

# HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

01.18



Budget winners  
and losers

Fire safety  
concerns



Action on  
rogue landlords

Housing over  
the past  
50 years

## Designing safety into housing

Plymouth development gives new and returning residents a feeling of security in their community. See page 28

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## HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

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The manufacturer of the paper used within our publication is a Chain-of-Custody certified supplier operating within environmental systems certified to both ISO 14001 and EMAS in order to ensure sustainable production.

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&p.

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Printed in England

This product registered with ABC in October 2015 but has not yet issued its first certificate.

## Editor's comment

# Will the housing green paper lead to significant changes?



Patrick Mooney,  
News Editor

It's unclear what the purpose and extent of the promised Green Paper on social housing will be – but it's abundantly clear that a strong statement about the future purpose of subsidised housing and its role in our lives, is badly needed.

The fire that engulfed the Grenfell Tower seven months ago and led to the death of 71 innocent people, as well as traumatic life changes to hundreds of others – residents, neighbours and those who fought the fire and dealt with its aftermath – has changed things forever. The social housing sector did not cause the fire, but it has been doing an awful lot of soul searching ever since.

Survivors and their representatives have spoken movingly about their experiences, but also with great anger when saying that no-one listened to them before the fire caused such devastation in June last year. Complaints were made about power and water supplies to the tower block, about the fire fighting equipment in the block and the advice given to residents, as well as about the quality of works undertaken during the refurbishment of the tower.

This in turn has led to more widespread criticism that the tower represents a wider set of society's ills – in particular a concentration of low income households with inadequate support from the state which has failed them across a wide spectrum of public services (education, health, welfare etc). The co-location of poverty and extreme wealth in a small geographic area only seems to make matters worse.

## CRITICISM

Kensington and Chelsea Council has come in for a lot of criticism, but not everything that has gone wrong can be their sole responsibility. The Police investigation and the public inquiry will identify the causes of the fire, who was responsible, whether any crimes were committed and what lessons we need to learn etc, but there must be wider lessons if we are to avert a repeat of this tragedy. And we can't wait for these inquiries to be completed before doing something.

There are hundreds of other tower blocks across the country, many of them with their cladding panels now removed in full or in part, while we await clear guidance on how best to safeguard the residents. They have stood in a sort of limbo or suspended animation for the past seven months. Some high rise blocks are being guarded around the clock by fire wardens, while others are having fire sprinklers installed. Surely there is a role for Government in ensuring that all residents of these tower blocks can sleep safely in their beds at night.

Housing in the UK today has come to represent divisions and differences across society. Why is this and why is it that social housing is increasingly associated with the poorest, least educated and unhealthiest members of society would be an interesting topic for the Green Paper. To many it is the housing of last resort. But it wasn't always like this. In the 1950s and 60s councils housed tens of millions of people of all types and classes.

## THE FUTURE

The former housing minister Alok Sharma has been touring the country talking to groups of tenants and hearing directly about their concerns and hopes for the future. It will be intriguing to see how much these discussions inform the content of the Green Paper. I am sure no tenant has suggested anything as daft as the Bedroom Tax, which has failed spectacularly in its objective, but has created a lot of misery.

Meanwhile the social housing regulator is going through (yet) another set of changes. Surely this is the right time to make it more proactive and a standard bearer for all rented housing – social and private. At the moment the HCA really only provides limited oversight of housing associations. Its role in respect of council housing is vague in the extreme, while it has no role in the oversight of the private rented sector – the fastest growing part of the housing market in recent years.

Perhaps the Green Paper could promote the HCA as a true champion and protector of all tenants. For too many people living in social housing the term value for money has translated as an excuse or explanation for cuts to their services. Some would say the sort of cuts that lead inevitably to the Grenfell Tower fire. Now is probably the time to focus on improving standards and ensuring landlords are better aligned with other public services, like GP surgeries, hospitals and schools. Here's hoping!

*Patrick Mooney*

Patrick Mooney



## On the cover...

The January issue of Housing Management & Maintenance features St John's Way © Stannah

St John's Hill's Clapham Junction scheme comprises the regeneration of a 1930s estate undertaken by Peabody to adapt the area to meet the needs of the residents.



# 'Housing budget' gets mixed reviews from the sector

It was promoted in advance as being a budget to get Britain building the large volume of houses the country needs, but eventually it ended up with mixed reviews from landlords, builders and economists.

In fairness there were many positives in Philip Hammond's second budget and he has set an ambitious target to be building 300,000 new homes a year by the mid 2020s. But there was scepticism over the resources allocated and in particular there was disappointment that local authorities have not been given a central role in the house building drive. It also looks like they will have to wait until 2019/20 before they can borrow more to build themselves.

The Chancellor left his headline-grabbing announcement on abolishing stamp duty for first time buyers until near to the end of his speech, but within minutes of him sitting down the Office of Budget Responsibility was reporting that the main beneficiaries of this would be existing home owners as the move would lead to an increase in property values.

More detailed analysis revealed that first time buyers in many parts of the country would only see very modest savings from the stamp duty cut. For instance the saving would be £11.82 in the north of England where the average price paid by first time buyers was only just over the previous stamp duty threshold of £125,000. A much bigger hurdle to prospective owners was and remains the size of the deposit they have to find - at £32,899 it dwarfs the average Stamp Duty charge of £1,654.

## POSITIVES

First of all, let's quickly run through the positives:

- The changes in Universal Credit in particular reducing the initial waiting period from six to five weeks, the commitment to paying two weeks of housing benefit and extending the repayment period for advances from six to 12 months;
- A range of incentives amounting to £44bn in loans, grants, guarantees etc, to encourage house building at levels not seen in this country since the 1960s;
- Encouragement for small and medium sized builders to play their part in the building programme;
- A strong focus on investing in infrastructure to make it easier for major building projects to proceed, particularly in places like the Oxford to Cambridge corridor, including Milton Keynes;
- Remediation of contaminated sites that could be used for new housing; and
- Doubling the charge that councils can make from 50 to 100 per cent extra council tax on properties that have been empty for two or more years is



It was promoted in advance as being a budget to get Britain building the large volume of houses the country needs, but eventually it ended up with mixed reviews from landlords, builders and economists

welcome but will this really have an impact on the rich and oligarchs. This will need to be monitored over the next year to see what impact it has on the number of empty homes.

On the flip side of the coin, we also see the following:

## NEGATIVES

- There was no new money for undertaking fire safety works to tower blocks in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire. This is now a huge political issue and is undermining some support for the Government's housing policies. When ministers say that installing fire sprinklers is not essential they risk alienating the public and in particular the residents of hundreds of tower blocks across the country;
- Following announcements at the Conservative Party conference, there were hopes of a tax boost for private landlords who offer longer term tenancies – but this turned out to be a damp squib, with only the promise of another consultation on the subject;
- It is doubtful that the skilled physical resources

exist to deliver the new housing and there are fears the supply sector will struggle to deliver all of the building materials and components required;

- The focus on new housing remains on homes for sale, with truly affordable housing for rent barely featuring;
- The failure to unfreeze local housing allowance rates, which could impact on tenants living in the private rented sector and force more of them into homelessness; and
- In too many instances the Chancellor announced the need for more or fresh reviews or studies whereas most people working in the sector believe the solutions are known. What appears to be missing is the political will to make difficult decisions and the financial resources to deliver.

## CURATE'S EGG

David Orr, Chief Executive at the National Housing Federation was probably speaking for many when he said: "The measures are a good signal of intent from the Chancellor. On their own, they may make an incremental difference but will not deliver a step change in the supply of new homes.

"While the Chancellor is right to say there is no silver bullet, a long-term supply of affordable land is the critical factor. We will need the Government to ensure that public land is used for housing and that private land is bought where it is needed to create new communities."

A similar message came from Gavin Smart, Deputy Chief Executive at the Chartered Institute of Housing, who said: "The renewed commitment to tackle the nation's housing crisis represents significant progress and we welcome the ambitious new target to deliver 300,000 new homes a year.

"Of course the important thing is that we are building the right homes in the right places and that people can afford them. We have to make sure that any new funding supports the building of new homes that meet the varied needs of individuals and families across the UK. For many people social rents, which are much cheaper than private rents, remain the only truly affordable option and more must be done to support this crucial form of housing."

Speaking on behalf of private landlords, RLA Policy Director David Smith said: "With ever growing numbers of families with children in private rented housing we recognise their needs for longer tenancies.

"The Chancellor could have acted on proposals we have made by providing tax relief for landlords prepared to offer longer tenancies and taking action against mortgage lenders who block them being granted. Instead we have yet another consultation related to the private rented sector, but tenants cannot live in consultations."

But Smith welcomed moves to include a tenant's rent payment history in their credit scores. Mr Smith added: "We welcome the Government's acceptance of our recommendation to include rent payment history in credit scores. This is good for tenants wanting to access mortgages themselves and good for landlords in better understanding the background of prospective tenants."

# News in brief

- The London Mayor Sadiq Khan has launched his private landlords on-line database, allowing tenants and prospective tenants across the capital to check whether any prosecutions or civil enforcement actions for housing offences have been successfully undertaken. The new Rogue Landlord and Letting Agent checker contains data from ten councils with a further eight boroughs submitting data early in 2018. It also allows tenants to report unscrupulous practices by landlords. Records from the three national organisations offering a free and independent service for resolving disputes with landlords have also been made available.
- Meanwhile the Government says private landlords in England who want to rent a property to five or more people, from at least two different families, should be licensed under new proposals to improve standards in the sector. In addition, the maximum number of people who can occupy a room will be specified in the property's licence. The changes are designed to tackle rogue landlords and will also make flats and one and two-storey properties subject to licensing for the first time. National mandatory licensing currently only applies if properties are three or more storeys high.
- Research undertaken by the Liberal Democrats has revealed more than 11,000 homes have been lying empty for longer than ten years. The data was collected through freedom of information requests to local councils. It showed 60,000 properties had been empty for two years or more while 23,000 homes have been empty for five years or more. Some 216,000 homes have been empty for six months. At the same time over 9,000 people are sleeping on the streets and 78,000 households are living in temporary accommodation.
- Councils will not be forced to sell off any high value homes before April 2019 or pay over the proceeds to the Treasury, Communities Secretary Sajid Javid has confirmed. Fears had been raised after the announcement to run a pilot Right to Buy extension to HAs in the Midlands from July this year.
- Prime Minister Theresa May has rejected calls to add any residents to the expert panel advising the Grenfell Tower public inquiry. The inquiry is not now expected to hear evidence from witnesses until after Easter but an expert on social housing complaints may be recruited to advise the inquiry's chair.
- Fire safety building regulations are not 'fit for purpose' according to Dame Judith Hackitt, the Government appointed expert, in an interim report released in late December. A full report with recommendations is expected after Easter but Dame Judith has called for a thorough overhaul of attitudes and the culture of cutting corners and costs in the design, construction and on-going maintenance of our homes.
- Only one sixth of council-owned tower blocks with the same type of cladding as Grenfell Tower, have had the material completely stripped from them according to Government figures. A total of 162 tower blocks taller than 18 metres had the same aluminium composite cladding, with removal work started on only 57 and completed stripped from just 26. Work to install replacement cladding had started on nine buildings and only completed on a single building before Christmas. No figures have been released for privately owned tower blocks.
- The company responsible for managing and maintaining Council homes in Kensington & Chelsea has controversially handed back its contract. The K&CTMO had previously had its work on Grenfell Tower and the Ledbury Estate withdrawn, but the board has decided it can no longer honour its commitments and tenants should be consulted on future management arrangements.
- The main investment body for providing new social and affordable housing has been rebranded as Homes England. It has also acquired extra powers to make development projects easier to assemble, such as through the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders. The HCA's regulatory functions will formally be hived off into an independent and standalone organisation, known as the Regulator of Social Housing.
- The Residential Landlords Association has called for a suspension and review of the Right to Rent scheme over fears that it is being manipulated by criminal gangs and leading to a situation where many private landlords will only let to people in possession of a British passport.
- The High Court has ordered the Home Office to end its illegal policy of deporting rough sleepers who are citizens of other EU countries. The Government has ruled out an appeal and said it will accept the judgement.
- The influential Public Accounts Committee has criticised the Government for its complacency over the rising tide of homelessness and says it is placing too much reliance on the forthcoming implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

## Housing in Government reshuffle

After weeks of rumours that we were going to see a new cabinet level Housing Secretary, the Prime Minister surprised the sector by simply adding the 'H word' to the title of Sajid Javid, making him the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. His department has been rebranded as the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

We wait to see what real impact this will have, but on his appointment the new Housing Secretary

said: "Building the homes our country needs is an absolute priority for this government and so I'm delighted the Prime Minister has asked me to serve in this role. The name change for the department reflects this government's renewed focus to deliver more homes and build strong communities across England."

Below the cabinet, Alok Sharma has been moved to Employment after spending recent months preparing for a Housing Green Paper and talking to social housing tenants, being replaced by Dominic

Raab who becomes the PM's third housing minister since mid 2016 and the seventh housing minister since 2010. The revolving door continues.

Meanwhile at the Department of Work and Pensions, Esther McKey has taken over responsibility for implementing Universal Credit from David Gauke who has moved to the Justice department after just seven months at the DWP. Research has recently revealed that three quarters of private landlords are reluctant to let to tenants in receipt of UC due to rent payment fears.





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## Single housing ombudsman closer to becoming a reality

The Government is looking at establishing a single ombudsman service to improve consumer rights of redress across all parts of the housing sector.

A consultation exercise is taking place early in the New Year to assess the current systems and seek views from experts and the public on how access to redress for consumers could be improved. This could result in the creation of a single body to investigate and deal with complaints from tenants (both private and social), leaseholders, owners and buyers of new homes.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid described the existing mechanisms of redress in the housing sector as “confusing and unco-ordinated”. There are currently four different bodies that can deal with complaints: the Housing Ombudsman, the Property Ombudsman, Ombudsman Services: Property and the Property Redress scheme. In addition the Charity Commission deals with charitable bodies like the National Trust who own and let properties.

But even this combination of overlapping schemes fails to provide full coverage of the potential issues that people might encounter, he explained. While membership of the Housing Ombudsman scheme is compulsory for all social landlords, private landlords do not have to be part of a scheme.

### BARRIERS

Mr Javid said getting cases considered takes too long and there are all kinds of barriers to doing so. Announcing his planned consultation, he said “This could help drive up standards across the whole industry and increase protections for consumers.”

“We’re also going to be consulting on reforms of the leasehold market to tackle abuses there and launching a call for evidence on regulation of property agents. Abuse of the leasehold system is rife, yet leaseholders and tenants can find it almost impossible to get their complaints heard and acted on.”

Mr Javid added “Research in other sectors has shown that redress works more efficiently for consumers when there’s a single ombudsman in place. So, in the new year, we’re going to consult on this and see whether it’s right for the housing sector too.”

It is thought that reports of complaints from Grenfell Tower residents over safety issues at the tower block being ignored or not acted upon may have prompted Mr Javid to act.

Tenants of the tower block were tenants of Kensington and Chelsea Council although management of the block had been contracted out to a tenant management organisation, which was also an ALMO. The Homes & Communities Agency said they had no powers to investigate tenant complaints at Grenfell as neither the council, nor the TMO or ALMO came under its jurisdiction. Tenants have subsequently complained that no-one was interested in listening to them.

## Empty homes council tax rise unlikely to deter rich owners, say critics

The Chancellor’s plan to tackle the housing crisis by increasing council tax on empty homes has been labelled a joke by critics, who say it will have little effect on the wealthy who own expensive properties across the UK.

There are over 200,000 homes in the UK that have been empty for more than six months. Parts of the capital city and beautiful locations in the country and by the seaside (like the West Country, East Anglia and the Lake District) are particularly popular locations for both second or holiday homes, as well as investment properties to hedge against financial risks.

These areas are very different from the urban centres suffering from low demand and poor property conditions that has also resulted in large numbers of empty properties in some cities. Places like Liverpool and Stoke have sought to tackle this by selling some houses for as little as £1 to buyers, on condition that they renovate the properties and bring them back into use.

Official figures show that the west London borough of Kensington & Chelsea has 1,652 empty homes, with more than 600 of them empty for more than two years. While it is undoubtedly the case that some of these are empty for perfectly legitimate reasons, it is also the case that many are in the ‘Buy to leave empty’ category with property inflation outstripping the general inflation rate.

### PUNISH

Philip Hammond announced in the Budget that councils would be able to charge 100 per cent extra council tax on properties that have been empty for two or more years, up from the current limit of 50 per cent. “It can’t be right to leave property empty when so many are desperate for a place to live,” the Chancellor said.

We probably won’t see the impact of the council tax change in the empty homes figures for about 12 months, but Paul Sweeney, the Labour MP for Glasgow North East, was quick to criticise the change, labelling it inadequate and too small. “We need to have a punitive rate above normal council tax to actually incentivise the reuse of empty properties,” Sweeney said on Twitter. “What a joke.”

Helen Williams, Chief Executive of the Empty Homes agency, said the increase would not deter those buying properties as an



investment. “For a very wealthy buyer spending millions of pounds, 100 per cent council tax is not really enough of a disincentive,” she said. It would be more helpful if the Government carried out a review into why overseas buyers kept their properties empty, she added.

Jeremy Corbyn, Labour’s leader, said: “We need a large-scale publicly funded house building programme, not this government’s accounting tricks and empty promises.”

### COUNCILLOR LANDLORDS

Meanwhile, an investigation by The Guardian newspaper found that in some areas the empty homes phenomenon was being fuelled by local councillors, with hundreds of councillors owning multiple properties which they either let out privately, or they use as holiday homes.

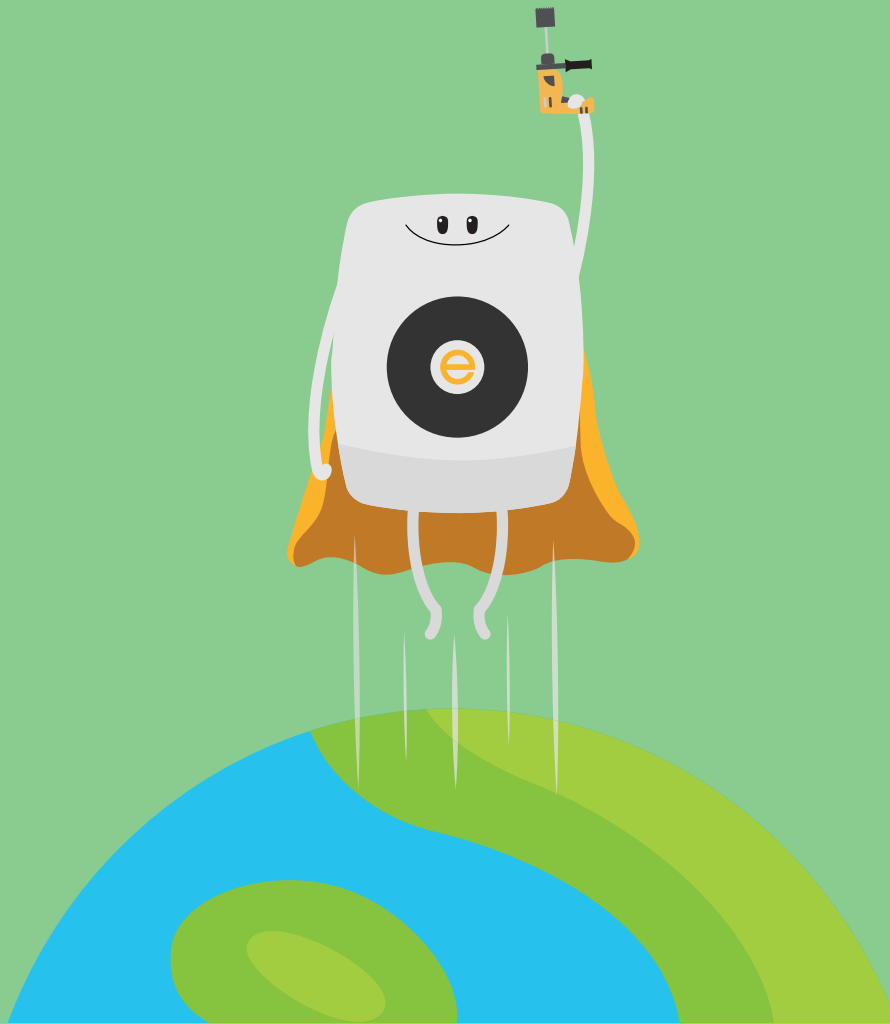
The paper reported that in Torbay, 39 per cent of councillors own multiple properties, including one who has received more than £63,000 in housing benefit payments for tenants in the last two years. Three Conservative councillors in the south coast authority are said to own a combined 68 residential properties. In Bournemouth, 15 of the 37 councillors hold multiple property interests, while in Labour-controlled Leeds, 26 of the 99 councillors own more than one property in the city.

Other councils where more than a quarter of councillors are landlords are Conservative-controlled Forest Heath in Suffolk, Liberal Democrat-controlled Eastbourne and Labour-controlled Waltham Forest in London.

The Guardian says it has identified a link between those areas with high numbers of councillors owning two or more properties, and councils that have failed to introduce registration and licensing schemes of the private rented sector.



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## Thousands of benefit claimants at risk of rental market rejection

Our research provides even more evidence that the system is not working

Steve Burrows, Landlord Secure

Thousands of Universal Credit claimants could be at risk of homelessness this Winter, as growing numbers of landlords refuse to consider their rental applications despite concessions made in the Budget.

Research undertaken by the tenant referencing and insurance agency Landlord Secure has found that 16 per cent of landlords would refuse to progress an application from any prospective renter who was in receipt of Universal Credit payments. This is despite estimates that over a third (37 per cent) of claimants are in employment.

In addition a further 20 per cent of private landlords said they would reject any applicant who requires support from housing benefits.

Commenting on the findings, Steve Burrows, managing director at Landlord Secure, said: "Universal Credit was introduced to help the poorest in society out of poverty, but our research provides even more evidence that the system is not working.

"Whilst unfair, it's hardly surprising that landlords are unwilling to accept tenants who could be relying on Universal Credit to meet monthly rental obligations; particularly given the scheme's six-week (soon to be five week) waiting time for first payments. The impending lettings fee ban, which many have predicted will create rent inflation, is only set to compound the issue.

"However, there are those who - despite receiving Universal Credit - are indeed capable of making rental payments, and in this respect the system is failing once again. Most landlords do not currently have access to an applicant's financial history, so may automatically reject applicants based on their receipt of benefits, when in fact they would be financially suitable for the property. This could leave them in an extremely vulnerable position, without a roof over their heads.

"The market needs to do more to provide the kind of products that allow landlords to get the full picture of their tenant's financial status so they can make better decisions that work for them and ultimately the tenant."

For the full findings visit:  
<https://www.landlordsecure.co.uk/news-and-media> for a copy of the research report.

## £1.5bn package of reforms to Universal Credit welcomed

The Government bowed to pressure from all corners to introduce a widespread package of changes in the Budget to its controversial welfare benefits programme.

Politicians, landlords and campaigners had united in attacking elements of Universal Credit, saying it was adding to the poverty of thousands of vulnerable people on low incomes, many of them in work, but who were struggling to make ends meet.

Eventually Chancellor Philip Hammond and Work & Pensions Secretary David Gauke knew they had to act but the range of concessions made surprised many, making it one of the more welcome parts of the Budget.

The measures announced include:

- abolishing the initial seven day waiting period to reduce the wait for payments from six weeks down to five from February 2018;
- extending the repayment period for advance payments from 6 to 12 months, and allowing people to receive 100 per cent of their payment upfront from January 2018 (people who make a claim in December can get a 50 per cent advance, and then in January can ask for a top up to 100 per cent);
- making it possible for people to apply for advances online from Spring 2018, making it even easier for a claimant to access an advance if they need it;
- paying an additional two weeks' of housing costs after the end of someone's Housing Benefit claim and into their Universal Credit claim from April 2018;
- making it easier for claimants to continue having their housing costs paid directly to landlords once they are on Universal Credit;
- local authorities being able to recoup over 80 per cent of the money they spend on temporary accommodation directly from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) rather than from the claimant, preventing losses of more than £70 million over 2018/19; and
- extending partnership working with Citizen's Advice, to provide more face to face support to Universal Credit claimants.

The package of changes was welcomed by the Opposition spokesperson Debbie Abrahams, although she did criticise the implementation timetable, which means some of the changes will not take effect until April, the reduction of only one week in the waiting/processing period and the lack of flexibility over fortnightly payments.

### FURTHER CHANGES

However, Mr Gauke rejected Ms Abrahams' calls for further changes to UC. He told the Commons: "We must remember that universal credit is aimed at

Politicians, landlords and campaigners had united in attacking elements of Universal Credit, saying it was adding to the poverty of thousands of vulnerable people on low incomes, many of them in work, but who were struggling to make ends meet

supporting those out of work to move into work, and, once in work, to progress and increase their earnings. That is why, in addition to these measures, the Government have allocated £8 million over four years to conduct a number of tests and trials to support development of the evidence about what works to help people progress in work. This is a comprehensive and wide-ranging package worth £1.5 billion, offering significantly more support than a simple reduction in the wait for the first payment to one month."

The Chartered Institute of Housing broadly welcomed the changes, but suggested the Government should slow down its roll-out programme, so that further testing and analysis can be carried out. In particular the CIH wants to see administrative and processing delays reduced and more information and support given to claimants.

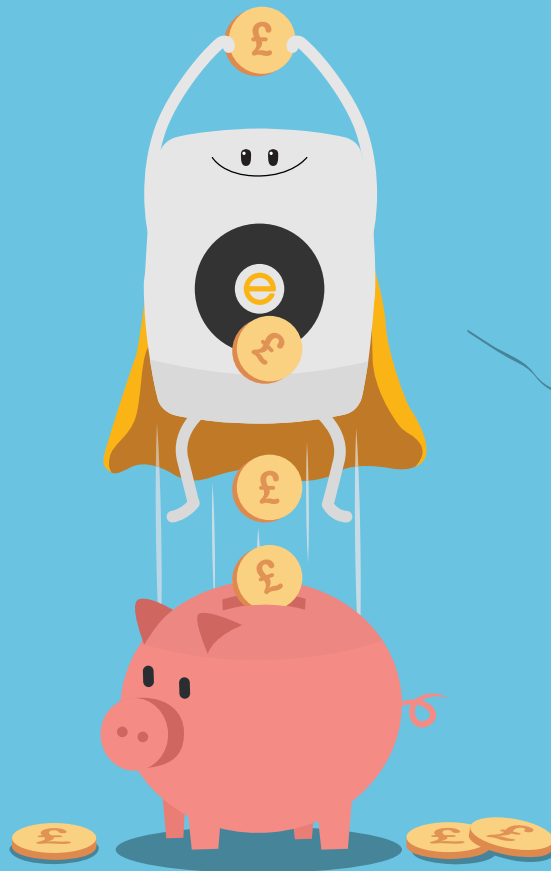
One of the most costly elements to the measures agreed by the Chancellor was to continue to pay existing housing benefit claims for two weeks, once a claimant moves onto UC. This will cost an estimated £550m and should greatly reduce the build up of rent arrears and prevent many evictions. It will take time for the impact of this to be seen and measured, but social and private landlords were particularly welcoming of this change.

The Residential Landlords Association which represents private landlords welcomed the changes, many of which they claimed to have been advocating for some time. They pointed to the planned issuing of guidance in December last year, to permit payment of the housing element of UC directly to landlords.

They said this move was long overdue and could stem the tide of PRS landlords refusing to provide accommodation to tenants receiving Universal Credit.



# ...OR PLANNED WORKS



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## New technology solutions outlined by HA chiefs

Delivering a growing number of housing management and maintenance services on-line was a common message emerging from several housing bosses at the HOMES2017 conference.

David Done, Chief Executive of Richmond Housing Partnership in west London said this was an inevitable consequence of rising costs. He said dealing personally with a customer (face to face or over the telephone) cost his association over £4 per transaction, but this was slashed to 99p when conducted on-line.

He said with over 90 per cent of his tenants owning and regularly using digital devices like smartphones, he expected over 80 per cent of their housing management work to be done digitally.

As a result of investing in new technology RHP has cut its overall annual operating costs to just £3,500 per property – some £2,000 below the London average. “Housing is a perfect service for digital provision. If your association or council hasn’t already made the transfer, it will be an imperative within three years” he added.

### DATA QUALITY

A similar message was given by Nick Atkin, Chief Executive of the Halton Housing Trust, in an entertaining presentation during which he described himself as a self confessed tech geek.

He said the move to a largely self service operation meant that lots of his staff had been freed up from answering telephones all day long to working on more intensive customer support work, such as recovering rent arrears and sustaining high risk tenancies. “We can even tell with a high degree of confidence when people will be leaving their properties,” he added.

Despite fears that the trust would be labelled a faceless organisation Atkin said they had managed to deliver real time customer satisfaction in the range of 92 to 95 per cent and that in the previous month over 83 per cent of all customer transactions had been completed via the trust’s self service operation.

He advised delegates that the quality of data on their tenants and properties was absolutely fundamental to getting the transition correct. He cited an example of a neighbouring social landlord who had some 150 year old tenants if their data was to be believed.

He praised the ‘internet of things’ as a source of solutions for most problems, particularly when combined with innovative thinking. He gave the example of using smart boilers that can be remotely controlled (if access for essential work is not allowed then they reduce the heating temperature to nudge the tenant into allowing service engineers in), but said his association was now exploring the use of infra red heating systems to replace gas.

## £28m for Grenfell relief work but no new money for fire safety measures

The Chancellor announced £28m of extra funding for Kensington and Chelsea Council to help deal with fallout from the Grenfell Tower tragedy, but provided no new funding for fire safety measures in the social housing sector.

Philip Hammond resisted calls from across Local Government and the Labour Party to announce new funds to retrofit sprinklers in high-rise tower blocks despite repeating a promise to help social landlords who could not pay for “essential” work.

In his Budget speech, Philip Hammond said the Grenfell Tower fire was a “tragedy that should never have happened”. The new funds for Kensington and Chelsea Council will pay for mental health and counselling services, the regeneration of the surrounding area and a new community facility.

He said: “This tragedy should never have happened and we must ensure that nothing like it ever happens again. Local authorities and housing associations must carry out any identified fire safety work as soon as possible. If any local authorities can’t access funding to pay for essential fire safety work they should contact us immediately. We will not allow financial constraints to get in the way of any essential fire safety works.”

### INQUIRY

The early stages of the public inquiry into the fire have focussed on procedural matters, with discussions about the participation of survivors and the giving of evidence. Hopes of an initial findings report being published in the Spring have

faded as it has become clear that Police investigations and any prosecutions will take priority.

The social housing sector is becoming increasingly frustrated at delays in the clarification of building standards and in particular guidance on fire safety measures. In the immediate aftermath of the fire it had been expected that clear messages would be issued by the Autumn but that timetable has long passed with no firm dates emerging for the publication of new guidelines or requirements.

Social landlords are also being frustrated at the lack of commitment from Whitehall to help with the funding of safety works. Manchester City Council has decided to install water sprinklers in all of its high rise tower blocks, although the existence of leaseholders, who have bought flats under the Right to Buy, remains uncertain with individual leases needing to be checked.

Alok Sharma, the former housing minister, repeatedly rejected calls for the Government to provide funding for sprinklers, saying: “they are additional, not essential works”. This is despite fire brigade leaders and safety experts saying that water sprinklers are the most effective way of tackling fires and they are now mandatory in new buildings above 30 metres in height.

A group of about 50 protestors lobbied delegates attending the HOMES17 conference at Olympia, west London on the same day as the budget. They also held a rally in Parliament Square before going on to a meeting with MPs and others at the House of Commons. But based on the lack of funding from the Government, it would appear their efforts on the day were to no avail.

## Councils will have to bid for a share of New Build pot

Housing chiefs in local authorities were left disappointed by the Chancellor’s announcement that they will have to bid for extra borrowing if they want to take part in new housebuilding programmes.

Ahead of the budget there were hopes that councils would be encouraged to build significant amounts of new housing for social rent. But when the details were revealed it left many feeling underwhelmed as councils were told they will have to competitively bid against each other, for a part of a relatively modest £1bn pot.

It is estimated this might be sufficient to fund

just 15,000 homes for rent. Given the timescales outlined it is possible the first homes will not be built until 2020/21 at the earliest and therefore will do nothing to alleviate the existing chronic shortfall in affordable housing.

The Government will allow councils access to £1bn by lifting the limits on their borrowing caps, but decisions will be based on submissions made by individual councils. Officials said priority would be given to councils operating in “high demand areas”, although no other details were provided so it is unclear whether this will restrict access to councils in certain parts of the country.



# Generation Rent in the dark over their tenancy rights

New research among more than 2,000 adults by the on-line letting agency LetBritain, has revealed that huge numbers of tenants and landlords across the country are unaware of the laws governing the private rental sector.

Among its findings, researchers found:

- 37 per cent of tenants and 16 per cent of landlords do not know that renters must be given at least two months' notice if a landlord wishes to evict them;
- A third of all people in rented accommodation – 34 per cent, do not realise they have the right for their deposits to be placed in a Tenancy Deposit Protection scheme. Somewhat worryingly 12 per cent of landlords were also unaware of this rule;
- Even more renters (43 per cent) and landlords (19 per cent) have no idea that tenants can challenge any excessive charges made by a landlord, via an ombudsman.

Similarly, more than a quarter (28 per cent) of tenants did not know a landlord should provide 24 hours' notice before entering their property, while over a third (34 per cent) were unaware that a landlord must provide an Energy Performance Certificate.

A half of all tenants did not know that the rent charged by a landlord should be comparable to rents for similar properties in the area or that it can be challenged. Some 27 per cent of landlords also did not know this right.

LetBritain commissioned an independent, nationally-representative survey among more than 2,000 UK adults. Their report comes as

figures show that 29 per cent of UK renters lose their deposits every year, at an average cost of £825 each. Furthermore, the number of privately rented households is due to increase from its current level of 5.4 million to 7.2 million by 2021.

## IGNORANCE

Worryingly, LetBritain's research also revealed that thousands of the UK's landlords are unaware of vital pieces of legislation. For example: 16 per cent of landlords did not know they must give at least two months' notice under section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 if they want to evict a tenant – that equates to 426,000 landlords in the dark about this fact.

Similarly, 12 per cent did not know they must provide 24 hours' notice before entering the property, while 14 per cent did not realise it is their responsibility to arrange and pay for any repairs to the exterior of a property.

Fareed Nabir, Chief Executive of LetBritain, commented: "Today's research delivers some really important findings. It is clear that a huge proportion of UK renters – a population growing in size – do not truly understand the legislation and regulation in place to protect them.

"Likewise, a concerning number of landlords are also in the dark about exactly what rights and responsibilities they have. Such a lack of awareness increases the risk of renters and landlords being exploited – it must be addressed and lettings agents certainly have a duty to better inform all their customers about the vital legislative framework governing the rental sector."

# Ombudsman slams councils as homelessness rises again

The Local Government Ombudsman has issued a damning report of the way councils in England are dealing with families who have lost their homes, as official figures show over 79,000 households placed in temporary accommodation.

Families are being placed for too long in unsuitable accommodation that is often damp or suffering from infestations and this is adversely affecting their physical and mental health. In 70 per cent of its investigations the Ombudsman finds fault with councils in homelessness cases, far higher than in other areas where complaints are made to it about council services.

In his report 'Still No Place Like Home', Michael King says people from professions such as nursing are finding themselves being evicted from private sector tenancies. They are turning to local authorities for help and in too many cases they are being badly treated and not told of their rights to demand reviews of decisions.

The Ombudsman produced a similar report four years ago and says it is deeply worrying that so many of the problems identified then are persisting today. Problems found mainly in London in 2013 are now being found across large parts of the South East.

The latest Government figures show that local authorities accepted 15,290 households as homeless from July to September, and the number of households in temporary accommodation rose to 79,190 – both are up six per cent. More than 6,400 families are in bed and breakfast hotels. Back in December 2010 there were 48,010 households in temporary accommodation.

Meanwhile, local authorities took action to prevent and relieve homelessness for 52,190 households between July and September, down one per cent on 52,880 in the same quarter of 2016.

Councils will soon have to undertake more preventative work to avoid families becoming homeless with charities and housing chiefs concerned about a shortage of suitable accommodation for those losing their homes. Evictions from private sector tenancies are seen as the biggest cause of problems although the roll-out of Universal Credit is also seeing more social landlords taking a harder approach to tenants in rent arrears.

The Ombudsman criticises councils for acting unlawfully by placing homeless households in bed and breakfast accommodation for lengthy periods of time, beyond the legal limit of six weeks. Some families were having to endure stays of over two years.

The report gives best practice guidance to help councils get things right, as well as suggesting a number of questions that councillors can ask to ensure they challenge their own authorities over the number of families left in unsuitable accommodation for too long.

# Unregistered gas fitter given prison sentence over unsafe work

A self-employed fitter has been jailed after carrying out gas work that endangered a young family-of-four.

Cardiff Magistrates' Court heard that Eric Parry, trading as EHP Building Services, removed pipework that supplied gas to a cooking hob at a family home in Rhose, South Wales without sealing the end of the pipe to ensure it was in a safe condition. Gas Safe Register who inspected his work classed it as 'Immediately Dangerous'.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Eric Parry completed this work in May 2016, despite having previously

been served a Prohibition Notice in 2011 for unregistered gas work.

Parry of Parc Bryn Derwen, Pontyclun pleaded guilty to breaching Sections 3 (2) and 22 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and breaching Regulations 3(1), 3(3) and 6(2) of the Gas Safety Installation and Use Regulations 1998. He was sentenced to six months in prison and ordered to pay costs of £1,788.38.


Speaking after the hearing HSE inspector Gethyn Jones said: "Eric Parry undertook gas work which he knew he was not registered to do and as a result he endangered a mother, father and their four-year-old twins.




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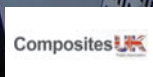
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# Housing in England has changed significantly in the past 50 years

A fascinating insight into the changes to our homes and how we live in them has been revealed in a review of the English Housing Survey, which recently celebrated its 50th birthday.

The first survey was undertaken back in 1967 and at that point we appeared to be mainly interested in whether homes had a bath or shower, an indoor toilet, a wash hand basin, and hot and cold water at three points. And you can understand why when we realise that 25 per cent of homes lacked one or more of these basic amenities, while 2.5 million homes didn't have an inside WC.

It seems quite remarkable to us now but it literally was a different world in the 'Swinging Sixties'. The country was enjoying Beatlemania, England had just won the football World Cup (for the first and only time) in the previous year, while the horrors of homelessness had been revealed in the gritty TV play 'Cathy Come Home'.

It was only just over 20 years since the ending of the Second World War, there were slums in all our major cities, and in places like Notting Hill in west London slum landlords like Peter Rachman had been making their fortunes out of squalid properties. The Rent Act 1965 and the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 had been brought in by the Wilson Government in an attempt to improve conditions and security of tenure for exploited tenants.

In 1967 there were 14.8 million homes in England – and approximately 14.4 million of these homes remain part of the housing stock today. Housebuilding peaked the following year in 1968 with 352,000 new homes completed – a figure that we can only dream about today.

## PRIORITIES

Wholesale demolition and the replacement of poor quality stock (through 'slum clearances') had been an important part of housing policy after WW2, but from 1967 onwards greater emphasis was placed on improving the existing housing and adding to it. Around 7.5 million of today's homes built before 1965 have had major improvement works undertaken and about a third have been extended.

Back in 1967, roughly half (51 per cent) of the housing stock was owner occupied, 29 per cent was in the social rented sector and 20 per cent was privately rented. Fifty years later, 63 per cent of the stock is owner occupied, 17 per cent is social rented and 20 per cent is privately rented. In between times the private rented sector dropped as low as nine per cent in the mid 1980s, a level it stayed at for 20 years before sharply increasing in the past decade, fuelled by the Buy To Let boom.

In the social rented sector housing associations were very much the minor player 50 years ago but

more recently they have overtaken local authorities as the owners of more than half of the sector's homes. This has been achieved through stock transfers (mainly in the 1990s and 2000s), a nationally driven development programme which directs funding towards associations and Right To Buy, which has seen millions of council tenants acquire their home.

Owner-occupation peaked at 71 per cent in 2003 and it seems the Government is intent on moving us back up towards that level of home ownership with its continuing support for purchase schemes, putting billions of pounds into Help To Buy in recent years and most recently in abolishing stamp duty for first time buyers on purchases up to £300,000 in value.

While the 1967 survey had a limited focus on measuring housing standards and housing regeneration, the survey's remit has since broadened to include a much wider range of housing-related concerns.

## GREENER HOMES

Notably, the EHS plays an important part in monitoring housing performance, particularly heating and energy efficiency, and its effect on fuel poverty. While the 1967 EHS did not collect information on heating fuel or insulation, other sources indicate that in 1961 some 76 per cent of homes used solid fuel (coal or wood) and the number of homes that had any form of insulation was virtually zero.

By 2015, less than one per cent of homes relied on solid fuel for their main heating (using gas, electricity or oil instead), 95 per cent of homes have some double glazing, and 98 per cent either have loft insulation or no loft.

Average household size has gone down since the 1960s, from 3.0 people per household in the 1961 Census to 2.4 in 2015-16. This is for a variety of reasons, including the ageing of the population and, related to this, the increase in the proportion of households consisting of just one or two persons, which rose from 43 per cent in 1961 to 64 per cent in 2015-16.

In 2015, the most prevalent dwelling type was the terraced house, comprising 28 per cent of the stock. While 17 per cent of our current homes were built between 1850 and 1918, more than half (54 per cent) of the homes remaining from that period are terraced houses.

The second most prevalent dwelling type in 2015 was the semi-detached house (26 per cent of the stock). While 16 per cent of our current homes were built between 1919 and 1944, nearly half (47 per cent) of the homes remaining from that period are semi-detached houses.

Among stock built since the 1980's, three



dwelling types predominate: the detached house (28 per cent of homes built during this period), the low-rise purpose built flat (24 per cent) and the terraced house (23 per cent).

## SMALLER HOUSEHOLDS

Since the 1967 survey, the number of households in England has increased from 13.9 million in the 1961 Census to 22.8 million in 2015-16. The increase in the number of households represents both population growth and a decrease in average household size, from 3.0 in the 1961 Census to 2.4 in 2015-16. For a variety of reasons, including population ageing, the proportion of households consisting of just one or two persons rose from 43 per cent in 1961 to 64 per cent in 2015-16.

There has been a corresponding increase in the number of under-occupied homes. In the last 20 years, under-occupation in the owner occupied sector has increased to the point where, in 2015-16, over half of owner occupied households are under-occupied (i.e. have two or more spare bedrooms). The proportion of under-occupied households in the rented sectors decreased over this period, partly fuelled by the Bedroom Tax and restrictions on housing benefit.

The overall number and proportion of under-occupied households increased from 31 per cent (6.2 million households) in 1995-96 to 37 per cent (8.5 million households) in 2015-16. Commentators say this is largely a result of middle-aged couples no longer downsizing after their children leave home as well as adult couples separating.

In 2015-16, overcrowding was more prevalent in the rented sectors than for owner occupiers. The proportion of overcrowded households in the owner occupied sector, which was just one per cent (191,000 households) in 2015-16, has remained relatively stable since 1995-96.

Overcrowding in the social rented sector rose from five per cent of social rented sector households in 1995-96 to seven per cent in 2015-16. Overcrowding in the private rented sector rose from three per cent of private rented sector households in 1995-96 to five per cent in 2015-16.

The full report, '50 years of the English Housing Survey' can be downloaded from the DCLG website.



# Growth in mergers as HAs reveal plans for a 57,000-home 'partnership'

Two of the largest social landlords in south east England are in talks to create a 57,000 home partnership with the aim of improving existing services and increasing the number of new houses they can build.

In the pre-Christmas period this was one of several high profile mergers announced – all of them citing the need to increase their size, so they had the capacity to take on larger loans to fund bigger house-building plans. This trend in medium to large sized associations merging has noticeably picked up as the sector continues to come under pressure to improve efficiency and reduce operating costs.

A2Dominion and the Radian Group took the unusual step of revealing their plans via a stock market announcement. It leaves the door open for different options to emerge from joint working arrangements to a full-blown merger. A consultation exercise with residents is expected to take place during the Spring and Summer later this year.

The two landlords currently manage 57,000 homes across London and surrounding counties as well as Hampshire, Dorset and Wiltshire. They jointly employ about 1,800 staff and have an annual turnover of approx £500m. Their development programmes exceed 1,100 new homes a year, with plans to increase this as a result of joint working.

In a joint statement, the two associations say the partnership is intending to explore options that will deliver long-term benefits for the residents and local communities, build more homes by working in partnership; and transform customer experience by developing well regarded digital services for customers.

## ELSEWHERE

Meanwhile in the Midlands, Waterloo Housing Group and Fortis Living are in merger talks to produce a new group with a combined stock of 42,000 homes, turnover of £230m and around 1,200 staff.

The new landlord has ambitions to build around 2,000 new affordable homes a year within five years – 500 more than the two had planned to develop separately. It also plans to establish a new maintenance business to oversee £50m of investment a year in the group's existing housing stock.

A merger was approved by the boards in October last year and subject to positive feedback from tenants it is expected to officially take place on 1 October 2018.

In the north east of England, York Housing Association has joined Karbon Homes as an independent group member. YHA has 943 homes under management and will retain its own board and staff, while benefitting from Karbon's back office and corporate services. Karbon was only formed in April 2017 from the amalgamation of three existing associations and it owns and manages some 24,000 homes.

Paul Fiddaman, Group Chief Executive of Karbon Homes, said: "I am pleased to welcome York Housing Association to the group, just eight months since we were formed. We believe this move is a very good strategic fit for the business and presents an exciting opportunity for our continued growth and expansion. Both organisations have a strong track record of achieving high levels of customer satisfaction and we share the same ethos and commitment to delivering excellent customer service."

Julia Histon, Managing Director of York Housing Association, said: "At a time when housing associations and their residents are under increased pressure from welfare reforms and Government cuts, we believe being part of a larger organisation will deliver significant benefits to our residents while protecting the services we already deliver."

"Our new partnership with Karbon Homes creates a financially strong, more flexible, efficient and resilient organisation and enables both organisations to meet their respective strategic goals while delivering value for money services and enabling more investment in building new homes."

## INVESTMENT

Midlands-based Bromford and South West-based Merlin are in formal talks to create a partnership working with nearly 100,000 customers to deliver the largest new build programme throughout Gloucestershire and the Midlands.

The partnership will see the organisations – with nearly 40,000 homes between them and a combined turnover of £250m, join together to invest £1.5b in 14,000 new homes over the next decade.

In a joint statement, CEOs Philippa Jones from Bromford and Robert Nettleton from Merlin, said: "This is a partnership where each organisation brings expertise that complements the other and service aspirations that fit really well. It brings together two forward thinking housing associations with a shared vision of enabling customers to use great affordable homes as a springboard to achieve more of what they hope for themselves, their families and their communities.

"Both our organisations have ambitious development programmes. Working together these can be combined and expanded to deliver 14,000 new homes in the next decade. This capability and a common passion to offer an exceptional customer experience, will help our combined business grow and deliver more of a difference."

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# Large development programmes lead to financial viability downgrades for HAs

The risks of expanding new build programmes have been exposed as three of the country's largest housing associations have been downgraded by the housing regulator over financial viability concerns.

Hyde Housing Association, Orbit and the Peabody Trust have all had their financial viability grades moved from the top rating of V1 down to V2, which still leaves them compliant with the regulator's requirements, but with a warning over future activities and work.

Peabody owns 55,000 homes predominantly in the capital, while Orbit has 39,000 homes in the south east and Midlands and Hyde has 42,000

homes spread across London and the south east. All three associations have expanded their development work to increase the output of new homes, but this has left them more exposed to financial risks and reliant on sales income.

Their downgrades reflect a tougher approach from the regulator over risk, despite Government ministers repeatedly urging social landlords to sweat their assets more and contribute greater levels of new housing. It is unclear if associations considered to be under-delivering on new houses will also receive downgrades.

The concern is that the recent batch of

downgrades could backfire by making housing associations more risk averse. They could also make private lenders nervous and more likely to impose their own tougher and more frequent monitoring of borrowers' performance.

Other associations to have their financial viability ratings lowered to V2 by the Homes & Communities Agency include the Acis Group, Broadland Housing Association, Christian Action (Enfield) Housing Association, East End Homes, Green Square Group, Thrive Homes, Wrekin Housing Group, Eden Housing Association and Manningham Housing Association.

Meanwhile the Together Housing Group, which owns 37,000 homes, the County Durham Housing Group and Bolton At Home who each own 18,000 homes, all had their governance ratings upgraded to G1. Trident Housing Association with 3,350 homes in the Midlands regained its V1 viability rating after resolving concerns over its income sources.

# Are you dealing with a high rise building that was involved in government testing?

If so, read on for an important update

Following the tragic events at Grenfell Tower, a series of BS 8414 tests were commissioned by the government on specific combinations of insulation and ACM cladding panel. Based on the results of the tests, a number of high rise buildings were identified as having a problem, and guidance was issued.

## **BUT**

BS 8414 tests are only valid for the precise combination and configuration of materials tested. Changing a small detail, can change how a system will perform. Yet the government has labelled complete classes of constructions as pass / fail based on a single test.

Since then, further BS 8414 tests have been carried out, to add to the bank of knowledge about what constitutes an acceptable façade system for buildings with storeys over 18 metres.

The results may have an impact on the necessity, or nature, of any remedial work that is being planned.

In particular the Government tested:

- FR cored ACM cladding with a 20 mm gap between the panels.

This passed with stone wool insulation, and failed marginally with phenolic and PIR insulation. However, a 20 mm gap between ACM panels would be uncommon practice in the UK.

Kingspan Insulation has now tested:

- Alpolic FR cored ACM cladding, with 10 mm and 4 mm gaps between the panels, and Kingspan Kooltherm K15 phenolic insulation.

These tests were successful. Therefore, if you have phenolic insulation with an FR cored ACM, but the joints between the ACM panels are 10 mm and not 20 mm, then the "fail" label and the need for remedial works may be invalid.

Similarly, if you are looking for a solution to replace a PE cored ACM installed over Kingspan Kooltherm K15 phenolic insulation, it might be as simple as replacing the PE cored ACMs with Alpolic FR cored ACMs with a gap (between ACM panels) size of 10 mm or less. This could provide an acceptable alternative solution to heavier options, helping to address potential structural limitations.

The BRE holds a register of systems that have been successfully tested to BS 8414:

[www.bre.co.uk/regulatory-testing](http://www.bre.co.uk/regulatory-testing). Kingspan Insulation's new test data will be added to that website when BRE have signed off the test reports for the above tests. NB, this can take several weeks.

In the meantime, please contact Kingspan Insulation for further information.



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## Charity demands 80,000 affordable homes a year to combat poverty



A leading charity and research organisation has called on the Government to build 80,000 affordable homes a year, in a bid to tackle the growth in poverty that is particularly affecting children and pensioners.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has found that 400,000 more children and 300,000 more pensioners are living in poverty compared with the situation in 2012-13. It says these are the first sustained rises in poverty in two decades and are the result of falling incomes due to benefits being cut or frozen, low wage growth and rising inflation.

It has called on the Government to reverse its policies on welfare benefits, to increase support and training for adult workers and to provide far more affordable homes for the 'just about managing' families that Theresa May prioritised for help on the day she became Prime Minister.

Last year the JRT estimates there were 14m Britons living in poverty – equivalent to over one in five of the population. Welfare changes made in the 2015 Budget were identified as a specific cause of problems for low-income families, reversing many of the advances made in the previous decades.

The cost of housing is a particular problem for

the poorest 20 per cent, with more than 3m people spending more than a third of their income on housing costs. The charity warns this is storing up huge problems as falling rates of homeownership means that in the future more older people will be renting their homes in retirement, rather than having paid off their mortgage.

It says to combat this problem the Government needs to invest in a far more ambitious house-building programme to deliver at least 80,000 genuinely affordable homes each year that are in the reach of low income families. The new homes can be a combination of homes to rent and to buy, but JRT says these should be the chancellor's priority over cutting stamp duty.

Without this sort of intervention, it says millions of people are being consigned to a life of poverty. Figures for the first half of this year highlight the scale of the problem with just 199 homes for social rent completed and starts made on 294, albeit this is an increase on the 265 started in the first half of the previous year which delivered 1,102 new social rent homes in total. Social rents tend to be set at roughly 50 to 60 per cent of the market rent, whereas affordable rents are generally at 80 per cent of the market rate.

## Start of Right to Buy pilot for HAs delayed

The much delayed pilot for introducing the Right to Buy to tenants of housing associations has finally been given the green light to proceed.

The scheme will run for just one year, starting in July and will be limited to HA tenants in the Midlands. This represents a 15 month delay on the expected start date. However, question marks still exist over its funding.

The Government has set aside money for the pilot scheme in the Budget, but in the past it has said that the discounts given to HA tenants will

be funded from the sales proceeds of local authorities who will be forced to sell off their highest value homes, when they become empty.

This has long been a contentious issue and it damaged relations between councils and associations, with the former accusing the latter of working with the Government on vanity projects. There was no mention of this funding mechanism in the budget statement, so it seems likely the Government will fund the cost of the pilot.

## Right to Buy sales fall again

Government figures for the sales of council houses show they have fallen to their lowest level since bigger discounts were made available to tenants in early 2013, but replacement homes are still failing to keep pace.

In the second quarter of 2017/18 some 2,558 council homes were sold, representing a fall of 21 per cent on the same period in the previous year when 3,255 homes were sold. This continues the general slowdown in RTB sales in the last 12 months.

Sales have particularly dipped in London, where local authorities sold an estimated 509 dwellings to tenants - a decrease of 36 per cent from the 800 sold in the same quarter of 2016/17. Total sales in the capital accounted for 20 per cent of the national figure, down 5 per cent from the previous year.

Across the whole of England RTB sales are yet to reach the level they were before the financial crisis with sales in the second quarter at just 55 per cent of those in 2006/07 first quarter (4,655).

But since discounts were increased in 2012/13, some 60,423 council homes have been sold at discounts of more than £100,000 in London and £75,000 elsewhere. In the same period less than 15,000 new council homes have been provided, while only 744 new homes were started or acquired by councils in the most recent three-month period.

Hopes that councils would be put centre stage in a new focus on building social homes for rent were dashed in the Autumn Budget. Commenting on the recent figures, Martin Tett, housing spokesman for the Local Government Association, said: "Current arrangements are restricting councils from being able to replace homes sold under the Right to Buy scheme." He urged the Chancellor to use the upcoming local government finance settlement as a way of achieving this.

Chartered Institute of Housing deputy chief executive Gavin Smart said: "The Government has rightly recognised that we need more homes for the lowest social rents – but Right to Buy is undermining efforts to provide genuinely affordable homes for people on lower incomes. We understand 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."

Both the LGA and the CIH are calling on the Government to allow councils to keep all of their sale receipts so they can build more affordable homes, rather than being forced to hand over a proportion to the Treasury.

The Welsh and Scottish Governments have now abolished the Right to Buy in their countries, while in England a pilot is to take place in the Summer of extending the Right to Buy to the tenants of HAs in the Midlands.

## Action needed on conditions in rental properties



A backbench MP is resuming her campaign to improve the condition of rented properties and make it easier for tenants to take effective action where landlords fail to fix dangerous faults.

The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation and Liability for Housing Standards) Bill is a private members Bill sponsored by Westminster North Labour MP Karen Buck. It had its first reading last July and is due to have a second reading in the Commons on the 19th January this year.

Its chances of success have greatly improved as a result of the Government deciding to support the Bill. Ms Buck's previous attempt to get the laws on private rental properties strengthened were defeated when Conservative backbench MPs (many of them private landlords) talked it out, but that is less likely to be repeated now that Housing Secretary Sajid Javid has given it his backing.

It aims to amend parts of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 and the Building Act 1984 to ensure rented accommodation is maintained in a state fit for human habitation. Where major faults or safety hazards exist then it makes landlords legally responsible for resolving them, or being liable for the cost of corrective works. The types of hazard includes leaking roofs, exposed or overloaded wiring, damp, badly fitted doors etc.

Meanwhile a report from campaigning charity Shelter has concluded that current laws governing health and safety do not safeguard people sufficiently in their own homes. Existing legislation is seen as inadequate and difficult to understand, making it costly to enforce.

They are recommending a new law which is tenure neutral and provides local authorities with sufficient resources for them to proactively investigate and take enforcement action. Both areas have been starved of resources due to public sector spending cuts over the last eight years.

With an obvious and understandable nod to the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the report's authors say that "serious consideration" needs to be given to increasing the role of the fire authorities in fire risk assessments "to ensure that fire safety decisions are made independently of cost factors".

## Government allows renewal of Newham licensing scheme

An east London borough has been allowed to renew its private rented sector licensing scheme, hailed as the biggest and most effective landlord scheme in the capital.

Newham has one of the biggest rental markets in the country with over 40,000 properties owned and let out by private landlords. It set up its large scale licensing scheme in 2013 and since then has undertaken more than 1,200 prosecutions, more than half the total for the whole of London.

After a lengthy delay, the Department for Communities and Local Government has given permission for the licensing scheme to be renewed but on condition that it omits the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park area. This will be operational from the 1st March 2018.

Newham's scheme requires all landlords to license all of their privately rented properties with the council. In 2015 the Government changed the regulations so that councils now require specific permission if they want to bring in licensing

schemes which cover more than 20 per cent of the local authority's area.

Sir Robin Wales, mayor of Newham, has called on ministers to reverse this rule. He said: "Government finally recognised the success of Newham's scheme, but it is ridiculous that ministers took so long to conclude that protecting tenants and driving up standards is a good thing. The council should not have been forced to spend so much time and resources justifying something so successful."

Late last year the council made a number of high-profile inspections of privately rented properties, often with the mayor present, and made a series of disturbing discoveries with people being charged hundreds of pounds a month for wholly unsuitable accommodation – in garden sheds and garages, in under the stairs cupboards and with bunkbeds squeezed into single size bedrooms.

Newham's scheme allows them to issue landlords with financial penalty notices of up to £30,000 per offence, depending on the seriousness of the conditions they find.

## Tougher housing enforcement powers for officers

Wolverhampton Council is giving its officers more enforcement powers against rogue private sector landlords as the city aims to provide further protection and rights for tenants.

Under the Housing and Planning Act 2016, the council's Cabinet has armed its housing officers with the right to issue civil penalties to rogue landlords. Those found breaking housing laws could be handed civil penalties up to £30,000 per offence, depending on the impact of the breach and culpability of the offender.

The council will retain any funds obtained from civil penalties provided it is used to further the council's statutory functions in relation to private rented sector housing enforcement.

Where landlords, owners and letting agents agree to work positively with the council to address issues identified in statutory notices and orders, the council will consider a reduction in the enforcement charge subject to them agreeing to being registered under the Rent with Confidence star-rating

programme, and achieving a minimum of a three-star rating out of five.

Cabinet Member for City Assets and Housing, Councillor Peter Bilson, said: "This move is in line with our efforts to improve the city housing offer and provide more transparency for landlords. It will complement the Rent with Confidence scheme for landlords and their properties."

"We must support responsible private housing businesses in the city and improve quality and choice for private sector housing occupiers. We will continue to work with landlords, agents, owners and service users by providing a range of information and guidance through the Rent with Confidence scheme."

To further support the council's Rent with Confidence scheme, landlords who have three stars or more will receive a discount on their mandatory HMO (Houses in Multiple Occupation) licence application fee. Three-star landlords will receive a 33 per cent discount, four-star landlords 66 per cent, and five-star landlords 100 per cent.





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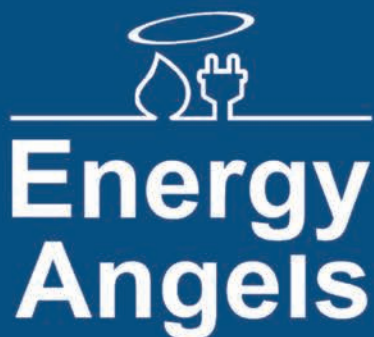
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# Private rents shrink towards year end as falling rents in London drag down the UK average

Rents across the UK began to shrink for the first time in over half a decade towards the end of 2017 as a two-speed market emerged between London and much of the rest of the UK.

The average rent paid for a PRS property grew by 0.53 per cent in 2017 (year to date), with falling rents in London (minus 0.83 per cent) weighing down otherwise resilient rental growth elsewhere (1.27 per cent).

These are the findings of the second edition of the National Rent Review from buy-to-let lender Landbay, which also reveals how much millennials can expect to spend on rent in their lifetime.

Across the UK rents fell by -0.01 per cent in November 2017, the first time rental growth has entered negative territory in at least five years. The average UK rent has now plateaued at a record £1,196 per month, up from £1,190 at the turn of year. Removing London from the equation puts average rents at £759, up from £750 at the turn of the year, an extra £9 per month or £109 per year.

The slowdown in rental growth has not been consistent across the country. The East Midlands (2.13 per cent), South West (1.63 per cent) and East

England (1.57 per cent) experienced substantial growth in 2017 and are expected to climb further in 2018. The North East has also seen rents grow at a faster rate in 2017 than at any other time in the past five years (0.65 per cent).

## MILLENNIALS

Despite the narrowing gap with the rest of the country, London rents remain, on average, 2.5 times greater than those across the rest of the UK (£1,871 vs £759).

John Goodall, CEO and founder of Landbay said: "Landlords have faced up to challenge after challenge over the past two years, from stricter regulation, reductions to tax relief, and a significant stamp duty tax hike when buying a buy to let property. We expect upward rental pressure to be just around the corner. Without a radical house building plan for purchase as well as purpose-built rental properties, rental prices are in danger of soaring over the coming decades."

Millennials renting an average-sized property outside of London, who begin their tenancy at age 21, will spend an average of £110,830 in household

rental payments before buying their first property at the average first-time buyer age of 32. For those living in the capital, where property prices and rents are significantly higher, the average household will have spent £273,210 on rent by the time they take their first step on the property ladder.

However, as it stands today, 41 per cent of millennials do not expect to ever own a home of their own, relying instead on the private rental sector to support them into old age. For this emerging generation of lifetime renters, the total amount they will spend on rent in their lifetime will be an average of £1.1 million if living outside of London. Again, those choosing to live in the capital will spend 2.5 times this figure; a total of £2.6 million.

Meanwhile, those renting throughout their life and retiring at the future state pension age of 68, will have to save for 15 years of rental payments in retirement, and will therefore spend some 44 per cent of their household disposable income (£2.4m) on rent (£1.1m) by the time they reach the average life expectancy of 82.

## HA surpluses soar on flat turnover, but management and repairs spending down

The combined accounts for the housing association sector provided a mixed set of messages about how social landlords coped with the first year of the forced one per cent cut in rents.

Every year the Homes & Communities Agency publishes the combined or global accounts for all HAs who own or manage one thousand homes or more. The strong health of the sector in spite of the rent cut will have surprised many as the figures show a strong year of performance with surpluses increasing markedly while day to day costs have been cut. Headlines from the accounts show:

- Turnover was unchanged at £20bn, with the rent reduction offset by additional rental income from new properties;
- The underlying net surplus was £3.5bn – a 7 per cent increase on 2016;
- Operating margins have increased by 2 per cent to 30 per cent, largely through reductions in ongoing expenditure;
- The average cost of each housing unit fell by 7 per cent to £3,698;
- The total spent on major repairs fell by 14 per cent to £2.1bn, while management costs were also down, by 9 per cent to £2.6bn;

- Debts increased by £2.9bn to £69.6bn; with total debt at 20 times the underlying surplus;
- £10bn was invested in new housing (including social housing, market rent and properties for shared ownership and outright sale) and £1.6bn in existing stock. A 15 per cent increase on 2016; and
- The sector completed 41,000 new homes, down from 44,000 in the previous year.

Some 18,000 homes were sold or demolished during the course of the year, which means that by the end of March 2017 the number of social homes in management by HAs increased to 2,761,000. A growing area of activity is the development or purchase of homes for market rent as well as investment properties.

## FEWER LANDLORDS

Rent lost on empty properties fell by 11 per cent compared to 2016, while current tenant arrears also decreased from 4.6 per cent of gross rent in 2016 to 4.4 per cent in 2017. Bad debts remained at 0.7 per cent of gross rent in both years

It is clear from the accounts that the sector is

contracting and has fewer landlords, as a result of mergers. In 2011 there were 366 HAs which managed more than 1,000 homes, but by 2017 the number had fallen to 319 and the trend shows no sign of stopping as social landlords seek efficiency savings and increase their output of new homes.

Commenting on the figures Fiona MacGregor, Director of Regulation at the HCA said: "The sector is continuing to invest substantially in existing stock and new supply and as a whole is well-placed to respond to the changing operating environment. The sector has consolidated over recent years and there are now a small number of very large providers whose results can have a material effect on the overall results.

"Decrease in management costs and major repairs expenditure demonstrates how the first 12 months of rent reductions have been managed. While lower repairs spend partly indicates the progress being made towards reducing non-decent stock we will continue to encourage providers to have a rigorous, evidence-based approach to expenditure and investment, which ensures that housing is sustainable for the long term, responds to tenant needs and gives good value for money."

The next set of global accounts are expected to see a reversal of the fall in major repairs expenditure as HAs respond to the Grenfell Tower tragedy with increased investment in energy efficiency and health and safety measures to tenanted stock, in particular fire safety work.



# Tenants are leaving it late before finding their next home

New data from a property company has revealed the incredibly short time span in which tenants expect to find and move into their new home.

The new data from TheHouseShop, which combines both private landlord and agency listings, shows that almost one in three tenants (31.2 per cent) aim to move into their new home less than two weeks after they first make an enquiry to the landlord or letting agent online.

Almost two thirds of renters (63.8 per cent) need to move into their new home less than one month after making their first enquiry.

Co-founder of TheHouseShop.com, Nick Marr, says tenants need to ensure they are thoroughly prepared if they expect to meet these tight deadlines: "For tenants who are expecting to actually move into their new home less than two weeks after they first make contact with the landlord - they will need to ensure that they are responsive, organised and thoroughly prepared."

"When a tenant makes an enquiry about a property online, it can often take two to three days before they receive a reply - especially if the property is being advertised directly by a DIY landlord who will usually have a full-time job to worry about, as well as their Buy To Let business.

"Even if the landlord replies to the enquiry instantly, the landlord and tenant will need to arrange a time for viewing that suits both parties, conduct tenant referencing checks, sign contracts, manage deposits etc. before the new tenants can actually move in. Leaving just two weeks to get from start to finish is definitely achievable, but leaves little wriggle room to handle delays."

## PEAK

Interestingly, the data shows a clear and consistent peak in the number of last minute enquiries (i.e. where the tenant states they need to move in in under two weeks) during the month of September over the past three years. This fits perfectly with the seasonal boom in the student lettings market as students desperately try to secure accommodation before courses start in October.

When looking at the locations of the last-minute enquiries for September only, TheHouseShop discovered that the vast majority were concentrated around big university towns like Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Durham/Newcastle.

Younger renters are increasingly seeking properties to rent direct from private landlords to cut out letting agents and avoid hefty fees.



This could explain the particularly high volume of enquiries on TheHouseShop.com marketplace - which allows direct communication between its private landlords and tenants.

Using the same data, they have identified that the best time for landlords to advertise their properties is roughly one month before the date the property will next be available, as this will match the expected move-in time frame for the majority of tenants actively searching online.

The move-in date is often an incredibly important factor for tenants, as arranging interim accommodation to plug a gap between properties can be tricky, time-consuming, stressful and, most importantly, costly.

As well as the cost of the actual accommodation, renters who find themselves stuck for a short time between properties also have to take into account the cost of removals (as most will have to move their belongings twice), and of storage. However, void periods where a property sits unoccupied are also a huge concern for landlords and can result in a significant loss of income.

Taking the average UK rental value for October 2017 of £909 per month (source: HomeLet Rental Index), a void period of just two weeks would cost a landlord £424.20 in lost rent. This can have serious consequences for Buy To Let mortgage holders, many of whom are working with tight margins.

Using the example of a £200,000 Buy To Let mortgage, over a 25-year term, with a 2.5 per cent interest rate - the landlord's monthly payment on an interest-only deal would total £416.67. A two-week void period (worth £424.20 based on average UK rents) would be roughly equal to a whole month's mortgage payment and effectively wipe out the landlord's profit for that month.

## Banning orders to be introduced next April

New rules to ban rogue landlords from letting or managing property are due to be introduced in early April if the Government obtains Parliamentary approval for the regulations in the New Year.

Plans to introduce banning orders were first announced as part of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 to root out criminal landlords. A new database (or register) of criminal landlords and agents will also be created under the Act and this should go live on the same day - possibly the 6th April.

The register will be held by the DCLG and updated by councils. Private landlords who receive banning orders will automatically be listed on the register.

The Government has already introduced civil penalties of up to £30,000 and extended rent repayment orders in a bid to tackle criminal landlords - moves also introduced under the Housing and Planning Act.

In December, DCLG released details of the offences that will merit a banning order. These include the following:

- Illegally evicting or harassing a residential occupier;
- Using violence to secure entry;
- An offence under section 36 of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998;
- An offence under section 32 of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005;
- Letting to someone disqualified from renting because of their immigration status, whether as a landlord or agent;
- a range of fraud offences under the Fraud Act 2006
- any specified violent and sexual offence under Schedule 15 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003;
- Harassment and stalking;
- Offences under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014; and
- Theft, burglary, blackmail and handling stolen goods.

The Residential Landlords Association welcomed the principle of banning orders and the database of criminal landlords when they were announced and has long argued that those landlords who wilfully breach their legal obligations should face the consequences.

However, the RLA believes those landlords who find themselves subject to an order or included on the 'rogue' landlord database through a mistake that was unintentional, should have a formal route to be released from an order and from being listed on the database where appropriate.

Currently, only councils are proposed to have access to the register, but the RLA has raised concerns that the reputation of membership bodies (for landlords and agents) could be undermined if they are not able to check if new or existing members are on the register.

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# Regenerating a troubled estate into an award-winning showcase

A former council estate, which became synonymous for poor quality housing, crime and anti-social behaviour, is part-way through a major regeneration which is giving its new and returning residents a feeling of security and sense of pride about their new community.



Originally known as Swilly and renamed North Prospect in 1969, the development is two miles north of Plymouth city centre and is the largest regeneration project in the South West.

Under the management of Plymouth Community Homes (PCH), the project involves demolishing 800 homes, building 1,110 new homes and refurbishing a further 300. Building commenced in 2011. The third of five building phases is now underway.

To help address concerns about the reputation of the former Swilly estate and to encourage confidence in the new development, PCH approached Secured by Design (SBD), a national police crime prevention initiative, to work with architects, developers and local authority planners to 'design out crime'.

## PLANNING FOR SECURITY

Planning meetings involving SBD's specialists started long before building commenced, meaning that security has been embedded into the layout, landscaping and physical security of all properties in North Prospect.

SBD's advice on the built environment included creating safer spaces through greatly increasing natural surveillance. Front garden hedges were replaced by railings whilst high fences protect rear gardens. Properties have living rooms that overlook cars parked either in the street or within the curtilage of the building and gable end walls with windows provide visibility over pathways and public spaces. There are no alleyways at the rear of gardens and no hiding places.

The physical security of properties includes products that meet SBD's preferred specification, such as external doors and accessible windows that are sufficiently robust to resist attack from a casual or opportunist burglar. Front doors have quadruple locking systems, door chains and spy holes as well as letterboxes with protective cowls to stop thieves using rods to 'fish' for vehicle keys or other valuables left inside. Every property has been fitted with an external light. Rear garden gates have two bolts and a separate key-lock and every lockable shed has a large metal ground anchor to help protect bicycles, motorbikes and mowers.

Devon and Cornwall Police reported a fall in recorded crime in North Prospect by 62 per cent between 2007-2016 in four key neighbourhood crime categories: residential burglary has fallen by 49 per cent, criminal damage by 84 per cent, vehicle offences 78 per cent and violence against the person 14 per cent.

The results are testament to the vision and determination shown by PCH who have become well practised at making North Prospect succeed



PCH approached Secured by Design (SBD), a national police crime prevention initiative, to work with architects, developers and local authority planners to 'design out crime'



in many ways. These include the complex, lengthy and sensitive process of helping residents to move to better homes, obtaining the necessary grant funding at a time of constrained public sector finances to avoid a partially completed project, tackling the many construction issues including using existing infrastructure on a sloping site and overcoming the many legal issues, such as identifying the owners of houses that had been left empty.

## BACKGROUND

Swilly was conceived as a 'home for World War I heroes' and building work started in 1921. As well as providing new homes, the development served to clear run-down areas of nearby Plymouth, Stonehouse and Devonport. During World War II the first bombs that fell on Plymouth fell in North Prospect. Other neighbourhoods in the city bore the brunt of the bombing and post war North Prospect became home to many families displaced by the destruction of large parts of the city.

With its mostly three-bed, semi-detached homes, Swilly had all the outward trappings of a garden suburb lifestyle to bring up a family. The homes had large rear gardens so tenants could grow their own vegetables for a healthy lifestyle, neatly presented front gardens bordered with picket fences or hedges, and a lime tree at the front of every house. There were wide pavements sufficient to allow for mums with prams to pass each other, and narrow roads with the only expected traffic being the occasional milk float, coal cart, motorbike and bicycle.

In its heyday the estate of homes built for £400 each was also known by locals as 'Paradise at 12 shillings a week' (about 60p today).

From the 1960s onwards building faults and social problems caused it to quickly gain the reputation as the 'Cinderella' housing estate in Plymouth and ranked as one of the most deprived communities in England.

More recently building surveys highlighted structural cracking, wall tie failure and extensive and untreatable damp. Residents complained that homes were difficult to live in and expensive to keep warm. Nearly 60 per cent of homes failed even the basic Decent Homes Standard.



PCH programme manager, James Savage, said that regeneration goes beyond providing new and better homes to improve family lifestyle, health, education and security

## BEYOND BETTER HOMES

In 2009, Plymouth City Council transferred its housing stock of 14,000 homes and 45,000 residents to PCH. As part of the agreement, PCH were required to deliver a major programme of improvements within five years with the regeneration of North Prospect identified as a high priority.

PCH management set about providing new impetus to the already up and running consultation with local residents about the future of North Prospect. The close ties it built with the local community proved to be the bedrock of PCH's vision for a transformation of the estate as it began to return to its showcase status as a place where residents were choosing to live.

The construction involved putting into reverse much of the original concept of the estate. Space was taken back from the large gardens and wide pavements and used to widen the roads to allow for today's car ownership. The density of the housing rose from 30 to 50 dwellings per hectare to increase the financial viability of the construction to provide quality affordable housing for rent, shared ownership or private ownership.

The estate that started to emerge was an open environment with a greater choice of house types – which were more energy efficient to reduce fuel bills, robust to need less repair and maintenance and more secure and safe.

A community hub, known as The Beacon, was built in the centre of North Prospect to provide a much needed focal point for the community. It included shops, a library, cafe and meeting places and apartments for the over 55s.

North Prospect started to win architectural and building awards and even received a Royal visit from Princess Anne in 2015. With many of the technical problems, rehousing issues and funding difficulties overcome, the regeneration at North Prospect is continuing and is due for completion in 2022 at a cost of £130 million.

PCH programme manager, James Savage, said that regeneration goes beyond providing new and better homes to improve family lifestyle, health, education and security. "A case study we did with the Homes and Communities Agency reported that because families now have properly insulated homes, children would not have to do their homework wrapped up in a duvet on their bed and could use the kitchen table instead. It's so easy to get lost in all the statistics around new homes, but children are achieving at school and health rates are improving."

Paul Shepherd, designing out crime officer, who is embedded with Plymouth City Council, explained that long before a spade had even touched the ground, there were pre-planning meetings every week for many months to discuss and debate all building considerations including how to 'design out crime'. "It was fantastic to have this level of reassurance that the plans were being continually improved. This was important because it channelled all of us into working to ensure residents were going to be happy and safe in their new community," he said.

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# Peabody passenger lifts in St John's Hill regeneration

**G**eorge Peabody Esq. was the 19th-century founder of one of the oldest and largest housing associations in London. This American-British financier, philanthropist and Londonophile was committed to providing housing of a decent quality for everyone in the UK's capital.

So, naturally, he would have welcomed the nine new lifts that support access-for-all to 153 apartments ranged over five and seven floors, in two distinct blocks, in Phase II of this comprehensive upgrade.

To match the heavy duty demand of this environment, the nine 8-person lifts are fitted with higher-grade stainless steel lift cars and Dewhurst push-button controls. Eight are traction, without motor rooms, and one is hydraulic, with a motor room. All the lifts have been installed with a range of options and a mix of vandal-resistant categories 1 and 2. Two models are also equipped as firefighter lifts.

The lifts were specified by Building Services Manager, David Lamb, who said: "Having heard good reports on their Xtralift passenger lifts, we had no qualms in specifying Stannah once again to help meet the people-moving requirements in this



high-use neighbourhood."

Designed by Hawkins/Brown architects, the total redevelopment will provide 538 new homes (up from the existing 353) in a mix of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom apartments. 279 homes are affordable, social rent and intermediate housing, and 249 for private sale.



The Xtralifts are covered by Stannah's comprehensive 24/7 lift service plan, with 12 service visits in the first year, and continued lift maintenance by the London and South East Dartford branch of Stannah Lift Services, part of a nationwide network providing comprehensive lift servicing and support.

## Fibo UK expands team

Fibo UK, the precision engineered wall panel manufacturer, adds to its growing team with the appointment of Jenny Gibson as Regional Account Manager (North West). Jenny comes with many years' industry and sales experience, previously working as National sales Manager for a plumbing supplies company. Fibo is experiencing strong demand from local authorities, contractors and builders' merchants for its unique bathroom and kitchen wall panels. MD Scott Beattie confirms that the company's continuing success is driving the investment in team expansion, and in customer service and support.



01494 771242 [www.fibo.co.uk](http://www.fibo.co.uk)

## Hi-spec and Economaire heaters

Johnson and Starley launched their highly successful range of WarmCair condensing warm air heaters, along with their market leading QuanTec range of boilers that can be connected to the warm air heater emitter range the Aquair. These units are highly efficient and will meet all future eco-design regulation requirements. The Aquair takes water from the boiler, and passes it through a heat exchanger which has a fan blowing across it. The Cleanflow electronic air filtration system, which can remove airborne particles down to one micron from the atmosphere, including cigarette smoke.



01604 762881 [www.johnsonandstarley.co.uk](http://www.johnsonandstarley.co.uk)



## Leading event for safety & compliance professionals returns this April

On the 25-26 April, the UK's only event dedicated to informing and supporting safety and compliance professionals in social housing returns to Hinckley Island, Leicester, to deliver what is anticipated to be the most comprehensive and dynamic event to date. The AGSM National Conference & Exhibition 2018 will play host to a variety of interesting and inspiring expert speakers, giving delegates the opportunity to broaden their understanding of the industry's hot-topics and take part in thought leading discussions such as: Gas Safety & Compliance – Regulation updates and the latest industry best practice; Electrical Compliance – 18th Edition – what you need to know; Fire Safety – high-rise fire safety and automatic sprinkler guidance; Legionella & Asbestos risk reduction – expert advice; New technology updates; Access – what next?; Women in Compliance – dedicated learning and mentoring session; Networking – invaluable opportunities to discuss issues that matter to you. In the exhibition hall, visitors will have the opportunity to see the latest products and services from gas, electric, fire, asbestos and water safety suppliers, bringing new ideas and innovations for those involved in safety and compliance.

01256 548 040 [www.gassafetyconference.co.uk](http://www.gassafetyconference.co.uk)



## Airtech guarantees mould won't return

Airtech, the mould and condensation control specialist, has developed a comprehensive service to offer landlords solutions for a healthy home. The latest expansion to its service is the addition of the innovative AIR+ Positive Input Ventilation (PIV) unit to its range of data gathering ventilation solutions it installs.

Airtech offers three steps that can solve this problem; comprehensive property surveys, mould removal treatment and a full installation service for both responsive and planned maintenance. The treatment and mould removal is backed by a unique three-year guarantee that the mould will not return. For more information contact Airtech or visit the website.

01823 690 292 [www.airtechenvironmental.co.uk](http://www.airtechenvironmental.co.uk)



## Airtech offers landlords free CPD

Airtech, the mould and condensation control specialist, is offering a free CPD accredited training seminar for social housing landlords on condensation and mould. The course looks at the difference between damp and mould, health implications, causes and consequences, solutions and data logging. This training will help ensure that landlords know how to break the cycle of condensation and mould, thus protecting both residents and their housing stock. Airtech's training course helps landlords understand the causes of condensation and mould and offer solutions and simple steps that guarantee that once mould has been removed it won't return.

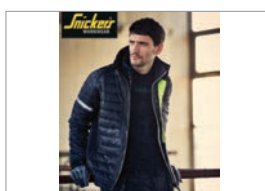
01823 690 292 [www.airtechenvironmental.co.uk](http://www.airtechenvironmental.co.uk)



## Snickers' new ALLROUND 37.5° Jacket

Sharp, stylish looks and 37.5° fabric technology make this jacket a must for winter on site or outdoor leisurewear.

**Snickers Workwear** continues to lead the way with working clothes that are unrivalled in design, superb functionality and fit. This great-looking quilted jacket is padded with 37.5° fabric insulation for warmth and climate control to keep your body warm or comfortably cool when you most need it. With a water-repellent fabric, it can be worn on its own or combined with other Next Generation working clothes or Outer Layer waterproof Shell Jackets. Fashionable and functional, this jacket has long arm cuffs with thumb grips for warm comfort and a high collar for wind protection.



[www.snickersworkwear.co.uk](http://www.snickersworkwear.co.uk)

## Yeoman Shield looking good

The new **Yeoman Shield** website has been designed to be fully responsive and can be viewed at an optimum whatever your digital preference, laptop, tablet, desk top or mobile.

Focusing on the comprehensive range of wall and door protection products by Yeoman Shield, it contains technical information and installation details along with a new colour carousel that showcases all 48 colours available.

Whichever way you browse, take a look at the new Yeoman Shield website.


[www.yeomanshield.com](http://www.yeomanshield.com)



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## Home protection enhanced as Polypipe delivers flood alleviation solution to Kidderminster estate

**P**olypipe, one of the UK's leading manufacturer of sustainable drainage and water management systems, has supplied a complete attenuation solution for the £1.3 million Kidderminster Linnet Rise Flood Alleviation Scheme.

The lack of capacity in the area's existing highway drainage network placed many properties on the residential area of Linnet Rise at risk of flooding, with the consequences most recently seen in 2007, when thousands of pounds' worth of damage was caused by a flood, following torrential rain.

The scheme was designed to ensure a collaborative approach to solving the area's flooding issues by providing a SuDS system that would provide long term defence with minimal intrusion to the existing space. Polypipe was approached due to its extensive track record of successfully delivering attenuation systems for developers and contractors. Working closely with contractor NMCNomenca and Severn Trent Water, Polypipe supplied a complete prefabricated solution using Polystorm geocellular tanks, together with pipework, manholes and catchpits all manufactured off site. The solution would also allow the installers to negotiate the very tight parameters of the Linnet Rise site, where space to maneuver plant equipment would be a challenge.



The solution delivered by Polypipe and NMCNomenca retrospectively addressed the site's drainage issues for the long term, while keeping installation time and disruption to a minimum, showcasing the capabilities that Polypipe can offer when improving the standards of flood protection in heavily populated areas. Polypipe's system was also fully adopted by Severn Trent Water.

The final design saw the installation of two Polystorm geocellular tanks at a depth of 3.2 metres, under two resident owned car parks on the Linnet Rise site, providing 366m<sup>3</sup> and 479m<sup>3</sup> of storage respectively. The tanks were formed using Polystorm cells, which boast a 95 per cent void fill ratio. This solution maximised the tanks' storage volume within the limited space available for an attenuation system on this compact

housing estate. These tanks will safely store flood water in the event of surface water sewers reaching capacity following heavy downpours, before releasing water back into Severn Trent's watercourse once the downpour has subsided.

The two tanks were laid at a 1 in 150 gradient across both length and width, to facilitate draindown to the primary inlet and outlet located in the bottom corner of the crates. This will ensure that any sediment entering the tank from the surface water sewer is flushed out through the same flow path. Three channels were also installed in each tank, to promote water flow dispersal throughout the geocellular crates and provide inspection points along the length of the tanks, which are accessible via six specialist access turrets located outside of the site's car parking bays.

Polypipe's ability to design and manufacture pipework, manholes and catch pits off site provided the perfect solution to the project's limited working space and the need for quick installation. The supply of high quality parts, designed to the project's exact specification and delivered directly to site, meant that the system could be installed in a single day, reducing both contractor costs and disruption for local residents.

01509 615 100 [www.polypipe.com](http://www.polypipe.com)

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What's causing  
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# Ecobuild 2018: The event shaped by the industry

Ecobuild is returning to the ExCeL London in March 2018 and under the new ownership of Futurebuild Events Ltd, the event is being designed and built around the industry, bringing to life the latest technology, thinking and materials.

The event is not only being shaped through comprehensive industry feedback, but also with direct input from leading industry influencers. These include Lynne Sullivan, Nathan Baker, Julie Hirigoyen, Darren Richards and Peter Murray, who are all members of the Ecobuild Steering Group which is helping to set the agenda for the event.

Martin Hurn, managing director of Futurebuild Events, explains: "New, independent ownership offers a unique opportunity to completely overhaul the event. We believe that to be as relevant and valuable as possible, we need to understand and act on what built environment professionals want to see at Ecobuild. We see our role as to facilitate the agenda, rather than dictate it, and we also believe that it is more important to bring future trends to life, rather than just thinking and talking about them."

## THE CPD ACCREDITED CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Sustainability will be a key focus at Ecobuild 2018, giving built environment professionals the opportunity to highlight, debate and present issues that matter now and will still matter in the future. Central to the event is the comprehensive conference programme, curated by top industry figures. The programme will provide an interactive platform for examining the big issues facing the built environment and creating an action plan for change, focused on real solutions.

Day One begins with some of the most pressing global issues, delivering the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda. The keynote speaker is Paula Caballero, global director of the Climate Programme at the World Resources Institute. Paula is one of the driving forces behind the development of the SDGs.

The conference programme also includes a panel discussion on the response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy. There will also be focuses on solving the housing crisis and how to achieve the aim of making all buildings net zero carbon by 2050.

Sue James, content producer for Ecobuild, revealed the intention to develop three key recommendations from each conference session, with audience support in shaping the outputs. She comments: "This will ensure that each topic covered in the Ecobuild conference programme concludes with actions that can be understood and implemented by the wider built environment."

## ECOBUILD SUSTAINABILITY SHOWCASES

Surrounding the conference arena will be the Ecobuild sustainability showcases, home to some of the most innovative solutions to the issues facing the built environment. The showcases will truly put sustainability at the heart of the event.

They will feature two full-scale builds. One of these properties is the zero net carbon home from Zedfactory which is designed to minimise fossil fuels and annual energy bills. It offers a complete response to the housing crisis with build times reduced to two weeks.

They are also home to The Hive from The Edible Bus Stop, a multifunctional, engaging social space. The sustainability showcases don't stop there, more details about the confirmed exhibits will be released in the coming weeks.

# ecobuild

You can register for a free ticket at  
[www.ecobuild.co.uk/register](http://www.ecobuild.co.uk/register)

## THE FUTUREBUILD DISTRICTS

The conference arena and sustainability showcases are surrounded by the futurebuild districts, each of which will act as an immersive and stimulating area where people, brands and companies will be able to network and develop profitable relationships.

The Building Performance district will look far beyond construction and design, instead considering the wellbeing agenda across new build, refurb and retrofit projects too. In association with the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Infrastructure district will demonstrate how the built environment can come together and plan for the future.

In the Energy and HVAC district, the latest innovations and best practices across renewables, smart buildings and HVAC will be presented through a series of seminars and workshops. The Green and Blue Infrastructure district will offer solutions in water management, external landscaping, biophilic design and biodiversity.

New for 2018 is the Timber district, in association with the Structural Timber Association and supported by Wood for Good and TRADA. This will be a showcase for the latest technological innovations and systems, alongside the Timber Talks seminar programme.

Another new addition is the Concrete district, delivered in association with The Concrete Centre and This Is Concrete. Here, information and inspiration will be shared to realise the potential of concrete as a sustainable material, as well as its range of solutions for housing, buildings and infrastructure.

Following its success last year, offsite technology will return for the second year in partnership with Explore Offsite. The district will feature a groundbreaking exhibition of offsite construction solutions and masterclasses.

This year will again see District Energy taken to the next level. The district will be hosted by the ukDEA and is in association with the Danish and Swedish Embassies. It's set to include a programme full of key speakers and debates, a networking lounge and a product launch pad.

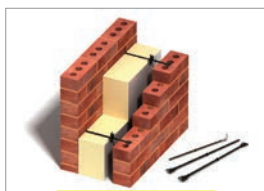
## KEY PARTNERSHIPS

Ecobuild is working with a number of strategic partners who are contributing to the overall strategy and shape of the event to ensure it is wholly reflective of the industry's needs. Notable partners include the Considerate Constructors Scheme, CIAT, NLA, Bioregional, CIBSE, The Edible Bus Stop and the Edge. The event will also host the BREEAM Awards and the Offsite Construction Awards.



## Ancon to launch products at Ecobuild

Double winner of the Queen's Award for Enterprise and holder of a string of innovation and product development accolades, Ancon will be launching its latest fixing innovations at Ecobuild on stand number C62. Ancon's stand will focus on structural fixings that are opening-up new possibilities in zero and ultra-low energy construction by minimising thermal bridging, including its insulated balcony connectors and ultra-low thermal conductivity cavity wall ties. It will also showcase a brick-faced support system that allows designers to achieve exciting masonry facade aesthetics, quickly and easily on site.



ECOBUILD STAND C62

0114 275 5224 [www.ancon.co.uk](http://www.ancon.co.uk)

## Accessible guidance

With the growing need to make homes adaptable so occupiers can remain independent, and in their own homes, new guidance is aiming to help get it right. 'Design Guidance & Considerations for a Domestic Accessible Toilet' has been produced and published by Closomat. The white paper gives advice to ensure that the key aspects affecting the functionality and practicality of a bathroom/wetroom and toilet, as occupier needs change, are considered. It even addresses the details as far as both new build and retrospective adaptation, in terms of legislation and 'best practice'. The white paper can be downloaded free of charge on the downloads section of Closomat's website.



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ECOBUILD STAND C41



# Tower block lifts – a fascinating history

Alastair Stannah of Stannah Lifts provides a helpful guide on residential lifts in housing developments. From fire fighting lifts to refurbishing existing lifts in a block of flats, the choices are endless

**M**ulti-storey housing developments were generally restricted to seven storeys before the days of elevators. Wealthy people lived on the ground floor and the poorest people lived on the top floor and so had to climb the most stairs. Social standing reversed with the advent of lifts, the penthouse being reserved for the wealthiest occupants.

High-rise housing became the order of the day post-war and many of these developments still exist, refurbished, today. Lifts for apartments were key in the development of modern high rise buildings as without them moving to high floors by staircases would have been too arduous. Today, lifts continue to play an important part in a growing requirement for public and private housing.

For managed housing over two floors or more, to ensure the housing is suitable for all occupants, including people with restricted mobility, a vertical lift should be provided. If there are thirty or more individual housing units above the ground floor of the building then two lifts for flats should be recommended. This is particularly important in larger flats where a lift being out-of-action could cause disruption to the residents.

Part M of the Building Regulations recommends passenger lifts should always be a first choice.

Platform lifts can be supplied and installed in low-rise housing, where they

Lifts continue to play an important part in a growing requirement for public and private housing

are to be used infrequently by a small number of people, and increasingly as an individual solution in a private dwelling.

For taller or larger residential buildings, passenger lifts play the main role. The type of passenger lift requires careful consideration.

## WHAT TYPE OF FINISH DO YOU REQUIRE OR DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS?

Lifts should reflect the building they are situated in. For some housing projects there is a more robust requirement, in these circumstances vandal-resistant finishes or vandal resistant lifts can play their part. There are two categories of vandal resistant lifts that are covered by the British Standard EN81-71: Vandal resistant lifts. This standard defines the testing methodology and the





classification of lifts in terms of vandal resistance.

For any lift requiring a vandal resistant element, be it category 1 or category 2, primarily the lift has more vandal resistant elements than a traditional passenger lift. These elements include (but are not limited to): vandal resistant and reinforced car and landing doors, finishing the lift car in vandal-resistant heavy-duty stainless steel cladding patterns such as 5WL, and leather or linen, vandal resistant lighting, car roofs, displays and car operating panels.

Vandal resistant lifts category 2 provide twice as much effort to control crushing, shearing, cutting, trapping, impact hazard, electrical and thermal hazard in a lift where there may be occurrences of vandal resistance than a category 1 lift.

### DO YOU REQUIRE A LIFT TO AID THE TRANSPORTATION OF WASTE?

There is a rise in the installation of goods lifts, used to aid underground storage of bikes/bins in residential buildings. Local council guidelines for waste management often state the goods lift must be large enough to accommodate a person as well as at least one waste container, this is where an attended goods lift or passenger and goods lifts can play a part.

### DO YOU REQUIRE A FIRE FIGHTING LIFT?

As a default, all new passenger lifts are equipped to conform to British Standard EN81-73: Behaviour of lifts in the event of fire. This standard means the lift is connected to the fire alarm system and in the event of a fire the lift travels to the

ground floor, the doors remain open and no further calls are taken. This enables all passengers of the lift to evacuate the building and fire fighters to ensure there is no one trapped in the lift car.

This is different to a fire fighting lift. Fire fighting lifts are lifts designed to have additional protection, with controls that enable it to be used under the direct control of the fire and rescue service in fighting a fire. For housing, a fire fighting lift is required if the building has a floor more than 18m above, or more than 10m below fire service vehicle access level.

British Standard EN81-72 compliant firefighter lifts feature trap doors and ladders for rescue operations. Additionally, electrical components in the shaft and on the car are protected against splashing water. Fire fighting lifts have very specific safety requirements and the presence of fire fighting controls within a lift does not necessarily mean that it is a fire fighting lift. In some circumstances a fire fighting lift may be provided as part of a management plan for evacuating people. In such cases, the lift installation may need to be appropriately located, protected and also contain a number of safety features that are intended to ensure that the lift remains usable for evacuation purposes during the fire.

### ARE YOU PLANNING TO USE THE LIFT AS PART OF YOUR EVACUATION PLANS?

In general, it isn't appropriate to use lifts when there is a fire in the building because there's always the danger of people being trapped in a lift that has become immobilised because of the fire, hence the British Standard EN81-73 being in place.

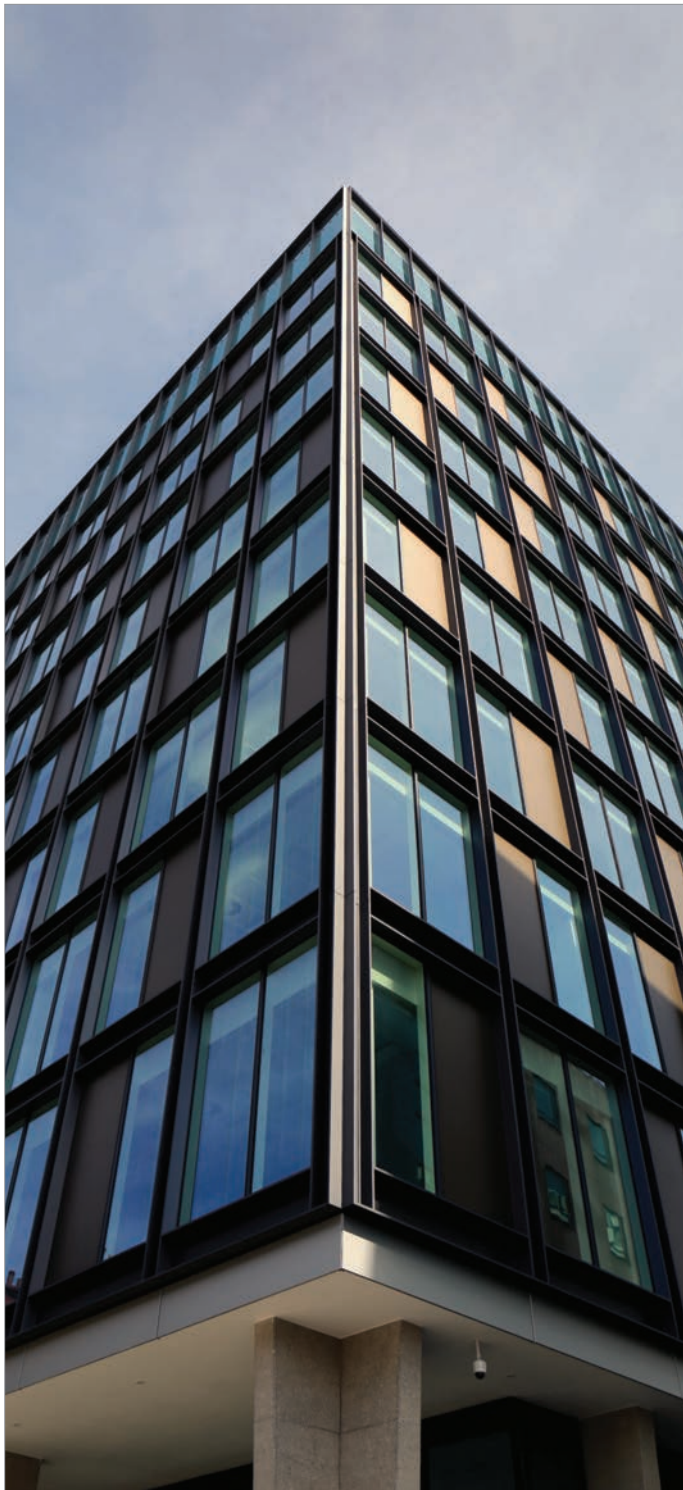
However, in some circumstances, a lift can be provided as part of a management plan for evacuating people and studies have shown they can cut evacuation times by up to 40 per cent. Guidance on the design and use of evacuation lifts is given in BS EN81-76: Evacuation of disabled persons using lifts and where a fire fighting lift has been provided, this can be utilised as part of a management plan for evacuating disabled people.

*Alastair Stannah is the managing director of Stannah Lifts UK Ltd*

In some circumstances, a lift can be provided as part of a management plan for evacuating people and studies have shown they can cut evacuation times by up to 40 per cent

# Face up to the challenge with a new facade

Panel Systems explores how housing providers are increasingly looking to innovative cladding to upgrade existing multi-occupancy apartments rather than building new ones



The number of homeless households in England has risen to more than 50,000 a year, with many of the people affected living in temporary accommodation and almost 2,000 living without a roof over their heads. As a result, pressure is mounting on housing associations, local authorities and developers to not only build new homes to alleviate the problem, but to update existing structures to ensure they offer the comfort, performance and aesthetics required in modern buildings.

During the post war population boom, demand was high for new housing, which led to a high number of multi-occupancy apartments. Due to its affordability and availability, concrete was widely specified as the material of choice for the construction of these buildings. Although they are still habitable, many have been criticised for their unappealing facades. As such, they are in need of repair and refurbishment to make them more aesthetically pleasing.

This is where housing providers and building owners are faced with a challenge. Do they refurbish existing buildings or demolish them and build new ones?

The wide choice of cladding options and fixing techniques that are now available means that social and private landlords are able to transform 'tired' structures into visually appealing buildings.

Aesthetics always has a big part to play when upgrading any building and authentic cladding options are often chosen to help existing structures to be more in keeping with the area.

## MODERN AESTHETICS

When most people think of modern facades they picture steel and glass rainscreen cladding systems, however architects are increasingly looking to use more authentic materials within cladding structures.

When it comes to aesthetics for city centres, architectural cladding can create a modern, sheer, smooth facade. Building designers often use this to great effect for residential buildings, incorporating elongated horizontal cladding panels, which creates a modern-take on the architecturally-proportioned ashlar coursing found on older buildings.

When most people think of modern facades they picture steel and glass rainscreen cladding systems, however architects are increasingly looking to use more authentic materials within cladding structures

This effect works particularly well with grey or stone coloured fibre cement panels, with the added benefit that it is very low maintenance. For developers looking for something even more contemporary, triangular, vertical or simply square panels are all possibilities.

Lightweight fibre cement panels give building designers greater freedom of expression because it avoids the need for heavy masonry-based internal





With 71.6 per cent of people within the 16 to 29 age group living alone, and thousands of people living in the UK considered homeless, the requirement for multi-occupational living showing no signs of weakening

supporting structures. The result is not only a building with a reduced carbon footprint, but one that incorporates a modern aesthetic with a hint of the original design. The material's visual appeal also creates an architectural fusion between other commonly-used facade materials, such as timber and aluminium.

This was one of the reasons why fibre cement cladding panels were chosen by Great Places Housing Group for its Richmond Park development in Handsworth. The work was part of a £16.5m redevelopment of two former council estates. The project comprised a development of 12 blocks of flats and 36 existing houses, which were overlaid with rainscreen cladding.

On this project, 600 m<sup>2</sup> of fibre cement external cladding was supplied. To ensure the panels could be quickly and easily installed on site, they were cut to size in the factory to meet the project's call-off schedule. The panels were specified in bluestone and azura, which provided a visual link between the older refurbished and new properties, creating a sense of continuity between the timber weatherboarding and the brick finish of the homes.

#### DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

With 71.6 per cent of people within the 16 to 29 age group living alone, and thousands of people living in the UK considered homeless, the requirement for multi-occupational living showing no signs of weakening. As a result housing providers are increasingly turning to refurbishment of existing stock. This is not only more economical, but more beneficial to the environment, as new builds have a higher carbon footprint due to the amount of new materials that need to be manufactured and the energy required from demolition and construction activities.

Many existing buildings have been successfully refurbished, breathing new life into them and giving them a facade for the future. With thousands of multi-occupancy apartments across the UK still requiring some form of upgrade, specifying a low maintenance facade that retains its aesthetic appeal may help to meet the aesthetic and performance requirements for modern housing.

*Panel Systems are global suppliers of insulated panels and external cladding*

## Glazpart – Launch trickle vent for the replacement and improvement market

Today house owners are looking for those quality final touches to dress their windows which are not only a significant investment but are a highly visible part of the building fabric. Over time though inevitably trickle vents get damaged. The kids hang off them, footballs miss the goal and accidents just happen! Just think how many hundreds and thousands of vents are needed across the country!

So, you want new vents, what do you do? Where can the home owner get a replacement? This is where the problems start. What size is it, will it fit over the routs, how do I fit it, can I do the DIY can I get the vents to match the window colour? With well over 100 different products on the market most end up with unsightly gaffer tape.

For the trade, especially trade counters, distributors and stockists they have the same problems. How can they stock every vent on the

off chance of a walk-in for that vent on the shelf? That's why in general the vents end up as a different type as it just happens to be the only one stocked and who would buy a minimum quantity for the same reason.

Many installed windows also have those old standard 4 colours fitted to them, brown on Golden Oak, yellow on Irish oak, black on grey and how many other mismatched solid colours against the frame. Most will be white but the Glazpart new vent is available to order from stock in over 30 colours including woodgrains...all without you spraying.

So, there are a vast quantity of installed damaged, mismatched colour vents that don't work all leading to poor air quality and look terrible. Therefore, an RMI (Repair, Maintenance and Improvement) product to address these issues would be ideal.

That's where Glazpart comes in with the Link vent Mk2, packaged and branded under Glazpart's highly successful Packers for Professionals product range for counter sales.

If as a trade counter, stockist, hardware shop or distributor you were able to stock one product, that fits the majority of installed window routs and could replace the majority of the damaged, trickle vents installed in frames. Your customers or installers could DIY fit them as

an RMI product in minutes...how many thousands could you sell a year.

Taking a closer look at the Link vent Mk2 (5000) which is close to the size of a traditional 4000 vent. You will see 13 fixing positions which would look odd to most? However; put the vent up to the window, fit the 4 clips (in the bag) where there is a rout and push fit the vent in seconds (if needed fit with screws into the frame material) and you are done. The Link vent Mk2 (2500) with 2 clips replaces a traditional 2000 vent, both fitting 10mm to 13mm rout heights.

So, one vent product in two sizes fits all and could grow your footfall and walk-in's whilst not significantly increasing your stock.

Installers can now carry a couple of repair vents for those occasional RMI jobs with the confidence they will fit most surface mounted applications.

01295 264533 [www.glazpart.com](http://www.glazpart.com)



### Senior gives Chester rooms with a view

A new student accommodation scheme in Chester is making the most of its picturesque canalside location thanks to an attractive glazing package from Senior Architectural Systems. The Towpath development offers modern student accommodation facilities across two four-storey and one three-storey blocks. Senior's aluminium curtain walling, windows and doors were specified for use on all three buildings of the new development. Senior's thermally-efficient SPW600e windows and SPW600 doors were chosen for the use within the individual apartments, many of which feature attractive balconies that overlook the canal. The communal areas of the scheme feature Senior's robust SPW501 aluminium doors. The facades of the individual buildings have been created using different materials, with a striking mix of traditional brickwork, pre-coated zinc cladding and cedar timber cladding. Owing to the close proximity of the new student accommodation development to existing properties on the canalside, the acoustic performance of the fenestration package was also a key consideration. Senior's SPW600e aluminium windows provided the ideal solution to meeting the various acoustic requirements across each of the three building.

[www.seniorarchitectural.co.uk](http://www.seniorarchitectural.co.uk)



### Door closer enhances fire safety

British designed and manufactured, Powermatic controlled, concealed door closers from Samuel Heath tick all the right boxes when it comes to fire safety and are particularly suitable for social housing applications.

Powermatics carry the CE mark, meet the requirements for one-hour and half-hour fire doors under BS EN 1634-1 and boast Certifire accreditation.

In addition to impressive fire performance credentials, Powermatic closers are totally concealed when the door is closed. This not only helps to create a more homely interior, but also enhances the reliability of fire doors by reducing the risk of damage through vandalism or tampering, which could render the fire door useless.

Powermatic's appeal to the social housing sector is further enhanced by its ability to enable doors to meet accessibility requirements.

0121 766 4200 [www.concealeddoorclosers.com](http://www.concealeddoorclosers.com)





# Window revolution

Neil Puttock of Boavista Windows explores how material innovations can foster tangible benefits

An American engineer and professor by the name of William Edwards Deming once said, “Innovation comes from the producer – not the customer.” This arguably rings true for fenestration.

What is the incentive for housing associations to seek an alternative to tried, tested and familiar fenestration products when those products do exactly what is required of them: they let light in, enable those inside to see out and provide an adequate level of security?

However innovation, like evolution, plays a key role in not only enabling housing managers to adapt to the constant changes and demands of a continually changing world, but also pre-empting those changes and demands by developing products and services that significantly improve the lives of those who use them.

## A GREEN WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

From a sustainability standpoint, fibreglass performs highly due to its reliance on silica, which is naturally found in abundance. In fact, there is at least 10 per cent recycled glass used in its production.

Using the latest in pultrusion technology, fibreglass frames are created by pulling resin-soaked glass fibres through heated dies, which only consumes 0.07 kilowatt to produce a linear metre of window frame weighing approximately 1kg.

When the windows need replacing, they can simply be shredded into sections and then mixed with concrete and asphalt to deliver a lightweight, stronger and crack and shrinkage-resistant composite material – a process that requires little energy to carry out.

In terms of insulation, fibreglass is a natural insulator as a result of its low thermal and acoustic conductivity, which means housing associations willing to incorporate fibreglass frames will be helping to ensure that residents are able to keep the heat in and the sound out.

“Innovation comes from the producer – not the customer” - William Edwards Deming

## DESIGNING OUT COMPROMISE

While it is true that window frames generally represent one component of the built environment and a relatively minor constituent in the construction of the UK's social housing stock, they are a key contributor to the overall aesthetic of a building. Windows also have a long lifecycle, meaning that what is installed today is likely to be around many years from now.



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In terms of design, fiberglass supports the construction of visually appealing housing. In fact, it opens up a world of possibilities for housing associations due to its strength and stability, which enable it to hold large surface areas of glass, bypassing the need to produce and fit specialist, and often very expensive, structural glass.

They also support more adventurous design projects that would previously have been prohibitive due to the cost associated with incorporating bespoke glazing solutions. Not only that, but fiberglass also expands in line with window glass, removing the need for gaskets to hold the pane in place, adding further aesthetic value to a building.

#### MINIMAL MAINTENANCE REQUIRED

Perhaps one of the most striking features of a fiberglass frame is that, despite how light it is, it is exceptionally hardwearing. Plus, it is highly rot and corrosion resistant delivering a long lifecycle.



## The challenge now is overcoming the UK's inherent resistance to change

In fact, it is these factors that have underpinned the material's success in parts of Europe and Canada; countries that were quick to harness the power of fiberglass to counteract the weather-related erosion that window frames in coastal regions and harsh climates are subject to.

Against the backdrop of a survey carried out by a prominent housing media title earlier this year, which revealed how housing associations' expenditure on major repairs reduced by 7.3 per cent in 2015/16 and that planned maintenance expenditure dropped by 1.6 per cent, sustainable and durable products will surely offer some welcome relief.

#### FUTURE PROOFING THE UK

A House of Lords report created by the Select Committee on Economic Affairs entitled *Building More Homes* concluded that the government's target of one million new homes by 2020 will not be enough. More importantly, it put forward the case that in order to address the housing crisis, at least 300,000 new homes are needed annually for the foreseeable future.

This is by no means an insignificant amount. If we are to meet this target then the annual window footprint alone would be considerable, and the volume of plastic and aluminium required quite daunting.

Given the renewed focus on sustainability, which is made even more urgent by government targets that seek to reduce the UK's carbon footprint, it is time that the industry embraced new approaches to window frames and considered the role it plays in contributing towards delivering sustainable housing.

The technology exists. The challenge now is overcoming the UK's inherent resistance to change by making fiberglass window frames a standard component within UK social housing in order to improve the sustainability credentials of today's buildings while helping to shape those of tomorrow.

*Neil Puttock is the managing director of Boavista Windows*





# From the ground up

In the face of rapid urbanisation, Andrew Cullum of Polypipe makes a case for Sustainable Drainage Solutions (SuDS), exploring how effective water management solutions can enhance flood resilience while providing environmental benefits for years to come

**T**he recent launch of the Government's Industrial Strategy brought together ideas from a number of different department white papers and construction sector reviews to lay the foundations of how the UK will tackle the need for more homes in urban centres, and the reality of having to make use of land prone to flooding.

According to the Government's recent housing figures, 217,350 new homes have been added to the UK housing market in the past financial year - the highest build rate since 2007. Coinciding with the rise in new housing, the number of extreme weather events in the UK has quadrupled in recent years, posing potential flood risk to densely populated urban centres, where drainage and storm management systems are already under considerable strain.

Green rooftop solutions also encourage biodiversity by enabling the plantation of seeds and local vegetation

Cities such as York and Carlisle have all suffered following seasonal deluges in recent years.

Sustainable Drainage Solutions (SuDS) are the first line of defence against floods in heavily urbanised areas, where a lack of natural 'soak away' features can prevent rainfall from draining away naturally. Combined with the increased





level of seasonal rainfall, this places immense pressure on the existing drainage infrastructure, and can lead to management systems being overwhelmed. However, with intelligent design, SuDS can collect, store and control the flow of excess surface water, to prevent water logging, and help to avoid sewer systems becoming overwhelmed, guarding against flooding during periods of high rainfall.

The latest Government Industrial Strategy outlines further funding set aside to help mitigate flood risk, with £2.6 bn being committed to provide new flood alleviation schemes across the UK. By increasing investment in flood defence now, predicted flood damage costs could be reduced to below today's level by the year 2080.

Furthermore, to ensure natural assets within development areas are being taken into consideration from initial planning stages, the Government will be committing to a 25-year Environmental Plan, while the £1.7 bn Transforming Cities Fund will look at new and better ways to incorporate natural resources to aid water management.

These measures indicate that SuDS planning and flood resilience will be of increasing importance at the planning stages of all new housing developments, whether in the city centres, or the suburbs. The level of committed funding should give developers and architects greater scope to look at new means of water management.

Typically, stormwater is stored and attenuated at ground level, however on already developed sites, creating new systems at this level can drive up project costs, and is not always feasible. To overcome the lack of ground space, architects and developers can opt for above ground podium and rooftop SuDS solutions, such as blue and green roofs.

Providing numerous environmental benefits, rooftop and podium level SuDS capture, store and release stormwater at a controlled rate. Combining building drainage and irrigation, green roofs and blue roofs are planted over a waterproof membrane that stores and attenuates surface water. The water captured can

The number of extreme weather events in the UK has quadrupled in recent years, posing potential flood risk to densely populated urban centres

either be stored and released back to the drainage system at a rate agreed by the local water company, or re-used for functions such as potable water for toilet flushing.

Green rooftop solutions also encourage biodiversity by enabling the plantation of seeds and local vegetation which are sustained through rainwater. This in turn can provide recreational areas for resident use. Within city centres where pollution is most concentrated, the increased levels of vegetation can also help to remove pollutants from the air, improving air quality and offering health benefits for locals.

With the Government looking to kickstart a building revolution by committing £2.5 billion funding to build affordable homes, architects and developers have access to the tools to build homes that can not only house, but enhance the lives of tenants and homeowners.

For developers, investing in whole sale, intelligently engineered SuDS solutions ensures our urban areas are resilient to future weather events, reducing damage caused by floods. As urbanisation continues at such an unprecedented rate, it is important that land developers consider SuDS right from the very first drawing to enhance flood resilience in urban centres and ensure robust and reliable drainage solutions able to meet long-term demands.

*Andrew Callum is the general manager of water management solutions at Polypipe*



## Care Home keeps warm with new system

Sheffield based plumbing and heating firm Pro Plumbers 24-7 has installed a new heating system in a care home in Rotherham, including a BoilerMag XT industrial boiler filter. The filter has achieved outstanding results for the care home. The BoilerMag XT is ideal for large heating systems, providing heating system protection by preventing the build-up of ferrous oxide and scale, reducing energy bills, increasing boiler life, and reducing maintenance call outs. The XT also includes an automatic air vent, which greatly reduces the potentially damaging effects of air accumulating in a heating system. With the range available from 2" to 12", the XT unit has a large collection capacity.

0114 225 0600 [www.eclipsemagnetics.com](http://www.eclipsemagnetics.com)



## Uponor supply HIUs to McCarthy & Stone

Uponor has supplied custom-specified heat interface units (HIU) for two retirement living developments in Southsea, Hampshire, and St Albans, Hertfordshire, as part of a solution jointly developed by McCarthy & Stone, the plumbing contractor and Uponor. The units will help deliver maximum energy efficiency from the four 150kW and three 120kW gas boilers installed as a central plant, helping McCarthy & Stone achieve its objectives of maximising comfort for residents while minimising operational costs and service charges. The Uponor MLC plumbing range has also been included in the specification for all water distribution networks.

01923 927 020 [www.uponor.co.uk](http://www.uponor.co.uk)



## Prepare your home for Winter

In the UK, our Winter conditions adversely affect many homes, causing water pipes to expand and rupture in properties and ultimately causing irrevocable damage, as well as triggering what has been reported as the most common type of homeowner insurance claim during the winter period – the escape of water, as a result of burst water pipes. That said, this widespread household winter insurance claim could be avoided through some basic preparation tips. Traditionally brass stopcocks have been the control valve for a home's mains water supply, however they are not always located in the easiest of places to reach and due to being susceptible to limescale damage, can be quite difficult to turn off in an emergency. For older residents or those with varying abilities especially, this poses a huge problem particularly during winter, when pipes are more prone to bursting. There is however now a modern alternative to brass stopcocks, Polypipe Surestop stopcock. Fitted in easy to reach places, the Surestop stopcock features a lockdown button, that can be simply and easily pressed to instantly stop the water supply. There are no electrics or batteries involved, it works purely on the water pressure and it will not seize up or be affected by limescale – unlike brass. The Surestop stopcock is also available with a version that includes a discreet, remote lockdown switch, that could be fitted in a kitchen cupboard or surface area, for even easier access and visibility.

08456 431800 [www.polypipe.com/surestop](http://www.polypipe.com/surestop)



NEW



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## Best-ever filter launched by Sentinel

Meeting customer demand for superior heating system protection products is what Sentinel has been doing for 30 years – and its latest major innovation is no exception. The new Sentinel Eliminator Vortex300 Filter has not only been independently verified to collect more magnetic debris on continuous pass than any other compact filter on the market, but is also the company's most compact, robust, and easy to install and service filter to date. What's more, the Eliminator Vortex300 filter eliminates all of the major problems installers face with most other brand filters, such as leaks and difficult handling.

01928 704330 [www.sentinelprotects.com](http://www.sentinelprotects.com)



## New ESi heating controls brochure

Heating controls manufacturer and distributor ESi has released its brand new heating controls range brochure introducing its new five series range designed to be fully interchangeable by the home owner. The latest ESRT5 range is packed with energy saving features designed to save the homeowner money by lowering their fuel bills. It includes the ESRT5RF 5 series Wifi programmable room thermostat which provides seamless control at home or from your mobile or tablet. ESi Controls is one of the fastest growing designers and manufacturers of heating controls in the UK.

01280 816868 [www.esicontrols.co.uk](http://www.esicontrols.co.uk)





## Consort launches SL single-zone controllers

Consort Claudgen has introduced three new wireless controllers which can be connected to one or multiple SL heaters to form an SL heating system. All controllers have comfort and setback temperatures settings. The SLPB and SLVT controllers have a control button with status indicators and a 4-stage run-back timer where a heating period remains active until the run-back timer expires. There is a choice of three time periods available: 5, 15 or 30 minutes. When the button is pressed four times, this takes the run-back time period to 20, 60 or 120 minutes. Additionally, the SLVT has temperature control buttons and a digital display to show the room temperature.

01646 692172 [www.consortepl.com](http://www.consortepl.com)



## Innovative heating transforms development

Housing developer, Sandrock, was keen to make its West Sussex development more energy efficient. It enlisted the help of The Gas Saving Company to design a new Home energy centre, including Alpha Heating Innovation's FlowSmart, to provide a high performing and energy saving heating and hot water system.

Alpha's FlowSmart offers the energy efficient benefits usually associated with a combi boiler while maintaining a high performance capability, making it a perfect component of the Home energy centre. FlowSmart works by sending cold mains water to the GasSaver, which is pre-heated using reclaimed flue gases, before diverting it to the copper coil heat exchanger in the thermal store.

[www.alpha-innovation.co.uk](http://www.alpha-innovation.co.uk)



## New Wilo-Yonos PICO launched

Wilo has launched the new generation of the Wilo-Yonos PICO. A range of new features has been added to this renowned circulator for residential buildings. With this new version, Wilo has succeeded in not only upgrading one of the most established products in the market, but also to an extent, it has been able to reinvent it thanks to new functionality and ease of use. As in the previous version, the outstanding Wilo ECM technology performance is combined with a precise setting of 0.1m. In addition, energy consumption can be monitored continuously on the LED display. For more information visit Wilo's website.

[www.wilo.co.uk](http://www.wilo.co.uk)



## LSZH self-regulating heating cable

Pentair leads on innovation with its new Raychem Low-Smoke Zero Halogen (LSZH) self-regulating heating cable range, the first of its kind. Thanks to its unique combination of self-regulating and LSZH properties, the range provides safe, simple and efficient pipe-freeze protection. This offers users superior performance and durability as well as improved energy efficiency. Developed specifically for use within commercial and residential buildings, the range offers unparalleled building safety, thanks to a new LSZH jacket material. XL-Trace features cross-linked materials to improve product performance, resulting in a superior life expectancy.

[www.pentairthermal.com](http://www.pentairthermal.com)



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## Kingspan provides premium solution

Residents of two community housing blocks in Ashton-under-Lyne are enjoying the benefits of a more energy efficient home, thanks to a major insulation retrofit featuring the premium performance of **Kingspan Kooltherm K5 External Wall Board**. After experiencing issues with the existing insulation, Ashton Pioneer Homes has invested in upgrading the thermal performance of two of its twelve-storey properties. Kingspan Kooltherm K5 External Wall Board achieves outstanding thermal conductivities as low as 0.020 W/m.K. It is designed to be installed behind lightweight polymer modified renders, such as the dry dash render applied to the flat blocks.



01544 387 384 [www.kingspaninsulation.co.uk](http://www.kingspaninsulation.co.uk)

## Capture the TrueScale of nature

Surfaces formed of natural materials like stones and woods are gaining popularity in kitchen trend guides as the ideal worktops. TrueScale from **Formica** captures the subtle variations and patterns found in natural materials but eliminates the high cost of sourcing and maintaining. Ideal for creating statement pieces, TrueScale provides the necessary sizing to bring your kitchen design concepts to life. The decors do not repeat across the full width of the laminate sheet so patterns can be unveiled in their full beauty. Available in 28 decors, TrueScale laminate gives you the authentic look of premium materials, while being lightweight, hygienic and stain resistant.



0191 259 3512 [www.formica.com](http://www.formica.com)

## Kingspan OPTIM-R provides solution

A derelict Grade B listed hotel in Kinross, Scotland, has been transformed into an impressive modern family home, with help from the ultra-slim **Kingspan OPTIM-R Flooring System**. Kingspan OPTIM-R vacuum insulation panels (VIPs) feature a microporous core which is evacuated, encased and sealed in a thin, gas-tight envelope. This design allows them to achieve optimum levels of insulation performance with a declared value thermal conductivity of 0.007 W/m.K despite their minimal thickness. 20 - 40 mm thick Kingspan OPTIM-R panels are the only vacuum insulation panels in the world to be certified under the independent BDA Agrément scheme.



01544 387 384 [www.kingspaninsulation.co.uk/optim-r](http://www.kingspaninsulation.co.uk/optim-r)

## Stand alone energy saving controls

**DANLERS** manufacture a range of high quality controls for switching a variety of HVAC loads – the switches are wall mounted, hard wired and easy to install. Heater boost switches for simply saving energy automatically turns the load off after a selected period has elapsed. Designed for use with immersion heaters and heated towel rails etc. Versions are available with different time settings plus options for switching air conditioning loads. PIR thermostat controls for heating loads combine an adjustable room thermostat with a passive infra-red person detector. If somebody is present in the room, the heating unit is switched on to achieve the selected thermostat temperature.



01249 443377 [www.danlers.co.uk](http://www.danlers.co.uk)

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# Integrated Project Insurance: a joined up approach to construction

Kim Vernau of BLP Insurance discusses how to protect your project from the ills of cumulative risk



**T**he concept of proper integration and collaboration when it comes to managing the insurance process is not new to the construction industry. Aligning the interests of all industry players, whether it is clients, contractors, consultants and others in the supply chain, is widely understood in terms of its importance. In the hunt for a solution to this fundamental problem, the introduction of Integrated Project Insurance (IPI), whereby the client and project team are collaborating under a single insurance policy, marks a significant milestone.

Within the construction industry, the current insurance framework is outdated and at odds with this collaborative approach. Instead, a culture of passing risk down the supply chain has become increasingly embedded in the industry, creating a defensive and insular system whereby each member of the construction process has to insure the risk under their own insurance policy. Industry players have come to accept litigation and subsequent legal costs as the norm in the event of an issue arising during the project delivery, with parties taking opposing positions to avoid risk of liability. This approach not only fails to assess the accumulative real risk with a project, but is also unhelpful for the end client.

Despite the day-to-day reality of this defensive approach, initiatives such as the implementation of Building Information Modelling (BIM) Level 2 and the wider Government Construction Strategy represent significant steps towards a more collaborative approach. BIM has been developed to change the dynamics of the construction supply chain by unlocking more efficient ways of working together.

The UK government took the major step of mandating the use of BIM by 2016



in its 2011 Construction Strategy, for use by all central government projects. This was to address the inertia inherent in analogue methods and to promote change through a dominant client forcing it on its suppliers. The government mandate to its own departments has taken five years of mentoring to achieve, and is yet to complete. The cultural shift required is considerable both in terms of challenging established ways of working and exploiting the benefits of collaboration for better project delivery.

The industry needs to move forward. To enable the required cultural change IPI provides the opportunity for one single policy to protect the entire construction delivery team (client, contractors, consultants and specialists), instead of a myriad of individual construction insurances. IPI could transform the way that construction projects are insured. As well as covering the project risk, crucially IPI also covers any financial loss that might result from a flaw in the construction project, without the requirement to prove fault by the party from whom the problem has originated.

Eliminating the blame culture in the construction industry, by doing away with the need to prove fault on the part of one individual, will help to foster a more collaborative approach that puts the client's needs first; delivering the project on time, within budget and in line with the agreed specification. The idea that a team can either stand or fall together under the combined liability will promote shared responsibility and naturally result in any problems or issues being resolved more quickly.

Looking at how IPI works in practise, the starting point for any project is to assemble a team and then to draw up a strategic brief and cost plan including the specification, time frame, cost and maximum liability. The involvement of a technical and cost assessor throughout the project delivery serves to identify any issues early on in the cycle and reduce the risk of anything going wrong. In the event that the project fails to deliver the specifics outlined in the strategic brief, then the IPI will respond to any losses.

The construction of a new Centre for Advanced Building Technologies at Dudley College was one of the first projects to operate with IPI. Alongside SECO, BLP Insurance was appointed as the local Technical Inspection provider on the Advance II project. IPI brokers Griffiths & Armour agreed terms between the Alliance (Dudley College and its five industry partners) and underwriters, with the first IPI policy undertaken and the project successfully completed earlier this year.

It's hard to say with certainty what impact IPI will have on the construction industry, and determining whether initial trials have been successful could take some time. Nonetheless, the significant strides that have already been taken to adopt this new approach indicate that a progressive attitude to problem solving and much needed willingness to collaborate is starting to permeate throughout the industry.

*Kim Vernau is the CEO of BLP Insurance*

## Concierge system from ISM integrates legacy systems to control Door Entry and more

A new Concierge and Physical Security Information Management (PSIM) solution from **Intergrated Security Manufacturing (ISM)** is protecting two tower blocks in Haringey, enabling authorised council employees to control door access and manage fire and security systems from anywhere within the council's estate. Newbury House, Finsbury House, John Keats House and Thomas Hardy House in Wood Green, London, already feature four of ISM's state-of-the-art Ultimate door entry systems as well as another two, third-party technology systems (Elizabeth Blackwell and George Lansbury) from Entrotec, utilising its Apex Dual path speech technology. Thanks to the Genesys PSIM from ISM, multiple technologies can be controlled, regardless of the manufacturer, providing enhanced security to residents in 510 flats across the six towers. This delivers greater flexibility and control, eliminates the potential disruption caused by installing new equipment, and protects the council's legacy investment. It also means that further buildings with existing ISM or Entrotec systems can be added as required with only minimal additional investment. Genesys allows the integration not just of door entry systems, but also multiple systems from multiple manufacturers – all from one holistic integrated security system. Every electronic security or fire safety device from CCTV and Intruder Alarms to Electronic Locking and Public Address can be monitored and controlled from a single platform.

01293 529990 [www.ism-uk.com](http://www.ism-uk.com)



## Installer selects INTRATONE systems for entire client portfolio

A specialist security installer, Green Gate Access Systems, is rolling out Radio Frequency (RF) receiver equipment manufactured by INTRATONE, one of Europe's largest access control businesses, across its entire portfolio of 400 clients with secured doors and gates. As well as this, Green Gate Access Systems is also installing Intratone's audio and video intercom equipment at many sites, and in particular its INTRABOX access control range. The technology comes with a monthly subscription contract (without binding duration) or with a 15-year pre-paid GSM SIM card. All of this and is managed remotely by INTRATONE's management platform. The systems are operated by proximity reading key fobs, which are also remotely managed. If a user loses their fob, the operator is able to immediately establish its identity and disable it for future use. A new fob is subsequently activated and then despatched. Every time a fob is used the data is sent back to the remote operating platform, giving operators an overview of that particular gate or secured door's activity. Any unusual activity is therefore easily identified and monitored. Green Gate Access Systems was introduced to INTRATONE by Cardin, which is one of its key distributors, as its Sales Director, Jason Gregg explains: "We have built an excellent relationship with the manufacturer which understands the needs of end-users and removes much of the complexities. INTRATONE's back-end operating system is easy to use, and is quickly becoming a product of choice for many end users."

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**Safeguard Europe** – one of the UK's leading specialists in damp-proofing and waterproofing technology – has produced a superb guide on the problem of larval infestation of timber, how to accurately identify the cause and how to treat it. Safeguard's Woodworm Identification and Treatment volume is packed with detailed colour photography on the likely species to be encountered in Britain – and through all their life stages, from larvae to adult. The guide covers how to check whether a woodworm infestation is still active or has died out, and how to treat minor infestations of common species effectively, and for the long term.

01403 210 204 [www.safeguardeurope.com](http://www.safeguardeurope.com)



## Aico expands Mobile Training fleet

**Aico Ltd.**, a market leader in residential Fire and Carbon Monoxide Alarms, has launched a third Mobile Training & Demonstration Unit to meet customer demand and introduced online tracking for customers to locate their nearest Unit. The Mobile Training & Demonstration Units have been created to enable Aico to deliver detailed Smoke and CO Alarm product and technology information. Information boards on all Aico technologies, such as RadioLINK+ and AudioLINK data extraction technologies, and alarm ranges - with fully functional product attached - are installed within the units, along with a virtual video tour of the company's manufacturing process in Shannon, Ireland.

[enquiries@aico.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@aico.co.uk)







# Turning the threat of the invisible enemy into an opportunity

With the amount of supported housing in private hands increasing, Andrew Scott of Gauntlet Group reiterates the significance of checking and balancing for legionella

According to the HCA Statistical Data Return, between 2015 and 2016 we witnessed the largest increase in the total amount of social housing stock owned by privately registered providers of social housing, with 2,761,690 units per bed spaces owned at March 31, 2016.

The transfer of housing stock from councils to private providers and agents typically leads to property refurbishment and repairs and often involves periods of tenant unoccupancy. At other times, capital works, which may disturb or affect the water supply, may be carried out while residents are still in their homes. The 'invisible enemy' of legionella can thrive in both scenarios.

Legionella is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia taking hold when tiny droplets of contaminated water (aerosols) are inhaled. The bad news is that all man-made hot and cold water systems can assist the growth of legionella bacteria. For this reason, a landlord (defined as anyone renting property they own under lease or licence for a period under seven years) has legal

The catalyst for that diligence should stem from your duty of care and social responsibility

responsibilities to control the risk of legionella under the COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) Regulations of 2002.

Those taking control of housing stock in which some or all of the apartments or units have been unoccupied, even if just for a short period, should hear legionella alarm bells, particularly if tenants receive their water supply from a central tank within which water could have stagnated.



## Stagnant water can be a breeding ground for legionella and systems should be drained and thoroughly flushed out

Stagnant water can be a breeding ground for legionella and systems should be drained and thoroughly flushed out. Communal tanks are a common feature in large residential blocks and a thorough risk assessment should surround their maintenance and use.

However, all social housing properties should have a legionella risk assessment in place, as legionella could take hold for a variety of reasons: at times because the water temperature of stored water has been too low (under 60 degrees celsius) to kill the bacteria; at others because pipework has not been lagged, or because the water reaches individual units via circuitous pipework with twists and bends that could be home to stagnating or contaminated water.

A written legionella policy that outlines the controls in place, maintains a programme of regular monitoring of the water supply and appoints a 'responsible person', charged with maintaining the regime of control and risk identification, is essential. The responsible person may be the social housing provider, or a letting agent and also, at times, tenants themselves.

Some residents are more at risk than others, particularly older people in sheltered accommodation. However, heavy smokers or drinkers, past or present, and those with existing conditions such as diabetes and heart complaints, are also at higher risk. Risk control measures should reflect this and those responsible may decide to implement a regime of legionella water sampling within such properties, though this is not a legal requirement.

In all environments, education is key, so everyone understands both how legionella develops and the signs of a possible outbreak: flu-like demonstrations, headaches, fever, high temperature and diarrhoea.

While property refurbishment can present a legionella threat, it can also create a real opportunity. While older housing stock may have access issues that present barriers to effective monitoring, cleaning and disinfection, these could potentially be improved during the refurbishment process.

Additionally, there may be an opportunity to make water circuits simpler and shorter and remove dead legs. Better insulation could be installed around pipework and tanks, and better screening with more modern materials could prevent contaminants such as insects, rust and organic matter entering the water supply.

Whatever the scenario, one thing is key within legionella management, and that is education. Ultimately, the message is that of not allowing your legionella



Andrew Scott of Gauntlet Group

risk management to stagnate. Continuously assess whether there have been changes to either water systems or the occupants living within properties and adjust controls accordingly. Ensure tenants cannot tamper with hot and cold water systems and make sure legionella education reaches everyone in the risk management chain, from tenants to workmen and suppliers, and not forgetting visitors to the site. Record procedures and actions taken, make policies living and regularly update documents.

Being diligent about legionella management will keep you on the right side of health and safety law, but the catalyst for that diligence should stem from your duty of care and social responsibility as a housing provider. Embracing this ethos should help protect against the invisible enemy that goes by the name of legionella.

*Andrew Scott is the health and safety manager at Gauntlet Group*



## Bathroom Refurbishment

**Clos-o-Mat**  
Tel: 0161 969 1199  
[www.clos-o-mat.com](http://www.clos-o-mat.com)

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Tel: 01706 863600  
[www.crlaurence.co.uk](http://www.crlaurence.co.uk)

**Grant Westfield (Multipanel)**  
Tel: 0131 290 2862  
[www.grantwestfield.co.uk](http://www.grantwestfield.co.uk)

**MX Group**  
Tel: 01684 293311  
[www.mx-group.com](http://www.mx-group.com)

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Tel: 020 8842 0033  
[www.saniflo.co.uk](http://www.saniflo.co.uk)

## Boiler Casings

**Encasement**  
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[www.encasement.co.uk](http://www.encasement.co.uk)

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**Forticrete**  
Tel: 01909 775000  
[www.forticrete.co.uk](http://www.forticrete.co.uk)

**Trespa UK Ltd**  
Tel: 0808-2340268  
[www.trespa.com](http://www.trespa.com)

## Doors, Windows & Glazing

**Comar Architectural Aluminium Systems**  
Tel: 0208 685 9685  
[www.comar-alu.co.uk](http://www.comar-alu.co.uk)

**Marlin Specialist Glazing Solutions**  
Tel: 01535 603909  
[www.marlinwindows.co.uk](http://www.marlinwindows.co.uk)

**Mila Window & Door Maintenance**  
Tel: 0808 100 8881  
[www.milamaintenance.co.uk](http://www.milamaintenance.co.uk)

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[www.windoork.co.uk](http://www.windoork.co.uk)

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**Kedel**  
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[www.kedel.co.uk](http://www.kedel.co.uk)

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**Rolec Services**  
Tel: 01205 724754  
[www.rolecserv.com](http://www.rolecserv.com)

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[www.aico.co.uk](http://www.aico.co.uk)

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[www.bmtradagroup.com](http://www.bmtradagroup.com)

**Sprue Safety Products**  
Tel: 02476 323 232  
[www.sprue.com](http://www.sprue.com)

**Kidde Fyrnetics**  
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[www.kiddefyrnetics.co.uk](http://www.kiddefyrnetics.co.uk)

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[www.floodcheck.co.uk](http://www.floodcheck.co.uk)

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[www.designercontracts.com](http://www.designercontracts.com)

**The Deck Tile Co.**  
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[www.thedecktileco.co.uk](http://www.thedecktileco.co.uk)

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**Flowcrete UK**  
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[www.gerflor.co.uk](http://www.gerflor.co.uk)

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[www.mapei.co.uk](http://www.mapei.co.uk)

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[www.osmouk.com](http://www.osmouk.com)

**Sika Ltd**  
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[www.sika.co.uk](http://www.sika.co.uk)

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[www.baxi.co.uk](http://www.baxi.co.uk)

**Bosch Thermotechnology Ltd**  
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[www.bosch-thermotechnology.co.uk](http://www.bosch-thermotechnology.co.uk)

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[www.evinox.co.uk](http://www.evinox.co.uk)

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**Kingspan Environmental Ltd**  
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[www.kingspanenv.com](http://www.kingspanenv.com)

**Mitsubishi Electric Europe BV**  
Tel: 01707 276 100  
[www.mitsubishielectric.co.uk](http://www.mitsubishielectric.co.uk)

## Heating & Renewable Energy

**Wilo (UK)**  
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[www.wilo.co.uk](http://www.wilo.co.uk)

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**Remmers UK Ltd**  
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[www.remmers.co.uk](http://www.remmers.co.uk)

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[www.coilltepanelproducts.com](http://www.coilltepanelproducts.com)

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**Airflow Developments Ltd**  
Tel: 01494 525252  
[www.airflow.com](http://www.airflow.com)

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[www.uksprayfoam.co.uk](http://www.uksprayfoam.co.uk)

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[www.nuaire.co.uk](http://www.nuaire.co.uk)

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[www.spirotech.co.uk](http://www.spirotech.co.uk)

**Total Home Environment**  
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[www.wavin.co.uk](http://www.wavin.co.uk)

# HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

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