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The NFB's Mark Wakeford looks at the barriers the industry faces in building a zero carbon future



Scott McAndrew of ITW on why timber is seeing a resurgence on beauty as well as practicality grounds

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HOUSEBUILDER & DEVELOPER

KICK-OFF AT WEMBLEY

Hub Group brings 239 homes to north west London – kickstarting local regeneration



It's what's underneath that counts

04.21

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James Parker

FROM THE EDITOR

The Government has had to announce the canning of another major green home upgrade initiative, handily buried under the continued controversy around Covid vaccines and other pressing concerns. The Green Homes Grant can only be described as a disaster, and it's highly unlikely that the way it was introduced would have led to success even without Covid's presence.

Despite hosting the international COP26 climate conference this year in Glasgow, and remaining committed to zero carbon by 2050, the Government has cancelled a scheme which could have seen 600,000 homes making a much lower contribution to our emissions. The scheme's track record of only upgrading 10 per cent of the 600,000 homes targeted since its September 2020 launch is pretty depressing, especially when, as it is believed, 19 million homes need insulation upgrades for us to hit climate targets.

The Government is conveniently blaming Covid, saying that homeowners didn't want contractors coming into their houses. However, in some areas installers were reportedly incapable of serving high demand, and the system of checking on the payments they received was so onerous that some went out of business due to delays in getting paid. Also, there are stories about installers fleecing customers, and charging nearly double the cost of work done, bringing back memories of the failed Green Deal.

Government is trying, as ever, to spin this new failure, by cheerleading its redirection of the rest of the £2bn cash for the GHG to a local fund for councils to spend on upgrades.

The Government hasn't had a very good couple of weeks for its programmes for the construction industry, with Redrow (rarely the bearer of bad news), saying that its market research shows that the new National Model Design Code is not going to work. Similarly snuck out under the Covid news blanket in January, the NMDC includes comprehensive guidelines on the shape of future housing for planners to adhere to.

Redrow says its research found that over half of local officials are "not sufficiently familiar with it to give a view on how it will be received by their constituents." The housebuilder is concerned that a YouGov poll gave more insights into consumers' real views, showing that the proposed new guidelines, including promotion of three-storey townhouses for instance, "do not align with the nation's desires for their future homes."

This is a huge and complex issue, and efficient land use and sustainability need to be accounted for among all the other priorities, but perhaps there's something of a chicken and egg argument here. It's arguable that consumers prefer what they're used to - i.e. semi-detached and two-storey terraced homes, and one day a big detached home. But if they become more familiar with better quality three-storey homes, made accessible and sustainable and in the right location, maybe they will start to become what they want and expect in the future.

James Parker

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ON THE COVER



04.21

HOUSEBUILDER & DEVELOPER



KICK-OFF AT WEMBLEY

Hub Group brings 222 homes to north-west London's first ever local regeneration

© Chesterfield House, HUB go to page 14

Fall recorded in social rent homes supply



The supply of council and housing association homes fell by almost 210,000 in England between 2012 and 2020, according to the Chartered Institute of Housing's annual UK Housing Review 2021.

Despite 70,000 new social rented homes being built, over 280,000 have either been sold, converted to higher rents, or demolished since April 2012, creating a net loss of 209,351, said the CIH. The two biggest reasons for this were believed to be right to buy sales (121,000) and conversions of letting to higher ('affordable') rents (116,000).

The review warns that the position is likely to get worse due to the pandemic. Only 10,531 affordable homes of all types were started under grant-funded programmes in the first half of 2020/21, compared with 17,980 for the equivalent period in 2019/20.

The CIH said: "The Government has promised 32,000 new social rented homes outside London in the next five years, but this is just 4,000 more than in the previous five years and will not replace future losses through right to buy sales."

Gavin Smart, chief executive of the CIH commented: "The Review shows the drastic effects that policy changes over the past few years have had on the supply of homes at social rents."

The CIH has called for the investment needed to build 90,000 homes per year at social rents "to address the backlog of housing need that has built up." It has also asked the Government to suspend right to buy to help deal with the housing crisis, which it says the pandemic "has only made worse."

Calls for skills investment after Green Homes Grant scrapped

Following the Government's announcement to end the flagship Green Homes Grant scheme after only upgrading 10 per cent of its 600,000 homes target, climate solutions charity Ashden has called for green skills investment in its place.

The grant scheme was much-promoted to help householders in England insulate their homes but has been cancelled, with the money allocated to a separate insulation fund run by councils.

While the announcement was a "body blow" to many in the industry according to Ashden, the Government can

still "take action to create thousands of local green jobs around the UK." However this will require a "revolution in green skills training," said Ashden.

Politicians must commit to long term "tailored investment in green skills, the company said. If they do not, "the UK will not achieve zero carbon by 2050, and many workers will face a precarious future, ill-equipped to meet the demands of tomorrow's job market."

"The Government has legal commitments to meet zero carbon – this is not a choice," said Ashden CEO, Harriet Lamb. "But the stop-start history of its commitment to providing grants for making homes more energy efficient is undermining confidence within the industry."

She argued that companies that have taken on the retrofit challenge are "scared of entering the market when the government has pulled the rug out from under their feet too many times."

"The Government has created a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure," she concluded. "It is crucial they turn this around through a long term, stable policy including investing in training."



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Brian Berry, chief executive of the Federation of Master Builders

COMMENT

A TOUGH OUTLOOK FOR SME FIRMS

Brian Berry, CEO of the Federation of Master Builders (FMB) takes a look at the challenges facing smaller builders this year, and what the Government can do to help.

As the lockdown gradually lifts, and a semblance of normal life returns to our communities, small housebuilding companies must be at the heart of the Government's plans to help us build back better – and greener – from the coronavirus pandemic.

The pandemic has shone a light on the fundamental role that our homes play in supporting our work, education, health and livelihoods. The housing crisis cannot persist if we are to be more resilient and adaptive to a new situation where more hours are spent at home in the future. This means that the Government must take decisive action now to once and for all address the shortfall in the delivery of new build homes by unlocking the potential of the SME housebuilding community.

Action is all the more urgent as the latest data from the Federation of Master Builders (FMB) State of Trade Survey (the only survey of its kind to track the experience of SME firms in the construction industry), found that small housebuilders are struggling to bounce back after a difficult year.

In Q4 2020, one in three builders reported lower workloads compared to the previous quarter, and two in five reported no change, indicating a sluggish recovery for Britain's local builders. Indeed, respondents active in the housing sector reported contracting workloads and enquiries in the winter months. At the same time, 82 per cent reported sky-rocketing material prices and costs as global supply chains have limited supplies of key building materials. Furthermore, necessary social distancing requirements on site have led to lower productivity levels and longer build out times for new homes.

The FMB welcomed the Chancellor of the Exchequer's decision to listen to industry representatives and extend the Stamp Duty holiday by three months at the Spring Budget, to ensure that consumers did not miss out on their dream homes because of factors outside of small builders' control. We also welcomed the announcement of guarantees on 95 per cent mortgages to keep the aspiration of home



ownership alive for more people.

However, what was missing was a cash injection for local authority planning departments, whose recent struggles with resources during the pandemic came on top of more than a decade of budget cuts. My members report that they typically wait a year for a determination on a non-controversial planning application on a small site. This must not continue if we are to build the homes this country needs, and at an organic pace in existing communities.

The State of Trade Survey also found that one in four builders were struggling to hire bricklayers and carpenters, and as activity ramps up again across all the sectors in construction, I fear that the long-standing construction skills shortage will once again rear its ugly head, and constrain the output of SMEs looking to build high quality, beautiful homes.

This concern is further compounded by the decline in construction apprenticeships, with recent figures from the Department for

OUR SME FIRMS ARE STRUGGLING TO BOUNCE BACK AFTER A DIFFICULT YEAR

Education showing that there were 3,000 fewer starts in the sector in the first part of the 2020/21 academic year, when compared to the previous year.

SMEs are at the heart of reversing the decline in apprenticeships, as they train 71 per cent of tradespeople in the industry, including the majority of bricklayers. However, builders need more support from the Government to train. Ministers should bring forward plans to give local employers a greater voice in skills plans, and help builders and colleges to work more closely together and identify opportunities for young people coming into the industry.

There has never been a more urgent time to provide opportunities for young people, and I'm calling on my members to do what they can at this difficult time and provide training in whatever form they can.

I paint a difficult picture for the UK's SMEs, a year on from the start of the pandemic, but true to their characteristic resilience, I know that local builders across the country will be adapting their business, and innovating their methods to provide an even better service to our local communities. I'm now calling on the Government to back builders and help them to what they do best.







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Patrick Mooney, editor of
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THE SOCIAL NETWORK

HAS THE CHURCH FOUND A SOLUTION TO THE HOUSING SHORTAGE?

Patrick Mooney, housing consultant and news editor of Housing, Management & Maintenance discusses the recent moves by the Church of England to unlock its land for housing developments.



THE CHURCH
HAS CLEARLY
DECIDED IT
WANTS TO BE
PART OF THE
SOLUTION,
RATHER
THAN PART
OF THE
PROBLEM –
HALLELUJAH!

In a dramatic change of policy, the Church of England has signposted its intention to allocate swathes of its land for the development of good quality, social and affordable housing and set an example for other landowners to follow.

The move could directly result in tens of thousands of new homes being built across England. However, its biggest impact could be in providing a blueprint for other public and private bodies to follow. The church has clearly decided it wants to be part of the solution, rather than part of the problem. Hallelujah!

The Church of England currently owns

about 200,000 acres of land, of which about 6,000 acres are considered suitable for housebuilding. In many respects it has treated these holdings as a land bank, just like many other commercial developers or investment managers, to maximise its income.

It releases small parcels of land for development from time to time but under arcane charity law and rules, or interpretations of those rules, it will invariably only sell these plots to the highest bidder – which rules out those wishing to build low-cost housing. Now after a two-year investigation, it has decided it radically needs to change tack.



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Clearly it also wants to provide much stronger moral leadership on how we solve the country's housing crisis.

In its report 'Coming Home', published after a two-year study, the church says it can set an example for the rest of the country to follow. In the short-term this includes looking to dispose of land "suitable for the delivery of 28,500 new homes across England, of which we anticipate around 8,600 will be affordable." If other large landowners follow the church's example, those numbers could grow exponentially.

The 10-person commission reflected on the current housing crisis, which has seen a huge growth in the private rental sector, a massive increase in the number living in unsuitable housing and house prices spiralling out of the reach of ordinary people. At the same time it has also witnessed a painfully slow response to the Grenfell Tower fire and an unfolding cladding crisis.

BOLD ACTIONS

Instead of short-term initiatives by successive Governments, the report says "it is time for a bold, coherent, long-term housing strategy focused on those in greatest need."

The commission's vice-chair Graham Tomlin, Bishop of Kensington said: "The answer is not just building more homes, which end up in the private rental sector, but truly affordable homes. The definition of affordability must be linked to people's incomes rather than discounting the market rate."

On the subject of Grenfell and cladding, Tomlin said: "This is a major injustice which needs dealing with urgently." The church is now calling for a deadline of 2022 for all dangerous cladding to be removed and replaced.

There are many institutions and organisations across the country with vacant plots of land in their ownership – these range from water and transport companies, to health trusts, educational institutions and local authorities, as well as private trusts and corporations. The plots vary in size from small to very large, but most landowners are driven by the same principle of maximising their income from the sales.

The church wants to change this deep-seated approach. "There is a perception that you have to maximise the amount you get, that assets have to be sold to the highest bidder," said Charlie Arbuthnot, the commission's chair.

"That is not great for the church's reputation. I'm sure for the most part [parishes] absolutely want to do the right thing but believe they can't."

Therefore the legal framework for selling church assets is to be amended, so church land and buildings can be used for social and environmental purposes, as well as for economic benefit. Other landowners could adopt similar principles.

STRIDENTLY SELF CRITICAL

To drive the new approach forward and ensure it is implemented, a new "Bishop for Housing" has been appointed.

Guli Francis-Dehqani is currently Bishop of Loughborough and is shortly to begin work as the Bishop of Chelmsford. She will support dioceses in "using their land well," the commission report said.

The report says about 8 million people in England live in overcrowded, unaffordable or unsuitable homes. "That is not right. Whole sections of our society, including people of all ages, are affected by the housing crisis, but those caught in poverty bear the brunt of this injustice."

In criticising the church's own track record in recent years, the commissioners said that fewer than a quarter of the 3,820 new homes that the church had secured planning permission for since 2015 were affordable. It cited the example of a proposal to convert a former C of E school in Arkengarthdale in the Yorkshire Dales into affordable housing that was blocked last year when the diocese of Leeds and the local parish said they were legally obliged to accept the highest offer for the property.

The report argues that homes should follow five core principles, by being sustainable, safe, stable, sociable and satisfying. It says that housing needs were "too important to be dictated by short term, narrow, party political objectives."

It also called on the Government to provide greater protection for private sector tenants through longer-term security of tenure and placing a duty of care on all landlords.

Polly Neate, chief executive of the housing charity Shelter, said: "It is brilliant to see the Church of England showing leadership and taking action to tackle our growing housing emergency. Looking at how church land can be best used to fight homelessness is extremely welcome."

Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, welcomed the challenge to the church, which he said was "uniquely placed...to work to build not just more houses but truly affordable houses and stronger communities."

Often the church is seen as being too remote from the lives of ordinary people, or guilty of rank hypocrisy in telling politicians how to act but then behaving differently in terms of its own investments.

If it delivers on the ambitious goals and targets set out in the 'Coming Home' report, the church could make itself hugely relevant to many thousands of people and help to crack the decades old conundrum of how we solve England's housing crisis. Now that really would be an impressive outcome, and an example of extraordinary leadership.

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CASE STUDY



A great finish at Wembley

The award-winning new development in Wembley, Chesterfield House, has now been completed – bringing new public realm as well as regeneration to a neglected part of the locality. Damien Sharkey, managing director of Hub Group, explains the project's features to Jack Wooler

Bringing 239 new homes to Wembley, North London, Chesterfield House and the new public square it has been developed around are intended to form the basis for a new neighbourhood regeneration in the area.

Led by developer Hub Group and designed by architects Maccreanor Lavington, the build to rent project includes two buildings of 21 and 26 storeys, connected by a seven-storey volume.

With the site previously occupied by a “rather unloved” office building, since the project’s inception Hub has worked closely with locals to secure “the best outcome for everyone” says the developer. This means “not only providing a new asset and a new community centre for the area, but replacing the old building with something architecturally superb” that will kick-start quality housing across the



whole of the Wembley area.”

A range of amenities to “support both physical and mental wellbeing for the inhabitants” have also been included across the one-to-three bed apartments as part of this. The variety of home types are available at a range of different rental levels and discounts.

STRIKING A BALANCE

Designed to strike a balance between creating an engaging addition to the area and ensuring both expansive views and natural light for those living in and around it, Chesterfield House is described by Damien Sharkey, managing director of Hub Group, as a “unique massing response.”

“Softened by the subtle splaying of elevations and additional terraces,” the full brick facades have been carefully designed to add “richness of texture, providing character,” and also to be “read at a range of scales, he says.

As examples, spandrels of white glazed sawtooth bricks have been used on the towers, and the ground floor elevations are finished in green glazed brick and concrete surrounds. This “materiality” alongside the form is intended to present “a confident urban image on one level, and a more gentle, engaging

response more locally along the street,” explains Sharkey.

Inside, while the apartments are available unfurnished, Hub – and the building’s owners UNCLE – have worked with interior designers Design Agency to create contemporary furnishing options. With furniture from Bo Concept, everything from the sofas to the coffee tables and rugs have been “curated” so that potential residents can move straight in and be surrounded by furniture “they would actually want to own, changing the status quo of renting,” as Sharkey puts it.

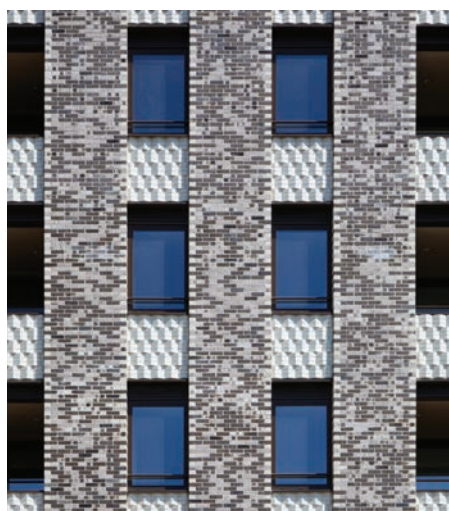
Furthering this “new take” on renting, the developers have also included a number of amenities to Chesterfield House as outlined earlier. These include extensive cycle parking, a fitness studio with Technogym equipment and a TRX wall, a Zen Zone which incorporates a state-of-the-art InHere Meditation Studio, a rooftop terrace and BBQ area, and even an indoor basketball court. This is alongside “parcel holding, speedy repairs, and anything else residents need,” adds Sharkey.

COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

The project was initially inspired by the “great efforts” underway within Brent to deliver much-needed homes in the local-



“FROM DAY ONE WE TALKED OPENLY WITH LOCAL PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY WANTED OUT OF THIS DEVELOPMENT – AND WHAT THEY DIDN’T WANT”



**THE FORM PRESENTS
“A CONFIDENT URBAN
IMAGE ON ONE LEVEL, AND
A MORE GENTLE,
ENGAGING RESPONSE
ALONG THE STREET”**

ity, says Sharkey. The developer noticed that construction had been concentrated around the stadium, “while the old heart of town (the High Road), had become increasingly run down.”

Aiming to stem this decline, a site was identified in planning as suitable for a ‘landmark building’ in this area, and the team believed that on this particular site they had the opportunity to “catalyse regeneration” in Wembley Central.

With the concept now firmly in place, the Hub Group were intent on taking a highly collaborative approach in taking the project to the next stages.

“Chesterfield House is a product of much more than Hub’s vision alone,” as Sharkey puts it. “Our partner on this project was social impact investor Bridges Fund Management, who we’ve now worked with on eight schemes around the UK.” This previous relationship gave the collaborating firms a head start on this project in terms of fostering co-operation.

Sharkey says that the “most important” stakeholders however, were the people of

Wembley themselves, who the developer “worked closely with to ensure the scheme responded to their needs.”

“No-one knows an area quite as well as those who live there, so from day one we talked openly with local people to understand what they wanted out of this development – and what they didn’t want,” he says.

The community reportedly wanted the developers to re-establish the town centre’s importance, as well as providing a community centre and delivering well-planned homes to meet a range of local needs. Public realm was also noted to be “really lacking in the heart of Wembley,” so a new square with seating, planting, and generous paved areas was envisioned.

In order to achieve this, it became clear that an “exceptionally high standard of design” was essential – and highly desired by the locals. As such, the (RIBA Stirling Prize winning) architectural practice Maccleanor Lavington were introduced into the project – designing what Sharkey describes as an “architecturally superb



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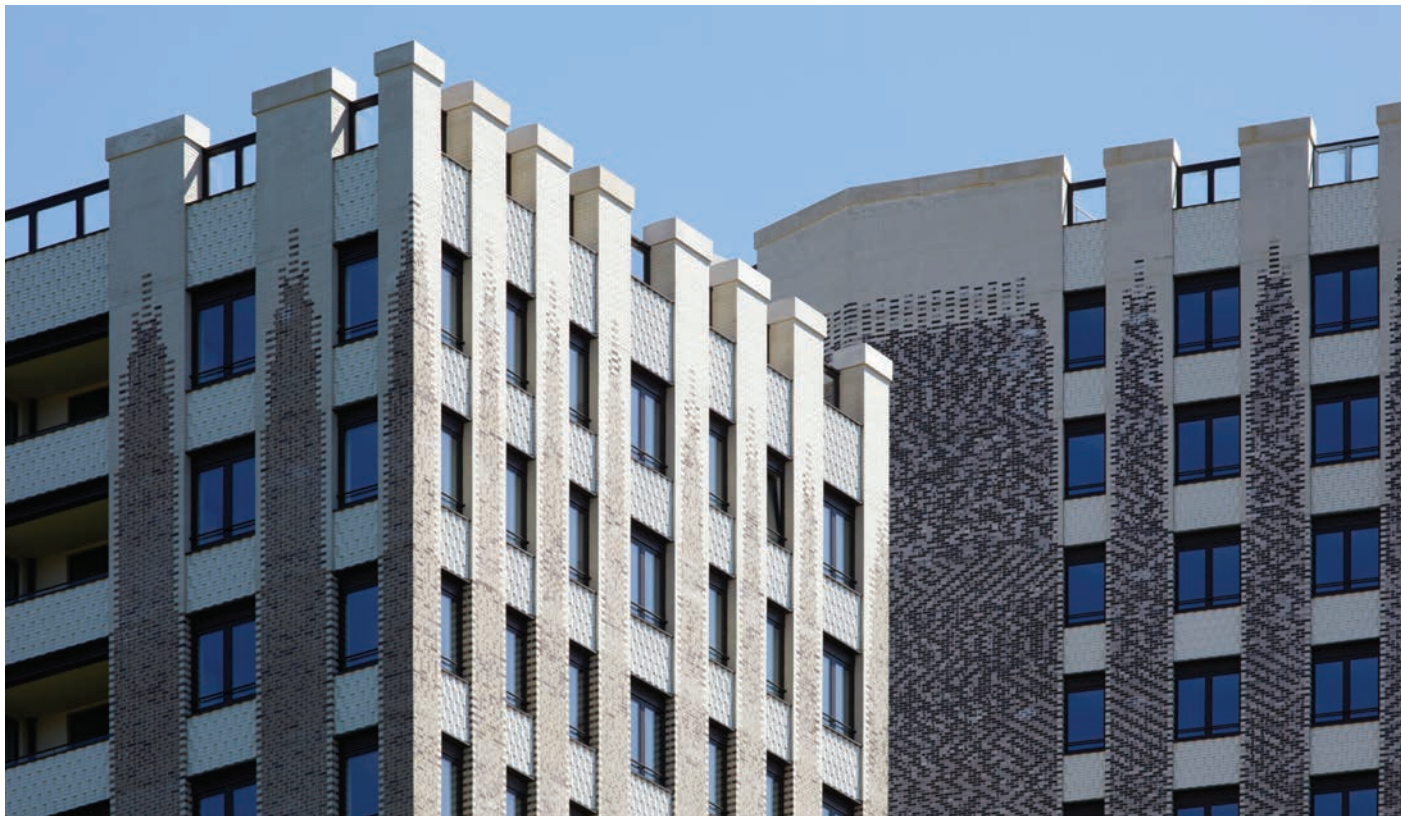
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HUB GROUP**

building that we feel represents a real step-change in quality for Wembley.”

While the team developed its plans for the site, Hub Group also provided space for local charities, community groups and start-ups within the old office building to help “breathe new life” into the High Road.

CAREFULLY CONSIDERED

In order to ensure success, Sharkey tells me that the build process was “carefully considered” from the outset, with sustainability approached holistically throughout the development, from passive design measures to the specification of highly efficient LED light fittings and low water use sanitaryware, and the implementation of a 110 kWe CHP engine for connection to a district heating network in the future.

While the process has reportedly progressed rapidly, there were of course challenges, largely presented by the site, says the developer: “Our contractor, Henry Construction, had to overcome the challenge of working on a very confined site, and right next to the railway track. We also had to find clever solutions to some technically challenging bespoke design features.”

One example of the latter is the corner junctions created by the various obtuse facades of the building, for which uniquely shaped bricks were formed by cutting and bonding standard bricks.

One of the elements that most aided these challenges, he tells me, was the use of Building Information Modelling

(BIM) to digitalise the scheme, the entire project team able then to work off of one model.

As such, BIM modelling was used to closely coordinate all aspects of the design and test decisions. The project team also utilised specialised ‘real-time’ rendering software to visualise and interrogate the designs during meetings.

Sharkey says this approach was “particularly helpful” in establishing day-to-day functional solutions and ensuring that all users of the building would gain “the best possible experience.”

REVOLUTIONARY

The model now having being fully realised in the flesh, the building is now being operated by Realstar (under its ‘UNCLE’ brand). UNCLE Wembley, as the development is now known, is already welcoming tenants.

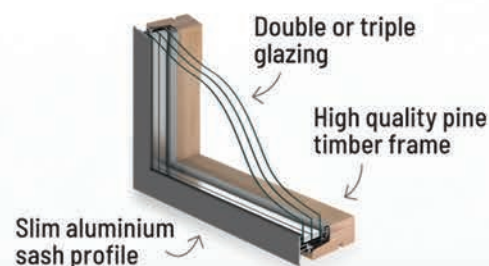
Despite launching during the pandemic, it has proven very popular, and, according to Sharkey, it has already “revolutionised the standard of mid-market homes available” in the area, he says.

“We hope this will encourage the construction of many more good quality places to live,” he continues, noting that Hub themselves are delivering a further 256 homes currently at Wembley Link.

“Our wish is that the mixture of new public space, improved streetscape, texture-rich elevations, and high-quality homes remain a much-loved part of the neighbourhood for many years to come,” concludes the developer. ■

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UK's tallest residential tower protected by Advanced Fire Panels



Global systems leader, Advanced, is celebrating being specified on yet another landmark development in London.

The installation of Advanced fire panels at the Landmark Pinnacle marks another tall-building win for the manufacturer who, in 2019, announced its specification at Western Europe's second tallest building, 22 Bishopsgate.

Standing 75 floors high at the head of the South Dock in the heart of Canary Wharf, the Landmark Pinnacle is the tallest residential building in Europe with more habitable floors than any other building in London, the UK and Europe. With prices starting from £480,000 and amenities including a roof garden, gym, private dining facilities and a cinema, London's latest skyscraper, at 239 meters tall, offers stunning views across London and the surrounding counties.



Four market-leading 8-loop and two 4-loop intelligent MxPro 5 fire panels alongside three repeater panels specified for the tower have been installed by Bedfordshire-based Firelec Controls Limited – responsible for the design, installation, testing and commissioning of the fire system. The MxPro 5 panels, that were certified by FM Approvals to the EN54 standard in 2019, are be networked with the tower's BMS using BACnet, include a custom graphics package and link to over 140 AOV vents and sprinklers with phased evacuation between floors.

Richard Randall, Managing Director at Firelec, said: "Advanced panels are our first choice every time, combining reliability and superior technical ability. Given the nature and size of the Landmark Pinnacle we needed a high level of protection to secure the public areas of the building and thanks to Advanced's vast cause and effect capabilities they were the ideal solution for this installation project."

The MxPro 5 is the unbeatable multiprotocol fire system. Approved to EN54-2,4&13, it offers four protocols, Apollo, Argus, Hotchiki and Nittan and a completely open installer network that benefits from free training and technical support. Panels can be used in single-loop, single-panel format or easily configured into high-speed, 200 panel networks covering huge areas. MxPro 5 panels are backwardly compatible with existing MxPro 4 networks and include a host of features includ-

ing AlarmCalm complete false alarm management and reduction.

Amanda Hope, New Business Development Manager at Advanced, said: "Landmark Pinnacle is the latest in a long line of tall buildings to benefit from Advanced protection, including western Europe's tallest and second tallest buildings, the Shard and 22 Bishopsgate. Where complicated cause-and-effect programming is required, our panels deliver market-leading performance and protection and we're thrilled to have been able to support Firelec with the equipment required."

Advanced is a world leader in the development and manufacture of intelligent fire systems. The performance, quality and ease-of-use of its products see Advanced specified in locations all over the world, from single-panel installations to large multi-site networks. Advanced's products include complete fire detection systems, multi-protocol fire panels, extinguishing control, fire paging and false alarm management systems.

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Mental health volunteers welcomed



A new scheme to help workplace employees through the worries and concerns of the COVID crisis has been welcomed by staff at **Designer Contracts**. Said HR and health and safety director Stacey Brereton: "The company introduced its mental health volunteer scheme back in October as a way of encouraging employees to open up about mental health. We currently have 10 mental health volunteers and one mental health first aider in place and are rolling the scheme out to all 15 regional depots. Each volunteer is undertaking online training which equips them with the skills to support a number of common issues, including stress and stress management."

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Keyline provide new employment opportunities



Keyline Civils Specialist has joined the Government's Kickstart Scheme – a placement programme designed to support young people into the workforce – as part of its ongoing commitment to bridging the skills gap in the construction industry. Keyline is offering 21 positions for young, unemployed 16-24 year olds with initial six month work placements across various divisions within the company, and as part of 800 placements across the Travis Perkins Group. The scheme will run alongside an existing portfolio of apprenticeship and learning and development programmes already offered at Keyline.

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Keyline strengthens management team



As part of the company's continued commitment to growth and delivering exceptional customer service, leading civils merchant, **Keyline Civils Specialist**, has announced key appointments to strengthen its leadership team in 2021. Joining the Keyline Senior Leadership Team are David Rudd, National Sales Director, Chris Woollard Commercial Director, Jon Pitman Finance Director and Vicki Evans in a new dedicated role as Head of Human Resources. The appointments reflect Keyline's continued focus on their customer and business growth with each bringing a wealth of experience in the sector to the business.

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To provide the very best long-term endurance that further enhances the environmental credentials of using timber, **Lonza Wood Protection** has recently launched VACSOL 6118. VACSOL 6118 is a water-based, metal free low pressure preservative treatment. With BPR (Biocidal Products Regulation) authorisation, it has an innovative booster technology (known as 'VAC-VAC') to provide long-term protection against fungal and insect attack around general building timbers and joinery components. VACSOL 6118 has been designed to treat timber to meet the requirements of Use Classes 1, 2 and 3 (coated).


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THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE

Time to take the lead on zero carbon



Mark Wakeford, chair of the Major Contractors Group at the National Federation of Builders, speaks to *Housebuilder & Developer* about the opportunities and barriers ahead for the industry in the critical path to zero carbon.

The housebuilding industry is making strong steps to reduce carbon within the built environment, including helping to inform customers on how they can live in their new homes and keep their carbon footprints low. However, there is still much work to be done to reach the Government's 2050 net-zero carbon targets – and the sector remains one of the biggest carbon offenders.

While new homes are generally low carbon, both in terms of embodied and operational carbon, significant challenges remain in the built estate, with many existing homes needing significant works to electrify heating, reduce emissions and support people living within them to maintain a low carbon footprint.

Hoping to arm the construction industry with practical tools to accelerate this journey towards achieving net-zero carbon, the Major Contractors Group of

the National Federation of Builders (NFB) have launched a new handbook, 'Transforming Construction: Delivering a Low Carbon Future.'

Mark Wakeford, the joint MD of Stepnell and chair of the Group, is embracing the challenge of promoting practical tools to the industry, as well as offering transparency on the barriers that currently exist in the way of change.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH

While Wakeford notes that there are areas of housebuilding that use more carbon than others, it is not helpful to identify "main offenders," he says, but instead to look at the issue more holistically.

"Quite often," adds Wakeford, "the higher carbon outputting areas are not easy to change, and will require a whole-sale review of a new home in order to reduce the overall carbon footprint of a new home."

While he says there are of course some areas that present greater opportunity than others, in that they are easier to deliver savings on or can be considered in isolation, Wakeford argues: "In reality, if we are to achieve net zero then the solution has to lie in an integrated approach to radically rethink the construction elements and the process of assembling them."

Wakeford uses cross-laminated timber (CLT) as an example, which offers a strong opportunity to use more wood in construction and reduce carbon output. He comments: "While it's a fantastic tool, it is no good telling industry to use CLT if there isn't a large enough CLT industry to support an industry wide change or the skilled workforce necessary to ensure correct installation."

Instead of looking at 'main offenders' within the construction industry on carbon, Wakeford prefers to point out who should be the 'first movers,' which he says are "generally" the leading forces of developers, politicians and influencers.

"It is these people who need to help change public opinion of what is acceptable, and to move the public's

expectations of what an acceptable new home will look like and how it will require active management," says the MCG chair. "If we can unlock this expectation in the market, then brilliant designers and delivery teams can work towards making net zero a reality."

LIMITATIONS

There are of course many barriers in the way of achieving these goals.

In recent times, the pandemic has produced the most obvious barrier here, with the impacts of Covid being "unquestionably frustrating" – the postponement of COP26 to November 2021 being just one example he cites.

Wakeford says that the virus has hampered progress: "It has been a distraction, while the main event [the urgency to deliver zero carbon] has continued unabated." The deadlines have not moved, and as such a year has been lost in the "war on carbon."

He also notes that, beyond the pandemic, most of the more general challenges for the industry exist in retrofitting existing housing. With new homes typically built to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating A and B, Wakeford says that 98 per cent of existing homes are EPC C and below. As such, retrofitting these homes to use less energy "must be a priority."

Wakeford believes that the overarching aim for the industry has to be to rethink how it operates, as well as getting customers to recognise its limitations. He says they will need to change some behaviours to support the industry in reaching net zero.

"The solutions will lie with an integrated team looking to solve the problems, and this will take suppliers, designers, lawyers and insurers from across our sector to lead in solving the issues," he says.

"We all have a role to play in enabling this to happen, and none of us can afford the barrier to exist in ourselves or our businesses – there is too much at risk, and we need to have answers before

"IF WE ARE TO ACHIEVE NET ZERO THEN THE SOLUTION HAS TO LIE IN AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO RADICALLY RETHINK CONSTRUCTION ELEMENTS AND THE PROCESS OF ASSEMBLING THEM"

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National Federation of Builders

Transforming Construction

Delivering a Low Carbon Future

A handbook for main contractors

answers are imposed from outside our industry on our country.”

A GUIDING HAND

Hoping to help the sector to tackle some of these barriers and take charge of its own role in moving to zero carbon, the group’s new handbook explains the practicalities to professionals in the industry, as well as the reasons for taking action, and how to go about it.

In conjunction with the MCG’s first edition of the handbook, the new volume seeks to “break the opportunities that can be taken to reach net zero into discrete areas.”

As part of this, it looks at key areas to address in terms of leadership and procurement, and examines four other crucial areas that the entire industry can address, such as reducing staff and

corporate carbon footprints, reducing project carbon emissions, reducing embodied energy, and increasing building performance.

The handbook also includes case studies from a range of businesses, with the aim of allowing construction professionals across the industry to identify an example which fits with their own stage of decarbonisation.

UNCERTAINTY

Despite efforts like these, and from much of the industry, Wakeford admits that the road map to delivering a low carbon future remains unclear.

However, he adds that with the “huge challenge, there are consequently huge opportunities.” He continues that buy-in across the board is essential: “The Committee on Climate Change is good at

“WE NEED TO HAVE ANSWERS BEFORE ANSWERS ARE IMPOSED FROM OUTSIDE OUR INDUSTRY ON OUR COUNTRY”

signposting the areas within our economy and country that will need to improve, but much will depend upon the way that customers, developers, contractors, designers and other stakeholders will respond to the challenges.”

Wakeford believes that success will come from “active leadership,” and that those companies who are prepared to take the opportunity seriously and to take a leading role their sector are “likely to be the ones who benefit.”

He also believes there is a need to understand that construction can only do so much: “We can reduce the energy used to build homes and energy used by users of homes, but the greatest challenge will be electrification of the grid and increasing our use of renewables; however that change will be enabled by the Government and its legislative programme, because it is a national challenge.”

SUCCESS

Wakeford says he believes that the likelihood of the industry’s success rests on the back of its own “ingenuity and support for its customers.”

However he adds that politicians and Government agencies need to be fundamentally better at creating the environment that will allow the sector and the country as a whole to deliver net-zero solutions on a level playing field with other technologies.

As an example of this, he says that the NFB’s Major Contractors Group has been recommending to the Government for the last five years that it implement streamlined planning for the most energy efficient homes and developments creating energy or heating on site, but that as yet, the Government has not enabled these “simple but effective” changes.

He concludes: “I am confident that if the Government was to overtly support these and our other endeavours, then we can deliver a housing industry that we can all be proud of, and we can tell our grandchildren that we played our part.” ■



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SWA member replaces steel windows at Dantzic



Steel Window Association (SWA) member, REA Metal Windows, has completed work on the Grade II listed Dantzic on the NOMA estate in Manchester. Dantzic, NOMA has been transformed into 45,000 sq ft of office space. Russell WBHO was the main contractor on this project and, after a competitive tender, Rea Metal Windows successfully secured the work. After completing a site survey, REA supplied 203 W20 steel windows; replicating the original window fenestration. 1600 individual frames were required for this project and each one of them was hot dipped, galvanised and polyester painted to a RAL 9001 semi-gloss (cream) finish. The frames were glazed with Part L compliant 16mm krypton gas filled double glazed units.

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A1 fire rated cladding used on regeneration



Tata Steel has supplied its leading steel standing seam wall cladding system, Urban Seam® Facade to a new award-winning development in Portsmouth. The Goldsmith Avenue project is among the first in the UK to benefit from the A1 fire rating of the system, as well as its modern aesthetic and long-term durability. The exterior of the two buildings features a mix of red brick alongside Tata Steel's Urban Seam® Facade in Merlin Grey, which was selected for its aesthetics, increased fire performance and longevity. The Urban Seam® Facade system consists of a high-quality steel standing seam mounted on a profiled steel deck.

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Tarmac first to launch 50 per cent recycled content packaging

Tarmac has become the first major cement manufacturer in the UK to move to 50 per cent recycled plastic in its packaging with the roll out of new all-weather, fully recyclable hybrid bags. Products manufactured at the company's cement plant packaging facilities in Scotland and Wales are all now in production with the new bag, which continues to offer rip, tear and puncture resistance, as well as providing essential protection against rain and water damage. Other sites currently producing a 30 per cent recycled content bag are due to switch to the latest packaging in the coming months. Tarmac's new packaging also features clearer recycling labelling and information to encourage customers to 'empty, rinse, recycle' and dispose of the packaging responsibly. The business estimates that the roll out across all bagged cement products will result in millions of bags switching to its newer, more sustainable solutions. Gareth Osborne, senior marketing manager in Tarmac's Cement and Lime business, said: "Our Blue Circle products have a proud history of innovation and we're excited to launch these new eco bags which are a significant step in our sustainability journey, at the same time as providing the weatherproof and robust packaging that our customers want and need."

enquiries@tarmac.com www.tarmac-bluecircle.co.uk



All you need to know from Freefoam

Freefoam Building Products has released a new document of guidelines to help roofline and cladding installers promote their business and services on social media. Spending even just a small amount on advertising through social media channels can make your content and posts go a long way. It's a very powerful tool to showcase your business to local homeowners while they are browsing Facebook or Instagram. But many installers find it daunting to run their own Facebook and Instagram adverts, so Freefoam have developed a step by step guide with all the information business owners will need to get started. The document includes details of each stage of setting up adverts, from information about a free online Facebook course, ideas on how to target an audience to make sure adverts reach the people who will be interested in a particular service, tips on adding tracking code so that Facebook shows adverts to the right people and advice on scheduling to ensure adverts are shown when the chosen audience are most likely to see them. And that's not all! Freefoam are also developing short snappy videos of each stage to show installers exactly what to do. Louise Sanderson UK Marketing Manager explained: "Using our experience we find that the combination of a document to follow and videos to illustrate different techniques are the best way of sharing this information with installers."

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Roofing products to rely on

Everbuild, a Sika company, has updated its range of roofing products, combining a fresh new look with the same tried and trusted formulation for reliable results every time. The new packaging design has been introduced across several product lines including the full Black Jack range of bitumen roofing coatings and flashing tapes, Everbuild Liquid Roof, Evercryn One Coat and Evercryn Emergency Roof Repair. The new-look products will be rolled out throughout the year. Everbuild's roofing coatings and adhesives are suitable for a variety of different projects, highlighting the company's commitment to offering reliable, high quality solutions for every build. Commenting on the new rebrand, Emma Taylor, product manager at Everbuild said: "Our trade customers can still rely on our products to be great to use and to give a high-quality finish but by giving the full range a new look, we hope we have also made it easier for trade professionals to find what they need. The redesigned packaging is professional, easily recognisable, gives clear product information and looks great both on the shelf and in the back of the van."

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Sapphire meets delivery challenge at Greenwich Millennium Village

Sapphire's industry-leading balcony design and offsite manufacturing capabilities were integral to success when the programme for Greenwich Millennium Village (GMV) phase 5 was shortened so the development could be completed ahead of schedule. Balconies for 71 new homes had to be delivered quickly and efficiently, without compromising on precision and quality control.

Each building in the prestigious development has its own unique character, with balconies by Sapphire adding a distinctive feature and giving apartments an attractive, valuable area of outdoor space. However, the principal challenge of the GMV phase 5 development was the delivery time.

Sapphire's offsite modular balcony system featuring its Glide-On™ technology provided the perfect solution. After receiving confirmation of the reduced deadline, Sapphire was able to manufacture, prepare and store balconies for the project at its offsite location, saving the client storage space on site. The preassembled balconies, including Crystal® frameless, structural glass balustrades, decking and soffits, could then be delivered as needed ready for quick and easy installation. Once



on site and lifted into position the Cassettes® simply Glide-On™ to the pre-erected support arms, before completing the simple mechanical fixings.

Thanks to its storage and logistical capabilities, Sapphire was able to deliver the project to time, even in light of the reduced deadline. Furthermore, the ease of installation meant fitting the balconies was swift and hassle-free. This quick turnaround was achieved without compromising on quality – Sapphire's balconies offer twice the rigidity specified in the British Standards and are beautifully finished.

The first of the Government's Millennium Communities, GMV phase 5 is a mixed-use development on the Greenwich Peninsula built according to the Code for Sustainable Homes, Level 4. Sustainability and inclusivity are at the heart of the project and the developers and architects have combined innovative design, construction and planning to create a variety of housing types and tenures alongside excellent amenities and green spaces.

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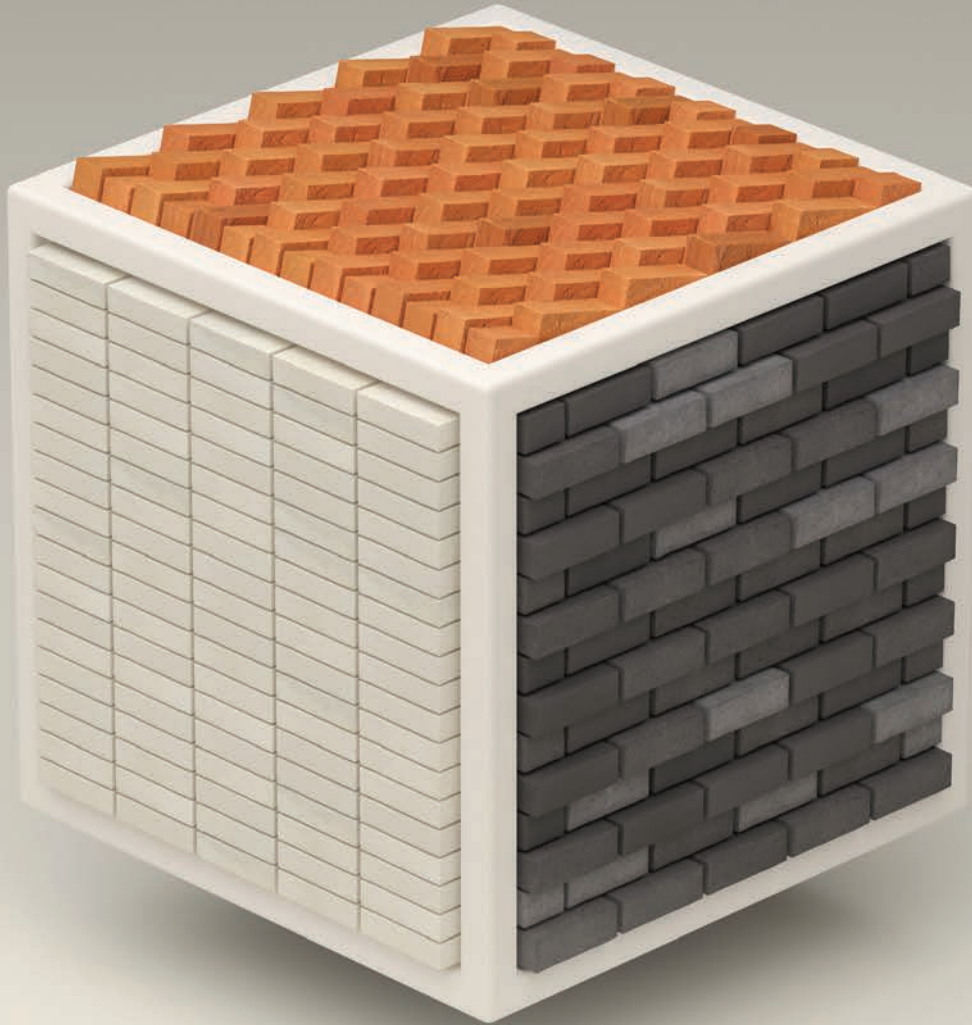
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TAKE IT TO THE BRIDGE

Simon Hill of Schöck explains the complexities around balcony design detailing to avoid thermal bridges, and why it must incorporate efficient thermal insulation



Improving the thermal performance of a building envelope by minimising energy usage has become increasingly important in the drive for sustainability and energy efficiency – particularly with residential new build and renovation.

Critical to this process is the avoidance of thermal bridging. As such, designers need to be aware of how significantly thermal bridges can compromise the value of the installed insulation.

THERMAL BRIDGING

A thermal bridge is a localised area of the building envelope with significantly higher thermal conductivity than surrounding areas, and typically occurs where a material with high thermal conductivity penetrates the insulation layer.

Cantilevered balconies are the most critical thermal bridges, and their presence results in a higher heat transfer through the building assembly and colder surface temperatures on the warm side of the assembly.

The main consequences will be higher energy consumption for heating, non-compliance with Building Regulations, and condensation. The latter leads not only to structural integrity problems, but the potentially serious occurrence of mould growth too.

REQUIRED STANDARDS

The latest version of the Building Regulations Part L (2013, with 2016 amendments) and associated guidance document for residential construction Approved Document L1A (ADL1A) require that thermal bridging be included in the fabric heat loss calculations.

The Government's Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP 2012) is the model used to provide evidence that the carbon emissions target has been achieved. Also the SAP calculation includes the term HTB (heat loss due to thermal bridging). There are of course also voluntary certification schemes such as BREEAM and Passivhaus, however, despite this background of increasingly stringent



DESIGNERS NEED TO BE AWARE OF HOW SIGNIFICANTLY THERMAL BRIDGES CAN COMPROMISE THE VALUE OF THE INSTALLED INSULATION

Unusually large balconies



standards for envelope thermal performance and for heat losses, many designers are still not fully aware of how significantly some common thermal bridges compromise the value of the installed insulation.

PERFORMANCE & INTEGRITY

The most effective way to minimise thermal bridging at cantilever balcony detailing is to incorporate a load-bearing structural thermal break.

This is a highly efficient manufactured balcony connector that minimises the flow of thermal energy between the interior and exterior of a building, providing both structural integrity and ensuring that the balcony is thermally isolated.

The units have a very specific purpose, and to work effectively over a long period they require certain physical characteristics. These include thermal insulation with an optimum thickness for the particular application, load-bearing components, and a combination of reinforced steel and stainless steel.

The bearings in the compression module transfer the compression forces, and steel bars transfer bending moment and shear forces. The stainless steel results in lower thermal conductivity and is also corrosion resistant.

A wide variety of thermal break solutions are available for connectivity applications as diverse as:

- Concrete-to-concrete
- Concrete-to-steel
- Steel-to-steel
- Renovation projects
- Passivhaus.

Structural assessments should verify the thermal break specifics in accordance with UK Building regulations.

CONDENSATION & MOULD

One consequence of thermal bridging is that condensation forming on surfaces, resulting in both visual deterioration and structural damage. However, an even bigger concern is mould growth.

To identify areas where there is a risk of condensation and therefore mould growth, a 'surface temperature factor' (fRsi) should be used. It allows surveys under any thermal conditions and compares the temperature drop across the building fabric with the total temperature drop between the inside and outside air. Using the formula, the recommended value for residential buildings is equal to or greater than 0.75.

HEAVY BALCONIES

One area that demands a fine balance of design and technical optimisation is the design of particularly heavy balconies. Where a balcony is heavier due to its method of construction and/or its unusual cantilever length, there will be a greater load transferred back to the structural thermal break connectors. The load capacity of those connectors will therefore need to be such that they can transfer the higher loads.

The likelihood here is that there will be more steel reinforcement required, in turn increasing heat loss. However, as long as the total heat losses remain within acceptable levels and the minimum temperature factor requirement (fRsi) is

exceeded at a specific junction, then it is usually acceptable.

It should also be mentioned that the number of facade penetrations is likely to have an impact on the rate of heat loss.

By using an optimum number of the same type of thermal break connectors, there will be an acceptable level of heat loss. However, if too few are used, this results in the remaining connectors taking increased loads and the overall heat loss may marginally increase – but still possibly remain within acceptable whole-building levels.

It is therefore necessary to check that the minimum localised fRsi value is achieved to ensure any risk of condensation and mould growth is eradicated.

RESPONSIBLE DESIGN

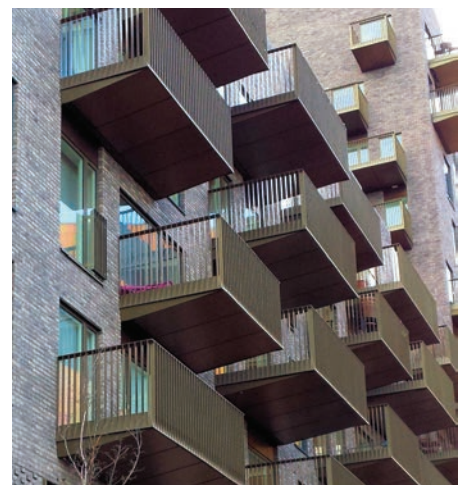
The UK has set in law a target to bring all its greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 – one of the world's most ambitious carbon targets.

As part of that journey there is a commitment to introducing the Future Homes Standard in 2025, a key part of which involves uplifting the minimum standard of whole building energy performance and improving the minimum insulation standards. The thermal performance of the building envelope is therefore becoming increasingly important – and critical to this process is the avoidance of thermal bridging.

Mitigating this problem may result in a limited upfront cost, but this represents a small investment when weighed against the long-term savings gained through energy savings and future maintenance issues.

It is therefore crucial that by shaping tomorrow's construction needs today, new homes will be future-proofed, avoiding any need for retrofitting in years to come.

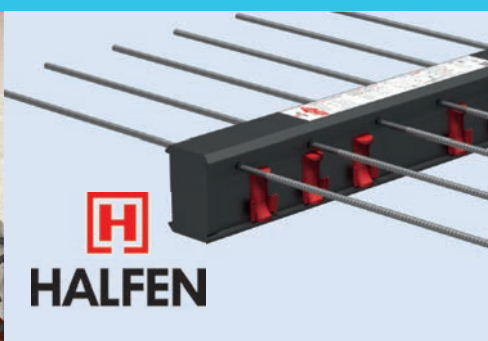
Simon Hill is product and marketing manager for Schöck



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01603 488700 www.althon.co.uk

Resource Hubs for specialist insulation solutions









Stone wool insulation manufacturer, **ROCKWOOL** has created a series of technical Resource Hubs to help specifiers access information and advice on specialist insulation solutions with ease. The new Resource Hubs span passive fire protection, HVAC, ventilated facades, flat roofs and acoustics. Each hub has been developed to provide visitors with extra support on more complex insulation applications where multiple design conflicts may be at play. The new areas feature a wealth of technical literature, proof of concept case studies, specification tools and CPD learning modules, making it simpler for specifiers to have all the necessary information available to make an informed and confident product choice.

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Panasonic provide for housing development



Marshgate Properties has recently completed a new housing development of two detached four-bed properties and six semi-detached three-bedroom homes in the rural village of North Kelsey. Installer UK Alternative Energy has provided each property with renewable energy heating thanks to **Panasonic's** Aquarea Mono-bloc air to water heat pumps which supply heating and

domestic hot water to each home. Andy Denton, Director of Marshgate Properties commented: "Selecting sustainable energy options is high on our list of important aspects for the homes we build. We had already installed Panasonic Aquarea Heat Pumps on a previous project a year earlier and have been impressed with the units and their performance."

01344 853 393 www.aircon.panasonic.eu

New heat pump videos now available



Grant UK has released a new series of air source heat pump videos which are now available to view on their YouTube channel. Comprising of 18 videos divided into three playlists, the videos have been developed to assist both heating engineers and end-users. Air source heat pumps are growing in popularity with both consumers

and their installers selecting this renewable technology to achieve sustainable heating systems in homes. To help customers develop their understanding of heat pumps, how they work and what factors help them to perform at their best, Grant UK has developed a series of video tutorials. View the playlists and subscribe to the Grant UK YouTube Channel.

www.youtube.com/MyGrantUK

Next gen high performance MVHR systems



Domus Ventilation has launched its next generation, improved performance HRXE Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR) units for a wider range of residential properties. HRXE-HERA™ and HRXE-AURA™ high performance MVHR systems combine supply and extract ventilation in one system. They efficiently recover the heat typically lost in waste, stale air and use it to temper the

fresh air drawn into the building via a heat exchanger. The filtered, pre-warmed air is distributed to areas of the home such as living rooms and bedrooms, meeting part of the heating load in energy efficient dwellings.

www.domusventilation.co.uk

Thermal bridging issue must be crossed



Hard foam insulation products such as Eurowall Cavity or the full-fill version, Eurowall +, offer an effective, easy-to-fit solution to heat loss caused by thermal bridging in cavity walls. User-friendly, the Eurowall PIR panels match the height of a wall's blockwork, thus eliminating the need for

on-site cutting and resizing to result in a time and cost-effective installation. Eurowall + panels feature an innovative tongue and groove detail on all four sides. This means the panels not only slot together easily, they produce a tight-locking finish that minimises heat loss through thermal bridging and offer increased protection against wind-driven rain, as well as improved airtightness. Visit the **Recticel** website for more information.

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Global by DRU gas fires, attractive solutions for new build and refurbishment projects.



Global by DRU 55XT BF cavity wall gas fire in slimline surround

DRU, based in the Netherlands, is a leading European manufacturer and distributor of contemporary gas fires, electric fires, wood stoves and bioethanol fires.

The Global by DRU range is a selection of gas fires that provide attractive solutions for new build and refurbishment projects. They include fires that are compatible with standard British chimneys, false chimneys and a unique cavity wall model.

An essential component is the innovative DRU TruFlame® burner. Rather than a simple

line burner it follows the contours of the logs, creating a flame pattern that is much more authentic, with high, dense flames underpinned by realistic glowing embers.

The TruFlame® range has three models with the following variations:

GLOBAL BY DRU 55XT AND 70XT BF AND CF

The 55XT is a compact fire, while the 70XT is more expansive. They both include conventional flue versions for Class 1 chimneys and balanced flue versions that can be installed

into existing chimneys, false chimneys or other architectural features.

They have log effect fire beds with realistic flames, a choice of black, mirrored Ceraglass or classic brick interior finishes and the option of standard or Clear View anti-reflective glass that replicates the appearance of an open fire. Both models are compatible with natural gas or LPG.

DRU GLOBAL 55XT BF CAVITY WALL GAS FIRE

This unique gas fire is designed to fit neatly into a brick wall cavity, as found in most homes that have been built since the 1960s. The compact nature of the design allows it to be combined with a slimline fire surround, which creates an impressive fireplace that takes up very little floor space, while the clever 'snorkel-shaped' balanced flue assembly ends in a simple terminal on the outside wall.

All the new Global TruFlame® gas fires have high efficiency ratings and are compatible with the latest international emissions regulations.

In addition, Global by DRU comprises a further 9 balanced flue models with front, 2-sided and 3-sided variations. With their high efficiency, they will enhance the energy ratings of both new-build and refurbishment projects and are highly recommended for architects and specifiers.



Global by DRU 70XT

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TAKING A FAR SIGHTED VIEW

Nick Gander and Rod Davies of Energy Carbon discuss why they believe the Government is missing a trick with its Future Homes Standard, namely to promote the benefits of 'far infrared' radiation



In January, as millions of people adjusted to life under the third national coronavirus lockdown, the Government quietly released a document with sweeping implications for the future of UK construction.

This was the Government's response to a 2019 consultation it held on its Future Homes Standard – Whitehall's attempt to dramatically reduce the environmental damage caused by Britain's houses and the housebuilding sector, as part of broader efforts to achieve net-zero carbon by 2050.

The standard's aim is simple, but far-reaching. It's designed to cut the carbon produced by the average new-build house by between 75 and 80 per cent in the coming years – something that would make a huge contribution to that quest for net-zero.

Originally, Ministers had intended to introduce interim measures in 2020 to strengthen Building Regulations as a stepping-stone to the full Future Homes

Standard. These measures would aim to cut the carbon emissions of the average new-build by 31 per cent.

Unsurprisingly, given the vast disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic, this was postponed.

In its consultation response, however, the Government announced that this interim phase would begin in 2021. Details will be finalised by December 2021, before coming into force officially in June 2022.

THE WHEELS BEGIN TO TURN

In January the industry also got some much-needed clarification about exactly what the measures would entail.

With its interim 'stepping-stone' to the full Future Homes Standard, the Government's aim is to ensure that new-built homes are not installed with fossil fuel heating after 2025, and won't require further retrofitting to make them fit for 2050.

The Government is also set to close

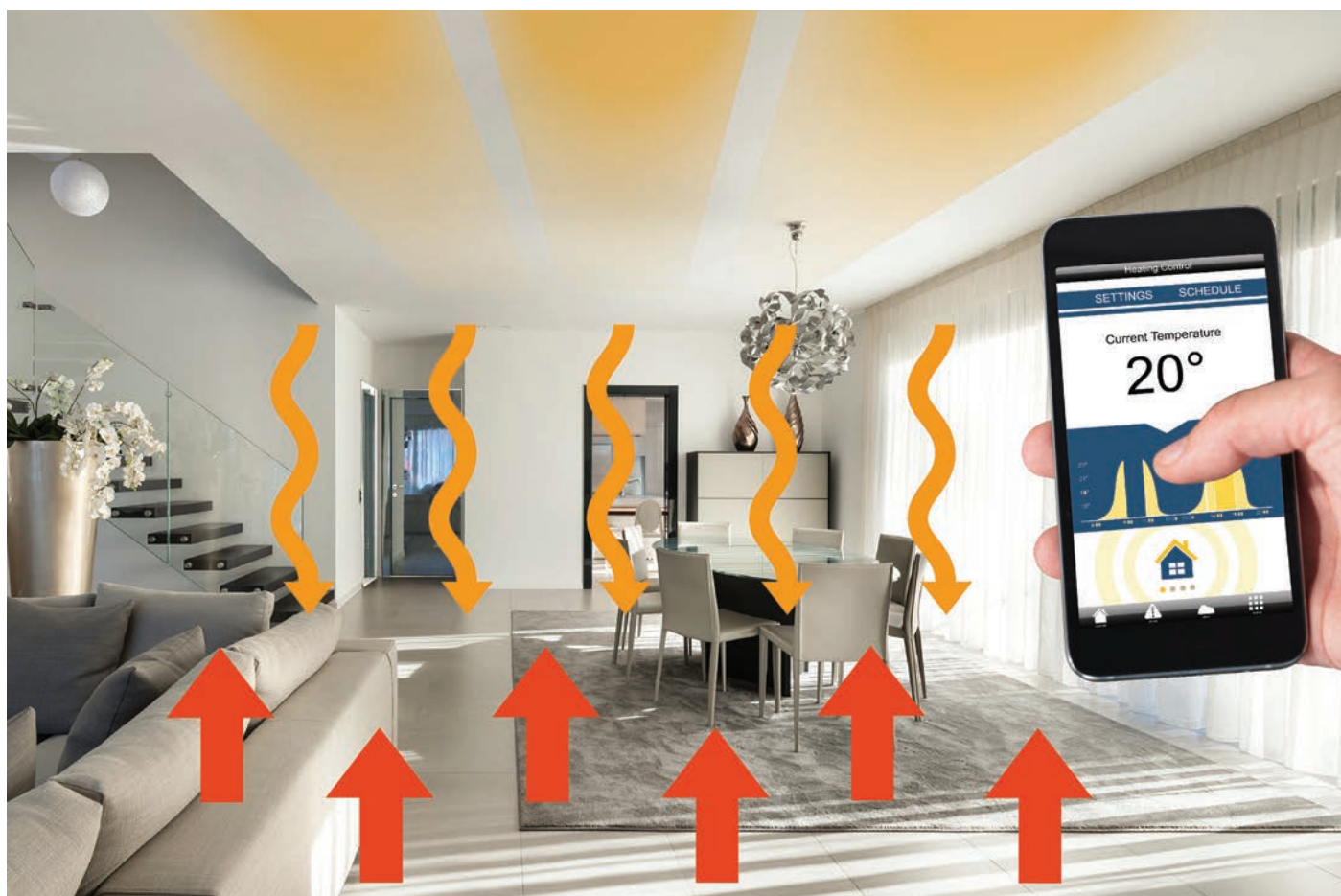
the loophole that's previously allowed builders to only have to meet the energy efficiency standards that were in place when a development first started, even if those standards change in the meantime.

From now on, rules will apply to individual buildings, not whole developments.

These are all extremely welcome moves. It feels like, finally, the wheels of the urgently-needed net-zero transition are starting to turn.

However, there are aspects of the Government's proposals that are less impressive.

THE GOVERNMENT'S AIM IS TO ENSURE THAT NEW-BUILT HOMES ARE NOT INSTALLED WITH FOSSIL FUEL HEATING AFTER 2025



NO MAGIC BULLET

In their consultation response, Ministers explicitly say that “low carbon heating systems will be integral to the specification of the Future Homes Standard”.

However, they then go on to say that “we anticipate that heat pumps will become the primary heating technology for new homes.”

Arguably, however, the industry is likely to draw on a variety of different technologies to help heat homes both sustainably and efficiently. While air-source and ground-source heat pumps have their place – they come with their

own issues, such as expensive annual maintenance visits and the likely need to replace them within 30 years.

The Government is therefore being very short-sighted by presenting this one heating technology as the solution to a complex problem – a problem likely to need all sorts of different systems to properly address.

FAR-INFRARED

So far in any of its documentation relating to the Future Homes Standard, the Government is yet to mention the huge potential of far-infrared.

Infrared refers to a division of the

electromagnetic spectrum. Within that division, there are three types of infra-red radiation: near infrared, mid infrared and far-infrared – and it’s far-infrared that’s by far the most beneficial for heating homes, as well as for their occupants.

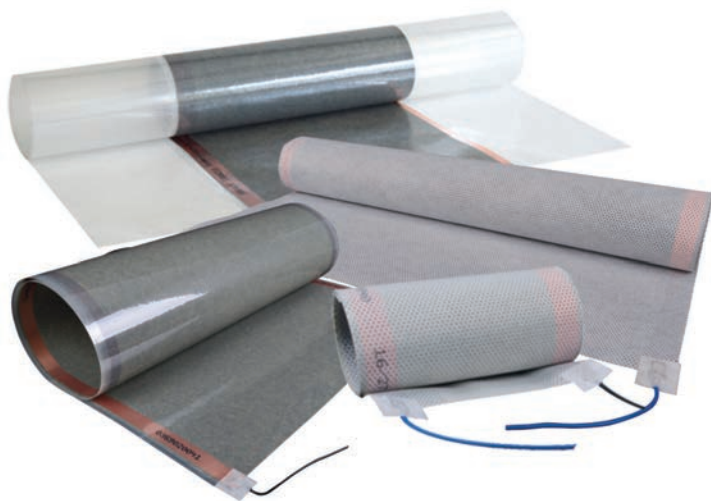
Far-infrared is in fact the exact same frequency of light generated by the sun, invisible to the naked eye, but capable of warming us directly. Far-infrared radiation warms all the surfaces and objects in a room, rather than the air – and those surfaces and objects then go on to radiate heat themselves.

The embodied heat gathered in these areas is slowly released back into the room, letting occupants turn down the thermostat. This in turn allows for a very fast reaction time to perfectly control the room temperature.

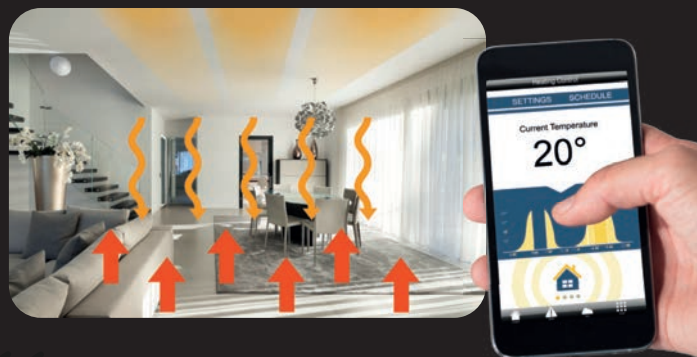
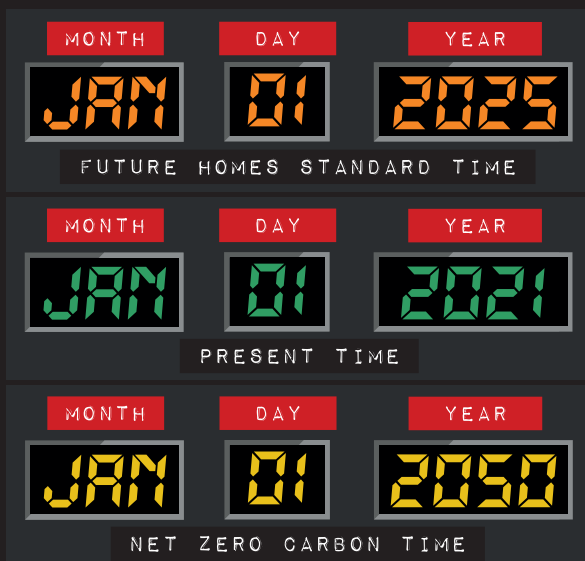
The fast reaction times mean occupants feel the benefits within minutes of the thermostat switching back on – saving energy, and cutting carbon emissions.

Systems using the technology can make a major contribution to the collective effort to reach zero carbon by 2050 – and as such the Government should seriously consider promoting its use as part of the Future Homes Standard.

Nick Gander and Rod Davies are co-founders of Energy Carbon



FUTURE HEATING FOR FUTURE HOMES



Great Scott! There's now less than five years before the government brings in its Future Homes Standard – the strict new home sustainability rules that mean a new-build house will have to produce up to 80% less carbon than the average property does today.

Easily plastered into the ceiling or placed behind the plasterboard, Energy Carbon's state-of-the-art far infrared heating technology can help house builders hit those tough new targets, and is perfect for modular and new-build.

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Contracts awarded to Offsite Solutions



Willmott Dixon has awarded two contracts totalling £3.5m to **Offsite Solutions** to supply bathroom pods for a £78m regeneration scheme in Birmingham. This use of offsite manufacturing will increase time efficiency by 30 per cent as well as maximise the cost, quality, and sustainability benefits. Offsite

Solutions is manufacturing 692 steel-framed bathroom and ensuite shower pods for the two apartment buildings. Each pod features contemporary grey floor and wall tiles, a wall-mounted D-shaped hand basin, and heated towel rail. The bath has a hand-held shower on a sliding rail. The shower rooms are fitted out with a hand-held rain shower, a large shower tray and sliding glass door. There is also a single bar towel rail adjacent to the shower or bath.

www.offsitesolutions.com

Fibo reaffirms commitment to environment



As part of its continued commitment to sustainability, **Fibo**, the leading supplier of waterproof wall panels, is now providing customers with easier access to its environmental data, with its wall panel EPD now available to download online. The Environmental Product Declaration (EPD)

provides quality-assured, quantifiable environmental data on Fibo's waterproof wall panels. As developers, contractors and housing associations pledge to build "greener", EPDs form a key part of this commitment, used to determine the environmental performance of a building product. Based on information from a life-cycle assessment, the EPD takes into account the panel's raw materials, transportation, manufacturing process and usage.

01494 771242 www.fibo.co.uk/product-information

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Regarded as the first of its kind anywhere in the world, "Passive House" is the name given to buildings that significantly reduce ventilation-induced heat losses and do not require a conventional heating system.

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A highlight is the DuraSquare washbasin with metal console in Black Matt, which stands out with its clear, pared-down design.

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New Cayono washbasin makes the perfect trio



The introduction of the of the Cayono washbasin, **Kaldewei** now offers the perfect solution for offices, hotels, commercial and residential construction; including a trendsetting washbowl, countertop or undercounter solution. The perfectly coordinated design of the bathtub, shower surface and washbasin brings effective harmony

to the bathroom. Cayono is the economical design solution for every bathroom and offers a balance in terms of quality, price and aesthetics.

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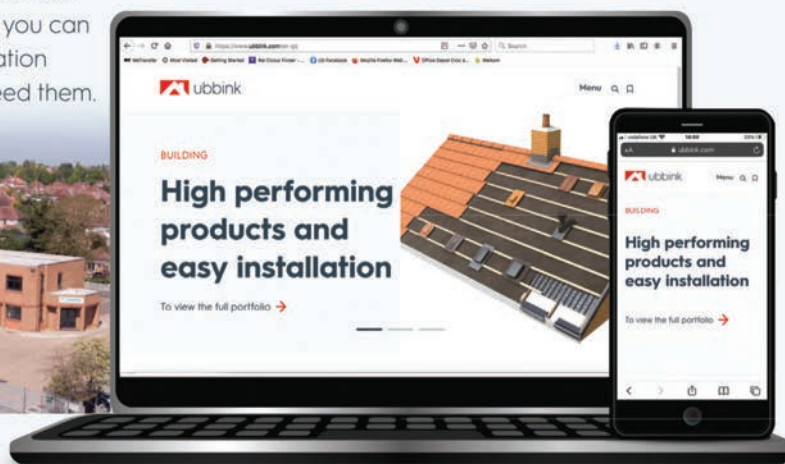
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Break the mould with Clean Extreme



Crown Trade's range of Clean Extreme Mould Inhibiting paints offers long-lasting protection against unsightly and unhealthy surface mould. Available in a choice of matt and acrylic eggshell, Crown Trade's Clean Extreme Mould Inhibiting paint range benefits from built in fungicide that prevents mould growth on the paint film.

Unlike other anti-mould paints available, it is also highly resistant to stains and can be repeatedly cleaned without any detriment to the finish. The specialist paint is ideally suited to damp-prone areas such as bathrooms and kitchens where condensation can build, as well as for use in void properties that are likely to be unheated and unventilated for long periods, helping to reduce maintenance cycles and redecoration costs.

0330 024 0310 www.crownpaintspec.co.uk

Chic new BLANCOCULINA mixer tap



BLANCO, as ever the innovator in mixer taps and perfectly matching sinks, has designed the BLANCOCULINA mixer tap range for the "passionate cook at home". Given the rise in professionally-styled appliances in the kitchen due to the trend for home cooking, this tap is an asset to all new and existing design schemes. BLANCOCULINA oozes design and quality engineering credentials and has won multiple awards. The tall, bendable arched outlet can be rotated 360° and can be pulled deep into

the bowl, preventing splashes while the practical magnetic outlet holder is another ingenious detail.

www.blanco.co.uk

Setcrete product and floor preparation guide



Leading manufacturer of high-performance floor preparation products, Setcrete has launched a new, 'fast check' product and floor preparation guide for its range of floor levelling compounds, repair mortars, primers, damp proof membranes and adhesives. Setcrete's product guide echoes the intuitive design of the range's clear and simple product packaging, which facilitates

quick and easy selection, focusing on each product's key performance capability and its primary application. Both the packaging and product guide make intelligent use of strong colour-coding and simple graphical information to further ease product selection. Setcrete's product and floor preparation guide is printed in a handy, pocket-size format.

www.setcrete.co.uk

Keller offers new colour and finish collections



Keller is well known for offering the widest range of colours and finishes in the kitchen furniture market – as well as developing different cabinet sizes and colours and being the first carbon negative kitchen manufacturer. 2021 is no different as new colours and collections

are launched. The new Keller MASTER collection consists of nine calm and stylish colours ranging all the way from Ice to Carbon. Available in melamine, synthetic high-gloss and matt, satin, textured and high-gloss lacquer, with plinths and carcasses colour-matched, the designer really does have a portfolio to hand for every taste and budget.

www.kellerkitchens.com/inspiration/program-overview/colour-collections

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Housing development offers a touch of class with Polyflor luxury vinyl tiles



Portabella is an award-winning property company made up of creative experts, based in Cardiff. The company has crafted a reputation for delivering desirable homes which inspire communities by applying unique design schemes to its individual developments, based on the preferences of its target audiences and reflecting the areas where they're located.

In 2015, Portabella was working on its St Winefride's development – a former art-deco hospital and annexed nurses' wing in Cardiff, which had been refurbished into 33 luxury one, two and three bedroom apartments. When developing its show home for the site, Portabella began searching for flooring products that would convey the quality of the designs, fixtures and fittings it would apply to the upcoming development.

The development is set in the heart of Cardiff's popular suburb of Pontcanna, close to

the parks, bars, cafes, restaurants and other amenities the area has to offer. Portabella wanted premium floor coverings which would reflect the community's assets but also look amazing to attract buyers – an essential role of the perfect show home.

It scoured the industry for suitable products and came across Polyflor's Camaro, Expona Commercial and Colonia ranges – luxury vinyl tiles that are designed to replicate the beauty of wood, natural timber and stone. While Expona Commercial is well suited to commercial settings, it is often used in residential developments. When used together with the Camaro and Colonia ranges, the trio offer a modern aesthetic and durability, particularly when used in kitchens and bathrooms, thanks to a polyurethane reinforcement, which protects the surface and makes it easier to maintain.

Available at competitive price points and

offering the highest possible standards of manufacturing, the floor coverings were specified for the Portabella show home.

The luxury vinyl tiles retained their quality and proved to be highly durable during an extended period of high footfall in the show home. They also received praise from potential buyers who commented on the look and feel of the tiles. It was enough to convince Portabella's specifiers that Polyflor should be the flooring provider of choice for its St Winefride's development, as well as future projects.

Since then, Polyflor's Camaro, Expona Commercial and Colonia ranges have been used in kitchens and bathrooms in over 200 properties across Portabella's Dixie, Churchill, Arbor Vale and Brickworks developments – the latter of which completed in 2019.

Peter Reilly, director at Portabella, said: "After seeing how Polyflor's products performed in our show home, we were convinced of their quality and performance, and the way the textures, colours and finishes were so complementary to the wider design schemes of our properties.

"Above all else, these luxury vinyl tile ranges are hard wearing and easy to maintain, which is what our buyers look out for.

"Polyflor's customer service, at every point of enquiry, has been excellent, with new samples sent out quickly and orders satisfied on time which means we have no delays in delivery. I'd highly recommend Polyflor to other developers."



0161 767 1111 www.polyflor.com

Time to get hung-up on the bathroom space



Today, more than ever, the key to enhancing buyer appeal is not just planning ahead, but designing ahead too. As buyers increasingly seek out washrooms that are not only functional but inspirational, it's never been more important for developers to add real value to new projects. Sophie Weston, channel marketing manager at Geberit, looks at the role of wall-hung bathroom technology in creating a stand-out space.

Wall-hung technology is an ingenious solution and one that is out of sight but very much front of mind for a growing number of UK developers. Offering a space-saving alternative to traditional close coupled toilets, wall-hung toilets maximise the bathroom space whilst offering a sleek, streamlined design.

SPACE-SAVING SOLUTIONS

By concealing the cistern behind a stud wall, a wall-hung toilet reduces the outward projection of the furniture to create the illusion of space. And, where space is paramount, opting for wall-hung ceramics can really help liberate the design process – complementing wall-hung ceramics with compact design choices can make even the smallest room appear bigger.

But it's not just all about space. Hygiene and ease of cleaning is now a huge consideration for homeowners - and lifting the toilet from the footprint of the floor is an effective way to make cleaning much easier and, with no hard to reach areas, dirt and dust accumulation is significantly reduced.

And for that extra design versatility, wall-hung furniture offers the opportunity to add the finishing touches to a project with the option of adding stylish flush plate finishes such as textured rustic wood or slate designs to shades that blend harmoniously into any décor style.

WORKING WITH GEBERIT

Whether you're new to the Geberit brand or an existing partner, we understand the importance of meeting the ever-changing business requirements across our sectors. Our bathroom collections provide housebuilders with a wealth of opportunities to offer a host of added-value specification packages and upgrades.

Our Geberit Select collection, launched last year, offers housebuilders functional, affordable and on-trend design possibilities across the basic-mid bathroom sector, with our Aspire collection offering developers the choice of

luxury, high-end bathroom ranges.

GEBERIT INNOVATIONS

Geberit's team of designers have created a range of bathroom solutions that optimise any room size without compromising on style. With more than 200 models available, Geberit's Duofix wall-hung frame system, together with our range of wall-hung ceramic furniture across both our Select and Aspire collections, offers developers a world design possibilities for any project.

A Geberit wall-hung bathroom means that developers can create a space that will stand the test of time. From incorporating odour extraction technology or touchless flush plates to future proofing the bathroom with superior acoustic flush performance and adjustable seat heights, opting for wall-hung offers developers the opportunity to create an innovative, design-led solution. And, with millions of Geberit concealed installations around the world, you can guarantee we have just the right product for you. .

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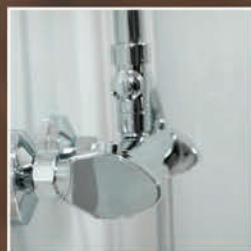
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KITCHENS FOR A NEW ERA

Tim Spann of Keller Kitchens takes a look at how kitchen designs might change in the wake of the pandemic.



Every year brings a new set of trends, whether it's fashion, cars, exercise or kitchens!

However, after the tumultuous year that was 2020, people are looking at their homes differently and figuring out ways in which they can utilise the space and create multi-functional spaces for the family. Choice and flexibility are needed when a homeowner is considering a new kitchen now.

COLOUR

The customer is looking for interesting colour and material combinations more than ever; so the kitchen specialist should be letting them know that the options are now not just black or white! There are endless possibilities in terms of design, space and technology in today's heart of the home.

The 'norm' is now not desirable – homeowners want their kitchen to stand out among the rest. Having the standard cabinet size is not enough for some clients, as they need that extra space –

and they can choose to have an XXL cabinet to facilitate the larger family.

Not everyone wants to have closed doors on their cabinets either, and the option is there to have open display units or add a smoked glass door.

Ultra-matt kitchens, with different coloured cabinets, rose in popularity in 2020, and they are here to stay. The material looks sleek, and it's easy to clean.

Choosing a material for a kitchen door is the first step depending on the budget – after that, the colour can be considered as most colours come in most finishes with today's flexible manufacturers.

The cabinet front colours are obviously the most striking points in a kitchen scheme, so making sure the right colour, or colours, is chosen for the room is essential. This all depends on the room itself – is it small and naturally dark without a lot of daylight? If so, you would choose a brighter shade to give the illusion that the room is larger than it actually is. Larger rooms can get away



CHOICE AND FLEXIBILITY ARE NEEDED WHEN A HOMEOWNER IS CONSIDERING A NEW KITCHEN NOW



with a deep navy, or even a striking black shade.

WOOD FINISHES

Natural wood is another classic trend that will never disappear. Wood look finishes are very popular right now, especially when used with contrasting colours and materials.

To get the full effect, contrast a warm oak finish with a dark shade for the handleless rail profiles, sink and tap, for example.

Wood effects for kitchens are enduring, offering reassuring warmth and charm standing the test of time. The new generation of faux wood finishes are stunning.

The 3D depth of grain with shade, light and detail is so close to the real thing, it really is hard for the untrained eye to tell the difference. Even the feel is so close these days. However, the wood effect finish offers the distinct advantages of price and durability. With a smaller budget, you can emulate the natural look with a considerable reduction in price;

and with a product that will take the knocks and bumps of family kitchen life without the damage that may occur to softer natural materials.

FUNCTIONALITY

We cannot sweep over the fact that our homes are used completely differently now compared to a year ago. We now sleep, eat, work, home-school and exercise under the one roof. Creating a multi-functional hub to accommodate for all of those things is essential.

Choose a large island for your kitchen that can be used for the children doing schoolwork, or simply as a home office for those that don't have the luxury of a spare room they can convert.

Lighting is a factor that has to be considered too. It can be added almost anywhere in the kitchen – inside cabinets, drawers or underneath the overhead cabinets or shelves. People also choose kitchen lighting for the aesthetic appeal as well as functionality – choosing different colours and settings.

Making sure the kitchen has the latest

high-tech gadgets and appliances is also key. Installing a hot tap so cooking dinner or even making a cup of tea is easier, or install charging pads for mobile phones and smart devices. The kitchen is now a meeting hub for all members of the family and somewhere where everyone wants to be – even if there's no cooking happening!

SUSTAINABILITY

Most consumers are now more aware of sustainable products when purchasing items for their home and the kitchen is no exception. New builds and contracts lead the way in terms of their needs and drive towards sustainability by choice and as required.

Consumer demand and forward-thinking retailers are striving for differentiation and planet friendly solutions, and questions about sustainability are being asked of manufacturers more than ever before.

Tim Spann is national sales manager UK at Keller Kitchens

CaberDek even protects against puppy puddles!



Cheshire Eco-Build is always careful to source environmentally-responsible products so choosing **Norbord's** carbon negative CaberDek and SterlingOSB Zero was an obvious move. The family-run business is known for renovation and extension projects. The latest undertaking has been a complete renovation of a four-bedroom bungalow recently bought at auction.

With challenging weather conditions and a young puppy visiting site, the protective film on CaberDek flooring panels was put to the test. "We were really impressed with CaberDek which we chose for its protective film. It was just the right size, was easy to put together and it formed a really sturdy, water-tight structure", said Sally Hilton, the company's director.

www.norbord.co.uk

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With street-smart designs for men and women, all **Snickers Workwear** jackets include must-have features that focus on fit and freedom of movement as well as using innovative fabrics that deliver long lasting protection and stretch comfort. Snickers Workwear has Jackets that will work on site, are ideal for leisure, always ensuring optimal performance, comfort, good looks and visibility. ALLROUNDWork Jackets are just what the name suggests, delivering a great all-round performance. There's also FLEXIWork Jackets that provide superb comfort and weather-proofing if you're always on the move and LITEWork Jackets that keep you feeling cool and looking good whatever you're doing in warm weather.

www.snickersworkwear.co.uk/products/93



Norcros Adhesives expands its successful Rock-Tite range

Strong sales through distribution of **Norcros** Rock-Tite Exterior Porcelain & Stone System have led the company to introduce an alternative formulation for the mortar element of this innovative 3-part system. Norcros Rock-Tite comprises a Primer, a Mortar and a Brush-In Grout and is designed for use by landscapers and garden designers, as well as tile fixers, and capitalises on a key trend in the tiling market currently. This is where internal tiled space is being extended to terrace or patio areas outside a building, which is part of a long-term lifestyle trend to enhance living areas by making better use of external space. The new Part 2a Rock-Tite Mortar Additive is a fibre-reinforced cement mortar mix, which is designed to mix with sharp sand to provide a high strength mortar for bonding concrete, natural stone and porcelain paving slabs to a hardcore or solid base. It contains Rock-Tite additives to improve performance, workability and freeze/thaw resistance of the finished mortar mix. The new system allows customers to purchase their sand separately if they wish, and the existing Part 2, which has the sand included, will continue to be offered. The Norcros Rock-Tite system has been designed to be simple to use by anyone who wants to create a seamless transition from internal to external living space in and around the home.

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47 is the new 50 – have you switched yet?

To build safer, stronger structures requires more than just top quality joist hangers; equally important is choosing the correct sized joist hanger. Regularised timber is now the UK standard, which means 50mm hangers are yesterday's news. Unlike rough sawn timber, where the width of a joist can be anything up to 50 mm, regularised timber is planed down and the edges rounded for consistency, so regularised timber is always 45 mm. At **Simpson Strong-Tie** we know that size matters! Regulated hanger sizes have long been offered across our hanger ranges. National builders merchant sales manager Steve Allen explains: "Our 47 mm range provides the correct, secure fit. Using 50 mm wide hangers leaves a gap between the hanger and the joist, which not only requires structural packing in order to meet regulations, but can still result in twisting timber and squeaky floors. The wider the hanger, the more important it is to use regularised sizing – and Simpson offer it as standard. We have 47 mm hangers for singles joists, 91 mm for doubles and 137 mm for triple joist applications."

01827 255600 www.strongtie.co.uk

WHY CHOOSE COMPOSITE DECKING?

Felicity Hodgkinson of Ecodek explores the benefits Wood Polymer Composite decking can offer to developers and home buyers alike



‘Kerb appeal’ is a well-used phrase in this industry, and creating an aesthetically attractive facade with an eye-catching front garden and driveway is key to enticing home buyers through the front door.

However, potential purchasers now also expect to see the same level of quality and attention to detail paid to the rear of the property. This is prompting developers to put as much effort into creating an appealing and impactful space behind a

building as they do to the front.

POST-COVID

The pandemic has shone a light on the importance of access to outside space and the impact it has on our mental and physical wellbeing, and with more of us than ever spending time at home, the back garden – whether that is an acre field, a small but perfectly formed patch of grass, or a courtyard – has become a focal point.

As well as providing a place for

escapism, the back garden is fast becoming viewed as an extension to the home, bringing the inside out and creating additional living space. As a result, developers need to be aware of the increased importance house buyers are placing on gardens when choosing their future home.

An effective and effortless way of creating an attractive outside space is through the installation of decking. There are two main types of decking available

IT IS CLEAR THAT OUTSIDE SPACE IS BECOMING MORE AND MORE IMPORTANT TO HOME BUYERS – AND CREATING AN ATTRACTIVE AREA TO CAPTURE THEIR IMAGINATIONS IS FAST BECOMING A PRIORITY FOR DEVELOPERS



on the market – timber and wood polymer composite (WPC). While both materials have benefits, many homeowners are leaning towards the WPC option, as it not only provides a pleasing aesthetic, but is safer, longer lasting, and easier to maintain than its timber counterpart.

COMPROMISE-FREE COMPOSITE

WPC deck boards present an attractive alternative to solid timber. Firstly, if you choose a quality product, it will usually be supported by a verified warranty – but make sure you do your research to ensure the warranty is genuine. Secondly, they are designed to be slip-resistant and will not splinter, rot or split, making them hard wearing, long-lasting and ideal for the unpredictable British climate.

Choosing a solidly constructed WPC

board, as opposed to a hollow one, helps to prevent water ingress (which can increase the likelihood of a board being compromised and eventually failing). A solid structure also provides greater noise absorption, so it's quieter underfoot, helping to reduce noise from neighbours.

STRESS-FREE

Unlike its timber equivalent, a WPC deck does not need to be stained, painted or treated to prevent warping, swelling or distortion.

Not only does this save both time and money when developing a home, it also presents a key USP to any future home buyer. There are many people who have neither the time nor the inclination to spend hours maintaining their garden, and this extends to the conservation of

any hard landscaping features.

By presenting an appealing timber alternative which requires only an occasional simple clean, you are offering potential buyers an easy, low maintenance and more importantly, stress-free, outdoor living option.

ANY PERIOD

The flexibility of WPC decking also makes it the ideal choice for any style of housing development, from modern estates to countryside dwellings.

The majority of manufacturers will offer a wide range of colourways and textures, enabling a developer to choose a design that blends beautifully into any environment. A sleek, grey board would complement any contemporary residence, while a more rustic, wood-like design in a natural tone may better suit a stone-built cottage.

Having the ability to create an outside space that merges seamlessly into the existing environment and is specifically designed to appeal to your target audience, is invaluable – and this is what wood polymer composite enables.

CONSIDERING THE ENVIRONMENT

It may surprise some to hear that WPC can be the most environmentally sound option when choosing a decking solution.

Not only can it be recycled repeatedly, but there are also companies out there that are using up to 95 percent recycled and sustainably sourced materials in the manufacture of their decking boards.

A handful of UK-based manufacturers will also offer a variety of board widths and lengths, as well as a 'cut to order' service, which helps to eliminate waste and any further environmental impact.

In addition, WPC does not need any protective chemicals adding to its surface, unlike timber boards, helping to reduce the amount of toxic substances being released into the atmosphere or leached into the ground.

THE PERFECT PARTNER

It is clear that outside space is becoming more and more important to home buyers and creating an attractive area to capture their imaginations is fast becoming a priority for developers.

Regardless of size or style of development, composite decking offers developers a cost-effective and easy to install, yet stylish, solution, while providing potential buyers with an attractive, long-lasting and low maintenance outdoor living space – the perfect partnership.

Felicity Hodgkinson is marketing manager at Ecodek

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Construction membranes are hidden protectors for Countryside Properties and emh group

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Wall and roofing membranes from Glidevale Protect have been specified and installed on a new build social housing scheme built by Countryside Properties PLC, working in partnership with the affordable housing provider, emh group.

The Protect TF200® breather membrane, branded as Countryside Properties, has been used on all external walls to offer protection during construction and to allow water vapour to escape into the external wall cavity, minimising the risk of condensation within the structure. All pitched roofs across the site

feature Protect VP300, the LR vapour permeable underlay, providing a secondary line of defence to the roof covering, ensuring water tightness and suitable wind uplift resistance to meet the wind zone requirements of the site's location.

The timber frame development, located at Daniels Way, Hucknall in Nottinghamshire, was constructed offsite, with wall panels built at the Countryside Properties Timber Frame factory in Narborough and erected on-site. The TF200 membrane was factory-fitted across all external walls before being delivered to site in stages, whilst VP300 was fitted to the roof structure on site by sub-contractors.

David Thacker, Director of Countryside Properties Timber Frame commented, "For over 16 years, Glidevale Protect has provided Countryside Properties PLC and formerly Westframe Timber Frame with high quality breather membranes. This demonstrates the value our supplier brings to our operation, helping us to deliver quality products to satisfy our end clients. The branded TF200 breather membrane provides the primary line of protection to our timber frame panels, increasing our brand presence and creating a unified Countryside and

The Protect TF200 membrane was factory-fitted across all external walls before being delivered to site in stages.



The Countryside development in partnership with emh group uses wall and roofing membranes from Glidevale Protect to offer added protection and minimise condensation risk.

Glidevale Protect approach."

The development is a mixed tenure housing scheme comprising of fifty dwellings, half of which are affordable rented with the remainder being shared ownership. Formerly a derelict industrial site, the land has been substantially re-developed for housing.

For more information, please email info@glidevaleprotect.com or call quoting 'Countryside'.

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Keystone brick slip feature lintels integral to Cheshire barn development

Keystone Lintels has provided a range of innovative, prefabricated brickwork solutions as part of the restoration and conversion of a series of barns into new homes along with the creation of nine new build houses.

Church Farm Barns in the village of Acton in Cheshire is located in a conservation area near the market town of Nantwich. The scheme, delivered in two phases, has seen the restoration and conversion of three barns and a six-bed Grade II-listed Georgian farmhouse along with the construction of nine new-build two, three and four-bedroom homes. Built by Chamberlain Developments, the second phase of the project required brickwork design for the new-build homes, which was in keeping with the heritage sensitivity of the site and adjacent barns and farmhouse. The specification required a number of unique, one-piece brick slip feature lintels which were designed by Keystone's technical team and manufactured in a factory controlled environment negating the need for complex brick cutting on-site.

The nine new-build homes feature a combination of eighty bespoke Flat Gauge Brick Slip Feature Arches, as well as Bullseye and



Parabolic Lintels, each requiring a flawless brick surround finish to match the brick being used on-site and in keeping with the appearance of the converted barns.

Fabricated off-site, Keystone's dedicated technical team ensured each bespoke lintel was manufactured to the size, shape and aesthetic requirements within the project build schedule.

Keystone collected a consignment of bricks from the developer to ensure the brick slips matched the ones being used on site. These were then cut and bonded onto load bearing lintels using a BBA approved construction adhesive.

The patented perforated design of a Keystone Brick Slip Feature Lintel allows the

adhesive to squeeze through the perforations and form a 'mushroom' on the inside, providing a mechanical lock between the steel lintel and the bricks.

The plans received from T G Builders Merchant originally included brick slip lintels for the front and rear elevations only however, Keystone's team were able to offer Chamberlain Developments a solution for the other more intricate brick details and the specification was therefore increased to include additional brick slip flat gauge arches and bullseye lintels for the side elevations.

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THE VERSATILITY OF TIMBER

Scott McAndrew of ITW discusses why timber is not only sustainable, but can also offer desirable flexibility as well as crucial fire safety



A lot of information has been circulating about timber being a sustainable material, with fantastic initiatives such as Wood for Good and Time for Timber aiming to tackle high emissions in the construction industry.

When sustainably sourced, timber is without question one of the most environmentally friendly materials currently available, being a natural carbon sink and truly renewable. This has made timber a popular material in green construction.

Sourcing wood from sustainably managed forests helps encourage biodiversity, it increases forestation, and it maximises CO2 absorption. It's now generally known that timber is sustainable and a great way of lowering the carbon footprint in construction.

But, being a versatile material, timber offers far more besides sustainability.

FLEXIBILITY

With the technical advancement of timber, designers and engineers now have the ability to consider the use of wood as an alternative to concrete and steel.

This opens up many opportunities and allows for greater design freedom. Timber is naturally beautiful and is a popular material that is widely agreed to offer warmth and a comforting aesthetic. As a natural material, it also has the benefit of helping a structure to blend in with its landscape, especially in rural areas.

That's not the only benefit of using wood in construction, however, as the use of timber also offers more versatility in a way concrete and steel cannot.

Across the world timber is becoming a great contender to concrete and steel. Designers and engineers are realising the strength, stability and design flexibility of timber products and how they are used to create high quality buildings. Timber has

TIMBER USE WITHIN CONSTRUCTION WILL UNDOUBTEDLY CONTINUE TO GROW AS MORE COMPANIES BECOME AWARE OF ITS GREAT BENEFITS



become popularised in Scandinavia, Australia and America, and structural timber buildings are pushing boundaries in design, attaining heights and spans that would have previously required concrete, steel or masonry to achieve.

Using timber as a new method of construction is not only a modern way to build but it's also an effective way to build. The advantage with the use of wood compared to concrete and steel is that it has the benefit of being able to be manufactured offsite – in a factory controlled environment – and being easily

assembled onsite. This has the advantage of speed, strict quality control methods, ensuring the correct specification of materials are used and a high degree of dimensional accuracy that you wouldn't get with traditional building methods.

Timber also allows for futureproofing. A timber construction's total lifespan can be extended to suit the flexible way we will be living in the future.

FIRE SAFETY

A hot topic around the use of timber in construction is fire safety. If managed in the right way, however, timber can be considered no more of a risk than any other building material.

As with any building material, safety is a priority, and all building materials are vulnerable to damage in the event of a fire and react in different ways.

With timber however, we have the added knowledge to be able to predict its performance in the event of a fire as it has a slow charring rate. The function and properties of wood being flammable remains unchanged within the pyrolysis zone, and as such engineers are able to use this knowledge to their advantage when designing for fire safety.

In response to concerns about fire safety in structural timber buildings, we've also seen the Structural Timber Association step in and do their own

analysis, investing close to £750k in fire research, which had led to the confirmation of timber being a safe building system when built correctly.

Modern international research into the development and risk of fire has helped change the approach to fire safety in buildings. Reported from Swedish Wood, we've seen cross laminated timber (CLT) being heavily used in Swedish construction. CLT is a smart environmental choice as it's made from renewable raw material and manufactured in a low-energy process. Products also have a high resistance to fire, improving safety in timber buildings.

RESURGENCE

Timber is currently undergoing a resurgence in use within construction, it has been shown to be a renewable building material with great benefits in terms of effectiveness, flexibility and design.

Timber is also an environmentally smart choice that lends itself to safe building designs, expanding methods of modern construction.

Because of this, timber use within construction will undoubtedly continue to grow as more companies become aware of its great benefits.

Scott McAndrew is engineer and research and development manager at ITW

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Tel: 01925 445 532
www.kemper-system.com

Traditional Clay Roof Tiles Ltd
Tel: 08008 886 633
www.traditionalclayrooftiles.co.uk

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Envirograf
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www.envirograf.com

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www.worcestershirecaravansales.com

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Email wcaravans@aol.com

Timber products

Hoppings Softwood Products PLC
Tel: 0800 849 6339
www.hoppings.co.uk

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www.hbdonline.co.uk

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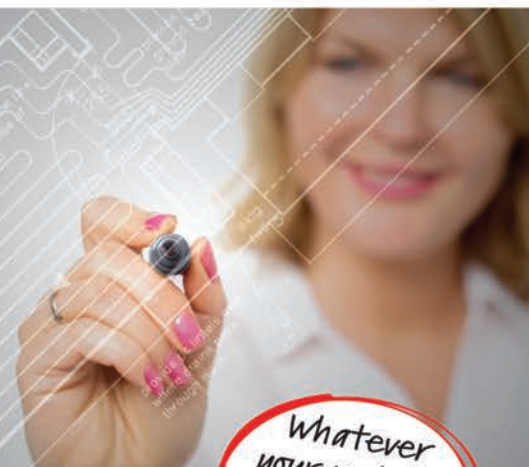


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