



HOUSING

MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

May 2017

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Balconies & Balustrades
Electrical Safety & Awareness
Furnishing & Communal Areas
Smoke & Fire Protection

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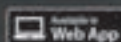
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Editor's comment

What's the future of council housing?



Patrick Mooney,
News Editor

Despite the recent raft of new legislation and policy papers on 'housing issues' it is still proving impossible to identify a clear Government vision for the future of council housing in Britain, or England anyway.

While it was reassuring to see our political leaders accept that simply building more homes for outright sale was not the way to fix our broken housing market, they have yet to come up with a blueprint for one of the major building blocks in our society.

Councils already provide affordable homes for millions of people in this country but when politicians bring themselves to talk about rented housing, they are invariably talking about the contributions being made by private landlords or housing associations.

Crisis

When policies are directed towards local authorities it is usually in a negative way – restricting access to or the length of tenancies, controlling rents or forcing councils to sell assets at ever-increasing discounts. And then to rub salt into the wounds, the proceeds from the sales of their most valuable properties are to be given to housing associations to compensate them for selling homes to their tenants at greatly subsidised prices.

Where's the logic in that? In many ways we are very lucky that the people working for councils up and down the country are such a resourceful and robust lot, otherwise we wouldn't see places like Sheffield responding to the current crisis by building hundreds of new low-cost homes for first-time buyers and young families, as well as new homes to rent at affordable prices, with higher levels of protection than the private sector will ever manage.

But the only way Sheffield City Council managed to do this was by setting up a housing company, which then entered into a partnership with a housebuilder and a housing association. Essentially they had to find a way around the byzantine maze of local government laws and finance, to ensure the new homes are not officially classed as council housing and tenants do not enjoy a statutory right to buy.

Solution

Thankfully Sheffield is not alone and councils in places like Croydon and Bournemouth are also finding ways of returning to the housebuilding game. It's a far cry from the peak of council housebuilding of the 1960s when more than 400,000 homes were built in a single year, but it's certainly a lot better than the somewhat miserly 130 homes built in 2004.

Why the Government forces local councils to act in this way is anybody's guess, but this is surely one of the more stupid cases of 'cutting off one's nose to spite one's face'. Councils are far from perfect and they do not always get it right, but if the Government is serious about fixing the housing market and delivering on its ambition to build a million new homes by 2020, while at the same time helping the 'just about managing', then surely it makes sense to give a key role to the likes of Sheffield.



On the cover...

The May issue of Housing Management & Maintenance features Tribe Apartments, Manchester's first Build to Rent scheme, which transformed three derelict tower blocks after an award-winning refurbishment.

Read the case study on p. 21

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Government awaits ONS decision on deregulation changes

The Office for National Statistics is monitoring the changes made to housing association regulation, but has not set a formal date for completing a review of the sector's public sector status.

ONS reclassified associations as public sector bodies in 2015, a decision that moved their £60bn of loans onto the national balance sheet. The Government has been desperate to change the classification of HAs so their borrowings can be treated as private sector debts.

The Homes & Communities Agency has taken various measures to lighten the regulatory burden on associations but the ONS has refused to say when a review will be undertaken.

Complications

What could make the eventual outcome difficult to predict is that while associations no longer have to obtain the HCA's prior consent for actions like rule changes, mergers and property disposals, they still have to advise the regulator after actions have taken place.



HAs are also very reliant on the public purse with housing benefit paying roughly half of all rental income. The HCA is also issuing strongly worded general advice over such issues as the need to consult tenants prior to property disposals and the importance of strong oversight by boards.

In a further complication, the Charity Commission has publicly stated that charitable housing associations – roughly one third of the total – will now have to obtain their prior consent instead. Previously this was not necessary if another organisation had oversight responsibilities.

Benefits

The National Housing Federation is lobbying for the administrative burden of regulation to be removed completely, with HA boards left in charge.

In a briefing sent to members, the NHF said: "The Federation is concerned that this has the potential to increase the regulatory burden on affected organisations, delay the implementation of active asset management strategies, and overwhelm the resources available to the Charity Commission."

The trade body said it is seeking a solution that would protect charitable assets while also ensuring all housing associations benefit from deregulation.

As the Charity Commission may be looking at a self-certificating system, the NHF position is potentially an over-reaction. Many HAs sought charitable status to reduce their tax liabilities and to gain other advantages, such as exemption from enforced asset sales.

Cabinet rejects recommendation over RTB funding

The Government has rejected a select committee's recommendation that the Right to Buy for housing association tenants should be funded from taxation rather than by a levy on local councils.

Under current policy, HA tenants are able to purchase their homes at a discount funded by the sale of high-value council properties in the area. This has put a considerable strain on the relationships between councils and housing associations, with less co-operative working on new housebuilding deals.

Council leaders have been critical of housing associations for being too keen to cut deals with the Government, while ignoring the impact of cuts on the incomes of both councils and their residents. The problem has been compounded by low rates of replacement to date with only about one new affordable home built for seven homes sold under the RTB.

The Communities and Local Government Select Committee published a report earlier this year calling for funding for the Right to Buy extension to housing association tenants.

Asset sales

But in its response to the committee, the Department for Communities and Local Government has said it "does not accept this recommendation".

"We believe in the principle that public policy should usually be funded by central government, rather than through a levy on local authorities, especially as the impact of this levy will fall only on some local authorities, yet will be applied nationally," the CLG Committee report said.

It argued that because only councils with retained housing stock would be eligible to pay the levy by selling off these assets, the effects of the extension will be "far greater" in some areas than others. London in particular is seen as a problem area.

However in its response, the DCLG said: "We made a clear commitment to fund the extension of RTB discounts to HA tenants by requiring councils to manage their housing assets more efficiently, with the most expensive properties being sold off and replaced as they fall vacant.

When there is an increased need for housing across the country, it makes no sense for a local authority to keep hold of higher-value vacant council homes when it could sell them to fund additional housing and the extension of Right to Buy discounts to housing association tenants, which will also create more affordable homes."

Government opens talks on future rent policies

Civil servants are talking with representatives of the social housing sector over possible rent setting policies from 2020, once the current round of annual cuts comes to an end.

Informal meetings have taken place with various groups, with the emphasis on listening to what housing associations think could work.

While the National Housing Federation is asking for complete freedom in rent setting, the Government is fearful of the impact this could have on the welfare budget.

However, it appears there is recognition that the current policy needs to be relaxed, with housing associations given greater incentives to increase their output of new homes. DCLG and the Treasury are understood to not share a

common view at present.

Options discussed are understood to have included a continuing freeze, a straightforward inflation link, a more complex productivity and rental increase formula.

"There is recognition that the current policy needs to be relaxed, with housing associations given greater incentives to increase their housing output"

HA deregulation – momentous change or a damp squib?

A lighter regime of regulating the activities of housing associations has finally kicked in, but opinions remain divided on how much of an impact this will have on the sector.

In a nutshell, social landlords no longer have to obtain the regulator's consent if they want to sell or mortgage their housing, to merge with another housing association, or to restructure their business.

To some this represents the first steps into a golden age of new freedoms where associations can act independently and determine their future, along with the right to control their own activities.

However, others say this is the least that could be done in an attempt to get HAs reclassified as private bodies by the Office for National Statistics and off the public sector's balance sheet, where they have sat since 2015.

Homework

The Homes & Communities Agency has retained the right to be notified of property sales and

other disposals, as well as rule changes and restructures, after the decisions have already been made.

This has been likened to 'marking the homework' at the end of term or just before exams are sat, rather than as part of a continuous process. It also means the HCA can step in and take action after the event if it has specific concerns.

However, its ability to appoint board members and senior managers has been diluted and can now only occur where there has been a breach of legal requirements.

A further complication has been highlighted by the need for charitable associations, of which there are 600 or a third of the total number of HAs, to obtain consent from the Charity Commission.

In the past this was not needed as the work was effectively delegated to the HCA, but with deregulation, this requirement has resumed much to the irritation of the NHF.

None of this has stopped the regulator from issuing a loud and cautionary warning to boards

and senior executives that they need to act with care and sensitivity to risks, while working to protect the sector's reputation at all times.

But the focus on good governance has certainly shifted from the HCA to individual boards, who will have to take a more active role in activities like scrutiny, oversight and risk assessment, while carefully managing relationships with senior executives.

It will only take one HA to act in an injudicious way – putting tenants' homes at risk, or defaulting on a private loan – for the new system to come under strain and for calls to be made to reverse the changes.

Diligence

It's possible that private lenders will step up their due diligence requirements and request more financial returns and operational information from HAs that they work with.

But the extent of this is unknown and will probably vary.

Credit rating agency Standard and Poor's has already said that credit ratings will not be damaged by deregulatory changes, despite some initial concern from lenders.

The HCA has seen fit to remind HAs about the need to consult tenants over sales of properties and one outcome could be that a closer relationship may develop between the HCA and the Ombudsman – in which case complaints could become a more important source of regulatory information and intervention.

This might result in a greater voice being given to tenants.

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Thousands on 50p-a-week housing benefit, Panorama finds

More than 7,500 households have lost their housing benefit and instead receive a nominal 50p a week because of the welfare cap, a BBC investigation has found.

The tenants affected are concentrated in cities in the North and Midlands. Birmingham has the highest number of households on 50p a week housing benefit - 578 out of 2,968 that are benefit-capped. Leeds is second (223 out of 993) and Manchester is third (179 out of 833).

A Panorama survey of hundreds of councils shows at least 67,600 homes in England, Scotland and Wales have lost some money due to the policy of capping benefits at £23,000 in London and £20,000 in the rest of the country.

The nominal sum of 50p is paid so that those households can claim access to an emergency fund if they need to. Without this, they would receive no discretionary help with their housing costs.

"There is recognition that the current policy needs to be relaxed, with housing associations given greater incentives to increase their housing output"

Homelessness risks

Alison Garnham, chief executive of the Child Poverty Action Group, said:

"Removing people's housing benefit basically means that people can't afford their home, so it puts people at risk of homelessness. It also means that they have to use money that's intended to buy food for their kids and for their other living expenses - this has to be used to plug the hole in their rent."

Where someone finds work - 16 hours a week for single parents, 24 hours for a couple - their benefits are reinstated, and research suggests about 5 per cent of those affected by the cap have returned to work.

But Ms Garnham said about 80 per cent of those affected cannot be expected to work as they are sick or have very young children.

Welfare delivery minister Caroline Nokes said the benefit cap was introduced to "level up the playing field between families who are in work and those who are reliant on benefits". She added: "What we sought to do was incentivise work because we know that the outcomes for children will be better if they are in families that are working."



Ministers reverse universal credit policy for homeless families

Government Ministers have bowed to pressure to exclude homeless families from Universal Credit after reports emerged of 'an explosion in rent arrears'.

Councils in south London say rent collection levels for homeless tenants placed in emergency accommodation have collapsed following the introduction of the UC digital service last year.

This was proving particularly embarrassing for Housing Minister Gavin Barwell, who represents a Croydon constituency and has a policy brief for the whole of the capital.

Croydon council has said it faces an unpaid £2.5m rent bill this year as a result of problems with UC and has warned ministers this scale of losses is unsustainable. It said the costs were leaving it and other councils potentially unable to meet their statutory duties under homelessness law.

Delays

Under universal credit rules homeless families who are put up in short-term, bed and breakfast accommodation have to wait six weeks to qualify for rent support. Council leaders say this is incompatible with laws that require councils to move those families on to more suitable accommodation within six weeks - so they have already left by the time their first UC payment arrives.

Large numbers of families placed in B&B lodgings in the south London boroughs of Croydon, Southwark and Sutton have run up rent arrears averaging £1,500 before being transferred by the authorities, leaving the councils to foot a bill that under the old system would have been met by housing benefit.

The Department for Work and Pensions is now working on introducing an exemption for people who are made homeless, so that councils can "fully support" them in temporary accommodation.

Croydon council is one of the few areas where UC has been fully rolled out. Some 1,250 of their 14,000 tenants are on universal credit. While the council's normal rent collection levels stand at 98 per cent, for tenants on UC this drops to 72 per cent. For those in temporary accommodation, it fell further to just 59 per cent in Croydon, 44 in Sutton and 51 in Southwark.

"There is recognition that the current policy needs to be relaxed, with housing associations given greater incentives to increase their housing output"

Debts

Alison Butler, deputy leader and cabinet member for homes, regeneration and planning at Croydon Council, said universal credit and the benefit caps "have left hundreds of Croydon families in more debt and saddled the council with spiralling costs. The government must fix this flawed policy before it goes nationwide."

She added the council had "repeatedly" raised concerns with the government and welcomed the move to consider exemptions for homeless families.

Universal credit was introduced by the former Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith as a way of ensuring claimants would be better off in work than on benefits. However, cuts to work allowances within UC have reduced the incentive for some claimants to get a job and will leave 1.2 million working families worse off.

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New rules to target rogue landlords go live

Local councils have been given new powers to crack down on rogue landlords as part of a series of measures to improve safety, security and affordability for private tenants.

The new rules came into effect from early April and they follow the Housing White Paper's launch, which is designed to encourage growth in the private rented sector, while protecting tenants from bad landlords who flout the rules. Councils can now impose fines of up to £30,000 as an alternative to taking landlords to court for a range of housing offences. They can also retain all of the income to make sure it is used for private sector housing enforcement purposes.

Rent repayment orders, which can be issued to penalise landlords managing or letting unlicensed properties, have also been extended to cover a wider range of situations. These include the illegal evictions or harassment of the occupiers of a property, using violence to secure entry and the breach of a banning order.

Poor quality

Housing and Planning Minister Gavin Barwell said: "These measures will give councils the additional powers they need to tackle poor-quality rental homes in their area.

"By driving out of business those rogue landlords that continue to flout the rules, we can raise standards, improve affordability and give tenants the protections they need." Further new measures introduced in April include giving councils access to tenancy deposit protection data that help them identify rental properties in their area, and tackle the small minority of rogue landlords through targeted enforcement and prevention work. Letting agents' fees will also be banned to give renters greater clarity and control over what they will pay.

Since 2011 the Government has provided £12m so local councils can carry out more raids, issue more statutory notices and demolish beds in sheds and other prohibited buildings.

Homelessness Reduction Bill latest

The head of the housing sector's leading professional body welcomed news that the Homelessness Reduction Bill passed its final stage in the House of Lords as new figures revealed the continuing scale of the problem.

Terrie Alafat CBE, chief executive of the Chartered Institute of Housing, said: "The passage of the Homelessness Reduction Bill through its final stage in the House of Lords is a hugely positive step forward as homelessness statistics reveal the scale of this problem.

"It's particularly alarming, but not surprising, to see the number of households in temporary accommodation increase by 10 per cent compared to last year and 58 per cent since 2010.

"Though the Homelessness Reduction Bill's progress is historic, the statistics are a reminder that the bill needs to be part of a robust homelessness strategy if we're really going to tackle an issue which has steadily worsened.

"That will require significant support for local authorities to deliver, more truly affordable homes and the review of welfare policies which undermine the government's ambition to create a country which works for everyone."

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

Where's the issue?

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

and money compared to site made alternatives.

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

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

Time for change

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

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

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New PRS review launched

A new review of how the private rented sector works is to be undertaken by leading academics from York University's Centre for Housing Policy. The independent study, funded by the Nationwide Foundation, is expected to be completed in a year with its findings published in 2018. It will be led by Julie Rugg and David Rhodes, authors of *The Private Rented Sector: Its Contribution and Potential* (informally known as the Rugg Review), which dates back to 2008.

Dr Rugg said: "Our last review showed the private rented sector is made up of lots of different sub-markets, meeting different types of need. Every one of those sub-markets has changed substantially. Without a better understanding of how the rented sector works, it's unlikely that policy aimed at the sector will have the desired effect." The review will provide an independent analysis of the private rented sector in England and will particularly focus on: a comprehensive analysis of the current 'state of play'; an assessment of the policy interventions currently impacting on the sector; and proposing policy options to contribute to more effective operation. Relevant stakeholders and industry experts will be invited to submit evidence.

In addition to this review, the Nationwide Foundation is also funding a separate research by the same academic team, assessing the extent to which the PRS meets the housing needs of vulnerable tenants. Its findings will be published alongside the main review.



Rosey outlook for social landlords

An extremely positive picture of the future has been drawn for housing associations by a leading commentator, in his annual health of the social housing sector report.

Gary Moreton, head of social housing at RSM consultants, says much confidence can be drawn from the commitment of governments in both England and Scotland, to fix the housing market and to deliver the many thousands of much needed new homes. In his introduction to the report, Mr Moreton wrote: "Today, the sector is in a stronger financial position than in the years before the recession. Turnover and surpluses have hit record levels, ambitious development programmes are starting to come forward and, in a clear sign of confidence, many are looking to award pay rises in the year ahead."

The report is based on the responses from HAs to an on-line survey conducted earlier this year. Among the many reported findings are the following:

- 86% are actively seeking cost savings;
- 82% are anticipating further welfare reforms to have a significant impact;
- 49% are expecting more RP/HA failures;
- 79% say the target to build one million new homes by 2020 is not achievable;
- 65% say it will be difficult to achieve 1 for 1 replacements of properties sold through the RTB;
- 20% are considering mergers;
- 35% are NOT considering any commercial diversification;
- 11% will reduce tenant services;
- 22% will reduce community services;
- 64% do not support the HCA charging fees

for regulatory work;

- 80% say that it is sensible for the Government to dilute regulatory work in order to declassify RPs; and
- 56% say deregulation will bring more risk.

The firm's 'Health of the Sector' survey has been running for 10 years and Moreton highlighted that during this period HAs have had to face some of the greatest tests in their history - a global economic crash and drawn-out recession, four changes in political leadership, an unprecedented vote to leave the EU, an ever-deepening housing crisis and a policy and regulatory environment that rarely stood still.

Despite this he claimed there is much to be positive about and overall the sector's confidence is on the up.

"It's clear that the sector has been able to weather significant changes. Amid a difficult operating environment, many have continued to adapt, and not shied away from making radical updates when needed. The lessons, skills and experiences gained during the past 10 years mean the sector is now in the best shape possible to meet future challenges head-on."

Moreton also pointed out that there will be some downsides to contend with, adding:

"While there are reasons to be positive, history tells us that stability is unlikely to linger.

Continued welfare reform, Right to Buy updates, deregulation and ambitious homebuilding targets will continue to exert day-to-day pressures." He concluded:

"Brexit and the prospect of a second independence referendum in Scotland will only compound risks."



Giant landlord takes its repairs service back in-house

One of the country's largest housing associations has decided to repair and maintain all of its 56,000 homes using its own property management company.

Sovereign operates throughout the south and south west of England.

It recently merged with Spectrum and as part of a strategic re-organisation of the business, it will now use Sovereign Response and Spectrum Property Care to provide the full range of maintenance services to the association's entire

housing stock.

Steve Barford, executive director of property at Sovereign, said "Sovereign will now provide in-house repairs, gas servicing and voids work to all of our 56,000 homes.

"Taking greater responsibility for these important activities is a key part of our plans to provide a consistent service for all our residents as well as bringing down costs, reinvesting the savings into new much-needed affordable homes and services."

Upgrade for Manchester HA

Manchester-based housing association St Vincent's has received a governance upgrade to G1 after making improvements to its controls over meeting health and safety legislation and regulatory requirements.

The 3,769-home East End Homes has been upgraded over its viability to V1. The regulator is now reassured the association has an "adequately funded" business plan, whereas previously it was exposed because of delays in completing its regeneration programme. This is now mostly complete.

HA chooses multiple contractors for £90m of repairs work

Social landlord A2 Dominion, has bucked the trend by splitting its repair and maintenance work for the next four years across 16 contractors.

The contracts are for both planned and cyclical works including kitchen and bathroom replacements, external and communal redecoration and external repairs.

While across the sector most landlords have sought long-term partnership deals with one or two major contractors or have set up in-house repairs businesses, the move by A2 Dominion stands out for being different. But Gary Bellenger, assistant director of property services at the association, believes their model will deliver many advantages to the business and their tenants.

Value for money

"Using 16 contractors gives us a mixed economy," he explained. "This allows us to match the best-placed contractors to deliver the repair works for the best price. Being limited to a small number of large national contractors can lead to work being delivered outside of the contractors'

core areas of business, resulting in inferior delivery or value for money."

Risk spreading

"Procurement is time-consuming and an expensive business for everyone involved. While we don't expect poor performance or failure from the contractors, should either occur, our frameworks allow us to respond quickly and efficiently, minimising the impact to our customers and to our repairs programmes."

Better relationships

"We are excited about building new and highly collaborative relationships with the framework contractors. An example of this is where all contractors on our frameworks have signed up to using a new joint project management tool. The list of contractors being used includes some of the big names, familiar to many across the sector (such as Kier, Mitie, Morgan Sindall, Mulalley and Ian Williams) and it will be interesting to see the progress made and whether the planned benefits are delivered."

UK 'must insulate 25 million homes'

As many as 25 million homes need insulating by 2050 to meet carbon emission targets – equivalent to more than one home every minute.

Britain has some of the least energy efficient homes in Europe and has agreed to cut carbon emissions by 80 per cent by 2050. A third of current emissions come from heating poorly insulated and draughty buildings. In a report to Parliament, the Green Building Council says that four out of five homes that will be occupied in 2050 have already been built. It also points out that too much focus has been on energy prices and switching suppliers, which deliver negligible savings of about £25 a year.

Construction experts say the current situation offers an unmissable opportunity under the Government's new infrastructure agenda. A drive to insulate roofs, walls and floors could create thousands more jobs, as well as lower energy bills and improve people's health, comfort and happiness.

Hassle

The Green Deal scheme for owner-occupiers collapsed amid criticism that interest rates for insulation were too high and the work was too much hassle. Pay back periods for improvement works were considered to be too long, despite their positive impact on property values.

The report recommends:

- Setting staged targets for refurbishing buildings;
- Reintroducing the "zero-carbon" standard for buildings from 2020;
- Recognising energy efficiency as a national infrastructure priority;
- Setting long-term trajectories for ratcheting up home energy standards;
- Obliging commercial buildings to display the amount of energy they use.

Julie Hirigoyen, head of the GBC, said:

"People will have warmer homes and lower bills; they will live longer, happier lives; we will be able to address climate change and carbon emissions.

"Driving up demand for retro-fitting homes is essential for any policy to be a success - the Green Deal told us just offering financial incentives isn't necessarily the only solution. We need to make it all easy, attractive and affordable."

Ms Hirigoyen called for support for innovation among builders. This includes finding new ways of insulating homes so residents do not have to be re-housed, while works are underway. This could include the use of robots.

"A drive to insulate roofs, walls and floors could create thousands more jobs"



Midlands HA to pilot a DIY repairs scheme

Bromford has launched a six-month pilot scheme requiring new tenants to carry out their own simple home repairs, in about one third of their stock.

Technical staff will provide tenants with toolkits and teach them how to carry out basic repairs as the social landlord attempts to cut down on the number of maintenance call-outs.

"As Bromford increasingly focuses on offering customers a far more coaching-led approach, we are keen to explore whether this evolving relationship between customers and our repairs team will lead to improved resilience in our communities as well as a reduction in these

types of call-outs which we believe customers could be able to do for themselves," said Jason Holder, head of home maintenance at Bromford.

Under Bromford's scheme, engineers will visit new tenants around two weeks after they move in and coach them on small DIY jobs including stopping leaking taps and toilets, bleeding radiators, replacing fuses and identifying minor heating and electrical faults.

The pilot will be run in Bromford's 10,429 homes in Staffordshire and Shropshire.

It follows a small test last year that found tenants were keen to do simple repairs with training and support.



London council gets tough with rogue landlords

Newham Council in east London has vowed to take strong action against rogue landlords with fines of up to £30,000 being imposed for breaches of the law.

The council's Cabinet has agreed to adopt new powers available to all local authorities under the Housing & Planning Act 2016. They allow council officers to take direct enforcement action against criminal landlords, without the need to go through the criminal courts, adding a powerful deterrent to bad landlord behaviour.

"Council officers can take direct enforcement action against landlords without going to the criminal courts"

In addition, the new powers allow councils to keep the money collected in fines to continue and improve the enforcement work of their PRS teams.

Mayor of Newham, Sir Robin Wales said: "Landlords who rip-off and endanger their tenants should never be allowed to operate.

We welcome the new powers, which will enable us to ban the worst landlords and prevent them from exploiting vulnerable families and individuals anywhere in England."

He added: "It is a sad reality that every week, our private sector housing team unearths yet further examples of housing crime perpetuated against vulnerable tenants. This makes it even more crucial that the Government urgently commits to renew our licensing scheme."

Strong track record

Since the launch of its borough-wide licensing scheme in 2013, Newham Council claims to have made approximately 70 per cent of landlord prosecutions in London, with 1,072 successful prosecutions. It has also issued 415 cautions, reclaimed nearly £2.5m in unpaid Council Tax and undertook more than 400 enforcement visits.

The council is seeking to extend its licensing system for another five years from January 2018 and has completed a consultation exercise, inviting comments on the proposed new licensing scheme in a bid to persuade Housing Minister Gavin Barwell of the case.

Since 2015, a quarter of London councils failed to carry out a single court action, while as many as a half of councils in the capital prosecuted fewer than 10 landlords for providing unsafe accommodation, according to London Assembly Member Caroline Pidgeon.

Housing estates get regeneration cash boost

Housing estates across the country are to benefit from a £32m investment project to kick-start their regeneration and the building of thousands of new homes.

The 105 estates are spread from Gateshead to Plymouth and are owned and managed by councils and housing associations. The money is available from the Estate Regeneration Fund, with a further £140m available in loan funds.

Housing Minister Gavin Barwell said: "Our housing white paper set out ambitious proposals to help fix the broken housing market and to encourage good design.

"Estate regeneration must be locally-led, and this £32 million fund will help breathe new life into estates throughout the country. It will help more ordinary working people have the security of a decent place to live."

The new investment follows work done by the Estates Regeneration Advisory Panel, co-chaired by Barwell and Lord Heseltine, who met six times during 2016 to help develop the Estate Regeneration National Strategy.

Speed up

After successful engagement with local communities, the money will be used to speed up regeneration schemes in their early stages by tackling problems that hold up projects and

give local authorities access to skills to ensure high-quality regeneration.

The loan fund is designed to cover costs such as land assembly, leaseholder buy-outs, re-housing costs, demolition, and preparatory construction works.

The biggest cash award goes to Haringey Council in north London, which will receive more than £2m towards two schemes. Other major winners of more than £1m each are Clarion Housing Group for three estates in Merton, Gloucester City Homes for the Matson and Podsmead project, and Bristol City Council for the Lockleaze Estate.

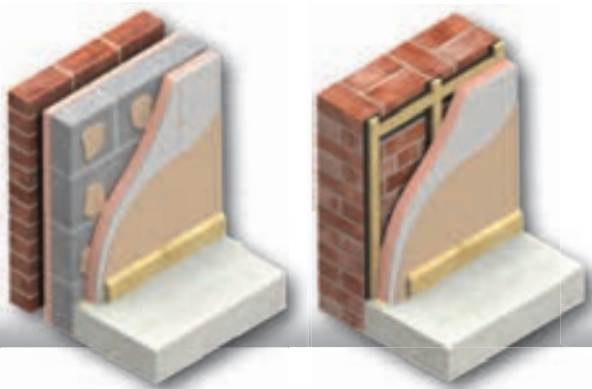
In Birmingham, the money will be used to support discussions with local communities and ensure the Meadway regeneration creates a place local residents are proud of.

Down the M1 in Milton Keynes, it will be used to kick start the regeneration of seven estates to provide thousands of new homes.

"Haringey Council will benefit from more than £2m while Clarion and Bristol City Council will receive over £1m"



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Consultation on banning letting agent fees launched

New measures to provide a fairer deal for renters by banning unfair letting agent fees and encouraging greater competition in the rental sector have been set out by the Government.

The consultation period runs for eight weeks and is due to close on 2 June. It primarily looks at how the ban should be implemented and enforced. Stakeholder workshops were organised as part of the consultation exercise with events arranged in London, Birmingham, Manchester and Bristol.

However, one of the main representative bodies for private landlords quickly attacked the measures as "short-term crowd pleasers" that would ultimately cost tenants more money.

Key points within the consultation are:

Government intends to bring forward a full ban on upfront fees charged by lettings agents.

Fees associated with ongoing services, such as providing replacement keys, carrying out repairs as a result of deliberate damage or breaches of the tenancy agreement, or late rent payment charges will not be banned.

It will examine whether holding deposits collected by agents at the start of a tenancy

should be capped.

The DCLG is collecting responses via an online survey for the consultation and by email to lettingagentsteam@communities.gsi.gov.uk.

Hidden charges

The proposed measures are intended to put an end to hidden charges and avoid tenants being hit by costly upfront payments that can be difficult to afford.

But commenting on the consultation launch, ARLA Propertymark Chief Executive, David Cox said: "The Government's housing policy is shambolic and this consultation contradicts its already stated aim to encourage longer term tenancies. Independent analysis launched at ARLA Propertymark's annual conference revealed that if an outright ban was introduced, rents will increase by £103 per year which will punish long term tenants financially.

"The decision is a short-term crowd pleaser and we are disappointed DCLG has not considered our proposals in the consultation. We urge the Government to use this process to think again to ensure that consumers, and the

wider economy are not penalised by contradictory Government policies."

Ministers hope the package of measures will bring an end to agents exploiting their middleman role between renters and landlords, banish unfair charges being imposed and stop those agents that double charge tenants and property owners for the same service.

Proposals also ban any letting agent fees being charged to tenants by landlords and other third parties. This stops tenants having to pay fees through the back door by other routes. Government says the measures will improve competition in the private rental market, which has been the fastest growing part of the housing sector and further drive up standards by placing the onus on landlords to shop around for more competitive fees for services they pay for.

Housing and Planning Minister Gavin Barwell said "We're determined to make all types of housing more affordable and secure for ordinary working people. Tenants should only be required to pay their rent alongside a refundable deposit and not face hidden fees."

A report from the charity Shelter found that nearly 1 in 4 people in England and Wales feel they have been charged unfair fees by a letting agent. Fee levels vary considerably and the charity found that 1 in 7 tenants pay over £500.

The ban also recognises that landlords are being hit with dubious fees. The measures create a more transparent market place so landlords can easily shop around for an agent to provide the quality of service they want at a price they are willing to pay. This avoids double charging and results in a better and transparent service.

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Huge repairs partnership deal announced

A joint venture between Scotland's largest social landlord and Glasgow City Council could deliver £3.7bn of repairs and maintenance work over the next 30 years.

The Wheatley Group has joined the council as joint owners of repairs service City Building Glasgow. It will employ 2,000 staff and deliver approximately £99m worth of work each year.

Frank McAveety, leader of Glasgow City Council, described the joint venture as "the biggest deal of its kind in the UK."

The company will provide repairs work to Wheatley's housing subsidiaries, including Glasgow Housing Association and other social landlords Cube and Loretto.

'Groundbreaking partnership'

Bernadette Hewitt, chair of GHA, said this was "an exciting opportunity to take the repairs and maintenance service to the next level".

She added: "Tenant feedback has played a major part in shaping what will be a modern, more efficient service provided by locally based repairs teams closer to their customers."

"The joint process review designing this new, improved service will ensure it is even better equipped to match and exceed customers' needs and expectations."

Annemarie O'Donnell, chief executive of Glasgow City Council, added: "This groundbreaking partnership will build on the significant and positive impact City Building has already had on Glasgow over the past decade – delivering jobs, training and first-rate services for communities and tenants."

Mitie wins five-year repairs deal

Giant contractor Mitie has won a £21m contract to provide repairs services to a London housing association for a minimum of five years.

The deal with Islington & Shoreditch Housing Association involves doing all responsive repairs and voids works to the landlord's 2,000-home stock across six London boroughs.

Mat Bishop, managing director of Mitie Property Services, said he was "delighted to be working with ISHA over potentially such a long term". It has an option to extend for two further five-year periods.

This followed the winning of a six-month contract, worth an estimated £4m, to deliver all planned maintenance works to Sanctuary Housing's properties in Rochford, Essex.

Right to Rent 'failing on all fronts'

A crackdown on illegal immigrants is leading to discrimination against prospective tenants – especially those from ethnic minorities – in the housing market, a new report shows.

A report for the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) reveals foreigners and British citizens without passports, particularly those from ethnic minorities, are being discriminated against in private rented housing, as a result of the Right to Rent scheme designed to crack down on irregular immigration.

The Right to Rent scheme requires landlords and agents to check the immigration status of all prospective tenants. If they fail to fully comply with the scheme, they face a fine of up to £3,000 or a prison sentence of up to five years.

These penalties, combined with the complexity of the immigration checks they must undertake, means that in some cases landlords are pushed into choosing tenants who feel like a 'safer bet' because they hold a British passport or because they 'seem British' or their name sounds British, the JCWI report shows.

Mystery shopping

The report was compiled by surveying private landlords – with 51 per cent of them saying the scheme has made them less likely to consider letting to foreign nationals.

It also found that 42 per cent of landlords stated they were less likely to rent to someone without a British passport. This rose to 48 per cent when explicitly asked to consider the impact of the criminal sanction.

The report also found a white British tenant without a passport was 11 per cent more likely to be ignored or turned down by landlords than a white British applicant with a passport (17 per cent of British citizens do not hold passports).

The situation was worse for those from an ethnic minority, with an enquiry from a British Black Minority Ethnic (BME) tenant without a passport was ignored or turned down by 58 per cent of landlords in a mystery shopping exercise.

Where neither the white British tenant nor the BME British tenant had a passport, the BME tenant was 14 per cent more likely to be turned away or ignored.

JCWI's mystery shopping exercise found no evidence of ethnicity discrimination where a non-BME and a BME British citizen both held passports.

Unfair

The report claimed the Right to Rent scheme creates structural incentives for landlords to discriminate unlawfully against foreigners and ethnic minorities and JCWI is now calling on

the Government to abandon the policy.

Saira Grant, chief executive of JCWI, said: "We have been warning for some time that the Right to Rent scheme is failing on all fronts. It treats many groups who need housing unfairly, it is clearly discriminatory, it is putting landlords in an impossible position, and there is no evidence that it is doing anything to tackle irregular immigration."

"Research suggests landlords who have no wish to discriminate are being forced to do so by the scheme"

JCWI's research suggests landlords who have no wish to discriminate are being forced to do so by the scheme – with people who have a full right to rent a home in the UK being disadvantaged, along with others who should be able to access housing.

Residential Landlords Association chairman, Alan Ward, said: "The Government's own figures show the Right to Rent scheme is not working so maybe it is time to scrap it and think again. With the threat of a jail sentence hanging over landlords if they get it wrong, it is hardly surprising that they are being cautious."

"There are more than 400 acceptable documents proving right to rent from within the EU alone, and landlords are making risk-based decisions and only accepting documents that they recognise and have confidence in."

HMM Stats

There were 23.7 million dwellings in England at 31 March 2016, an increase of 190,000 dwellings (0.81%) on the same point in the previous year and 1.66 million more than in 2006. 14.8 million dwellings (62.4% of all dwellings) were owner occupied, 4.8 million (20.3%) private rented dwellings and 4.0 million (16.9%) social and affordable dwellings (HAs = 2.4m and LAs = 1.6m).

Cumbrian associations begin merger talks

Two housing associations in northern England are in merger talks after one was given permission to break away from its parent organisation.

Derwent & Solway and Two Castles are considering joining to form a new 7,000-home social landlord. The former is currently part of the Your Housing Group, which owns and manages more than 32,000 homes across the North of England.

The decision to allow Derwent & Solway the chance to leave the group followed a strategic review of their business activities last year. If approved by the boards, Derwent & Solway and Two Castles are expected to merge in the summer following consultation with tenants and the regulator.

Mark Tattersall, chair of Your Housing Group, said: "During the review process it became clear

that Derwent & Solway would like to continue to focus its service provision around local administration and delivery. As this did not fit with the future strategic direction of Your Housing Group, the logical step was to explore the possibility of a demerger."

Rob Rimmer, chair of Derwent & Solway, said: "We looked at a range of options before selecting Two Castles Housing Association as the best partner for Derwent & Solway to continue to serve our residents with high quality services with strong local oversight. Your Housing Group have been great in supporting the process."

This could be the second significant break up in the north west after Cobalt's decision to leave the Symphony Group on Merseyside, in order to retain its surpluses for spending in Liverpool.



Housing conditions in NI at record best level

Unfitness in Northern Ireland's housing stock is at its lowest ever recorded level, according to data on conditions from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

The province's House Condition Survey 2016 preliminary report showed that just 2 per cent of the 740,000 homes in the region are deemed unfit for occupation. Down from 2.4 per cent in 2009 and 20 per cent in 1974, when the surveys began.

The NIHE attributed the reduction in unfitness levels to a drop in the number of empty homes across Northern Ireland, with vacancy rates decreasing from 40,300 in 2006 to less than 27,000 in 2016. The proportion of vacant homes

recorded as unfit in the last survey was 29.6 per cent, compared to an average of one per cent across occupied housing.

Of 15,130 unfit homes in the region, 12,110 are in the privately owned sector and 3,020 are in the private rented sector, while unfitness levels among social housing are negligible. The Chartered Institute of Housing are now calling for a new fitness standard that links housing to better health outcomes.

Clark Bailie, chief executive of the NIHE, said: "This highlights the importance of intervention in terms of grants, measures to tackle fuel poverty and investment in maintenance and repairs."

Campaign to protect deposits succeeds

The Government has agreed to improve the security offered to tenants and landlords for millions of pounds they have deposited with agents, after a two-year campaign.

Ministers will now consult on how mandatory client money protection (CMP) should be implemented and enforced. CMP is a compensation scheme that recompenses landlords and tenants where an agent misappropriates their rent, deposit or other client funds.

It is estimated that up to £2.7bn is held by letting agents at any one time including rents and monies to cover maintenance and other costs. Of this some £700m is thought to be unprotected, leaving tenants and landlords vulnerable to agents who go bust or abscond.

Safeguards

ARLA Propertymark Chief Executive, David Cox commented on the campaign's success, said: "CMP safeguards landlords and tenants in the event that agents misappropriate their money. With the ban on letting agent fees on the horizon, this is more important than ever before, so we are very pleased the Government has agreed to take it forward."

The ARLA website contains details of several case studies where six-figure sums have been stolen from tenants and landlords by crooked agents, causing financial hardship and damaging the reputation of the sector. It is a requirement for ARLA Propertymark members to have CMP.

Tenants are particularly vulnerable to theft. Since 27 May 2015 agents have had to display whether they belong to a CMP scheme. This means that landlords can choose an agent depending on whether they belong to a scheme or not, but tenants do not have such choice.

HMM Stats

There were 589,766 vacant dwellings in England on 3 October 2016, a decrease of 10,413 (1.7%) from 600,179 on 5 October 2015. Vacant dwellings are 2.5 per cent of the dwelling stock. Long term vacant dwellings numbered 200,145 on 3 October 2016, a fall of 3,451 (1.7%) from 203,596 on 5 October 2015.

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Increased taxes could deter landlords

Pivate landlords are being driven from business through a combination of higher taxes and regulatory changes according to a trade body.

David Cox, Chief Executive of ARLA Propertymark has said the increased taxes landlords have incurred over the last 12 months is making their work more difficult with stock numbers falling. "It's been a year since the Government inflated Stamp Duty costs for landlords to 3 per cent and it's already made the Treasury £1.3 billion.

That's more than changes to Mortgage Interest Relief, which are now in force, are expected to make in its first three years.

This will only further squeeze the sector and make buy-to-let a less attractive investment for landlords" said Cox.

"Our monthly report shows that since the



Stamp Duty reforms came into effect last April, letting agents have seen the supply of rental stock decrease. In February, 44 per cent saw supply fall as a direct result, while only nine per cent saw it increase.

"The impending letting agent fee ban will also make buy-to-let investment less attractive, as costs are passed on through inflated agents' fees which landlords pay.

'Real crisis'

A quarter (27 per cent) are expected to stop increasing their portfolios as a result and a fifth (20 per cent) plan to sell some of their properties.

"We're facing a severe housing shortage at the moment, and if the supply of rental stock falls any lower relative to demand for housing, we'll find ourselves in the midst of a real crisis."

Safer water in the pipeline

Leading water hygiene consultancy Urban Environments has made a strong start to 2017 by being appointed to two supplier frameworks in the housing sector for the provision of Legionella services.

The company has won a position on the ESPO (Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation) Water System Risk Assessment and Water Hygiene Monitoring framework for a period of three years. ESPO is a local authority purchasing and distribution consortium in Leicestershire, jointly owned by six county councils in the east of England, which has appointed eight suppliers to the framework.

Urban Environments has also been awarded a position on the PFA (Procurement For All Ltd) Water Hygiene, Legionella and Associated Services Framework, for a contract duration of four years.

Founder James Homard commented, "The importance of Legionella control and associated water hygiene risk management is not to be under-estimated, especially with an ageing population, so we look forward to working closely with these new clients to maintain a safe and healthy environment for their tenants, employees and members of the public alike."



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Joining the Tribe

Three derelict tower blocks were transformed into a highly sustainable PRS scheme providing 192 high-spec homes in central Manchester. Teodora Lyubomirova explores the refurbishment

A local eyesore and a vivid symbol of urban decay, three disused brick-clad high-rise buildings marred the views over Manchester's Ancoats neighbourhood for more than two decades.

The 13-storey pre-cast concrete towers were erected in the 1950s and once provided council homes. At the time, the area's days as an industrial powerhouse had largely ceased and social decline was rife.

Few decades later, the buildings had fallen into such a severe state of disrepair that Manchester City Council was forced to shut them in 1994. Since then, the neglected towers, known as Chippenham Court, Saltford Court and Rodney Court, had become vermin-infested, drawing complaints from local residents about the hundreds of pigeons living in the blocks and various anti-social incidents taking place.

"They were close to people's homes and had become a bit of an anti-social hotspot," recalls Andrew Smith, project lead and director at architecture firm Pozzoni who worked on redesigning and repurposing the blocks. "The windows were in some cases missing, smashed and damaged, regular fires had been burnt, all of the mechanical and electrical systems had been stripped down, the lifts were vandalised and inoperable, door sets were gone, and there was substantial graffiti to every part of the building. The external areas were also substantially overgrown."

Single block ownership

Leases for the three blocks – today standing tall as Tribe Apartments – were first acquired by developer Urban Splash circa 2006, but the firm abandoned its plans to restore the towers as a result of the recession. With no visible progress made six years after the acquisition, the council terminated the company's lease and the buildings' future laid uncertain.

However, in October 2013, a joint venture between developer Rowlinson Construction and businessman Nigel Rawlings' Housing Capital Trust (HCT) acquired the leases for the derelict blocks from the council with the idea to not only revamp the three buildings, but to also bring a new model of PRS operations to Manchester – single block ownership, meaning the three towers will be retained by a single landlord.

Rawlings, who has a solid background in property having been the chief executive of Assura, the UK's largest owners of healthcare property, and is a part time finance director at development group Pochin's, admitted: "It was



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"One of the biggest challenges was to visualise what the blocks could be, because they were in such a bad state of disrepair"

evident to me in 2012 that there was a shortage of accommodation available for rent in Manchester. At the same time it was clear that a new asset class, being residential property professionally managed under single block ownership, would develop in the UK just as it is the norm in other countries. The Tribe blocks had been derelict for many years and I could not resist the challenge to bring them back into use."

Rowlinson Construction and HCT were backed by private equity firm Cabot Square Capital, which invested £8.4m to kick-start the scheme, and the project also secured a £7.9m Build to Rent loan from the Homes and Communities Agency. With the funding secured, the partnership turned to the design brief, with the onus to transform the towers into contemporary accommodation that is relatively easy to maintain and can set a standard for sustainable refurbishment.

'Outstanding' design

"One of the biggest challenges was to visualise what the blocks could be, because they were in such a bad state of disrepair," said Smith. Before commencing the refurbishment, the blocks and the surrounding area had to be decontaminated including thorough asbestos removal, and their

Key dates

August 2013 – Initial feasibility

February 2014 – Start on site

April 2015 – Completion

May 2015 – Project came into use



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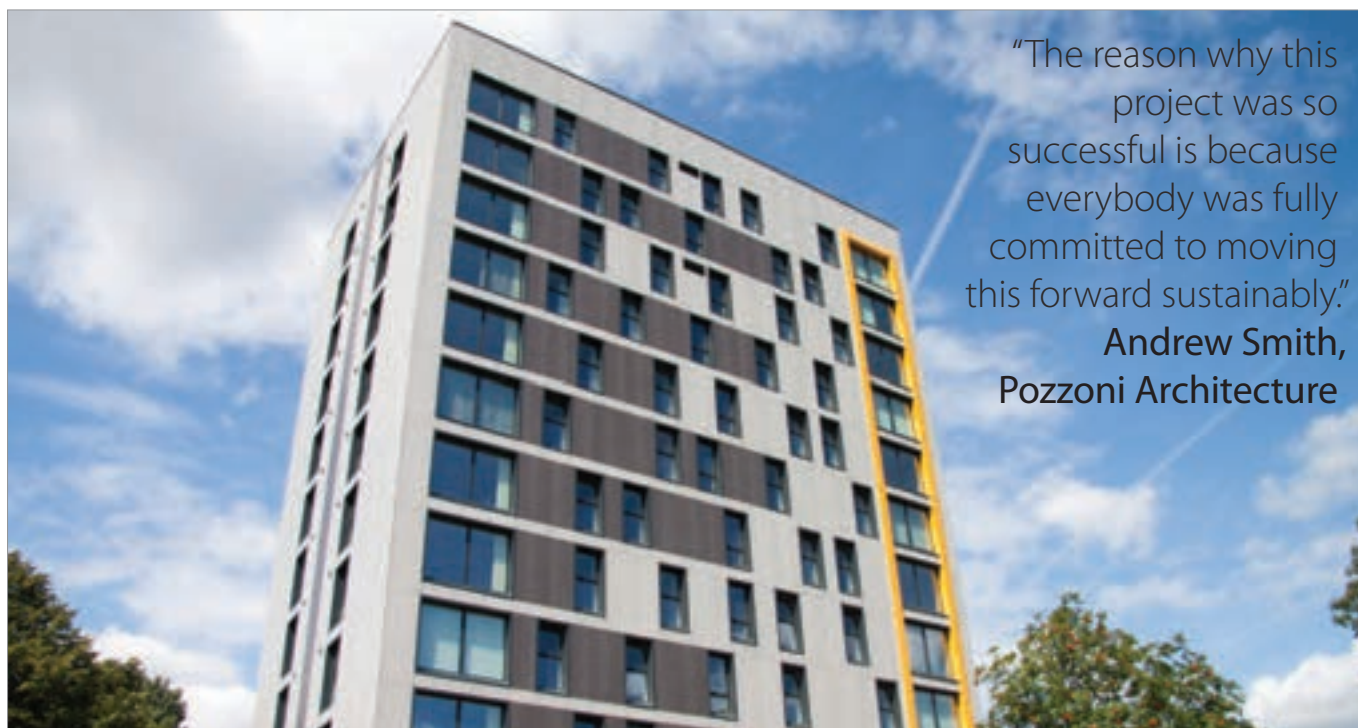
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“The reason why this project was so successful is because everybody was fully committed to moving this forward sustainably.”
Andrew Smith,
Pozzoni Architecture

structural stability had to be assessed.

However, making Manchester's first Build to Rent scheme a success required a careful approach to the design. “The reason why this project was so successful is because everybody was fully committed to moving this forward sustainably,” added Smith.

While Manchester City Council set out a minimum requirement of BREEAM ‘Very Good’ for the scheme, the refurbishment team, consulted by the Energy Council, decided Tribe Apartments could target the highest score, BREEAM ‘Outstanding’. “As a collective design team, we felt we could achieve a lot more with the existing spaces within the buildings. It is a real testament to [Rawlings] that he really wanted to push forward and make the best of the project for the buildings and the local area,” said Smith.

To achieve this, the team adopted a range of sustainable measures, from low-energy lighting, triple-glazed aluminium windows and efficient facades, to a centralised wood pellet biomass heating system connected to all flats – the latter preferred instead of less efficient electric heaters. Even the ground floor extension built at one of the blocks to house the biomass boiler has a sedum roof. Combined, the sustainability measures will help Tribe Apartments generate savings of about 28,000 tonnes of carbon over the buildings' lifetime. According to the BREEAM report, all the apartments perform on average 65 per cent better than flats built to current regulations. As for the tenants, they can benefit from annual heating and water bills of just £350 on average.

Low maintenance

Another element that sets the tower blocks apart is their new external looks, which feature low-maintenance, moisture-proof cladding boards. Smith said a lot of attention was given to that aspect of the works in order to ensure there was no thermal bridging. The system was actually used as overcladding, placed on top of the existing brickwork with a thick layer of insulation in between to improve the thermal fabric.

The architects also managed to increase the size of the existing homes by encasing the balconies in the new facades. Beyond that, the majority of flats were remodelled and two additional ground floor homes were created in each high-rise, bringing the total number of apartments from 186 to 192.

To keep maintenance to a minimum, self-cleaning glass was specified

and fitted to all windows across all three blocks, as erecting tall scaffolds or using cherry pickers was deemed an ineffective solution to cleaning.

Internally, special attention was paid to the surfaces, with acrylic worktops added in kitchens and bathrooms (“They look like marble and last forever,” said Rawlings), large format tiles to minimise grout, and floor tiling that can be easily replaced if damaged. Moulded sinks should minimise sewage problems, while LED lights are used in all flats to reduce energy use.

The scheme is already reaping the rewards of its sustainable design, winning the “Sustainable Housing Scheme of the Year” at the Housing Excellence Awards 2016 and more recently became ‘Best Residential Scheme’ at the BREEAM Awards 2017.

Enhanced lifespan

When pressed about the longevity of the three blocks, Andrew Smith reckoned the regeneration has significantly boosted the buildings' lives. “By encapsulating the envelope as we have done, we've really enhanced their lifetime,” said Smith, adding that various elements specified in the refurbishment, from the roofing to the cladding, are set to last over 25 years. Adding to that the buildings' overall good structural stability, the architect concluded with good maintenance the blocks would last at least another 60 to 70 years as a minimum.

The flats in Tribe Apartments are one or two-bedroom and are offered furnished or unfurnished, with rents ranging from £575 to £750 per calendar month (pcm) for a one-bedroom apartment, and two-bedroom flats from £775 to £975 pcm.

Project team

Client: Nigel Rawlings - Housing Capital Trust (HCT)
 Contractor: Rowlinson Construction
 Architect: Pozzoni Architecture
 Property management: Plumlife
 BREEAM Assessor: The Energy Council

Smart meters cut costs

One of UK's largest infrastructure projects in our lifetime, the Smart meter roll out is set to replace 53 million household and small business electricity and gas meters by 2020. Over five million Smart meters have already been installed by a selection of energy suppliers up and down the country and the project continues to gain momentum.

With the support of energy services company Energy Angels, a number of registered social landlords have been at the forefront of installing Smart meters in their properties during void periods.

There are several advantages to this approach, including reducing disruption for testing and cutting energy costs for landlords. Once the installation is completed, tenants can benefit from remote top-ups for prepay, accurate billing and no daily standing charges.

The Smart Electricity meter is the hub of an installation, communicating with a meter if one is present and with an In Home Display, or IHD unit. The IHD allows consumers to monitor their energy consumption in real time in order for them to understand, manage and ultimately reduce their energy usage and costs.

This is contrary to current practices in which consumers are billed without knowing their precise energy use – like driving a car with no

fuel gauge. Real time and historic energy usage information would help consumers make better choices about how and when to use their energy as the IHD makes it instantly obvious which appliances use the most energy and consumers can modify their behaviours accordingly.

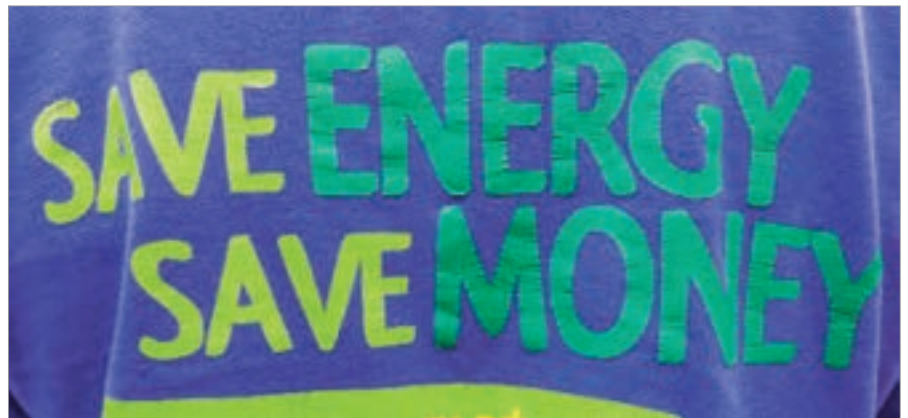
Experience in practice

Working with National Energy Action's (NEA) Smart meter training for communities programme, WM Housing offer tenant training

on how IHDs work. The programme has helped Family Optima (Part of the WM Group) tenant Mr St John with Lewis Taylor, Energy Angels MD, and Mohammed Nasim, WM home energy advisor.

Mr St John said: "We now check our IHD every day and along with some simple energy saving tips, things we'd never really thought of, we've been able to spend less on our electricity."

WM Housing Group are committed to a number of actions to help tenants reduce their utility bills and ensure more sustainable tenancies. Through their work with Energy Angels alone it is estimated tenants will save over £100,000 on energy bills in the coming year, and Smart Meters are at the heart of that strategy.



DOES MOULD LOOK FAMILIAR?

Black mould on walls may be caused by over insulation or damp insulation in the wall cavities.

We can extract the offending material then re-fill with an eco bead product, if the property is suitable.

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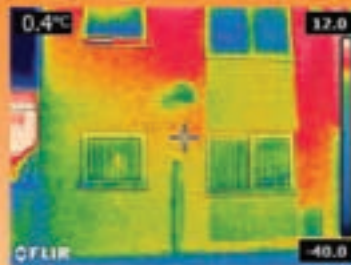
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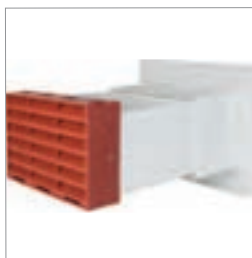
West Sussex: 01903 740339 North West: 01772 691832

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Unit 23, Higham Grange, Higham Side Road, Inskip Preston Lancs PR4 0FT



Product Focus



Condensation Shop

www.condensationshop.com

The Condensation Shop Passyfier Dehumidifier vent combines a through-the-wall, 'warm' telescopic sleeve with a slab of insulant inside, louvered vent internally and an external airbrick available in 5 different colours. The insulant used within the duct is transparent to the seepage of moisture vapour whilst simultaneously preventing cold draughts. Therefore people are not tempted to block them up or cover them with a poster. The vents have a telescopic outer duct so can be adjusted to all domestic wall thicknesses. For details of our complete range refer to the enclosed catalogue.

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 CLEGGK2.



BAFE

www.bafe.org.uk

BAFE is the independent registration body for third party certified fire protection companies across the UK. For more than 30 years BAFE have been developing schemes for UKAS accredited Certification Bodies to assess and certify fire protection companies to recognised quality standards. BAFE continually develops its schemes and has evolved into the body acknowledging competence for companies providing specific fire protection services. BAFE provides end users with an easy method of finding quality, third party certified competent companies to help them meet their fire safety responsibilities following UK fire legislation.

VEKA UK secures Secured by Design

The VEKA UK Group, has been awarded membership once again of the national crime prevention initiative, Secured by Design (SBD), for both its VEKA and Halo brands. The VEKA UK Group partnered with Secured by Design several years ago and has maintained its strong relationship with the team, thanks to a shared ethos of designing out crime at the product development stage. Mark Barsby, Accreditation Manager of The VEKA UK Group, explains: "Designing out crime" means that security features are incorporated within products during the design and development stage, rather than being an 'add on' to the finished product."



01282 716611 www.vekauk.com



£1million investment

A leading fenestration partner to the social housing and new build sectors, **Nationwide Windows Ltd**, announces a further £1 million investment in automation at its door and window manufacturing facility in Rugby. The company recently reported it is now manufacturing and installing an impressive 60 products an hour – that's one product every minute of every working day. But these results are no surprise because the company has enjoyed double digit growth (13 per cent) year on year, every year since 2009. John Whalley, MD of Nationwide Windows & Doors, comments: "Production levels have been at an all-time high at our 126,000ft² manufacturing facility in Rugby. We've experienced growth across all product ranges including our core PVC-U windows and doors, composite doors and insulated glass units. In addition, specialist products like aluminium windows and doors, patios, vertical sliders and bi-folds are also seeing hikes in demand. To continue to deliver this growth, it is imperative that we keep investing in our business."

01788 224466 www.nationwidewindows.co.uk

Loyalty pays with Grundfos Win & Earn

The WIN & EARN loyalty scheme offers people buying **Grundfos** products even more reasons to purchase from a really extensive domestic pump solutions range. Registration to WIN & EARN is simple as you create your account on-line or by downloading the GO Installer Companion app in Google Play or iTunes. Once you have registered you can immediately start collecting points from participating pump purchases using the codes on the WIN & EARN stickers that are attached to the outside of relevant pump box. This year we have added even more products to the line-up and you can now earn rewards on a wide range of products.



01525 850000 www.grundfos.co.uk

Heat Network seminar accredited by CIBSE

With the introduction of a new UK Test Standard for HIU's and advances in technology, the District Heating market is progressing rapidly. We have therefore updated our CIBSE accredited CPD seminar, to provide the opportunity to explore the topic in depth. Here we identify some of the key technical considerations that are fundamental to improving user satisfaction levels, and the overall efficiency of the network.

Our seminar entitled "Next Generation Heat Networks – Key Considerations" is accredited by The Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) and provides credits towards consulting engineers' Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

The seminar includes topics such as -

- Regulations and Guidelines
- Heat Network Design Principles
- Heat Interface Units (HIUs)
- Network Pipework Sizing
- Central Plant - Capacity Calculation
- Metering, Billing and Revenue Management
- Remote Surveillance

The seminar is ideal for M&E consultants, developers and housing associations, and can be held at client's premises or at the Evinox Energy offices in Chessington, and at a time convenient to you. Our speakers are highly experienced in Heat Networks with relevant professional



qualifications. A certificate will be provided to all attendees for obtaining CIBSE CPD points and refreshments will be supplied.

Please contact us or complete the contact form on our website for further information or to book a seminar.

01372 722277 www.evinoxenergy.co.uk

Andrea Leadsom MP is VIP visitor

Andrea Leadsom, MP for South Northamptonshire and Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs was a VIP visitor to the headquarters of **Johnson & Starley** on March 24. Managing Director Chris Yates hosted a visit that demonstrated the company's commitment to environmentally product development and marketing initiatives. Johnson & Starley is a member of the BEAMA Ventilation Group that promotes the importance of indoor air quality and the need for efficient ventilation in new and existing properties. During the visit, the roles of BEAMA and the government in underlining the concept of indoor air quality.



01604 762881 www.johnsonandstarley.co.uk

Danfoss strikes the right balance

The installation of **Danfoss** ASV automatic balancing valves is providing heating comfort and energy savings for tenants living in five social housing tower blocks in south east London. Danfoss' simple and cost-effective solution optimises heating system performance by ensuring that risers are perfectly balanced under all system conditions (partial and full load) and outside temperatures. The result is even heat distribution throughout all apartments, with no overflows and wasted energy, which means lower heating costs for tenants. System misbalances and associated temperature control are among the major sources of tenant dissatisfaction.



ukheating@danfoss.com

Effective heating controls...

The selection of programmers and timers available today are many and varied. They range from the simple to the far more complex. **ESI** offers a range of programmers from a simple 1 channel version to a 3 channel Multi-purpose Programmer which enables the installer to comply with Part L of the Building Regulations by providing separate timed heating control for living and sleeping zones in a home, whilst also providing timed control of hot water. All these programmers also feature a 'Landlord' option to encourage social housing tenants to allow access for annual maintenance. For more information please visit the company's website below.



01280 816868 www.esicontrols.co.uk

Wall and underfloor vent range

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01332 813050 www.klober.co.uk

Eliminating bad air

John Moss of EnviroVent looks at how housing providers can ensure a better level of indoor air quality in their residents' homes.



Dealing with issues caused by condensation and mould growth is a persistent problem for housing maintenance teams. As energy efficient upgrades result in more air-tight homes, this has had a direct impact on the internal environment by lowering the quality of the indoor air.

Looking back at the statistics, it's clear where the problem lies. Between 2007 and 2012, the number of cavity wall insulation upgrades increased by 31.5 per cent from 8.5 million homes to 11.2 million homes, or 59 per cent of all properties with a cavity wall. The number of loft insulation upgrades went up from 9.5 million to 14.1 million (or 60 per cent of all properties with a loft), an increase of 48.4 per cent.

Similarly, the number of solid wall insulations completed in that period

rose from 65,000 to 122,000. This was largely driven by Government incentives and the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) schemes. These schemes offered incentives to upgrade or add insulation and improve air tightness in order to reduce levels of carbon emissions from the UK's existing housing stock.

Deep-rooted problems

While these energy efficiency upgrades provide clear benefits, the work is often done without adequate consideration to improving the ventilation in the property, which in turn results in a whole host of problems.

Without a continuous flow of fresh air to control the relative humidity within a dwelling, the internal atmosphere may reach a high relative humidity of around 70 – 80 per cent, which then leads to condensation. The water droplets that form on colder surfaces can result in mould growth and, in some cases, damage to the building fabric. This is due to the fact that the home can no longer breathe. High humidity can provide a haven for dust mites and their detritus and can exacerbate respiratory conditions, such as asthma.

Often the situation is made even worse by modern lifestyles, for example washing dried on radiators can lead to a build-up of stale or moist air, resulting in a decrease in indoor air quality. To add to this, fans may be

“Ultimately the onus is on social housing providers to upgrade the airtightness of their homes and there is a very real need for ventilation to be given equal consideration”

Home sweet home?



**Did you know that the air in your house
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Johnson & Starley's range of innovative ventilation solutions reduce humidity and condensation, helping to provide a fresher and healthier living environment for your family.

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* source: BEAMA, of 122 homes surveyed

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HEATING



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VENTILATION

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switched off by residents who have concerns over running costs. This is why there is a clear need for education when ventilation systems are fitted, to advise residents on how they work and why they are essential. It is also worth considering ventilation systems that are tamper-proof, which means they can work effectively without restriction.

The challenge for housing associations or registered social landlords is therefore to ensure that when homes are made more airtight, their properties still meet the requirements of Approved Document Part F (Means of Ventilation) and provide good indoor air quality for residents.

There needs to be a balance of elements in a home to include adequate heating, insulation and ventilation in order to provide a healthy environment. As the living conditions in every home are different, it is recommended that a survey is carried out by a ventilation specialist to fully understand the issue and advise on the best method to solve the problem for the long term, whether this be fitting extract fans in one or more rooms, or carrying out a whole house solution.

Lasting solutions

Many housing providers are looking for permanent solutions to the issue of poor ventilation. Weary of mould treatments that don't work and with pressure from increasingly frustrated residents, they are seeking longer term, effective solutions.

One social housing provider that has taken direct action is Your Homes Newcastle (YHN), the ALMO of Newcastle City Council. Your Homes invested in a positive input ventilation (PIV) system for 150 properties as a way of reducing mould and damp in its tenants' homes.

During the winter months, condensation and mould growth was becoming an issue for some of its residents, which resulted in ongoing callouts and reactive maintenance by YHN's repairs and maintenance team. This was costing the social housing management company a significant amount every year in temporary measures aimed at tackling the issue of condensation.

Around 30 per cent of Your Homes Newcastle's 26,000 properties were built in the 1920s and 1930s and have a brick cavity wall construction with no insulation and single glazing. Between 2008 and 2014, many of the homes were upgraded with new doors and windows and cavity wall and top up loft insulation. Although this has made the homes more energy efficient, it has resulted in inadequate ventilation and poor indoor air quality (IAQ), leading to issues with the properties experiencing condensation and mould growth.

As a result of the PIV systems fitted, Your Homes saw a significant reduction in the number of call-outs to deal with issues with mould growth. This includes some of the worst affected properties reporting no further mould problems.

To ensure ventilation systems are installed correctly to meet a home's requirements, some manufacturers employ their own fully integrated, in-house planning and installation service with a nationwide team of directly employed, qualified and highly trained installation engineers.

Solving problems

It's important that manufacturers work in partnership with their clients, using our expertise in solving condensation and mould problems to help their knowledge and understanding. Condensation workshops are well attended by local authority maintenance teams and housing managers to ensure they are even better informed and are better equipped to deal with issues.

Ultimately the onus is on social housing providers to upgrade the airtightness of their homes, and there is a very real need for ventilation to be given equal consideration. It is becoming increasingly clear that integrating effective ventilation goes hand in hand with carrying out energy efficient upgrades. By upgrading the ventilation systems too it means that for a relatively small investment, the level of complaints for issues of condensation and mould growth would be much reduced and



"It's important that manufacturers work in partnership with their clients, using our expertise in solving condensation and mould problems to help their knowledge and understanding"



the burden on maintenance teams would be much smaller. Failure to provide adequate ventilation can lead to serious consequences for the health of buildings and their occupants.

John Moss is head of sales, social housing at EnviroVent

ARE YOU **REFURBING** YOUR STOCK?



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Leaning on innovation

Effi Wolff of Balcony Systems Solutions offers essential safety and maintenance tips on balconies and advises on new cost-saving solutions.

Around seven per cent of properties in the UK feature some kind of balcony, but for new developments in urban areas, that figure rises to over 11 per cent. Private and social housing landlords managing flats that feature balconies cannot ignore their maintenance issues.

The International Standards Organisation estimates that only half the world's 40 million balconies are fully compliant with building codes, and that figure doubtless includes countries where building codes are largely a fiction. Nevertheless, any risk of a balcony failure is too high to contemplate.

Balconies, whether concrete, steel or wood, should be regularly inspected. The International Code Council suggests specific attention should be paid to split or rotting wood, loose or missing nails, screws, and the integrity of anchors where the structure is attached to the building. Missing, damaged, or loose support beams and planking, and wobbly handrails or guardrails are also urgent warning indicators.

Loose connections

Improper or loose connections can occur on any style of balcony. Connections can degrade over time, and wobbly railings and loose stairs and ledgers that appear to be pulling away from the adjacent structure are obvious causes for concern.

Corrosion is the most common issue in the UK. Metal connectors and fasteners can corrode over time, especially if a product with insufficient corrosion resistance was originally installed. The condition of flashing is another important consideration: water can leak under the flashing, causing wood to rot and the deck's foundation to weaken. Visual inspection is usually inadequate, as key components of fasteners are often hidden from view.

Glass takeover

Railings can be made of many materials, with steel now the most prevalent. Typically, if a deck is more than a certain distance from the ground, railings are required for safety purposes. Building regulations also specify the maximum opening between balusters, spindles or pickets, as well as the height of the railing.

However these old-style metal railing balustrades have largely given way to glass balustrades. The advantages are not simply aesthetic – glass balustrades provide a complete barrier, so any risk from falling items to passers-by is significantly reduced.

Landlords must pay special attention to the fixings – upright posts must be securely anchored and the fixings themselves need periodic inspection for corrosion damage, and any decay of the substrate to which they are fixed. Balustrade attachments can fail where the guardrail support posts are attached to the deck and where the guardrail attaches to support posts. A qualified building inspector should evaluate how railings are attached and verify that the railing attachments are properly installed.

The design of balustrades has not changed significantly for more than a century, after the first development of structural glass. That was also the birth of the frameless glass balustrade, a design that has never lost its aesthetic appeal.

Glass balustrades have, until now, fallen into one of two categories:



“Landlords must pay special attention to the fixings and carry out periodic inspections”

laminated, structural glass balustrades (marketed as ‘frameless’), or those supported by regular steel uprights.

The frameless balustrades sit at the top of the market, with nothing to see besides the view and a narrow line between adjoining panes. That minimalist aesthetic has a price tag, however – the laminated structural glass required is heavy and expensive, and fitting has to take that into account as well as the simple mechanics of supporting glass from only the bottom edge. Fitting is more complex and costly, since recessed channels at least 100 mm deep are usually needed.

Steel-posted balustrades are cheaper, lighter and more straightforward to install, and a wide variety of attractive lugs and clamps and posts are readily available from many suppliers, at inexpensive prices. Safety issues with modern designs and products are extremely rare, provided that codes and manufacturers specifications are adhered to.

Improving the system

There is a new type of glass balustrade design intended to provide a combination of high-end aesthetics and structural stability at a price comparable with older designs requiring frequent upright posts.

The system has been cleverly engineered to provide stability inside a slim handrail, allowing much longer runs of glass without upright posts and greatly simplifying secure installation.

The new design has concealed cantilevering inside an anodised aluminium rail, which sits on top of standard 10 mm toughened glass, so few, if any, upright posts are needed. The lower-cost glass also brings advantages in both weight and clarity, as thicker structural glass often carries a heavy green tint.

In addition, anodised aluminium surpasses even marine grade stainless steel for corrosion resistance. Feedback so far suggests that the aesthetic may prove even more popular than the fully frameless systems.

Effi Wolff is managing director of Balcony Systems Solutions.

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www.goplastic.co.uk

CIH stand no D61

Industry to gather at CIH Housing



Housing 2017 will explore hot topics including tackling the housing supply challenge and homelessness, coping with deregulation and mergers and thriving in the current and future political environment.



Housing 2017, taking place in Manchester on 27-29 June, is set to welcome 1,500 delegates and a total audience of 8,000 people who can expect to walk away with bright ideas and inspiration.

The conference will explore the biggest questions our industry is facing and will aim to identify the solutions that can help make a difference. With such an crucial period of change and Brexit uncertainty, Housing 2017 is the perfect opportunity for the sector to come together, take stock and re-energise.

Over the three days Housing 2017 will examine and explore the political and policy environment, the economic outlook and the latest thinking across the sector. By attending the conference delegates will come away with:

- A deeper understanding of how the sector can meet the housing supply challenge;
- Strategic sessions on how housing can underpin economic development and create successful communities;
- Best practice examples on delivering genuinely affordable housing;
- Ideas around what the business models of the future will look like;
- A clear picture of the opportunities and the risks that deregulation presents;
- Leading insights on leadership, strategy and mission;
- A toolkit to balance commerciality and social purpose;

- Expert analysis on the current and future political and economic environment;
- Different perspectives on mergers and acquisitions;
- The latest thinking around social innovation;
- International initiatives to tackling homelessness;
- An increased understanding of how housing can help shape the health and social care agenda;
- The latest thinking around social innovation;
- A comprehensive overview with practical examples of how organisations are reacting to welfare reform;
- The latest thinking in housing management; and
- Up to date analysis of the White Paper and practical guides on how to implement it.

Unmissable

This year, Europe's largest housing event is bigger and better than ever. Over the three days, 200 speakers, 300 exhibitors, 1,500 delegates and over 8,000 visitors will convene in Manchester at Housing 2017. With greater investment in features, over 100 hours of content and more networking and hospitality opportunities, Housing 2017 will offer essential insight into the current industry affairs.

Delivered across five conference theatres, Housing 2017 delegates will



"Housing 2017 offers the housing sector a unique platform to take stock and plan for the year ahead"

enjoy unrivalled insight, debate, and discussion provided by more than 200 speakers including Housing and Planning Minister Gavin Barwell MP. From Keynotes to Think Tanks and topics covering everything from housing management to the supply of new homes, Housing 2017's five theatres will offer innovative learning opportunities that ensure delegates leave with actionable and implementable solutions.

Inclusivity & networking

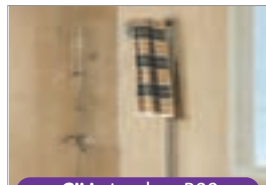
Even more housing professionals can now benefit from the full conference week experience with new corporate group packages, junior delegate rates, and the award-winning delegate of the future offer – all this ensures everyone who wishes to join the show can be part of the conversation at Housing 2017. Whether delegates, speakers, exhibitors or visitors, Housing 2017 offers the housing sector a unique platform to take stock and plan for the year ahead.

With more investment in the event experience than ever, and over 300 of the sector's leading suppliers, Housing 2017 is the perfect place to revisit professional relationships, make new contacts, keep up to date, share best practice and forge new partnerships. Over 30,000 meetings took place in 2016, and with 2017 set to be much bigger, make sure you are part of Europe's largest housing event.

Visit cihhousing.com and secure your place.

Fibo exhibits at Housing Show 2017

Bathroom and wet room wall panel manufacturer **Fibo UK** is exhibiting at Housing 2017 at Manchester Central 27th – 29th June. The exhibition and conference which welcomes around 8,000 people each year, is the largest of its kind in Europe. Bringing together housing associations, local authorities, housebuilders, funders, contractors and advisors, Housing 2017 is an opportunity to make new contacts, learn new skills and network with thousands of others from within the industry. Fibo's unique panels are a high-quality, long-lasting, cost-effective alternative to ceramic tiling for social housing, retirement homes and care homes.

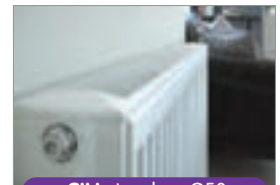


CIH stand no B22

01494 771242 www.fibo.co.uk

Stelrad at Housing 2017

Stelrad Radiators, a leading UK manufacturer of radiators, will once again be in attendance at the Housing 2017 Conference and Exhibition, the annual showcase of the Chartered Institute of Housing. This year's event takes place at Manchester Central between 27th-29th June. Stelrad will have its full range of radiator options on display on its stand from its best-selling Compact range, its designer and decorative options, its specialist LST – low surface temperature range and its special application series including its Compact XP rust resistant radiators. For more information visit Stelrad on stand G50 or visit the company's website.



CIH stand no G50

0844 543 6200 www.stelrad.com

Expert advice from Marley Alutec

Manufacturer of high quality aluminium rainwater and eaves systems **Marley Alutec** will be offering free technical and design guidance at Housing 2017 running from 27 – 29 June at Manchester Central on stand G42. Representing Europe's largest housing event, Housing 2017 is the perfect place to come and get expert advice from the UK's leading housing experts. Marley Alutec has a wealth of experience in helping local authorities and housing associations build and maintain properties that meet the demands of 21st century housing including performance, durability, sustainability and aesthetics.



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The case for furnished tenancies



Prevalent in the PRS, furnished tenancies remain scarce in social housing despite millions of tenants facing poverty. Helen Campbell of FRC Group explains why landlords must change their ways.

Furniture poverty is on the rise and thousands of families and households across the UK are struggling to afford or access the essential furniture items they need to make a home. This problem lives behind closed doors, shielded from the view of friends, family and Housing Officers. The changing picture of poverty across the UK combined with the impact of welfare policy changes mean that the situation is about to get worse.

According to The Joseph Rowntree Foundation, one of the UK's foremost experts on poverty and disadvantage, the number of social housing tenants in poverty in 2014/15 was 4.6 million, or 43 per cent of all social tenants.

A closer look at the report's historical findings revealed little change since the last estimation in 2004/05, which recorded 4.7 million poverty-stricken social tenants. In the private rented sector, the number of people in poverty had more than doubled, with 4.5 million tenants in 2014/15 compared to 2.2 million 10 years earlier.

To compound this bleak picture, increasingly families are not able to make savings. The proportion of households in the poorest fifth with no savings has increased by 12 per cent over the past 10 years to 69 per cent in 2014/15. Lack of savings has big ramifications for those facing furniture poverty, who often incur large upfront costs when having to replace essential white goods, for example. With the introduction of the latest welfare cuts, the number of people struggling to afford new or replacement furniture looks set to increase.

Tackling furniture poverty

This situation should be highly concerning to social landlords charged with housing some of the most vulnerable and socially disadvantaged.

In addition, furniture poverty poses a significant threat to the business success of landlords, as tenants without essential furniture items are far less likely to be able to accept or

fulfil their tenancy agreement. Ultimately, this can result in higher void rates, costs and arrears for the landlord.

Local welfare provision

One of the most important ways to access furniture for those on low incomes is through local welfare provision (LWP), or local welfare assistance schemes run by the local councils. These funding streams, devolved from the Social Fund in 2012, are an emergency safety net for people in need, from families fleeing domestic violence to those who had been affected by fire or flooding.

“It's time to turn the tables and make furnished tenancies available to those who need them”

However, LWP is by no means a panacea. With the funding devolved to local council level, the extent of provision varies widely across the country, creating a 'postcode lottery'. Councils also have vastly different resources available and some have axed their schemes altogether. The list of available items and eligibility criteria vary, meaning that some low-paid working families may be ineligible. It's therefore clear that LWP cannot be a solution for all those in dire need.

Furnished tenancies

Another solution is for tenants to use second hand furniture. However, the quality and availability of certain essential furniture items such as carpets or white goods may not always be suitable for a household.

Another potential solution is for a household

to access extra money for furniture through an affordable credit provider such as a credit union, or use a budgeting loan. However, poor credit history and very low income may render these options unavailable, leaving tenants to opt for high cost loans or rent-to-own stores which offer quick fixes, but the higher cost of credit could create a vicious cycle of debt.

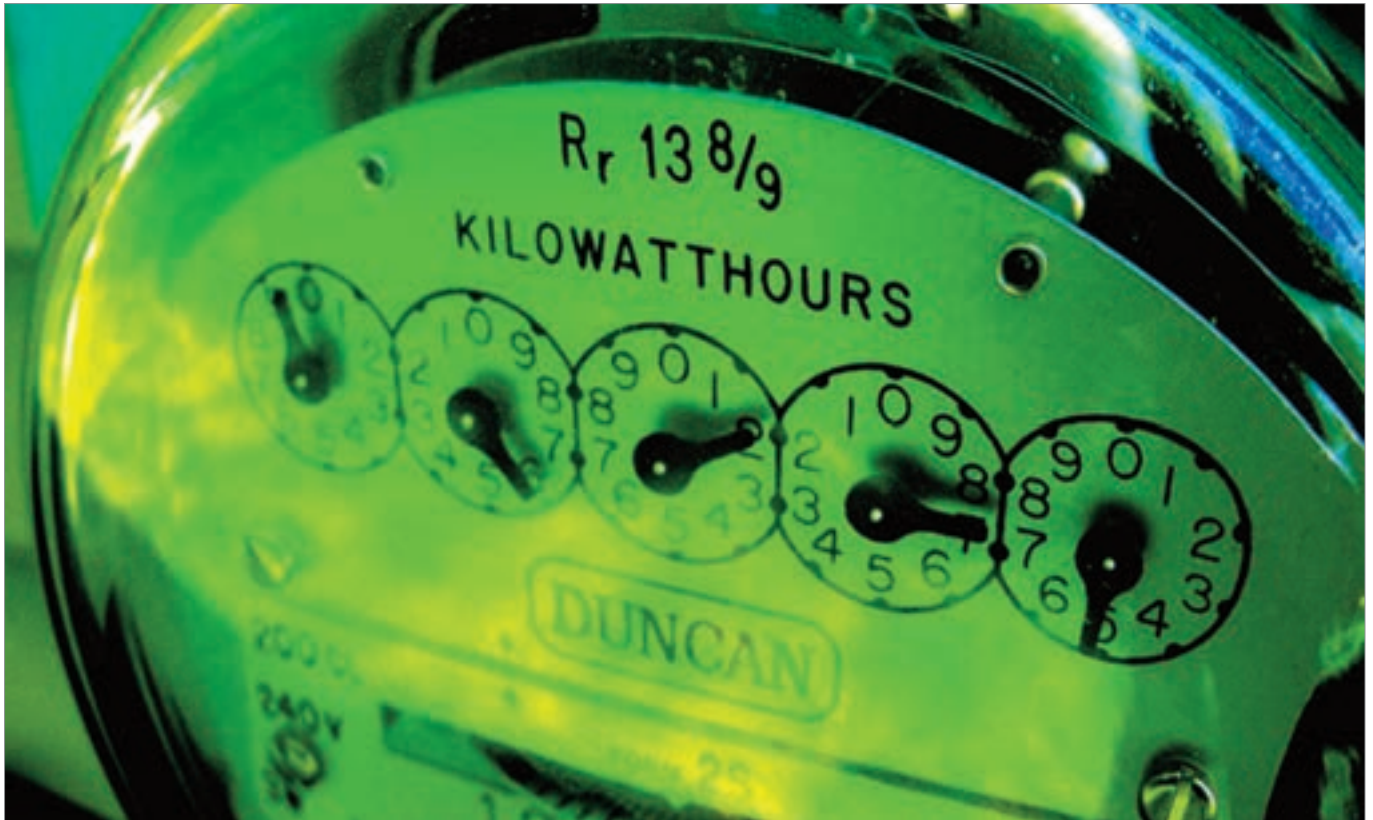
There is another solution that some social landlords are using to turn the tables on furniture poverty: furnished tenancies. These have proven to be hugely beneficial for disadvantaged tenants who need help to tackle their financial problems. Research from the Human City Institute revealed provision of furnished tenancies is of highest priority for tenants experiencing financial difficulties; ahead of landlord offered banking or budgeting help.

Usually associated with the private rented sector or the desirability of hard-to-let stock, furnished tenancies are a proven solution for furniture poverty. Outcomes include:

- Meeting urgent housing need
- Improving housing management performance: increasing occupancy rates and reducing tenancy churn resulting in lower void loss and lower tenant rent arrears
- Maximising local income and effectively tackling poverty
- Creating social value through increasing confidence of tenants, increasing their time to do alternative activities such as seeking employment

In a society where furniture poverty is only increasing and tenants have limited options, furnished tenancies can offer gains for both the tenant and the landlord. It's time to turn the tables and make furnished tenancies available to those who need them.

Helen Campbell is a campaigns officer at the FRC Group



High voltage

While gas and fire safety requirements have become paramount across the PRS, the emphasis on electrical protection is yet to catch up. Phil Buckle, of charity Electrical Safety First, explains how this is changing.



For almost 20 years, landlords have had to provide annual gas safety certificates, while in October 2015 the requirement for carbon monoxide alarms in private rented sector properties also came into force. But, until recently, there was no equivalent legislation covering electrical safety in the sector – yet it kills more people than gas or carbon monoxide poisoning combined.

According to the English Housing Survey, in 2014-15, 19 per cent (4.3 million) of households were renting privately – a trend replicated across the UK. The PRS is now a fundamental component of the housing landscape being used by an increasing number of people – but such rapid growth brings its own problems.

While most landlords are responsible and law-abiding, the accelerated expansion of the PRS has highlighted safety concerns and electrical safety as a particular issue, as electrical problems tend to be invisible until an accident occurs. This is particularly worrying as the demographic of the PRS has changed, from mobile younger people to families with children.

Fires with an electrical cause are (conservatively) estimated to produce £1bn worth of damage to homes a year and lead to almost half of all UK house fires. But legislation now placing electrical safety in the PRS on a par with gas and carbon monoxide protection is happening – although in a rather piecemeal fashion throughout the UK, and Scotland is leading the way.

Division

The disparity occurs because the governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland can introduce new laws on a range of issues, including housing, through their devolved powers. Over the last couple of years, Electrical Safety First has worked closely with Westminster and the devolved governments to ensure electrical regulations for PRS homes are fit for purpose.

While regular electrical safety checks are considered best practice by some leading landlord bodies, unless houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) are rented out, landlords' legal obligations around electrical safety have been rather broadly defined. The general requirement was simply to ensure that the electrical installation in a rental property is safe when tenants move in – and that it is maintained in this condition during the tenancy – along with any electrical items supplied.

Specific proposals

The new regulations Electrical Safety First called for make such requirements much more specific: regular electrical checks undertaken every five years by a competent, registered electrician, of both the installation and any electrical appliance supplied with it. In addition,

landlords should undertake a visual inspection of the property after each change of tenancy. These proposals are, according to the charity, a cost-effective, simple way to protect both people and property.

This is why Electrical Safety First were delighted when the most recent Housing (Scotland) Act included these checks as legal requirements and today, all PRS landlords in Scotland are required to ensure the electrics in their properties are inspected at least every five years. A copy of the latest EICR, or electrical inspection condition report must also be provided to the tenant.

Specific proposals

When the Scottish Government introduced this requirement, it proved itself a step ahead of the rest of the UK – and aware of the real impact of dangerous electrics. To ensure compliance, landlords were given a period of grace, with the regulation initially only covering new tenancies beginning in December 2015. Landlords with existing tenancies were given an additional or 'transitional' year – until 1 December 2016 – to organise inspections for their properties.

In Wales, Electrical Safety First worked closely with Assembly Members on the Renting Homes (Wales) Act, which was granted Royal Assent in January 2016. Following consultation, fitness for human habitation provisions will come into force and regular PRS electrical inspections are fully expected to be included. In Northern Ireland, despite the current political uncertainty, the Department for Communities has stated that they would like to press ahead with mandatory PRS electrical checks as soon as possible.

When England's Housing and Planning Act gained Royal Assent last May, it contained an amendment on electrical safety, which we sponsored.

However, until the regulation has been passed by the Secretary of State, we will not know the extent of the obligations, so Electrical Safety First have continued to work on the issue as members of the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) PRS Electrical Safety Working Group.

The DCLG has now drafted a report, which will be submitted to the Housing Minister Gavin Barwell, recommending mandatory electrical checks. The next step is to wait for ministerial approval. If successful, draft regulations will be proposed, followed by a parliamentary debate and further public consultation. Given Brexit, among other things, we would not expect any changes to impact the sector until much later this year.

Safety for everyone

While our focus has initially been on the PRS, it doesn't stop there. We want everyone to live in a safe home, regardless of whether they rent privately, live in social housing or are home-owners. To this end, Electrical Safety First have just launched a new campaign in Scotland called Inequality Street.

It calls on the Scottish Government to extend five-yearly electrical safety checks to all social housing and, as a first step, to add this protection to those living in owner occupied flats, where the risk of fire spreading to other households is increased. And we want to see the installation of RCDs- which quickly cut the current to prevent fatal electric shock – to be fitted in all rented homes. Electrical safety can't stop at the PRS, but improvements are starting there.

Phil Buckle is chief executive of Electrical Safety First.



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Sandtex proves its worth in cold-weather

Community housing in Birmingham was given a fresh new look over winter – despite challenging weather. 12 homes had been identified for redecoration work. But the falling temperature meant the plan to repaint the external elevations to each property required a special solution. The specification services team at Crown Paints selected **Sandtex Trade 365 All-Weather Masonry Paint**. Sandtex Trade 365 All Weather Masonry Paint's high performance Pliolite® Resin formulation is designed to combat difficult weather conditions, as it can be applied in temperatures down to -10°C, and is also rain resistant in 20 minutes.



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Facilities Show takes off this June



Meet hundreds of exhibitors and enhance your professional network at this flagship event.

The largest event in the FM calendar is less than two months away: from 20-22 June, FM specialists are invited to ExCeL London to source and inspect the latest solutions at the cutting-edge of FM innovation.

The show will again be held in association with the British Institute of Facilities Management and this year partnered with CBRE, creating a flagship event supported by the industry that tackles the critical issues facing those working within facilities management.

With over 50 complimentary seminar and workshop sessions and more than 300 forward-thinking exhibitors, Facilities Show 2017 is set to be another show-stopper.

Keynote inspiration

Headlining the programme of more than 50 speakers, this year's keynote speakers will focus on the theme of strength, resilience and defying the odds and deliver a session on the obstacles they faced, solutions they found and how the results allowed them to march on.

The sessions take place every day of the event from 11.30am to 12.30pm. The speakers are:

- Double Olympic gold medallist Dame Kelly Holmes (Tuesday 20 June)
- Professor Brian Cox OBE (Wednesday 21 June); and
- Falklands War veteran Simon Weston CBE (Thursday 22 June).

Future Trends Zone

This area of the show floor will be the perfect place for delegates to get hands-on experience with the latest advances across facilities management. There will be a showcase of products and solutions that focus on the future of FM as well as demonstrations of their implementation. With a mix of both exhibiting suppliers and non-exhibiting vendors, delegates will have benefit from real innovation.

Meet the suppliers

Visitors will again be able to pre-book meetings with the suppliers ahead of arriving at Facilities Show, with products on display covering maintenance, M&E, waste management, cleaning, energy management, TFM, CAFM, catering and more, providing tangible ROI before visitors have even entered the ExCeL.

Expand your network at the Networking Hub

New to 2017, the Facilities Networking Hub and Games Arcade will be two areas of the show floor that will offer facilities managers the opportunity to grow their professional community over a drink with like-minded peers or

"Years of research has resulted in the most focused programme the Facilities Show has had yet"



during a game of pool. Networking sessions will be hosted by industry groups such as FM North and The Hills Club on top FM and property trends for 2017 and beyond.

Enhance your career & knowledge

Whether visiting key associations like BIFM, CIBSE and RICS or stopping by the Total FM Zone, visitors can meet with the HR departments of international TFM and gain insight to courses, accreditation and more. With a focus on attracting the best talent in the market, visitors will benefit greatly from the BIFM Careers Zone and the Total FM Zone.

The Facilities Show Seminar Theatre and the Keynote Theatre will examine all the key issues in facilities management. Addressing the most pertinent topics, the tailored programme delivers insights from industry experts as well as real case studies and developments from Senior FMs.

Commenting on the line up, Charlotte Wright, senior content manager for Protection & Management, said: "A wealth of years of research with the FM community has resulted in the most focused programme the Facilities Show has had yet. Stages this year will welcome a mix of truly inspirational stories from our headline speakers with practical and insightful sessions from industry trailblazers and trainers."

Focus on safety and security

Facilities Show badge holders will be able to further develop their specialisms and source products in security, fire, safety, field service and corporate wear with access to IFSEC International, Safety & Health Expo, FIREX International, Field Service Management Expo and Professional Clothing Show that take place in adjoining halls at the same time. Visitors can identify new suppliers for perimeter security, access control CPD accreditations, CCTV, site evacuation and more or attend a host of education sessions discussing core issues including safety legislation, fire door installations and field service solutions.

Sound environmental credentials from Swish

For Roofline and rainwater goods specialists, Swish Building Products, environmental responsibility goes hand in hand with efficient manufacture, supply and distribution. Housing Management and Maintenance takes a look.

The basic design principles of UK housing stock have changed very little over the last hundred years or so. Our favourite style is a rectangular masonry box topped by a pitched, tiled roof with a network of troughing and pipework to channel away the large quantities of rainwater that characterise the country's climate.

Like it or not, "an Englishman's home is his castle" and until some major innovation changes his mind, the preference for a pretty, brick-and-tile box with roses around door, will surely remain!

Over the years, frequent changes to regulatory policies have done much to improve the standards of house construction in terms of materials, amenities and energy efficiency. Furthermore, despite the demise of the Decent Homes Policy, a great deal has been achieved with environmental issues such as sustainability, long term maintenance and carbon neutrality.

Where the roof meets the vertical walls, the area known as the Roofline, construction innovation has also moved on significantly.

Traditionally, Roofline construction was dominated by timber – used for fascias, soffits, weatherboarding and so on. It was a simple, easy to manipulate material that was readily available and low in cost. It also ticked the sustainability box from an environmental perspective – up to a point.

The fact that it deteriorates rapidly if not installed correctly and requires re-painting every four to five years to prevent inevitable decay and eventual complete replacement, was frequently ignored.

A more practical and environmentally sound solution for these harsh environmental conditions is cellular PVC.

Cellular PVC has similar working characteristics to timber, it is installed using the same tools and skills but is far more durable than timber, requires no maintenance and will last the whole life cycle of the building.

What's also important is that, unlike timber, Cellular PVC can be fully re-cycled at the end of its service life. So far, you would expect that it's game, set and match to PVC and the end of timber as a roofline material.

But back to reality, as timber will always have its die-hard supporters.

The service life of a material is an important consideration but what is just as crucial in today's eco-focussed world are factors such as efficient use of energy and natural resources, environmental performance in the



Swish roofline systems are widely used in the Public Sector Housing market

manufacturing process and driving down waste.

Here, one company which has been almost evangelical in its approach to making its manufacturing and distribution operations one of the most efficient in the industry, is Swish Building Products.

Swish, part of the Epwin Group, manufactures Cellular PVC Roofline products and rainwater drainage systems, supplying new-build and refurbishment projects across both public and private sector.

In this competitive commercial market where creating a clear differentiation seems to be important; being more efficient, creating less waste and being more environmentally responsible and delivering the attendant product quality gains can add real value to a brand.

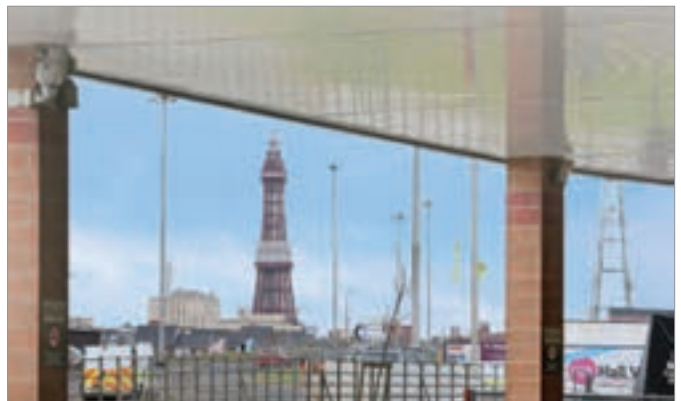
Swish has made real progress here and since achieving ISO14001 Environmental Management Certification in 2007, they have worked continuously to improve the environmental performance of their manufacturing and distribution operations.

Benefits have included significant reductions in energy inputs, water usage and scrappage rates during manufacture. Marked improvements in transport efficiency, better levels of service and reductions in fuel usage have also been realised.

This attention to environmental detail has also translated into consistent



Production of cellular PVC fascia boards



1000m2 of Swish cladding forms the soffit to a covered walkway at Blackpool Football Club.

improvements in quality stability, which itself is part of the waste reduction initiative.

Swish recognised how important efficient use materials and energy resources had become, with greater regard to the environmental effects that flow from their use. In light of this, Swish conceived a corporate Resource Use Policy in 2014.

The Swish Resource Use Policy sets out the Company's commitment to reducing and refining its use of resources based on the principles of Vinyl Plus, the European PVC industry's own commitment to meaningful environmental action over the period to 2020.

In 2015, Swish then achieved ISO50001 Energy Management Certification, to further demonstrate its commitment to continuing environmental improvement.

Swish's environmental achievements during 2014 and since 2008 look like this:

During this period Swish also became the first plastics company to achieve BES6001 Responsible Sourcing certification in order to engage

Emissions of Greenhouse Gases (GHG) from operation.	Elements	2015 Actual	Change since 2008
Direct Impacts Fixed (Production)	Electricity, Gas, Heater Fuel	+2.3%	-30.55%
Moving Impacts (Transportation)	Transport Vehicle Fuel, LPG	+19.7%	-3.5%
Combined Fixed and Moving		-5.7%	-26.1%
Water	Consumption of water	-26.6%	-71.9%

with its suppliers and ensure their capabilities in environmental matters.

So what? You might say. Well, quite a lot, actually. In the highly competitive world of construction materials, manufacture and supply, production and distribution efficiency are King.

Minimising waste and employing efficient methods of production to make products with long a working life and next to no maintenance requirement, creates something of a virtuous circle.

Combine this with the wider programme of activities that the Swish Resource Use policy holds for the future; including short, medium and long term resource usage, alternate material sourcing, staff, supply-chain and installer engagement and a system that allows the return of damaged or misshapen boards for recycling, it all bodes well for the Company.

The Code for Sustainable Homes may be a thing of the past but its spirit continues to guide important principles for the housebuilding industry: Responsible use of raw materials, efficiency in production and minimal environmental impact.

Full details of the Swish's Environmental Performance and Policies are available on the Swish website.



Swish Cellular PVC Roofline products and rainwater drainage system – a stylish enhancement to this modern new-build property



Swish, high capacity rainwater system



Cellular PVC has similar working characteristics to timber but is far more durable

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The environment tops the agenda

The environment is top of the agenda for **Designer Contracts**. The company's award-winning recycling scheme sees all waste removed from site and taken back to its 12 regional centres, saving a staggering 250 tonnes of waste going to landfill every year. The programme not only includes flooring. Designer Contracts has invested £40,000 in a baling machine that helps to recycle 70 tonnes of cardboard and 20 tonnes of plastic every year. At the company's national distribution facility in Kettering, which holds £2m worth of stock, it uses a computerised planning system to ensure maximum efficiency and to reduce waste.



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New surface mounted controls

DANLERS has launched a new range of hard wired ROUND PIR Occupancy switches in a choice of different switching and switch/dim options. Product features include versions for both Presence detection and Absence Detection; switches can be mounted directly to a ceiling or onto a range of different mounting boxes; adjustable time lag settings; adjustable photocell 30-1000 lux and inactive mode; switch comes with a snap fit mounting plate – easy to install and all products are backed with a five year warranty and are made in the UK.



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Kooltherm K100 range expands

Kingspan Insulation has announced the launch of two new products to join their innovative new Kooltherm K100 Range, designed to deliver lower U-values with a minimal construction thickness. Kingspan Kooltherm K112 Framing Board and K107 Pitched Roof Board are the latest products in the range, which was launched last year. Their advanced, fibre-free insulation core has a thermal conductivity of just 0.018 W/m.K across all available board thicknesses, the lowest for any rigid phenolic insulation board. This revolutionary composition offer the freedom to design and construct buildings with inherently outstanding fabric performance.



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Existing appliances into the Internet

Appliances don't need to be "WiFi ready" to be controlled from a phone any more. All you need to do is replace a fused spur or switch with one of **Timeguard's** new FST WiFi units, pair it with the home WiFi and download the free Timeguard App. So now any space or water heater can become part of the Internet of Things. There's even a weatherproof option to control outdoor heaters, pumps and lights. You have remote control over the biggest energy guzzlers in your property. The App enables you to set on and off times, add an extra 'boost' hour if needed. And, of course, this ingenious unit also provides essential fused spur protection for each appliance.



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Specifying the right life safety system to ensure compliance

The issue of poor and unplanned maintenance for vital life safety fire and smoke control systems is a key concern, which also has potentially fatal consequences. In particular, there have been a number of recent reports where smoke control systems in some housing association (HA) properties have been poorly maintained or neglected completely, placing tenants at risk.

Recognising the need to raise the standards when it comes to maintenance, SE Controls has launched SECloudlink™, an innovative 'remote services' solution, which provides detailed, around-the-clock system status interrogation. This comprehensive system enables SE Controls' maintenance team to provide planned and corrective maintenance when needed, driven by regulatory demands or by notifications direct from the smoke control system.

Using integrated 4G communications technology, it enables the system to be constantly monitored, as well as allowing any adjustments and tuning to ensure it matches the needs of the building and occupants, whether it is for smoke control only, environmental ventilation or a hybrid of both systems.

This approach not only provides an effective solution for buildings where ongoing maintenance might be an issue, but is also applicable to all buildings where smoke control systems are installed and demand regular maintenance to the standards demanded by BS9991, BS9999 and BS7346 Part 8, together with Building Regulations ADB; European EN12101, and others.

The key benefits of SECloudlink™ remote services include:

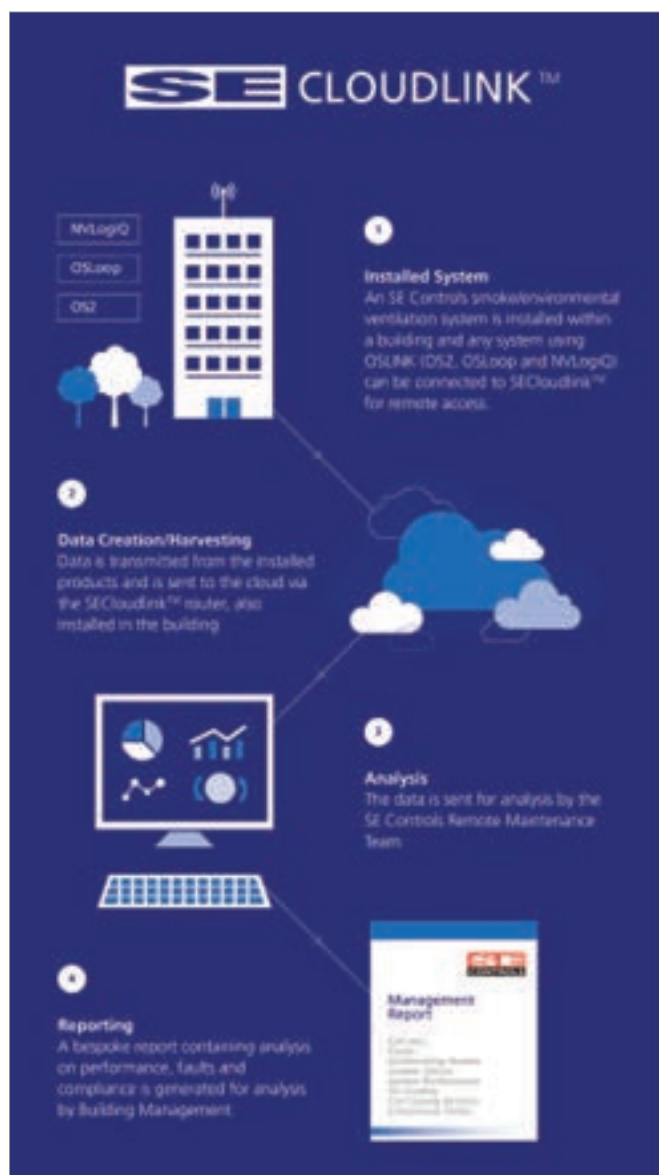
- Proactive management of life safety systems to ensure building compliance
- Improved efficiency and budget control, minimising disruption and reducing costs associated with expensive site visits
- System performance, including historical data, for individual sites or a portfolio of buildings
- Highlight faults and service requirements with fast problem resolution
- On-going support with advice and assistance when needed
- Management reporting

Simon North, Service and Maintenance Division Manager with SE Controls, explained: "The priority to install a legally compliant smoke and fire safety solution, means the onus of maintenance and servicing that system is often neglected, however, the potential costs associated with reactive maintenance e.g. sending out an engineer to site, as and when there is an issue, or when the system needs servicing, begs the question - why wouldn't you want to engage an SECloudlink™ solution?"

He added: "One of the key values of SECloudlink™ is that once the data is captured, a much more proactive and cost effective maintenance regime can be implemented. This includes the production of management information reports, system performance reports and early warnings, such as battery life, together with documentation to demonstrate compliance with the relevant regulations, which are a legal requirement."

The system can also provide significant benefits to contractors, particularly where they are responsible for maintenance on multiple sites. Due to the efficiencies of SECloudlink™ software, every installation can be monitored remotely where an SE Controls solution has been installed.

Individual rooms can be monitored on a floor-by-floor basis and using the system's graphical interface, which can be configured to notify SE Controls, or the appointed maintenance contractor, when an issue appears. Any alert or notification can be immediately interrogated on



screen with data logs to show details of the reported event to speed up corrective actions.

The SECloudlink™ solution is already in place on several sites where life safety systems are installed and the resulting benefits to landlords have also been significant. However, the most important benefit is for the building's residents; if a fire should occur, then the system will operate flawlessly and escape routes will be kept clear of smoke, as the alternative doesn't bear thinking about.

Further information on SE Controls' products, solutions and projects can be obtained online.

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No smoke without fire

Martyn Walley of Aico looks at the benefits of interconnecting domestic smoke alarms with third-party safety systems and how best to achieve this.



Domestic smoke alarm systems used to be pretty much self-contained affairs – you couldn't add accessories to a system (there were none to add in any case), you couldn't integrate them with other alarm systems, and you certainly couldn't interconnect to third party equipment. To do that required a commercial Part 1 system, which is entirely unsuited to the vast majority of residential properties, not to mention expensive.

Smoke alarms have developed considerably over the years, from improved response times through to greater system flexibility. This latter aspect in particular has had a considerable impact for landlords, especially in social housing. Now there are a raft of valuable system add ons, such as alarm control switches and the ability to connect smoke alarms to other systems.

Integrating alarm systems

In what circumstances would you want to connect a domestic fire alarm system to what is essentially a commercial one? The answer: when that Part 1 panel-based fire alarm system is fitted in the communal areas of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and apartment blocks. In this instance the individual apartments would be fitted with a BS5839 Part 6 domestic smoke alarm system. If this is triggered, it will only sound within that individual flat. To maximise safety and ensure the communal alarm can be heard within each property, it is beneficial to integrate the two

alarm systems so that the Part 1 communal system will activate all alarms throughout the entire building if a fire is detected, but does not allow individual flats' alarms to activate those in the communal areas or within other tenant's homes.

In case of emergency

Telecare/Warden Call Systems are commonplace in dwellings for vulnerable people and are an important tool to let people live independently in a safe environment, but in most situations they are not connected with the smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in the property. If a fire was to start or there was a CO leak, the alarms would activate but external assistance would not be sought, and this could be fatal. The ability to integrate these different systems means that if an alarm goes off, an emergency signal can be transmitted directly to the Warden Call system and on to the Alarm Receiving Centre if used. Assistance to evacuate the

"If a fire was to start or there was a CO leak, the alarms would activate but external assistance would not be sought, and this could be fatal"

continued on page 47...

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“It’s not always a straightforward process to connect smoke alarms with third-party systems. In fact, remarkably few can genuinely claim to do so”

property, if necessary, can then be provided quickly for maximum safety and peace of mind.

Sprinkler systems are another solution that are becoming more commonplace in domestic properties. In Wales, they are a legal requirement in all new build homes. Connecting the smoke alarm system to the sprinkler system offers clear benefits: if the sprinklers activate, an alarm can be triggered throughout the property providing occupants with plenty of time to evacuate.

Pain-free connection

It’s not always a straightforward process to connect smoke alarms with third-party systems. In fact, remarkably few can genuinely claim to do so. Most will only be able to achieve this through the use of relays, which will work but, as they haven’t been specifically designed for this purpose, may limit what you can do and how you do it.

Instead of utilising an existing product and adapting it to work adequately, Aico has approached the challenge by researching what customers really want to achieve from integrating alarms with third party systems and developed a specific solution that accommodates those needs. This has led to the introduction of our Ei414 Fire/CO Alarm Interface, which provides a dedicated connection between Aico smoke and CO alarms and third-party safety systems.

The connection to the other system can be made wirelessly with radio frequency (RF) or via hard wiring directly between the two devices. The Ei414 Fire/CO Alarm Interface itself features Aico’s award winning RadioLINK RF technology. It can be powered directly from the mains or

from a 12-24V DC supply and has built-in tamper-proof rechargeable lithium cells which will power the device in the event of any mains failure.

Added safety

Fire/CO Alarm Interfaces have already been successfully used in many applications and are proving particularly useful in the social housing sector.

Fife Council, for example, is undergoing a programme to install 30,000 Ei414 Fire/CO Alarm Interfaces throughout its housing stock. Previously it had been using different components, which did not ‘talk’ to each other, resulting in a potential safety issue. The Interface overcomes this, directly interacting with the different systems fitted within the properties to ensure the safety of the council’s tenants. The council initially intended to use the interface in sheltered housing properties, connected to warden call systems, but has found it so flexible and easy to use that it has since made the decision to extend its use to its entire housing stock.

The RHP Group, a registered housing provider in south west London, is also using an alarm interface to ensure the communal BS5839 Part 1 Fire Alarm system in the common circulation areas in HMOs can be heard within each flat. RHP has achieved this by installing an Aico Ei164e Heat Alarm in the hallway of each flat, which interconnects to the existing Part 6 alarm system within the flat. These heat alarms are also interconnected to an Aico Ei414 Fire/CO Alarm Interface, which in turn is connected to the communal alarm system in the common parts.

Interconnecting domestic smoke alarms systems with other safety systems remains a relatively new development, but one that is rapidly taking traction. The social housing sector in particular has been quick to see the benefits and make the most of this relatively low-cost added safety measure. Private housebuilders and developers are also showing an interest, especially for interconnecting to sprinkler systems. For those involved in installing or specifying fire alarm systems in domestic properties, ensuring you use good quality alarms that provide such flexible solutions provides a genuine opportunity to add value to that system and to your work.

Martyn Walley is national technical manager at Aico.

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Management, use and maintenance of fire alarm and detection systems

Fire alarm and detection systems can become an integral component within a property's fire protection strategy. Despite this, when FPA fire risk assessors visit properties they regularly find systems that are poorly managed and/or maintained. Situations such as this can leave people and assets at risk, can invalidate insurance policies and in many cases fall foul of the law.

The FPA would always recommend appropriate training, from a recognised provider for relevant key members of staff. System management - In any premises subject to the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 or equivalent legislation, a responsible person or duty holder must carry out a fire risk assessment that considers the safety in case of fire of all 'relevant persons'. A relevant person is any person who is or may be lawfully on the premises or any person in the immediate vicinity who is at risk from a fire on the premises. Maintenance - BS 5839-1 provides the current guidelines for a servicing and maintenance regime of automatic fire detection and alarm systems.

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Quality alarms & service make Aico No. 1

Aldwyck Housing Group in Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire has announced its decision to standardise on **Aico Ei208 Carbon Monoxide (CO) alarms**, based on its positive experience of working with Aico over many years. Aldwyck will be installing **Aico AudioLINK™ Ei208 Lithium battery powered CO alarms** into 5,200 properties. The Ei208 is a quality, cost-effective Lithium battery powered CO alarm designed to encourage widespread adoption of this life saving technology. Sealed in Lithium batteries largely overcomes the problem of battery removal by tenants as not only are they difficult to remove, but cannot be used to replace batteries in other devices.



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Firex low energy smoke and heat alarms

Kidde's Firex range now offers safety plus sustainability, with low energy mains-powered smoke and heat alarms that cost less than £1 a year to run. Interconnected, mains-powered smoke and heat alarms with reliable power back-up should now be the norm for most housing to satisfy Building Regulations requirements and Code of Practice recommendations. **Firex** alarms can be interlinked to create a low-energy network for protection throughout the home. But they can also interconnect with Kidde's 4MCO and 4MDCO mains-powered carbon monoxide alarms, using the unique 'Smart Interconnect' feature.



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