

HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

05.18



Shocking
Grenfell report
leaked

Crackdown on
rogue landlords

Councils
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HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

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Publisher:
Lesley Mayo

News Editor:
Patrick Mooney
patrick@netmagmedia.eu

Assistant Editor:
Sébastien Reed

Editorial Assistant:
Jack Wooler

Studio Manager:
Mikey Pooley

Production Assistants:
Carmen Simpson
Georgia Musson

Sales Executives:
Suzanne Easter
Kim Friend

Circulation:
Jane Spice

Managing Director:
Simon Reed

Cointronic House,
Station Road,
Heathfield,
East Sussex TN21 8DF

Advertising &
administration
Tel: 01435 863500
info@netmagmedia.eu
www.housingmmonline.co.uk

Editorial features
Tel: 01435 863500
sbreed@netmagmedia.co.uk

Press Releases
editorial@netmagmedia.eu

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Editor's comment

Busy agenda for the new Housing Secretary



Patrick Mooney,
News Editor

So the cabinet minister merry go round has been hard at work (again) and we find ourselves with a new Housing Secretary in the shape of James Brokenshire, after his predecessor was moved to the Home Office. The new minister has inherited a very busy agenda, with little time to make his mark.

Top of the list must surely be dealing with the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, ensuring the survivors are properly looked after and sympathetically rehoused, while at the same time helping residents of similarly clad high rise blocks to get on with their lives safe in the knowledge that their homes are neither a fire risk, or the source of an impending financial disaster.

The leaked report by the Building Research Establishment laid bare the awful facts behind the fire, where it seems corners were cut and 72 lives were needlessly lost. Over the coming weeks and months, the public inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire will hear harrowing accounts of what happened on the night of June 14 last year. It's been more than 11 months since the tragedy but there is little in the way of solid evidence to show we are any closer to preventing a similar catastrophe.

The fact there was a similar fire at Lakanal House in Southwark eight years earlier which killed six people is a reminder that strong, direct action is required. The coroner who ran inquests into the six deaths made a set of clear recommendations – many of them on fire safety and building regulations – but these were never properly implemented. James Brokenshire needs to show his mettle by driving through a safety first agenda and scrapping the 'penny pinching and cutting corners culture' that has built up in so many parts of the construction and maintenance sectors.

AFFORDABILITY, QUALITY AND SECURITY

It is clear from the tone and content of the Labour Party's green paper on social housing that they spent a lot of time talking to survivors of the Grenfell fire and to many tenants of councils and housing association, as well as workers from across the sector. The new Housing Secretary would do well to borrow ideas from the opposition or to replicate their approach.

His predecessor did a reasonable job at listening to people who live and work in the sector. He certainly appeared to get the message about the importance of providing housing for all and not just those fortunate enough to be able to buy their home. But Sajid Javid was not always successful in winning arguments with the Treasury or Number 10 and this limited his impact.

Rented housing is a hugely important asset to this country, but we need much more of it at an affordable price and of a quality which makes people happy to live in it. The private rented sector continues to grow and in recent years it has been the subject of lots of new regulations designed to improve the quality of properties and landlords. There is still a need to introduce longer, more secure tenancies and possibly rent controls to protect tenants and encourage them to put down deeper roots. But good landlords also need safeguards and reassurances. If Mr Brokenshire can succeed in delivering all of this then he will get a very loud three cheers from me.

RESOURCES AND FOCUS

His in-tray probably contains reports from the Resolution Foundation and the Trussell Trust, which focus on the plight of young adults struggling in the housing market and of the growing numbers of low-income families who are reliant on food banks for everyday essentials. Meanwhile the BBC and NHF have produced reports on the growing unaffordability of rents, with growing numbers of Baby Boomers facing difficulties in paying their rent.

Homelessness is continuing to rise and it was horrific to read reports that over the course of the last winter more people died on the streets than in the Grenfell fire. Councils have been given new powers and responsibilities to tackle homelessness, but they also need the financial resources and access to new homes so they can support and rehouse families.

Cases like the Bristol family of five who spent over three years in a single hotel room with no cooking facilities after they lost their private tenancy and were unable to make a housing application, are rare but by no means unknown. Legally families should not have to stay longer than six weeks in Bed & Breakfast hotels while they are found housing, but thousands are having to endure much longer waits, often in unsuitable conditions.

Solving these issues does not come cheap. After a disastrous start to the year for the construction sector, it is unlikely the Government will get close to its target of building 300,000 new homes a year. Mr Brokenshire deserves some time and space to show his intent, but for the sake of the Grenfell survivors, the residents of other high-rise blocks and the many thousands of homeless people waiting for a decent home, I hope he turns out to be a lucky minister with a great track record of successfully ticking items off his 'To Do' list as jobs well done.

Patrick Mooney



On the cover...

The May issue of Housing Management & Maintenance features a follow-up of the now award-winning refurbishment by Nottingham City Homes in Sneinton.

Read more on page 24...

Fatal shortcomings at Grenfell Tower revealed in leaked report ahead of public inquiry resumption

A leaked report into the causes of the Grenfell Tower fire has revealed the shocking findings that all 72 deaths could have been prevented, as a catalogue of errors were made in the block's refurbishment project.

The report will inevitably increase the pressure on the Police and Crown Prosecution Service to pursue manslaughter charges against various individuals and firms or bodies associated with work on the high-rise block. But it also raises serious questions about the actions of Kensington & Chelsea Council, their Tenant Management Organisation and the Government, who failed to implement changes to building regulations and fire safety standards after six people died in a fire at Lakanal House in 2009, just a few miles across the capital in Southwark.

The public inquiry into the Grenfell fire resumes this month with, it seems, precious little progress having been made in the past 11 months. There are tenants of the tower block still waiting to be permanently rehoused, while residents of similar high-rise blocks wait for their homes to be made safe. Doubts have been raised about the reliability of the Government enforced testing regime, and so far Ministers have failed to find funding for safety works or to agree any kind of common standards with landlords of other tower blocks in the public, social and private sectors.

The leaked report was written by experts at the Building Research Establishment and commissioned by the Metropolitan Police. A copy was sent to the Evening Standard and its publication shocked Grenfell residents, council staff and housing professionals over the scale of the problems that were uncovered. A spokesperson for the survivors' group, Grenfell United, said its findings were shocking and showed "an industry that is broken".

There was a litany of deficiencies in the £10m refurbishment project of the 24-storey block including a widespread failure to meet building regulations. The report shows in detail how the original concrete building was turned from a safe structure into a tinderbox by the refurbishment between 2014 and 2016.

DAMNING FINDINGS

It says the fire on 14 June would not have spread beyond its source in Flat 16 and would not have

claimed a single life, if the original facade of the building had not been re-clad. (71 residents died on the night and in the immediate aftermath, with a further resident falling victim some months later.) The 2014-16 refurbishment failed in several fundamental areas to meet fire safety standards set out in building regulations — known as Approved Document B. Taken together, these areas proved critical for the rapid spread of flames across the length and breadth of the building.

The report is damning in its findings and will inevitably lead to calls for fundamental actions to safeguard tens of thousands of residents of other tower blocks and ensure further potential disasters are prevented from happening. At present, many tower blocks across the country are being watched around the clock by fire wardens, but this is costly and cannot go on indefinitely. The report also puts significant pressure on the Government to ensure no stone is unturned in efforts to change industry practices and to end a cost saving culture that saw corners cut and people's lives put at risk.

The report identifies five significant breaches of building regulations that appear directly implicated in the loss of life:

- Large gaps between the building and cladding that fanned the fire;
- Gaps in window frame surrounds that helped flames spread;
- The insulation used was combustible and spread the fire;
- Panels had a flammable core that also spread the fire; and
- Many of the front doors to flats lacked door closers, or had faulty closers.

The BRE report notes that individual breaches relating to the cladding system assume far greater importance when "considered in combination as opposed to when they occur in isolation". In addition the report says there was only room for just "a single fire engine" on the hard standing at the base of the east side of the tower, while firefighting facilities were "deficient", due to poor access and the lack of a wet rising main. Landscaping around the base of the tower prevented other fire engines getting close enough to it.

BRE cites two other breaches of building regulations — the absence of a sprinkler system and



the single stairwell being 8cm too narrow. However, it does not necessarily regard these weaknesses as directly responsible for loss of life. It adds that the stairwell would have been "difficult and expensive to change as part of any refurbishment". Meanwhile a separate Police test conducted on one of the fire doors recovered from Grenfell Tower found that it could only withstand a fire for 15 minutes – just half the 30 minutes it was meant to last for.

After the BRE report was leaked, a spokesperson for Grenfell United said the findings were not surprising. "It was clear to us the refurbishment was shoddy and second rate. We raised concerns time and time again. We were not just ignored but bullied to keep quiet. That a refurbishment could make our homes dangerous and unsafe shows the contractors put profit before lives." It is hard to argue or disagree with those words in the light of what we now know.

INQUIRY RESUMES

Further tests on the fire resistance of doors and lifts, and the safety of the gas installation were being carried out after the leaked report was written. The Continued on next page...

During Prime Minister's Questions, Theresa May has promised £400 million of new money to pay for the cost of removing dangerous cladding from council tower blocks and its replacement. However, she made no mention of funding the removal of similar cladding from privately owned tower blocks, nor for the installation of water sprinkler systems in older high rise blocks.

Continued from previous page...

public inquiry resumes on 21st May, with expert witnesses due to start giving evidence in June. The first six months of the inquiry will focus solely on what happened on the night of the fire. Months of further evidence examining why it happened will follow. A timetable for that larger part of the inquiry has yet to be set, but it could run into 2020 according to lawyers involved with it.

A mound of confusion has been fanned by reports on the fire retardant qualities of the cladding panels used, with conflicting statements and reports uncovered from the manufacturer and the different testing systems and regimes in use. It remains unclear if building companies here were aware of the results of the tests which gave the panels very low fire resistant ratings.

Across the country various social landlords are proceeding with works to remove faulty cladding and to install water sprinkler systems in high-rise blocks. But the work is bespoke and carried out to different specifications as the Government has failed to take ownership of the problem and formulate a standard solution. It appears to be waiting on the Hackitt Review to complete before it commits itself.

It also does not appear willing to provide funds for the fire safety works being undertaken and instead Ministers are repeating a mantra that all landlords are responsible for the safety of their buildings. This is not a reassuring approach for the tens of thousands of residents living in tower blocks with similar cladding to that used on Grenfell Tower.

An inconsistent response is also emerging in the private sector where at least one builder, Barratts, has decided to pay for re-cladding work at a high-rise tower it built, but no longer has a direct interest in as it is neither the freeholder, nor providing

management services. Other owners and management service companies appear unwilling to take on the cost of safety works and are hoping that insurers, builders, individual leaseholders or the Government will stump up the hundreds of millions required.

During a hearing of the Treasury select committee, Rushanara Ali, MP for Bethnal Green and Bow, in east London, said only seven out of 160 social housing blocks with flammable cladding similar to that used at Grenfell had so far had it replaced. She added that Ministers were not aware of how many private blocks were similarly affected and their residents should not have to "wait years" before the work is done.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond replied that social landlords had a duty to ensure their properties were safe and a lack of finance should not prevent urgent safety work from taking place. He said the Housing Ministry might relax council borrowing rules or spending caps to fund repair work.

He acknowledged the situation in relation to private blocks was "more complicated". "I accept it is a challenge. But there is only a certain amount of finance available and diverting public housing funding to leaseholders in private blocks would be a very significant decision."

CREDIBILITY DOUBTS

Credibility issues have been raised by the Association of British Insurers (ABI) who along with the Fire Protection Association question whether the fire testing systems used to measure the flammability of various materials are realistic or valid. They have come out and said the tests done in the aftermath of the fire, do not replicate the conditions in the 'real world'. They say this makes

them inadequate and underestimates the ferocity of real fires.

There are also claims that the manufacturers of panels have been gaming the system, or cheating the tests. This is similar to practices used by car manufacturers in the engine emission testing scandal. This has already led to calls for only non-combustible materials to be used in tower block construction, refurbishment and cladding works. And for the Government to stop using the tests to confirm the fire performance of systems already installed on buildings.

Huw Evans, the director general of the ABI, said the building control system was now "broken". He added: "This latest research is yet more evidence that fundamental reform is needed to keep our homes and commercial premises safe from fire. It is a matter of urgency that we create the right testing regime that properly replicates real world conditions and keeps pace with building innovation and modern design."

His message was echoed by Lord Gary Porter, chair of the Local Government Association representing all local authorities across England. Following release of the ABI findings, he said: "Using non-combustible material only would provide clarity to all types of landlords who remain unsure about what they should use to re-clad and insulate their buildings. The tragedy at Grenfell Tower must never be allowed to happen again."

None of this will reassure tower block residents (tenants and leaseholders), who surely ought to be a priority after suffering almost a year of anguish since the terrible events of last June. It is time for the Government and the new Housing Secretary to step up and play a more prominent leadership role in resolving all of the issues raised by the Grenfell fire.

Dame Judith Hackitt's review of building regulations has condemned the current "ambiguous and inconsistent" system but has stopped short of calling for a ban on the use of combustible materials in cladding. Instead she says a cultural shift needs to take place to improve safety at every stage from design and construction to on-going management and maintenance, with priority given to the 2,000 to 3,000 "high risk" residential buildings with more than 10 stories. The current system had created a culture where the prime motivation was to do things as quickly and cheaply as possible... "a race to the bottom".

New housing secretary of state appointed

The new Housing Secretary is James Brokenshire MP for Old Bexley and Sidcup, situated between south east London and Kent. He replaces Sajid Javid who moved to the Home Office after almost two years in charge of the housing brief.

Mr Brokenshire last served in the cabinet as Northern Ireland Secretary between July 2016 and

January 2018, but stood down in order to receive treatment for lung cancer. A former junior minister in the Home Office, the Right to Rent checks for landlords were brought in under his watch. These controversially require private landlords to check on the immigration status of those they rent homes to.

Mr Brokenshire inherits a busy and challenging work agenda including dealing with the aftermath

of the Grenfell Tower fire, implementing the Hackitt Review, delivering on last year's Housing White Paper and a stretching programme of 300,000 new homes a year, a variety of changes to the private rented sector and a long delayed Green Paper on social housing.

On his appointment, Mr Brokenshire said: "One of my top priorities is going to be ensuring everyone affected by the Grenfell Tower fire gets the support they need and we learn lessons from the tragedy so something like this can never happen again. I am also looking forward to working with councils across the country by supporting them to deliver quality public services and build strong integrated communities."

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Confusion and fears in private sector as residents of one tower block are spared £2m bill

Residents of a private high-rise block in Croydon clad in similar panels to Grenfell Tower have been told they will not have to pay £2million to make their homes safe.

Barratt Homes who built the Citiscape block has said it will pay to have the panels removed as well as funding the ongoing cost of 24-hour fire wardens, saving residents an estimated £31,300 per flat.

Barratt's decision came as a surprise because the firm has no ongoing relationship with the block, which is managed by an agent for a separate freeholder, and comes after a housing tribunal in March ruled resident leaseholders were liable for the costs.

Meanwhile residents across London in Battersea are facing five-figure bills each for the removal of Grenfell type cladding from their block. Leaseholders of the Sesame apartments fear they are trapped in unsellable homes while the Astor management company claims it is not responsible for the costs.

Residents of 80 flats are each facing bills of up to £40,000 because the building is clad with flammable panels similar to those used on Grenfell Tower. Initial bills are to cover a new fire alarm and the cost of a 24-hour watch for the building. They fear a

further £2.2m bill for replacing the combustible panels will also fall to them. The freeholder and management company said they hoped insurers and warranty providers would pay the bill.

DEVALUED

The same type of cladding panels were also used at a complex of more than 1,000 flats at New Capital Quay, Greenwich, where one resident was told by a building surveyor that her £475,000 flat had fallen in value to just £50,000 because the original developer has no plans to remove the cladding.

Homes England has written to the same leaseholder saying she only has to repay £10,000 of her £95,000 Help to Buy loan after she wrote to them about her predicament. This could prove very costly for the taxpayer, who funds the loans and similar packages.

Sajid Javid, the former Housing Secretary said before moving to the Home Office: "I applaud Barratt Developments' decision to cover the costs of fire safety works. They have listened to the concerns of Citiscape residents, engaged with Government and done the right thing."

"Other building owners and housebuilders in the private sector should follow the example set by

Barratt Developments to protect leaseholders from costs and begin essential fire safety works. I want to see all leaseholders in this position get the peace of mind they deserve and I am keeping this under review."

Across England some 306 residential buildings of more than 18 storeys, have been identified as having cladding that has failed fire tests since the Grenfell tragedy. In common with many other blocks the cladding at the Sesame apartments is still in place but the "stay-put policy" for residents in the event of a fire there has been abandoned in favour of evacuation.

Steve Reed MP added: "This is fantastic news for residents in Citiscape who were facing unaffordable debt to make their homes safe." But he highlighted the fact that Barratt's decision represented a one-off – and said the Government should be prepared to pay for the removal of flammable cladding in private blocks.

"The Government's intransigent refusal to set out a plan to remove flammable cladding wherever it is found has left tens of thousands of residents in fear. The Government must accept responsibility for the failure of their safety regulations and take all flammable cladding down."

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MPs demand greater legal protection for vulnerable tenants in private sector

An influential Select Committee has called for private sector tenants to be safeguarded from retaliatory evictions, rent increases and harassment from their landlords. It also wants councils to be given extra powers to takeover properties from rogue landlords.

MPs on the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee say strong measures are needed so tenants can safely make complaints about poor conditions in their homes and demand essential repairs and maintenance works are carried out.

In a new report on the private rented sector, the Committee says there is a 'clear power imbalance' in parts of the sector with tenants often unwilling to complain to landlords about conditions in their homes such as excess cold, mould or faulty wiring, for fear of reprisals.

They called for more robust penalties to deal with the worst landlords and for the Government to give local authorities the power to confiscate properties from those committing the most flagrant offences and whose business model relies on the exploitation of vulnerable tenants.

OVERCROWDING

During their inquiry, the Committee heard how in some areas up to 25 people could be found living in houses of just three-bedrooms, while some landlords charged rent of up to £500 for a bed in a room with four bunkbeds.

Meanwhile the Residential Landlords Association has responded by saying sufficient regulatory powers already exist and the main problem is that councils lack the resources and in some cases the political will, to take enforcement action where necessary against bad landlords who let down the whole sector.

Last year the RLA conducted a Freedom of Information exercise across all local authorities in England and Wales to measure enforcement activity over a five-year period, 2012/13 to 2016/17. This found there was a three per cent fall in inspections by councils related to the regulatory standard for private rented housing, known as the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). There was a seven per cent decrease in the number of Hazard Awareness Notices issued.

While the Committee acknowledged the legislation introduced in recent years to strengthen protections for tenants – including civil penalties of up to £30,000 and banning orders for criminal landlords – the Committee heard that local authorities have insufficient resources to undertake their enforcement duties. MPs want to see stronger powers, harsher fines and a new commitment to cracking down on unscrupulous practices.

POWER IMBALANCE

Clive Betts MP, Chair of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, said: "The imbalance in power in the private rented sector means vulnerable tenants often lack protection from unscrupulous landlords who can threaten them with retaliatory rent rises and eviction if they complain about unacceptable conditions in their homes. Local authorities need the power to levy more substantial fines against landlords and in the case of the most serious offenders, ultimately to be able to confiscate their properties.

"Such powers are meaningless if they are not enforced and at the same time councils need more resources to carry out effective prosecutions. Stronger powers, harsher fines and a new commitment to cracking down on unscrupulous practices will go some way towards rebalancing the

sector and protecting the many thousands of vulnerable residents who have been abused and harassed by a landlord."

The report recommends:

- Tenants need greater legal protections from retaliatory eviction, rent increases and harassment;
- The establishment of a new fund to support local authorities to undertake informal enforcement activities;
- The introduction of new ways of informing tenants and landlords of their rights and responsibilities;
- A requirement for local authorities to publish their enforcement strategies online; and
- A review of legislation relating to the private rented sector aimed at bringing more clarity for tenants, landlords and local authorities.

The report found a significant minority of homes in the private rented sector are shockingly inadequate. While the proportion of non-decent homes has declined over the last ten years, the absolute number has increased as the sector has grown.

The Committee concluded that enforcement of existing legislation to protect tenants had been far too low with six out of 10 councils not prosecuting a single landlord in their areas in the whole of 2016.

RLA Chairman Alan Ward supported much of the Committee's findings, but added: "It is vital that Ministers adopt the Committee's recommendation for the speedy establishment of a new housing court. This key proposal called for by the RLA would improve the speed of and access to justice for tenants and landlords. At present the courts are not fit for purpose when seeking to uphold tenant and landlord rights."

Ombudsman slams council after homeless family lived in hotel room for three years

A Bristol family was forced to share a single hotel room for more than three years because of failures in the council's homelessness system, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman found.

The family was evicted from their private tenancy flat in early 2014. After asking Bristol Council for help, they had to stay in single hotel rooms with no cooking facilities and frequently had to move at short notice. As a result of mistakes by council staff and failures to properly implement procedures, the family's housing application

was not registered until March last year.

Two of their children have visual impairments and were being schooled in their hotel room. This led to the council's children's services department being involved, but they failed to refer the case to the housing department.

The Ombudsman found the council failed to accept the family's homelessness application and reportedly tried to charge the family the full cost for storing their belongings while living in a hotel room. In normal circumstances families should

only be accommodated in hotels for a maximum period of six weeks.

Michael King, said the council followed his recommendations once the investigation began. He said the council found a home for the family within two months of them being placed on the register, which suggested "just how desperate the family's situation was."

The council apologised for any hurt caused to the family, and "any failures that led to them living in unsuitable conditions for such a long time". Their statement added "While we recognise the situation was unacceptable for a family with young children, we do believe that we tried to do our best for the family on a number of occasions." The case "did not live up to our usual high standards," but said "the length of time since the application and the difficulties in making meaningful contact with the family" made the case unusual.

At least 78 homeless people died on the streets over winter

At least 78 homeless people have died on the streets and in temporary accommodation this winter – equivalent to more than two deaths a week and more than the number who died in the Grenfell Tower fire, which has dominated the social housing agenda for the past year.

Research undertaken by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism revealed the number of deaths on the streets and in shelters. It brings the total number of recorded deaths of homeless people to more than 300 since 2013.

The figures could even be an under-estimate of the true figure as no part of Whitehall records homeless death statistics at a national level, and local authorities are not required to record the information. The rise in homeless deaths comes as the BIJ launches its Dying Homeless project, which aims to establish accurate statistics on the issue by putting pressure on the Government to officially record the data.

Last month, the Guardian newspaper reported the annual number of recorded deaths of homeless people has more than doubled over the last five years, rising from 32 in 2013 to 77 in 2017. So far, 40 deaths have already been recorded in the first four months of 2018, meaning at least 318 homeless people have died since 2013.

The average age of rough sleepers who died in the last five years was 43, around half the usual life expectancy in the UK. Where local authorities provided a gender, the figures showed that 88 per cent of those who died were men.

Rough sleeping has increased by 169 per cent since 2010 with an estimated 4,751 people bedding down outdoors in 2017. Charities say the official figures fail to capture the true level of street homelessness. Austerity, rising rents and a lack of social housing have all been blamed for the rise in homeless deaths, with charities calling for multi-agency investigations after every death.

Jeremy Swain, chief executive of Thames Reach works with homeless people in London. He called on the Government to record statistics to help identify the true extent of the problem.

“Triggered by public concern at the inexorable rise in rough sleeping, there is now much greater urgency from Government to tackle rough sleeping across the country. In order to understand the issues that lead to people sleeping rough and find solutions to end their homelessness, we need strong data about who is sleeping rough. It is extraordinary and unacceptable that national data on rough sleepers is so limited,” he said.

Most councils struggling to find housing for the homeless

The majority of local councils in England are struggling to find stable housing for homeless people in their area, leaving them forced to place more and more people in unstable temporary accommodation.

A new report from the charities Crisis and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found 70 per cent of councils had difficulties finding social housing for homeless people last year, while 89 per cent reported difficulties in finding private rented accommodation.

As a result many councils have been forced to place more homeless people in temporary accommodation, including Bed & Breakfast hotels and short-stay hostels, leading to urgent calls for more permanent and genuinely affordable homes to be built.

The report warns that 78,000 homeless households in England are in temporary accommodation and, if current trends continue, more than 100,000 households will be trapped in temporary accommodation by 2020.

LIMITED OPTIONS

The Homelessness Monitor: England - an annual independent study funded by Crisis and JRF and carried out by Heriot-Watt University, is the most comprehensive homelessness study of its kind. Published every year since 2011, it includes a national survey of councils, statistical analysis, and in-depth interviews with council and national government representatives and charities working with homeless people.

Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick, the report's lead author, said: "This year's Homelessness Monitor has, again, provided evidence of the profound, cumulative and adverse impact of welfare reform on access to housing for low-income groups, especially in high-value markets.

"The options are narrowing for local authorities charged with preventing and resolving homelessness, as benefit-reliant households are entirely priced out of the private rented sector in some parts of the country. At the same time, homeless people's access to a diminishing pool of social tenancies is increasingly constrained by landlord nervousness about letting to households whose incomes are now so very low that even properties let at social rents can be unaffordable to them."

The report found that the problem of rising homelessness pressures is not limited to London. 40 per cent of councils in London said the number of people seeking help from their homelessness services had risen over the last year, compared to 76 per cent in the Midlands, 70 per cent in the south and 62 per cent in the north.

The report warns that 78,000 homeless households in England are in temporary accommodation

RELUCTANCE

Crisis and JRF say more must be done to solve the problem – in particular that the Government must build more social housing and ensure that homeless people can access it. In the report, the councils reported a growing reluctance among landlords to rent to people on welfare.

The charities welcome the Government's recent actions on homelessness, including the pledge to end rough sleeping by 2027 and the establishment of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Implementation Taskforce, but more must be done urgently.

Jon Sparkes, chief executive of Crisis, said: "It's truly terrible that, across England, councils are finding it increasingly difficult to find homeless people somewhere to live. This means ever more people are ending up trapped in B&Bs and hostels, with no stability and often in cramped conditions.

"Our report makes it clear that, unless we take action as a society, this problem will only keep getting worse. Homelessness is not inevitable and our research has shown how it can become a thing of the past."

UNACCEPTABLE

Campbell Robb, chief executive of JRF, said: "It is simply unacceptable that more and more people face the misery and insecurity of living in bed and breakfasts and other forms of temporary accommodation in England today.

"We have a shared responsibility to ensure everyone can access a decent and safe home, especially at times of crisis in people's lives. High housing costs, low pay and insecure work are locking people in poverty restricting their choices: with councils finding it harder to help, more families are being forced into temporary accommodation. This is not right.

"A failure by successive Governments to build enough genuinely affordable homes has contributed to this situation. The Government has recognised the problem with its Homelessness Reduction Act, and the forthcoming social housing green paper is an opportunity to commit to building the low-cost rented homes we need to release families from the grip of poverty."

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A third of millennials 'face renting their entire life'

Up to a third of young people face living in private rented accommodation for all of their lives, a new report by the Resolution Foundation think tank has found.

The Foundation's 'Home Improvements' report says Generation Rent need much more help in the housing market. It called for more affordable homes for first-time buyers to be built, as well as better protection for those who rent.

The think tank said 40 per cent of Millennials (those born between 1980 and 1996) were living in rented housing by the age of 30, a figure that is twice as many as for Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980). Although renting is often a reasonable choice for people who have few ties, the private rented sector is "far less fit for purpose" for those with children because of a lack of security.

It predicts an explosion in the housing benefits bill once the Millennial generation reaches retirement age, with the housing benefit bill for pensioners forecast to rise by 250 per cent from £6.3bn today to £16bn by 2060.

Lindsay Judge, senior policy analyst at the Resolution Foundation, said: "Britain's housing problems have developed into a full-blown crisis and young people are bearing the brunt - paying a record share of their income on housing in return for living in smaller, rented accommodation.

"While there have been some steps recently to support housebuilding and first-time buyers, up to a third of Millennials still face the prospect of renting from cradle to grave. If we want to tackle Britain's housing crisis we have to improve conditions for the millions of families living in private rented accommodation. That means raising standards and

reducing the risks associating with renting through tenancy reform."

The report says the tax system should be changed to discourage second home ownership, reducing stamp duty for people who own one home and increasing surcharges for second home owners.

PRS OVERHAUL

It also calls for a radical overhaul of the private rented sector, proposing a three-year cap on rent increases, limiting rises to the consumer price index inflation rate and the introduction of 'indeterminate' tenancies as the sole form of contract in England and Wales. These would replace the standard six-month or 12-month tenancies used by most landlords.

They say this would follow Scotland's lead, where open-ended tenancies began in December 2017, and is the standard practice in Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland.

Not surprisingly there was a robust reaction from the private landlords body, who criticised any suggestion of rent controls. David Cox, Chief Executive of the Association of Residential Letting Agents, said: "The last time rent controls existed in this country, the private rented sector shrunk from 90 per cent (of all housing) to just seven per cent.

"At a time of demand for private rented homes massively outstripping supply, rent controls will cause the sector to shrink. In turn, this means professional landlords will only take the very best tenants and the vulnerable and low-income people that rent controls are designed to help will be forced into the hands of rogue and criminal operators, who may exploit them."



The Resolution Foundation's report says that public policy has failed to keep up with extraordinary changes in those who are renting. "In 2003, the number of children in owner-occupied housing outnumbered those in the private rented sector by eight to one. That ratio has now fallen to two to one."

Resolution's intergenerational commission is also calling for the UK to tax foreign investors in rented property more heavily, along the lines of Vancouver in Canada and Australia, where external buyers face levies of up to 15 per cent. It also sets out a number of reforms to improve the supply of houses in the UK, including giving local councils more powers to compulsorily acquire land and greater access to finance to build affordable homes.

Call for tax changes as young renters face 'perfect storm'

The Residential Landlords Association has asked the Government to reconsider the way landlords are taxed after a report from the Resolution Foundation claimed 16 per cent of young people will never own their own home.

Responding to the report RLA policy director David Smith said Government needs to focus on pro-growth taxation policies to help landlords provide the extra homes to let that are needed.

"The report shows the perfect storm that young people face. With home ownership remaining difficult for many to access, demand for homes to rent continues to increase. This is at a time when Government tax increases are discouraging many landlords from investing in new homes to rent out.

"Ministers need to make pragmatic changes to their approach to private rented housing, with a

series of policies that support, rather than attack, the majority of private landlords who are individuals to invest in the new homes to rent we need alongside all other tenures.

"This includes greater support and encouragement for those prepared to offer longer tenancies but who are concerned about being locked into agreements where tenants might be failing to pay their rent, not looking after their property or committing anti-social behaviour."

Surveys by the RLA's research arm PEARL found 69 per cent of landlords are put off investing in further homes to rent as a result of the Government's three per cent stamp duty levy on the purchase of homes to rent out.

The RLA is calling for a number of reforms to support those in rented housing, including:

- Waiving the stamp duty levy where landlords invest in property adding to the net overall supply of housing;
- Using a combination of tax incentives and improvements to the process for regaining possession of a home where tenants are neglecting it or not paying the rent (73 per cent of landlord have told the RLA that they would be encouraged to offer longer-term tenancies if such reforms were made);
- Action to stop mortgage providers from prohibiting landlords from offering longer tenancies (44 per cent of landlords have told the RLA that they have mortgage conditions that limit the maximum length of tenancy that can be offered);
- Establishing a new housing court to improve and speed up access to justice for tenants and landlords when things go wrong; and
- Providing relief from Capital Gains Tax where a landlord is prepared to sell a property to a sitting tenant to support first time home ownership.

News in brief

- Less than five per cent of the Government housing subsidy is being spent on new homes. More than 95 per cent of the state's housing subsidy was instead spent on housing benefit and support for mortgage interest, new analysis has revealed. Research from the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) has found that only 4.3 per cent of this investment was actually spent on building new homes, down from 82 per cent in 1975/76. The UK Housing Review 2018 showed that investment in social housing has dropped from £13.7bn in 1979/80 to £5.1bn in 2016/17, in today's prices. Chief executive of CIH, Terrie Alafat, said: "The Government has pledged to deliver 300,000 new homes a year. That is absolutely the right ambition, but we are never going to reach that target unless more investment is switched to bricks and mortar. Investing in new homes would help make housing more affordable for people who are struggling – and it is also the only sustainable way to cut the housing benefit bill in the long-term." The review also reveals that 1.97 million homes have been sold through right to buy across England between 1980 and 2016/17.
- The National Fire Chiefs Council has called for a clear duty holder with responsibility for fire safety at every building to be introduced through the Hackitt Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety Standards. Mark Hardingham, chair of the NFCC's protection and business safety committee, said: "NFCC has been clear in its submission to the Hackitt Review that a clear 'duty holder' is required to ensure those who do not take their fire safety responsibilities seriously are easily identifiable and can be dealt with appropriately through the courts."
- Labour has vowed to restore legal aid funding for advice work on all housing cases, reversing cuts made five years ago. The commitment could help up to 50,000 people a year enforce their housing rights at a cost £9m a year. In 2012/13 housing advice was provided in 85,192 cases, but by 2016/17 that had fallen to 35,474. The party claims the number of legal advice cases has plummeted by almost three-quarters, from 573,739 in April 2013 to 147,284, with housing and welfare rights among the areas most badly affected. Under the current guidelines, legal advice is not available for housing disrepair cases unless they have become so serious that they are affecting a resident's health. A Citizens Advice study has estimated that every pound of legal aid spent on housing advice could potentially save the state £2.34.



New student letting service will save landlords in agency costs

A new online student letting service that covers landlords for up to six months' worth of unpaid rent if the tenant is unable to pay, and reduces costs for landlords by more than a third, has launched in Bristol.

The easy-to-use platform, Conker, has access to thousands of university students looking for accommodation in the Bristol area. With backing from Unite Students, the UK's largest accommodation provider of its kind that houses more than 50,000 students, Conker will use Unite's network to connect landlords and students.

On average, landlords pay £3,300 per property to fill and / or manage their multi occupancy properties. With Conker, these costs are reduced by more than a third, and landlords can decide how involved they want to be in the management of their properties, as well as having a dedicated account manager.

The student letting service also has additional

24/7 support for maintenance requests and student queries to remove hassle for people who let out their second or third property or those who do it as a full-time business.

Neil Hinwood, Head of Proposition and Service Design at Conker, said: "Conker takes away some of the pitfalls of being a landlord by covering them with up to half a year's unpaid rent and helping them to avoid the hefty letting agent fees to find and manage tenants. Not only that, it gives landlords access to thousands of students that are trustworthy and in need of housing.

"Conker serves the gap in the market to make student lettings much more convenient and secure for the landlord. With the backing of an established company like Unite Students, we feel that people will be able to trust Conker to make their lives easier when letting property to students." To find out more, you can visit <https://getconker.com/landlord>.

Council seeks to limit number of student houses in city

Liverpool City Council has told landlords to stop converting family homes into student accommodation in part of the city, unless they obtain specific permission to do so after complaints from residents about anti-social behaviour.

The council's cabinet has approved plans to control the number of converted properties in the Dales area of Wavertree, which already has approximately 700 HMOs and has resulted in the area being referred to as a student village.

Existing conversions for student lets are

unaffected by the new order. It came about after the council received hundreds of complaints about noise, litter, bad behaviour and late night parties, which residents said was changing the family-friendly feel of the area.

A consultation exercise received almost unanimous support from residents who complained that large numbers of family sized properties were being bought by absent landlords and converted into 'students digs' with six or more students per property.



Universal Credit is driving record numbers to foodbanks

The country's largest food bank network, the Trussell Trust gave out a record 1.3m food parcels last year, up 13 per cent on the previous year, as people struggled with the roll out of Universal Credit and other welfare reforms. Food parcels were given to an estimated 666,000 people in 2017/18, with 484,000 parcels going to children. In the past five years the number of food parcels given out by the Trust has risen by almost 50 per cent, up from 913,138 in 2013/14.

In their latest annual report, the Trust identified a growing proportion of referrals to them for support was because benefit levels are not covering the cost of everyday essentials. The problem is worse for those people who have been on the new benefit system for longer.

Food banks in areas where the full Universal Credit service has been in place for 12 months or more were four times as busy, recording an average 52 per cent increase in the number of three-day emergency food packages distributed.

The Trust says many UC claimants came to food banks after long waits for benefit payments and administrative problems pushed them into debt, ill health and rent arrears. It is calling for an urgent inquiry into the administration of UC and an end to the benefits freeze, as well as more practical help for the poorest claimants.

UNACCEPTABLE

The highest reason for referrals to the Trust was low income (28 per cent), followed by benefit delays (24 per cent) and changes in benefits, including sanctions (18 per cent). Debts run up in order to meet housing costs and energy bills accounted for

an increasing percentage of food bank referrals.

"This is completely unacceptable. We need to move towards being a country where no one needs a food bank's help, not a country where charity provision is the only defence from utter destitution," said Emma Revie, the Trust's Chief Executive.

Research into the experiences of food bank users published by the Trust found a "significant scale" of poor benefits administration. Claimants reported they found the digital-only UC service hard to navigate, with little or no official support or financial assistance to help them cope or tide them over the six-week wait for their first payment. A lack of money meant some had been forced to give up a home internet connection or smartphone, making it harder for them to access the benefit.

The report says: "Rather than acting as a service to ensure people do not face destitution, the evidence suggests that for people on the very lowest incomes ... the poor functioning of universal credit can actually push people into a tide of bills, debts and, ultimately, lead them to a food bank.

"People are falling through the cracks in a system not made to hold them. What little support available is primarily offered by the third sector, whose work is laudable, but cannot be a substitute for a real, nationwide safety net."

The Trust surveyed 284 users of 30 food banks in England, Scotland and Wales during February and March. Disabled people, claimants affected by chronic health conditions and families with dependent children were especially vulnerable to problems arising from the design or operation of UC. A Government spokesperson dismissed the findings due to the small survey size.

Huge fine for private landlord over fire safety failures

A record six-figure fine has been imposed on a Birmingham landlord after the city council discovered well over 30 fire safety issues in four properties she let as houses of multiple occupation.

Lelia Amjadi, of Sutton Coldfield, was ordered by Birmingham Magistrates Court to pay a total of £182,315 – made up of an initial £85,000 fine, costs to the council at £22,975, a victim surcharge of £170, and financial compensation to 11 of the tenants totalling £22,000. Her company, Vertu Capital, was also found guilty of 21 offences relating to two HMO properties and was fined £52,000, plus a victim surcharge of £170.

After the case Robert James, director of housing at Birmingham City Council said:

"We are delighted with the result. This is the largest fine that Birmingham has seen for these type of offences, and it sends out a strong message to all landlords that the council will use all its enforcement powers to ensure that tenants are protected from rogue landlords who neglect their responsibilities."

The 35 offences were associated with four properties Ms Amjadi owns in the Selly Oak and Edgbaston areas of Birmingham. They included the failure to obtain houses in multiple occupation licences and breaches under the HMO management regulations.

The council became aware that Ms Amjadi's properties were being let without the appropriate licences in 2016. Numerous complaints were received from occupants and local residents regarding poor property maintenance. On inspection, 31 breaches of the HMO management regulations were found including missing fire blankets, inadequate or missing fire doors and smoke detectors hanging loose from ceilings.

Does GREEN have to cost more?

Given two choices, would a product's 'green credentials' sway a buying decision? For several years, the influencing factor on the consumer has been cost. However, clients, particularly those working to 30-year asset plans, now need to consider other aspects. Is the cost to the environment becoming one of the most crucial of these?

BBC One's Blue Planet II series (2017) is immensely popular, with the first episode attracting over 14 million viewers – more than Strictly or X Factor. Narrated by Sir David Attenborough, the programme explores our amazing oceans but also highlights the human impact upon them, particularly the increased use of plastics, in all aspects of daily life, where up to 12 million tonnes per year (Greenpeace, 22 August 2017), 'ends up in the oceans where it can be lethal' (David Attenborough). So, what can we do? Is there a way that we can reduce the use of plastics and what will be the cost implications of this choice?

In the construction industry there is a perception that environmentally friendly products are more expensive, and, in some instances, this is true. For example, there is a considerable cost difference in common loft insulation products and that of 'eco' sheep's wool alternatives.

Plastic – or PVCu – is the most commonly used material in rainwater products, such as guttering,

and is perceived as the cheapest solution. Plastic guttering is readily available at builders' merchants and DIY chains. However, there are shortfalls in durability. Firstly, over time there can be issues due to the expanding and contracting of the plastic, causing problems such as warping or leaking and colour fade. Secondly, the expected life is only 15–25 years, unlike other roofing materials, such as tiles, that are expected to last 50–60 years. Finally, at the end of its functional life, plastic guttering has no scrap value and will become landfill.

Metal guttering is a practical alternative. It can be formed from molten metals, such as aluminium, steel or iron, and properly maintained, could give a functional life of up to 60 years. Most types of metal guttering can be fully recycled, having a viable scrap value. They are sold in lengths and components, in a range of shapes, sizes and profiles and can be produced in any number of colours. When Wembley Stadium was demolished in 2003, 96% of the aluminium was collected and recycled (Aluminium for Futures).

However, annual maintenance is required, and could include washing down, repairing the paint finish and re-jointing. In addition, these products are significantly more expensive than PVCu goods.

Mustang® Seamless Aluminium Guttering has all the benefits of metal rainwater goods but is far closer in price to plastic guttering. It is a unique



system with no joints, meaning no leaks, and has the visual appeal of smooth, neat lines, in a non-fading range of colours. Mustang is environmentally sustainable: manufactured from a minimum of 78% recycled aluminium which can still be recycled at the end of its life, and made to the exact dimensions of the building, eliminating wastage. It is the only aluminium seamless gutter system approved by the construction industry's accreditation body, BBA, and has a certified life expectancy of 30 years.

Drew Robins, ARP Ltd Head of Specification: "The Mustang Seamless gutter is the environmentally responsible choice, with all the benefits of a metal system, at a price that is within Local Authority and Housing Association budgets. Its accredited life expectancy assists with asset planning, bringing it into line with the life expectancy of other roofing elements."

To request a brochure or any further information on your specific needs please visit www.arp-ltd.com or call 0116 473 5862

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Housing association mergers continue apace

Mergers in the social housing sector continued with several completed deals being announced in different parts of the country, as the drive for efficiency savings and bigger volumes to deliver new development work persists.

In East Anglia, Cambridge based King Street Housing Society transferred its 600 homes to the 11,000 home Aldwyck Housing Group. The organisations said the deal frees up £40m for investing in the building of new homes in Cambridgeshire over the next five years. Craig Gasper, former chief executive of King Street, takes responsibility for “seeking opportunities for growth” in Cambridgeshire and in Aldwyck’s wider operating area.

Sara Garnham, former chair of King Street Housing Society and now an Aldwyck board member, said: “We know all too well that Cambridgeshire, like much of the UK, has a chronic shortage of affordable quality homes. Through our merger we can play our part in addressing the housing crisis and continue to provide great service to our existing customers.”

In the capital Notting Hill and Genesis completed their controversial 64,000-home merger, to form Notting Hill Genesis, less than nine months after talks were first announced. Residents of both associations and the former chair of Genesis had publicly declared their opposition to the deal, but to no avail.

Shareholders (made up of residents, founders,

current and former board members and others) voted strongly in favour of merging. The two organisations aim to free up £20m worth of savings a year through the merger, and hope this will help them to deliver 400 extra homes per annum.

Kate Davies, the chief executive of Notting Hill, is now chief executive of the new organisation, while Elizabeth Froude, deputy chief executive of Genesis, has the same role at the new association. Dipesh Shah, the chair of Genesis, is now chair of Notting Hill Genesis.

Meanwhile two Greater Manchester housing associations have completed a merger to become one of the largest landlords in the region. New Charter and Adactus Housing have formed Jigsaw Homes Group, with more than 33,000 homes in ownership.

The new group also has stock in the North West and the East Midlands, with plans to deliver more than 2,700 homes during the next three years. It has an estimated turnover of £194m and employs about 1,450 staff. Former Adactus boss Hilary Roberts will take over as chief executive, while Ian Munro, former chief executive of New Charter, is set to retire after a transition period.

The group comprises six housing association subsidiaries, as well as a housing advice charity, a development arm and a procurement company. It will operate across Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Cheshire, Lancashire and Nottinghamshire.

News in brief

- Waltham Forest Council in north east London has agreed an £88m partnership with Mears to buy 400 homes for people in emergency accommodation like B&Bs. The council has almost 100 households in B&Bs and spends £3.4m a year on emergency housing, with 2,326 families in temporary accommodation and 8,496 households on its waiting list. It hopes to make a return on its investment through house prices over the life of the 40-year initiative.
- In a welcome move the Government has overturned its controversial policy to scrap housing benefit for 18 to 21-year-olds under Universal Credit. In a written statement to Parliament before Easter, Esther McVey, the Work and Pensions Secretary, announced the Government would “amend regulations so that all 18 to 21-year-olds will be entitled to claim support for housing costs in Universal Credit”. The news was warmly welcomed by campaigners. David Orr, Chief Executive at the National Housing Federation, said: “It’s very good news the Government is restoring housing benefit to 18-21 year olds. This benefit cut has been creating great confusion over whether young people were eligible for these vital funds. Housing associations have told us that as a result they have seen more young, vulnerable people sleeping rough, or forced to depend on unscrupulous private landlords and dangerous accommodation. This was a policy that made no sense and the decision is a positive sign that the Government is listening on welfare reform.”
- Research by the Guardian newspaper has revealed that nine cabinet ministers, including the Prime Minister, are each making more than £10,000 a year by acting as private landlords. The investigation was prompted by Jeremy Hunt’s failure to declare the purchase of seven luxury flats that he subsequently rented out. The paper’s analysis of the Parliamentary Register of MPs’ interests showed eight other members of the cabinet own property that is rented out for five-figure annual sums. The Health Secretary has amended the register, which now shows he has a half share of a holiday home in Italy, a half share in an office building in Hammersmith and the seven apartments in Southampton. Theresa May and Philip Hammond, who both live in Downing Street, rent out their personal homes in central London. Former Housing Secretary Sajid Javid rents out a property, while Chris Grayling rents out two properties. Boris Johnson, Liam Fox, Brandon Lewis (a former Housing Minister) and Alun Cairns, also own and rent out property.

HA fined after exposing employees to Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome

A community housing association in Wales has been fined £30,000 after it failed to effectively manage its employees’ exposure to Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) over a prolonged period of time.

Following the company’s introduction of health surveillance in May 2015, a number of employees were diagnosed with HAVS which has side effects such as pain and loss of strength in the hands and has been known to cause distress and sleep disturbance.

An investigation by the Health & Safety Executive found Tai Calon failed to adequately assess the risk to employees from the use of vibratory tools, failed to implement adequate measures to reduce employees’ exposure to vibration, failed to place employees under suitable health surveillance and failed to provide employees with suitable information, instruction, and training.

Tai Calon Community Housing of The Rising Sun Industrial Estate, Blaina, was found guilty of breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974 and was fined £30,000 and ordered to pay £2,789.25 in costs.

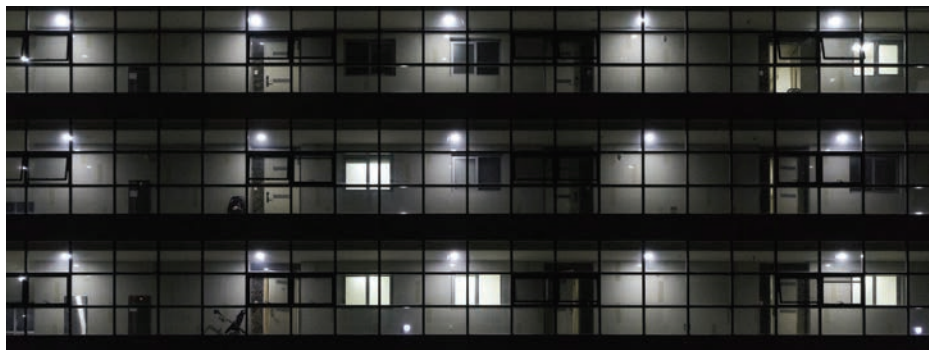
Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Paul Newton commented: “No one’s health should not be made worse by the work they do. In this case, if Tai Calon had understood why health surveillance was necessary, it would have ensured that it had the right systems in place to monitor its workers’ health.

“This prosecution highlights the health risks from using vibratory tools and the importance of employers having a health surveillance programme in place. Where vibratory tools are used, employers should monitor the health of employees using them and ensure appropriate systems are in place to manage and control the risk from vibration.”

News in brief

- Nearly half of private renters in England aged over 50 have been forced to make drastic decisions to cover their rent, including borrowing money from their own children, a new study from the National Housing Federation has found. In addition a third of older private renters are living below the poverty line after they have paid their rent. The number of people over 50 renting from private landlords has nearly doubled in just ten years. At the same time private rents in England have grown 21 per cent on average over the last six years. According to the NHF research, nearly half a million older renters have been hit by a lack of affordable housing, and have been forced to take out loans or cut down on food and heating just to make rent payments. 170,000 older renters said they had borrowed money from friends or family to pay their rent. Meanwhile, around 52,000 private renters over 50 who moved house in the last three years, were forced to do so against their will.
- A year's rent takes up every penny earned by full-time workers until the first week of May, analysis undertaken by the BBC revealed. A middle-income earner in England has to work 86 days to rent an average two-bedroom home, five more than in 2011. In Scotland and Wales the number of working days needed to cover their rent fell to 79 and 71 days respectively. The workers being squeezed the most by rents rising faster than pay are in the south of England. A private tenant in London would have to work 165 days to earn enough to cover the rent on a two-bed property, compared to 66 days for a worker in the North East. In the capital, even renting a room in a shared property takes a full-time worker until 27 March. A middle-earning worker makes £27,150 after tax and National Insurance. Renting a room at an average of £7,200 they would have to work 67 days just to cover the rent. That is nearly three weeks longer than in 2011. In Bristol, rents have increased so much that it takes another month to be able to afford a two-bed property, compared with 2011.
- The company which oversaw the 2016 refurbishment of Grenfell Tower has announced in its annual accounts that it had made £9.2m profit in the year ended 30 September 2017. However, a Rydon spokesperson, said its total profit was £19m, a 50 per cent increase on the previous year. This was the figure for Rydon Holdings, which is the parent company of Rydon Group. The company said it made no provision in its accounts for any costs arising from the blaze in June last year, which killed 72 people.

Labour promises to redefine 'affordable housing' and to rekindle council housing



In a very ambitious set of promises, the Labour party is vowing to build one million genuinely affordable homes over ten years, including the biggest council housebuilding programme for over 30 years.

'Housing for the Many' is the party's Green Paper on reviving the social housing sector and dealing with the affordability crisis facing the nation's youth, with young adults struggling to buy or to pay their rent. It's arrival fills a policy gap with the Government's own promised Green Paper being delayed.

In a set of eye-catching proposals within the 40-page document, Labour says it will:

- redefine affordable housing – doing away with "affordable rents" at up to 80 per cent of market rates and replace them with genuinely affordable homes to rent and buy linked to local average incomes;
- suspend the right-to-buy, arguing it jeopardises the supply of social housing;
- end all conversions of existing social rent homes to the much higher "affordable rents" and scrap plans to force councils to sell their most valuable homes;
- transform the planning system with a new duty to deliver affordable homes, while setting up an English Sovereign Land Trust to make more land available more cheaply;
- lift the cap on borrowing by local authorities, to allow councils to build more social housing; and
- set up a new Department of Housing and an independent watchdog to assess the Government's housing policies and to make sure promises are delivered.

As the Green Paper was written in the post Grenfell period, it is no surprise that the opposition say they want to make affordable homes "a best choice, not a last resort" with fire safety being given a high priority – becoming the first standard in a new Decent Homes definition and works

programme, as well as committing to the fitting of sprinklers in all high rise tower blocks.

NEW RIGHTS

It also proposes ending any institutional indifference or failure to respect tenants by granting a new set of rights for affordable housing residents, including tenants on boards, consumer rights standards and a vote on estate regeneration schemes. It also wants to promote security for families and stability for communities by scrapping the laws to end long-term council tenancies.

John Healey, the Shadow Housing Secretary, said: "We will build for those who need it, including the very poorest and most vulnerable ... and for those in work on ordinary incomes. This is the 'just coping' class in Britain today, who do the jobs we all rely on – IT workers, HGV drivers, joiners, warehouse managers, lab technicians, nurses, teaching assistants, call centre supervisors, shop staff."

While the announcements were welcomed by many working in the housing sector, some commentators were critical of the Green Paper for its near exclusive focus on social renting, saying that it also needed to address issues in the private rented sector and housing for sale market. Some also felt that not enough focus was given to the positive contributions that housing associations could make.

A Conservative spokesperson said: "Labour would kick away the housing ladder from everyone living in council houses by taking away their right to buy, just as Labour did in Wales. Under the Conservatives, we are investing £9bn to build more good-quality homes that people can afford and have seen the highest number of new homes being built for a decade."

Healey responded by saying: "The housing market is broken and current Conservative housing policy is failing to fix it. We have to build more affordable homes to make homes more affordable."



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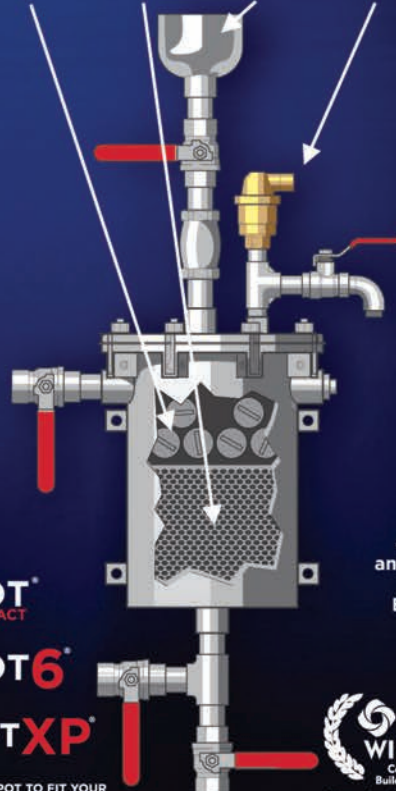
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Contractor enjoys run of success

Housing contractor Wates has enjoyed a successful start to the year with a series of positive outcomes across its repair and maintenance, regeneration and new build business areas.

Wates Group's results for 2017 showed a 5.9 per cent increase in turnover to £1.62bn and profit before tax at £35.7m. The company saw its order book hit a record £5.1bn heading into 2018. James Wates, chair of the company, said its performance had been rising steadily over recent years despite challenges arising from the Government imposed rent cuts and a changed climate after the Grenfell Tower fire with social landlords moving planned spending towards safety work.

He said: "We are seeing a change in the way budgets are allocated – a lot of local authorities and housing associations are redirecting spend from what has been bathroom and kitchen improvements into fire safety. As they have made that switch there has been a slight delay in orders coming through, but not a material one. We are helping in a number

of areas to take cladding off buildings – we think we are trusted as part of the solution."

Wates has been chosen as a joint venture partner for a giant £1bn regeneration programme covering 12 estates in the east London borough of Havering. This will see 3,000 new homes built in the borough over the next 12 to 15 years, with the programme in line to receive £33m in grant from the Mayor of London.

Plans include the creation of a construction academy through a partnership with Havering College and the Construction Industry Training Board. It is intended that around 165 apprenticeships will be delivered over the scheme.

Roger Ramsey, leader of Havering Council, said: "This is the most exciting and ambitious council home building programme in London. Forming this joint venture will allow us to provide high-quality new homes for existing residents and young people who want to stay in the borough."

Midlands-based housing association Longhurst Group has appointed Wates Living Space to a

maintenance contract worth close to £100m. The 10-year contract includes repairs, void refurbishments and planned maintenance work to 16,000 of Longhurst's 19,000 homes. In February, Southern Housing Group and The Guinness Partnership both appointed Wates Living Space to repairs contracts worth a total of £13m.

David Morgan, managing director of Wates Living Space, said: "Being appointed by Longhurst Group to deliver this contract is further evidence of our status as a trusted provider of large-scale maintenance services of exceptional quality to housing associations and councils throughout the country."

Sharon Guest, executive director of housing services at Longhurst, added: "We are delighted to be working with Wates Living Space to provide a new and improved repairs service to our customers. Having a single contractor to manage repairs across our member companies and the many communities we serve will ensure that we can provide a more efficient and consistent service to our customers."

Private rents falling for first time in six years

Private sector rents across the UK fell for the first time since 2012 during the first quarter of 2018 although the rate of decline was less than one per cent, The Deposit Protection Service has revealed.

In the latest version of its Rent Index, the average UK monthly rent during Q1 of 2018 was £772: some £4 (or 0.54 per cent) less than Q4 2017 (£776). The DPS says that if rents remain unchanged or there is another decline in Q2 2018, then the UK will experience its first annual rental decrease since Q4 2009.

But the unpredictability of the current rental market was revealed when HOMELET's rental index for April was released showing on the basis of their figures, the average rent in the UK is now £918, up by 1.5 per cent on a year ago. When London is excluded, the average UK rent is now £761, a rise of 0.9 per cent on the year.

Julian Foster, Managing Director at The DPS, said: "The decrease in average rents could represent

the beginning of a substantial development for the housing sector and a significant indicator for understanding the wider economy. Rent growth began to slow in summer 2016, and the slip into negative figures suggests that there is a genuine long-term issue affecting the private rented sector. It implies there is more at play than a short-term or local correction to excessive prices."

Northern Ireland experienced the biggest percentage decrease of any UK region: down 3.14 per cent from £544 to £527, replacing the North East as the most affordable UK region in which to rent property. London saw an £18 decrease in average rent (falling from £1,325 to £1,307): the largest fall in value of any UK region and the second consecutive quarterly decrease for the capital. For HOMELET, the average rent in London is now £1,588 up 4.5 per cent on last year, while the North East saw rents grow by 2.8 per cent in a single month between March and April 2018.



Only four UK regions experienced growth in average rent according to DPS: the South East (up from £870 to £879), the East Midlands (from £599 to £602), the North West (from £594 to £595) and Wales, which also experienced the biggest growth (up £21 or 3.62 per cent from £573 to £594).

Every type of property became cheaper on average to rent, with flats experiencing the biggest decrease (down £10 or 1.20 per cent from £796 to £786) in the quarter. As a proportion of salary, rents decreased from 32.63 per cent to 32.45 (using 2017 average wage data).

Contractor blames Grenfell for drop in profits

The Mears Group has blamed delays to work orders following the Grenfell Tower tragedy as a major factor in its profits falling by almost eight per cent over the past year.

The contractor carries out repairs and maintenance work for many social landlords, as well as providing housing management and care services across the housing sector. After a difficult year for business it has reported a drop in revenue from £940.1m to £900.2m (£766.1m from housing contracts down three per cent and

£134.1m from care, down 12 per cent) and a fall in profits before tax from £40.1m to £37.1m for 2017.

Mears has seen expected work orders delayed while customers reassess their planned maintenance programmes, as well as disruption to its care arm, which led to a restructuring of the business and some closures. However, the company has said it expects an upturn in its fortunes as a result of a "healthy pipeline of opportunities" as it bids for £2bn of work.

David Miles, chief executive at Mears, said: "While 2017 proved to be a challenging year, we made solid operational progress. The decline in housing revenues following the tragic events at Grenfell Tower has stabilised, although there still remains some uncertainty as to the speed at which these revenues will recover." He added: "The strategic evolution of our business means we are gaining access to opportunities that previously would have been out of our reach."



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Unpopular tower block to be demolished over structural concerns

The tallest remaining tower block built using the same large panel system as Ronan Point is set to be demolished due to concerns about its “long-term structural integrity”.

Leicester's deputy mayor approved proposals to knock down Goscote House, a 23-storey block built by Taylor Wimpey in 1973. Ronan Point, was a tower block in Newham, east London which partially collapsed after a gas explosion in May 1968, killing four people just two months after the block had opened.

Goscote House is one of five tower blocks on the city's St Peter's Estate - the other four blocks have already been refurbished. Goscote House consists of 134 flats, of which about a quarter are understood to be empty. The block is locally unpopular, difficult to let and suffers from anti-social behaviour issues.

An investigation found the structural integrity

of Goscote House's concrete frame cannot be guaranteed for longer than five years. Examination of the building found any upgrade work should be kept to a minimum and external cladding or insulation should not be installed because the structure could not cope with the additional weight.

The council had planned to refurbish the block at a cost of around £6.5m, including retrofitting water sprinklers. Instead it now plans to demolish the building for around £3m and either redevelop the site or to sell it on. Building a new tower block similar in size to Goscote House would cost around £17.3m, while valuers estimate it would fetch £1.2m on the open market in its current state or £8.35m after refurbishment. Student accommodation is believed to be one of the building's most likely alternative uses.

Durkan appointed for first phase of Thamesmead regen

A London housing association has appointed a contractor to deliver one of the first phases of its work on the giant Thamesmead regeneration project in the south east of the capital.

Peabody has named Durkan as the contractor for the Southmere Village Phase 1A project on the estate. Work includes the design and construction of 130 new homes, an energy network, commercial space and parking. The contract also includes building public spaces and provisions, such as offices, shops and revamped roads, pavements and cycle lanes in the area.

Angela Wood, director of new business, regeneration and partnerships at Peabody, said: “Durkan has a strong track record of delivering top-quality homes. We are pleased to be moving forward with them on the first phase of Southmere

Village as part of the comprehensive regeneration in south Thamesmead. This is the third major scheme we have committed to in Thamesmead and represents our long-term commitment to the area.”

Jim Briggs, managing director of Durkan, said the contractor was “delighted”. He said: “It's our priority to deliver sustainable communities. We're looking forward to helping Peabody deliver on its proposals for Thamesmead, in what will doubtless add long-term value to a growing community.”

The £45m contract is the most recent part of Peabody's massive regeneration of the Thamesmead housing estate, which includes plans to build more than 20,000 new homes over the next 30 years in a multi-billion pound investment.

Biggest HA sees surplus grow to £306m

Clarion has boosted its operating surplus by six per cent from £289m to £306m for the financial year 2017/18, while its operating costs fell from £495m to £478m.

The association, which already owns 125,000 homes, built 1,263 homes in the financial year and started work on 1,428 more homes, investing

£427m in the year, up from £196m spent in 2016/17.

Its pre-tax net surplus was slightly lower than the previous year, falling from £176m to £162m and the value of Clarion's housing assets rose from £6.5bn to £6.77bn, mainly due to investments in new development.

News in brief

- A collaboration between around 16 London boroughs is set to establish a company to deliver modular housing for use as temporary accommodation. The company will be used as a not-for-profit vehicle to procure and own factory-built homes, which councils can let as cheaper alternatives to B&Bs or other emergency housing for homeless families. The properties could be moved between sites across the capital where necessary. London mayor Sadiq Khan has awarded the councils £11m in grant from the Greater London Authority's Innovation Fund. Umbrella group London Councils, which lobbies the government on behalf of all 33 boroughs, has put forward £20,000 in ‘seed funding’ from its Capital Ambition programme. There were 54,660 households in temporary accommodation in London at the end of September 2017.
- Water sprinklers should be mandatory in all new build high-rise flats, a London Assembly report into fire safety has said. Building regulations currently only require sprinklers to be installed in new tower blocks of 30m (10 storeys) or higher. But ministers should change the rules to lower that threshold to all buildings taller than 18m (six storeys), the report said, as well as developing “a road map with clear milestones” to make sprinklers compulsory in every residential building in England. Assembly members also called for all new care homes and sheltered housing to require sprinklers.
- Glasgow Council is failing to house homeless people quickly enough, the Scottish Housing Regulator has warned. In a report looking at how effectively Scottish registered social landlords work to find homes for homeless people, the regulator concluded that homeless people in Glasgow are spending too long in temporary accommodation waiting for a home. In 2016/17 it said the council found homes for nearly 2,000 families, but this was only around half of the families it had a duty to house. People spent on average 238 days in temporary accommodation. The council has a target to find 3,000 homes for homeless people each year, but the regulator said this is “too low for the number of people it assesses that the council has a duty to house”.

News in brief

- Rugby Council has agreed to move residents out of 124 homes at Biart Place so the two tower blocks can be repaired or demolished. The decision came just weeks after it scrapped its “stay put” policy on two estates over concerns about the structural safety of the blocks in the event of a fire or explosion. The large panel system blocks in Rounds Gardens and Biart Place now have an immediate evacuation policy for residents, ahead of decanting taking place. A spokesperson for Rugby Council said: “The blocks have stood safely since they were built around 50 years ago, and all previous fires within them have been contained as designed. However, having removed some of the concrete within some of the flats, we cannot be completely sure the blocks were built as designed and will perform as we expect in the event of a fire or explosion.”
- Well over £20million has been spent keeping Grenfell Tower survivors in hotel rooms, enough to have built the original block an estimated three times over, figures suggest. RBK&C had paid £20.9m in hotel bills for survivors and their families between June and mid February. The figure is likely to have risen to well over £25m by now – more than double the cost of the discredited refurbishment work in 2014-16. The council has also built fewer affordable homes than any other London borough in recent years with work started on just 244 genuinely affordable homes since 2014 – an average of just 61 each year and less than a fifth of the total built by the average London borough. In the same four-year period, its neighbour Westminster managed to build 423 affordable homes. Overall some 38,514 genuinely affordable homes were started in London since 2014.
- English councils are spending £8.4m a year renting ex-council flats from private landlords to provide housing for homeless families, according to research by the magazine Inside Housing. Freedom of Information Act requests to over 100 councils found 23 are leasing back 725 flats sold under the Right to Buy, for use as temporary accommodation. The true figures are likely to be much higher as many London councils did not provide data. Of those that did Southwark said it was renting 93 ex-council flats for £1.36m a year, while Enfield said it paid out £1.8m in rent for 130 ex-council flats. The rents being charged are far higher than the rents councils would have let them for, if the flats were still council owned.

Nottingham's ultra-low energy homes win national innovation award

A project that has radically improved the energy efficiency of ten homes in Sneinton has won the UK Housing Award for Innovation of the Year.

The UK Housing Awards, run by the Chartered Institute of Housing and Inside Housing showcase the very best the sector has to offer. The Innovation award was given in recognition of Nottingham City Homes' pioneering approach to tackling energy inefficiency in older housing stock to address both climate change and fuel poverty.

Nottingham City Homes the arms' length management organisation (ALMO) that manages and maintains Nottingham City Council's council homes, also took home the prestigious Landlord of the Year and Outstanding Approach to Tenant Involvement awards. The three awards combined highlight how by embracing new ideas and being tenant led Nottingham City Homes are making a real difference to tenants' lives.

Nottingham City Homes is the first housing organisation in the country to adopt a ground-breaking approach known as Energiesprong. The Energiesprong approach, pioneered in the Netherlands, wraps homes with new exterior walls and high-performing windows, a solar roof, and a state of the art heating system, dramatically reducing household energy bills and making homes warmer and healthier for residents.



The construction partners for Energiesprong in Sneinton were Melius Homes, and the project has been supported and part financed by the REMOURBAN initiative that is developing a pioneering model to show how sustainability can be integrated into the regeneration of towns and cities across the UK (Nottingham is one of three demonstrator cities for REMOURBAN).

Councillor Dave Liversidge, the city council's portfolio holder for energy and sustainability, said: “It's a great achievement to have won these awards and testament to the innovation and commitment that Nottingham City Homes has shown to ensure its homes are ready for the zero carbon standards required across the UK by 2050.

“Many of our residents live in fuel poverty so creating more energy efficient homes to reduce people's energy bills is a high priority for us. We're very excited that Nottingham is at the forefront of this revolutionary approach, which can help tackle both fuel poverty and climate change.”

Nick Murphy, chief executive of Nottingham City Homes, said, “We're extremely proud of the work we've done in Sneinton, and we intend to roll Energiesprong out to other homes across the city in the coming months and years to make sure that we're combating fuel poverty and ensuring that more of our residents can benefit from warmer homes.”



Product Focus



Consort Claudgen

www.consortepl.com

The WMH3E Chelsea and HE6137E Flowzone fan heaters are the latest addition to Consort Claudgen's Electronic 7-day Timer range. Both heaters have a digital control panel with easy-to-read display and four large control buttons with audible and tactile feedback. They are robust to suit demanding environments and are quiet in operation. These heaters offer six heating periods per day, 7 days a week and have an optional open/close window detection feature which reacts intelligently to a sudden temperature change in the area or room. They are also easy to operate and can set comfort and setback temperatures which helps reduce the overall energy consumption.

Neaco

www.neaco.co.uk

An apartment development in Blaby has joined the long list of residential projects to specify Neaco's all-in-one balcony solutions. The three-storey complex includes Neaco's walk-on and Juliet balconies which are manufactured and assembled at the factory stage for fast installation, minimising time, energy consumption and waste on site. Neaco has experienced an exceptional growth in demand for its balconies in recent years. The rails, stanchions and open grille decking are manufactured from aluminium, a lightweight-yet-strong metal which has an A1 Fire Rating - the highest achievable score for non-combustibility.



Intratone

www.intratone.com

Intratone, one of Europe's largest door entry and access control specialists, has published a new product and applications brochure showcasing its proven portfolio of reliable and innovative door entry and access control solutions. The brochure provides detailed product features of its full range including its Video and DDA Panels, proximity readers, and its cloud-based management system. It also profiles its key cabinets, digital noticeboards, and RF receivers, and provides simple guides on how each of the products work alongside basic specifications, and the many benefits and advantages of using its technology.

Scotland leads on fire safety

Kidde Safety Europe welcomes new Scottish proposals to apply universal minimum standards for smoke and heat alarms in all housing, and calls for similar measures throughout the UK.

Following the Grenfell Tower fire, the Scottish Government brought forward its consultation on fire and smoke alarms in housing and published the resulting headline proposals this March. In essence, the current minimum safety standards for private rented housing will be extended to all other tenures including social and owner-occupied homes. Private rented housing must already meet the 'Repairing Standard' requirements for interconnected smoke and heat alarms, including smoke alarms in principal living rooms and heat alarms in kitchens, in addition to smoke alarms in circulation areas on each storey.

This level of protection is in line with current Scottish Building Regulations and the Code of Practice BS 5839-6:2013, where it is designated Category LD2. Scotland proposes extending this to all types and tenures of housing. We welcome this move and consider that it should now be adopted as the norm throughout the UK. In particular, it contrasts with England where private rented properties only require a smoke alarm on each

storey and there are no specific regulations for social housing or requirements on owner-occupied homes.

Even Building Regulations Part B for new-builds falls short with only Category LD3 protection in circulation areas. As the Code stresses, with Category LD3 the evacuation time once fire is detected in the escape route: "might not prevent death or serious injury of occupants of the room where fire originates". Kidde has been lobbying over several years for a minimum Category LD2 protection in Part B and private rented property regulations.

With Dame Judith Hackitt's recently published interim report on Regulations and fire safety considering that: "the whole system of regulation [in England] ... is not fit for purpose", we can only hope that the replacement system - when it eventually appears - matches or exceeds Category LD2. In the meantime, all housing providers would do well to consider this for their own peace of mind. In today's uncertain world, smoke and heat alarms offer the first line of defence against fire in housing,



providing critical early warning at low costs. Relying on assumed fire-safe construction to minimise alarm provision is clearly a serious mistake and wider alarm installation should be considered a priority for all housing.

For more information, email: sales@kiddesafety.co.uk or call: 03337 722 227.

New Heavy Duty Accessories for Yeoman Shield Protection Rails

With over 50 years of experience in the wall & door protection industry, Yeoman Shield continually assesses and develop their products based on not only their own knowledge, but also feedback received from customers.

Always keen to problem solve Yeoman Shield responded to customers who wished to use 200mm, 125mm Protection Rail, or the Guardian Twin Handrail in areas of heavy traffic, where vulnerable corners and wall surfaces were being hit by very heavily laden or motorised vehicles and equipment.

"Whilst our standard PVCu injection moulded accessories are more than capable of warding off

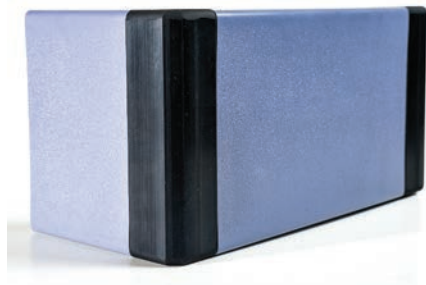
general, everyday blows, in certain circumstances where the traffic is exceptionally heavy and continuous an alternative, more durable option is required"

"This led us to designing and manufacturing alternative 200 mm and 125 mm rubber accessories to solve this problem, all of which are compatible with the profiles mentioned above" commented Yeoman Shield's Sales Director, Stuart Russell.

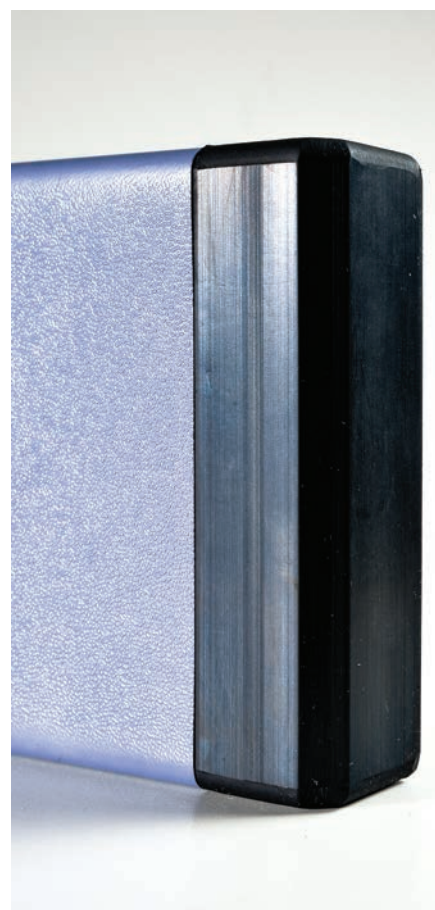
Manufactured solely from EPDM rubber, which is a dense and abrasion resistant compound, results in the new accessories being capable of absorbing heavy blows – perfect for use in areas such as service corridors, warehouse, manufacturing facilities, etc. – in fact anywhere that has the traffic of heavily laden trucks and trolleys passing through on a daily basis.

To receive product information, costings or if you would like to request a site survey from an Area Sales Managers, then please contact sallyann@yeomanshield.com

All products are showcased on Yeoman Shield's newly launched website where you can also sign up to a mailing list to keep up to date with all product development and news.



0113 279 5854
www.yeomanshield.com



A new captain takes the helm at Evinox

Evinox is thrilled to announce that Terry Mahoney has taken the helm as its new Managing Director. Terry originally joined Evinox in 2010 and through his most recent role as Operations Director has been pivotal to much of the company's recent success, including the delivery and ongoing support of key projects. The Building Engineering Services Association (BESA) UK test standard for heat interface units (HIUs) was recently introduced to enable designers and specifiers to evaluate the performance of a HIU on their network. Currently, only a handful of manufacturers have published results for the HIU test regime, with Evinox being one of the first to undertake the testing process. The results achieved provide a clear, independently verified confirmation that the Evinox ModuSat® XR HIU range delivers outstanding heating and hot water efficiency performance for modern heat networks – something the team at Evinox are very proud of. The strong growth in sales reported, can be clearly demonstrated by the calibre of clients and projects that Evinox are working with. Mahoney believes that it is a combination of the comprehensive product range and support services that Evinox offers, with the dedication of the Evinox team and keeping ahead of evolving industry standards that has spurred on the company's recent success.

01372 722277 www.evinoxenergy.co.uk



Evinox team of CIBSE Certified Heat Network Consultants expands

Evinox has added to its CIBSE certified Technical and Design team, with Design Engineer Arturs Kokins becoming the latest to successfully complete the CIBSE Heat Networks Code of Practice course, passing his final exam with flying colours. The CIBSE Heat Network qualification is recognised across the industry and covers a broad spectrum of considerations for communal and district heating systems, demonstrating the depth of knowledge Evinox can offer to their customers in the design of heat network systems. Arturs originally joined Evinox in early 2017 as a Graduate Engineer, with an MEng (Hons) Mechanical Engineering degree, and has since developed his skills and gained valuable experience working on a number of key projects. "Arturs is a perfect example of what can be achieved by investing in people and promoting their growth within a business," comments Helen Gibbons, Evinox Technical and Design Manager.

01372 722277 www.evinoxenergy.co.uk

BLM British Lead technical support

BLM British Lead is pleased to announce the launch of its own in-house technical support service with David Pounds joining the company as Technical Advisor. David comes with a wealth of knowledge and experience in the industry, having spent 13 years as Technical Advisor at the Lead Sheet Association. The service aims to fulfil the requirements of architects, specifiers, surveyors, contractors and property owners working at design, construction or post installation stages.



For more information on the level of support you require, please contact BLM's technical team.

0330 333 3535 technical@britishlead.co.uk

Third Queen's Award for Ancon

Ancon has won a 2018 Queen's Award for Enterprise in the Innovation category, for the successful introduction and on-going development of its advanced composite, low thermal conductivity, Teplo wall tie range. This is the third time that Ancon has been honoured in this prestigious award scheme. Teplo wall ties are manufactured from continuous basalt fibres set in a resin matrix; a fibre-reinforced polymer that is 70 times more thermally efficient than steel. When used to join the two leaves of a cavity wall, this material virtually eliminates cold bridging across the insulated cavity.



0114 238 1219 www.ancon.co.uk

Apprenticeships boost from partnership

A new Modern Apprenticeship programme has been created at Norbord, Inverness, to develop skills that are focused on the technical and manufacturing aspects of the process at the mill. The new Technical Manufacturing (TM) Modern Apprenticeship is an 18-24 month programme consisting of a combination of theoretical learning and practical hands-on experience within the production process, and results in an SVQ2 qualification. Emma Eadie, HR Assistant, said: "We have always supported Modern Apprenticeships and take on two apprentices every two years to be trained in either mechanical or electrical engineering to help support our maintenance teams."



www.norbord.co.uk

Consort Claudgen launches brochure

Consort Claudgen's new Heat brochure is now available in print and online.

The full-colour, 48-page product directory provides information and comprehensive explanation of various heating systems including the SL and RX Wireless Control Heating System, Electronic seven-day Timer models and receiver units which can be retrofitted to existing compatible heaters, allowing the heaters to be wirelessly controlled by either an RX or SL wireless controller.



Download a copy from Consort Claudgen's website or request by calling.

01646 692172 www.consortepl.com

Airtech showcases at CIH Events

Airtech, the mould and condensation control specialist, will be exhibiting at two Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) events during May 2018. "We are delighted to be attending the CIH events where visitors will be able to hear about the services we offer to combat condensation and mould and improve indoor air quality.



It just takes three simple steps to eradicate mould and prevent it returning, helping ensure a healthy environment for residents. With over 30 years' experience our expert team can offer a range of services to help social housing landlords with their housing stock," said Jeremy Cleeter, Sales Director at Airtech.

01823 690 292 www.airtechenvironmental.co.uk

Stelrad shows why it's Europe's favourite

Stelrad Radiators, one of the UK's leading manufacturers of radiators will once again be attending CIH this year – the annual showcase of the Chartered Institute of Housing. This year's event is taking place at Manchester Central between 26-28 June 2018. Stelrad will have its full range of radiator options on display on its stand from its best-selling Compact range, its designer and decorative options, its specialist LST – low surface temperature range and its special application series including its Compact XP rust resistant radiators for use in rooms with high humidity. For more information, visit Stelrad on stand G50 and talk to the knowledgeable Stelrad team.



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HOUSING 2018 STAND G50

Fibo to exhibit high-performance panels

Fibo UK will be showcasing its innovative range of bathroom and kitchen wall panels at Housing 2018 at Manchester Central 26-28 June. With a unique 15-year guarantee, Fibo's wall panels are a real alternative to ceramic tiling for social housing, retirement homes and sheltered accommodation. The panels can be fitted directly onto walls, stud partitioning or over existing tiles. Fibo's patented Aqualock tongue-and-groove system means the panels simply click into place, making them quick and easy to install - up to five times faster than traditional tiles - so contractors don't need to sub-contract the job to tilers, saving further time and money. Specific installation skills aren't needed as the panels are fixed with screws and then finished with sealant between the joins. There's also a wide range of colours and finishes so both local authorities and residents get the choice they want with peace of mind. And no grouting means there's nowhere for mould or dirt to get a foothold, so the panels are easy to keep clean and fresh - a quick wipe down will do. Join us on stand B22 to find out how your next housing project can benefit from Fibo's wall panels.



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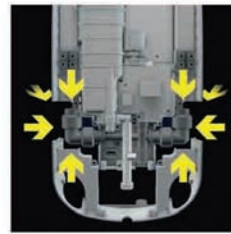
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Exploring offsite construction

CIH's Housing conference and exhibition returns to Manchester Central from 26 – 28 June with a focus on the potential of offsite construction

CIH's annual Housing show is Europe's largest gathering of housing professionals, offering the perfect opportunity for networking. A range of seminars and conferences with industry experts will provide you with the latest information on all aspects of housing.

The show's "alternative" theatre The Fringe will play host to sessions that ask the difficult questions, while new event TECH@Housing will run alongside the show where you can discover the latest in housing technology. Over 300 different companies will be exhibiting at the show.

In partnership with the NHBC and Trowers & Hamlin Housing 2018 will be showcasing offsite over the three days, with live offsite builds on display with ilke Homes, CHIC and Premier Modular. Housing 2018's Sarah Payling, Homes England's Stephen Kinsella and the MHCLG's Andy von Bradsky explain why now is the time for offsite.

Event director Sarah Payling says: "We are on a journey which some say we have been on before. I did eight years in offsite media from 2000 to 2008 and I spent a lot of my time on John Prescott's £60k house project. And here we are again. Some of you may remember in 2005 there was a sustainable communities summit that took place at the GMEX, now Manchester Central. For all those that came along we witnessed Blair, Brown, Prescott and about five modular house builds. 13 years on and these homes have changed but we still have a housing crisis. I think we can all agree the time is now for off-site construction.

"On only my second day in this job, I hosted an offsite walking tour around the exhibition hall of Housing 2017 in Manchester. The microphone wasn't working properly so I had to shout to be heard, which perhaps symbolises where we were at that time and how quickly things seems to be changing."

Stephen Kinsella, executive director of land at Homes England says: "In the last few months, there have been several notable offsite developments. As part of the Autumn Budget, the Government gave a massive boost to offsite by stating that modern methods of construction (MMC) would be favoured for public infrastructure schemes from 2019. Closer to home, our deal to sell land to the Berkeley Group to build an offsite factory in Ebbsfleet made the national news and there have been similar announcements from the housing sector from the likes of Accord and Swan.

"It certainly feels like momentum is building. At Homes England, we see the expansion of offsite construction as absolutely crucial in getting the increase in numbers we need to build 300,000 homes a year. Simply put, there isn't the capacity in the industry to build 300,000 homes through traditional methods. So, we intend to be much more actively involved in offsite and we will use our land and finance to help scale it up. You will see us doing further land deals with MMC included in schemes. But we need our housebuilder partners to work with us and they're telling us they cannot easily shift their businesses from traditional to offsite construction – even those convinced of the benefits."

Andy von Bradsky, design and quality consultant for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government says: "The Government



For more information and to register visit www.cihhousing.com

recognises that in order to meet its commitment to increase the supply of new homes we need a modern construction industry with the techniques to build to scale, volume and speed of supply. Building more homes using MMC, including offsite and smart techniques, is a key part of this. The Secretary of State has made it clear that quality is as important as the quantity of new homes. Manufacturing homes in closely monitored factory conditions can deliver improved quality to a consistent standard. Greater investment in time earlier in the design, manufacture and assembly process can lead to faster delivery onsite.

"We know use of MMC across the housing market is increasing, particularly where pace of delivery and investment over the long term are key factors in the business model. Other sectors are making greater use of pre-assembled components. Some are embracing the opportunities offered by digital technology to customise layouts, fittings and finishes.

"There are challenges such as ensuring certainty of supply proportionate to the scale of investment, reducing costs compared to traditional methods, ensuring we deliver well designed, attractive places, securing mortgage finance and training a new diverse workforce with the necessary skills.

"The Government is putting measures in place that are aimed at transforming a developing market into one that contributes positively to mainstream supply."

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*source: BEAMA, of 122 homes surveyed

A HEALTHIER LIVING ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUR FAMILY

Improving indoor air quality for long-term gain

John Moss from EnviroVent discusses condensation and mould growth, and what social housing providers can do about it

The English Housing Survey (EHS) has revealed recently that damp continues to be a problem for at least one million homes in England, the data showing that people living in rented properties were most likely to be living with issues such as 'damp.'

Condensation is a direct result of everyday activities, such as taking showers and baths, boiling kettles, cooking, drying clothes and even breathing – where moisture is created and is not able to escape from the home. A family of four will contribute approximately four pints of water per person each day into the environment – 112 pints of water vapour a week.

Before the days of double glazing, and cavity wall and loft insulation, humid, stale air would find its escape route through ill-fitting windows and doors, lofts and so on. In contemporary thermally-efficient homes without adequate ventilation, when warm air hits a cooler surface and the water vapour within it condenses, leading to mould. This places a burden on housing maintenance teams, particularly in the colder months.

There is a whole host of problems that a lack of ventilation can cause. Here are some of the reasons why it is important to ensure adequate air flow.

1. CONDENSATION IS UNSIGHTLY AND CAN BE DAMAGING TO THE FABRIC OF THE BUILDING

Condensation is a common problem in homes across the UK. On planned maintenance visits to properties it is advisable to check for the early signs of condensation – usually found on windows and door panes, leading to rotting frames, peeling paint and unsightly grey-black walls, as a result of mould growth. Condensation and mould growth are bigger issues in the winter, caused by excessive moisture in the house condensing on the cold windows. An effective ventilation system will improve the air quality within the properties affected and control humidity levels in a home, preventing condensation from forming in the first place.

2. HEALTH BENEFITS OF IMPROVED VENTILATION

Research by Professor Awbi at the University of Reading in the report *Indoor air quality in UK homes and its impact on health* revealed a major increase in asthma cases as a direct result of poor indoor air quality. The report stated that: "Poor indoor air quality is associated with a range of undesirable health effects, such as allergic and asthmatic symptoms, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, airborne respiratory infections and cardiovascular disease." When energy-efficient refurbishments are carried out, it is important to ensure that a property has an effective ventilation system installed, otherwise improved airtightness can trap pollutants, as well as humidity, in the home.

A whole-house Positive Input Ventilation (PIV) system will gently draw in fresh air from outside, reducing humidity levels, diluting and reducing the overall number of potential toxins.

3. ADEQUATE VENTILATION HELPS TO RELIEVE SYMPTOMS OF ASTHMA

The same report by Professor Awbi predicted an 80 per cent increase in asthma sufferers from current levels by 2050. The effects of severe asthma can be debilitating, and even fatal. In 2016, 1,410 UK citizens were reported to have died from asthma related events. Mould spores and minute particulate matter associated with damp, pollution, cigarette smoke and airborne detritus from house dust mites can all trigger attacks or make an existing problem worse. A well-ventilated home can help to reduce the symptoms and the likelihood of such attacks.

4. REDUCE POLLEN LEVELS

And it's not just in the colder months that inadequate ventilation can cause a problem. In the Spring-Summer months, hay fever can cause aggravate thousands of people. Many hay fever sufferers stay indoors when pollen levels are high, and a ventilation system can reduce the need for residents to open doors and windows.

5. REDUCE RADON LEVELS IN AFFECTED AREAS

An increasing concern for tenants and social housing providers in some areas is radon, a naturally occurring gas that is formed by the decay of uranium, which is in all rocks and soil. The World Health Organisation (WHO) states that radon is linked to between 3 and 14 per cent of all lung cancers in a given country, depending on the national levels of Radon and the prevalence of smoking. An effective ventilation system can reduce Radon levels and minimise risks to tenants, as well as providing better indoor air quality.



The importance of ventilation to a resident's physical health cannot be overstated

6. LESSEN THE IMPACT OF VOLATILE ORGANIC COMPOUNDS (VOCs)

Toxic home syndrome was identified as a problem in homes a couple of years ago, when studies by My Health My Home found that 15.3 million homes were at risk of health deterioration as a result of poor indoor air quality. There are natural and man-made airborne pollutants that exist in homes, known as Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). These are present in some soft furnishings, cleaning products, aerosols, candles and air fresheners. When these VOCs build up in a confined space, they can start to lead to a deterioration in indoor air quality. One way to lessen the impact of VOCs is to reduce the use of these products; the other option is to control the levels via a ventilation system.

Active whole-house ventilation systems are being seen as the answer as, for a relatively small investment, a resident's home can be free from condensation and mould growth. Failure to provide adequate ventilation can lead to serious consequences for the health of buildings and their occupants.

John Moss is head of social housing sales at EnviroVent

Domus' quiet and stylish Sapphire fan

The Sapphire range of bathroom and kitchen intermittent extract fans and dMEV units from **Domus Ventilation** (formerly Polypipe Ventilation), comes in a contemporary and minimalist design, coupled with extremely quiet performance. They are available as both standard and energy efficient models. Sapphire models are available with a variety of user-friendly control options, including timer, pull cord and humidity-sensing versions. In addition to these, the range also features an innovative 'silent' back draught shutter. The Sapphire dMEV and intermittent extract fans are competitively priced and come with a two year warranty as standard.



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At ESi the company is providing installers and specifiers with a new range of quality heating controls that are already being met warmly by a number of new build and social housing providers.



ESi is introducing easy to use controls with unique features and offering keenly priced replacement units that are proving very attractive through the merchants.

For more information, or to take a closer look at ESi's offerings, please contact the company or visit its website.

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Have faith with Nuaire

Ventilation manufacturer **Nuaire** has launched 'Faith', a new continuously-running extract fan designed specifically for Social Housing applications. Small yet compact, the new FAITH fan has a facility to enable constant-flow operation via a sensor to guarantee installed performance. Unlike some other continuous extract fans on the market, Faith can automatically adjust its airflow to maintain the designed duty, enabling it to comply with ADF 2010 (system 3) once installed. Even with its competitive price point, Faith extract fan comes with a number of sophisticated features. For tenants, the new Faith extract fan is small and sleek and, just as importantly, is quiet in operation.



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Springfit™ Mask offers an unrivalled fit

JSP has launched the New Springfit™ fold flat disposable mask with a unique endoskeleton structure which guarantees each mask keeps its shape, increasing performance and maintaining rigidity. This integrated spring feature allows facial movement ensuring the mask offers a secure face fit and seal during speech or movement of the jaw. The pioneering Typhoon™ valve has been designed to reduce breathing resistance, heat and moisture build-up. The low profile design provides exceptional compatibility with other above the neck PPE, such as eyewear improving the wearer's field of vision. It is designed to be compact, is easily pocketed and individually packed for hygiene reasons.



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Houses thrive with RåBuild House

Having previously experienced the system first hand, the Managing Director of Hill Bespoke specified the RåBuild method of construction, which uses the H+H Thin-Joint System on four new build homes in Cambridgeshire. A division of the Hill Group, Hill Bespoke was established to handle complex design projects for the most discerning of clients. Hill Bespoke uses cutting edge techniques to provide premium housing solutions. RåBuild, an all-in-one approach to building from H+H UK, takes full advantages of the properties of aircrete to allow for the quick construction of high quality homes. Despite aircrete being a well-established construction material in the UK for a number of years, it is still considered a modern method of construction, and is more than capable of producing outstanding results on bespoke high-quality projects. The RåBuild house ran alongside conversion of the barns to also offer prestige housing. The site possessed extraordinary heritage value, as archaeological research confirmed that the timbers within the original barns on site dated back to Anglo-Saxon times.

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Taking glass to new heights

While the aesthetic appeal of glass balustrades and Juliet balconies is obvious, thought needs to be given to the careful and safe installation of such systems. Simon Boocock of CRL Europe takes a look at some of the solutions available

Creating a minimal, high-end finish on buildings, glass is fast becoming the material of choice for balustrades and balconies. Providing an uninterrupted view, this look is particularly popular on high-rise buildings and has widespread aesthetic appeal.

Small spaces can be made to feel much bigger through the use of glass, and Juliet balconies in particular are increasingly being chosen for new buildings as a way of filling the room with light and natural ventilation, without the need for any planning permission. Unlike a bolt-on or decked balcony, they do not need the foundations of a property to be re-evaluated to accommodate them, making them a useful solution for refurbishment and renovation projects.

Once installed, Juliet balconies are effectively maintenance-free and can be suitable for even the most corrosive seaside or coastal properties if they are made of 316 Grade stainless steel and accordingly tested. Although glass infill panels are often perceived as a more expensive option than metal, glass isn't necessarily beyond the reach of projects with a limited budget.

For the installer though, fitting a glass balustrade or balcony can be a more

demanding – particularly when scaffolding is required and the system needs to be installed from the outside in, as this raises many health and safety issues. Maintenance, too, can be a challenge, as by their nature balconies and balustrades involve working at height.

Wet fit balcony systems need to be held securely in place, and this is often achieved with cement to ensure a tight fit. Cement can be messy however, particularly on retro-fit projects. Often the architectural hardware used for installation will be heavy and cumbersome to fit, particularly when working at awkward angles and from height, and can even compromise the minimal aesthetic if it is poorly designed.

Specifiers need to be mindful that the general Code of Practice for barriers in and around buildings is confirmation to BS6180:2011 and a system that can be fixed back to the stone or brickwork of the building will offer the best solution in terms of security. However, a dry-glazed railing system suitable for frameless glass balustrades is a hassle-free alternative to the mess and awkwardness of working with cement and scaffolding. This solution simplifies the fitting and maintenance process, enabling installation from the safe side of



With the right systems used the end result will be a graceful balcony that takes full advantage of the strength and aesthetic qualities of glass

the balcony or balustrade, reducing installation times and providing safety and security for the installer and end user.

Juliet balconies fall under Part K of the Building Regulations Act 2000, stipulating that gaps in any railings must not be more than 100 mm and that the top of the balcony must be at least 1100 mm from standing floor level.

With glass Juliet balcony systems; less is more, and the secret here lies very much in the strength of the handrail. The stronger the handrail the fewer supporting posts, connectors and cap rails will be required, resulting in a greater span of glass. Installers should also look for a system that makes maintenance easier, with any necessary replacement of glass panels able to be carried out from the safe side, internally, and with no need for scaffolding.

Both dry glazed railing systems and Juliet balcony systems tap into the big trend for frameless glass balustrades, and balconies have less architectural hardware, providing an improved aesthetic when compared to standard vertical posts. What hardware is on show can be chosen in a number of attractive weather-proof finishes so a minimal, high-end look can be easily achieved.

With the right systems used, the end result can be a balcony that takes full advantage of the strength and aesthetic qualities of glass, while being virtually maintenance free and very straightforward to install.

Simon Boocock is managing director of CRL Europe



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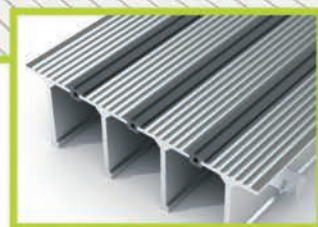
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Solid Gear continues to modernize safety footwear with the revolutionary 'Infinity' technology in this new shoe. Combining a lightweight athletic look with maximum breathability and superb safety features, the new VENT safety shoe is ideal for workers who are constantly on the move. VENT's upper is made from lightweight mesh combined with Cordura and a TPU reinforcement to ensure cool comfort, maximum breathability and enhanced durability. While the shoe's two midsoles deliver stability, flexibility and optimal energy return for enhanced comfort on your feet, the rubber outsole provides a high level of anti-slip protection.



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Dulux Trade plus range cuts heat loss

Dulux Trade has launched a range of innovative coatings designed to help improve the energy efficiency of existing older buildings. The products in the range have been specially developed to help cut heat loss through solid wall construction. Dulux Trade Plus Thermacoat+ is a revolutionary three-part coating system, independently proven to reduce heat loss through solid walls by up to 18 per cent. The second product in the range, designed specifically for undecorated external brickwork, is Dulux Trade Plus Smartshield+. Karen Wilkinson from Dulux Trade said: "Independently-tested, Dulux Trade Plus Thermacoat+ and Smartshield+ offer revolutionary benefits to enhance buildings inside and out."



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In association with the British Institute of Facilities Management and CBRE, Facilities Show 2018 continues to attract inspirational speakers, contractors and individuals. It champions the industry, changes perceptions, drives excellence and pioneers new-age leadership.

ENHANCE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Designed explicitly for facilities management practitioners, 2018's theatre sees each day split into three different themes: the workplace, technology and people. The programme includes presentations and panel discussions on topics including workplaces of the future, security, delivering top class FM on a budget, leadership, office refurbishments and relocations, technology disruption, diversity, skills and recruitment, getting recognition in the boardroom and flexible working.

INSPIRATIONAL SPEAKERS

An aspirational line-up of speakers including comedian and mental health expert Ruby Wax OBE, Nicky Moffat CBE and Sir Clive Woodward OBE will take to the stage to deliver fascinating, diverse talks on the need for positive professional environments, communications, conditions and challenges and sustaining and growing a healthy, happy, and high-achieving workforce.

BIFM SMART CLIENT PROGRAMME

Equipping attendees with the knowledge and tools to make smart procurement decisions enabling successful client-supplier partnerships, seminar sessions will be followed by pre-booked 1:1 appointments with selected suppliers. The 90-minute session will cover: How to select a contractor or supplier; how to use strategic sourcing to improve quality, deliver efficiencies and reduce risk; and what to do when contracts go wrong.

FACILITIES GAMES ARCADE

Back by popular demand, the Facilities games arcade is an area of the show floor not to be missed, providing all FMs with the opportunity to grow their professional community.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & WELLBEING ZONE

In response to industry needs and essential learnings from key government reports, Facilities Show will launch a new area dedicated to the health and



Facilities Show takes place from the 19–21 June 2019 at ExCeL London. Get your badge at: Facilities.ubm-events.com/netmagmedia

wellbeing of the workforce. The focused theatre will deliver thought provoking and tactical seminar sessions on how FMs benefit from enhanced productivity by putting employee health and wellbeing at the forefront of company culture.

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Bradite will take market by storm

Bradite is set to take the specialist paint market by storm with the launch of a new multi-purpose product that is suitable for use on all surfaces. Bradite One Can, the first all-purpose water-based primer and finish in one can, will be available at merchants from this Spring. The unique product is an interior and exterior, anti-corrosive, quick drying, low odour, low VOC, primer, undercoat and finish. The high-performance coating will give protection to many substrates including: cladding, UPVC, powder coated metal, steel, and timber including fencing, garden furniture and sheds. One Can is easy to apply and is touch dry after one hour.



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Polyflor flooring brings style and safety

A variety of Polysafe safety flooring and Expona luxury vinyl tiles from commercial vinyl flooring specialist Polyflor were recently used to complete the construction of Needham House in Devizes, Wiltshire. Needham House is a housing development of extra care apartments which allow older people to live independently in their own homes with on-site care and support. Expona Commercial PUR luxury vinyl tiles in the Light Classic Oak design were selected for the building entrance and lobby areas, the dining hall, staircases, circulation areas and corridors between the apartments. Flooring samples can be ordered free of charge on the Polyflor website.



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Floor preparation: worth every penny

Dave Bigham of National Flooring Equipment discusses the process of floor preparation in residential spaces

In the last few years, luxury coverings such as marble, solid oak and bamboo have bumped up the price of residential flooring in the UK. Fortunately, there is an alternative, cheaper option – one pence pieces. While a floor made from pennies certainly makes an impression, it might not be the most durable, long-lasting option. For a floor to truly stand the test of time, property owners need to invest in good preparation.

According to the National Association of Home Builders, the average home owner replaces their carpet every eight to ten years. While hard flooring lasts slightly longer, home owners are likely to experience several floor renovations during their lifetime. The aesthetics of a new floor are important, however, it's actually what lies underneath that is the critical work. Without good sub-floor preparation, a pristine floor can soon become an eye sore.

WHY RENOVATE?

When carrying out general modernisation, property owners are not expected to restore their sub floors every time. However, there are certain situations when it is important to address the foundations of their property.

If a home has experienced water damage, its sub floor is likely to have suffered. Often, owners are keen to restore their home as quickly as possible, but it is important to address all aspects that might affect the quality and safety of the building in the future. When water damage occurs, you must ensure that concrete floor is completely dry before laying a new covering. It is often believed that, after a few days of drying out, you can proceed with the covering. Normally, a concrete floor is much cooler than the rest of the room. Condensation will therefore form on the surface of the concrete long before it does anywhere else in the room. If a new floor is laid on top of the layer of condensation, you can run into problems further down the road.

Flooding can also cause structural damage to the concrete floor, wearing it away if left for a long period. If a new floor is laid on top of a worn surface, it can appear uneven and poorly fitted. The only way to achieve a quality finish is to invest in floor preparation.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Many believe that floor preparation in residential spaces should be more straightforward than commercial and industrial buildings, due to there being less property legislation and health and safety considerations. In reality, there are additional concerns that could impact the renovation process if not handled correctly.

The first thing to consider when handling floor preparation in a residential space is ease of access. Contractors and rental customers should ensure that their floor preparation machine fits through any doorways or stairwells that lead to the workspace. If there are steps leading to the property, users should consider whether they are able to lift the machine to transport it to the correct area.

It's also important to consider whether the renovated area is going to be used as a living space during the working period. Floor preparation machinery can be noisy, therefore it's important to inform residents that there may be some disruption while work is being carried out.

Finally, consider the amount of dust that is generated during the floor preparation process. Silicon dioxide or silica is a chemical compound found in materials that are found in sub floors, including sandstone, granite and



concrete. These materials create dust when they are cut, sanded and carved. When fine enough, this dust can be inhaled by both workers and residents, causing health problems, such as silicosis or bronchitis.

The only way to mitigate the dangers of silica dust is to use the correct dust collecting equipment. Investing in a dust collector that attaches onto the surface preparation machine is the best way to keep silica dust enclosed and stop it from becoming airborne.

There's no doubt that laying a floor made completely from pennies takes rigorous planning in order to get the ideal finish. However, the importance of planning is often devalued during standard renovation. When carrying out your next project, whether it be a home or a commercial property, ensure that you have all the tools and techniques to complete the job to a standard that generates the same reaction as a floor of pennies.

Dave Bigham is the director of national accounts at National Flooring Equipment

A heater for almost every application

Installers or homeowners looking to replace old warm air heating systems with the latest highly energy efficient technology should consider the advantages of the **Johnson & Starley's** Aquair Heat interface unit. This is possibly the most unique and versatile HIU available and will provide all the benefits that a centralised heating system can offer, but with a host of additional advantages. An Aquair can replace any warm air heater in a home, fully utilise the existing warm air ducting and be integrated in to almost any centralised heating source. It can be run in conjunction with an existing wet system and also has the option of supplying unheated air for cooling purposes during the warmer months.



01604 762881 www.johnsonandstarley.co.uk

LED floodlights for the British weather

Rusty fittings, casings, screws and brackets on outdoor lights are no longer inevitable result of the British climate. Timeguard's new Coastal range maintains good looks for longer because all the metal parts are made of high-grade stainless steel, from the brackets to the screws and even pcb components. 10W, 20W and 30W floodlights with integral PIR detectors are available, all with slave terminals for external loads. You can also connect floodlights in parallel so that any detector will switch them all on. Another great new feature is the curved Timeguard panning bracket. No longer do you have to align floodlights flat to the wall, this clever curved bracket enables you to pan as well as tilt.



020 8452 1112 bit.ly/TimeguardCoastal

Danlers range just got better!

DANLERS Outdoor Security Switch range are neat and compact and now benefit from an IP66 rated polycarbonate enclosure and therefore can be installed across a greater range of challenging environments. The product range includes: IP66 Compact Person Detector with both improved time lag options and upgraded photocell range of 10-1000 lux together with a new photocell inactive feature; IP66 Twilight Switch turns lights ON from Dusk to Dawn; New IP66 Twilight Switch featuring DANLERS 'Intelligent' Photocell which reduces risk of hunting and over illumination; IP66 Dusk Switch with new 'Intelligent photocell' and LED feedback for determining time on duration from 2-16 hrs.



01249 443377 www.danlers.co.uk

Nationwide Windows invests in Swindon

A leading door and window supplier, **Nationwide Windows Ltd** announces further expansion with the opening of a new 4,000sq.ft depot in Swindon to better service customers in the South and South West area. The company places huge emphasis on the commitment it makes to excellent customer service and the new Swindon depot will enable Nationwide Windows & Doors to better deliver to existing window and door replacement contracts in both social housing and new build sectors in this geographical area. Daryl Cashmore, Operations Director said: "Having a regional presence across the UK is part of Nationwide Windows Ltd's overall strategy to achieve ultimate customer satisfaction."



www.nationwidewindows.co.uk

New Aico 3000 Series Fire & CO Alarms

Aico, one of the UK's market leaders in domestic mains powered Fire and Carbon Monoxide (CO) detection, has launched the new 3000 Series. This technologically advanced series detects both Fire and CO and includes, for the very first time, a Multi-Sensor Heat & CO Alarm, providing whole property coverage from one Series.



Unique to the 3000 Series, the Ei3028 Multi-Sensor Heat & CO Alarm has been much anticipated as a convenient, cost-effective, efficient solution to protecting residents from both Fire and CO. All alarms in the 3000 Series are backwards compatible with existing Aico products, including the ground-breaking Ei450 Alarm Controller and Ei414 Fire/CO Alarm Interface.

www.aico.co.uk/3000series

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

Horbury secures fire safety agreement

Horbury Property Services, part of the **Horbury Group** of companies, has been accepted as an approved supplier on Paragon ASRA's social housing framework agreement. The company has secured approval to provide fire door and fire compartmentation inspection and remediation works for the Midlands, as



part of a four year framework agreement that started in April. Richard Sutton, General Manager at Horbury Property Services, said: "This is the latest in a number of framework agreements that we have successfully secured. Our expertise in fire safety and as FIRAS-approved contractors means we can help to ensure a housing provider is compliant and occupants are being protected."

www.horburypropertyservices.com

Circle of light

David Neale of Sylvania looks at how changing trends have influenced lighting in residential applications

The cyclical nature of lighting trends poses an interesting dilemma for lighting manufacturers. How can we balance the constant criteria of energy efficiency and design, while ensuring we have created a light source that meets the needs of a residential property?

Lighting has the power to create the right ambience for comfort, relaxation or completing tasks as well as providing energy savings. Over the last few years, the latter of these has become increasingly more important to tenants, facilities managers and property owners.

THE RIGHT LIGHT

In most residential properties we use a combination of ambient and task lighting. To achieve these differing requirements, careful consideration is needed of which light sources and lamp types will work best. LED technology has proved hugely popular in the lighting industry over the past five years, but has struggled to become the go-to technology for residential applications. This is due to occupants often favouring the light emitted from traditional technologies such as incandescent, halogen and compact fluorescent lighting.

It is not just the light levels and colour temperatures that occupants crave from traditional lighting; it is also the style and look of the lamps. We have seen an explosion in the demand for retro inspired products across vinyl and fashion and this retro appeal is seeping into the lighting industry. Many people want the look and the feel of traditional lighting – a fusion between old and new. Characterised by an exposed filament and a warm, inviting glow, incandescent lamps lend themselves perfectly to installation within residential properties including bedrooms, living rooms and dining rooms.

However, property owners and tenants are becoming savvier and understand the need for energy efficient lamp technologies. Traditional lighting itself is not sustainable. With a lifespan of around 1000 hours and a power consumption of approximately 60 watts these lamps can be costly both in terms of energy and financially.

So how is the lighting industry bridging the gap between style and efficiency?

Retro lamps evoke images of atmospheric and warm light. However, there are ways to replicate the look and feel of retro-style products, without sacrificing on reliability, performance and cost. There are now LED products available that replicate traditional lamp designs, which incorporate modern energy efficient technology.

THE FUTURE IS LED

The evolution of LED lamps has given users more benefits than just energy efficiency and long life. LED lamps offer the opportunity to improve the light quality in our spaces with better colour rendering, which is the lamps ability to reproduce colours accurately. Not only does the long-life promise of LED lamps mean fewer power outs and lamp changes, therefore reducing the prospect of being left in the dark, but it also provides instant light. Instant lighting capabilities make LED lighting the ideal solution for use in high use areas such as bathrooms and corridors.

Due to low running costs and simple installation, LED's offer an impressive payback period, saving up to 85 per cent of the energy usage when compared with a some traditional incandescent or halogen lamps. Coupled with the extremely long lamp life of LED, the energy saving through life, and the cost saving in not having to more frequently buy traditional lamps as they fail, means that LED lamps more than pay for themselves over their lifetime. For example, based on 1000 hours per year burning (roughly three hours per day), a replacement LED lamp will pay for itself in around two years and continue saving for many afterwards.



Instant lighting capabilities make LED lighting the ideal solution for use in high use areas such as bathrooms and corridors



The ability to introduce sophisticated but easy to use and install control systems are an additional benefit allowing large private and public landlords to ensure the lighting is turned off when spaces are unoccupied and set unique scenes to create the right ambience. The latest controls can also be integrated into the luminaire meaning no extra cabling or installation is required, saving time, money and energy throughout the system's lifespan.

Property owners, facilities managers and tenants all like the look and feel of traditional lamps and are looking for LED versions that maintain that feel while offering energy savings. We foresee this trend continuing to grow and more LED lamps being brought to market with a retro feel.

David Neale is the marketing manager at Sylvania

What should you look for to determine competence when choosing fire safety service providers?

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Promoting Quality in Fire Safety



Door closers create safer homes

With fire safety high on the agenda, Dr Lloyd Blewett of Samuel Heath investigates the potential of door closers for social housing

The tragic events of last year have, understandably, brought the fire safety spotlight on to the social housing sector, particularly high-rise flats and apartments. Social landlords are reassessing their approach to fire safety and re-evaluating the fire safety measures in properties they own and manage.

Many local authorities are having to undertake extensive improvements throughout properties, and whilst financial resources will have a bearing on these refurbishments, there appears to be a much greater emphasis on choosing products for the benefits they deliver, rather than their cost.

Providing safe, secure and comfortable accommodation in the social housing sector imposes enormous responsibilities on social landlords and those delegated to design, build and maintain the housing stock.

There is a wide variety of requirements that need to be taken into consideration in ensuring that homes are fit for habitation, including Building Regulations, product performance standards, codes of practice and legislative instruments. These factors also have to be applied with due regard to the needs of residents; physical or psychological challenges, for example, may need special consideration.

Similarly, the risk of products being damaged may also need to be considered. Damaged products not only incur additional maintenance costs; they can also have a detrimental effect on the building's ability to provide safety in the case of a fire. There is also a growing appreciation amongst designers and managers that dwellings in the social housing sector should provide similar levels of comfort and aesthetics as those in the private sector.

So, how can a door closer be expected to contribute towards all of these requirements; fire performance, accessibility, safety, reliability, damage limitation, comfort, aesthetics and so on?

PERFORMANCE

Where performance is concerned, the key considerations when selecting door closers are fire safety and accessibility. Legislation and performance standards governing these areas, include CE marking, Building Regulations, the Regulatory Reform Order and the Equality Act.

The product's ability to perform reliably, time after time, and for many years, is also critical. The design, engineering and quality of the door closer should be paramount in the selection process, as should the reputation of the manufacturer.

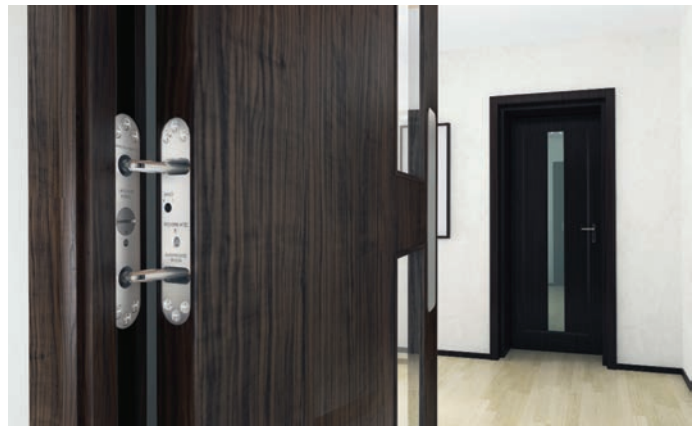
ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

Consideration also needs to be given to the needs of tenants and the situations in which the door closers are being used. The performance, functionality and features of some door closers can deliver additional benefits that make them more suitable for many social housing applications.

Jamb-mounted, concealed door closers are becoming increasingly popular in high-rise accommodation. Available in standard and free swing models, they not only meet the essential fire and accessibility performance criteria, but also deliver a number of benefits over surface-mounted devices, thanks to the fact that they are totally concealed when the door is closed and unobtrusive when the door is open.

MORE THAN GOOD LOOKS

Aesthetics are now widely valued in social housing developments, and not for the sole purpose of a better looking interior. The lack of unsightly mechanical devices creates a more homely, less institutionalised atmosphere contributing to the comfort and well-being of residents.



Concealed door closers are less likely to be damaged, whether by a deliberate act, lack of care, misuse or tampering

A more practical, financially astute reason for selecting concealed door closers is the fact that they are far less likely to be damaged, whether by a deliberate act, lack of care, misuse or tampering.

This can mean reduced maintenance costs, less inconvenience for residents and more reliable fire safety.

Totally concealed door closers also offer some benefits in dwellings occupied by tenants with psychological or mental health challenges.

CHOOSE WISELY

When selecting door closers, specifiers should be looking beyond product performance, choosing products which will perform reliably, are appropriate for the situation, deliver additional benefits for residents and stand up to the rigours of day-to-day use in social housing situations.

Dr Lloyd Blewett is the sales manager at Samuel Heath

Fire sprinkler casings – a compliance loophole for LAs and HAs?

Local authorities, housing associations and contractor partners could be contravening the UK government's 'Timber Procurement Policy' (TPP) guidelines and their own sustainability procedures if the plywood casings being used to cover fire sprinkler pipework are not FSC® certified.

With LAs and HAs across the UK focusing on fire protection and tenant safety in tower blocks, many have already started the process of installing fire sprinkler systems in high rise buildings and are using plywood casings to conceal the orange CPVC sprinkler pipework in flats and public areas.

As these products are manufactured from wood, specifiers and contractors should be stipulating that they are FSC® or PEFC certified, required by the government's TPP as well as the latest edition of the Timber Procurement Advisory Note (TPAN) from Defra.

Defra's guidance on compliance with the TPP states: Government procurers and their suppliers should have documentary evidence to show the timber supplied is at a minimum from legal and sustainable sources. This evidence should include full chain of custody from the forest source(s) to the end user.

Acceptable forest certification schemes provide this evidence of legal and/or sustainable timber. Suppliers and buyers must check evidence to verify its validity. Approved schemes include the



“...if you don't know where your timber and paper come from, you could be part of the problem.”

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

2 international certification schemes: Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).

In addition, where LAs, HAs, contractor partners or merchants have their own 'green' or sustainable procurement policies in place, using and supplying non-FSC® products will also be contravening these compliance procedures.

Encasement's Managing Director, Martin Taylor, explained: “The TPP and TPAN guidance exists to encourage and enforce a responsible approach to global environmental issues, such as climate change, illegal de-forestation and the use of sustainably sourced timber.”

He added: “Even though there is an obligation to use FSC certified boxing under TPAN, non-FSC casings are still available in the market, which presents a risk of non-compliance for specification and procurement personnel. Clearly the best way to address this is to tighten the specification clauses and specify only FSC Chain of Custody certified products.”

“In our view FSC is the default choice and not an option,” he continued. “Today, it's impossible to purchase non-FSC toilet paper, so why should companies still be able to supply fire sprinkler casings that aren't manufactured from FSC certified materials. We always advise specifiers to avoid the risk of non-compliance and look for the FSC Chain of Custody (COC) certificate number against each product line that is ordered and supplied. If it's not present on the invoice and delivery note, then it's probably not FSC. Even

FSC themselves say that if you don't know where your timber and paper come from, you could be part of the problem.”

For reference, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) procurement Factsheet, recommends the following procedures and checks when purchasing:

- Source from an FSC certified supplier. All FSC certified organisations are included within the FSC certificate database at <https://info.fsc.org>.
- Check that the certificate is valid and that it covers the appropriate product categories using the database at <https://info.fsc.org>.
- Specify FSC certified materials when placing your order and let your supplier know that you need them to make an FSC claim on their sale documents.
- Check that the delivery note and/or invoice clearly identifies the FSC certified products and includes the supplier's FSC certificate code.

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Important Smoke Control Notice

Product and System Safety Guidance

If you are involved in the ownership, management or fire safety approval of high rise buildings, or if you install AOVs and smoke control systems, take note of this important information from SE Controls.

Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the building owner or manager is responsible for ensuring the smoke ventilation system is compliant. Compliance doesn't just mean having a fire safety contract for a building, compliance is about providing a regulated building which is safe for occupation.

If a contractor is used to install or maintain the smoke ventilation system, make sure they can provide evidence that the system is compliant, and therefore safe. Below are some key things to look out for.

EN 12101

For a product to be placed on the market in the European Economic Area, it must be CE marked. Under the Construction Product Regulations, it must be CE marked to a particular standard, in the case of smoke ventilation it is to the EN 12101 suite of standards. A Declaration of Performance (DoP) can only be issued if these requirements have been met.

- EN 12101: Pt 2 – Natural Smoke and Heat Exhaust Ventilators (SHEV)
- EN 12101: Pt 3 – Powered SHEVs
- EN 12101: Pt 6 – Pressurised Differential Systems
- EN 12101: Pt 8 – Smoke Control Dampers
- EN 12101: Pt 9 provisional – Control Panels
- EN 12101: Pt 10 – Power Supplies

These standards often have specific requirements relating to installation or testing practice. For example, EN 12101: Pt 2 dictates that unless the actuator and vent profile are tested together as a system, in a fire environment and at an accredited facility, it is not compliant; therefore its safety can't be guaranteed and a DoP can't be issued.

BS7346-8 Code of Practice

BS7346-8 summarises the entire process from design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of the system.

Approved Document B

Approved Document B (ADB) provides guidance on complying with the building regulations with regards to means of escape, travel distances, vent locations, free area calculations, access and limiting fire spread.

BS9999 and BS9991

These standards cover fire safety in the design, management and use of non-residential and residential buildings respectively.

SE Controls is a member of the Smoke Control Association. If you want to check that the system you have is fit for purpose contact SE Controls for further information.



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Save lives, limit damage, protect property

Paul Hague of HSP Fire Protection provides answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about passive fire protection, and its place among the social and private rented sectors



University of Hull. Image courtesy of HSP

As every landlord, local authority or facilities management company will know, the safety of your tenants and property is of upmost importance – especially when it comes to fire protection.

Passive fire protection is your first line of defence against a fire that could occur in your property. After installation, passive fire protection remains inactive until the case of a fire in which case they work without human intervention.

With this first line of defence you buy yourself crucial extra time – extra time in which fire fighters are able to reach the property – limiting potential property damage and most importantly allowing time for safe evacuation of any people.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES

The role of passive fire protection isn't to extinguish the blaze, but to contain the fire to its point of origin and prevent flames and smoke from spreading throughout the building.

Therefore, passive fire protection covers different types of product for many different building components. Depending on the building requirements passive fire protection can; seal openings to contain fire, retard passage of flames across a surface, or resist penetration of flames into structural elements to maintain structural integrity.

There are passive fire protection solutions for both interior and exterior surfaces and building components, and for all kinds of substrate. So always ensure to get a professional specification when looking to add passive fire protection products to your property.

RETROFIT

There are passive fire protection solutions for all properties; from new build constructions, to existing properties, and even for historical buildings.

The role of passive fire protection isn't to extinguish the blaze, but to contain the fire to its point of origin

Some of the things your building control might ask you to do may be: Upgrading doors to fire doors; fire protection coatings such as intumescent coatings; fire protection for electrical or plumbing fixtures and fittings; fire Protection for soft materials such as fabrics, wallpaper and upholstery; plus protective solutions for loft conversions.

The above list is by no means extensive – fire protection solutions and regulation depend on the property, building requirements, location and materials used.

A COMBINED SOLUTION

Passive fire protection systems will be integral to the construction and maintenance of your property. However, they are not a stand-alone solution.

To provide the most effective fire protection, using both passive and active fire protection elements will always be recommended. So that in case of a fire, the elements can work together to ensure occupants have the greatest chance of exiting the building safely and to minimise damage to the property.

Paul Hague is the director of HSP Fire Protection

Three white plastic tubs of Crown Trade Fastflow products are shown against a colorful, abstract background. From left to right, the tubs are labeled 'PRIMER', 'GLOSS', and 'PUTTY'. Each tub has a black lid with the 'CROWN TRADE' logo and a label with the product name and a small image of the finished surface.



**Passive Fire Protection
Save Lives, Limit Damage, Protect Property**

Image courtesy of Marley Elmit

- 

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