roofing system from Hambleside Danelaw. Unlike ‘wet lay’ systems, the Dryseal system is supplied pre-cured and ready to install. All Dryseal GRP trims and membrane are manufactured under strict BS EN ISO 9001 and 14001 quality and environmental controls and then supplied via our network of fully trained Approved Contractors for installation on site. Dryseal should not be confused with ‘wet lay’ systems, which comprise fibreglass reinforcement saturated with liquid resin hand laid on site. Wet lay systems have greater potential for error as the process relies on fair weather from the outset. Liquid resin containing a catalyst is applied directly to a completely dry new roof deck. Dryseal is one of the most advanced GRP roofing systems available and comes with an insured guarantee which covers the water tightness of the system for 20 years, with an expected life of 30 years.

01327 701 900 [www.dryseal.org](http://www.dryseal.org)



# Green roofs are 'low-maintenance', not 'no-maintenance'

Green roof maintenance is generally a very simple process as Tom Storrer, sales and marketing at Sky Garden Ltd explains

**G**reen roofs are designed so that they will not require endless hours spent on the roof in order to keep them looking at their best. Each type of green roof brings many different benefits to the occupants, the owners and the roof itself, so a little time maintaining the system is advantageous in the long run.

London is an excellent example of the rate of living roof growth in the UK. Green roofs are sprouting up on new rental properties and council buildings all around the capital city. The reason for this is the space being lost due to this urbanisation – many developments are replacing green areas that are habitats for local wildlife and species of various plants, flowers and grasses.

The ball is rolling to counter this through policies suggesting that developments are now expected to incorporate living roofs where possible. This is a step closer to the policies in Germany that have been in place for many years, and to the recent law passed in France, stating that rooftops on new buildings in commercial zones must be partially covered in plants or solar panels. The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 will bring us much closer to that situation.

## Types of roof maintenance

Further green roof maintenance processes differ depending on which system is installed on the roof.

Sedum green roofs require very little maintenance as they are very hardy plants and don't require much attention to keep them healthy. A sedum green roof can be maintained easily in two visits, one in the spring and one in the autumn. In the spring, the gutters and drainage channels will be cleared, any weeds removed and fertiliser applied. Weeding is particularly easy on a sedum roof due to the lower level of substrate preventing many weeds from establishing, and those that have established are easily removed. In the autumn the drains can be checked again and the spent flower heads and



any weeds that have grown over the summer can be removed. With this little maintenance sedum will remain healthy and the green roof will stay looking lush throughout the year.

Other systems require slightly different maintenance. With wildflower roofs it is recommended that the year's growth is cut back and removed in the autumn. This prevents a build-up of decaying organic matter on the roof and the nutrient levels do not get too high. Biodiverse roofs require little maintenance because they are designed to be seeded naturally by the local environment. Some housing associations or private landlords prefer the removal of certain species from their biodiverse roofs and others like to cut back the year's growth in autumn but this is personal preference and is not essential for biodiverse roofs.

The only other form of maintenance green roofs need is irrigation. As green roofs only have a limited depth of substrate to reduce weight, moisture cannot be drawn up from deep in the ground like it can for conventional plants. That said, a good drainage board will allow the plants to absorb all the water they need to stay healthy using only natural precipitation. However, in the first few months after installation the plants will be 'stressed' from the move and will be trying to establish in a new environment. In this time, and in periods of extremely hot and dry weather, roofs may need irrigation in the form of full saturation once or twice a week.

## Maintenance issues

Although the task of maintaining a green roof is usually straightforward, there are issues that may arise before a maintenance team reaches the roof.

Access is often a stumbling block. When a green roof is initially installed there is usually scaffold and easy access to roof level. Six months later when maintenance is required the building is completed and the scaffold has been removed. In order to meet health and safety requirements the green roof company would need a man-safe system or a scaffold tower to fulfil the works.

Simple, consistent maintenance of living roofs leads to less roofing headaches in the long term for housing associations, local authorities and private landlords. Keeping a green roof maintained prevents damage to the roof which can lead to expensive remedial works.





## Natural finish to new development

Jutland, smooth and Zeeland, textured BBA certified fibre cement slates from Cembrit, have demonstrated their versatility, design and performance features on a stylish, nature-inspired housing development in the seaside town of Weymouth. Pemberly consists of 176 houses, townhouses, apartments and bungalows, varying from one bedroom to four bedrooms in size. While the development is centrally located and within walking distance to shops, schools, amenities, a community centre, library and local transport, it still offers a tranquil living space. Cembrit holds five BBA Certificates for its fibre cement slate range.



[sales@cembrit.co.uk](mailto:sales@cembrit.co.uk)

## Engel has high vis workwear wrapped up

One of Europe's leading workwear manufacturers, Danish company, F. Engel has introduced a wide range of high visibility safety workwear in accordance with the new International and European standardisation EN ISO 20 47100. With customers' safety as the company's prime concern, each item of warning-clothing is produced with the largest possible fluorescent and reflective areas thus ensuring the safest levels of visibility both day and night. LOXY high visibility reflector tape, proven for its hard wearing and effective performance, is used throughout the range. Most items also have a water, oil and dirt repellent finish.



The Engel  
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1000-928-3806

07933 150197 [www.fe.dk/en](http://www.fe.dk/en)

## VMZINC provides face of Uni HUB

VMZINC standing seam facades have been used on the new £45m Fferm Penglais student accommodation building at Aberystwyth University. Specified by PCKO architects, with 900 bedrooms, 100 studios and a landmark hub building with communal and learning zones. The HUB building features ANTHRA-ZINC cladding, the matt black appearance with a visible grain structure which has proved popular with architects. It is visually distinctive of the metal and one of eight pre-weathered colours available in addition to the metal's natural finish. VMZINC can also emboss, perforate and incorporate bespoke textures to fulfill project-specific requirements.



01992 822288 [www.vmpzinc.co.uk](http://www.vmpzinc.co.uk)

## New heights of quality assurance

Construction quality assurance is being taken to new heights with an innovative service from leading roofing membrane manufacturer Protan. The company – already one of Europe's top three producers of single ply PVC construction materials – has introduced new facilities to further enhance its on-site installation inspection regimes. Now, Protan provides a detailed report, plus support material and images, within minutes of completing an inspection. Further it does not limit the number of its inspections, but undertakes as many as each individual job requires, depending on its complexity, contractor expertise, and support required.



01925 658 001 [www.protan.co.uk](http://www.protan.co.uk)



# KEY INFORMATION

## Regarding Secured by Design (SBD)

### Does your Door Entry system meet the requirements of Secured by Design (SBD)?

SBD is the official UK Police flagship initiative supporting the principles of designing out crime. Videx, the experts in access control, are highly experienced when it comes to SBD compliance.

#### Videx were the very first Door Entry company to be SBD approved.

Videx have been supplying and manufacturing for over 30 years. Our teams of estimators, technical support and designers all aim to make your job easier. For more information on meeting the Secured by Design seal of approval and ensuring your access control system meets the SBD standard, please visit:

[www.sbd-accesscontrol.com](http://www.sbd-accesscontrol.com)

**Choose Videx for quality, competitive pricing and exceptional support.**



**T: 0870 300 1240 [www.videxuk.com](http://www.videxuk.com) [www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com)**

Videx Security Ltd received accreditation in October 2013 and were the first Secured by Design Door Entry & Access Control Member company with a range of products tested to STS202 BR2 Level of Burglary Resistance.







## Effective access control: shared buildings

Neil Thomas, national sales manager at Videx – who has been providing door entry and access control systems to housing associations for almost 30 years – addresses the key issues that need to be considered when choosing door entry systems for shared buildings

**A**ccess control is pivotal to any building and getting it right is especially critical for shared buildings. Essentially, effective access control is achieved by preventing unwanted access to buildings. In residential developments, where a constant flow of visitors need access to different locations within the building on a 24/7 basis, this is best achieved with a combination of door entry and access control systems to communal and internal doors.

“Access control systems with effective key management capabilities can provide useful information to identify individuals and to ensure they can only access certain parts of the building”

Identifying an individual, whether resident or visitor, is key to ensuring that only those authorised can gain access to particular areas of the building. When residents and staff have traditional keys to gain entry it can be difficult to manage the number of keys issued. If keys are lost, or taken by residents when they leave, new keys need to be issued. This can incur significant costs and often results in the need to change locks to prevent unwanted entry. Access control

systems with effective key management capabilities can provide useful information to identify individuals and to ensure they can only access certain parts of the building.

To help prevent unauthorised entry by visitors, video entry systems offer residents the opportunity to view callers on a colour videophone before deciding whether to speak to them or allow them entry into the building.

Access control and door entry systems are now available to help overcome common issues including anti-social behaviour (such as noise, intimidation and assault) and benefit fraud. Reports can be prepared showing fob activity and logging which flats visitors call at, when a conversation starts and ends and when exit buttons are pressed to leave the building. When used in conjunction with CCTV, these reports can provide useful information which can aid in any investigations helping to improve resident's safety and security.

Many housing blocks are used as shortcuts and hangouts by non-residents especially estates that have a multiple entrance layout. Residential developments without adequate security are potential magnets for disruptive and criminal behaviour. This, in turn, can affect the quality of life for residents and often results in buildings becoming a popular place for criminal behaviour such as drug use and associated crime.

Without adequate access control, vandals can easily access a building often resulting in ongoing repair costs and an unpleasant environment for residents to live in, making them feel unsafe and

also less likely to respect the property themselves.

Before selecting an appropriate access control system for a specific building, such as an apartment block, a few issues need to be considered which are relevant to that particular type of building. For example, legislation needs to be a key consideration. Building regulations must be followed when putting an appropriate system in place and thought must go into how access control will affect users with disabilities following the Equality Act 2010 guidelines.

Secured By Design, the official UK Police flagship initiative supporting the principles of designing out crime, might also be specified which means only those products that have passed the stringent tests of Secured By Design should be used.

Cabling is also another important issue. Most





door entry systems are connected together throughout the building using low voltage cabling. Quite often, the cabling is installed as part of the first fix and sometimes the access control and door entry equipment has not been fully specified at this stage.

**“New door entry and access control systems are constantly being developed so it’s important to keep abreast of the latest offerings. When considering a system, it’s best to talk to the manufacturer who will be able to listen and ask the right questions”**

An issue that has become increasingly apparent is the need to know the difference between solid copper and copper coated cables. In most instances, solid copper must be used on access control systems due to the need for these cables to carry current and have a low voltage drop. Copper coated cables such as copper coated steel (CCS) or copper coated aluminium (CCA), although may look attractive when comparing the price between that and solid copper, will have a much higher resistance and therefore will suffer from much greater voltage drop than a solid copper cable. Not knowing this difference can

prove costly in the event the system is unable to function correctly due to a voltage drop.

## Choosing the right system

During the planning stages, it is important to understand the function of the building and the type of use the system will have. A number of questions need to be considered. For example, which entrances and exits require access control, should the access control be in the form of coded keypads, proximity fob readers or a type of biometric reader, should the door entry include video as well as audio communication, do residents’ handsets require timed privacy, is isolation required in case of damage to the cables, should tradesmen and postmen have a fob or ‘trade’ button combined with PIN to prevent misuse, and how will people exit in an emergency?

New door entry and access control systems are constantly being developed so it’s important to keep abreast of the latest offerings. When considering a system, it’s best to talk to the manufacturer who will be able to listen and ask the right questions to help find the one that best suits the site specific requirements.

When choosing a system, it is also important to know that it can be modified in the future if the building is expanded or the needs of the residents change. An example would be the increasing use of remote management to link multiple blocks to a concierge, offering residents higher levels of service 24 hours a day without significantly increasing costs.

The exit of buildings in particular requires

additional thought. For instance, in the event of an emergency how would someone negotiate the access control to exit the building? Solutions to this would normally include fail safe exit devices and links to the fire alarm to automatically release the doors. An appropriate access control system can also generate reports to show who is in the building at the time of the alarm so you’re aware of peoples’ location in the event of an emergency.

Product support is also crucial when dealing with a customised solution. Knowing that there is support available either online, via phone or on site, can offer reassurance for the long term. Installing a door entry and access control system is a long term investment and it is important to know that replacement parts are available.

The type of door entry system selected will depend on the specific needs of the building and its occupants. Housing associations specifically have a duty of care to protect residents and provide a secure environment and improved quality of life for residents. Choosing an appropriate access control system is therefore crucial to the security and wellbeing of these residents.

Many factors are involved in decision making, not least of which is cost. However, it is important to balance cost savings with product performance and ongoing support. As well as considering the specifics of the equipment, it is also extremely important to consider the services offered by the manufacturer of the equipment such as their experience, equipment warranty, technical support and availability of equipment and spares in the long term future.



## J.Banks is no.1 for window safety restrictors

Award winning UK hardware manufacturer J.Banks Ltd has been designing, developing and producing door and window products for over one hundred and sixty years. Following the first design for a concealed window restricting device more than 20 years ago, the company has been actively involved in a continuous programme of design and development, which has now evolved into the most comprehensive range of window restrictors available from any European manufacturer. In recent years the company’s R&D department has recognised the growing need for products that satisfy the new building regulation requirements and the possibility of even more demanding legislation likely in the near future. To address these safety requirements the company produces a variety of products for either face-fix or concealed applications, available as standard non-locking devices, through to the highly specified range of Res-Lok auto-locking, auto re-engage restrictors, all available with the latest Hold-Open arm option. For more information, visit the company website.

01902 864 863 [www.jbanks.co.uk](http://www.jbanks.co.uk)

**telguard**  
Telephone based entry systems using your existing phone..

The installation costs are significantly less than a hard wired system, the Telguard is vandal resistant and can be fitted in less than a day with minimal disruption.

A property needs telecommunications – the resident requires communication to the outside world for social and emergency reasons. If a scheme is not warden assisted, how would the resident alert the Emergency Services?

Communications are required for arranging health visitors, doctors and deliveries etc. Telguard utilises the existing service.

Suite 2, Stanley House,  
Kelvin Way, Crawley,  
W Sussex, RH11 9SE  
-[www.doorentry.co.uk](http://www.doorentry.co.uk)-  
01306 710120



## DANLERS range just got better

DANLERS Outdoor Security Switches are neat and compact and now benefit from an IP66 rated polycarbonate enclosure. The IP66 Compact Person Detector has both improved time lag options and upgraded photocell range of 10-1000 lux plus new photocell inactive feature. The IP66 Twilight Switch turns lights ON from Dusk to Dawn and features DANLERS 'Intelligent' Photocell which learns the contribution of the artificial lighting it is controlling reducing the risk of hunting and over illumination. The IP66 Dusk Switch features new 'Intelligent photocell', which switches lights on for a timed duration and resets itself when sufficient light is available.



01249 443377 [www.danlers.co.uk](http://www.danlers.co.uk)

## Eurosafe Solutions expands team

Leading provider of fall protection systems Eurosafe Solutions has expanded its Lightning Protection team with the appointment of Lee Dickinson. His role will see him managing Eurosafe Solutions' Lightning Protection test and inspection contracts and generating new business opportunities for the division.



Lightning Protection is required, by the British Standard BS EN 62305 to be tested and inspected every 11 months. All buildings over 5 metres are required to have some form of lightning protection. Eurosafe Solutions provides lightning protection test and inspection services to a wide range of buildings from schools and council offices, right through to churches.

[info@eurosafesolutions.com](mailto:info@eurosafesolutions.com)

## EnviroVent celebrates one millionth fan

UK ventilation manufacturer EnviroVent is celebrating the production of its one millionth Filterless Fan. To celebrate the occasion, a special edition gold version was presented to Fife Council by EnviroVent to mark this major milestone in the company's history. The Filterless Extract Fan was designed for the social housing sector and was one of the first products to be manufactured by EnviroVent. The Filterless Fan was created by designing out the requirement for filtration to ensure a smooth, uninterrupted passage of air through the fan. It uses filterless technology, with a unique patented cartridge system and ultra low watt motor technology.



[info@envirovent.com](mailto:info@envirovent.com)

## Waterproofing simplified with Remmers

Remmers Multi-Tight 2K is a new, flexible, mineral-based waterproofing product which has all the performance properties of older technology polymer-modified thick bitumen emulsions, whilst being "bitumen free". Using unique rubber granulate filler technology Multi-Tight 2K has a crack-bridging capacity which is five times more effective than standard flexible mineral-based waterproofing systems. The versatility of the product allows it to be used to waterproof below ground, externally and internally, offering excellent resistance to ground or water pressure as well as frost and salts. It is very quick and easy to apply by trowel or spray application.



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## Glidevale improves universal Versa-Tile

Glidevale, the specialist building products and ventilation solutions provider, has extended its tile ventilator range by introducing a new and improved version of its Versa-Tile G5 tile ventilator and terminal solution. The Versa-Tile G5's universal design provides a single solution for the majority of single lap tiles, resolving the challenges around tile profile matching. With a sleek, new lower profile and guaranteed 20,000mm<sup>2</sup> ventilation area, it can be used for all roof space ventilation requirements and is the ideal solution for refurbishment projects where retrofit roof space ventilation is required following the installation of increased roof or loft insulation. It can also be adapted into a soil ventilation pipe or mechanical extraction terminal using Glidevale's pipe adaptor and flexible pipe. With the Versa-Tile range proven in use for over 15 years, the Versa-Tile G5 ventilator is suitable for roof pitches between 20° and 60°. It is available in the following UV-stable colours: brown, grey, black, terracotta, red and red streak. The product is AA fire rated.

0161 905 5700 [www.glidevale.com](http://www.glidevale.com)



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www.clos-o-mat.com

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www.crlaurence.co.uk

**Croydex**  
Tel: 01264 365 881  
www.croydex.co.uk

**Grant Westfield (Multipanel)**  
Tel: 0131 290 2862  
www.grantwestfield.co.uk

**Lecico**  
Tel: 01234 244030  
www.lecico.co.uk

**MX Group**  
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www.mx-group.com

**Norcross Adhesives Ltd**  
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www.norcross-adhesives.com

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www.plumis.co.uk

**Sprue Safety Products**  
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www.sprue.com

**Kidde Fynetics**  
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www.kiddefynetics.co.uk

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www.gerflor.co.uk

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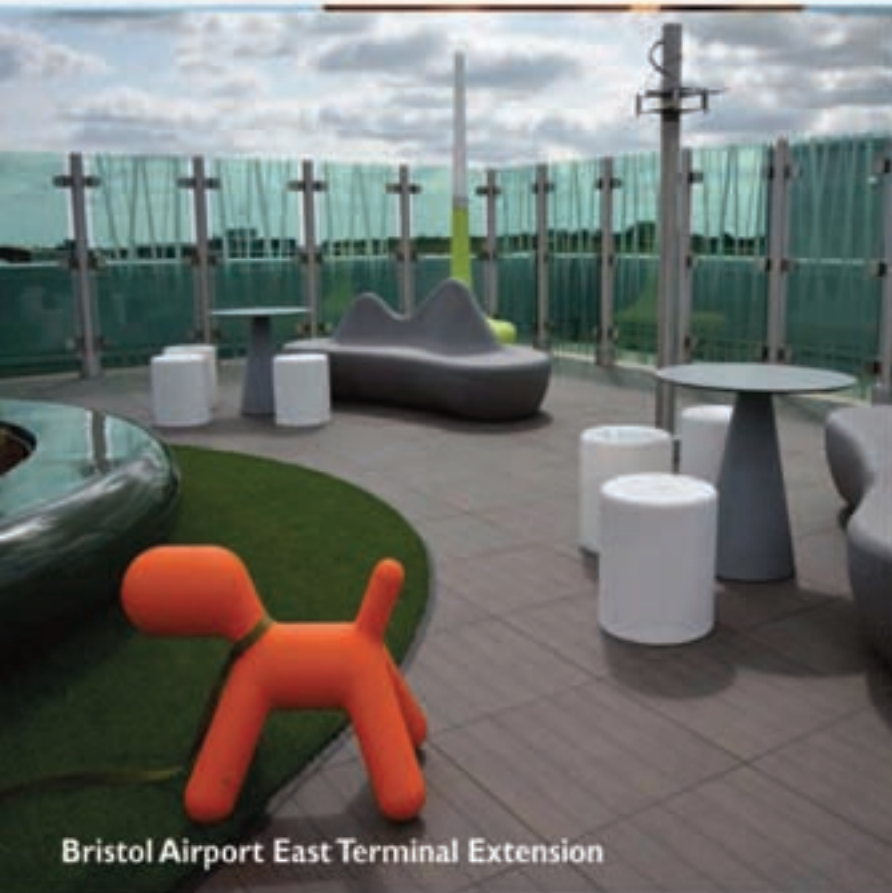
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