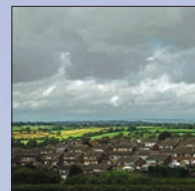


HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

APR/MAY 2019



Section 21
evictions axed

Councils demand
sprinklers funding

Harrogate to pilot
UC changes



Homelessness
continues to rise

End of fixed-term
tenancies

Architectural copper for the long term

There is more to architectural copper than meets the eye, with an unrivalled lifespan counted in hundreds of years, no maintenance and full recyclability as Graeme Bell of Aurubis explains. See report inside

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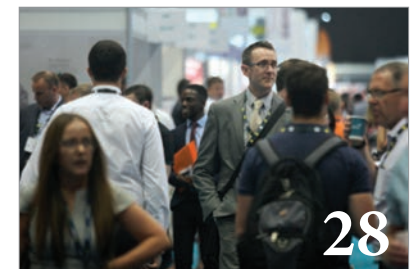
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Editor's comment

A time for reflection, a time for action



Patrick Mooney,
News Editor

Welcome to the 21st issue of Housing Management & Maintenance, a magazine started three and half years ago in which health and safety issues and attempts to improve conditions in the private rented sector were at the forefront of topics covered. It's surprising to look back over the intervening period and to see what has and hasn't been achieved. We started HMM well before the Grenfell House fire, but this single tragic event proved to be a defining moment in the country's attitude towards social rented housing and of the people who live in it. It turns out Grenfell's tenants had been complaining about various problems arising from the block's refurbishment, but their voices were stifled and they were not listened to. Safety concerns were secondary to the making of savings and we also learnt that many older and disabled tenants were allocated flats in the upper floors of the high rise block. A previously safe building had its ability to withstand a fire completely compromised and as a consequence 72 lives were lost. Almost two years have passed since the fire, but we appear to have made little progress in dealing with the many questions arising. Brexit has obviously been a huge distraction for the Government, but it is appalling to think there are survivors who still have not been found a permanent home some 22 months since that awful night and there are thousands and thousands of people across the country who are going to bed every night in a potential firetrap, their blocks of flats still covered in dangerous cladding while politicians argue about the merits of sprinkler systems and 'Stay Put' policies.

LISTEN TO TENANTS

At present we see a disjointed and fractured response, with landlords and freeholders essentially doing their own thing. It's simply not good enough for Ministers to stay quiet and hide behind the public inquiry, the Police investigation and the review of building regulations. We cannot let the second anniversary of the fire and the terrible loss of life pass in June without demanding real and significant action to ensure our homes are made safe and that tenants' voices are listened to. Recently the Regulator of Social Housing announced it is increasing the frequency of checks on more complex social landlords. While this is welcome – none of us wants to see a housing association go under – it is not addressing the issues of residents' safety, quality of services and accommodation, the suitability of housing allocations and whether landlords are listening to tenants. All of these issues should be centre stage in the aftermath of Grenfell, but the regulator continues with its primary focus on governance and value for money – presumably under orders from the Government. Isn't it time that its focus was changed? We also need to ensure that private tenants receive similar protections. Ministers have passed many laws relating to the private rented sector in recent years but they keep passing responsibility for implementation to local councils. These are the same organisations who they are starving of the resources needed to carry out their existing responsibilities, let alone the new ones they conveniently delegate to them. Councils are best placed to do local enforcement and protection work, but they need the powers, the resources and the right encouragement to do this.

INCREASE HOUSING SUPPLY

The extra £3 billion for building more affordable homes in the Chancellor's Spring Statement was a welcome boost, but it will not solve the problems of our historic under-supply of low cost housing which has been building up over decades. The price of this is being paid for by the growing numbers of homeless households and the families living in unsuitable private rentals, too afraid to complain in case they are evicted. The Chartered Institute of Housing is correct in asking for the Right to Buy to be suspended until we can get to a position where all sold properties are replaced on a like for like basis. It would be even better if we could ensure every sold property was replaced with at least two or three new homes for rent. The pilot scheme to extend the Right to Buy to housing association tenants will only benefit those families lucky enough to buy their home with a huge discount. Housing is too important an issue to be left to the whims of a lottery. The Government needs to step in to actively encourage more councils to increase the building of affordable housing. Some of the recent actions taken, such as removing borrowing caps on the housing revenue accounts have helped, but far more has to be done. Bigger and bolder solutions are needed if we are to ensure houses are fit for purpose and are in sufficient supply, are built in the right places, and to ensure no-one has to live in an unsafe and overcrowded property, fearful of every knock at the door.

Patrick Mooney

On the cover...

There is more to architectural copper than meets the eye, with an unrivalled lifespan counted in hundreds of years, no maintenance and full recyclability.
Image © Anthony Weller (courtesy of EPR Architects)

See page 38



Major changes to private rentals market announced, giving tenants greater security but landlords urge caution

The Government is consulting on what it is calling “the biggest change to the private rental sector for a generation” by abolishing Section 21 evictions. These are often referred to as short notice, or no fault evictions as they allow a landlord to quickly recover possession of a property. They currently account for tens of thousands of private tenancies ending each year and they are the single biggest cause of homelessness.

However, landlords groups are warning that the measures could backfire and reduce the number of properties available for rent. They claim that many landlords have lost faith in the judicial system and will sell their properties, rather than risk going through lengthy and costly legal processes.

After a decade of unprecedented growth in which it doubled in size, the private rented market is now the second biggest part of the housing sector. It provides homes to approximately 11 million people, with more than a million households raising their children in this sector. The average private tenancy lasts just over four years and roughly 90 per cent are ended by the tenants.

Ministers say that private landlords have nothing to fear from the greater protections for tenants. They say that landlords will get more effective means of getting their property back when they genuinely need to do so.

UPROOTING ENDED

In making his announcement in mid April, Communities Secretary James Brokenshire said: “This will bring an end to private landlords uprooting tenants from their homes with as little as eight weeks’ notice after the fixed-term contract has come to an end.

“This will effectively create open-ended tenancies, bringing greater peace of mind to millions of families who live in rented accommodation. Many tenants live with the worry of being evicted at short notice or continue to live in poor accommodation for fear they will be asked to leave if they complain about problems with their home.

“It will give them the reassurance that they will not be suddenly turfed out of their home and reduces the risk of being faced with having nowhere else to go.”

Prime Minister Theresa May added: “This important step will not only protect tenants from unethical behaviour, but also give them the long-term certainty and the peace of mind they deserve.”

Under the proposals, landlords will have to provide a concrete, evidenced reason already



specified in law for bringing tenancies to an end. This is a marked change from the current rules, which allows landlords to evict tenants at any time after the fixed-term contract has come to an end, and without specifying a reason.

To ensure landlords are able to end tenancies where they have legitimate reason to do so, Ministers say they will amend the Section 8 eviction process, so property owners are able to regain their home should they wish to sell it or move into it.

QUICKER COURT PROCESSES

Court processes will also be speeded up so landlords are able to swiftly and smoothly regain their property in the event of tenants falling into rent arrears or damaging the property.

Ministers will also work with other types of housing providers outside of the private rented sector who use these powers and use the consultation to make sure the new system works effectively.

The news comes just weeks before the Tenant Fees Act takes effect on 1 June, which will save tenants across England at least £240 million a year – up to £70 per household – by banning unfair letting fees and capping tenancy deposits at five weeks’ rent.

David Smith, Policy Director for the Residential Landlords Association said: “While the RLA recognises the pressure being placed on Government for change, there are serious dangers of getting such reforms wrong. For all the talk of greater security for tenants, that will be nothing if the homes to rent are not there in the first place. We call on the government to act with caution.”

“With the demand for private rented homes continuing to increase, we need the majority of good landlords to have confidence to invest in new homes. This means ensuring they can swiftly repossess properties for legitimate reasons such as

rent arrears, tenant anti-social behaviour or wanting to sell them. This needs to happen before any moves are made to end Section 21.”

MOVING HOME FREQUENTLY

The Government’s own data shows that it takes over five months from a private landlord applying to the courts for a property to be repossessed, to it actually happening. The RLA argues that it is vital that a reformed and improved court system is able to bed in and the grounds to repossess properties are properly improved before making changes to Section 21. This would follow the lead set in Scotland.

Housing campaigners and charities warmly welcomed the Government’s announcement, although Labour’s John Healey said that private tenants still needed protections from unfair rent increases and from unsafe living conditions.

Polly Neate, Shelter’s chief executive, said the Government deserved great credit if it delivered on the promise quickly and the change would transform lives. She said tenants were often given contracts “shorter than your average gym membership, who live in constant fear of being thrown out at the drop of a hat”.

Shelter claims that one in five of families who rent privately have moved at least three times in the last five years, and one in 10 say that a private landlord or letting agent has thrown their belongings out and changed the locks.

The Citizens Advice chief executive, Gillian Guy, said the change was a “groundbreaking shake-up” and it would prevent landlords from “evicting tenants for simply complaining”. Recent research by Citizens Advice had shown that tenants who complained about their landlord or the state of their rented home had a 46 per cent chance of being issued with a Section 21 eviction notice in the following six months.

News in brief



- West London HA **Catalyst** has awarded three ten-year contracts totalling £210m for the repair and maintenance of its 21,000 homes in the capital and across the south east. The biggest contract worth £85m is with Engie for repairs and maintenance, gas servicing and planned maintenance to its west London stock, while Chas West has a £73m deal for the HA's homes in Kensington and Chelsea, Brent, and Barnet. DW Support Services won the third contract worth £52m, for housing outside the London area, in Berkshire, Luton, Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Reading.
- The main contractor for the Grenfell Tower refurbishment has again declined to make any provision in its accounts for a possible fine, relating to the work undertaken on the West London tower block. **Rydon Group** has declared pre-tax profits of £20.8m for the year to September 2018, more than double the £9.2m it earned in the year before. Rydon's after-tax profits for the year also rose from £7.4m to £16.6m, while turnover fell from £230.1m to £227.2m.
- Greater Manchester HA **New Charter Homes** has asked its tenants on Universal Credit to make extra rent payments, to avoid falling into arrears next year as a result of there being 53 Mondays (and rent weeks) in the 2019/20 financial year. It is understood tenants who are still receiving separate Housing Benefit payments will not be affected by the anomaly.
- **Bolton at Home** has taken over near neighbour **Arcon Housing Group** as it looks to build more homes in Greater Manchester. Arcon will join Bolton at Home as a subsidiary in April after the move was officially signed off by both boards. The two organisations say they expect the new partnership to deliver 1,400 new homes by 2023. Bolton at Home currently manages more than 18,000 homes. It was originally an ALMO but in 2011 it acquired its council housing stock from the council and then re-launched itself as a housing association. Arcon is much smaller, with only around 1,200 homes, but its properties are more widely spread.

Grenfell residents' rights were breached

The human rights of Grenfell Tower's residents were breached by both their local council and the Government, according to the country's equalities watchdog.

The use of combustible cladding on the tower and allocating flats high in the building to elderly and disabled people (many of whom died) came in for particularly strong criticism – in a move which could have major repercussions for the owners of other high rise blocks across the country.

After a 15-month investigation, the Equality and Human Rights Commission said “the state either knew, or ought to have known, of the real and immediate risk to life posed by the cladding on Grenfell Tower”, that regulation had failed and that it had also failed to tell residents about the dangers they faced.

It also criticised the official handling of the fire's aftermath, citing witnesses who alleged that the response of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the Home Office had been “overshadowed by racism”.

The EHRC has a duty to promote awareness of and protection of human rights in the UK, and its inquiry is the first into the disaster to conclude. Its chairman David Isaac, said: “Everyone has the right to life and the right to safe adequate housing, but the residents of Grenfell Tower were tragically let down by the public bodies that had a duty to protect them.”

The EHRC points the finger firmly at both the Government and Kensington and Chelsea council, which owned the tower. It said the use of combustible cladding raised questions about whether the UK has met its duty to protect life. It warned that, with many other residential and public buildings still covered in ACM cladding, “the failure to protect lives and violation of article 2 [of the European Convention on Human Rights (right to life)] continues”.

WIDE-RANGING CONSEQUENCES

“Grenfell raises many questions about the suitability of the housing in the tower, for example, placing older, vulnerable and disabled people on upper floors,” its report says. “Many of the people killed by the fire were older people who were housed at height.”

Firefighters told the inquiry they did not know how to tackle the fire in the building's cladding, and the EHRC said the Government would be breaking its duties under the European convention on human rights if it did not train firefighters to do so. It must also reconsider stay-put policies for buildings with similar cladding.

Other issues that could amount to breaches of human rights included a lack of planning for what to do with evacuated residents, poor and sometimes non-existent consultation with residents and that “responsible authorities did not make reasonable adjustments for disabled people living in Grenfell Tower”.

It said: “The state has failed, and continues to fail, to meet its equality and non-discrimination obligations, in particular in relation to disabled people, older people, women and children and, in particular, ethnic minority groups.”

Officials at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government stressed that Ministers are determined to ensure a tragedy like Grenfell can never happen again, that it is reforming building regulations and has banned combustible cladding on high-rise residential buildings, as well as hospitals, residential care homes and student halls of residence.

Councillor Elizabeth Campbell, the leader of Kensington and Chelsea Council, said it would learn from the report. “That is part of our commitment in making sure Grenfell never happens again, whatever it takes and whatever the consequences for the council.”

Events

National Landlord Investment Shows

15 May, Birmingham
13 June, London
8 October, Manchester
5 November, London
www.landlordinvestmentshow.co.uk

Facilities Show

18 - 20 June, London
www.facilitiesshow.com

CIH Housing

25 - 27 June, Manchester
www.cihhousing.com/home

UK Construction Week

08 - 10 October
www.ukconstructionweek.com

Homes UK

27 - 28 November, London
www.homesevent.co.uk/home



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Councils' powers to remove Grenfell-style cladding 'useless'

New powers for councils to step in and remove dangerous cladding from privately-owned towers have been criticised for being “largely useless”, leaving tens of thousands of leaseholders feeling unsafe and facing huge bills.

Last November, Housing Secretary James Brokenshire announced that councils had Government support to take control of ACM-clad buildings and carry out works, where developers and freeholders were dragging their feet or refusing to act. He said this included financial support if necessary and that “Everyone has a right to feel safe in their homes.”

But council officials believe that as little as ten per cent of the affected private tower blocks can actually be tackled by councils and as yet, no councils have used the powers, which only apply to buildings that meet very strict criteria.

Instead Gary Porter, chairman of the Local Government Association, is asking ministers to fund the works directly.

Ministers made £400m available to fix social housing blocks which has proved successful, with remediation works started or completed in over 80 per cent of blocks owned by councils and HAs. By contrast only a fraction of the private blocks identified as using the now banned aluminium composite material cladding panels have been fixed (10 out of 173). The Prime Minister and Chancellor have joined Brokenshire in demanding action from private block freeholders but 22 months on, works

have yet to start on most private residential blocks.

The Government has revealed there are as many as 16,600 flats in private tower blocks that have still not had their dangerous flammable cladding panels removed. Opposition MPs are demanding that Ministers set up a loan fund to be used for removal work, with a date set for all works to be completed and the affected buildings made safe.

LIFELINE NEEDED

Suzanne Richards, Manchester City Council's executive member for housing and regeneration, said: “The current powers government has given councils only apply to limited cases, perhaps only 10 or 20 per cent, where building owners refuse to act. What we now really need to see is for government to step in to offer leaseholders a genuine lifeline, by creating a fund that will pay for cladding works directly.”

The crisis is affecting tens of thousands of households across the country.

Councils have to demonstrate problems with insulation, cladding and firebreaks as well as the presence of an acute fire trigger such as gas supply, and that the building has no waking watch in place for a building to be classed as a category one risk, according to Manchester city council.

If developers or freeholders have shown they are willing to take action, those buildings will not qualify for council intervention, even if that involves passing costs onto leaseholders.

The Housing Ministry confirmed that the powers



are only available “under certain circumstances”. It said: “We have been abundantly clear that unsafe cladding systems which do not comply with building regulations must be replaced and leaseholders must be protected from costs. We will also support councils who use the full range of enforcement powers at their disposal to ensure that action is taken by building owners to remove unsafe cladding.”

In a more positive development, Housing Minister Kit Malthouse told MPs that the company providing building warranties for most of the country's housing has agreed to contribute to cladding removal costs from some schemes. “The government is aware that the NHBC has currently accepted seven warranty claims for buildings with unsafe ACM cladding in England and Wales. A number of these claims include multiple buildings. Further claims are still being considered.”

Toxic contamination found in homes and soil near Grenfell

Highly dangerous chemicals and other harmful toxins have been found in debris and soil samples close to Grenfell Tower, that could pose serious health risks to the surrounding community and survivors of the fire.

Research by an expert witness to the inquiry into the fire, has found a range of toxins with “significant environmental contamination” in a flat 160 metres from the site. Professor Anna Stec said there was now an urgent need for further analysis of the surrounding area to “quantify any risk to residents” over the long term for conditions such as cancer, asthma and other respiratory problems.

Her study noted that although many of the chemicals found in the soil are stable while undisturbed, problems can arise when they come

into contact with the skin through activities such as gardening or playing on the ground.

Inhalation of chemicals found in the indoor samples could also be damaging to health.

Housing Secretary James Brokenshire and the Minister for Grenfell Victims Nick Hurd, wrote to Grenfell survivors and the wider community in late March to confirm the appointment of an independent specialist who will be carrying out environmental checks in the tower's vicinity. An initial report is not expected from them July at the earliest.

Natasha Elcock, chair of Grenfell United, the survivors and bereaved families group, said Professor Stec's report was “alarming and hugely upsetting to read”. She said: “Allowing exposure

to the level of pollutants in this report would be criminally negligent even without the horror of what happened that night.” She accused the Government of dragging its heels. “Twenty-one months after the fire, it has yet to carry out a single soil test or offer a proper health screening programme to the community,” she said.

The potential risk of contamination has been one of the principal concerns for residents and survivors since the fire on 14 June 2017. They have repeatedly asked questions about the potential effects from particles in the plume of smoke and residues generated by the ferociously burning tower.

Public Health England has been monitoring air quality around the tower since the fire. In a report published in early March, it said “the risk to public health from air pollution remains low”. It has also consistently played down the likelihood the fire could have caused serious contamination because of the trajectory of the plume of smoke.



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Reinventing the standard

Grenfell: essential fire safety checks for all landlords to undertake

After over 80 days of evidence at the Grenfell inquiry, the Chair, Sir Martin Moore-Bick is expected to issue interim recommendations during April 2019. The evidence given during the first phase of the Inquiry has highlighted a number of basic housing management and asset management issues that are worthy of re-checking in every landlord organisation, whether in the social or private rental sectors.

There is a need to ensure that all the equipment needed in the event of a fire (emergency lighting, dry risers, automatic opening vents, lifts, fire fighting locks, alarm systems, fire doors) are inspected in accordance with the regulations and there are robust procedures in place to remedy defects, whenever they are reported by residents or staff.

It would be appropriate to consider whether Premise Information Boxes should be installed at tower blocks, sheltered blocks, or hostels. A discussion with the local Fire & Rescue Service about where they should be located and what information goes in them is recommended.

ACCESSIBLE PLANS AND INFORMATION

Emergency plans for these blocks should include clear information about the location of local community centres that could be used as reception centres and the location of the centre keys at 1 o'clock in the morning! Housing Associations and private landlords will need to ensure that their emergency arrangements are known to the local authority, in which each building they own is located.

In addition, the computer information about the known residents of each block needs to be accessible 24/7. This includes emergency cover arrangements for events like holidays, sickness or other absences.

It will certainly be necessary to review the arrangements about the information held about leaseholders (and their tenants). Invariably, this is likely to be necessary when we begin to



implement the Hackitt recommendations about building occupiers.

If asset teams are undertaking extensive refurbishment of buildings and have not yet begun to use the very useful document that was produced following the Lakanal fire, then now is the time!

www.london-fire.gov.uk/media/1885/726527_fire_safety_in_refurbished_buildings_audit_tool_report_-_january_2015-1.pdf

This would also be a good time to review the organisation's fire safety action plan taking into account the recommendations of the Lakanal Coroner that were made early in 2013

The reality is that prior to Lakanal House most housing managers (and residents) had never heard of a "stay put" policy. If a fire occurred in a property, the fire brigade turned up and extinguished it. If residents in the block saw the fire and considered themselves at risk, they got out. Others stayed put, usually, because they didn't know there was a fire in the block at all!

FIT FOR PURPOSE IN THE 2020s

We are now in a different world where everyone has a view (valid or not) about stay put and landlords

are going to have to accept that a "stay put plus" is likely to become the new norm.

Although it is clear (with Lakanal and Grenfell being the exceptions) that "stay put" has worked for many years, it may be time to respond to residents' concerns by creating a further level of assurance, in addition to passive fire safety. This could include:

- Installing misting systems on a flat by flat basis, WITHOUT the need to consult leaseholders about the costs, because there are no communal works needed;
- Providing an individual fire extinguisher to those residents that request them. New ones on the market do not require servicing or maintenance; and
- Installing an alert system throughout the building that could link with individual properties and could enable a controlled evacuation to take place.

Whatever action is taken, it is clear that fire safety cannot be allowed to be far from the top of Asset and Housing Manager's daily "to do" lists.

Article submitted by Jan Taranczuk, CihCM, an experienced housing practitioner

Councils demand money for sprinklers in tower blocks

Council leaders have demanded Government funding for installing water sprinklers in hundreds of tower blocks, warning that residents in thousands of flats do not feel safe in their own homes.

Representatives of 15 councils from Bristol to Newcastle delivered a letter to Whitehall demanding that Ministers honour their pledge,

given after the Grenfell Tower fire, to do "whatever it takes" to keep people safe. So far the Government has rejected every bid from councils for cash to install sprinklers.

It is estimated the works could cost as much as £1bn, dwarfing the £400m which has already been released for replacing the combustible cladding on social housing blocks over 18 metres in height.

Since 2007 building regulations have made it a requirement that every new residential tower block over 30 metres tall should have sprinklers, but there are no rules affecting the retrofitting of sprinklers into existing blocks.

Several councils have already announced plans to

instal sprinklers in their high-rise blocks, including Birmingham with 213 blocks and Croydon in 25 tall blocks. Other councils calling for funds include Coventry, Dudley, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Sandwell, Sheffield and Solihull, as well as a number of councils in London.

The call for sprinklers to be installed in social housing blocks has also been made by the London fire brigade commissioner, Dany Cotton, who said: "Sprinklers save lives, they are not a luxury." Increasingly experts are calling for a number of measures to be implemented to improve fire safety, with sprinklers being seen as part of a solution rather than as the solution.

Total Housing 2019 rounds up the key issues facing the sector

On 6 and 7 March at the Brighton Hilton Metropole Hotel, experts and delegates from the housing sector gathered to discuss the hurdles facing the industry.

Total Housing 2019, organised by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), saw two days packed full of content on a variety of issues affecting housing including housing stock maintenance, regulation, homelessness, Universal Credit, offsite construction, and Brexit.

The talks were held across four theatres – The Big Picture, Development & Asset Management, Housing Management and Fringe. Speakers included professionals from a range of industry bodies including Homes England, Federation of Master Builders (FMB), Shelter, Savills, Anchor Hanover and the CIH.

The event began with a welcome and overview discussion on the state of the housing industry chaired by CIH chief executive Terrie Alafat CBE. Alafat also offered her thoughts on housing's biggest issues in a talk at the Fringe theatre.

Other sessions held over the course of the event looked at specific issues such as how Brexit will impact the building industry, with the FMB's Barry Mortimer discussing the skills and materials

shortage the UK is facing due to its upcoming departure from the EU.

Savills' Helen Collins and Melissa Madjitey and Anchor Hanover's Abigail Ellis looked at the increase in stock rationalisation within the housing management sector and the effect this is having in terms of driving housing growth and improving efficiencies.

Nik Turner from Thirteen Group discussed how the company managed to turn itself around from one that was failing to meet customer needs and employee satisfaction, to one that now maintains a top quartile performance and excellent customer feedback. She referenced the importance of introducing IT solutions and engaging more closely with tenants.

In the Housing Management theatre, CIH's Sam Lister, Phoenix Community Housing's Jackie Davcorn and the London Borough of Southwark's Eugene Nixon gave their thoughts on why the role out of Universal Credit hasn't been a smooth process, and what housing providers can do to help their tenants better understand it. This included the hosting of events where residents can learn and discuss any issues, and the introduction of programmes that aim to help them find work.

Building safety was a hot topic and one that was explored by Jan Taranczuk of Jan Taranczuk Associates, Clarion Housing Group's Daniel Hollas and the CIH's Debbie Larnar. The importance of resident engagement was emphasised, along with the suggestion of recruiting specific building safety managers.

The benefits of modern methods of construction were highlighted in a session with Baily Garner's John Milner and Trowers & Hamlin's Katie Saunders. They discussed the reasons they believe it hasn't yet taken off such as the financial barriers faced by the public sector and delivery models that are "not fit for purpose". They also explored the misconceptions putting people off, explaining how elements such as digital design actually allow for easy maintenance and repair programmes.

Running alongside the conference was an exhibition and on the Tuesday evening delegates and exhibitors attended a networking session where those in attendance were able to share ideas and meet likeminded professionals. The CIH hosts a multitude of events throughout the year, including its large annual conference and housing festival in Manchester from 25 – 27 June.



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Police say Grenfell charges are not expected before 2021

Survivors of the Grenfell Tower fire have reacted with anger and frustration to an announcement from the Metropolitan Police that they do not expect to bring criminal charges against anyone until the latter part of 2021 – over four years after the tragedy which killed 72 people.

The Met said the second phase of the public inquiry would have to complete before they can send any files to the Crown Prosecution Service. Although the Police have interviewed many people under caution, they have not made any arrests.

The public inquiry itself is ongoing - phase one which focused on the night of the fire (14 June 2017) was completed just before the end of 2018

with the chairman expected to issue a report in the next month or two. Phase two focussing on the causes of the fire and events leading up to it, is formally expected to open late this year and to run throughout the whole of 2020.

Natasha Elcock, chair of survivors group Grenfell United, responded to the Met's announcement by saying: "The week after a fire that killed our loved ones and neighbours, Theresa May promised us justice. Justice for us means accountability and change. The police have said no charges will be brought until at least 2021 and we see little real change.

"We wait month after month, our lives on hold

Theresa May promised us justice. Justice for us means accountability and change

Natasha Elcock, chair of survivors group Grenfell United

for some kind of justice and progress. It is extremely frustrating and disheartening to be told this will be our way of life for years to come. On this timeline Theresa May risks leaving office without a trial starting. Today we have to ask if Theresa May will be the prime minister that brought us justice and change, or the prime minister who failed us?"

Sprinklers should be provided in all new and refurbished flats

Influential building industry bodies have joined forces to demand that sprinklers are made mandatory in all new homes in buildings taller than 11 metres.

The Royal Institute of British Architects, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and the Chartered Institute of Building said sprinklers should be retrofitted in existing buildings during refurbishment work involving "material alterations". They also support the installation of fire suppression systems, including sprinklers, in buildings below 11 metres "on a case-by-case basis of risk".

The three bodies also said the Government should require sprinklers be installed in all hotels, hospitals, student accommodation, schools and care homes. They said they will bring forward their own guidance on sprinklers if the Government fails to change the law.

While sprinklers have been legally required in new residential buildings of 10 storeys or higher since 2007 in England, the regulations do not apply retrospectively. In Wales, they are required in all new homes.

In a joint statement, RIBA, RICS and CIOB said: "As the leading professional bodies in the built

environment, we believe further action is required to improve the fire safety of buildings in the UK. Lives, stock and property are saved by the use of automatic fire suppression systems, which includes sprinklers.

"At present, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland differ in their requirements on sprinklers yet the science of fire knows no political or geographical boundaries. Harmonising building regulations across the UK regarding the installation of sprinklers would provide clarity to the industry and help protect the public."

League tables for social housing less likely

The Government is understood to have dropped its proposal to introduce league tables for social housing providers, after tenants voiced their concerns it could increase their stigma and leave them trapped in poor housing.

The idea was originally included in last year's Social Housing Green Paper and was thought to be one of the Government's favoured responses to the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

However, Ministers are still expected to introduce key performance indicators for assessing landlords' performance, although it is still unclear how these will be used. The Government has yet to publicly respond to the consultation on the Green Paper, with a White Paper not expected until later in this year or early in 2020.

When the introduction of league tables was first mooted, many landlords and their representative

organisations protested. They claimed tables were a blunt tool, which could be misunderstood and encourage the wrong types of behaviour.

Jonathan Walters, Deputy Director of Strategy and Performance at the Regulator of Social Housing, is reported to have said that while KPIs are likely to be part of future consumer regulation, he was less sure about league tables.

Jenny Osbourne, Chief Executive of TPAS, said: "Tenants have consistently raised their concern to us about league tables and the impact these will have on the wider issue of stigma. What help will it be for tenants whose landlords are among the worse performers when in reality there remains so little choice about moving landlord?"

"It could serve to only make a poor situation feel even worse. While league tables could be a help to make performance more visible across the sector,

Ministers are still expected to introduce key performance indicators for assessing landlords' performance, although it is still unclear how these will be used

for most tenants what they are concerned with is the service and treatment they and their neighbours personally receive from their landlord. They want that to just simply get better and fast, not what position their landlord is in a table."

Councils share £46 million pot to get people off the streets

Councils in England will share over £46 million to help get rough sleepers off the streets and into accommodation ranging from Night Shelters to permanent housing.

The money has been allocated from the Government's £100 million Rough Sleeping Strategy budget, to 246 areas nationwide – providing an estimated 750 additional staff and over 2,600 new beds in total. It will be paid out to councils over the next two years.

As well as paying for accommodation the funds will be used for additional staff and outreach services. Over three-quarters of local authorities in England are now covered by the Rough Sleeping Initiative programme, which aims to end rough sleeping by the year 2027.

It is estimated that the money will provide funding for up to:

- 110 rough sleeping coordinators to improve local handing of the issue;
- 300 outreach workers and 350 other support and specialist roles;
- over 1,400 new emergency bed spaces, including winter night shelter provision;
- over 700 new long-term beds, including in the private rented sector and supported housing;
- more than 500 new temporary spaces, such as in hostels; and
- over £2.5 million for spot-purchasing beds and increasing access to accommodation.

Some projects will provide specialist support such as family reconnections, immigration advice or access to mental and physical health services. Others will focus on providing services for specific



groups of people, such as vulnerable women, those transitioning from leaving care or people trying to get their life back on track after leaving prison.

Communities Secretary James Brokenshire said: "The £100 million-backed Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out this Government's blueprint for ending rough sleeping for good. We must keep up the momentum and that's why we are giving this funding to areas and projects that need

it, ensuring progress continues to be made and people are given the help they need to turn their lives around."

Some £34 million is going to the 83 authorities with the highest number of rough sleepers and a further £12 million is set aside for spending on other areas and projects in the 2019-20 year. An additional £1 million will be funded from within existing budgets.

Homelessness in Wales at highest level since law changed

Homelessness in Wales has climbed to its highest level since new legislation designed to tackle the problem was passed in 2015, with continuing austerity and welfare reforms being blamed for the increases.

Some 2,997 households became homeless from October to December 2018, while another 2,649 households were identified as threatened with becoming homeless within 56 days.

Ministers defended their policies, saying that tackling homelessness and rough sleeping is a priority for the Welsh Government and their measures had already prevented more than 21,400 households from becoming homeless.

The Housing Act (Wales) 2014 introduced new duties for councils to prevent people from becoming homeless. Similar measures were introduced in England from the start of April 2018 under the Homelessness Reduction Act.

INCREASED DEMAND

In the final quarter of last year Welsh councils were successful in finding new accommodation for 43 per cent of the homeless households and were able to prevent 67 per cent of the other households from becoming homeless.

However, they could not stop the number of

homeless households in B&Bs from increasing to 270 (up by 58 per cent from last year), while the overall number of households in temporary accommodation rose to 2,139, its second-highest ever total.

Matt Dicks, director of the Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru, said: "The statistics shed a worrying light on the nature of our homelessness challenge.

The pressure on social housing supply means that in practice there is an ongoing reliance on the private rented sector and a growing trend in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation, particularly for families with children.

He called on the Welsh Government to provide more support for private landlords working with councils to house homeless families and to speed up the roll-out of Housing First across the country.

News in brief



- One million new homes could be built on brownfield sites in England, with more than 2,600 new sites identified in the past year according to the group, the Campaign to Protect Rural England. The sites are in many high demand areas such as London, Bristol and Cambridgeshire. The CPRE say previously built-on sites with a capacity for at least 120,000 new homes were identified in the last year alone. The CPRE have researched official public registers of land to come up with their figures. They added that almost two-thirds of the available sites were classed as deliverable within five years, in a counter to objections from housebuilders who often prefer to build on green field sites. The Government has set a target of 300,000 new homes a year by the mid 2020s, but we are only delivering an average of 180,000 per annum. The National Federation of Builders has issued a press release supporting the CPRE's findings. It said brownfield sites are typically uncontroversial, can be built upon more quickly and are delivered by smaller builders using local labour resources.

- The number of newly built social rent homes (1,707) delivered by HAs in the final quarter of last year was the highest since the National Housing Federation began compiling figures three years ago. This figure was more than 550 higher than the 1,155 homes started in the same quarter in 2017/18. The previous highest figure for a three-month period was the 1,228 new social rent homes built in the first quarter of 2016/17. This level of activity contrasts favourably with figures released by the MHCLG showing that building work began on just 40,580 homes in England during the final quarter of 2018 – some eight per cent down on the previous three months. Completions were estimated at 42,970, up by two per cent on the previous quarter and one per cent on the previous year. During the whole of 2018, work started on 165,160 new-builds, almost exactly the same as the 2017 total. Only the number of completed homes rose in the past calendar year, up one per cent to 165,090. Housing Minister Kit Malthouse said he was “delighted” with the result.

Empty homes in England rises to more than 216,000

The number of empty homes across England has risen for the second year running to more than 216,000, its highest level since 2012 (when 254,059 properties were empty) according to official figures.

The number of long-term vacant properties (those that have been empty for at least six months) rose by 5.3 per cent to 216,186 in the 12 months to October. They now account for £53.6bn of property according to analysis by modular home and school builder Project Etopia.

The rise compares with a 2.6 per cent increase in the previous year. Prior to then the number of empty homes had fallen every year since 2008.

Project Etopia chief executive, Joseph Daniels, said: “The stubbornly high number of empty homes is compounding the housing market’s deeply entrenched problems with lack of supply remaining a key driver of high prices and low affordability.

“New homes are not being built fast enough and the constant spectre of abandoned properties aggravates an already tough market, particularly for first-time buyers who desperately want to claim the keys to their first property.”

The biggest increases in the number of empty homes have been seen in coastal towns and cities.



Portsmouth recorded the biggest increase (to 939), followed by Hartlepool (to 726) and then Eastbourne (to 518).

The largest number of long-term empty homes are in London, which has risen 11 per cent to 22,481 (representing £10.7bn of property) while Birmingham has 4,283 long-term vacant homes, followed by Durham with 4,130, Bradford with 4,090 and Liverpool with 3,889. In Durham and Liverpool the number of empty homes fell by nine per cent and almost five per cent respectively.

Tenants not being protected from revenge evictions

Only five per cent of private sector tenants who complained to councils about the condition of their homes are being properly protected by their local authorities.

According to Generation Rent, 99 English councils received a total of 67,026 complaints about housing in 2017/18. Those complaints resulted in just 3,043 Improvement Notices being served on landlords, meaning that only five per cent of those tenants were protected from eviction.

The campaign group added that 12,592 Category One hazards were recorded by 78 councils in 2017/18. These saw 2,545 Improvement Notices being served as a result, equating to 20 per cent of cases and leaving the remaining tenants with no protection from eviction.

Dan Wilson Craw, the director of Generation Rent, said: “These figures demonstrate that despite powers and protections, tenants living in squalid homes are being let down by their councils. If landlords are free to evict tenants who complain about disrepair then we cannot expect the quality of

private rented homes to improve.”

Data obtained under the Freedom of Information Act by the campaign group Generation Rent shows that English councils are failing to use their full powers to protect tenants. Even when the most severe hazards, such as mould or broken stairs, is found in a rented home, tenants only get protection from eviction in one in every five cases.

This is the latest example of councils being accused of failing to use all of their powers to clamp down on rogue landlords, following media investigations last year. These found that convicted landlords are continuing to operate by exploiting gaps in a law that is supposed to protect the most vulnerable tenants.

Landlords can legally evict their tenants without giving a reason, this is called a Section 21 eviction. But section 21 evictions are invalid for six months after a council has served an Improvement Notice on the property. There must normally be a severe Category 1 hazard in the property for the council to take this action.



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News in brief

- West Midlands based WM Housing is collapsing its group structure and merging all of its subsidiaries into a single legal entity, to be known in future as Citizen. The reorganisation is expected to be completed by September and it covers all 30,000 homes owned by WM Housing Group and its subsidiaries. The new association plans to invest £870m into its housing stock and communities over the next five years. The investment includes £500m to be spent on building 500 homes for outright sale and 2,800 affordable homes for rent and shared ownership by 2024. WM Housing was originally formed in 2009 from a merger between West Mercia Homes and the Coventry LSVT HA Whitefriars Housing. Later on Optima HA joined in 2012, followed by Family HA in 2014.
- Seven London council officers have been jailed for a total of 17 years for stealing more than £1m through a **housing benefit scam**. The officers created fake benefit claims over a period of six years while working as benefit assessors for Lambeth, Kingston, and Barking & Dagenham councils. Menelik Cowan, 38, was sentenced to six and a half years in prison at Southwark Crown Court after being found guilty of stealing £293,147 from Lambeth Council over six years. He denied fraud but was convicted by a jury after a trial lasting three-months. The other six defendants were given prison sentences of between 18 months and three and a half years. They are Hugh Small, 40, Rahel Asfaha, 36, Alex Williams, 39, Cassandra Johnson, 38, Jessica Bartley, 35, and Natasha Francis, 38. In addition Donna Francis, 58, and Derrick Williams, 59, were convicted of entering into a money laundering arrangement and received sentences of a 12-month community order and 15 months in prison.
- The **Scottish social housing regulator** has revealed it has barred several for-profit HAs from joining the sector north of the border. They have been able to do this because their registration criteria makes it clear that social landlords in Scotland must be organisations that do not trade for profit. The situation is different in England and Wales, where campaigners including the National Housing Federation want the term of a 'housing association' better protected, so that it only applies to not-for-profit organisations.

Labour would force private landlords to offer indefinite tenancies

A Labour Government will require private landlords to offer tenancies of indefinite length, similar to the German system, in a drive to give renters more security.

The plan was announced by the Shadow Housing Secretary, John Healey, who said it would protect tenants from arbitrary eviction, where landlords do not have to give a reason. In Germany, landlords are only allowed to evict tenants for reasons such as a failure to pay rent or committing an offence in the property. Meanwhile tenants would still be able to leave the property if they gave a period of notice.

The proposal is a change from Labour's pledge at the 2017 election, when it committed to making private tenancies three years by default. Labour says the indefinite system brings more security for renters, with private tenancies in Germany lasting an average of 11 years, compared to about four in England.

This would particularly help the 1.6m households with dependant children in private rented accommodation. The scheme is also intended to reduce the extent of rent increases. Labour says landlords often use changes in tenancy as an opportunity to increase rents.

DESERVE BETTER

Healey said: "People shouldn't be living in fear of losing their homes. The insecurity of renting is a power imbalance at the heart of our broken housing market, where tenants are afraid to report problems

The plan was announced by the Shadow Housing Secretary, John Healey, who said it would protect tenants from arbitrary eviction, where landlords do not have to give a reason

in case they are evicted, and families with children are forced to move at short notice.

"Many landlords provide decent homes that tenants are happy with, but the Government is allowing rogue landlords to take advantage of good tenants. Renters deserve better."

The plan was welcomed by the housing charity Shelter, which said the current system meant "an alarming number of people are at the mercy of no-fault evictions".

Greg Beales, Shelter's campaign director, said: "Private rents are already expensive, so when you add short-term contracts into the mix, the situation for renters is pretty tough. Right now a family can be turfed out for no reason at any time, and saddled with not only the cost of moving but the huge burden of uprooting their lives. It doesn't have to be this way."

Right to Rent scheme ruled to be unlawful

The Right to Rent scheme which required landlords to check the passports and immigration status of prospective tenants has been found to be unlawful – as it encouraged racial discrimination against anybody with a foreign-sounding name or a foreign passport.

The scheme itself threatened landlords with unlimited fines and up to five years in jail if their tenants could not produce all the right immigration paperwork. But in a landmark ruling the High Court has declared one of Theresa May's flagship schemes from her time as Home Secretary, to be unlawful.

The court found that the Government ignored evidence of these risks and, in turn, that it failed to provide any evidence the scheme delivers anything but misery and state-sanctioned hostility – targeted predominantly at minorities, people of colour, and people who were born somewhere else.

The case was brought by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants who warned the Government for years about the inherent risks of the scheme, as well as its cruelty and of the hostile environment it created. They were supported by various organisations in opposing Right to Rent, including the Chartered Institute of Housing.

Even after the Home Office's defeat, more public money might be spent on appealing against the decision, despite the judgement making it very clear there is no "improved" version of the policy that could be considered lawful.

The scheme had effectively delegated border guards' responsibilities to landlords and their letting agents. Many landlords were deeply unhappy with this and feedback from a pilot scheme was not positive. However, it also meant many people were turned away by landlords, simply because they could not produce a British passport.

Homelessness Reduction Act increasing numbers in TA

More people are being placed in temporary and emergency accommodation as councils struggle to cope with rising numbers of people facing homelessness and a lack of affordable housing for them.

The findings of a Local Government Association survey coincided with the first anniversary of the Homelessness Reduction Act, which placed a renewed focus on homelessness prevention and introduced a range of new duties on councils. In all some 151 councils participated in the survey.

Since 2017, local authorities have been housing more than 200,000 households in temporary accommodation, including in bed and breakfasts, hostels and private rented accommodation, with over half of them children.

The number of people presenting themselves to councils as homeless is continuing to rise while the number of households in temporary accommodation is up more than 70 per cent since 2010 and the burden on councils and their budgets continues to increase.

To coincide with the anniversary of the Act, the survey of councils by the LGA revealed:

- 8 in 10 councils have seen an increase in homelessness presentations since the introduction of the Act;
- 6 in 10 councils said it had increased the number

of people being housed in temporary and emergency accommodation. The same number of councils say the length of time people spend in temporary and emergency accommodation has increased;

- Limited access to affordable housing and a lack of suitable accommodation for people already sleeping rough is a serious concern for 91 per cent of councils;
- Councils across the country say excessive levels of paperwork required by the Act are costing them too much in administration costs and are hampering their ability to meet the needs of people at risk of homelessness; and
- Councils are determined to prevent homelessness from happening in the first place.

DESPERATE NEEDS

The LGA said it is crucial that councils can keep 100 per cent of the receipts of any homes they sell to replace them and reinvest in building more of the genuinely affordable homes they desperately need and adapt welfare reforms to prevent people from losing their home where possible.

LGA housing spokesman Cllr Martin Tett, said: "Behind every instance of homelessness lies an individual tragedy and councils are determined to prevent it from happening and support homeless people in their communities into accommodation as quickly and as effectively as possible.

The number of people presenting themselves to councils as homeless is continuing to rise while the number of households in temporary accommodation is up more than 70 per cent since 2010

"Many councils have updated their homelessness prevention strategies since the Act was introduced last year. But a lack of affordable housing has left many struggling to cope with rising number of people coming to them for help and having to place more families and households into temporary and emergency accommodation as a result. This is bad for families and communities, expensive for councils and not the aim of the Act.

"The wider factors that are increasing homelessness also need to be addressed if the Act is to be a success. Councils need to keep 100 per cent of RTB sales receipts to replace homes sold and to adapt welfare reforms to protect families at risk of homelessness and prevent homelessness from happening in the first place."

Councils in the capital pay landlords £14m in 'incentives' to house homeless people

London councils paid private landlords more than £14m last year in "incentives" to persuade them to house homeless people, in addition to rents and other fees.

The payouts were branded as "ludicrous" by housing campaigners and "intolerable" by councils. The payments of up to £8,300 each were made to landlords more than 5,700 times in 2018 to house people who were either homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Barnet Council in north London, paid out the largest amount totalling £1.5m in order to secure housing. In the past five years, the borough has built only 20 council houses while across London just 680 new council homes were built during the last 12 months.

Councils at Hillingdon, Haringey and Barking & Dagenham also spent more than £1m each. Councils claimed some landlords played different councils off against each other to increase payouts and that the system was vulnerable to abuse.

Barking & Dagenham has sold 48,500 council homes under the Right to Buy and is spending more than £800,000 a year renting back sold-off properties. Ealing, which spent £770,000 on incentives, said it saved the council money by keeping people out of shabbier, but more expensive emergency and temporary accommodation.

CASH SWEETENERS

The payments were revealed in response to freedom of information requests.

The fall in social housebuilding and a widening gap between housing benefit and market rents appear to be fuelling the payments.

Polly Neate, the Chief Executive of Shelter, said: "It is ludicrous that councils have to resort to handing out cash sweeteners to secure housing for desperate families, when there's a much more sustainable solution - build social housing on an ambitious scale." Shelter is campaigning for a national programme to build 3.1m new affordable homes over the next 20 years.

Landlords said the payments compensated them for accepting homeless tenants who are more likely to fall behind on their rent, especially if they received Universal Credit which makes payments in arrears.

David Smith, Policy Director at the Residential Landlords Association, said: "Councils should be focusing more on supporting tenants [so they don't become homeless]. Bribing people isn't the answer. You end up with people taking tenants who don't really want them and then evicting them later."

Cllr Darren Rodwell, the housing lead at London Councils, said the level of payments was "a symptom of London's broken housing market". "At a time when our funding from central government has been reduced by 63 per cent since 2010, we would much rather be investing in frontline services," he said.

London councils are setting up a joint body, Capital Letters, to purchase housing using collective bargaining and to reduce competition between councils for the same homes.

News in brief

- A BBC report has disclosed that senior officers and housing staff at Kensington and Chelsea Council received bonuses of around £250,000 in the year following the Grenfell Tower fire, despite the fact 71 households from the estate are still waiting to be permanently rehoused almost two years on from the tragedy. Figures, obtained by the BBC via a freedom of information request, showed 12 employees in leadership roles at the council received a total of £93,174 in bonuses in May or June of 2018 - an average payment of £7,765 per employee. In addition, 52 members of staff working in housing received £131,804 in bonuses, an average of £2,534 per employee. The council did not say whether there was an overlap between the total figures for bonuses paid to leaders and housing staff. A survivors' group called the payments "abhorrent" since some households still do not have permanent homes. The fire in north Kensington on 14 June 2017 killed 72 people. A council spokesman said: "No-one got a bonus specifically for helping respond to the fire."
- People receiving housing benefit will no longer be barred from renting properties advertised on one of the UK's largest listing sites. Zoopla has said it will stop landlords posting "No DSS" in advertisements for letting properties. (DSS is a widely-used acronym for the Department of Social Security, which has been superseded by the Department for Work and Pensions.) In an investigation carried out last year, the National Housing Federation and Shelter found that one in 10 letting agents refused to let to tenants who relied upon benefits. The BBC found the policy was enforced even if tenants could afford the rent. Almost 900,000 people in England receive housing benefit to help pay their rent. According to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government around half of landlords would not be willing to let to them.
- Clarion Housing Group, the country's largest housing association has revealed that fire safety work has cost it around £20 million in 2018/19. The figures were given in a presentation by Dan Hollas, project director for fire safety at Clarion, at a conference organised by the Chartered Institute of Housing. They include around £12.8m on passive fire protection including door installations, compartmentation work and fire-stopping work, and almost £4.5m on active fire protection like the installation of alarm systems.

L&Q set to build 20,000 new homes in the North West

Giant social landlord L&Q has announced ambitious plans to invest £4bn to create 20,000 new homes and neighbourhoods in the North West of England through the takeover of Manchester based Trafford Housing Trust.

L&Q sees THT as a gateway to the North West and a key to delivering on its plans to build 100,000 new homes over the next 10 years to tackle the country's under-supply of housing. The Government has a target of building 300,000 new homes a year, well above the current delivery of 180,000 per annum.

L&Q and Trafford Housing Trust (with 90,000 and 9,000 homes respectively) announced in early April they were in talks for THT to become a wholly-owned subsidiary of L&Q. The deal is due to complete in June 2019, subject to due diligence, customer consultation and the development of a five-year business plan.

The acquisition of THT will build on an existing joint venture partnership that has already seen 679 housing starts with a further 1,493 in the pipeline since it was launched in April 2017. The new agreement will unlock £4 billion of investment in the North West by combining the capabilities and resources of the two HAs. At least half of the 20,000 new homes will be affordable.

MAJOR REINVESTMENT PLANS

Around £2 million will be put aside to improve the standard of THT's existing homes, as they come up for re-let, in-line with L&Q's Home Standard. This includes modernising, re-painting and fitting carpets. This is part of L&Q's £225 million annual investment in existing homes.

L&Q sees THT as a gateway to the North West and a key to delivering on its plans to build 100,000 new homes over the next 10 years to tackle the country's under-supply of housing

There will be savings by removing duplication and increasing efficiencies, but the HAs say the acquisition is focused on investment and growth and there will not be any compulsory redundancies as a direct result of the acquisition.

Commenting on the announcement, L&Q Group Chief Executive David Montague said: "L&Q has an ambitious plan to build 100,000 quality new homes over the next 10 years to tackle the national housing crisis. We are excited by the opportunity to invest in the North West with a partner that shares our social purpose, values and ambition, has excellent local knowledge and a strong reputation for innovation and delivery."

Larry Gold, Acting Chief Executive of THT, added: "This is a unique creation that will be built on true partnership and the strength of our vision, and the people who will deliver it. As part of L&Q, we'll create significant social impact in the North West at scale and pace and strive to find solutions to the national housing crisis. We will deliver an extensive programme of new development and regeneration projects, as well as improving homes and services for our existing customers."

Fixed-term tenancies have had their day

A growing number of housing associations are scrapping their use of fixed term tenancies in a rejection of the policy, first brought in by the Coalition Government as David Cameron sought to change the role and purpose of social housing.

Giant social landlord L&Q was the first HA to announce they were dropping this form of tenancy, designed to limit tenancies to five or ten years. Tenants' circumstances were then to be reviewed to assess whether they still needed assistance with their housing.

L&Q had also announced it was converting all existing fixed term tenancies to periodic or lifetime assured tenancies. They have since been followed by other giants of the HA sector, Peabody and Sanctuary. Others like Optivo and the Thirteen Group are following suit, while many others have



announced they are formally undertaking reviews.

The chief objection to their use was that no matter how much landlords sought to reassure their tenants, the fixed term nature of the tenancy made their homes feel temporary and devoid of security, so they could not put down roots leaving them unsettled.

Harrogate to pilot changes to Universal Credit

Amber Rudd has revealed the Yorkshire town of Harrogate will be the first area where existing welfare benefit claimants will be transferred onto Universal Credit, after telling Parliament she is committed to making the system fairer.

This will involve piloting a managed migration of the flagship welfare reform system from July, while trialling changes in how it works. Work and Pensions Secretary Ms Rudd made the announcement when appearing before a Commons select committee. It is one of various measures being introduced to make the benefit system more acceptable to MPs, campaigners and claimants.

She said: "Obviously there's been a lot of interest in what progress we're making with our managed migration pilot and we have decided to go ahead and do that in Harrogate. We've chosen them because they've had Universal Credit for three years, they're an experienced Jobcentre, and they're an area with both urban and rural claimants."

Around 3,000 people registered at Harrogate Jobcentre are currently claiming legacy benefits. They will be the first of three million to switch over to Universal Credit by the end of 2023. Currently the combined benefit has only been paid to new benefit claimants, so the Harrogate pilot represents a real test of UC and it will be under intensive scrutiny.

COMPENSATION DESERVED

In the latest of measures taken, DWP has awarded £39 million to Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland for an independent 'Help to Claim' service. People using the service can get advice on anything to do with applying for the benefit, including gathering the required evidence, filling in the application or preparing for their first Jobcentre appointment.

Meanwhile a Conservative thinktank has recommended Universal Credit claimants should be compensated if their benefits are paid late or promised training and skills courses are not delivered.

Bright Blue said it was unfair that claimants were sanctioned (had their benefits docked) if they failed to look for work or missed appointments, but Jobcentre officials faced no penalty if their errors left claimants in hardship.

It also called for financial rewards for claimants who put "maximum effort" into their job search but were unable to find work. This could be a cash supplement built into benefits and a biannual £1,000 cash prize.

All new Universal Credit claimants should receive a one-off upfront "helping hand" payment amounting to a quarter of the estimated first month's benefit to help with the five-week



minimum waiting time for the first payment.

The thinktank said the long waiting time for initial payments was "difficult and distressing" for most claimants, and making non-repayable financial support available would soften the impact and generate goodwill.

Bright Blue said it was broadly supportive of the online benefit system and said its research showed most people were adapting. But it said older claimants and those with mental and physical health problems often struggled with Universal Credit – particularly with the initial 35-day wait for payment – and its complexity and harshness was dissipating public confidence.

NEGATIVE IMPACT

The Chartered Institute of Housing is among a host of organisations calling for the cap on benefits to be relaxed. Its deputy chief executive, Gavin Smart, said Universal Credit and the benefit cap had increased poverty and hardship among the poorest households in the country. He said changes in its rules and how it is implemented needed to be made.

The Government's justification for the cap was that it would encourage more people into work; restore "fairness" to the benefit system, by ensuring a non-working family does not receive more in benefits than a working family gets from going to work; and make financial savings.

However, he said the select committee's report showed that 82 per cent of those hit by the benefit cap are people who by the DWP's own terms are unable to work for the time being, including single mothers of small children and those who are unwell.

He said the CIH agreed with the Committee's conclusion that the claim of "fairness" does not hold, because it fails to take account of benefits received by working families (such as child benefit), so that those in work are already better off even without the cap. Further, the Committee's evidence shows that the cap is largely failing in its stated objective of getting people back into work with less than one in 20 households affected by it doing so.

News in brief

- **Brentwood Borough Council** in Essex has signed a £1 billion Joint Venture partnership for up to 30 years with construction company **Morgan Sindall** to deliver new housing, commercial space and leisure facilities across the borough. The contract is the largest that Brentwood Council has entered into and the fourth long-term deal of this kind signed by Morgan Sindall. The council will now act as a central purchasing body through which other local authorities in Essex may procure similar partnerships with Morgan Sindall Investments. The company has struck similar deals with Slough Council, Bournemouth Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council.
- A north London council is introducing a borough-wide licensing scheme for houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). **Haringey Council's** cabinet approved a scheme under which landlords renting a property to three or more people in two or more households will have to obtain a licence from the council at an early-bird cost of £500. A smaller selective licensing scheme for non-HMOs for some parts of the borough was also approved. The council said the scheme will allow it to know who manages and owns HMOs in the borough and that the homes meet legal standards. Emine Ibrahim, cabinet member of housing and estate renewal at Haringey Council, said: "Many residents live in HMOs across Haringey, and the council is committed to doing what it can to ensure that every resident has access to good-quality housing. This additional HMO licensing scheme will help ensure all HMOs in our borough are safe, well maintained and managed effectively."
- According to research from Rentokil Property Care, over two fifths (44 per cent) of rented properties in the UK have no extractor fan in the bathroom, and in a further 31 per cent the bathroom had no window either. More than a third (35 per cent) of rented properties did not have enough natural light in them and 34 per cent did not have reliable central heating. Up to 5.8 million renters have experienced damp and condensation issues, while it takes a landlord almost three months (84 days) to help rectify such issues. The research also indicates that up to 2 million renters have developed an illness as a result of their living conditions while an average family of four can produce up to 24 pints (14 litres) of water vapour in just 24 hours.

News in brief



- Figures released by the Ministry of Housing show that local authorities in England sold 2,645 dwellings under the right to buy scheme from October to December 2018, an increase of 9.4 per cent on the previous quarter. In the same quarter, only 1,038 replacement dwellings were started on site or acquired, which is 32 per cent lower than the number of dwellings started or acquired in the same quarter of 2017/18. Since the reinvigoration of right to buy in April 2012, 75,618 council homes have been sold, while just 21,890 homes have been started or acquired to replace them. In October last year, CIH produced analysis showing that RTB discounts had climbed to £1 billion a year, costing local authorities £300 million a year. According to CIH's calculations, reducing discounts by just a third could free up enough funds to deliver an extra 12,000 homes a year.
- Ministers have been strongly criticised for releasing a report on the problems faced by **Universal Credit claimants**, some 18 months after the report was completed. It revealed that tax credit claimants experienced "real financial problems" after they signed on to UC. Over half of claimants reported the routine six-week wait for a first payment took them by surprise, and nearly half of those who were expecting a delay underestimated by a third how long the wait would be. Half of those surveyed did not have sufficient savings to tide them over the initial six weeks. A few claimants endured "considerable stress" after payment delays meant they had to wait up to three months to get their money. Overall, 25 per cent said they were having real financial problems and falling behind with many bills and commitments.

Regulator to undertake more in depth assessments of HAs

In a shake up to how it assesses and oversees the work of housing associations, the Regulator of Social Housing is to carry out more frequent in depth assessments for larger and more complex HAs.

Updating its Regulating the Standards document, the regulator says it will carry out IDAs on the largest and/or most complex housing providers every two years, up from the current practice of every three or four years.

The new regime will come into force from April, although most HAs can still expect an IDA on the same timetable as now. The regulator will also conduct an update meeting for each landlord in the year it is not receiving an IDA. It will also issue an interim regulatory judgement if a HA goes through a significant constitutional change or group restructure.

The regulator introduced IDAs in 2015, when they replaced annual viability reviews for registered providers with more than 1,000 homes. They were initially thought to be more like the Audit Commission's inspections, which ceased eight years ago, but in reality IDAs have not focussed on the quality of homes or on services to tenants.

Also in the new document is a stronger requirement that HA boards have greater ownership of stress-testing exercises, with more focus on "severe but plausible scenarios". This is being seen as a reference to the type of financial shocks caused by Brexit and other stock market disturbances.



Fiona MacGregor, Chief Executive of the regulator, said: "As part of our commitment to take a proportionate, risk-based regulatory approach, we are making changes to our planned regulatory engagement with larger providers and those that have more risk exposure. This will allow us to seek the frequency of assurance that organisations are effectively managing their changing risk profiles and keeping pace with the fast-moving operating environment.

"We will also ask for evidence of well-developed and tested strategies that boards and senior teams of all registered providers have in place to be able to respond promptly and recover from potential scenarios such as a housing market downturn."

Two Welsh HAs get extra scrutiny

The Welsh Government has increased its scrutiny of two social landlords amid concerns over their governance and financial viability. One of the housing associations is in the process of merging with another landlord, but the extra regulation is not expected to prevent this from proceeding.

Mid-Wales HA which owns about 1,500 homes and Cardiff YMCA which provides hostel accommodation to about 120 homeless people, both require "increased regulatory oversight". Neither of their published judgements provide reasons for the gradings.

However, the judgement for Mid-Wales HA says it requires added oversight to meet five of the regulator's performance standards, including those relating to effective board and executive management and demonstrating compliance.

Mid Wales HA is set to merge with 2,272-home landlord Tai Ceredigion, which has earned the

highest grading of 'standard' for governance and viability. Peter Swanson, Chair of Mid-Wales, said: "We welcome the additional support that such increased regulatory oversight brings. This is an enhanced model of co-regulation and is to be expected given the challenging and exciting programme currently being undertaken by the association."

Cardiff YMCA faces extra scrutiny on five performance standards including effective board and executive management, effective tenant involvement and delivering value for money.

Andrew Templeton, Chief Executive of Cardiff YMCA, said: "We have worked closely with the regulator throughout this process and would like to reassure our tenants and residents that our services across Cardiff remain unaffected by this judgement. We look forward to consolidating our services and governance arrangements in the coming period."

Chancellor offers £3bn boost for new affordable homes



The Government is making £3bn available to housing associations to fund the building of an extra 30,000 affordable homes, as it struggles to meet its target of 300,000 new homes a year.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond used his Spring Statement to announce the boost via the affordable homes guarantee scheme in the form of Treasury guarantees for HAS to allow them to build.

He also announced a series of schemes to boost housebuilding, including £717m to “unlock up to 37,000 homes” in the Oxford-Cambridge arc, in Cheshire and west London.

Mr Hammond said: “The Government is determined to fix the broken housing market. Building more homes in the right places is critical to unlocking productivity growth and makes housing

more affordable.”

The news was welcomed by many housing bodies including the campaigning group Shelter, but they also called for increased investment in social housing for rent. Campaigners, landlords and developers say that far more homes at low rents are needed, in place of the higher affordable rent homes and shared ownership properties.

Polly Neate, Chief Executive of Shelter, said: “While this is good news, it has to be noted that we can’t deliver social housing on the scale we need on borrowing alone – 3.1m social homes are needed in the next 20 years to tackle the housing crisis at its root and lift thousands of families out of homelessness. We need much more grant funding for social housing in this year’s spending review to get a grip on our ever-growing housing emergency.”

Government confirms five-year rent settlement for social housing sector

The Government has confirmed that social housing rents charged by councils and housing associations can rise by inflation plus one per cent for five years from 2020.

The announcement follows a formal consultation on the new rent standard. It also marks the end of the annual one per cent rent reductions, which have been in place since 2016. There was no provision for raising historically low social rents by higher rates.

The Government has said it “acknowledges the concerns” of tenants about future rent rises. The proposal to allow annual rent increases was rejected by 87 per cent of tenants and tenant groups, who responded to the consultation.

However, Ministers were under huge pressure to

allow social landlords to raise more money for building much needed new low-cost homes, mainly for rent. On the opposite side of the equation, they also wanted to limit increases in the welfare budget.

Housing Minister Kit Malthouse said: “This Government is committed to ensuring social housing remains fit for the future, with homes that tenants can be proud of and shovels in the ground to build even more.

“The new rent deal will ensure that housing associations and councils have the certainty they need to manage, maintain and build more social housing – providing tenants with high-quality homes and helping to restore the dream of homeownership for a new generation.”

News in brief



- Analysis released by the Office for National Statistics shows the **number of single-person households** in the UK is rising sharply and that nearly one in seven people in the UK could be living alone by 2039. The report also revealed that those living alone are more likely to be renting and feel less financially secure than couples without children. The number of people living on their own shot up by 16 per cent between 1997 and 2017, to 7.7 million, said the ONS. It predicted that this could rise to 10.7 million people living alone in 20 years’ time. The study also found people living on their own spend an average 92 per cent of their disposable income, compared with two-adult households who spend 83 per cent. The number of people aged 45 to 64 living alone has increased by 53 per cent in the past 20 years to 2.43 million. The increase was partly due to the large number of children born in the 1960s reaching older age, but is also down to a change in our relationships, with more people in this age group being divorced or single than there were 15 years ago.
- According to the **Joseph Rowntree Foundation**, the benefit freeze between 2016 and 2020 will have affected more than 27 million people and swept 400,000 into poverty. It says if the Government lifted the freeze in April 2019 this would have helped almost all UK families with children, with working families who have children gaining the most. After three years of the freeze, people in poverty are on average £340 a year worse off than they would have been – equivalent to the average cost of food shopping for a low-income family for around eight weeks. Of the 200,000 people who have already been pulled into poverty in the first three years of the benefits freeze, around half of them children. The JRF estimate the cost of lifting the freeze in 2019 would be £1.4 billion – substantially less than the £2.79 billion cost in 2019/20 of raising the income tax personal allowance and higher rate threshold. More than £5 in every £6 of the money spent on these tax cuts benefits people already in the richest half of the country.

'Rogue' private landlords must stop exploiting students

A Government minister has warned landlords who fail to meet standards for student accommodation that they will face justice under new regulations designed to protect all private rental tenants.

Universities Minister Chris Skidmore hit out at private landlords who do not fulfil their responsibilities, resulting in some students encountering poor conditions such as a lack of heating or hot water. Some figures have suggested that one in five students live in 'squalor' and reported mice, slugs, and other vermin infesting their accommodation.

New regulations have come into force empowering students and renters across the country, giving them the right to take landlords to court where they fail to address serious defects in homes such as mould, damp and safety hazards.

Mr Skidmore said: "Students' time at university should be some of the best days of their lives and yet I have heard appalling stories of students living in terrible conditions, which can affect their studies and even their mental health.

"For too long rogue private landlords have been failing to provide even basic standards of living. Now the time is up for these landlords making a profit from shoddy accommodation."

A survey by the National Union of Students and UniPol found that in 2018, 40 per cent of UK students who rented privately lived with damp and mould on their walls. It also found that over a third of students said poor living conditions made them feel anxious or depressed (36 per cent).

To make sure that students receive adequate accommodation when renting privately, Unipol and Universities UK have created codes to set standards for practice and conduct, which landlords can sign up to, to make sure standards are met.

The Universities Minister is calling on all private landlords renting properties to students to sign up to these codes to help to ensure they act responsibly, meet standards of practice and have a clear complaints process.

Mr Skidmore is also encouraging universities to consider the social value of contracting out services, such as accommodation, to help make sure the wider community benefits from these decisions. He is working with the University of Northampton to look at ways in which universities can ensure they are embedding social values in their procurement practices.

Right to Buy homes re-sold since 2000 made owners £6.4bn



In one of the widest ranging investigations into the Right to Buy policy, the BBC has found former council tenants who bought and then re-sold their homes have made a collective profit of £6.4 billion since 2000.

BBC's Shared Data Unit obtained and analysed data from HM Land Registry, the Registers of Scotland and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Data for 92,000 sales was published in Freedom of Information responses.

In one example they found, a former Solihull council tenant bought their home under the Right to Buy for £8,000 and sold it on for £285,000 just nine days later in July 2013, making a massive profit of £277,000. The Solihull resident was among 140 former tenants who bought and resold their homes within one month, making a £3m collective profit.

Recently the Government has attempted to extend the statutory Right to Buy policy to housing associations. A pilot scheme has begun in the Midlands in which HAs voluntarily signed up to participate in a scheme to sell homes to their tenants, with the Government reimbursing the cost of the tenants' discount to the HAs. This allows the HAs to replace the sold properties, either with a newly built property or by buying on the open market.

The £200m fund is expected to pay for approximately 3,000 sales through the scheme in which 45 HAs are taking part. The Home Group made their first sale at the end of March and has pledged to work with local authorities towards replacing every home sold through the Right to Buy pilot with two newly constructed homes.

PROFIT MARGINS

Referring to the BBC report, the Chartered Institute of Housing said it was "shocking to see the extent of

the profit margin". The CIH has been calling for the scheme to be suspended in England, following its abolition in Scotland in 2016 and in Wales at the beginning of this year.

Tenants qualify for a discount to buy their home and this increases according to the length of their council tenancy. However, when RTB properties are re-sold within five years of their original purchase, a proportion of the discount has to be repaid. This would have eaten into the profits made by the cases reported on in the investigation

The scheme has been dividing opinion since its introduction back in 1980. It has seen 2.6 million council homes sold to the former tenants, at discounts of up to 70 per cent of the open market value although these are also subject to caps of £82,800 across England and £110,500 in London.

Housing Minister Kit Malthouse said the policy had helped people "achieve their dream of home ownership". But Polly Neate, chief executive of Shelter, said the scheme had "stored up serious trouble for the future as we're still building far fewer homes than we're selling off".

A total of 2,645 homes were sold under Right to Buy in the three months up to and including December, which was down 20 per cent on the 3,320 homes sold under the scheme across the same period in 2017.

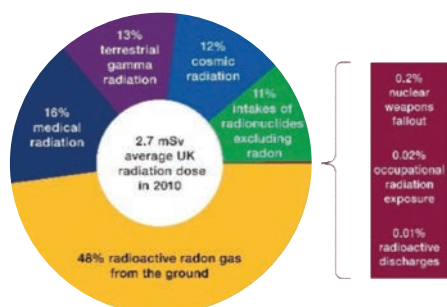
The pilot scheme which is extending the scheme to HA tenants in the Midlands has attracted controversy due to the shortage of affordable housing for rent. The National Housing Federation is working with participating HAs and civil servants to develop "safeguards to stop the loss of social housing" by ensuring a new affordable home is built for every property that is sold. However, a decision on the next steps for this policy and whether it is rolled-out to all HAs, is not expected to be made before 2020.

Radon: What is it? What is my responsibility? How can PHE help?

PHE has decades of experience and expertise in delivering radon programmes. Our measurement service is underpinned by our scientific research. We advise about the risk of harm from radon. We advise you how to check your property portfolio and what to do when action needs to be taken.

WHAT IS RADON?

Radon is a radioactive gas. You can't see, smell or taste it. It is formed by the radioactive decay of the small amounts of uranium that occur naturally in all rocks and soils. Radon accounts for half of the average UK radiation dose.



PICTURED ABOVE

Breakdown of the average UK radiation dose in 2010 by source of exposure

WHAT IS THE RISK TO HEALTH FROM RADON?

Radon produces radioactive particles in the air we breathe. These particles become trapped in our airways and emit radiation that damages the inside of our lungs. This damage increases the risk of lung cancer. The risk from radon is increased if you are a current or ex-smoker.

WHAT IS THE LANDLORD'S RESPONSIBILITY?

Under the 2004 Housing Act landlords have a duty of care to provide a safe home. Radon is identified as a potential hazard in dwellings.

WHAT IS THE EMPLOYER'S RESPONSIBILITY?

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, employers have a responsibility to ensure the Health and Safety of employees and others who have access to the work environment.

Radon should be included in the risk assessment under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

HOW CAN PHE HELP?

We recommend a three-stage process:

1. CHECK: ARE ANY OF YOUR BUILDINGS IN A RADON AFFECTED AREA?

Affected Areas are parts of the UK where the potential for high radon levels is greatest. The radon atlas gives the worst-case radon potential within a 1km grid square and can be viewed for free on our website www.ukradon.org.

We also offer a search service for large property portfolios. A postcode list assessment is more specific, giving the radon potential for properties sharing a given postcode.

2. MEASURE: ALL OCCUPIED PROPERTIES IN AN AFFECTED AREA SHOULD BE TESTED

PHE is a validated laboratory and can carry out your radon testing programme.

3. ACT: THE RADON LEVELS SHOULD BE REDUCED IF THE RESULT IS AT OR ABOVE 200 Bq m⁻³ FOR HOMES (ACTION LEVEL) OR OVER 300 Bq m⁻³ FOR WORKPLACES (IONISING RADIATIONS REGULATIONS 2017).

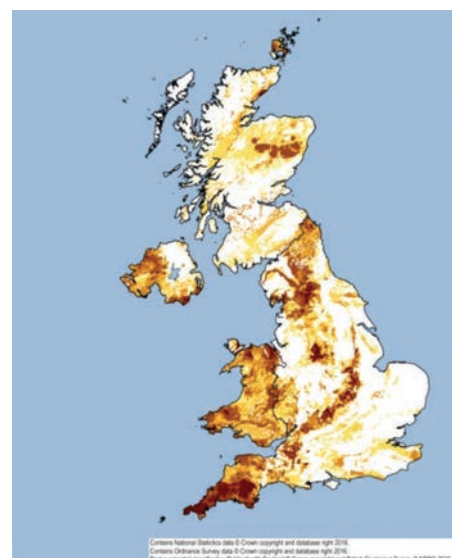
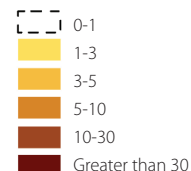
Various options are available depending on the result and construction of the property.

PHE radon group will exhibit at:

- Safety & Health Expo, London 18-20 June. Stand SH3020
- Contamination Expo, Birmingham 11-12 September. Stand J18
- Health & Safety North, Manchester 8-9 October. Stand F20.

PICTURED BELOW

Percentage of homes at or above the Action Level



Please come and talk to us if you are attending these events. For general radon information visit our website or contact us by email for more information about our services.

radon@phe.gov.uk
www.ukradon.org



New technologies inspire optimism on energy use

Patrick Mooney explores why new technologies are inspiring him to be more optimistic about our use of energy

The challenges posed by global warming in terms of how can we reduce carbon emissions, safeguard our health and pass on a better planet earth to future generations, are so huge they can easily overwhelm us into believing we as individuals can do next to nothing about it

When you add in the financial pressures still reverberating from the banking crisis of ten years ago and the uncertainty caused by Brexit, it is perhaps easy to understand why so many of us are struggling to engage with the 'Green' agenda.

We know we should be doing more to cut down on waste and make better use of resources, but we put off doing anything significant or major to another day.

CHANGING OUR HABITS ISN'T EASY

I am as guilty as the next person at failing to consider my impact on the planet every day, or even every week or month. But every now and then, something catches my attention and sparks me into action.

A huge volume of emails arrive in my postbox at work each day, many of them are marketing a variety of products (which I will never even think of using), some of which promise to change my life FOREVER! The other day one such email arrived and it really caught my eye.

It was for a low-energy scheme in the south of England, which will provide 'cheap' electric power for the council's entire vehicle fleet, as well as the city's taxis and provide heating for up to 300 homes. The city in question wants to become zero carbon to improve its residents' health and it has teamed up with a world famous university to deliver on its ambitions.

Given its grand promises, I decided to inquire further. Particularly as the email's arrival coincided with me looking at a Government statistics bulletin on the energy performance of new buildings in 2018.

GROUNDS FOR OPTIMISM

There is encouragement of sorts in that our newly built houses are emitting far less carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than our existing homes (1.68 tonnes a year, as opposed to 4.78 tonnes), but these are still adding to an over-supply of carbon dioxide already up there.

But the really impressive statistics come when looking at the average energy consumption figures

and costs when comparing new versus old.

Some 84 per cent of new homes attained the top two energy efficiency ratings of A and B, compared to just three per cent of existing homes. The comparison of environmental impact ratings (based on carbon emissions) are even more stark – with 88 per cent of new dwellings scoring the best ratings of A and B, against just over four per cent of existing residential properties.

IMPRESSIVE SAVINGS

New houses are costing us on average £294 a year on heating, £93 a year on hot water and £72 on lighting. Meanwhile our existing houses cost us £789 a year to heat, £136 for hot water and £89 to light. You also need to factor in that new houses are on average ten per cent bigger than our existing ones (at 112 square metres compared to 101) and the annual savings (of £555) speak for themselves!

For flats the annual saving on energy costs is £247, when comparing newly built to the average existing properties, which is still pretty impressive and worth having in this age of higher fuel bills.

Part of the impressive improvement in these costs comes from newer construction methods and materials, better insulation, more use of double and triple glazing, etc, but we are also using more fuel-efficient heating systems.

Our modern boilers are much better at converting raw energy fuel into heating and hot water for our homes, although the days of gas fired boilers are limited and will need to be phased out.

HOW WE CAN DE-CARBONISE

A growing contribution is now being made by ground source and air source heat pumps. These harness 'natural energy' from the earth, water and air all around us to deliver cleaner energy into our homes. As technology improves and more heat pumps are being installed, their cost is coming down and their reach is increasing.

The recently completed Aaben development just south of Manchester city centre in Hulme is a good example of how this new technology is helping to reduce our carbon footprint. The scheme consists of 105 flats for market rent, on a site which was previously used as a cinema and as a bingo hall.

Eight air source heat pumps are located on the building's roof and these power the communal heating system, which in turn provides heat and hot

water to the individual flats, with each tenant charged via a meter for the amount of heat energy they have taken from the network.

THE RETROFIT CHALLENGE

However, it also remains the case that it is easier and cheaper to install new technologies like heat pumps and communal heating systems and networks into new housing developments, than it is to retrofit them. Resolving this is part of the next challenge in reducing our carbon footprint and emissions into the atmosphere.

It is a problem we need to find a solution form if we are to convince the country's army of private landlords to embrace this new technology and invest in their rental stock of housing.

Over in Oxford the plan is for ground source heat pumps and an underground network loop to be combined with smart meters and controls to minimise energy use at high peak and high cost times, and to maximise use at times of lower prices.

Work is expected to start soon on identifying the properties to take part, but the organisers are hoping for a mix of retrofit and new build, with a variety of tenures so both owner occupiers and tenants benefit from the anticipated savings. Ideally clusters of up to 30 homes will be networked, so we are looking at manageable numbers and it means the pilot project will not be restricted to just a single location in the city.

The project's targets are impressive, as they aim to produce heating at prices below those for mains supplied gas boilers, while also delivering a 50 per cent cut in the carbon footprint of traditional heating systems and greatly reducing levels of air pollution.

A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Reading about schemes such as those in Manchester and Oxford give me grounds for optimism that more and more manufacturers and builders in the country are seeing the benefits of adopting Green principles and are working hard at designing practical solutions to one of mankind's biggest and most fundamental challenges in this modern world.

A little while ago these problems seemed to be intractable but human ingenuity is showing we can decarbonise the production of electricity and supply it to our homes in ways that do not threaten our very existence.

The next step, after Brexit is resolved one way or another, is to persuade our national politicians to openly embrace the new technologies and to incentivise builders and landlords to increase the rate at which they convert their business activities and processes into delivering cleaner, more energy efficient homes – new and existing - for us all to live in.

I shall keep a vigilant eye open on my email inbox to learn about the next impressive development in this area and while it appears clear the direction of travel is correct, we would certainly benefit from the pace of change picking up.

More information on the Manchester scheme is available using the link:
library.mitsubishielectric.co.uk/pdf/book/The_Aaben_Leaf_Street_Manchester#page-1

Fire sprinkler systems – Cover your investment

By Martin Taylor, Managing Director with decorative casings specialist, Encasement

Residential fire safety, particularly in multi-storey buildings and tower blocks is a key focus for housing associations and local authorities as the retro-fitting of fire sprinkler systems now an essential part of a multi-million pound investment in fire protection upgrades.

With many HAs and LAs making significant contributions to the cost of this package of improvements, questions regarding 'best value' and 'cost effectiveness' must be considered while ensuring that quality and safety are not compromised.

As sprinkler system pipework needs be surface mounted in flats and communal areas for most retro-fit projects within existing residential blocks, it is important that pipework and sprinkler heads are concealed to provide a more aesthetic finish and avoid tenant complaints, as well as containing the system components and acting as a visible barrier to potential tampering.

THE COVER UP

Versa fire sprinkler boxing is manufactured from preformed 5mm thick, FSC® 'Chain of Custody' certified material and are available in a range of sizes to meet specific project requirements and pipework configurations.

An 8mm thick FSC® option is also available in the range along with Versa FR flame retardant

sprinkler boxing, which also FSC® certified and manufactured from Euroclass B compliant material, which has Declaration of Performance certificate following its testing to the appropriate harmonised European Standard (hEN) technical specification.

The Encasement fire sprinkler boxing system also includes accessories, such as internal and external corners to help create an integrated finish to the sprinkler installation. Also, as they're pre-finished with durable white melamine, there's no painting required on site, which also saves time and cost.

SAVING TIME AND COST

From our experience of working with contractors on countless social housing projects where pipework needs to be concealed, Versa can typically be fitted in less than half the time of site made alternatives.

Potentially the most important advantage is that costs can be reduced, not by 'cutting corners', but by cutting the time spent during the installation without compromising the quality or integrity of the installation.

The focus is rightfully on improving fire safety in high-rise residential buildings, and Versa can make a contribution to that process in terms of effectiveness, ease of installation and



economics by helping conceal sprinkler pipework and 'covering' the significant investment in sprinkler systems.

01733 266 889 www.encasement.co.uk

Too many keys?

What could your team do with all the time they currently spend looking for, chasing after and issuing keys?

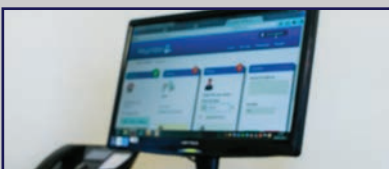
Keyzapp is the smart, affordable way to remove the headaches, and stay in control!

Issue keys in seconds



Tap contactless smart fobs on PC, phone or dedicated kiosk

1-Click compliance



See who has keys right now and their full activity history

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HOUSING 2019 STAND NO E7

Vent-Axia's Lo-Carbon Revive Wins

Vent-Axia is celebrating winning the Innovative Product category at the prestigious EEM Building Communities Awards 2019. Scooping the award for the pioneering Lo-Carbon Revive, an intelligent filter-less fan designed specifically for the social housing sector, the Sussex-based company received the accolade at a glittering awards ceremony on Friday, 15th February 2019. After a rigorous judging process, the company's Lo-Carbon Revive was selected as the winner. Following extensive R&D Vent-Axia's popular Lo-Carbon Revive has a range of new and improved design features that ensure it continues to meet the specific needs of Social Housing.



0844 856 0590 www.vent-axia.com/social-housing

Easing delivery and maintenance

A new poll maintains that 75 per cent of people believe all new homes should be built to be accessible to all ages and abilities. The poll follows recent surveys, which further identified that an accessible WC and shower were rated the most important accessibility features by 90 per cent of respondents, and that a growing number of homes are multi-generational. Closomat, one of Britain's leading manufacturers of accessible toilet solutions, is enabling private and social housing providers to meet the requirement easily and cost-effectively. It has developed a combination of packages that facilitate provision of enabling toileting equipment from design to occupation and beyond.



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Hadley Group to bring steel framing solutions to Housing 2019

Hadley Group will be showcasing its high-performance light gauge steel framing solutions for low rise residential and social housing on Stand F41 at Housing 2019, taking place on 25-27 June at Manchester Central. The world leader in advanced cold rolled steel technology will be exhibiting at the highly anticipated housing event of the year, offering in-depth technical advice and practical product insight into how their light gauge steel framing solutions can benefit the likes of housing associations, local authorities, housebuilders and developers. Visitors to stand F41 will be able to learn more about Hadley Group's steel framing housing solution which offers a fast track and lightweight system, suitable for stick built or pre-panelised construction. Pre-panelised, stand-alone frame structures are a lighter and easier to erect alternative to steel or concrete primary frames, which in turn enables faster build turnaround times. The components are designed, detailed and manufactured at the company's advanced production facility then delivered to site, ideal for housing schemes with high volume requirements and for projects where space is limited on site. Looking forward to the event, Chris Holleron, Group Product Manager – Housing, said: "By visiting our stand, visitors will be able to discover the benefits of light gauge steel framing solutions in housing and how we can support them with their next project."

0121 555 1300 www.hadleygroup.com



HOUSING 2019 STAND NO F41

Stelrad at Housing 2019

Stelrad Radiators is at Housing 2019 exhibiting its wide range of radiators that make it the ideal 'one stop shop' for all things radiators at the show.



As well as its leading range of Low Surface Temperature radiators, you can touch and feel its market leading Compact and Elite designs, and radiators from its leading Vita and Softline ranges.

Take a pre-show look on the Stelrad website and pop along to the stand at G50 to see it all for yourself.

0844 543 6200 www.stelrad.com

HOUSING 2019 STAND NO G50

Air Source Heat Pumps at Housing 2019

Panasonic is showcasing its range of renewable air source heat pumps during Housing 2019. Please visit stand F11 at the show.



The energy efficient Panasonic Aquarea range of air source heat pumps scores highly on energy efficiency, design and comfort with features that deliver benefits for both residential and commercial customers.

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www.aircon.panasonic.co.uk

HOUSING 2019 STAND NO F11

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Visit us on Stand E14 at Housing 2019, 25–27 June, Manchester Central

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Meet the housing sector's most influential stakeholders

Housing 2019, the Chartered Institute of Housing's annual event and Europe's largest housing festival, takes place from 25 - 27 June at Manchester Central

Visitor registration for Housing 2019 is open and the shows organisers cannot wait to see you in Manchester in June. With 450+ speakers, 400+ key exhibitors, 12 streams of innovative content and a footfall of over 12,000 decision makers across three days, it is the biggest meeting place for the whole of the housing sector. Ranked as a global leader for the delegate experience, Housing has taken place for 70 years in the UK and provides a platform for key stakeholders to come together to discuss, debate, partner, learn and improve the lives of the people we house.

In 2019, alongside the Ministerial address, keynotes and masterclasses, the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) will focus on red hot topics including affordability, business transformation, leadership, technology, offsite construction, placemaking, fire safety, finance, politics and, of course, housing management, welfare reform and homelessness.

Housing 2019 is set to be the biggest and best of the Housing editions as of yet with new, exciting additions such as:

- The MMC stage
- Drag queen karaoke at the alternative street party
- Homelessness hackathon



As well as the new additions, all visitors' favourites are back in 2019 too, including:

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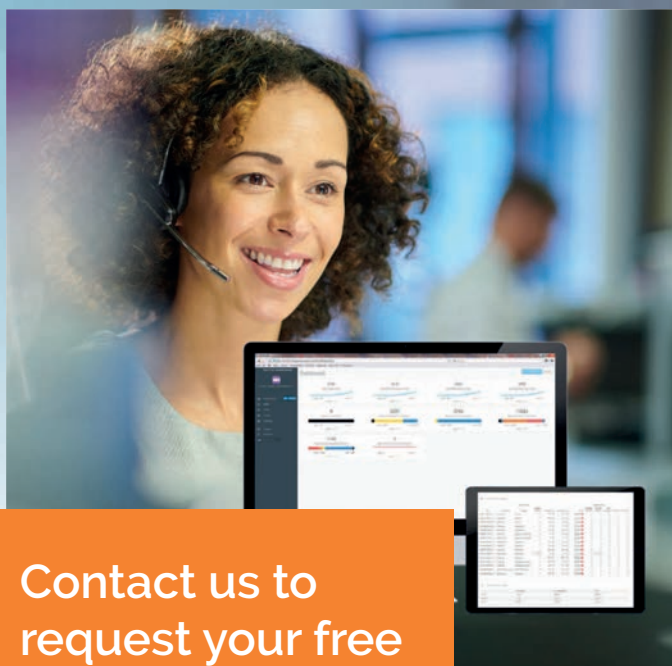


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Fit for purpose

Ian Napier of Switchchee explains why the Fitness for Human Habitation Bill is important for those managing private and social housing



On 20 December last year – the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 received royal assent and it became law on 20 March.

The bill was originally introduced by the MP Karen Buck although it received widespread bipartisan support from both politicians as well as high-profile members of the housing industry. It was first proposed as a Private Members' bill but after receiving the backing of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, it successfully passed through parliament. Naturally, as with all high-profile bills, there has been plenty of coverage in the national news press – with titles like 'Time is up' for rogue landlords' and 'You can now sue your landlord over damp and mould' – but what is the truth behind all this coverage?

IS THE BILL REALLY THAT BIG OF A DEAL?

The short answer is yes. The Homes Act applies to all new tenancies (including secure, assured and AST agreements) starting on or after 20 March 2019. It also applies to all tenancies that began as a fixed term before 20 March 2019 but become a periodic tenancy after the commencement date. The Act will apply to nearly all tenancies from 20 March 2020. The basic idea of the bill is to ensure that properties start and remain fit for human habitation throughout a tenancy. In a change from previous legislation, it now gives tenants a direct approach to redress poor conditions in their properties. For social landlords this means tenants have now been given the power to go through the courts to compel repairs to be made. For private landlords the bill effectively takes the power of the local authority environmental health teams and puts it squarely into the hands of renters.

The act uses the 29 hazards currently listed in the Housing Health and Safety Rating system (HHSRS) to define 'fit for human habitation'. Originally created in 2006 to help local authorities enforce conditions in the private rental sector, now all landlords and managing agents need to be aware of and familiar with

these conditions. Each hazard category is assessed independently from each other and denoted a Category 1 or Category 2 ranking. Category 1 is deemed a serious and immediate risk to a person's health and safety. Category 2 is less serious and urgent (but none-the-less may be considered a hazard).

The most relevant category areas that could be cause for alarm for most landlords are the following:

- Is your property free from damp and mould? Can you prove it?
- Is there adequate natural light in the property?
- Is the property adequately ventilated?
- Does the property have an adequate supply of hot and cold water?
- Is the property too hot or too cold?

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

Landlords are likely to see an increase in disrepair claims for already recognised issues such as damp and mould: the process of registering a claim has been made easier, and the level of proof required lowered. Furthermore, the increased scope of qualifying factors means both an expanded duty of care and also a likely additional rise in claims. Proactive solicitors may encourage an increased density of claims – and with tenants no longer needing to engage the Environmental Health Department there is the potential for development-wide claims of unfit properties.

The bill amends the Landlord and Tenant Act (LTA) 1985 so that any qualifying tenancy (excluding shared ownership) implicitly contains a covenant that the dwelling must be fit for human habitation at its commencement and will remain so for its lifetime. This obligation to ensure that a dwelling is, and stays fit, for human habitation extends to all parts of the building to which the landlord has an interest. This includes the common areas and the retained parts – for example, the external wall, the roof, the communal bin store area, the



Landlords are likely to see an increase in disrepair claims for already recognised issues such as damp and mould

entrance hall as well as the stairwells of blocks of flats.

If a landlord or managing agent fails to carry out the appropriate remedial works to ensure that the property is made fit for human habitation within a reasonable time of notification, they can be ordered by a court to pay damages. The tenant also has the option to seek an injunction from the court requiring the landlord to make the property fit for human habitation, whatever the cost of those works. For larger landlords this will mean the existing Housing Disrepair Protocol will need to be amended to include the various HHRS hazards and, like with Disrepair claims, general damages will be assessed by the diminution of rent principle.

The good news is that as with repairing obligations in Section 11 of the LTA 1985 landlords will have a reasonable period of time once notified that the property is unfit for human habitation to put right the defects, after which the tenant then has the option to sue directly for damages. The LTA 1985 implies a promise on the part of a tenant to give access to inspect the property, to prepare a report and to then carry out any remedial works. If a surveyor decides that the fault lies with the tenant (i.e. because of lifestyle), then landlords will not be responsible. The legislation states that landlords are not responsible for unfitness caused by the tenant's failure to behave in a tenant-like manner.

The two main points that the majority of landlords will need to focus on are their time to repair and their ability to monitor the on-going condition of their property portfolio. Taking too long to repair a property now has significantly more severe consequences. In the next year or two, we are likely to see some organisations who have extensive repairs backlogs strain under the weight of litigation. On-going monitoring poses a significantly greater issue for most landlords. Ensuring shared spaces don't develop cases of mould, ensuring wall insulation hasn't failed and that you have supporting data to prove your works have been carried out successfully will be the challenge for most organisations. So, the question is what do you and your organisation need to do differently to remain on the right side of the law?

Ian Napier is chief commercial officer at Switchchee

Intratone keeps Stockport housing residents updated

Intratone, one of Europe's largest access control specialists, has installed 25 of its digital noticeboards in the communal areas of a number of tower blocks in Stockport Housing Group's property portfolio supporting the group's aim of enhancing digital communications.

Stockport Homes is an Arm's Length Management Organisation that is responsible for managing housing stock comprising more than 11,500 homes on behalf of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council.

Stockport Homes wanted to be able to communicate important messages to residents such as maintenance works, lifts being out of operation and fire safety information in a quick and simple way via a cloud-based system that can be accessed remotely, 24/7.

The asset managers, compliance managers and the communications team can upload PDFs, spreadsheets, word documents or design their own messages, and can manage individual boards or whole groups at a time through Intratone's cloud-based management portal. The noticeboards use GSM technology so wireless networks are not required, and they are quick and easy to install. The digital noticeboards are 15in diameter; IP65 rated and made of 10mm thick glass so they are vandal resistant.

0207 0926 613 www.intratone.uk.com



"Door Unlock Invitation" update from KMS

KMS have recognised that often the ability to give access through a housing block communal door on a temporary but not regular basis is required. In the past the solution has been to provide temporary fobs, but this can take time and relies on the contractor or guest to return the fob after use. Now SimpleKey Web has been updated to allow a "Door Unlock Invitation". This function allows the system administrator to send an invitation via an email to a contractor or visitor, so that when they arrive at the housing block it enables them to gain access through the communal door(s) by following the simple email instructions. Come and find out how at Housing 2019, Manchester Central, Stand C1.

01494 531099 www.kms.uk.net



Housing Management & Maintenance

The Housing Management & Maintenance (HMM) website is an online provider of past and present news items dedicated to keep professionals within this sector updated with a wide range of topics including legislation, projects, products and more.

housingmmonline.co.uk is a one-stop source for all the latest press releases providing any visitor with access to information about products and services that they may require. From the website, you can find links to digital issues that have live links to advertisers' sites, as well as email alerts to keep you as informed as possible.

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Housing maintenance procurement – a menu of options

AM Bid's Andrew Morrison examines procurement and bidding trends including the outsourced service versus in-house delivery debate, in order to help housing clients, buyers and bidders pause and reflect about what will work best for them



As we begin a new financial year (2019/20) that will take us into a new decade, it's a good time to look both back and ahead at social housing maintenance in the UK.

OUTSOURCED VERSUS IN-HOUSE DELIVERY

This can feel a bit like the fashion world where styles come in, go out and then come back again some time later, perhaps with slight modifications. Go back 10 to 15 years and outsourced delivery seemed to be the way to go. However, the financial crash in 2008-10 saw some large contractor names go to the wall, such as Connaught, Kinetics and Rok.

These failures meant that social housing clients had to source alternative contractors in very short timescales. This experience, along with the VAT savings being able to be channelled into the service, saw some movement towards bringing maintenance back in-house.

The sector has examples of in-house service delivery working very well, and of it failing to provide the expected improvements. It also has examples of outsourced delivery working very well, especially in partnership working rather than adversarial contracting models. Some organisations choose frameworks which

allow them to select a range of contractors and not be too closely aligned with any single contractor. An options appraisal approach usually works best when selecting which model is right for an organisation.

BREXIT EFFECTS

The 2016 referendum and its aftermath have seen some significant market fluctuations. The value of sterling declined in the international currency markets meaning that the price of imported materials has increased – this alone has caused some construction sector contractors to fail, perhaps due to over-exposure to contracts with no price increase or change control provisions.

We have also seen a reduction in the availability of EU national labour. Taking the uncertain times into account, the banks are becoming less keen to lend to the sector and this has been exacerbated by some significant business failures including Carillion and Interserve.

BID TRENDS

In trying to square the price versus quality value for money conundrum, many buyers have been on a journey of moving from a high emphasis on

quality to a high emphasis on price. Neither approach has fully delivered to their expectations.

Grenfell stands as a salutary lesson of what can happen when value engineering and lack of quality control goes wrong. Too high an emphasis on price can also deter the quality bidders in the sector from participating.

Since people and their homes are involved (rather than transactional commodities), invitations to tender that are more weighted towards quality will generally produce better value for money and client satisfaction. The race to the bottom on price has no winners, only losers all round.

CLIENTS – HOW TO ATTRACT MORE AND BETTER BIDS

There are a number of steps that clients can take to help increase their prospects of attracting quality bidders. These include market engagement, e.g. through meet the buyer days and prior information notices, and providing meaningful information e.g. historic statistics and information on repairs that shares breakdowns of numbers, types and timing of repairs. The more information you can provide, the less the bidders are having to price in risks, which may not happen.

Try to get the bidders in almost as good a position with information as if they were the incumbent. If you want a fair, transparent and inclusive process, why should the client and the incumbent bidder be sitting with all the cards? This brings us to risk sharing – contracts that look to push all of the risks onto the contractor while still expecting a very low price are really in nobody's long-term best interests. Allowing sufficient time in the bid process itself will also result in attracting more bids – too often we see bids being advertised with a four week response timescale which includes Christmas or Easter holidays – actions which will usually ensure that many bidders decline to participate.

CONTRACTORS – HOW TO DIFFERENTIATE YOUR BIDS (NOT JUST BY BEING THE CHEAPEST)

This involves providing a tailored solution to the buyer's needs. Social housing organisations are not all the same and should not be treated as such. For a start,

they work in some different geographies across the UK which brings its own differentiation. Their resident and stock profiles can also be quite diverse.

The extent of resident/tenant involvement can also vary as can the amount of social value and added value that they are looking for. How can you demonstrate innovation, especially by using technology to make your services better, faster, cheaper and safer? Evidence that you have really thought through their needs, e.g. stock needs, tenant needs and community needs, and that you have a bespoke (rather than off the shelf) solution that will work best in partnership with them. Use the clarification question process during the bid window to level the playing field i.e. helping ensure that all bidders have access to as much information as possible to inform the delivery model and, importantly, the pricing.

LOOKING AHEAD

At the macro level, expect to see more consolidation both within social housing and within the contracting worlds. Social housing organisations are continuing to engage in merger activity as the housing regulatory focus on financial viability and governance helps to mitigate against housing organisation failure or poor service delivery. Similarly, the contracting sector is also seeing some consolidation. Notwithstanding this, there is likely to be a continued move away from over-reliance on large contractors who operate on a sub-contracting model.

Government and buyer pressure on ensuring fair payment terms for the supply chain will likely encourage SME contractors to get more involved in bidding directly for contracts rather than being content with low margin work as part of an extended supply chain. And what about the outsourced versus in-house debate? This is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. It is not a one size fits all approach – both models can operate successfully as can a blended model which combines some in-house delivery with some specialist external assistance.

Andrew Morrison is managing director of AM Bid

Obtaining Your Local Area Information

Information on your local area is now easy to obtain and understand thanks to a new tool by CIA Landlord Insurance. The local area statistics calculator provides up to date information on the average property prices and crime rates in your area. The information provided includes a breakdown of the values of different property types and a list of the most common criminal offences. The calculator can find information for any area of Great Britain. This allows you to search for information on your area, neighbouring areas and locations further afield, that you may be looking to relocate to. The calculator can be found on the CIA website and is free to use for all.



01788 818 670 www.cia-landlords.co.uk/local-property-stats

First class knowledge delivers adaptation

A 'first class' adaptation has been achieved for a client with diverse needs by using a contractor with understanding of the objective. As a result, 42 years-old Becky Downie from Exeter says she now feels safe, and has confidence and she is managing to live independently. The achievement is the result of a series of changes to Becky's bathroom, by First Class Independent Living, a division of First Class Builders Ltd, on behalf of Exeter Council. First Class has converted the bathroom into a wetroom, added grab rails, shower screens and, most recently, a Closomat Palma Vita shower (wash dry) toilet tailored to her individual needs (infill panel, plinth and bariatric seat).



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Solutions to help deliver neighbourhoods of the future now

One of the objectives set out in a new white paper on housing for the future can already be achieved, simply by appropriate selection of bathroom fixtures.

Neighbourhoods for the Future 2 calls for high quality housing that can be adapted to meet changing needs efficiently, in days, and deliver a home for life, with built-in adaptability. Explains Minister of State for Care Caroline Dinenage, it's about providing "everyone with the best possible chance to grow old with dignity in their own home".

Says Robin Tuffley, Closomat marketing manager, "That aim is already achievable, at least in the bathroom. The bathroom is the most commonly adapted room. The report highlights, that adaptations are often done out of desperation, rather than as a planned inclusive design strategy, yet there should be a proactive approach so people can continue to look after themselves in their own home.

"Certainly in the bathroom, that is already a reality, just by careful selection of the WC. It is the fixture most commonly in need of adjustment to accommodate changing needs. A shower, or wash dry, toilet delivers improved hygiene for all; as someone's ability to clean themselves reduces, its in-built washing and drying ensures they can still go to the toilet with dignity and independence."



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Architectural copper for the long term

There is more to architectural copper than meets the eye, with an unrivalled lifespan counted in hundreds of years, no maintenance and full recyclability as Graeme Bell of Aurubis explains

Despite its heritage, roofing some of our oldest buildings, continuing developments make copper and its alloys thoroughly modern and sustainable cladding materials for today's urban housing.

Copper's longevity is due to a complex patination process. It ensures extreme durability with no maintenance and resistance to corrosion in virtually any atmospheric conditions. And, unlike some other architectural metals, copper does not suffer from underside corrosion. The empirical evidence of copper's longevity cannot be matched by more recently developed cladding materials. The rate of reduction of a copper roof surface decreases with patination and equates to no more than 5 per cent reduction over 100 years.

WHOLE LIFE BENEFITS

The lifespan of copper roofing and cladding can therefore be regarded conservatively as 200 years, subject to substrate and structure – and this is endorsed by experience. Naturally, this longevity has a significant effect upon comparative whole of life assessments. With copper, it is invariably the supporting substrate or structure which eventually fails, rather than the copper cladding itself. Therefore, the selection of appropriate substrate and build-up are essential.

In addition, copper requires no maintenance or decoration. As a lightweight and flexible covering, structural support demands are reduced, resulting in lower carbon and 'whole of life' costs. Copper is also fully recyclable utilising long-established practices – 97 per cent of copper in construction comes from recycling – and has other impressive sustainability and environmental credentials. And, of course, copper retains a high scrap value at demolition.

SAFE MATERIAL

With a melting point of 1083°C and 'A1 (non-combustible material)' fire classification to EN 13501-1, copper is also suitable for cladding tall buildings, using appropriate constructions. Low thermal movement makes it appropriate for any climate and location, and it is non-toxic and safe to handle, as well as non-brittle and safe to work. Its inherent antimicrobial qualities make it ideal for touch surfaces internally as well.

Copper's unique architectural qualities are defined by its naturally developing patina – which cannot be replicated successfully using other materials with surface coatings. Within a few days of exposure to the atmosphere, a copper surface begins to oxidise, changing from the 'bright' mill finish to a chestnut brown, which gradually darkens over several years to a chocolate brown. Continued weathering can eventually result in the distinctive green or blue patina seen on older roofs.

The patina film provides impressive protection against corrosion and can repair itself if damaged, giving its exceptional longevity. A complex combination of factors determines the nature and speed of development of patina over the years. So, it is not surprising that factory-applied surface treatments are popular to provide straightaway oxidation and patination of copper surfaces to a selected level, particularly for facades.

NATURAL PROCESSES

Some of the processes involved are very similar to those taking place in the environment and utilise copper mineral compounds, not alien chemical actions.



Essentially, they bring forward the environmental changes without taking away the integrity of copper as a natural, living material. They form an integral part of the copper and are not coatings or paint, and on-going changes will continue over time depending on the local environment.

These surface treatments include pre-oxidised copper, where the

thickness of the oxide layer determines the colour lightness or darkness. Then, pre-patination enables designers to determine both the colour and intensity of blue/green patina for each project with 'living' surfaces. Here, as well as a solid patina colour, other intensities can be created revealing some of the dark oxidised background material.

COPPER ALLOYS

Of course, copper alloys have also been used throughout history and bronze and brass – which can also be pre-weathered – remain popular for architectural applications. In addition, a recently developed alloy of copper with aluminium and zinc gives a rich golden through-colour. Its surface retains the golden through-colour and simply loses some of its sheen, as the oxide layer thickens with exposure to the atmosphere to give a protective matt finish. This golden alloy behaves differently to other copper products over time and does not develop a blue/green patina.

Graeme Bell is Nordic Copper sales & marketing manager at Aurubis



Images © Anthony Weller

CASE STUDY

The new Ram Quarter mixed-use development at the heart of the London Borough of Wandsworth is highlighted by its rooftop cladding of green pre-patinated copper, reflecting the site's industrial heritage. It also demonstrates the capabilities of copper cladding for urban housing.

The site was formerly home to the Young's brewery and its regeneration has encompassed the restoration of historic buildings alongside the construction of stunning new-build apartments. The three phases of Ram Quarter will deliver 713 homes, nearly 100,000 sq ft of shops and community and leisure facilities over 8 acres. Greenland Group UK, the developer of Ram Quarter, was keen that the site's material specification should help to reflect the history of the site and deliver high-quality design and long-term durability.

EPR Architects, the appointed architectural practice for the scheme, commented: "The oldest fermenting and brewing vessels within the old brewery were copper. This inspired us to predominantly clad the upper two floors of the tallest residential buildings in Nordic Green Living 1 copper. Adjacent to the historic brewery complex we introduced a playful vertical expression to one of the new buildings – a nod to the industrial vats – raised from the ground with softer rounded corners and vertically-ribbed profiled copper cladding."

The world's most advanced collated screw system just got even better!

Simpson Strong-Tie's Quik Drive auto-feed system is a significantly faster way to install screws. With a multitude of modular fittings and screws for a huge range of purposes, there is a Quik Drive kit to suit just about every application – from drywall installation to mezzanine floor construction. A perfect alternative to traditional nailing and screwing. The ergonomic design allows the installation of screws into walls, floors and ceilings without the need for bending, stretching or crouching. Which means not only can the system operate for several hours at a time – so can you. The Quik Drive system fits onto all leading dry wall drivers with just a click. The patented screw strips are designed to avoid jamming, and unlike many collated screw strips, a partially used one can be saved for reuse later – so it's cost effective too.

Sales Manager, Phil Chambers, explains: "The Quik Drive system has been on my radar for some time, it's not just fast, it's really (really) simple to use. It's great to see the lights go on in peoples mind when they give it a try."

In addition to Phil conducting Quik Drive demonstrations throughout the UK, an all-new catalogue now features additional Quik Drive equipment and collated screws, including some tools that can be used to install construction connectors. For further information or to arrange a test drive, email Phil at pchambers@strongtie.eu

01827 255600 www.strongtie.co.uk



Shelforce – saving Local Authorities money

A leading manufacturer of PVCu windows and doors based in Birmingham is continuing its legacy of saving Local Authorities money on building projects. Shelforce specialises in providing high-quality products to local authority building projects, including social housing, around the country. The company, which is situated on the outskirts of Erdington, is Birmingham City Council's chosen manufacturer of choice and they have a reputation for providing quality products for local authority projects and finishing them on time and within budget. For Local Authorities that want to save money, Shelforce's Eurocell Eurologik profile system not only offers high performance but huge value for money too. The advanced six-chambered system and innovative PVC-U Thermal Inserts work together to lock in heat which maximises thermal performance making the window incredibly energy efficient. This means that a cheaper glass unit can be used, and the window will still achieve an 'A+' energy rating. The slim, six-chambered outer frame costs no more than the standard Eurologik outer frame too, so there is no cost barrier to installing the highest energy efficiency-rated profiles. Sustainability is also a big consideration for Shelforce, and the company uses new profiles made from recycled material from unwanted PVC-U frames thanks to Eurocell's very own recycling plant. Shelforce have also been leading the way in inclusivity when it comes to training and employment opportunities in the glazing industry, with 75 per cent of its workforce disabled.

0121 603 5262 www.shelforce.com



Accommodation benefits from Optima

Profile 22 Optima Flush Tilt & Turn Windows were chosen for a £24 million project to build new accommodation for 735 students at Sheffield Hallam University. Profile 22 Approved Window Contractor Polar Windows has a strong commercial division and works with some of the biggest names in the construction industry. One of Polar's clients, North Midland Construction, appointed it to supply and install the PVCU windows required in a £24 million project to build accommodation for 735 students at Sheffield Hallam University. The sash on the Flush Tilt & Turn Window is neatly positioned inside the frame of the window to create an elegant and sleek 'flush' appearance that means it is a cost-effective alternative to aluminium.



info@profile22.co.uk

CSR in action by The Window Company

The Window Company (Contracts) is embracing the opportunity which that presents to set the very highest standards for all those operating in the window and door sector. First amongst these is the appointment of two ex-service personnel into full time roles at The Window Company (Contracts). Recruited through the MoD and Right Management's Career Transition Partnership (CTP), both have recently left the army. One will be prepping the windows and doors ready for delivery to site, while the other will be out on site working with the company's fitting teams. The company has also been supporting the Basworx Training scheme over recent months.



01245 268120 www.thewinco.co.uk

The new 37.5® Technology Fleeces

These new styles from Snickers Workwear deliver AllroundWork warmth and cooling comfort. Not only will you stay warm with these new 37.5® Technology Fleeces, you'll look and feel cool too. With styles for both professional tradesmen and women, they excel at ventilation and moisture transport to keep you working comfortably wherever you are on site. The 37.5® Technology fabric in the Fleece is a very quick-drying material that captures and releases moisture vapour – like your sweat – for superior coolness and dry working comfort. After all, keeping a balanced work temperature is not just about staying cool and in great shape, it's a matter of your wellbeing and job safety.



www.snickersworkwear.co.uk

Precision Safety and Comfort

Solid Gear continues to modernise PPE footwear with a safety shoe that looks and feels more like a trainer. The new OCEAN safety shoe is ideal for workers who are constantly on the move. The shoe's midsole is made of a poured PU rather than a traditional injected PU to give a more cushioned feel underfoot, while the thick rubber outsole provides a high level of anti-slip protection and durability. With an eye-catching style, the shoe's BOA comfort fastening delivers a better overall fit making it easy to take the shoe on and off. Added to which, the shoe's fibreglass toecap and ballistic midsole combine with the other protection features and anti-static properties to deliver S3 protection.



www.solidgearfootwear.com

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Copper: Nordic Brown Light; Project: Chamberlain Hall, Birmingham
Architects: Glancy Nicholls Architects; Photo: Alastair Carew-Cox

Architectural Copper Surfaces and Alloys

Copper is a constantly evolving, natural and durable material with an indefinite design-life. It is fully recyclable, safe to use, non-combustible and requires no maintenance. Nordic Copper is an impressive portfolio of surfaces and alloys for architecture, including Nordic Brown pre-oxidised copper. The Nordic Blue, Nordic Green and Nordic Turquoise pre-patinated ranges share properties and colours based on the same brochantite mineralogy found in natural patinas. Alongside traditional Nordic Bronze and Nordic Brass alloys, the innovative Nordic Royal retains its rich golden colour over time. An extensive choice of Nordic Décor mechanically applied surface treatments is also available. Nordic Copper offers limitless possibilities for innovative contemporary architectural and interior design. Discover Nordic Copper now.

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g.bell@aurubis.com

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Hambleside Danelaw's outstanding quality Interlocking Plain Tile Dry Verge System is designed to minimise water run-off staining on the verge and gable wall, and is guaranteed for 15 years.



It eliminates the mortar installation and maintenance issues, and takes less time to install. It suits all single lap interlocking plain tiles between 170mm and 200mm batten gauges.

Complies with BS8612 and provides a fixing for the verge tiles for use in the wind zones 1 to 5 in accordance to Table C.1.

01327 701 900 www.hambleside-danelaw.co.uk

Aico 3000 series CO alarm

The Ei3018 mains powered Carbon Monoxide Alarm from Aico brings together the company's very latest technologies into one alarm for exceptional protection. At the heart of the Ei3018 Carbon Monoxide Alarm is Aico's high performance, proven electrochemical Carbon Monoxide sensor which has a ten year life. When in alarm mode, the level of Carbon Monoxide detected is indicated by the flash rate of the red LED on the unit and the sounder incorporated within it. The Ei3018 comes with a number of sophisticated features including AudioLINK data extraction and SmartLINK wireless interconnection & whole system data monitoring capability.

www.aico.co.uk/3000series

STAND ALONE Energy Saving Controls

DANLERS manufacture a range of quality controls for switching a variety of HVAC loads – the switches are wall mounted, hard wired and easy to install. The Heater Boost Switches automatically turns the load off after a selected time period has elapsed. Designed for use with immersion heaters and heated towel rails etc. Versions

are available with different time settings plus options for switching air conditioning loads. The PIR Thermostat Controls combine an adjustable room thermostat with a passive infra-red person detector. If somebody is present in the room, the heating unit is switched on to achieve the selected thermostat temperature. If nobody is present, the room temperature is allowed to fall.

01249 443377 www.danlers.co.uk

Langley pledges support for campaign

Langley Waterproofing Systems Ltd has pledged its support to the 100% Hackitt campaign, an initiative which aims to ensure that all recommendations made in the Hackitt Review of fire safety and building regulations are fully implemented. The 100% Hackitt campaign was launched by Local Authority Building Control (LABC) and the British Board of Agrément (BBA) to bring together key individuals and organisations from across the sector. Dean Wincott, Managing Director of Langley Waterproofing Systems Ltd, commented: "We are strong advocates of the 100% Hackitt initiative and encouraged to see the rapidly growing levels of support it has received from across the industry."

01327 704778 www.langley.co.uk

KYDEX® doors achieve fire test certification

James Latham can now offer four KYDEX® encapsulated door blanks with Exova Warringtonfire Global assessment to FD30. Exclusive to James Latham in the UK and Ireland – and available in 0.76mm, 1.5mm and 2mm thicknesses and 20 on-trend colours – KYDEX® is a highly durable thermoplastic which will not crack or split, offering greatly improved service life. The permitted door cores: Halspan Optima, Prima 44mm; Flamebreak 44mm; Moralt FireSmoke 44mm and FireSound 44mm, 54mm and 59mm are all Latham fire door cores and have been tested to FD30, BS 476 Pt 22. Steven Dennard, Group Door Manager, James Latham explained: "We are particularly delighted with the result of this testing as it utilised three of our products in the same test. As well as KYDEX, which was used for facing and encapsulating the door cores, the test evidence also covers two of Latham's other products, Woodex laminated timber which was used for the door frames, and Medite® Tricoya Extreme, which was used for the door lippings." Steven continued, "These encapsulated doors are suitable for applications in all kinds of sectors and will have particular appeal to our customers in the healthcare, industrial, education, leisure, hotel and retail sectors. "In the instances of wet-rooms, swimming pools and leisure centers for example, the door lipping will often be the first part of the structure to "blow" as moisture gets into the door. Encapsulating the door with KYDEX should ensure that no moisture gets in."

marketing@lathams.co.uk

Fibo wall panels achieve Class 1 Fire Rating

Fibo UK has achieved a Class 1 fire rating on its Grey Concrete, White Tile Silk and Titan bathroom wall panels. The classification relates to BS 467 Part 7: 1987, which looks at the distance and time it takes for flames to spread across a surface. To achieve a Class 1 rating (with Class 4 the worst), the surface must prevent flames from spreading no more than 165mm in 10 minutes. Scott Beattie, Managing Director of Fibo UK, comments: "Our Class 1 fire rated panels are ideal for public sector projects that require a higher performance level, whether that's hospitals, schools or high-rise flats. They're an ideal option for Councils that want extra peace of mind. These options mean Councils can choose a durable, low-maintenance alternative to tiles that's quicker and easier to fit, and provides a proven level of fire protection." Grey Concrete and White Tile Silk from Fibo's Marcato range are available with or without an authentic routed 'grouting' line, while Titan is a smooth grey panel from the Traditional range. The rest of Fibo's range has a comfortable Class 2 rating, where the spread of flame is no more than 215mm in the first 1½ minutes, with an overall spread of no more than 455mm. Five times quicker to fit than tiles, Fibo's waterproof panel system is used in new build and refurbishment projects for public sector, domestic and retail clients. With a 15-year guarantee, the panels are manufactured to the ISO 9001 quality standard and comprise a specially developed 7-layer WBP plywood core, with a high-pressure laminate surface on the front and back.

01494 771242 sales@fibo.co.uk

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Raising the bar with fire and CO alarms

Wide ranging new requirements recently confirmed by the Scottish Government call for a consistently high level of smoke, heat and CO alarm provision to be applied across all housing, and a review of Building Regulations should improve standards in England too, as Kidde Safety Europe explains

Following the Grenfell Tower fire, the Scottish Government brought forward its consultation on fire and smoke alarms, as well as CO alarms, in housing. The result is a major change to the 'Tolerable Standard' for all housing tenures, taking effect from February 2021, giving housing providers and owners less than two years to install or upgrade fire and CO alarms in all their properties. In essence, the minimum safety standards currently in place for private rented properties will be extended to all other tenures including social housing and owner-occupied homes.

CODE OF PRACTICE

Private rented housing in Scotland must already meet requirements based on the BS 5839-6:2013 Code of Practice 'Category LD2' level of protection, mirroring Scottish Building Regulations for new-builds, change of use and extensions. This means a system of interconnected smoke and heat alarms, including smoke alarms in principal living rooms and heat alarms in kitchens, as well as smoke alarms in circulation areas on each storey.

In addition, CO alarms will also be required in all homes with combustion appliances. The Scottish proposals consider that: "it makes practical sense to combine installation programmes for... smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms together". More attention should be paid to the positioning of alarms for audibility, as well as early detection of fire or carbon monoxide – something that current standards and guidelines fail to address properly. Combining smoke, heat and CO alarms can provide more coverage cost-effectively, ensuring that occupants are awoken and alerted wherever they are in the property, whatever the risk.

COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEMS

Kidde's Smart Interconnect facility, for example, enables all its Firex smoke and heat alarms, and its hard-wired mains CO alarms, to operate as a comprehensive domestic system. Here, all the alarms sound when one is triggered, with different, distinct alarm sounder patterns for carbon monoxide or fire – an essential facility – supported by different display messages on the digital CO model. So, without the need for any other hardware, occupants are automatically alerted to the specific hazard enabling them to respond quickly and correctly.

FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE

The new Scottish measures herald a fresh, straightforward approach to fire and carbon monoxide safety, recognising the key role of alarms as the first line of defence, providing critical early warning at low costs. They make occupants (and therefore also alerted fire and rescue services) aware of fires sooner and at an earlier stage in its development, reducing risk of injuries, deaths and property damage.

Kidde welcomes the new measures and calls for a similar approach to be applied throughout the UK. In particular, pressure is now on to upgrade regulations for private rented properties in England, including CO alarms with all combustion appliances, not just solid fuel as at present, and to extend the requirements to social housing.



BUILDING REGULATION ISSUES

Similarly, Building Regulation guidance in England desperately needs attention, recognising that it covers changes of use – even where planning 'permitted development' applies – extensions and some alterations. Approved Document J should again require CO alarms with installation of any combustion appliance, not just solid fuel. And Approved Document B (AD B) is now under review following the Grenfell Tower fire and Dame Judith Hackitt's condemnation that it is "not fit for purpose".




New Scottish measures herald a fresh, straightforward approach to fire and carbon monoxide safety, recognising the key role of alarms as the first line of defence, providing critical early warning at low costs


Currently, AD B relies on BS 5839-6, stating that: ‘All new dwellinghouses should be provided with a fire detection and fire alarm system in accordance with the relevant recommendations of BS 5839-6:2004 to at least a Grade D Category LD3 standard’. In addition, AD B recommends a heat alarm only where the kitchen area is not separated from the stairway or circulation space by a door.

CONFLICTING STANDARDS


However, this AD B guidance conflicts directly with the ‘relevant recommendations’ of the current BS 5839-6:2013 – the very standard that it is based on. Notably, BS 5839-6:2013 recommends a minimum Category LD2 (including heat alarms in all kitchens) where Building Regulations apply. So, AD B guidance on fire detection and alarm systems in dwellings must now be completely reviewed to remove the confusion of conflicting recommendations and to adopt the relevant recommendations of BS 5839-6 correctly, including a minimum level of protection of Category LD2.

The right provision of alarms – to detect fire or CO, and also ensure that occupants are alerted throughout the home – is critical. Certified CPD presentations and documents such as Kidde’s ‘Guide to regulations & standards’ can help clarify the issues involved.





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Door closer’s fire credentials enhanced

Samuel Heath’s commitment to ensuring that its Powermatic controlled, concealed door closers provide the ultimate assurance in quality and performance has been further underlined with the successful completion of additional full-sized fire testing on both timber and steel fire doors at renowned testing laboratory, Exova Warrington Fire. 30-minute testing in accordance with BS EN 1634-1 was undertaken on a timber fire door constructed with a Halspan core to replace Powermatic’s current small-scale indicative testing for the BS476 assessment. The door set easily achieved the 30-minute test requirements, continuing until final failure occurred at 42 minutes. Significantly, where most timber door fire tests fail due to failure of the hinge/timber joint, which causes the door to drop and intumescent seal to break at the top of the door, Powermatic was actually shown to hold the door in place after the hinge/timber joint failure. This is attributed to the design, strength and location of Powermatic, which fits in a similar position to hinges, between the door and door frame. The uninsulated steel door passed the four-hour test comfortably. As a result, the test evidence will allow certification to cover both insulated and non-insulated doors at any fire rating up to and including four hours.

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Safety matters

What does safety really mean when it comes to heating appliances in the home? Christian Hadley of Glen Dimplex Heating & Ventilation examines the real value of safety testing, the issue of self-declaration – and why external certification can be key



Consumer awareness of product safety has never been higher, with customers more switched on to safety and the peace of mind afforded by safety certification. Last year the Government set up a new code of practice for consumer product recalls, PAS7100, which is designed to help companies plan and execute product recalls in light of recent issues. But what actually goes into a product safety testing programme and how can social and private landlords communicate the added value to tenants?

CE MARKING

Like any product category, the level of testing undertaken by heating appliance manufacturers will vary from statutory requirements through to rigorous, external safety testing.

At the most basic level, it is a mandatory requirement for electrical room heaters sold in the UK to meet the requirements of the safety regulation 60335-2-30 part 2, conformity of which is demonstrated by the application of the CE (Conformité Européene) mark.

The introduction of BS: 60335 meant that all products could be compared on a like-for-like basis, instead of installers, wholesalers and merchants having to try and compare from a range of alternative standards as they had previously. Plus, it gives end users greater confidence in the safety of their heating system.

However, for some there remains a question over the credibility of CE Marking, not least because it is a self-administered system which does not always require additional independent testing for a product to be approved. The responsibility for carrying out the conformity assessment lies with the manufacturer themselves, which is why we believe manufacturers have a responsibility to gain independent verification of compliance in order to ensure the safety and performance of their products.

BEAB TESTING

One way to do this is to undertake rigorous external testing through a third party organisation, such as the voluntary BEAB Approved Mark from Intertek. As one of the most stringent product testing routines in Europe, BEAB enables manufacturers – and in turn their installer partners – to show their commitment to best practice, commitment to producing quality goods and commitment to the safety of customers.

SAFETY STANDARDS: WHAT IS BEST PRACTICE?

Best practice product testing is demonstrated by the safety testing routine undertaken on the Dimplex Quantum high heat retention off-peak heater. The purpose of the product safety testing is to assure consumers that what they are buying is safe and compliant with applicable safety requirements of the relevant country. Product safety test includes, among many others, the following tests or inspections:

- Functional test – does it operate in the way it is meant to?
- Markings and instructions – looking at everything from location and size of labels to whether the symbols and values used are correct. Particular attention is paid to warning labels.
- Construction – is it well made and durable?
- Mechanical strength. A “test hammer” is applied to test impact resistance.
- Stability and mechanical hazards – inspecting for access to potentially dangerous moving parts.
- Supply connection and external flexible cords.
- Leakage current and electrical strength.
- Internal wiring – inspecting wiring requirements.
- Moisture resistance and resistance to rusting – some appliances are tested for electrical safety after water has been tipped onto the controls, checking to see if the water makes any part of the appliance electrically unsafe.
- Protection against access to live parts – this can include using a replica of a small child’s finger to establish whether they can gain access to electrically live parts.
- Clearances.
- Heat and fire resistance.
- Overheat protection devices are tested.
- Appliance surface temperatures are measured for compliance under normal operating conditions.
- Appliance surface temperatures are also tested under “abuse conditions” for instance with outlets partially blocked to ensure that temperatures do not rise too high.

Manufacturers have a responsibility to gain independent verification of compliance in order to ensure the safety and performance of their products

The Mark indicates that the product has been manufactured in an inspected factory, using accepted methods and that the product has been tested and assessed by Intertek. Products bearing the BEAB Approved Mark are also randomly checked by Intertek on an annual basis to offer complete peace of mind.

AT WHAT PRICE DOES SAFETY COME?

Of course, additional safety testing comes at a cost to the manufacturer, a cost which is ultimately recouped through the added value of being seen to lead the industry for product safety and conformity.

And likewise, for the customer. There may well be cheaper (often imported) options available when specifying a new electric radiator, towel rail or convector heater, but as consumer awareness of safety testing increases, so too do the opportunities to add perceived value and boost social responsibility with rigorously tested, market leading models.

With safety, comes reassurance – and in most cases this is combined with the recognition of a brand name; one study from last year shows 71 per cent of consumers are more likely to buy a product if they recognise the brand.

Housing providers and private landlords should not underestimate the trust and confidence that their tenants place in household heating brands with years of heritage behind them.

Christian Hadley is head of product marketing at Glen Dimplex Heating & Ventilation, which includes the Dimplex, Creda, Faber and Valor heating brands



Hidden Extra's in New ModuSat XR HIU's - Giving You More for Less!

With over 15 years of HIU supply under their belts, Evinox has unveiled the latest range of ModuSat® XR 'Smart' Heat Interface Units, which provide M&E Contractors and Consulting Engineers with a "whole lot more" for a "whole lot less" due to the myriad of hidden extras.

Smaller, more compact dimensions; the ability to deliver high performance at low primary flow temperatures; TCP/IP communications connectivity; and new, lower output models to allow cost-effective compliance with the latest industry design standards are but a few of the ways Evinox ModuSat XR models offer more features, value

and performance - but with less space requirements, lower heat network operating conditions, and less time on site to install, commission, support and maintain - than ever before.

LESS SPACE

The latest ModuSat XR and XR-ECO Twin Plate HIU's have been enhanced to provide the same great performance but in a package requiring 27 per cent less space in the home than before*1. Additionally, units have been "designed by engineers for engineers", with a real focus on providing flexible pipework connection options, easy access to key components and simple installation and maintenance.

LOW CARBON HEAT NETWORKS

With the latest GLA planning guidance around carbon factors already causing a stir amongst consulting engineers and specifiers, there is a clear incentive for heat networks to be designed around different heat generation technologies, which in turn require lower primary flow temperatures. The high efficiency ModuSat XR-ECO models continue to provide impressive heating and domestic hot water performance at primary flow temperatures of 60°C (or even lower), making them the ideal choice for low temperature networks.



SMART, LOWER COST COMMUNICATION NETWORK CONNECTION

Ethernet connectivity comes as a standard feature on all ModuSat units, allowing two-way communications for diagnostics, commissioning and support – as well as metering data – to be accessed across shared building infrastructure.

LOWER DEFECTS LIABILITY AND AFTERCARE SUPPORT COSTS WITH 'SMARTTALK® PRO'

And if all that wasn't enough, yet another hidden extra giving Contractors opportunity to reduce costs and risks associated with their heat network installations is Evinox's new 'SmartTalk® Pro' monitoring and diagnostics web portal, which now comes bundled with every ModuSat installation.

01372 722277 www.evinoxenergy.co.uk



A breath of fresh air

Wendy Thomas of Nuaire discusses the importance of filtering the air in existing homes, particularly when the occupants are some of society's most vulnerable



The Chief Medical Officer's 2017 report, released in 2018, focused on air pollution as a major threat to public health and called for tougher standards to combat wide ranging health challenges.

Clearly prevention is better than cure, so the long-term goal has to be to reduce air pollution, but in the meantime what should and could we be doing to protect those most at risk?

AIR POLLUTION: CAUSE FOR CONCERN?

Air pollution now regularly makes headline news, with 44 UK cities identified by a recent World Health Organisation (WHO) report as having air too toxic to breathe safely.

While the focus remains on particulate matter, notably PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}, the presence of large quantities of NO_x, the collective name for Oxides of Nitrogen (with NO and NO₂ having the most effect on the environment and human health) is also a danger. The main culprit for NO_x emissions is motor vehicles, in particular diesel engines. The WHO annual mean target for NO₂ is 40 micrograms per cubic metre but in 2015 only six of the 43 UK air quality assessment zones met the annual mean limit value for NO₂.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PROTECT THE MOST VULNERABLE?

Children and vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions, are at a disproportionately high risk of respiratory problems. Certainly, it can have a significant impact on people with asthma causing more frequent and more intense attacks.

Reducing levels of particulate matter and NO_x are essential in our cities and steps are being taken, but it's a slow business as it requires major changes such as building schools away from main roads and phasing out diesel cars. But it can

be done! German cities now have the right to ban diesel cars from their cities (70 German cities exceeded EU limits for NO₂ in 2017). What's more it MUST be done as the population living in UK cities is set to rise to 92.2 per cent by 2030 (from 79 per cent in 1950).

In the meantime, we need to take measures to protect those most at risk and not just those who can afford it. It's a well-quoted figure, but worth restating here: every £1 spent on improving homes saves the NHS £70 over 10 years. Investing in our housing stock, especially our social housing where some of our most deprived live, is essential for our wellbeing.

FILTERING OUT POLLUTANTS

Carbon filtration remains one of the best options we have for removing pollutants from our homes. Pollutant gases like NO_x are attracted to the surface of activated carbon, where they are trapped through a process called adsorption. By installing carbon filters within the duct of a mechanical ventilation system, it is possible to control and dramatically reduce the level of pollutants entering a dwelling.

Incorporating a carbon filter into a standard MVHR (Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery) supply air valve that is part of a ducted ventilation system is an effective way to do this as long as access to the filter is quick and simple. Nuaire's IAQ-VALVE, for example, has a simple 'twist-and-clip' bayonet fixture which enables quick release for easy maintenance that can be carried out every two years, without the need for tools.

Most MVHR systems however, are designed for new build properties, as they require extensive ducting in voids and through ceilings and walls. So, while there is an effective solution for the 170,000 new homes built each year, the remaining 27 million existing homes in the UK have had no alternative carbon

It's time for action when it comes to air pollution and we have to look at both the long and short-term solutions

filter product for the retrofit market. Retrofit options are few and far between, but that is beginning to change as manufacturers react to demand.

THE INDUSTRY HAS TURNED TO POSITIVE INPUT VENTILATION (PIV) INCORPORATING A CARBON FILTER.

PIV units, traditionally used as a cost-effective method of eliminating moisture from the home, gently pressurise a dwelling to expel stale and humid air through natural ventilation points; these are very common in older properties as most of you probably know! PIV units can be mounted in the loft area of a house. By adding a powerful carbon filter into a PIV unit, existing properties can benefit not only from reduced concentration but reduced pollution also. In the case of our own Noxmaster system, it removes up to 99.5 per cent of NO² and up to 75 per cent of PM2.5.

While most existing properties can benefit from this combined PIV and carbon filtration system, it's social housing providers that can use it to make the most immediate difference to the most deprived and vulnerable members of our society. Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) are, after all, the leading suppliers of affordable homes and providers of a wide range of vital welfare services to the most vulnerable in our communities.

It's time for action when it comes to air pollution and we have to look at both the long and short-term solutions. Reducing air pollution is the goal but can we really afford to wait that long? In the meantime, some of the most vulnerable members of our society living in high pollution areas are slowly being poisoned in their homes without even knowing it.

Wendy Thomas is residential product manager at Nuaire



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The hidden costs of 'cheap' insulation

New research has shown that by using premium performance phenolic insulation over cheaper, thicker mineral fibre insulation, developers can reduce construction thicknesses and actually save on total upfront costs. The study from Currie & Brown, which was commissioned by **Kingspan Insulation**, assesses the impact of cavity wall insulation thicknesses on the development cost of three house types: large detached; small detached; and mid-terraced. The results showed that by using the Kingspan Kooltherm K106 Cavity Board specification, overall construction costs were reduced by £161 and £420 in the large and small detached houses respectively.



01544 387 384 www.kingspaninsulation.co.uk

New Atmos ventilation range

EnviroVent, one of the UK's leading ventilation manufacturers, has revolutionised its Positive Input Ventilation (PIV) range and added a whole collection of new features and functionality to make it even more appealing for homeowners, self-builders, social housing providers and private landlords. Atmos® is the first smart range of PIV solutions with five different units available designed to improve indoor air quality and eradicate the problem of condensation and mould growth in all types and sizes of homes. This includes: Atmos®; Atmos® Air; Atmos® Dual; Atmos® Air Dual and a wall mounted Atmos® unit suitable for apartments and flats that do not have a loft space.



www.envirovent.com

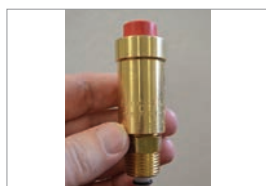
Flexvent success for Flamco

One of the leading HVAC component manufacturers, **Flamco** is celebrating the sale of its three millionth Flexvent air vent valve in the UK and Ireland in the past ten years.

Selling around 300,000 of these a year it's clear to see that these are essential components to keep on every heating installer, air conditioning installer and plumbers van.

For more information, head for Flamco's website or go to their YouTube page and see a presentation on the installation of a Flexvent.

www.youtube.com/user/flamcogroup www.flamcogroup.com/uk-en



Vent-Axia welcomes Homes Act

Vent-Axia has welcomed the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018, which is scheduled to come into force from 20th March 2019. The Act makes it a legal requirement that rental properties, both social housing and private, are fit for human habitation at the beginning and throughout a tenancy, including the need for effective ventilation and freedom from damp. This is good news for tenants who should be able to demand good indoor air quality (IAQ) within their homes, protecting their health from the ill effects of condensation and mould. As ventilation experts, Vent-Axia offers a raft of tools to help landlords meet the requirements of the Act.



0844 856 0590 www.vent-axia.com/social-housing

Solid floor refurbishment research

Kingspan Insulation has published a new white paper assessing how different floor insulation specifications can impact cost and floor-to-ceiling height in home refurbishments. The report is based on research from leading consultants — Currie & Brown. It shows that Kingspan Kooltherm K103 Floorboard can provide a cost-effective option for insulating solid floors without reducing headroom. The research looked at Kingspan Kooltherm K103 Floorboard, which has the lowest thermal conductivity of any commonly used insulation (0.018 W/m-K), and expanded polystyrene (EPS) insulation with a thermal conductivity of 0.038 W/m-K.



01544 387 384 www.kingspaninsulation.co.uk

ESi - heating controls for all homes

ESi offers a range of programmers that enables the installer to comply with Part L of the Building Regulations, providing separate timed heating control for living and sleeping zones in a home, whilst also providing timed control of hot water.



The ESi range offers 24 Hour/5/2 day and 7 day programming options for each channel. And these programmers also feature a "Landlord" option to encourage social housing and private tenants to allow access for annual maintenance.

Take a closer look at the ESi website.

01280 816868 www.esicontrols.co.uk

Vectaire's Microbox 125/2DC chosen

Vectaire's Microbox 125/2DC was chosen to ventilate St Peter's House and Admiral's House in Kents Road, Torquay. This prestigious development converting two listed buildings into apartments needed discreet, but effective ventilation. The Microbox, provided this. The unit is slim (less than 184 mm deep) so is particularly suited for in-line installation where space is at a premium. Additionally, it can be installed at any angle and only requires one discharge grille. It is an efficient, low energy solution to controlling condensation and pollution in residential properties up to 185m². It has a variable choice of low (trickle), boost and purge speeds at installation with low noise levels and low running costs.



01494 522333 www.vectaire.co.uk

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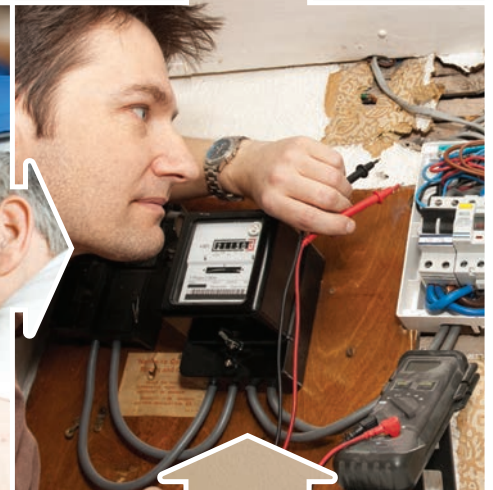
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