

HOUSING

MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

September 2016

Features this month

Accessibility
Cladding & Facades
Lighting & Electrical
Roofing
Structural & Damp Repairs
Comment: Reducing voids

Show preview

UK Construction Week

News

Home Group helps tenants buy
Pay to Stay to charge high earners
Social renters in fuel poverty

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Karen Williams

Tenant from Bowland House in Blackburn



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25

Features

39 Cladding & Facades

Restoring pride in social housing

Although providing the numbers of housing units required is higher on the agenda than ever before, future-proofing our tower blocks needs to be a top priority to help repair their image, explains William McDowell of Rockpanel.

44 Lighting & Electrical

Get smart with lighting

New generation monitoring and management systems for indoor lighting and LED solutions are bringing significant benefits to social housing. Tim McKernan of Harvard Technology explains how.

46 Roofing

Going solar

Energy efficiency continues to be a hot topic for property as housing providers gear up to meet rigorous efficiency rules. John Forster of Forster Group explains why solar roofing is a win for landlords.

49 Structural & Damp Repairs

A new lease of life for the high rise

Concrete tower blocks were the government's solution to post-war housing shortage, but the stock's structural integrity has come back to haunt planners and maintenance teams. Nic Collins of Sika explains why building strength is key.

HOUSING

MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

09/16
Contents

In this issue...

Industry news	5-25
Events	17
Product Focus	29
UKCW Show Preview	31-33
Directory	51



Products

Air Conditioning & Ventilation	37-38
Appointments & News	34
Bathrooms & Wetrooms	34
Building Products & Services	37-38
Cladding & Facades	38-40
Doors, Windows & Glazing	40-41
Heating & Renewable Energy	42-43
Insulation	43
Landscaping & External Works	43
Lighting & Electrical	43-45
Roofing	46-47
Smoke & Fire Protection	48
Structural & Damp Repairs	48-50
Timber & Joinery	47



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Editor's comment

Housing sector on stand by



Patrick Mooney,
News Editor

This year's Autumn Statement by the new Chancellor Philip Hammond is eagerly anticipated as it will surely provide the strongest clues yet of changes in Government policies which affect housing.

Since Theresa May took over the reins from David Cameron we have been waiting for signs to see if planned welfare cuts will be eased or if house-building targets will be firmed up.

The new ministerial team at the Department of Communities & Local Government has been strangely quiet – and we don't know if this is because they are getting to grips with their new responsibilities or busily changing existing policies.

In the meantime life goes on and so does the merry-go-round of housing association mergers and deals. Over the summer months we have seen proposed deals falter and new deals emerge. This is likely to continue for some time yet, as social landlords respond to the changed financial climate and the enforced rent cuts.

Council housing bosses can be forgiven for being a bit tetchy as they are having to contend with a difficult set of problems. With a shortage of details (and time!) they are preparing for the introduction of Pay to Stay, the ending of lifetime tenancies, the forced sale of higher value homes and a surge in Right to Buy applications.

This is just the tip of a busy agenda and a bulging in-tray.

Unknowns

Following the passing of the Housing & Planning Act local authorities are being given new duties and responsibilities for regulating the activities of private landlords in their areas, but once again the details still need to be firmed up before full implementation can take place.

Prosecutions of rogue landlords are taking place and court fines do appear to be increasing, but private sector rents will only stop rising if demand can be eased by giving a big boost to the building and supply of truly affordable new houses – to

buy and to rent, from councils, housing associations and private landlords.

Low income tenants are facing the difficult prospect of a reduction in the benefit cap with many commentators and practitioners warning about a possible upsurge in homelessness.

This would be a tragedy at a time when we mark 50 years since the making of *Cathy Come Home*, the seminal film on substandard housing and homelessness. The BBC re-screened the film over the summer while many of us were heading off on holiday, something which was probably denied to thousands of families facing an uncertain future.

Frightening

It's a frightening statistic that in the first quarter of 2016 some 14,780 homeless households were registered as being owed a rehousing duty by local authorities in England – up nine per cent on last year and 54 per cent higher than the same period in 2010. The focus on various housing for sale initiatives under George Osborne has clearly not worked for these families.

The public spat between the National Housing Federation and private lenders over who is to blame for the huge growth in the housing benefits bill was neither educational or helpful. Neither side emerged with any credit from the argument.

Inevitably the Brexit vote has caused a deal of uncertainty over the economy and future financial policies, but instead of putting the squeeze on rented housing, the Government could do us all a huge favour by developing a clear strategy for improving standards and security, allied to the delivery of housing at prices which people can afford.

Surely extending the right to buy is not the solution, particularly when so many of the sold homes end up being owned by speculative private landlords who let the homes at higher rents, to tenants who are reliant on housing benefit.

Beware the law of unintended consequences!



On the cover...

The September issue of *Housing Management & Maintenance* features Orchard Village in Rainham, Essex (Image © AluK).

The former Mardyke Estate in Rainham, East London, has been transformed by Circle Housing which invested £80m to redevelop the old estate using AluK aluminium curtain walling, window and door systems through four phases. A total of 555 new affordable homes will be provided.

For more information, go to page 23.

Home Group to help tenants buy homes

One of the UK's largest housing providers is offering to help its customers overcome a major barrier to owning a home – saving for a deposit while paying rent.

Home Group, which manages 55,000 homes in England, Scotland and Wales, has committed to match the Government cash bonus to savers using a Help to Buy ISA to save for a mortgage deposit.

In what is believed to be a sector first, Home Group will also commit to a house price inflation freeze of up to five years and a rent reduction granted to customers intending to buy.

The scheme, named Graduated Ownership, is to be targeted at those who want to own their home but will not be eligible for the Voluntary Right to Buy (VRTB) scheme.

Mark Henderson, Home Group chief executive, said: "A compelling 87 per cent of our customers have told us that they would like to own their home and we believe the soon to be introduced VRTB scheme is the best way for them to achieve this.

"However, a portion of our customers will not be eligible for VRTB either because they live in Scotland or they haven't lived in their home long enough to qualify. This scheme will help those people."

Almost a third of Home Group customers who want to own their home say that saving a deposit is the single biggest factor preventing them from achieving their dream.

They cite limited income (which could be

directed into savings), high deposit values and the property price increase as the three biggest obstacles to saving a deposit.

In order to tackle the issues Home Group has identified three ways in which we can help customers:

- Encourage customers towards the Help to Buy ISA under which Government will add £1 towards deposit for every £4 saved. Home Group will match the Government's £1 meaning for every £4 saved customers will benefit with a £2 bonus.
- Once customers start saving Home Group will freeze the value of their property for five years. This way further rises in prices won't require a corresponding deposit increase.
- Improve monthly cashflow – Home Group will reduce rents in return for the customer taking on increased repairs responsibilities – This will act as preparation for being a homeowner.

"The scheme, named Graduated Ownership, is to be targeted at those who want to own their home but will not be eligible for the Voluntary Right to Buy scheme"

Mr Henderson added: "We've discussed this idea with Government, who are very supportive although we still have some details to iron out. We expect to launch a limited pilot scheme later this year and we're excited about the prospect of doing all we can to help

our customers achieve their aspirations."

Funds raised from the sale of homes would be re-invested by the housing association to provide new affordable homes.

Nine in 10 renters cannot afford minimum deposit



A vast majority of renters are locked out of home ownership due to a lack of income and savings, according to new analysis.

The study conducted by the Equity Trust found over six million households (86 per cent) cannot come up with the £8,838.65 needed for a five per cent deposit for a mortgage on an 'average' first home in the UK.

Even in Burnley, the cheapest local authority for housing, 78 per cent of renters have less than a quarter of the deposit needed, which is £3,629.

"This isn't sustainable, and we need action from our politicians" – John Hood

The analysis also established the wealth of the richest 100 people in the UK has increased by £15bn last year and nearly a quarter of them accumulated their wealth in part through interests in housing.

John Hood, acting director of the Equality Trust, said: "Our housing crisis is well documented, but it's startling to see just how many people are priced out of owning their own home. At the same time, a small number of people at the top are making huge wealth from our dysfunctional housing market.

"This isn't sustainable, and we need action from our politicians. That means reforming council tax, which hits the poorest hardest, and a substantial house building programme. Anything less threatens to lock a generation out of home ownership, and into insecurity and punishingly high rents."

The discoveries come after a Resolution Foundation study recorded the lowest home ownership levels in England since 1986. The sharpest drop was seen in Greater Manchester where numbers had plummeted by 14 per cent since the early 2000s meaning fewer than six in 10 households in the area own their home today.



Pay to Stay to slap high earners with £1,000 more in rent

Average rent rises of over £1,000 a year under the Government's Pay to Stay policy will hit council tenants judged to be high earners.

Due to be implemented from April next year, the policy will see "better off" tenants charged higher rents, at close to private market levels, for living in council housing. Alternatively they can move out or look to buy their home.

"Pay to Stay risks becoming an expensive distraction from our ambition to build more homes"
– Nick Forbes

Under Pay to Stay, households with a combined income of £40,000 and above in London, and £31,000 in the rest of England, will be classified as "high income tenants" and subject to rent increases of 15p for every pound they earn above the high-income thresholds.

Councils have warned that nearly one in 10 social tenants in London and the south-east can expect rent rises, with those living in the capital facing an average rent rise of £132 a month.

Condemned

The crossbench peer Bob Kerslake, a former head of the civil service and permanent secretary at the Department of Communities & Local Government, condemned Pay to Stay and tried to delay its implementation so pilot schemes could be progressed.

During passage of the Housing & Planning Act, Kerslake tabled various amendments to place the scheme at the discretion of local

authorities and "provide adequate protection for tenants on the amount of rent they have to pay compared to their income".

"When this was originally discussed in the coalition government, it was intended to deal with the very small number of high earners on over £60,000. The current proposals will affect a lot more households with earnings of half that.

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

'Lengthy and costly'

There are fears that many families on average incomes will be unable to afford to stay in their home or find an affordable local alternative. Critics have savaged the policy as "ill-thought-out and unfair". They fear Pay to Stay will force working families out of council homes.

The Local Government Association has said the policy will be costly and bureaucratic to implement, stressful for affected families, and will raise just £75m year for the Treasury, compared to original projections of £365m by 2017-18.

It said, "Councils need to invest millions in new IT systems, hire new staff and write to more than a million social housing tenants to try and understand household income and approve individual tenant bills by January. This will be a difficult, lengthy and costly process for councils, and is likely to be unpopular with tenants and result in high levels of costly

appeals and challenges."

Nick Forbes, senior vice-chair of the LGA, said: "Pay to Stay risks becoming an expensive distraction from our joint ambition to build more homes. We urge new government ministers to take this opportunity to allow councils to decide whether or not they will introduce pay to stay for their tenants and to keep the additional rent to invest in new and existing homes, as will be the case for housing association tenants."

"Nearly one in 10 London and South East tenants can see rises, councils have warned"

However, the DCLG insisted 90 per cent of social housing tenants would be unaffected by the policy. A spokesman for the Department said: It's simply not fair that hard-working people are subsidising the lifestyles of those on higher than average incomes, including tens of thousands of households earning £50,000 or more.

"Pay to Stay better reflects tenants' ability to pay while those who genuinely need support continue to receive it. It means households earning £32,000 would see rents rise by just a couple of pounds a week."

Initially the policy would be mandatory to both HAs and councils, but the Government dropped this to ensure HAs are not considered part of the public sector. The policy emerged after it emerged that Members of Parliament and high-ranking trade union officials were benefitting from low rents on social tenancies in London.

Benefits report sparks row between landlords

Research showing a huge increase in spending on housing benefits has triggered a bad tempered exchange between representatives of private landlords and housing associations.

The row started when the National Housing Federation published a report which revealed:

- Private landlords in the UK received twice as much in housing benefit last year - £9.3bn, compared to £4.6bn a decade ago.
- The number of private tenants claiming housing benefit has grown by 42 per cent since 2008.
- Taxpayers paid £1,000 more per year, per family renting in the private rented sector than they did for those in social housing.
- This amounted to an average of £2.2bn a year extra being handed over to private landlords, at a cumulative additional cost of £15.6bn

over the past seven years.

- If this extra housing benefit for just one year had been spent on creating new affordable housing, then nearly 50,000 new homes could have been built.

It is unusual for landlord organisations to get involved in public disagreements where they openly criticise each other but at the report's launch NHF chief executive David Orr said: "It is madness to spend £9bn of taxpayers' money lining the pockets of private landlords rather

"50,000 new homes could have been built if benefit for just 1 year was spent on housebuilding"

than investing in affordable homes."

"The lack of affordable housing available means that a wider group of people need housing benefit," he added.

The report also points out that a larger proportion of families claiming housing benefit in the private rented sector are now in work. "Today, nearly half (47 per cent) of all families claiming housing benefit in the private rented sector are in work – this is nearly double the proportion it was six years ago (26 per cent)," the NHF said.

Finger pointing

Responding to the report and the claims from Orr, his opposite number at the National Landlords Association struck back by claiming

Continues on page 8...

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the NHF was trying to deflect attention from its own members.

Richard Lambert, chief executive officer at the NLA, said "The NHF is clearly still reeling from the news that its members have been ordered by Government to reduce spending over the next four years, so it comes as no surprise that they are looking to shift the emphasis and point the finger elsewhere.

"The private rented sector plays a significant role in providing much-needed

"What we should all be talking about is the failure of successive governments to adequately allocate their housing budget and to incentivise the building of new homes" – NLA CEO Richard Lambert "

homes for tenants so there seems no real benefit in the NHF taking a cheap shot at landlords.

"What we should all be talking about is the failure of successive governments to adequately allocate its housing budget and to incentivise the building of new homes. In the long term, that would be the best use of taxpayers' money".

A Government spokesman said it had been taking action to bring the housing benefit bill under control and challenged the report's conclusions. "Since 2012 the amount going to private sector landlords has actually been falling - something which the National Housing Federation fails to recognise. We are also committed to building the homes this country needs and investing £8bn to build 400,000 more affordable homes."

£1,000

max fine for CPN breach

Peterborough-based Cross Keys Homes got powers to issue Community Protection Notices (CPNs) to tenants with "persistent unreasonable behaviour that has a detrimental effect on those nearby".

Breaching a CPN is a criminal offence with a fixed penalty of £100, but can be increased to a maximum of £1,000.

Social renters in fuel poverty despite energy improvements

Despite living in more energy efficient homes, social renters struggle to pay their energy bills or to keep their home adequately warm more often compared to households in other tenures.

In a new report, the National Housing Federation examined how English housing stock fares in terms of various factors including energy efficiency. According to the figures around 1 in 10 of HA households are in fuel poverty, in line with the national average.

This is largely due to social housing tenants earning considerably less than residents of other tenures.

Costs

Fuel costs vary significantly depending on the energy efficiency of a home, ranging from £930 per year in energy efficient homes (EPC rated A, B or C) to almost double (£1,780) in inefficient homes (EPC rated E, F or G).

Social tenants are disproportionately affected by cold homes across all energy efficiency bands as a result of their lower average household incomes.

Almost a quarter (23 per cent) of all housing association and local authority tenants are unable to keep their living room warm.

This is well above the national average of 12 per cent and almost four times the proportion of owner occupiers (6 per cent). Similarly, a fifth (20 per cent) of private renters struggle to

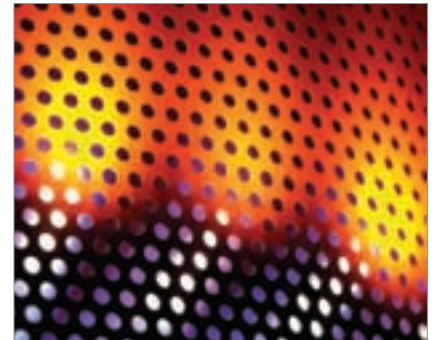
keep their living room warm.

For a typical housing association household, moving to an energy efficient home would mean savings of £850 (or 6 per cent) per year.

Why this matters

The NHF data highlighted housing associations and local authorities have the highest number of efficient homes. As much as 90 per cent of housing association homes are classed in EPC bands A to D, meaning just one in 10 homes are inefficient. This is significant compared to the private rented sector, where three in 10 properties are in the low efficiency bands.

The mean Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating for HA homes is also the highest at 66.2.



Steady number of complaints received from social tenants

Complaints about social landlords made to the housing regulator and the ombudsman have both fallen in the past year but it's not all good news.

The Homes and Communities Agency said complaints to them fell by more than a fifth last year, down from 589 to 461. However, the proportion of complaints deemed serious enough to be investigated further rose from 40 to 44 per cent.

Over at the Housing Ombudsman Service, the number of complaints and enquiries received fell by just two per cent, from 16,337 down to 15,984. This small decrease came after a huge increase in tenants' complaints in the previous two years, coinciding with the Ombudsman taking responsibility for complaints about councils' housing services.

As customer satisfaction figures are no

longer collected from all social landlords and reported annually, it is impossible to say if the drop in complaints represents an improvement in services to tenants.

Of 461 referrals to the HCA in 2015/16, the regulator published just four findings of 'serious detriment' where tenants were deemed to have been at risk of serious harm. Social landlords are now encouraged to refer themselves to the HCA when they find something wrong.

The ombudsman, which had previously warned it may struggle to cope with its increased caseload, said, "The numbers are now at a steady level. We believe this reflects both our sector development work and the housing sector's own commitment to improving complaint handling, resulting in fewer complaints requiring our intervention."



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Tenant's eviction blocked despite cannabis farm

A tenant found with 300 cannabis plants in her spare bedroom escaped eviction, following a successful appeal to the country's highest court.

Salford based City West Housing Trust tried to evict Lindsey Massey after the plants were discovered at her Swinton home last year.

'No idea'

Her eviction was blocked at the Court of Appeal when she claimed to have "no idea" her boyfriend Jamie Parker had been growing the cannabis. She had allowed him to use the spare room to store his belongings.

Lady Justice Mary Arden said the district judge who heard the original case had been entitled to show Ms Massey mercy. Sitting with Lords Justice Christopher Floyd and Philip Sales, she agreed there was "a sound basis for hope" that Massey would succeed in keeping Parker away from her home in future.

Last chance

As a single mother of three young children, Massey had rightly been given a last chance to keep her home, the appeal judge concluded. Mr Parker, who was homeless when he left his belongings with Ms Massey, has since been convicted of cannabis production.



Merger watch Deals collapsing

The difficulties of successfully merging already large landlords have been revealed with several high profile deals falling through – cultural differences are often non-negotiable.



Collapsed mergers do not appear to have caused any long-term difficulties or opposition to the process per se, with all of the landlords issuing statements they are still looking to do deals. Here's a summary of the latest news.

'Apparent' differences

Genesis and Thames Valley became the latest housing associations to call off their deal. The collapse was a surprise to many as the two associations had only recently received consent from their lenders.

In a joint statement issued at the time of the breakdown, Thames Valley Housing and Genesis blamed "differences in style and approach" which they said "have become more apparent as the merger progressed".

Geeta Nanda, chief executive of TVH, said "Ultimately we feel we will be better able to serve our residents and communities as two separate entities".

Her opposite number Neil Hadden of Genesis, added: "It is obviously disappointing that we were not able to complete the merger, but we are now very much looking forward to delivering on our corporate strategy and looking at other possible opportunities in the near future."

The merger would have created a single organisation with 47,000 homes under its management, that planned to build 1,800 homes per year, including 600 for below

market rent.

In the period since the collapse was announced, further details have emerged which suggest Genesis was keen on pursuing growth through further mergers while TVH was more interested in integrating the two landlords to ensure the merger achieved its objectives.

"The Genesis and Thames Valley merger would have created a 47,000-home landlord able to build at least 1,800 homes a year"

'Like minded' partners

Hyde Group say they are still looking to merge with other landlords, despite pulling out of plans to form a 135,000-home group with L&Q and East Thames in August. Chief Executive Elaine Bailey said Hyde was open to "working in partnership with like minded organisations."

She added: "We owe it to ourselves, our board, our residents and future customers to do everything we can to help ease the housing shortage in the south east. We will increase our development programme and we have ambitious plans for 2017 and 2018 to

“Sanctuary Group and Housing & Care 21 would have joined in a 120,000-home landlord managing 32,000 retirement and extra care properties to rival Anchor as the largest HA providing homes and care for older people.”

further improve the efficiency of our business. We remain open to working in partnership with other like minded organisations. Hyde continues to be very much open for business.”

Hyde initially cited “practical issues that cannot easily be overcome” in a joint statement, but later it emerged that differences between the landlords over the pace of integration was a major factor in Hyde pulling out of the deal.

Opportunities

Sanctuary has made an open offer to take over “struggling” organisations, showing that it has not been put off mergers by its failed deal with Housing & Care 21.

David Bennett, chief executive of Sanctuary, said: “I am sure there will be businesses looking for opportunities to become more financially and operationally efficient, and Sanctuary will be looking to work with other organisations to deliver better value.”

The 100,000-home landlord has grown significantly in recent years through a combination of an active new development programme, as well as pursuing a series of acquisitions and take overs. In 2013 it rescued Liverpool-based Cosmopolitan Housing after it was hit by a financial crisis.

Accent on simplicity

Meanwhile Bradford-based **Accent Group**, which was formed from three associations in Yorkshire, Peterborough and Surrey, has moved to simplify itself by collapsing its group structure to form a single housing association.

The 21,500-home landlord has finally amalgamated its subsidiaries Accent Nene and Accent Peerless into a single association, Accent Housing. The process had started three years ago, but their lenders consent was required and the negotiations took a long time to conclude. The deal has saved Accent “several million pounds” according to its chief executive Gordon Perry.

Mr Perry said the merger would enable Accent to “operate more efficiently and provide better value for money”, as well as allowing it to build more homes.

Merger watch

Deals proceeding

Thinking big

Affinity Sutton and **Circle** have agreed to create the country’s largest housing association with a sizeable new build programme.

The deal, which will create one of Europe’s largest housing associations with 127,000 properties providing homes for nearly 500,000 people, needs to be approved by the Homes and Communities Agency.

Legal completion of the merger will follow “as soon as practically possible after that”, the associations commented.

The group also plans to build 5,000 homes annually and 50,000 from the 10 years from 2019, making it one of the largest house builders in England.

Both associations have announced sizeable surpluses in recent months with Circle also improving its regulatory position after improving its repairs and maintenance service in parts of London and the south east.

Pressing on

Over in Wales, there has been vocal opposition to the merger of **Tai Cantref** with **Wales and West HA**, but it looks like the deal will be done after shareholders gave their approval.

Politicians have protested saying the merger has proceeded without proper tenant consultation or transparency. The 8,500-landlord’s size, its base outside Cardiff and a perception that it’s less committed to the Welsh language have also been causes for concern.

Kevin Taylor, interim chair of Cantref, has countered the opposition saying, “Throughout the merger discussions Cantref has engaged fully with tenants via direct mail, community visits and the tenants’ panel, and has been open and transparent, taking on board all feedback and comments. The decision to merge with Wales & West Housing is the right course of action for both our tenants and staff within the organisation.”

Meanwhile **L&Q** and **East Thames** are still proceeding with their part of the deal, while Hyde, Sanctuary and Genesis have all declared themselves ready to merge with new partners.

Consolidation

Genesis chief executive Neil Hadden told staff the organisation was still ‘merger ready’ shortly after its deal with Thames Valley Housing hit the buffers after significant differences in future strategies emerged.

Mr Hadden said: “The Government has made it absolutely clear that there must be consolidation in the housing association sector – and that is a view our board firmly shares. There will be other potential merger partners ahead – and probably quite soon.



“It is the right thing to do and as an ambitious organisation, we will look to do it as quickly as we can, with the wealth of information we now have to hand as a result of the TVH process. In effect, we are merger-ready,” he added.

Sharing

In the north west, Mosscares Housing Group, with 5,000 homes in Stockport, and St Vincent’s Housing, running 3,500 homes in Manchester, have started to work on a merger. This follows work done last year on setting up a joint cost sharing vehicle for repairs and maintenance work.

They have already named Charlie Norman, currently chief executive at St Vincent’s, as the chief executive designate of the proposed new landlord, while Rob Ferguson, chief executive at Mosscares, is expected to retire next year.

Down in Hampshire, First Wessex and Sentinel Housing Association have started talks about a possible merger next year, to create a landlord with a combined stock of over 28,000 homes and a turnover of more than £180m.



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Healey calls for investigation into RTB fraud

A former housing minister has called on the National Audit Office to mount an investigation of possible Right to Buy fraud.

Wentworth and Dearne MP John Healey requested intervention from the NAO after claiming the Government was not taking worries about fraud seriously enough.

A joint investigation by BBC Radio 4 and Inside Housing showed that 721 of 4,538 sales made by 10 local authorities since 2012 were to tenants on housing benefit. While this does not prove fraud, it should prompt inquiries as the tenants would need financial help from a third party to pay the mortgage.

Healey wrote to the Department for Communities and local government in response, calling for answers on the level of Right to Buy fraud and asking what the Government was doing to combat it.

The new Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said the Government set up a working group to tackle Right to Buy fraud and launched a £16m counter fraud fund in 2014.

‘Woefully weak’

But Healey countered, “I regret that it is clear to me that the Government’s approach to Right to Buy fraud and abuse is woefully weak. Ministers have no idea of the extent of financial abuse and no plans to find out... I would therefore be grateful if you could investigate the extent of Right to Buy financial abuse and fraud and its public value for money implications.”

Javid said that a working group including the Local Government Association, Council of Mortgage Lenders, Financial Conduct Authority and Greater London Authority were involved in exploring the issues surrounding fraud. He said this would feed in to the Right to Buy extension to housing association tenants when it is launched.



Council leaders urge Right to Buy reform

Leaders of English councils have urged the Government to make changes to the Right to Buy scheme or face an unstoppable decline in council housing.

Figures compiled by the Local Government Association show that 12,246 council homes were sold to tenants under Right to Buy in England in 2015-16, but just 2,055 replacements were started by councils.

‘More difficult’

With a voluntary RTB scheme for housing association tenants currently being piloted, the failure to replace homes sold on a like for like basis means the stock of low rent houses is declining and further worsening the housing crisis.

Nick Forbes, leader of LGA’s Labour group, said: “Right to Buy will quickly become a thing of the past in England if councils continue to be prevented from building new homes.”

“Housing reforms that reduce rents and force councils to sell homes will make building new properties and replacing those sold even more difficult. Such a loss in social housing risks pushing more people into the more expensive private rented sector, increasing homelessness and housing benefit spending.”

‘100 per cent’

Council leaders are calling for changes so councils can keep 100 per cent of receipts from sales, rather than the one-third they can currently retain, and that discounts should be set locally to reflect regional variations in house prices. Under the current rules, tenants in London qualify for a discount of up to £103,900, while those outside the capital can get a £77,900 discount.

Crisis

The LGA expects 66,000 council homes to be sold to tenants by 2020 and says councils will struggle to replace the majority of them. A further 22,000 homes will be sold if councils are forced to offload higher-value properties to fund the extension of Right to Buy to HA tenants.

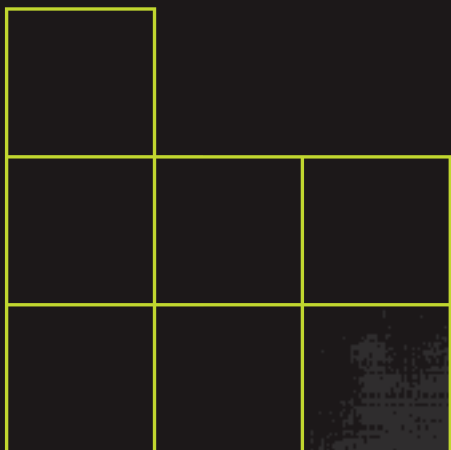
“Right to Buy will quickly become a thing of the past in England if councils continue to be prevented from building new homes”

The LGA also warned that the fall in the number of much-needed council homes would exacerbate the housing crisis and increase homelessness and spending on housing benefit at a time when there were 1.4 million people on waiting lists.

Since RTB was launched in the early 1980s, almost two million council properties have been sold across England and the proportion of homes that fall within social housing has fallen from 31 to 17 per cent.

Right to Buy has already been scrapped in Scotland and the Welsh assembly confirmed that it plans to follow suit.

“Not a moment too soon”
SCFA comments on the end of RTB in Scotland – p. 9



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“

Homes 2015 was an excellent couple of days which really helped us validate our thoughts on our future property strategy. At Homes 2016, I would like to hear how regeneration and asset management combined can bring about neighbourhood sustainability.

Russell Thompson, Director of Property Services for Tees Valley-based Thirteen Group

”

“

“I really enjoyed the Homes 2015 conference and in particular finding out from others what they are doing to support women wanting careers in construction. In November I would like to see whether the government is prepared to invest in new affordable rented housing post-2018 as well as housing for sale.”

Jez Lester, Assistant Chief Executive (Asset Management) at Incommunities Group based in West Yorkshire

”



Rent to Buy company gets £20m boost

Private sector housing company Rentplus has won a further £20m of funding towards its programme of delivering 8,500 rent to buy homes by 2021.

The money is coming from institutional asset manager Crestline Investors and adds to a £70m deal with BAE Systems Pensions Fund, announced earlier this year.

The company hopes to secure £1bn in total, as part of its ambitious plans to deliver the majority of the government's programme of 10,000 Rent to Buy homes over the next five years.

"Completed properties will be let to people off council waiting lists who are judged to have too high an income for traditional social housing, but are struggling to get onto the property ladder"

Rentplus plans to purchase new homes directly from housebuilders and then lease them to housing associations, who in turn sub-let them to tenants at an intermediate rent. Typically this is 80 per cent of the private rent. After a defined period of between five and 20 years, the tenant can buy the property.

West country

Schemes are already underway in Devon and Dorset, with Rentplus working with Plymouth City Council and Persimmon, as well as Tamar HA. Discussions are proceeding with another 20 local authorities, as well as the HCA.

Completed properties will be let to people off council waiting lists who are judged to have too high an income for traditional social housing, but are struggling to get onto the property ladder. The product is available for those with an income of less than £80,000 a year.

'Helping families'

"This is about helping families get on to the property ladder," said Marshall, director at Rentplus. He described Rent to Buy as "a contemporary affordable housing tenure alongside Starter Homes and other affordable housing tenures".

Because HAs will not own the homes, the properties will be unaffected by policies such as Pay to Stay or Right to Buy, which could have deterred private investors.

"Biggest investment for a generation" pledged by Scottish landlord



North Lanarkshire Council has pledged to build 1,000 new homes in a bid to address the need for more affordable homes in the area.

Scotland's largest council landlord is set to make "the biggest single investment in council homes for a generation".

This means the council has now planned 1,800 new homes over the next decade, with over 600 already built or under construction.

"The quality of our new houses is unbelievable. They are energy-efficient, accessible and adaptable" – Cllr Barry McCulloch

Councillor Barry McCulloch, convener of housing and social work services, said: "Access to good quality, affordable housing is a major priority for us and this programme – the biggest in a generation – goes some way towards meeting demand for homes. I'm delighted that many more people will be able to live in safe, efficient and accessible homes as a result of our announcement today."

"The quality of our new houses is unbelievable. They are energy-efficient, accessible and adaptable, which means the needs of people can really be taken into account. It means we can deliver a wide range

of housing, including housing for older people, disabled people and young people setting up home for the first time."

The council's waiting list swelled to 13,000 but has fallen to just over 12,000 in the past two years and is second only to Edinburgh and South Lanarkshire.

The Scottish Government has set a target of 50,000 affordable homes built by 2020 and it is thought around 35,000 of the new homes would be council or housing association properties.

Meanwhile campaigners welcomed the abolition of the Right to Rent policy in Scotland at the end of July. The scheme, which allowed tenants to buy their social homes at discount rates, is blamed for the loss of nearly half a million social homes.

news bytes

Visit www.housingmmonline.co.uk and enter the reference number for more information

Khan approves 10,000-home development...

Ref: 79539

Scottish Parliament given new welfare powers...

Ref: 51549

North London mega scheme approved

Over 700 affordable homes will be built as part of a major housing scheme in Enfield, north London, after Enfield Council approved the first stage of the development in July.

Phase one of the £3.5bn Meridian Water development will provide 725 homes, including 25 to 30 per cent affordable housing, with the exact percentage subject to viability.

"This is a huge leap forward for Enfield and a gigantic step towards making Meridian Water a reality" – Cllr Ahmet Oykener

The scheme can eventually create 10,000 homes and 6,700 jobs on a waterfront setting in Edmonton over the next 20 years.

Enfield Council's Cabinet Member for Housing and Housing Regeneration, Cllr Ahmet Oykener, said: "This is a huge leap forward for Enfield and a gigantic step towards making Meridian Water a reality. We can now get boots on the ground and start to turn our vision into a reality. This transformational project will make a huge contribution towards tackling the shortage of housing in our borough."

The development plans also include the creation of a new Meridian Water railway station that will be prepared to receive Crossrail 2. The scheme also includes proposed retail spaces, community and leisure facilities and associated infrastructure.

Because of its scope, the project will now be referred to the Greater London Authority to grant planning permission.

Construction on phase one is set to begin next spring, with some homes and the new station ready by the end of 2018.

End of Right to Buy comes "not a moment too soon" for Scots

Mary Taylor, chief executive of the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SHFHA) welcomes the end of the policy.

Introduced in the 1980s by Margaret Thatcher to stimulate home ownership, the Right to Buy policy which allowed tenants to buy their social homes at a discount, was abolished in Scotland on 31 July. It has been blamed for diminishing Scotland's social housing stock by nearly half a million properties.

The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and its members long

"While Right to Buy benefitted a small number of individuals, it has been at the expense of the public good" – Mary Taylor Chief Executive of SFHA

campaigning for an end to Right to Buy in Scotland, and we warmly welcome the end of the policy.

Now that it has come to an end, social landlords in Scotland have the best opportunity in a generation to increase the supply of affordable housing for social rent.

RTB was in its time, a popular policy. It gave eligible council tenants and later, housing association tenants, the right to buy their home at heavily discounted rates. This was made possible because of the investment in housing made by taxpayers in previous generations.

What made this policy so harmful, was the fact that while receipts from the sale of these social homes in Scotland were re-invested into affordable housing provision, the generous discounts meant that receipts didn't begin to cover the cost of building replacement housing. So while the Right to Buy benefitted a comparatively small number of individuals, it has been at the expense of the public good, and has contributed to the growing intergenerational inequality in terms of access to affordable quality housing.

Asset management woes

A lack of awareness from many former tenants about the responsibilities of home ownership, together with unhelpfully vague title deeds, has made asset management particularly challenging in multi-ownership blocks. Owners often lack the finances or are unwilling to fund their share of investment and repairs works, impacting on integrity of our housing stock.

Future

Going forward, we have a chance in Scotland to focus our housing policy on the supply of well-designed, energy efficient social rented homes that are truly affordable to people on low incomes. The Scottish Government has pledged a commitment to investment of £3bn over 5 years to build 50,000 new affordable homes.

Now more than at any time in the past 30 years, social landlords have the opportunity to plan longer term, manage assets and income more effectively and invest to increase the supply of affordable housing.

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Boost for 3,000 properties in Stevenage

United Living Group has been appointed by Stevenage Borough Council to deliver more than £3.5 million worth of improvement works to around 3,000 properties in the borough.

The project focuses on improving the thermal efficiency of resident's homes and will see the replacement of windows and doors, as well as major insulation improvements such as loft insulation, cavity wall and external wall insulation.

Divisional director for United Living South, Daren Mosley said: "This contract will help to improve people's lives significantly. In keeping with the ambitions of the project, we will also be providing additional social investment such as training and apprenticeships, which will further support the local community and leave a strong legacy for future residents."

Councillor Jeannette Thomas, executive member for Housing, Health and Older People, said: "I'm pleased that we will be working with United Living to improve the insulation of 3,000 homes in Stevenage. Not only will this make our tenants more comfortable in their homes but it could also help them save up to £200 a year."

United Living will deliver the works over the next two years.



"This contract will help to improve people's lives significantly. We will also be providing additional social investment to further support the local community and leave a strong legacy for future residents." – Daren Mosley

District heating points way forward for energy prepayment revolution

Ofgem, which has called energy prepayment the option of 'last resort', has announced a price cap for customers until the roll-out of smart meters in 2020.

But smart metering is already being widely used in the district heating sector, where it is revolutionising prepayment and reducing energy bills.

Customer friendly smart meters are fast making prepayment the first choice option for

thousands of residents connected to community heating schemes. Technology from metering and billing specialist Switch2 Energy is helping customers to reduce energy consumption and bills and is pointing the way forward for the 'big six' energy suppliers and others to follow.

Switch2 is working with Sheffield City Council to roll out smart meters to 6,000 homes connected to its heat network. This is predicted to reduce customers' total annual bill by £1.4 million, with the first 227 homes using the pay-as-you-go meters saving an average £238 each over the first year.

The technology can be used for either prepayment or credit billing, but more than 80 per cent of residents opted for pay-as-you-go to provide better budgeting control and because there is no price differential between the two payment types.

Smart

The G6 smart pay-as-you-go meter was introduced by Switch2 in 2012, replacing the traditional corner shop/token based prepayment system with an instant top-up credit facility via smartphone, tablet, computer, phone, Post Office or PayPoint outlet.

It introduced a convenient and fair charging energy monitoring mechanism for both

Continued overleaf....



Events

RESI Conference

12 - 14 September, Newport
www.resiconf.com

Landlord Investment Show

21 September, West Bromwich
www.landlordinvestmentshow.co.uk

ARCH Tenants Conference

22 September, Woodland Grange
www.arch-housing.org.uk

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.chcymru.org.uk/en/events

Property Investor & Homebuyer Show

7-8 October, London
www.propertyinvestor.co.uk

BIFM Awards

10 October, London
www.bifmawards.org

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

National Home Improvements Council Annual Awards

17 November, London
www.nhic.org.uk

SHIFT Awards

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



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prepayment and credit billing consumers, with the ability to flex between the two. Switch2's next generation Incontro pay-as-you-go technology was launched earlier this year. It has taken smart metering and energy prepayment to a more advanced level, providing everything residents need to programme, control and monitor their energy usage, while also taking care of budgeting and payments.

Kirsty Lambert, director of Switch2, said: "The big six energy suppliers have a lot to learn from the community heating sector, where advanced smart metering is already available and is demonstrating the positive face of energy prepayment. When implemented well, prepayment can become the most popular, flexible choice and help customers budget better and save money.

"It can be particularly beneficial for vulnerable customers; for example our technology provides an emergency credit facility and other features to help residents who run into financial difficulties. By putting residents in charge of their heating system and costs, as we are doing, the results are often amazing."

Switching

More than 25,000 homes are using Switch2's prepayment technology, including residents of social housing providers such as Hyde Housing, Gentoo, Notting Hill Housing and Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing.

Switch2 remotely manages and monitors customers' smart meters from its UK customer service centre, which provides complete billing, prepayment and administration services to more than 69,000 homes across 430 community energy and district heating schemes.

'Switch2 is working with Sheffield City Council to roll out smart meters to 6,000 homes connected to its heat network. This is predicted to reduce customers' total annual bill by £1.4 million, with the first 227 homes using the pay-as-you-go meters saving an average £238 each over the first year'

Switch2's Incontro smart meter can also monitor six other utilities, including water, and handle billing of electricity. It operates via any mobile network, avoiding the need for complex and costly infrastructure.

Diagnostics and system upgrades are made remotely to the system 'over the air', thereby reducing installation, servicing and maintenance costs.

Electricity kills – landlords deserve clarity around safety



The Housing and Planning Act has made it on to the statute books and it includes electrical safety provisions for the private rented sector. Phil Buckle, director general of campaigning consumer charity Electrical Safety First, explains why electrical checks are necessary.

Electricity kills one person a week, seriously injures 350,000 individuals each year and causes around half of all domestic fires in Great Britain, resulting in billions of pounds of property damage. The personal cost is, of course, immeasurable.

Dangerous electrics in the PRS results in more deaths and injuries than those caused by gas and carbon monoxide poisoning, yet landlords have had to provide annual gas safety certificates since 1998 and the

requirement for carbon monoxide alarms came into force last October.

Electrical Safety First has worked long and hard to put electrical safety on par with gas safety. We led the charge to ensure regular electrical checks for PRS properties were included in the recent Housing Acts in Scotland and Wales and sponsored an electrical safety amendment included in the England-only Housing and Planning Act, which gained Royal Assent last May. However, a range of secondary legislation will need to be passed before the Act comes into force (which is not expected until April 2017).

Possible obligations

Under the Act, the Secretary of State can establish regulations placing a positive obligation on landlords to ensure that electrical safety standards are met during a tenancy.

As members of the Department for Communities and Local Government's PRS Electrical Safety Working Group, we have called for regular electrical checks to be undertaken every five years, or on change of tenancy, of both the installation and any electrical appliance supplied with it. We also consider it imperative that these checks are carried out by a qualified electrician registered with one of the Government's Competent Person Schemes.

Cost effective

A 2013/14 research in partnership with Shelter and British Gas which indicated many landlords did not know their insurance may be invalidated if they ignore electrical safety in

their properties. Our proposals are a cost effective way to protect people and properties as current estimates suggest that a five yearly check would be approximately £100-£150 – equivalent to £3.00 per month. And

by ensuring tenants feel safe in reporting repair issues, responsible landlords can maintain their properties more efficiently, thereby saving money and, potentially, saving lives. This is not an argument for more red tape. Regular electrical checks really are a 'win-win' for all.

Extending the scope

While our focus has initially been on electrical safety for the PRS, we were extremely pleased to discover that Glasgow Housing Association (Scotland's largest social landlord, with almost 40,000 homes in the city) has decided to adopt a five yearly electrical check of its properties. We hope other social landlords will follow suit – in fact, it's a safety essential we'd ideally like to see across all housing tenures.



A third of families at risk of losing their home

A third of working families in England could not afford to pay their rent or mortgage for more than a month if they lost their job, new figures from Shelter reveal.

The Shelter and YouGov study found that that three million working families could be just one paycheque away from losing their home as they have little or no personal savings to fall back on.

"16.5 million UK working age adults have no savings" - Department for Work and Pensions

The research also revealed that a fifth of working parents face the prospect of being unable to make their next rent or mortgage payment if they lost their job and could not get another one straightaway.

The findings mirror recent Government figures, which show that 16.5 million working age adults have no savings at all. High housing costs remain a major area of concern for most working families, with almost half saying housing puts the biggest strain on their household budget.

Campbell Robb, chief executive of Shelter, said "These figures are a stark reminder that sky-high housing costs are leaving millions of working families stretched to breaking point, and barely scraping by from one paycheque to the next.

"Any one of us could hit a bump along life's road, and at Shelter we speak to parents every day who, after losing their job or seeing their hours cut, are terrified of losing the roof over their children's heads too.

"In these uncertain times, the new Government has a real chance to show working families they're on their side, by protecting and improving our welfare safety net. It's vital that if life does take a turn for the worse, there's enough support available for families so that they don't go hurtling towards homelessness."

4.9%

unemployment rate for
April – June

Down from 5.6 per cent for a
year earlier and the lowest
since September 2005 – ONS

Benefit cap cut to hit a quarter of a million poor children

Campaigners fear the latest round of cuts in the benefit cap will impact most on the poorest families, taking an average of £60 a week from household budgets.

The new cap restricts the total amount individual households can receive in benefits to £23,000 a year in London (equivalent to £442 a week) and £20,000 in the rest of the UK (£385 a week). It replaces the existing cap level of £26,000.

Anti-poverty campaigners are warning the new cap will force already poor families to drastically cut back on the amount they spend on food. Landlords also fear that more tenants will be tempted to spend their housing benefit on other living essentials like clothing and heating, pushing them into rent arrears and under threat of eviction.

Nearly a quarter of a million children from poor families will be hit by the extended household benefit cap being introduced in the autumn, according to the Government's latest analysis of the impact of the policy.

The new projection of 244,000 children affected is substantially less than the 330,000 figure contained in the Department for Work and Pensions initial analysis published last year.

Lone parents

The new cap will take an average of £60 a week out of the incomes of affected households, with about 61 per cent of them lone parent families.

The benefit cap is intended to encourage people on benefits to find work, because getting a job automatically exempts them from cap penalties. Ministers claim the cap makes people more likely to search for

employment and says that 23,000 affected households have taken a job since its introduction in 2013.

"Landlords fear more tenants will be tempted to spend their housing benefit on other living essentials like clothing and heating, pushing them into rent arrears and under threat of eviction."

Damage

However, an official evaluation of the cap by the Institute for Fiscal Studies in 2014 found the "large majority" of capped claimants did not respond by moving into work, and a DWP-backed study in Oxford published in June found that cutting benefit entitlements made it less likely that unemployed people would get a job.

Joanna Kennedy, chief executive of the charity Z2K, said "Our experience helping those affected by the original cap shows that many of those families will have to reduce even further the amount they spend on feeding and clothing their children, and heating their home to avoid falling into rent arrears and facing eviction and homelessness."

The chief executive of the Child Poverty Action Group, Alison Garnham, said "A lower cap that cuts family budgets will do nothing to help parents who want to work. Instead it will damage the life chances of hundreds of thousands more children."



East Midlands tenants can lose £100 a week



A proposed housing benefit cap could see supported housing residents in the East Midlands pay at least £100 more a week for rent.

According to the Starts at Home campaign – an alliance of housing associations, charities and politicians lobbying the Government on the importance of this type of housing – the most vulnerable residents would need to find an extra £5,200 a year to cover their rent.

Starts at Home also highlighted there are more than 32,000 living in this type of housing in the East Midlands, more than three quarters of whom are older people.

“East Midlands residents would need to find an extra £5,200 a year for rent”

Kate Warburton, External Affairs Manager for the East Midlands at the National Housing Federation said:

“Some of the most vulnerable people in the East Midlands are supported by housing associations – and it cannot be right that they lose the £100 per week that helps keep a roof over their heads.

The government is currently reviewing how supported housing is funded and the NHF said the funding model should offer “peace of mind” for vulnerable people.

“The Government has already said that these tenants will continue to receive the support they need,” Warburton added, “but providers need to hear how it will do this. Any future funding model should provide peace of mind and security to those people who most sorely need it.”

The social housing sector has called for an exemption for supported housing saying it delivers average net savings to the public purse of around £940 per resident per year and that demand for this type of accommodation is growing.

Bedroom tax impact is challenged

The bedroom tax is failing in its main objective to free up larger social homes according to research by an influential group of London-based housing associations.

The G15 group of HAs are now challenging the policy, officially known as ‘the removal of the spare room subsidy’, on the basis that tenants who are under-occupying their homes are unable to move. They say this is because smaller properties simply do not exist in the social housing sector, or smaller privately rented properties actually cost more to live in.

The group are undertaking a study called Real London Lives. This is based on telephone interviews with 713 working-age tenants, including a range of household types from young families with children under the age of 12 to single households with no family support.

The bedroom tax was introduced in 2013. Social housing tenants with a spare bedroom have their housing benefit reduced as an incentive for them to move to smaller accommodation. It was one of several reforms to welfare benefits, including the introduction of a cap on the total value of benefits that can be claimed.

Early findings from the project showed that 74 per cent of those affected in 2013 remained in the same situation at the end of the three-year study period.

Of the remaining one quarter, 12 per cent stopped receiving housing benefit and 14 per cent no longer had extra bedrooms due to changes in family circumstances.

Small numbers

Only a handful of residents affected by the bedroom tax said they had moved as a direct

result of the policy, according to the G15 study.

It also found that residents hit with a cut in housing benefit as a result of the bedroom tax, had found paying bills a “constant struggle” or they had fallen behind in paying their bills. Others said the reduction in benefit led them to cut back on food and heating.

This is consistent with national findings from the English House Condition survey, which showed the number of tenants in rent arrears rose from 12.2 per cent in 2012/13, to 14.1 per cent last year, after hitting a high of 15.2 in the previous year.

David Montague, chief executive for L&Q and chair of the G15, said: “Our study suggests there is little evidence under-occupied families were motivated to move into smaller homes as a result of the policy. Given the shortage of affordable housing in London, it is questionable whether residents would have been able to downsize, even if they wanted to.”

“As a sector, we are keen to work with the new Government to examine how we can address the lack of affordable homes, which is the underlying issue.”

A Department for Work and Pensions spokesman challenged the study’s findings by focusing on greater consistency across all tenures and the financial savings generated.

“The reality is that removing the spare room subsidy had brought Housing Benefit rules for social renters into line with those in the private sector, and the number of people affected by it is going down.

“By restoring fairness to the system, we are saving the taxpayer an estimated half a billion pounds every year, and our research shows that landlords are actually building more one bedroom homes and fewer larger ones as a result of the policy.”

Social tenant evictions hit a 7-year low

Legal action to evict tenants has fallen after social landlords pursued fewer repossession claims according to official figures.

Data released by the Ministry of Justice shows landlords issued 19,372 possession claims in April to June this year, the lowest in a single quarter for at least seven years.

A total of 43,341 claims were made by social landlords in the first six months of 2016, the lowest figure since at least 2009. This continues a trend seen in recent years with possession cases falling from 113,175 in 2013 to 94,577 in 2015.

Given the problems created by welfare reforms and the introduction of Universal Credit, it shows that social landlords are trying hard to avoid evicting their tenants. This is

being achieved with greater support and intervention at earlier stages, to avoid rent arrears reaching high levels.

The official figures showed possession claims started by private landlords have also fallen. A total of 10,314 were issued in April to June, compared to 10,586 the same time last year.



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Homes for a lifetime

A London sink estate was recently transformed into hundreds of sustainable homes. HMM reports on how aluminium windows and doors helped provide the finishing touches to the new Orchard Village for the future.



The former Mardyke Estate in Rainham, East London, has undergone a substantial transformation to make way for a new residential development, Orchard Village. Circle Housing has invested £80m to redevelop the old housing estate and create 555 new homes to meet local affordable housing needs. Designed by PRP Architects and developed in its entirety by Willmott Dixon, the project specified AluK aluminium curtain walling, window and door systems throughout all four phases.

To make way for the new housing, most of the original estate (including six high rise blocks) was demolished and replaced with new low rise homes. From the first construction phase in 2010 up until completion of phase three in 2014, the project adhered to the Building Regulations as well as the Code for Sustainable Homes level 4. The design brief also required all homes to comply with Lifetime Homes standards based on inclusivity, accessibility, adaptability, sustainability and good value. The aim of the standards is to make homes flexible enough to meet the changing needs of current and future occupants.

Continued on page 24...



Project Details

1960s: Mardyke Estate is built to house Ford employees but falls in disrepair when jobs are cut

2007: Majority of tenants vote to transfer their homes to Circle Housing

March 2008: Circle Housing takes over with £80m regeneration plans imminent

November 2009 – 2016: Orchard Village is completed after seven years

Meeting requirements

AluK SL52 curtain walling, 58BW TBT (tilt before turn) window, 58BD balcony door and GT55 TB commercial entrance door systems were specified for each project phase. In the case of windows and doors, Lifetime Homes requires that occupants have a reasonable line of sight from a seated position in the living room, and the use of at least one window for ventilation in each room. The AluK 58BW TBT window and 58BD balcony door systems were designed with the tilt turn handles below 1200mm from the finished floor to meet accessibility requirements. To

meet security requirements, all windows and doors complied with the Secured By Design (SBD) initiative, with the GT55 TB commercial door systems integrating electric strike access with key fob entry.

The AluK systems specified have slim sightlines and profile sizing to meet bespoke design requirements. The aluminium profiles are thermally broken, providing the homes with energy efficiency qualities that comfortably exceed the current Building Regulations Part L1A minimum U-Value of 2.00 W/m²K.

Regeneration

The redevelopment includes one, two, three and four bed apartments and houses. The design of Orchard Village features a new square with community facilities, retail and commercial space, transport links and recreational opportunities. Phase one comprised 121 new homes, most of which were brick buildings with standard punch-hole windows. Phase two and three of Orchard Village saw a total of 265 homes built with a design combining coloured cladding panels and render walls to produce a modern look.

Alongside the construction of new homes, landscaping was an integral part of the regeneration masterplan. The newly created spaces include courtyard gardens with play areas, a park, streets with shared surface areas and a new hub space, to be used by the whole community. The design also includes an orchard sculptural giant fruit and playable island features. The paving surfaces follow a linear pattern echoing the route of a nearby stream.

In addition to the homes and external spaces, the development also encompasses a central energy centre incorporating renewable energy measures to provide residents with a community heating and hot water system to help alleviate fuel poverty.

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 spilled on them.

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Accessible housing must become a national priority

By Paul Gamble, Habinteg Chief Executive



There are 11.9 million disabled people in the UK and as a society we are ageing rapidly.

Yet a look at our existing housing stock shows that only seven percent of existing homes provide the four minimum access features that allow a disabled person to easily visit, let alone stay the night or live in on a longer term basis.

Habinteg's Hidden Housing Market report with Papworth Trust (and London School of Economics/Ipsos Mori) showed that 1.8 million disabled people have an identified accessible housing need and 19 per cent of the British public favour moving to a property designed or adapted to enable them to live independently in later life. This demand and shortage of accessible and easily adaptable housing, such as those built to the Lifetime Homes standard, represents a long-term challenge that needs to be addressed now.

Lifetime Homes are ordinary homes designed to incorporate 16 Design Criteria that make them accessible and easily adaptable and can be universally applied to new homes at minimal cost.

A national response?

The Government's new higher accessible housing standard, Part M(4) Category 2, is broadly equivalent to Lifetime Homes and features in the building regulations as an optional standard. Local authorities have a duty to produce a local plan setting out their approach to new development by 2017. Habinteg is campaigning for local authorities to make the optional Category 2 their default housing standard.

A new data obtained by Habinteg found just a handful of English councils – just 3 per cent – outside London have policies to deliver and monitor the number of accessible homes built.

This excludes the 32 London Boroughs but when they are all included the figure is just 8.2 per cent of councils with robust accessible housing plans.

This happens because since 2004, the London Plan under successive mayoral administrations has regulated to ensure that all homes are built to the Lifetime Homes standard with 10 per cent to higher wheelchair accessible standards and we would like to see this replicated across the country. Nevertheless some councils are delivering best practice on accessible homes planning, monitoring and delivery.

Councils such as Leeds, Reading, Sevenoaks,

"Only 3 per cent of councils in England have plans to meet the accessible housing demand"

Leicester, Peterborough and Eastleigh are providing a strong example to others of what can be achieved within long-term planning frameworks.

Good for everyone

The benefits of accessible homes are not only experienced by disabled people. Their non-disabled neighbours, whether it be the couple with small children, a young professional having furniture delivered to their first home, or an active retiree grandparent - can all benefit from the features of inclusively designed homes. The ability and flexibility to adapt homes to life's changing needs are also a key factor that everyone should consider.

Meanwhile the positive impact of meeting the

"Accessible homes are not just for the disabled. For example, a couple with small children, a young professional having furniture delivered or an active retiree grandparent can benefit from inclusively designed homes." – P. Gamble

housing needs of disabled people can reach beyond health, wellbeing and employment prospects, to the wider community and savings for public services. Disabled people living in inaccessible homes are four times more likely to be unemployed, while a strong link between health and housing sectors relies fundamentally on the accessibility and adaptability of the homes available.

Working together

We would like developers, planners and health and social care commissioners to take note of the desire of the public to maintain independence in mainstream housing and communities as they age or develop needs for care and support.

We hope that this research is the beginning of a broader debate about how accessible homes should feature in the decision-making processes of developers and policy-makers, ensuring more homes become accessible, affordable and available.

Foundations release disability grants action plan

Recommendations on the use of disability grants have been released by campaigners.

Foundations, the national body for home improvement agencies, has created an eight-point plan to improve awareness of grants, how grants are allocated and to ensure more people can live more independently.

Increase

About 40,000 people a year receive Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) - which the government is set to increase from £200m to £500m by 2020 - to pay for improvements such as ramps, stairlifts or level access showers.

The recommendations include:

- Combining services around the customer so that

people with disabilities do not have to find their own way through complex service pathways

- Review of the DFG allocation formula to spread resources more fairly across each local authority
- Update the test of resources, revise the upper limit of funding and provide guidance about when it is appropriate to remove the means-test
- Involve GPs in referrals
- Provide advice and work with the supply chain to develop cost-effective designs
- Develop action plans to ensure joint working between health, housing and social care and include developers, planners and social housing providers to create accessible housing policies for people who must be rehoused
- Develop a data system to show how grants are

delivered and ensure representation of DFG services on health and wellbeing boards

- Carry out independent evaluation of new service delivery models



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Don't void your insurance

Crime risks, financial woes and safety issues are associated with mismanagement of void properties. Guy Other of Orbis tells how landlords can stay covered.



Around £2 billion worth of property damage in the UK is done through vandalism and arson, and a quarter of this involves empty properties. This is what Aviva, UK's biggest insurer, reported, adding that claims filed as a result of squatters had doubled in recent years. These claims included not only the cost of removing the squatters, but also any associated repairs – and that's before considering the legal fees.

Tenants' care and surveillance can contribute to the security and fire safety of an occupied building, but empty properties lack such protection. Although detailed records of all fires and theft in unoccupied buildings within the UK are not available, many insurers continually report this type of loss as very significant on an annual basis.

Property insurers have a poor experience with void properties and tend to compensate for this by applying:

- higher rates
- reduced cover, for example for perils and/or basis of settlement
- higher excesses
- regular inspections and reviews

But not all insurers cover vacant properties due to the higher risks associated with these buildings, so careful research and policy comparison is needed to find the best cover. Getting the insurance wrong could prove critical for the property and detrimental to business and the owner's bank balance.



“Property owners are legally required to maintain a safe property, even when the building is vacant” – Guy Other of Orbis

The occupancy issue

When a property is going to become void, owners and landlords must make it a top priority to inform their insurers and arrange for the premises to be 'covered' in the event of intrusion or damage. If this doesn't happen, there could be a breach of the change of occupancy clause.

When a tenant moves out of their building without informing the owner or landlord, this creates insurance implications. The tenant will be in breach of their lease condition, but in the eyes of the insurance firm, it is the landlord who is liable. Landlords should maintain strong lines of communication with tenants and stay up to date with their plans. Failing to do so or to comply with any resulting requirements can prove very costly in the event of a problem.

Safety first

The potential danger posed by the empty building to any intruders must also be taken into account, as there is the risk of paying compensation to anyone injured on the premises. In particular, the attractiveness to younger

people of empty buildings as a potential playground should be considered, especially as children are able to gain access through very small gaps such as fanlight windows or minor holes in walls.

Property owners are legally required to maintain a safe property, even when the building is vacant. Under the Defective Premises Act and Occupiers Liability Act, a 'duty of care' exists for landlords towards third parties who might be injured by their failure to maintain or repair the property.

When occupancy of an empty building is not imminent, it is necessary to manage the shutdown in an orderly and structured fashion. Where a managing agent, builder or specialist firm is taking over responsibility for an empty building, a formal handover should take place and an inspection carried out beforehand. In fact, regular inspections with a full audit trail are often necessary to remain compliant with insurance requirements and health and safety regulations.

Property inspections

Insurers typically require regular, auditable inspections of a void property. It is essential that landlords and owners check how often the property needs to be inspected under the policy, which would specify the how frequent the checks should be and what those should cover. Some policies are content with monthly inspections, others require weekly or even more frequent visits – all with a full audit trail to demonstrate compliance. Visits can anything from 15 minutes to two hours and should be carried out on rotation to deter criminals from surveying the building.

Professional inspectors tend to carry out inspections through a personal digital assistant (PDA) device. The inspector begins by entering either the postcode of the property into the PDA or scanning the building's barcode.

The device will then display a list of pre-agreed questions regarding security and compliance, which the inspector will check and answer. The questions are generally specified by the insurer to be tailored to the property but can vary by building type, location and level of insurance cover.

Guardianship

Guardianship is one method that landlords consider for keeping their void property secure. However, as well as the insurance implications, they should be aware that, when looking to reclaim their property, the Protection from Eviction Act applies to anyone who is a 'residential occupier' of a building, including property guardians. Owners and property managers must be mindful once again that they are legally bound by the 'duty of care' to keep safe anyone who enters their premises.

Furthermore, owners, who consider employing guardianship, should consult their insurers prior to entering into an agreement. Before they accept the changes in occupation and use, the insurers will wish to examine the service contract and assess whether any consequent changes in risk are acceptable. Likewise, once the guardianship has ended, it is important for landlords to re-check the building and inform the insurance company of the change of status.

In a nutshell

Choosing the right insurance policy for their void property is the first step landlords should make to cut damage and repair costs, but taking additional safety measures to prevent squatters can help ease financial or legal headaches. Insurers must also be informed about changes of occupancy status of the building in order to adjust the cover adequately.



“Very significant” – annual losses from claims relating to void properties

West London high rise fire cause traced to a tumble dryer

A London Fire Brigade investigation has revealed the cause of the fire that ripped through a residential block in Shepherd's Bush on 19 August.

The blaze left 50 people temporarily homeless but there were no casualties despite neighbours reporting thick black fumes had engulfed the top stories of the tower block.

Over 120 firefighters attended the fire in Shepherd's Court in Shepherd's Bush Green and some remained at the scene until late at night to dampen down.

On 30 August fire investigators revealed the blaze had been caused by a faulty tumble dryer. The machine had been recalled by the manufacturer and was due to be seen by an engineer.

The investigation revealed the blaze had started in the kitchen of a seventh floor flat and the occupants were in at the time and using their tumble dryer. They had escaped uninjured when smoke coming out of the appliance.

London Fire Commissioner Ron Dobson said: "The flat's occupants had a terrifying ordeal. The kitchen quickly became smoke logged and thankfully they noticed the smoke and quickly left the flat and called the Brigade. This decision could have saved lives.

"If your appliance is subject to a safety or recall notice or you think there is something wrong with it our advice is simple. Unplug it immediately and contact the manufacturer or a

qualified repair technician."

Following the blaze, which was put out by over 120 firefighters, the residents of four other flats in the block have also had to be rehoused.

The Brigade claims 'nearly one fire a day' involves white goods and is urging Indesit's parent company, Whirlpool, to change its current advice to consumers. The firm says

owners should attend their faulty appliances while in use as an extra precaution, but the firefighters believe it's impractical for most people to remain with an appliance for the duration of a drying cycle.

Six people died in a blaze which broke out at Lakanal House in 2009 and spread via non-fireproof window panels outside.



Image courtesy of @PinkyNotBrian

Product Focus

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The UK produces over 5 million tonnes of plastic every year but recycles less than 30 per cent. We lack adequate recycling facilities and falling oil prices make virgin plastic cheaper so incinerating waste plastics to produce electricity is more profitable, even though this increases our CO₂ emissions. This is particularly disturbing, as plastic waste is comparatively easy to convert into new products. Typical applications include fencing, gates, gallows brackets, porch posts, finials, pediments, rafter tails, cladding, and tongue and groove.



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Poujoulat UK's Therminox TI and ZI chimney system is "the only HETAS listed metal twin wall chimney that is soot fire tested using a solid fire stop in the room of the appliance in domestic houses" which, the company says, makes it an "ideal internal metal chimney solution for houses built post 2008 (Airtight)". During testing, the soot fire test took the cooling air for the enclosure shaft down from the roof space and avoided taking air flow from the living room and this was sufficient to achieve a distance to combustible materials of 50mm. For further information on Poujoulat's complete range visit the website.

Envirograf

www.envirograf.com

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Celebrate construction at the biggest industry forum

UK Construction Week brought together over 24,000 industry professionals and 650 exhibitors to Birmingham's NEC last year and is returning with an enhanced programme this October.

Nine separate shows will be hosted at this year's UK Construction Week – Timber Expo, the Build Show, Civils Expo, the Surface and Materials Show, Energy 2016, Plant & Machinery Live, HVAC 2016, Smart Buildings 2016 and Grand Designs Live.

With the majority of top architects and construction firms present at last year's event, visitors will get a rare opportunity to network with renowned industry professionals, benefitting from exclusive deals from leading brands. Meanwhile exhibitors will get the chance to interact with key decision-makers and purchasers from across the industry.

Leading trade bodies will also be present at the event, including representatives from the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), the Timber Research and Development Association (TRADA), the Builders Merchants Federation (BMF), the Construction Products Association (CPA) and the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB).



Show Highlights

The Build Show will return to UKCW after its 2015 edition welcomed all of UK's top 20 construction firms and brought together 76 per cent of UK local authorities and 70 per cent of UK's top 10 housebuilding firms.

This year it will continue to provide the most powerful opportunity available for suppliers and contractors to connect face-to-face.

More than 400 exhibitors will be joined by over 24,000 building and construction industry contractors and professionals, who can choose from a mix of seminars, demonstrations, debates and discussions to make the Build Show a powerful and stimulating event at all levels.

High profile debates and CPD seminars will cover topics on funding, the



"High profile debates and CPD seminars will cover topics on funding, the self-build market, housebuilding and the future of construction will provide vital insight to visitors"

self-build market, housebuilding and the future of construction will provide vital insight to visitors, while a keynote panel featuring representatives from CPA, CITB, AECOM among others will discuss the challenges to productivity, innovation, investment and skills.

The Civils Expo will see one of the world's top civil engineering companies CEMEX exhibit while Tideway Tunnels and Instant Upright will also be present.

At the Timber Expo, Vandecasteele, W. Howard Group, Arch Timber Protection and Rothoblaas will feature. HVAC 2016 has attracted leading insulation manufacturer Knauf Insulation as well as Airflow Developments Ltd and Hitachi. Ranking among the top six power companies in the country, Scottish Power will exhibit at Energy 2016 along with British Gas and Pavegen.

At Plant & Machinery Live global construction machinery provider Case



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“Over the course of UK Construction Week, visitors will benefit from a comprehensive seminar schedule, with panellists discussing reasons for - and solutions to - challenges facing the industry”

Construction Equipment will be showcasing its latest innovations. Filling the roster at Smart Buildings 2016, Finnish acoustics specialists Framery will showcase its products alongside Theben, Savant and Voltimum. In the Surface & Materials Show, established brands such as Johnson Tiles and FunderMax will return alongside French newcomers Panaget.

Seminars

Over the course of UK Construction Week, visitors will benefit from a comprehensive seminar schedule, with panellists discussing reasons for - and solutions to - challenges facing the industry. These will include two



seminars on Brexit and a discussion on how to raise the industry's profile among prospective workers in order to tackle the skills shortage, plus seminars on the future of SMEs and the impact of BIM six months from the Government deadline. Furthermore, a series of seminars, 'A Tale of Three Cities', will highlight the opportunities, challenges and lessons to be learned from UK's three most active cities, Birmingham, Manchester and London.

Awards & entertainment

UK Construction Week will also be a host to a number of industry awards, including the first Construction Enquirer Awards, the Concrete Awards, the Infrastructure Awards, the Structural Timber Awards and the BIM Awards.

A news-style programme from ITN Productions called "Foundations for the Future" will be launched to explore the state of the home building industry by examining key challenges in the building, quantity and quality of new homes required to meet demand.

Additional entertainment will be provided through a beer and ale festival, with 30 craft ales and live music as well as a casino. Property buyers will be able to take advantage from a free hosted buyers scheme which will enable them to connect directly with the suppliers and vendors that are most able to meet their needs.

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Kingspan TEK achieves BES 6001

Kingspan Insulation is once again taking the lead on responsible business practices as its TEK and OPTIM-R product ranges became the first in their respective classes to achieve 'Very Good' BES 6001: Responsible Sourcing of Construction Products certification. The certificate covers all Kingspan OPTIM-R products manufactured at Kingspan Insulation's Herefordshire site and Kingspan TEK panels produced at the firm's facility in North Yorkshire. During the certification process, BRE Global also confirmed that the Kingspan Kooltherm, KoolDuct and Therma product ranges manufactured at the facilities have retained their 'Excellent' ratings.

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Toilet independence? Less than £1/day...

With continuing discussion over care budgets, use of assistive technology could provide a cost-effective long term solution for many. Bathroom alterations are already the most common home adaptation. Independence in the toilet can be delivered, for as little as 75p/day!

The independence is achieved by fitting one of Clos-o-Mat's Aerolet toilet lifters over the WC – whether a conventional loo or wash & dry unit. The unit replicates the natural motion of sitting down and standing up, automatically and smoothly lowering the user over and onto the toilet and then raising them to standing whilst ensuring their centre of gravity and thus balance remains stable.



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Don't slip up: effective choices for communal spaces



Beware taking the cheap option when it comes to busy communal spaces – it could prove to be a false economy. Martyn West of Altro advises on how to make informed specification choices based on safety, durability and reducing maintenance costs.

Maintaining communal spaces is a tough business. Public areas such as entrance halls, corridors and stairwells experience heavy foot traffic and are often the buffer zone between homes and the street. Floors need to be able to withstand heavy traffic, remain easy to clean and yet also keep tenants, staff and visitors safe. In areas where water and mud is brought in on shoes and wheels, slip risk increases dramatically. Walls are vulnerable to impact-damage, being easily knocked and scraped by pushchairs and bikes, wheelchairs or walkers.

With budgets under greater pressure than ever before, housing associations and local authorities could be forgiven for having to overlook the challenges and opt for the cheapest possible walling and flooring finishes, on the understanding that 'it will have to be replaced soon anyway'. However, that approach will almost always prove to be a false economy – and could even prove extremely costly in this modern litigation culture. Thankfully there are some practical solutions for making budgets work harder, in terms of performance and lifecycle costs, cleaning, hygiene and safety, without compromising on aesthetics.

Safe for now...

First and foremost, landlords need to keep tenants, visitors and staff safe from harm. Older residents and those with mobility issues can be massively affected by a fall. Minimising slips and trips should be an essential part of your planning and risk assessment, and is particularly important in busy communal areas. Safety flooring is essential, but you'll need to ask suppliers some tough questions to ensure you get the best long term performance.

Choosing products with a guarantee of sustained slip resistance for the life of the flooring ensures you continue to meet your responsibilities and also prevents expenditure on untimely replacement – always consider life cycle costings alongside initial outlay. Safety flooring with a slip resistance of PTV ≥ 36 (the HSE standard) makes the chances of anyone slipping or falling one in a million. However, you'll need sustained slip resistance for the lifetime of the flooring to keep it that way.

Be wary of flooring that meets that HSE standard when fitted, but loses slip resistance over time when in use. This can bring the odds of a slip or fall as high as one in two. Always ask to see manufacturers' figures for sustained slip resistance, so you make an informed choice rather than a costly mistake.

Tough enough to last

Surfaces in communal and entrance areas also have to withstand heavy traffic from buggies, bike wheels, wheelchairs and walking aids. Walls often take a real battering, with newly painted surfaces getting covered in scuffs, scrapes and knocks in no time at all. Corners and outer surfaces of doors are particularly vulnerable to damage. Not only does this call for frequent

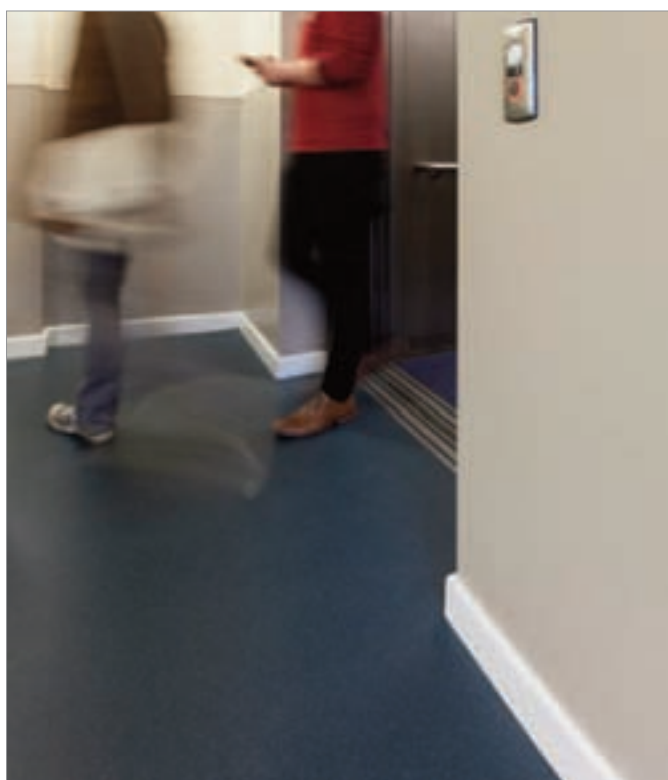


repairs and decorating, but the general scruffiness and a perceived lack of care can impact on the way tenants and visitors view and treat their surroundings.

Flooring also needs to be tough, easy to maintain and look good. For longevity and improved life cycle costs, consider heavy duty 2.5mm safety flooring for communal areas, as it is thicker and more durable than standard 2mm thick flooring. Good quality 2.5mm safety flooring will have very high resistance to damage and impact and should come with a long guarantee, so you can be confident it will stand the test of time.

Ideally, choose a walling and flooring system from the same manufacturer, as these will be designed to work together, ensuring an effective bonded finish, and avoiding the risk of incompatible materials 'parting company' along joins. Ensure products are compliant with all the relevant standards, and look for time saving features such as larger standard sheet sizes for wall protection, requiring fewer joins and being quicker to install.

"Surfaces in communal and entrance areas also have to withstand heavy traffic from buggies, bike wheels, wheelchairs and walking aids"



Homely interiors, suitable for all

While it is essential to protect the fabric of the building, the visual impact of spaces is also important. The good news is that there's no need to choose between performance and aesthetics as the latest generation of walling and flooring products combine both. Wall protection systems come in a variety of popular colours, while the range of safety flooring available has changed beyond recognition in recent years, with many now incorporating technologies to make them easier to clean, reducing time and costs for upkeep. Options now include wood effects for a homely feel, bright and bold colours to create a wow factor as well as many more subtle options. These include safety flooring without the traditional 'sparkle' which can be a disadvantage to someone living with dementia.

To ensure communal spaces are accessible to all, you should also consider tonal contrast between floors, walls, steps and doorways. This ensures a clear difference between the surfaces that can be easily identified by someone with visual impairment. Where different types of flooring are used alongside each other and there is no step between them, it's equally important to ensure that the materials are similarly contrasted to avoid creating the illusion of a step where there is none. Tonal contrast is measured in Light Reflectance Values (LRVs).

As in so many areas of life, it is important to avoid false economies when selecting wall and floor surfaces for communal areas. Choosing hard working products, designed to last the distance can unlock local authorities and social housing landlords from short maintenance cycles in areas attracting the greatest wear and tear, keeping them safer, looking smarter and more welcoming for longer.

Keeping residents safe at Derby's Sunnyfield Extra Care development

Derby's Sunnyfield development of 70 self-contained 'Extra Care' flats for people over 60 is using a combined smoke and hybrid natural ventilations system from leading specialist, SE Controls, to help keep residents safe in the event of a fire while also providing fresh air to corridors and communal spaces.

Developed by Housing & Care 21 in partnership with Derby City Council and the Homes and Communities Agency, Sunnyfield enables older people to live independently, but with the added support of an 'Extra Care' approach which enables residents to access a range of on-site services and amenities, as well as social events.

The 70 flats are located over three stories plus a lower ground level with access provided by stairwells, lift shafts and a corridor network. SE Controls upgraded the smoke ventilation equipment with an environmental ventilation system, which is fully automated and provides day to fresh air ventilation to the communal corridors. The system also keeps these areas clear of smoke in the event of a fire when triggered by the network of SHEVTEC controllers and temperature sensors.

While the primary function is to provide essential smoke ventilation, the system's versatile design enables it to be configured as a natural ventilation solution to provide a supply of fresh air to corridors and communal spaces.

This not only allows comfortable temperatures to be maintained and avoid the possibility of overheating during summer months, but also removes stale air from the building to create a better environment.

Throughout the development, the extensive SE Controls system uses an array of sensors, control panels, roof vents and ventilation louvres, located in each corridor, as well as the four stairwells and glazed atrium areas, to ensure that smoke control and fire safety is maintained at all times for residents and staff, should a fire occur.

SE Controls' Commercial Director, Martin Oates, explained "Sunnyfield is a perfect example of how our hybrid smoke and natural ventilation solutions can provide critical fire safety protection while also helping improve the day to day living environment for residents, whether it is in sheltered or managed accommodation, social housing or private



residential developments."

He added: "There is increasing interest and concern about building overheating, particularly in relation to building air tightness regulations and the effects of climate change and we are already helping address these effects with related technologies to help provide cost effective cooling, ventilation and smoke control solutions."

01543 443060
www.secontrols.com

Vent-Axia revives social housing

Vent-Axia has launched the intelligent Lo-Carbon Revive, a new filter-less unitary fan designed to meet the specific needs of social housing. Boasting powerful, quiet, efficient ventilation, Revive provides good indoor air quality and comfort for tenants while being quick and easy to install, low maintenance and reliable. For landlords the Revive has been designed to offer simple specification. Highly versatile the Revive offers a choice of run speeds for multiple installation options and can be ducted or through the wall, making specification easy. Featuring Smart Sense™ intelligent technology Revive is quick and easy to install.



0844 856 0590 www.vent-axia.com

ALLROUND 37.5° Insulated Work Jacket

Top athletes have long enjoyed the benefits of performance wear – now craftsmen and women can too. **Snickers Workwear** is one of the first manufacturers of working clothes to introduce 37.5° Technology into its clothing. This new 37.5° ALLROUND Insulated Work Jacket is just what the name suggests. A jacket that has all the features and functionality of the other Next Generation working clothes, but without the heavier weight fabrics. It's a super-light, quick-drying garment that will keep you looking and feeling comfy wherever you are on site in colder weather. Snickers' ALLROUND garments have become known for must have features.



info@snickersworkwear.co.uk

So powerful, they need a Cage!

With the new **Big Wipes Cage** you will never again need to search for your powerful set of Big Wipes products! The fully adjustable wall and van bracket means you can keep Big Wipes close at hand. Made from tough high quality polycarbonate, the Cage comes with pre-drilled holes for screw fixing. Once installed, the cage allows Big Wipes 4x4, Power Spray and Power Gel to be accessed with just one hand for those very messy jobs. Big Wipes 4x4 wipes and Power Spray contain four powerful cleaning agents and four dermatologically tested skin conditioners to quickly shift all modern construction sealants, adhesives, paints, coatings and grime in an instant.



webenquiry@bigwipes.com

All round knee protection

Redbacks Cushioning Ltd, the manufacturers of the World's only patented, 'leaf-spring', non-foam or gel kneepads offer a strapped version as an addition to its original, big-selling product for pocketed work trousers. Designed by a senior Ergonomist, Clinical Scientist and Biomedical Engineer, the kneepads retain the company's award winning cushioning technology which incorporates a flexible TPE (Thermo Plastic Elastomer) leaf-spring set within a unique honeycomb matrix. Durable and hardwearing, Redbacks strapped kneepads give the user unrivalled, all-day comfort and long-term protection even in the harshest of environments.



01327 702104 www.redbackscushioning.com

Worker of the Year 2016 – a month to go



Entries for UK WOTY have been flooding in, but there is still time to enter and win the incredible prizes, including £250,000.00 cash, a Honda Jazz car, a Honda Crosstourer 1200cc motorbike, a Honda Marine Rib boat, a year's free shopping at ASDA, a luxury holiday and many more goodies. Sponsored by workwear giant Dickies, in association

with Honda and ASDA, the competition is open to anyone in the UK who works, just go to the UK WOTY website and answer two simple questions.

0191 258 2758 www.dickiesworkwear.com

Snickers RUFFWork

Part of the Next Generation Workwear range, **Snickers' RUFFWork** working clothes are modern, heavy-duty garments that combine an amazing fit with reinforced features throughout. Packed with loads of functionality, the trousers are specially designed for those professional craftsmen who really rely on their gear in demanding on-site working conditions. The special 'Dobby Pro' fabric used in these garments provides a unique combination of comfort and durability. What's more, the 'Cordura 1000' reinforcements are up to three times more durable than regular Cordura and with a special DWR coating to repel oil and moisture.



info@snickersworkwear.co.uk

A mighty defence against skin damage

Dry skin and cracked, painful hands are a common ailment among the trade, but **Big Wipes** has come to the rescue with the launch of its new, specially formulated Hand Cream. Big Wipes Hand Cream is a high performance treatment cream that rapidly relieves dry and rough skin, helps strengthen the skin's barrier function and improves its ability to absorb and hold moisture. It is non-greasy and alcohol and fragrance free and is recommended by dermatologists to increase moisture concentration and improve skin texture, appearance and function. Used regularly, Big Wipes Hand Cream helps restore the skin's smoothness, softness and flexibility.



webenquiry@bigwipes.com

Solid Gear Athletic Safety Trainers

Part of the **Hulafors Group UK**, Solid Gear delivers top quality safety footwear for professional craftsmen. With modern, sporty looks, it's Athletic range of Safety Trainers brings together superb functionality and top class safety in a range of styles, designs and colours to create versatile safety shoes that are well suited to a variety of work tasks. Superlight high performance EVA midsoles combine with anti-slip rubber outsoles and lightweight, breathable uppers to ensure optimal comfort and functionality. What's more, all the shoes in the athletic safety range are made using a composite plate with aluminium toecaps to ensure maximum protection on site.



info@hulaforsgroup.co.uk



Sterte Court stands out, thanks to Trespa

The twin high-rise housing blocks of Sterte Court occupy a commanding location overlooking part of Poole Harbour in Dorset. But, if the view from within the ten-storey flats was impressive, the external appearance of the 1960's rendered concrete structure was far less so, and its exposed setting near the coast also created corrosion issues. A two-year, £7.5million refurbishment completed in summer 2015 has given the towers, together with two adjacent four-storey blocks, a new lease of life with better insulation, enclosed balconies, modern heating systems and a jaunty external colour scheme thanks to the use of **Trespa®** cladding to form a robust rainscreen. The colour scheme, a maritime mix of white, grey and light blue, was chosen by the people living in the 134 one and two-bedroom apartments. Residents have declared themselves extremely satisfied with the results of the refurbishment. More than 5000 square metres of the Trespa® Meteoron® 8mm thick product in a mix of Cobalt Blue, Royal Blue, Verdigris, White and Ocean Grey were used in the Poole project.

0808 234 0268 www.trespa.co.uk

VMZINC for Langwith College

As part of a £30 million project to provide self-catering accommodation for 645 students at the University of York's Langwith College, CJCT Architects specified **VMZINC®** in QUARTZ-ZINC PLUS®. The 'Glasshouse', Heslington East's only licensed social space which houses a cafe, bar, common room and launderette has a VMZINC compact warm roof and facades. The QUARTZ-ZINC is visibly distinctive of the metal and blends with the subtle PIGMENTO shades of blue, red and green used on the University's Computer, Law and Management building. The scheme achieved a BREEAM 'Very Good' rating.



01992 822288 www.vmzinc.co.uk

SkyVac launches powerful gutter cleaner

SkyVac has launched one of the world's most powerful pole operated gutter cleaners. The SkyVac Industrial is at least three times more powerful than any other model, capable of drawing 8,000 litres of air per minute and lifting water 150. It will remove heavy tufts of grass up to 5 kilos. Celebrating its fifth year of UK production, SkyVac has designed this model for all situations. It has three motors controlled by a power management lever to operate on 6,500 - 8,000 litres suction per minute and to ensure economical use of electricity. Full details of SkyVac products from **Spinaclean** are available on the company's website.



info@spinaclean.com

Restoring pride in social housing

Although providing the numbers of housing units required is higher on the agenda than ever before, future-proofing our tower blocks needs to be a top priority to help repair their image, explains William McDowell of Rockpanel.

Social housing tower blocks are easily one of the most controversial elements of post-war town planning. The buildings were originally envisioned as “symbols of the aspirations of the people of our age”. However, as the focus quickly moved from quality to quantity, many of the blocks were completed to a poor standard and have rapidly decayed.

While the temptation to simply demolish and start afresh is strong, such an approach has serious implications in terms of cost, environmental impact and displacement of existing tenants. Large scale refurbishments offer an alternative way to breathe new life into these so called “sink estates”, and in order to reshape the attitudes of residents and the public at large, it is essential that high quality facade materials form part of the solution.

Effective protection

Rainscreen systems are among the most popular options for multi-unit housing refurbishments. When specifying facade boards for these systems, it is crucial to not only carefully consider the look, but also the overall performance of the products. Issues such as poor weather resistance or weak durability can badly undermine the long-term effectiveness of the facing, leaving a building that looks badly aged before its time.

One way to avoid these issues is by selecting a facade manufactured from volcanic basalt rock. These boards are inherently insensitive to moisture and temperature, meaning there is no risk of them expanding or shrinking once installed and leaving no need for additional waterproofing treatments. The products require only minimal maintenance and are colourfast, making it easy to keep buildings looking as good as new.

Facades manufactured using this process are light but extremely strong. This makes them easy to install at height while allowing them to be simply curved or bent on-site to meet the particular requirements of a project. The boards can also be easily adjusted with a standard selection of tools, making detailing simple.

Fire is another major consideration for both specifiers and installers, particularly on high-rise projects. Facade boards made from basalt rock are available in a range of enhanced fire safe specification up to Euroclass A2-s1,d0 – giving assurance that they will deliver excellent fire performance.

In addition to their overall performance, the board material can also be specified in designs and finishes to meet virtually any aesthetic requirements including subtle natural tones, modern metallics and striking solid colours. Wood style facade boards are another increasingly popular option. These products are virtually indistinguishable from real wood, but provide a lighter and more durable external surface to the building, together with the benefits of excellent fire performance.

Case study

Lying to the north east of Manchester city centre, Collyhurst houses some of the most deprived communities in the country. As part of a 20-



year regeneration plan for the area, four 1960s council blocks - Humphries, Roach, Mossbrook and Vauxhall Court - were extensively refurbished by social landlords Northwards Housing, in collaboration with Manchester Working (part of Mears Group) which undertakes repairs and maintenance on 37,000 properties in the region.

The project team recognised at an early stage that the success of the scheme depended on resident buy-in. As a result, tenants were consulted on design choices throughout the project and were directly responsible in the choice of iridescent Rockpanel Chameleon facade boards as the new cladding material.

Rockpanel Group spent three days with tenants going through the benefits of the thermal upgrade, as well as looking at the choices of the various finishes that were on offer for the boards. CGIs (computer generated images) were created and printed onto mood boards with samples of the different products to help tenants visualise how their building might look. The choice of boards was voted by the tenants, as was the decision to include solar panels or not.

The Rockpanel Chameleon boards feature a crystal layer which makes them change colour depending on the angle of view or level of natural light. The lightweight boards were installed on two sides of the 13 storey

"Fire is another major consideration for both specifiers and installers, particularly on high-rise projects"



blocks by Astley Facades UK. The graceful transition between shades of blue, green and purple form a beacon for regional regeneration which can be seen for miles around.

For facade products, sustainability is not simply about green credentials, but also the ability to sustain the desired appearance over the long-term.

With the UK's housing shortage once again placing housing associations under pressure to focus on quantity, it is crucial that we learn from the

mistakes of the past. High quality facade boards installed as part of modern rainscreen cladding systems can keep buildings looking good and performing well for years to come, transforming them into a source of pride and enjoyment for tenants.

William McDowell is business director UK & Scandinavia at Rockwool B.V. / Rockpanel Group



Easy to install cantilever canopies

Perfect for turning outdoor spaces into sheltered and usable places the versatile Canofix cantilever canopy system from **Birchwood Trading** is the ideal fit for housing associations, private landlords, local authorities and universities with student accommodation. They have a multitude of uses from a simple doorway canopy or stairwell cover to passageway awnings and bin or bike shelters. The canopy comprises of lightweight yet durable polycarbonate brackets, aluminium fixing pipes and 2mm polycarbonate glazing sheet. Choose from black or grey brackets and clear or bronze glazing sheet. Canopy projections are set according to the bracket length at either 650mm, 1000mm, 1270mm or 1500mm with widths up to an impressive 30m. The 1000mm bracket is also available without the Canofix logo. Canopies can be fashioned to accommodate internal and external corners. Each canopy is supplied a complete kit of parts and is easily installed using the fixing guide provided. There is no need to silicone or weld. Delivery is usually within four working days and is free of charge to the UK mainland.

01925 826314 www.birchwoodtrading.co.uk

Ten years with Halo and a new website

Patios South West Ltd, a specialist trade fabricator of patio door systems is celebrating ten years of working with Halo, an industry-leading PVC-U profile brand of national market leaders, **The VEKA UK Group**. The family-run company was started in 2003, growing the business throughout South Wales and the South West to now produce, on average, 120 patio door systems per week, from a 4,500 sq. ft. factory in Paignton, Devon. Patios South West is now looking to bolster its reputation for impeccable customer service with a brand new website, complete with an online quote facility – ideal for installers wishing to 'price up' jobs for their homeowner customers.

01282 716611 www.vekauk.com



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.



enquiries@rehau.com

Refurbishment of high rise windows over replacements

Social Housing provider Ongo Homes Scunthorpe has engaged Mila Window and Door Maintenance to refurbish windows in three high rise tower blocks in the town, and key supply chain partner Siegenia has provided the critical hardware solutions.

The three blocks were originally built in the 1960's and underwent a full window replacement and external wall insulation programme 20 years ago as a part of refurbishment works during the 1990's.

Head of Regeneration at Ongo, Neil Webster explained their decision to undertake further works on the site and why they went for refurbishment of the windows rather than another full window replacement scheme.

"We had become aware of the increasing number of maintenance call outs to the blocks with regards to windows in recent years and had particular difficulty finding replacement hardware parts. With the windows having been installed for over 20 years many of the parts had become obsolete as technical advancements in the window industry developed".

"We were already planning to do work to the lifts, heating system and communal areas on the blocks so it was a good opportunity to investigate the options for the windows at the same time".

"We were aware of a very similar scheme which had been undertaken in pretty much the same circumstances at Gentoo in Sunderland and so we visited their site to see what had been done and to see the positive impacts on their blocks and on their residents".

"The cost of replacing the windows for a second time would have been prohibitive, added to which was the potential damage to the external insulation system, disturbance to residents and the negative environmental impact".

"Our residents are always supportive of what we try to do and understand that we try to offer them the best solutions; after meeting with Mila Window and Door Maintenance and talking to our residents, and following a full assessment of all the options available to us it was clear that a 'refurbishment scheme' rather than another replacement of the windows was a viable and very attractive proposition".

Tristan Cooke Managing Director of Mila Window and Door Maintenance takes up the story. "As Neil said, we spent a lot of time with Ongo and their contractor considering all of the options, and working out how we could deliver them an answer to all of the issues which needed to be addressed".

"The biggest single issue for us to address, and one of the key drivers Neil outlined earlier, was identifying Tilt and Turn hardware which we could fit



the existing frames and sashes which were originally installed. Over a period of years, the hardware had been failing and in a high rise living environment the risks are significant".

"This is where we were able to introduce one of our key supply chain partners into the equation. We have been working with Siegenia for nearly 30 years and for Tilt and Turn replacement hardware in high rise applications they are able to provide the perfect solutions".

"A very rigorous assessment of the existing frames and sashes alongside trials of our proposed hardware options enabled us to confirm to Ongo that we did indeed have an entirely workable solution".

John Chambers National Sales Manager for Siegenia reinforced the same point. "Over 30 years the relationship between ourselves and Mila Window and Door Maintenance has really developed and we have not yet failed to find a technically robust supply chain solution when they have approached us to do so, and this was no different".

"As social landlords increasingly look to refurbish and renew windows in situations where external wall insulation has subsequently been installed we know there will be more and more of these situations arising".

"Hardware as we know should always be maintained, even from new, but with the best will in the world after 20 years it really should be replaced in its entirety – earlier if possible. Continuing to install the odd replacement part is not sustainable in real terms as very quickly a block can become a patchwork of different hardware types".

"It is great that Ongo had the foresight to take the view they have and replace all the hardware with a complete new set and that they have engaged a specialist maintenance contractor to do the job for them. This way the new gearing is fully guaranteed as a new installation thereby extending the life the landlord's assets".

Neil Webster "Going down the refurbishment route rather than replacing the windows is clearly a fantastic outcome for Ongo and its residents; the feedback about the completed works and in respect of Mila Window and Door Maintenance's ability to carry out the job has been excellent".

For more information about Mila Window and Door Maintenance's 'Refurbishment and renewal' of high rise windows package visit www.milamaintenance.co.uk/our-services/mila-refurb-renew. For more information on Siegenia Hardware solutions visit www.siegenia.com.



02476 622000
www.siegenia.com



Irwell Valley uses Sentinel SystemCare

Irwell Valley Housing Association has taken a proactive approach to boiler care and heating system protection in all of its 7,000 homes, using **Sentinel** SystemCare to help meet its ambitious business goals of zero unnecessary repairs and zero customer dissatisfaction. The forward-thinking housing association deploys a treatment plan comprising Sentinel's high quality cleaning chemicals, inhibitor, and Eliminator Nano filter. As a result, avoidable boiler and heating system repairs have been eliminated, keeping heating maintenance costs at a minimum and ensuring that its homes provide year-round efficient heating and hot water to some 17,000 residents. Irwell Valley works towards a series of goals called the '5 Zeroes', an approach developed to maximise resident satisfaction while growing the business responsibly. Two of these goals, zero unnecessary repairs and zero dissatisfaction, are directly related to heating system management within its homes, and are being achieved with the help of Sentinel's industry-leading SystemCare Soft Water Pack. Comprising Sentinel X800 Cleaner, Sentinel X100 Inhibitor and the Sentinel Eliminator Nano Filter, Irwell Valley's SystemCare Pack is tailored to suit the housing association's requirements.

01928 704330 www.sentinelprotects.com

Cost effective renewable heating

The residents of 200 dwellings under the ownership of a Basingstoke Housing Association have been given a welcome boost to both their energy bills and their temperatures with the installation of **Mitsubishi Electric** Ecodan air source heat pumps. Ecodan air source heat pumps are proven to reduce both running costs and emissions over traditional carbon-intensive heating and are particularly suited to off-gas areas which are heavily reliant on oil. The fact that they also qualify for the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) provides additional financial benefits to the system owner. The installations also include Mitsubishi Electric's Metering and Monitoring Service Package.

01707 282880 www.mitsubishielectric.co.uk



Introducing the new P3 Hybrid Gas Fire

The Paragon P3 Hybrid fire from **Charlton & Jenrick** is a natural gas, manual control, convector gas fire combining the performance of a highly-efficient glass-fronted fire with the charm of an open-flame gas fire. The new Hybrid technology brings high-efficiency performance combined with the appeal of a welcoming open-flame fire, which was first developed in the Paragon P7 hole-in-the-wall fire and now used for this 16x22" fire. The fire comes with a very realistic coal flame effect and offers an impressive 4.9kW output from its 7kW input. This gives an extremely impressive 70.8 per cent Net efficiency to the most current British Standards.

sales@charltonandjenrick.co.uk



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Pioneering for You

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An easier route to energy savings at home

Effective heating controls are a vital part of an efficient heating system. Heating controls manufacturer **ESi Controls** says it make sense to look more closely at the options. ESi offers a range of programmers from a simple one channel to a three channel multi-purpose programmer which enable a housing provider or developer to comply with Part L of the Building Regulations by providing separate timed heating control for living and sleeping zones in a home, whilst also providing timed control of hot water. To take a closer look or for more information, visit the ESi website.



01280 816868 www.esicontrols.co.uk

Making a Passivhaus a home

A stylish Passivhaus home in South Manchester has achieved exceptional levels of airtightness through a combination of careful detailing and a high performance structure, provided by the **Kingspan TEK Building System**. Steve and Mel Howarth hired certified Passivhaus designers, PHI Architects, to create their dream home. After considerable research, PHI selected the Kingspan TEK Building System to form the walls and roof of the structure. The firm worked closely with highly experienced Kingspan TEK Delivery Partners, Point1 Building Systems, to achieve an extraordinarily energy efficient design.



01544 387 384 www.kingspantek.co.uk

New towel rail options from Stelrad

Stelrad has introduced an extended Aqua range, the perfect addition to the Decorative and Designer collection. The range offers a stunning selection of decorative and designer radiators for use primarily in the kitchen and bathroom.



Stelrad offers high quality, good looking options at affordable prices – the unique Aqua range is understandably appealing to house builders and homeowners alike. The range includes stylish yet cost-effective radiators. To take a closer look or for more information, visit the Stelrad website or contact the company directly.

01709 578 950 www.stelrad.com

Lower lambda products hit the market

Kingspan Insulation has revolutionised rigid insulation technology with the launch of four new low lambda products for floor, wall and soffit applications; delivering premium thermal performance with a minimal construction thickness. The expanded range now includes Kingspan Kooltherm K103 Floorboard, K110 and K110 PLUS Soffit Board, and K118 Insulated Plasterboard. The advanced composition of Kingspan Kooltherm lower lambda products ensures architects and builders now have even greater freedom to achieve spectacular designs with inherently outstanding fabric performance.



01544 387 384 www.kingspaninsulation.co.uk

Low cost solution to slippery decking

Wooden decking can become hazardous in damp and slippery conditions, creating the possible threat of slips or falls for anyone walking across the surface. **FibreGrid** has come up with a solution to this problem with the development of Anti Slip Standard GRP Decking Strips, part of their affordable GRP SlipGrip® Standard range. Timber decking becomes safer with these quick and easy to install DeckGrip Strips, which come supplied with decking screws and are pre-drilled. Available in lengths of 1200mm and 2400mm and widths of 50mm and 90mm, these decking strips are ideal for most decking areas and walkways.



01440 712722 www.fibregrid.com

EasyZAPP – making energy saving easy

DANLERS are pleased to announce the launch of their EasyZAPP range of PIR occupancy switches. Designed for the automatic control of lighting or other connected loads, these controls are remotely set-up or adjusted using a free app on an Android phone or tablet. EasyZAPP products work as presence detector switches and can be adjusted for settings such as photocell override, time lag and maintained lux levels (dimnable versions only). The phone or tablet can also be used as a remote control on/off override, or to configure a number of EasyZAPP controls at the same time. The products are straightforward to install and make use of existing wiring.



01249 443388 www.danlers.co.uk

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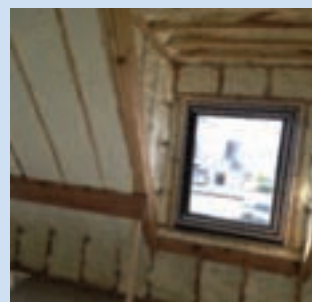
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The Icynene Insulation System is a series of soft, flexible spray foam insulation products that delivers up to 50% greater energy savings when compared to other insulation products. Icynene is perfect for loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, drylining insulation, sound insulation and more.

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.



Get smarter with lighting

New generation monitoring and management systems for indoor lighting and LED solutions are bringing significant benefits to social housing. Tim McKernan from Harvard Technology explains.



Lighting, which can account for as much as 40 per cent of a building's electricity bill, has been a constant source of concern for social housing landlords. Faced with the prospect of rising energy costs, the sector is turning to LED lighting to cut energy bills and meet crackdowns on CO₂ emissions.

The issue is compounded by the strict emergency lighting regulations in the social housing sector which call for ongoing monthly site visits in order to conduct emergency tests.

Consequently, pressure to find a solution to cut costs and improve performance has been growing from end-users, with innovative industry leaders now offering customers tailor-made solutions.

These feature the latest energy-saving LED technologies and indoor lighting control systems which also bring the benefit of reduced maintenance bills and CO₂ emissions.

Peabody takes control of lighting

Peabody, which has established local partnerships with local authorities across London, achieved impressive results through an integrated LED lighting solution, combined with controls to maximise energy and

cost savings.

Peabody aimed to decrease energy usage while at the same time meeting the strict emergency lighting regulations required in the sector. Equally fundamental was offering tenants the benefits of a better illuminated, safer environment.

Peabody turned to Harvard Technology and fixture designer and manufacturer Fern Howard, to revolutionise its lighting portfolio. Together they designed an integrated LED lighting system with a wireless enabled bulkhead fixture, which could link with Harvard Technology's EyeNut system, enabling users to monitor and manage their interior lighting with multi-site control from a single hub – an attractive option for those responsible for multi-site lighting operations.

Not only did the system allow the HA to wirelessly manage and monitor indoor lighting, but it also eliminated the requirement for monthly site visits by automating monthly and annual emergency tests that are needed to comply with regulation. In the social housing sector, this was a particularly key benefit.

“Since the installation, Peabody has achieved energy savings of 44 per cent. This significant figure could be boosted further with the planned addition of enhanced dimming and sensor control ”

Phase one of the project saw 80 bulkhead fixtures installed in two blocks of social housing, 70 per cent of which were fitted with this emergency feature, which through the CLZ40E EyeNut enabled driver, allows for the automation of all emergency protocols. Moreover, the HA was able to achieve full compliance with the strict legal requirements regarding emergency lighting in social housing, as all the results of automatically scheduled functional and duration testing are exported for audit tracking.

EyeNut gives full control of lighting within the blocks through the system's graphic user interface (GUI). Energy 'hot spots' are flagged-up on the system through the mapping tool, as are usage patterns, allowing the most effective energy strategy to be deployed. Luminaires can be switched or dimmed collectively, or individually, and scheduled to activate lighting where and when it is most needed.

With the data reporting function, efficiency strategies can be implemented as facilities managers are informed of energy saved in kilowatt hours and pounds. Also, lamp failures or abnormal behaviour is swiftly reported, which can then be promptly investigated, enabling tenants to feel more comfortable as concerns over dimly lit areas within and around the outside of buildings on housing estates can be addressed immediately.

Since the installation, Peabody has achieved energy savings of 44 per cent. A significant figure which could be boosted further to 50 per cent with the planned addition of enhanced dimming and sensor control features.

Bristol City Council cuts costs

In a more specific example, the benefits of LED solutions for social housing have been demonstrated at a Bristol City Council sheltered housing scheme.

The council faced ever-increasing running costs across its social housing and decided to tackle the drain on resources from Butler House, a 1960s high-rise that has been adapted into sheltered housing for older people. The council substituted the outdated lighting with LED, with the added functionality maximising the benefits of the new installation.

The chosen solution incorporated fittings from the specialist fixture designer and manufacturer, Fern-Howard, powered by LED drivers and light engines from Harvard Technology. The driver, chosen from the CoolLED range is used in conjunction with modular light engines which are compatible with DALI and 1-10 V dimming.

A total of 60 original 1962 fixtures, located within corridors and stairwells, were replaced with a low-glare LED solution and a new non-occupancy dimming function, enabled by Harvard Technology LED drivers and light engines. This combination delivered significant energy and maintenance savings and a payback on investment of just 21 months.

The solution has eliminated the need for monthly site visits to inspect every fixture, and allows for remote testing with full assurance and compliance. Any warnings in the system are flagged up for speedy attention and the results of automatically scheduled functional and duration testing are exported for audit tracking and delivered by email.

Harsh light spots commonly associated with inferior LEDs have been banished and the elegant new luminaires provide well-modulated and efficient light. The drivers and light engines enable each of the 60 lights, of 1,600 lumens, to dim to 10 per cent when corridors are unoccupied. The



Peabody set the goal of reducing energy usage while meeting strict emergency lighting regulations across its London estate

new luminaires' lifespan of 50,000 hours means there will be no need to replace lamps for seven years.

As result of the new installation Bristol Council is saving £5,300 per annum in energy and maintenance costs from the project. It has also brought an annual CO₂ reduction of four tonnes.

Both projects show successful collaboration between experts that led to innovative integrated solutions, maximising lighting efficiencies and versatility across social housing projects in a cost-effective way.

Tim McKernan is head of OEM Sales at Harvard Technology.

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Solar success

Energy efficiency continues to be a hot topic for property as housing providers gear up to meet rigorous efficiency rules. John Forster, Chairman of Solar Trade Association Scotland, reveals how solar roofing can improve homes and lives.

Despite the UK government's commitment to the Green Deal, improving inefficient, draughty properties remains a pressing issue for social landlords to tackle ahead of the cold months. Meanwhile fuel poverty remains a widespread problem across the sector, with recent National Housing Federation figures revealing one in 10 social housing households in England is fuel-poor. Over in Scotland, just below a million households in total have been affected.

Introducing EESSH

The Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) was launched in March 2014 with the objective of improving the energy efficiency of Scotland's social housing stock. The standard sets a minimum energy efficiency (EE) rating for each social home (see Table 1), for landlords to achieve before the end of 2020.

EPC Band	EPC Points	Social housing units	Proportion of housing units
A	92-100	0	0%
B	81-91	10,000	1.6%
C	69-80	329,000	54.1%
D	55-68	216,000	35.5%
E	39-54	45,000	7.4%
F	21-38	8,000	1.3%
G	1-20	0	0%
	Total	608,000	100%

Table 1: Spread of social housing units in Scotland by EPC band

The rating depends upon the dwelling and the fuel type used to heat it. In essence, EESH will mean that no social home can be lower than a C or D rating, resulting in warmer homes, lower fuel consumption, and subsequently, lower fuel bills and less tenants in fuel poverty.

Social housing is already significantly more energy efficient than private rented or owner occupied homes. As of 1st April 2015, 64 per cent of social homes were already meeting EESH. However, this means there are 218,000 homes yet to meet the standard.

Solar solution

Landlords should select the energy efficiency measure that best fits with their stock profile. Solar PV can be a suitable solution to meeting the EESH criteria for many social homes as it is cost effective and less intrusive than other measures such as external or internal wall insulation. Moreover, as Table 2 shows, it can have a significant impact on EE ratings.

The availability of more attractive, robust integrated in-roof solar PV solutions, combined with electrical and heat storage systems, can further enhance the appeal of solar PV for social housing landlords.

Solar can be easily incorporated into roof renewal programmes, helping to

Improvement	Roof area needed	Increase in energy rating
Solar PV - 1kWp	7m ²	+5
Solar PV - 2kWp	14m ²	+10
Solar PV - 3kWp	21m ²	+15
Solar PV - 4kWp	28m ²	+20

Table 2: Impact of solar PV on energy efficiency rating

pay for and generate a return from the works as well as producing a cheaper, cleaner electricity supply for social landlords or their tenants.

Likewise, ahead of retro-fit solar installations, it is important to consider the age and condition of the roof onto which the system is being installed.

It may be more cost-effective (in terms of avoiding future duplication of infrastructure costs) to renew the roof at the same time.

In-roof solar PV at Airlie Gardens, Brechin, Angus



Combining PV and roofing

Forster Roofing completed the installation of an 80 panel (20 kWp) in-roof PV system in conjunction with the re-tiling of a sheltered housing complex in Brechin for Angus Council.

The project was awarded as a result of our ability to provide all the roofing and solar PV installation works in-house and also, as we were able to host educational visits for local high school pupils. The 800 m² roof area of the complex was re-tiled with around 8,000 Marley Modern smooth grey tiles and the 80 black framed PV panels were integrated into the two south facing roof elevations.

The system generates approximately 17,000 kWh of electricity, which is being used to provide power for the communal areas including residents lounges, kitchen and laundry facilities. As part of the contract, we provided a workshop on the workings of solar PV for two groups of Physics pupils from Brechin High School.

Solar legacy for Athletes' Village

Forster took part in supplying solar panel roofing for the 2014 Commonwealth Games' Athletes' Village, which was transformed into a 700-home housing development and one of the most long-lasting legacies of the sport event. The firm was selected by Mactaggart and Mickel to deliver a 'one stop' integrated solar PV, roofing and roof window installation service to almost a third of the 700 homes.

Around 300 houses were allocated for private sale, with the remaining 400 houses for social rent through three local housing associations – Glasgow, Thenue and West of Scotland.

Forsters designed, installed and commissioned the in-roof and ballasted flat roof PV systems to 225 homes. Black trim 250 Wp panels and an in-roof mounting system (for the pitched roofs) were selected by City Legacy to

create a sleek design and finish for this prestigious development.

Heat batteries and inexpensive power diverters can be fitted in conjunction with PV to store electricity for combi boilers or to heat immersion water tanks, maximising tenants' self-consumption, creating savings on both their electricity and hot water heating bills.

A heat battery stores excess electricity as heat. Water flows through the battery increasing in temperature so the combi boiler does not have to work with the same intensity.

Social landlords can access a range of funding options to help pay for energy efficiency measures to bring their homes up to EESSH.

Further ahead, a review of the standard is planned in 2017, which will consider the setting of longer term milestones in line with the requirements of the 2050 Climate Change target of an 80 per cent reduction in carbon emissions against the 1990 baseline.



Welsh Slate stars in a landmark

Natural Welsh slates have been used in the refurbishment of a historic house. A historic seaside villa is enjoying a new lease of life as a Landmark Trust holiday let, thanks in part to **Welsh Slate**, part of the Lagan group. Some 150m² of Welsh Slate's natural Cwt Y Bugail County-grade roof slates in various sizes have been used on the stables and Grade II* listed main house at Belmont House in the Conservation Area of Lyme Regis in Dorset. The design of the roof with the natural Welsh slates, which are guaranteed for 100 years, was straightforward, with a parapet gutter to the front, valley gutter in the centre and drain to guttering at the rear.



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Felmoor Park's Premium Protection

The Scandinavian log cabins and lodges at the picturesque Felmoor Park in Northumberland have been given a striking new finish thanks to **Remmers**. Remmers HK Stain was selected to provide not only effective weather protection but protection against blue stain, rot and insects. HK Stain is a "2 in 1" product which eliminates the need for an additional wood preservative primer and is perfect for both soft and hardwoods. The product penetrates deeply into the wood whilst leaving it fully breathable and as it doesn't flake or peel. Available in a wide range of traditional colours or the alternative HK Stain 'Grey Protect' range of natural grey shades.



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The roofers best kept secret

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

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Kidde's Firex range now offers safety plus sustainability, with low energy mains-powered smoke and heat alarms that cost less than £1 a year to run. Interconnected, mains-powered smoke and heat alarms with reliable power back-up should now be the norm for most housing to satisfy Building Regulations requirements and Code of Practice recommendations. To meet demands for sustainable, low-energy products, the latest Firex range provides much lower maximum mains consumption, with substantial energy savings over previous models and significantly lower running costs. Firex alarms can be interlinked to create a low-energy network for protection throughout the home. But they can also interconnect with Kidde's 4MCO and 4MDCO mains-powered carbon monoxide alarms, using the unique 'Smart Interconnect' feature. Another important Firex innovation is the introduction of long-life lithium battery back-up options for all three sensing technologies.

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Giving old multi-storeys a new lease of life

They may have been the necessary solution to post-war housing shortages, but concrete multi-storey buildings' structural integrity has come back to haunt planners and maintenance teams. Nic Collins of Sika explains how they can be made fit for the future.

The high and medium-rise blocks of the mid to late 20th century were made primarily from concrete as the material enabled contractors to meet requirements for speed and longevity, while also offering flexibility to building designers.

While it is a relatively durable and robust building material, concrete can be severely weakened by poor manufacturing or a very aggressive environment. As a result, the durability of these reinforced 'streets in the sky' has become a serious issue over the years.

Premature deterioration, chemical degradation, unexpected and uncontrolled cracking caused by corrosion of the reinforced steel, and poor appearance and finish became commonplace, with these high rise towers losing their once-futuristic looks.

With growing demand for additional social housing set against shrinking budgets, the need to repair, maintain and extend the life of these high rise concrete buildings in the most cost effective and reliable way has never been greater.

Structural decay

If its structural integrity or load-bearing abilities are compromised, it is vital that a building is refurbished, restored and strengthened if it is to remain a viable asset for the 21st century.

During the refurbishment process, it is crucial to get the specification right first time to ensure buildings are not just returned to their former aesthetic standard, but also meet building standards and regulations. These include European Standard EN 1504, which helps owners and construction professionals to fully understand the requirements of the different stages of the repair and protection process.

So, how can we ensure refurbished building stock is fit for the long term? An approach that can completely seal a building envelope, stop water ingress, control air leakage, and repair and strengthen structures in refurbishment and restoration projects, is one way in which this can and is being achieved.

Building owners wanting to repair and protect their buildings for the long term need to take into consideration the whole life costs of repairs.

A total approach to tackling corrosion

Developed by concrete repair specialists Sika, the Total Corrosion Management (TCM) approach encompasses concrete repair and protection, corrosion control and structural strengthening systems. Helping to prolong and extend the life of buildings and structures as well as provide a viable and cost effective alternative to demolition and rebuilding, it is appropriate for a wide range of applications including commercial and industrial buildings, residential properties, and bridges and tunnels.

A focus on products, technologies and processes combine to make the firm well equipped to make the UK's ageing buildings and infrastructure facilities fit for the future, thereby reducing the costs and disruption of unplanned repairs and maintenance.



“The project at Four Squares Estate in Bermondsey demonstrates the potential of the post-war modernist block to be renovated for the future”

As well as improving the aesthetics of buildings, companies expert in maintaining concrete structures can also deliver efficient and reliable structural strengthening systems. For example, using fibre-reinforced polymer (FRP) plates, fabrics and post-tensioned systems, solutions have the ability to increase the load capacities of beams, columns, walls and slabs in concrete substrates.

Tower block makeover for the future

One project that demonstrates the potential of the post-war modernist block to be renovated for the future is the Four Squares Estate in Bermondsey, south London.

Built between 1971 and 1975, the estate comprises 691 homes across four near-identical seven-storey blocks – New Place Square, Lockwood Square, Marden Square and Layard Square. Following a structural inspection by consulting engineers Arup, all housing blocks were deemed to be structurally sound, but large areas of previously uncoated concrete were exhibiting reinforcement corrosion.

Working closely with clients Keepmoat and Southwark Council, specialist



contractor Barwin and Sika carried out on-site trials to demonstrate the potential to penetrate the concrete to reach the steel and restore it to a state of 'passivity'. With the tests showing the system successfully encapsulated and protected the reinforcement, the corrosion inhibitor was specified as part of the Total Corrosion Management solution – that also comprised repair mortars and protective coatings.

"Due to its age and on-going exposure to the elements, all four buildings' concrete exteriors were suffering from corrosion, as well as stalactites, excessive sediment and efflorescence caused by leaking balconies," said John Connell, contracts manager at Barwin. "A two-stage jet wash was required to clean and prepare the previously uncoated substrate before the application of a mixed corrosion inhibitor across all external elements"

Designed to extend the service life of aesthetically valuable concrete surfaces, more than 60,000 m² of Sika Ferrogard 903+ was spray-applied by Barwin's team of operatives. The product penetrates the concrete to provide a protective layer around steel reinforcement whilst maintaining the aesthetics of the structure.

Appointed to complete a series of refurbishment projects on behalf of Southwark Council, Barwin then applied Sika MonoTop to repair the damaged concrete frame. The system's first layer inhibited corrosion and improved the lifespan of the steel reinforcement, whilst also acting as a bonding bridge for the second layer – a repair and re-profiling mortar.

Weatherproofing

To provide a final layer of weather protection, a further specialised solution was specified. For the soffits and remaining concrete surfaces except ringbeams, SikaGard 675W anti-carbonation coating was applied to seal against the ingress of water, chlorides and carbonation.

With the external concrete structures fully repaired and protected, these ageing tower blocks have been given a new lease of life. Sika's solutions have given the clients and residents peace of mind that their new-look properties will provide hundreds of residents with a high quality, attractive



and sustainable home for years to come.

If we are to robustly refurbish the UK's existing building stock rather than tear it down, careful consideration of solutions is required – as well as technological innovation and fresh architectural ideas. Meeting the ever changing needs of the built environment, expert approaches can future proof structures using maintenance and renewal solutions that make economic as well as ecological sense.

Nic Collins is area sales manager, property, at Sika UK

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