# HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

#### Features this month

Bathroom Refurbishment Heating & Plumbing Landscaping & External Works Roofing Security & Tenant Safety Sustainable Drainage

#### **Show preview**

FIT Show 2017

#### News

Cautious welcome for White Paper Regulator to charge fees New PRS minimum standards? Latest news, events & products

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#### Editor's comment

# Only time will tell...



Patrick Mooney, News Editor

The long awaited Housing White Paper, 'Fixing our broken housing market', has succeeded in dividing the experts over its likely chances of success. Most commentators praised the thoroughness of its analysis and identification of the problems. But once attention turned to the proposed solutions, opinions became sharply divided and I was left thinking "Is this a missed opportunity?"

Listening to Ministers doing the rounds of TV and radio studios you could be forgiven for thinking Governments were almost powerless and could not have prevented the current state of affairs. We all agree there is no 'silver bullet' but half hearted pledges to do something (anything!) while extolling local councils, builders and private landlords to "just do more" do not amount to a comprehensive housing policy.

Nevertheless it was welcome news to hear the Government no longer believes all our housing woes can be solved simply by building more houses for sale. They acknowledged we need to build more homes, of all types, and in places where people want to live. They just don't want any building on the Green Belt!

#### **Brexit fears**

Fixing the broken housing market will require a strong commitment from the very top of Government. They need to provide the legislative time along with serious amounts of money to sort out the many deep-rooted problems. My fear is that Brexit is now an all-consuming distraction that comes with a very hefty price tag.

Former Conservative housing minister Grant Shapps probably spoke for a lot of people when he told the BBC's Daily Politics show, that the problem would not be solved simply "by slotting in a few more homes in converted former industrial sites"

Some of the most impassioned contributions have came from young people (members of Generation Rent) who feel trapped in expensive or sub-standard privately rented accommodation.

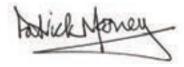
#### Questions

They want to know why the new three year tenancies are being restricted to newly built to rent schemes and why tougher action isn't being taken against bad landlords, who refuse to carry out repairs and evict tenants at the first sign of a complaint?

They also want to know why their local councils are not being allowed to borrow money to build new homes for rent or sale at truly affordable prices and why proceeds from Right to Buy sales are not being used to replace sold properties?

Communities Secretary of State Sajid Javid has promised for months to tackle house-builders head on and to ensure the planning system delivers new housing of all types. But the solutions look destined to only partially succeed in the long-term.

Perhaps the final words should be left with Graeme Brown, interim chief executive of the homelessness charity Shelter, who said: "The White Paper poses the right questions. But what we need now is quick and bold action that helps people in need of a decent home tomorrow, not in 10 years time."



#### On the cover...

The March cover of Housing Management & Maintenance features Hjaltland Housing Association's new Lyndhurst Place scheme, which delivered 12 flats in close proximity to the centre of Lerwick in Shetland, Scotland.

Photography © Paul Leask Architects: Gillberts Architects Contractors: Hunter & Morrison

# White Paper overview – will it fix a broken market?

ur broken housing market is one of the greatest barriers to progress in Britain today. Whether buying or renting, the fact is that housing is increasingly unaffordable – particularly for ordinary working class people who are struggling to get by." These are the Prime Minister's words in the introduction to the Housing White Paper, setting out changes of direction in future Government housing policy.

While house building still forms the centrepiece of the 104-page document, it is clear the Cabinet has dropped its "ownership at all costs" doctrine. While it wants to ramp up the speed of construction, increasing the numbers of houses being built and their density, the Government is at last putting an emphasis on rental properties and affordability.

Unveiling the White Paper, Communities Secretary of State, Sajid Javid, said

"The housing market in this country is broken and the solution means building many more houses in the places that people want to live." Central to this, the White Paper hopes to tackle the high cost of renting, with institutional investors like pension funds being encouraged to get actively involved in developing and managing private rental properties through build to rent.

Much of the document is about speeding up the building of homes – so long as they are not on the Green Belt – with a focus on reforming the planning system. Campaigners would like to speed up implementation of the changes, but getting Parliamentary approval could take up most of the next two years.

#### Disappointed

Changes in the private rented sector have disappointed many campaigners, as the introduction of three-year 'family friendly' tenancies appears to be restricted to new 'build to rent' schemes only. These will not apply retrospectively to tenants in buy-to-lets although talks are to be held with the National Housing Federation, British Property Foundation and LGA about extending their use to market lets. Ironically, the Government is proceeding with work to end lifetime tenancies in council housing. Similarly, the loss of a private sector tenancy will probably remain the most common cause of homelessness.

Local authorities are being encouraged to resume council house building, but their borrowing powers will still be constrained and tenants' Right to Buy is being preserved. This needs more work as roughly six council properties were sold through the RTB last year for every new council house that was built.

Housing associations will still have to reduce rents by one per cent a year up until 2020, but thereafter they are likely to have more freedoms, provided greater operating efficiencies and more new homes are built. No form of rent controls in the private sector is being



considered, other than increasing supply.

Meanwhile welfare reforms continue to bite, retaliatory evictions will continue in the private rented sector and property conditions remain variable

The Government has reiterated its commitment to tackle rogue landlords and encouraging local councils to impose better conditions through use of HMO licensing. The banning of letting agents fees is to be consulted on, but will be subject to fresh legislation.

The White Paper itself is divided into four chapters and the main points in each are summarised below:

### The right homes in the right places

- Ensuring all parts of the country have an upto-date plan which the whole community has been able to contribute to. This should be reviewed every five years.
- Ensuring that plans are based on an accurate assessment of housing need that sees local authorities working with their neighbours to make difficult decisions.
- Local authorities should identify all the land available for housing and who owns it.
- Maximising use of brownfield and publicly owned land while continuing to protect the green belt.
- Making better use of land by building to higher densities and reviewing

- space standards.
- Consulting on housing need assessment methods to ensure a consistent approach that takes account of the needs of different groups.

#### **Building homes faster**

- Introducing a housing delivery test for local authorities to ensure they are delivering the housing needed.
- Addressing capacity issues in planning departments by ensuring councils have sufficient funding to recruit properly trained planners.
- Ensuring the right infrastructure is in place and secures timely connections to utilities to allow building to start promptly.
- Addressing skills shortages in the construction workforce.

#### Diversifying the market

- Encouraging more small and medium builders, custom builders and non-traditional construction methods, such as offsite construction.
- Encouraging more institutional investors into build to rent schemes, including affordable private rent where homes will be available for rent at a minimum of 20 per cent below market levels. Eligibility will be based on local incomes and house prices.
- · Making more 'family-friendly' tenancies of

- three or more years available to those who want them - this appears to apply to new build homes for market rent.
- Government will set out a rent policy for all social landlords to use from 2020, giving them certainty to borrow against future income. There will be further discussions about this with the sector.
- Government will expect all housing associations to make the most efficient use of their resources to deliver the maximum number of new homes.
- Providing more support for local authorities to help them start building by addressing issues that hold them back. All those placed in new affordable homes built by local authorities using models such as local housing companies should have the same rights as existing tenants including the Right to Buv.
- Working with lenders and surveyors to ensure that mortgages are available for properties built through non-traditional construction.

#### Helping people now

- · There will be changes to the Starter Homes scheme. It will be restricted to households earning less than £80,000 (£90,000 in London), there will be a 15 year repayment period for the discount, if properties are sold triggering the repayment of some or all of the discount and all homes must be purchased with a mortgage.
- The number of Starter Homes required on site is to be reduced from 20 per cent to 10 per cent and for rural exception sites it is acceptable to require a local connection.
- All new developments must have a minimum of 10 per cent of homes available for affordable homeownership.
- Schemes to help older people to downsize, freeing up homes for families who need them will be explored.

The document is now out for consultation until the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017, before starting its passage through the Commons and Lords.

#### Miscellaneous

Councils will be encouraged to bring more empty homes in their localities back into use, as well as finding ways to help more older people to downsize and free up family-sized homes for younger couples with children.

Beyond supporting the Homelessness Reduction Bill and delivering the financial support announced in the Autumn Statement, the only additional initiative for tackling homelessness appears to be the establishment of a network of expert advisors to share best practice.

The Homes and Communities Agency is being renamed as Homes England from the summer. This change will better reflect its future role, which will not include the regulation of social landlords.

While the Government appears to have done a lot of listening in recent months, there is still some concern and scepticism about the timescale and outcomes that can be delivered, while competing with Brexit for resources and Parliamentary time.

#### PRS landlords say White Paper will not tackle rental shortage

Plans to boost the supply of homes for rent will 'fall flat on their face' without practical support being given to individual private landlords.

Although they welcomed the change in emphasis towards renting and away from a narrow focus on home ownership in the Housing White Paper, the Residential Landlords Association (RLA) said that institutional investment alone will never achieve the level of supply needed to meet the growing demand for rented homes.

The vast majority of rental supply comes from small landlords and there is nothing in the White Paper to support their continued investment in new housing. Instead, the RLA claimed recent Government policy has been to attack smaller landlords and discourage their expansion. This is clearly a reference to the stamp duty surcharge and proposed tax changes to discourage the buy-to-let market.

The RLA has highlighted that institutions (like pension funds) invest in large population centres to get the mass they need, leaving smaller towns and rural areas continuing to face a shortage of rented housing and associated higher rents.

While welcoming the Government's plans to encourage corporate landlords to offer longer tenancies, the RLA has pointed out that 25 per cent of small landlords are prevented from offering tenancies longer than a year by their mortgage lender or their insurer.

RLA Policy Director, David Smith, commented: "The White Paper falls a long way short of the radical changes for renters that we were promised. There may be more build to rent resulting from this in our large towns and cities, but without any plans to support the hundreds of thousands of smaller landlords who make up the bulk of the supply, there will continue to be a major shortage."

He added: "Landlords are happy to offer longer tenancies provided the climate is right to do so. They give landlords certainty and they are good for tenants as rents tend to increase less often." Smith concluded: "We will be talking to the Government about what needs to be done to address the barriers preventing landlords from offering longer tenancies without the need for a one size fits all model."

#### De-regulation of social landlords underway

The Homes & Communities Agency is consulting the social housing sector on de-regulatory proposals as it seeks to get HA loans and borrowing off the Government's balance sheet. But it included a sting in its tail over property disposals.

As Ministers revealed in the White Paper, the HCA is being broken up with Homes England re-launched in the summer with a single purpose "to make a home within reach for everyone". We await what the new regulatory body is to be called and if it will undergo further changes.

Meanwhile the HCA has written to all registered providers of social housing outlining the red tape it is cutting from April. It also reminded them of the need to properly consult tenants before disposing of properties or making changes in their management.

Jim Bennett, assistant director for regulatory strategy at the HCA, said some associations have not been "completely upfront" about the possible risks and consequences of their disposal plans, "so we've asked them to go back and properly explain to tenants what they're planning".

From 6 April, the de-regulatory measures of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 will come into force. This means social landlords will no longer need consent to undertake disposals, restructures or certain

"From 6 April, the de-regulatory measures of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 will come into force. This means social landlords will no longer need consent to undertake disposals, restructures or certain constitutional changes"

constitutional changes. As a consequence of the consents powers being withdrawn, the HCA is proposing to strengthen the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard to ensure landlords carry out effective consultation with the tenants affected.

The measures will probably coincide with the introduction of the new regulatory fees, set at £4.72 a property per year, to pay for the majority of the new regulatory body's running costs.

Ministers hope the package of measures will persuade the Office for National Statistics to reverse its decision to reclassify associations as part of the public sector.

# Social housing bosses give cautious welcome to White Paper

enior figures across the social housing sector struggled to hide their disappointment with the Housing White Paper, with a series of lukewarm responses that welcomed its move away from housing for sale as the only solution to the current crisis.

Perhaps many had interpreted Sajid Javid's promises of radical reforms and tough actions into a sign that greater changes would be delivered. In the end, while acknowledging the positives, senior executives qualified their comments and asked for more resources, greater urgency, or both.

David Orr, chief executive of the National Housing Federation, said: "We welcome the Government's ambition. The positive announcements – combined with the Autumn Statement's increased flexibility and extra investment – point towards a more comprehensive and strategic framework to fix the housing crisis."

He added: "However, what the nation needs now is unwavering political will and courage to see this through. The public backs building more homes - it is time to get on with the job. We urgently need to have honest conversations about how Green Belt land is used."

Orr concluded: "Encouraging private landlords to offer tenants more security and choice is absolutely the right thing to do. Housing associations share the Government's commitment to improving life for all renters – across the private and social sector - and driving up standards, already offering 50,000 homes to rent on the open market."

#### Infrastructure

Greater caution was expressed by Natalie Elphicke, chief executive of the Housing & Finance Institute and until very recently an adviser on housing policy to the Government, who commented: "There are a large number of technical issues which the White Paper sets out for consultation. This is a technically strong rather than a radical white paper.

"Building more homes faster requires effective infrastructure funding and utilities to deliver in line with development needs. The Housing & Finance Institute is leading a national housing infrastructure pilot in the south East area in this area so welcomes the strong focus for housing infrastructure.

"Protections for renters is welcome. But millions of young people will be disappointed by a continuing focus on 'build-to-rent'. The White Paper is a missed opportunity to create a step change in innovative finance and modern tenures like rent and buy which support building at scale but also provide housing choice and housing ownership.

"The Government is right to support the building of homes at greater densities and to bring in fairer protection for tenants. But the Government also needs to be careful not to let



London off the hook by imposing the biggest housing targets on the South East and further straining infrastructure in those areas.

"It is simply wrong to imply that the Home Counties councils are not doing enough to support national housebuilding. Latest figures on registrations for new properties saw a 14 per cent increase in the South East but a 33 per cent drop in London. London's poor performance is yet again dragging down national housing growth. Without London, the national performance was up four per cent. With London it is dragged down to two per cent less than the previous year."

#### **Affordability**

Over at the Local Government Association, Councillor Martin Tett, housing spokesman, said: "This White Paper includes some encouraging signs that Government is listening to councils on how to boost housing supply and increase affordability. We are pleased it has taken on board a number of recommendations made in our recent Housing Commission final report.

He added: "Communities must have faith the planning system responds to their aspirations for their local area, rather than simply being driven by national targets. To achieve this, councils must have powers to ensure that new homes are affordable and meet their assessments of local need, are attractive and well-designed, and are supported by the schools, hospitals, roads and other services vital for places to succeed.

"Local government believes even more needs to be done to rapidly build more genuinely affordable homes to help families struggling to meet housing costs, provide homes to rent, reduce homelessness and tackle the housing waiting lists many councils have.

"For this to happen, councils desperately need the powers and access to funding to resume their historic role as a major builder of affordable homes. This means being able to borrow to invest in housing and to keep 100 per cent of the receipts from properties

sold through Right to Buy to replace homes and reinvest in building more of the genuine affordable homes our communities desperately need."

#### **Standards**

The Chartered Institute of Housing attempted to give a balanced and politically neutral response, welcoming the moves to address lack of supply and recognising the crucial role of local authorities. However, concerns over affordability, conditions in the private sector and the impact of current welfare cuts and austerity remain critical areas for change.

On the private rented sector, Terrie Alafat CBE, chief executive of the Chartered Institute of Housing, said: "This sector has grown considerably since the 1990s and is now the second largest tenure after home ownership. Though many landlords provide good quality housing, standards are highly inconsistent and at the lower end of the market they can be very poor.

"The ending of a short-term tenancy is the leading cause of homelessness, so measures to give the millions of people now renting privately additional security are very welcome. We think more can be done to improve standards for the millions of tenants in private rented accommodation, including the introduction of a set of minimum standards and other measures which incentivise providing good quality accommodation."

Turning to the vexed issue of older people's housing, Alafat added: "It is welcome that the Government has recognised that helping older people downsize keeps the housing cycle moving by freeing up homes for the many families across the UK who need them and it means that older people can move into accommodation which better supports their independence and health.

"A question remains on the future of supported housing and we would urge the Government to establish a long-term funding model for this vital type of accommodation."

# Merger watch: HA mergers advancing

he spate of social landlords merging to create bigger businesses with stronger balance sheets continues with more deals being struck, although there was also a notable casualty.

The four years of one per cent annual rent cuts imposed by the Government together with a drive to make operating efficiencies and invest savings in bigger development programmes appears to be fuelling the current trend.

But two housing associations in the North West have bucked the trend by agreeing a ' de-merger' after Symphony Housing Group and Cobalt Housing announced the latter was leaving the group "in the best interests of

Symphony is the largest social housing provider in the North West with 41,000 homes. Apart from Cobalt, it consists of Contour Homes, Hyndburn Homes, Liverpool Housing Trust, Peak Valley Housing Association and Ribble Valley Homes.

Peter Mitchell, chair of the 6,000 home Cobalt Housing, explained: "The board has worked with Symphony to ensure a positive future for all tenants, and is delighted to have reached an agreement. Cobalt is committed to working with our partners to build on our current good performance, to deliver the best possible services to our tenants."

Bronwen Rapley, chief executive of Symphony added: "Symphony and Cobalt will remain neighbours and partners and will continue to work together to achieve our shared goal of seeing Liverpool and its communities succeed."

#### Top spot

Earlier this year Places for People Group completed its takeover of Derwent Housing Association, making Derwent a subsidiary of the larger housing association, which is vying with the newly formed Clarion Group for the top spot in terms of properties owned and managed.

Derwent, with its 25,000 homes in the Midlands, has become a subsidiary of the 150,000-home PfP group. This follows a difficult period for Derwent following its downgrading for both viability and governance in the middle

The Homes and Communities Agency was concerned about the association's ability to manage its financial exposures, including its

liability on interest rate swaps. At the time its chief executive Peter McCormack said the assocation's board was drawing up an action plan to regain compliant status as quickly as possible.

Meanwhile Guinness has expanded into a 65,500 home organisation after taking Crewe based Wulvern and its 5,500 homes in Cheshire and Staffordshire, and 200 staff under its ownership.

Catriona Simons, group chief executive of The Guinness Partnership, said: "We were thrilled to be chosen by Wulvern as their merger partner, to continue their tradition of outstanding customer service.

Sue Lock, formerly chief executive of Wulvern, is now director of strategy and policy for older people at Guinness. She said: "This merger will deliver clear benefits for our customers, as well as delivering more new homes across Cheshire. The merger process has been very smooth and I am delighted to be taking up a new role at Guinness."

#### **Midlands**

New Charter Group is in negotiations with Adactus Housing Group to form a 33,000 home landlord spanning the North West and the Fast Midlands.

New Charter has 19,500 homes, while Adactus owns 13,000 properties.

Ian Munro, chief executive of New Charter, said: "This is a merger of equals. It's very early days yet. We're in a position to produce significant savings to plough into producing new homes to help solve the housing crisis."

The newly merged organisation would have a combined turnover of £174.4m and a surplus of £18.3m, based on both providers' accounts for 2015/16.

Across the Irish Sea, two Northern Irish housing associations have merged with 4,000 home Clanmil taking over Hearth Housing Association, which has specialised in restoring approximately 100 homes of architectural significance since 1978.

Historic properties include Wallace Park Gate Lodge and homes on Camden Terrace in Belfast, along with a number of restored schoolhouses, unique almshouses and distinctive townhouses throughout Northern Ireland.

Steve Amos, chair of Clanmil, said: "The merger is good news and increases the potential



for more dormant and derelict spaces to be transformed into much-needed social homes. It will build on both organisations' excellent reputations, our track records and our shared passion for restoring older buildings, enabling us to meet a wider range of housing and community needs.

#### **Costs**

A possible unforseen cost of merging was also demonstrated when two of the biggest housing associations in the country were downgraded by the credit-rating agency Moody's after the completion of their mergers.

Clarion Group, formed through the merger of Affinity Sutton and Circle, was downgraded from Aa3 to A2 because of its "weaker credit profile" following the merger and the "increased risk" from its development ambitions.

L&Q, which now manages 90,000 homes after merging with East Thames, was downgraded to A2 negative from A1 negative because of a "weaker credit profile" for East Thames and the planned increase in debt to fund an "ambitious" development programme.

Over at Clarion, Mark Rogers who had been chief executive of the Circle Housing Group, decided to stand down from his deputy chief executive role at the new organisation due to a duplication in executive duties.

#### More HA mergers

As the trend towards fewer and larger social landlords continues, another set of mergers between housing associations have been announced in the north and south of England.

In Hampshire, a new 30,000 home landlord to be called Vivid, formed by joining together First Wessex with Sentinel, has got the nod of approval from the Homes and Communities Agency.

Several hundred miles up country in Durham, a three-way merger involving Isos Housing, Cestria and Derwentside Homes will see a 23,500 home landlord formed. This will be one of the largest social landlords in the north east,

with plans to develop a further 1,350 homes over the next five years.

West of London, stock transfer association Bracknell Forest Homes are to merge with Maidenhead based Housing Solutions to establish a 14,500 home housing association



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#### **Funding of** sheltered housing faces massive shortfall

Three of the key providers of sheltered housing are warning that a proposed new funding regime could see an annual shortfall of up to £64m across their services.

This threatens both existing and future sheltered housing, according to the three largest specialist providers, Anchor, Hanover, and Housing & Care 21 in a joint response to the Government consultation on funding for supported housing.

"The proposed changes threaten to devastate the sector's ability to maintain current levels of specialist housing, let alone develop to meet increasing demand"

The organisations warned that capping Housing Benefit at Local Housing Allowance levels would mean many residents will be left with a shortfall between their benefit entitlements and the cost of their homes and services received.

They also said the protection being offered was not fit-for-purpose and would lead to a postcode lottery, with residents in the north and Midlands hit significantly harder than those in the south.

The three housing providers are leading calls for sheltered housing to be exempt from the proposals, or, if this is not possible, a say on the decision until 2022 to allow for the implementation of Universal Credit.

The joint submission warned that uncertainty about future income also impacts on providers' ability to invest in new developments, stating: "The proposed changes to the funding for supported housing threaten to devastate the sector's ability to maintain current levels of specialist housing, let alone develop to meet increasing demand."

Jane Ashcroft of Anchor, Clare Tickell of Hanover and Bruce Moore of Housing & Care 21 said: "The proposals create huge uncertainty for older people and risk breaking a part of the housing system that works well.

"With an ageing society and growing pressure on the NHS, sheltered housing has never been in greater need. There is strong evidence that investment in such services saves money for the state.

'The Housing White Paper talked about the merits of older people downsizing. Yet these proposals could have the opposite effect – reducing the number of properties available to do just that."

#### Sector scorecard to measure the efficiency of social landlords launched

A pilot scorecard to measure the value for money and efficiency of social housing landlords has been launched.

Designed by a working group of housing associations over an 18-month period, the scorecard provides a set of metrics for housing providers to compare their performance and costs. It has been developed at a time when associations are coming under greater scrutiny than ever before with Government urging them to deliver increased savings for investment in new housebuilding.

The National Housing Federation and the Chartered Institute of Housing, as well as Housing Minister Gavin Barwell are among those to have already backed the scheme.

The working group has been led by Mark Henderson, chief executive of the Home Group. He said: "We've been careful to look at areas which will allow us to compare like with like, while recognising that there are areas of difference within the sector.

"Formulating the 15 indicators is a great starting point, but what we really need now is for the wider sector to embrace this and sign up to the pilot en masse. By gaining the support and involvement of as many providers as possible, we'll be able to further refine the metrics and ensure we have a system which not only fully reflects the needs of the sector, but acts as a robust mechanism for years to come."

#### Measures

The scorecard measures 15 indicators across five areas of a business. The pilot will be concentrated in England and the working group is seeking as many providers as possible to sign up, including supported housing, to influence how the scorecard will work after the pilot is completed. The 15 indicators are:

- Operating margin
- Increase/decrease in operating margin
- EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest Tax and Amortisation Major Repairs Included)
- Units developed
- Units developed (as a percentage of units
- Gearing
- Customers' value for money satisfaction
- Investment in new housing for every £1 generated from operations
- Investment in communities for every £1 generated from operations
- Return on capital employed
- Occupancy
- Ratio of responsive repairs to planned maintenance spend
- Headline social housing cost per unit
- Rent collected
- Overheads as a percentage of adjusted turnover

Barwell said: "I welcome this initiative to develop a set of common efficiency metrics for the housing association sector. The sector has a vital role to play in providing the homes we need, and housing associations need to be able to demonstrate that they are making the best possible use of their resources to deliver for the communities they serve."

Lending his support David Orr, chief executive of the NHF, said: "Having a set of indicators that are owned and reported by the sector will be a real step forward. The pilot is critical in making sure the indicators work for associations in different markets and different areas and gives us the information we need to paint a coherent picture of sector efficiency."



#### Institute calls for introduction of new standards in private rented sector

New minimum standards should be introduced for the private rented sector and landlords should receive tax incentives for signing up to accreditation schemes, the Chartered Institute of Housing has said.

The Institute made the calls in its budget submission to the Government. It said more needs to be done to improve the quality of private homes, including a new set of minimum standards for landlords that covers both property conditions and housing management.

It also called for tax incentives for private landlords who sign up to an accreditation scheme and new measures to allow local authorities to enforce standards. It also calls for the regulation of letting agents to stamp out poor practice.

Gavin Smart, deputy chief executive of the Chartered Institute of Housing, said: "The private rented sector has grown considerably since the 1990s and is now the second largest tenure after home ownership. Though many landlords provide good quality housing, standards are highly inconsistent and at the lower end of the market they can be very poor.

#### **Improvements**

Smart added: "We think more can be done to improve standards for the millions of tenants in private rented accommodation, including the introduction of a set of minimum standards and other measures which incentivise providing good quality accommodation.

He concluded: "We expect that the large number of landlords who are already providing good quality homes and services will already be operating at a level at or above the minimum



standards we envisage."

CIH's budget submission also asks for more funding to secure the development of new homes for affordable and social rent. That follows its projections published in January that 250,000 homes for social rent will have been lost to the sector between 2012 and 2020 - as a result of Right to Buy sales and properties being converted to lets on affordable rents.

And it calls for a reversal of the decision to lower the benefit cap, which its research revealed will hit 116,000 families across the UK. In its submission CIH also calls for:

- · New support for local authorities to become major house builders - including exemption from the rent reduction in exchange for a commitment to build homes;
- The development of a new funding model for supported housing - including a long-term commitment on top-up funding to give certainty to providers; and
- More loan funding for regeneration increasing the current £140 million by £300 million.

#### 'Unfit' council home payouts and legal fees hit £35m in five years

A BBC investigation has found councils in England have paid out more than £35m in compensation and legal fees in the past five years to tenants living in "unfit" council homes.

In total almost 11,000 disrepair claims have been brought against councils for issues such as damp, leaks and damage. This amounts to a 68 per cent increase in the number of disrepair claims brought against councils since 2011/12.

Despite the figures, the Local Government Association (LGA) said councils were doing a "great job in difficult circumstances".

Seventy five local authorities disclosed they had paid out £35.4m to deal with disrepair claims. In London, Southwark and Lambeth Councils paid out the most in compensation and legal costs since 2011/12, with both authorities paying out more than £10m each.

Councils often pay out more in legal fees than in compensation, as they are usually ordered to pay the legal costs of both parties when they

lose cases. For example, Birmingham City Council paid out £200,000 in compensation to tenants over the last five years but spent an additional £1.5m on legal costs.

The latest local government budget data shows that the amount earmarked for maintaining and repairing council properties has remained relatively stable at about £1.7 billion a year.

Councillor Martin Tett, LGA housing spokesman, said: "The number of 'non-decent' council homes has plummeted in the last 20 vears from 746,000 in 2006 to 80,000 in 2016.

"This is a 90 per cent drop and shows councils are doing a great job in difficult circumstances to ensure homes are at a decent standard. Councils desperately need the powers and access to funding to improve existing housing stock, replace homes and reinvest in building more of the genuine affordable homes our communities desperately need."

#### **Regulator may** scrap VFM selfassessments

The Homes and Communities Agency is considering scrapping its requirement for social landlords to produce and publish annual value for money self-assessments.

Housing associations in England have been required to produce VFM selfassessments since 2013. They have varied enormously in content and quality and resulted in a number of downgrades. Now the regulator thinks it can instead rely on a set of common "metrics" to measure efficiency.

The HCA is planning to launch a consultation in April on changes to its Value for Money Standard. This could either place less emphasis on the selfassessments or remove the need for them altogether.

It is understood the regulator believes holding conversations with boards and relying on widely agreed measures of efficiency could provide a clearer picture of an organisation's performance on value for money than relying on self-assessments.

Writing recently for Inside Housing magazine, Julian Ashby, chair of the HCA Regulation Committee, said "We would like to shift our focus away from the analysis of value for money self-assessments to seeking assurance that boards have a clear and demonstrable strategic grip on the value for money of their businesses and more solid reliance on useful metrics to assess their progress."

Mr Ashby's comments come as a working group of landlords continue to develop a 'sector scorecard' to provide a consistent measurement of efficiency. Mr Ashby said this is "not without difficulty" but he is "encouraged by the steps the sector is taking to deliver a common metrics platform." This will make comparing associations' performance a much easier exercise.

"We would like to shift our focus away from the analysis of value for money self-assessments to seeking assurance that boards have a clear and demonstrable strategic grip on the value for money of their businesses and more solid reliance on useful metrics to assess their progress"

# Regulation fees to be charged from October



he social housing regulator has delayed the introduction of fees by just six months to October this year, following a consultation conducted in late 2016.

Fees have also been marginally reduced from £5 a property to £4.72. Providers will only pay 50 per cent of the annual fee for 2017/18 because of the delayed start. These changes have been welcomed by the National Housing Federation, which opposed their introduction and viewed them as cutting resources available for investment in new homes.

The regulator was granted powers to charge fees under the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. It set out proposals firstly in a discussion paper in 2014 and held a further statutory consultation at the end of 2016.

The regulator will introduce:

- A one-off flat-rate registration fee of £2,500 for successful registration with the regulator;
- A fixed annual fee of £300 for providers with fewer than 1,000 social housing properties;
- An annual per unit fee of £4.72 for large providers with 1,000 or more social housing properties – with the fee charged at group level rather than for each individual entity on the register.

The regulator has also committed to:

- · Waive fees for 2017 to 2018 for providers with fewer than 60 social housing properties, where a complete de-registration application is made by 1 September 2017 and it has a reasonable chance of being completed by the financial year end;
- A cap on the maximum increase to total income raised from fees to one per cent per annum until the end of current Spending Review period in 2020 from a base of £12.5 million; and

Introduce a Fees and Resources Advisory Panel and publish an annual fees statement in addition to the transparency information it already publishes.

Julian Ashby, chair of the HCA Regulation Committee said: "I'm pleased to see a high level of support for our proposals, which were described as fair, simple, transparent and practical. In our approach to implementing fee charging we have carefully considered the impact on existing budgets and business planning for 2017/18 and noted the affordability challenges raised by some of the very small providers.

"We will establish a Fees and Resources Advisory Panel to ensure that there is accountability for fees charged" - Julian Ashby

He added: "Introducing fee charging complements the HCA review conclusion to establish the regulator as a separate legal entity. We're committed to keeping our costs low and therefore the fee level reasonable and proportionate, while maintaining effective regulation. We will establish a Fees and Resources Advisory Panel to ensure that there is accountability for fees charged."

There were 169 responses to the consultation, which ran from 25 November 2016 to 9 January 2017. The regulator also consulted extensively with sector representative bodies.

Funding for some aspects of the regulation function such as reactive regulation, including consumer regulation, will be continued through Government grants.

#### **Stamp duty** income surges

The Government is being urged to rethink its PRS tax changes after official figures show the new stamp duty surcharge raised more than a billion pounds in its first nine months of operation.

It had been predicted the three per cent surcharge (introduced last April) on the purchase of additional homes, would bring in an additional £630m in its first year. But HMRC figures show that in its first nine months the tax raised £1.19bn, more than £560m over the forecast for the whole year.

If the collection rate continues income for the year will exceed £1.58bn, nearly £1bn more than the original projection. After the Autumn Statement, the Office for Budget Responsibility predicted that in its first four years the extra levy would bring in £3.1bn more than forecast.

The Residential Landlords Association has called on the Government to use the extra stamp duty revenue to scrap its planned changes to mortgage interest relief. The RLA said this will prevent landlords from selling up or having to increase rents.

An RLA survey has found that 58 per cent of landlords are considering reducing investment in their rental properties because of the changes, while 66 per cent feel the tax changes will place upwards pressure on market rents.

"At no stage has evidence been published to support the assertion that landlords are taxed more favourably than homeowners"

#### Windfall

The RLA also believes the Government should pause the start of the introduction, scheduled from April, of the mortgage interest changes to enable a better assessment to be undertaken of the likely impact of the policy.

RLA policy director, David Smith, said: "In raising nearly twice as much in just nine months as the tax was predicted to make in one year this stamp duty windfall gives the Government a chance to back the rental market and support the development of new homes which we desperately need.

"At no stage has evidence been published to support the assertion that landlords are taxed more favourably than homeowners, or that they are squeezing first time buyers out of the market.

"The Government has received far more money than it expected. We urge them to use this to support the country's tenants and undertake a fuller impact assessment of a policy that has the potential to cause untold damage to the rental market."

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# More than 90 landlords prosecuted for 'Right to Rent' breaches

total of 91 private landlords have been fined almost £30,000 since the Government's Right to Rent scheme was rolled out nationally a year ago.

Brought in under the Immigration Act 2014 Right to Rent was introduced across England in February last year as part of Government reforms to build a 'fairer and more effective' immigration system. Landlords and their agents are required to check the immigration status of prospective tenants before they allow them to move in.

The scheme is due to be extended to Scotland and Wales in the near future but no clear evidence has so far emerged that it is working as intended. Landlords who break the rules

and are found to be letting a home to a tenant who is not allowed to stay can be fined up to £1,000 the first time, and £3,000 subsequently. Home Secretary Amber Rudd has also raised the prospect of prison sentences for repeat offenders.

Initial figures revealed by Immigration Minister Robert Goodwill MP in response to written Parliamentary questions from Stuart McDonald MP show limited success. Goodwill said the majority of offences related to lodgers living in England without a Right to Rent in the UK – and confirmed none of the landlords involved had appealed the penalties. Goodwill added: "Phase 1 of the Right to Rent scheme ran in the West Midlands from 1

"Landlords who break the rules and are found to be letting a home to a tenant who is not allowed to stay can be fined up to £1,000 the first time and £3,000 subsequently"

December 2014 to 31 January 2016. Phase 2 of the scheme started across England from 1 February 2016."

#### Lodgers

He explained: "During phase 1 of the scheme, 15 landlords were issued with a civil penalty. Since the start of phase 2 of the scheme, 91 landlords have been issued with a civil penalty. All were first time penalties. 55 related to lodgers in a private household and 51 related to occupiers in rented accommodation. The total amount collected from the scheme up to mid December 2016 is £29,575."

The Residential Landlords Association (RLA) is conducting research into landlords' experiences of Right to Rent and its impact on the private rented sector.

In the world of unintended consequences it is even possible for British people to be affected by the regulations and denied access to rented properties if they have no passport or other accepted proof of UK residence. It is estimated that upto 12 million Britons do not have a passport.

Other people who are now finding it much more difficult to rent a flat includes refugees who have been accepted in the UK, but they often have to wait many weeks for documents to prove it - and many become homeless because they cannot get either a social or a private tenancy.

Uncertainty also lingers over the future security of the estimated 3 million EU nationals currently living in the UK after Brexit.

#### Bristol landlord fined for failing to complete safety works

A landlord who failed to comply with an Improvement Notice and carry out essential repairs to his property was ordered to pay fines and costs of more than £6,000 following an investigation by Bristol City Council.

Following a complaint to the council's private housing department, environmental health officers inspected the property. It was let as a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) where up to three tenants shared the bathrooms with the resident landlord Zafar Iqbal.

An inspection on the 3 August 2016 found the property to be in a filthy condition and in very poor repair. The conditions were so poor, a formal Improvement Notice was served requiring Iqbal to carry out numerous works in the property to eliminate the hazards and improve the safety and living conditions.

Required works included the installation of a fire alarm system; provision of hot and cold water and heating; treating the mouse infestation and repairing the leak to the roof. Mr Iqbal failed to complete these works to improve the living conditions within the time allowed by the notice.

#### Safety

Councillor Paul Smith, Cabinet Member for Homes and Communities, said: "The council will not tolerate landlords failing to meet their legal responsibilities for the conditions and safety of their properties.

He added: "This is an issue we take very seriously, and we will continue to take action

where necessary to improve people's living conditions. We urge landlords to co-operate with our officers to avoid court cases and fines which are much more expensive than undertaking the improvements. The vast majority of landlords do this and working together we can improve housing conditions within the city."

This is the second time Igbal had been prosecuted for failing to complete works required of him in an Improvement Notice. In August 2015 he was also found guilty and ordered to pay a total of £6,284.

The works remain incomplete and Bristol City Council is considering carrying out the improvements in his default, resulting in the landlord having to repay these costs.

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#### **East Midlands** council consults on new PRS licensing scheme



Nottingham City Council is consulting residents over the introduction of a city wide selective licensing scheme - with each licence set to cost landlords £600 per property.

The scheme's outline was approved late last year and a consultation exercise with tenants, residents, landlords, and other interested parties began in January.

The scheme will require private landlords to obtain a licence demonstrating that they and their properties meet specific standards. The proposed standard licence fee is £600 per property with a discount of £140 for accredited landlords.

"The scheme can become one of the largest in the country, with an estimated 43,000 privately rented properties"

If approved, the Nottingham scheme will be one of the largest in the country, with the city home to an estimated 43,000 privately rented properties. The scheme has the potential to raise more than £25 million for the council.

The Council said that it has received over 4,500 complaints in the last four years about privately rented properties, about problems ranging from dangerous electrical wiring, cockroach infestations, lack of windows and to smoke alarms not working.

A report to the Council on 22 November highlighted that poorly managed and maintained properties in areas that also have a high proportion of private rented housing, see higher levels of crime and antisocial behaviour.

Councillor Jane Urquhart, the Council's Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, said "Introducing a new licensing scheme for landlords is one of the most important measures we can take to improve the quality of housing in the city, which is why we made it a key objective in the Council Plan published last year."

The scheme could be introduced from Spring 2018.

#### Country's largest build to rent development underway

Construction has started on a massive building project to deliver almost 7,000 homes, mostly for private rent at Wembley Park, next to the national football stadium in north west London.

Quintain who own the 85 acre site expect to have work underway on at least 3,000 homes during the course of this year alongside a new seven acre public park, a landscaped square, a new primary school, GP surgery and a wide range of shops, restaurants and workspaces. An estimated 8,640 new jobs will be created in addition to the construction jobs.

The company has planning permission for a total of 6,955 homes at Wembley Park, of which 995 homes have already been completed and occupied and a total of 4,874 homes will be built for renting through Tipi, their own management company. The new homes are to be delivered in phases over the next seven years with the first completions in the summer.

A further 2,081 other homes are also being built, either for outright sale, shared ownership or at a discounted rent and being managed by a housing association. Of these 800 homes have already been completed.

#### **Transformation**

Wembley Park is believed to be the largest single-site purpose built private rental sector development anywhere in the UK. Quintain has already invested £900m in the transformation of Wembley Park and has a further £800m of funding secured, with planning permission in place.

The existing Tipi managed apartments are available furnished, part-furnished or unfurnished, with communal lounges, gardens, roof terraces, gyms, secure underground parking and cinema rooms.

Tipi's tenants will pay no agent's fees, no inventory fees, a reduced deposit and all their utility bills and ultra-fast broadband are included in the rent. Tipi's on-site management means tenants do not need to search out an absent landlord or managing agent. Tipi will also manage those homes available at a discounted rent as part of the affordable housing package.

#### Commitment

Angus Dodd, Chief Executive of Quintain, said: "Our commitment to build to rent at Wembley Park means we can deliver the homes London needs far faster than if we were selling homes privately and ensures they will be occupied very shortly after they are complete.

"This long term commitment also means we can design homes specifically for the needs of today's generation of renters and provide fantastic shared facilities and professional management arrangements which our residents love. We will ensure no apartment is left empty."

Cllr Muhammed Butt, Leader of Brent Council, said: "To have 3,000 new homes under construction in one location this year shows just how in demand Wembley Park is as a place to live and it is comforting to know that with professional management in place, we won't have a single roque landlord.

"I have been hugely impressed with the quality of homes being built at Wembley Park and Quintain has also made a huge investment to upgrade all the public spaces around the area to bring the place alive with events, shops, workspaces and other attractions.

Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, said: "This development will provide 5,000 much-needed private rented homes for Londoners. It will take time to fix the housing crisis, but at City Hall we are committed to help deliver schemes like this that will increase the supply of homes across the capital."

#### Midlands council to invest £180m in its housing stock

One of the country's largest council landlords has approved plans to spend £183m on its housing services over the next four years.

Birmingham City Council currently owns and manages just over 62,000 homes. It is going to spend £169m upgrading around 20,000 tenants' homes and a further £15m on adaptions, clearance works and redevelopment costs between 2017/18 and 2019/2020.

Peter Griffiths, cabinet member for housing and homes at Birmingham City Council, said "The average age of our properties is approaching 70 years, so investing in our stock is essential in order to safeguard its condition."



# Rent cuts force HAs to limit repairs expenditure

Government policy to impose annual rent reductions is forcing social landlords to cutback their expenditure on planned repairs programmes.

Faced with a perfect storm of the enforced rent cuts, increasing rent arrears (caused by welfare benefit reforms) and pressure to spend more on building new homes, many housing associations are cutting back on major repairs and planned maintenance work to balance their budgets.

As part of a drive to cut public expenditure (and the huge housing benefit bill of approximately £28 billion), the Government decided in 2015 to impose one per cent rent reductions on housing associations in each of the four years up to 2020.

An investigation carried out by Inside Housing has shown that in 2015/16 associations responded to the Chancellor's announcement (in July that year) by reducing their collective spend on major repairs by 7.3 per cent to £386m and their spend on planned maintenance by 1.6 per cent to £630m.

In contrast, expenditure on routine maintenance (the day to day repairs reported by tenants) actually rose by two per cent to £1.54bn.

#### **Efficiencies**

The overall spending profile changed during 2015/16 – with 60.1 per cent of expenditure on routine maintenance, up from 58.7 per cent in 2014/15. Traditionally social landlords have been urged to spend less of their repairs and maintenance budgets on reactive repairs and more on planned works, based on up to date stock condition data and to increase efficiency and value for money.

The figures were based on responses from 100 associations and they relate to expenditure in the year before the new rent reduction policy officially came into effect. The full impact of the rent reduction policy will become clearer when associations publish their audited financial reports for 2016/17.

Housing associations have been under increasing political pressure to increase their output of new homes, contributing to the Government's headline target of one million additional homes being built by 2020.

Now it appears that HA boards and executive teams have tried to balance the books by cutting their expenditure on major repairs programmes. These works are intended to maintain the condition of tenants' homes and cutbacks are potentially putting at risk their compliance with decent homes standards.

#### Cuts

Cuts in repairs and maintenance budgets have been achieved through a combination of deferring planned works, enforcing efficiency savings on contractors and removing contingency sums.

It remains to be seen what reaction this might prompt from the Homes and Communities Agency. Only last Autumn the regulator warned HAs it would be checking their business plans for signs of them failing to maintain their housing stock properly.

The HCA said the mean major repairs cost per property is forecast to decrease by 10 per cent from £1,032 in 2016 to £928 by 2020.

It said where costs appear "unusually high" it will challenge boards. However, it added: "We will also seek to understand the assumptions within business plans where there are significant reductions in maintenance and repair expenditure to gain assurance that this is not a sign of a registered provider failing to maintain its stock or a simple balancing figure in which significant capital investment programmes are being pushed to future years."

The HCA also said associations relying on ambitious cost savings need to have clear plans in place and mitigations if they cannot be delivered.

"HAs have been under increasing political pressure to increase their output of new homes, contributing to the Government's headline target of one million additional homes"



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#### Repairs giant wins £86m **Manchester** contract

Mears has won a 10-year repairs and maintenance contract worth £86m from Northwards Housing, Manchester's armslength management organisation.

The contractor will carry out repairs and servicing work to 13,500 council homes in the north of the city. The contract begins in April and will initially run until 2021 with plans for three-year extensions.

Sue Abbott, chair of the Northwards board, said: "Mears offers good value for money, with the pre-set price of each repair job decreasing by 3.01 per cent. They've also agreed to fix this cost for four years, which is great at a time where funding for services is uncertain."

Des Morris, managing director of Mears North West, added: "We can now build on the foundations already established over the last 10 years through the Manchester Working joint venture to deliver excellent services, value for money and tenant satisfaction."

"Mears will carry out repairs and servicing work to 13,500 council homes"

#### Repairs contractor posts a £31.7m loss



Housing repairs and maintenance contractor Lakehouse has posted a £31.7m operating loss for last year as part of its annual results.

Problems with the firm's property services division, which works in the social housing sector, and other costs saw the firm rack up £43.2m in "exceptional and other items" during the year despite underlying profit before tax standing at £9.9m. Underlying revenues fell to £305.8m from £336.6m.

It lowered the value of its framework contracts to £370m from £540m in 2015. The group order book also fell by £52m from £595m to £543m in 2016.

The firm's results show it also spent £1m in

redundancy packages for 100 staff in the property services division and £1.5m covering the costs of the departure of former directors. The firm also recorded a £17.4m loss on goodwill of contracts by the group's Foster Property Maintenance arm.

Bob Holt, chair of Lakehouse, believes the firm has turned the corner, saying "[It] has been a challenging year for Lakehouse but one we believe will prove to be transformational, having focused on reviewing the strategy of the group, stabilising operational performance with a view to improvement and controlling costs at every level, while retaining a high quality of client service."

#### Lincs HAs to merge

Two Lincolnshire associations have agreed in principle to form a new 12,700-home landlord.

Shoreline, which owns 7,900 former council homes in north east Lincolnshire, and the 4,800-HA Boston Mayflower, have agreed to merge after a three-month evaluation.

The new partnership could be launched in

October if the boards agree to tie-up in summer.

Shoreline chief executive Tony Bramley commented: "While we are both robust organisations, we believe that during these challenging times, we will be stronger together collectively protecting and enhancing our services for the benefits of our tenants and the local communities we serve."

Chief executive of Boston Mayflower, Murray Macdonald, added: "Remaining locally based,

"The new partnership could be launched in October if the boards agree to tie-up in summer"

we will be strongly placed to meet housing needs, provide new homes and deliver better services throughout Lincolnshire."



# **Universal Credit is** pushing tenants towards debt and eviction

enants receiving Universal Credit are increasingly falling into rent arrears because of payment delays, forcing them to turn to food banks and running the risk of eviction.

Organisations representing more than one million council households said Universal Credit (UC) claim processing problems had 'notably worsened' over the past few months. Thousands of benefit claimants are facing debt, rent arrears and eviction as a result of policy design flaws in UC, according to landlords and politicians, who are demanding an urgent overhaul of the system.

#### "UC rules require claimants to wait at least six weeks for a first benefit payment"

The situation is no better in the housing association sector. While giving evidence to a House of Commons select committee earlier this year, Nick Atkin, chief executive of north westbased Halton HA highlighted the following facts:

- Of the 12,091 tenancies covered by the four main housing associations operating in Halton, 1,058 are in receipt of UC and of these 87 per cent, over 920 tenants have outstanding rent arrears;
- UC claimants total 9 per cent of all Halton tenancies but account for 37 per cent (£586,000) of all rent arrears;
- Average arrears now total £602; an increase of £160 (36 per cent) since the tenants moved on to UC; and
- · There are four times as many UC claimants in receipt of a Notice of Seeking Possession as non-UC claimants.

Atkin told MPs, "We support the modernisation of the benefits system and its simplification. Unfortunately, Universal Credit in its current form is not delivering this. It is placing people at increased risk of losing their home as well as the additional legal costs from recovery action."

Landlords have warned that the UC rules that require claimants to wait at least six weeks for a first benefit payment mean many are going without basic living essentials, forcing them to turn to food banks and loan sharks.

#### **Delays**

Ministers are being urged to slow down the national rollout and to increase support for vulnerable claimants who are struggling to cope with the demands of monthly payments and an increasingly online-only system.

Research carried out by the Guardian newspaper, has revealed that:

"We support the modernisation of the benefits system and its simplification. Unfortunately, Universal Credit in its current form is not delivering this" - Nick Atkin, Halton HA

- · Eight out of 10 social housing tenants moved on to UC are falling into rent arrears or increasing the level of pre-existing arrears;
- Families unable to manage the regulation 42day wait for a first payment are regularly referred to food banks by housing associations or local MPs;
- Some claimants are waiting as long as 60 days for an initial payment because of processing delays on top of the formal wait; and
- Uncertainty about the system has contributed to a dramatic decline in the number of private landlords willing to take on benefit recipients, even if they are in work.

The National Federation of ALMOs, which represents arm's length organisations running council housing, and the Association of Retained Council Housing called for payment waits to be reduced.

Chloe Fletcher, the NFA's policy director, said: "Our members are reporting households being forced to turn to food banks, payday lenders and, alarmingly, loan sharks just to get by. This is storing up long-term financial problems for these families."

#### **Failure**

Although it simplifies the benefits system by merging six benefits into a single payment, its implementation has been dogged by expensive IT failures and administrative complexity. Ministers have slowed the pace of the rollout that is now due to be completed in 2022.

Private landlords are saying that without changes they will be reluctant to let to UC recipients because of the high risk of tenant arrears. Alan Ward, the chairman of the Residential Landlords Association, said: "Landlords are rapidly losing confidence in the system." Membership surveys by the National Landlords Association show the number of its members willing to let properties to recipients of benefits has fallen sharply from 46 per cent in 2010 to just 18 per cent now.

Although 430,000 people are currently on UC that figure is expected to grow to seven million when rollout is completed. Landlords and charities are keen that Government ministers move quickly to correct the more negative effects of UC long before then.

#### **Electrical safety** checks must be risk-based

Government plans to introduce mandatory electrical safety checks of privately rented homes are backed by a landlords' body, who insist the tests must be risk-based rather than being made compulsory every

The Residential Landlords Association, which has submitted its views to the DCLG following consultation discussions, said tests were a good idea, but risk must be taken into account when considering how frequently they are carried out.

It agreed that compulsory checks on the fixed wiring are necessary due to the wide range of homes and standards within the PRS, but it does not think all rental properties should be subject to the same regime. Since the Housing and Planning Act became law, a working group set up by DCLG has been discussing the pros and cons of compulsory checks of PRS homes.

RLA Director Chris Town, said: "Compulsory five yearly testing has been brought in to Scotland, but Scotland has a relatively small population, so what is suitable there is not necessarily suitable in England.

#### **Diverse**

"The private rented sector in England is huge and extremely diverse, ranging from £1m properties to tiny bedsits and everything in between. The RLA believes the best course of action would be to bring in a risk-based system."

He added: "At the moment HMOs must have five-year electrical safety test as they are deemed to be high risk, suffering multiple and intensive use. However, if you have a family home for instance, there isn't the same demand on the system, so there should be a longer test cycle." The RLA is proposing that only high risk properties are placed on a five-year cycle, partly because of the expense of doing the checks but also the inconvenience caused to tenants.

'To carry out these checks, every single fixed electrical fitting, such as sockets, switches and light fittings must be opened up and examined, it is not just a case of plugging in a tester. This can take half a day or longer and is much more intrusive and expensive than a gas safety check," added Town.

The RLA is also recommending the installation of Residual Current Devices, which offer added protection for the occupants from electric shock and can offer extra protection from faulty appliances.

"The RLA is proposing only high risk properties to be placed on a five-year cycle"

#### Growing inequalities in housing market revealed

The plight of people who do not own the house they live in has been revealed in a report by the Government's own spending watchdog.

The National Audit Office has published an overview of the housing market in England, while also reviewing the Department for Communities and Local Government's housing strategy and the overall housing policy landscape.

While housing has become more affordable for existing homeowners, by contrast housing has become less affordable for first time buyers and for tenants in both the social and private rented sectors.

The report states that the proportion of owner-occupiers who spend at least a quarter of their disposable income on housing has fallen sharply from 40 to 19 per cent of people with a mortgage. But social housing rents have been increasing faster than earnings since 2001-2.

Homelessness has also increased over the past five years. At the end of March 2016, 71,500 homeless households in England were in temporary accommodation, up from around 48,000 in 2010-11.

#### **Imbalance**

The imbalance in the housing market has increased as the need for housing has grown faster than its supply.

According to the NAO, housebuilding has not kept pace with need, and this is particularly

England's housing in numbers:

- 23.5 million Total number of homes in England in 2014;
- £28 billion Estimated total public sector spending on housing in 2015-16;
- 1 million The number of new homes that the government aims to deliver in 2015-20;
- £5.6 trillion Estimated total value of the housing stock in England in 2015;
- £1 trillion Estimated increase in the value of the housing stock in England since 2010;
- 62 per cent Proportion of

homes in England that are owner-occupied;

- 20 per cent Proportion of homes in England that are privately rented;
- 17 per cent Proportion of homes in England that are socially rented;
- 20 per cent Proportion of homes in England that were "non-decent" in 2014, down from 35 per cent in 2006;
- 71,500 Number of homeless households in England in temporary accommodation at 31 March 2016
- £20.9 billion Spent in England on housing benefit in 2015-16.

acute in London. Projections suggest there will be at least 227,000 new households formed each year between 2011 and 2021. This is substantially higher than the annual average of 166,000 extra homes in England over the last 10 years. Delivery of the government's million new

homes ambition by 2020 will require 174,000 net additions each year.

The most significant element of Government expenditure is on housing benefit. In 2015-16 there were 4.1 million claimants in England, costing around £20.9 billion.



# Rough sleeping numbers jump by 16 per cent

ore than 4,000 people a night have been sleeping rough on England's streets, a 16 per cent increase on last year, according to official figures.

The homelessness charity Crisis described the increase as "appalling". Its chief executive Jon Sparkes said "Behind these statistics are thousands of desperate people, sleeping in doorways, bin shelters, stations and parks - anywhere they can find to stay safe and escape the elements.

He added "Rough sleeping ruins lives, leaving people vulnerable to violence and abuse, and taking a dreadful toll on their mental and physical health. Our recent research has shown how rough sleepers are 17 times more likely to be victims of violence. This is no way for anyone to live."

The number of people sleeping rough in England has risen for the sixth year in a row. An estimated 4,134 people bedded down outdoors in 2016, an increase of 16 per cent on the previous year's figure of 3,569, and more than double the 2010 figure, when 1,768 people were recorded.

#### **Streets**

London accounted for 23 per cent of the England total (960), down slightly from 26 per cent the previous year, with Westminster City Council (260 cases) recording the highest number of rough sleepers in both the capital and the country. Outside London, the number of people on the streets rose 20 per cent since 2015, whereas in the capital it was three per cent.

After Westminster, the highest numbers of rough sleepers were recorded in Brighton and Hove (144), Cornwall (99), Manchester (78), Luton (76), Bristol (74), Croydon (68), Redbridge (60), Bedford (59) and Birmingham (55).

As bad as they are, the rough sleeping figures only represent part of the problem. They do not include people staying in hostels, shelters or temporary accommodation. The housing charity Shelter estimates that more than 250,000 people in England are homeless or lack a permanent place to live.

There are concerns homelessness will rise further in coming months, fuelled by insecure

tenancies and rising rents, benefit cuts and shortages of affordable housing in many parts of the country. There are also fears that further savings in local authority budgets will result in cuts to housing support services for vulnerable tenants, with more people forced to sleep rough.

#### Vulnerable

Separate statistics showed more than 114,000 households in England turned to councils for help in 2015-16 because they were losing their home.

Research by St Mungo's, the homelessness charity, found four in 10 rough sleepers had mental health problems, 41 per cent needed help with alcohol dependency and 31 per cent with drug abuse.

Its chief executive, Howard Sinclair, said cuts in welfare and services covering mental health, drug and alcohol abuse had contributed to the rise. "There is no single reason. People who end up on the streets are not just homeless and getting somewhere to stay is not the only problem.

He added "We have seen cuts to services as part of the austerity agenda but also a lack of

affordable housing, particularly in the south."

#### Scandal

Labour's shadow housing secretary John Healey said "It is a national scandal that in England in the 21st century the number of people forced to sleep rough on our streets is spiralling upwards - and this is only the tip of the iceberg."

The housing charity Shelter blamed "the lack of affordable homes coupled with cuts to welfare" for the "tragic" situation.

The Government said it was determined to help the most vulnerable and was investing over half a billion pounds to tackle the problem of homelessness and rough sleeping.

A spokesman for the Department for Communities and Local Government said "This Government is determined to help the most vulnerable in society, which is why we're investing £550m to 2020 to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

"Homelessness is more than just a housing issue so we are now funding projects in 225 local authorities to help those people at risk of becoming homeless, already sleeping rough or those with complex needs, to get back on their feet."

The Government has been supporting the Homelessness Reduction Bill, proposed by Conservative MP Bob Blackman, to force councils to give people help earlier so they avoid becoming homeless in the first place. However, charities and local authorities have questioned whether Government funding of £48m over three years to help implement the bill, is sufficient.



#### Three boroughs support rental scheme for the homeless

London councils in Croydon, Lambeth and Westminster have backed a new £45m scheme to buy homes for letting to homeless people.

The three councils have lent the money to fund manager Resonance and homeless charity St Mungo's for the second Real Lettings Property Fund, which then buys homes to rent to homeless individuals and families across the capital.

The fund follows an initial scheme launched in 2013 that saw £57m invested in property purchases. Croydon Council was an investor in the original Real Lettings Property Fund and this second one, while Lambeth and Westminster are new investors.

Set up over 10 years ago by St Mungo's, the Real Lettings Property Fund provides a secure tenancy to those who would otherwise be in bed and breakfast emergency accommodation or hostels. The charity supports tenants moving into independent living and provides help and support to ensure the tenancy succeeds.

# FSC® - Who Cares?

By Martin Taylor - Managing Director with Encasement

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

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

#### Where's the issue?

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

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



products manufactured from FSC certified legal

responsible forestry

and sustainable timber.

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

#### Time for change

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

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

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

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

01733 266 889 **www.encasement.co.uk** 

# Can you spot the difference?





At first glance, there's no obvious difference between the products. But look closer and you'll find that only Encasement's pipe boxing carries a full FSC® 'Chain of Custody' certification, which makes it automatically compliant with your sustainable procurement policies. We even provide a certificate with every order. As Encasement is the UK's only FSC® certified manufacturer of pre-formed plywood casings, if you're using similar products from Pendock, you're probably not compliant.

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### Private tenants living in cold homes



ousing tenants in the private rented sector are choosing to live in cold homes out of fear of high heating bills and losing their tenancy, according to new research by Sheffield Hallam University and funded by the Eaga Charitable Trust, an independent grant-giving trust committed to combatting fuel poverty.

The private rented sector is the fastest growing tenure in England. It houses a higher proportion of poor and vulnerable households than any other tenure and contains a higher proportion of the least energyefficient properties.

Research focused on private rental sector tenants across two areas of England - in Hackney and Rotherham - and revealed that tenants face considerable barriers to seeking help with cold homes that are unaffordable to heat.

Respondents in both locations experienced dangerously cold homes and rationed their heating in winter due to energy inefficient properties and fears over high heating bills.

The relationship between tenant and landlord was one characterised by fear on the part of tenants that any complaint may be countered by retaliatory action such as rent increases or eviction if they spoke out. Most tenants felt reluctant to make contact with their landlord and instead found ways to work around problems.

#### Ill health

Keeping warm by routinely wearing coats inside the home, keeping blankets in living areas and spending extra time in bed or outside of the home were common practice, as was heating the home for very short periods in order to save money, rather than lobbying landlords for improvements.

Issues such as excess cold, condensation, and extensive damp and mould were widely highlighted, with respondents also highlighting increased suffering associated with chronic health conditions (such as respiratory diseases and arthritis) known to be exacerbated by cold homes and the emotional strain of insecure tenancies and living in properties they would not have chosen to live in.

Over half of participants used pre-payment methods to pay for their heating and therefore paid higher tariffs, but despite this, many valued pre-payment meters as a method of controlling spending on heating and electricity.

Under the Energy Act (2011), tenants are able to request consent from their landlords to carry out energy efficiency improvements to properties. The landlord cannot unreasonably refuse consent. It is, however, the responsibility of the tenants to arrange funding. Although the majority of respondents were supportive of the Act in principle, the majority felt too afraid to approach their landlord about this.

Dr Aimee Ambrose, from Sheffield Hallam University led the project and said

"The picture emerging from the accounts of respondents is one characterised by limited housing choice that leads to the acceptance of poor quality properties that would otherwise be unacceptable, to fear of challenging the landlord in case of retaliatory action, to enduring cold conditions and high bills, and to suffering the consequences for health and wellbeing.

Dr Naomi Brown, manager of Eaga Charitable Trust, said "This is highly significant research which is hard-hitting in its depiction of the challenges that tenants in the private rented sector face.

"The Eaga Charitable Trust is very pleased to have funded the research and hopes that it will influence positive changes to enable private tenants to live in warmer, healthier homes."

#### London council to hound rip off rogue landlords

A series of raids on privately rented properties by Barking and Dagenham Council in east London has revealed dozens of tenants living in squalid, cramped and dangerous conditions paying thousands of pounds a month to rip-off landlords.

In one three-bedroom house in Sherwood Gardens, council officers found 11 people including two children living there with blocked fire escape routes and out of action smoke alarms.

And in another property illegally converted into bedsits in Upney Lane,

"We will be relentless in our determination to stand up for standards and drive out these criminal landlords"

Barking, council staff found 10 tenants were paying around £600 each for a room.

Councillor Laila Butt, Cabinet Member for Enforcement and Community Safety, said: "Rip-off landlords are the scourge of London. I can assure our residents that we will be relentless in our determination to stand up for standards and drive out these criminal landlords."

#### Rubbish

Elsewhere in raids which took place on the same day, officers also found nine people including two families of three paying up to £900 each living in a four bedroom bungalow in Gay Gardens.

And in Western Avenue, Dagenham, five men were living in a three-bedroom house. Officers said each bedroom was locked and had no smoke alarms. They said the garden was filled with rubbish and had a bed frame in it. In total 100 operations against private landlords had been carried out by Barking and Dagenham Council over the last two years. The operations by the council's Private Rented Sector Team resulted in 25 landlords taken through the Magistrates Court.

The PRS team enforces the council's borough-wide private rental property licensing scheme - one of only two in the country.

Since the scheme has been operating they have:

- Brought over 400 unlicensed properties into the licensing regime;
- Received 12,000 license applications;
- Inspected 10,500 of these properties;
- 280 Enforcement Notices served on landlords requiring housing standards to be improved; and
- Prevented over 20 illegal evictions by criminal landlords who were not licensed.



# A new dawn

Lambeth Council delivered its first directly developed scheme in a decade – including the complex conversion of a heritage building into six social housing flats, writes Teodora Lyubomirova.

t first sight, there's nothing unusual at the corner of the busy intersection of Mostyn and Akerman Road in Lambeth's Vassall Ward in London. However, this is the site of Lambeth Borough Council's first directly delivered housing development in 10 years - a significant milestone in times of funding cuts and planning restrictions.

The scheme is located in a conservation area and is sandwiched between numbers 52 and 58 on Akerman Road. The development includes three new build homes, but also the complex conversion of a former hostel, consisting of two adjacent buildings, into six residential flats. Importantly, all homes provided in the project, which the council handed over in January, are for council rent.

While the Akerman Road scheme is not notable for its size - it has created just nine homes in total - its significance lies in the council's approach to the new build homes as well as the refurbishment of the existing buildings. With a particular focus on sustainability, plans envisaged the new homes to be delivered to Passivhaus - an internationally recognised energy efficiency standard focused on exceptional airtightness, excellent thermal performance and minimum heating demand - with the council keen to upgrade the hostel to similarly high standards.

Huw Jones, a Lambeth Borough Council housing development manager, explained the reasoning: "There's a lot of interest in building sustainable homes in Lambeth that address fuel poverty. The council recognises that a fabric first approach to building is one way of addressing tenant fuel poverty and as well as also reducing our management costs further down the line. With a fabric first approach you don't rely on exotic, expensive types of equipment. The attraction for the council is that once we've built it, it only requires simple maintenance."

#### "The attraction for the council is that once we've built it, it only requires simple maintenance"

Lambeth identified the area - a Victorian terrace which had been partly demolished in World War II bombings - as suitable for development. The three new homes would be built into the bomb-damaged infill site, while the team also decided to embark on the complicated refurbishment of the hostel buildings on 56-58 Akerman Road.

The two buildings - organised as maisonettes, with the white-rendered No 58 consisting of two maisonettes, and the brick-clad No 56 housing 11 bedsit rooms with a shared bathroom - had to be extensively retrofitted, with the council making significant alterations to the internal layouts of



Main image: The two hostel buildings (56-58 Akerman Road) sit adjacent to the new builds © Paul Samuel White

Above: The three new houses completed the bomb-damaged Victorian terrace © Lambeth Borough Council

#### both properties.

An additional challenge was the fact that No 56 is a heritage listed building – it had been the former residence of Victorian-era entertainer Dan Leno between 1898-1901 and has a blue plaque on its front elevation. Despite these constraints, the council was committed to delivering its key objectives – creating sustainable, affordable homes that would require little maintenance in the future while also addressing issues such as fuel poverty.

#### **Planning**

Lambeth's planning committee was first presented with the scheme in May 2011, but planners deferred it for design improvements to ensure the development would better relate to the neighbouring properties. The amended designs, presented to the committee in November the same year, included two-storey bay windows created to replicate those on the neighbouring terrace, and to retain the rhythm and consistency of the streetscape.

Beyond those relatively simple design tweaks, the scheme had to adhere to the council's sustainability criteria, which the team worked towards addressing by specifying Passivhaus new builds and the highly-insulated hostel conversion. This process delayed the commencement of the project, which did not begin on site until 2015, despite the fact it had been granted planning approval in 2012.

#### On site

To support the Lambeth Development Team, contractor Sandwood Design and Build (SDB) was appointed in June 2015, with architects Anne Thorne and Prewett Bizley novated to the contractor. The experience of the architects and contractor was key: Anne Thorne had worked with SDB on other social housing schemes, including Hawthorn Road – a retrofit of two maisonettes in Haringey, in which, similarly to the Akerman Road project, the two firms refurbished the buildings to standards close to Passivhaus.

In Lambeth, the contractor converted the 11 bedsits within the blue plaque No 56 building into four highly-insulated self-contained flats (two three-bed, one two-bed, and one one-bed). The development team also created key facilities missing from the former bedsits by utilising kitchens and bathrooms for each home. There was also the addition of a two-storey rearside extension that allowed the developers to better accommodate the flats.

At the adjacent No 58, the internal layouts of the two flats were carefully reconfigured and converted into residential dwellings. Meanwhile, the construction of the Passivhaus buildings (A,B,C 54 Akerman Road) completed the bomb-damaged terrace and provided three new-build large four-bed family houses. The development team also retained the green space located at the back of the former hostel and divided it into private gardens for two of the flats, while the green space within the bomb-damaged infill site provided gardens for the new build homes.

# "All that science was put into the retrofit in the same manner that it was used for the new build homes"

#### Fabric first

Lambeth's decision to opt for two practices experienced in delivering low energy schemes was vital for the low carbon and low embodied energy materials specified in the scheme. In the new builds, the walls were made of timber and filled with recycled newspaper and natural sheep wool insulation. Similarly, the insulation used in the retrofit homes was a type of wood fibre that stores carbon in the fabric, but is also breathable, thus preventing problems such as overheating, condensation or damp. Jones explained, "We used materials that were – wherever possible – sensitive to the environment and the fabric of the building – this decision was down to the architects, but we [Lambeth Council] also supported the low energy design and the material use."

He stressed that the hostel conversion was engineered via the same software used for the new build Passivhaus buildings – PHPP (Passivhaus Planning Package) – which meant the team could carry out complex assessments regarding thermal modelling and thermal comfort and cold bridging. "All that science was put into the retrofit in the same manner that it was used for the new build homes" said lones.

The hostel, which was last refurbished in the late 1970s, was described as "generally habitable" by Huw, who added, "The hostel was occupied, so we had to ensure it was safe and suitable by undertaking checks each year. But we had what we call significant asset liabilities – there was a lot of work to be done." One area that caused delays to the project was the repair of an extensive part of the brickwork – an issue that became apparent only after the internal linings had been stripped.

Once completed in August 2016, the scheme was a success not only for



Gardens were created at the back of the hostel and the new houses © Lambeth Borough Council

### **Product Focus**

**TME** www.tmethermometers.com

The MM2008 thermometer from TME helps landlords keep on top of essential water checks legally required to prevent Legionnaires' disease. Its built-in timer with one and two minute countdown buttons simplifies timed temperature tests on taps and showers. How good a USP is this? Well, you try holding a thermometer, timer, clipboard and a pen all at the same time without dropping something! The thermometer can be bought online as part of a single kit combined with TME's unique KS01-S dual surface/immersion probe, conveniently designed for use on both pipes AND running water – all for just £150. Order code CLEGK2.



**T-T Pumps** www.ttpumps.com

Picture this, you have just arrived back from your holiday to find out your pumping station pumps have failed, your garden (or even worse your home!) is flooded with sewage and you know an expensive bill is coming your way. It's a situation no one wants to be in, but unfortunately can happen. Well worry no more, with T-T's 24/7 monitoring package there will never be a time when your pumping station is not under observation. For more information on monitoring packages from T-T and for further applications for the monitoring unit visit the website.

**Poujoulat** www.poujoulat.co.uk

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.





#### **ESS Ventilation**

www.esscontracting.co.uk.

A well-managed ventilation system helps avoid mould formation on walls and ensures that you, your family, friends or colleagues breathe cleaner, fresher air. There are three popular types of ventilation technologies, heat recovery systems, positive input ventilation and extract ventilation. With over 18 years of professional experience in the trade, ESS Ventilation is a reputable provider of ventilation systems, both commercial and domestic, and can offer excellent solutions for mould and condensation removal as well. ESS Ventilation serves South London and the South East.

**Envirovent** www.envirovent.com

UK ventilation manufacturer EnviroVent has revealed that its Filterless Extract Fan is its most successful product ever! The fan, which achieved over 1,000,000 sales in 2016, was designed to help reduce issues of condensation and mould and can be found in homes across the UK. This includes over 25,000 Filterless Fans in properties owned by Fife Council. Designed for social housing with zero resident intervention. The Filterless Fan provides exceptional performance and received royal approval in 2009 by winning the coveted Queen's Award for Product Innovation. Over 500 registered providers trust us to look after their ventilation requirements.





#### **Anchor Magnets**

www.warmroom.co.uk

Warmroom® from Anchor Magnets Ltd is a patented and cost effective magnetic heat saver, which grips to the rear of steel radiators preventing heat radiating to the wall. The low emissivity of Warmroom® reduces the heat lost through exterior walls by up to 60 per cent, and is easily fitted by a tenant or resident without the need to remove radiators. As well as reducing heat loss and heating bills, Warmroom® helps the environment by lowering the carbon footprint of a property.

its sustainability credentials, but also because it delivered properties that all exceeded the minimum requirements set out by local planners. For example, the two three-bed flats within the brick-clad part of the former hostel span 86 m² and 95 m² compared to the minimum of 70 m²; in the adjacent No 58, the one-bed and two-bed flats are sized 59 m² and 69 m² compared to a minimum of 45 m² and 60 m² respectively.

#### More and better homes

Lambeth Council's development aspirations are underpinned by its commitment to delivering 1,000 new homes for council rent. This is just one way of addressing the local authority's swelling housing waiting list, to which over 21,000 people had signed up in March last year.

In addition, 1,800 families were found to be either homeless or in temporary accommodation at the time, and the Valuation Office Agency estimated that monthly private rents in the area had breached £1,500 on average in the first quarter of last year. All this has prompted the council to further focus its powers on housing supply. Huw said: "The council is looking to build more and better homes. To do this we are setting up Homes for Lambeth, the council's own development company, to deliver homes across a range of tenures, but with the objective to increase the number of affordable homes in the Borough."

Lambeth's Estate Regeneration Programme focuses on six estates, but the development team is also investigating opportunities for underused land or buildings they can turn into homes. "We are looking at an infill programme on similar sites like Akerman Road where we would be able to provide new homes for residents of the Borough," explained Jones.

Asked whether local authorities should concentrate on delivering more low energy schemes – and whether those are cost-effective – he added: "Normally there would be a slight uplift on this type of development but

#### Akerman Road

Total cost: £2,210,000 \*

Developer: Lambeth Borough Council

Architect: Anne Thorne Architects/Prewett Bizley

Contractor: Sandwood Design & Build Employer's agent: Artelia UK

\* The funding was raised through a mix of Right to Buy receipts and S.106 contributions.

Property address	Bed(s)	Max rent p/w
58A Akerman Rd		£124.31
58B Akerman Rd	2	£141.61
1, 56 Akerman Rd	3	£156.48
2, 56 Akerman Rd	3	£156.48
3, 56 Akerman Rd	2	£139.70
4, 56 Akerman Rd		£119.20
A, B, C, 54 Akerman Rd	4 each	£164.71

so far it doesn't look like it was significantly more expensive than a conventional build – but that's mainly because we looked at this from the outset." Huw concluded: "I think we are the ideal organisations to take up this method of building and prioritise it because not only are we building the houses, but we are managing them as well. We've got a long-term interest in the stock – and it's also important for tenants to be able to afford living in these homes."

# Children 'at risk' from spending too long in temporary accommodation

Families with children in Scotland are spending too long in temporary accommodation according to Shelter Scotland. This is risking the health and well-being of thousands of children.

Families are spending longer periods of time in temporary accommodation, with an average stay of 24 weeks compared to 18 weeks in 2014. Nearly a third of families spent over six months in temporary accommodation, according to the research based on Freedom of Information Act responses from 30 Scottish councils.

Shelter Scotland said the median time spent in temporary accommodation by families with children has increased by almost 20 per cent in the last two years to more than 20 weeks. In addition 13 per cent of families with children were in temporary accommodation for longer than a year.

Recent Scottish Government statistics revealed that in September last year the number of homeless children in temporary accommodation had risen to 5,751.

Alison Watson, deputy director of Shelter Scotland, said "Losing your home is a traumatic experience in itself, but then having to spend increasingly long periods of time in temporary accommodation – with no guaranteed standard for the quality of your housing – just heaps more misery on people whose lives are already in crisis."



She added "Children in particular are adversely affected by homelessness and, as recent Scottish Government figures show, the

problem is getting worse not better – with 826 more children in temporary accommodation last year than the year before."



# FIT Show – A showcase for glass & glazing

The UK's premier trade exhibition dedicated to the window, door and glazed extension industry, opens its doors at Birmingham's NEC in May. A showcase for innovation, products and services, and featuring the largest presence from the aluminium sector at any event in 2017, it will be a must-see event for any housing professional.

indows and doors are constantly evolving and, as such, the fenestration industry has changed immeasurably over the past 30 or 40 years, with products that are increasingly more secure and energy efficient. With that in mind, the aspirations of homeowners have also become more demanding.

The latest report published by Palmer Market Research, which has been gathering data on the industry since as far back as 1976, and as such is uniquely placed to identify long-term trends, is illuminating. It points out that, since 2000, the home improvement market as a whole has recorded a 36 per cent drop in volume, but at the same time its value has dropped by

According to the report: "This reflects the growth in the second-time replacement market and also the shift in consumer behaviour that has accompanied it, most notably towards higher-end products, which has offset the fall in volume."

It continues: "One of the reasons for the increase in unit prices has been the trend towards premium products. For instance for PVC-U, which has 83 per cent market share in the home improvement window market, there continues to be growing interest in colour and woodgrain finishes as there has been in the new build market. The growth we are seeing in foils, in colour and in premium PVC-U systems, is reflective of what we would suggest is a shift in end-user expectation as well as innovation in the market."

For housing maintenance professionals, the performance of windows and doors has always been important, thanks of course to ever more demanding building regulations, and also because of the benefits provided by warm and secure homes. But while it's always made sense to ensure that they also look as attractive as possible, it is now evident that consumers are more 'style conscious' than ever when it comes to their homes. They don't just want their windows and doors to keep them warm and safe, they want them to look good. In fact, they want to show them off!

As a result, the industry has responded to this thirst for premium aesthetics and quality, with an ever-increasing palette of colours, foils, innovation and style for products such as flush casements, composite



entrance doors and elegant bi-folds, not to mention the next generation of glazed extensions and orangeries as well.

It's a phenomenon that has perhaps become most apparent at the FIT Show, the UK's premier trade exhibition for the window, door and glazed extension market. The FIT Show, which first appeared in 2013, quickly established itself as an essential event for the glass and glazing industry, and while it primarily 'sells to itself', it is also a fantastic showcase for specifiers and designers of all types of residential buildings.

After a 2016 event that played host to some of the most important product launches seen in over a decade, including four entirely new window systems, the FIT Show promises to be bigger and better than ever for its next outing in 2017. The previous show at the Telford International Centre featured 180 exhibitors and was bursting at the seams, so a new home at Birmingham's NEC, which can accommodate closer to 250, has really given the exhibition space to grow - which means the potential to not only discover more new companies, products and services, but explore more business opportunities as well.



"Since 2000, the home improvement market as a whole has recorded a 36 per cent drop in volume, but at the same time its value has dropped by just six per cent"

Nickie West, FIT Show event director, explained: "Exhibitions offer much more than just a platform to launch new product – everything is new to somebody. Having said that we do have a very large number of exhibitors launching new products and, of course, it's important to remember that around 30 per cent of the exhibition space (on current figures) will be occupied by companies who didn't exhibit in 2016 so there will be acres of 'new'.

She continued: "However, we are also broadening our visitor base so we expect new visitors to the show, which means new customers for our exhibitors. New networking, new business."

Speaking of networking and business opportunities, one company that recognises the importance of visiting the FIT Show is Building Product Solutions, a major supplier to housebuilders in the North of England, with clients such as Persimmon Homes, Taylor Wimpey, Redrow, Larkfleet Group and Gleeson Homes.

Lynne Darwin, Sales Director at Building Product Solutions, commented: "We always attend the FIT show, as it provides us with the opportunity to meet like-minded businesses all under one roof. Over the last few years we have seen significant growth across all areas of our business and in the last year alone we have seen a 70 per cent increase in turnover."

She said: "We continuously invest in new technology and have just installed a new Lisec Glass Line, plus we have also commissioned bespoke software to streamline our processes, which enables us to track every stage of a customer order from initial estimate to project completion. Attending the event will allow us to look at new innovative manufacturing processes that can increase our overall production capacity."

Also new for 2017 will be an increased presence from the aluminium

sector, including a dedicated Pavilion hosted by the Council for Aluminium in Building (CAB). According to CAB, this will be the biggest gathering of aluminium suppliers ever assembled at a UK fenestration trade show, with many launching brand new products specially developed for the UK residential market.

CAB's CEO, Justin Ratcliffe, said: "CAB will be at the FIT Show together with over 30 of its members to present dozens of exciting new products and we will have the CAB Technical Team on hand to answer any questions. For any company looking at expanding their interest in aluminium the FIT Show will have the widest range of products and services anywhere in the UK during 2017."

So, whether it's to see new products and innovations, sample the expert seminar programme, or take the opportunity to meet new and existing suppliers, the FIT Show represents a fantastic opportunity for housing maintenance professionals to gain an insight into all the fenestration market has to offer. And with 'Big Tuesday' being introduced for 2017 – which will see opening hours on the Tuesday extended to 8pm to allow more time at the show and for some to enjoy a more relaxed 'party' atmosphere – it could also allow them to sample the industry's famous social scene as well.



#### Response to Sentinel training

A clear indication that Sentinel is succeeding in its mission to make lifetime boiler and system protection the new industry benchmark, demand for Sentinel's best practice water treatment training is at a record high, with thousands having taken part in 2016. Sentinel's training comprises a wide



range of flexible learning options such as Sentinel's online training academy, on-site training centre, and commercial CPD events. Furthermore, Sentinel is rolling out a UK-wide college training scheme in 2017, ensuring that the next generation of heating and plumbing engineers is armed with the skills to deliver best practice water treatment.

01928 704330 www.sentinelprotects.com

#### The Grundfos SCALA2 is second to none

Grundfos SCALA2 is a new compact, variable speed, water booster pump that has been specifically designed and built to deliver perfect water pressure to wherever it is needed in the home. Recently launched and WRAS approved, each unit is a fully integrated water booster pump that will provide the



perfect water pressure to up to eight water outlets – even with multiple taps and showers running at the same time. The SCALA2 combines the pump, motor, tank, sensor, drive and non-return valve in one neat package. The units also offer intelligent pump control as they adjust their operation to ensure perfect water pressure at all times.

01525 850000 www.grundfos.co.uk

#### New year new brochure from Yeoman Shield wall & door protection

January 2017 will see the release of Yeoman Shield's new wall & door protection product brochure. After having celebrated 50 years in the business on 24th November 2016, the launch of the brochure will help to cement Yeoman Shield's position as market leaders and innovators in the wall & door protection industry. Guided by the requirements and wants of their client base, the updated brochure includes full product data & drawings, case studies and vibrant project photography as well as a full colour range chart. Along with 26 original protection products, it will also showcase three newly developed products - The Yeoman Shield Rub Rail, Universal Frame Protector and PVCu or Stainless Steel Footrail. "We are extremely excited about the new brochure launch" commented Marketing Manager, Sally Moores. "There is a wealth of information we wish to convey to our current and prospective customers to reinforce the quality and versatility of our products and services. The new brochure is the ideal tool for us communicate this in a clean, fresh and non-fussy yet comprehensive way."The brochure will be supported by extensive fixing instructions, technical drawings, new colour cards and swatches along with data details - all available as hard copy or digital versions. To request a copy of the new Yeoman Shield brochure call or visit the website.

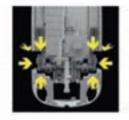


0113 279 5854 www.yeomanshield.com



### The electric shower designed for refurbishments

- Retro-fit footprint so it covers up the marks and holes left by the previous shower
- . Long-term reliability with 3-year warranty
- 8 water/electrical points for easy installation
- Robust design reduces maintenance & repairs
- Phased shutdown reduces limescale, extends life.
- Easily accessible parts for servicing and diagnostics
- Full thermostatic control protects residents from scalding





www.akw-ltd.co.uk/retro-fit

# Ideal Standard adds to Concept Freedom range with new bath

deal Standard, a leading provider of innovative and design-driven bathroom solutions, has extended its successful 'accessible bathroom range', Concept Freedom, with the addition of a new, multi-functional, accessible bath that is suitable for the whole family.

Concept Freedom's new inclusive bath tub has been designed to make bathing anxiety free for users with mobility issues, while still delivering a beautifully designed aesthetic and a tranquil space in which to bathe.

It also aims to offer an alternative to the somewhat stigmatised requirement to replace a bath with a shower in the hope, just because a user has mobility issues.

The intelligent and versatile design of the bath combines luxury with multi-functionality, meaning its features are relevant for the different needs of the different types of users in the bathroom – with many of its features, such the lower ledge, also making bath time simpler for those bathing children and pets, for example.



Other key features of the bath include a reinforced ledge for stability, a lowered height controlled entry and exit, an inside step ledge to aid movability, a gel headrest to support the neck and support rails for manoeuvrability.

Ideal Standard teamed up with experts in design and care for older people. Led by Ideal Standard designer Robin Levien, the team comprised Design Council member, Colum Lowe, from specialist healthcare organisation, Red and Yellow Care, and well-respected occupational therapist, Anava Baruch, from Design for Independence.

Developed with accessibility in mind, the Concept Freedom range aims to include those of limited mobility through a collection of ceramics, brassware and showers that are welldesigned, elegant and functional to meet a range of access needs.

Bathrooms can be adapted to users' changing needs, whilst still looking modern and stylish - ensuring that the space deals with the demands of modern households and the diversity of occupants, including less abled and older generations.

Concept Freedom's collection includes raised height WCs for easier, more comfortable access, accessible basins with wide side rims, wet-room panels with extended brackets and easy to use shower valves and kits.

01482 346 461 www.ideal-standard.co.uk

#### A system solution for wetroom tiling

A wetroom is considered to be an installation where the shower base is at the same level as the floor. Good design, water-resistant background materials, high quality tiles, grouts and adhesives, as well as correct installation methods are all important to achieving a safe and long lasting wetroom. Tile adhesive,



grout and preparation products manufacturer Norcros Adhesives offers a range of solutions which can be used by builders to achieve a successful result. Manufactured from high density polystyrene, Norcros Pro Board comprises a rigid insulation core, coated with a specially formulated reinforced cementitious coating ideal for the application of tiles.

01782 524140 www.norcros-adhesives.com

#### 'Marvellous' job

An RAF engineer who defied medical expertise after a spinal injury is still retaining a degree of independence and refusing to succumb to his physical limitations, by using British toilet engineering expertise. To accommodate his needs, William (Buff) McBeath's home in Livingston has been majorly adapted,



with a stairlift, and the bathroom turned into a wetroom, complete with Clos-o-Mat Palma Vita wash & dry toilet. Further deterioration in his condition has meant that he has now had a hoist fitted in his bedroom to enable his carers to get him out of bed, and his wheelchair replaced with a shower chair. "Clos-o-Mat does a marvellous job" he says.

0161 969 1199 www.clos-o-mat.com

#### Tarasafe ULTRA H<sub>2</sub>0

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#### Tarasafe Ultra H20

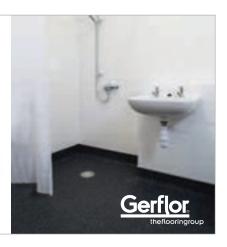
is a high performance slip-resistant flooring for wet and dry, barefoot and shod applications, which meets HSE 36+ guidelines. It is suitable for use in all areas where slip-resistance, durability and hygienic conditions are required.











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# Refurb to reinvigorate

Updating a bathroom is no easy undertaking, but Chris Tranter of Bristan offers advice on how to tick all the boxes.

hen it comes to refurbishing social housing, there are several considerations to bear in mind. While the updates should be attractive and appealing to residents, this must be balanced with budget constraints, ease of renovation and future-proofing measures.

Although every refurbishment requires careful planning and thought, this is especially true for social housing, where multiple criteria - including cost and time efficiency, sustainability, and future proofing - must be met alongside residents' expectations.

Water wastage is a serious issue for social housing providers. In 2015, UK charity Turn2us discovered that approximately eight out of 10 social housing tenants are struggling to pay for food despite a recovering economy. Today, housing providers more than ever have a duty of care to help lessen the financial load wherever possible.

#### Go green to save

While there is much talk around energy-efficiency strategy, the reality is that water-saving products can make a substantial difference to tenant costs too. In fact, according to the Energy Saving Trust, if a family of four used a water-efficient showerhead instead of an inefficient one, each year they could save around £72 off their gas bills and around £72 off their water bills, generating a total saving of almost £150.

A refurbishment project can represent an ideal opportunity to replace older products with more efficient options that can reduce residents' water usage and their utility costs.

A good starting point is the electric shower. Rather than being fed from a hot water storage tank or boiler, an electric shower instantaneously heats up the cold mains water as it passes through the shower unit. This means they only heat the amount of water that is actually needed, so there is no wasted energy. This energy efficiency makes the electric shower ideal for green focussed refurbishments, and, in conjunction with tenants watching their water bills, can ensure that only the most necessary amount of water is used.

For an easy way to identify sustainable fittings, specifiers should look for WRAS-approved products. Such products are fully compliant with the requirements of the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations and Scottish Water Byelaws, which means they are of an appropriate quality and standard and do not contribute to waste, misuse, undue consumption or contamination of the water supply. In short, this provides peace of mind that the fixtures are legally sound and of good quality.

#### **Fuss-free fit**

For cash-strapped housing providers and private landlords, keeping labour costs down during a refurbishment can be challenging. The good news is that there are multiple options available to save time and avoid undue extra work when updating a bathroom.

Careful product selection is key here. For example, if an electric shower is being replaced, choosing a unit with flexible water and electrical entry points means the existing pipework and electrical cable can be utilised (unless they also need to be upgraded). Choosing a product that will fit over the footprint of the existing electric shower will ensure that the original fixing holes are covered over or reused – minimising redecoration work.

Equally, when updating mixer options, it's crucial to choose a shower



"If a family of four used a water-efficient showerhead instead of an inefficient one, each year they could save around £72 off their gas bills and around £72 off their water bills"

that is simple to install. Although retrofits can be tricky in their own right, the right product can make part replacements a relatively quick and easy process.

The central challenge is fitting a shower that matches the existing pipework, eliminating the need for adjustments and avoiding unnecessary retiling or redecorating. The answer to this lies with shower valves that allow flexibility of fit.

For example, Bristan's range of maxi and mini mixer shower valves come with adjustable elbows and a variable centre selection from 110mm to 158mm (across the ranges), so they are easily adjusted to fit onto a bathroom's existing pipework – thus saving time and hassle. These simple features mean that the valves are easy to install and ideal for both new or retrofit applications.

#### Multi-generational living

The way we live is changing, and this needs to be reflected in housing design and refurbishment. According to the Intergenerational Foundation think tank, over 500,000 households have at least three generations living under one roof, and that number is expected to rise to 556,000 by 2019 with a significant increase in the number of people aged 85 or over.

When the time comes for bathroom refurbishment, specifiers need to look not only for what is needed from each product now, but also how it would perform in the years ahead.

In response to this demand for sustainability, manufacturers are increasingly developing products that incorporate easy-to-use features into an attractively designed unit.

There are now showers available which are endorsed by BEAB Care and RNIB (Royal National Institute for the Blind), ensuring the safest possible experience for residents of all abilities.

These models combine modern styling and ease of use features such as large, easy-to-move dials, raised markings and audible clicks when settings are adjusted, illuminated stop/start buttons, LED digital setting displays and contrasting back boxes - all designed to increase suitability for users of a wide range of abilities.

What's more, there are plenty of cleverly designed fittings that provide aid for vulnerable users without impacting on the rest of the family. A wall-mounted fold-up shower seat, for example, is practical and unobtrusive. For safety, grab rails usually come into the picture, but by choosing versions that double up as stylish towel rails or over-basin shelves they become a bathroom accessory rather than assistive aid.

Refurbishment projects are no simple undertaking, but specifying the right products can help reduce costs for both the housing provider and



tenants. The bathroom is one of the most important areas of a home, and choosing sturdy, easy to use fittings, which can also save on bills is an easy winner for social housing managers.

Chris Tranter is specification product manager at Bristan.

#### Tarasafe Ultra H2O for social housing

Gerflor can now offer certified social housing flooring solutions guaranteeing comfort and well-being, while meeting strict requirements. Gerflor's vinyl flooring products include different sets of benefits to meet the wideranging needs of diverse social housing projects and their Tarasafe Ultra H<sub>2</sub>O is



a perfect solution for a myriad of social housing applications where heavy duty slip resistance is essential in the shower, changing or bathroom environment. Gerflor's social housing applications are well-liked by tenants as they combine tenant-appeal with construction and installation features to address the needs of housing specifiers.

01926 622600 www.gerflor.co.uk

#### Mapethene EQ waterproofing system

Mapei's Mapethene EQ is a selfadhesive bituminous membrane for waterproofing and damp-proofing applications. Made by a high technology calendering process during which a special polymer modified bitumen layer is bonded to a carrier film of high density polyethylene (HDPE),

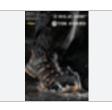


Mapethene EQ provides a continuous waterproofing layer of uniform thickness to the outer surface of below ground or partially below ground concrete and masonry structures. Mapethene EQ may also be used as an effective damp-proof membrane beneath un-bonded screeds. Mapethene EQ is defined as a TYPE A barrier within BS 8102: 2009.

0121 508 6970 www.mapei.co.uk

#### SolidGear and ToeGuard's Catalogue

Packed with the very latest information about market-leading safety footwear technology. The 2017 Product and Price Catalogue has full details of the complete range of the UK's most stylish Safety Shoes, Boots and Trainers from Hultafors UK's own SolidGear and Toe-Guard brands. With four very different



types of products - TUFF, ATHLETIC, TREKKING and OCCUPATIONAL there's a product to suit almost every footwear need on site. There's also loads of other information on all the important product features - Comfort and Safety, Fabrics and Linings, BOA System Technology, Caps and Plates, Water Repellency, Oil- and even Heat-resistance.

info@hultaforsgroup.com

#### Snickers Classic Series 3 WorkTrousers

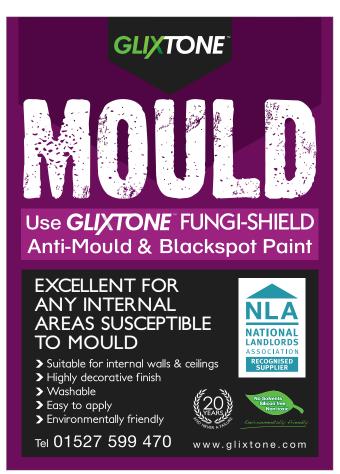
A Snickers classic to rely on with superb fit and functionality - whatever work you're doing on site. Available in a choice of hard-wearing, but comfortable DuraTwill, Canvas+ or Rip-Stop fabrics for long-lasting durability, the stylish cut in these garments has an advanced Twisted Leg design for a

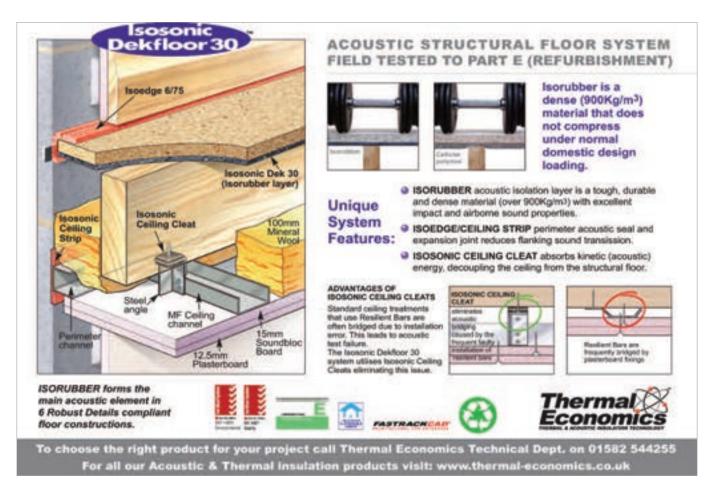


modern fit that delivers outstanding working comfort in every move you make on site. The tough Cordura reinforcements on the knees and inside the holster pockets give extra durability, while the kneepad pockets are designed for the special KneeGuard positioning system for superior protection and comfort.

info@snickersworkwear.co.uk







#### Designer Contracts launches new ranges

As carpet remains a staple flooring option for the home in 2017, Designer Contracts has unveiled a number of new flooring collections. The latest products include some exciting luxurious and super soft carpet ranges. Soft Focus is a new luxury super-soft easy clean collection, manufactured



from 100 per cent Finesse polypropylene. Sensation Twist is a luxury stain resistant twist suitable for all around the home and comes in a range of 10 heather tones. Portobello - a super- soft luxurious carpet manufactured with prestige fibres – has a completely natural look and feel, available in 10 stylish tones.

01246 854577 www.designercontracts.com

#### Secura luxury vinyl sheet flooring

Polyflor has launched their new Secura PUR collection of luxury vinyl sheet flooring, designed to create inspiring home interiors for modern living. Made in the UK, the Secura PUR range features 22 designs which authentically replicate the natural character of wood, stone and abstract materials in a



practical and durable sheet format. With 12 wood effects, nine stone effects and an abstract design in the collection, on-trend new additions include white and grey oaks alongside contemporary concrete and slate effects. All Secura designs include grain patterns, surface textures, tonal variations and subtle detailing for a realistic look that is easier to maintain.

0161 767 1111 www. polyflor.com

#### Silentflor – Design led acoustic flooring

Polyflor is pleased to announce the launch of Silentflor PUR, a collection of heavy commercial sheet vinyl flooring with acoustic properties, available in a variety of high design wood, concrete and abstract effects. Silentflor is a robust, beautifully designed collection that achieves 19dB impact sound



reduction and has been expertly created for a wide range of commercial interiors, such as installations in the healthcare, office, education, residential, retail and leisure sectors. Made in the UK, this flooring range includes 36 stunning designs in a 3.7mm gauge and 0.65mm wear layer sheet format.

0161 767 1111 www.polyflor.com

#### Cylinder thermostat from ESi

ESi has developed a unique electronic dual Cylinder Thermostat. It is a direct and economical replacement for traditional mechanical dual cylinder thermostats. It offers real safety and energy saving benefits and provides accurate temperature control with a clear and informative LCD display. It has



the added advantage of a weekly automatic one hour 'boost' that lifts the temperature of the water in the cylinder to above 60 degrees C to eradicate any legionella bacteria. Go to the ESi Controls website for more infomation. Alternatively contact the number and one of ESi Control's expert team will gladly help.

01280 816868 www.esicontrols.co.uk



#### Paint Away – the ultimate paint stripper!

Stripping paint and varnish from surfaces can be a difficult and laborious task, requiring time, patience and a lot of elbow grease. Everbuild - A Sika Company now have the answer to this age old problem with the arrival of Paint Away® – the ultimate paint and varnish stripper.

The new triple strength, non-drip formula of Paint Away can remove up to three layers of paint or varnish from masonry, wood, metals and most common building substrates in just one easy and fast application.

Simply brush the gel on to the painted area, leave for 20 minutes and watch as the paint begins to blister and crack, before scraping the area to fully remove. Available in 750ml tins with 10 per cent extra free, Paint Away can be used with most paints and varnishes on both vertical and horizontal applications.

For further information on Paint Away or any other product in the Everbuild or Sika ranges, contact your local sales representative, call the sales office or visit the company website.

0113 240 2424 www.everbuild.co.uk

#### Safe to touch radiators...

LST radiators are key where there is a need for special heat emitters that are ideal for safety critical environments especially those that need to meet NHS Guidance for 'Safe Hot Water and surface temperature' - in hospitals, care and nursing homes, as well as sheltered housing, schools and



nurseries. Stelrad's range of Low Surface Temperature radiators are finished in antibacterial paint as standard making them the number one choice for safety critical environments. For more information on the leading range of LST radiators – horizontal and vertical models – from Stelrad, head for the website.

01709 578 950 www.stelrad.com

#### High efficiency small circulators

Small circulating pumps are key components of all wet heating systems in the UK. They perform as standalone pumps or as integrated pumps in combis and system boilers and they keep the water circulating in underfloor heating systems too. Wilo offers a family of small circulating pumps for all



applications that are renowned for their reliability and energy efficiency. They are responsible for a much higher percentage of overall household electricity usage than many still realise. They offered a real way of making strides towards meeting the ambitious environmental targets. Go to the Wilo website to find out more about these excellent small pumps.

01283 523 000 www.wilo.co.uk



## A network of opportunities

District heating schemes have gained popularity across Europe, but the UK is still trailing in the adoption of this energy-efficient heating method. Louise Howlett of RA Brown explains the benefits.

hile district heating is widely adopted in Northern Europe, it remains underutilised in the UK, providing less than two per cent of the energy. However, the benefits of district heat networks, such as the fact they can use a variety of heat sources and power off-grid developments or multiple properties from one centralised location, have made them an increasingly popular option for the residential sector, particularly for large-scale refurbishments or new build developments.

### A growing sector

In the Government's fifth carbon budget, it was projected that by 2050 heat networks would be serving 18 per cent of the total heat demand.

To address the challenges which local authorities identified as barriers to heat network deployment in the UK, the Heat Network Delivery Unit was formed in 2003. Since then, it has supported over 100 local authorities in England and Wales, and there are now over 200 projects at development stage. A pilot scheme open to local authorities and other public sector bodies has been launched, with the first payments of the £39m funding to be made by April. However, investment in these schemes is a big challenge for the Government as typically returns are slow, and while district heating

systems work well with an owner/operator model, the Government will want to regulate charges as it is committed to lowering heating bills for consumers.

### **Technical benefits**

One of the great benefits of district heating is that a wide range of heat sources can be used to run district heat networks – from gas, burning of waste or bio fuels. Renewable technology such as ground source heat pumps, which extract heat from the ground to reduce emissions, can also be utilised with these systems.

District heating is also scalable – a number of units can be linked together and housed in a large plant room. From that centralised location, the heat is then distributed to individual apartments, for example, via a Heat Interface Unit (HIU). This can be installed inside or outside each home (very much like a gas meter) and that way heat usage can be metered for individual billing. Like with other heating systems, householders are able regulate the amount of heat that they use as the warm water is transferred into the radiators or through the underfloor heating system in each property.

Pipes feeding the HIU flow and return from the central point. If run by a  $\,$ 

series of linked ground source heat pump units, efficiencies of over 300 per cent can be expected. The system is flexible and will modulate depending on the heat demand – either caused by occupancy or outside temperature. This means that the number of heat pump units will be switched on or off depending on these factors. This way of operation also provides reliability, so that if one of the heat pump units fails, other units will continue to operate until the problem is resolved.

Another positive aspect of district heating, particularly with regards to the social housing sector, is the low cost of maintenance. This is due to the fact that there are no individual boilers in each property that would normally require annual servicing.

### Potential drawbacks

A district heat network is excellent at providing space heating. The provision of hot water for bathing and washing up has very different requirements in technical terms. By its very nature a district heating system plant room will be a distance away from the property and this creates significant issues with loss of temperature that is critical for domestic hot water supply. The temperature of water for showering is usually 38 degrees or slightly higher and hot water must be brought up to a higher temperature at regular intervals to kill legionella bacteria. A practical solution is for each property to have individual electrical water heating, either an electric shower and instantaneous water heaters or a hot water cylinder with an immersion heater. Usually there would be scope to install PV on the roof of a new development, which could contribute renewable electricity towards heating the hot water.

One other factor that could become an issue with a district heating system is the periods when the heating needs to be switched off centrally. While it would be wasteful to keep the system running all year round, the

"Pipes feeding the HIU flow and return from the central point. If run by a series of linked ground source heat pump units, efficiencies of over 300 per cent can be expected"

parameters of what external temperature the system should be turned off is a delicate issue - particularly with regards to residential housing for vulnerable or elderly people with more complex requirements. On the plus side, it should be possible to schedule routine maintenance when the system isn't operating, such as in the summer, thus lessening disruption during the colder months.

### Conclusion

The economies of scale of these type of District Heat Networks are obvious. It will be a breakthrough if the Government can achieve the joined-up approach required to deliver on its aims: affordable heating that can lower carbon emissions and is efficient and sustainable. There are obvious challenges in gaining investment but hopefully once these systems become more widely used across the UK, this barrier will also be brought down.

Louise Howlett is commercial director of air and ground source heat pump specialists RA Brown.



## Thinking outside the box

With the constant pressure on public sector budgets, Encasement's Managing Director, Martin Taylor, believes local authorities should investigate modern and more cost effective methods of concealing boiler pipe work.

s energy efficient heating system upgrade programmes in social housing is important to reduce emissions and energy consumption, there is also a need to ensure that the updated system is not only safe, but also looks good.

However, just by deciding on which method to use when boxing in heating system and boiler pipework, LAs and HAs can save thousands of pounds on their annual repair, maintenance and improvement budget.

### Removing cost and saving budget

By saving time or removing cost from key stages in the pipe casing process, then this will have a positive effect on reducing the overall budget required to achieve the end result.

Essentially, savings can be made in each of the following four sections:

- · Manufacture How is the boxing made?
- · Materials What materials are used in their manufacture?
- · Methods How is the boxing installed and secured?
- · Maintenance How easily can the boxing be removed and replaced?

### Manufacture

The traditional and still widely used approach for concealing pipework, is for boxing to be fabricated on site using wood or MDF with nails, Inevitably, this is a time intensive and costly solution.

The Encasement solution is much simpler. guicker and cost effective. Manufactured from pre-formed plywood to exact boiler dimensions and pre-finished with durable melamine or laminate, there's no fabrication or painting required, which provides a consistent finish and saves even more time.

As a result, typical cost savings of around £20 can be made on every casing installed, which equates to a budget reduction of £10,000 on every 500 properties.

### **Materials**

Often the materials used to manufacture pipe boxing and boiler casings aren't a major consideration, yet they should be, as there is a need to comply with the sustainable procurement policies that many local authorities now have in place.

Encasement has already addressed the issue. Only FSC® certified timber is used in the manufacture of our boxing and boiler casings. Encasement are also the UK's only manufacturer and supplier of pre-formed plywood boxing and casings that holds a Forest Stewardship Council FSC® 'Chain of Custody' certification.

### Methods

heating engineer will move on to the next flat

Typically, where site made casings are used, the





fabrication and fitting of site made pipe casings to a joiner. As two trades and different skills are required, this inevitably adds time and cost.

By using a pre-formed boiler casing, which has already been supplied to the correct dimensions, there's no need for fabrication and the freestanding casing just slides into place underneath the boiler, which can be done by a heating engineer.

### Maintenance

The 'whole life' cost for site made casings escalates significantly, when routine maintenance visits are factored in to the equation, as they're usually damaged or destroyed during their removal. This necessitates their replacement or re-manufacture, as well as re-fitting, all of which, increases budget.

In contrast, pre-formed casings are selfsupporting, allowing them to be easily removed and replaced in seconds, dramatically reducing the time maintenance engineers need to be on site, and the corresponding cost.

### Case closed!

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

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### Econoplate 'H' Series serves demand

Stokvis Energy System has responded to the increasing popularity of communal and district heating systems by offering its H-Series Econoplate interface units. There is a choice of single and twin plate units to provide heating and hot water services within dwellings such as apartments, student



flats or around sheltered housing schemes. These in turn might be fed from a central plantroom – incorporating perhaps Stokvis Econoflame Boilers, a Stokvis Solar Thermal System, combined heat and power (CHP) unit, biomass boilers, heat pumps or some wider district heating source such as the waste heat from a power station/incinerator.

info@stokvisboilers.com

### Retiring in style with Kingspan

Residents at the Tennyson Wharf Care Home are enjoying seamless access to a recessed, marina facing roof terrace, thanks in part to the ultra-slim design of the Kingspan OPTIM-R Balcony & Terrace System. As residents have a varied degree of mobility, accessibility was at the forefront of considerations during



the design of the building. To achieve this on the recessed top storey roof terrace, whilst keeping the area well insulated, the Kingspan OPTIM-R Balcony & Terrace System was specified. The next generation insulation solution features vacuum insulation panels (VIPs) with a microporous core which is evacuated, encased and sealed in a thin, gas-tight envelope.

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

### **ECoTherm launches Eco-Cavity full fill**

EcoTherm Insulation is pleased to announce the launch of Eco-Cavity Full Fill. The new foil faced, rigid PIR insulation board has been designed to allow simple compliance with the energy requirements of the Building Regulation and Standards, without requiring alterations to standard wall designs.



EcoTherm Eco-Cavity Full Fill is available in standard thicknesses of 90, 115 and 140mm thicknesses. The insulation board dimensions are sized to coordinate with brick and block sizes, allowing them to be quickly installed with standard wall tie methods whilst their tongue and groove edges offer a superior fit and increased resistance to moisture penetration.

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### Outdoor security switches just got better

**DANLERS** Outdoor Security Switch range are neat and compact and now benefit from an IP66 rated polycarbonate enclosure and therefore can be installed across a greater range of challenging environments. The product range includes: IP66 Compact Person Detector with both improved time lag



options and upgraded photocell range. The IP66 Twilight Switch turns lights on from Dusk to Dawn. The new IP66 Twilight Switch featuring DANLERS 'Intelligent' Photocell which reduces risk of hunting and over illumination. And the IP66 Dusk Switch with new 'Intelligent photocell' and LED feedback for determining time on duration from 2-16 hrs.

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with plain-English text prompts, and clear LED indicators for both mains power and timed on/off status. Also available are Boost timers that switch off the power automatically after a selected count-down time so there's no danger of leaving appliances such as heaters, fans or towel rails or irons switched on.

sales@timeguard.com

## Ready for a climate change

A regeneration charity has gone the extra mile by climate-proofing the external spaces at several social housing estates. Hannah Baker reports.

cientists predict that climate change is likely to bring more extreme weather events to the UK, significantly increasing the threat of surface water flooding and overheating. This in turn would cause substantial damage, disruption and material costs to communities.

Social housing tenants in particular may find their properties adversely affected, especially if no measures have been taken to mitigate this risk. While most new housing developments are designed with the flexibility to adapt to future climates, this is not often the case with our existing housing stock. However, housing providers and their maintenance teams need to adapt and future-proof existing buildings and infrastructure in order to minimise the impact of extreme weather on people's lives and their homes

### **Transforming communities**

"Climate-Proofing Social Housing Landscapes", a project co-financed by the European Commission's LIFE+ Programme and carried out by environmental regeneration charity Groundwork London, aimed to demonstrate how this can be achieved by making improvements to three social housing estates in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.

Working with residents, external experts and other key stakeholders, Groundwork London and Hammersmith & Fulham Council designed and implemented a package of retrofit climate change adaptation measures to ensure that these estates are better placed to withstand the effects of a changing climate.

Key activities have included:

- · The design and implementation of affordable and socially acceptable retrofit climate change adaptation measures, using a model that is replicable and transferable in cities across Europe
- · Supporting the achievement of wider green infrastructure goals including biodiversity, air quality and play provision - which not only have an environmental impact, but also offer social and economic benefits for residents and the wider community
- · Implementing the main measures through employment programmes for long-term unemployed (Groundwork London's Green Teams), improving





their skills and employability

- · Developing and running a set of training courses for housing and grounds maintenance professionals to learn how to maintain these measures and replicate them elsewhere
- Developing and implementing a methodology for resident engagement to give them the opportunity to shape the open space improvements on their estates, and to raise their awareness about the implications of climate change
- Evaluating technical performance and social return on investment (SROI) in order to quantify the environmental, social and economic benefits
- · Supporting the transferability of similar schemes to other housing landscapes across Europe through the development and dissemination of tools and resources, including an implementation guide and short film

The improvements made to the three estates not only help to improve the estates' ability to withstand the impacts of climate change, but also residents' understanding of climate change and its impacts, their engagement with each other and the open spaces where they live, and their health and well-being through their involvement in activities such as food growing and gardening clubs. "We've shown here with these three relatively small spaces that there's a lot that can be achieved... Every time we come down here when it rains, it seems to be achieving what we expect," said George Warren, flood risk manager, Hammersmith & Fulham Council.

At the same time, the project has helped to ensure that local people have the skills and knowledge to plan for, implement and maintain climate adaptation measures, not only supporting the sustainability of these measures over the longer term but also the implementation of similar schemes elsewhere in the Borough and beyond.

In numbers, the project has achieved:

- · 3,158m<sup>2</sup> of impermeable surface diverted from draining directly to the sewer
- · 4,537m<sup>2</sup> of land improved
- 1,286,815 litres annual rainfall retention and diversion away from the storm drain system
- 472 residents engaged

### "Most new housing developments are designed to adapt to future climates, but this is not the case with existing stock"

- 81 per cent of residents agree or strongly agree that the quality of the green spaces has improved significantly
- £4.39 of benefits for every £1 invested (SROI assessment)
- 22 Green Team trainees involved in the project, all achieving City & Guilds Level One in Practical Horticulture Skills
- 46 H&F Council maintenance contractors and senior managers trained
- 48 representatives from other housing providers engaged in masterclasses

### **Teamwork**

The project has demonstrated that retrofitting open spaces in social housing environments is both necessary and cost-effective, emphasising the role these spaces can play in increasing urban resilience to climate change.

The experience also confirmed that such projects work better when not delivered in isolation, but with cross-disciplinary working at all stages. The comprehensive programme of resident engagement has highlighted that residents are expert users of spaces and have valuable knowledge of their local environment - and therefore their involvement from the start is essential to secure their input and support.



By carrying out a comprehensive approach to monitoring and evaluation, with technical elements led by the University of East London, it was established that the quantification of project impacts can help to make the business case for such schemes, particularly where budgets are limited.

Taking on board these experiences and lessons learned, Groundwork London developed an Implementation Guide which aims to equip other housing providers with the tools and resources to implement climate change adaptation measures across their own housing stock. The Guide provides advice based on the activities and outcomes from the project, and uses the three project sites as best practice examples.

Hannah Baker is programme manager at Groundwork London.

## Social housing tennants warm to Kemper System roofing solution

emper System's Stratex warm roof system has been used to upgrade the roofs of five social housing apartment blocks as part of an investment programme supporting a £20 million stock transfer from Gloucester City Council to housing association Gloucester City Homes.

Combining Kemper System's Kempertherm PIR insulation board and the company's Kemperol V210 cold-applied liquid waterproofing membrane, the warm roof upgrades form part of a £29 million 30-year plan, which also includes construction of 100 new social housing dwellings by 2020; the first to be constructed in the city since 1991.

Delivered by main contractor, Mears Group, the improvement works focused on an external upgrade to five tenanted blocks; two on Sweetbriars Street, two on Union Street and one on Columbia Street. All works had to be carried out while the homes remained fully occupied, so the use of Kemper System's cold-applied liquid

membrane was the ideal solution for delivering a robust solution with a BBA accredited service life of 25 years, without causing undue disruption or risk to tenants.

Roofing contractor, Rateavon, stripped the existing metal deck roof of each block and installed a new OSB (oriented strand board) deck as part of the strategy for maximising the service life of the existing accommodation. A Kempershield primer was then applied to the roof surface and allowed to cure before the installation of a Kempershield vapour control

Kemperfix adhesive was applied onto the roof surface and the Kempertherm insulation board was adhered to the roof, using the system's tongue and groove structure to interlock each piece of board and provide a uniform finish.

The Kemperol V210 cold-applied liquid waterproofing membrane was then applied in a single wet-on-wet process involving the application of liquid resin to the substrate



followed by installation of the reinforcement fleece onto the wet resin. More resin was then immediately applied to ensure complete saturation of the fleece before the system was allowed to cure to form a durable, monolithic waterproof membrane that cannot delaminate and remains permanently elastic and U/V stable.

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## View from the top

Allan Frizzell of roofing specialists Topseal looks at how innovation in roof coverings has taken the hassle out of flat roof maintenance.

**■** lat roofs have a long history in the UK, and their benefits in terms of affordability and ease of construction have made them a popular choice for buildings in multiple occupation and home extensions. Compared to pitched roofs that can obstruct views, flat roofs are by nature able to keep the height of a building to a minimum, which has contributed to their popularity.

Many of the early flat roofs gained a reputation for being high-maintenance, but innovation has led to the development of new materials such as Glass Reinforced Polyester (GRP), which offer better durability. Latest generation GRP flat roof replacement systems can ensure that flat roofs can be refurbished effectively.

### Affordable and versatile

Flat roofs are a popular choice as they offer both aesthetic and practical benefits. Their flat profile enables them to keep the height of a building to a minimum, while a pitched roof may interfere with existing sightlines. From an aesthetic point of view, they are often considered more contemporary looking compared to the more traditional pitched roofs, and are therefore becoming increasing popular, particularly in urban areas or for bespoke 'one off' home designs. Flat roofs are also extremely versatile, providing the option for mechanical services such as air

"GRP refurbishment roof coverings are the most cost-effective option for the long term"

conditioning units and plant rooms to be located there, or even for building occupants to benefit from a roof garden or balcony.

When it comes to the installation of flat roofs, some traditional materials have been found to degrade more quickly than others - for example, when exposed to the sun - that can reduce their lifespan.

### Low maintenance future

The question facing facilities managers and building owners when a flat roof becomes a maintenance burden is whether to repair the damage or replace the whole system with a more modern roof covering. When faced with that dilemma, a number of options need to be taken into consideration. Firstly, an initial survey of the roof must be carried out to identify any issues, including damage to the surface membrane. Afterwards, there is a need to check that the underlying substrate is sound. Damage to the waterproof membrane is a common issue on flat roofs especially in areas of heavy footfall, which can dramatically reduce the material's life expectancy.

If the building owner or facilities manager is taking a long-term view of the building's maintenance requirements, then the most cost-effective option could be to specify a modern GRP refurbishment roof covering. This type of roof covering is effective as it is ultra-low maintenance and in some cases comes with a guaranteed lifetime of 20 years.

### Time is money

Building owners also need to factor in the maintenance labour time and cost savings when considering whether to replace a flat roof that has been damaged or started to leak. Frequent repairs can prove too costly, and that is when a more lasting solution would offer better value.

In the past, building owners and property managers had been reluctant to have a flat roof completely replaced as it would mean that the building could not be used while the work was being carried out, causing a great deal of inconvenience for residents. However, latest GRP roof coverings systems allow the building to remain fully operational, because the GRP system is installed over the existing substrate. If the refurbishment works fall under Part L of the Building Regulations, some GRP systems can allow you to upgrade the warm roof properties by installing the system directly

Recently there has been growth in demand for GRP as a replacement roofing material as local authorities and landlords have recognised how it provides a long-term, low-maintenance, durable, lightweight solution.

The aesthetics of GRP flat roof coverings also add to their appeal. These are often available in a choice of colours and finishes, including simulated lead and copper, enabling specifiers to retain the appearance of a lead or copper roof without the associated expense or risk of theft.

### Safety

Flat refurbishment GRP roof coverings offer safety benefits, too. These single-ply membranes remove the need for hot works as part of helping contractors and building owners to meet ever more stringent health and safety requirements on site.

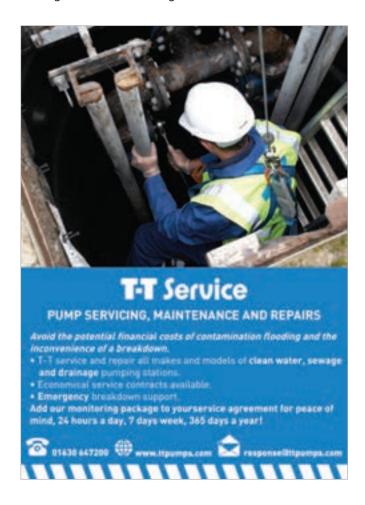
The new generation of GRP flat roof refurbishment systems are set to change perceptions of flat roofs. And, with a growing market for flat roof refurbishments, this means that building owners can be assured of a much lower maintenance roof covering that offers better weather protection and provides a more durable system.



For building owners that are seeking a more cost-effective, long-term solution for their existing flat roof, GRP refurbishment systems are an attractive option as a real alternative to the constant repair and maintenance of flat roofs.

Allan Frizzell is technical manager at Topseal.





### Maintenance-free ridges and hips

As an alternative to using mortar on roofs, Klober Roll-Fix is a ventilating dry ridge and hip which is virtually maintenance-free. As a pioneer of such systems, the Roll-Fix kit now includes universal seals for use with either round or angle ridges. To make ordering simple there's just one kit for ridges and



one for hips, both containing everything you need to fix five linear metres and using a butyl-backed roll to provide an incredibly strong and lasting bond. Hip kits include hip trays and cro clips for small tile pieces. Four UV-stable colours are available to match commonly used tiles. For more information visit the website.

01332 813050 www.klober.co.uk

### 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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# Relieving the pressure

Stuart Pearce of GeoSmart Information explains how SuDS can help mitigate the flood risk.

mproving the country's resilience to flooding is driving the need for a new approach to managing surface water runoff.

Existing drainage systems and sewers have a limited capacity and the increase in surface water from development means that we can no longer rely on this infrastructure to cope with surface water on site. Add to this the impact of climate change and the risk and severity of flooding increases.

Planning policy requires that development must accommodate additional runoff on site, and only rely on the existing drainage network as a last resort where it is not practical to manage the additional water within the site.

This calls for a new approach and help is at hand for developers in the shape of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) that are designed to replicate the natural drainage from the site (pre-development) to mitigate the flood risk. They provide areas for water storage and drainage as close as possible to where the rain falls. Far less then goes into traditional sewers, taking pressure off existing drains and river systems elsewhere.

### **Clearer SuDS legislation**

Currently, SuDS legislation is a complex and messy picture. Schedule 3 of the Water Management Act 2010 required the establishment of statutory approval boards to scrutinise drainage proposals. These have yet to be enacted. In part, concern over introducing further hurdles during planning had dampened the Government's appetite at a time when housing supply is in high demand.

The Chartered Institution of Water and Environment Management (CIWEM) undertook a survey in 2016 on SuDS implementation on developments in the planning system. Their "A Place for SuDS" report concluded that the main barriers to widespread SuDS uptake in England are not from cost or practicality, but from policy and institutional barriers (progress on SuDS legislation is far more advanced in Scotland and Wales).

While the Government is unlikely to remove the automatic right to connect to the main sewer network, the report makes three clear recommendations:

- Make discharge to the sewer system conditional on high-quality SuDS in new developments
- Update standards, focusing on the wider benefits of SuDS: amenity, biodiversity and water quality
- Clear direction on SuDS adoption and funding maintenance
   This will feature strongly in the House of Lords Spring Review of the
   2010 Act Schedule 3 with repeated calls for the government to amend the

   2016 Housing Act further to ensure SuDS legislation gains more bite.

### Existing drainage guidance

That said, a drainage hierarchy already exists in both the Building Regulations and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which



"Ideally, surface water should infiltrate into the soil directly but this may not always be possible as a single solution. Clay based ground conditions, such as those in parts of London, make solely relying on infiltration far harder"

prioritises drainage through soil infiltration rather than to a sewer. Since 2015, all developments in a flood risk area and all major developments (10 or more dwellings) need to demonstrate that the project will not increase flooding elsewhere or downstream.

NPPF also states that Local Authorities must scrutinise development for flood risk and to liaise with Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs), created from the 2010 Act, to ensure that surface water runoff calculations meet the Authorities' guidance. Increasingly, LLFAs and Local Authorities are more robust in their approach – albeit that the guidance varies frequently between Authorities.

Ideally, surface water should infiltrate into the soil directly, but this may not always be possible as a single solution. Clay based ground conditions, such as those in parts of London, make solely relying on infiltration far harder.

Authority planning teams and LLFAs will be looking for infiltration SuDS schemes to be quoting adequate rates of water infiltration that do not increase flood risk on site or elsewhere. They will also look to set the water discharge rate as close to those of a Greenfield site.

### Planning ahead

Developers, architects and planning consultants are increasingly being



expected to provide details of the drainage strategy early on in the design and planning phase, and need to demonstrate why infiltration SuDS are not appropriate if they want to rely on discharge to the existing drainage network. If this is not considered early in the development process it may have a significant impact on how the final scheme design, costs and future maintenance liabilities turn out.

SuDS shouldn't be seen as a restriction to development and can prove

attractive to buyers through improved community amenity. Information on the suitability of infiltration SuDS and outline drainage strategy is readily available and affordable to support pre-planning and outline design phases of development.

The key is not to try and retrofit SuDS into an already planned site to satisfy planning or **Building Research Establishment** Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) conditions. This can lead to inefficient design and ultimately more cost.

Who adopts the SuDS maintenance is critical to resolve at the start of the development process - so that the local authorities,

maintenance company, residents or water company have the long term

"SuDS shouldn't be seen as a restriction to development and can prove attractive to buyers through improved community amenity"

resources to maintain it.

### Verify your site suitability

The Local Authority SuDS Office Organisation (LASOO) are the owners and writers of the guidance which sits alongside the Non-Statutory Technical Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems.

> In the guidance, they advise: "It is highly recommended that pre-application discussions take place before submitting an application to the local planning authority. Ideally, these discussions should start at the land acquisition due diligence stage and continue as part of the pre-planning application process."

> Developers frequently cite land constraint as the most common reason for not doing SuDS. However, our own data shows that the majority of land in England and Wales is suitable for infiltration of surface water via SuDS. With a multitude of attenuation SuDS options now available, there are very few sites, even where space is limited, for which a SuDS option is not achievable at reasonable cost.

SuDS should be considered in the early stages of design and planning and also when buying land for any future development. Land owners, developers and institutions require clear advice at the earliest stage in the process as SuDS can have a significant impact on the development proposal. SuDS can have a very positive impact on a development and land value, but it is advised to consider this early and avoid surprises later.

Stuart Pearce is managing director at GeoSmart Information.



## Locking crime out

Robust door-access control is key to a safer community. Tim Rogers of security specialists Key Management Systems reveals the options.



n a world where population numbers are rising rapidly and social pressures change by the day, concerns over personal security have taken centre stage.

While we trust the police and the media to inform us about significant threats to our safety, there are many long-standing problems that continue to plague society.

Social housing estates in particular are often associated with crime and anti-social behaviour that affects communities and harm individuals, but even when these are not relevant issues, adequate access systems can provide vital control over who is let in and out of the premises.

Significantly, communal door access systems installed in most multiresident blocks today allow much greater visibility over who enters the property and when. Most importantly, it ensures that anyone who

shouldn't gain access to a property is prevented from entering, even if they had acquired an entry fob.

Achieving this level of security has been a challenge in the past. Since old communal door access systems were not typically linked to a central management system, monitoring of fobs had been limited to keeping manual records.

In certain circumstances, this led to potential security breaches, with stolen or lost fobs remaining active for long periods after their disappearance. Tenants who had moved

out of a flat would still possess active fobs for example, or contractors hired to carry out work would hold fobs that cannot be tracked. Such manual recording practices were confusing and wouldn't allow the building management to effectively look after the security of any single block.

"Communal door access systems allow greater visibility over who enters the property and when"

### Advancements

Along with rapid developments in technology, there have been significant steps forward in the management practices of communal door access and the associated security. These technological advancements are concentrated in two main areas: firstly, around the actual access to the door, and secondly, around management and reporting.

In terms of access, the technology has developed to take into account multiple householders living in a single property. This means there can be multiple fobs issued for each person living in a flat within a building, ensuring each resident can have a different-coloured fob that can be easily identified and tracked.

It is not just the looks of the fob that are key, however. Internally, each one would be equipped with a unique coding, which means that if it is lost, it can be quickly deactivated and replaced with a like-for-like fob.

The same principle applies when it comes to granting access to staff and contractors. It is now easy for management to provide unique fobs that can be programmed to allow contractors into specific areas and at specific times of the day, further guaranteeing that no unauthorised personnel is present in a building.

### Moving to the cloud

When considering the management of these access systems, the most significant development has been the explosion of cloud usage in recent years. This, in short, allows facility managers to monitor their building's access system at any time via the Internet.

The impact of these technological developments cannot be

understated. Historically, if a fob needed adding or deleting to the system, someone had to go to the actual building and manually programme the system to delete the fob. Any data was then manually recorded, if at all.

Today however, all this can be done instantly – the building manager can use an internet-connected device, whether a smart phone, tablet or a computer, to access the management system and apply the necessary changes there and then. A detailed record of what fob had been changed, when it happened and whether a new fob had been issued, can then be generated.



### **Detailed reporting**

There are, in addition, a few systems that take this management a step further and provide a detailed reporting function. The KMS Simplekey Web allows the management team to view real-time reports of the fob usage for any one block, or track a specific fob. This reporting function not only has major time and cost-saving benefits, but also offers enhanced security to building owners and residents alike.

Allowing building management to track fobs instantaneously ensures that when a fob is cancelled, someone who shouldn't be using it cannot use it improperly. In one recent domestic violence case, the police were able to work with the Housing Trust to ensure that a violent partner was not able to gain access into his old apartment, ensuring his partner and family were safe.

With this type of controlled access systems being adopted across an increasing number of multi-resident blocks, building managers can now take action to minimise crime and help communities enjoy an improved level of security.

Tim Rogers is director at Key Management Solutions.

"It is now easy to provide unique fobs to grant contractors access to specific areas and at specific times"

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### Aico releases new features for app

Aico is pleased to announce the arrival of new features to the multiple award-winning app, AudioLINK. The data extraction technology is integrated into all Aico Carbon Monoxide (CO) Alarms and the Multi-Sensor Fire Alarm Ei2110e. AudioLINK is a revolutionary alarm technology that allows for



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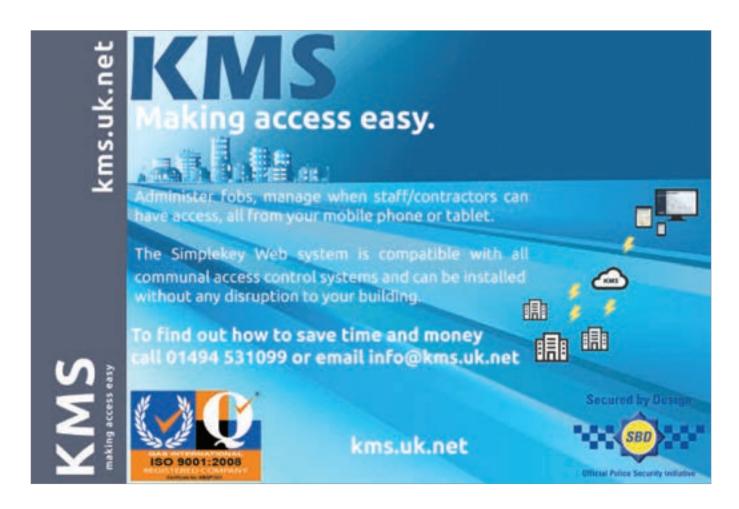
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Tel: 0131 290 2862 www.grantwestfield.co.uk

Lecico

Tel: 01234 244030 www.lecico.co.uk

MX Group

Tel: 01684 293311 www.mx-group.com

Norcros Adhesives Ltd

Tel: 01782 524 140 www.norcros-adhesives.com

Tel: 020 8842 0033 www.saniflo.co.uk

### **Boiler Casings**

**Encasement** 

Tel: 01733 266 889 www.encasement.co.uk

### **Cladding & Facades**

Forticrete

Tel: 01909 775000 www.forticrete.co.uk

Trespa UK Ltd

Tel: 0808-2340268 www.trespa.com

### Doors, Windows & Glazing

Comar Architectural Aluminium Systems

Tel: 0208 685 9685 www.comar-alu.co.uk

Marlin Specialist Glazing Solutions

Tel: 01535 603909 www.marlinwindows.co.uk

Mila Window & Door Maintenance

Tel: 0808 100 8881 www.milamaintenance.co.uk

Windoor UK

Tel: 0870 0678810 www.windooruk.co.uk

### **Eco & Green Products**

Tel: 01282 861 325 www.kedel.co.uk

### **EV Charging**

**Rolec Services** 

Tel: 01205 724754 www.rolecserv.com

### Fire & Smoke **Protection**

Aico

Tel: 01691 664100 www.aico.co.uk

**BM TRADA Group** 

Tel: 01494 569800 www.bmtradagroup.com

Plumis Ltd

Tel: 0208 133 8775 www.plumis.co.uk

**Sprue Safety Products** 

Tel: 02476 323 232 www.sprue.com

**Kidde Fyrnetics** 

Tel: 01753 685 148 www.kiddefyrnetics.co.uk

### **Flood Control**

Floodcheck

Tel: 08443 356 668 www.floodcheck.co.uk

### **Floors & Flooring**

**Designer Contracts** 

Tel: 01246 854 577 www.designercontracts.com

The Deck Tile Co.

Tel: 0118 3740123 www.thedecktileco.co.uk

Flowcrete UK

Tel: 01270 753 000 www.flowcrete.co.uk

Gerflor

Tel: 01926 622 600 www.gerflor.co.uk

Mapei UK Ltd

Tel: 0121 508 6970 www.mapei.co.uk

Osmo UK

Tel: 01296 481 220 www.osmouk.com

Sika Ltd

Tel: 01707 394 444 www.sika.co.uk

### **Heating &** Renewable Energy

Arrow Valves Ltd

Tel: 01442 823123 www.arrowvalves.co.uk

Altecnic Ltd

Tel: 01785 218200 www.altecnic.co.uk

### **Heating & Renewable Energy**

Baxi Heating UK Ltd (Potterton)

Tel: 0844 871 1525 www.baxi.co.uk

Bosch Thermotechnology Ltd

Tel: 01905 752902

www.bosch-thermotechnology.co.uk

Danfoss Ltd

Tel: 0870 608 0008 www.danfoss.co.uk

The Electric Boilers Company

Tel: 0208 998 2024 www.electricboilerscompany.com

**Evinox Energy** 

Tel: 01372 722277 www.evinox.co.uk

Gi Energy

Tel: 024 7667 3131 www.gienergy.net

Ice Energy Technologies

Tel: 0808 145 2340 www.iceenergy.co.uk

Intergas Heating Ltd

Tel: 01527 888000 www.intergasheating.co.uk

Johnson & Starley Ltd

Tel: 01604 762 881 www.johnsonandstarley.co.uk

Kingspan Environmental Ltd

Tel: 028 3836 4400 www.kingspanenv.com

**LG Electronics** 

Tel: 01753 491500 www.lg.com

Minus7 Ltd

Tel: 01922 419405 www.minus7.co.uk

Mitsubishi Electric Europe BV

Tel: 01707 276 100 www.mitsubishielectric.co.uk

Panasonic

Tel: 0344 844 3899 www.panasonic.co.uk

Tel: 01432 598 019 www.rointe.co.uk

Stokvis Industrial Boilers International Ltd

Tel: 0208 783 3050 www.stokvisboilers.com

**UK Plumbing Supplies** Tel: 0800 622 6855

www.uk-plumbing-supplies.co.uk

### **Heating & Renewable Energy**

Wilo (UK)

Tel: 01283 523 000 www.wilo.co.uk

### Insulation

Remmers UK Ltd

Tel: 01293 594010 www.remmers.co.uk

### Stairs, Balustrades & Balconies

Coillte Panel Products Ltd

Tel: 01322 424900 www.coilltepanelproducts.com

### Water & Air Quality

Airflow Developments Ltd

Tel: 01494 525252 www.airflow.com

**EnviroVent Ltd** 

Tel: 01423 810810 www.envirovent.com

**ESS Ventilation** 

Tel: 01428 751646 www.esscontracting.co.uk

Greentherm Solutions Ltd

Tel: 01708 720190 www.uksprayfoam.co.uk

Neoperl UK Ltd

Tel: 01684 564869 www.neoperl.net

Nuaire Ltd

Tel: 0292 085 8486 www.nuaire.co.uk

Poujoulat UK Ltd

Tel: 01483 461700 www.poujoulat.co.uk

Space Air Conditioning

Tel: 01483 504 883 www.spaceair.co.uk

Spirotech UK Ltd

Tel: 0208 4513 344 www.spirotech.co.uk

**Total Home Environment** 

Tel: 0845 260 0123 www.totalhome.co.uk

**Urban Environments** 

Tel: 01732 743003

www.urbanenvironments.co.uk

Vent-Axia

Tel: 08448 560 580 www.vent-axia.com

Wavin

Tel: 0844 856 5152 www.wavin.co.uk

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