# HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

**OCT/NOV 2023** 





Regulator gearing up for new powers

Rishi u-turns on PRS energy efficiency

Ombudsman criticises more landlords

Homelessness on the rise

Calls to speed up banning S21 evictions





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# Editor's comment

# Never a dull moment, but wouldn't a period of boring normality be good for the sector



Patrick Mooney. News Editor

The list of challenges and changes facing both the private and social housing sectors never seems to diminish, but surely there will come a time when politicians will accept that landlords and their staff need a rest from the constant pressure of change in order to plan for and implement the last set of changes, or even the ones previous to that. The never ending merry-go-round of policy initiatives, new laws and regulations means that it can be a blinking difficult job to just keep track of what we are all supposed to be doing. Of course while some people say they thrive on change, it is also true that the fast pace of change can result in burnout and good staff leaving the sector prematurely.

The country is not building enough affordable homes in the places where people need them and as a consequence there is huge pressure on the rental market, which in turn is driving rents up and forcing more people than ever out of their homes, either voluntarily or as a result of being evicted. The cost of living crisis which has been going on for an awfully long time is squeezing incomes and making managing household budgets incredibly difficult.

One light on the horizon for tenants in the private sector was the plan to force landlords to improve the energy efficiency of the coldest and draughtiest properties over the next few years. But in the face of pressure from private landlords, the Government has caved in and cancelled this measure, supposedly on the grounds that we can still meet net zero carbon emission targets while at the same time delaying or abandoning the measures drawn up to deliver it. OK so we've seen Governments perform spectacular u-turns before, but this measure will hit vulnerable households on low incomes the hardest and will inevitably damage their health. It will also hit them severely in the pocket as they try to keep warm and dry in properties in a poor condition. While the Prime Minister chases votes ahead of the next General Election he is consigning at least 1.5 million households to a miserable existence. You have to ask yourselves 'Why?' and 'Is it really worth it?'

The use of temporary accommodation to house homeless people is already at a record high, with little prospect of the rate of increase slowing down or even tailing off. This is having a dramatic impact on the finances of many local authorities. In this issue we have covered the plight of Hastings Borough Council on the Sussex coast. It is not alone in facing a huge upsurge in homelessness, but this relatively small council has been driven to the brink of bankruptcy by the staggeringly expensive cost of temporary accommodation. The Government has done very little to help the likes of Hastings, in fact it could be said they have exacerbated the issue by cutting grants to the council, while at the same time overseeing changes to the housing market which has created the conditions under which household finances have collapsed, mortgage rates have soared, evictions have risen and there is little help at hand.

Politicians continue to tinker (at best) or they make wholescale changes (at worst) and all the while councils, housing associations and landlords are nearly all trying to do their best to alleviate matters. Sadly it is probably in their DNA to push change as they think this is how they make their mark. But in the same way that 'less can be more' so it is 'that leaving well alone, can be the best way to solve a problem. So if only politicians can resist the urge to tinker or coming up with yet another new initiative, then housing organisations can get on with the task of tackling damp and mould, improving communications with tenants and getting better value for money from their contractors, while at the same time building more homes. As an analogy, I would point people towards the health service which has endured a near constant stream of changes since 2010 (and probably before then, but I'm relying on my memory!) with successive Ministers bringing in new structures, new payment plans, new IT systems etc and where has it left us – with an NHS which is struggling to cope and with the longest waiting lists for treatment in its history.

If housing organisations, landlords and staff are to deliver the raft of changes brought in over the past 18 months in both the private rented and social sectors, then they need to be given a chance to deliver them. Tenants will not thank anyone if staff (and Boards) are distracted from the job at hand by another round of changes.



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### On the cover...

Rhys McNichol from Videx Security explains how remote entry management is transforming the approach to access control across local authority and housing association developments.

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# Government u-turn on energy efficiency disappoints sector

ishi Sunak has taken an axe to many of the country's energy efficiency targets threatening the delivery of net zero carbon emissions by legal deadlines and drawing widespread criticism from the social housing sector.

In a move seen as a cynical piece of electioneering and potentially counter-productive due to its impact on people's health, the Prime Minister signalled a dramatic u-turn on many Green energy policies which have previously enjoyed high levels of cross party support. Among the changes, Sunak announced were:

- Scrapping of plans for new rental properties to have at least an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of 'C' by 2025, and all properties by 2028
- A 50% increase in grant funding (to £7,500) for heat pumps through the Government's boiler upgrade scheme
- Giving households "far more time" to transition from oil and gas boilers to heat
- A delay on banning the sale of diesel and petrol cars from 2030 to 2035

While claiming he was still committed to delivering next zero by 2050, Sunak said he would achieve it in a more proportionate way, which would save hardpressed families thousands of pounds.

But many commentators have said low-income tenants will face higher energy bills as a result of the decision to scrap plans to force private landlords to upgrade their properties to make them more energy efficient. There were also no new incentives for increasing rates of home insulation.

In a hard-hitting response to the announcement Kate Henderson, chief executive of the National Housing Federation, said it was "hugely disappointing" to see the Government "row back from its commitments to net zero, particularly on improving the energy efficiency of our homes".

She added: "England's homes are among the oldest and draughtiest in Europe. Making homes more energy efficient is a win-win, not only helping



In a hard-hitting response to the announcement Kate Henderson, chief executive of the National Housing Federation, said it was "hugely disappointing" to see the Government "row back from its commitments" to net zero, particularly on improving the energy efficiency of our homes".

to save our planet, but also boosting our economy by creating jobs and, crucially, saving money."

"Our research found that retrofitting homes would save social housing residents on average 40% on heating bills. Scrapping targets on this could lead to people facing higher bills for years to come."

Ms Henderson said housing associations are committed to carrying out this work and "ensuring residents on low incomes benefit from homes that are affordable to heat".

"It's a commitment that will help people across the country. However, they cannot do this alone and need leadership, policy certainty and long-term investment from government," she added.

Just days before the Sunak u-turn, the NHF had

written to the Government calling on it to release the full £3.8bn Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund in the Autumn Statement.

Dan Wilson Craw, deputy chief executive of Generation Rent, said that cancelling higher standards for rented homes is a "colossal error" by the Government.

"Leaving the impact on the climate to one side, it makes the cost of living crisis worse and damages renters' health. One in four private renters already lives in fuel poverty and without targets for landlords to improve their properties, they face many more years of unaffordable bills. Energy efficiency is also an essential part of a home's quality."

# Private landlords urge Welsh Government to reject rent controls

The NRLA has responded to the Welsh Government's "Fair Rents & Adequate Housing" consultation, by arguing that any move to introduce rent controls would have a disastrous impact on the private rented sector in Wales.

In its consultation submission, the National Residential Landlords Association sets out how rent controls have significant downsides in how they influence landlord behaviour and stifle housing supply.

Commenting on the consultation response, Ben Beadle, chief executive at the National Residential Landlords Association, said: "With a chronic supply and demand crisis engulfing the Welsh private rented sector, it is difficult to think of any policy measure likely to worsen the current situation more than rent controls"

"Wherever they have been applied, interventions of this kind have served only to deter, rather than encourage, investment."

"If the Welsh Government is serious about addressing high rents and a lack of supply, it must take tangible steps to increase housing supply. A good place to start would be to back our calls for pro-growth measures to encourage investment in homes to rent."

"Now is not the time for failed ideologies to be pursued. We need progressive policies which will allow private landlords to deliver the high-quality private rented accommodation tenants need."

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# Nearly five million households will live in unaffordable homes by 2030

ne in every five households in England will be forced to spend more than a third of their income on housing by the end of the next Parliament unless politicians commit to a long-term plan to fix the housing crisis.

This is the message arising from a new report by the Pragmatix Advisory on behalf of the National Housing Federation (NHF). The wide-ranging report looks at how England's housing crisis will unfold in the coming years without urgent action from Government

Rising mortgage rates and private rents, coupled with a chronic shortage of social housing, will mean a sharp rise in the number of homeowners and private renters struggling to meet their housing costs, heaping further pressure on budgets already stretched by the rising cost of living.

The report finds that by 2030, compared to the most recent official figures from 2020/21, an extra 1.7 million households will be living in unaffordable homes - an increase of more than a third (35%). This includes:

- 600,000 additional households living in unaffordable private rented homes, taking the total to 2.2 million.
- 1 million additional homeowners facing unaffordable mortgage costs, taking the total to 1.9 million - more than double current levels.
- 1.5 million families will be on the waiting list for social housing, a rise of 350,000 or almost
- 150,000 children will be homeless and living in emergency accommodation like B&Bs and hostels by 2030 - an increase of 20,000. This is the equivalent of six children in every school in England.

The consequences will be most severe for those on low incomes who are already struggling to afford

private rents and cannot access social housing. Future rent rises will force more of these families into overcrowded conditions, increase levels of poverty and debt, and put many at risk of homelessness.

Overcrowding and homelessness among children in England is already at record levels. Earlier this year NHF research revealed more than 310,000 children are sharing a bed with their parents or siblings; and the number of homeless children stuck in temporary accommodation reached 130,000 this year, the highest number since records began.

### SITUATION HAS WORSENED

Previous action by successive governments has focused on short term and piecemeal policy decisions around housing, which has seen the situation worsen for many.

For example, the decision to cut funding for affordable housing by 63% in 2010 led to an 80% fall in the number of new social homes being built, forcing many low-income families into unaffordable and insecure privately rented homes. NHF research from 2019 revealed that nearly half of children in private rented homes are living in poverty.

The NHF is calling for a strategic, long-term plan to fix our broken housing system, which can only be achieved through a commitment to drastically increase the number of social homes beginning in the next Parliament. A long-term plan must:

- Be based on ambitious and measurable outcomes for people in need of housing
- Be properly funded to meet the target of building 90,000 social rented homes each year for the next decade
- Include funding for regeneration of existing homes to bring them to a decent standard and make them energy efficient.

The decision to cut funding for affordable housing by 63% in 2010 led to an 80% fall in the number of new social homes being built

A recent YouGov poll commissioned by the NHF showed there is strong public support for building social housing. It found that voters from all the main political parties think the government should prioritise building social housing above any other

Kate Henderson, chief executive of the NHF, said: "There is no more time to lose. For decades, the number of families who can't access a safe, secure home has been rising. Without urgent action from government, by the end of the next parliament many more families will be left living in unsuitable and unaffordable housing, affecting their health, economic security and life chances."

"Many at the sharpest end of the crisis are forced to share beds or live in shared emergency accommodation such as B&Bs or hotels while struggling to pay for food and other essentials."

"Today's report shows that short-term, piecemeal decisions on housing have created an emergency that will continue escalating at a rapid rate. But this is a crisis that can be solved. By committing to a long-term plan for housing that is properly funded and based on ambitious, measurable outcomes, politicians of all parties could begin to turn the tide and create real change for people in need of affordable housing."

# Action needed to speed up the property possession process

A private landlords organisation is demanding action to tackle a backlog of possession cases clogging up the courts, with some landlords waiting more than six months to get back their properties.

The National Residential Landlords Association has called on Justice Ministers to take action to speed up the possession process as a matter of urgency.

The Government has promised reform, as called for by the NRLA, following the end of Section 21 repossessions as outlined in the Renters (Reform) Bill. However the NRLA is concerned that no firm commitments have been made on how this will be acheived.

The organisation's concerns are shared by the Levelling Up, Housing & Communities Select Committee, which has warned: "It is not clear whether the Government fully appreciates the extent to which an unreformed courts system could undermine its tenancy reforms."

Before the Second Reading of the Bill, the NRLA called for assurances that Ministers will make an announcement - and has asked specific questions about the digitalisation of the court process and plans to increase the number of court staff dealing with possession cases, as well as calling on the Ministry to publish its test regarding the impact the Bill will have on the courts system.

Landlords also want to know what commitments

are going to be made regarding the length of time it will take possession cases to be processed in the courts under the new system, and how progress will be measured.

Ben Beadle, NRLA chief executive said: "Court wait times are a major issue for landlords who need to repossess property from anti-social tenants or those who are in extreme rent arrears."

"The Government must take positive steps towards resolving the courts logjam so that legitimate cases can be heard as swiftly as possible."

"Failing to do so will only jeopardise the implementation of the rental reforms and may well exacerbate an already serious crisis of supply of rented housing."

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# **Spotlight** on Devon highlights the unaffordability of rural housing

New research from campaign group Generation Rent has revealed that local rents are too high for many key workers living in the south west county of Devon.

Average wages for teaching assistants, taxi drivers, kitchen assistants, cleaners, and roofers living in the region were not enough to affordably cover the rent for a one-bedroom house in any of Devon's eight district or

Renting was unaffordable for care workers living in five of the seven councils in Devon and for pharmacy assistants and sales assistants living in all but one council in the county.

On average, care workers and ambulance staff spent 33% of their income on an average one-bedroom house in Devon, meanwhile sales assistants spent 35%, pharmacy assistants 37%, cleaners and roofers 38%, kitchen assistants 39%, and taxi drivers 40%.

Teaching assistants however experienced the most affordability issues of the roles analysed in this research, with 47% of their wages going towards average rents in the county. In seven out of eight district and city councils in the county, teaching assistants spent at least 40% of their wages renting a one-bedroom house on average, with this rising to 58% for teaching assistants in Exeter.

For communities to survive, local people must be able to stay healthy, receive an education, find a safe home to live in and purchase basic goods. But, if those working in vital jobs cannot afford to live in the area, everyone loses out.

Promisingly, a newly established Devon Housing Commission has launched a Call for Evidence into local housing issues.

Lord Richard Best, chair of the Devon Housing Commission, said: "The Commission is very grateful to Generation Rent for providing powerful evidence that people in Devon in a wide range of jobs face unaffordable housing costs. For many, rents absorb far more than the 30% that is commonly regarded as the maximum for affordability."

"This evidence demonstrates the scale of the problem in the county created by the shortages that push house prices and rent levels out of reach for the next generation."

A spokeman for Generation Rent, who campaign on behalf of private renters said the current cost of renting crisis is devastating Devon's communities, and they will support the new county-wide Housing Commission to tackle this head on.

# **Coastal council** almost bankrupt due to 'massive' rise in homelessness costs



astings Council in East Sussex has been pushed to the brink of bankruptcy by an enormous increase in the costs of providing temporary accommodation for homeless applicants.

The South East seaside town of Hastings has more than 1,500 households waiting for a new home and more than 1,000 people living in temporary accommodation, costing the local council a predicted £5.6m in 2023/24, compared to £730,000 in 2019 - a rise of more than 700%!

While the council's overall budget was £23m a decade ago, it has fallen to a little over £16.5m largely driven by a huge 90% cut in Government grants and other support, dropping from £15.9m to just £1.5m last year.

Without the high cost of temporary accommodation and housing, the council's budget actually shows an underspend of £1 million. But because of the huge increases in housing costs, a spokesman admitted there are going to be difficult decisions that have to be made across the whole council as it continues to try to balance the budget.

A recent peer review report by the Local Government Association (LGA) warned that the increased spend on temporary housing was putting Hastings Council at risk of bankruptcy.

The finance peer review team said it was "very concerned" over the council's finances and that in 2021/22 it had incurred a "significant overspend" on homelessness of £174,000. As demand grew further, this has grown to a forecast overspend of £2.03m for 2022/23.

The council has accepted all of the LGA's 13

recommendations and promised to urgently reduce spending, review all its spending budgets and prioritise financial stability. It has approved plans to sell off four assets to raise up to £3m, potentially using the money to transform its housing and temporary accommodation services.

Extra staff were recruited in July with the purpose of reducing the number of people in temporary accommodation and it was seeing the first "tentative signs" of a reduction. However the council is still forecasting an overspend of £697,790 due to an increase in provider costs.

Hastings is one of the poorest towns in the South of England. Having transferred its housing stock to a LSVT HA many years ago it has been forced to use expensive nightly accommodation from the private sector.

To address this, the council has approved plans to spend £11m acquiring properties to house people experiencing homelessness, and is also building its own hotel, which will be leased to Premier Inn.

Writing in the Hastings Observer, council leader Paul Barnett said the town's problems were part of a national housing crisis and that changes in the housing market meant more and more homeless residents were being placed outside the town.

Mr Barnett accused the Government of "dragging its feet" by refusing to increase the Local Housing Allowance and failing to introduce rent controls or end Section 21 'no fault' evictions. "They have even removed housing targets from local authorities, so fewer than ever affordable homes are being built nationally," he added.

# What do Tenants say?

'The builders were in and out the same day.
The mould is gone and no sign of returning after a few months...'

# What do Operatives say?

'The necessary PPE was provided in the kit. We watched the application video and set to work. It was nice to know we could contact Wykamol with any questions about the application.'

# What do YOU say?



# Regulator publishes first quarterly survey of social landlords' finanical health for 2023/24

**♦** he Regulator of Social Housing has published the results of its latest quarterly survey of registered providers' financial health which shows that landlords are continuing to balance investing in existing homes and building new ones while operating in a very challenging and fast-moving economic environment.

The report covers the period from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023. High interest rates, combined with increasing spend on repairs and maintenance, put pressure on providers' interest cover, although the regulator has assurance the vast majority of providers are managing their lender interest cover covenant positions.

Cash balances again decreased in the quarter. However, in combination with undrawn facilities they remain sufficient to cover forecast expenditure for the next year.

Spend on total repairs and maintenance reached £1.8bn in the quarter which, although below forecast, was still the highest Q1 figure on record. Over the next 12 months, providers expect to spend £8.2bn on total repairs and maintenance – another record figure. Providers continued to cite damp and mould repairs as a key area of focus.

Providers secured £1.8bn in new finance during the quarter, with bank facilities making up the

Will Perry, Director of Strategy at RSH, said: "Against this challenging economic backdrop, boards need to maintain a strong grip on financial performance so they can continue to provide good-quality homes and services for tenants."

majority of this. Mark-to-market exposure on derivatives remained low, with current gross expose

Providers spent £3.7bn on new homes in the quarter. This was 24% below expected levels (although only 3% below forecast for contractually committed schemes), which indicates an investment backlog. Although in line with recently recorded levels, outturn expenditure is consistently failing to keep pace with forecasts.

Providers attributed this to operational delivery issues, including delays to land acquisitions and planning as well as contractor insolvencies. In addition, some providers said they had started to reassess some uncommitted development projects.

Will Perry, director of strategy at RSH, said:

"Social housing providers continue to attract private finance and invest in new and existing homes. But they are facing significant financial and supply chain pressures, which are causing investment backlogs. We are also seeing evidence of providers mitigating financial risks by reducing development and agreeing covenant waivers with lenders."

"Against this challenging economic backdrop, boards need to maintain a strong grip on financial performance so they can continue to provide good-quality homes and services for tenants."

The quarterly survey returns summarised in the report cover the period from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023. The latest report is based on the regulatory returns of 202 PRPs and PRP groups which own or manage more than 1,000 homes.

# **Regulator of Social Housing consults** on changes to social landlords' fees

The Regulator of Social Housing is holding a consultation on proposed changes to the way it charges fees to social landlords, as it gears up for the biggest regulatory changes imposed on the sector in over a decade.

The changes to regulation include the regular inspection of larger landlords, including councils who were previously exempt. From July 2024, social landlords will need to pay for the full costs of their regulation, in line with many other regulated sectors.

The proposed changes to the fee principles are designed to ensure the regulator has the necessary resources, skills and capacity to deliver its new, proactive consumer role, building on its existing regulation of landlords' viability and governance.

The Social Housing Regulation Act, received Royal Assent in July 2023. It gave new fee-charging powers to the RSH to ensure it can deliver its expanded role. The exact fee levels will be confirmed following the consultation.

Currently the regulator is funded through a combination of fees and Government grants. Proactive regulation of the economic standards is funded by fees, while other activities including enforcement and reactive consumer regulation are currently covered by government grant. From 1 July 2024, the regulator will be entirely funded through fees. The RSH is proposing to:

- Increase the fees social landlords pay, to recover the full cost of regulation including its expanded consumer remit.
- Continue to charge a flat annual fee to smaller housing associations (those with fewer than 1,000 homes), and charge larger social landlords for each social home they provide.

- Start charging fees to councils owning over 1,000 homes - this is in response to the Government's requirements on funding and because councils will be included in the new programme of regulatory inspections.
- Charge organisations when they apply to become registered social landlords (instead of the current approach where landlords pay fees after they have successfully registered).

The consultation will have run for a total of eight weeks, by the time it finishes on 31 October 2023.

Fiona MacGregor, chief executive of RSH, said: "Our stronger regulatory remit will empower tenants and help us to hold social landlords to account. We need to make sure we have the resources to deliver this expanded remit, building on our regulation of landlords' governance and viability. That is why we're proposing changes to our fee principles, and we encourage landlords, tenants and others in the sector to respond to this consultation."

The full suite of consultation material including the questions, proposed fee principles and proposed fee levels, is available on the regulator's website.



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# Tenants over 55 hit with a no-fault eviction notice every 16 minutes

The housing charity and campaigning group Shelter wants Section 21 property possessions urgently scrapped as nearly three in ten older renters fear eviction.

In England, a no-fault eviction notice drops through the letterbox of an older private renter every 16 minutes, research from Shelter

The charity's research, conducted by YouGov and funded by The Co-operative Bank, has shone a spotlight on the struggle older renters face in keeping a roof over their heads. Nearly three in ten (28%) private tenants over the age of 55 – which equates to 400,000 people - live in fear of being evicted by their landlord.

People who receive Section 21 notices have only two months to move out and their landlords do not have to give a reason for evicting them. But a third of all private renters (34%) say, the last time they moved, it took them longer than two months to find a new privately rented home.

With Parliament back from its summer break, Shelter is urging Ministers to finally scrap no-fault evictions and protect at-risk renters from the threat of Section 21.

Shelter warns delays to the Renters (Reform) Bill are harming the health of thousands of older tenants. Research from Shelter and The Co-operative Bank found that a quarter (25%) of renters aged over 55 say worrying about eviction is negatively impacting their mental or physical health, while one in four (24%) said housing problems or worries had made them feel physically sick in the

The gross instability caused by Section 21 no-fault evictions has meant the rental sector is not fit for purpose for the growing number of older tenants who call it home. Nearly one fifth (19%) of adult private renters in England are over 55 - up 31% in the past decade.

Shelter is calling on the Government to make passing the Renters (Reform) Bill a top priority. Polly Neate, chief executive of Shelter, said: "Older renters may already be retired or planning for retirement at this point in their lives. They shouldn't have knots in their stomachs, constantly afraid that their landlord is going to kick them out of their home for no reason."

"We hear from hundreds of over 55s who have worked for decades in search of safety and security later in life. It's a disgrace that so many are being stripped of a stable home by the gross injustice of Section 21 no-fault evictions."

"Instead of forcing older renters to pay over the odds for often shoddy rentals that leave them sick with worry, the government must keep its word, and get the Renters (Reform) Bill over the line. Tenants are tired of waiting for a system that makes private renting safe and fair for all."

Nick Slape, chief executive officer at The Co-operative Bank, said: "Fighting inequality across the UK is extremely important to our customers, and that's why we're campaigning for better rights for renters alongside Shelter. We know the private rented system in this country needs urgent reform



Nick Slape, Chief Executive Officer at The Co-operative Bank, said: "Fighting inequality across the UK is extremely important to our customers, and that's why we're campaigning for better rights for renters alongside Shelter."

and this new research shows just how desperate the situation has become."

"Together with our partner Shelter we are calling on the Government to prioritise the Renters (Reform) Bill now, to protect tenants across the country and deliver lasting change."

# **Numbers in** temporary accommodation in England hits record high

The number of people living in temporary accommodation in England has hit a 25 year high, according to official figures.

Almost 105,000 households were in temporary accommodation, including more than 131,000 children, on 31 March this year. This figure is 10% up on the same day last year, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities data shows.

This latest figure for temporary accommodation surpasses a previous high of 101,300 reached in 2004, and is the highest since records began in 1998. The figures also show almost 14,000 households were in hotels or bed & breakfasts in the three

There are currently more than 200 families living in hotels and bed and breakfasts in Plymouth, and the local council estimates it will spend £6.8m supporting them this year, about 10 times more than five years ago.

"The whole system's broken," says Chris Penberthy, the council's lead member for housing. "We don't have enough affordable housing for people who need it. So our waiting list has gone from 8,000 to 12,500 in the last three years."

"That means that when people are in temporary accommodation, there's nowhere for them to move to, which means that there's nowhere for people in bed & breakfast to move to."

The figures also show a sharp rise in homelessness in older people, in the year to 31 March, with a 33.3% increase in the number of homeless households with a priority need due to

At the root of the problem, say campaigners,

is a lack of housing, exacerbated by a decision by Ministers to freeze local housing allowance rates for the past three years.

Amid soaring rents, that choice has left much of the country unaffordable for any household needing housing benefit to help pay their rent, while in many areas, landlords are leaving the sector.

Shelter says the instability of private renting is a major contributor to rising homelessness. Crisis chief executive Matt Downie said: "Once again, we see the crippling cost that years of no investment in housing benefit and a shameful lack of social house building is having by trapping families in temporary accommodation."

A Government official said it had "given £2bn over three years to help local authorities tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, targeted to areas where it is needed most".

"The Government is also improving availability of social housing," the official said. "We are committed to delivering 300,000 new homes per year and investing £11.5bn to build the affordable quality homes this country needs."









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# No-fault evictions by bailiffs up 41% in one year

Shelter is urging the Government to make scrapping unfair no-fault evictions a priority. Ministry of Justice data shows the number of households removed from their homes by court bailiffs as a result of no-fault evictions is up 41% in one year in England.

Between April and June 2023, 2,228 households were evicted by bailiffs because of a Section 21 no-fault eviction, up from 1,578 households since the same quarter last year. 21,332 households have been kicked out of their homes by bailiffs since the Government first promised to ban no-fault evictions in 2019.

Private landlords started 7,491 court claims to evict their tenants under Section 21 this quarter, up 35% in a year, putting thousands more renters at risk of homelessness.

Section 21 evictions are a major contributing factor to rising homelessness because they allow landlords to evict tenants with only two months' notice and they do not have to give a reason.

24.060 households were threatened with homelessness as a result of a Section 21 nofault evictions in the past year - up by 21% compared to the previous 12 months.

The Government first promised to scrap no-fault evictions in 2019 and in May, it finally published its Renters (Reform) Bill that would allow this to happen. The Bill has since failed to progress through Parliament and Shelter is urging the Government to urgently prioritise its progress in the Autumn.

Polly Neate, chief executive of Shelter, said: "With private rents reaching record highs and no-fault evictions continuing to rise, hundreds of families risk being thrown into homelessness every day."

"Landlords can too easily use and abuse the current system. Some will hike up the rent and if their tenants can't pay, they will slap them with a no-fault eviction notice and find others who can. We speak to renters all the time who feel like they have zero control over their own lives because the threat of eviction is constantly hanging over them."

"The Renters Reform Bill will make renting more secure, and for those who live in fear of the bailiffs knocking at their door, these changes can't come soon enough. The moment Parliament resumes, the government must get rid of no-fault evictions which have made the prospect of a stable home little more than a fantasy for England's 11 million private renters."

# Regulator recruiting new staff to deliver extra responsibilities



he Regulator of Social Housing has embarked on a major recruitment drive which could see it take on as many as 100 extra staff, needed to deliver extra powers and responsibilities.

Under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act the body will be at the forefront of driving change across the social housing sector, as Ministers impose higher service delivery standards on social landlords and expect their customer focus to change for the better.

From next year the regulator will start delivering a programme of planned and reactive inspections, backed up by a raft of sanctions including a power to issue unlimited fines on offending housing associations and councils.

Adverts have already been out for four Assistant Directors covering areas such as regulatory engagement, assessment and tenant engagement. The recruitment process for additional posts is expected to continue into next

year, with the regulator taking a more active role in monitoring the performance of social landlords against the new consumer standards and tenant satisfaction measures.

This is a far cry from the benign co-regulation system previously implemented since the early 2010s, but it has been forced upon the social housing sector by increasing cases of service failures and high profile tragedies like the Grenfell Tower fire and the death of two year old Awaab Ishak and a damp and mould infested Rochdale flat.

In recent years the regulator has taken something of a back seat as the Housing Ombudsman has taken the lead in exposing service failures at social landlords and championing the rights of tenants.

Writing on LinkedIn, Jonathan Walters, deputy chief executive at the regulator, said: "These are exciting and important roles at the heart of our regulation. There has never been a better time to come and join the RSH and make an impact on the social housing sector."

# Private landlords' sales profits down

Private landlords selling property will typically make around £10,500 less than they would have done had they sold in 2022 according to a new analysis.

The data from letting and estate agents Hamptons suggests that so far this year, the average landlord in England and Wales has sold their buy-to-let for £94,800 more than they initially paid for the property, having owned it for an average of 11 years.

However this gain has shrunk by around 10% or £10,500 from a record £105,300 achieved last year and is similar to what landlords selling in 2016 typically achieved.

Hamptons have used Land Registry figures to

make its calculations and the gains do not include tax and other charges.

It said average gains by buy-to-let landlords were down in every region, with the largest falls, in percentage terms, in the north. This, the report says, reflects a shift in the type of homes being sold, with smaller terraced houses and flats making up a higher proportion of buy-to-let sales, both of which have seen lower price growth.

The pressure on landlords caused by rising costs across the board has seen rents rise with the report estimating around 35,000 landlords are coming off fixed-rate mortgages each month, with many trying to balance the books by paying down debt and bringing rents in line with market rates.

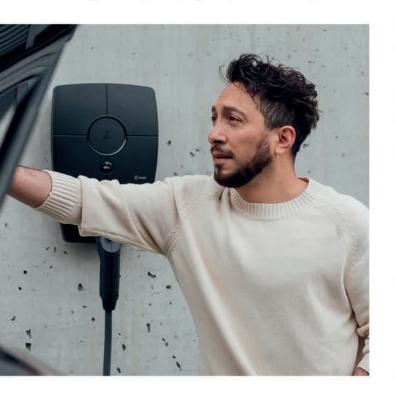


# Zaptec EV Chargers: Quick Installation, Quality Hardware, Cost-Efficient, **Excellent Safety**

With the public's swift uptake of electric vehicles (EVs), landlords, housing associations and owners of large shared parking spaces are having to keep up with the parking demands of EV drivers and those who work in business's who have an electrified fleet. Navigating the rapidly growing electric car charger market comes with its challenges. With a vast choice of EV manufacturers to choose from, some offer more than others when it comes to safety, quality and smart technology.

Of the legitimate options on the market, many tick some boxes, but not all. Sifting through products online, learning new terminology and technologies can be hard at times. So we have made your job easier buy introducing an AC (alternating current) charger which has already been chosen as a favourite by 6 of the UK's biggest housing developers, because, well, it's a perfect fit!

Since launching to the UK market in 2021, Norwegian brand Zaptec has established itself as the go-to manufacturer of high-quality EV chargers that look the part without breaking the bank. Combining sleek Scandi design with state-of-the-art charging hardware, Looking for the highest-quality chargers at affordable prices that



# A compact range that meets all your customer's needs

Zaptec currently offer two charge points, the Zaptec Go and the Zaptec Pro. The Zaptec Go is perfect for fast and simple home installations while the Pro is oriented toward large site installations, specifically shared parking, apartments and workplaces.

Last year, the Zaptec Go was internationally recognised as the winner of the 2022 Red Dot Design Award and the Zaptec Pro gained its' well deserved patent status for its unique 'phase rotation' capabilities ensuring the car receives the maximum available power. The Zaptec Pro provides an excellent, end user experience where users can scan an RFID key and simply monitor the electric they use. Many government grants are available to help landlords and business owners with the costs of installation.

# Scandinavian simplicity & next-gen tech

Zaptec have been producing charging points since 2016 and have supplied over 250,000 units with a reliability rate of 99.7%. While packing all the features you would expect from a next-generation charging solution. One being Wi-Fi and 4G SIM connectivity making them simple to commission and provide software updates even in unoccupied properties. All Zaptec chargers are designed, engineered and manufactured in Norway, so there is no need to worry about the cold, rainy weather conditions, the Zaptec Pro has already been proven to work in the bitter chill of the Arctic Circle!

# Fast install & lead times

The Zaptec Pro was developed to be quick and easy to install, saving time and money - and has been voted a favourite amongst installers in the UK. The AC commercial charger, has a backplate which makes the charger scalable. Have all the disruptive work done once, utilise the grant, save money, and purchase the charging unit at a later date when you wish to scale up. This is one of the most important considerations for many, who are seeking to streamline fleets, apartment developments and adherence to new legislation and meet their requirements without additional hassle. Zaptec UK hold substantial stock in the UK, minimising national lead times to help

## 5-year Guarantee

Zaptec is the only manufacturer to offer a 5 year guarantee on all of it's products rather than the standard 1-3 year warranty of its competitors.

In summary, Zaptec offer developers two high-quality, safe and cost effective solutions for both houses and apartments. The Zaptec Pro and Zaptec Go combine guick and easy installation with award winning design that customers and users will appreciate. To top it all off, Zaptec was voted the safest EV charger with the best technology in 2022 by the NAF (Norwegian Automobile Federation).

# Half of working renters are only one pay cheque away from losing their home

ne in two working private renters in England, some 3.2 million adults, would not have enough in savings to pay their rent for more than a month if they lost their job, research by Shelter has revealed.

Shockingly, 2.2 million renters (34%) would be immediately unable to pay their rent from their savings if they lost their job.

With tenants' savings all but drying up, these are some of the worst figures the housing charity has recorded since before the pandemic. In fact, the number of renters who are one paycheque away from losing their home is up by almost a third (31%) in just two years.

Official data shows that private rents are at a record high, and according to Shelter's latest YouGov poll 55% of private renters have had their rent put up in the last year - putting immense strain on people's finances. 2.1 million tenants (37%) are now struggling or behind with their rent due to the increase in payments.

Shelter is arguing the only sustainable, longterm alternative to expensive, unstable private renting is to build more social homes. In contrast with private renting, social housing offers long term secure tenancies with rents set at local incomes.

Additional research by the charity shows the benefits of social housing to local communities are significant with:

Shelter is arguing the only sustainable, long-term alternative to expensive, unstable private renting is to build more social homes

- More than three quarters of social renters in England (76%) say without their social home they would not be able to afford to live in
- 67% of social renters say where they live feels like a safe, stable, and secure home; and
- 53% say living in a social home enables them to stay close to family and friends.

Polly Neate, chief executive of Shelter, said: "Private renters up and down the country are facing a crisis like never before. Decades of failure from Government to build enough social housing means that the pressure on oversubscribed private renting is worse than ever."

"The severe lack of social homes means swathes of people are barely scraping by as they're forced to compete for grossly expensive private rentals, because there is nothing else. With food and household bills continuing to surge, the situation is precarious for thousands of renters who are one



paycheque away from losing their home, and the spectre of homelessness."

"The time for piecemeal policies is over. To jam the brakes on the housing emergency we need a genuinely affordable alternative to private renting. We know social housing works for most people because it's secure and the rents are tied to local incomes. Instead of empty words, the government and every political party must sign up to building thousands more social homes."

# Housing benefit fails to cover rent for 61% of households

New figures show 61% of households in England and Wales are seeing a growing shortfall between the benefit payments they receive and the rent they

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) data, released by the Department for Work and Pensions showed the number of households experiencing a shortfall was 52.8% higher in May 2023 than in April 2020, when LHA rates were frozen at September 2019 prices. This is the equivalent of 802,437 households, up from 525,088, with the average shortfall being £750 a year.

LHA rates are used to calculate benefit payments for housing costs. Historically rates were set at the average rental price for an area, with the sum regularly reviewed. However, the rate was reduced to the 30th percentile in 2011.

They were frozen between 2016 and 2020 when they were realigned to the 30th percentile once more at the outset of Covid. They have remained at this level despite rents going up by more than 10%

The news comes after analysis from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) suggested Local Housing Allowance rates now cover just 18% of the cheapest private rents.

The foundation analysed Government data to arrive at the figure, with the Institute for Fiscal Studies claiming only 5% of private rental properties listed for rent on Zoopla in the first quarter of this year would be covered by LHA.

## NRLA CAMPAIGN

The NRLA has been campaigning on the issue for some time, claiming the Government must reverse the freeze to support both the 38% of private renters in receipt of housing benefit, and the landlords housing them.

NRLA chief executive Ben Beadle recently gave evidence to a House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee, which launched an inquiry into the adequacy of working-age benefit levels in the UK earlier this year. He said: "Unless action is taken now to change LHA rates to reflect real-life

rents there is a real risk that some of the most vulnerable tenants may fall into significant arrears or homelessness."

"Keeping Housing Benefit rates pegged to market rents is vital - and the Government needs to carry out an impact assessment on its decision to freeze LHA rates this year as a matter of urgency, before determining rates for 2024/25."

As part of its welfare campaign the NRLA is asking the Government for the following:

- A reversal of the freeze on LHA rates which should instead be aligned to at least the 30th percentile - based on today's rents.
- Abolition of the five-week wait for Universal Credit payments.
- Payment of the housing element of Universal Credit in advance to better reflect rent payment cycles.
- The replacement of the existing advance payment loan with a grant.
- Allowing housing benefit to be paid directly to landlords.



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# More wheelchair user homes could save public purse millions

New research has revealed that building more wheelchair user homes for disabled people, from children to adults over 66, could save the public purse millions over a 10 year period.

In research commissioned by Habinteg Housing Association, the London School of Economics (LSE) and Political Science Housing and Communities research group interviewed people from three household types and analysed publicly available data to discover the value to society and the economy of building new wheelchair user homes.

The research revealed that the additional cost of building a wheelchair user home instead of an accessible and adaptable home - for a typical disabled adult of working age is around £22,000, with the potential 10 year financial and social benefit to the individual and the public purse being around £94,000.

For a household with a child who is a wheelchair user, the 10 year economic and social benefit is around £66,000, with an additional cost of around £26,000 to build a new wheelchair user home.

# Building more wheelchair user homes could save the public purse millions over a 10 year period

For a typical older wheelchair user household, the 10 year financial and social benefit is around £101,000, with a new wheelchair user home costing around an additional £18,000.

The positive impact on the public purse for each household type benefits both national and local bodies. For local authorities, savings amount to around: £1,700 per year for a household with a disabled child; £4,800 for a household of working age, and £9,200 for a later year's household. The NHS also benefits by hundreds of pounds per household per year.

New wheelchair accessible properties (known as M4(3) in building regulations) are built when Local Plans set a target within their housing policies. At present of England's 325 Local Plans, 162 have no target included for such homes.



# £10m 'green' transformation for Salford tower blocks

pair of ageing Salford tower blocks are going 'green' as part of a multi-million pound eco-transformation.

Housing association Salix Homes has unveiled its investment plans for neighbouring blocks Greyfriar Court and Whitefriar Court in the Greengate area

The 14-storey high rise buildings will undergo a £10m refurbishment, making them greener and more energy efficient.

The planned improvement work includes

external wall and roof insulation, new windows and ventilation; while the facade and balconies will be completely rendered and transformed.

An eco-friendly ground source heating system will also be installed, which, combined with the external insulation will improve the thermal efficiency of the building and help reduce energy bills for Salix Homes customers. The state-of-theart heating system works by harnessing the natural heat from the ground, rather than burning fuel to generate heat.

# **Orbit shares progress against** sustainability commitments

Orbit, one of the UK's affordable housing groups, has published its progress against its sustainability commitments in its 2022/23 Sustainability Report.

The Report details how the social housing provider is working to meet people's needs now, and in the future, while playing its part in the global response to climate change.

Over the past 12 months, Orbit has made

positive progress in a number of key areas including reducing its carbon footprint by 14% (38.5% against its 2018/19 baseline), introducing its first sustainability-linked financing facility and delivering £19.2m worth of social value to its customers. In addition, Orbit also achieved its ISO14001:2015 certification for its environmental management system by the British Standards Institute (BSI).



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# Conceal and protect pipework with Pendock metal boxing

hen concealing external pipework, building services and other utilities associated with low carbon district heating schemes or air-source and groundsource heat pumps, Pendock's metal pipe boxing range provides protection against accidental damage or tampering, while helping improve the project's aesthetics.

Bespoke manufactured to the individual project specifications from 2mm aluminium, as standard, metal boxing is available in two styles. CHM is a three-sided channel profile, for securing to a single flat surface, while the MXM is a two-sided 90-degree design for fixing to adjacent surfaces, such as walls and ceilings.

Both profiles are available with two fixing options for increased versatility - EFF profiles have an integrated external flange on each edge, enabling them to be readily secured with suitable fasteners, while IFA profiles are designed to be installed using separate, concealed fixing angles and fasteners.

CHM and MXM profiles are also used to conceal fire sprinkler supply pipework mounted in open balconies, or externally to flats, to provide added security and weather resistance. In addition, as metal boxing is noncombustible, it is used in high rise residential blocks to conceal interior sprinkler pipework where no sprinkler heads are present, such as communal areas.



Usually supplied with a PPC finish, which can be selected from any RAL colour to blend in or contrast with the surroundings, Pendock's metal boxing profiles are available in lengths of up to 4m, as standard. Other lengths and material thicknesses are available on request, as well as options to include perforations and hinged access hatches.

A range of dedicated accessories is included within the CHM and MXM metal boxing range, which includes internal and external corners, stop ends and joint covers, as well as

fixing angles, access panels and TEK fixings, which can be colour coded if required.

Metal boxing is part of the Pendock Profiles range of pipe boxing and casings, which includes pre-formed plywood pipe and fire sprinkler boxing, as well as boiler pipe casings. A range of technical information is available online including PDF and DWG drawings as well as NBS specification clauses.

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22 - 23 November, ExCeL, London

# **HOMES UK**

n 2023, housing providers face increased obligations to simultaneously: improve housing standards and tackle disrepair, empower tenants, meet net zero targets, address building safety and increase housing supply.

In the face of limited resources, it's more important than ever to collaborate and find complementary strategic goals to achieve more together.

HOMES UK and Unlock Net Zero Live taking place on 22-23 November at ExCeL is an unmissable event for housing and asset management, development and sustainability professionals.

You'll get the opportunity to learn from 275+ speakers across six stages with 70+ hours of CPD accredited content covering the top issues.

### HEALTHIER OUTCOMES: REDUCING CARBON WHILE TACKLING **DAMP & MOULD**

Awaab's Law within The Social Housing Act puts obligations on housing providers to take immediate action on dangerous hazards in homes including damp and mould. How can we improve the energy efficiency of homes while reducing damp and mould?

### HIGH QUALITY HOMES FOR A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE

While we need to accelerate the delivery of affordable housing supply, this cannot be done at the expense of housing quality. During this session we will look at how to design and build affordable homes that are suitable for the future.

## HOW CAN WE PRIORITISE AFFORDABLE HOUSING DELIVERY DESPITE **ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY?**

Housing providers are facing a plethora of economic pressures as a result of regulatory requirements, delivering net zero, and the need to build more homes whilst balancing asset management investments. How can we avoid trade-offs between investment in existing and new homes?

## WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO DELIVER RETROFIT AT SCALE & FOR ALL

There have been great examples of collaboration to deliver retrofit projects through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, but further action is needed to enable long-term area based retrofit collaboration. Join this session to understand how we can enable the mass roll out of retrofit activity by bringing together housing providers, local authorities and communities.



### **DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO NEW BUILDING SAFETY REGULATION THAT EMPOWERS TENANTS & RESIDENTS**

Learn how to navigate evolving building safety regulations and ensure remediation plans can be completed in a cost-effective and efficient way. Hear about engagement strategies that are helping to rebuild resident trust and gain clarity on remediation cost protections that could support leaseholders.

### **BUILDING CONFIDENCE IN THE PLANNING SYSTEM**

This session will discuss the opportunities and challenges facing organisations using the existing developer contributions system. How can we solve the issues that are limiting the delivery of homes in the planning system?

### **NEW & INNOVATIVE FINANCE MODELS TO FUND NET ZERO**

The up-front capital costs needed to decarbonise homes in the UK remain high. Join this session to explore the implications of the changing finance market, what lenders are looking for, and how ESG financing is pushing organisation's further on their commitments.

### IS CO-PRODUCTION DELIVERING IMPROVED SERVICE DESIGN & AN **ENHANCED TENANT-LANDLORD RELATIONSHIP?**

Listening and learning from lived experience, at a time of extensive "othering" as highlighted in the Ombudsman's report, is a call to action for housing providers of all sizes. Join this session to understand how RPs can include the tenant experience when making key decisions through initiatives like co-production.



In the face of limited resources, it's more important than ever to collaborate and find complementary strategic goals to achieve more together

### BEHIND THE WALLS: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN PERCEPTION SURVEYS & TRANSACTIONAL DATA TO INCREASE TRANSPARENCY

Despite the introduction of Tenant Satisfaction Measures, there is not a consistent methodology for how social landlords collect and interpret tenant surveys. Discover best practice methods of analysing and presenting data in a meaningful and transparent way for tenants and residents.

### HOW TO BUILD & RETAIN A DIVERSE & SKILLED WORKFORCE THAT IS **DRIVEN BY SOCIAL PURPOSE**

This session will uncover ways to put social purpose at the heart of recruitment and staff development to address the sector's chronic talent shortage and its impact on services and tenants.

Plus we'll also be showcasing over 150 exhibitors, which is a fantastic opportunity to meet your supply chain, gain industry updates and discover new solutions all under one roof. To help you navigate this, we are devising an improved innovation trail of not-to-miss highlights to help you get the most out



And finally, new for this year and in response to the skills crisis and calls for professionalism, we are introducing a jobs fair and series of talks designed to help both leaders who are recruiting and talent. HOMES UK and Unlock Net Zero Live will become a place to facilitate the knowledge exchange and connections needed to attract high-quality diverse people to a career with purpose and to develop those already in the sector.

If you're involved in housing and asset management, development or sustainability within the UK housing sector or a tenant or resident, then HOMES UK and Unlock Net Zero Live taking place on 22-23 November at ExCeL is a must attend for you!

Claim your free\* visitor pass for HOMES UK and Unlock Net Zero Live by scanning the QR Code

\* Free to housing associations, local authorities, public sector, housebuilders, master developers, funders, architects, planners and BTR landlords, student accommodation, retirement living and extra-care providers. Fees will apply to other commercial organisations

Article submitted by Homes UK



# Potential for unlimited fines in 2024 - A word from Jim McClelland

The countdown is on, with approximately five months to go before the new regime goes live in April 2024. Ensuring compliance and avoiding unlimited fines must be at the forefront of all Housing Managers' minds a highly likely outcome for Housing Associations that do not conform with the new Social Housing Regulations Act passed in July 2023, after years of landmark cases.

Many of us in the Building Industry closely followed the developments leading to the Act receiving royal assent earlier this year, not just from a professional perspective, but a human

Starting with the Grenfell Tower Fire in 2017, the scrutiny that Social Housing Providers are under has increased tenfold since the catastrophe, leaving those of us who have put the focus on 'homes fit for human habitation' for years now wondering, 'Why has this taken so long?'

Awaab's Law, passed in December 2020, was another heartbreaking turning point in acknowledging the responsibility of Social Housing Providers and local authorities to ensure accommodation is not just fit for purpose in an affordable manner, but in a safe and healthy one too.

Although not exhaustive, below is a list of action points that the Social Housing Act will aim to address from April next year:

- The new law will strengthen powers to tackle failing social landlords and issue unlimited fines. Tenants living in unsafe homes will be better supported by the Regulator of Social Housing.
- This will force social landlords to take immediate action. The Regulator will be able to enter Social Housing properties with only 48 hours' notice, to make repairs themselves where there is a serious risk to tenants.
- Social Housing tenants will receive training on how to engage with their landlords, hold them to account and demand a higher quality of service where needed.



- Social Housing Managers will now require an appropriate housing management qualification - either a Level 4 or 5 Certificate or Diploma in Housing, or a foundation degree from the Chartered Institute of Housing.
- From June 2023, the Social Housing Quality Fund will accept applications from providers for grants to fund repairs and renovation works in properties affected by issues including damp and mould.

We can't stress enough how vital it is that organisations tap into the Social Housing Quality Fund. The only conditions to access this funding are that the proceeds are used to complete remedial works, such as the installation of damp-proof courses or the eradication of mould, and the awardee matches the grant by 25%.

At Wykamol we are huge advocates for education, which is why our training courses for Social Housing Providers are and always will be completely free of charge. If the knowledge that Housing Managers and Operatives take away with them after a half-day training course is going to have a positive impact on their tenant's lives, we consider this a job well done.

The fact remains that further education of key individuals is still required, before the buying process begins, and who better to perform this training than the very people who develop and test products to deal with damp and mould under stringent laboratory conditions in state-of-the-art facilities?

Jim McClelland is merchant and social housing technical manager st Wykamol Group

01282 473 100 www.wykamol.com info@wykamol.com





'The events of the past 5-years have left us asking, "Why has this taken so long"; - Jim McClelland, Wykamol Group Ltd.

Structural Elements Roofing & Solar PV Feature



# **Smart roof specification**

Local authorities can better support social housing tenants through smart and well-timed roofing specification choices, as Stuart Nicholson from Marley explains

ver the past year, and for several reasons, residential energy costs have increased. For many social housing tenants this has subsequently led to a tight household budget squeeze and an ongoing struggle to deal with energy bills as part of the current cost of living crisis.

When assessing existing housing stock, local authorities and social housing providers need to be mindful of a landscape in which their tenants are predicted to remain under financial pressure while assessing any sustainable building investment solutions that can help to mitigate ongoing worries.

And heavily related to energy cost, evidence is also clearly emerging that for many people sustainability, energy efficiency and climate concerns are growing in importance.

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

A recent report published by housing association Orbit, shows that an increasing number of residents recognise the value of being more energy efficient as a way of mitigating the surge in energy costs, as well as being more aware of the nation's journey to net zero by 2050.

The research findings highlight that 75% of those questioned said they are interested in changing their behaviours to become more energy efficient. Reflecting a broader perspective, one in four said they understood what 'net zero' means and 38% stated that they were 'very concerned' about climate change.

### **CONSIDERATIONS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

So, with energy efficiency and reducing their impact on the planet increasing in importance for tenants, it's important local authorities carefully consider how smart and timely building fabric upgrades – together with the inclusion of sustainable solutions – can make a difference over the short and long term.

A prime example is the specification of high performing, cost effective and sustainable roofing solutions as part of retrofit schemes needed for the many older properties under local authority ownership. And central to this is the choice of solar PV.

PV technology is proven in the market, is readily available, and has become much more affordable in recent times – reducing by 90% over the past decade. The latest integrated PV roof systems also offer a more visually appealing and easier to install option.

Replacing a section of roof tiles as part of planned maintenance or fabric upgrades, integrated solar PV provides a sleek aesthetic and functions as a

# PV technology is proven in the market, is readily available, and has become much more affordable in recent times – reducing by 90% over the past decade

seamless part of the overall roof. This type of solar panel can also be installed at the same time as the rest of the roof tiles, without a specialist contractor and best of all has a payback period of less than six years.

### **ROLE OF VENTILATION**

While sustainability is now a primary specification consideration for social housing providers, there also remains other obligations that underpin holistic efforts to drive improvement to tenant comfort and future proof housing stock in general terms.

These include revisions to important standards such as BS 5250 regarding the management of moisture in buildings which can contribute to housing fabric issues if left unchecked. Alterations to the standard in 2021 took a fresh look at the role of roof space underlay.

The new standard outline specification must provide minimum levels of ventilation to the roof void, in combination with a vapour permeable underlay and air open roof covering to ensure there is minimal risk of condensation within the roof build up.

As such, local authority specifiers should ensure they include some form of supplementary low- and high-level ventilation in accordance with BS 5250 to prevent the risk of condensation build up and potential damage.

### **EFFECTIVE TIMING**

Finally, local authority investment decisions also need to be smartly timed. Undertaking retrofit or refurbishment programmes during the summer months can have a direct and positive impact, especially if introducing renewable systems such as solar PV.



Solutions installed ahead of the winter months - which inevitably lead to higher energy consumption (and bills), as well as building fabric stresses - can help provide access to more sustainable, as well as better ventilated roofing spaces, both of which deliver practical cost and comfort advantages for tenants.

### SINGLE SOURCE STRATEGY

For ultimate peace of mind as tenant sentiment and the regulatory landscape alters, local authorities should consider specifying a fully tested complete roof system. As an example, an entire roofing solution from Marley includes JB Red battens, underlay, tiles or slates, fixings, accessories, Roof Defence fire barrier and optional sustainable energy generation via integrated solar PV and Arcbox safety enclosures, and is also backed by a 15 year warranty.

Stuart Nicholson is roof systems director at Marley





# **BUILDING INSIGHTS**

# A PODCAST FOR THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

LISTEN AT HOUSINGMMONLINE.CO.UK



# Heat shouldn't cost the Earth

s your heat network performing at its best? It's a crucial question for housing providers and property managers responsible for heat networks. The truth, however, is many UK heat networks operate at only 35% to 45% efficiency because they're not correctly operated and maintained. Consequently, they become less efficient over time. This can lead to a host of serious problems, including high energy costs, excessive carbon emissions, impaired comfort for residents, shorter repair and replacement cycles and even potential safety issues.

Heat networks are high-value assets and must be properly looked after to ensure they live up to the substantial benefits they promise. When you consider that a 10% efficiency increase in a 50-unit development can yield a total scheme saving of around £9,612 per annum, while a 20% improvement can generate



savings of £16,121 per annum, it's clear why heat network maintenance is so important.

### **HEAT NETWORK EXPERTS**

Finding a contractor with the right expertise can be hard though. Although heat networks are growing rapidly in popularity, the technology is still new. Heat network maintenance differs significantly from ordinary boiler maintenance because a heat network is building-wide, and the ways in which the central plant room connects with individual dwellings on the network are very specific.

Insite Energy has been working with heat networks since 2009. Insite's maintenance engineers are trained in-house to ensure their knowledge of the technology is at the forefront of the market, guaranteeing more reliable and efficient heat distribution at a reduced cost.





### **TAILORED SOLUTIONS**

Insite offers the UK's most bespoke heat network maintenance service, tailored to cover your specific needs. Contracts are tailored to cover whatever is needed, including plant room assets, heat interface units (HIUs), heat meters, metering solutions, heat pumps, water quality and network efficiency improvement (NEI) services. In addition, Insite's ESCo Manager solution provides everything needed to effectively manage your heat network, without tying you into long contracts.

Ready to unlock the full potential of your heat networks? Contact Jarrad Bedford, Insite energy's maintenance development manager, for more information or a quote.

07899 030759 insite-energy.co.uk

# Vent-Axia welcomes updated PAS 2035

Ventilation manufacturer Vent-Axia has welcomed the publication of the amended PAS 2035/2030:2023 which now aligns with Approved Document F (Means of Ventilation) of the Building Regulations. The British Standards Institution (BSI) has published an updated PAS 2035/2030:2023 document in light of the urgent need to



decarbonise 27 million UK homes, the document describes how to conduct retrofits on existing dwellings to improve their energy efficiency. If you would like to learn more about Vent-Axia's Heat Recovery Retrofit Solution, please visit the website.

0344 856 0590 www.vent-axia.com/HeatRecoveryRetrofitSolution

# DF2 Heatflow downflow fan heaters

Consort Claudgen's downflow fan heaters are ideal for use in bathrooms and kitchens, providing rapid warmth and adjustable heat output of 1 kW or 2 kW upon installation. The DF2 Heatflow has a pull cord switch that operates on a 30-minute run-back timer, which can be deactivated before the timer expires. The DF2SL Heatflow



has a variable thermostat and requires a separately purchased wireless controller to operate. It's compatible with Consort's SL run-back timers and advanced wireless controllers, offering a more extended heating period and efficient heat control. Download BIM objects from Consort's website.

01646 692172 www.consortepl.com

# €CONSORT CLAUDGEN DOWNFLOW FAN HEATERS

Suitable for bathrooms, kitchens and drying rooms

With pull-cord switch or Wireless controlled



- Up to 2kW heat output for fast heating
- Wall-mounted
- Simple pull cord operation with DF2
- Variable thermostat and heating control options with compatible wireless controllers with DF2SL

01646 692172 • sales@consortepl.com • www.consortepl.com

# Embrace Cultural Change for Managing Property Health



Cornerstone fully recognise the call for levelling-up and seeking qualifications when dealing with property conditions and, it aligns with our significant number of independent surveys to date for the prevailing issue of...... damp and mould.

Will qualifications change the approach? Have the processes in place 'always been done that way'?

What if there was a flexible solution available to be embraced within your current operating systems. Would you trust and use it?

What if there was a uniform Framework as called for by the Housing Ombudsman.

### Would you trust and use it?

What if there was a uniform platform for dealing with damp and mould that embraced your expert contractor network, plus decarbonisation and retrofitting in a user-friendly system.

## Would you trust and use it?

Our experience has highlighted the need for change when investigating root causes of a reported problem but moreover, developing 'trend' data with regard to stock conditions for future management protocols. Such an approach removes blame and embraces a culture of change with SMART decisions aligned to accessible fact-based data in a usable and understandable language for housing staff and residents.

Cornerstone are ready to share their knowledge with all social housing partners that will build pride in your organisation, develop and maintain proactive engagement with residents and, uphold calls for a zero-tolerance, uniform system.

Our experience demonstrates many repairs have been undertaken with the best intentions however, the term 're-spend' may argue against that. Whilst there are many expert trades offering and providing the best industry services and installations, are we fully acknowledging their individual impact on the dwelling as a whole?

Examples include ventilation installations and/or repairs void of recognising the structural permeability prior to and post any works that impacts the ;whole dwelling ventilation rate'.

And, with our proven data indicating 91% of all damp and mould surveys to date confirm the structures were dry, how do we decipher the reasons void of a blame culture and, how do we provide credible advice for moving forward.

These are embodied aspects of the Cornerstone investigative service and, we can and do share our knowledge with all interested parties.



## A Property Health App

Accessed by both landlords and your residents via a bespoke license, provides immediate guidance for an issue with recognisable causes in a user-friendly language for timely rectifications. Why and How are added for simplistic understanding.

### Still a problem?

Upload images/videos to the landlord platform for early intervention.

### Landlord solving the problem?

Not an issue. Embedded SMART assistance is designed to impart likely reasons and rectifications. However, if the issue remain or is complex, send the data to Cornerstone for timely assistance – when you need it.

## For further information:

www.cornerstone-ltd.co.uk info@cornerstone-ltd.co.uk

0344 846 0955 023 9200 9270

'Levelling Up' will eradicate stigma, shift attitude and enhance resident engagement with proven SMART understandable knowledge at your fingertips



# **Breaking the mould**

Kathryn Tormay from Crown Paints discusses how anti-mould paints can help landlords and housing providers fight mould and damp, amidst a stubborn cost-of-living crisis

he cost-of-living crisis looks set to continue into this winter. With energy prices remaining high, tenants are, understandably, likely to keep their windows shut and heating off this winter. Unfortunately, that creates a perfect breeding ground for mould and mildew.

As long as any pre-existing mould is eliminated beforehand, repainting with effective, anti-mould paints can help landlords tackle the health risks of damp and mould, while improving a property's look and establishing a positive relationship with its tenants.

### HUMAN, LEGAL, STRUCTURAL & AESTHETIC: MOULD'S MANY THREATS

The law around damp and mould may be set to become more stringent for the private sector, after it was proposed that the Decent Homes Standard be applied to all rented properties. With the Chartered Institute of Housing currently also pushing for social housing providers to do more, it seems there will be pressure on all housing providers and landlords to step up their efforts to combat mould.

As well as the build-up of mould leading to allergens, irritants, and sometimes toxic substances that can have a negative impact on the health of a building's occupants, it can also cause structural damage to the property.

Mould can cause dry rot in wooden features, damaging skirting boards and floorboards. It can also lead to insulation becoming damp, and ineffective, exacerbating the problems of a cold, low ventilation environment.

On top of that, it seriously impacts the property on an aesthetic level; damp and mould can ruin the look of a new paint job in a month. That may not feel as important, but it makes a huge difference to how happy and comfortable a tenant feels in their home. A happy, comfortable tenant is likely to stay in the property long term too. Depending on its severity, the aesthetic and structural damage could also decrease the value of your property.

There are a multitude of factors, compelling landlords and housing providers to take action to prevent the build-up of mould this winter. Repainting, with the right products, can help them meet their legal obligations, protect their property, and - most importantly - fulfil their duty of care to tenants this winter.

## TACKLING MOULD, IN THE COLD

With windows closed, the lack of ventilation in properties, along with the cold, wet climatic conditions can create the perfect breeding ground for mould.

# There are various anti-mould and mildew paints on the market, with properties which inhibit mould growth

Landlords and housing providers can compensate for this, to some extent, by making sure extractor fans are working and dehumidifiers are provided to tenants. Accepting that this won't be as good as a warm, properly ventilated property, they can take a range of other steps to combat damp and mould.

There are various anti-mould and mildew paints on the market, with properties which inhibit mould growth. Where these are designed with strength and durability in mind, they can also play a role in making mould easier to treat where it does occur.

An example is Crown Trade's Clean Extreme Mould Inhibiting Scrubbable Matt Paint. It has built-in fungicides which stop mould building up on its film. It is also highly durable, so it can be cleaned repeatedly and thoroughly without its finish being ruined. The paint can also be tinted in well over 400 colours, allowing landlords and property managers to fortify their defences against mould without compromising on style.

Repainting provides a valuable opportunity to build dialogue with tenants. Residents, naturally, want to see their landlord or housing provider being proactive on tackling mould, and taking their thoughts and feelings into consideration. Consulting with them regarding repainting, or installing other anti-mould features, can be a great way of doing this.

Repainting can be particularly effective here. Taking tenants' opinions into consideration about aesthetic elements of the property, like colour choice, demonstrates a commitment to making them feel happy and comfortable, not just safe from hazards. It can also treat any remaining scars in properties that were badly affected by last year's mould.

It's crucial, of course, that you only repaint once your walls are free of mould. Painting over it will obscure the problem, but it won't prevent it from



causing damage. Crucially, people can still become seriously ill from mould underneath paint.

### LEARNING FROM LAST YEAR

Last year's cost of living crisis caught the rented housing sector off guard. Landlords and housing providers didn't have time to make provisions to compensate for the removal of heat and ventilation - the traditional defence against mould.

This time around, they have more opportunity to prepare. The same problems are likely to remain relevant. So, it's important to use other protective measures, to combat the dangers damp and mould pose to the health of tenants.

Using anti-mould paints is a great way of doing this. The right products can provide extra protection against the formation of mould, and make cleaning far easier if any mould does form. And, repainting shows a commitment to creating pleasant and comfortable, not just safe, housing for renters.

Kathryn Tormay is head of product at Crown Paints

# Nuaire launches Faith-Plus extract fan

Nuaire, part of the Genuit group, has launched the Faith-Plus continuous running mixed flow axial fan, designed to provide social housing with a costeffective ventilation solution that complies with Building Regulations. Suitable for wall, ceiling and window installation in kitchens, bathrooms and other wet rooms, Faith-Plus has been



designed and built to achieve the ventilation rates as set out in Part F and L Building Regulations, which was revised in 2021 with higher rates than previously required. Faith-Plus features an integral monitoring device to detect occupant operation and boost air flow when necessary.

enquiries@nuaire.co.uk www.nuaire.co.uk

# Ventilation for the built environment

Poor indoor air quality contributes to respiratory and allergy problems, while inadequate ventilation creates ideal conditions for condensation and resulting mould growth. Vectaire's MVHRs help tackle these problems by providing low level continuous ventilation at the optimum level. They incorporate two fans - one extracts stale,



damp air from wet rooms, and the other brings in fresh air from outside. The two airflows pass through a heat exchanger, recovering heat from the outgoing air and filtering it before transferring it to the incoming, fresh air supply before ducting it to the living areas to ensure a comfortable environment.

01494 522333 www.vectaire.co.uk

# Fit door handles faster with latest line-up

Leading specialist trade supplier IronmongeryDirect, has added the Urfic Easy Click door handles to its range of over 18,000 products. Offering easy and quick installations of under one minute, these simple, sleek and reliable lever handles are suitable for a variety of applications, especially where convenience is a must.



Thanks to a distinct patented fixing system, the Urfic Easy Click door handles are an ideal solution to save time on site and can be installed in just under one minute (after the lock has been fitted).

03003 038 821 www.IronmongeryDirect.co.uk

# Piccolo brings stylish, affordable comfort

New Altro Piccolo is an attractive, cushion backed 2.4 mm wood-effect vinyl flooring, designed to create comfortable and affordable living spaces in residential housing. Ideal for residential living areas, Altro Piccolo is available in a range of designs including maple, oak and cherry, helping create homely aesthetics where people live,



work, sleep and play. Robust and low maintenance Altro Piccolo colours are aligned with resilient Altro Wood, enhancing the choice of products and making selection between the wood-effect ranges quick and easy. Altro Piccolo deadens footsteps while providing comfort for standing or sitting.

01462 489 516 www.altro.co.uk

# Helping further explain the upgrade and benefits of Diamond Matt

Following the recent news that Dulux Trade has reformulated its popular Diamond Matt product, the company has shared two exciting videos that will further explain the upgrade and the benefits. The first is a 'Behind The Scenes' interview with Hannah Beeke, R&D team leader at AkzoNobel. She explains more about the product's durability and improved sustainability credentials, as well as the Tested & Approved process and what it means for the industry. You can watch the video here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AW4gMn\_MOw

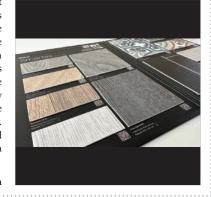
In the second video, AkzoNobel's Duncan Lochhead, commercial sustainability manager at Dulux Decorator Centre and Peter Howard, sustainability & CSR lead discuss what the new Diamond Matt will mean for architects and specifiers. They talk about why Dulux Trade Diamond Matt has been upgraded and the benefits it offers, including the importance of sustainability and why it was placed front and centre when updating the Diamond Matt formula. They also delve in deeper to explain what sets the new Diamond Matt apart. You can watch the video here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9EI9cFycrE



0333 222 7070 www.duluxtrade.co.uk/diamondmatt

# Choose a smarter vinyl floor

Beauflor\* Smartex Pro is an affordable vinyl floor that's available in a wide range of home-like looks that makes it perfect for housing projects. Suitable for use throughout all domestic areas, Beauflor Smartex Pro can be used as a comfortable and affordable flooring solution in new and refurbished housing projects. Equipped with a textile back that means it can be loose laid in rooms up to 36 m<sup>2</sup>, Smartex Pro is also fast and easy to install. Multiple width options (2 m, 3 m, 4 m) also help to cut down on installation waste and reduce the need for seams in large rooms. There's 26 home-like looks to choose from within Smartex Pro. Ranging from warming oak effects and fashionable herringbone to stone tiles, modern concrete and classic ceramic tiles; Smartex Pro's wide range means that it's easy to find a look that matches the interior design of your project, and which will give a homely feel for residents. Featuring Beauflor's Natural Look surface, Smartex Pro brings the best out of its designs while an R10 slip-resistant finish provides assured footing and means that it can be used in bathrooms without worry. In fact, with a Class 22 General Domestic rating, Smartex Pro can be used in hallways, living areas, kitchens and bedrooms too. Chris Roberts, sales director UK, Beauflor says: "Smartex Pro is a floor that ticks all the boxes when it comes to housing."



info@beauflor.com www.beauflor.com/global/en

# Dulux unveils its Colour of the Year 2024

Dulux has announced its Colour of the Year for 2024, Sweet Embrace<sup>TM</sup>.

The colour is a delicate, optimistic and modern tone that is understated and comforting and brings a sense of stability and softness to a space.



To complement Sweet Embrace<sup>TM</sup>,

Dulux is also launching three versatile colour palettes to provide architects, specifiers and designers with a wealth of colour inspiration when creating beautiful spaces for the housing sector. Please visit the Dulux website for more information.

0333 222 70 70 www.duluxtrade.co.uk

# Housing Management & Maintenance

Housing Management Maintenance (HMM) website is an online provider of past and present news items dedicated to keep professionals within this sector updated with a wide range of topics including legislation, projects, products and more. housingmmonline.co.uk is a one-stop source for all the latest press



releases providing any visitor with access to information about products and services that they may require. From the website, you can find links to digital issues that have live links to advertisers' sites, as well as email alerts to keep you as informed as possible.

www.housingmmonline.co.uk

# Kidde Safety Europe unveils new branding

Kidde Safety Europe, a trusted fire safety leader for more than 100 years, has unveiled a significant rebrand. With a new logo that represents the home combined with the strapline: 'The Power to Protect,' the roll-out of the new identity started to hit the merchant and wholesaler shelves on new packaging earlier this year with



the launch of Kidde's new CO. Monitor. Kidde is a part of Carrier Global Corporation (NYSE: CARR). The new look sees Kidde Safety Europe move away from its traditional shield logo to one that now represents a home, with the lettermark icon representing the 'K' in the Kidde name.

03337 722227 www.kidde.com/fire-safety/en/uk

# Industry best practices with FASS

FASS (Fire And Solutions) the company has practical experience in designing, installing and commissioning natural air relief pressurisation systems, powered air relief pressurisation systems and Lobby extract systems. FASS has successfully upgraded legacy concrete high-rise residential blocks originally



built to CP3 standard with smoke control systems that protect the stairs and increase safety for residents, as proven in real-life fire instances. As long-term and active members of the SCA, FASS contribute to developing industry guidance and have been accredited with IFC SDI 19 certification.

02476 980 820 www.fireandsmokesolutions.co.uk

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FASS (Fire And Smoke Solutions) are SCA SDI 19 accredited designers and installers audited by a third-party body for compliance, design competence and install quality.

www.fireandsmokesolutions.co.uk

**Smoke & Fire Protection Feature** Safety & Security



# Maintaining smoke control systems

Recent high-profile incidents have reaffirmed the need for regular smoke control system maintenance carried out by competent contractors. David Mowatt from the Smoke Control Association (SCA), examines the latest maintenance requirements

'aiting until it is too late to find out that a smoke control system isn't functioning as intended can have catastrophic consequences, putting property at risk and endangering the lives of building occupants. Put simply, a smoke control system that is regularly tested and maintained by a competent, qualified person can be a life saver.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

BS 7346-8: 'Components for smoke control systems. Code of practice for planning, design, installation, commissioning and maintenance' provides details of maintenance requirements and templates for test records and service certificates. Building owners and managers should ensure they have documented performance criteria for the installed system that confirms the basis of its compliance with the building regulations. This should include a detailed cause and effect which then forms the basis of the test and maintenance regime.

This regime should include daily, weekly, monthly, three-monthly, sixmonthly and annual testing and maintenance. Some of these tasks may be undertaken by a suitably trained in-house individual but others will require a certified and accredited service provider.

A qualified contractor can carry out regular maintenance on the system and ensure that any faults occurring are rectified promptly. There is now also a requirement to notify the local fire and rescue service of any faults that are not rectifiable within 24 hours.

### **TESTING AND MAINTENANCE PROCESSES**

Although it isn't unusual to find smoke control system maintenance bundled in with fire alarm maintenance, the skillset of a smoke control engineer is different from that of a fire alarm engineer, encompassing air flow and pressure differential measurement, fan, damper and ventilator testing as well as smoke and CO detection. A fire alarm engineer may not be equipped to carry out the measurements required to confirm the correct operation of most mechanical

Testing a smoke control system is more involved than a regular fire alarm test - particularly for high rise residential buildings where a comprehensive test will involve visiting every floor of a building. For residential buildings there is rarely a permanent on-site maintenance presence and it can be a costly exercise to employ someone to complete these tests.

A culture change is required to ensure that building owners understand the importance of smoke control systems and make sufficient provision for regular testing and reporting of faults. Smoke control systems should be maintained by a competent specialist and BS 7346-8 recommends third party certification as a measure of competence.



# In October 2023, new fire safety guidance will come into force for all buildings regulated by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO)

Routine inspection and maintenance of the smoke control system should also be carried out in accordance with BS 9999:2008, Annex V. BS 9999 provides recommendations and guidance about the design, management and use of buildings to achieve acceptable levels of fire safety for people in and around buildings.

The system should be tested to ensure that it operates correctly and that, in particular:

- The agreed cause and effect requirements function correctly and the system responds to any planned method of initiation
- When the primary power is removed, the secondary power supply operates within the interruption time specified in BS EN 12101-10
- When the duty equipment fails, standby equipment operates, (e.g. duty standby fan sets and UPS equipment)
- Labels, visible when secondary power supplies (e.g. batteries) are in their normal position, are fixed to batteries, indicating the date of

- installation or date of last replacement and that those dates are within the manufacturer's recommended life cycle
- All fault monitoring functions operate correctly (e.g. by simulation of fault conditions)

In October 2023, new fire safety guidance will come into force for all buildings regulated by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO).

The new regulations will improve cooperation between Responsible Persons, increase requirements in relation to the recording and sharing of fire safety information, make it easier for enforcement authorities to take action against non-compliance, and ensure residents have access to comprehensive information about fire safety in their building. A clear and preventable failure in a life safety system caused by a lack of maintenance can lead to risk of injury as well as heavy fines or even imprisonment if the resulting fire is serious enough.

### SUMMARY

In order to comply with The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO) all smoke control systems need to be serviced on a yearly basis and a regular maintenance schedule is a fundamental part of ensuring proper operation of the system.

Smoke control systems can only be relied upon to operate effectively if they are regularly checked and maintained by competent operatives. A sure way to assess the competence of a contractor is through third party certification and it is mandatory for all SCA members involved in the installation of smoke control systems to achieve SDI 19 accreditation as a condition of membership.

There is now more onus on building owners and operators to ensure that their systems are in full working order and act promptly to rectify known issues. Failure to do so can result in financial penalties and legal charges against the responsible person while compromising the safety of building occupants. As life safety systems, smoke control technologies have a vital role to play in protecting buildings and their occupants in the event of a catastrophic fire. Overlooking maintenance obligations is just as serious as it sounds.

David Mowatt is chairman of the Smoke Control Association (SCA)

# Rising to the challenge of protecting the world's tallest modular building

Believed to be the world's tallest modular building Tide Construction's Enclave residential development at College Road Croydon has needed to put fire safety as a top priority. The interconnecting twin towers, reaching 35 and 50 storeys which top out at 158 m high, constitute one of the world's largest co-living schemes providing over 900 residences. The volumetric construction has focussed around central columns to which the modular units have been connected to deliver 817 co-living and 120 affordable homes. Keeping the residents safe is a smoke ventilation system designed and installed by Orion Contract Services, which centres on 200+no S60 smoke evacuation dampers designed and manufactured by Gilberts Blackpool. The smoke shafts make use of the central columns to efficiently remove noxious fumes from the building should a fire break out. Gilberts' EN12101-8 and EN1366-10 compliant S60 units have been strategically fitted on every floor to contain and channel the smoke, delivering up to 120 minutes' fire integrity. In the event of a fire, a powered motor triggers the units on the fire floor to open, and the S60 units on all other floors to failsafe close to contain the smoke within the riser and protect the other storeys. The S60 and its counterpart S61 range of smoke evacuation dampers builds on Gilberts' 60+ years' heritage of bringing to market advanced technology.



01253 766911 info@gilbertsblackpool.com

# Accessing the versatile performance benefits of Magply

The task of adding an extra floor to an apartment building in the heart of Brighton has seen the 12 mm version of IPP Ltd's Magply boards employed in a variety of applications, both internally and externally: highlighting the well proven MOS product's fire performance, weather resistance and overall economic benefits. The local branch of Jewson has supplied Godfrey Investments with 295 sheets of the 12 mm boards for use in the construction of a parapet around the new roof terraces being created atop the three-storey structure. Then more of the boards are being used inside the quartet of luxury apartments.

Site manager, Hassam Yesilada said: "Internally the Magply MOS boards being covered in two layers of plasterboard while around the terraces the liquid rubber membrane is being dressed up the face of the parapet walls and covered by a capping. Definitely, this is a unique project for central Brighton with every property having a scenic roof terrace and the work has gone well." With a Class 1 fire rating and backed by BBA Agreement certification, Magply MOS boards present a fire-safe and environmentally friendly alternative to conventional plywood or OSB products. Additionally, the unique production process keeps the chloride content to just 0.01%, enhancing both stability and long-term durability.

01621 776252 www.magply.co.uk





"If you are installing or maintaining life-safety smoke ventilation equipment, you have to ask companies if they have the right certification"



Smoke Vent Limited have been confirmed as a certificated installer of active fire protection by IFC Certification. It means Smoke Vent Limited has successfully completed the requirements of IFCC

Scheme SDI19 'Requirements for Contractors Installing Smoke Control Systems'. The IFCC SDI19 certification scheme has been developed by the Smoke Control Association (SCA) – of which Smoke Vent Limited is a member.

The SCA recommends that maintenance of smoke ventilation systems, including automatic opening vents (AOVs), be undertaken by competent organisations that are both members of the SCA,



and accredited to IFC Certification third party installers scheme SDI 19. The SCA recommends you engage with an SCA member to provide access to competent engineers with the knowledge to help you correctly maintain any smoke vent systems in your property portfolio.



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Access Control Feature Safety & Security



# Revolutionising access control

Rhys McNichol from Videx Security explains how remote entry management is transforming the approach to access control across local authority and housing association developments

n today's rapidly evolving landscape of online and remote security management, housing associations and local authorities are increasingly embracing the transition from traditional 'on-site' management to remote management using cloud services. This shift is driven by the advanced capabilities provided by remote management solutions. These advancements are reshaping the way access control parameters, access levels, and temporary access rights are managed across housing developments, streamlining processes through centralised control and automated cloud services.

The scope of online services enables instant modification of access parameters for a single housing development or multiple sites, ranging from adding new users to adjusting access privileges, dealing with lost access credentials, incorporating maintenance engineers, and generating health reports for properties or systems. These adjustments can be executed by remote operators or, where applicable, even automated through computer-operated systems.

The embracing of online and cloud-based services reflects a broader trend in modern society. In the same way that banking, retail, and even healthcare have utilised technology to improve customer experiences, housing associations and local authorities are recognising the potential for technology to revolutionise property management.

### THE BENEFITS OF REMOTE MANAGEMENT

With remote management, access restoration can now be effortlessly administered in various ways. A one-time access code can be issued, or access can be granted through a tenant's mobile device. Both options can be configured with temporary limitations or a restricted number of uses. These temporary measures bridge the gap until a replacement fob is dispatched or collected by the tenant. The cumulative effect of these remote solutions not only translates

to substantial time and cost savings for management companies but also significantly reduces their carbon footprint.

Another key benefit of the shift towards remote management is a dramatic increase in flexibility. Previously, making alterations to access parameters would often require physical intervention, taking up valuable time and resources. Now, these changes can be made remotely, often at the click of a button. This not only accelerates response times but also allows for a more dynamic approach to access control, responding to changing circumstances in real-time.

The use of cloud services has also opened the door to unprecedented integration across different systems and platforms. Access control can now be linked to other building management functions, such as heating, lighting, or alarm systems. This integration not only streamlines management processes but also provides opportunities for enhanced efficiency and sustainability. For example, access data could be used to optimise energy usage within a building, turning off lights or lowering heating when rooms are unoccupied.

From a security perspective, the shift to remote management also offers substantial advantages. Real-time monitoring and alerts mean that any unauthorised access attempts can be detected and dealt with immediately. Similarly, the use of remote diagnostics can facilitate rapid response to any system faults or issues, minimising potential risks to tenants.

Moreover, this shift to remote management using cloud services allows for more sophisticated data analysis. By gathering and analysing data on access patterns, housing managers can gain insights into tenant behaviour and needs, allowing for a more personalised and responsive approach to property management. This data-driven approach is not only more efficient but can also enhance tenant satisfaction by tailoring services to individual needs and preferences.

Safety & Security Access Control Feature

# The migration from traditional 'on-site' management to remote management using cloud services represents a significant step forward for housing associations and local authorities

The inclusion of system events within online services is also a very useful feature. These events can be extracted from the cloud upon request or at predefined intervals, providing housing officials with valuable insights into the patterns of managed properties. An example of this functionality is in detecting instances where a door has been propped open or left ajar. The door contact can promptly trigger an error notification for relevant personnel, including details like the duration of the door being open, the last access fob used, and the frequency of such incidents within a predetermined time frame.

### A TOOL FOR DIAGNOSTICS AND TROUBLESHOOTING

Beyond situational awareness, these events also serve as an indispensable tool for diagnostics and troubleshooting. In cases where a card reader malfunctions or a controller experiences power supply issues, possibly due to a power failure, automated notifications can be dispatched to the maintenance team. This timely alert empowers maintenance professionals with precise information regarding the location of the fault and the necessary equipment required for rectification. The maintenance team can also be issued with access rights to the designated property for a specific duration, facilitated by mobile-based access or dedicated apps, further streamlining the process. By automating access rights allocation for attending maintenance engineers, this approach negates the need for key distribution and retrieval, sidestepping potential mishaps associated with incorrect or misplaced keys and minimising administrative overhead.

The integration of networked controllers and security systems marks a pivotal milestone in the entry management of housing association and local authority



properties, irrespective of size. Remote management offers a user-friendly interface for configuring and controlling events, users, alarms, and notifications. This shift in management practices is not only more informative but also contributes to a smoother operational environment.

The migration from traditional 'on-site' management to remote management using cloud services represents a significant step forward for housing associations and local authorities. By leveraging the power of technology, they can provide a level of service, flexibility, and security that was previously unattainable. It's a shift that reflects not just a change in technology, but a fundamental reimagining of what property management can be. It's about not just keeping up with the times but leading the way towards a more efficient, safer, and cost-effective approach to housing management.

Rhys McNichol is national projects manager at Videx Security

# Built-in panic function adds competitive advantage from **Carl F Groupco**

eading independent hardware supplier Carl F Groupco is highlighting the benefits of its popular SmartSecure FUHR autotronic 834P Hybrid Automatic Door Lock for multiple occupancy buildings or dwellings within the social housing sector. One of the product's key differentiators is its built-in panic function that provides an effective emergency escape.

John Crittenden, managing director of Carl F Groupco, explains: "The 834P offers a practical hybrid solution for multiple occupancy buildings or dwellings that need the security and convenience of an automatic locking system with access control options. But what sets this product apart from other market offerings is its emergency exit or panic function, which is a critical safety feature for use in such settings. It's a step change in intelligent hardware design that is proving popular with our customers."

The emergency exit and panic door function of the 834P is compatible with the CISA FAST Touch Panic Exit Push Bar, allowing unimpeded escape from the inside of the building at any time on either the active or inactive door leaf. The hardware set is BS EN 1125 and BS EN 179 accredited for panic and emergency exit doors and is also UKCA approved.



The 834P lock is suitable for aluminium, composite, PVC-U and timber doors and is available for single and double doors. The lock is fitted into the eurogroove, which unlike face fit alternatives, make is particularly suitable for

multiple occupancy dwellings where the risks of tampering may be higher.

On closing, two latching deadbolts simultaneously extend and lock in place, providing instant security compared to a standard mechanical door lock. Unlocking is motorised, allowing access control to be added or integration into existing building management systems. A PAS 24 and Secured by Design option is available too.

The CISA Push Bar is also suitable for installations that need to comply with Scottish Building Regulations, because at just 75 mm from the door, it is well under the requirement that hardware on panic exit doors should protrude no further than 150 mm for Category 1 doors and 100 mm for Category 2 doors.

John concluded: "We're committed to offering products with added value benefits to support our customers, and the SmartSecure FUHR autotronic 834P is the perfect example of this. It offers an intelligent, practical solution that meets the needs of multiple occupany buildings and dwellings."

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