

# HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

07.18



Grenfell update

Suspend RTB  
demanded

NAO slams UC



Landlords  
prosecuted

3 year  
tenancies  
for PRS



## Towards a retrofit sprinkler breakthrough

Antony Corbett examines the case for a mandate on installations of sprinklers in existing properties – See inside



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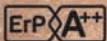
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## HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

# 07/18 Contents

## Features

### 29 Boiler Replacement & Servicing **Bridge over troubled water**

Craig Mitchell of Sentinel explains how a few changes to water treatment practices can ensure lifetime protection

### 34 Doors & Windows **Collaborative working pays dividends**

Adrian Pavey of Nationwide Windows Ltd looks at the challenges facing Registered Social Landlords and the industries they partner with

### 38 Finance **Should you invest in Buy to Let property?**

Jeff Knight of Foundation Home Loans considers six concerns when pursuing Buy to Let property

### 41 Heating & Renewable Energy **Water heating innovation and it's key role in Britain's new social housing stock**

Stuart Doggrell of Fabdec discusses how developments in water heating can power efficiencies and sustainability for housing associations

### 43 Flooding **Best in class**

Phil Windus from ACO Technologies, delves deeper into drainage channel load classes, and explains why you need to know your A 15's from your B 125's

### 46 Kitchen Refurbishment **The durability debate**

Bob Andrew of Elfin Kitchens discusses the importance of using durable materials in kitchen refurbishments, and the benefits of thinking small

### 49 Heating & Renewable Energy **Time to move to heat pumps**

Sharon Oliver of Mitsubishi Electric examines the industry's rising interest in heat pumps

## In every issue...

Industry news.....	04-27
Events .....	06
Product focus.....	37
Directory.....	51



## Products

Air Quality & Ventilation.....	28
Appointments & News .....	27
Bathroom Refurbishment .....	28
Boiler Replacement & Servicing.....	29
Building Products & Services .....	31
CAD & Software .....	32
Doors, Windows & Glazing.....	32
Finance & Insurance .....	38
Floors & Floor Coverings.....	40
Guttering & Drainage.....	42
Heating & Renewable Energy .....	41
Kitchen Refurbishment .....	46
Lighting & Electrical .....	45
Roofing.....	48
Smoke & Fire Protection .....	48
Solar & Renewable Energy .....	49



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## Editor's comment

# Quicker and more decisive action is urgently needed



Patrick Mooney,  
News Editor

The housing sector's professional body demands the suspension of Right of Buy and the investment of billions of pounds in the building of new affordable homes, while the Government puts the finishing touches to its long awaited Green Paper on social housing. Yet it is the Grenfell Tower fire and its aftermath that continues to dominate the headlines.

Politicians and policymakers appear to be finally getting the message that Health & Safety is NOT red-tape, nor is it petty bureaucracy that can be dropped or jettisoned without huge costs being risked. Most regulation is there for a very good reason, it just needs periodic reviews to ensure that it is still valid and relevant. The potential cost of not having it is the needless and catastrophic loss of human life, as we saw in the fires at Grenfell Tower and Lakanal House.

It is noticeable that more social landlords are deciding to demolish or carry out structural strengthening works to a growing number of tower blocks, but of course this increases the pressure on the supply of affordable homes in these localities and is exacerbating an already difficult situation. We are seeing more caution in the private sector, with only two developments where the original builder has decided to bite the bullet and pay for cladding removal works to proceed.

## STAY PUT OR EVACUATE

Clarity of purpose is also required, particularly with regard to Stay Put strategies. These are only justified if fires can be safely contained within individual flats or areas where they have broken out. Once they are outside of these, then it seems obvious the strategy has been compromised and the onus should be on a safe and orderly evacuation of the affected building.

We also need decisive action when circumstances dictate. Ministers should have imposed an immediate ban on the use of combustible materials, even if only for a temporary period while a proper review of its use is undertaken. It damages public confidence when we see spats over technical minutiae by well paid professionals, some of who work for the manufacturers and whose independence is rightly being questioned. Science and the evidence should be above vested interests and different interpretations. If in doubt, then people should err on the side of caution and public safety.

The Government should also consider the appropriate fire protection systems that should be mandatory in all medium and high-rise buildings, including the installation of water sprinkler systems, fit for purpose ventilation equipment and effective communal smoke and fire alarms. What is good for new buildings should surely also be fitted to existing buildings unless there are exceptional reasons for not doing so. And in these circumstances, there should be alternative fire retardant or extinguishing systems available for use.

The list of flaws at Grenfell Tower was truly frightening. Michael Mansfield QC in his opening remarks to the public inquiry asked about the possibility of returning fire extinguishers and fire hoses to the communal parts of tower blocks and requested the provision of smoke masks for the residents of each flat. Whatever their price these are a cost worth bearing, especially if they buy our safety.

## BUDGETS AND CAPACITY

The money being spent by landlords on fire safety is coming under greater scrutiny at present. The biggest housing association in the country, Clarion, has revealed it has virtually tripled its fire safety budget from £12.5m over 18 months to £61m over 30 months. Not all landlords will be able to increase their budgets by similar amounts, but clearly HA boards and councillors need to be asking questions about levels of risk and what is being done to manage and mitigate these in the social sector. But who is performing this role in the private rented sector?

The £400m to pay for cladding removal from tower blocks owned by councils and housing associations is a welcome start, but the fact this money has been taken from the social housing new build budget looks questionable. The final figure for remediation work in the social housing sector is likely to be at least double that and it is to be hoped that the building of more new affordable homes is not postponed or cancelled, to make up the balance. The slow rate of progress in removing and replacing combustible insulation and cladding materials from tower blocks up and down the country is a worry and concern.

There are also worrying signs that a shortage of construction workers is already hitting development programmes with several HAs reporting a slowing down in the rate of new house completions and problems in their supply chains – with an ageing workforce and many foreign workers returning home or migrating to other EU countries. The problem is also hitting the private housebuilding sector with output of new homes falling to its lowest quarterly level in two years – down from a peak of 55,000 at the end of 2017, to just 39,000 at the start of this year. That 300,000 new homes a year target is looking increasingly unlikely to be met in the foreseeable future.

*Patrick Mooney*

Patrick Mooney



## On the cover...

Antony Corbett examines the case for a mandate on installations of sprinklers in existing properties

Read more on page 25...



# CIH boss challenges Government to adopt bold solutions

The Chartered Institute of Housing has developed an ambitious set of proposals to revitalise the social housing sector in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire with calls for a significant growth in both investment and support.

With a Government green paper on affordable housing expected very soon, the CIH says the Government should be aiming to re-establish social housing as one of the central pillars of society alongside education and the NHS. CIH chief executive Terrie Alafat called on Ministers to suspend the Right to Buy and transfer billions of pounds from private housing into the building of new affordable homes.

'Rethinking social housing' was launched at Housing 2018 in Manchester and sets out an ambitious new vision for affordable housing. Polling by Ipsos MORI has revealed strong public support for the sector and this has possibly emboldened the institute. Ms Alafat said: "The message we got from our research was loud and clear - social housing has a unique and positive role to play and it is highly valued."

## CENTRAL ROLL

She highlighted 'a huge disparity' between the support for social housing and the current level of investment. Ms Alafat added: "We can only truly start to tackle the chronic shortage of affordable housing in this country by putting social housing at the centre of government plans to solve the housing crisis."

"I want to be very clear - yes the government needs to make some big changes but landlords must step up and take action in a number of areas without waiting to be told what to do. The sector must own its future. We cannot call ourselves a civilised society if we are failing to provide a safe, decent and affordable home for everyone who needs one."

Recommendations made in the report include:

- Suspending right to buy to stem the loss of social rented homes; removing the barriers stopping councils from replacing homes sold under the scheme and looking at more effective ways to help people access home ownership.
- Shifting investment from private housing to genuinely affordable homes – CIH analysis shows that 79 per cent of the Government's £53 billion housing budget up to 2020/21 is directed towards the private market, with just 21 per cent going to affordable housing;
- Reviewing the consumer regulation that is supposed to protect social housing tenants, in particular the tenant involvement & empowerment standard;
- Giving tenants the power to shape the direction of future government policy at a national level; and
- Linking social housing rents to local incomes.



With a Government green paper on affordable housing expected very soon, the CIH says the Government should be aiming to re-establish social housing as one of the central pillars of society alongside education and the NHS

Member organisations are also challenged to 'up their game' with social landlords being called upon to:

- Review the way they communicate with tenants and listen to and act on their concerns;
- Review their tenant scrutiny processes and the way that tenants are able to compare their performance in management and maintenance; and
- Set rents that are genuinely affordable to people on lower incomes.

## PUBLIC SUPPORT

By taking a balanced approach towards Government and social landlords, the CIH hopes to tread a fine line between advocacy and evidence based research. It is clear that some policies may not be new, but it wants to see a new framework which supports and protects tenants, while at the same time giving them a greater say in the development of policies which affect them and their implementation.

Much of the evidence and the basis for the recommendation lay in the near 200 workshops carried out during the report's preparation. These were supplemented with a national poll, which showed very high levels of support for social housing.

Polling carried out by Ipsos MORI showed that:

- More than six out of 10 people across England support more social housing being built in their area;
- 80 per cent of people agree that social housing is important because it helps people on lower incomes get housing which wouldn't be affordable in the private rented sector;
- 78 per cent agree that social housing should be available to people who cannot afford the cost of renting privately, as well as to the most vulnerable;
- 68 per cent agree that social housing plays an important role in tackling poverty in Britain; and
- 65 per cent of people agree that the negative view of the people that live in social housing is unfair.

It will be interesting to see how much of this work will have found its way into the Government green paper when it is published. The good news is that we should not have long to wait, but with Cabinet ministers already lobbying hard for growth in their departmental budgets it will surprise no-one if housing has to make do with what it already has. The next best thing to hope for will be to see money being re-allocated towards genuinely affordable housing.



## Events

**National Housing Awards**  
6 September, London  
[www.nationalhousingawards.co.uk](http://www.nationalhousingawards.co.uk)

**Social Housing Scottish Conference**  
6 September, Glasgow  
[www.insidehousing.co.uk/events](http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/events)

**Leaseholder and Tenant Service Charges Conference 2018**  
11 September, London  
[www.housing.org.uk/events](http://www.housing.org.uk/events)

**AGSM Safety & Compliance Conference**  
13 September 2018  
[gassafetyconference.co.uk/scotland](http://gassafetyconference.co.uk/scotland)

**National Housing Summit 2018**  
19 - 20 September, London  
[summit.housing.org.uk](http://summit.housing.org.uk)

**Future Housing Leaders 2018**  
19 - 20 September, London  
[futureleaders.housing.org.uk](http://futureleaders.housing.org.uk)

**Urban densification, energy efficiency and affordability of housing**  
20 September, Paris  
[www.housingeurope.eu](http://www.housingeurope.eu)

**Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in Housing Conference 2018**  
2 October, London  
[diversity.housing.org.uk](http://diversity.housing.org.uk)

**Treasury Management Conference 2018**  
3 October, London  
[www.housing.org.uk/events](http://www.housing.org.uk/events)

**The Big Question**  
4 October, Cardiff  
[www.cih.org/events](http://www.cih.org/events)

**Women in Housing Awards**  
11 October, Manchester  
[www.womeninhousingawards.co.uk](http://www.womeninhousingawards.co.uk)

**CIH North East Conference**  
8 - 9 November, Newcastle  
[www.cih.org/events](http://www.cih.org/events)

**London Development Conference 2018**  
21 November, London  
[londondevelopment.housing.org.uk](http://londondevelopment.housing.org.uk)

**Welsh Housing Awards 2018**  
23 November, Cardiff  
[www.cih.org/events](http://www.cih.org/events)

**Homes 2018**  
27 November, London  
[homesevent.co.uk](http://homesevent.co.uk)

**Social Housing Annual Conference**  
5 December, London  
[www.insidehousing.co.uk/events](http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/events)

# Homelessness could end within a decade

Britain could put an end to homelessness within 10 years if the Government adopts and implements specific policies, according to the homeless charity Crisis. They also claim the policies could save the public purse billions of pounds.

The charity estimates that there are currently 236,000 homeless people across England, Wales and Scotland, including those living in unsuitable temporary accommodation. It says this figure could double in the next 25 years. Fellow campaigning charity Shelter recently reported that more than 100,000 households in England had been on council waiting lists for housing for more than a decade.

In launching the report, the chief executive of Crisis, Jon Sparkes said: "We must not become a society that simply accepts homelessness as a sad fact of life... it doesn't have to be this way." The charity which is focussed on ending homelessness in Great Britain was set up 50 years ago.

## SAVINGS

In their report *Everybody In: How To End Homelessness In Great Britain*, Crisis sets out a comprehensive plan to make homelessness a thing of the past. It claims that the recommended policies carry a large initial cost of £19.3bn between 2018 and 2041, but says this is more than compensated for by much bigger long-term savings of £53.9bn based on figures from accountants PricewaterhouseCoopers.

The findings include the following proposals:

- 100,500 social homes to be built annually for the next 15 years to meet the needs of the homeless and those on low incomes (91,000 in England, 5,000 in Scotland and 4,000 in Wales);
- A national roll-out of Housing First, which aims to provide more than 18,000 homeless people with homes and a package of specialised support;
- Better rights for private renters and a reform to housing benefit, to protect people once they have been housed;
- Hospitals, prisons, the care system, and other parts of the state to be legally required to help find homes for those leaving their care; and
- Job Centres to have homelessness specialists.

"For the first time ever, we have a comprehensive

In launching the report, the chief executive of Crisis, Jon Sparkes said: "We must not become a society that simply accepts homelessness as a sad fact of life"

plan that shows exactly how we can address the root causes of homelessness and make it a thing of the past," said Mr Sparkes. "Other parts of the world are taking huge strides towards ending it, and Britain can too."

The report is based on work undertaken with the Chartered Institute of Housing, Heriot-Watt University, the National Housing Federation and PwC. The savings are expected to come from reductions in spending on councils' homelessness services, temporary accommodation, welfare benefits, the NHS and the criminal justice system.

## INVESTING

Local government has joined Crisis and Shelter in calling for funding for new homes. "A genuine renaissance in council house building would increase housing supply, boost home ownership and reduce homelessness" said Martin Tett, housing spokesman for the Local Government Association.

Responding to the Crisis report, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government said it was committed to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping.

"We are investing more than £1.2bn to tackle all forms of homelessness," said a spokesman. The spokesman highlighted last week's announcement of £30m for councils "to help boost support available to people living on the streets". "We are also investing £9bn to build more affordable homes and are piloting the Housing First approach in three major regions to get people off the streets and into stable accommodation."

## Kate Henderson replaces David Orr at NHF

Kate Henderson, the current chief executive of the Town and Country Planning Association will replace David Orr as the next chief executive of the

NHF. Ms Henderson will take up the post in early October.

During her time at the TCPA Ms Henderson led campaigns on garden cities, affordable housing, poverty and climate change. She has been involved with the Lyons Housing Review and the Raynsford Review of Planning. She is visiting professor at the Bartlett School of Planning at University College London and a board member of the International Federation of Housing and Planning.



# Government proposes longer tenancies but no rent controls for RPS

A minimum tenancy term of three years for privately rented homes is being considered by the Government as a way of giving people greater security in the fastest growing sector of the housing market.

A consultation exercise on the minimum tenancy term will now run until the end of the August. Most private tenants currently have contracts of six or 12 months and Ministers say longer agreements would allow them to put down roots in local communities. Tenants would also be able to leave early under the new plans while landlords would get more financial security.

However, the proposal has been attacked as not being fit for purpose by both the Labour Party and a major landlords group. The National Landlords Association derided it as a throwback to an earlier, over-regulated time that fails to address the needs for a more flexible system.

Meanwhile opposition housing spokesman John Healey said: "Any fresh help for renters is welcome but this latest promise is meaningless if landlords can still force tenants out by hiking up the rent." He said Labour's plans included caps on rent rises, an end to no-fault evictions and protection against substandard properties.

NLA Chief Executive Officer Richard Lambert said: "We would accept that the flexibility of the current Assured Shorthold Tenancy isn't used as effectively as it could be, and that we should be looking to find ways to ensure that tenants are offered the kind of tenancies they need at the time they need them.

He added "That means thinking about how to modernise a model devised 30 years ago, to take account of the changes in the people who are renting and the way they live their lives." Mr Lambert accused the Government of having misled private landlords over the proposals in the past couple of years.

## SHORT NOTICE

Official figures show approximately 20 per cent of all households live in the private rented sector, double the figure it was 20 years ago. Renters stay in a property for an average of four years but most have shorter contracts, typically just six months under the assured shorthold tenancy model. These can be ended by landlords at very short notice, often without giving a reason.

Official figures show approximately 20 per cent of all households live in the private rented sector, double the figure it was 20 years ago

Exemptions to the new rules could apply to certain types of tenancy, such as for students who usually want accommodation for between nine months and two years, linked to college and university academic years.

If approved, the new longer tenancies would bridge some of the gap in security of tenure between privately rented properties and council homes. Two years ago the Government ended the practice of lifetime tenancies being granted to council tenants, with fixed term tenancies of between two and five years (or up to ten years where young children are involved) now being the norm for new council tenants.

Announcing the consultation, Housing Secretary James Brokenshire said: "It is deeply unfair when renters are forced to uproot their lives or find new schools for their children at short notice due to the terms of their rental contract. Being able to call your rental property your home is vital to putting down roots and building stronger communities."

Mr Lambert said NLA research finds consistently that around 40 per cent of tenants want longer tenancies, but a similar number do not. More than 50 per cent of tenants consistently say they are happy with the tenancy length they were offered, and 20 per cent say that when they asked for a longer tenancy, they got it.

It is feared the proposals could have a negative impact on the buy-to-let sector, which is already showing signs of stress following changes in the tax system and a proposed ban on fees which have encouraged many smaller landlords to sell some or all of their properties. It may also encourage lenders to increase interest rates or impose other conditions to compensate for landlords having less flexibility over disposing of properties.

## Jump in landlords leaving the private rental market



Despite a continuing growth in demand for rental properties, the private rented sector is seeing growing numbers of landlords selling their buy-to-let properties.

Recent figures from ARLA Propertymark reveal rises in the number of landlords selling properties to their highest level since 2015 with the highest numbers of landlords leaving the sector in London and Wales. The number of rental properties managed by letting agents was 179 per branch on average, down from 183 in March last year and a figure of 193 in 2015.

This is happening despite increases in levels of demand for rental properties with a nine per cent rise in the number of prospective tenants registering with letting agents and member branches. Demand was the highest in Wales, followed by the East Midlands.

A quarter of branches also saw rents rise. Some 56 per cent of tenants in the East Midlands saw their rents rise while it was just 11 per cent in London and the North East. The average length of tenancy for properties let and managed by ARLA branches was 18 months.

David Cox, ARLA Propertymark Chief Executive, said the "barrage" of legislative changes that landlords have faced over the past few years, combined with political uncertainty has meant the BTL market is becoming increasingly unattractive to investors.

Cox said the statistics showed landlords were either hiking rents for tenants or choosing to exit the market altogether to avoid facing the increased costs incurred.

"This in turn is hitting renters most, at a time when a huge number of people rely on the rented sector. As demand for private rented homes massively continues to outstrip supply, the Government can no longer divert its attention from the broken housing market. The recent news that the Government is regulating the industry is a step in the right direction, but ultimately we just need more homes," he said.



# Spending watchdog slams faults in Universal Credit system

The Government's flagship benefits scheme has been savagely criticised by the National Audit Office, who say Universal Credit is unlikely to deliver the planned savings for the taxpayer but is inflicting untold misery on tens of thousands of claimants through incorrect and delayed payments.

UC combines six benefits including housing benefit, job seekers allowance and child benefit into a single monthly payment, which puts more onus on the claimant to manage their finances. It is heavily based on IT and was meant to be simpler and more streamlined – to claim, process and to pay. MPs from all political parties support its intentions but are highly critical of its implementation.

So far it has cost around £1.9bn to introduce the new benefit system and only 10 per cent of the planned number of claimants are receiving it, instead of the millions who were expected to be on UC by now. Amyas Morse, the head of the NAO, said: "We think the larger claims for Universal Credit, such as boosted employment, are unlikely to be demonstrable at any point in future. Nor for that matter will value for money."

The NAO say we probably have to proceed with the new system but UC has been beset by problems and delays and is years behind schedule. Each claim is costing £699 to process (four times the estimate) and some claimants are having to wait up to eight months for their payments. This in turn is causing problems for landlords in areas where the UC has been introduced because many of their tenants on the new benefit system are struggling to pay their rent and arrears are climbing. It is also increasingly difficult for landlords to differentiate between tenants who won't pay and those who can't pay their rent.

## CHALLENGES

The Department for Work and Pensions remains adamant that UC is good value for money and is set to save the public purse some £34bn over 10 years while helping 200,000 back in to work. They also say over 80 per cent of claimants are satisfied. All of this is challenged by the NAO and many charities, who point to the lack of hard evidence to back up the DWP claims as well as the increased use of foodbanks, higher rates of evictions, mental health issues and suicides. Ministers are accused of being in denial about the problems.

Official surveys have shown that two out of five claimants were experiencing financial difficulties. Parliamentary debates have been littered with examples of people being left in dire circumstances through delays in timely processing. MPs forced a number of concessions from the DWP last year while the film I, Daniel Blake presented a stark critique of the system's impact on individual claimants. A particularly contentious element of the UC scheme is the heavy use of sanctions, whereby



deductions or a complete suspension of benefits are used as penalties for missed appointments or failing to apply for jobs.

Multibillion-pound cuts to work allowances imposed by the former chancellor George Osborne mean UC is far less generous than originally envisaged. The architect of UC, Iain Duncan Smith has said these cuts have undermined many of the planned outcomes. According to the Resolution Foundation thinktank, about 2.5m low-income working households will be more than £1,000 a year worse off when they move on to universal credit, reducing their work incentives.

Despite the NAO's criticisms, Work and Pensions Secretary Esther McVey hailed Universal Credit as a "great British innovation" just a week after the report's publication. She said the cost per claim had been reduced by seven per cent since March this year and it was due to fall to £173 by 2025. "This is around £50 less per claim than legacy cases currently cost us to process," she claimed.

Meg Hillier, chair of the Public Accounts Committee said the introduction of UC had been "one long catalogue of delay with huge impact on people's lives". Frank Field, who chairs the Commons work and pensions select committee, said the report exploded constant assertions by ministers that all was well with UC. The Labour MP said a culture of ministerial denial about the project's problems over the years meant it was now "mega-costly" to either continue or halt it.

## MISERY

Campaigners feel the time is right for a thorough review of UC before the new system is rolled-out to more claimants. Jane Ahrends, of the Child Poverty Action Group, said the NAO presented a "justifiably bleak" picture. "Today's report must give ministers pause for thought," she said. "Will the government press on with a programme that is demonstrably failing - causing financial misery for families - or will it restore the money that's been taken out of

Universal Credit in an effort to rehabilitate it for struggling families."

Emma Revie, chief executive of food bank charity The Trussell Trust, called for more support to be put in place for "groups of people most likely to need a food bank, and debt advice to be offered to everyone moving on to the new system".

David Smith, Policy Director for the Residential Landlords Association, said: "While it's clear that Universal Credit is here to stay, the NAO report recognises the difficulties faced by tenants and landlords as a result of rent arrears. The RLA's most recent research found that 38 per cent of landlords have experienced Universal Credit tenants going into rent arrears over the previous 12 months. The RLA has previously called for a pause to the roll out of UC and it would seem prudent to do so as the DWP undertakes its promised work to understand the impact of the policy on rent arrears."

In the past year DWP ministers and officers have made a series of concessions including shortening the waiting period for initial payments and increasing the size of cash advances – but these are in effect loans which are repaid by reducing the amount of subsequent payments. The direct payment of rent to landlords is only permitted in limited circumstances and this is a major point of contention, with landlords feeling they are bearing the cost of the new benefits system. This is reducing the money available for other tenancy services and the building of new homes.

The NAO report received extensive media coverage following its publication with the Government's defence of UC getting little sympathy. It was originally due to be fully implemented by 2017, but the long running series of expensive blunders means that only about 10 per cent of claimants are receiving UC and problems in its operation and delivery continue to mount. It's full roll-out has now slipped to March 2023, although Ministers have a poor record of hitting UC deadlines thus far!



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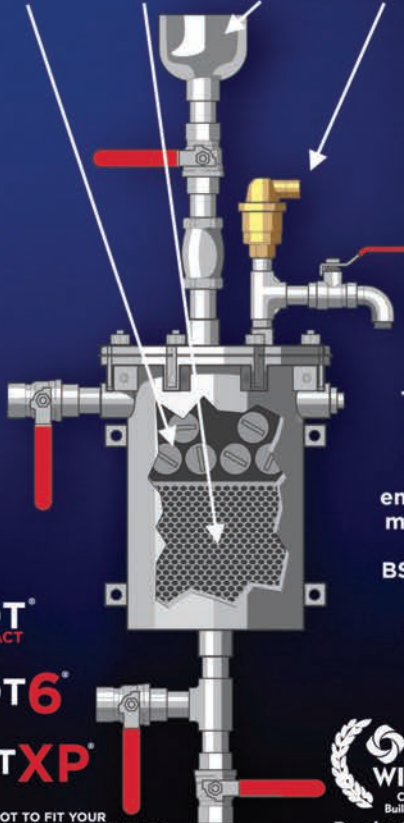


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## Number of tower blocks with flammable cladding could be more than double official figure

The number of high-rise tower blocks with dangerous cladding could be more than double the official figure, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors has claimed.

Government figures show there are 323 buildings over 18 metres with ACM cladding, of which 138 are privately owned residential buildings, including hotels and student accommodation. But speaking at the Royal Institute of British Architects fire safety conference, a senior member of RICS said many private block owners have not disclosed they have aluminium cladding similar to that used on the Grenfell Tower.

Gary Strong, director of practice standards and technical guidance at RICS said he believed this was due to concerns over share prices and valuations, with properties being downgraded “because of the blight factor.”

“Out of the 323 buildings which were in the latest MHCLG report that have ACM cladding we know that in reality it’s more like double that. In the private sector, some of those have not been properly disclosed yet, with very good reason, because it will affect their share prices.”

“We need to address the uncertainties in the market, we need to come together as professionals to try and make sure that we learn from other countries like the United States and Canada.”

There have been reports in the media of flatowners seeing the value of their homes slashed by as much as 90 per cent, with many having bought their homes in the past couple of years using Help to Buy loans funded by the taxpayer.

## Birmingham to spend £31m on sprinklers in council’s tower blocks



**M**ore than 200 residential tower blocks in Birmingham are to have sprinklers fitted “as a matter of urgency” after the city council’s cabinet approved plans to install them.

The work is expected to cost £31m. It was initially approved last year but was held up when some councillors said decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis. Council leader Ian Ward said it was “clear no other system can match this for the prevention of deaths”.

Mr Ward said it was “regrettable” that Prime Minister Theresa May had indicated no money will be made available centrally for councils to retrofit the sprinklers after he sent a cross-party letter requesting funding earlier this year. He added that experts including the chief fire officer of the West Midlands and the commissioner of the London Fire Brigade had endorsed the use of sprinklers.

The council has over 7,000 flats in 213 tower blocks across the city, although none of the council-owned tower blocks has the same controversial type of flammable cladding that was used on the Grenfell Tower. Overall it owns more than 60,000 homes making it the biggest council landlord in England.

The Government has approved a £400m funding programme to pay for the removal and replacement of dangerous cladding from social housing tower blocks, but has not approved the use of this money for other safety works such as retrofitting water sprinklers

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## Property manager and asbestos surveying company fined for inadequate refurbishment

A property management consultancy and an asbestos surveying company have been fined after an inadequate refurbishment and demolition survey was provided for a major refurbishment project including partial demolition.

Dudley Magistrates' Court heard the survey undertaken by Home Inspectors Southern Limited failed to identify asbestos cement and asbestos insulating board (AIB) containing Chrysotile and Amosite asbestos.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive found the surveyor had no training in asbestos surveying or previous work experience with a suitably qualified person or accredited organisation. The survey incorrectly advised that a non-licensed contractor could be engaged to remove the large quantity of AIB identified. Home Inspectors Southern Limited were not asked for any information by Vital Property Solutions Limited to demonstrate their skills, knowledge, experience and training relating to asbestos surveying.

Vital Property Solutions Limited of Desborough Street, High Wycombe pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The company was fined £8,400 and ordered to pay costs of £929.67.

Home Inspectors Southern Limited of Hawthorn Close, Brighton pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and was fined £4,800 and ordered to pay costs of £929.67.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Edward Fryer said: "Asbestos surveyors have a duty of care to those persons who use the information they provide. The survey missed a significant amount of asbestos contaminated materials (ACM's) thus increasing the risk to workers, who would be disturbing the fabric of the buildings during the refurbishment/demolition project. The risk arises from workers unknowingly working on ACM, and not taking effective precautions to prevent exposure and spread of asbestos fibres. Where surveyors fall well short of the standard then HSE will take robust action."

## Landlord fined for failing to licence a Bath HMO



**A** Bath landlord has been fined £24,000 after failing to licence and manage a House in Multiple Occupation, which council investigators found to be in poor condition and had fire hazards.

Allan Green, of Credenhill Road, London, was charged with failing to licence a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO), failing to comply with regulations related to the management of the HMO and failing to respond to a formal request for information. Green was found guilty of all offences by Bath Magistrates and fined £24,000, ordered to pay prosecution costs of £1,860 and a victim surcharge of £170.

The court heard Bath & North East Somerset Council started investigations after receiving a complaint from a resident about the property. Officers found the property should have been licensed as a HMO because it is within the council's Additional Licensing area and was occupied by three unrelated tenants who were sharing one or more amenity.

The court heard that officers found the house to be in a poor condition with a number of fire hazards, particularly related to the means of escape

from the building. Green was asked to supply the latest gas and electrical test certificates to the council, but failed to do so and contact details for the HMO manager were not displayed in a prominent position within the property.

The court heard the defendant also failed to co-operate with the council or respond to a formal request for information. Council officers served schedules of works on Green but he failed to complete any of the remedial work and did not apply for a HMO licence.

Councillor Paul Myers, the Cabinet Member for Economic and Community Regeneration, said: "Our housing service always works in partnership with landlords to improve housing standards wherever possible. Additional licensing helps to ensure that occupants of HMOs are able to live in safe and well managed properties.

"Where landlords fail to licence their properties such as the case here, they are undermining the objectives of the additional licensing scheme and are putting the safety of their tenants at risk. This case shows our message is clear - landlords and letting agents operating outside the law will not be tolerated by Bath & North East Somerset Council."

# Hundreds of social tenants to be moved from tower block homes

Tenants from opposite ends of the country are being moved from their homes over concerns that the tower blocks where they live are either becoming too costly to maintain or they are unsafe.

In north-east England, Thirteen housing association which owns around 34,000 homes in the Tees Valley, has announced it will be demolishing five of its 18 tower blocks. The blocks' 346 flats will be replaced by 100 new homes on sites in Thornaby and Middlesbrough.

Residents will be moved out over the next 18 to 24 months and helped into their new homes by a specialist relocation co-ordinator. A spokesman said a review of its high-rise stock concluded the investment needed to maintain the five buildings "is not sustainable and could also lead to significantly increased service charges for tenants". It insisted the blocks are fully compliant with building and fire safety regulations.

All five were built in the 1960s using large panel system construction methods, the same building type used at Ronan Point in Newham, which killed four people in a partial collapse in 1968 following a gas explosion. A spokesperson said Thirteen does not have any further demolition plans for its other tower blocks but intends to retrofit them with sprinkler systems.

Ian Wardle, chief executive of Thirteen, said: "This news will come as a shock to those living in

these flats and we can assure them that it is not a decision that has been taken lightly. It is important to stress that all our high-rise buildings are safe and meet all the relevant standards and requirements. This decision has not been made because of safety concerns."

## STRUCTURAL CONCERNS

Down on the south coast residents are to be moved out of two Portsmouth tower blocks to allow strengthening works to be completed, after structural investigations found the two 18-storey buildings' concrete was "not as strong as expected",

Horatia House and Leamington House, owned by Portsmouth City Council, are home to around 800 people. The blocks were built using the Bison system of large panel construction – the same as that used at two high rise tower blocks in Rugby where the council has taken similar measures.

The two blocks had dangerous ACM cladding removed last year following the Grenfell Tower fire. The structural issues were discovered while the council was looking to replace the cladding.

Residents of the 272 flats will not be evacuated immediately but will be moved out once suitable new homes are found. It is expected to be spring 2019 before all residents have left the blocks, with "extra security measures" introduced in the interim.

Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Liberal Democrat leader of the council said: "It is very important that people

A rehousing strategy will see the Irvine residents rehoused in "high-quality" homes on the site and elsewhere in the area. Joe Cullinane, leader of the council, said: "From the outset, we said we would listen to what the residents wanted and that is reflected in the decisions made."

realise there is no immediate danger from day-to-day living in the buildings but, as our number one priority is resident safety, we are starting the process of moving people to new homes." There are five other council-owned LPS blocks in Portsmouth, but the authority said it has no concerns about these following structural surveys.

Meanwhile North Ayrshire Council in Scotland has decided to demolish five tower blocks in Irvine after a majority of residents voted in favour of the proposal. But two other blocks in Saltcoats were reprieved and instead will be fitted with water sprinkler systems.

A rehousing strategy will see the Irvine residents rehoused in "high-quality" homes on the site and elsewhere in the area. Joe Cullinane, leader of the council, said: "From the outset, we said we would listen to what the residents wanted and that is reflected in the decisions made."

## Over 1m families on waiting lists for social housing

More than 1 million families are reportedly stuck on local authority waiting lists for social housing in England as the number of council homes has slumped to a record low.

Analysis done by the housing charity Shelter shows that a total of 1.15m households were on waiting lists last year. At the same time only 290,000 homes became available, leaving a shortfall of more than 800,000 homes across the country.

Two thirds of these families had been on waiting lists for more than a year, while more than a quarter of them had been waiting for more than five years, often in unsuitable or temporary accommodation. Waiting times in some London boroughs and seaside resorts like Blackpool and Brighton have now grown to beyond 10 and 15 years, with no early resolution in sight.

Speaking at the Chartered Institute of Housing Conference in Manchester, Terrie Alafat described the housing situation as "a national disgrace". She

said tackling homelessness had to be a top priority for the Government and she called for the right to buy policy to be suspended.

Shelter says the main factors causing the current shortfall are the lack of new affordable homes being built by councils and housing associations, coupled with the continuing sale of properties through the right to buy scheme. Only a fraction of the sold properties are being replaced while many others are re-let privately at much higher rents.

Polly Neate, Shelter's chief executive, said the fact that some survivors of the Grenfell Tower fire were still homeless a year on from the disaster had "totally shaken people's trust in the safety net the state supposedly provides". She called for a bold new plan for social housing so families are not condemned to waiting lists but given safe, secure and affordable housing as quickly as possible.

"Imagine how frustrating life must be for the millions of people across the country who have



been stuck on waiting lists, often for years on end," she said. "This is not just confined to London but it is happening right across the country, from Brighton to Blackpool. Families are unable to get settled and unable to get on with their lives."



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# Consultation on banning Grenfell type cladding is launched

The Government has finally launched its consultation on banning the use of combustible materials in the external walls of tower blocks more than four weeks after initially announcing its intention to do so.

The commitment to consult on banning combustible materials was originally made by James Brokenshire on 17 May 2018 during the Secretary of State's Oral Statement to Parliament on the day the final report of Dame Judith Hackitt's Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety was published.

The consultation document was eventually launched on 18 June shortly after the first anniversary of the Grenfell Tower fire and the

consultation period will last for eight weeks until 14 August 2018. The proposed ban goes beyond simply banning the Grenfell style ACM cladding panels and could extend to all combustible materials. Responses will be analysed over the summer and a Government response will follow.

Officials have estimated that a ban on using combustible materials could cost social landlords up to £110m over a ten year period, due to additional construction work and costs on new developments. The ban would not apply retrospectively to existing buildings where no work is being carried out, nor would it apply to works already underway.

On 11 June 2018, during a statement on the

Officials have estimated that a ban on using combustible materials could cost social landlords up to £110m over a ten year period, due to additional construction work and costs on new developments


Government's response to the Grenfell Tower fire to Parliament, the Secretary of State reaffirmed the Government's intention "to ban the use of combustible materials on the external walls of high-rise residential buildings, subject to consultation". This consultation is seeking views on proposals to ban the use of certain materials.

## Long awaited Green Paper expected soon

The Government has announced that its overdue Social Housing Green Paper is finally due to be published on 24 July, ending months of speculation over its non-appearance.

In the immediate aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, the former Housing Secretary Sajid Javid said the green paper would set out his ambitions and hopes for the sector. It came in response to criticisms that the Government was too focussed on housing for sale while social housing tenants complained of being stigmatised and taken for granted.

Since then the housing minister merry-go-round has spun several times with James Brokenshire now in post as the new Housing Secretary. Making the announcement Mr Brokenshire said: "It is essential that people living in buildings like Grenfell Tower are not only safe but they feel the state understands their lives and works for them.



In the immediate aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, the former Housing Secretary Sajid Javid said the green paper would set out his ambitions and hopes for the sector

"There is no question that their faith in this has been shaken. Which is why, as well as strengthening building and fire safety, we'll be publishing a Social Housing Green Paper by recess," he added.

In his statement to the Commons last month, Mr Brokenshire also announced plans to publish a

consultation into banning combustible materials in cladding systems on high-rise buildings. This supplements a consultation on banning desktop studies, a way the industry has in the past cleared the use of combustible materials in cladding on high rises without physically testing them.

## Second developer to pay for removing cladding on highrises

Taylor Wimpey is to pay the costs of replacing flammable cladding from a private highrise housing development in Glasgow, following the example of Barratt Homes.

It is understood leaseholders at the Glasgow Harbour development were facing a bill of £10m to remove and replace the cladding on two tower blocks and four other buildings. Taylor Wimpey

built the development back in 2007, but following a council-commissioned survey it has said it will meet the costs of removing and replacing the cladding plus any short-term fire safety measures.

A Taylor Wimpey spokesperson said: "The residents and owners at the Glasgow Harbour development are our number one priority and we recognise that the current situation is a cause for

concern for them. While the ACM cladding met the technical standards relevant at the time of the building warrant application, we agree that it needs to be replaced." Other completed developments will be assessed individually by the firm.

The move follows the example of Barratt Homes, which agreed to pay for the removal and replacement of cladding at its Citiscape development in Croydon. The decisions have been welcomed by Government ministers, who have urged the owners and developers of private blocks to pay for the removal of cladding rather than passing on the costs to individual leaseholders.





# Sparks call for tougher controls on electrical safety in PRS homes

**A** campaigning body for the electrotechnical trade in Scotland, has called for more stringent controls over the electrical inspection and testing performed by private landlords prior to their registration.

SELECT, whose member companies account for over 90 per cent of all electrical installation work carried out in Scotland, was responding to a Scottish Government consultation paper on Landlord Registration.

Darrell Matthews Managing Director of SELECT,

said: "Private landlord registration has been mandatory since 2004 and a robust process is critical to keep the people of Scotland safe in privately rented accommodation. Our members operate to the highest standards and firmly believe the government should hold private landlords to the same standards."

One of the key areas in the consultation relates to a proposal to expand the "prescribed information" which landlords have to provide when letting a property. This will require landlords to provide

information that "a property meets the specific requirements relating to gas, electrical and carbon monoxide safety."

SELECT has said that landlords should be required to submit written evidence that they have had electrical inspection and testing undertaken and that fire, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are fitted and operational.

Mr Matthews said: "The current Prescribed Information makes no requirement on the landlord to declare the safety of the property being rented, so any change to this is a welcome improvement. We believe this is an excellent opportunity for the Government to put the safety of renters foremost, and ensure that properties being rented by private landlords have electrical installations of the highest standard."

SELECT is Scotland's largest trade association, with over 1,250 member companies, employing 15,000 people and a combined turnover of around £1 billion.

## BUPA fined £3m after death of elderly resident

A national care provider has been hit with a huge £3m fine following the death of a resident at an Essex nursing home after he contracted Legionnaires' disease.

Kenneth Ibbetson, 86, died three months after moving into Hutton Village Nursing Home, which is operated by BUPA Care Homes (BNH) Ltd. Ipswich Crown Court heard that Mr Ibbetson had moved into the care home in March 2015 when he

was no longer able to cope at home. In June 2015 Mr Ibbetson contracted Legionnaires' disease, a serious waterborne form of pneumonia, and later died in Basildon Hospital on 23 June 2015.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive found that for more than a year, during which time major refurbishment works were carried out, BUPA Care Homes (BNH) Ltd failed to implement the necessary control and monitoring measures required to safely manage their hot and cold water system. It also found those responsible for overseeing legionella controls and for taking crucial water temperature measurements had not been trained to the required standard.

BUPA Care Homes (BNH) Ltd of Bridge House, Outwood Lane, Leeds, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act

1974. The company was fined £3m and ordered to pay costs of £151,482.

After the hearing, HSE principal inspector Vicky Fletcher said: "It is heart-breaking to think Kenneth contracted Legionnaires' a matter of weeks after moving into the Hutton Village Care Home. His family have been left devastated by his sudden death.

"Mr Ibbetson and other residents were exposed to the risk of contracting Legionnaires' disease because adequate controls were not in place. The risk is more acute in care home settings because residents are more susceptible due to their underlying health conditions. We would expect those who have a duty of care to understand this and have the necessary controls in place to manage the risk."

# Survey of tenants shows average private renter may not exist

Wide disparities in the rents, personal finances and aspirations of tenants in the private rented sector have been revealed in a survey carried out by the Nationwide Building Society.

After paying all of their bills more than a third of tenants (36 per cent) exist on £100 or less each month, while one in eight (12 per cent) say they have no disposable income left at all, including some 17 per cent with children in their household. At the other end of the spectrum, one in sixteen (6 per cent) claim they have more than £1,000 left to play with each month, including 11 per cent of those based in London.

Among the headline findings from a survey of more than 2,000 tenants of private landlords, were the following:

- Almost a half of tenants are renting because they cannot afford to buy their own home, while one quarter are saving up for a deposit;
- One in three renters live alone, rising to 45 per cent of retired renters and 40 per cent of those who are unemployed;
- One in eight have lived in their current home for at least 10 years, although the average length is four years; and
- Men are left with over £100 more disposable income each month than women, on average.

Almost half of those surveyed (46 per cent) said their main reason for renting was they could not afford to buy. For more than one in ten (11 per cent) a change in circumstances, such as the breakdown of a relationship, leaves them renting – and the likelihood of this grows with age, with 15 per cent of over 55s citing this as their main reason for renting.

The stereotype of students eeking out a chaotic existence in a communal house no longer typifies those renting a home from a private landlord. Tenants are more likely to be couples (47 per cent) or those living alone (30 per cent), rather than young people living with university friends (7). More than a third of men surveyed rent a home alone, compared to one in four women, with lack of affordability or a change in life circumstances most likely to be the cause.

## EUROPEAN TRENDS

Nationwide's Director of Specialist Lending, Paul Wootton, said: "It's clear renting is not a one size fits all experience. With one in five renting a home and many expected to rent throughout their lives, tenant's priorities differ according to where they are in their life, in the country or in their own housing journey.

"Where older generations assumed they would own their own home, for many today long-term renting is considered the new housing normal – as it is in much of Europe. We're already working with landlords to ensure a private rented sector that recognises different needs and works fairly for everyone."

The most important consideration when choosing a home to rent for one in four (25 per cent) was cost or affordability. For one in ten it was location or availability. One in 14 chose based on the standard of the property, while one in four chose on its layout or facilities. One in 20 selected a property based mainly on whether the landlord accepted pets and one in 50 chose a property on whether landlords accepted benefit claimants.

Once they had made the decision to rent, a third

found their new home through an online website. More than a quarter sourced their home through a lettings agent. One in five turned to family and friends for help to find a home while one in 25 found their property through an ad in their local newspaper.

Tenants renting from a private landlord stay an average of four years and two months, though almost one in three stay for five years or more and one in eight stay for a decade or more. According to the study, the older the tenant, the longer they seem to stay, with average length of tenancy duration for 18-24 year olds at just over a year, 25-34 year olds at two years four months, 35-44 year olds at four years five months, 45-54 year olds at five years eight months and those 55+ staying six years nine months in the same home.

## FINANCIAL WORRIES

The average UK monthly rent is £562.05, though one in seven pay more than £800. After paying for food, rent and bills, the average Brit has £314.45 in monthly disposable income left – although men are left, on average, more than one hundred pounds better off than women (£372.84 v £264.69).

Almost a quarter were trying to save towards a mortgage deposit or to buy a new home, and one in 10 towards a car or other transport. One in 14 were saving for children, one in 20 for a new rental deposit, five per cent for furniture or white goods, and four per cent for further education or training. However, three in 10 were not saving at all, with 85 per cent of them stating it was because they could not afford to.

One in five believe the worst thing about renting is that it is a waste of money because others (their landlords) are profiting and this is felt most keenly among 25-34 year olds. Lack of security, including not knowing when they would be asked to leave, was the most concerning aspect for one in seven, though most acutely felt by those not working and those with children.

The major gripe for one in sixteen is the repeated cost of moving, and for another six per cent the poor quality of their accommodation. For one in 25 tenants the worst thing about renting is not being allowed to have the companionship of a pet living with them.

## News in Brief

- **Borrowing by housing associations** rose by a third in the last financial year, the Regulator of Social Housing has reported. In its final quarterly survey for 2017/18, it showed that HAs agreed £10.1bn of new facilities in the year to March, up from £7.6bn in the previous year. The regulator concluded that the HA sector remains financially strong, with £17.2bn of undrawn debt still available. In total, the sector has agreed borrowing worth £89.1bn, £57.8bn of

which are bank loans. If further borrowing is necessary, HAs estimate there is enough security across the sector to support £48bn of new borrowing.

- **Housing associations reduced their spending on repairs and maintenance** for the second year running in response to the Government's enforced 1 per cent a year rent cut. Data from the English regulator's global accounts revealed that spending by HAs with more than 1,000 homes fell 1.7 per cent to just below £3.2bn in 2016/17. The biggest percentage fall was in major repairs expenditure, which fell 11.3 per cent from

£524.5m in 2015/16 to £465.5m in 2016/17.

Spending on day-to-day repairs fell by 1.5 per cent to just under £1.9bn from £1.93bn in 2015/16.

- French multinational energy firm Engie is launching a £15m venture into Britain's **retirement housing sector**. The firm plans to develop homes specially designed for the over 55s in partnership with local authorities. It is targeting a possible gap in the market between the luxury retirement housing sector and specialist social housing providers.



# Private block with unsafe cladding has safety watch removed

A private residential tower block in south London with cladding that has failed fire safety tests had its waking watch removed leaving residents concerned about their future wellbeing.

The Palm and Malt House development in Lambeth consists of three blocks, but only one of them is over 18 metres high. The blocks had a waking watch put in place after the combination of cladding used on the development failed Government fire safety tests carried out in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire.

Bellway, who built the blocks, hired fire

consultants who advised them that the buildings are safe without the need for a waking watch. They also advised residents that the London Fire Brigade had removed their objection of the waking watch's removal. Bellway has said it will cover the £150,000 cost of the waking watch.

DJC Property Management has told residents they will now seek to clarify whether the block's ACM cladding needs to be replaced but this is likely to take some time while official guidance is developed. But residents have been left wondering what fire safety measures are now in place to protect them from a Grenfell style fire.

## Anchor and Hanover in merger talks

Two large landlords who provide care services and homes to the elderly are in merger talks over forming a 53,000-home organisation and the biggest specialist housing association in the country.

If the merger goes ahead, the new Anchor Hanover Group will have a combined turnover of almost £500m a year. Anchor had a turnover of £374m in 2016/17, producing a surplus of £10.6m, while Hanover's turnover was £120.9m with a surplus of £12.2m. They claim the merger will allow them to build more new homes as well as developing enhanced services.

In a joint statement, Jane Ashcroft, chief executive of Anchor and Dame Clare Tickell, chief executive of Hanover, said: "People can look forward to living longer than ever before. More

specialist housing and care will be needed going forwards, with new types of services. At Hanover and Anchor, we understand these changing needs.

"We have ambitious plans and want to provide more services, driven by the needs and aspirations of the growing number of older people. A new, bigger organisation has the potential to provide the best value-for-money services for our customers now and in the future."

Ms Ashcroft is chief executive designate of the new organisation, while Stuart Burgess, the current chair of Hanover, is expected to chair the new board. The organisations are now consulting on the move and they are expected to announce their next steps in the coming months.

## Council raid finds 16 living in a two-bedroom flat

A dawn raid by enforcement officers from Brent Council found sixteen people squeezed into a two bedroom flat above a shop in north west London, in conditions described as "Dickensian" by a local councillor.

Council staff were supported by police officers when they entered the property. They found mattresses, bunkbeds and sofa beds packed into the two bedrooms and living room space within the poorly ventilated flat. Fire escapes had been blocked while a smoke alarm was

found hanging off the ceiling.

One occupant told enforcement officers that he was paying £50 a week for a bed space. On this basis council staff estimated the landlord will have been receiving at least £3,200 a month.

Cllr Eleanor Southwood, Brent Council cabinet member for Housing and Welfare Reform, described conditions at the flat as "Dickensian". The flat also contained three times the number of permitted tenants.

## Court jails man who locked 35 tenants out of their home

A head tenant who changed the locks on a property in north-west London that was illegally sublet to 35 men has been jailed for 16 weeks.

Ilie Florin Dragusin bolted the men out of a converted three-bedroom semi-detached house after the property was raided by Brent Council's enforcement team in September last year.

Mr Dragusin was one of three head tenants at the property in Winchester Avenue, Kingsbury, where 35 tenants were found to be living in substandard conditions in an unlicensed HMO. Some men were forced to sleep in the garden with just a canopy to shelter them.

He had previously been fined a total of £29,000 along with Gheorghe-Valentin Lingurar and Ana Maria Pricop, after officers visited the poorly maintained house. On that occasion council officers found eight men sleeping in one room, with mattresses lining the entire property including in the kitchen and back garden.

Cllr Eleanor Southwood, Cabinet Member for Housing and Welfare Reform, said: "This custodial sentence sends a strong message to anyone thinking that they can get away with illegally evicting their tenants."

"The punishment is prison. We will help people in the private rented sector who are suffering from the actions of rogue landlords, subletters and agents."

Mr Dragusin, who was living with his parents in Edgware before being taken into custody on 19 June, ignored four sets of warnings by enforcement officers not to change the locks on the property. Willesden Magistrates Court heard how he showed no regard for the people he had locked out after removing their belongings from their home.

The custodial sentence is the second jail term that Brent Council has seen brought against a person for unlawful eviction since licensing came into force at the end of 2015.

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## Everything is renewable at Energy 2018

**H**ousing management and maintenance professionals seeking a cost-effective and easily scalable solution to compliance with the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards won't want to miss out on this year's Energy 2018, from 9 to 11 October at Birmingham's NEC.

As part of UK Construction Week (UKCW), Energy 2018 brings together the news, products and experts necessary to understand how renewable energy can help the housing industry meet challenging targets amid sharp falls in green energy investment.

Exhibitors include: EcoVolt, who will be launching an exclusive electric heating paint; Solecco Solar, with its zero-glass solar tiles; Eland Cables; Flo Gas; Eon Energy; and Libra Energy.

Powering Energy 2018 is the UKCW's theme of 'Innovation'. The Innovation Trail provides the perfect opportunity to see what cutting-edge products are on offer in the energy sector. The latest exhibitors revealed include: eMotorWerks, PowerSolutions, Mill Heat, CARBON-4, ROLEC

EV, S & R Construction, Lamina Heat, IEMA and ETU.

Nathan Garnett, UKCW event director, said: "We have a strong line-up of events and experts at Energy 2018 to challenge policymakers and the industry alike.

"If you work in the housing industry, it's a must-attend event. It's an opportunity to see new products, discuss deals with suppliers, meet with your peers and hear what's going from leading industry experts."

Seminars will address the tough questions facing the energy sector such as the implications of a 'green Brexit', and how ambitious efficiency targets can be met against the backdrop of sharp falls in renewable energy investment.

Industry commentators and experts will share their predictions, innovations and insights at the Energy 2018 REA Theatre. Topics already confirmed include Power for a Cleaner, Quieter World and Green Strategy – Energy Policy Post Brexit.



Other benefits of attending the show include an extensive programme of free CPD sessions and the ever popular Beer & Ale Festival.

Free tickets to Energy 2018 and the eight other UKCW shows are available now from [www.energyliveshow.co.uk](http://www.energyliveshow.co.uk)

Keep up-to-date with the latest information about exhibitors, product launches and speakers via the website [www.energyliveshow.co.uk](http://www.energyliveshow.co.uk) and Twitter at @UKEnergyshow or using the hashtag #Energy2018.

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## Wales looks to ban letting fees

The Welsh Government has introduced a bill to ban the charging of fees for many standard tenancy transactions in the private rented sector. This has the potential to save tenants many hundreds of pounds and follows similar steps taken in Scotland and at Westminster.

The Renting Homes (Fees etc) (Wales) Bill will prohibit landlords and letting agents from charging

for basic activities such as viewing properties, signing contracts, renewing tenancies and receiving an inventory, or checking out.

Under the proposed new law, tenants who comply with their tenancy agreement will only be required to pay rent plus security and holding deposits.

Holding deposits paid to reserve properties would be capped at one week's rent.

Councils will be allowed to hit landlords and agents attempting to charge tenants fees banned under the legislation with a £500 fixed penalty, or take them to the magistrates' court with the

potential for an unlimited fine if they fail to pay. Offenders could also face losing their landlord licence through the Rent Smart Wales scheme.

Rebecca Evans, housing and regeneration minister for the Welsh Government, said: "Fees charged by letting agents often present a significant barrier to many tenants, especially those on lower incomes. In most instances they will only need to pay their monthly rent and a security deposit. I want renting to be a positive and widely accessible choice for people, and this bill will ensure that rental costs become more reasonable, affordable and transparent."

## Welsh care and repair agencies get £6m cash boost

Care and repair agencies in Wales are being given an extra £6m, allowing them to help thousands

more vulnerable people to live independently in their own homes.

There are 13 care and repair agencies in Wales, covering every local authority area in the country. Last year they helped more than 40,000 people, by carrying out more than £11.5m of repairs, around 17,000 for small adaptations, and safety and falls-prevention work for 22,000.

The agencies help vulnerable older people to live independently by carrying out minor repairs and

adaptations at their homes. They also provide free home visits to check people's health and well-being, including whether they are able to keep warm.

Rebecca Evans, housing and regeneration minister for the Welsh Government, said: "Housing adaptations play an important role in helping many older and disabled people live safely and independently. As well as improving their lives, it reduces pressure on frontline health and social care services."

## Scotland to legislate for sprinklers in all new social homes

The Scottish Government is to pass new laws forcing developers to include sprinklers in all new social homes, during the lifetime of the current parliament.

Housing minister Kevin Stewart made the pledge after an opposition backbencher, David Stewart, Labour MSP for the Highlands and Islands, gained cross-party support for the proposal.

The new requirement will be included in a bill to be prepared alongside two reviews of building standards and fire safety, in time for it to be passed before the next Scottish elections in 2021.

This will extend fire safety legislation north of the border, as new private and social residential buildings higher than 18 metres are already required by law to have automatic fire suppression systems fitted to them in Scotland.

## News in Brief

- An attempt to get the **Freedom of Information Act** to apply to housing associations and public contractors has failed after time ran for it to be debated in the House of Commons. Hammersmith MP Andy Slaughter had tabled a Private Members' Bill to put social landlords on the same footing as councils. Mr Slaughter has vowed to not give up, but his Bill was not supported by the Government and therefore stood little chance of reaching the statute book. Ministers claim that provisions already in the existing legislation can be extended to apply to HAs.
- Kensington and Chelsea Council has agreed a budget of £3.6m to **replace about 4,000 fire doors** on council-owned properties around the borough after tests found they were unsafe. This follows the news that fire doors used in Grenfell

Tower were found to only provide fire cover for half of the specified 30 minutes. Housing secretary James Brokenshire recently told Parliament that tests conducted on doors made by Manse Masterdor had revealed a "performance issue".

- The year following the Grenfell Tower fire saw a 56 per cent increase in the number of **fire safety contracts** awarded by councils and housing associations according to data collected by the consultancy group Tussell. 221 fire safety tenders worth £661m were published, up from 142 in the previous year.
- About 180 people were **evacuated from a 20-storey tower block** in Lewisham, south London on the first anniversary of the Grenfell Tower fire. The blaze, in a flat on the 12th floor of the building on Elmira Street, Lewisham, started at 04:14 and was under control by 05:23. Eight fire engines and 58 firefighters attended. London Fire Brigade said a sprinkler system inside the tower was

activated and suppressed the fire. The Metropolitan Police said there were no reported injuries. Residents ignored the Stay Put policy to evacuate the building with many complaining afterwards that no fire alarm sounded.

- Stevenage Borough Council has announced a £45m programme to **refurbish 4,000 homes** in hundreds of blocks of flats. Wates Living Space and Mulalley have been appointed for a five-year programme to carry out essential repairs to 550 blocks of flats, starting later this year. Work will vary from block to block, but will include roofs, windows, structural repairs, rewiring, fencing, paving, signs and some redecoration of communal areas. This is part of the council's plan to upgrade existing stock and invest £1bn over the next 30 years to build quality new council homes for local people. Overall, the council is investing £448m in building new council homes and £660m in maintaining and improving existing council properties.

# Slow rate of removing Grenfell style cladding is major concern

**M**ore than a year after the terrible fire at Grenfell Tower only a tiny number of tower blocks with the same combustible cladding have had it removed and replaced with alternative materials, making them safe for residents but raising question marks over hundreds of other high rise blocks across the country.

The slow rate of progress was revealed in the latest update from the Government, as concerns mount about the number of affected blocks in the private sector along with the capacity of the construction sector to carry out or speed up essential safety works.

The Government's £400 million allocation for removing cladding from blocks owned by social landlords has been welcomed, but it is thought to be less than half the likely £1 billion bill for this work. Ministers are holding the line that private sector developers, freeholders and managing agents should foot the cost of removing dangerous cladding from private blocks but to date only two developers have agreed to self-fund the works.

Fire wakening watch patrols are gradually being removed without alternative schemes being put in place and there is confusion over the 'stay put or evacuate' policies, with several fires at blocks in recent weeks causing understandable panic from residents who do not want to take any chances with their lives post Grenfell. The Government's lack of urgency in pushing forward with clear strategies for ensuring a similar tragedy does not happen again is causing huge frustration and is delaying future planning by landlords.

## SLOW RESPONSE

It is both remarkable and chilling that some 13 months after the fire, that so many families and individuals are still without a permanent home. In an update on the fire's first anniversary, the Royal

Borough of Kensington & Chelsea said 52 households remained in temporary accommodation with another 68 in "emergency" accommodation - 42 in hotels, 22 in serviced apartments, and four staying with family or friends. Just 83 households had been rehoused in permanent homes. The council also revealed it had spent more than £250m on purchasing properties, paying for temporary accommodation and providing specialist care and support for the fire's survivors and nearby residents.

Of the 314 buildings that have failed BRE large-scale system tests, figures from the MHCLG show:

- 159 are social-sector residential buildings, managed by councils or housing associations. Of these 111 buildings have started remediation, while works have been completed at just 15 buildings;
- 141 are private-sector residential buildings, including hotels and student accommodation. This rises to 297, when buildings with cladding systems that are unlikely to meet current Building Regulations guidance are included. MHCLG is aware of plans for remediating 72 buildings, work has started on 21 buildings, of which four have completed (data as at 20 June); and
- 14 are publicly-owned buildings, including hospitals and schools.

Local authorities have assessed over 6,000 high-rise private sector buildings and identified an additional 156 buildings (included within the 297 figure above) with similar ACM cladding systems to those which have already failed large-scale tests. The cladding status of approximately 170 private sector residential buildings is still to be confirmed. The remediation of buildings with ACM cladding is

proving to be a complex and slow process, involving the removal of cladding systems, analysis of what lay underneath and an assessment of the broader fire safety systems for the buildings.

## BIGGER PROBLEM

These figures do show the scale of the problem, but they also hide the fact that within these blocks there will be tens of thousands of people trying to live their lives as normally as possible, while living with the shadow of where the next fire will strike and could they safely get out of their home if it was on fire.

Almost 1,000 adults have been screened by RBK&C for post-traumatic stress disorder and several hundred have been treated. Children at seven state schools were directly affected by the death of pupils or staff, and 10 more were significantly affected. The council now employs 10 specialist educational psychologists to help them. But alongside these figures, there are the frontline staff at RBK&C and at other social landlords trying to do their best in difficult circumstances, but whose needs are not in the public eye. Just as we are facing a construction workers crisis at the moment, thought needs to be given to ensure we do not face a similar problem over housing management staff in the near future.

Part one of the public inquiry is under way but its focus is on the fire itself rather than on the refurbishment of the block some years beforehand and it is a major concern that the whole inquiry could run into 2020. This could delay the process of identifying how and why the tower became such a fire risk and the lessons to be learned from the tragedy. There has also been criticism of the failure of some of the companies involved in the refurbishment to provide full statements so far to the inquiry.

The housing sector is hungry for recommendations to emerge at the earliest possible time, so changes can be implemented and confidence restored. Sadly it is unlikely that even interim recommendations will emerge before the late autumn.

# News in Brief

- House builder Countryside has reached a deal with the investment fund Sigma to provide **5,000 new homes in the private rented sector** over the course of the next three years. The two have already worked together to build approx 1,800 PRS homes, since 2015 but this is their biggest joint deal. Graham Barnett, chief executive of Sigma, said: "We are delighted to be extending our highly successful relationship with Countryside, one of the UK's leading home builders, which regularly wins awards for its work. This major new agreement targets the delivery of 5,000 high-quality family homes across a number of regions."

- Housing associations have made at least **£82.3m from auctioning homes** in five London boroughs since 2013, according to analysis by Karen Buck, the Labour MP for Westminster North. This showed that HAs in Westminster, Brent, Camden, Hammersmith and Fulham, and Kensington and Chelsea sold 153 properties at auction through Savills estate agents - with more than half in Westminster where sales totalled £36.4m. Nationally sales of homes by HAs to the private sector have more than tripled since 2001, with 3,891 social homes sold in 2016. Overall, more than 150,000 homes for social rent have been lost since 2012.
- Concerns over the **management of finances and risk** have been highlighted at three housing associations operating in the

south east. In the capital Newlon Housing Trust, which manages over 8,000 homes, was downgraded by the regulator over financial viability concerns, while 15,500-home One Housing Group kept its G2 and V2 ratings for governance and viability but the regulator changed the basis for its governance rating. The regulator said OHG still needs to improve aspects of its governance despite making some improvements. Howard Cottage Housing Association, which manages 1,600 homes, had its governance downgraded to G2. The regulator said the HA needs to strengthen its risk management and stress testing. Its risk management framework does not "clearly identify the mitigating actions" it would take to deal with risks that arise.



# 1.75m private renters never expect to buy a home

About 1.75 million people who rent their homes do not believe they will ever be able to buy a property, according to analysis of the English Housing Survey carried out by the Labour Party.

This is an increase of 585,000 since 2010 and may surprise Government ministers given the raft of measures they have brought in to encourage home purchases. It is up by almost 300,000 since 2012

when George Osborne, introduced the help-to-buy programme, which critics claim boosted demand.

Levels of owner-occupation have been declining since peaking at 71 per cent in 2003. Since then, population growth, a lack of new housing, the failure to replace social housing sold under the right-to-buy scheme and rising property prices have resulted in the figure dropping to 63 per cent.

The shadow housing secretary, John Healey said: "The dream of buying a home is dying for more and more private renters. With home ownership at a 30-year low and a million fewer under-45s with their own home now than just eight years ago, it's clear Tory ministers have no answers to the cost of the housing crisis."

The Institute for Fiscal Studies recently found that the chances of a young adult on a middle



income owning a home in the UK have more than halved in the past two decades. It said an explosion in house prices above income growth had increasingly robbed the younger generation of the ability to buy their own home.

## News in Brief

- Less than half the £4.8bn raised by **selling council homes** to tenants under the right to buy since 2012 (when discounts were increased) has gone on building replacement housing. Only 47.4 per cent of the cash raised through the sale of 63,518 council homes was put aside for replacement housing. Councils have started just 15,981 replacement homes. The remaining £2.57bn has been split between the Treasury (£920m), the repayment of historic debts (£1.1bn) and administration costs (107m). Town halls have retained £380m and councils have spent £50m buying back properties previously sold under the RTB policy.
- Social housing contractor Mitie's property management arm had "**a challenging year**" with revenues down from £257.7m in the previous year to £237.9m, and its operating profit falling from £12.3m to £7.9m. The overall company saw its profits fall 6 per cent for the 2017/18 financial year, to £77.1m despite revenue growing from £2.1bn to £2.2bn, and the company's order book growing to £4.5bn. In the coming financial year, Mitie plans to integrate its property management arm into its engineering services arm. Phil Bentley, chief executive of Mitie, said it "is beginning now to focus on key social housing opportunities".
- Northern-based Your Housing Group has formed a **£54m partnership** with Wates Living Space and Engie to reinvest in more than 6,000 homes over the next five years replacing kitchens, bathrooms and heating. Richard Woolfall, head of property services at the 28,000-home association said: "We're passionate about building and managing high-quality homes and by modernising our existing properties people will no longer need to move house to enjoy living in a property they're proud to call home. The savings will be used to realise our ambitious commitment to build 5,700

more new homes across the North of England over the next five years."

- Redbridge Council has been given the approval to introduce an expanded **selective licensing scheme**, which will cover a further 12 wards in the borough when it is introduced on 1st October 2018. The council already operates a borough wide additional licensing scheme, and selective licensing schemes in the wards of Clementswood and Valentines. The new scheme means that all privately rented properties in 14 wards will need to be licensed, and comply with conditions to ensure the property is safe and well managed. It is estimated that an additional 15,000 privately rented properties will be affected. Redbridge Council say they have seen a marked increase in the number of requests for assistance from tenants because of the condition of their rented property, with many trying for months to get their landlord to carry out essential repairs.
- Leicester City Council has banned some landlords and letting agents in the city from **displaying to let boards** from this summer. Addresses in the Windermere, Hazel, Clarendon Park, Greenhill, West End, Ashleigh Road and West End conservation area parts of the city will be covered by the ban, which came into effect from 2nd July and will last for five years. Landlords and agents in these areas will have to apply for planning consent to put signs up advertising their properties-or they could face court action and a fine of up to £2,500. It comes as the council were successful in their application to the Government for a Regulation 7 direction, which will ban the use of 'to let' boards in some areas around both the University of Leicester and De Montfort University. Similar action to this has already been taken by councils in Brighton and Newcastle.
- The number of children **living in temporary accommodation** in Scotland has reached 6,615, a nine per cent increase on last year's total and is at a 10 year high according to the



Housing associations have made at least £82.3m from auctioning homes in five London boroughs since 2013, according to analysis by Karen Buck, the Labour MP for Westminster North.

Scottish Government. Overall there were 10,933 households in temporary accommodation, up one per cent on last year. Households with children spent on average 204 days in temporary accommodation, longer than the 161 day average for households without children. Of these 16 per cent were in hostels and 11 per cent were in bed and breakfast hotels. There were 39 households with children or pregnant women in B&B accommodation up from 33 at the same point last year. There were 34,972 homelessness applications recorded in Scotland, one per cent higher than the number of applications received in 2016/17.

- Eight out of 10 **rough sleepers who died** last year had a mental health problem according to research from the homelessness charity St Mungo's. This is more than double the figure for 2010 when three in 10 rough sleepers who died had a mental health problem. Since 2010 the number of people sleeping rough in England has risen by 169 per cent. Over this period at least 158 rough sleepers died in London, an average of one death every fortnight. Nine in ten needed support for mental health, drug or alcohol problems.

# Best places to rent out property in the UK revealed

The city of Manchester is the best place for people to buy property and let it out to tenants in the private rented sector according to analysis carried out by the website GoCompare. Manchester was rated as the best place to rent out a house with an average yield of 5.55 per cent.

GoCompare researched the best areas for renting out a house and ranked them by average property price and rental yields, population under 35, number of properties available, number of letting/maintenance agencies, number of new housing developments, properties currently available for rent and rental price growth.

## RENTAL PRICE GROWTH

If you are considering renting out your house, a key aspect to consider is how fast the local rental price is growing, so you can predict how much you will be able to raise the rent of your house in the next few years.

- Manchester takes the leading position on the ranking with a growth of 5.76 per cent.

- In second position with 5.3 per cent growth is Leicester.
- Cardiff is in third position with a growth of 5 per cent.

## AVERAGE YIELD

The average yield of a property determines the profit you will obtain for renting it out - and its rise or fall will establish how much of a return the owner gets.

- Manchester holds the top position again. The average yield there is 5.55 per cent, putting the city in a great position for property owners.
- Sunderland takes the second position for yield with 5.37 per cent - its best quality in terms of renting opportunities.
- Liverpool is a hotspot for owners, occupying the third place with an average yield of 5.05 per cent.

## AVERAGE PROPERTY PRICE

In deciding between renting or buying a house, money is one of the main aspects to consider. The actual prices of properties will determine if renting out is worth it:

- Stoke-on-Trent is in the least expensive area to buy property with an average property price of £106k, making the city the best place to buy a property and rent it afterwards. Landlords



in this area have the best potential to make good profits.

- Oxford is one of the most expensive cities to buy a property with a price of £411k. Even though the city has one of the highest property prices, it might be good to consider renting out your property. The city is known for its university and the huge amount of students moving there looking for a place to leave while they start their university life is quite significant.
- London is in first position with the highest price rents, but also the highest purchase prices. The gentrification of areas and the facilities people have to move, plus the growing offer of jobs in the capital have made London the most expensive city to buy a house. Renting out is an option that needs to be considered really carefully.

# Student hotspots in the north are the best bet for buy-to-lets

Buy-to-let landlords squeezed by recent tax changes are being advised they may find better returns by targeting northern towns and cities with sizeable student populations.

University towns and cities where housing is cheap, such as Liverpool and Middlesbrough, are providing rental yields up to seven times higher than in London, a study by credit specialists Totally Money has found. The effect of the three per cent stamp duty surcharge is also mitigated by buying cheaper property.

Its report compared average rents to house prices to highlight the most profitable places for buy-to-let and named a pair of postcodes (L6 and L7) close to two of Liverpool's three universities as a hotspot for property investment - with rental yields of almost

12 per cent.

Average monthly rents in the two postcodes were £1,162 and £1,046, according to the research, whereas house prices were £118,225 and £109,940, respectively.

Middlesbrough's TS1 town centre postcode, home to Teeside University, took third place, with an average rental yield of 10.94 per cent. The area has modest average rents of £595 per month but a low average asking house price of just over £65,000, makes it one of the most affordable spots to buy into.

Landlords whose hearts are set on a buy-to-let investment in the capital should look to east London for the best returns. East Ham, Plaistow, Manor Park, Chingford, Stratford, and Poplar all

rank in the top 10 London postcodes for rental profits.

At the other end of the spectrum, the worst performing area outside of London was Bournemouth's BH14, which has average rental yields of 1.68 per cent. Crewe's CW12 comes next, with 1.74 per cent.

All postcodes in the 25 highest yielding areas have average house prices of below £300,000, suggesting that more affordable house prices generate better rental yields than hoping that costly properties will rent for more.

Totally Money's Joe Gardiner said: 'With students flocking to university cities year after year and looking for a place to live, it's no surprise the student market is a dependable one for landlords. Since so many students are looking for accommodation, landlords may use this as an opportunity to drum up competition between them.'

# Surge in landlords remortgaging their businesses

Growing numbers of private landlords are remortgaging their businesses to obtain lower interest rates, rather than looking to buy more properties, according to a leading funder's survey. The gap between landlords looking for a better rate

and those raising capital is now the widest in five years.

Paragon's latest Financial Adviser Confidence Tracking Index reports that 52 per cent of Buy to Let mortgages in Q1 of 2018 were from landlords seeking to remortgage. This is up from 29 per cent in Q1 of 2015.

During the same time period, mortgage intermediaries say they have seen a drop in the proportion of mortgage applications from first time landlords, down from 19 to 13 per cent of the total, as well as a fall in landlords remortgaging to raise funds to

expand their property portfolios, down from 39 to 22 per cent.

Among those landlords looking to remortgage, the proportion seeking to secure a better interest rate reached the highest ever level in Q1 of 2018.

Some three years ago equal numbers of landlords were remortgaging for a better rate and to raise capital.

In Q1 of 2018, 60 per cent of landlords said getting a better interest rate was their primary objective, while 30 per cent of landlords said raising capital was their top priority. This represents the biggest gap since 2013.



# NHBC agrees to pay for cladding removal

A significant move forward in dealing with the removal of Grenfell style cladding from private tower blocks has been taken with the National House Building Council agreeing to pay for remediation works at the New Capital Quay complex in Greenwich.

It is unclear if this sets a precedent for other blocks across the private sector but residents will certainly hope so as the Greenwich scheme in east

London is a large development and was being keenly watched. Total removal and replacement costs are estimated to amount up to £40 million.

The NHBC said it would accept the insurance claim after it had “concluded that there was a failure to comply with building regulations at the time of construction” following “expert input and a review of the individual circumstances at this site”.

The Housing Secretary James Brokenshire

advised MPs on the Housing, Communities and Local Government select committee that he had received notice of the decision directly from the NHBC, which he warmly welcomed. It is unclear how quickly the developer Galliard Homes will proceed and what timetable exists for the combustible cladding panels to be removed and replaced.

The Government has steadfastly maintained its line that the private sector needs to find and fund its own solutions to the problem. Mr Brokenshire gave very guarded responses to MPs at the committee and refused to commit any money (at this stage) to remediation works, beyond the £400m already announced for social housing.

## New housing minister appointed (again)

After just six months in post Dominic Raab has been replaced as housing minister by Kit Malthouse, as a result of a cabinet reshuffle arising from Brexit inspired resignations. The change happened just weeks before the launch of a delayed Green Paper on social housing.

The sector reacted to the news with something similar to a shrug of the shoulders as it is accustomed to housing ministers being changed with increasing regularity. Raab's predecessor Alok Sharma had lasted just seven months in post and Malthouse is the eighth

housing minister in the past eight years.

The new minister arrives from the Department for Work and Pensions where he was working on Universal Credit, so at least he should be well aware of welfare issues and their impact on housing. Kit Malthouse is MP for North West Hampshire and was a deputy mayor of London, deputy leader of Westminster City Council and a board member of the council's ALMO.

## News in Brief

- Families in rural areas are spending almost one third of their income on rent according to research by the **Institute of Public Policy Research**. A family with one child, and earning one full-time and one part-time median wage in a mainly or largely rural area, is spending 31 per cent of their income on rent. Only 8 per cent of the housing stock in rural areas is affordable, compared with 20 per cent in urban areas, and current delivery is failing to provide enough new homes. In their report published to mark Rural Housing Week the IPPR found there is an affordability “crisis” in rural areas where the average house price is £320,700, more than £87,000 higher than the urban average outside of London.
- The country's largest housing association is bringing a repairs contract for 18,000 homes in London, Essex and the Midlands back in house. **Clarion Housing** has decided to end its current agreement with Mitie and Wates from November. The two contractors have delivered responsive repairs on the homes since 2015, when they took over the work from Kier whose multi-year contract was ended early.
- Midlands based **Bromford** has completed its merger with South West-based **Merlin**, to form a

40,000-home organisation. The association will still be known as Bromford and it plans to invest £1.5bn in 14,000 new homes over the next 10 years in both the South West and the Midlands. It is also in talks with Gloucestershire-based **Severn Vale Housing** over a further merger, which it aims to complete in early 2019, bringing the total number of homes owned and managed by the landlord to almost 44,000.

- Nottingham City Council is bringing in a **selective licensing scheme** of private landlords from 1st August. From that date landlords who receive rent on a private property in certain parts of the city will need a licence to show their property meets safety and quality standards set out in the conditions of the licence. Failure to do so can be an expensive mistake as it can lead to financial penalties of up to £30,000 or prosecution through the courts. Tenants can also apply to a tribunal to claim their rent back for up to 12 months. The licence conditions include - providing up to date safety certificates, evidence of any relevant training undertaken and evidence the property is sufficiently insured. The scheme covers an estimated 32,000 privately rented homes in areas of the city where the council has gathered evidence of poorer property conditions. The council aims to raise standards across the sector and provide a clear set of guidelines, which all landlords will need to achieve and follow.
- The number of households in temporary



Families in rural areas are spending almost one third of their income on rent according to research by the Institute of Public Policy Research.

**accommodation** totalled 79,880 at the end of March this year, compared to 77,220 in March 2017, with London accounting for two thirds of the total. The overall UK figure was up 66 per cent on the low of 48,010 at the end of December 2010. One bright spark in the figures was that the number of families registered as statutorily homeless fell 6 per cent to 13,740 in the three months to 31 March 2018, compared to the same period last year. “It's clear that our country is in the firm grip of a housing crisis as these figures starkly show, with older people and single parents both bearing the brunt,” said Polly Neate, chief executive of Shelter.

- Welsh housing associations **increased their operating surpluses** by 12.7 per cent last year reaching £193m, from a turnover which rose just 0.3 per cent to £908m. The largest 33 Welsh HAs also reduced their operating costs by 2.6 per cent, down to £715m. The sector's total debt level is now £2.7bn, up from £2.5bn in 2015/16, while it owns and manages 160,636 homes.

# Breaking the barriers to retrofit sprinkler installations

Fire safety remains top of the agenda following the Dame Judith Hackitt Review and the inquiry into the Grenfell Tower disaster. Whilst much of the debate has centred around the use of combustible cladding and the need to improve fire safety management systems, there are strong calls from the industry to tighten the law on the installation of fire suppression methods too.

Antony Corbett of Geberit Piping Systems examines the case for mandatory sprinkler installations into existing properties



**Y**ou don't have to look hard to find evidence of public support for tighter regulations on the use of sprinklers in new and existing buildings following the Grenfell

Tower disaster. The National Fire Chiefs Council, RIBA and the London Assembly Planning Committee are amongst the organisations to have called for a change in fire safety laws surrounding sprinklers. Jeremy Corbyn and Dany Cotton, Commissioner of the London Fire Brigade, have also expressed their support for mandatory sprinkler installations since June 2017.

Dame Judith Hackitt's review into Building Regulations and fire safety laws may have focused on fire safety management, but in all the debate around cost, process, red tape and product, one fact can't be ignored; sprinkler systems save lives. It is no coincidence nobody has ever died from a fire related incident in the UK in a building with a working sprinkler system. In fact, research by the National Fire Chiefs Council shows that sprinklers are 99 per cent effective at containing, controlling or extinguishing fire when activated.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

The English Housing Survey shows that there are 425,000 flats situated in high rise blocks in England, including 189,000 rented from local authorities or housing associations. However, just 6.5 per cent of buildings over five storeys or 18 metres high have sprinklers.

This is because of the simple fact that current regulations do not require it. Despite varying regulations applying to new domestic properties across the home nations, nowhere in the UK is it a requirement to retrospectively fit sprinkler systems into existing buildings.

## OVERCOMING BARRIERS

Part of the issue is that for too long the construction industry has had this perception that retrofit installations are messy, disruptive, unattractive and most importantly too expensive to ensure viability.



With modern systems, however, this simply isn't the case. Press-fit systems offer fast, reliable connections, with no hot works, lightweight piping and a clean finish. There are cost savings too - BSRIA calculates that the installation efficiencies of press-fit can deliver cost savings of approximately 27 per cent when compared with screwed steel pipework.

Whatever the outcome of the Grenfell Tower inquiry, press-fit sprinkler installations - when manufactured to the required standards and installed by approved contractors - offer a viable, cost-efficient and proven fire suppression system.

## TAKING PRACTICAL STEPS

Even now, in advance of any potential change in regulations, many local authorities are already taking matters into their own hands and giving approval for mass retrofit sprinkler installations across their high-rise housing stock.

In Birmingham for example, the City Council has recently approved a project to install sprinklers in all 213 of its tower blocks, despite initial funding concerns. There are other examples already complete or in progress, in Southampton, Manchester, Stoke-on-Trent and elsewhere.

The cost of sprinkler installations will of course



vary, but the Fire Sector Federation, a forum for organisations in the fire and safety sector created to advise and help shape policy on fire-related issues, estimated it would have cost around £200,000 to install sprinklers at Grenfell Tower.

In most cases, the sensible approach is to combine sprinkler installations with other necessary improvements, to minimise disruption to residents and drive cost efficiencies above anything else. Oxford City Council, for example, completed a £20m renovation project of five tower blocks which included sprinkler installations back in 2016 - later replacing cladding too, in response to the Grenfell Tower fire.

Naturally, there are other considerations - namely the capacity within the construction industry to complete these works - but with a real and urgent focus on fire safety since the Grenfell disaster, the lead time from specification to installation is lower than ever. Of course, demand for approved contractors will soar if and when fire safety legislation is changed to mandate retrofit sprinkler installations in tower blocks.

Even ahead of any potential change, there is no reason why life-saving sprinkler systems can't be installed retrospectively in a safe, clean and cost-effective manner.



# Has the golden goose finished laying golden eggs?

With some private landlords leaving the sector, Patrick Mooney explores the issues

The housing phenomenon since the turn of the century has to be the rampant growth of the private rented sector, but for how long can this increase keep going on for and are its tenants properly valued?

The most recent figures from the English Housing Survey shows us that the private rented sector accounts for 4.7 million, or just over 20 per cent of all households across the country. In London, private renting was the most prevalent form of tenure at 30 per cent

This means the private rented sector has more than doubled in size since 2002, during which time Governments of all political shades have been in power. The period is also characterised by an ageing domestic population, boosted by record numbers of younger migrants to fuel our growing economy and labour force.

## TENANTS OVERLOOKED

However, the needs and aspirations of private tenants are often overlooked in the heated debate over how to make housing more affordable, how can home ownership rates be boosted and can we take the stigma out of social housing. Instead the private rented sector is characterised as being dominated by rogue landlords who are ripping off the state, while making vast fortunes on the back of rising property values.

And yet politicians and policy makers who overlook this group do so at their peril.

Private tenants tend to be younger, are more likely to be in employment and they are increasingly bringing up families in rented homes.

This is the Brexit generation who are leading a revolution in how shopping for services and goods is conducted on-line, rather than in shops or offices.

They are also becoming more difficult for political pollsters to predict how they will act and vote.

## CHANGING DYNAMICS

The under 35s have always been over-represented in the private rented sector, but over the last decade the increase in the proportion of such households in the private rented sector has been particularly pronounced.

In 2006/07, 27 per cent of those aged 25-34 lived in the private rented sector.

Ten years later in 2016/17 this had increased to 46 per cent. In the same period, the proportion of 25-34 year olds in owner occupation decreased from 57 to 37 per cent.

Households headed up by someone aged 25-34 years old are more likely to be renting privately than



While demand for private renting continues to grow, the numbers of properties available is showing signs of stress

buying their own home, a continuation of a trend first identified in 2012/13. But significantly 60 per cent of private renters (some 2.7 million households) say they expect to buy a property at some point in the future.

Perhaps not surprisingly this is also the most economically active group in the population, with three quarters (74 per cent) of private renters employed, with 63 per cent in full-time work and 11 per cent in part-time work. Smaller proportions of private renters are retired (9 per cent), in full-time education (6 per cent), or unemployed (4 per cent).

They have a buying power which is informed by the web and conducted over the internet. They are more likely to change their bank, where they shop and who they buy telephone and other services from, than their parents ever were.

## GREAT EXPECTATIONS

There are lessons to be learnt here too for landlords as this generation has quite different expectations from previous generations.

Smart homes with connected services all controllable and accessible via the internet are now being asked for more and more.

These younger tenants are also more switched on in terms of their impact on the environment, so recycling facilities, renewable heating, cycle storage, car charging and even photovoltaic power generating systems may now be something that a landlord needs to look at offering.

## OFFLOADING

In the ten years between 2006/07 and 2016/17, the number of households with dependent children in

the private rented sector also increased by about 966,000.

Over the same period, there was a corresponding decrease of 1.0 million in the number of households with children who are buying their home with a mortgage.

But landlord groups and letting agents are warning that while demand for private renting continues to grow, the numbers of properties available is showing signs of stress.

A growing number of buy-to-let landlords are cashing in and selling up, as they are increasingly wary of the growth in regulations and changes in taxation.

Recent figures from ARLA Propertymark reveal rises in the number of landlords selling properties at their highest level since 2015 with the highest numbers of landlords leaving the sector in London and Wales.

Last month, it was reported that landlords are offloading 3,800 buy-to-let properties a month, possibly bringing an end to almost two decades of sustained growth.

Andy Golding, chief executive of OneSavings Bank, said: "Political opinion may be set against the private rented sector, but without it, the housing crisis would be deeper still.

"A housing market with dwindling supply of rental accommodation yet growing demand would provide the worst of all worlds for tenants: higher rents, with less choice and security, hampering their ability to save to buy a home."

It will be fascinating to see how the Government responds to this news in the coming months.



# Leading event for safety & compliance professionals launches in Scotland

On 13 September 2018, the long-established AGSM Safety & Compliance Conference will be launching its first event dedicated to informing and supporting asset safety and compliance professionals in Scottish social housing and facilities management.

Bringing the same high standard of speakers and exhibitors as the national conference, delegates to the Scottish event can expect to hear from experts in the field of gas, electrical, fire, legionella and asbestos safety and compliance, as well as leadership inspiration and plenty of networking opportunities.

Crieff Hydro will play host to this inaugural event, which will provide delegates the opportunity to broaden their understanding of the industry's hot-topics and take part in thought leading discussions. Speakers already confirmed:

- Gas safety in flats – Kevin Winship, CORGI Technical Services
- 18th Edition – SELECT
- Fire Sprinklers: myth busting and case studies – Keith MacGillivray, British Automatic Fire Sprinkler Association
- Tackling fuel poverty with flue gas heat recovery – Mark Crump, Alpha Boilers
- HSE impact of non-compliance with Scottish Regulation: Case Study – John Vaughan, CORGI Technical Services
- Michael's story: Lessons from an entirely preventable death – Louise Taggart, Workplace Safety Speaker
- New Regulation 36A flexible MOT-style LGSR: What the changes mean for you – Kim Morris, CORGI Technical Services
- Applying the correct domestic and commercial

- gas standards – Jamie Cooper, Tracpipe
- Protected status for Electricians– SELECT
- The Importance of DSEAR Risk Assessments – John Vaughan, CORGI Technical Services
- An overview of new fire and carbon monoxide safety legislation for social landlords in Scotland – Andy Greenhorn, FireAngel

In the exhibition hall, visitors will have the opportunity to see the latest products and services from a selection of key suppliers to the sector, bringing new ideas and innovations for those involved in safety and compliance.

*Earlybird prices available to the end of July 2018. To find out more or to book, visit [www.gassafetyconference.co.uk/scotland](http://www.gassafetyconference.co.uk/scotland), email [enquiries@agsm.uk.com](mailto:enquiries@agsm.uk.com) or call 01256 548 040*

## Intratone access control technology installed at over 900 sites for Hounslow council

Door entry and access control equipment from Intratone, one of Europe's leading manufacturers, has been installed at over 900 different sites across Hounslow Council's estate.

The access control systems across the Council's residential and commercial portfolio had become obsolete with the desire to move from keys to a fob-based system.

Residents had been complaining at the delays in receiving new keys – in some cases taking up to six weeks for them to be delivered. New fobs can now be obtained straight away by residents when visiting their local housing office through the new cloud-based technology. Since late 2016 the Intratone fob readers have been installed at low and high-rise apartment blocks and Council offices, commercial buildings and operational sites, and complaints have dropped significantly.

Ian Williams, Electrical Engineer for Hounslow Council is in no doubt as to the benefits of the new Intratone proximity readers: "We hadn't heard of Intratone before it was recommended by the installer. So far, we have been very impressed – although it is a sizeable investment for the Council initially, the build and technology of the readers means that they will last for at least ten years.

"At one point the fob programming was carried

out by two full-time members of staff who would visit site daily to program residents' fobs. This can all now be programmed remotely by the relevant housing officers at the local housing office which will be a large long-term saving to the council."

The cloud-based fob-reader system has significantly enhanced control over who has access, for how long and to which properties. Because it is cloud-based, changes made to key fobs are almost immediate and can be facilitated from anywhere where there is internet access – whether that's at a PC, laptop or a smartphone on site.

"The simplicity of the database is such that some of our concierge and caretakers are being trained to manage the system themselves which frees up even more of the engineer's time," Ian adds. "With the older technology residents were also able to copy fobs in some local shops which did not give the council full control over who could access certain blocks.

"The new Intratone fobs have similar technology to an Oyster card – you cannot rewrite or copy them so when someone tries to use a copied fob it sends the system a notification. We can check the system when a certain fob has been used so we can assist Police when they have been trying to track someone's whereabouts."

Daniel Bacon, Area Sales Manager at Intratone



says its products are flexible enough to suit a wide range of sites and applications: "Our access control and door entry systems are installed across Social Housing, Private Properties and HAs all over the UK and Europe, and prove popular for residents of all ages, but especially the elderly, because they are very easy to use. Installers and customers also like them because they are very easy to install and competitively priced."

[export@intratone.fr](mailto:export@intratone.fr) [www.intratone.com](http://www.intratone.com)



## Aico unveils new CPD training scheme

Aico will be relaunching its award-winning Expert Installer CPD accredited training scheme at this year's FIREX (19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> June, ExCel London) on stand A625, in addition to showcasing its alarm ranges. Taster sessions of the new, improved Expert Installer will be held twice a day at FIREX in Aico's on-stand mini theatre. To date, Expert Installer has trained over 17,500 industry employees in domestic Fire Alarm specification and installation. To ensure content remains fresh, relevant and engaging, Expert Installer has been reviewed and re-formatted by focus groups from across Aico, including the Technical Team and the Regional Specification Managers who deliver the training on a regular basis.

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



## Vent-Axia supports Noise Action Week

Vent-Axia is delighted to be supporting Noise Action Week for the sixth year in a row. Co-ordinated by Environmental Protection UK, Noise Action Week aims to raise awareness of the cost of noise to the health and wellbeing of communities and individuals. At Vent-Axia the company also aims to help tackle household noise through a focus on continuing improvement through its R&D to produce the quietest products on the market, including the Lo-Carbon Svara and the Silent Fan, which both have a Quiet Mark. Quiet Mark by the Noise Abatement Society, is a mark of approval given World-Wide to manufacturers of the quietest products on the market.

0844 856 0590 [www.vent-axia.com](http://www.vent-axia.com)



## New manager at The Window Company

Steven May is the new Contracts Manager at award winning commercial installer The Window Company (Contracts). He has been appointed to oversee and supervise a number of projects from survey to final completion, including the window and door replacement contract for Basildon Council, which the company was awarded recently. He said of his new role: "The ethical culture of The Window Company (Contracts) and the standard of professionalism exhibited at every level fits perfectly with my own approach. I'm very excited to be joining a company with such an outstanding reputation, at a time when it is expanding so fast."

01245 268120 [www.thewinco.co.uk](http://www.thewinco.co.uk)



## CORGI welcomes Andrew Crown

CORGI Technical Services are delighted to welcome Andrew Crown to the organisation as Group Executive Director. Andrew will work across the group, which includes CORGI Technical Services, the Association of Gas Safety Managers (AGSM) the Association of Electrical Safety Managers (AESM) and the broader Association of Safety & Compliance Professionals (ASCP). As Group Executive Director, Andrew will ensure the group continues to deliver the highest value and standards to both clients and members. Andrew's appointment marks the Group's commitment to leading the industry forward and continuing to raise safety and compliance standards.

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



## Aico's new national technical manager

Aico, a market leader in domestic mains powered Fire and Carbon Monoxide (CO) Alarms, is pleased to announce the appointment of Andy Speake to the role of National Technical Manager. Andy joined Aico in 2016 in a technical capacity, moving swiftly to IT Manager. Andy also works closely with Aico parent company Ei Electronics to research and develop new products. For Andy, working at Aico is exciting and challenging: "Aico just keeps going from strength to strength and the speed of development is incredible. This, and the unique family feel to the company, really attracted me to Aico in the first place and I'm looking forward to where it's going in the future."

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



## Broxtowe Borough Council installs Fibo wall panels to support dementia care

Broxtowe Borough Council recently installed Fibo wall panels in a retirement living scheme to make a bathroom more suitable for individuals with dementia. Two contrasting colours were specified as recommended for this type of installation. Howard Draper, from Broxtowe Borough Council, comments: "This was the first time we had used panels as an alternative to tiles and we are very pleased with the outcome. The panels were quick and easy to fit, and excellent from a maintenance point of view." Fibo's unique Aqualock system means the wall panels can be installed up to five times quicker than tiles. The simple tongue-and-groove system means that tilers aren't required, saving further time and cost. The panels can also be fitted directly onto existing tiles or stud partitioning – all meaning less disruption to social housing residents. In addition, there's no grout line to attract mould and the panels are low maintenance, only requiring a quick wipe down to stay clean, a further benefit for vulnerable residents in particular.

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

## Nuaire Launches Noxmaster

Nuaire hopes to prevent thousands of deaths caused by air pollution with what they consider to be a revolutionary technology for existing homes. To coincide with national Clean Air Day on 21st June, the company is launching the Noxmaster whole-house ventilation system for the retrofit market. The Noxmaster combines a powerful carbon filter with a strategy invented by Nuaire over 45 years ago, Positive Input Ventilation (PIV). This combination removes up to 99.5 per cent of nitrogen dioxide and other harmful pollutants generated by traffic emissions and industrial processes. The Noxmaster delivers clean, filtered air into urban homes, improving the indoor air quality to within safe levels.

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





# Bridge over troubled water

Around 45 per cent of failed boilers are due to poor quality water in heating systems. This same phenomenon is also responsible for premature boiler breakdowns and repairs. Although the cost of poor water quality is high, the solution is decidedly inexpensive. Craig Mitchell of Sentinel explains how a few changes to water treatment practices can ensure lifetime protection

**H**ousing associations invest vast sums every year on heating system upgrades and maintenance in order to increase tenant satisfaction, improve system performance, save energy and reduce heating related costs (both for tenants and themselves). Despite this, independent research shows that the social housing sector absorbs a veiled cost of millions of pounds every year in heating system issues, while the National Housing Federation reports that ‘almost a quarter (23 per cent) of all housing association and local authority tenants are unable to keep their living room warm’ – a problem that is known to impact wellbeing. So where are things going wrong?

The answer is complex and likely to involve numerous factors. However, poor water treatment – which is remarkably prevalent – is guaranteed to be involved. To illustrate, research and testing by Sentinel and two major boiler manufacturers in over 50,000 UK homes found that 87 per cent of heating systems are without correct water treatment, while 50 per cent of systems over five years old suffer from dirty circulating water. Another study of 16,000

Often tenants will try to counteract the effect of cold spots by turning the thermostat up, but all this tends to do is increase bills rather than temperatures

homes discovered that 28 per cent of treated systems had lost inhibitor in just 12 months.

Inadequate water treatment will almost certainly allow corrosion to ensue (and limescale, where systems are located in hard water areas), which can wreak havoc inside heating systems. Where corrosion exists, common problems include boiler breakdowns, early repairs and parts replacements, reduced energy efficiency (and therefore reduced savings), degraded heating





performance, loss of boiler warranty, and shortened boiler and component life.

In fact, according to a national social housing contractor, poor water treatment is responsible for writing off around 45 per cent of boilers five to seven years early. The cost to the social housing provider? Approximately £344,000 for every 1,000 units – an expense which has to be absorbed since heating provision cannot stop.

Callbacks are yet another consequence of poor water treatment that involve alarming figures. Independent research found that every boiler incurs an average of 0.86 unplanned callbacks per year. Across the sector, this equates to more than 3.3 million unplanned callbacks every year for heating alone. The cost? Depending on contractor rates, this is likely to be anywhere from £40,000 to £890,000 per 1,000 boilers, every year. Add to that the cost of repairs and component replacements (and all other associated costs, such as investment in what are ultimately erroneous water treatment schemes), and the figures keep rising.

And what about the impact of poor water treatment on tenants? Sadly, the story doesn't improve. For example, radiator cold spots, which arise when corrosion deposits ('sludge') accumulate inside radiators, make homes colder. Often tenants will try to counteract the effect of cold spots by turning the thermostat up, but all this tends to do is increase bills rather than temperatures (by contrast, a warm home is associated with better wellbeing, lower energy bills and a higher disposable income). Of course, boiler breakdowns can leave tenants without the basic provisions of heating and hot water, while unplanned engineer visits can be extremely inconvenient.

Overall, the picture painted by poor water treatment is pretty grim for both landlord and tenant, but it can be avoided with system care that effectively implements and ensures best practice water treatment (a process of correct system cleaning, protection and maintenance). In fact, best practice water treatment can deliver lifetime protection from corrosion-induced problems in heating systems, optimising system longevity, performance, and efficiency.

## Best practice water treatment can increase the reliability, performance and energy efficiency of heating systems, ensuring greater tenant satisfaction

The proof? Many adopters of such programmes report to have practically eliminated heating repairs and callbacks, benefiting from annual savings of tens or hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Initiatives that ensure comprehensive system care comprise four essential components: Free best practice water treatment training for installers and contractors; complete, pre-packaged product kits; water quality testing (via an independent lab) on each heating system to confirm adequate cleaning and protection; and online reporting that details contractor performance (handy data that some housing associations use to incentivise better practice from contractors by withholding payment until systems have passed water quality checks). An additional monitoring innovation, due to launch in early 2019, will help housing associations to benefit from 'right first time' water treatment, and catch potential problems early, thus reducing return visits and reactive callbacks.

Best practice water treatment is estimated to cost less than £13 per year, per boiler. In return, potential lifetime savings are available of over a quarter of a million pounds per 1,000 boilers. Furthermore, best practice water treatment can increase the reliability, performance and energy efficiency of heating systems, ensuring greater tenant satisfaction; surely that is one bridge worth crossing.

*Craig Mitchell is sales director for Sentinel*

## Fire sprinklers go undercover with Encasement

Where fire sprinkler systems are being installed or retro-fitted in tower blocks and flats, Encasement's 'Versa' pipe boxing range provides a cost effective, durable and easy-fit solution for concealing sprinkler pipework.

Manufactured from pre-formed FSC® certified plywood and pre-finished in a durable white melamine, Versa 'L' shaped boxing is available in either 5mm or 8mm thicknesses for use within flats, as well as communal areas, such as corridors and lift lobbies, where sprinklers are required. Versa boxing can be used with standard sprinkler heads or concealed 'pop-out' units with cover caps.

Available in a wide range of sizes, Versa sprinkler pipe boxing helps save on installation time, as there's no need for fabrication or painting on site. All that's required is for the boxing to be cut to length and holes drilled for the sprinkler heads before securing to the wall or ceiling.

Encasement's Managing Director, Martin Taylor, commented: "Our fire sprinkler boxing has already been installed on a large number of number of high rise refurbishment projects, where pipework and sprinklers need to be concealed for both aesthetic and practical reasons, as they are cost effective and easy to install.

"From our experience of working with contractors on countless social housing projects where pipework needs to be concealed, Versa



boxing solutions can be fitted in less than half the time of site made alternatives. Also, as they're pre-finished with durable white melamine, there's no painting required on site, which also saves time and cost."

He added: "As Encasement holds a full FSC® 'Chain of Custody' certification, which certifies

that our products are manufactured from sustainable timbers, this helps HAs and LAs meet their compliance obligations under the UK government's timber procurement guidance."

01733 266 889  
www.encasement.co.uk

## The time saving way to fit piping branches

Flamco has introduced its T-plus for installing branches to existing heating and potable water systems. It's a quick and easy way of adding a T extension for a heating system extension to add additional radiators for example. The unit comes with its own trigger mechanism that once activated sees the cutting plunger cut a part of the pipe out, forming a perfect T piece without needing to drain the system, interrupt use of the system or needing to re-dose the system with inhibitor.



For more information, head to our website or go to Youtube and see T-plus in use.

info@flamco.co.uk www.flamcogroup.com/uk-en



## Connecting Cross-Laminated Timber

To support the growing use of cross-laminated timber (CLT) in the UK and Europe, one of the leading connector manufacturers **Simpson Strong-Tie** has released an updated version of its 'Connectors for CLT' catalogue. Featuring a host of new products including heavy duty angle brackets, hold-down connectors and structural screws, this edition represents a complete set of solutions for the assembly of CLT buildings, as well as steel and chemical mortar products designed specifically to connect the entire structure to concrete. Sales Director, Jon Head explains: "We have drawn together a huge variety of products from across our European operations to produce a comprehensive range of performance tested connectors and fasteners to enable CLT constructions from floor to ceiling – the CLT designer need look nowhere else". To further support the design and construction of CLT structures, Simpson Strong-Tie also has a team of engineers based at its manufacturing plant in Tamworth, offering technical support and assistance. The new brochure can be downloaded from the Simpson Strong-Tie UK website.

01827 255600 www.strongtie.co.uk

## Snickers' 'Climate Control' Workwear

The onset of summer and warmer weather calls for a change of focus on what you choose to wear on site. From keeping warm and dry in winter, warmer weather brings with it a need for professional craftsmen and women to be cool and dry - to maintain well being and working efficiency. That's why **Snickers'** new working clothes for the summer uses 37.5° fabric technology which is really good at 'wicking' moisture away from the body and keeping you dry. In the Snickers Workwear **FLEXIWork**, **LITEWork** and **RUFFWork** product families, there's NEW Shirts, Shorts and Work Trousers that are super-light and quick-drying with advanced ventilation to keep you cool in the heat.



www.snickersworkwear.co.uk



## Helifix BIM Object Library Launched

Helifix has launched a BIM object library to support the industry's transition to digital building modelling.

Available to download from the Helifix or the NBS National BIM Library website, these Revit format BIM objects allow Helifix products to be easily incorporated into a 3D building model and its associated component database. Offered as part of the NBS portfolio, BIM Objects are available for masonry repair products and new-build wall ties.



For more information, please contact the Helifix team by calling.  
020 8735 5200 [www.helifix.co.uk/downloads/bim-objects](http://www.helifix.co.uk/downloads/bim-objects)

## A change of scenery with Kingspan

Kingspan Kooltherm K108 Cavity Board has been installed on the first phase of houses constructed in the major redevelopment of The Poets in Swinton, helping the project to meet its thermal performance requirements with slim wall build-ups. To ensure the homes are energy efficient, whilst still retaining the estate's welcoming and familiar aesthetic, 75 mm Kingspan Kooltherm K108 Cavity Board was installed behind traditional red stock brickwork facades. Part of Kingspan's premium performance Kooltherm K100 range, the insulation board features a fibre-free phenolic core with an outstanding thermal conductivity of 0.018 W/m.K.



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



## Door closer enhances high-rise fire safety

British designed and manufactured, Powermatic controlled, concealed door closers from Samuel Heath are gaining increasing popularity for use on fire doors in high-rise flats and apartments. The door closers carry the CE mark and have been independently tested and proved to meet the requirements for one hour and half-hour fire doors under BS EN 1634-1. Unlike other jamb-mounted devices, Powermatic door closers facilitate a door's compliance with Approved Document M, neither do they have to be removed from the door to be adjusted. Powermatic is ideal for restricted door reveals and, thanks to the fact that it is totally concealed when the door is closed, helps retain the aesthetics of interiors and create a less institutionalised, more homely feel. Concealment also reduces the risk of the door closer being damaged through vandalism, misuse or tampering, which could render a fire door useless. It also means less maintenance call-outs and continued fire safety.

0121 766 4200 [www.samuel-heath.co.uk](http://www.samuel-heath.co.uk)

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# Collaborative working pays dividends

Adrian Pavey of Nationwide Windows Ltd looks at the challenges facing Registered Social Landlords and the industries they partner with, and how a collaborative approach is the only way of working in the current climate

Consolidation sees Registered Social Landlord's getting larger while the Government are introducing more and more ambitious targets. There is also increasing pressure for social housing providers to maintain investment into their housing stock and make the right choices with their spending decisions. In parallel, joint partnering seems to be disappearing as initiatives such as Decent Homes comes to an end. In-house Direct Labour Organisations that offer more control over investment in works are hard to recruit, train and retain thanks to the much talked about skills labour shortage. So, all in all, social housing landlords are under immense strain in the current climate.

The fenestration industry specifically is also increasingly reporting the difficulties it has recruiting new young people, and is making moves to combat this. For example, the GQA – who specialise in providing training and qualifications in this sector – have recently backed the Building Skills Initiative,

Choosing a supplier who understands the pressures and can work with you to ease the load is key when thinking about who will undertake your refurbishment programmes

which will take the skills shortage issue to schools, colleges, teachers and parents, to promote the variety of career paths the industry has to offer. While such schemes may change the future however, the short-term landscape is likely to remain unchanged.



The strength of a relationship is built with a good team and groups who are happy, work well together and deliver a great service



#### PARTNERING WITH THE RIGHT SUPPLIER

Choosing a supplier who understands the pressures and can work with you to ease the load is key when thinking about who will undertake your refurbishment programmes. It's about transparency and choosing a specialist that recognises the complexity of working in the social housing sector. It's worth finding a company whose staff have undergone training to work sensitively in homes of vulnerable people for example, as well as understanding which materials are fit for the job and cost-effective in providing a long-term solution. Ask your supplier about their team's experience. Can they prove they can do what they say they can with measurable KPI's? What do the tenants of their previous projects think about their performance – are they transparent enough to invite them to leave online reviews? Do they have the assurances in place for quality, safety and best practice?

#### TRAINING

It's not enough to specify the right product for the job though, it's about finding the right people that will consistently perform exactly how clients need them to, whether in the factory or out on site during installation. It's not easy when recruitment of a new generation of window manufacturers and installers is proving so hard.

#### PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

Perhaps the most important aspect of all though, even more so than product and people, is the ability to create a collaborative working partnership with each individual client. You need to work well as a team to meet the key objectives of each project.

There are many pressures faced by social housing landlords, with ongoing rent reduction and expectations to maintain investment into their housing



stock. This is where innovation and collaborative working pays dividends. The strength of a relationship is built with a good team and groups who are happy, work well together and deliver a great service. If all of this is in place, you can be sure to meet the demand for future proofed, high specification, quality housing stock.

*Adrian Pavey is the commercial director of Nationwide Windows Ltd*





COOKE BROTHERS

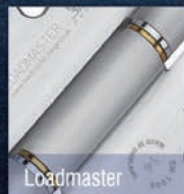
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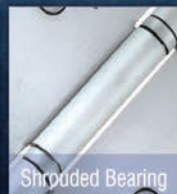
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# Product Focus



## Intratone

[www.intratone.com](http://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.

## Whitesales

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## Saniflo

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Saniflo – one of the UK's leading designers and manufacturers of macerators, pumps and shower cubicles – has added a range of shower enclosures to its Kinedo portfolio, the Kinesmart. The new range addresses a variety of modern-day bathroom design needs and can be fitted with or without profile. Whether it's a new bathroom, a room with limited space, a wetroom or a shower with a level surface, the Kinesmart fits the bill. In keeping with the Kinedo ethos, Kinesmart is swift and easy to install and with seven different options, there's a configuration to suit every bathroom.



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FastFit, from Canopies UK, is designed to help housebuilding professionals get their hands on a GRP door canopy when they need it.

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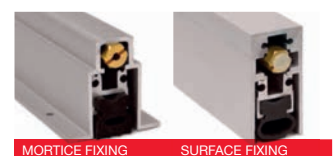
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# Should you invest in Buy to Let?

Jeff Knight of Foundation Home Loans considers six concerns for pursuing Buy to Let property



Every day the news seems to suggest the buy to let market is set for some form of meltdown or mass exodus of landlords. So, if you are wondering whether to grow your portfolio, all the negative talk is probably not what you want to hear.

Fortunately, expert insight indicates a mass exit by landlords is not something we can expect, at least over the next few years. The Buy to Let market is here to stay, but nonetheless not everyone wants to be a landlord, or indeed should be. Having an investment property has many benefits, as well as risks, and there is much to consider before doing so.

## HERE ARE JUST SIX THINGS WORTH PONDERING:

### REASONS MUST BE CHEERFUL

You must have a good reason for entering the Buy to Let market as a landlord. Investing in property, while offering a wide range of benefits, should only be done with your eyes wide open. Too often, younger landlords get invested off the back of their family and friends' advice. It's your money and your time

Investing in property, while offering a wide range of benefits should only be done with your eyes wide open. Too often, younger landlords get invested off the back of their family and friends' advice. It's your money and your time you're risking and it must be your decision alone

you're risking, and it must be your decision alone.

Recently, an extensive piece of landlord sentiment research was conducted to identify any operational and behavioural differences among landlords of varying ages and regional areas. To do this, 1,000 landlords from across the

country were surveyed, and asked a series of questions relating to property management, property preferences and the reasons behind their decision to invest in buy-to-let.

One of the most common reasons was for the long-term financial prospects, which were indicated to be supporting future retirement income. Interestingly though, about 1 in 5 became a landlord by 'accident', meaning they could have either inherited the property or gained it through marriage. Should this happen to you, you will still need to challenge yourself about if you want to be a landlord for the long haul. Managing one or several properties can be a handful, particularly if this is only a side venture to a full-time job.

### LOCATION. LOCATION. LOCATION.

Pre-credit crunch, there were many stories of Buy to Let investors who lost money because they bought in areas they were unfamiliar with, or had not done enough background research on. Most landlords seem to buy property in areas in proximity to where they live – areas they know and feel most comfortable in. For example, 84 per cent of the landlords surveyed operating in London have Buy to Let properties in London, whereas for those operating in the East of England, this was lower at 78 per cent and for the South West of England at 75 per cent.

Lesson being: there are others who may look to diversify to other parts of the country, but to be successful you must do your homework.

### KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Ask yourself, who would be the most suitable tenant for me and my property? Middle-aged couples were found to be the most popular tenant choice, at 21 per cent, followed by families with children at 16 per cent. However, it's worth noting, one in four landlords said they do not have a preferred type of tenant. But if you do, this needs to be brought into the mix when choosing a property and location to ensure the needs of your prospective renters are being met, and your property is being used to its full potential.

About 1 in 5 became a landlord by 'accident', meaning they could have either inherited the property or gained it through marriage

### TIME MANAGEMENT

Owning a property is likely to take up some of your time, in fact only 21 per cent of landlords operate on a full-time basis.

The rest work full-time (60 per cent) or part-time (19 per cent). Paperwork details, housing maintenance, repair and damage work, and even distance to the property, will carve up the time you can dedicate to this – just imagine if you had several properties to check up on!

### LIMITED COMPANY

You need to think about whether to set up as a limited company or not. This is becoming more popular but it is not a panacea for all, which is why it is important to seek tax advice. It is also important to seek advice if you need a Buy to Let mortgage to fund the property purchase. This will save you a lot of time and hassle than if you did so yourself.

### WHERE'S THE EXIT?

It may not seem like a priority concern, particularly after going through how and why to get involved in this thriving sector; but having an exit strategy must form a part of your management plan.

Considering how quickly and easily you can sell up in the future, should you choose to, or whether the property will be part of your estate, planning is key, and will help safeguard your finances for the future.

*Jeff Knight is the director of marketing at Foundation Home Loans*

## Seam Capital say there is always another way to build more homes



**SEAM CAPITAL**  
make a difference

Seam Capital believe the sector trend for increasing financial risk by taking on more debt, or increasing commercial risk by growing development of housing for sale – is just



not sustainable. There is another way. Seam challenge the status quo and want to work with like-minded people to achieve their social purpose and build more affordable homes – whilst simultaneously making their organisations stronger.

Seam are home-grown strategic advisors to housing associations and local authorities inspired by the desire to materially increase affordable housing development capacity and output to help solve the housing crisis. They are experienced social housing professionals with a wealth of expertise developed over many years spent at large housing associations.

Using socially responsible board-approved solutions, they have developed a tried and tested approach to unlocking the enormous latent value (they call it the 'social equity') embedded in balance sheets by offering an integrated approach to business strategy, financial planning and corporate treasury – but always driven by the responsible stewardship of social housing assets and truly strategic asset management.

Many boards believe they have a stewardship, a social obligation to reinvest whatever surpluses their organizations can produce – be it financial capital, social equity or intellectual property. Social equity is capital by any other name – and as a form of equity can be put to good use in the vital investment in affordable housing development. Using their social and financial investment appraisal techniques, the choices where best to redeploy the value extracted can be evaluated, be it in building more homes, investing in treasury and financial negotiations, or in the underlying business itself.

Clearly then, by providing asset-backed driven solutions to raise capital, reduce risk and also help determine the best uses for that capital – Seam Capital create a truly strategic advisory relationship – rather than a purely transactional one.

If you are like-minded and would like to hear more please contact Ray Christopher at 07918 057516 or [ray.christopher@seamcapital.co.uk](mailto:ray.christopher@seamcapital.co.uk)

020 3743 6036  
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## Acoustic vinyl flooring solutions for housing

Unwanted sound can have a detrimental effect on people's health and well-being especially when living where constant nuisance noise can be acute, says Kenny Miller, National Sales Manager - Housing, Gerflor.

In residential environments nuisance noise is usually more bothersome to occupants of homes where impact sound travels from one dwelling to another, especially from rooms above to spaces below. This has been exacerbated by the building of more flats and multi-storey apartments, the conversion of older, single dwellings into multi-occupancy homes and the trend for extending homes to include three or more floors.

The greater use of hard floorings such as wood, stone and wood laminates over carpets and cushioned floorings in homes has also contributed to higher levels of disturbance caused by impact sound on upper floors to rooms below.

Impact sound transmission is a form of structure-borne sound made by the impact of an object on another, generating sound transmission. Impact sound can be transmitted through the floor construction to the room below, commonly by footsteps. Sound insulation levels are measured using a decibel (db) scale, which involves logarithmic units to measure airborne and impact sound.

Pioneering vinyl flooring manufacturers have therefore responded to the need to control impact sound by introducing residential acoustic vinyls



with sound insulation levels as high as 19db. These floorings are now playing a vital role in minimising impact sound within homes, both in multi occupancy and single dwellings, and in the private and public sector.

As acoustic, residential floorings can mimic wood, wood laminate and stone floorings so successfully and look and perform better than ever before, they provide a quieter and more practical solution where sound-proofing is required, especially in buildings that have been converted into flats and apartments.

The UK's Building Regulations 2003 Part E: Resistance to the Passage of Sound sets minimum standards for impact sound insulation. Acoustic floorings can help achieve performance requirements.

Whereas wood and laminate floors generally rely on underlay to provide acoustic

insulation, domestic, cushioned vinyls with integrated textile-backing systems and sound-insulating foam backing systems benefit from sound-insulation built into their specification. And, usually the thicker and more effective the textile backing system, the more sound-absorbent and thermally-efficient the flooring will be. Textile-backed vinyl floorings can also be loose-laid, thereby speeding up fitting and lowering installation costs.

For housing applications where slip resistance as well as sound insulation is essential, some high performing, acoustic textile-backed and foam-backed residential vinyl floorings are  $\geq 36/R10$  slip resistant and meet HSE guidelines.

In addition, some of the new wood-effect interlocking click and lock system residential vinyls provide a secure yet floating floor and are a quieter alternative to LVT, wood and wood laminate.

Cushioned, high performing, easy-maintenance, acoustic residential vinyl floorings with additional benefits such as waterproofing, slip resistance and cost-effective installation are bringing solutions to housing projects. While flooring manufacturers continue to invest in innovative new technologies, advanced acoustic, thermal and high performing vinyl floorings will meet the challenges ahead for flooring in housing.

01926 622600 [www.gerflor.co.uk](http://www.gerflor.co.uk)

## Social housing flooring from Gerflor

Housing is about far more than four walls and a roof. It's more about environment and the positive or negative impact that it can have on the tenant's overall well-being. At International flooring specialist Gerflor they're committed to providing the social housing sector with a range of flooring products that deliver fantastic quality, together with providing the all-important levels of comfort, safety and wow-factor. When time means money, and budgets often tight, Gerflor has the ideal solution. The range of options from Gerflor include solutions for a range of applications including wet room and bathroom areas as well as living spaces. For more information call Gerflor or visit their website.



01926 622600 [www.gerflor.co.uk](http://www.gerflor.co.uk)

## The Specifier's Guide to Flooring

The Specifier's Guide to Flooring, published by Kick-Start Publishing, has launched in the UK. Officially unveiled during Clerkenwell Design Week, the new 'definitive guide' will provide a specification tool for architects, designers, facilities managers and specifiers on all aspects of flooring. Exploring key materials, from carpet to vinyl, ancillary products and accessories – and everything in-between – the Guide will provide a rich resource for the industry, in hard copy format and online. "The Specifier's Guide to Flooring is the must-have publication for every architect, designer and specifier from Land's End to John 'o Groat's." added David Strydom, editor of CFJ.



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# Water heating innovation and it's key role in Britain's new social housing stock

Stuart Doggrell, water heating general manager at Fabdec discusses how developments in water heating, can power efficiencies and sustainability for housing associations and help them improve standards for residents

**H**ousing associations and local authorities currently face a key challenge, maintaining a consistent delivery of homes whilst ensuring that quality across the board, in both new-build and existing stock, is unaffected.

As the government prepares to announce its social housing green paper, this emphasis on quality comes into sharp focus. Former housing minister Dominic Raab stated the green paper would aim to “strengthen the role of the regulator” and “empower residents as consumers and give them the voice and ability to hold landlords to account”. Those comments echo the sentiments contained within in the recent Building Homes, Building Trust report into social housing – which called for social landlords to improve their service standards.

With political pressure increasing, largely in line with attempts to tackle Britain's long-standing housing crisis, there exists an opportunity for housing associations to innovate and bring existing stock up to the high standards set by new-build developments.

When looking to revitalise existing housing stock, or ensure quality in new-build developments, authorities should look to take advantage of the benefits provided by innovations in unvented water heating technology. Doing so can help drive energy efficiency and create more sustainable housing, with lower long-term costs, that provides tenants with a more reliable service.

Technology in this area has been through three major evolutions, beginning with tanks that require an expansion vessel, through to the introduction of floating baffles, and finally the use of the Venturi effect to create the ultimate high-performance space-saving option.

There is technology which takes full advantage of the Venturi effect, which negates the need for floating baffles and expansion vessels.

It does this by using the reduction in pressure that results when a fluid flows through a constricted section of pipe with no discernible restriction to the volume of water flowing through. In the process, a fluid's velocity increases as it passes through a constriction while its static pressure decreases. Any gain in kinetic energy a fluid may accrue due to its increased velocity through a constriction is balanced by a drop-in pressure.

This results in the mixing of liquid with air – or more specifically the induction of air bubbles into the water. It is this process that makes this technology (Self-Sustaining System) unique, with the system now able to maintain an internal air gap as hot water is drawn off further upstream in typical usage. As it replenishes the internal expansion device permanently, there is no need for recharging or regular servicing.

It's this reliability and lower reliance on repair work that makes the technology ideal for housing associations and residents of their developments, whether that be through retrofitting existing stock or new-builds.

The lower number of moving parts in the system means that residents and landlords need not worry about disruptive servicing and repair work, as the tank is able to deliver high performance consistently on a long-term basis. This is key from both the perspective of residents living standards, and reducing pressure on housing association and social landlord's resources whilst streamlining their maintenance program for hot water servicing.



When looking to revitalise existing housing stock, or ensure quality in new-build developments, authorities should look to take advantage of the benefits provided by innovations in unvented water heating technology

In addition to delivering the high-water pressure required for high rise blocks, and lower costs and down-time necessitated by repair work, this technology allows water heaters to be contained in streamlined space-saving housing. This means that in smaller developments installers can safely and reliably install units quickly, whilst allowing for greater living space for those that will eventually occupy the housing.

As we look forward, it's clear that the spotlight will shine on housing associations upon the release of the social housing green paper, as the government looks to improve standards. As housing associations look to respond, the adoption of innovative unvented water heaters can provide the answer to both upgrading existing stock and improving the quality of future homes. Their use is an important consideration for any social landlord looking to improve sustainability and tenant service standards in the context of tight budget constraints. as part of a cost-effective strategy to embracing a sustainable future.

*Stuart Doggrell, water heating general manager at Fabdec*



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# Best in class

Phil Windus from ACO Technologies, delves deeper into drainage channel load classes, and explains why you need to know your A 15's from your B 125's

Given the country's tendency to suffer from wet weather all year round, and the subsequent need to shift surface water in a variety of domestic applications – from roads and car parks to driveways and patios – drainage channels are an incredibly common building product. Often bought by the metre, and generally purchased or specified on price, drainage channels can easily slip into a 'fit and forget' category. However, by not taking the time to fully consider the final application, individuals can quickly find themselves confronted by disgruntled tenants demanding for the work to be re-done if a product with the wrong load class was installed.

## LOW DOWN ON LOAD CLASSES

In accordance with BS EN 1433:2002, all drainage channels are classified into load classes, which are effectively different categories detailing the load-bearing capacity of that product. Ranging from A 15 for pedestrian footpaths and patios,

Often bought by the metre, and generally purchased or specified on price, drainage channels can easily slip into a 'fit and forget' category.

through to F 900 for airports and industrial yards, the system is a quick way of ensuring that, if you are fitting out a driveway or a patio, the right channel and grating – one that will stand up to the rigours of the application – is selected.

However, while the load class system itself is a fairly simple specification tool to follow, it's one that surprisingly few people are fully up to speed with.





In short, while drainage channels might seem like a commodity product, there's much more to them than that.

#### A CASE IN POINT

Let's put the issue into context. A 15 is the most commonly used drainage channel, and a staple commodity that is often bought again and again due to its familiarity, availability, and cost. If we take a typical scenario of a garden and driveway renovation, then A 15 drainage channels would be suitable for use on pathways and patios.

However, where the issues begin to arise is when an A 15 channel is installed at the entrance or in the middle of a driveway. In short, A 15 should not be used in these scenarios as the product does not have the load-bearing capacity to withstand the pressure of a car turning on it (as is a common occurrence at the entrance for most driveways) or if a delivery van or bin lorry pulled up outside the house and parked on it. Here, the material would soon buckle under the pressure and start to break apart, both turning it into a potential hazard and generally losing its aesthetic feel. It's worth remembering here that you can't escape the fact that looks are a key factor when it comes to building work, and tenants will rightly be angry if their new property or driveway renovation is marred by broken drainage grates just a few months after being finished.

In this instance, a B 125 channel would be best. It is the next load class up, has a higher load-bearing capacity and comes in at only a slightly higher price

per metre than an A 15 channel. Importantly, it's generally readily available in merchants alongside its A 15 counterpart.

This is where having that extra in-depth product knowledge around drainage load classes can make a difference between the right or wrong product being installed first time around.

#### WEAKEST LINK

While A 15 and B 125 may be the most commonly bought drainage channels, the same principle applies to all load classes and applications. For instance, if a property developer was also responsible for building any flats as part of the development then B 125 would be sufficient for a small car park mainly used by domestic vehicles. However, if it were a large carpark open to the public, such as one supporting municipal facilities within a housing estate such as a row of shops or a library, where vans or commercial vehicles could feasibly park, then either a C 250 or D 400 solution is likely to be the best option.

#### FINAL THOUGHTS

In short, while drainage channels might seem like a commodity product, there's much more to them than that. By cross-referencing the intended end-use with the load class and limitations of each product, installation of the right drainage solution for the application in question can be ensured. It might not seem like a big thing, but it will go a long way to keeping your buyers happy, and ensuring a job only ever needs to be done once.

*Phil Windus from ACO Technologies*





## Civils solution from Kalsi Plastics

Maintenance-free building product specialist, Kalsi Plastics is working with civils and heavy materials stockists across the UK to provide a reliable supply of its high-quality drainage product range, Aquaflo. As a proven and trusted system, Aquaflo has everything to support the specialist building contractor including PVC-U inspection chambers with lids, frames, bases and risers. The plastic inspection chamber covers are designed to withstand loads up to 35Kn. Stainless steel screws are supplied with the cover and frame to ensure secure fixing to the risers. All risers are supplied complete with a fully lubricated sealing ring, benefiting both stockists and installers. The Kalsi Aquaflo inspection chambers are BBA certified and all products are marked accordingly, providing reassurance onsite. Commenting on the range, national sales manager, Graham Wilde said: "We work closely with our stockists to ensure that they have the right product for the right job. It's important that a customer can go into their local supplier and know that they can get the product they want, there and then, or it arrives next day."

0121 693 0373 [www.kalsiplastics.co.uk](http://www.kalsiplastics.co.uk)

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



## Rehau checks in for Holiday Inn refurb

REHAU's slimline PVC trunking has been chosen for two major room refurbishment projects for the Holiday Inn hotels in Southampton and Reading. The premier cable management solution was specified for the hotels by Haddow Electrical, who required high quality, robust trunking which would meet the technical brief and be aesthetically suitable for the new room designs. SL Trunking is tested and approved to DIN EN 50085, is flame-resistant and self-extinguishing. The trunking used in the Holiday Inn was white, but it is also available in other colours to give specifiers and designers more choice over the aesthetics of the product.

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# The durability debate

Bob Andrew of Elfin Kitchens, discusses the importance of using durable materials in kitchen refurbishments and the benefits of thinking small



A recent report by the charity Shelter revealed that tens of thousands of families are being forced to wait more than a decade to move into social housing, with the number of homes dwindling to a record low. Consequently, it is no surprise that the private rented sector is continuing to grow and landlords are having to provide affordable, practical accommodation.

With many properties rented on a temporary basis for short tenures, there is an inevitable cycle of maintenance. Consequently, it is vital for landlords to equip a studio, apartment or house with items that are durable and built to last. One area that can be at risk of damage is the kitchen, which can often bear the brunt of constant use. This can lead to continuous, costly and time-consuming maintenance.

However, the wider, underlying issue to consider is that traditional timber-based kitchen cabinets are not always built with durability in mind. At the lower end of the market, doors and drawers are regularly manufactured from low grade materials, such as chipboard, making them highly susceptible to damage and water ingress. Furthermore, in many rental properties, space is at a premium, and traditional cabinetry is restricted, often requiring fixed cabinets to be adapted to fit a space correctly. These factors can quickly translate into spending a disproportionate amount of time designing, developing and maintaining individual properties, which adds extra, unnecessary costs to an overall budget.

Consequently, it is vital for landlords to equip a studio, apartment or house with items that are durable and built to last

Consequently, landlords and social housing managers would be wise to look at pre-built compact kitchens as an excellent alternative. This type of kitchen offers a combination of style, flexibility and practicality, as well as an integrated robust design, that is created to last far beyond the term of a tenancy. This is certainly the case with models manufactured from powder coated steel which have been specifically designed to withstand even the toughest environments. Such a specification is essential in properties with a high turnover of tenants which need to be ready for new occupants at short notice.

Compact, mini kitchens can also be conveniently delivered to a site in one piece and quickly installed thanks to a 'plug and play' design which simply requires an electrical supply, water and drainage to be connected. Of course, for any kitchen to work in a rental property, it needs to be practical and provide all the necessary levels of cooking, storage and food preparation facilities. So, for



Using robust, well-conceived products is vital to not only reduce maintenance costs but also ensure a property remains fit for purpose year on year

any compact kitchen to truly work, needs to have a well-conceived design – and companies that are experts in the pre-built compact kitchen market will be able to offer units that provide the right balance of appliances and cabinets.

A clever design also allows private landlords and social housing managers to specify units that offer the correct amount of facilities for the property. So, for a larger apartment, a pre-built kitchen could comprise a built-in combination microwave oven and grill, ceramic hob, dishwasher, sink and integrated fridge. Alternatively, in a smaller studio space, which might even be deemed as 'temporary accommodation', a pre-built kitchen could simply consist of a sink, hob and fridge. In both scenarios, the kitchen area must be designed to suit the occupants' needs as well as the available space, while remaining balanced against an expected rental yield from a property.

With demand in the private rented sector growing, many landlords are also looking at alternative approaches to create new rental accommodation, often reconfiguring garages or annexes. This is also being taken to an even more impressive level by the social housing sector, with some councils turning to innovative ways of offering accommodation. Indeed, Elfin has recently supplied

34 'Economy Plus' kitchens with safety timers to Marston Court in Ealing, London. The site consists of re-purposed shipping containers, which have been converted into apartments for emergency hostel accommodation. These specially designed studio, one and two-bedroom dwellings offer a sustainable, robust, affordable and flexible option for an urban infill site, which was previously occupied by largely disused 1970s garage blocks.

With so many thousands of families waiting for social housing to become available, there will surely be a continuous need for private rented properties to fill the void. And with a potentially high number of tenures, landlords and social housing managers need to consider the long-term durability of the fixtures and fittings within their portfolios, not least of all the hard-working kitchen. For this reason, using robust, well-conceived products is vital to not only reduce maintenance costs but also ensure a property remains fit for purpose year on year.

*Bob Andrew is the managing director of Elfin Kitchens*



## Ubbink announces the end of dry verge installation problems

Ubbink has launched an all-new BS8612 compliant Ambi Dry Verge System designed to provide a clear and simple installation procedure. Prior to the launch of the system, the Company undertook consultations with contractors nationwide, to fully understand widely reported issues regarding the installation of other currently available products.



Ubbink's new system now overcomes the common problems which have resulted from poor design, over-complexity and a lack of clarity regarding the installation procedure and the fixing of individual components.

A key feature to this system is the mechanically fixed starter and eaves closure unit! This unit was designed to mechanically fix to the barge board, and can be fitted either before or after the gutter has been installed, overcoming a common problem reported with other systems.

The Ubbink batten bracket is fitted to the face of the batten, allowing the verge unit to be fixed without screwing into the end of the batten giving a more secure reliable fixing. This bracket can also be used at the eaves starter where no barge board is fitted, or to the front of the fascia board if additional fixings are required at eaves for areas where extreme weather conditions may prevail. To allow a quick, simple install and gain a straight line, the bracket also has a built-in depth gauge, removing the need to extend the battens past the barge board so all can be cut flush.

The ambidextrous unit's suit most metric tiles and the thin leading edge tile, allowing easy purchasing and stocking – and ridge end caps are available to suit all common concrete ridge tiles. The unit's also include a water channel which prevent unsightly water staining, another well-



known issue which needed addressing.

Ubbink's Technical Manager Keith Plummer, said "Trials of the new system have been extremely positive, with contractors praising the design for at last providing a simple and clear-cut method of installation for a dry verge system."

01604 433000 [www.ubbink.co.uk](http://www.ubbink.co.uk)

## Interior Film proves to be a winner

Get Living London manages apartments at the former athletes Olympic Village in London. When tenants move out, each apartment is given a thorough inspection and clean before new tenants move in. Specialist Contractor T6 were called in to provide an economical solution to refurbish a kitchen in one of the apartments. T6 recommended using Interior Film, an architectural, self-adhesive film supplied by leading surface material distributor David Clouting and manufactured by LG Hausys, to 'wrap' around the existing surfaces rather than replace the kitchen units. The project was completed in a day.



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

## Aico launches combined Heat & CO alarm

Aico has launched its first combined Heat & Carbon Monoxide (CO) Alarm. The new Ei3028 from Aico is the company's first ever mains powered Multi-Sensor Heat & CO Alarm. Unique to the new 3000 Series, it is a convenient, cost-effective, efficient solution to protecting residents from both Fire and CO in the kitchen and garage. The Ei3028 Heat & CO Alarm contains Aico's proven electrochemical CO sensor and its tried and tested thermistor heat sensor which reacts to temperatures of 58°C or over. The Ei3028 Multi-Sensor Heat & CO Alarm is designed to work as part of a Fire Alarm system that also includes Smoke Alarms, all interconnected to meet British Standards.



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# Time to move to heat pumps

Sharon Oliver of Mitsubishi Electric examines the industry's rising interest in heat pumps



In May, the European Heat Pump Association (EPHA) reported a growing market for renewable technology for the fourth year in a row, with sales rising by 9 per cent and well over 1 million heat pumps installed across Europe in 2017 alone.

The EPHA also predicts a healthy outlook for heat pump sales, with the top 10 markets growing positively and contributing 10.6 TWh of renewable energy, generating 16.9 TWh of useful heat and saving 2.7Mt of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

The Association also predicts a 36 per cent cost reduction by 2030 or even sooner if additional technology development kicks in and market framework conditions are adjusted.

Germany lead the way in sales and installations, and in terms of technology, air-source heat pumps accounted for the majority of heat pump sales (around 71 per cent) with the bulk of these being air to water monobloc units.

However, the EPHA warns that even this high volume of European sales won't be sufficient to decarbonise the heating and cooling sector.

## 1 MILLION UK SALES

Here in the UK, the value of heat pumps has also been recognised by the UK Government in helping to reduce household fuel bills and lower the nation's overall emissions levels.

The Committee on Climate Change is forecasting that UK heat pump sales will rise to over one million units per year by 2030.

There has also been a mainstream TV advertising campaign for heat pumps recently with an advert from E.ON and we ourselves have just announced an association with TV presenter, architect, lecturer and writer, George Clarke, to help promote our Ecodan air source heat pumps.

Best known for the Channel 4 programmes George Clarke's Amazing Spaces, The Home Show and Restoration Man, George Clarke is a passionate advocate of design excellence and of quality in the construction industry.

We have just added an article by George Clarke to our dedicated industry blog, where he lambasts the UK's approach to housing as "a disaster" and calls for "change that will transform the house building industry and the quality of homes that we build for generations to come."

Here in the UK, the value of heat pumps has also been recognised by the UK Government in helping to reduce household fuel bills and lower the nation's overall emissions levels

## RENEWING THE WAY WE HEAT HOMES

The need for a change of approach in terms of both sustainable build quality and an increase in the use of renewable technologies could not be clearer with the Government's Clean Growth Strategy stating that: "Meeting our target of reducing emissions by at least 80 per cent by 2050 implies decarbonising nearly all heat in buildings and most industrial processes."

Launched in October 2017, the Strategy points out that heating in buildings and industry creates around 32 per cent of total UK emissions, which makes heating a natural target if we are to get anywhere near the ambitious (and legally binding) carbon reduction targets by 2050.

One of the major hurdles to decarbonisation though is the fact that almost



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What this means for the nation's housebuilders, landlords and homeowners in particular, is that the biggest target now is our gas-dependent heating systems.

70 per cent of heat for buildings, currently comes from natural gas.

What this means for the nation's housebuilders, landlords and homeowners in particular, is that the biggest target now is our gas-dependent heating systems.

The Government's strategy document names this as one of the 'Grand Challenges' to overcome, recognising that heating is the most difficult decarbonisation challenge facing the country.

We still remain heavily reliant on the use of gas but continuing on this path will simply not allow us to move to the low carbon future that we are legally obligated to achieve.

The Government is working to develop a post-Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) strategy for both domestic and commercial buildings which will help reduce barriers to growth in low carbon heating.

#### TIME FOR CHANGE

In the George Clarke article on our blogsite, he says it is time for a massive, systematic change in the housebuilding industry and the quality of homes that

we build, but he also states that we literally don't have the number of skilled trades to build the number and quality of homes we need.

While that may be an issue facing the new-build sector, we also urgently need to find easy ways to decarbonise the millions of existing homes, and this is where I believe we do have the technology, the skills and the infrastructure to make a difference.

While there is no one single 'silver bullet' solution, monobloc air source heat pumps do offer one of the quickest and most straightforward ways of reducing carbon emissions, house by house.

Not only can they be retro-fitted to replace carbon intensive forms of heating such as oil, gas or solid fuel, they can also be added to existing heating systems to work in a Hybrid approach, which can immediately help reduce both running costs and emissions.

With our own Ecodan systems for example, they come with intelligent controls which work out when it is best to use the existing heating or run the low emissions, renewable system, meaning that the household get seamless and reliable heating and hot water at minimum running costs and emissions.

The scalability of heat pumps also means that they can be added to and we are seeing more examples of blocks of them being used for district heating schemes, so the technological solutions already exist that can really make a difference.

*Sharon Oliver is marketing manager for Mitsubishi Electric's Ecodan range of renewable heating systems. For more information please visit [les.mitsubishielectric.co.uk/the-hub](https://www.mitsubishielectric.co.uk/the-hub)*

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# HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

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## Newsletter

The monthly Housing Management & Maintenance email newsletter is designed to provide you with the latest products and services, direct to your inbox. You can quickly gather a snapshot of information from up to 12 carefully selected companies and easily follow links through to further information on the website or go directly to the company's website. Go to the Housing Management & Maintenance website to subscribe.

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