



HOUSING

MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

July 2016

Features this month

Air Conditioning & Ventilation
Bathroom Refurbishment
Doors, Windows & Glazing
Floors & Flooring
Insurance
Solar Energy

News

Build to rent schemes to provide
1,000 new homes in London
New law could ban letting fees
Evictions threat to hundreds of
thousands

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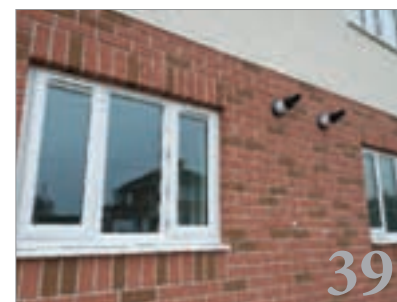
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Editor's comment

Steady as she goes?



Patrick Mooney,
News Editor

The official reaction to the EU Referendum vote appears very similar to the message Corporal Jones used in every episode of Dad's Army – "Don't panic Captain Mainwaring." Younger readers might be more familiar with the slogan "Keep calm and carry on". At least for the time being, anyway!

Despite huge uncertainty over what the Leave vote means for us all, most public figures are telling us to not overreact in the face of falling stock markets and a plunging pound. This message has been echoed by senior housing figures like Terrie Alafat from the CIH, the NHF's David Orr and Richard Lambert from the NLA.

And in some respects I can see where they are coming from – at least in terms of the rented housing sector. After all, the Government is not changing, although a number of key individuals will be changing their jobs. Personally I cannot see the Government changing its plans to cut welfare expenditure on housing benefit and the like. If anything it's possible the cuts could be made deeper or even speeded up, if public finances require it.

The ink is still wet on the Housing & Planning Act and we wait to see what the detailed regulations say on things like the prosecution of rogue landlords and how improved electrical safety is delivered. Council landlords are protesting about the short timetable and extra workload for implementing 'Pay to Stay' so better off tenants are forced to pay a higher rent, but this and other measures were not that contentious in the House of Commons and are likely to survive. The only way for significant changes to be made to the new Act is if a General Election is called in the next few months and the current Government is booted out of office.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne has played a huge part in formulating housing policies in recent years, particularly in the various initiatives to encourage and support home ownership schemes. Alongside this he has tried to discourage the exponential growth in buy to lets. The emergency Budget, which the Chancellor had threatened us with just a few weeks ago, has been shelved now that we have a new Prime Minister. This will allow more careful thought to be given to what the Brexit vote means for us all.

The big fears are that interest rates (and mortgage rates) will be forced up to defend the pound; that investment for building new housing is cut, that the budgets of all landlords are hit and cutbacks result in fewer jobs and support services to tenants being reigned back.

The credit rating for the country has been downgraded by both Moody's and Standard & Poor's, which could make the borrowing costs of the Government, HAs, councils and private landlords more expensive. So throwing more money at various housing for sale initiatives might not be the wisest action to take and it could represent very poor value for money.

But wouldn't it be interesting if the Government took an unexpected turn in terms of its support for rented housing – both social and private – and find ways to encourage its construction and to fund improvements in property conditions and management practices. Rented housing should not be the housing of last resort, the poor relation that is only for those who cannot afford to buy their own home. Well managed and well maintained homes for rent can and does play a valuable role in the smooth functioning of successful communities.

As a sector it can make a huge contribution to improving the health and well-being of the population, providing an affordable and stable base for its occupants. The potential benefits go well beyond bricks and mortar.

Patrick Mooney
News Editor



On the cover...

The July issue of Housing Management & Maintenance features
VM Zinc - Photographed by P Koslowski

An £18m refurbishment of Newcastle College's Parsons Tower will extend the usable life of the 60s block by around 40 years. Pre-weathered standing seam VMZINC® ANTHRA-ZINC® and QUARTZ-ZINC® facades and roof from VMZINC have given it a distinctive visual aesthetic.

For more information, go to page 48.

Build to Rent to supply 1000 London homes

Two multi-million pound deals have been signed that will see over one thousand new homes built in London for private rent.

The schemes are the latest deals under the Government's Build to Rent scheme and are being supported with more than £150m of public funding.

The 1,046 new homes are part of a package of Government measures which it hopes will deliver one million new homes by 2020.

The schemes will provide 636 homes at The Newfoundland Building, Canary Wharf in Docklands and 400 homes at Ferry Lane, Walthamstow in north east London. They are both located close to existing underground stations and will provide a mix of one, two and three bedroom homes. The properties are due to be completed in 2019.

Housing and Planning Minister Brandon Lewis welcomed the move as an important boost for renters in London: "As a global city filled with opportunity and links to the rest of the world, there is a real demand for good quality homes available to rent on flexible terms in the capital. These two new deals will provide a big boost to housing and help meet

the needs of tenants well into the future."

The Build to Rent fund was launched by the Government to "accelerate housing provision and to help developers produce large scale, quality homes specifically for the private rented sector." Since its launch over 5,800 homes have been contracted through Build to Rent with investment totaling £66m.

The Homes & Communities Agency's head of transactions Gareth Blacker commented on the two new London projects: "This is good example of how the Agency is able to support major cities to create successful places for people to work and live. This investment in the capital helps to meet local priorities for housing and growth, supports a wide range of construction professions working on the scheme, and gives greater choice to people who want to rent a high quality home in London."

The Build to Rent fund is a fully recoverable, commercial investment where the Government will share risk or bridge finance to allow schemes to be built, managed and let. The investment can cover land, construction or management costs.

"As a global city filled with opportunity and links to the rest of the world, there is a real demand for good quality homes available to rent on flexible terms in the capital" – Housing Minister Brandon Lewis MP



Lords ups housebuilding target to 300,000

The UK needs to build 300,000 new homes a year to resolve the housing crisis, according to a House of Lords committee.

The Economic Affairs Select Committee released a report "Building More Homes" on 15 July stating the Government must amend its current housing target of 200,000 per year and grant local authorities and housing associations better access to funding and more decision power to meet the prevailing housing demand.

Some of the recommendations in the report related to lifting restraints on borrowing for local authorities and allowing them to set and vary planning fees, maximise the use of public land and levy council tax on developments that are not completed within a set time period.

The Committee offered strong criticism of the Government's reliance on private developers calling it "misguided," and saying the private sector could not deliver the high volume of homes required.

"The private sector has neither the ability nor motivation to deliver the 300,000 homes needed" – Lord Hollick

Lord Hollick, chairman of the Committee, said: "The country needs to build 300,000 homes a year for the foreseeable future. The private sector has neither the ability nor motivation to do so. We need local government and housing associations to get back into the business of building."

The report noted that housing associations had been able to build homes in greater numbers than local authorities. The committee therefore supported the Government's efforts to reclassify housing associations as part of the private sector saying HAs' ability to borrow to fund new development could otherwise be at risk.

The Economic Affairs Committee stated in the report that one benefit of greater availability of social housing would be the likely reduction in the housing benefit bill over the long-term.

The committee also criticised cuts to social rent calling them "short-sighted" and concluded they were likely deter investment and reduce the available housing social and affordable housing stock long term.

The report also suggested a cabinet minister should be tasked with identifying and coordinating the release of public land for housing and that the National Infrastructure Commission should oversee the number of homes being built on such land.

North east HAs complete merger

Two housing associations based in the north east have merged to form a single 14,000-home landlord.

Bernicia Homes, based in Northumberland, has completed its merger with Four Housing Group, in Durham. The newly formed Bernicia Group has assets in excess of £500m with an annual turnover of more than £70m.

Bill Heads, chief executive of Bernicia Group, said "The enlarged group enhances our opportunity to do more for more local people."

The new group is one of the region's largest property management and development organisations, based in and committed to the North East. It works across

14 local authorities, from Berwick in the north down to Darlington, providing a range of homes and services to customers and communities.

The landlord employs over 500 staff and has plans to build 2,200 new homes in the region. With its specialist care and support services, Bernicia now works with over 60,000 customers a year.

"Bernicia Group has assets in excess of £500m and an annual turnover of more than £70m"

Terrie Alafat challenges sector to use its expertise to tackle housing crisis

Chair of the Chartered Institute of Housing Terrie Alafat marked the institute's centenary with a speech at Housing 2016 where she stressed the crucial importance of housing professionals in tackling a growing range of problems in the sector.

She told conference delegates in Manchester: "There is still much that is wrong about the way in which housing works in our country, and the persistence of many of these problems shows that what we do is more important than ever." Alafat added: "There is as great a need today for a talented, committed housing profession now as there was 100 years ago.

She said that current Government policy approach is "too narrowly defined and risks failing to enable proper housing solutions for too many people."

Alafat asserted that the expertise of housing professionals needed to be brought to the table "to help improve policy and produce better outcomes." She told delegates, "it is not just about Government – Leadership needs to come from us. If we look to others to solve our housing problems we are both dodging our responsibility as a profession and downgrading the role that we can and must play."

Alafat drew attention to the financial struggles being faced by many tenants in meeting their housing costs. She said that private rented sector tenants "are now spending on average 47% of their net income on rent according to the English Housing Survey."

She drew attention to key challenges for the future, including the housebuilding sector's "failure to build sufficient numbers of new homes," which she asserted was "at the heart of our housing crisis." In addition, Brexit would cause "a period of immediate financial uncertainty which could have an effect on housing markets and housebuilding," said Alafat. She warned the audience: "The future will not be easy, far from it."

In terms of recent Government policy, she acknowledged that thanks to last summer's



Terrie Alafat

Budget and the Autumn Statement, "lack of money is no longer necessarily the prime issue," with nearly £45bn planned for investment over the next five years. Alafat also applauded the "scale of ambition" of the Government's goal to build a million new homes by 2020.

Delegates heard the CIH had "concluded that current investment plans may not create a housing system that works for everyone." Alafat explained: "Many of the thousands who will be helped will be people who are already in a better position in the housing market."

The Government's ambition of a "major expansion in home ownership" meant that it "appears to have set its goal of promoting homeownership above all else," and this was a "cause of concern."

She said that the goal of increasing first time buyer numbers by a million over the life of this Parliament "presumes that the range of policies being deployed can actually bring ownership within range of a million households."

Alafat identified two "unknowns" namely the actual take up of starter homes, shared-owner homes, and associated ISA products, equity loans and guarantees, and whether the products are affordable as well as whether sufficient mortgage finance will be available.

A growing number of people, especially young people, may not become homeowners at all, she told delegates, meaning the rented sector was "a vital part of our housing system."

She said the eight million renters includes

people whose homes are unsatisfactory, unaffordable or insecure: "We need a better answer for the third of households who are not homeowners and for lower income households more generally."

"This means paying more attention to policy for, and investment in, rented housing, including providing new homes at sub market rents."

Alluding to problems inherent in expanding Right to Buy to housing associations, Alafat commented: "In the last 70 years or more, we have only ever built large numbers of new homes when local authorities have been involved."

"We need to ensure that in each of our different local housing markets we have the right mix of products at the right prices to meet the needs of the people living there," including the most vulnerable tenants."

She welcomed the Government's new estates regeneration advisory panel under Lord Heseltine and said the CIH "will make sure that the voice and experience of housing professionals is heard as the panel take forward their work."

Following the Homes and Communities Agency having "challenged" HAs with its latest analysis of the cost base, Alafat told Housing 2016, "How we respond to this is an important demonstration of where we are as a profession."

She said the CHI was "here to encourage and to challenge you, but also to support," and has introduced routes to chartered membership "so that there is an option for everyone," as well as new apprenticeships.

Alafat concluded: "We are determined not to shy away from difficult conversations where they need to be had, including addressing "tension between Local Authorities and Housing Associations following "changes in the Housing and Planning Act. She said CHI will host regional round table discussions bringing LAs, HAs and and other stakeholders together to "develop new ways to work together to deal with the problems in our housing market," because the sector, like the UK, were in "uncharted territory."

Innovative approaches to driving value in repair services revealed by leaders at Housing 2016

Housing 2016, held by the Chartered Institute of Housing in Manchester, included a workshop looking at innovative approaches to the management of repairs and maintenance services which worked for end users as well as helping the bottom line.

In the face of a 1% reduction in rents, combined with the need to build homes and ever increasing maintenance problems, session chair Lucas Critchley, managing director of the Mears Group, admitted that "the challenge doesn't really fit together." However he added that many housing associations and local authorities were "rethinking services" to address the problems, and "clients have become a lot braver."

Richard Medley, director of assets and neighborhoods at CIH, told the audience: "The industry has been developing gold plated services that don't reflect the cost base that people aren't working in." He added that it was possible to achieve better value through better integration of repair, maintenance and renewal activities, and "move from it being seen as a service to tenants to being about asset investment first and foremost." However he concluded that this does not mean there couldn't be a "focus on the customer while driving asset value," and highlighted a 'learning report' which can be found at cih.org

Ian Gregg, executive director of asset services at Riverside housing association gave a revealing

talk on the fundamental shift the group had made in its repairs services, to "bring all asset management together" and maximise value.

The group has achieved nearly £7.5m in savings but at the same time a 6 per cent increase in customer satisfaction and a 10 per cent performance uplift in its building stock. It instigated a "red ribbon approach" with tenants including doing the same amount of repairs over a three year period but making fewer visits.

He told delegates: "The biggest thing we have done is with voids, we decided we would not have a void standard." In addition, he said the group had made quick decisions on asset disposal if not worth investing in.

List reveals the country's 10 best HAs to work for

The latest Sunday Times 100 Best Not for Profit Organisations to Work For List includes the 10 Housing Associations that are currently leading the way in the sector.

The table shows the pecking order of the leading organisations are according to employee engagement specialists Best Companies, who compile the list for the newspaper.

Jonathan Austin, founder and chief executive of Best Companies, commented: "By featuring in the Best Not for Profit Organisations to Work For List, these housing associations have been identified as the very best places to work this year. If you work in a similar industry, these are the organisations you should be looking to for inspiration; using them as a benchmark to measure yourself

against in the coming years."

According to the list compilers Best Companies, being placed in the list gives housing associations a range of important benefits. These include "engaged employees – being placed on the list also gives companies invaluable data based on how their employees really feel." The company says they are able to "use this to make real change in the workplace for the better."

Jonathan Austin added: "Making it on to the list is about so much more than competing against others in your industry; it's about celebrating your employee engagement and taking steps to improve further. Making sure your employees love where they work will transform your organisation from the inside, and could translate into higher productivity, and improved customer service."

HAs in the Sunday Times 100 Best Not for Profit Organisations

Housing Association	Position	Rating
SLH Group	1	3 Star
Wales & West Housing	2	3 Star
B3Living	3	3 Star
Dale and Valley Homes	4	3 Star
Weaver Vale Housing Trust	7	3 Star
Newydd Housing Association	13	2 Star
CHS Group	14	2 Star
Calico	16	2 Star
The Havebury Housing Partnership	19	2 Star
Ongo Partnership Ltd	23	2 Star

Lewis fails to give clarity on target

The Housing Minister Brandon Lewis gave a televised address to the Chartered Institute of Housing's Housing 2016 conference in which he reaffirmed previous commitments post-Brexit, but failed to be clear on whether one million homes was an official target.

Following a speech designed to offer reassurance and galvanise the sector to "keep calm and carry on" following a shock result to vote Leave, Lewis said that he "never set a target" to build 1 million homes.

In his speech he reaffirmed the Government's commitment to build 200,000 Starter Homes by 2020 however, in spite of post-Brexit concerns around the housing market: "Our policy programmes to deliver those commitments carry on," he told the audience. Lewis said that he would shortly bring forward measures designed to avoid "abuses" of Right to Buy discounts for housing association tenants.

In a later session regarding the achievability of the 1 million homes, and whether that 'target' was adequate, John Godfrey, corporate affairs director of Legal & General Group told the audience that an efficient off-site approach to housebuilding was the way forward. "We need to move away from our Biblical building approach to a more modular approach," he told delegates, revealing that L&G Homes has constructed a 650,000 ft² facility manufacturing modular cross-laminated timber panels for homes near Leeds, the first of its kind in the UK.

He believed it was more important to focus on Build to Rent than "paper money," telling the audience: "We are unique in Europe in not having an institutional Build to Rent Market."

Robert Grundy, head of housing at Savills, told the audience that the UK's housebuilding performance had been improving, with "nearer to 170,000 per year currently, if you count conversions." However he warned that "following Brexit it will be a lot tougher."

Threat of eviction hanging over "hundreds of thousands"

Campaigning group Shelter is claiming that 350,000 people are at risk of eviction as a result of legal action by their landlord.

Using figures on possession cases from the Ministry of Justice, the housing charity found that court action was taken against 148,000 households in the 12 months to April. With average property occupancy rates, this is equivalent to over a third of a million people.

A possession claim is the first stage in a court process that can end with an individual losing their home. It is usually initiated by a breach of the tenancy conditions, such as non-payment of rent, causing damage to the property or being a serious nuisance to neighbours.

However, a possession claim can also occur

where there has been no breach and the landlord simply wants the property vacant – either so they can sell the property or re-let it to someone else, usually at a higher rent.

People renting in the London Boroughs of Enfield and Barking & Dagenham faced the greatest risk of eviction, according to Shelter. In these Boroughs, it said that one in 23 tenancies was "under threat" – which worked out as 2,314 households in Enfield, and 1,647 in Barking & Dagenham.

In the boroughs of Havering and Croydon it was one in 27 and in Ealing, one in 28, but Shelter also pointed out this was a problem that "stretches far beyond London". Areas such as Luton (one in 28 rented homes at risk),

Thurrock in Essex (one in 34) and Peterborough (one in 35) also made it into the top 20 areas most at risk.

Shelter calculated the figures by comparing the total number of possession claims issued in each area in the last 12 months with the total number of renting households in each location.

The charity group also reported that the volume of people facing eviction who were approaching the charity for advice "was getting higher and higher".

A spokesman said "In the past year alone, over 9,800 people facing eviction have called the Shelter helpline for advice, and 500,000 people have visited the Shelter website's eviction advice pages."

Sale of Kent barracks site to London council sparks protest

A Kent council has protested after it was outbid by a London council for a disused former Ministry of Defence site, which both councils wanted to convert to accommodation for homeless families.

The Howe Barracks are located in Canterbury and the city council wanted to take a lease on the site and use it to house people on its housing register. It was outbid by the London Borough of Redbridge, located 60 miles away on the borders of east London and Essex.

“Canterbury City Council was outbid by the London Borough of Redbridge, which is located 60 miles away on the borders of east London and Essex”

Redbridge are planning to move 208 families from temporary accommodation into the former barracks in Canterbury this summer.

Simon Cook, the leader of Canterbury City Council, said the council had looked at whether they could take legal action but conceded the law allows councils to place people outside of their area. He added: “We will monitor this to ensure Redbridge follows due process and will take action if they fail to do so.”

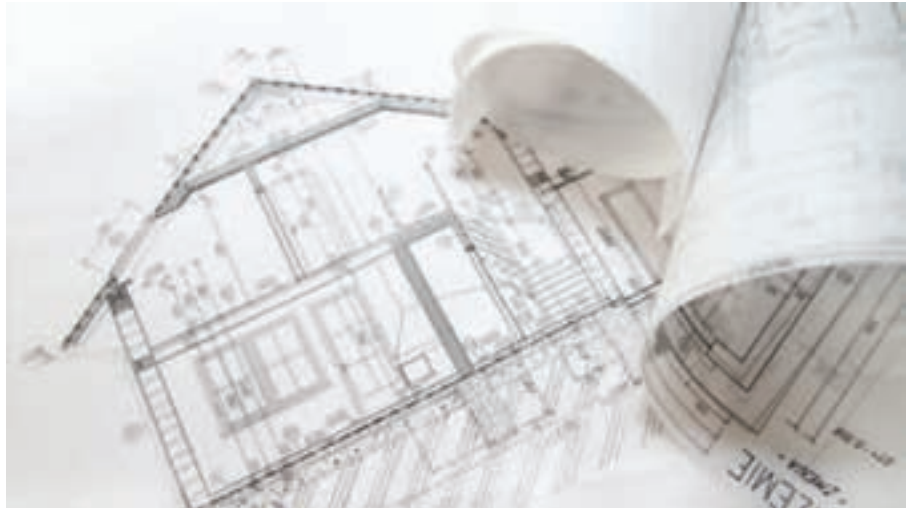
Stretched

He said it was “very regrettable” that a council can solve its housing problems by moving people “miles away from friends and family,” and the council would be lobbying the Local Government Association and other housing bodies to call for a change in legislation.

Mr Cook said the sudden arrival of 208 families will “place a financial strain on many local public services...at a time when resources are already stretched to capacity”.

There have been similar protests from councils in coastal areas and in the Midlands following action by London councils, to house homeless families in cheaper accommodation far outside the capital.

A spokesperson for Redbridge Council said: “Where we have a statutory duty to place a homeless household we try to secure suitable and available temporary accommodation in the borough, however, we can only do this if we have local accommodation available.”



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Plan launched to build 250,000 homes for long-term rent

A new group of developers and investors has written to the Housing Minister Brandon Lewis proposing a three-point action plan to build more than 250,000 extra homes built for rent.

The Better Renting campaign's letter, signed by 11 companies, says that Build to Rent – where companies build clusters of homes for rent – could help the Government deliver its pledge to build a million homes by 2020. The letter claims that traditional housebuilders are at full capacity and that support for corporate landlords could bring £50bn of new money into the sector.

The letter asks Lewis and fellow Ministers to set aside an agreed proportion of public land for Build to Rent development. Councils and public landowners could then generate long term rental income from buildings or land, enabling them to fund under-pressure public services.

The group also calls on the chancellor George Osborne not to apply an additional 3% stamp duty charge to professional Build to Rent developments. The group claims this charge will dampen investor appetite to build more homes. It could deter further investment which could build more than 250,000 new homes.

Recognition

Finally, the campaign's letter calls for recognition of Discount Market Rent (DMR) homes as an accepted form of affordable housing. This would allow developers to create subsidised rental homes as part of their development commitments, following successful use of the policy in the London boroughs of Ealing, Greenwich and Brent. A nationwide recognition would deliver more affordable housing.

Signatories to the letter include Grainger Plc, Essential Living, LaSalle Investment Management, HUB, Fizzy Living, Real Star, Hermes Investment Management as well as Mishcon de Reya, a leading city law firm.

Martin Bellinger, chief operating officer at Essential Living, said "Until we face up to the fact that promoting home ownership at all costs will lead us nowhere, Britain will not overcome its housing shortage. The Housing Minister has been very supportive of Build to Rent, but what's crucial is that the Prime Minister and Chancellor recognise the contribution this could make to helping them keep their promises."

Helen Gordon, chief executive at Grainger Plc, the country's largest private sector landlord, said "Our vision is for a better rental market, underpinned by good value for money for our customers, supporting economic growth and housing supply. We are looking to invest hundreds of millions of pounds into new rental homes, designed specifically for renting, which we will directly manage for many years to come. It is important that the Government does all it can to allow us and companies like us to build more homes."

Other signatories highlighted positive examples of successful private rent schemes from overseas and the huge appetite for investment, waiting to be unlocked. They also advocated build to rent as an attractive and often less risky alternative to building for sale. They forecast significant growth in interest if Government support can be found.

A campaign group Better Renting for Britain has been set up to promote and support a professional, long-term rental market, including private developers, institutional investors, housing associations and quoted companies. The organisation says it wants to positively influence Britain's housing debate by explaining the benefits that this new type of housing can offer and by identifying any technical barriers which may discourage investment and by helping to find solutions.

The campaign says it will engage openly to try and correct any misconceptions around Build to Rent and to support moves by others to drive up standards across the housing sector which it says have to be a priority for everyone.

Events

Facilities Show

21 - 23 June, London
www.facilitiesshow.com

Housing Heroes Awards

27 June, Manchester
www.facilitiesshow.com

CIH Housing Conference & Exhibition

28 - 30 June, Manchester
www.cihhousing.com

Procurement for Housing Live 2016

28 - 30 June, Manchester
www.procurementforhousing.co.uk

National Tenant Engagement Conference

15 August, London
www.capitaconferences.co.uk

RESI Conference

12 - 14 September, Newport
www.resiconf.com

NHF Annual Conference & Housing Exhibition

21 - 23 September, Birmingham
www.annual.housing.org.uk

NHF Development, Asset Management & Maintenance Conference

21 - 22 September in Birmingham
www.developmentandasset.housing.org.uk

London Housing Summit

6 October, London
www.cih.org/eventsfinder

One Big Housing Conference 2016

6 - 7 October, Llandrindod Wells
www.hcymru.org.uk/en/events

RTPI Affordable Housing & Starter Homes

12 October, Melton Mowbray
www.rtpi.org.uk

UK Construction Week

18 - 20 October, Birmingham
www.ukconstructionweek.co.uk

Scottish Rural & Islands Housing Conference

27 - 28 October, Peebles
www.sfha.co.uk

National Landlord Day

8 November, Edinburgh
www.scottishlandlords.com/events

Social Housing Annual Conference

10 November, London
www.socialhousing.co.uk

SHIFT Awards

24 November, London
www.sustainablehomes.co.uk/shift



Association calls for a “renaissance” in council house building

The Local Government Association has commented on the urgent need for new council houses to address affordable housing needs which will become more acute in the wake of Brexit.

Peter Box, the LGA's housing spokesman, said: “Bold new action is needed in the wake of the UK's decision to leave the European Union. National and local government must come together around our joint ambition to build homes and strong, inclusive communities.

“A renaissance in house building by councils must be at the heart of this bold new action. The private sector clearly plays a crucial role but it cannot build the homes we need on its own, and will likely be further restricted by uncertainties in the months and years ahead.”

The LGA said the economic uncertainty facing housebuilders following the UK's vote to leave the European Union could make it difficult for private developers to rapidly build enough homes on their own.

Box said that the housing crisis was deepening with affordability becoming difficult for a wider range of the population: “The housing crisis is affecting more and more families every year. For many, studying hard and succeeding in work will no longer guarantee an affordable and decent place to live.”

Research by the LGA research has revealed that demand for affordable homes will be much higher should the country fail to train the millions of higher skilled and higher paid jobs that are projected to be created by 2024.

Even if the country is able to achieve full employment in 2024, around 4 million working people will need some type affordable housing as wages struggle to keep pace with house prices.”

He added however that councils were able to bring huge benefits “beyond bricks and mortar” by investing in housing. “Investment in housing has significant wider benefits and we want to build the right homes in the right places that can generate growth and jobs, help meet the needs of our ageing population, and provide the infrastructure, schools and hospitals that enable communities to thrive.”

He added: “We must be freed to make this change happen.”

The LGA found the last time the country was building more than the 250,000 houses that it is estimated the nation currently needs was in 1977/78 - when councils built 44 per cent of new homes. Private developers in England have built an average of 90,000 a year since 2009/10.

Huge growth in multi-generational households forecast



A million more young people are likely to find themselves living with their parents over the next decade, according to insurance company Aviva.

With rents and house prices continuing to rise beyond the reach of many young adults, the main reason given for the predicted growth in multi-generational households is the affordability of housing, the company said.

The study is Aviva's inaugural ‘Home’ report, and it focuses on the changing face of UK households. It forecasts that 3.8 million people aged between 21 and 34 years old will be living with their parents by 2025, a third more than at the moment.

The number of households containing two or more families is also expected to rise, from 1.5 million to 2.2 million. Aviva's figures assume house prices will continue to rise at the same rate they have done over the last 10 years.

Company

While shared living may not appeal to everyone, there are others who highlight the advantages of sharing their living space with others. Two in three (66 per cent) people currently in this situation say the benefits far outweigh the disadvantages, according to Aviva's report.

The main advantages are said to include having other people around for company (72 per cent), cheaper shared living costs (62 per cent) and more people to share chores (56 per cent). Only 12 per cent of those already in a multi-generational household say the disadvantages outweigh the benefits, compared to 21 per cent of all UK adults.

“Multi-generational living is often seen as a necessity rather than a choice, particularly when adults are forced to move back in with their family to help save for long-term goals like buying their own house,” said Lindsey Rix, who is managing director of personal lines at Aviva UK.

“But rather than being an inconvenience, our report shows it is often a positive experience, with shared living costs reducing

financial strain and the added benefit of constant company.”

Overcrowding

Figures from the 2011 census show that 1.1 million households in England and Wales were officially overcrowded. In London 11.3 per cent of all homes were overcrowded, rising to 25 per cent in the London borough of Newham, the worst affected area in the country.

Affordability of housing appears to play a huge role in people's decision to stay living with their family or moving back in with them. When asked about situations when they might consider this living arrangement for six months or more, saving for a house deposit (57 per cent) was the second most common reason given, beaten only by caring for an unwell relative (71 per cent).

While two in five (42 per cent) of all UK adults believe living as part of a multi-generational household would be a positive arrangement, this rises to 66 per cent of those already living in this type of household, suggesting there is a gap between people's perceptions of multigenerational living and the reality.

Housing problems

In a separate research project for housing charity Shelter, 59 per cent of 18-44 year olds in Britain say they will be forced to put their lives on hold because of housing problems. Housing issues are also shown as stalling life milestones like career progression, having children and retirement.

The Shelter and YouGov study of adults under 45 was carried out as part of the Great Home Debate. It revealed the housing shortage is reshaping how millions of people live their lives and creating entirely new timeframes for when they hit life milestones.

Housing problems are a key factor in stalling people's careers, with one in five (19 per cent) saying they had experienced or expected a delay in finding job opportunities.

Property Management Software Driven by Sage



ARLA event sees speakers reacting to Brexit with concern and optimism

As Britain's vote to leave the European Union began to cause severe repercussions across the UK and Europe, the Association of Residential Letting Agents (ARLA) hosted its regional Brighton Expo on 29 June to offer landlords and lettings agents legal and tax advice.

With Brexit stirring up uncertainty, speakers at the event agreed there was no way of knowing how the sector would react, but for some representatives there was cause for optimism.

Jonathan Chapman, sales director of online repair and maintenance service providers Fixflo commented: "What the EU referendum outcome has ultimately led to is an amount of uncertainty. But while there's a threat, there's also opportunity." He added, "Housebuilders' shares have been hit and they may stop building some of the homes they wanted to. I also read in the press that 1.7 million people who were considering to sell their homes were now putting these plans on hold" (quoting Plentific research carried out by Opinionium).

He concluded, "Logically speaking, if it turns out that fewer people are buying or moving to new properties, this could mean that people are going to be renting for longer."

Speakers at the event also highlighted the importance of the obligatory right to rent checks in terms of immigration and how the related law will evolve in the next six months.

David Cox, managing director at ARLA, explained: "What the Immigration Act 2014 essentially did was enshrine in law the best

practices related to right to rent checks." The new Immigration Act 2016, set to come into force in the next six months, will add heavier penalties and grant landlords the right to evict illegal occupants.

Delegates heard that EU/EEA citizens retain their indefinite right to live and rent in the UK while Britain remains part of the EU – but this may change depending on the outcome of prospective Brexit negotiations.

While an EU passport/ ID card currently suffices and no further legal checks are required for tenants from the EU, Cox warned that various combinations of documents and a "myriad of visas" may have to be checked before accommodating immigrants.

He said landlords could grant tenancy to visa holders "as long as they have at least 24 hours left on their visa" however, adding: "As long as it expires tomorrow or beyond, you are fine – you can grant tenancy of any length you want."

The ARLA managing director highlighted landlords had to conduct rechecks within 28 days of expiry of the visa or otherwise they could face hefty fines for housing illegal immigrants.

Cox warned the fixed penalties of up to £3,000 for housing illegal immigrants will be replaced with an unlimited fine or up to five years in prison. The Immigration Act 2016 will also create an 'expectation' for regaining possession of the property so landlords will be able to evict illegal occupants within 28 days of a notice served by the Secretary of State.

"Logically speaking, if it turns out that fewer people are buying or moving to new properties as a result of Brexit, this could mean that people are going to be renting for longer" – Jonathan Chapman, Fixflo



David Cox

Industry views on Brexit

"It is unlikely that we will see significant policy changes straight away...in the meantime we must not lose focus on ensuring we continue to do our part in addressing our national housing crisis."

– Terrie Alafat, Chartered Institute of Housing

"We recognise the uncertainty that this result will bring to the sector and we are working with our housing association members to support them to continue delivering the homes and services this country needs. Whatever happens there is still a housing crisis and we remain committed to ending it."

– David Orr, National Housing Federation

"Let's just take a long, deep, calm breath. Leaving the EU is completely unknown territory, and jumping to conclusions isn't going to help anyone."

"Any knee-jerk reaction will have a real impact on our members' mortgages, tenants' rents and overall confidence in the market. So we would urge the policy as regards to interest rates should be to continue David Cameron's advice of 'steady as she goes.'"

– Richard Lambert, National Landlords Association



Buy to let interest rate victory will see over £25m paid back to landlords

A group of buy to let landlords have won a multi million pound payout from a lender who wrongly increased their interest rates. This ruling may also set a precedent for others to pursue cases against their lenders.

The West Bromwich building society faces paying back over £25m to the landlords after the Court of Appeal ruled it was not legally entitled to vary the landlords' mortgage interest rates in the absence of a change in the Bank of England base rate.

The loans had been set up to track the base rate throughout their term, but the building society increased the rates in 2013 and continued charging the higher rate.

David and Goliath

The ruling is expected to see roughly 6,000 borrowers compensated in what has been termed a 'David and Goliath' legal contest. An average payout of just over £4,000 is expected to be paid although the actual sums will vary according to the size of loan, when it was taken out and the interest rates. It is understood the affected customers took out their loans between 2006 and 2008.

The group of landlords who fought and won the case, called the Property 118 action group, said the ruling "sends a clear message" to other mortgage lenders who might have considered following suit. It added there were around one

million buy to let tracker mortgages that could have been affected if the decision "had gone the wrong way".

The West Bromwich Mortgage Company, a division of the building society, had increased their interest rates by two percentage points back in 2013. This was despite the fact that the base rate had been at 0.5% since 2009. Some of the landlords affected saw their mortgage rate more than double at a stroke.

Initially the Property 118 action group took their case to the High Court, where they were defeated, but they have now won their case at the Court of Appeal. All were described as "landlords of multiple property portfolios" by the building society. They have now offered to help other landlords who think they may have been similarly wrongly treated.

Reaction

The building society said that while it was "disappointed", it accepted the court's decision

and it would be contacting all 6,415 affected borrowers, most of who were not part of the court action, to advise them of the outcome. The society said the borrowers would receive a refund of any additional interest charged.

"Initially the group of landlords, who have multiple property portfolios, took their case to the High Court but were defeated, but they have now won their case at the Court of Appeal"

After being saddled with a £27.5m bill following its defeat in the Court of Appeal, a spokesman for West Bromwich Mortgage Company said: "This will not put the society in financial difficulty," adding "Our financial position remains very strong." However, the society is now expected to record a loss for the year to March 2017.

The building society had argued that the small print of the mortgages contained a clause that, under

certain circumstances, enabled the lender to change the interest rate "to something more in line with the current market norm". It said it had acted in part because of the plight of savers, who make up the vast majority of its 446,000 members and had suffered dramatic falls in income due to plummeting interest rates.

Buy to let landlords are increasing rents to offset cost hikes from regulations and tax changes, report says

Tenants will be feeling the brunt of regulatory and tax changes imposed on buy to let landlords as property investors look to recoup additional costs from stamp duty increases and tax relief cuts, according to a new report.

The report, from lender Kent Reliance, found that at least four in 10 landlords in Britain planned to raise rents in the next half year.

The firm's research found that about a third of buy to let landlords intended to pass on increased costs to their tenants following the surcharge on stamp duty for second property owners and the cap on tax relief for buy to let mortgages.

Four in 10 of the landlords expected to increase rents in the next six months, with three-quarters saying they would do so to offset the reduction in tax relief on mortgage interest. The average rent rise buy to let investors anticipated making was 5.6%, or £49 a month.

The then Chancellor, George Osborne, had surprised investors by cutting the rate at which higher rate taxpayers could claim relief on their mortgage interest payments in last year's Budget. The change, which will be phased in from next April, means that by 2021 only relief of 20% will be available.

Switching

The research, carried out for Kent Reliance's latest Buy to Let Britain report, also found a large number of landlords are changing the way they manage their properties, with many switching to running their portfolio through incorporated

"The research carried out for Kent Reliance's latest Buy to Let Britain report, also found that a large number of landlords are changing the way they manage their properties, with many switching to running their portfolio through incorporated companies"



companies, as these are exempt from the changes.

The number of mortgage applications through limited companies increased by more than 80% in 2015 to 54,750 a month, making up more than a fifth of the market. So far in 2016, 40% of buy to let loan applications had been from companies, the report said.

As well as the planned changes to tax relief, a new rate of stamp duty for second-home owners was brought in during April 2016.

Threats

Three-quarters of the landlords surveyed said that Government action was the biggest threat to investment. However, the report found that

those who owned property were still getting strong returns.

Tenants were paying on average 3.5% more than in the previous year. The average monthly rent was £872, while the average total annual return, including capital growth, stood at £28,617.

A spokesman for Kent Reliance, said the buy to let market was now "firmly in the crosshairs of both politicians and regulators", and that landlords were reacting. "But it is tenants who are feeling the real brunt," he said. "Rents are rising and landlords will increase them further as they pass on the increased cost of running their businesses. Far from supporting tenants, recent intervention will see tenants bear a heavier financial burden."

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Edward Lister appointed new chair of HCA

Sir Edward Lister is to be the new chair of the Homes and Communities Agency, which continues to have a key role in implementing Government targets for social housing and regulating the sector. His appointment was confirmed after he appeared before MPs at the Communities and Local Government Select Committee.

“A former leader of Wandsworth Council, more recently Sir Edward was the London mayor’s chief of staff and deputy mayor for policy and planning at City Hall. He will be supported by Julian Ashby, as chair of the body’s regulation committee”

He will be supported by Julian Ashby, as chair of the body’s regulation committee. Ashby has had his term of office at the HCA extended by another 18 months to 2018.

A former leader of Wandsworth Council, more recently Sir Edward was the London mayor’s chief of staff and deputy mayor for policy and planning at City Hall.

Clive Betts, chair of the CLG committee, said: “The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) has an important role to play in delivering the Government’s housing targets and regulating the social housing sector.

“On the basis of the evidence presented to us, we believe that Sir Edward has the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to undertake the role of chair and we wish him well in the post.”

Cost of renting one bed flats soars for under 30s

The cost of renting one-bed properties in the private sector has soared, with younger workers paying almost half of their take home wages in rent.

Tenants under 30 are the hardest hit while those living in the capital are having to pay almost 60% of monthly wages in rent, according to figures from property firm Countrywide.

The average cost of a new tenancy for a one-bedroom property hit £746 a month in May, taking up 48 per cent of the take-home pay of a worker aged under 30. In London, the average rent on a one-bed property was £1,133 in May, Countrywide said.

Rising rents have outstripped the growth in earnings to such an extent in the capital that since 2007 the proportion of take-home pay used to pay the rent has risen from 41 per cent to 57 per cent.

Countrywide reports that increasing numbers of young adults are responding to the higher costs by moving into house share arrangements. Since 2007 the proportion of one-person households in the private rented sector has decreased by 3 per cent, while four- and five-person households have risen.

The figures are based on properties let through Countrywide’s letting agents and income figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), adjusted for tax. They show

“The average cost of a new tenancy for a one bedroom property hit £746m a month in May, taking up 48 per cent of the take-home pay of a worker aged 30”

that the lowest rents as a proportion of income are found in the east Midlands, where tenants are only spending a third of their take-home pay on rent.

Increases

Countrywide’s analysis of all new lettings shows landlords have increased prices by 2.9% since May 2015, with the average monthly rent for all types of property across Britain rising to £945. Across London, the average new rent was up by 0.3% year-on-year at £1,292.

Tenancies coming up for renewal showed a bigger jump in costs, with rents rising by 5.2% over the year, to an average of £907 a month. In Wales, Countrywide said landlords were charging 9.4% more than in May 2015, with rents at £661 a month.

Higher demand for rented properties has been driven by a number of factors including high house prices, demands for large deposits of up to 40% and harder eligibility tests for mortgages.

Even when the housing market appears to have cooled, there is no let-up in rising rents in the private sector. The most recent monthly report from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors predicts that private rents will rise at a faster pace than house prices over the next five years. Meanwhile social landlords are having to reduce rents by 1% a year until 2020.

Johnny Morris, research director at Countrywide, said that rising incomes had softened the impact of increasing rents in most parts of the country, but in London affordability was being stretched.

“Many tenants have adapted to rising prices by either moving to cheaper areas, further from the centre, or sharing,” he said. “Stalling rental growth in the capital raises the question of whether London’s rents have reached their affordability limits for now.”

Uncertainty over electrical safety standards following late amendment to Housing & Planning Act

A late amendment to the Housing & Planning Act saw a new power introduced to impose electrical safety standards on properties in the private rented sector.

However, that is almost the sum total of our knowledge. The details of what the standards will actually cover will only become known once the regulations have been finalised. It is likely the regulations will not be agreed until 2017.

The standards could cover any number of things – the property’s fixed wiring, or the fixtures, fittings and appliances. They might

require regular testing and certification from qualified electricians, or members of an approved trade body.

The type of premises covered could include caravans and mobile homes, while the type of tenancy covered could include licences, as well as holiday lettings and lodger arrangements.

How the standards will be checked, enforced and regulated and who by, with what penalties at their disposal, could become contentious details which are argued over.

It is understood the DCLG have set up a working group to draw up draft regulations,

with representatives drawn from across the private rented sector and electrical industry. Members of the working group include Residential Landlords Association policy director David Smith.

Writing in a blog post on the RLA website, Smith summed up the industry’s uncertainty as follows: “It is common to hear politicians talk about how our rental sector should be more like Germany where no electrical goods (even white goods) are provided to tenants at all. However, I am not sure this is the similarity they had in mind!”

Councils call for rethink on Universal Credit



Councils are calling on the Government to review its flagship reform of welfare benefits as new research highlights a huge impact on rent arrears.

Housing benefit is one of six benefits being amalgamated into Universal Credit. But one year after the rollout of Universal Credit (UC), research has found 79 per cent of tenants on UC are in rent arrears compared to 31 per cent of other tenants.

The National Federation of Arms Length Management Organisations (NFA) and the Association for Retained Council Housing (ARCH) conducted a survey of councils and ALMOs. Following this John Bibby, chief executive of ARCH said: "A review of current policy is imperative if we are to reduce unnecessary hardship within our communities."

Arrears

The NFA and ARCH are calling for the government to abandon the seven day waiting period for Universal Credit, to review the in-arrears policy to see if this is causing "unnecessary hardship and long term disadvantage" for UC entitlement and to speed up the assessment process to three weeks.

Their research found households in receipt of UC are more likely to be in arrears and on average, to have larger levels of arrears than tenants in general. On average tenants on UC owe £321.05, compared to £294.57, the average arrears level for all tenants.

The six-week wait before tenants receive their first UC payment is cited as a common problem in pushing claimants into rent arrears. Councils said they are seeing an increase in the demand for money and debt advice services, food banks and hardship funds, as well as increasing numbers of tenants using loan sharks and pay day loan companies.

"A year after the rollout of Universal Credit, research has found 79 per cent of tenants on UC are in rent arrears"

Numbers of available homes for rent starts to drop, research finds

Actions taken by the Government to cool the buy to let housing market appear to be reducing the supply of properties available for private renting.

According to research by property crowdfunding platform Property Partner, new rental properties listed by landlords in May were down 5.7 per cent on March levels, before the 3 per cent stamp duty hike on second homes was introduced.

New rental properties listed in London dropped by 14.1 per cent in May, but it was not just the capital's housing supply that was hit as an estimated 90 per cent of surveyed towns and cities experienced similar or bigger falls.

Places as diverse as Worcester, Derby and Bedford all experienced big falls in property listings in May, taking them well below March levels. In some cases the reductions have been in the range of 30 to 40%.

Difficulties

Some of this movement was expected after investors rushed to beat the stamp duty changes in April but the size of the reversal has surprised many and could lead to difficulties for tenants as rents are pushed up and properties in poor conditions come on to the market.

Dan Gandesha, chief executive at Property Partner, said "The rush of investors buying before April's stamp duty hike caused a temporary spike in rental supply, but this now seems to have been swiftly reversed.

"With high and rising demand, any prolonged fall in rental supply can only have negative consequences for tenants. It's likely that rents will increase as landlords, facing less competition, pass on their additional purchase costs to tenants" he added.



Mr Gandesha warned that a lack of available properties will also force more tenants into accepting poorer quality accommodation, particularly in areas with an acute shortage of stock.

"April's stamp duty changes are just the first in a series of additional costs being piled on traditional buy to let. In the longer term, the private rented sector must be professionalised, to provide Generation Rent with enough good quality homes at rents they can afford."

"The rush of investors buying before April's stamp duty hike caused a temporary spike in rental supply, but this now seems to have been swiftly reversed" – Dan Gandesha, chief executive at Property Partner"

HCA downgrades two housing providers amid compliance concerns

The Homes and Communities Agency has downgraded two housing associations due to regulatory concerns.

Bath based Curo Group, with 12,600 homes in Somerset and Bristol, has had its governance rating downgraded to 'G2', which means it complies with standards but needs to improve.

The Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust (JRHT) in York has had its financial viability rating downgraded to 'V2', meaning it complies but needs to manage risks to ensure continued compliance.

The HCA raised concerns with the Curo Group about its ability to effectively manage its own affairs. In response Curo Group has produced an action plan including reducing

the size of its board and streamlining committees. A spokesman said they aim to get the 'G1' rating back later in the year.

In its judgement on JRHT, the HCA said the association was too reliant on property disposals to comply with its loan conditions. "Underlying its forecasts are significant efficiency savings and increasing rental income from new developments. Failure to realise these savings or the benefits of growth would exacerbate the existing pressures on the business."

A JRHT spokesperson said: "We are in the process of reviewing all our options to ensure we are running the organisation as efficiently and effectively as possible."

Mega merger collapses due to “cultural differences”

The planned merger of two of the largest social landlords in the care and support sector has been called off after problems arose between the two housing associations.

Sanctuary Group and Housing & Care 21 were working on plans to join forces in a 120,000 home landlord with a new subsidiary called Sanctuary 21 being set up to specialise in housing for older people. The subsidiary would have managed 32,000 retirement and extra care properties and rival Anchor as the largest HA providing homes and care for older people.

But it has emerged difficulties arose after the boards and management teams were reviewing the findings of the due diligence process. These could not be resolved satisfactorily so the merger was called off.

No merger

Housing & Care 21 says that it will not be looking to find an alternative housing organisation to merge with, but will instead re-focus on maintaining the momentum in its own

improvement and investment programmes. “We remain committed to being the leading provider of housing and care for older people

“The merger would have created a new 120,000-home landlord that would have managed 32,000 retirement and extra care homes and rival Anchor Group as the largest housing association providing homes for the elderly”

of modest means,” a spokesman said. This is the first of the current spate of so-called mega mergers to collapse in midstream, but similar

deals have been called off before and this will serve as a wake-up call to other housing associations involved in merger talks.

Originally the Sanctuary Group and Housing & Care 21 organisations said they were looking to create “efficiency gains and capacity” which they would use to build at least 800 affordable rent homes a year for older people. This was double their combined development programmes.

Other deals

Significant progress has also been made in other planned mergers. Sovereign and Spectrum Housing Group are now aiming to complete their deal before the end of the year. The newly-formed landlord will own and operate 55,000 properties in the south west of England.

And the Circle Housing Group has settled a long-running industrial dispute with trade unions which was threatening to disrupt its plans to create a huge landlord with 127,000 homes in London and the south east, through merging with Affinity Sutton.



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Expensive HMO experience for rogue landlord

A rogue landlord who tried to avoid obtaining a HMO licence or paying for works to make his property habitable ended up in court and with a large fine.

Magistrates at Bexley in south east London heard that the Woolwich property failed to comply with the most basic housing regulations. When challenged by environmental health inspectors (EHOs) from Greenwich Council, landlord Oner Arslanboga claimed he did not need a HMO licence.

The court was told the property first came to the council's attention in 2013 when EHOs suspected it was an unlicensed HMO. Officers served an Improvement Notice after an inspection, but Mr Arslanboga claimed it was not a HMO and applied for a temporary exemption notice.

Tip off

Two years later the council received a tip-off from a tenant and the EHOs returned to find the property failed basic housing regulations. They also found three tenants present, who all confirmed that they paid rent to Mr Arslanboga.

"All five rooms were occupied by at least one person unrelated to the occupants of the other rooms, and most of the rooms did not meet the minimum regulatory standard. Missing smoke detectors and widespread use of socket adaptors were cited as examples"

The inspection revealed that all five rooms were occupied by at least one person unrelated to the occupants of the other rooms, and most of the rooms did not meet the minimum regulatory standard. Missing smoke detectors and widespread use of socket adaptors were cited as examples.

Both Arslanboga and his letting agent South East Residential Ltd were found guilty of failing to license a house in multiple occupation, being in breach of the Housing Act 2004 and failing to comply with Management of Houses of Multiple Occupations (England) Regulations 2006.

Arslanboga was fined £5,600 and ordered to pay prosecution costs of £750 with a victim surcharge of £120. SE Residential was fined £1,750, prosecution costs totalling £375 and a victim surcharge of £120.

Council rent cut exemption criteria published by DCLG

Councils have been advised of the limited grounds on which they can apply to be exempt from enforcing the annual 1% rent cuts for the next four years.

However, the Department for Communities and Local Government has made it clear that it expects very few applications to be made and where these are submitted, they should be the last resort after all other avenues have been exhausted.

The guidance reveals exemptions will only be granted "where the local authority would be unable to avoid serious financial difficulties if it were to comply".

The Secretary of State will consider whether reductions in expenditure will jeopardise the ability of a council to maintain its stock at a

sufficient level for social housing and whether the council has considered all options for reducing expenditure and avoiding financial difficulties.

Councils applying for an exemption will need to "present a robust and detailed business case", including information about the financial effects of the rent cut, findings from a comprehensive review of costs and details of assumptions including inflation, interest rates, future rent levels and Right to Buy sales.

The Homes and Communities Agency has said waivers would only be considered for HAs "who face viability or solvency issues and have considered all mitigating actions" including looking at mergers.

South London HA to demolish two new Peckham blocks of flats

A housing association will demolish 48 rented homes just six years after they were built after discovering major problems.

Wandle HA has decided to demolish two blocks of 48 rented homes and it will refurbish two further blocks of 37 leasehold or shared ownership homes in Peckham Rye, London. The homes set to be demolished were only completed in 2010.

The association is looking at its options to redevelop the rented blocks. Shared owners and leaseholders are to be helped to find alternative accommodation while work to refurbish their homes is carried out.

Investigations were carried out following reports of water getting into ground-floor flats.

These found a range of problems including water damage to timber frames, defects to roofs and balconies, and poor drainage.

The homes were built for Wandle by a private contractor which has since gone into administration. The HA is in discussions with legal advisors about its options, including possible litigation.

"Wandle has decided to demolish two blocks of 48 homes and refurbish two further blocks of 37 leasehold or shared ownership homes"

HMO failings cost landlord £24,000

A rogue landlord from the Midlands has been brought to justice after being found guilty of a series of failings relating to a HMO and poor living conditions at the property.

Birmingham based landlord Salih Mahfood Hassan Mohamed was told to pay fines, court costs and victim surcharges totalling £24,158 after being prosecuted by Birmingham City Council.

The property in the Sparkhill area of the city had a HMO licence until May 2014, but it was then not renewed. Poor living conditions became apparent when the West Midlands Fire Service referred the property to the council.

Housing officers visited the property and found a long list of failings including a fire alarm not working, a blocked fire escape, mouldy shower rooms, low windows without safety glass fitted, faulty fire doors, an overgrown and cluttered garden and a broken front door lock.

Councillor Peter Griffiths, Birmingham's cabinet member for Housing and Homes, said: "HMO licensing exists because tenants living in this type of accommodation are almost 17 times more likely to be killed in a fire than an adult living in a similar single-occupancy house."

"West Midlands Fire Service raised concerns about this property and our officers found a shocking list of breaches," Mr Griffiths continued.

Mr Griffiths said that Mr Mohamed left the country for a lengthy period and instructed a friend to collect rent on his behalf. During this time the tenants in the property were subject to appalling conditions, which put their safety at risk.

"Most landlords are responsible and law abiding but the council's HMO Licensing Team will continue to pursue and prosecute those that are not," Mr Griffiths warned.



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FSC® – Who Cares?

By Martin Taylor – Managing Director of Encasement.

Since the Forest Stewardship Council was founded in the early 1990s, its 'Chain of Custody' certification process has become recognised globally as the primary standard for sustainable sourcing of timber.

Yet in spite of the UK government's 'Timber Procurement Policy' guidance, which in essence, requires only independently verifiable legal and sustainable timber should be used on housing stock, there is evidence of inconsistency and a lack of awareness of this, particularly in local authority and housing association property refurbishment projects.

Where's the issue?

Tens of thousands of local authority properties are maintained and refurbished every year, often requiring boilers and heating system pipework to be concealed. For more than 25 years, pre-formed and pre-finished plywood boxing has gradually been adopted as the preferred solution for many LAs and HAs, together with contractors, as it saves time and money compared to site made alternatives.

However, even with the move to sustainable timber, government procurement guidance and FSC certification, most if not all, LA pipe boxing specifications still do not specify the use of

products manufactured from FSC certified legal and sustainable timber.

As FSC pipe boxing costs no more than the non-FSC equivalent, price is not an obstacle to specification or supply. Also, under the scope of their own sustainability policies, contractors and merchants should be purchasing and supplying FSC products in preference to non-FSC equivalents. Some would even argue that they should go further and take the responsibility of advising specifiers that legal and sustainable products are available.



Time for change

Price is clearly not a barrier to change, which should help stimulate interest from specifiers and contractors alike to adopt pipe boxing manufactured from independently verified legal and sustainable timber.

It's likely that LAs, HAs, contractors and merchants are as focused on sustainability and sustainably sourced products, as we are at Encasement. But, for some reason it's not being applied to the use of pre-formed pipe boxing, which is worth millions of pounds to maintenance contractors, heating engineers and merchants nationally.

Throughout the supply chain everyone has a responsibility for sustainable procurement, so in our view a lack of awareness or understanding about obligations is no defence, especially as existing government guidance has set out the policy that should be adopted.

So, what is the answer to the question of FSC, who cares? "We all should."

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Families now the most common renters in private properties

Families are the most common household type in the private rented sector for the first time, according to the latest research from the National Landlords Association.

The findings show that more landlords are now letting to families with children (48%) than any other household type, just overtaking young couples (47%).

This represents a shift compared to four years ago, when young single adults made up the largest group (53%), followed by young couples (51%), and then families with children (51%).

Richard Lambert, chief executive of the NLA, said: "There is a genuine contrast between the experience of renting in the 21st century shown in this research and the prevailing housing culture in Britain that only views it as a stopgap - something to be tolerated while waiting for the opportunity to buy your own house."

The private rented sector (PRS) now accounts for approximately 5 million households in the UK and the proportion of families in the PRS has increased from 30% in 2004-5 to 37% in 2014-15 – an increase in roughly 1 million (912,000) households in ten years.

Stability

For the majority of families surveyed, renting privately is a stable option, with almost 8 in 10 (76%) reporting they were happy with the length of their tenancy, and a similar proportion (79%) reporting their tenancy was renewed or stayed the same at the end of the initial fixed term.

As a result, the perception of renting as a barrier to family life is breaking down, with nearly two-thirds of renting families (60%) saying that it was not. 77% of families considered their rented accommodation to be home, and the majority (65%) reported that they were free to personalise it however they chose.

Mr Lambert added: "There is a rogue element to private housing that ruins the experience for far too many people, but for the majority of the 11 million private renters, renting offers an inclusive and flexible option which works for them in their current circumstances."

"Contrary to popular perception, there's growing evidence that renting is no obstacle to putting down roots and calling somewhere home. The majority of landlords want good, stable, long-term tenancies, and these findings show that more and more are becoming receptive to helping families make a home in the private rented sector".



Gas Access Campaign suffers legislative blow

The housing minister has ruled out granting new powers of access to housing associations for them to complete gas safety work in tenants' homes, in an unexpected blow to a safety campaign.

Landlords must complete annual safety checks on gas-fired boilers but often experience difficulties getting into properties to complete the work. As a precautionary measure, many landlords schedule the works early (say after 10 or 11 months) to allow them time to overcome any access problems. This results in higher servicing costs and sometimes solicitors' fees for legal action.

HAs have been lobbying to be given the same powers of access as councils have. Despite initially giving positive signals he would listen and comply, Brandon Lewis MP has decided against allowing HAs to access a property within 24 hours of a tenant refusing them entry.

The Gas Access Campaign which called for the change was being led by the Home Group and backed by more than 200 organisations. Mr Lewis has written to the Home Group to explain why he is not in favour of a law change.

A Department for Communities and Local Government spokesperson said: "There is little

to justify granting a significant new power of entry, when the vast majority of tenants already grant access for annual checks."

Injunctions

Councils can obtain a warrant to gain swift access to a property where a tenant refuses access, but associations' only option is to serve an injunction or to start possession proceedings, both of which are more costly and time-consuming. Poor performance in ensuring annual services are routinely completed has resulted in a number of HAs being down-graded by the HCA.

The current laws, which the Home Group estimates are costing landlords £500 million over 10 years, also means associations have to carry checks more regularly than 12 months to ensure they comply.

The Gas Access Campaign has however persuaded the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) to consider a new "MOT-style" system for gas safety checks. This means, for example, if a check is carried out a month early, another check is then not required for 13 months.

Despite the Government's rejection of a new law, Mark Henderson, chief executive of Home Group, described the HSE proposal as a "significant change" and said the campaign has put annual safety checks "on the agenda".

About seven people die each year as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning leaking from unsafe boilers and flues that have not been properly installed, maintained or are poorly ventilated. Large fines and prison sentences can also be handed out by the courts.

"HAs have been lobbying to be given the same powers of access as councils have"

BBA to launch scheme to improve cavity wall assessments

The British Board of Agrément (BBA) is to launch its cavity assessment surveillance scheme (CASS) on 1 September with the aim of improving the assessment of cavity walls on site to in turn improve insulation installation.

Research by the BBA found that on its surveillance visits, cavity wall assessments were often not up to the required standard. It decided that another layer of oversight was necessary to try and ensure the quality of assessments and in turn the compliance of installations.

The BBA is introducing a rigorous process to ensure the competence of assessors. Through a web-based portal, they will have to register through the BBA in order to prove their competence and confirm the systems they are approved to assess on, along with confirming any certification they may hold. Unless the criteria are fulfilled, the BBA will reject the applicant, leaving them without a BBA registration or access to the platform until the application is deemed compliant.

When the application is compliant and all the information is available, assessors can then

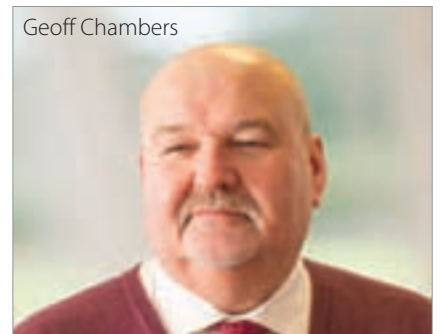
upload assessments to the website. The BBA will then review the online assessment, a percentage of those found to be suitable will have a surveillance inspection carried out to ensure compliance with the scheme requirements.

Geoff Chambers, head of approvals for property investigations at the BBA said that assessments often neglected to address ventilation issues caused by installations: "We felt that this was an area of the process that didn't have enough oversight. When cavity wall insulation is installed, it can adversely affect the airflow within the cavity. If there are combustion appliances within the property for example, it's incumbent upon the assessor and the installing company to ensure that there's adequate combustion ventilation for each fuel burning appliance."

He added: "Assessors are not always as diligent as they should be and they don't realise that a combustion appliance requires additional ventilation. If such issues are not identified and addressed prior to the cavity wall installer arriving, customers are likely to turn around and say that they no longer want the job done."

"Assessors are not always as diligent as they should be and they don't realise that a combustion appliance requires additional ventilation"

Geoff Chambers



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Welsh private rental sector satisfaction outstrips social

Private sector tenants in Wales are more satisfied than tenants living in the social rented sector.

Figures from the Welsh Government revealed that 90% of those in private rented housing in Wales are satisfied with their homes, compared to 83% living in social housing. Satisfaction rates among English tenants of social housing stand at 88%.

The National Survey for Wales found that 77% of private sector tenants are satisfied with the way their landlord repairs and maintains their homes compared to 69% of social sector tenants.

Rents across Wales increased by just 0.2% in the year to April 2016, lower than any other region in the UK.

The Residential Landlords Association Cymru argues that this data, while not a reason for complacency, shows the private rented sector is delivering decent homes at an affordable price.



NHF supports campaign to install smart meters in more homes

The National Housing Federation (NHF) is supporting a national campaign to encourage more social landlords and tenants to have smart meters installed in their homes.

Smart meters are the new generation of gas and electricity meters, replacing traditional meters in homes across Great Britain. They send automatic meter readings directly to the energy supplier and have a display showing how much energy is being used and how much it costs.

The Government wants every household to be offered a smart meter by 2020. Although it is not compulsory for smart meters to be installed in homes, the campaign seeks to highlight the benefits to having a smart meter.

A series of training and information events have been organised for HAs in August and September. Run in partnership with National Energy Action, the events in Birmingham, Bristol, London and Manchester are designed to provide landlords with all the information they need to understand smart meters and how to get these messages out to their tenants.

How do smart meters work?

The meters send readings directly to the energy supplier via a secure national network used solely for smart meters (similar to car remote keys). Tenants will only pay for the energy they use and because they can see how much energy they are using, it is easier to identify where they can become more energy efficient and reduce their bills.

They will bring an end to estimated bills, so tenants will only pay for the energy they use. Smart meters do not cost tenants anything and will be installed without charge by their energy supplier.

Prepay meters

As the smart meters technology also works with prepay meters, it will make it much easier



for tenants to top up their credit. Depending on their supplier, tenants should be able to top up directly online or through a smartphone app. There will be no more keys, cards or inconvenient visits to the shop.

It will also make switching between payment methods (e.g. direct debit or prepay) much easier as an installer will no longer have to visit the property and change the meter.

“The Government wants every household to be offered a smart meter by 2020. Although it is not compulsory for smart meters to be installed in homes, the campaign seeks to highlight the benefits to having a smart meter”

Man jailed for illegal gas work

A Darlington man has been jailed for carrying out illegal gas work on social housing properties on three separate occasions.

Teesside Magistrates' Court heard Neil Simon McKimm carried out gas work including servicing boilers. McKimm used the alias of a legitimate gas engineer to deceive his customers.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Neil McKimm repeatedly falsely pretended to be a legitimate Gas Safe engineer and falsely signed official records in the name of a legitimate gas engineer.

Neil Simon McKimm (trading as Macs Plumbing Services and under an alias as Robert Welsh), of West Moorland Street, Darlington, was found guilty of breaching Section 3(2) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974; Regulations 3(3) and 3(7) of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 and was sentenced to prison for 18 months.

HSE inspector Paul Wilson said after the hearing: “Gas work must be carried out by properly registered Gas Safe engineers and the HSE will robustly pursue those that break the law.”

Council fined £2,300 by Ombudsman

A south east council broke the law through its homelessness service's “aggressive gatekeeping” of a vulnerable man, a watchdog has found.

The Local Government Ombudsman ordered Eastbourne Borough Council in Sussex to pay £2,300 after concluding that council staff failed to follow the law and the council's own policies when handling the man's homelessness application.

The ombudsman said Eastbourne Council turned ‘Mr X’ away on 25 June 2014, despite the fact he had mental health problems and had been sectioned in the past.

“I am very concerned officers noted Mr X was not adequately dressed and did not appear to know where his medication was, but decided he was fine to sleep on the streets,” the ombudsman reported.

Delays

The council had delayed making inquiries about Mr X's homelessness situation until August, after 63-year-old Mr X was evicted from his home. The council eventually accepted a duty to house Mr X in September, but in the meantime he was sleeping rough and lost his possessions after his eviction.

“The list of failures identified indicates to me the council did aggressively ‘gatekeep’ Mr X's homelessness application with a view to avoid providing him with interim accommodation,” the ombudsman said.

Councils should make enquiries as soon as they have reason to believe an applicant may be homeless or threatened with homelessness. The ombudsman said Mr X's suffering could have been avoided had Eastbourne Council placed him in temporary accommodation earlier.



Profits grow in 'year of two halves'



One of the housing sector's main repairs contractors has reported operating profits of £15.8 million, despite a "year of two halves" in its social housing business.

Mitie has released its preliminary annual results for the 2015/16 financial year, showing a turnover of £2.2 billion and pre-tax profits of £96.8 million across the group.

The company works for around 100 landlords and has increased both revenues and profits in its property management business. Revenues in this area were up 13% to £280.4 million, while operating profits rose £15.8 million, up 51.9% from the previous year.

It said its profits in the second half of the year were hit as many social landlords deferred

planned improvements to homes and instead were focused on statutory maintenance due to budget cuts. Results had also been affected by social landlords cutting back expenditure to accommodate the imposed 1% rent cut.

Deferred work

"Our social housing business experienced a year of two halves. In the first half, buoyed by contract awards and increased spending levels from existing clients, it recorded significant growth in both revenue and profits," the results report said.

"Over many years we have seen a marked improvement in the second half as our clients look to deliver their budget commitments. However, this was not the case this year.

Mitie said social landlords have been driven to look at "different ways to look after their homes", with some re-tendering and others "looking at new models". It said it is being approached by clients to "take over contracts from other providers that are not meeting expectations".

The company is expanding its service offer to social landlords, so it can provide an "integrated service" including call centres, energy services, investment planning and other services.

New law could ban letting fees

Private sector landlords and letting agents could be forced to stop charging lettings fees as a result of a new law being discussed in Parliament. The Renters' Rights Bill, sponsored by Liberal Democrat peer Baroness Greener, proposes to ban letting agents' fees and publish a public list of criminal landlords.

Following the passage of the Housing and Planning Law, the new Bill recently started its legislative journey, having had its second House of Lords reading and moved to the committee stage, but its likelihood of success is uncertain. It may not achieve a majority in both houses and even if passed, it is possible ways will be found to work around it.

The Bill would give tenants access to a database of 'rogue' landlords and letting agents, as well as such landlords from banning from owning and letting houses in multiple occupation.

Removing fees

Campaign group Generation Rent is supporting the Renters' Rights Bill, which Baroness Greener said was intended to improve the quality of accommodation for renters and remove upfront fees.

"We think they're prohibitive, they're a rip-off, they're an upfront fee which is really hard, especially when tenants are moving," she said, adding: "People who rent have to move much more often than people who buy."

Betsy Dillner, director of Generation Rent, said that landlords who propose to put up rents are motivated by greed. "Landlords who are putting up rents are just excited that they can blame something other than their own greed. Pulling the plug on landlord incentives is an essential step towards a stronger economy and a healthier housing market."

A warning has come from Jeremy Leaf, former chairman of RICS, who said that a total ban on fees would lead to rents rising as costs will still be passed on to tenants.

"The fees have got to come out in the wash somehow. You cannot expect someone to administer housing lettings for nothing. I'd like to see caps on fees or more transparency around them. Banning them altogether could mean the costs are passed on to tenants, who could end up paying even more than they do," he said.

Leaf also said that "rogue tenants" should be named and shamed in a list to match the one for landlords. "The very worst excesses are pretty obvious rogue landlord territory - but there's also rogue tenant behaviour, such as being obstructive, or never being around for repairs. A landlord could quickly be tarnished by bad publicity from a dispute over one property - and then he can't let out his other 20 flats."

"Mitie has released its preliminary annual results for the 2015/16 financial year, showing a turnover of £2.2 billion and pre-tax profits of £96.8 million across the group"



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Greenwich build to rent scheme wins housing design award

A major build to rent scheme designed exclusively for families has won the Project Award for a PRS Development at this year's Housing Design Awards.

Creekside Wharf, which is being developed and managed by Essential Living, will deliver 249 new homes in Greenwich.

The scheme will provide a large number of affordable homes with wide corridors, buggy storage spaces, acoustic insulation, child play areas and public realms, making it suitable for family renters.

The Project Award recognised the project's innovative design, amenity spaces and discount market rent offer (DRM), which will apply to a quarter of the homes.

Matthew Lamb, development manager at Essential Living, said: "We're delighted to have won this award, which is fantastic recognition of our work in making a scheme that kept families in mind at every step of the design process."

Russell Pedley, director at Assael Architecture who designed the scheme, added: "Our ethos is that a resident's home starts at the front door of

the building, not the front door of their apartment. Our focus on amenity space was integral in giving our buildings that strong sense of community to ensure residents want to stay there for the long-term."

Creekside Wharf, due to be completed in 2017, is part of Essential Living's pipeline of 5,000 homes for rent across London and the South East.

The Housing Design Awards are the longest running awards programme in the country, having been launched in 1948 as a government initiative to promote well-designed and healthy homes.

The panel was made up of leading industry and public sector figures from RICS, RIBA, the GLA and the Department for Communities and Local Government, among others.

"The scheme will provide a large number of affordable homes"



Symphony ruled non-compliant following fire safety concerns

A large housing association in the north west has been downgraded by the housing regulator following an investigation over fire safety and managing risks to tenants homes.

Symphony Housing Group reported itself to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) in April this year after an internal review of fire risk assessments highlighted problems. Based in Liverpool and Manchester, Symphony is a partnership of nine organisations, who together own and manage 41,000 properties in the region.

The HCA initially placed the landlord on its 'gradings under review' list, but following an investigation it decided Symphony was non-compliant with the governance part of the agency's Governance and Financial Viability Standard.

In its published judgement, the HCA said "Symphony is unable to provide robust assurance to its board or the regulator that it is compliant with statutory tenant health and safety requirements across all the properties it owns. Symphony acknowledges this has been a long-standing situation."

The HCA criticised Symphony for failing to effectively scrutinise or challenge the information provided by its subsidiaries, its performance reporting framework did not effectively support the group and the group board was not holding subsidiaries to account or delivering compliance. Internal controls and risk management have been ineffective.

However, the regulator acknowledged Symphony had been open and transparent



about the problems, including data limitations. It has developed an action plan to identify and address risks to tenants and address weaknesses in data, systems and governance structures.

Following the HCA ruling, Symphony has also commissioned an independent review of its actions, which will seek to identify any further immediate risks arising from inadequate governance. The regulator assessed Symphony as being compliant with the financial viability

element of the governance and financial viability standard.

After reporting itself to the HCA, the association's chief executive Ms Bronwen Rapley, said: "The concerns relate to our processes and controls – no resident or member of staff has been injured. We take the welfare of our residents and staff very seriously and are taking all necessary steps to resolve the issues. We will co-operate fully with the HCA investigation."

Best rental yields to be found in the "university cities" of north west England, according to research

Property investors are being advised they can find the best rental yields in university cities of the north west of England.

Research by LendInvest found that Manchester and Liverpool have been the most lucrative areas for rental yields in the past five years, while London and the south dominated for capital growth and return on investment.

Average annual rental yields were 6.02% in Manchester, followed by 5.15% in Liverpool. Returns in London were lower at 4.86% in outer London and 4.71% in the centre.

Property experts Savills report that the five largest rental markets outside of London are Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Bristol and Birmingham – all are university cities, with many thousands of students and thriving private rental sectors.

Property investor Peter Armistead, of Armistead Property, explained the reasons behind the yields the areas were enjoying: "An average residential property in Manchester is just £155,000, while a flat in good area costs as

little as £120,000. In Manchester, property can provide a 5% minimum cash rental yield and a typical 12% total cash yield, including 7%

capital appreciation. Demand for rental accommodation is strong and by comparison with other regions, housing is cheaper.



TTA promotes high hygiene

The Tile Association and its members are promoting the hygiene advantages of correctly installed tiled surfaces, especially in commercial kitchens and food preparation environments. Tiled surfaces are entirely safe to install and use in hygiene-sensitive installations, particularly if large format porcelain tiles are used with epoxy grouts. Tiled surfaces can safely be cleaned at temperatures in excess of 60°C, since tiles are fired to temperatures far above that during the manufacturing process. This means that tiles are a good solution in an environment where boiling liquids might get spilt on them.



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New, improved & accessible on the move!

Remmers UK Ltd has given their website a fresh new look and the fluent, responsive design means that it can now also be viewed on both desktop and mobile devices easily. The new site enables all visitors access to a wide range of detailed information quickly and efficiently. Highlights include Remmers product catalogues, technical data sheets, in-house and NBS specification guides, colour charts and system specific project references along with a host of other helpful product and system information. The website also has an up-to-date news section and integrated social media links to Remmers Twitter, Facebook and Linked-In pages.



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Marc Overson joins Panasonic UK

Panasonic is delighted to announce the appointment of Marc Overson to Panasonic Heating & Cooling, who joins our team as the Country Manager for the UK & Ireland. Marc Overson joins Panasonic from the European air conditioning division of Samsung Electronics, where undertaking the role of the European B2B & Distribution Sales Manager, he gained a broad understanding of the European heating and air conditioning market. Marc succeeds in this position from Marc Diaz, who returns to the Panasonic operation in Spain. Marc will focus on building market share within the commercial air conditioning arena.



uk-aircon@eu.panasonic.com

Three decades of quality and innovation

The VEKA UK Group is marking its 30th year of manufacturing in the UK with a host of celebrations. VEKA began manufacturing in Burnley in 1986, with just four extrusion lines. The company has now become one of the UK's largest supplier of PVC-U window profile and of one of the local area's biggest employers. MD Dave Jones believes, "If we're not providing the perfect products for the market, we don't deserve to succeed." The VEKA UK Group marks the anniversary with a celebratory staff event at Burnley FC's Turf Moor (including a visit from the Global VEKA Group's CEO Andreas Hartleif) and the official unveiling of the NEW M70 profile system.



01282 716611 www.vekauk.com

Sentinel drives expansion

Sentinel is scaling up its operation in key international markets. Regions such as Eastern Europe and Asia are witnessing increasing investment in high efficiency heating technologies, for instance condensing boilers and renewables, at both domestic and commercial levels. John Lynch, sales director for Eastern Europe and Asia, says: "There exists a significant opportunity for Sentinel to help protect new higher efficiency systems by raising awareness of water treatment. The benefits of water treatment are well documented and we aim to ensure homeowners and landlords achieve maximum value from their investment."



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Snickers' ALLROUND work clothes

Snickers' Next Generation Workwear symbolises the brand's commitment to delivering the very best in modern working clothes. The latest ALLROUND Workwear family has been designed to cope with just about everything in everyday working environments. For professional craftsmen, they are probably the most advanced working clothes of their kind with modern designs that ensure smart, professional looks and an amazing fit. Garments combine to deliver maximum, hardwearing comfort and innovative functionality. They really are the ultimate choice for today's professional craftsmen in all kinds of everyday on-site environments.



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Construction United Welcomes Morgan Sindall Partnership

Construction United, a coalition of some of the construction industry's key stakeholders which aims to change perceptions of the sector, has recently welcomed leading UK construction and regeneration group, Morgan Sindall plc, to its ranks. As one of the initiative's partners, Morgan Sindall will support Construction United in its three key objectives; improving public perceptions of construction, encouraging young people to consider careers in the industry and maximising the health and wellbeing of its workers. Formed in February 2016, Construction United has already gained the support of influential product distributor SIG, trade bodies including the Finishes and Interiors Sector (FIS) and the Thermal Insulation Contractors Association (TICA), and leading skills certification scheme, CSCS. The initiative has also selected The Prince's Trust, Crash and Time to Change as its key charities, which it will support through fundraising activities which will be held from the 17th to the 23rd of October this year. Graham Edgell, Director of Sustainability and Procurement at Morgan Sindall plc said: "Public perceptions of the industry have an effect on all of us, and it's vital to address this if the sector is going to continue to grow. By becoming a Construction United partner we're showing our support to the wider industry and supporting worthy charity causes by hosting and participating in October's events."

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Glidevale presents ultra-low maintenance ventilation system

Glidevale, the specialist building products and ventilation solutions provider, has launched *iPSV*®, a humidity-sensitive, intelligent passive stack ventilation system which requires virtually no maintenance once installed. Designed to combat harmful condensation, the energy efficient system is ideally suited to new build social housing and refurbishment projects.

The system has no electrical connections making installation straightforward. Once fitted, it requires no further adjustments or commissioning. With 'intelligent' yet simple components containing very few moving parts this has the net effect of lower lifetime costs.

iPSV offers comparable and in some cases superior energy efficiency compared with other ventilation systems. Operating without the need for power, there are no direct CO₂ emissions as a result of ventilating a property.

A whole-house ventilation system, *iPSV* is controlled by responsive air inlets and extracts which react automatically to changes in relative humidity. When the condensation risk is high, the humidity-sensitive control provides an automatic boost effect to allow greater airflow. As the humidity levels fall, the airflow is reduced. Working silently 24 hours a day with no operating controls or electrical connections, the *iPSV* system is less likely to be tampered with by occupants, ensuring that the system runs at optimal performance.

"Efficient and effective ventilation is mandatory under building regulations for modern airtight dwellings and to meet the need for low energy consumption," says Senior Product Manager Laura Hughes. "Glidevale's *iPSV*



allows the most up-to-date ventilation requirements to be met with ease."

With over 30 years in operation, the *iPSV* system meets the requirements of Building Regulations and Standards in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, and is also BBA certified.

0161 905 5700 www.glidevale.com

Vent-Axia helps raise awareness

Vent-Axia was delighted to support Breathe Easy Week, an annual awareness week which focuses on lung health, run by the British Lung Foundation (BLF). Every year the BLF holds the event which is designed to highlight the widespread effect of lung disease which affects about one in five people in the UK. Jenny Smith at Vent-Axia said "We were delighted to support Breathe Easy Week this year. The British Lung Foundation's aim is that one day everyone will breathe clean air with healthy lungs. At Vent-Axia we support this and are committed to helping by providing effective, energy efficient ventilation to help provide good indoor air quality in our homes."

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Vectaire has two fans for single room ventilation with EC motors. They operate continuously, almost silently and very economically in any wet room. Also Vectaire has a single-room heat recovery unit within its range – the HREC 1003 designed both for new-build and refurbishment. It provides low level and continuous, energy saving ventilation, combined with high performance and efficiency. It saves up to 75 per cent of potential heat loss and includes integral summer mode and frost-stat. The HREC 1003 is available with 400, 500 or 600mm length tube heat recovery cells (100mm dia) and is available in standard, timer, humidity control and SELV models.

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*source: BEAMA, of 122 homes surveyed



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Look after your ventilation

Well-maintained ventilation systems can reduce overall building repair and maintenance costs for social housing landlords, while improving occupants' health and well-being. Michelle Sharp of Greenwood Airvac explains how.

We would all agree that a well ventilated home is essential for a comfortable, healthy living environment and happy and healthy occupants. However, it is also the case that the number of occupants in the dwelling and their behaviour will affect the performance of a ventilation system. The on-going maintenance of that system can also have an effect. For example, the average family home can create up to 17 pints of moisture per week from everyday activities such as cooking, bathing and showering.

A badly or incorrectly maintained system will not deliver fresh air or expel stale air, which can potentially lead to condensation and mould issues and can cause a build-up of indoor pollutants such as dust, pollen, household chemicals and biological materials - all potentially damaging to health. Increased noise levels is another consequence, as pressure builds up due to dust and debris, the fan or system have to work harder, ultimately affecting performance.

It's a worrying issue and one that looks to become worse, if not addressed. Recent research for BEAMA, the UK's electro-technical industry body, found that more than one in three UK homes are at an elevated or severe risk of having polluted indoor air, and that this can be up to 50 times more polluted than the air outdoors. BEAMA also found that 58 per cent of people have suffered mould or condensations in their home and 81 per cent of people are at risk from suffering a respiratory or dermatological condition by 2050 because of poor air quality inside their home.

Social landlords have a duty of care to their occupants, so it is essential that both the choice of ventilation systems for their properties and their maintenance are given high priority over the long term.

Mechanical ventilation systems

Building Regulations and the drive towards efficient homes means that simply opening windows or doors is no longer enough. Ventilation in airtight homes needs to be balanced and controlled. Often, because of the weather, security issues, noise and outdoor air pollution, opening a window is not always possible anyway. Mechanical ventilation systems deliver filtered, clean air into a home and can precisely control airflow. But, if financial pressures lead to skimping on system maintenance, noise levels could rise, performance will decline, and benefits will be lost.

A number of different types of mechanical ventilation systems are frequently installed across the social housing sector. These vary in their purpose, capabilities and maintenance requirements, but ultimately all will help reduce building maintenance by promptly extracting air laden with condensation and preventing the conditions that can create mould.

The simplest type of mechanical ventilation for energy-efficient homes comes from continuous extract fans. These are a one product concept – one fan, any room, all installations - designed to run continuously at a very low speed, with boost operation typically activated by the light switch. The popular Greenwood CV2 fan, for System 3 compliance, costs as little as half a penny per day to run.

Intermittent extract fans for bathrooms, WCs and kitchens provide traditional on-off ventilation and are controlled by the occupant or



through automatic sensing. They are easily specified for all types of apartments and houses but are not necessarily the best option in buildings with low airtightness levels, where continuous ventilation is preferable. This is especially prevalent in new builds, because high levels of trickle ventilation are required within the window profiles.

For whole-house ventilation, there's mechanical extract ventilation (MEV), sometimes also known as central extract ventilation. The central system is often mounted in a loft or cupboard and connected by ductwork to multiple wet rooms throughout the building.

The most sophisticated of all systems and the most beneficial economically, is mechanical ventilation and heat recovery (MVHR). By re-using up to 96 per cent of a building's heat loss, it helps to cut energy use and heating bills for end users, while ensuring balanced fresh air and comfort throughout the year.

Maintenance matters

Performance losses are suffered in fans when dust and dirt is allowed to build up in them. Some fans will maintain a constant airflow rate when this happens, but in doing so they get noisier. Other systems simply fail to provide the desired airflow or end up not doing much extracting at all.

This means regular maintenance is vital – but it is also easy. All that's required to maintain fan performance in most systems is to remove deposits of grease and dust from the fan and grilles, and if possible, when isolated from the mains, inside the fan and on the impellor. It is crucial,

therefore, that housing occupants are informed of this.

If a MEV or MVHR system has been installed, it is necessary to check/clean the filters every six months. However, this very much depends on the air quality in the location of the property and it is necessary to replace them every year.

“Social landlords have a duty of care to their occupants, so it is essential that both the choice of ventilation systems for their properties and their maintenance are given high priority”

Changing an air filter in a Heat Recovery Unit is vitally important to its longevity. It not only assists in the quiet, efficient running of the recovery unit, but is essential for bringing in fresh, clean air throughout the property, making sure that air being drawn in from outside is filtered and free of dust and pollen before it enters the home. Changing the filter can also boost the comfort levels of occupants, particularly for families with allergies or conditions such as asthma, where poor indoor air quality may trigger health problems.

If air filters are not replaced, there can be clear consequences. In the same way that a vacuum's filter can get blocked up and will not suck up dirt, the clogged filters will then impact airflow rates (both supply and extract) and it may introduce noise, as the system will be working harder. Overall, poor air quality and a stuffy atmosphere will affect the comfort

level of the home.

It is also imperative to professionally clean ductwork every five years, perhaps more often in urban areas. The heat exchanger core should also be maintained throughout the lifetime of the product – up to five years.

By taking these simple maintenance measures, a mechanical ventilation system – whether fans, MEV or MHVR – made by a respected manufacturer and fitted by a quality specialist installer, will consistently deliver. To maintenance teams and social housing occupiers, the benefits are well worth having.

Michelle Sharpe is group communications manager at Greenwood Airvac.

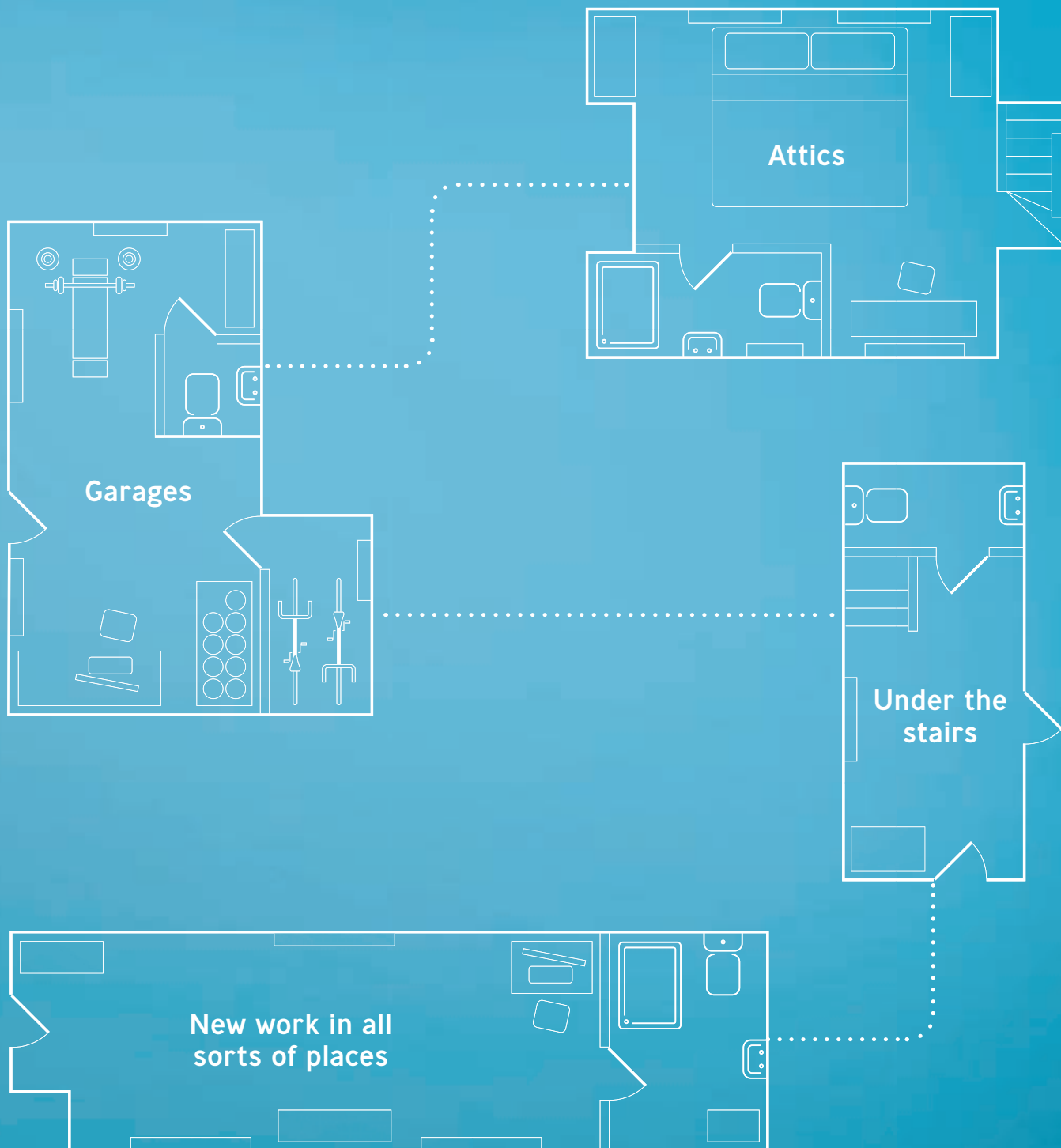


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Find paradise with Kinedo Eden

The range of self-contained Kinedo shower cubicles from Saniflo now features the stunning Eden with polished chrome profiles and external Cristal Plus coated glass panels plus internal panels in gorgeous opaque white glass. As with all Kinedo cubicles they are completely leak-free with no requirement for silicone or grout. Available as quadrant and corner versions, with either pivot or sliding doors and left and right handed versions. It comes in the full range of popular sizes including 800mm x 800mm, 900 x 900, 1000 x 800, 1200 x 800 – ensuring it is suitable for every shape and style of bathroom.

020 8842 0033 www.saniflo.co.uk

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.

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Design flexibility enables bathroom accessibility

As the need to make properties accessible grows with the UK's ageing population, Ann Boardman of Saniflo UK explains the flexible design options that are available for installing an efficient yet stylish downstairs bathroom.



It's well documented that the UK has a growing, ageing population of 'baby boomers' who would rather stay in their own homes and live independently than go into a care home. As a result more people are adapting their homes to facilitate independent living, and for the ageing population this mostly means installing a bathroom or WC downstairs somewhere, often in an unused room or even under the stairs. In addition, one in 10 (11 per cent) of British adults report having a mobility problem, and this demographic too is increasingly looking to install ground floor bathroom facilities in their homes.

However, the prospect of installing downstairs bathroom facility can be off-putting for many people, as they don't want the cost, hassle and mess of digging up floors to make way for mains drainage.

Enter modern day pumps and macerators which allow clients to create their ideal bathroom anywhere a water supply can reach and without the need for mains drainage. By using an array of macerators and pumps a WC, shower, bath and basin can be installed to create the perfect mix of facilities in a downstairs bathroom.

As we as a nation have moved away from baths to showers over the years, an obvious place to start in the design process is with the shower area. Showering spaces themselves have changed dramatically in the UK. Our travels abroad have broadened our horizons and for some time now we have expected something different from our shower designs. What once was a shower over the bath with a curtain can today be anything from a swanky shower enclosure with beautiful sparkly tiles

to a Moroccan-inspired tadelakt wetroom, to a practically driven yet stunning shower enclosure.

Each of these options carries with it varying degrees of hassle, expense and upkeep. Of the three shower options referred to above, the tadelakt is the one with the heaviest initial work requirement as it requires a lot of plastering and the plaster can only be applied to a waterproof substrate.

Then there is on-going maintenance to ensure the wetroom surface remains waterproof and clean and for this, often the entire area needs to be treated with a special soap every few months.

Shower enclosures can be pretty high maintenance too. The initial installation is likely to be a messy and time consuming process sometimes requiring excavation of the floor and always requiring tiling and grouting. Keeping a tiled shower enclosure looking pristine is a task in itself. The key here is the bigger the tile, the better. No homeowner wants to spend their time scrubbing grout or re-grouting to keep the bathroom looking good.

Shower cubicles – the practical answer

The most swift, affordable and hassle-free showering solution on the market today is the shower cubicle. They offer a quick, efficient and modern showering solution for any shape or size of bathroom. In many cases, you can have a watertight space, complete with the shower, controls and doors fitted and ready in less than a day. This means you can free up time to get on with other jobs, and your customers have a beautiful shower with minimum hassle and mess.

bathroom refurbishment

In order to identify the best type of product, look for manufacturers who design, manufacture and test in Europe, as this means they have complete control over the process and they can maintain the highest standards of quality and service. Also ensure that glass panels and doors meet the European standard EN12150 for toughened safety glass and choose manufacturers who supply products flat-packed for ease of manoeuvrability.

Some cubicles, even the most contemporary designs on the market, have the option to choose particular shower fittings, and others feature an integrated thermostatic control. Some even come complete with grab rails and a fold-down seat, for ease of bathing.

Look for cubicles that don't require silicone. In the humid environment of the bathroom, silicone will deteriorate and discolour without constant maintenance. Generally speaking, if no silicone is required, the wall panels of the product are cleverly designed to fit snugly within the shower tray. Choose cubicles with a leak free promise. Picking wisely, from a quality manufacturer should also mean there's no need for tiling or grouting and a shower that will stay looking as pristine as when it was installed.

As with fitting any shower there are three main considerations for specifying cubicles: floor construction; waterproofing, and drainage. Once you have established these you can get on with finding the best sanitaryware and brassware for the perfect solution for your users' needs.

Combine a showering space with a WC and basin – also possible without mains drainage – and you have a complete downstairs bathroom that can be used by a whole family, but which will definitely make the life of an ageing person far easier and more comfortable.

Today you can even find WCs and basins with height adjustment capabilities, so that you can set them to the height that suits you best. Again, look for manufacturers who design, manufacture and test in Europe, as this will give you best whole-life performance, meaning peace of mind for years.

Ann Boardman is customer services and marketing manager at Saniflo UK.

“Enter modern day pumps and macerators that allow clients to create their ideal bathroom”



Norcros addresses industry need

Norcros Adhesives is aiming to meet tiling industry demand for training with the opening of its new 'Skills Centre'. Located in a redeveloped area of its factory complex at Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent, the company's new facility is set to become an important resource for companies in the tiling sector, as the company sets out to deliver an expanding range of tiling courses in state-of-the-art bespoke facilities for the benefit of customers throughout the industry. The nature of the training that is carried out puts the emphasis firmly on the practical aspects, with all trainees encouraged to improve their own tiling techniques.



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Guernsey flats go thoroughly modern with Trespa

A landmark high-rise apartment block that was once thought to have outlived its usefulness has been given a new lease of life and a fresh appearance, thanks to Trespa® Meteon® cladding panels.

Built in 1963, Cour du Parc is 11 storeys high and the tallest building on the Channel Island of Guernsey. Only five years ago it stood empty of tenants and was considered to have reached the end of its useful life. Then an imaginative refurbishment and upgrade was given the go ahead by the States of Guernsey planners.

The result is an eye-catching structure where it's previously uninspiring dun-coloured brick-work has given way to vibrant Trespa® Meteon® cladding panels in two shades of light green.

"Visually the improvement to the building and

the ability to detail openings and vary colour to enhance vertical features were key to choosing Trespa," says Phil Roussel, Development Manager of Guernsey Housing Association, which carried out the transformation in partnership with the States of Guernsey Housing Department.

"The new panels have rejuvenated a tired old building and brought it up to date for the 21st century," says architect Ricky Mahy whose practice, Create, masterminded the new design.

Of crucial importance was protection against the elements. By using a ventilated facade system, the continuous air flow draws air through the cavity between the cladding and the inner layer of the exterior wall aiding in the removal of heat and moisture from rain or condensation.

"On the subject of environmental impact, using a ventilated rainscreen cladding system allowed us to increase the amount of insulation, thereby improving the energy efficiency of the building," says Mr Roussel. "There were less expensive options we first looked at but, with knowledge of other use of Trespa® on the island both at Sir Charles Frossard House and Oakvale School, we were satisfied that the product was capable of withstanding the harsh coastal environment to provide a long-term solution

without high maintenance costs," he adds.

The refurbishment project reconfigured space internally to provide 50 flats where previously there had been 42 and also made provision for an additional lift. The end result has been a welcome increase in social housing units for the island.

Says Mr Roussel: "GHA is a long term owner of this property so we wanted something without a high maintenance requirement. Trespa® Meteon® panels have good resistance to dirt, so we are confident the building will look good for many years."

Trespa® Meteon® is a decorative high-pressure compact laminate (HPL) with an integral surface manufactured using the company's unique in-house technologies; Electron Beam Curing (EBC) and Dry Forming (DF). It is the company's leading family of architectural panels for facades and exterior applications, created – as with all Trespa products – in close collaboration with architects, designers, installers, distributors and end-users.



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REHAU Passivhaus for social housing

REHAU's expertise in the Passivhaus sector has been perfectly demonstrated with an installation of windows and doors in one of the UK's first Passivhaus certified social housing projects. REHAU GENEIO tilt and turn windows, French doors and AGILA Passivhaus entrance door were all fabricated by Passivhaus specialists GRM Innovations for the pilot development in Sarisbury Green, Fareham. This is the first installation of the brand new AGILA Passivhaus contemporary styled entrance door which features a glazed in Rodenberg door panel. It achieves a U_d value of just 0.7 W/m²K, and comes pre-glazed and with high security hardware pre-fitted making it easy to install.



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Dickies launch fashionable trousers

Dickies has introduced a number of exciting new products and ranges for 2016, with style and functionality that offer unsurpassed value for money. Technicians can now look fashionable while at work when they wear the new tone-tone ED24/7 trousers. The 245gsm fabric ensures they are tough but light enough to retain agility. Most importantly they are free of any exposed metals such as zips, and buttons making them scratch free. With cargo pockets to ensure direct access to your tools enabling you to finish the job quickly and easily. Using the two-tone colours you can easily match the ED24/7 to any other item of clothing in the extensive workwear range.



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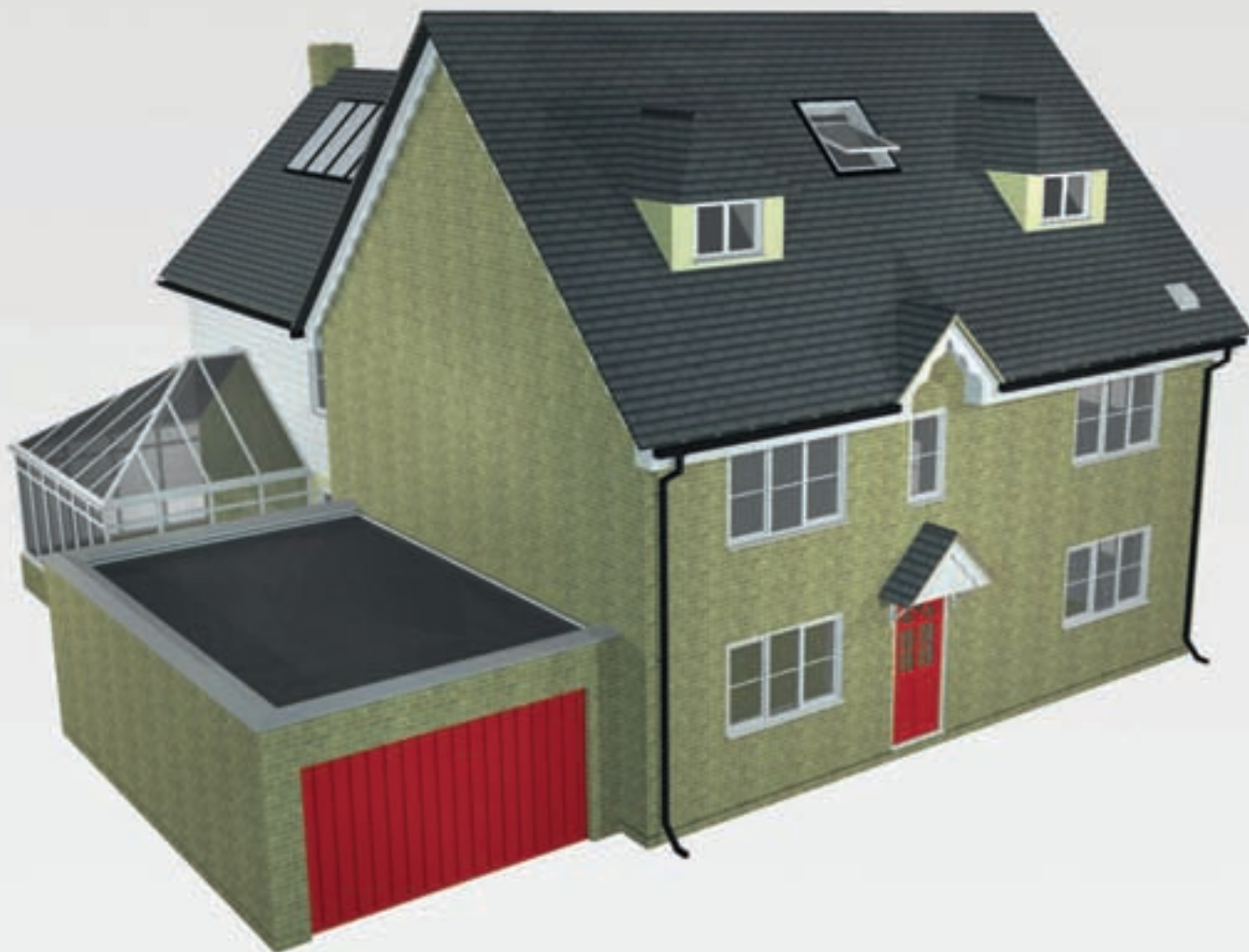
Schueco's outward-opening window

Schueco UK Ltd, a UK market leader in sustainable building envelopes, reports that its AWS 70 SC outward-opening window system is proving extremely popular for projects in both domestic and commercial markets. Launched just two years ago, the AWS 70 SC window delivers Schueco 'build quality' at an economical price, a performance/price combination that has won the approval of architects and contractors right across the country. They have found the Schueco AWS 70 SC system to be the perfect solution for new and replacement windows in houses and apartments, light commercial buildings, local authority properties, schools, hospitals and clinics.



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Safe as houses: safety and security glass

Keeping people safe in their homes is a high priority for housing professionals, and glass has a significant role to play in achieving this. Phil Brown of Pilkington explains how today's advanced glazing solutions are helping those in the industry to ensure home safety.

Like all landlords, those working in the social housing sector have a legal responsibility to make sure that tenants are kept safe in their homes. Similarly, landlords and property developers working in the industry have a responsibility to carry out repairs to the property's structure and exterior, to further safeguard it against accidental damage or deliberate attack.

Although windows are one of the most commonly used access points for intruders, they are often overlooked when it comes to making a property more secure. Huge expense is spent on installing modern alarms and security systems, but robust safety and security glass is an equally effective long-term solution.

While home safety and security glass are closely linked, there is a clear distinction between the two terms and the way the glass performs. For that reason, it's crucial that housing professionals understand the difference between these products and where they need to be placed in order to be effective.

The term 'critical locations' is commonly used in this area as it is key to the specification of security elements. Critical locations refers to glass in doors, door side panels, and low-level glazing in general. Typically in access locations, these areas are considered to be the most likely to cause accident or injury should the glass break.

Safety glass

Safety glass applies to glazing that reduces the risk of an accident by impact or fracture and is found across commercial and domestic settings. The two most common types of safety glass are toughened glass and laminated glass.

Toughened glass is manufactured by subjecting glass to a heating and cooling treatment whereby high compressive stresses are set up at the surfaces with balancing tensile stresses in the centre. The high compressive surface stresses give toughened safety glass its increased strength, resulting in panes typically four or five times stronger than ordinary glass. When it does break, it tends to fracture into small, relatively harmless fragments.

Laminated glass differs as it has a polyvinylbutyral (PVB) interlayer sandwiched between two panes of glass. If broken, the interlayer holds the



fragments of glass in place.

While it is technically no stronger than traditional glass, this interlayer makes it safer for people as it reduces the risk of occupants coming into contact with broken glass and injuring themselves on harmful shards.

Security glass

While safety glass applies to glazing that reduces the risk of an accident by impact or fracture, security glass is designed to withstand various deliberate attacks. Laminated glass in particular offers considerable security benefits, and when correctly designed and installed, its

“Although windows are one of the most commonly used access points for intruders, they are often overlooked when it comes to making a property more secure”

resistance to penetration can even protect against bullets, explosions and manual attack.

In any case however, since glass can behave differently in different framing systems, it is imperative that high performance security glazing is suitably glazed in appropriate framing systems to achieve the level of protection required.

More than just protection

Although safety and security glass products are designed with protection in mind, the presence of PVB in these products also offers a number of added benefits, such as acoustic insulation. This is particularly beneficial for properties located near to a source of noise disturbance, such as a building site or a busy road.

Laminated glass can be combined with other glazing products in an Insulating Glass Unit (IGU) to offer added benefits. For example, a low-emissivity (low-e) glass coating can be incorporated as a pane of an IGU to provide thermal insulation.

The low-e coating applied to glass reflects interior heat back into a room, reducing heat loss while allowing high levels of valuable free solar gain to heat buildings with no significant loss in natural light. Depending upon the low-e glass used in the IGU, U-values as low as 1.0 W/m²K can be achieved with double glazing, whereas triple glazing can reach U-values as low as 0.5 W/m²K. This can significantly reduce a building's reliance on heating, in turn reducing utility bills for tenants.

Laminated glass can also be combined with self-cleaning glass products. Self-cleaning glass uses a dual-stage process whereby organic deposits, such as dirt, are broken down by daylight and then washed away by rain. The first stage of the cleaning process is 'photocatalytic.' In this stage, the coating reacts with daylight to break down organic dirt. The second stage

is hydrophilic i.e. instead of forming droplets, rainwater hits the glass and spreads evenly, running off in a 'sheet' and taking the loosened dirt with it, also drying quickly without leaving streaks.

This helps keep homes clean, helping save time and money for the tenants or those responsible for maintaining the property. Similarly, advances in glass coating technology means that safety and security products can now also offer solar control, thermal insulation, self-cleaning and anti-condensation properties. Developments mean housing professionals can fulfil a wide variety of end-users' requirements, while meeting the strictest safety and security standards.

Phil Brown is European regulatory marketing manager at Pilkington.



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Waste not, want not

Graham Hurrell of AluK looks at the measures in place to regulate domestic window and door installations in order to help tackle energy waste.

Research by the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU) found that 79 per cent of the population would like to see energy subsidies spent on schemes that reduce energy waste. Rising heating costs, coupled with the UK's inefficient housing stock, has put millions in fuel poverty, with an estimated 2.35 million households in the category in England alone.

The main way to prevent heat loss in a building is through insulation. But with around 25 per cent of heat escaping through the doors and windows, specifying thermally efficient aluminium building systems could help retain the warmth internally, resulting in comfortable homes and lower bills.

According to the Office for National Statistics, England and Wales had an estimated 43,000 "excess mortalities" in winter 2014/15, a 27 per cent rise against non-winter months. Cold homes have been identified as a major contributor to the ill health and additional deaths during this period. Combining insulation with measures such as installing energy-efficient aluminium windows and doors, can help improve a home's thermal ratings, enhancing occupant comfort and health.

When installing new windows and doors, there are a number of regulations in place to help reduce the energy wasted in UK homes. In England and Wales, two Building Regulations cover the energy efficiency of window and door systems in dwellings; these are Approved Document (AD) L1A and L1B. Directives are in place to offer guidance and safeguard building owners, builders, fabricators and installers as well as end-users.

U-values

The U-value is a very useful measure of window and door energy-efficiency levels as it provides details relating to heat loss by calculating the amount of heat lost in watts per square metre when the temperature outside is at least one degree lower.

Thermally broken aluminium windows and doors offer enhanced energy-efficiency. Such systems have a barrier between the inner and outer frames to prevent temperature transfer through the frame and condensation on the inner frame. Thermally efficient products should provide lower U-values, equating to a better insulated property.

U-values are of greatest use to specifiers, builders and developers. However, fabricators and installers are responsible for ensuring that the windows and doors they supply or install in new and refurbishment projects meet the specified minimum U-value for windows and doors.

Window and Door Energy Rating

Window Energy Rating (WER) and Door Energy Rating (DER) are of most use to owners and installers. They measure the thermal efficiency of a standardised complete fabricated product to generate an energy performance level. Introduced by the British Fenestration Ratings Council (BFRC), the ratings range from A-G with A being the most energy-efficient. In addition to thermal insulation (measured in U-values), WERs and DERs also consider air tightness to ensure systems do not lose heat from their weather seals and glazing seals. The ratings also take into account the positive heating effect (or solar gain) as a result of more glass and less frame, which can reduce the need for heating on colder days. Aluminium windows and doors offer slim sightlines, which provide a property with



increased external light transmission.

Energy Performance Certificates

Building owners and occupants benefit the most from Energy Performance Certificates (EPC). Introduced by the Government to tackle the problem of Britain's large stock of inefficient housing, an EPC is used to calculate the energy performance of a building. It provides prospective occupiers and owners with information relating to a property's energy use and carbon emissions so they can consider its thermal levels and fuel costs.

When making decisions on moving home, occupants can use the EPC to compare the energy efficiency of similar properties. For owners, an EPC provides a recommendation report that lists cost-effective and other measures to improve the building's energy rating.

It is the joint responsibility of owners, builders and installers to ensure that Energy Performance Certificates are up to date and available to occupants whenever any improvement work such as loft and wall insulation, new boiler installations or window and door upgrades takes place.

In the year to 31 December 2015, a total of 1,797,276 EPCs were lodged on the Domestic Register. Based on fuel costs, 11 per cent received an A or B rating, 65 per cent got a C or D with the remaining 24 per cent rated E, F or G. Properties with an A or B rating exceed current standards whereas properties rated D-G are the worst performing.

Energy Performance Certificates are also used to calculate a property's Environmental Impact Rating (EIR), which is based on CO₂ emissions. During the same period, 12 per cent of domestic properties with an EPC lodged were awarded an EIR of A or B. An additional 48 per cent received a C or D rating and the remaining 40 per cent were rated E, F or G.

A total of 14,445,372 EPCs covering domestic properties have been lodged between 2008 and the period ending 31 December 2015. Based on fuel costs, 9 per cent of properties were given a rating of A or B. A further 66 per cent received a C or D with the remaining 25 per cent rated E, F or G.

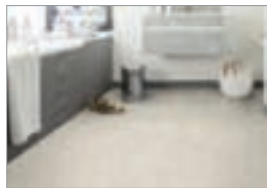
From 1 April 2018, owners and landlords will be forced by new energy-efficiency regulations upgrade the energy-efficiency of the millions of homes currently rated F and G to a minimum of E or face being unable to let them until they improve the rating.

Graham Hurrell is commercial director of AluK

Safety floorings looking good

Gerflor unites leading technology with first class design in its $\geq 36/R10$ slip resistant, residential vinyl floorings, Agrippa and Griptex. Developed for housing, these advanced, 3mm thick, domestic floorings meet HSE guidelines and include different sets of benefits. For example, Agrippa is an exceptional 19 db acoustic vinyl whereas, Griptex is a water-resistant, sound insulating and thermally efficient Gerflor Fibre Technology (GFT) vinyl. Both floorings are low maintenance and come in convenient two, three and four metre widths. They are also 100 per cent recyclable, environmentally-sustainable and manufactured at Gerflor's ISO 14001 certified production sites.

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SikaBond® Wood and Laminate Floor Cleaner from **Everbuild** is a ready-to-use floor cleaner designed to make light work of keeping your wood and laminate floor looking as good as new. Spray applied, this cleaner is suitable for use on laminate, wood, ceramic, polished stone and vinyl floors and is ready to use with no need for dilution in just three easy steps. Simply sweep the area, spray directly onto the floor and wipe with a mop or cloth to leave behind a clean and smear free finish. The fast acting, acid-free formula of SikaBond® Wood and Laminate Floor Cleaner is safe and effective and won't damage wood or glued joints.

0113 240 2424 www.everbuild.co.uk



OPTIM-R installed on London housing

The superior thermal performance of the **Kingspan OPTIM-R** Flooring System has helped a new residential development in the fashionable area of Battersea Village to meet its strict sustainability goals. The two, five and six storey apartment blocks and two townhouses have been designed to combine modern architecture with high sustainability standards, including the use of the innovative natural building material, Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT). 111m² of the Kingspan OPTIM-R Flooring System was specified for the townhouses due to its high level of thermal performance, which is five times that of other, more commonly available insulation materials.

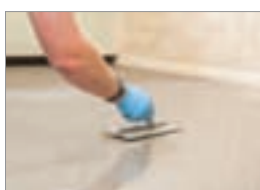
01544 387 384 www.kingspaninsulation.co.uk/optim-r



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Setcrete High Performance floor levelling compound and wearing surface offers professional builders and tradesmen a simple, easy-to-use, cost-effective solution to problematic flooring installations. Setcrete High Performance is a high-strength floor levelling compound and wearing surface, specifically designed for use over plywood subfloors, as well as over concrete and traditional sand/cement screeds. Setcrete High Performance levelling compound and wearing surface is fibre-reinforced, meaning that it can 'flex', allowing it to accommodate the movement inherent in wooden floorcoverings.

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Vinyl accounting

Navjot Dhillon, from Gerflor Limited, says the social housing sector is facing pressure to provide a diverse mix of properties for an ever-increasing range of tenants, but innovations in vinyl flooring can address those complex needs in a compliant and cost-effective way.

With the Government's drive to increase housing supply, including extending the Right to Buy scheme to housing association tenants, the pressure is on social landlords to diversify. Statistics indicate that UK homeownership has decreased after peaking at 71 per cent in 2003 and dipping a decade later to 64 per cent. There has been an accompanying increase in demand on the rental sector, particularly private rental, which is experiencing a rise in the proportion of families with dependent children entering the sector.

Pressure has been placed on housing providers to provide a mix of refurbished and new build social and private rental homes to meet the needs of both short and long term tenants. In terms of refurbishment, faster turn-arounds are also more commonplace where existing housing stock is being used for high-turnover temporary accommodation.

To address the increasingly complex needs of those providing, managing and maintaining housing accommodation, flooring manufacturers have invested in the development of flooring systems that address common issues, streamline installation, lower remedial work and bring longer term value to housing projects. Floorings that deliver reliability and consistency, achieving lower lifetime costs without impact on quality and longevity, are now possible.

One of the most significant flooring innovations to come about has been loose-lay residential vinyl flooring. Textile-backed vinyl has revolutionised how flooring is specified and laid within homes - both in refurbishment and new build housing. Eliminating adhesives, reducing subfloor preparation and accelerating installation times can reduce floor costs by up to 30 per cent compared with standard vinyl. Textile-backed vinyls are also thermally efficient.

Slip-resistant vinyl

Some residential vinyl floorings have played a significant part in bringing social housing up to the Decent Homes Standard. Historically, this was helped by the introduction of high-performance sheet floorings that met HSE guidelines and were better suited in terms of cushioning, design and colour to the home than contract floorings, which were previously used as only they had the required slip-resistance ratings.

Today's slip-resistant, luxury vinyl floorings continue to provide solutions for housing, and as technology moves on, residential floorings are better than ever before, with the construction, thickness of wearlayer and type of surface treatment contributing towards performance and longevity.

Slip-resistant surfaces can vary however. Those with mechanical texturing processes to provide slip-resistance can trap dirt and, over time, a build-up of dirt and wear to the surface can reduce the slip-resistance. By contrast, those with slip-resistance embodied in the surface layer during manufacture tend to remain slip-resistant, hygienic and easy to clean, with less routine maintenance necessary.

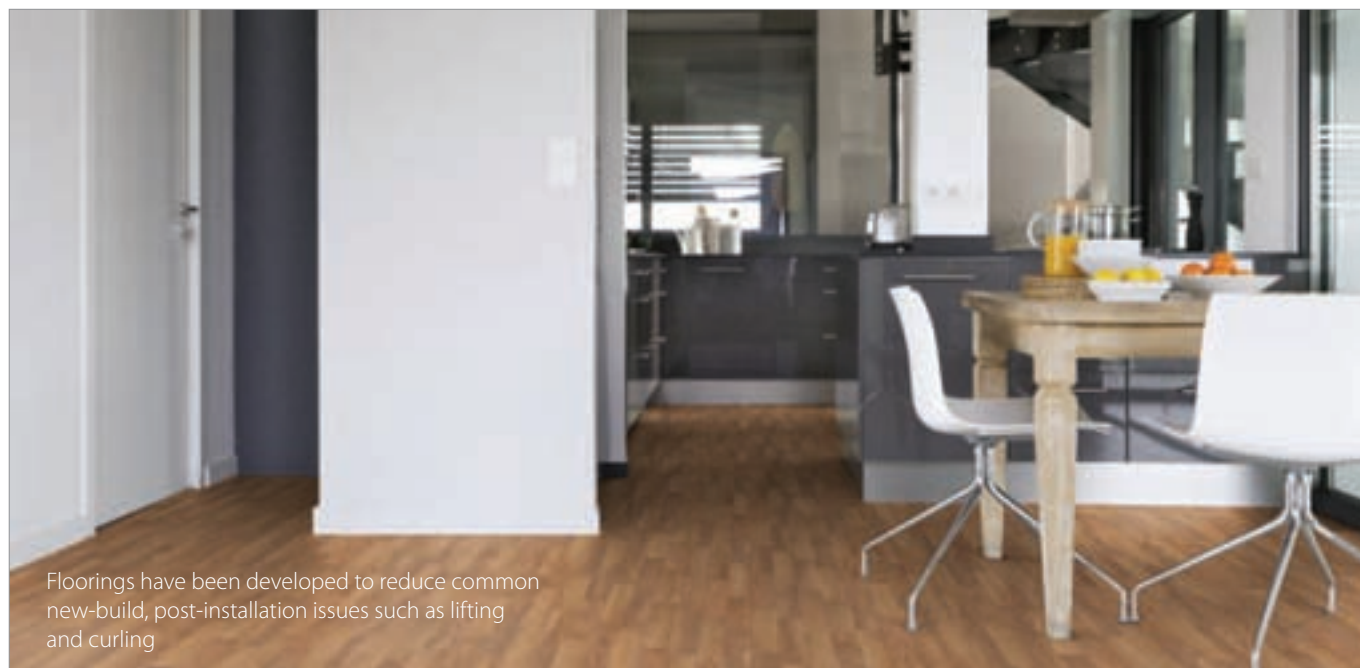


Fast-track refurbishments

According to the English Housing Survey 2014-15, 14 per cent of the social rented sector homes and 29 per cent of private rented sector failed to meet the Decent Homes Standard in 2014. There is clearly work still to be done. Particularly suited to this purpose, and for general, on-going refurbishment, are slip-resistant, textile-backed vinyl floorings.

Textile-backed, residential vinyls are designed to be loose-laid. Up to 35 m² of floorings with a stabilising interlayer and a textile-backing system can be laid directly over concrete and most existing smooth floorings without being stuck down or screed or latex applied to the floor. These can automatically absorb small defects beneath to provide a better finish to the floor above.

As installation can be fast-tracked, loose-lay vinyls are accelerating both long and short term rental refurbishments, whilst the availability of two, three and four metre widths avoids wastage and joins. Loose-lay floorings



Floorings have been developed to reduce common new-build, post-installation issues such as lifting and curling

can also be easily taken up for refurbishment and, if in good condition, re-laid. Far from a short-term solution, some high quality vinyls with durable, thick wearlayers and can remain in-situ when white goods need replacing.

In addition, as textile-backed floorings generally eliminate adhesive, glue degradation will not affect them as it might an adhered flooring. Glue degradation plays a major role in the life cycle of a flooring as adhesive can begin to break down in as little as two years. Adhesive-free floorings can therefore contribute to longer-term cost savings on replacement budgets.

Damp conditions

On the whole, textile-backed, loose-lay floorings will tolerate damp conditions better than glued products, which can result in damp and condensation being trapped between the flooring and the subfloor. They offer a solution where faults in the damp proof course occur or a damp proof membrane (DPM) has not been installed in older properties.

As damp can have adverse effects on the health and well-being of occupants, it is prudent to install a vinyl with an in-built waterproof layer within its specification. Some vinyls are up to 90 per cent RH resistant and can be laid where new subfloors have not fully dried out or where damp conditions prevail. Those with anti-mould treatments will also help prevent bacteria and mould.

Lower remedial work

Conventional, foam-backed, traditionally adhered residential vinyl is commonly used in new build housing. However, this vinyl type is prone to lifting, bubbling and curling when problems such as moisture, which is inherent to concrete subfloors, has not sufficiently dispersed and movement in new properties occur. Between 50-75 per cent of foam-backed vinyl installations typically require remedial work, whereas loose-lay, textile-backed floorings encompass technology that helps to eliminate these failures. Their use can reduce the number of post-installation issues significantly.

Whole-life specification

When it comes to selecting flooring, it is worth considering the longer-term implications and the 'whole-life' cost of the product, and not simply

the price per square metre. A higher price flooring could result in better value.

Plus, as today's floorings are developed for distinct areas within housing, it is worth consulting with a flooring specialist in the planning stages of a housing project to ensure the best outcome. Therefore, from dedicated flooring solutions for living areas to decorative, slip-resistant, easy-maintenance vinyl floorings for heavy traffic communal areas, the right product can be assured for each role.

Navjot Dhillon is marketing manager at Gerflor Limited.

“Pressure has been placed on housing providers to provide a mix of refurbished and new build social and private rental homes to meet the needs of both short and long term tenants”



New retrofit underfloor heating system

Maincor are pleased to introduce Overboard for retrofit underfloor heating applications. Ideal for extensions, kitchen refurbishments or upgrading domestic heating systems, the system is quick and easy to install, offering an energy efficient solution and a comfortable internal environment for building occupiers. The underfloor heating pipes are laid within the pre-routed Overboard panels offering a low profile solution which lends itself to situations where minimal floor height adjustments are desired. This makes the Overboard system suitable any property desiring UFH with its indoor comfort benefits, lower heating bills and reduced CO2 emissions.

01455 555930 www.maincor.co.uk



District heating at Banbury Park

Evinox Energy recently worked with Higgins Construction & Circle Housing on a development in Walthamstow. The site was a former warehouse, industrial works and electronics factory in Waltham Forest. Evinox engineers completed a full design of the primary network for the district heating and hot water system for a complex. The apartments are connected to the district heat network and each includes an Evinox ModuSat® FS storage HIU to provide heating and hot water. Residents at Banbury Park benefit from the Evinox PaySmart® pre-payment system. This system enables residents to be in control of their own energy bills by paying in advance.

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IMI's intelligent control valve system

IMI Hydronic Engineering has created a brand new solution to the problems caused by inaccurate control technology in heating or cooling systems. Uncomfortable temperature oscillations, noisy systems, and expensive and unsustainable energy bills are all a thing of the past with the new TA-Modulator – a highly precise pressure independent balancing and control valve – in conjunction with a range of fully digitally configurable actuators TA-Slider. Together, their revolutionary technology delivers the exact amount of energy to ensure perfect comfort and reduced energy costs.



01582 866 377 www.imi-hydronic.co.uk

Kingspan launch lower lambda products

The future path to energy efficient buildings will be revealed when leading manufacturer, Kingspan Insulation, launches four advanced, low lambda insulation products for floors, walls and soffits. Kingspan Kooltherm K103 Floor-board, K110 and K110 PLUS Soffit Board, and K118 Insulated Plasterboard feature an advanced, fibre-free insulation core, enabling them to achieve an outstanding thermal conductivity. As a result, the products can facilitate buildings to be built to the upper levels of fabric performance with minimal thickness. The launch of the new products follows the huge success of Kingspan Kooltherm Cavity Boards released earlier in the year.



01544 387 384 www.kingspaninsulation.co.uk

Faster, cheaper and lighter: Sentinel JetFlush Rapid® cleans up

Boiler-manufacturer endorsed water treatment specialist, Sentinel, has introduced a new powerflushing machine, the JetFlush Rapid®, to its comprehensive range of high quality products. Meeting increasing demand for a high performance, easy to operate, and ergonomically designed powerflushing machine, the JetFlush Rapid® boasts a range of innovative features that help installers to save time and hassle on the job, while improving heating system efficiency, minimising the risk of boiler failure, and preparing systems for protective inhibitor. Big on performance, the JetFlush Rapid® delivers thorough removal of magnetic and non-magnetic debris, while restoring heat and efficiency to domestic heating systems. This is thanks to the unit's high flow rate of 90 litres/minute (more than twice that of the previous model, the JetFlush4), made possible by a bespoke pump that couples a large, high efficiency impeller with a powerful motor. Instant flow reversal adds extra cleaning power, helping to shift even the most stubborn of dirt by disturbing water flow. Compact and lightweight, the JetFlush Rapid® is the size of a small suitcase and weighs only 17kg, despite boasting a one piece 39 litre tank, so is ideal for difficult to access jobs. Moreover, the unit's multi-move design – which includes integrated handles and 75mm wheels – and durable construction makes the JetFlush Rapid® easy to transport and stable, even when full of water.

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Icynene has been successfully tested and certified for applications directly to the underside of breathable and non breathable roof membranes and felts and recently received BBA certification for this application. Icynene absorbs the lowest amount of moisture and has the highest level of vapour resistivity of any soft foam on the market.



Lighting control for who Do or Don't

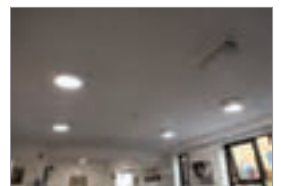
Danlers new range of PIR occupancy switches with short visit mode and courtesy exit mode can save even more energy through automatic presence based switching with optional manual intervention. Product Benefits: manual option for short visits to reduce the Lights on time (Time Lag); manual exit option to reduce Lights on time (Time Lag); always returns to standard automatic mode after short visit/exit functions; ideal for those who do and those who don't switch lights off; easy to Install and backed with a 5 year warranty; made in the UK for quality, reliability and service.



01249 443377 www.danlers.co.uk

Chapel Court – Ormskirk

Within walking distance to the vibrant town centre of Ormskirk is Chapel Court Retirement Apartments, part of the Riverside Group. Chapel Court has 41 one-bedroomed apartments for people over 55. At the heart of Chapel Court is the large communal lounge area, an ideal place to meet and catch up on the news. With a refurbishment programme planned, Luceco, part of Nexus Industries, provided lighting solutions to improve the lit area in communal spaces, corridors and stairwells. Over 100 Atlas luminaires were used in these areas, an attractive alternative to 28 and 38 watt traditional fluorescent fittings.



01952 238100 www.luceco.uk

Risk and reward

Managing risk in the supply chain is something all businesses should be aware of and this is no different in social housing. Karl Jones of insurance specialists Kerry London looks at the best risk management strategies.



From routine maintenance to emergency repairs, subcontractors are a common sight on projects as primary contractors look to outsource work to the supply chain. With requirements more pressing than ever and the 'claims culture' increases across the commercial and public worlds, subcontractors should know the risks to their businesses.

At the same time, any property owner – be it a housing association, local authority or a large-scale landlord – should have a risk assessor or risk management team on hand when considering contracts for property maintenance. Owners should also check their public and products liability cover to a tune of a minimum of £5m in respect of maintenance being undertaken on their sites.

Monitoring is key

Under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, housing providers have a duty of care to anyone working on their sites. So while the prime contractor is mainly responsible for the subcontractors, property owners also need to ensure that the work premises are fundamentally safe.

Conducting adequate checks and performing due diligence can contribute to keeping claims to a minimum. Taking time-stamped photographs of work spaces can provide vital evidence in the event of an accident and liability claims. The severity of the risk should also be considered – for example, roofing projects would require more regular checks than gardening contracts.

Monitoring can take many forms – from appointing a project manager, to regular spot checks or weekly meetings. Of course, there are costs involved here and, in an industry with relatively tight margins, you will need to weigh up the cost of monitoring against the amount of risk it is mitigating.

It is also important to ensure your contractors are reputable – check their turnover, wage roll, the types of work they undertake, their subcontractors and what systems they use to check them before issuing purchase orders.

Contractors – risks and mitigation

With risks apparent both up and down the supply chain, among the key players it is arguably contractors are arguably the most vulnerable to risk in the maintenance of social housing. To begin with, there is vulnerability higher up the chain as they depend on prompt payment of invoices. Credit insurance – traditionally an expensive option but becoming more affordable – may be an option in this respect.

The main threat to contractors is the risk of the underinsurance of subcontractors if the latter have a less comprehensive insurance cover than required by the terms of the contract.

So what happens when an electrician is insured for £1m but whose faulty wiring causes major fire damage needing £2m of repairs? The main contractor, even though not responsible for the damage, will have to pick up the tab through their insurance.

While insurers would agree to pay out unless there is a serious breach of

the terms of contract, the contractor can expect premiums to rise.

Another issue is the checks are often carried out by members of staff at a contractor's office who are unqualified to ensure correct policies are in place. These types of employees cannot reasonably be expected to know the finer details of an insurance policy – so their work must be done by someone with adequate knowledge and understanding of the consequences of subcontractors being underinsured.

One final issue which needs to be addressed when it comes to key risks is hot work – use of blow torches, hot air guns, welding gear, bitumen boilers and grinders. This use of heat and flame is not covered under insurance policies for general building and if you ask subcontractors to undertake such work without specific policies to cover it then they, as well as you, risk having no cover at all.

Risks to subcontractors

All of the risks which apply to contractors – particularly regarding late payment of invoices – can also be applied to subcontractors. Small businesses are especially vulnerable to the many instances of prime contractors not paying invoices on time. It is the smallest businesses which are most likely to be on the hand-to-mouth knife edge of needing prompt payment.

Therefore subcontractors need to ensure the contractor is reputable and reliable. It is also advisable that businesses clearly set out their terms in writing prior to engagement, especially if the subcontract is substantial enough to put the trader at a serious risk.

“Supply chain failures can take many forms – from negligent or substandard work done by subcontractors to underinsurance by any parties involved”

Conclusion

Given the cost of property and the potential damage to buildings and people involved in maintenance work, there are great spectrums of risks and costs involved in claims from across the supply chain from property owners right down to sole traders.

No matter who is addressing the risk, the general principles must be the same – be thorough, take advice if necessary and make sure all paperwork and policies are in order prior to work commencing.

Karl Jones is an insurance broker specialising in construction at Kerry London.

UK Roofing Awards 2016 – Winners revealed

The winners of the UK Roofing Awards were announced at a ceremony hosted by BBC's Steph McGovern at the Hilton London Metropole on Friday 13th May 2016.

The CompetentRoof Registered Contractor winners are:

- Roof Sheetting – KGM Roofing, Marshgate Drive, Hertford
- Solar on Roofs – Bauder Ltd (with Hodgson Sayers), Byker Wall, Newcastle Upon Tyne
- Reinforced Bitumen Membranes – Bauder Ltd (with Mitie Tilley Roofing Ltd), ROM Ltd, Sheffield
- Single-lap Tiling and Slating – Wienerberger (with Timby Traditional Roofing), Burgess, Wellingore
- Double-lap Slating – Timby Traditional Roofing, Tait Gazebo, Gainsborough
- Double-lap Tiling – Karl Terry Roofing Contractors Ltd, Shipley Farm, North Elham
- Heritage Roofing – Karl Terry Roofing Contractors Ltd, The Cloth Hall, Smarden

The UK Roofing Awards also reward the individuals and organisations that go above and beyond the call of duty.

The companies that scored highest within their roofing discipline in the NFRC Safety in Roofing Awards for 2015 were, in slating and tiling; Wensley Roofing Ltd, for flat roofing, CompetentRoof Registered Contractors; Stormforce Roofing & Maintenance Ltd and for industrial roofing and cladding; Industrial Construction (Sussex) Limited.

The Lead Contractors Association presented the Murdoch Award and Murdoch Sponsor's Award for best leadwork. The former was won by



CompetentRoof Registered Contractor Lead-Tech Roofing for Rygar House in London.

The Roofing Awards bring everyone within the industry together. Along with CompetentRoof, the awards hosts were the Roof Tile Association (RTA), the Liquid Roofing and Waterproofing Association (LRWA), the Lead Contractors Association (LCA), the Lead Sheet Association (LSA), the Federation of Traditional Metal Roofing Contractors (FTMRC), Single Ply Roofing Association (SPRA), the Metal Cladding and Roofing Manufacturers Association (MCRMA), National Federation of Roofing Contractors (NFRC), and the Green Roof Centre.

You can view this year's winner's and finalists projects on the website.

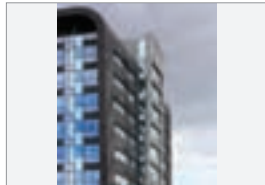
For more information visit www.competentroof.co.uk

020 7638 7663

www.roofingawards.co.uk

VMZINC for Newcastle Uni tower refurb

An £18m refurbishment of Newcastle College's Parsons Tower will extend the usable life of the 60s block by around 40 years. Pre-weathered standing seam VMZINC® ANTHRA-ZINC® and QUARTZ-ZINC® facades and roof from VMZINC have given it a distinctive visual aesthetic and completely new face on the skyline. Being a dominant feature of the city landscape this was a key consideration, so the Red Box Design Group subtly extended the facade into the roofline using the two contrasting shades. Their spokesman commented, "The building has been transformed, and now stands as a physical beacon which further advertises the College's ambition."



01992 822288 www.vmpzinc.co.uk

Aico launches new multi-sensor

Aico has launched the new Multi-Sensor Fire Alarm. The Multi-Sensor Ei2110e contains two sensor types, optical and heat. Between them they are capable of detecting all fire types, providing a total fire response. The Multi-Sensor fire alarm uses dual sensors to constantly monitor smoke and heat levels, sending and receiving information via its intelligent detection software. This sensor information alters the alarm's sensitivity and trigger points, automatically providing the best response to all fire types and reduces potential false alarms. The Multi-Sensor Ei2110e can be sited anywhere in a home that requires a smoke alarm – making it easier to specify.



sales@aico.co.uk

Kingspan updates guidance for safety

To ensure purpose-built constructions adhere to complex fire safety regulations, Kingspan Insulation has released its second issue technical bulletin which focuses on buildings with habitable storeys 18 metres or more above ground level. The improved 'Routes to Compliance: Fire Safety' bulletin features a general overview of the linear, performance-based, and fire safety engineering routes; offering stakeholders an easy place to check if their desired build-up follows the best route to compliance. The full technical bulletin is available to download from the website. The technical bulletin also includes recent case studies and project specific build-ups.



01544 387 384 www.kingspaninsulation.co.uk

EVO-STIK expands its foam range

EVO-STIK from Bostik has added to its range of foams with the launch of a Fire Retardant Gun Applied Expanding Foam Filler. Offering a more accurate and efficient application through the use of a gun, the foam can be used for gap filling and insulating to prevent the transmission of smoke. The B1 grade foam is ideal for filling large, irregular or awkward gaps between brickwork and cladding, as well as around ductwork. It can also be used to insulate and fill around door and window frames where a fire rating is necessary. It's suitable for use on a wide variety of building substrates and offers excellent adhesion. Once cured it can be sanded and painted.



01785 272625 www.bostik.co.uk

An intelligent route to solar PV efficiency in social housing

Solar PV can offer cost-effective installations for social housing, but intelligent technology has now been developed which ensures properties use every bit of electricity generated to maximise efficiency. HMM reports on one firm's innovations in this area.



The best things in life are free, so the song goes. Many local authorities and housing associations would agree, and those who have solar PV installations across their housing stock are now actively seeking ways to maximise utilisation of the PV generation for the benefit of their tenants.

A new approach taken by some social housing bodies has been to install specially adapted ceramic solar PV-ready radiators in a tenant's home and, with the help of intelligent technology, send any solar PV generation not being used by the tenant to them.

How does the technology work?

The technology has now been developed and trialling has begun of solar PV-ready radiators across the country in several local authorities and housing associations. The radiators work in conjunction with an intelligent controller to ensure that the tenant is using all of the electricity being

generated and minimising the generation that is sent back to the grid. The system will operate such that the feed in tariff received for generation is not affected and can still be received by the appropriate party.

Intelligent controllers ensure that tenants' power demand (e.g. for the kettle, vacuum cleaner, television etc.) is met first by the solar PV energy generated, and only the excess PV generation not otherwise utilised is sent to the solar PV-ready radiators. The system can be programmed for up to three appliances to suit the tenant's wishes, for example to operate with three ceramic radiators or two ceramic radiators and a hot water cylinder. The priority order of the appliances can also be programmed to suit the tenant's requirements.

The solar PV-ready radiators can operate from as low as a small trickle of current being fed to them up to the full current required to heat the radiator to its maximum output. The radiators will continue to modulate at temperature while solar gain is being achieved and fed to the radiators.



Once the first radiator has reached the required temperature, the intelligent controller will then divert the excess PV generation to a second radiator. The intelligent controller will then regularly monitor the first radiator to ensure that it is still at the desired temperature; if it is not then the PV generation will be sent to the first radiator again until it reaches the temperature. This process will continue while excess PV generation is being diverted to the ceramic radiators.

The intention behind the technology is not to provide a whole heating system for a property, but to provide background heat during the day until the main central heating system in the property is required. Where heating during peak times is unaffordable for the tenant, this is something that could be particularly beneficial. It is recommended that solar PV-ready radiators be installed on their own circuit in the property, to ensure the tenant does not suffer increased heating costs due to additional radiators operating when the main central heating system is operating.

Proving the benefits

To prove the benefits that solar PV-ready radiators can provide, a trial study has been commissioned on the system. This trial will involve approximately 40 properties which have solar PV already installed. Each property will be fitted with two solar PV-ready radiators and an intelligent controller. Through a remote monitoring capability, an independent company specialising in research, analysis, insight and advice on emerging distributed energy markets and systems, will then collate data on the trials for a period of six months.

The independent specialist will then analyse the data collected and key performance indicators of this solar PV-ready radiator heating system against other heating systems available. Performance factors such as CO₂ savings, electricity and gas usage savings, return on investment and increased utilisation of PV generation will be critically assessed, as well as softer factors such as health benefits to tenants who now have a higher base temperature to their home and benefits to the building fabric of properties which otherwise may have had no heating system operating due to the cost.

It has been predicted that this system will assist energy companies to deal with infrastructure problems they may be experiencing due to particular areas having high amounts of solar PV generation being sent back to the grid.

Operations director for The Electric Heating Company, Calum Black explained: "These trials have been commissioned to provide an independent view on this innovative way of maximising solar PV generation. We believe that this trial study will prove the benefits that solar

"The intention behind the technology is not to provide a whole heating system for a property, but to provide background heat during the day until the main central heating system is required. This could be particularly beneficial where heating during peak times is unaffordable for the tenant."

PV-ready radiators can provide and show that such a system can make a home a more comfortable and cost effective environment. We also believe that the trials will demonstrate electric heating products can be adapted to work with 'green' technologies and should not be discounted as an efficient and cost effective means of providing heat to a home."

Initial trial data

With initial trial properties now running, early results have demonstrated the CO₂ savings, improved heating experience for tenants and an increase in the utilisation of PV generation and reduction in the amount of PV generation being exported back to the grid.

One trial is taking place at a three-bedroom property near Wrexham occupied by a family of four with a gas central heating system. The intelligent controller has been programmed such that excess PV generation is prioritised to two of the solar PV-ready radiators located in the living room and hallway. Charges are approximately 4 pence per kWh for gas and 15.52 pence per kWh for electricity.

The trials will run until early 2017 and once the data has been analysed and the independent report completed, The Electric Heating Company intends to share the report with all interested parties. The company's Calum Black commented: "We will present the final report to the Department of Energy and Climate Change and others to show there are innovative electric heating systems being created and other electric alternatives to heating homes in an energy-efficient manner."

He adds: "In this way we hope the Government will consider supporting them in the future."

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