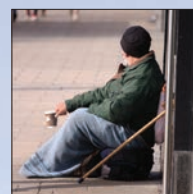


HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

09.17



Homeless
crisis grows

Rising tenant
dissatisfaction



Rent fraud
hits £800m

Regulatory
changes
disappoint

Wellington Road

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Subscription costs just £18 for 6 issues, including post and packing. Phone 01435 863500 for details. Individual copies of the publication are available at £3.25 each including p&g.

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Editor's comment

Fingers crossed for this piece of legislation



Patrick Mooney,
News Editor

Statistics do not always provide you with the whole picture and context can be all-important, but figures from the English Housing Survey do present us with a bleak picture of the housing conditions in which millions of our fellow citizens are living today.

While the number of private renters continues its exponential rate of increase, we see that tenants in the private sector are spending more than a third of their income on rent. In high demand areas the proportion is even higher, rising to between 45 and 50 per cent of income in London.

Many of these private tenants are young adults who are giving up on dreams of home ownership. To make matters worse, their homes are often not in a good condition and increasing numbers of them are at risk of eviction either because they have fallen into rent arrears or their landlord simply wants the property back – either to sell, or to re-let to someone else at a higher rent.

LICENSING

An increasing number of councils are bringing in licensing schemes to improve conditions in the private rented sector and many schemes are supported by landlord organisations, who have a shared interest in weeding out the rogue landlords who blight the sector.

However, there are still too many tenants having to put up with unsafe living conditions such as faulty electrical wiring, unserviced gas boilers or excessive damp and mould. By complaining they run the risk of losing their home.

It is for this reason that we should applaud the efforts of Karen Buck MP, who is trying to improve living conditions with her private member's bill – the rather snappily titled, Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Bill. It has had its first reading and we await news of its progress early next year. But for many, it can't get onto the statute books soon enough.

CONSCIENCES

So we hope it has more success than the last time she attempted to get this law passed as it was defeated back in 2015. The shocking thing about that defeat was that many of the MPs who voted against it were themselves private landlords and they were free to vote down laws that would have made them ensure properties they let out were decent enough for people to live in.

A recent study by Channel 4 found that at least 123 MPs (from all the major parties) have declared making an income from letting out property. Let's hope that their consciences ensure that this time they do not block the bill and tenants win the right to sue their landlord if they are expected to pay rent on an unsafe and unhealthy property. Rogue and criminal landlords need to be rooted out and we need all of the tools at our disposal to make this happen.

Patrick Mooney



On the cover...

The September issue of Housing Management & Maintenance features Wellington Road © LMH

Wellington Road is the Housing Design Award-nominated refurbishment carried out by Liverpool Mutual Homes that gave a 1960s building in Liverpool a new lease of life through energy efficiency upgrades and comprehensive soft and hard landscaping works. Read the report on page 25.

Homeless crisis grows as 100 tenants a day are evicted and children in temporary accommodation leaps 37 per cent

The number of children being housed in temporary accommodation has risen to over 120,000, as English councils struggle to cope with the rising tide of homelessness.

This is equivalent to an increase of 32,650 or 37 per cent since the second quarter of 2014, or an average of 906 extra children every month – similar in size to an average secondary school according to the Local Government Association.

Councils are currently housing 77,240 homelessness households in temporary accommodation (54,280 in London), a 10 per cent rise on the previous year, with the increased use of temporary accommodation now rising fastest outside of London.

The accommodation is usually either in a Bed & Breakfast hotel, an overnight hostel or in leased properties, but none of these provide a secure tenancy with washing and cooking facilities often shared with other residents.

RISING EVICTIONS

The LGA, which represents councils in England, says the current situation is unsustainable. The cost of providing temporary accommodation has tripled in the last three years, as the extra demand places increasing pressure on local authorities, who now face a total £5.8 billion funding gap by 2020.

Much of the rise in homelessness is due to private sector tenancies coming to an end, often with rent arrears caused by welfare benefit changes and the imposition of a benefit cap, which itself has been reduced in recent years to £23,000 in London and £20,000 elsewhere. High numbers of “no-fault” evictions (under a Section 21 notice) by private landlords are often to blame, where the landlord does not have to give a reason and the tenant has just two months to leave.

The housing charity Shelter has warned that more than a million households living in private rented accommodation are at risk of becoming homeless by 2020 because of rising rents, benefit freezes and a lack of social housing. The charity calculated that if the housing benefit freeze remains in place until 2020 – more than a million households, including 375,000 with at least one person in work, could be forced out of their homes.

A record number of renters are being evicted from their homes – more than 100 tenants a day are losing the roof over their head, according to

analysis by the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF). They found approximately 40,000 tenants in England were evicted each year from 2014 to 2016, with over 9,000 evictions carried out in the first quarter of 2017.

FUNDING GAP

Campbell Robb, chief executive of JRF, has called for the freeze on housing benefit to be lifted. “With higher rents, a benefits freeze and impossible choices about what bills to pay, evictions have reached record levels and put families under enormous strain,” he said.

“The Government has made welcome moves to offer renters more protection. But it must take immediate action on housing costs. This means lifting the freeze on housing benefit. It is intolerable that more than 100 families a day are losing their homes.”

The LGA has pulled together the latest data and combined this with best practice examples of how councils are responding to the growing demands on their resources in a report entitled, *Housing our homeless households*. It is supplemented with practical advice and on-line tools for councils to use.

Council leaders are calling for extra funding so they can provide much needed support services and permanent housing for families that become homeless. They are also demanding help from the Government to relieve the financial drain on councils and the disruptive impact on affected families.

UNSUSTAINABLE

The new Homelessness Reduction Act requires councils to help individuals and families before they become homeless, but as a new responsibility it is unproven and local authorities fear the rising costs of support will prove very expensive, draining their resources from other key areas.

Martin Tett, the Local Government Association's housing spokesman, said: “The net cost for councils of funding for temporary accommodation has tripled in the last three years, it's clear the current situation is unsustainable for councils, as well as being disruptive for families.

“Councils are working hard to tackle homelessness, with some truly innovative work around the country – and we now need the Government to support this local effort by

“The Government must abandon the freeze on housing benefit that's denying thousands of families the essential top-up needed to pay for rising rents”

Anne Baxendale, director of campaigns and policy at Shelter

allowing councils to invest in building genuinely affordable homes, and taking steps to adapt welfare reforms to ensure housing remains affordable for low-income families.”

A DCLG spokesman said the Government is investing £550 million to help tackle the issue, adding: “The number of children living in temporary accommodation is down from its peak in 2006, but any increase in the number of homeless families is always a concern.

CHALLENGES

The LGA said placements in temporary accommodation presents serious challenges for families, from parents' employment and health to children's ability to focus on school studies and form friendships.

“We're clear that while temporary accommodation is vital in making sure that no family is without a roof over their head, councils have a responsibility to find secure, good quality accommodation as quickly as possible,” said Mr Tett.

Anne Baxendale, director of campaigns and policy at Shelter, said: “Every day we speak to families desperate to escape the dingy, cramped hostel room they're forced to live in, for weeks if not months, as overstretched councils can't find them anywhere else. The situation is getting worse as the lack of affordable homes and welfare cuts bite deeper.

“The Government must abandon the freeze on housing benefit that's denying thousands of families the essential top-up needed to pay for rising rents. And, in the longer term, they must build decent homes that families on lower incomes can actually afford to live in.”

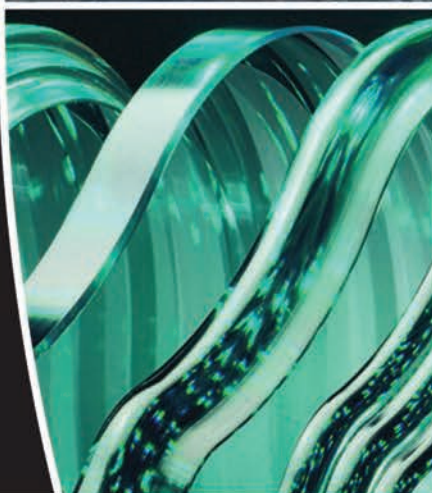
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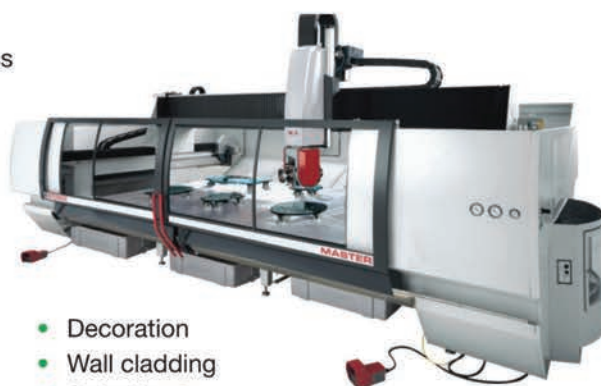
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Housing regulator makes limited changes to tenant consultation standard



The social housing regulator has amended its Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard but doubts persist over whether it gives all tenants a meaningful voice.

With many people calling for the Homes and Communities Agency to take more notice of tenants' views or complaints and for it to liaise more effectively with the Housing Ombudsman, fresh concerns have been raised in the wake of the Grenfell Tower tragedy. This could represent a missed opportunity.

Residents of the tower block complained that their concerns over a number of health and safety matters, mainly associated with the block's refurbishment, were either ignored altogether or only given scant attention by both the tower block's owners, Kensington & Chelsea Council and the tenant management organisation it employed to manage the block on its behalf.

While both the new and old versions of the standard have meant to apply to all social housing landlords, their impact on councils is largely

advisory and only housing associations needed to get the HCA's consent for property disposals. The Grenfell Tower residents have said they literally had no one else to complain to after the council had made decisions on their specific concerns.

REMIT

The HCA published the updated standard in July (a month after the Grenfell fire) following a detailed consultation process in the late Spring and early Summer. But leaseholders and prospective tenants (such as those on a waiting list for social housing) are among the groups whose concerns lie outside the remit of the HCA's tenant consultation standard.

The consultation exercise followed fast on the heels of the deregulatory measures for housing associations in April. This ended the need for HAS to seek the regulator's consent for asset disposals, such as selling properties or raising mortgages.

Some 156 responses were made to the consultation from individuals and organisations,

with the majority being in favour of the proposed changes. However, it is felt that if the consultation had coincided with the fire at Grenfell Tower or its aftermath, then the response rate would have been greater in number and more demanding in giving all tenants (and leaseholders) a louder and more influential voice.

REQUIREMENT

The new standard requires social housing providers, including HAS, councils and ALMOs to consult with tenants if they are considering changing their landlord or changing the management arrangements of their homes.

Under the old standard social housing landlords needed to obtain the HCA's consent before disposing of properties, with the regulator checking that an adequate tenant consultation had been carried out. The consent requirement ceased in April as part of the Government's deregulatory package to get HAS' loans off the public sector balance sheet.

In response, the regulator decided the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard needed to be made "more explicit and strengthened" to ensure it was fully understood by housing providers.

APPROPRIATE

The new wording is: "Where registered providers are proposing a change in landlord for one or more of their tenants or a significant change in their management arrangements, they shall consult with affected tenants in a fair, timely, appropriate and effective manner.

"Registered providers shall set out the proposals clearly and in an appropriate amount of detail and shall set out any actual or potential advantages and disadvantages (including costs) to tenants in the immediate and longer term.

"Registered providers must be able to demonstrate to affected tenants how they have taken the outcome of the consultation into account when reaching a decision."

The HCA has acknowledged the limited effect of the change in the following statement, buried on the penultimate page of its 24 page decision statement – "The change is only that the regulator is now making explicit within the Standard the required quality of consultation that has always been required by the regulator."

LSE students act over 'mouldy and mice-infested flats'

Postgraduates at one of Britain's leading universities have criticised their accommodation, claiming it caused many of them to fall ill and that constructive work disrupted their exams.

Students living in halls of residence at Sidney Webb House, near London Bridge station in central London, said the property suffered from widespread black mould, mice infestations and

periods without ventilation. They claimed this resulted in a "health crises, distraction and distress".

The students have threatened to sue LSE for what they claim is a "breach of tenancy contract". They also cited delays in repairs to basic utilities, including heating and hot water, while students, who lived in the halls between September 2016

and June 2017, also complained of disruptive construction work, which took place over a seven-week period, and affected students' ability to prepare for their exams.

The accommodation is provided by specialist landlord, Unite Students, who acquired it in the previous year. They said it "does not accept" the accommodation had been the direct cause of any illness. A spokesman for the LSE said the property was due to be refurbished over the summer and it was aware of a number of complaints about the accommodation during the academic year. They said each issue was being investigated.

Social tenants less satisfied with repairs than private renters

Tenants of councils and housing associations are more dissatisfied with their landlord's repairs and maintenance service than private renters, the latest English Housing Survey report has shown.

Council tenants are the most dissatisfied with repairs work to their homes at 25 per cent, compared with 22 per cent for HA tenants and 18 per cent of private renters. The report does not reveal the reasons for the differences in satisfaction levels.

However, social housing tenants are also more likely to report dissatisfaction with their accommodation (13 per cent) compared with 10 per cent of private renters and three per cent of owner-occupiers.

Social tenants are more likely than those in other tenures to be 'very dissatisfied' with their accommodation (six per cent) compared with less than one per cent of owners and four per cent of private renters. Social housing tenants are also less likely than other tenure groups to feel safe in their neighbourhood.

PROFILES

There were noticeable differences in satisfaction levels between council and housing association tenants. Council tenants are slightly more likely to be dissatisfied with their accommodation than those renting from a HA (15 per cent compared with 12 per cent). As the report points out this difference may be due to different property age profiles and the quality of housing stock, as HA homes were typically built more recently than most council houses.

Overall some 3.9 million households in England were renting in the social housing sector (17 per cent of all households) which is now the smallest tenure group, after the private rented sector (20 per cent) and owner occupiers (63 per cent).

Among social renting households, 59 per cent rented from housing associations (2.3 million households) and 41 per cent from councils (1.6 million). While households renting from housing associations now make up the majority of social sector households, this has only come about in recent years.

In 2015-16, social tenants had lived at their current address for an average of 11.6 years, compared with 17.8 years for owner-occupiers and 4.3 years for private renters.

CHARACTERISTICS

Generally council tenants are older than the average adult in England, is more likely to be white and have or be living with someone with a disability while private tenants are younger than average. Social housing tenants are more likely to be living in single adult households or as single parents, but less likely to be in full-time work.

The average weekly income of social tenants was £394, which is significantly lower than the average income of private tenants (£673) and of owner-occupiers (£919). No doubt this is connected to the survey's finding that a quarter of social rented households were in rent arrears or have been over the past year.

In 2015/16 there were 686,000 (25.4 per cent) social rented households in arrears, or households that had been over the past 12 months, compared with just nine per cent of private renters. This is a lower proportion of households in arrears compared to 2014/15, when 27.7 per cent were either in arrears or had been over the year.

The survey found that a cut to housing benefit was cited as a reason for being in arrears more commonly by private renters than social tenants. Nearly a quarter (23 per cent) of those who said they were in arrears because of a housing benefit cut said this was due to the "new benefits system/caps".

CAP

The lower benefit cap was introduced at the beginning of this year and has estimated to have hit 88,000 families, 63 per cent of which are single-parent families.

Families living in overcrowded social rented homes have increased, after remaining at six per cent for three years. There are now seven per cent of social rented households living in overcrowded conditions, a return to the 2010/11 peak.

The survey found the proportion of households in the social rented sector who expect to buy their own home has increased, from 35 per cent in 2010/11 to 47 per cent in the latest year.

A DCLG spokesperson said: "The number of social renters in arrears has fallen year-on-year and we're reducing social housing rents by one per cent each year for four years."

Rise in tenants' complaints to Ombudsman

Complaints by social housing tenants to the sector's ombudsman have increased, with repairs again featuring as the most complained about service.

Figures reported in the Housing Ombudsman's annual report for 2016/17 shows that overall it received 15,112 complaints and new inquiries, there was an 18 per cent rise in the number of cases that went forward to a formal investigation and compensation orders against landlords totalled more than £200,000.

Highlights from the ombudsman's annual report included:

- Staff completed inquiries into and closed 15,877 complaints;
- 96 per cent of complex cases were determined within 12 months (59 per cent in 2015/16);
- 2,471 landlords are members, representing 4,761,158 properties, comprising - 2,051 housing associations, 349 councils and 71 private landlords;
- Responsive repairs (34 per cent) were the largest category of complaints overall followed by tenants' behaviour (10 per cent);
- 546 orders of compensation totalled £205,402;
- Individual compensation awards ranged from £20 to £8,195; and
- Vast majority of complainants are tenants but 17 per cent of complaints come from leaseholders.

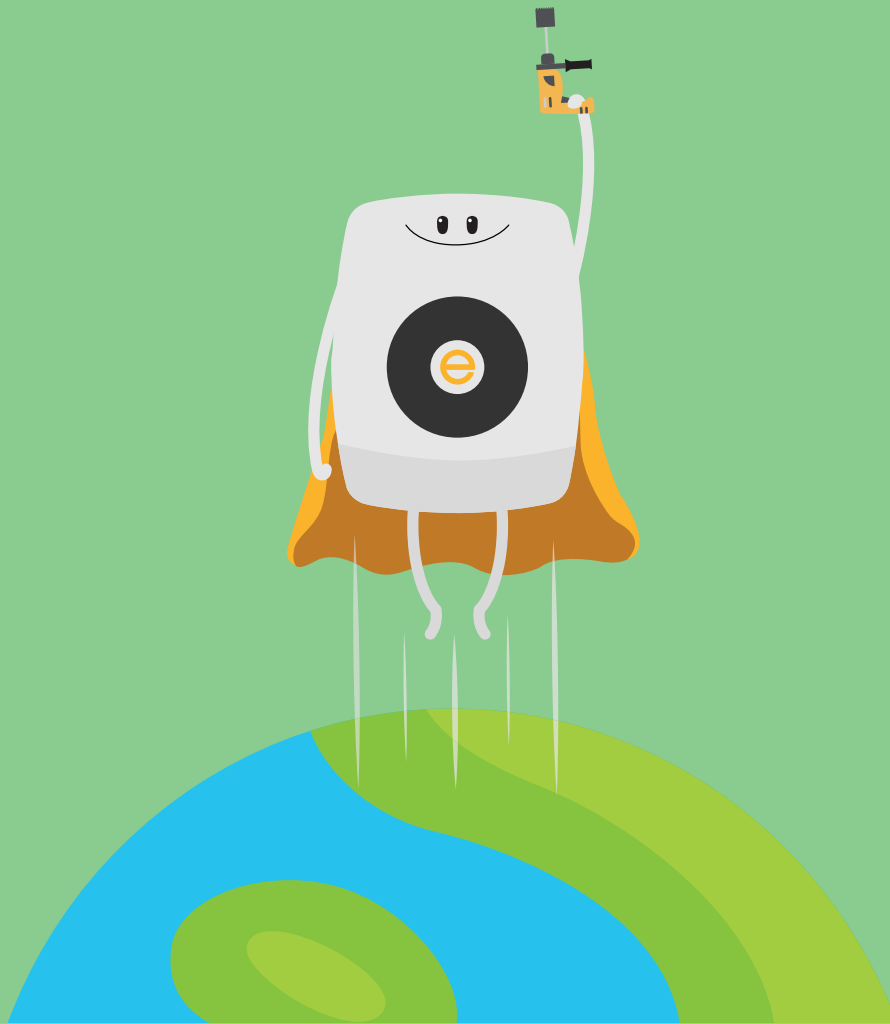
David Connolly, interim housing ombudsman, said: "The improvements in our service reflect the dedication and hard work of our staff.

Through their efforts we have made a difference for many complainants, and we have played our part in supporting the sector to improve complaints handling and develop their services."

The report showed increased productivity and high levels of customer satisfaction. In the wake of its publication, Labour MP Rushanara Ali called for a ratings system so tenants would be able to avoid poor-performing housing associations. "Why can't we have league tables for housing associations so we know who are the worst offenders," she said.

In the past year the Ombudsman and the Homes and Communities Agency have been told by MPs to liaise better, with concerns over whether landlords pay sufficient notice to tenants' complaints heightened after the Grenfell Tower tragedy. It has been reported that residents were raising issues about fire safety and electrical problems long before the terrible events in mid June.

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Growing problem of homelessness in rural communities

The largely hidden problem of homelessness in rural villages and market towns has been revealed in a new report highlighting an increase in numbers affected coupled with a shortage of emergency and temporary accommodation.

Rates of homelessness are increasing across England, but the focus of resources is on our cities and urban areas. The peculiarities of rural areas can make delivering services to prevent and relieve homelessness particularly difficult.

A new report published by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has found 91 mainly rural councils recorded a 42 per cent rise in rough sleeping between 2010 and 2016, according to analysis of official data.

The report says the causes of homelessness are similar in rural and urban areas, but prevention work was especially difficult outside of towns and cities due to a lack of emergency and temporary accommodation. It also claimed lower levels of affordable housing and high numbers of second or holiday homes in rural communities posed “particular challenges”.

HIDDEN

The IPPR are urging the Government to update its homelessness strategy to include countryside-specific guidance after 6,270 rural households became homeless in 2015/16.

Charlotte Snelling, research fellow at IPPR, said: “Many people see homelessness and rough sleeping as a problem which only affects England’s big cities. However, our research shows that it is a real problem in rural areas too.

“It is often hidden with people forced to bed down in outhouses, barns, tents and parked cars. However, this isn’t something we simply have to accept: building more affordable homes alongside putting in the right support from government would do much to tackle this issue.”

The IPPR said local authorities should try to strike devolution deals with the Government to allow those with ambitious affordable housing targets to be given extra powers to help achieve their aims.

SOLUTIONS

Among the report’s findings:

- In 2015/16, 6,270 households were accepted as homeless in England’s 91 mainly and largely rural local authorities;
- In 16 of these predominantly rural LAs, at least two in every 1,000 households was accepted as homeless;
- In 2015/16, mainly and largely rural areas in England reported making 12,977 decisions on homelessness approaches – 11 per cent of local authority decisions, nationally; and

Idyllic images of rolling hills, countryside pursuits and village life can mask significant experiences of inequality and deprivation which rural communities are vulnerable to

- From 2010 to 2016, mainly rural local authorities recorded a rise from 191 to 252 rough sleepers – an increase of 32 per cent. In largely rural areas there has been a leap of 52 per cent.

Sue Chalkley, chief executive of Hastoe Group, which supported the research, said: “It is clear from this report that homelessness manifests differently across the country and solutions used to tackle it in urban areas may not be the right approach for those in our rural towns and villages.”

Idyllic images of rolling hills, countryside pursuits and village life can mask significant experiences of inequality and deprivation which rural communities are vulnerable to. Homelessness, traditionally seen as an urban street phenomenon, is notably absent in people’s understanding of rural life.

The research found that central to addressing homelessness in rural areas will be making sure rural housing markets work for their resident populations by providing affordable accommodation across a range of tenures and types of home.

For homelessness itself, the research starts to identify a number of things that could be pursued now, ranging from new rural-specific homelessness strategies to new models of partnership working, from improved monitoring and reporting to community-based service delivery options.

CAMPAIGN

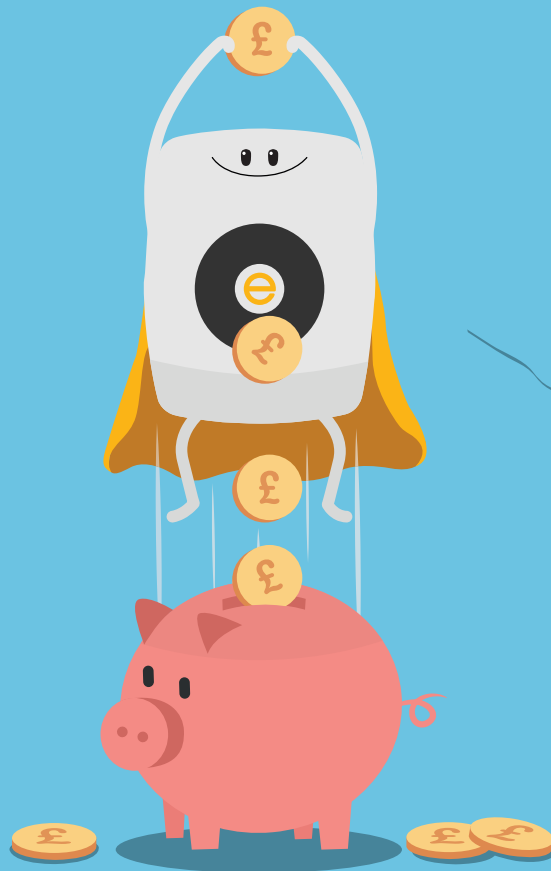
Meanwhile, a group of 12 campaign organisations and associations have warned rural areas could become “enclaves of the affluent” unless there is a meaningful increase in the number of affordable homes outside of towns and cities.

The Rural Coalition, a lobbying group that includes the National Housing Federation, the Campaign to Protect Rural England and the Royal Town Planning Institute, called on the Government to introduce an “ambitious annual target” for new affordable homes in rural areas.

It also called for a dedicated rural affordable housing funding programme.

Just 8 per cent of homes in rural areas are affordable, compared with nearly 20 per cent in cities and towns.

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Council approves £25m re-investment of RTB receipts in new affordable housing scheme

A south London council has approved a £25m investment in more affordable housing via a new independent charity that guarantees cheaper rents for local people.

Croydon council will use Right to Buy receipts to buy properties and let them on assured short-hold tenancies for up to three years, as an alternative to using B&B hotels or temporary accommodation for up to 250 homeless families.

The council believes the new scheme will give families greater security of tenure in safer properties, while at the same time saving the authority up to £1m a year in the cost of emergency temporary accommodation.

Councillor Alison Butler, deputy leader of the authority, said: "Renting privately is expensive for many Croydon people, which is why this council is taking action to make it more affordable for them. I look forward to seeing Croydon Homes buy its first properties."

Homes will be bought for a target price of between £300-400k each, with the council completing any repairs and refurbishment works before passing them to the charity on a leased basis. The scheme will focus on purchasing two and three bedroom properties, where demand is greatest and the highest savings can be achieved.

The council deemed that no existing housing association would be able to deliver housing in sufficient numbers to use the council's level of RTB receipts.

Earlier in the summer, the council's cabinet agreed the setting up of an independent charity provisionally called Croydon Homes to rent out 340 local homes costing 65 per cent of the usual private rent. This £25m allows the council to fund Croydon Homes's purchase of another 250 properties on the open market.

At the cabinet meeting which gave final approval to the scheme for a £25m revolving fund to be loaned to Croydon Homes, members were told Croydon Homes will repay the council through the rent it receives, and will receive extra investment money from the council in stages as more properties become available.

The scheme means that a two-bedroom privately rented flat in Croydon at £1,380 per month would instead cost £900 through Croydon Homes. Tenants would benefit from the security of a three-year contract instead of the usual six months with a private landlord.

Homelessness of vulnerable groups is avoidable

A cross-party Parliamentary group believes that homelessness of people in high-risk groups can be prevented within the next few years.

Following the passing of the Homelessness Reduction Act, a new group of MPs are urging the Government to bring together national policies and local frontline work to prevent and end homelessness for good among care leavers, prison leavers and survivors of domestic abuse.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Ending Homelessness (APPGEH) have produced a report, in conjunction with Crisis, the national charity for homeless people.

They say that with so many vulnerable people already on the radar of police, local authorities, prisons and social services, it is 'inexcusable' that they fall through the net, yet they continue to do so, as reflected in the report:

- One third of care leavers become homeless in the first two years immediately after they leave care, and 25 per cent of all homeless people have been in care at some point in their lives;
- In 2016, 90 per cent of women in refuges were reported to have housing needs and in 2015/16, 6,550 people became homeless because of a violent relationship breakdown, accounting for 11 per cent of all homeless acceptances. In 2015, 35 per cent of female rough sleepers left their homes due to domestic violence; and
- In 2014, 20 per cent of prisoners said they had no accommodation to go to on release and there are many barriers which can make finding accommodation on release difficult.

The report was based on a year of research and consultation with experts and those with direct experience of homelessness.

It recommends Whitehall departments should work in partnership to audit existing policies and design programmes to specifically support care leavers, prison leavers and survivors of domestic violence.

TRANSITION

The Government has already committed to putting prevention at the heart of its future working and to set up a Homelessness Reduction Taskforce. The report says there is an opportunity to bring together national policies and local frontline work to prevent and end homelessness for these cohorts for good.

Neil Coyle MP, joint co-chair of the APPGEH, said: "A local authority should know exactly when a care leaver or prison leaver is making the transition from institutional life to independence and should be ready and prepared to step in at that stage.

"Similarly, survivors of domestic violence



The Government has already committed to putting prevention at the heart of its future working and to set up a Homelessness Reduction Taskforce

should be given a crime reference number as soon as they make a domestic violence report to the police. Many survivors feel unable or too afraid to even report abuse to the police in the first place.

"Time and again these people are getting lost despite, in many cases, receiving assistance from public bodies which should be a trigger to prevent their homelessness. It is an achievable goal for these groups."

The group's other co-chair Will Quince MP, added: "The APPGEH championed the recently passed Homelessness Reduction Act, but more must be done and more resources made available. This report demonstrates there is nothing inevitable about homelessness.

"It also gives government and other decision makers carefully thought through recommendations for action."

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Second landlord prosecuted by Rent Smart Wales

A Cardiff landlord who ignored the Rent Smart Wales scheme has been fined more than £3,500 for a series of non-compliance offences.

Landlord Shelley Bailey of Wotton-Under-Edge, Gloucestershire was prosecuted under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 for breaking the law requiring all private landlords with properties in Wales to register and all self-managing landlords and agents to become trained and licensed.

Acting on reports about her failure to comply, Rent Smart Wales officers attempted to contact Ms Bailey to inform her of the requirement to register herself and her seven Cardiff properties and, as a self-managing landlord, to complete training and become licensed.

Ms Bailey failed to take any steps to comply and was issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice of £150 in April, but her failure to pay led to the prosecution by Cardiff Council, who operate the scheme on behalf of Welsh Government.

She was found guilty of 21 offences in her absence at Cardiff Magistrates Court, fined £3,580 and ordered to pay £457 costs.

Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, Cllr Lynda Thorne, said: "Rent Smart Wales was established to drive up standards in the private rented sector, protecting tenants and ensuring landlords and agents are fit and proper and aware of their rights and responsibilities."

She added: "Landlords and agents had a full year to comply before the November 2016 deadline when enforcement powers became active but despite this some landlords believe they can continue to flout the law and side-step complying. This case shows that we are actively seeking out those who fail to comply and are working with Local Authorities across Wales and others to identify cases of non-compliance. We're keen to hear from tenants and neighbours who have concerns about unregistered landlords and properties."

She concluded: "As we see with this prosecution, the sanctions for failing to comply with Rent Smart Wales are serious and the fine imposed reflects the complete disregard for the scheme shown by the landlord. It should be a stark warning to all those who are yet to comply and I encourage any unregistered or unlicensed landlords or agents not to delay. Come forward and comply without delay."

Further information about the scheme can be found at www.rentsmart.gov.wales

One in three houses with consent not getting built

More than 320,000 homes with planning permission have not been built in the past five years despite overwhelming pressure for new properties of all tenure types, according to new research.

The figure for phantom homes is equivalent to nearly one in every three homes in England (32 per cent) that have been granted planning permission in the past five years.

London is faring particularly badly with over 100,000 unbuilt homes (48 per cent of the number with consent), but the regions of the North West and Yorkshire & Humberside are also performing well below the national average, with 38 and 34 per cent of consents unbuilt, totaling more than 73,000 homes.

Shelter is warning the current housebuilding system encourages developers to sit on land and drip feed new homes onto the market, keeping prices high for individual buyers and volume purchasers, like housing associations and councils.

The charity has called on the Government to get tough with developers by giving councils the power to tax those who do not build homes fast enough, as well as granting planning permission to developers based on their track record.

PROFITS

Shelter's report revealed that in the same five-year period, the profits of the country's biggest housebuilders (Barratt Developments, Taylor Wimpey, Persimmon, Berkeley Group and Bellway) have soared by an astronomical 388 per cent from £674m in 2011 to a combined £3.3bn in



2016. In addition developers' profit margins have increased with payouts to shareholders having risen to £936m in 2015.

Anne Baxendale, head of communications, policy and campaigns at Shelter, said: "Housebuilders are trickling out a handful of poor quality homes at a snail's pace meaning there are simply not enough affordable homes and ordinary working families are bearing the brunt.

"While people across the country struggle with eye-wateringly high housing costs, developers' profits are soaring into the billions. Time and again we hear that red tape of the planning system being blamed but the real problem is a system where developers make more profit sitting on land than they would by building homes.

"It's clear our housebuilding system has failed the nation but the Government can turn things around by supporting a whole new approach. Shelter's New Civic Housebuilding model listens to the needs of communities and gives more powers to councils to get developers building the high-quality genuinely affordable homes we need."

L&Q reports record surplus

Giant landlord L&Q has announced its biggest ever trading surplus of £332m following its merger with East Thames, up £53m on the previous year.

At the end of a busy year in which L&Q also bought strategic land business Gallagher Estates, announced a joint venture with Trafford Housing Trust in Manchester, set up a new care and support arm L&Q Living and formed a 20,000-home development partnership with the London mayor Sadiq Khan.

Turnover in 2016/17 increased 20 per cent to £756m, while L&Q's operating margin on its social housing lettings increased to 50 per cent. Total assets net of current liabilities rose to £10.8bn from the previous year's £8bn.

The board also approved plans to integrate the operations of L&Q and East Thames and to create

a new regional structure by April of next year.

The merger with East Thames is forecast to provide £38m of efficiencies by the end of 2020, allowing the association to set up an investment fund of £250m for "community investment".

Waqar Ahmed, group director of finance at L&Q, said: "Britain's housing crisis will only be solved if organisations like L&Q forge relationships with like-minded partners and put forward bold, long-term plans."

"The strategic partnerships formed during the year have significantly changed L&Q in terms of size, geography and customer profile, but we have reaffirmed our social mission to make sure that at least half of the new homes we build are genuinely affordable to people on low incomes."

VEXO International (UK) Ltd – Clarity through Innovation

VEXO, established in 2010, is a committed designer, manufacturer and supplier of high quality Side Stream Filtration & Dosing Units and Water Treatment Chemicals. After three years of product development, trialling and testing, VEXO's product ranges were brought to market in 2013 and in the timescale since VEXO have continued to attract customers with its excitingly unique approaches to managing excellent water quality in closed heating, cooling and condenser water systems.



Our recently launched BOSS X-POT6+ Unit c/w integral pump and intelligent controls. Wall mounted, space and cost saving unit capable of managing an 86,400 litre system at up to 10 Bar working pressure. It filters down to 0.50 micron and can be easily retro-fitted to an existing system or installed as part of a new build

VEXO's senior management team is supported by a team of national business development managers and administrators. This extremely proactive VEXO team manages to reach a very large cross-section of customers including almost all the UK's leading MEP contractors and consultants, but also end users including borough councils, FM contractors and specialist water treatment companies.

Internationally VEXO supplies its products through single distributors in the USA and South-East Asia. VEXO Director Paul Hanrahan commented on organisation's structure: "We are a relatively small, but very fast-growing company and our sales continue to increase year on year," he explained. "In light of increased sales and end user customers we plan to increase our team of Business Development Managers across the UK regions later this year. We have relatively no direct competitors in the Side Stream Filtration marketplace as we believe our patented X-POT Units are totally unique due to their all-in-one multiple features. However, the Water Treatment Chemical market is much busier but due to our investment in independent trials, BUILDCERT

approval and Energy Savings Trust accreditation, amongst other things, our range of Water Treatment Chemicals not only sit at the top end of the quality ladder, but are also very competitively priced. All our products are readily available nationwide through BSS Industrial the UK's market-leading distributor of pipeline and heating solutions".

As an all-in-one solution, the X-POT incorporates air separation, dirt separation, magnetic filtration and a dosing pot. It is therefore the perfect all-in-one single component for water treatment in closed systems. X-POTs are constructed from polished stainless steel and are fully compliant with BSRIA BG50 and BG29 guidelines and PED 2014/68/EU. X-POTs have done remarkably well: more than 2,500 units have been installed in the UK since 2013 and against large name competition, our innovation deservedly won the "H&V News Commercial Building Services Product of the Year Award" back in 2015.

VEXO X-POTs are currently being specified and installed on some of London's current landmark super high-rise projects where working pressures of 25 Bar are not uncommon. Similarly,



It is amazing just how much magnetite can be captured by an X-POT Compact Magnet Grate

in Kuala Lumpur, X-POTs are specified on two of the tallest buildings currently under construction in Malaysia – again 25 Bar working pressures are the norm.

Closer to home, VEXO X-POTs are being retro-fitted the length and breadth of the UK, where poor-quality heating & cooling systems are common and conventional approaches are not achieving the desired quality. For example, regional borough councils are specifying VEXO X-POTs more and more particularly due to low CAPEX and ease of install without the need to drain down, isolate or interrupt normal system operation – also the improvements to the existing water quality are immediate.

Another key VEXO product is the superior



Our best selling unit: the BOSS X-POT Compact Side Stream Filtration & Dosing Unit

range of super concentrated BOSS XP-0 water treatment chemicals – a complete suite of water treatment chemicals to suit most applications in heating, cooling and condenser water systems. The bestseller is the super-concentrated BOSS X-PO10 Inhibitor (dosed at 0.36%) which is pH neutral, BUILDCERT approved, independently tested, verified and approved by several leading Boiler manufacturers (especially those with Aluminium Heat Exchangers) and fully endorsed by the Energy Savings Trust.

"Working closely with our selected and trusted supply chain partners helps us to achieve a nationwide presence," Paul concluded. "Later this year we will add further exciting new products to our portfolio especially as we continue to work on new product designs. The prototypes are being built and rigorously tested and we are set to have up to four new products released between now and Christmas. Our aim remains to continuously innovate regarding the area of closed system water quality management and we will stay ahead of our competitors by continuously improving and adding to our game changing product range."

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Big merger of London housing associations announced

Notting Hill Housing and Genesis have announced they are in merger talks to create a 64,000 home social landlord and one of the largest housing associations in the country.

They claim the new organisation, to be called Notting Hill Genesis, will be the largest provider of shared ownership homes in the country once the merger is completed early next year.

Kate Davies, chief executive of Notting Hill, has been named chief executive designate, with Dipesh J. Shah, current chair of Genesis, appointed as the chair designate. A spokesman described the deal as “a merger of equals”.

The two associations have combined reserves of £3.1bn and loan facilities of £3.5bn, with a turnover of about £700m and a net surplus of more than £120m. Together they aim to deliver 2,700 new homes every year, 400 more than they would build separately.

A planned merger between Genesis and Thames Valley Housing was cancelled last year when the latter pulled out, citing differences of views over future merger deals.

Ms Davies said: “Bringing together two housing associations with similar backgrounds, shared values and a strong social purpose will allow us to



provide more of the homes London needs, for those who most need them.

“This is an exciting challenge for all of us and I’m very much looking forward to leading this new organisation, which has the will and resources to be even more innovative, ambitious and influential together than we could separately.”

Mr Hadden said: “I have always believed there should be more consolidation within the sector so that our capacity can be utilised better to provide more homes and improved services for our customers. To that end, this merger makes complete sense and I am pleased to have been involved in getting it off the ground.”

New DFG portal offers speedy solution to home adaptations

A new portal designed to speed up the approval and installation of home adaptations that allows vulnerable people to live independently in their own homes, has been launched by a national body.

The DFG Tenders – Home Adaptation Portal uses an advanced customer relationship management platform to bring home adaptation surveyors and local builders together to speed up the process and reduce costs.

It significantly reduces the time taken from the award of a disabled facilities grant (DFG) by local councils to the work being carried out. Some 40,000 people a year receive a DFG to pay for a wide range of adaptations, from ramps and stairlifts to wet floor rooms and extensions. The figure is set to rise to 85,000 by the end of the decade following an increase in Government funding to £500m in 2019/20.

Foundations is the national body for England’s 200 home improvement agencies (HIAs) and handypersons services. It has completed a pilot phase of the portal with 20 HIAs and it is now fully operational. DFGs are awarded by local authorities and are predominantly delivered by home improvement agencies based in local authorities, housing associations or run as standalone charities.

INDEPENDENT

HIAs and handyperson service providers are local organisations dedicated to helping older

people, people with disabilities and vulnerable people to live in safety and with dignity in their own homes.

Services are focused on ensuring existing housing is fit for purpose and vulnerable people are able to continue living independently as long as possible.

The online portal is free for both local authorities and HIAs and allows them to add customers to the system who want to apply for a DFG. For the first time, surveyors will be able to award projects by price, speed of delivery and – in time – client satisfaction.

The average time taken from assessment to completion of works is 34 weeks and the portal immediately cuts that by four weeks. But it will reduce the duration even further by bringing greater efficiency to the process and freeing up time for surveyors to handle more DFG projects.

The prototype was first developed by Foundations’ director Paul Smith while he was working at Cannock Chase District Council, when it won a Home Improvements Innovations and Achievement Award.

Mr Smith said: “We know that in many areas of the country, there are complaints about the amount of time it takes to process DFG applications. A speedy adaptation can be the difference between living independently at home in a safe environment and hospitalisation.

ADAPTATIONS

“Launching this portal on a national basis has long been a personal ambition. I know it will bring greater clarity to the process for clients, surveyors and local builders.”

Research published last year by Foundations found those who have had adaptations and later move into care do so some four years later than those who have not had adaptations carried out via a DFG.

HOW THE PORTAL WORKS:

1. Schedule of standard works items is produced for standard adaptations
2. Local builders submit prices for each item
3. Surveyor inputs quantities for each job
4. System generates instant quote from every contractor
5. Surveyor chooses successful quote, creating instant email to contractor
6. Contractor goes out & completes job and can take photos of the work and upload them to the portal for the surveyor to view

A video has been produced that describes how the DFG Tenders – Home Adaptation Portal works: <http://foundations.uk.com/about-us/procurement-services>.

For more information about the portal or to sign up contact Paul Smith: pauls@foundations.uk.com



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Online service puts community heating customers in control

Community and district heating specialist Switch2 Energy has launched a new online service to increase transparency – giving residents full control of their bills and easy access to their accounts.

The easy-to-use My Switch2 online portal provides residents with complete visibility of their account and enables them to make payments online. It is available to both credit billing customers and pay-as-you-go customers using Switch2's G6 and Incontro smart meters.

Kirsty Lambert, Director of Switch2 Energy, said: "The My Switch2 portal is accessible to all customers. By giving residents full access to energy consumption data, account details and tariff information, we are making metering and billing more transparent than ever before.

"This is the latest digital innovation from Switch2 and is built to complement our existing smart meters. We've made it much simpler for community heating customers to budget and pay, view and access, and control and monitor their energy usage."

Customers can now log on securely to view all aspects of their account, such as checking and paying credit bills, viewing previous bills and pay-as-you-go statements, topping-up pay-as-you-go accounts, and viewing and/or uploading meter readings. Useful tips are also available to help them save on their energy costs.

MySwitch2 can be used on smartphones, tablets or other web enabled device, with all major payment cards accepted

It has been designed to be fully accessible to all customers, including the visually impaired.

Pay-as-you-go customers can choose to top-up their account via the My Switch2 portal or via phone, app, or by card or cash at any of the 29,000 convenience stores in PayPoint's UK retail network. The same options are available to credit billing customers, making payments very flexible.

Workers in dangerous jobs get poor health and safety guidance

A quarter of employees working in hazardous job roles believe their employers are not doing enough to keep them safe at work.

A survey of 2,000 employees revealed 25 per cent of labourers in manual professions, such as construction, thought their company's health and safety information did not go into enough detail about their role and the dangers they could face, or how to deal with risky situations.

Worryingly, the survey that polled workers employed at firms with more than five employees found that almost two thirds (65 per cent) of employees have never received any information on their company's health and safety policies. This is despite it being a basic legal requirement for all companies with five employees or more.

The research, which was conducted by award-winning data capture app provider, WorkMobile, also revealed that as a result, the majority of workers in dangerous jobs do not feel that they are well equipped to deal with a hazardous situation if one occurred.

HAZARDS

A fifth (18 per cent) would have no idea how to report an issue or hazard at work, despite there being a higher chance of this occurring in dangerous working environments.

A quarter (25 per cent) would have a vague idea about how to handle the situation, but would still need to ask for help or consult with the company's procedure documents first.

Thankfully, over half (57 per cent) of workers would know exactly what to do in a hazardous situation.

Although it is the duty of the employer to keep staff members safe, workers are also failing to take responsibility for their own welfare and follow rules that have been put in place. Almost half (48 per cent) of those, who work in a hazardous or high-risk role, such as construction, said they have not read their operations manual.

Surprisingly, those, who work in low-risk roles, like office work, are more likely to read their company's health safety guidance - almost two thirds (60 per cent) of these employees have read the health and safety documents they were provided with, despite being exposed to fewer hazards.

The survey was conducted as part of WorkMobile's 'Work Safe' report, which looks at the current state of health and safety in the UK and where improvements need to be made to protect workers.



SHOCKING

Colin Yates, chief support officer at WorkMobile, said: "Employees working in dangerous sectors, such as construction or manual labour, will inevitably face a higher number of hazards than those in office-based roles, for example. Based on this, we'd expect companies in these sectors to take health and safety much more seriously in order to keep their staff safe.

"It's really shocking to see that some businesses are failing to put in place even the most basic health and safety procedures. Failing to supply workers with information and guidance on health and safety policies could land business owners with a hefty fine, or even a prison sentence in extreme cases. But, aside from this, when staff are not trained on how to work safely, there is a greater risk of accidents happening – especially in these more hazardous industries.

"With working practices constantly being improved, there is no excuse for not obeying the law and fulfilling their business obligations."

LGA launches new housing advice programme for councils

The Local Government Association (LGA) has launched a new programme to pay for independent experts to assist councils with tackling housing shortages and related issues like homelessness in their areas.

Established to tackle problems associated with our broken housing market, the Housing Advisers Programme will see up to £14,000 given to councils embarking on specific projects which deliver new homes, reduce homelessness or help to generate savings and revenues. Advisors will provide expertise to aid local authorities in completing the projects.

The sum has been calculated on the rate of providing up to 20 days of support at £700 per day but with flexibility in its use so councils could either fund fewer days at a higher daily rate, or they can extend the project's length using their own funds. Participating councils will be expected to share good practice and lessons learned throughout the programme, taking part in events and possibly assisting other authorities.

The support will be locally led and vary in their scope according to the specific problems or challenges identified by individual councils. The scheme is not intended to impose a central model of delivery onto local authorities.

Martin Tett, housing spokesperson for the LGA, said: "There's no substitute for central government giving local authorities the tools they need to invest in the homes, of all type and tenure, which their communities desperately need.

"However, councils need the best tools available to them to help build on the innovation in the sector. The Housing Advisers Programme will be an essential aid to councils wanting some expertise to innovate and improve in their efforts to help build homes, plan prosperous places and economies, and reduce homelessness."

To take part in the programme, councils must have registered their interest by 12 September. The initiative follows the launch of the Housing Finance Institute, launched in March 2015 by the Treasury, to "address the skills and knowledge gap in delivering local authority housing".

Government urged to speed up replacement of right to buy homes

The Chartered Institute of Housing and councils are urging the Government to be more flexible and to relax building and funding regulations, to allow local authorities to replace RTB properties at a much faster rate.

With sales of council homes recovering to beat pre-recession levels, councils are struggling to build new homes for social rent in significant numbers and many are forecasting significant shortfalls. This is expected to increase the pressure on homelessness services.

Among the suggestions being put forward is a proposal that councils should be allowed to keep all of the sales receipt (after the discount given to the tenant) rather than passing much of it to the Treasury.

Figures released by the Department for Communities and Local Government show that for the last financial year a total of 12,826 homes were sold, while just 4,475 new homes were started or acquired to replace them.

Total sales receipts amounted to just over £1bn - the first year since discounts were raised when receipts have broken the billion figure.

Former housing minister Gavin Barwell said the Right to Buy is "only politically justifiable" if the replacements pledge is being met

REPLACEMENTS PLEDGE

This means that since RTB discounts were increased by the Coalition Government in April 2012, a grand total of 54,581 homes have been sold, while only 12,472 have been started or acquired to replace them.

This is despite the often mentioned aim for sold homes to be replaced on a one for one basis within three years.

Admittedly the woeful rate of replacement, which has been as low as one new home for every seven or eight homes sold in recent years, has significantly improved. Former housing minister Gavin Barwell said the Right to Buy is "only politically justifiable" if the replacements pledge is being met.

In the last quarter of 2016/17, the replacement rate rose to one in two with 2,890 homes sold by councils while 1,378 were started or acquired to replace them using the receipts. Councils are not expecting to be able to build or acquire new homes at a faster rate unless rules on funding are changed.

Among the suggested alterations to the

current system, the CIH and local councils are calling for:

- Councils to have more flexibility to combine the receipts with other grants, funding and land to deliver replacement homes;
- Councils to be allowed to share their receipts with ALMOs (Arms Length Management Organisations) for them to build;
- Councils to retain 100 per cent of receipts from sales to reinvest locally (only about 40 per cent of receipts are currently available to councils for reinvestment); and
- Allowing councils to vary the RTB discounts offered locally to tenants in specific circumstances.

CRUCIAL

Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) chief executive Terrie Alafat CBE said: "We understand that the government is trying to help people achieve their aspiration of home ownership – but if affordable homes for rent are being sold, it's absolutely crucial that they are replaced.

"We are deeply concerned about the loss of social rented homes at a time when more and more people are in need of genuinely affordable housing.

"The figures are further confirmation that the number of replacement homes being built is nowhere near the number being sold. Our research has shown that most councils only expect to be able to replace half or fewer of the homes they sell under right to buy.

"It's always been clear that there would be a time lag between homes being sold and homes being built to replace them, but it's now been more than five years since right to buy discounts were increased and there is mounting evidence that replacements are simply not keeping pace with the level of sales."

CAPITAL

Councils in London have experienced particular problems with high volumes of sales, given the very high demand for property in the capital while facing difficulties with acquiring sites and financing new developments.

Kensington and Chelsea, the borough at the centre of the row over the Grenfell Tower fire, has built no new council houses since 2014 but has sold 46, netting the council more than £14.3m. Over in the east, Waltham Forest council has sold 345 council houses but similarly no replacements have been built in the borough since 2014.

Tower Hamlets, which sold seven times as many council homes as were built over the last three years, raised the most cash from the sales, at just under £104m.

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Rental fraud is costing almost £800m

Recent estimates from Shelter show that as many as 250,000 renters have fallen victim to rental fraud and scams in the past five years – with almost 50,000 victims in the past 12 months alone.

It is estimated that bogus landlords are making an eye watering £775 million through rental scams, with an average cost per victim of roughly £2,400, showing the scale of the damage caused by scammers.

As landlords' profits are squeezed by various Government measures, more private landlords are turning to DIY online platforms to find tenants for their properties. However, many of the classified ad sites commonly used by such landlords offer little-to-no security checks to verify the authenticity of adverts.

Unfortunately, these sites have therefore become favourite targets for scammers looking to secure up-front payments from tenants for properties that they either do not own, or that never existed to begin with.

INCREASED SECURITY

Online security and fraud prevention is becoming an increasingly important concern for safety-conscious home-hunters, especially for the thousands of tenants looking for private landlord properties that they will not find on the big "agent-only" portals.

Recent YouGov research commissioned by

TheHouseShop.com found that the majority of adults said they would be "more likely" to use a property website that runs a variety of checks to verify the identity of advertisers and confirm property ownership details. Older age groups are the most cautious when it came to fraud prevention and online security, with 24 per cent of 45-54 year olds and 29 per cent of over 55's saying they are "much more likely" to use a property site with additional security checks.

Forcing landlords to provide evidence that they are the legal owner of a property before allowing them to post an advert is one of the best ways to deter bogus landlords, but many in the industry admit that even with the most sophisticated security checks available, it is almost impossible to stop 100 per cent of scam or fraud attempts.

To attract the growing number of renters looking for a safe and secure platform to find and communicate with private landlords, TheHouseShop became the first business in Europe to offer a property ownership verification system for all private advertisers when they installed their Land Registry database check last year.

PRAISE

The site is now reaping the benefits of its forward-thinking approach and is winning praise from both landlords and tenants for its attempts to

stamp out fake landlords trying to run scams on the site.

Nick Marr, Co-founder of TheHouseShop, said: "It's been almost a year since we launched our mandatory Land Registry ownership verification check and we have now built up thousands of verified private rental listings on the site. We are finding that more and more of our traffic is coming from tenants using Google to track down private landlords, and being able to provide a safe and secure platform for renters to engage with landlords directly has been a huge achievement."

"Recent YouGov research has shown that home-hunters are increasingly concerned about online safety and security, and these concerns are impacting which sites they choose to use. With the majority of Brits saying they would be either "more likely" or "much more likely" to use a site that verifies advertisers' identities and confirms property ownership, it is clear that consumers are wising up to the dangers of online rental fraud and demanding tougher security checks on the platforms they use to search for property."

TheHouseShop works with private sellers, private landlords, online agents, High Street agents and some of the UK's largest property developers to buy, sell, rent and let property online. It offers free property advertising for private landlords and has helped thousands of landlords find tenants for free. It also offers buyers and tenants a comprehensive selection of properties with both private and agency listings.



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Kaleidoscopic living

Liverpool Mutual Homes completed a dramatic transformation of a tired residential building into a vibrant place to live. Teodora Lyubomirova inspects

A flagship scheme – this is how John Bowker, property services director at Liverpool Mutual Homes (LMH), describes the housing association's refurbishment of a 1960s building comprising 12 maisonettes in Wavertree, Liverpool.

The residential building, on 62-72a Wellington Road, went through an eight-month, £750,000 transformation that was completed in March. Following the refurbishment, which gave the homes a colourful new cladding and various security and energy efficiency enhancements, the scheme earned a place in the running for Best Regeneration Scheme in the 2017 Housing Excellence Awards.

However, despite the building's excellent location – on a busy street opposite the Liverpool Aquatics Centre – years of low investment in its maintenance meant a comprehensive regeneration was urgently needed. Since 2008, when the building was transferred from Liverpool City Council to LMH, the housing association carried out various refurbishment works, including kitchen and bathroom fit-outs as part of the Decent Homes Programme, and upgrades to the communal areas.

However, the persisting problems around the building's appeal, energy efficiency and security had hindered the community and contributed to a high tenant turnover and anti-social behaviour. With the scheme deemed 'potentially unsustainable', both tenants and HA staff agreed that a comprehensive refurbishment was needed.

IMPROVING THE KERB APPEAL

The £750,000 regeneration reimagined the four-storey building as a "modern, attractive site that enhances the local landscape", as LMH explained. To maximise efficiencies, the work was carried out by the association's building and maintenance arm, Housing Maintenance Solutions (HMS), while local architects TADW provided the designs. Tenants were consulted on the proposals and were asked for feedback at least once a week during the refurbishment, with their input being fed into weekly site team progress meetings held by the contractor.

In addition to the key improvements to the building fabric – which included roof repairs, insulating, over-cladding and carrying out hard and soft landscaping works – some design flaws were also addressed. "Security was poor, waste management was problematic, parking was only available on the busy main road and the unloved communal gardens were rat infested and strewn with sharp objects," confirmed the HA. A long-term issue, which affected the kerb appeal and caused obstructions and trip hazards, were the individual bins strewn across the front. The solution was a secure bin storage at the back of the building, with a separate access for refuse collection from the adjacent Nelson Street.

Another key alteration was integrating the street parking at the rear into the scheme. Before the refurbishment, the parking had been obscured from view by the boundary wall, prompting safety concerns.

Now, an integrated, secure and well-lit car park comprising nine parking spaces, including one disabled parking space and cycle storage, is available to residents of the maisonettes. In addition, level access was formed to all ground-floor entrances; boundary walls were replaced with new brickwork, fences or railings; fob access was devised to all entrances; and all external areas were designed to comply with Secured By Design standards.



ROOFING & FACADE

The first stage of the works conducted by LMH and contractor HMS focused on roofing upgrades. HMS carried out essential fire safety works as well as structural alterations to improve efficiency, safety and design, and installed a new protective covering. The changes included replacing the existing roof with concrete roof tiles, while the party walls were extended up to the underside of the roof to reduce noise between the upper floor maisonettes.

This was followed by extensive upgrades to the facade, which now give the scheme its bright appearance. HMS added external insulation to the front and back elevations, while the existing brickwork gables and ground floor front and rear received cavity insulation. Maintenance-free, iridescent cladding panels that don't discolour were then installed on top of the insulation, providing the block with a striking new look on its south elevation, while a subtler grey colour was used on the rear, combined with the red panels to mark the windows on both sides.

The difference with the old worn-out render is particularly stark, and Bowker admits the change had been a talking point for some locals. "I'm not saying that everybody likes it," he says, "but I think that's quite often the case with architecture – you get polarised opinions. We really wanted something to make a statement, and the majority of people like it." The contractor also installed a single communal satellite system as per residents' requirements to eliminate the need for individual satellite dishes fixed on the exterior.

Further alterations to the facade included installing efficient grey uPVC windows and removing the brise soleil on the communal stairs. This was replaced with glazed curtain walling, which significantly enhanced daylighting. In addition, the recessed balconies were encased to increase the internal floorspace of the upper level maisonettes. Bowker explains:

Continued on page 27...

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“The top floor maisonettes don’t benefit from [private] gardens, so we wanted to create a useable space for these residents as well. It was also our intention to remove the ‘old feel’ of the maisonettes and try to modernise them.”

EXTERNAL WORKS & SUSTAINABILITY

In the final stage of the refurbishment, HMS and LMH carried out comprehensive hard and soft landscaping works, which included creating small front gardens, paving the old pavement on Wellington Road, and planting trees.

At the rear, the contractor split the single communal garden into six private gardens with timber fencing, sheds and cycle storage. “We gave people on the ground floors individual gardens, which they didn’t have before,”



confirms Bowker.

Adjacent to the secure car park is also a communal garden with a seating area and an enclosed drying space. The backyard is securely fenced on all sides for privacy, with a designated rear entrance as well as parking access both on Nelson Street.

In addition to the increased soft landscaping, which minimises water run-off, 16 photovoltaic panels had also been installed on the south-facing part of the pitched roof to power all internal and external communal areas.

Commenting on the feedback of the refurbishment that tenants and locals have been providing, Bowker says: “Tenants were perhaps embarrassed or ashamed to bring visitors to their property before and now they are proud of it and want to show it off. That says it all for me.”

PROJECT DETAILS

Work initiated: August 2016

Work completed: March 2017

Client: Liverpool Mutual Homes

Contractor: Housing Maintenance Solutions

Cost: £750,000 (HMS gift aid)

Architect: TADW

Geo-environmental assessment: WML Consulting

Cost consultants: Savills

Horbury appoints Senior Estimator

Mark Allen has been appointed as Senior Estimator at Horbury Property Services, part of the Horbury Group.

Mark has spent over seven years working in hard facilities management services, including most recently in an asset and compliance role where his responsibilities included co-ordinated activities at 500 train stations across the UK. Previous to this, Mark worked as Senior Estimator for another major construction contractor providing facilities management services to large scale clients. Mark, will be responsible for designing and pricing solutions to deliver hard FM maintenance and repairs to Horbury Property Services’ customers.



enquiries@horburygroup.com

Stokvis Energy exhibiting at HVAC

Mechanical services consultants and specialist contractors visiting this year’s UK Construction Week will be able to see the latest generation of boilers and other advancements from Stokvis Energy Systems on Stand H262 within the HVAC hall. Building on a long established reputation for offering the commercial sector both high quality and excellent service, Stokvis has upped its game still further with the introduction of the R600 and R40 EVOLUTION ranges of high performance gas boilers. Visitors to Stand H262 will have the opportunity to discuss their project requirements with Stokvis’ experienced personnel and understand the flexibility of the manufacturer’s offering.



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Making lives safer with innovative PPE

JSP will be showing a brand new product to market at London Build on Stand E99. JSP is committed to improving safety, health and well-being in the workplace. Celebrating over 50 years of ‘Manufacturing for a Safer Future’, JSP are excited to launch their latest innovative PPE protection: The new Powercap®

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tremco showcases portfolio at UKCW

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Largest construction industry event returns



With nine trade shows taking place at the Birmingham NEC this November, UK Construction Week promises a rich variety of exhibitors and topical debates in its 2017 edition.

One of the leading voices of the construction industry, UK Construction Week 2017 promises to deliver its most comprehensive and diverse show to date with support from leading associations including The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), Construction Products Association (CPA) and Builders Merchants Federation (BMF).

Running from 10am to 5pm on Tuesday 10th, Wednesday 11th and Thursday 12th October, the multiple-award-winning UK Construction Week (UKCW) is trade-only, and free to enter. Visitors will benefit from nine shows: The Build Show, sponsored by Easy-Trim, Timber Expo, Smart Buildings, Grand Designs Live, Surface Materials (featuring Kitchens & Bathrooms Live), Energy, Plant & Machinery Live, HVAC and Civils Expo.

In between exploring the industry's most innovative products and services, visitors can attend an array of debates, seminars and specialist building safety workshops hosted at six hubs plus the UKCW main stage. Free and CPD-certified workshops are running throughout the three days, but delegates are advised to register as soon as possible to secure a space.

BIG NAMES TO EXHIBIT

Among the exhibitors will be LHC, the leading provider of free-to-use framework agreements used by local authorities, social landlords and other public bodies; UK Contractor Lettings, provider of affordable accommodation solutions for contractors; and scaffolding and construction specialist Embassy Site Service. Some of the industry's biggest product manufacturers, suppliers and service providers will also exhibit and attend the show. Those include Rockwool, CAT, Gripple, Jigtech, Knauf Insulation, Portakabin Group, Screwfix, and Velux Modular Skylight, as well as a stellar line up of speakers from Urban Splash, Heathrow, AECOM, Cast Consultancy, Kier Group, and Network Rail.

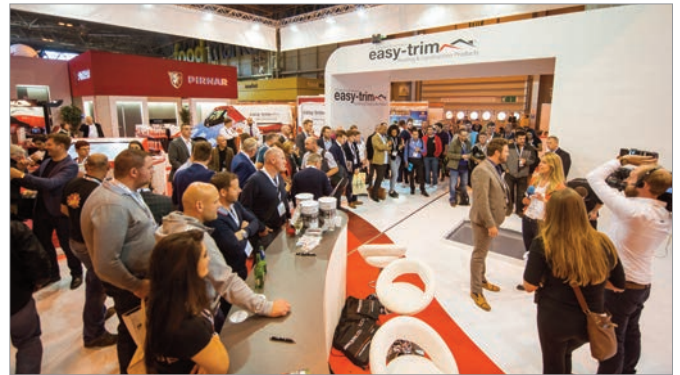
SAFETY & OFFSITE CONSTRUCTION

UK Construction Week will focus on several key themes this year, which the industry's big thinkers will explore at the conference.

Safety, quality and fire prevention are all priority at this year's event. Free CPD advice will include changes to legislation on safety, guidance on product safety, fire prevention strategies, and your role in construction. Spaces are expected to fill very quickly, so registering your place early is advised.

Offsite construction features heavily in this year's conference, with a dedicated offsite award ceremony plus a theatre, with key speakers focusing on volumetric construction in the residential sector including Urban Splash chairman Tom Bloxham, Rory Bergin, partner at Sustainable Futures, plus insights from the industry-leading Knauf Insulation.

Part of the discussion will focus on how lenders and local authorities can be assured that the industry is committed to building quality, healthy, well-designed housing, with an esteemed panel including Andrew Carpenter, Chief Executive of the Structural Timber Association and Constructing Excellence South West, Ayo Allu, Chairman and Committee Member at CIOB's London Branch; and Mark Jones, Business Development Director



(Acting) from NHBC will debate the merits of modern methods of construction, and provide advice on how to retain quality and design without slowing down the build process.

WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

An all-new layout and floor plan will feature at this year's show – all the better to showcase an unprecedented number of exhibitors and seminars. One of UK Construction Week's main aims is to act as a showcase for innovation in the industry, whether it's new ways of working, sustainable products or evolving technologies. The Innovation Trail will bring visitors the latest products, services and innovations that are changing the way we build and have never previously been showcased in the UK. Companies can apply for their product to feature on the Innovation Trail by visiting the website.

A number of new, specialist awards will also feature at this year's event, including LowCVP Low Carbon Champions Awards, BIM Awards, Offsite Awards and the WAN Transport, Concrete in Architecture and Adaptive Reuse Awards.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

UK Construction Week is making it easier than ever before to share knowledge, meet new contacts and make lasting connections. In person, visitors and exhibitors are guaranteed entertainment as well as unbeatable networking opportunities. The beer and ale festival – a huge hit last year – is open throughout each day and both nights, and features live music, entertainment, 15 types of beer and hot food. UK Construction Week has also arranged special perks for casino nights on the 10th and 11th with Genting International Casino at Resorts World Birmingham.

To register your free tickets and guarantee a space at UK Construction Week's seminars and workshops, visit: www.ukconstructionweek.com

Access all areas

Mark Sadler of Closomat highlights why it's vital to adopt accessible bathroom features in rented properties and reveals any hidden costs and product considerations involved in the process

Bathroom adaptations are driving a growing debate about how to balance the provision of any necessary and appropriate adjustments against the housing provider's considerations of what is reasonable and practical. The balancing act is only going to continue.

In the UK, statistics show that people with disabilities are twice as likely to be in social housing than non-disabled people. In addition, one in five people in the UK are registered disabled, while our population is ageing rapidly. By 2025, over 20 per cent of those living in the UK will be aged 65 or over.

By that same time, it is predicted that almost one and a half million people aged 75 or over will be unable to manage at least one mobility/daily living activity independently – including using the toilet on their own.

At the other end of the age spectrum, the number of disabled children is also on the rise – by more than 60 per cent in the last 25 years. All this means a potentially significant number of tenants would require some kind of home adaptation – now, or in the near future.

However, according to the 'Better Outcomes, Lower Costs' report, carried out by the University of Bristol on behalf of the Office for Disability Issues at the Department for Work and Pensions, there should be little doubt about what landlords should opt for. The report reads: "If, for the same money, a disabled person may have a carer come every day in to lift them on and off a commode and help them to wash, or may choose an automatic toilet and level access shower to use whenever they please, they will normally choose the solution that offers more dignity and autonomy."

HIDDEN COST

Bathrooms are the spaces that most commonly require adaptations, but there is a hidden cost, which needs to be borne in mind when planning to undertake an adaptation. The rise of single occupancy households is placing a strain on care services, and solutions, which require carer assistance, instantly carry a higher cost consideration: the provision of a paid care worker to assist the resident, irrespective of the capital cost of the living aid.

An often-overlooked factor in assistive technology specification is that we all change with time, and what solves a situation now could quickly become redundant, requiring further alterations, disruption and cost. That's why any adaptation needs to be judged not on the initial capital cost, but the long-term best value, taking into account its lifespan, and whether an additional pair of hands is required.

Beyond adding value to a property, adaptations can help residents retain their independence in the home, which can in turn enhance their wellbeing. In addition, research shows that an adaptation pays for itself within a year, and landlords in England, Northern Ireland and Wales can further cut their refurbishment costs by applying for a state-funded Disabled Facilities Grant.

ADDRESSING MOBILITY ISSUES

There are a number of solutions for housing providers looking to carry out a stylish adaptation of an existing bathroom, or to create a brand new accessible bathroom.

A cost-effective option for the whole space can be the incorporation of a rail-based system, whereby a track is installed around the wall, onto which a raft of aids – from support arms to washbasins and shower seats – can be added, moved, or removed, as required.

In toileting specifically, there are two main considerations regarding a person's



"An adaptation pays for itself in a year and landlords can cut refurbishment costs by applying for a Disabled Facilities Grant"

mobility: whether they can get on and off the toilet, and if they are able to clean themselves properly. Solutions depend on the length of time the occupier would require assistance and what their long-term prognosis is.

Getting on and off may initially be addressed by the provision of a grab rail, or support arms, but those assume the user has the manual dexterity to grip and the strength to weight bear. Another solution is a toilet lifter, which is the WC equivalent of a riser recliner chair, and can be easily fitted over the pan as it requires no structural support or plumbing – just an electrical connection.

Which solution is chosen depends on the user's specific issues: most offer a tilting action as they raise, hence the analogy with a riser recliner chair. However, people who typically require such equipment often have balance

problems and prefer a vertical lift option that still lifts them up, while the seat remains horizontal.

COMMON SOLUTIONS

One of the most common toilet adaptations is the removal of a conventional toilet and its replacement with a wash & dry (automatic bidet) toilet, particularly if the user has a long-term requirement. Options range from basic models that clip onto conventional toilet seats, through to toilets with integrated douching and drying, complete with a remote control.

The choice is influenced by the length of time the equipment will be needed, and the recipient's mobility and agility now and in the foreseeable future. Anecdotal evidence indicates the bolt-on options are the most cost-effective short-term solutions: fixings and brackets tend not to be robust enough to withstand long-term stress from transfer, nor bariatric usage. Equally, remote-controlled units require the user to be dextrous enough not to drop the controller and to be able to operate the buttons.

More information on the types of solutions and their application can be found as part of a White Paper on effective design and execution of an accessible toilet in a domestic environment.

ADAPTING TO CHANGE

Since no two people are the same, nor do they have the same issues, aids that offer the flexibility to be adapted or accessorised would provide a better long-term value.

Accessories can be fitted either at initial installation or retrofitted without major disruption as and when the user's needs change. Thus, for example, at outset if the user is able to operate conventional flush pads, but later becomes frailer and lacks the manual strength to do so, a touch-sensitive switch or an infra-red switch can be added. Likewise, a child may need a support system fitted initially, but that can be altered or removed in the future.



Such additions can help deliver better value, extending the relevance of the equipment even when a user's needs change, and ensure your tenants are appropriately accommodated without straining your budget.

Mark Sadler is the sales director at Closomat



Hidden housing – Solutions for accessible bathrooms

New research has revealed almost two million people have unmet accessible housing needs, giving providers an opportunity to adjust their offering to meet demand. The report by Habinteg and Papworth Trust, is recommending developers to review their products to deliver solutions that enable maintenance of independence in mainstream housing. Clos-o-Mat can give a single source to address prolonged independence, at least in the bathroom. Clos-o-Mat can provide comprehensive design advice, through to supply, install, commissioning and maintenance of appropriate equipment- including hoists, shower seats, support systems and the only WC unit developed specifically for disabled people, the Clos-o-Mat Palma Vita wash & dry toilet. Clos-o-Mat has a proven reputation for provision of accessible bathrooms to best practice, and has worked with Habinteg on the social housing provider's property portfolio, to deliver personal care solutions that deliver optimum independence.

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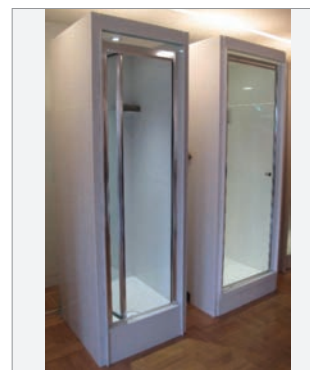


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Diverse range of pre-fabricated shower cubicles and en-suite pods from Taplanes

Taplanes Ltd is a manufacturer of a diverse range of pre-fabricated shower cubicles and en-suite pods. Taplanes understand family life can be demanding and rented accommodation can get a fair bit of a battering in the bathroom stakes. Safety, health and hygiene along with minimal upkeep & lasting endurance are right up there on any tenants' requirements. Taplanes can supply a shower that is robust enough to take on the constant use and abuse over the years, as well as being speedy and straightforward to install. The company also guarantees its products for 25 years.

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New Snickers Workwear Catalogue

This 148 page catalogue has all you need to know about one of the world's leading range of working clothes for professional tradesmen and women. This Workwear will work hard on site all year round, whatever the working environment you're in. Snickers topwear garments are great both for work and leisure activities.

Whatever trade you're in, there's something for you – Work Trousers, Work Jackets, Tool Vests Shirts, Underwear, Accessories and Tool Carriers – plus an extensive range of PPE Workwear. Plus the most innovative Layered Clothing System that ensures you can choose clothes to suit the weather on site – rain or shine, wind or snow.



info@snickersworkwear.co.uk

The Solid Gear safety shoe

The Revolution Infinity from Solid Gear is exactly what the name suggests – a revolutionary safety shoe. A 'bounce back' mid-sole which gives a 55 per cent 'energy return' that will put a real spring in your step to reduce fatigue and stress on your back, legs and feet. The shoe's stretchable upper with Cordura is water-resistant with amazing performance when it comes to breathability, fit and flexibility. It has a non-slip sole, a composite midsole, a heel counter for foot stability. These shoes come with Solid Gear's newly developed NANO toe-cap. It's 40 per cent stronger than fiberglass and thinner than other non-metallic toe-caps.



info@hultaforsgroup.com

The future of wood

One of the UK's largest independent timber and panel products distributor **James Latham**, now offers the next generation of timber and panel products through all nine of its nationwide panel depots with both Accoya® and Medite®Tricoya® Extreme. Sourced from fast growing sustainable forests, Accoya® wood, which spans eight decades of research, is a certified softwood which uses Accsys' proprietary wood acetylation technology to deliver exceptionally high levels of performance, stability and durability. Boasting a 50-year guarantee for exterior use and 25-years when used in the ground, Accoya® wood offers all kinds of new possibilities and solutions for outdoor projects which may involve challenging and demanding applications. The design and application possibilities offered by Medite®Tricoya® Extreme – a high technology wood – sees the marriage of acetylated wood fibre with the manufacturing technology of Medite MDF – has already excited and stimulated composite product manufacturers, designers, architects and the construction industry alike. Characterised by its durability, dimensional stability and reliability, and offering Medite®Tricoya® Extreme inspires creativity and discovery in environments where humidity and weather are usually concerns. The potential applications for Medite®Tricoya® Extreme are far ranging and are particularly well suited in areas where wood would not traditionally have been considered.

www.lathamtimber.co.uk



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Plastering simplified with Knauf ProRoll

With its brand new roller-applied range of finishing and surface-levelling ready-mixed plasters, **Knauf** has introduced ProRoll, a new quick, clean and efficient way of plastering residential homes and smaller projects. Suited to both smooth and textured backgrounds, Knauf ProRoll is applied to surfaces using a 9-inch medium pile roller and extension pole as required, ensuring a quick and easy installation while reducing the physical effort required of plastering. Pre-mixed, Knauf ProRoll can be applied directly from the tub, producing only a fraction of the mess of a traditional plaster product. In addition, any excess material can simply be removed from a surface and recycled.



01795 424 499 www.knauf.co.uk

UV-Protection Oil from Osmo

External elements of weathering fade the natural colour of the wood to a grey patina over time, but UV-Protection Oil from **Osmo** has been developed to resist against this, while maintaining the wood's natural appearance. Natural oil-based and microporous finish which does not crack, flake, peel or blister. Water and dirt resistant, moisture regulating and reduces wood swelling and shrinkage. Ideal for windows, doors, cladding, fencing and other vertically structured joinery to block the greying process of the wood by a UV-protected factor of 12 in comparison to untreated wood. For more information about the product, please contact Osmo.



www.osmouk.com

Nationwide Windows & Doors' inaugural CIH Exhibition a resounding success

A leading social housing fenestration partner **Nationwide Windows Ltd**, has returned from exhibiting for the first time at Europe's largest housing event, CIH Housing. As well as having a stand dedicated to social value, the team got involved with the prestigious Housing Heroes Awards, sponsoring the Development or Maintenance Team of the Year category. Managing Director, John Whalley comments: "This was our first time at CIH and we're delighted that we took the decision to support the event. Most of the work Nationwide Windows & Doors undertake is within the social housing sector – 10s of 1000s homes every year – and our ultimate customers are the residents and local communities in which we work. So, it made sense that our presence at CIH was characterised by the theme: Changing Lives In Homes and Communities. Our stand was a celebration of some of the great community and charitable projects we've been involved in with clients, staff and residents across the UK. We also offered a chance for visitors to nominate and win £1000 towards a community initiative in their local area – winners to be announced soon. And on the subject of winners, congratulations to Housing Maintenance Solutions (HMS) who won the Development or Maintenance Team of the Year category sponsored by ourselves during the Housing Heroes Awards evening of celebration."

01788 224466 www.nationwindows.co.uk



PURe® makes the grade in the student accommodation sector

Combining a robust design, excellent acoustic properties and some of the lowest U-values available on the UK market, **Senior Architectural Systems'** innovative PURe® range of aluminium windows has been specified for use on several new projects in the student accommodation sector. One of the largest contracts to feature Senior's PURe® aluminium windows is The Courtyard scheme at the University of Hull. Comprising five separate blocks based around two central courtyards, the development has been designed by GSS Architecture and offers a range of facilities in addition to high-specification student accommodation. The extensive fenestration package, which was installed by Glass and Framing Solutions (GFS) also features Senior's thermally efficient SF52 aluminium curtain walling. Further additions to Senior's growing order book of contracts in this sector include two new student residences in Sheffield. Located close to the city's universities, the new Sharman Court scheme on Sheffield's Broad Lane offers students high-specification accommodation in a central location. Here, Continental Installations Ltd fabricated and installed Senior's PURe® aluminium windows for main contractor Watkins Jones and architects Kelsey Design Associates. The Printworks is another example of purpose-built modern student living. Senior's PURe® windows and SCW curtain walling have been installed throughout the six-storey building by fabricators.

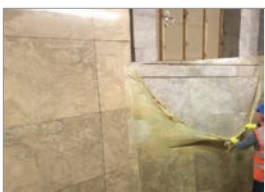
www.seniorarchitectural.co.uk/pure



Hanover building unveiled by Remmers

The Grade II Listed building located in Manchester is being refurbished by Quadriga Contracts Ltd as part of the NOMA regeneration scheme to provide Grade A office space, retail and leisure facilities. The interior walls have accumulated a thick build-up of dust, dirt, polish and even nicotine residue, all of which needed to be removed. **Remmers Arte Mundit Eco** was selected as it is a self-vulcanising cleaning paste designed for thorough, water-free removal of residues and soiling on a wide range of substrates. The Arte Mundit Eco was applied using a 4" brush and left to 'set' overnight. The material was then removed revealing the original white marble finish.

01293 594010 www.remmers.co.uk



Crown Trade Fastflow

A Midlands-based housing association turned to **Crown Trade Fastflow** to deliver a splash of colour, with a low odour application and fast-drying times for the comfort and convenience of residents. Doors, window sills and skirting boards were decorated with Crown Trade Fastflow Quick Dry Gloss, over Crown Trade Fastflow Quick Dry Primer Undercoat. Sharon Smith, Crown Paints Trade Communications Manager said: "The Crown Trade Fastflow range features advanced water based technology which offers the characteristics of a traditional solvent-based product." For more information on Crown Trade's products contact the Crown Trade Specification Team.

0330 0240310 www.crowntrade.co.uk





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Cairngorm supported by Carl F Groupco

Recent contract gains for Cairngorm Group, manufacturers of high energy rated windows, are being supported with hardware supplied by Carl F Groupco. Carl F Groupco has a strong track record in Scotland and a partnership with Cairngorm Group that dates back to 2004. Cairngorm Group began working with award winning new home builder, Springfield, in 2013. David Dowling, Managing Director of Cairngorm Group said: "An ability to provide a PVCu alternative for timber windows, while maintaining aesthetics and functionality with PN reversible window gearing supplied by Carl F Groupco, was pivotal in Springfield's decision to work with Cairngorm Group."

01733 393330 www.carlfgroupco.co.uk



Polysafe offers Sustainable slip resistance

Polyflor was chosen to help create a safe yet homely interior design scheme for Somerset Care's latest care home, Stockmoor Lodge in Bridgwater. Three safety flooring collections featuring sustainable wet slip resistance were used throughout communal areas and bathrooms within the care home – Polysafe Wood fx PUR wood effect flooring (Sun Bleached Oak, Rustic Oak, Tropical Pine wood effect designs), Polysafe Hydro Evolve flooring for continually wet areas (hard wearing sheet vinyl flooring which) and Expona Control PUR luxury vinyl tiles (cross-linked and UV cured polyurethane reinforcement to achieve superior cleaning benefits).

0161 767 1111 www.polyflor.com



The Go-To Site for Flooring Fanatics

All Things Flooring is a quirky, new, online hub for B2B decision makers, currently attracting a lot of interest in the world of flooring. The lively, interactive site is the one-stop-shop for flooring advice, news, ideas and inspiration from industry leaders across the globe. Managed by Flowcrete and written by flooring enthusiasts, All Things Flooring features a range of engaging and informative posts, such as 'Five Questions With...' a monthly, interactive post that shares the knowledge and industry expertise built up by members of Flowcrete's team over many years in the resin flooring industry.

01270 753000 www.allthingsflooring.com



Purevision slimline models

Charlton & Jenrick are pleased to announce the launch of the slimline versions of their popular Purevision stoves. New models are available in the new slimline format are the PV5W (pictured), BPV5W (Black) and the Classic CPV5W. The new versions keep the same look, design and feel but benefit from being shallower and in the case of the Classic stove also shorter. This was after feedback from their customers who love the look and performance of the Purevision stoves but were looking for a more universal fitting stove that would fit into more situations. Charlton & Jenrick have announced a significant price decrease across the range.

sales@charltonandjenrick.co.uk



Look more closely at heating controls

The decision as to which controls to include in a new build heating installation or in a heating system replacement project is not straightforward, with a wealth of options available and a range of combinations of components that can enable the homeowner to be in control of the heating in their home.



ESi has introduced a new 1,2,3 Channel programmer to its range and offers its S and Y Plan kits of controls as highly cost effective ways of meeting Part L Regs in heating system installations. Take a closer look at ESi's offering on its website or please call the company for more information.

01280 816868 www.esicontrols.co.uk

Efficient underfloor heating systems

A revolutionary dynamic balancing valve will eradicate common issues experienced in Underfloor Heating systems when it is launched in the UK. Set to revolutionise balancing issues experienced in multi residential or multi room applications, the Series MH underfloor heating manifold from Watts UK will simplify hydraulic balancing and flow control in radiant heating systems delivering energy savings and comfort for users. The manifold which can be specified as part of a new build project, or successfully retro-fitted, as part of an entire underfloor heating system allows the flow rate in each circuit to remain constant.



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Boiler servicing simplified

Gaining access to a tenant's home to conduct boiler servicing can be a challenge, but modern boilers with in-built controls can make this process easier, reports Bill Jones of Potterton

The relationship between a landlord and their tenants can sometimes be a sensitive one. As housing is such an emotive issue, it is imperative to strike a balance between the needs of both parties.

While tenants have a right to privacy in their homes, landlords are also legally responsible for upholding high standards of safety and condition. Indeed, a recent survey from HomeLet found that over half of 2,000 landlords had dealt with a problem tenant in the past, which shows how difficult getting the right rapport can be.

A common cause of tension is when landlords attempt to gain access to inspect or carry out service checks to the properties they own. This process is particularly important when it comes to servicing a gas boiler. By law, boilers must be inspected at least once a year by a Gas Safe-registered engineer to qualify for the Gas Safety Inspection Certification (CP12) which, as owners of the property, landlords are responsible for. However, many tenants don't realise the importance of this and continue to deny registered gas engineers entry to their homes.

Although tenants can legally restrict and deny landlords' entry to the property, it is within their best interest to not limit their landlord's ability to maintain the gas central heating system. When correctly maintained, modern boilers will continue working at optimum efficiency for a number of years. However – much like a car – the individual components must be checked, cleaned or replaced as required.

With carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning from leaking boilers sending 4,000 people to A&E each year as the Government calculates, regular boiler servicing is essential, particularly when tenants are very young, elderly or have chronic health problems, as they are more susceptible to the effects of CO. This not only ensures that the system continues to run safely, it also allows it to run as efficiently as possible, reducing tenant's fuel bills and preventing minor issues from developing into major ones – saving money for the landlord in the long run. According to energy specialist Just Energy Solutions, on average 50 of these A&E cases result in death, so the need for continued access is vital.

In light of this, how can the process be made easier for landlords to gain access to their tenant's homes?

The technology can reduce the boiler's performance to prompt the tenant to contact their landlord and arrange a service check

BACK TO FULL CAPACITY

Help is at hand, as modern boilers now feature technology that is designed to make the entire maintenance and servicing procedure easier and faster for both the registered gas engineer and the tenant.

An example of this a recently-developed boiler range, designed in partnership with over 50 local authorities, housing associations and contractors. The range has been created with the social housing sector in



mind – specifically combatting problems associated with maintenance checks.

One of its key features includes an optional module, which reduces the boiler's performance after 11 months, thereby encouraging tenants to contact their landlord, who can then carry out the service safety checks and bring the boiler to full power. This module will reduce the boiler's performance just enough to prompt tenants to make the call, without putting them at risk.

The facility is designed to help social housing providers with those circumstances where gaining access to carry out mandatory service safety checks could prove difficult. However, if the tenants want their boiler to continue running at full capacity, they will make sure the gas engineer can enter the property in order to fix it.

ADDED BENEFITS

In addition to the mandatory safety checks, other maintenance processes can also be completed quickly, particularly if the boiler's components can be accessed from the front.

This way, gas engineers can swiftly get to the interior of the boiler, providing cost-effective maintenance for the landlord and reducing disruption to the tenant. Some boilers also features an external gas test point for ease of access, further speeding up the maintenance process.

On some models there's also a dedicated boiler drain that enables the machine to be cleared for maintenance without draining the entire system. Again, this reduces the time spent servicing the boiler and in the tenant's home, speeding up the whole process from start to finish.

EARNING THE TENANT'S TRUST

Gaining access to a tenant's home for maintenance work, in particular boiler servicing, is never going to be a straightforward process. However, with the latest developments in technology, this issue can be overcome through clever boiler design.

Technical features, such as an optional module that controls the boiler's performance to prompt tenants to contact their maintenance provider when boiler servicing is due, offer assurance that engineers will be granted entry to carry out essential servicing.

Bill Jones is sales director at Potterton

Concealing boiler pipework – simple, quick & cost effective

As heating system refurbishment and upgrade programmes, particularly in social housing, aim to reduce emissions and energy consumption while improving efficiency, it is also important that the updated systems look good and are cost effective

Local authorities and housing associations have the potential to save thousands of pounds on annual repair, maintenance and improvement budgets, purely by choosing pre-formed boiler pipework casings over time consuming site made fabrications.

CUTTING COST, CUTTING TIME AND SAVING BUDGET

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

- Manufacture – How are the boiler casings made?
- Materials – What materials are used in their manufacture?
- Methods – How are they fitted and secured?
- Maintenance – Can the boiler casing be removed & replaced easily without damage?

Obviously, if cost or time can be removed from these areas, then they will help reduce the budget required to achieve the end result. To get a better understanding of these elements, let's explore each in a little more detail.

MANUFACTURE

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

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

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

MATERIALS

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

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

So, if you're using similar products from Pendock, you're probably not compliant. If in doubt, check your specifications, as they're likely to require FSC® compliance or certification.



METHODS

Typically, where site made casings are used, the heating engineer will move on to the next flat once the boiler installation is done, leaving the fabrication and fitting of site made pipe casings to a joiner. As two trades and different skills are required, this inevitably adds time and cost.

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

MAINTENANCE

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

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

CASE CLOSED!

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



01733 266 889 www.encasement.co.uk

SuperQuilt earns Agreement Approval

The effectiveness of SuperQuilt, part of the YBS range, as a single layer insulation solution for use beneath pitched roof rafters, in either new-build or refurbishment situations has been underlined by the award of a coveted BBA Certificate. Agreement Certificate 17/5388 explains in detail how the already widely specified, multi-layer foil insulation can be used to retain energy within attic or habitable loft spaces: cutting fuel bills, improving comfort levels for building occupants and adding value. The Certification comes after prolonged evaluation by the British Board of Agreement and covers such considerations as related Building Regulation matters.



01909 721662 www.ybsinsulation.com

Making every day jobs quick and easy

New high-performance recessed ceiling mounted PIR presence detectors from Timeguard have been designed with installers in mind: they are easy to fit, easy to set up and easy to adjust. Just connect the wiring box, slip it through the ceiling aperture, and plug in the detector using its RJ11 connector before spring clipping into the ceiling. Even better, you can plug in up to five slave detectors, all controlled from a single master. You only need to set up once at the master, and of course, a master/slave set up will save you money as well. It's a solution that's ideal for corridors or large areas. On top of that, these new detectors have really accessible controls.



020 8452 1112 www.timeguard.com

By the seaside with Kingspan

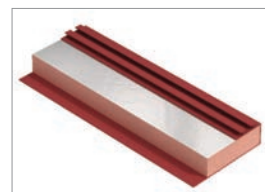
The premium performance of the Kingspan Kooltherm K108 Cavity Wall Board has led to its specification on a new residential development in Hendy, Swansea, helping the project to meet its thermal performance requirements with a slim construction build up. Part of Kingspan's new Kooltherm K100 range, Kingspan K108 Cavity Board features a fibre-free phenolic core with an outstanding thermal conductivity of 0.018 W/m.K. This excellent performance enables housebuilders to meet or exceed target external wall U-values, without encroaching on living space or moving away from preferred cavity sizes.



01544 387 384 www.kingspaninsulation.co.uk

Kingspan takes the devil out of detailing

Kingspan Insulation has released a new technical bulletin and RIBA approved CPD article, designed to support enhanced detailing. The documents explore the effects of linear thermal bridging around openings in the building envelope, and present new research on the subject, allowing specifiers to use Kingspan Kooltherm Cavity Closer as a premium performance, one-size-fits-most solution. The CPD article and technical bulletin are based on a thermal modelling study of jamb details by BRE Scotland. The study covers a variety of cavity wall constructions closed using Kingspan Kooltherm Cavity Closer.



01544 387 384 www.kingspaninsulation.co.uk/psidetails

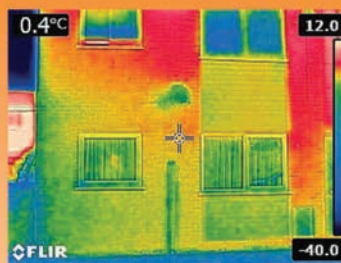
DOES MOULD LOOK FAMILIAR?

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West Sussex: 01903 740339 North West: 01772 691832

Unit G, Chantry Industrial Estate, Chantry Lane, Storrington, West Sussex, RH20 4AD

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



RCI Show to bring the best of roofing, cladding and insulation



National and international exhibitors will be on hand at this key trade event on 1-2 November in Coventry, while seminars and CPDs will raise awareness on current issues in housing.



The tragedy at Grenfell Tower highlighted that closer attention to safety needs to be paid when refurbishing high-rise buildings. Material choice, construction methods and fire safety standards have all dominated the discussion in the aftermath of the fatal blaze in June. However, for those working within facilities management and construction, separating the facts from the media speculation is crucial to determine how to best prepare for the future.

With this in mind, one of the major debates at this year's RCI Show, taking place on 1-2 November in Coventry's Ricoh Arena, will focus around fire safety. Industry experts will address questions and concerns regarding the current regulations, and highlight any changes in policy that might be required going forward.

SKILLS AND RECRUITMENT

Another major topic that will be explored in depth at the RCI Show is the continuing lack of skilled workers and new entrants in the roofing sector. With an ageing workforce and not enough young workers entering construction, the industry is facing a real challenge to meet the Government's ever-growing housing targets and deliver a strong pipeline of projects in the coming years.

At the RCI Show, a panel including IKO Plc MD Andy Williamson, RCI Technical Note author Keith Roberts, and a representative from the CITB will give their thoughts on how to tackle this problem in a debate chaired by NFRC's CEO James Talman.

CPDS & OFFSITE CONSTRUCTION

In addition to this, visitors to the RCI Show 2017 will be able to take

advantage of 18 RIBA-approved CPD sessions delivered by leading manufacturers, including RCI Show sponsor Jablite, as well as Knauf Insulation, IKO Permanite, Whitesales, Ash & Lacy, FM Approval, SIG Roofing and Moy Materials.

Visitors will also hear from prominent green roof advocate Dusty Gedge, who is founder of Livingroofs.co.uk and author of the first UK Green Roof Market Report. Mr Gedge will discuss the report's findings and outline his map for the progress of the sector in the coming years.

Elsewhere at the RCI Show, Livia Williams from the National Construction Training Services will host a seminar on 'Developing Modern Methods of Construction in the Roofing Sector'. Ms Williams will outline why she feels modern methods of construction can offer key opportunities in addressing the skills shortage affecting the sector and reduce waste in the industry.

KEY PROFESSIONALS AND EXPERTS

At present, the roofing, cladding and insulation sectors are under more scrutiny than ever before, so the need to source accurate and correct information is now more crucial than ever. With this in mind, the RCI Show 2017 will offer housing providers and facility managers a platform to contact and consult key professionals and experts in order to stay informed with the latest views, products and legislation affecting the market.

Register now for your free tickets to the RCI Show 2017 at www.rcishow.co.uk

Dallmer shows off products at RCI Show

Dallmer will be exhibiting at the RCI show in the RICOH Arena in Coventry on 1st and 2nd November on stand B7. Dallmer will be showing a range of its products including the RenovaDrain, ideal for retrofit. When re-roofing, a major problem encountered is often the removal of existing roof drains before installing new ones and connecting them inside the building to existing drain-pipes. Dallmer's Renova 63T Roof Drain is a product, which overcomes this problem completely and therefore reduces the overall cost of roof renovation dramatically. Dallmer staff will be on hand to offer a full sales and technical advice and could assist with any project on the stand.



RCI SHOW STAND B7

01787 248244 www.dallmer.com/en

Klober tops performance ratings

Variable performance of vapour permeable underlays ultimately prompted the NHBC and BSI to require supporting high level ventilation for all except those classified as air-open membranes. Klober Permo® air offers exceptional breathability, with a water vapour transmission sd-Value of 2736 g/m²/day and a water vapour resistance confirmed independently as 0.03 MNs/g. Ideal for vapour dispersal during a building's critical drying out period, Permo air is suitable for cold and warm roof installations. It has also been tested for wind uplift resistance by the BRE who found it to be suitable for use up to Zone 5 on the BS5534 wind speed map.



01332 813050 www.klober.co.uk

Glidevale Versa-Tile G5 universal tile ventilator for roof space ventilation applications

Glidevale, the specialist building products and ventilation solutions provider, is now offering a recently improved version of its AA fire rated Versa-Tile G5 tile ventilator and terminal solution. The Versa-Tile G5's universal design provides a single solution for the majority of single lap tiles*, resolving the challenges around tile profile matching, and making it the ideal product for builders, DIYers and roofing contractors. With a new, sleek, lower profile and guaranteed 20,000mm² ventilation area, it can be used for all roof space ventilation requirements and is the ideal solution for refurbishment projects where retrofit roof space ventilation is required following the installation of increased roof or loft insulation. It can also be adapted into a soil ventilation pipe or mechanical extraction terminal using Glidevale's pipe adaptor and flexible pipe. Manufactured from robust ABS and polypropylene material, the Versa-Tile G5 has a multi-coat, water based, environmentally friendly UV-resistant coating, to help weather more closely with the surrounding tiles over time. It has been proven to resist driving and deluge rain. The Versa-Tile G5 also incorporates AluFlash, a flexible adhesive-backed aluminium flashing at the leading front edge, which ensures the weathering and wind uplift security of the ventilator. It is available brown, grey, black, terracotta, red and red streak.

**Not recommended for use with plain tiles, clay single pantiles, interlocking slates, and certain small format tiles.*

0161 905 5700 sales@glidevale.com

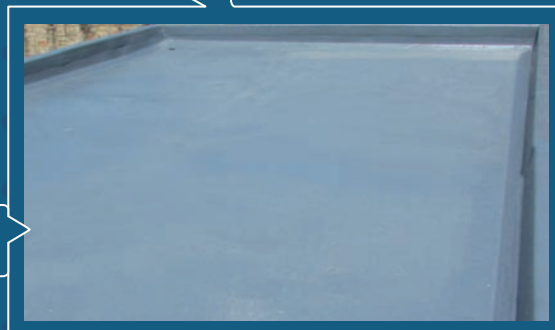


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glidevale



GV110 pipe adaptor



Flexible pipe



Glidevale's Versa-Tile G5 is ideal for new build applications as well as for refurbishment projects where retrofit roof space ventilation is required following the installation of increased roof or loft insulation.

- Ventilator & terminal solution.
- Guaranteed 20,000mm² ventilation area.
- Compatible with over 50 interlocking tile profiles.
- Available in six standard colours.
- Deluge & driving rain resistant.
- AA fire rated.
- Can be adapted into a soil ventilation pipe or mechanical extraction terminal using Glidevale's pipe adaptor & flexible pipe.
- Designed & developed under BS EN ISO 9001.

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A new age for dry fixing

Andrew Cross of Klober addresses the gap in quality and performance of dry fix systems and how a new British Standard could help specifiers navigate the growing market

With housing associations and local authorities investing significant sums to ensure the long-term thermal efficiency and build quality of their properties, greater attention is being paid to design life rather than the lowest tendered cost. By contrast, some private sector landlords have been slower to adopt such changes in the procurement process, which often means the cost of maintenance and remedial works 20 years down the line could be significant.

Understandably, many consider that relying heavily on a 'commodity approach' rarely leads to cost-effective results. Part of that problem stems from performance comparisons that are based purely on third party accreditation, such as that provided by the British Board of Agrément.

However, even the most cursory examination of certificates can reveal quite how marked the product variation can be. This is because few check that manufacturers of products sold on price can get away with selling them as 'like-for-like'. Despite the saying that "there is hardly anything that someone can't make a little worse and sell a little cheaper", many companies are clearly prepared to let this be their primary strategy in pursuit of quick market share.

CHOICE APLENTY – BUT WATCH WHAT YOU PAY FOR

The roofing sector is a case in point, with products such as dry fixing accessories being offered at increasingly lower prices as a means to compete with market-established brands.

For those involved in social housing provision, roofing accessories offer benefits out of all proportion to their cost. Dry ridge, hip and verge accessories have been used extensively for long enough to demonstrate proof of performance.

"The new standard is designed to provide a benchmark for quality and to force manufacturers to publish specific product performance data"

The use of mortar however had become increasingly problematic, to the point where the National House Building Council and the British Standards Institution felt they had to make additional mechanical fixing mandatory. Indeed, the level of claims had reached the point where insurance underwriters thought their widespread incidence and cost had become unsustainable.

While problems associated with the use of poor quality dry fixing accessories may not appear as quickly as those related to the use of mortar, there had been instances where 'failure' within a fraction of the solution's projected design life have been documented.

SETTING A STANDARD

As an increasing number of new dry fixing products have been launched to the market in the past five years, the absence of a British Standard has made choice increasingly difficult for contractors. Despite being supported by little more than promises about performance, the attraction of low cost products remains irresistible for many specifiers and roofing merchants. Factors such as durability, colour retention, dimensional stability and weathertightness can





vary, so the imminent publication of the new standard – BS 8612 – really cannot come too soon.

Designed to provide a benchmark for quality and place a requirement for manufacturers to publish specific product performance data, it can only be hoped that the standard will finally put pressure on those companies whose products would, in essence, create a liability for the customer, rather than offer long-term performance.

“If facility managers are looking to achieve life expectancies of up to 20 or 30 years, then that ‘detail’ could be crucial”

THE DEVIL'S IN THE DETAIL

For building owners and facility managers, dry fixing represents a very simple and inexpensive way to ensure a roof will remain without problems. It has been the preferred method for such repairs in Scotland for more than 15 years, but despite the greater experience north of the border, product comparison there is similarly problematic.

However, some features, such as the backing adhesive used on a ridge or hip roll, can be checked with relative ease. For example, only the highest-performing products bond securely to dusty surfaces, a butyl rubber-backing providing instant adhesion and weatherproofing protection. Those manufacturers, whose products use such material, would typically demonstrate that in published information. However, it is important to emphasise that anything less effective could be at a risk of early failure through the effects of adverse weather conditions during the curing process.

The new standard has been designed to prevent this and is likely to cover product features that are currently given little consideration, such as fixings and the base material from which dry verge and ridge unions are made.

And while the devil is always in the detail, if facility managers are looking to achieve life expectancies of up to 20 or 30 years, then that ‘detail’ could be crucial.

Andrew Cross is marketing manager at Klover

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Impressive Manchester residential development chooses SE Controls

One of Manchester's latest high rise residential developments, Cambridge Street, is using smoke control systems from SE Controls to provide a safe environment for residents, by ensuring escape routes are kept clear of smoke in the event of a fire.

Designed by Hodder & Partners and constructed by developer-contractor, Renaker Build Ltd, the new building stands on a previously derelict 0.35 hectare site and now provides 282 private rental apartments within two towers, which stand 19 and 28 storeys above ground level.

With such a large number of apartments at Cambridge Street, fire safety is an essential consideration of the building's design with the smoke control system being an integral part of the solution.

Each tower has its own escape staircase at the centre of the structure, which is protected by SE Controls smoke ventilation and control systems. These systems are code compliant to Building Regulations Approved Document B, as the travel distance from each apartment is less than 7.5 metres.

Every floor of each tower is fitted with an automatically opening smoke vent door, leading to a dedicated smoke shaft, which includes a

SHEVTEC automatically opening louvre at roof level. This allows smoke and hot air to be vented and ensures corridors and escape routes are kept clear. On the top floor of each block, an additional corridor roof vent is also incorporated as part of the design, which is controlled by a dedicated SHEVTEC control panel.

The smoke vent doors use SE Controls actuators, which are compliant with BS EN 12101, and these are controlled by a series of OSLoop controllers that provide instant response in the event of a fire to ensure the appropriate doors are opened, allowing smoke to escape.

Cambridge Street, is also installed with SECloudlink™, a remote services solution from SE Controls that uses 4G communications technology to constantly provide system status information, allowing data to be displayed remotely to enable facilities and building managers to monitor the building's smoke control system.

Michael Scrimshaw, Business Development Manager for SE Controls said: "Cambridge Street has rapidly become an iconic landmark on Manchester's skyline with its white tile cladding contrasting with the red brick of adjacent listed buildings. We're delighted to have been involved



with the project, as Renaker Build has delivered a high quality apartment building, which is an attractive proposition in the growing private rental sector."

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Stylish and practical workwear, F Engel has built further on its reputation by introducing a collection of slim-fit, stretchable work trousers which allow wearers to be especially comfortable in any work situation – and look/feel smart at the same time. Called 'X-treme', the trousers are made from 65 per cent polyester and 35 per cent cotton incorporating a specially developed mechanical stretch factor; they are available in various choices both with and without useful hanging pockets. The Engel 'X-treme' Slim-Fit Stretchable Work Trousers are available in a black, black/anthracite grey, Forest green/black and Mocha Brown/black in sizes 42-66.



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Council upgrades all sheltered housing

Sheffield City Council has completed a programme to upgrade its fire safety throughout its 1,134 sheltered housing properties using Aico's Multi-Sensor Fire Alarm for an enhanced level of safety; this will enable residents to live safely in their homes for many years to come. An additional 261 properties within three tower blocks will also benefit from this premium fire alarm, following a fire risk assessment and advice from South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue. Aico's Multi-Sensor Fire Alarm contains two sensor types, optical and heat, to constantly monitor smoke and heat levels, sending and receiving information via its intelligent detection software.



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Powermatic also offers operating efficiencies that enable it to assure a door's compliance with Approved Document M of the Building Regulations.

In addition, Powermatic is particularly suited to social housing situations thanks to the fact that it is totally concealed when the door is closed. This not only ensures that interiors look less institutionalised and more homely, but can also reduce the risk of the door closer being damaged through vandalism, misuse or tampering, which could render a fire door useless. It also means less maintenance call-outs and enhanced reliability.



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Achieving consistency in fire safety standards

Discrepancies between Building Regulations and other guidance for smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms in housing must be resolved, argues Rex Taylor of Kidde Safety Europe

Definitive guidance for smoke and heat alarms is provided by the Code of Practice, BS 5839, Part 6: 2013. It covers both new and existing homes, whether for single occupancy households or houses of multiple occupations consisting of self-contained units.

While BS 5839-6 takes the form of guidance and recommendations, it is not in itself mandatory. However, it forms the basis for Building Regulations and housing standards, and is used in legal and insurance disputes.

MINIMUM STANDARDS

While BS 5839-6 is based on a risk assessment approach, it recognises that in most cases guidance tabulated in the Code can be applied as a minimum standard. It lists the minimum Categories (locations for alarms) and Grades (power sources) recommended for different types of housing. Typically, for new houses up to three storeys and individual flats, the Code recommends Category LD2. This means smoke alarms must be installed in all escape routes and any areas where fires might start, such as living rooms, plus heat alarms in all kitchens.

Installation of smoke and heat alarms to satisfy Building Regulations is a legal requirement for all new-build dwellings, changes of use and certain alterations. Different regulations and related guidance apply in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This guidance is unsuitable for existing properties where Building Regulations do not apply, because more alarms may be needed in older homes to account for a lack of passive fire protection and other factors, as highlighted in BS 5839-6.



also important for existing buildings and BS 5839-6 excludes Grade F battery-only systems from all rented homes.

RENTAL RULES

Recent rules also apply to privately rented homes. In England, the 'Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations' call for a smoke alarm on each floor with accommodation, and a CO alarm in any habitable room with a solid fuel appliance. The landlord, managing agent or other representative must check that alarms work at the start of each tenancy and replace any that do not, highlighting the need for long-term reliability. The regulations do not distinguish between battery and mains smoke alarms but, as we have seen, BS 5839-6 recommends Grade D mains with back-up power, interconnected alarms. This is also a legal requirement for Scottish rented properties.

The English Rental regulations also require a CO alarm – but only in habitable rooms with solid fuel heating appliances (as with Building Regulations Part J).

In contrast, private rented properties in Scotland now have to meet a much higher standard, in line with the Building Regulations Technical Handbooks, already applying to all new and replacement combustion appliance

“There is a compelling case to adopt the BS 5839-6 standard in both new and existing properties”

CONFLICTING REGULATIONS

Regulations in Scotland and Northern Ireland effectively mirror the recommendations of BS 5839-6. But Approved Document B, covering England and Wales, sets the bar lower – effectively Category LD3, with smoke alarms just in escape routes and heat alarms only in kitchens open to circulation areas. Worryingly, BS 5839-6 stresses that with LD3 the evacuation time once fire is detected in the circulation area might be quite limited, and also “might not prevent death or serious injury of occupants of the room where fire originates” such as living rooms. There is clearly a compelling case to adopt the BS 5839-6 standard in both new and existing properties – even those where Regulations have previously been applied – with more alarms.

All Building Regulation guidelines and also BS 5839-6 are agreed in demanding Grade D hard-wired, interconnected smoke and heat alarms with backup power, which should be professionally installed. Battery-only smoke alarms are not permitted where Building Regulations apply. But Grade D is



installations. They require a CO alarm in every space containing a combustion appliance such as boilers, fires, heaters or stoves – whether using gas, oil, wood or other fuels. A CO alarm is also required where a flue passes through ‘high risk accommodation’, such as a bedroom or a main living room.

CARBON MONOXIDE ALARM STANDARD

The latest guidance on CO alarms is provided by BS EN 50292:2013. It recommends that a CO alarm should be installed in every room containing a fuel-burning appliance plus other well-used rooms remote from the appliance, and all bedrooms.

Where the number of CO alarms has to be limited, priority should be given to any room containing a flue-less or open-flue appliance and where the occupants spend most time. In addition, rooms with extended or concealed

flues passing through should also have an alarm.

Building Regulations throughout the UK require CO alarms to varying degrees, but only with installation of new or replacement combustion appliances – excluding those used for cooking, unlike the Standard. BS EN 50292’s more rigorous approach contrasts particularly starkly with the Part J Approved Document applying to England and Wales.

This only requires a CO alarm with installation of certain, solid fuel heating appliances. The rising toll of deaths and illness caused by carbon monoxide incidents associated with other fuels and types of combustion appliances, including cookers, highlights the urgent need for a better benchmark than this. It is also important to consider potential CO risks to and from adjacent properties or shared spaces.

COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEMS

According to all the Regulations and BS EN 50292:2013, alarms can be powered by batteries designed for the whole working life of the alarm, or by mains. Hard-wired alarms are easily installed in new-builds, or during refurbishments and rewiring, alongside hard-wired smoke and heat alarms to offer additional safety features. Examples include hard-wired CO alarms that interlink with each other but also with smoke and heat alarms that can all act as sounders to alert of either risk, forming comprehensive systems.

Crucially, the alarms must have different, distinct alarm sounder patterns for carbon monoxide and fire, as required by BS 5839-6 – and some are supported by different display messages on digital models.

Some of these systems can therefore automatically alert occupants of the specific hazard that confronts them. This allows occupants to respond quickly according to different scenarios caused by either fire or the presence of carbon monoxide.

Rex Taylor is technical support manager of Kidde Safety Europe

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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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Get plastered, without the damp patches

A change in plaster choice can help landlords and local authorities to eradicate damp and cut their maintenance bills in the process, argues Tom Emery of Tarmac

Over the last five years, UK local authorities have paid out £35m on compensation and legal fees related to damp, leaks and related damage. Given the funding challenge that local authorities face, there's a growing pressure for them to ensure that their housing stock is fit for purpose. While some of the main causes of damp are well known, others are sometimes less evident. Plaster is one example.

In urban areas, particularly in the Midlands and North of England, much of the council-owned housing is made up of 19th century solid wall properties. For much of the latter half of the 20th century, local authorities used traditional lime-based plasters throughout these properties, largely to great effect. However, gypsum plaster's rise in popularity – and the general perception that it's a one-size-fits-all 'wonder product' – meant it soon overtook lime-based products and became the plaster of choice in council housing up to the present day.

IMPACT ON BUILDING FABRIC

There is no denying that price also comes into the equation, with the accessibility of gypsum plasters freeing up precious costs from maintenance budgets. However, one of the major flaws of gypsum plaster is that it offers very poor levels of breathability, as it quickly absorbs and retains moisture from the surrounding atmosphere and substrate.

Its distinct lack of breathability makes gypsum plaster highly susceptible to damp and mould growth. The problem is often exacerbated when local authorities carry out further energy efficiency upgrades, for example by fitting double glazing and cavity wall insulation. While these methods improve air tightness, they also lead to a notable increase in condensation, which combined with gypsum plaster's tendency to absorb moisture can create further damp problems.

Treating damaged gypsum plaster is a lengthy and expensive process, involving plaster removal and wall treatment with a Damp Proof Course before waiting for it to dry, typically at a rate of 25 mm per month, to receive a backing plaster. Crucially, if gypsum plaster remains on the local authority's specification programme and is used to replace old plaster, there is no guarantee that the damp problems would not return.

THE CASE FOR RENOVATING PLASTERS

Ultimately, local authorities have both the opportunity and capacity to make a change; not just to their specification, but to the whole-life costs of their properties, and the living conditions of their tenants. Persisting with the use of gypsum plaster in aging housing stock would do little to reduce the prevalence of damp, and will only serve to add further cost into a section of the UK housing market already under immense strain.

The alternative is for local authorities to switch their plaster specification for older properties back to a lime-based product, such as a lightweight renovating plaster. Such products are able to mitigate the potential humidity and airflow issues by allowing moisture to pass through.

One of the main reasons for lime-based plasters falling out of use was



“In addition to being a budget-savvy alternative, renovating plaster also promotes a safer living environment”

their longer application time, especially when compared to gypsum. However, modern variants are easy and quick to apply and do not require the skill or expense of a specialist contractor. Crucially, renovating plasters also dry much faster than gypsum. In real terms, this means the properties don't have to stay unoccupied due to maintenance work.

Typically, renovating plasters include a salt inhibitor that increases the retention of dissolved solids within the plaster, helping to protect the decorated finish. The result is a highly breathable plaster solution, which delivers balanced moisture movement through the building fabric. This allows the substrate to dry naturally and prevents damp and mould growth, and prevents corrosion in walls with metal reinforcements.

In addition, the aseptic qualities of a lime-based product will further curb the spread of mould and bacteria.

Given that most local authorities are in charge of their own specification, switching to renovating plaster could make a sizeable impact on the amount of money spent on remedial damp problems, in particular those stemming from gypsum plaster. In addition to being a budget-savvy alternative, it also promotes a safer living environment for tenants.

Tom Emery is specifications coordinator at Tarmac's Limelite division

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