



Comment: Brian Berry says the next Government needs a dedicated Secretary of State for Housing



Comment: Patrick Mooney puts the case for an expanded social housing programme



Energy House 2.0 Spotlight: Reporting on test findings from Bellway and Barratt homes

HOUSEBUILDER & DEVELOPER

JUNE/JULY 2024

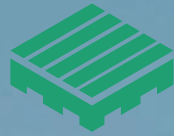


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James Parker

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FROM THE EDITOR

Is it because housebuilding has finally become such a national 'hot potato' in this General Election, with a hard-to-treat cost of living crisis married to continual industry problems and NIMBYism, that most parties haven't really mentioned it?

Several months ago, Labour said it will build 1.5 million homes, but those are just numbers. Details on their plan (beyond another pledge to 'reform planning' and build on 'grey' not 'green' belt sites) are very hard to find.

However, whichever party comes into power (and the odds are very short on Labour) will have to quickly bring some form of plan to 'unlock' housebuilding to bear. In March the industry saw the lowest number of new site permissions over the year since the data began to be collated in 2006.

Simply introducing alternatives to Help to Buy (or a continuation in the Conservatives' case) does nothing to tackle the systemic problems on delivery in the industry. The right plots are needed in the right sites, which may mean that some sort of central intervention is needed to free up planning rules. This is not going to happen locally, given that there is so much objection to schemes, for a variety of reasons (some more understandable than others).

Open minds to innovation are probably what will be most welcome and useful, and not around the beleaguered offsite mantra (currently, that doesn't have the traction.) No, as per the approach of a purveyor of lateral thinking in Lincolnshire (the influential national president of the FMB, housebuilder Chris Carr), planning rules are there to be 'innovated.' They have collaboratively managed to find and build on sites by working sensitively in partnership with the planning department, and have found a way around pointless bureaucracy in some cases.

As I discovered in our Builders' Voices podcast a few weeks back (run in partnership with the FMB and available at www.insights.netmagmedia.co.uk), Chris is very much can-do on planning, but local dynamics can be sensitive and require careful handling.

Building tens of thousands more houses, and to the requirements of the Future Homes Standard, is a massive ask. But as both the FMB and NFB manifestos make clear, it could be our best bet as an 'engine' for UK growth.

Somehow, the adversarial nature of many local discussions needs to be facilitated and nurtured, and North East Lincolnshire's approach would be a good one to emulate, it seems. It is based around a developer's forum which contains all stakeholders, to iron out issues quickly, and as Chris says, it's not a case of an open-season approach to schemes, "passing everything, more a case of if we refuse it, we tell you why."

Maybe the new Government could open its ears.

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NFB harnesses growth message in 'manifesto' to new Government

The National Federation of Builders has released its Election Manifesto, which is titled 'Supporting Construction to Power Growth.'

Richard Beresford, chief executive of the NFB, said: "The reality is obvious; the construction industry is a key component for the UK to meeting its numerous challenges and therefore the incoming government must not only understand where the barriers to our industry's growth exist, but what that means for the UK's ambition."

He continued: "With more than 50 recommendations, our Manifesto builds on NFB member experiences and involvement with policy makers to create a solid foundation for the reforms that would immediately deliver sustained economic and social growth in construction and across the UK."

Covering seven topics, the document presents recommendations that are "deliverable within one parliamentary term, and sustain growth," said the NFB.

The first chapter, 'Decarbonisation', focuses on the UK building stock, tax incentives, retrofit and energy. It "offers solutions to the challenges in turning energy inefficient buildings into climate, health and economic assets, the grid into an enabler and government policies into decarbonisation and business advancement."

The second chapter, 'Housing and Planning', recognises the barriers of growth to a competitive, better housing market that the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) damned as non-existent. With a focus on enabling small and medium sized housebuilders (SMEs), making planning work, fairer housing outcomes, placemaking and affordable housing, it highlights that although we still need major reform, many tweaks are available and should be taken up.

The third chapter, 'Procurement and Payment', builds on some recent reforms but highlights that post-leaving the European Union (EU), "the UK has not made the most of its opportunities and it must therefore explore how it can ensure it is spreading growth, rather than avoiding risk. From late payment and retentions, to process and penalty, we need a fairer system for tax payers and constructors."

The fourth chapter, 'Environment', looks at "how policies on water and



biodiversity are not delivering the world leading outcomes that are possible within the existing policy frameworks," said NFB. "Unfortunately, construction has been held accountable for many environmental failings they did not cause and a half decade of stifling and taxing them has not improved outcomes. Our recommendation would achieve an "immediate environmental betterment and tackle the source of two major environmental challenges."

Finally, chapter five highlights 'Skills and training,' and the need to avoid "wasting billions training up a new workforce for jobs that don't exist." The NFB added: "The best example of this is the decimation of SME housebuilders, whose market share has dropped from 40% to 9% in three decades. During this period, we have also seen a decrease in the construction workforce, with apprenticeship completions struggling to grow. Is it therefore any wonder that with SMEs training seven in 10 apprentices and delivering 90% of the training, we have a skills crisis?"

"In a recent House Builders Association (HBA) survey, no respondent said the cost of training was an issue, but all highlighted that a lack of work pipelines or certainty meant they either couldn't afford to take on an apprentice, retain an existing worker, or had to cut staff to meet business costs related to the broken planning process."

The NFB added: "Business certainty is key, well exemplified by the Government's commitment to heat pumps and huge investment and growth of that sector. The same should be afforded for all of construction."

"The NFB Manifesto is a starting point for a healthier industry, and it highlights the many things the Government could and should be doing to create an environment for construction to ensure it is able to power and sustain UK growth."

Boyer achieves planning consent on appeal for new green belt Herts homes



Planning and design consultancy Boyer has secured planning permission on behalf of Burlington Property Group for the development of 92 homes and a new doctors surgery on two parcels of land at Church Lane in Sarratt, Hertfordshire. The two planning applications had previously been refused by Three Rivers District Council, but were successful on appeal.

The planning consent is for two sites, one of 5.5 hectares and a second of 0.7 hectares. Of the 92 homes delivered across the two sites, 48 will be affordable homes of various tenures, while nine will be self/custom-build homes. On the larger site, a new doctor's surgery will be delivered, replacing the existing, cramped facility in the village, thereby enhancing the patient experience and supporting the local growing and ageing population.

The original planning applications had been refused primarily due to the sites being within the green belt, associated landscape harm and their location in a less sustainable part of the district. However, said Boyer, "the planning inspector found that the considerable scheme benefits, especially the proposals ability to address an acute housing need locally, outweighed the identified harm."



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National Federation of Builders and Scottish Building Federation announce merger plans

The National Federation of Builders (NFB) and the Scottish Building Federation (SBF), two of the country's leading and longest-running construction trade associations, have announced that they plan to become "one organisation" in the future.

Following a meeting of delegations from the two organisations' boards held in Glasgow on 6 June, the NFB and SBF said that they plan to become a single organisation "in the next 18-24 months." The announcement comes after "over two years of dedicated joint working," said the two bodies, as well as the publication of a "partnership accord" in 2023.

The NFB can trace its origins back to 1880 and is claimed to be the "foremost professional association of builders, contractors and house builders, offering unrivalled standards, services and advocacy to members across England and Wales." The SBF was founded in 1895 and is the leading trade association representing the construction industry in Scotland, advocating for the interests of its members and promoting excellence in the sector.

Commenting on the announcement, chief executive of the NFB, Richard Beresford said: "We have long considered the SBF to be our 'sister' organisation and have enjoyed many decades of cordial relations, culminating in a significant level of partnership working in recent years. As the construction sector continually adapts and changes, so too must those who represent it. Our two teams have worked hard together to get to this point, so we are delighted to announce that we now intend to become one. Our members will enjoy a greater range of services, a louder share of voice and a bigger network of like-minded colleagues."

Paul Mitchell, operations director at the SBF, added: "Through our ongoing partnership work, it is clear that SBF and the NFB share similar goals and ambitions

for the construction industry. Both federations have collaborated diligently to reach this juncture and now is the right time to announce our plans to unify into a single entity."

He continued: "The industry can suffer at times due to fragmentation or divisions that make it harder to secure the support we need. By joining together, we can maximise our influence on critical policy areas whilst also delivering significantly enhanced services and benefits to our combined membership."

Having made the commitment to join each other permanently, the NFB and SBF said they "will now intensify their work to prepare for the change and ensure that members are consulted to best preserve the spirit, heritage, traditions and identities of the two organisation's respective sets of members."

Birmingham restoration gains Master Builder award

Old Heaton House was "derelict, forgotten and unloved" – but a painstaking restoration by dedicated builders and craftspeople has breathed new life into a Georgian villa dubbed "the jewel in Birmingham's crown."

Built in 1823 for William Cotterill, a wealthy Birmingham merchant, Old Heaton House was originally set in its own landscaped park. But a century of industrial activity around the site had left the house unlisted and at risk of demolition.

But in 2021, the building and the surrounding land was purchased by city developers Elevate Property Group, who then asked Vantage & Co to complete a restoration which would see the Midlands-based constructor named Master Builder of the Year.



Vantage & Co managing director Stephen Rankin said the seven month long project had been a "labour of love" for the team working on it. He said: "Old Heaton House is one of only two Georgian villas remaining in the city's historic Jewellery Quarter and it was a complete wreck. But we knew it could be something special."

Elevate Property Group tasked the Vantage & Co team with preserving as many original features as possible, while ensuring the finished property incorporated Elevate's luxury and high-end signature features.

The house was an almost total ruin when the Vantage & Co team took over – it had taken Elevate several months to make it safe enough to work on. But the building revealed some "stunning" original features, including a large, hipped slate roof with a central well and a three-bay stone facade with an abundance of rendered details such as detailed corncicing at the eaves and moulded architraves to the windows.

Working with D5 Architects, the brief was to restore the outside to a 'magnificent' Georgian villa but create modern luxury on the inside that was in keeping with the period features but practical for 21st century living.

The core building is 200 years old, and to bring it up to date with current Building Regulations, the firm "had to work closely with Building Control to make sure Old Heaton House would meet the highest standards of fire safety, construction and insulation."

Once the structural renovation was completed, the interior design was completed by Blocc Interiors, "which created an ambience which seamlessly blends the old with the new." The colour scheme and kitchen reflect modern tastes, with plenty of grey and neutral tones, while the furniture, mirrors and rugs are firmly rooted in the house's Georgian heritage.

The award judges described the project as a "superb example of urban renaissance in practice" and a 'shining beacon of what can be done.'



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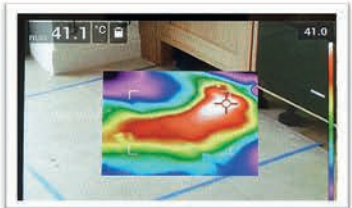
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Thomas Alexander Homes grows its senior management team by two



Yorkshire-based housebuilder Thomas Alexander Homes has made two new key appointments as it continues to grow following the successful recent launches of two new housing developments.

Chris Warren has joined the company as senior buyer, where he will play a key role in Thomas Alexander Homes' procurement process. Chris has held buyer, manager and director roles at companies in the housebuilding industry for more than three decades. He joins Thomas Alexander Homes following a brief period of retirement, having most recently worked for City, Town & Village Living Ltd, where he spent four years as the company's commercial, sales and marketing director, procuring a wide range of properties and developing them into private homes.

Thomas Alexander Homes has also appointed Gemma Bateman as the new head of sales and marketing. Gemma joined Thomas Alexander Homes from Persimmon Homes, one of the UK's largest house builders, where she worked for six years. Her final two years were spent as head of sales whose responsibilities included overseeing the company's sales function and coordinating impactful marketing strategies.

Alex Blease, managing director at Thomas Alexander Homes, said: "Since successfully launching two new high-quality housing developments in recent months, we've been looking for the perfect candidates to grow our team and

enable us to expand the business, so we're delighted to have Chris and Gemma on board. With his vast industry experience, innovative thinking and familiarity with our company ethos, we couldn't have found a more perfect addition to our team than Chris, while Gemma's proven track record and her understanding of our target market will be an invaluable asset as we continue to chart our growth path."



41 homes receive planning approval at Trimdon Village

A regional housebuilder has received planning permission from Durham County Council to build 41 residential homes at Trimdon Village after concluding the

acquisition of the 7.5 acres of land in September 2023.

Brought forward by Esh Group's private housebuilding division, Homes by Esh, the Bluebell Gardens development features a mix of three and four-bedroom detached homes and two-bedroom terraced bungalows, providing a range of choice for potential buyers.

Nine house types are available across the site, all in keeping with local housing styles in the Trimdon area, coming with energy efficient features, including electric vehicle charging points, solar photovoltaic panels, smart technology and secure bike storage.

The homes will be compliant to the 2022 Building Regulations Uplift – bringing increased insulation, improved ventilation and enhanced energy efficiencies – as well as the Nationally Described Space Standards and M42 building regulations.

Homes by Esh's technical director, Dale Morris, said: "The Bluebell Gardens planning approval allows us to expand our live sites across County Durham after making good progress on multiple sites in Darlington in the early part of 2024. We have implemented vast open space areas through well worked landscaping designs to help create an open and community 'green feel' to the development."

Delivering more than 25% biodiversity net gain, the development has been designed with ample space for landscaping at the front of properties, setting them back from the road and ensuring a green entrance feel.

A sustainable urban drainage system forms part of the landscape scheme, while all paving used to construct the plot and shared driveways will be constructed with permeable paving so that the site has a holistic approach to sustainable surface water drainage.



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Springfield and Barratt collaborate on a 3000-home 'village'

Springfield Properties, a leading Scottish housebuilder focused on delivering private and affordable housing, has announced that it has entered into a strategic collaboration agreement with Barratt for the development of the Group's Durieshill site, creating a new village near Stirling.

With planning in place for 3,000 private and affordable homes alongside new schools, local shops and other business opportunities, community woodlands and greenspace, Durieshill involves the creation of a new standalone sustainable village near Stirling and within commuting distance of Edinburgh and Glasgow. Spanning nearly 600 acres, Durieshill is believed to be the largest detailed planning application for housing development to be approved in Scotland to date.

Under the terms of the agreement, Barratt will, in consideration for half of the land at Durieshill, provide and fund the infrastructure development for the entire site, expected to be over the next five years, and has made a cash payment of £10m to Springfield. The provision of site infrastructure by Barratt will significantly accelerate the development of the site, whilst eliminating Springfield's requirement to tie up capital for the next five years.

Springfield has received £10m from the profitable sale of the initial 34 acres of land. The remaining land will be exchanged for the provision of site infrastructure over the coming years as development milestones are achieved. The cash proceeds from the profitable land sale will contribute to reducing Springfield's debt. The group expected to report bank debt of approximately £41m, "ahead of its stated target of £55m."

Innes Smith, CEO of Springfield Properties, said: "We are delighted to collaborate with Barratt on this exciting project at Durieshill. Our shared values and goals in constructing quality homes and fostering sustainable communities, combined with Barratt's five-star reputation, will offer customers increased choice and accelerate delivery in this premier development. We are eager to

work with Barratt to establish a thriving village at Durieshill. With the substantial size of this site, this partnership marks a significant milestone for Springfield, emphasising the worth of our extensive land holdings with planning permission in sought-after locations throughout Scotland. The infrastructure support provided by Barratt will enhance Springfield's growth prospects in the medium term, minimise risks and optimise our return on capital."

Meadfleet shortlisted in 2024 awards for biodiversity

Open space management company Meadfleet have been shortlisted in the 2024 Unlock Net Zero Awards. Their Bee Friendly campaign has been recognised in the Biodiversity and Nature Award Category. The campaign aims to make open spaces more wildlife friendly and engage customers and communities in this approach. "Not only are the areas Meadfleet manage now more biodiverse, but the enhancements also help mitigate climate change," said the firm.

The shortlisting "recognises Meadfleet's commitment to biodiversity whilst encouraging customers and future generations to join them in making green spaces more supportive of wildlife." The aims of the Bee Friendly campaign, which launched in 2019, include:

- Installing over 30,000 m² of new wildflower meadow
- Creating 1 km of new hedgerow
- Planting over 80,000 nectar rich bulbs
- Giving away 2000 bee hotels to customers and communities.

Meadfleet said the targets "are all on track to be met or exceeded this year."



Meadfleet uses the campaign, alongside other projects "to provide engagement and educational opportunities with their 40,000+ customers, plus local schools, and community groups, promoting the benefits of biodiversity and the importance of a mosaic of habitats within previously more formal landscapes."

Additional areas of wildflower, hedgerow and tree planting on open spaces "create more wildlife habitats and enrich their local environment, help reduce CO₂ and absorb water."

David King, managing director of Meadfleet commented: "We are thrilled to be shortlisted amongst excellent competition in the 2024 Unlock Net Zero Awards for our Bee Friendly Campaign. Our team has been working hard to improve the open spaces we manage for biodiversity, so we are delighted that our achievements have been recognised by the judges."

King added: "With the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain legislation earlier this year, it is more important than ever for us to demonstrate to housebuilders our expertise and commitment in successfully managing wildlife habitats. We believe our Bee Friendly initiative demonstrates our commitment to biodiversity and responsible open space management."

The Unlock Net Zero Awards are hosted in partnership with the British Property Federation and are focussed on recognising the achievements of the housing, built environment and property sectors.

For more information about this year's entries in the Unlock Net Zero Awards, visit www.unlocknetzero.co.uk/awards

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Genesis Homes' new director Lilley to oversee all commercial operations

The new commercial director for Genesis Homes Brett Lilley is aiming to use his industry knowledge to develop the skill sets of the company's commercial team.

Brett Lilley will oversee all commercial operations in the newly created director role, using more than 20 years of knowledge of the industry gained while working at some large housing developers across the North West.

Joining from Story Homes where he was associate commercial director for the north west, Brett is looking forward to using his expertise within the construction industry to develop the skills of people learning their trade in Cumbria.

Lilley's career started as a trainee quantity surveyor at Fairclough Homes, with spells following at Chelford Homes, Countryside Properties and Rowland Homes. It was while working as a surveyor at Rowland when an opportunity to move into a more senior role presented

itself, following a company restructure during the recession of 2008.

After working with the company for 12 years, Brett moved to Russell Homes as head of commercial before heading on to Story Homes.

Lilley said: "I'm very excited to be joining Genesis Homes, which is a homebuilder really going places and making its mark in construction across the north west. Through my role as commercial director, I want to build on the great work already ongoing at Genesis Homes to make sure our staff are the best they can be, and putting into place more specialist coaching and mentoring programmes will help us achieve this and bring on the next generation of commercial staff."

Genesis Homes was founded in the Cumbrian town of Penrith in 2017 and builds high specification new homes across Cumbria and Lancashire.

Karolina Maunder appointed as sales manager



Domus Ventilation, manufacturer of market-leading ventilation systems that save energy and improve indoor air quality, is pleased to announce the appointment of Karolina Maunder as its new national sales manager. Karolina officially joined Domus Ventilation as national sales manager in March 2024 and is first and foremost looking forward to "spending valuable time developing a great team". Domus Ventilation has

a well-deserved reputation for quality, supported by excellent technical support, from a market leading manufacturer and designer. It is well placed to offer immediate, practical solutions to Building Regulations Parts F & L.

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The West Fraser sales team is bigger than ever



The sales director for **West Fraser**, UK and Ireland, Dom West said: "Our sales organisation is well-established in the UK & Ireland and we have a team of talented people. As well as driving the sales of West Fraser's leading OSB, MDF and PB products, we continue to work together to identify new opportunities for growth, with a focus on establishing

solid relationships. We are also excited about furthering our environmental status and messaging. More and more of us are aware of our impact on the environment; so being able to represent a business whose products are net carbon negative is important for us all." The brands, SterlingOSB Zero, CaberFloor and CaberMDF, are well known in the UK and are commonly specified by architects, national housebuilders and specifiers.

uk.westfraser.com

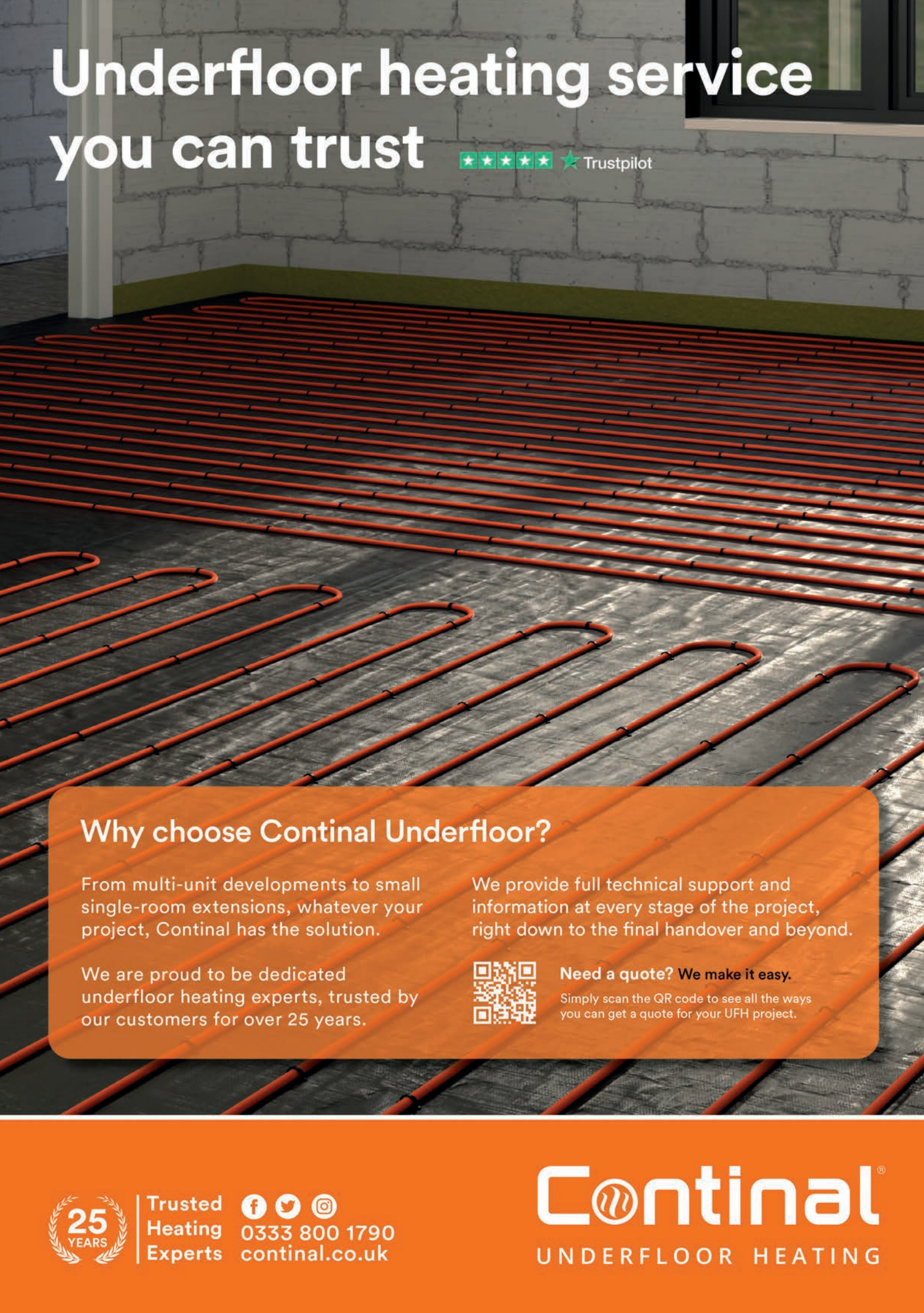
Marmox appoints Finance Director



Marmox Ltd. has strengthened its board by promoting its current finance manager to the newly created post of finance director with immediate effect. The move follows founding family member, Jonathan Parsons, having been appointed as business development director as his parents, Harry and Anne, prepare to take a less active role in running the company. Having been at the company since 2014, Richard Kent-Smith previously worked for a firm of chartered accountants where he was involved for some years in preparing VAT returns and management accounts on behalf of Marmox, before the company created the position of finance manager in order to recruit him as a member of staff: a position where he has successfully applied his people skills as well as his aptitude for numbers. Sarah Viney, managing director commented: "Richard Kent-Smith has been successfully filling the role of Finance Manager since 2014 and has proved himself to be a hard-working and dedicated member of the team, who has helped take the company from strength to strength in recent years. I am absolutely delighted to have Richard as a fellow director. His skills and knowledge have helped us to grow the company over the last few years and it is great to be able to recognise his invaluable contribution by appointing him as a company director."

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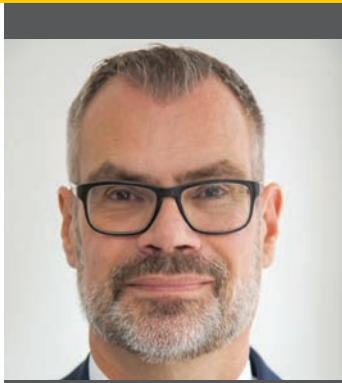


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Brian Berry

THE INDUSTRY ADVOCATE

WILL HOUSING BE LEFT IN A STATE?

Brian Berry, CEO of the Federation of Master Builders (FMB) says that as the Election looms, the current Government appears to have abandoned the need for more homes, and calls for a dedicated Secretary of State for Housing.



HOUSING SHOULD BE AN EASY WIN WITH THE BUILDING INDUSTRY AND VOTERS ALIKE LONGING FOR A BOLD PLAN TO DELIVER MORE HOMES

Not long before the General Election date was announced as 4 July, the FMB launched its manifesto for the next Government. Unsurprisingly, one of our key asks was the need for more housing.

Without an adequate supply of new homes people can't move freely, which stifles economic growth and opportunities. Our document calls on the new government to create a dedicated Secretary of State for Housing and end the merry-go-round of Housing Ministers.

Under the Conservatives, the current Housing brief exists as a junior Ministerial position, and is seen as a leg up to higher office. Surely, given the ongoing housing crisis, it needs to be a higher office, with a dedicated, strong voice at the Cabinet table.

We were fortunate to have the current Housing Minister, Lee Rowley at our Manifesto launch, but despite our call, he remained somewhat tight lipped about the potential promotion on offer! Fortunately, the Minister did say that he agreed with a good deal of

what was in the FMB Manifesto – maybe this request was one of them.

HOUSING LEFT OUT OF LABOUR PLEDGES

Having put forward a plan to put housing on the top table in our manifesto, it was very disappointing when Labour leader Keir Starmer failed to include housing in his six 'pledges for change.' How can a country grow with too few homes, forcing more and more people to stay in unaffordable and often unhealthy rental accommodation.

Housing should be an easy win with the building industry and voters alike longing for a bold plan to deliver more homes. So, despite lofty pledges at the last Labour Party Conference housing for the time being seems to have been brushed to one side.

One ray of light does however remain, with Angela Rayner, Shadow Secretary for Housing, announcing that Labour has big ambitions for new towns, seemingly channelling the Labour Party of the post war years, when places like Basildon and Stevenage were born.

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But let's not forget the role of smaller housebuilders in all this. In the immediate post-war period, small builders played a much bigger role in housing delivery, helping to deliver the new towns and creating diversity in the housing stock. Labour has the opportunity to make housing delivery an integral part of its election offer. Should it decide to do so it's an opportunity for Labour to embrace local housebuilders to create the capacity that is needed to build the quality homes that are so desperately

needed. Furthermore, local homes built by local builders offer the opportunity to transform regional economic growth across the country.

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN SCHEME UNDER FIRE

Like much of the industry, I was concerned when I read the recent Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) scheme report from the National Audit Office (NAO). The report found substantial risks for the long-term effectiveness of

the new BNG scheme, with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) having failed to put all necessary elements in place ahead of launch.

The NAO's criticism of Defra echoes the concerns that were raised by housebuilders at the time. Small housebuilders were broadly supportive of the aims underpinning biodiversity net gain, but they have been warning that additional costs – and the underprepared nature of local authorities – will make it near impossible for smaller firms to manage.

The Department's acknowledgment that there had been mixed readiness among local authorities is a positive first step. Local authorities have been tasked with enforcing planning regulations at their own discretion, and Defra has said that it does not intend to provide central monitoring, which we feel seems like poor management of the scheme.

Furthermore, the lack of involvement that Defra has in the biodiversity credit market is also extremely worrying, especially as smaller builders are more likely to need to offset biodiversity offsite. Unless these issues are addressed, BNG will continue to create substantial barriers to small housebuilders.

World first green RFID-tagged LOOP pallets



In a world first for construction – the first batch of reusable green, RFID-tagged pallets from **The Pallet LOOP** have started entering the construction supply chain, en masse. Over the last three weeks, The Pallet LOOP – and its manufacturing partner Scott Pallets – have shipped more than 30,000 LOOP pallets to

British Gypsum's bagged plaster plants at Barrow, East Leake and Kirkby Thore. This major milestone is set to shift the dial on pallet waste across the UK – with The Pallet LOOP providing the world's first dedicated pallet production, delivery, and collection service for the construction industry. As part of its offer, The Pallet LOOP will pick up green pallets across the UK, inspect and repair them where necessary, and redistribute them.

setmeup@thepalletloop.com [youtube.com/watch?v=JAAMrYk-2P0&t=1s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JAAMrYk-2P0&t=1s)

Housebuilder & Developer website



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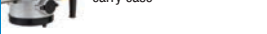
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COMMENT

SOCIAL STRENGTH

Patrick Mooney, housing consultant and news editor of Housing, Management & Maintenance magazine asks 'has the case for an expanded social housebuilding programme ever been stronger'?

During the height of council house building in the 1950s, councils built on average around 147,000 homes a year. In the past 10 years councils have averaged building around 1% of that – just 1,400 new homes a year. This is principally due to a number of Government restrictions and a lack of funding available. At the same time councils are struggling to fulfil their housing responsibilities and billions of pounds each year are being wasted on providing emergency housing, often in unsuitable and unsafe properties.

Of course this money could be better spent on providing high quality, secure housing at reasonable prices. Instead, councils are housing over 100,000 households in insecure temporary accommodation with many more people living on the streets. 1.2 million households are currently on social housing waiting lists across England, with councils heavily reliant on housing associations to provide them with access to new and affordable housing.

But the HA sector is also struggling in the present climate. An influential group of MPs with a keen interest in housing issues (the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee), recently stated: "The social housing sector is crucial for providing shelter and support for millions of households. The sector is, however, under serious financial pressure, although it remains resilient for the time being. The sector has been presented with massive bills for decarbonisation, fire safety and regenerating old homes. At the same time, the maximum rent that social housing providers can charge has been unexpectedly capped by the Government."

"In order to deal with the financial headwinds, social housing providers have cut the amount they plan to spend on building new social homes. This reduction in new building has been necessary for social housing providers to remain financially secure. However, this comes at a time when the country needs to build significantly more social housing and if this continues it will present a major problem for individuals that need social housing. Moreover, all stakeholders are clear that England has been facing a chronic shortage of social housing which must be addressed."

SECTOR-WIDE PROBLEM

In fact the whole housing industry is in desperate need of a boost as the number of new homes registered to be built in the first quarter of this year was 20% down on the same period in 2023, according to the National House Building Council (NHBC).

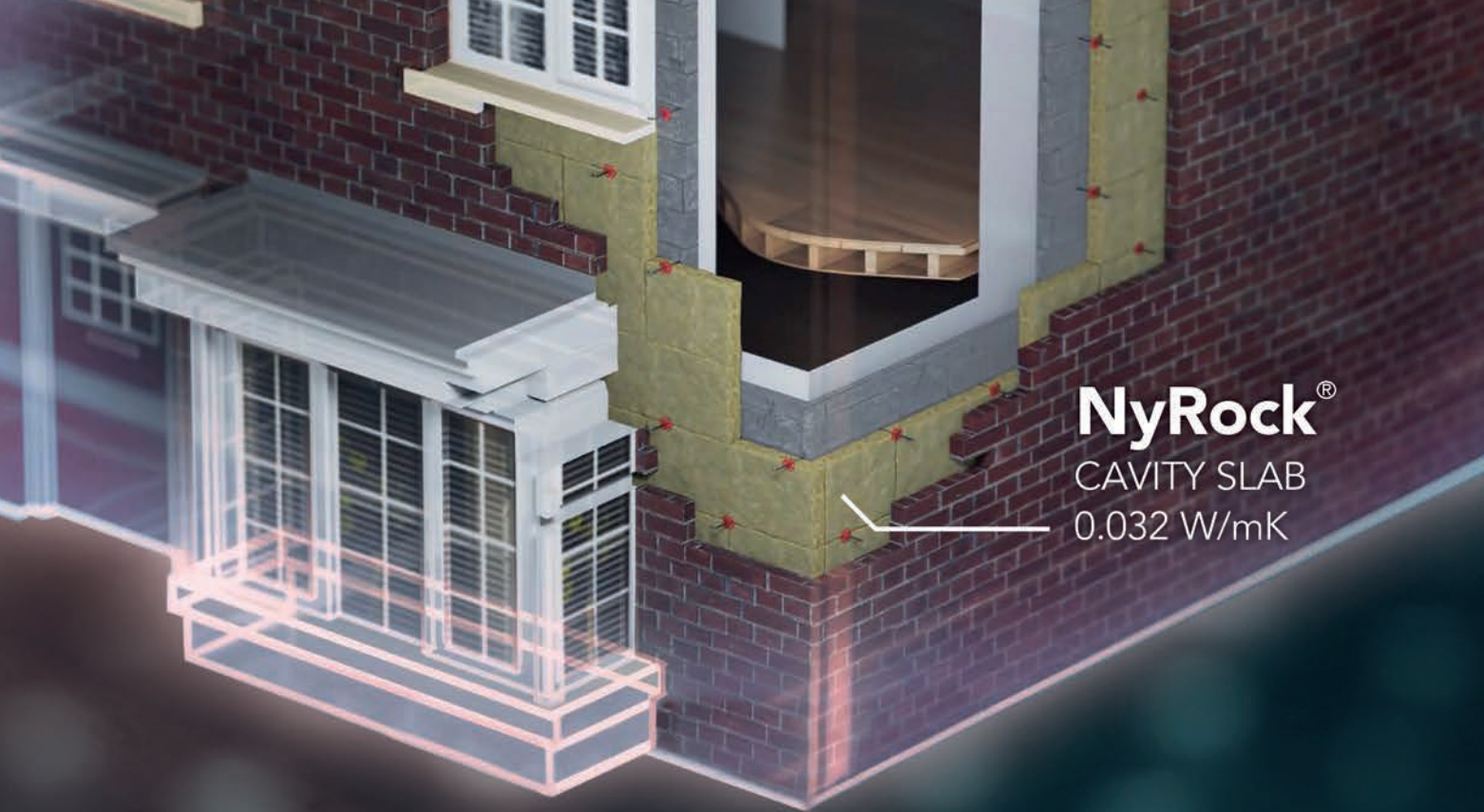
The figures show 21,967 new homes were registered to be built in Q1 2024. In the same period, 26,240 new homes were completed, 13% down on the 30,071 completions recorded in Q1 2023. The fall was attributed to continuing economic challenges, skills shortages and poor weather conditions.

NHBC chief, Steve Wood said: "Our Q1 2024 figures reflect prevailing market conditions. Rises in the Bank of England's base rate have driven mortgage rates higher, leading to a drop in new home purchases and a slowdown in house price growth. Prolonged wet weather has also hampered housebuilding output in Q1, with the south of England experiencing its wettest February since 1836, according to the Met Office, and many parts of southern England recording well over twice the average rainfall." Despite the negative figures, NHBC pointed to some tentative signs of growth. New home registrations increased month-on-month in the first quarter. 8,320 new homes were registered to be built in March compared to 6,557 in January and 7,090 in February. Q1 2024 registrations were also higher than Q3 and Q4 2023.

However, housing consultancy Savills has warned that housing completions could fall to just 160,000 next year across the entire country and have emphasised that more affordable housing is "critically important." Across the country, Mayors of our big cities like Andy Burnham in Manchester and Sadiq Khan in London have been urging the Government to greatly increase the investment in housebuilding and for all authorities to be allowed to get on with the building of tens of thousands of new homes each year, for the next five to 10 years.

Meanwhile, an intervention from the former Conservative MP Natalie Elphicke must have caused huge embarrassment across Whitehall, as she cited the Government's failure to hit its 300,000 homes a year target as one of the key reasons for her high-profile defection to Labour. The MP for Dover and housing finance

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expert made headlines when she ‘crossed the house.’ In her statement, she said: “On housing, Rishi Sunak’s Government is now failing to build the homes we need. Last year saw the largest fall of new housing starts in England in a single year since the credit crunch. The manifesto committed to 300,000 homes next year – but only around half that number are now set to be built.”

A BUILDING RENAISSANCE

Councils across England are represented by the Local Government Association (LGA). Responding to the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (LUHC) Committee’s report ‘The Finances and Sustainability of the Social Housing Sector,’ councillor Darren Rodwell, Housing spokesperson for the LGA said: “The LGA has set out a six-point plan to spark a council house building renaissance, which must include urgent reform to the Right to Buy. “Long-term certainty on powers and funding could help councils deliver an ambitious build programme of 100,000 high-quality, climate-friendly social homes a year.”

The LGA is calling for the Government to go further and faster in order that councils can properly resume their historic role as a major builder of affordable homes, by implementing a six-point plan for social housing.

The six points in the LGA’s plan are:

- Roll out five-year local housing deals to all areas of the country that want them by 2025 – combining funding from multiple national housing programmes into a single pot. This will provide the funding, flexibility, certainty and confidence to stimulate housing supply, and will remove national restrictions which stymie innovation and delivery;
- Government support for a new national council housebuilding delivery taskforce, bringing together a team of experts to provide additional capacity and improvement support for housing delivery teams within councils and their partners;
- Continued access to preferential borrowing rates through the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB), introduced in the Spring Budget, to support the delivery of social housing and local authorities borrowing for Housing Revenue Accounts;
- Further reform to Right to Buy which includes allowing councils to retain 100% of receipts on a permanent basis; flexibility to combine Right to Buy receipts with other government grants; the ability to set the size of discounts locally; and the ability to recycle a greater proportion of receipts into building replacement



- homes paying off housing debt;
- Review and increase where needed the grant levels per home through the Affordable Homes Programme, as inflationary pressures have caused the cost of building new homes to rise, leaving councils needing grant funding to fund a larger proportion of a new build homes than before;
- Certainty on future rents, to enable councils to invest; Government must commit to a minimum 10-year rent deal for council landlords to allow a longer period of annual rent increases and long-term certainty.

RENT LEVELS A KEY FACTOR

The importance of rent levels and policies which control the rents which councils and housing associations can charge has been clearly demonstrated by research undertaken by a group of the largest HAs operating in London. They found that differences in rent levels for similar properties are costing HAs in the capital more than £2bn a year with more than half of their social rented homes being at risk of becoming unsustainable to manage due to the Government scrapping its rent convergence policy. Historically, the level of social housing rent paid to councils and housing associations has varied depending on when and where their home was built. To counter this, from 2002, the Government allowed cheaper rents to increase by the Retail Prices Index (RPI) + 0.5% and a maximum of an additional £2 per week, every year; but this policy was scrapped in 2015.

Analysis of rents by Hyde for the G15 group consisting of London’s largest housing associations shows more than half (57%) of social homes managed by London’s largest landlords have now diverged away from the higher ‘formula rent’. This has cost the G15 members £211.4m a year, meaning they have an

equivalent of £400 less to invest per social rented home, per year.

Andy Hulme, chief executive of Hyde Group, said: “The evidence is clear, scrapping rent convergence has sucked resources away from social housing providers being able to invest in customers’ homes. This move will mean G15 members alone will have more than £2bn less to invest over a decade, and this is equivalent to losing almost a quarter of the money we invest in each social home every year.”

Hulme added that the losses come at a time landlords are investing record sums to address building safety and damp and mould issues. He said: “With more than half of homes not meeting the formula rent, in the long-run they become unsustainable for social housing charities to continue providing. We simply have to avoid this happening.”

The G15’s analysis also showed the ending of convergence has led to “unfairness and tension” about unequal rents, with some social housing residents “being charged more than 30% less than a fellow resident to live in a home of a very similar standard.” The G15 has also calculated that large London housing associations have lost £6.6bn as a result of the Government’s 2016/2020 1% annual rent reduction and last year’s 7% rent cap.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan has repeated his call for the Government to inject £2.2 billion in emergency funding into affordable housebuilding and criticised ministers for failing to take action to kickstart “a stalling market”. He warned that a failure to boost funding was exacerbating “a national housebuilding downturn” and that extra funding was needed to keep housebuilders on site in London and across the country. The latest Greater London Authority figures show that between April 2023 and March 2024, building started on just 2,358 grant-funded affordable homes in the capital, down from 25,658 in the previous year.

It is increasingly clear that the Government is being provided with lots of evidence and advice on what it needs to do to tackle a housing sector stuck in the doldrums battling to solve huge and costly problems, with homeless households and unsuitably housed people paying a very high price as a consequence.

There are only weeks until the General Election. Hopefully an incoming Government will be minded to accept the LGA’s six point plan, and will take the step to investing in the building of 100,000 new social rent homes a year. This will not only give a welcome boost to the construction sector, it will also finally provide decent home to people who are currently stuck on council waiting lists.

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Clearing the path to timber



The Government's roadmap for increasing timber use in construction is here, but how is the industry tackling the obstacles? James Parker spoke to Andrew Carpenter, chief executive of the Structural Timber Association.

How can structural timber, the ultimate sustainable material option, regain its place on the specification agenda? Facing a combination of a long-standing stigma around fire safety on sites, misconceptions around moisture issues and buildability, and recently supply, inflation and the post-Grenfell war on combustible materials, the timber industry was feeling somewhat unloved.

There has been widespread cynicism from homeowners since media coverage in the late 1980s of poor practice in masonry plus timber housebuilding. The timber industry has been repairing its reputation ever since, such as Barratt Homes (the subject of a seminal 80s *World in Action* timber exposé) doing an internal exercise among its younger staff to look at the appetite for timber frame. With the 1980s now a distant memory but the climate crisis now front of mind, those staff advocated a return to timber frame.

THE ROADMAP

Having spent months lobbying government, the Structural Timber Association (STA) celebrated when Defra launched the Timber in Construction (TiC) Policy Roadmap in December; a practical framework for increasing the use of timber in construction. It was the result of close collaboration between the industry and the Government to identify the steps needed to drastically increase adoption in the race to net zero 2050.

The working group behind the document included DLUHC, the Department of Business and Trade, and the Forestry Commission. The construction and supply chain sectors had passionate advocates in Andrew Carpenter, chief executive of the STA, plus Timber Development UK's Dave Hopkins, and Andy Leitch of the Confederation of Forest Industries. Augmented by

industry associations like the HBF, the wide-ranging and influential voices on the panel meant the issues were vocally expressed, and ownership guaranteed.

With 2050 net zero looming ever larger, and the Future Homes Standard 2025 imminent, the STA contributed research and data to the working group to help understand the impact its widespread use could have on reducing CO₂ in housebuilding. However the group also looked at barriers to adoption, and ways to overcome them. Seven key recommendations emerged to make up the roadmap, labelled Supply, Demand, Building Safety, Labour & Skills, Carbon, Insurance, and Innovation.

Carpenter said that with the recommendations now in place, the roadmap gives "clarity and reassurances to stakeholders throughout the construction industry." However, have we made any progress down the road?

The agenda behind the roadmap, which traces back to COP26 in Glasgow, was to "safely use more timber in construction." The two major drivers were the climate crisis and the safety agenda following the Hackitt report on building safety, post-Grenfell. Andrew Carpenter of the STA says that within the working group, the imperative was that "you don't choose a net zero solution that's not safe, and you don't have a safe solution that's not net zero." Carpenter praises the Government's approach to grappling with the need to pursue ways to enable timber to form part of the specification agenda: "They have played a blinder."

SUPPLY & DEMAND

Andrew Carpenter says that the working group identified the need for the UK industry to use more homegrown timber. He says that according to the STA's research, around 50% of the carbon emitted from timber supply in the UK is from transportation. "It's still considerably less than steel and concrete, but if we want to improve, it's the transport side that's the biggest problem."

Carpenter believes that "quite an education process" was required to meet the group's goals – firstly the Forestry Commission needed to grow the right species, and increase forestry from its current 14.5% cover to 16.5% in the UK. However, to enable this to occur, he says "we need to create a market, and

THE SKILLS ISSUE IS "PROBABLY THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM"

THE SEVEN 'PRIORITIES' IN THE TIMBER ROADMAP

1. Improving data on timber & whole life carbon
2. Promoting the safe, sustainable use of timber as a construction material
3. Increasing skills, capacity, and competency across the supply chain
4. Increasing the sustainable supply of timber
5. Addressing fire safety and durability concerns to safely expand the use of engineered mass timber
6. Increasing collaboration with insurers, lenders, and warranty providers
7. Promoting innovation and high performing timber construction systems

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the Government has recognised that that market is construction.” However, Carpenter added that the construction industry needed to understand that it is acceptable to use softer timber varieties than received wisdom may suggest, to benefit UK sourced timber. “We need to educate the sector that they can use C16 timber rather than C24; that is a big stumbling block.”

“The other question mark,” says Carpenter, is around the capacity of the industry to deliver, which “will not be overnight,” meaning many suppliers will still need to import the majority of their timber. He says that the Environmental Audit Committee has asked for a minimum of 40% of housing to be timber frame, nearly doubling the current 23% figure; “ideally they’d like it to be 80%” (the target in Scotland). Carpenter asserts: “If we get 40% my sector would be quite happy.”

The second priority for the roadmap was looking at “how are we going to create that demand in the industry, what’s the incentive,” says Carpenter. He asserts that the major housebuilders are driving it “to a degree,” citing how Barratt purchased STA member Oregon Timber Frame around three years ago. They “have invested heavily” in a new £40m-plus factory in the Midlands, and Taylor Wimpey’s new £45m Peterborough factory building timber-framed homes.

He adds: “Persimmon has had Space4 in their supply chain for ages, Cala Homes has bought Taylor Lane, Vistry has just bought Countryside with its three factories.” He says that this shows that commercially “it stacks up,” but adds “we need to fill in the gaps,” giving one example of how the STA was that day

meeting the leading group of London housing associations G15 to hear their views and drive forward the agenda. England, where the big potential currently is for timber, is “behind the curve” on growing compared with UK devolved governments, admits Carpenter.

Timber’s sustainability is a given, but the roadmap working group is “interrogating it far more than just embodied carbon to look at whole life, end of life, and EPDs (Environmental Product Declarations). Carpenter said “at the moment we seem to be fixated on a 60 year building life, but we think it should be double that,” but admitted that degree of shift would be unlikely.

Fire safety agenda forms one of the key priorities, and the STA has worked for many years to bring rigour to timber design and specification (collected in its ‘16 steps to fire safety and the STA Assure fire safety audit scheme). Post-Building Safety Act, Carpenter says that allied to “early involvement of all the key players,” dangerous specification switching is far less likely. Although ostensibly for over 18 metres, the “culture has cascaded down through the industry,” he asserts.

Persuading the insurance sector remains a major nut to crack, of course. With the post-Grenfell environment seeing a ban on all combustible materials over 18 metres, we are a long way from seeing the innovation in sustainable high-rise timber buildings many hoped for, in the short term. A working group has been set up with the insurance industry via the Association of British Insurers to “try and look at their issues and concerns.”

SKILLS, COST & INNOVATION

Carpenter says the skills issue is

“probably the elephant in the room,” even questioning whether architects have the skills to design in timber. Many may assume that designers love timber, but there’s a lack of specific timber-oriented training currently, says Carpenter, so he is working with the RIBA currently on developing a technical helpline, alongside the STA’s existing training scheme for contractors assembling timber frames.

The final part of the puzzle is innovation: Homes England now requires 55% of MMC-oriented projects to provide ‘premanufactured value’ ie factory assembly, as a prerequisite for funding. STA members are innovating further in response, adding more elements such as doors and windows offsite.

Cost may continue to be a stumbling block here, and STA is producing an “extensive” cross-sector cost comparison with other materials like masonry, with consultant Rider Levitt Bucknall. And, with a greater push towards controlled, innovative offsite methods, unforeseen costs should be reduced.

The timber ‘roadmap’ is just a start, and the Election may see a shift in priorities, but you’d expect such a key piece of thinking to survive the political upheaval. Could we soon see a step change in specification of timber across the industry, but also, long term, from UK sources? The biggest immediate question is whether the construction industry can supply the necessary demand to support the investment and innovation.

In terms of the impetus for tackling climate change, “the direction we are on as a society is unstoppable,” says Carpenter. For now, industry and Government have finally seen the sense in pursuing the answers collaboratively.



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Local sensitivity



Roseanne Field reports on a high-end nine house development in a small village in Kent, built by an SME developer that prides itself on its local knowledge and respectful approach to schemes.

Situated just outside Maidstone in Kent, the village of Loose made an ideal spot for a small housing development by local SME developer Esquire Developments. Given its proximity to London, it offered potential homeowners the opportunity to commute to the capital in under an hour, while enjoying living in a countryside setting.

The semi-rural location, just outside the Loose Valley Conservation Area, meant gaining planning approval for any kind of development on the site was never going to be easy. An application for 15 dwellings had previously been turned down, before Esquire acquired the site in 2018.

Founded in 2011 by childhood friends Paul Henry and David Braddon, Esquire is based in Longfield in Kent. The pair pride themselves on their knowledge and understanding of the south east, and how the company utilises that to deliver homes that are responsive to and respectful of their location. “Through a community-focused approach to planning, strong design ethos and understanding of the housing market, Esquire secures a solid pipeline of sites and land options,



“AS AN SME, WE ARE TOTALLY FLEXIBLE IN OUR APPROACH TO LAND AGREEMENTS AND THE TERMS OF ANY POTENTIAL CONTRACT”

and forges good relationships with local councils, contractors, other housebuilders, and communities,” explains head of sales and marketing, Alex Mattingly.

The developer’s in-house land and planning team also boast extensive local knowledge and over time have helped develop the relationships with local planning authorities and communities. “As an SME, we are totally flexible in our approach to land agreements and the terms of any potential contract,” the company says. This flexibility includes considering sites that range from two to 200 dwellings, short term planning applications or long-term local plan allocations, and including amenities such as nurseries, offices and other community asset buildings. The company

has won several awards over the years both for specific developments and the company as a whole, including the Small Housebuilder of the Year Gold Award at the 2020 WhatHouse? Awards.

Esquire’s combination of understanding the local housing market, a flexible approach and a bespoke, high-end design offering allows Mattingly to claim that the firm “offers something different to our larger competitors.” She continues: “Everything we do reflects and respects the communities in which we are building and helping to create.”

This belief and confidence in their offering meant the developer was happy to take the risk on the site, despite it having been previously refused for development. Esquire formed an



“OUR SCHEME RESPONDED TO THE PROXIMITY OF ADJACENT NEIGHBOURS BY DELIVERING SINGLE STOREY DWELLINGS IN KEY LOCATIONS”
PAT CONVEY, HEAD OF CONSTRUCTION, ESQUIRE DEVELOPMENTS

“excellent working relationship” with the landowner which, says Esquire head of land and planning, Andy Wilford, “helped maximise the development potential and minimise the planning risk.” The site was essentially a large rear garden, having previously been home to a swimming pool as well as being used for storage for vehicles and garden equipment.

Originally acquiring an option on the site directly from the landowner in 2019, Esquire then submitted an application in October 2019, though withdrew it due to feedback on the principle of the development. They held discussions with the local planning authority and submitted a revised application in November 2020 which was unanimously approved in February 2021.

“The adoption of a neighbourhood plan identified the site as being within the urban area of the village and recognised that design quality and lower density development was key,”

explains Esquire head of construction, Pat Convey. “Our scheme for nine dwellings responded to the proximity of adjacent neighbours by delivering single storey dwellings in key locations, thus delivering a mix of dwellings that responded to the site’s characteristics in both design terms and housing needs.”

Work began onsite in May 2022, with some minor site clearance required – mostly clearing rubbish and removing the old swimming pool.

DEVELOPMENT DESIGN

The final development of nine homes consisted of two three-bedroom bungalows, five three-bedroom houses, one four-bedroom house, and one five-bedroom house, all detached. They were designed to encircle a small community green, with each home also featuring its own garage, driveway with EV charging, and a private landscaped garden.

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The houses are built utilising traditional methods – brick block and cavity construction. All homes feature open plan kitchen/dining areas; the two storey houses have separate living rooms while the two bungalows have an open plan kitchen/dining/living room. The four and five bedroom houses also include a downstairs study. All homes' master bedrooms have an ensuite – as well as bedroom two in the five bed – and a main family bathroom. A single garage is attached to each property, with the five bed including a double garage with integrated workshop to the rear.

Sustainability forms a key part of what Esquire does: “We’re constantly reviewing our environmental measures in a bid to reduce the carbon emissions of our homes by 50% or more,” it says. All homes at Millers Field feature an air source heat pump as opposed to gas boiler – something the developer now does at all of its projects. These feed into an underfloor heating system downstairs and conventional radiators upstairs.

The homes are built with a fabric first approach, and the company claims “improved efficiency is inherent in our

building processes and specifications.” The houses are built with an increased cavity wall thickness and materials are both “responsibly sourced and perform to the highest possible standards,” such as high specification window with a U-value of 1.1 W/m²K]. Wherever possible, the company uses local suppliers and locally sourced materials to reduce its carbon footprint. At Millers Field, the bricks came from Bespoke Brick Company in Rochester, based about an hour away, and all contractors were based in and around Kent, with many coming from Maidstone.

To further reduce carbon emissions, careful consideration is given to local transport links. All homes are also fitted with EV charging points as standard. LED downlights and low energy pendant fittings are used throughout the houses.

Correspondingly, the homes are finished to a high standard, a luxury Esquire believes is a key differentiator an SME developer can provide. An abundance of choice of finish was given to buyers who purchased off plan to personalise their homes. The kitchens were finished with a high grade laminate worktop, upstand

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and splashback in all homes bar the five beds, which have a quartz worktop and splashback. All homes also featured fully integrated appliances including Neff ovens, five ring induction hobs, fridge freezers and dishwashers.

The bathrooms included both rain and handheld showerheads, vanity units, and heated chrome towel rails. Porcelain wall and floor tiles were used, along with bespoke white painted staircases and oak handrails. All houses were wired for satellite television in the living area, dining room, study and all bedrooms, as well as including a wired-in video doorbell.

Landscaping forms an important part of Esquire's sustainability policy. The company says it takes a "holistic" approach to development to offer a wide range of environmental benefits for customers. Masterplans are designed to allow for less homes and more open space – "inviting nature to bloom in both private gardens and public open spaces, with a mix of grassed areas and native planting for wildlife," it says.

The developer also includes "rejuvenated and expanded footpath networks" to encourage homeowners to reduce their car use, helped also by the development's connection to public transport.

The landscaping at Millers Field comprised a central green space which "creates a focal vista as you enter the site from the driveway and through the walled entrance," explains Wilford. He adds: "The central green space offers visual amenity and ecological enhancements within the development, and improves the spaciousness within the site." As well as the ecological benefits, this creates a community feel within the development, "allowing new homeowners to connect with neighbours," says Mattingly.

Esquire also contributed financially to a local re-wilding scheme led by the Parish Council that backs onto the Millers Field site. "The contributions were used to improve accessibility to the woodland for the community and enhanced enjoyment of this space in the open countryside," Wilford explains.



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Construction started onsite in May 2022, with all properties completed by February 2024. The build phase reportedly ran smoothly aside from developments' typical weather and supply chain-related delays.

CREATING AN IMPACT

Being a small development doesn't mean Millers Field hasn't had an impact. The development has been received exceptionally well, not only by homeowners but the local community too. Mattingly explains further: "Having a smaller, more bespoke development really does add to the existing community feel of the village." She continues: "The area and community feel was a key selling

point for the development."

One proud new owner of a house on the development had been searching for over two years for the perfect family home. When they found a house at Millers Field, it "straight away ticked all the boxes," she explains. "Having purchased from national housebuilders over the years, it's great to see that when using a regional housebuilder you get the service-led approach rather than just being treated like a number," she says.

The development proved to be so popular it had over 80,000 views on Rightmove, with the nine homes receiving over 390 leads. The overall reaction has, Mattingly says, been "really positive, everyone loves it." ■

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Adam Lindsay-Smith, Group Procurement Manager, Persimmon Homes



ENERGY HOUSE 2.0 SPOTLIGHT

Barratt and Bellway put to the test



Will Swan from The University of Salford describes the development of the Energy House 2.0 project to test two new build models by Barratt and Bellway, and compare different approaches to meeting the Future Homes Standard affordably.

The Future Homes Standard provides far more rigorous performance demands as applied to new build homes than currently. The uplift to a 75% reduction from Part L (2013), increases in airtightness, and a required understanding of overheating risk requires the industry to take a more technical approach than in previous iterations of the regulations. For many, particularly volume developers, this potentially means a tipping point away from traditionally built homes, with new fabric technologies, heating systems and controls regimes required to meet the standard. While product manufacturers have traditionally invested in research

and development, the key points of failure are often around integration issues, such as construction, installation and commissioning. These more stringent demands, focused on the performance of the building, requires the sector as a whole to consider how they might deliver homes when the regulations come into force in 2025.

The University of Salford completed the construction of Energy House 2.0 in 2022 and this provided a perfect opportunity for the industry to explore what the Future Homes Standard meant for the sector. Energy House 2.0 is a large environmental chamber, large enough to allow whole houses to be tested under controlled conditions. The conditions under control are temperature (-20°C – 40°C) and relative humidity, while large-scale rigs provide snow, wind, rain, and solar gain. This was built on the work of the Salford Energy House, constructed in 2011. This was a Victorian end-terrace built within an environmental chamber to address the retrofit challenge. The testing of whole buildings under controlled



Barratt's eHome2 features a new closed panel timber frame system developed by Saint Gobain, plus other technologies

conditions remains unique to Salford in the UK, and has not been replicated globally on this scale.

The development of the facility, the changes in the regulations and the industry drive to deliver created a unique set of circumstances that led to the development of a cutting-edge project to explore the future of UK housing.

ENERGY HOUSE 2.0

In 2011 the original Salford Energy House, now called Energy House 1, was developed to look at retrofit. It is a Victorian property, selected as it represented 20% of the UK housing stock by typology, as well as being the most problematic to retrofit, often called “hard to treat”. The facility represented a major change in how we could understand the impact of different interventions, focussing on manufacturers of all sizes, ranging from major international companies, such as Saint Gobain, to innovative new start-ups.

This approach gave advantages over the existing methods for understanding products. The existing methods were one of two approaches. The first is a bench test; these are individual products such as boilers or insulation, tested in isolation for their performance. The

weakness with this approach is that it did not take into consideration interactions with the environment, other elements of the building, or the risks associated with installation or commissioning. The second existing approach was the field trial. These are often complex and, by necessity, large-scale. Typically, 100 occupied homes will be monitored for two heating seasons, usually between October and March. They can suffer from occupants withdrawing from studies, data loss on multiple sets of equipment, and unpredictability around construction times and weather. They are lengthy and costly, and this can provide difficulties for innovators who need to understand if their product is performing more quickly than a robust study will allow.

The approach taken at Salford Energy House has a number of advantages over the existing approaches. Firstly, repeatable experiments can be conducted. Simply, the house may be tested without an intervention, the intervention is made, and the house can be tested under exactly the same conditions, giving a clear measurable impact of the intervention. An excellent example of this is the boiler turn down project undertaken with the National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts, which

THE ENERGY HOUSE 2.0 PROJECT PROVIDED A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY FOR THE INDUSTRY TO EXPLORE WHAT THE FUTURE HOMES STANDARD MEANT FOR THE SECTOR



The Future Home project designed by Bellway has a fairly traditional timber frame construction with PIR infill

ultimately became UK Government advice during the cost-of-living crisis. The impact on energy consumption and comfort was analysed under different boiler flow temperatures under identical conditions, something not possible in the field.

Secondly, the data provided by an experimental house is in far more detail than is possible in the field. Salford Energy House has more than 200 fixed sensors and more can be added, giving a high-level of understanding on not only whether a product performs, but also providing enough detail to understand why or, perhaps more usefully, why not. Finally, as the house is unoccupied, it can be changed and adapted with the needs of the project without inconvenience for the occupant. The approach does not replace the existing approach, both field trials and bench tests are still very much part of understanding building performance. However, more than a decade of work shows us the approach has considerable power in quickly assessing the impact of retrofit improvements.

Energy House 2.0 was conceived in light of the limitations of the Salford Energy House. The team at Energy House Labs at the University of Salford recognised that the single building archetype limited the type of work we wanted to do. Additionally, the temperature ranges and weather replication needed to better reflect an international range. Finally, the team wanted a facility that would retain

leadership in the approach. The Energy House 2.0 concept was developed over a two-year period from 2016, with funding from the European Regional Development Fund (£8.35m), the Office for Students, and the University of Salford contributing to this £16.5m project. As part of the launch in January 2023 the team ran a competition to identify projects that could be constructed in the two environmental chambers. In response to the emerging Future Homes Standard, two properties were put forward from the UK new build sector, Barratt and Saint Gobain, and a property from Bellway.

ABOUT THE PROPERTIES

eHome2 and The Future Home (TFH) were built within the chambers exactly as they would be built onsite. The scale of the chambers allowed lifting and ground working equipment to be brought indoors. The design principles of both homes were to ensure that multiple configurations of the homes could be tested. This meant that fabric systems and control changes could be switched between or entirely replaced, as the teams and their supply chains explored issues such as performance, cost, and buildability.

eHome2 developed by Saint Gobain and Barratt is an adaptation of the existing Moresby House type. The construction is a closed panel timber frame, built using a new product from Saint Gobain. It is heated by a Vaillant heat pump, via Thermaskirt perimeter

**THE RESULTS INDICATE
THAT BOTH HOMES HAVE
A LOW PERFORMANCE
GAP COMPARED WITH
EXISTING HOMES**



Bellway's Future Home project tested multiple heating systems including two different air source heat pumps, one of which was roof mounted

heating emitters at skirting board level, as well as having an infrared heating system that can be used independently to allow a comparison between them. Ventilation is provided by two systems which can be switched easily.

A whole house MVHR system is provided alongside a dMEV system, this allows for both systems suggested by the Future Homes Standard consultation to be examined. Domestic hot water is supplied from the Vaillant heat pump system through to a cylinder. In addition, an air source heat pump hot water cylinder is also installed, which is required to deliver hot water when the infrared heating is being used.

The Future Home, designed by Bellway, has a timber frame with a more traditional wall build up delivered using an open panel timber frame product, with PIR infill, a cavity and an external brickwork skin. The property has multiple heating systems including two different air source heat pumps – a Panasonic mono-block unit and a roof mounted Worcester Bosch Hydrotop.

These can feed two separate heating emitter types – wall mounted radiators and a ground floor underfloor heating system, as well as two independent infrared heating systems. The domestic hot water is fed by the Panasonic ASHP. This house also has two switchable ventilation systems; MVHR and dMEV.

Research commenced in May 2023 with a detailed programme that included not only the lead partners, but also their

supply chain, as well as innovators new to the sector. The project was supported with a £2.3m UK Research and Innovation Grant, which began in June 2023 and lasts two years. This allowed the team to not only look at energy performance, but widen the performance issues to include acoustics and air quality.

CURRENT & FUTURE TESTS

The research was conducted at two levels. The first level aimed to measure the overall fabric performance of the entire house to determine if it performs as intended. The second level aimed to measure the performance of individual elements of the house's fabric to understand their specific contribution to the overall performance. In December 2023, the Future Homes Standard consultation was released. The table on the facing page provides an overview as how eHome2 and Future Home performed against the proposed standard for each of the individual elements.

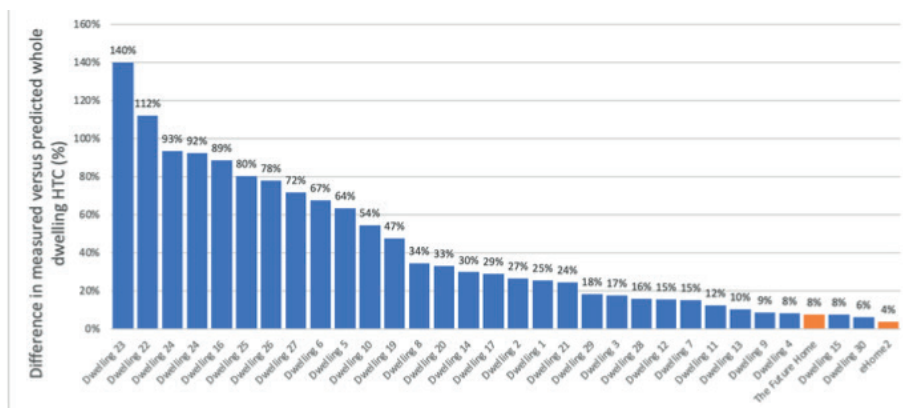
KEY LEARNINGS

Each home had its combined heat loss measured using the 'coheating' test method. Detailed information, including all analyses, can be found in the final reports (see QR codes on page 46). Previous research identified significant issues with the performance gap in new homes built in the UK. A study by Leeds Beckett University (LBU) revealed fabric performance gaps ranging from

THE 2023 RESEARCH COMPRISED A DETAILED PROGRAMME THAT INCLUDED NOT ONLY THE LEAD PARTNERS, BUT ALSO THEIR SUPPLY CHAIN, AS WELL AS INNOVATORS NEW TO THE SECTOR

| | Future Home Standard | | TFH | eHome2 |
|--|----------------------|----------|--------|--------|
| | Option 1 | Option 2 | Design | Design |
| Roof U-value (W/m ² K) | 0.11 | 0.11 | 0.09 | 0.11 |
| External walls U-value (W/m ² K) | 0.18 | 0.18 | 0.18 | 0.13 |
| | 0.18 | 0.18 | 0.17 | - |
| Floor U-value* (W/m ² K) | 0.13 | 0.13 | 0.11 | 0.11 |
| Window U-value (W/m ² K) | 1.20 | 1.20 | 1.20 | 1.20 |
| Door U-value (W/m ² K) | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.20 |
| Airtightness (m ³ h ⁻¹ m ⁻² @ 50Pa) | 4.00 | 5.00 | 2.50 | 3.00 |

Comparison of design specification of The Future Home and eHome2 with the Future Homes Standard



Difference in the measured Heat Transfer Coefficients of a sample of 30 new homes by Leeds Beckett University

5% to 140% in a sample of 30 new homes (see graph above). TFH showed a performance gap of 7.7%, while eHome2 had a gap of 3.9%. The Energy House 2.0 test homes' results are marked in orange, indicating both homes had a low performance gap when compared with existing homes.

AIR TIGHTNESS

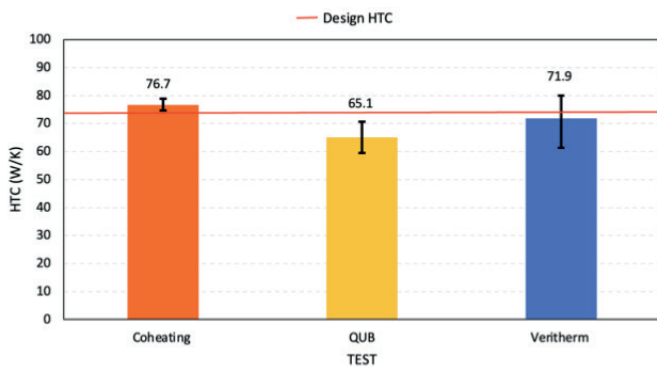
TFH's air tightness was tested using two methods: the blower door method and the Pulse test. There was a difference between the design value and the measured value. The design value was 2.5 m³/h/m², but the measured result was 4 m³/h/m². This is a difference of 1.5 m³/h/m², which is 61% worse than the design value. Thermal imaging and visual inspections identified that extra sockets and service penetrations drove much of this gap. However, this was due to the experimental nature of the house, with multiple heating systems installed to allow side-by-side comparison.

eHome2's air tightness was tested using two methods: the blower door method and the Pulse test. There was a difference

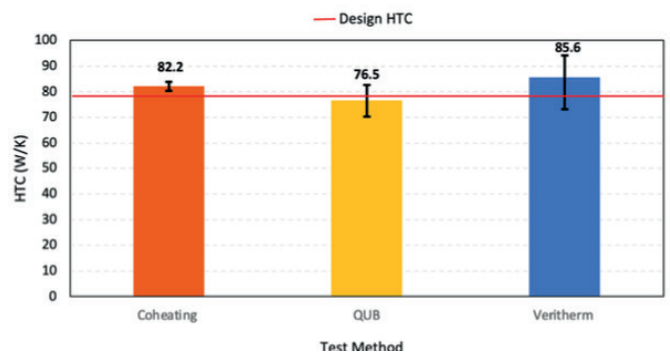
between the design value and the measured value. The design value was 3.0 m³/h/m², but the measured result was 2.8 m³/h/m². This is a difference of 0.2 m³/h/m², which is 6.2% better than the design value.

WHOLE HOUSE HEAT LOSS

eHome2 was designed to have a Whole House Heat Loss (Heat Transfer Coefficient or HTC) of 73.8 W/K, based on the SAP energy model. This includes both the heat loss through the building's materials and the heat loss due to air leakage. When measured using the coheating method, the HTC was 76.7 (±2.1) W/K. This shows a difference of 2.9 W/K, or 3.9%, which is higher than the margin of error, indicating a small performance gap. Measurements for eHome2 were taken using the Saint-Gobain QUB and Veritherm test methods. Representatives from Veritherm and QUB conducted these tests independently of the research team. The tests were done under the same conditions as the coheating method, with the chamber set to 5°C, to allow for direct comparison.



Heat Transfer Coefficient (HTC) obtained from eHome2 designed by Barratt and Saint Gobain, in the three different types of test used by the Energy House 2.0 team



HTC scores from the 'experimental' Future Home designed by Bellway in the three different tests showed a slightly larger performance gap using the coheating method

THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES TO UNDERSTAND A WIDE RANGE OF TOPICS – INCLUDING BETTER UNDERSTANDING OCCUPANTS

TFH was designed to have a Whole House Heat Loss (Heat Transfer Coefficient or HTC) of 76.3 W/K, based on the SAP energy model. This includes both the heat loss through the building's materials and from air leakage. When measured using the coheating method, the HTC was 82.1 (± 1.8) W/K. This shows a difference of 5.9 W/K, or 7.7%, which is higher than the margin of error, indicating a minor performance gap. HTC measurements were taken using the Saint-Gobain QUB and Veritherm test methods. Representatives from Veritherm and QUB conducted these tests independently of the research team. The tests were performed under the same conditions as the coheating method, with the chamber set to 5°C, to allow for direct comparison.

Both properties had a small performance gap that, potentially, would not be measurable in the field due to higher levels of uncertainty, indicating an overall high level of performance against design intent. However, the study created an opportunity to undertake a detailed building pathology study.

In eHome2 there were some small areas of insulation in the prototype timber frame wall panel where the insulation had become compressed during the manufacturing process, allowing some air movement within the panel. This finding allowed the team to design additional research and create a test cell to evaluate future iterations of the panels.

The Future Home, as outlined above, had a performance gap that was mainly driven by issues of airtightness due to factors related to the experimental nature of the property, some of which could have been contributed to by the large number of heating systems and service penetrations. In addition, the uneven application of loft insulation meant the roof of the property underperformed by 56%.

TECHNICAL LEARNINGS

As important as the technical learnings are on this project, one of the key takeaways that the team has learnt is how the sector can work with the research sector and each other, and in a more open way. The partners shared research resources and data and have committed to making the data available for the wider sector, including issues and difficulties, which we have highlighted above. Net zero and energy efficiency are UK problems, and this approach means that the investments made by all parties are shared with industry in order to help drive change.

The work will continue into 2025 with the next stage of testing, due for release shortly, focusing on the performance of the heating systems under controlled conditions. This will focus on the comparison of heating systems in terms of energy usage, running costs, carbon and thermal comfort. This will cover a number of different configurations of air source heat pumps, emitter types, as well as infrared heating. These reports are expected to be available in late summer 2024.

Energy House 2.0 is still a relatively new facility, having only been launched 18 months ago. We can see the value in being able to understand buildings in this level of detail. There are opportunities to understand a wide range of topics including better understanding occupants, as the facility is designed to safely allow people to live in these homes.

The opportunities for this and other built environment research are being explored as we work with new partners, covering new areas such as digital energy, electric vehicles, new materials and circular economy.

Will Swan is director of Energy House Laboratories at the University of Salford

The full in-depth reports for the eHome2 and The Future Home can be read by scanning these QR codes:

eHome2 by Barratt & Saint-Gobain



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ENGAGE SCIENCE FOR THE BIODIVERSITY BONUS

Paul Brown from Fera Science explains how developers can rise to the challenge of the Biodiversity Net Gain requirements for developments by embracing science, data and ecological expertise

As a result of human activity, the UK has lost over half of its biodiversity since monitoring began in 1970. This unprecedented decline is clearly a huge concern and public awareness of the issue has escalated in recent years.

Land management changes are cited as a key driver of biodiversity loss, however, there is a huge opportunity for developers to play a pivotal role in changing the trajectory.

By embracing Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) within development plans, using science and data to inform successful offsetting projects, housebuilders can help minimise habitat loss and leave a positive footprint on nature.

INVESTING IN NATURE

Technological advancements have allowed environmental data to be captured in a greater quantity and detail than ever before, enabling scientists to tap into more in-depth assessments of our ecosystem and work closely with developers to embody a 'nature first' approach.

By using scientific validation to position themselves as leaders in sustainable and biodiversity-friendly development, companies stand to reap financial, reputational, and operational rewards – as well as compliance with the latest regulations.

This could reflect positively on a developer's brand image in the marketplace, amid growing public demand for corporate commitments to sustainability initiatives.

There's now a much greater understanding of why a thriving natural environment and access to nature, close to home, is so important for society and personal wellbeing; nevertheless, consumers demand evidence of action, over and above marketing claims.



THE NEED FOR A ROBUST BNG PLAN

Under the Town & Country Planning Act (TCPA), in February 2024 it became a mandatory requirement for developers in England to set out detailed plans of how they will ensure biodiversity levels are at least 10% better than pre-development.

This gain must be sustained for 30 years, and can be achieved through various means.

Options include creating or enhancing habitats for flora and fauna, investing in landscaping or adding green infrastructure on the new build site.

Alternatively, habitats could be invested in off-site, on land holdings, or through habitat banks.

If developers are unable to deliver at least 10% net gain in biodiversity

onsite or via the offsite market, Natural England's statutory biodiversity credits scheme is accessible as a last resort.

This allows developers to purchase statutory biodiversity credits to reach the legal requirement – but at a higher price than the going rate for biodiversity units in the private market.

At a local level, the 10% BNG requirement is being increased by local authorities too.

So, developers are being confronted with the urgent need to craft a biodiversity net gain strategy for each site, that will ensure compliance with new legislation.

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE IS CRUCIAL

According to Defra guidance, an extensive

BNG SUCCESS HINGES UPON HARNESSING ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AT EVERY STEP



list of BNG evidence must be submitted to the local planning authority and approved in writing before any development can commence.

This evidence includes a habitat map of the site pre-development, complete with a Biodiversity Metric 4.0 calculation of initial biodiversity levels to provide a baseline.

Crucially, developers must also submit a comprehensive biodiversity net gain strategy that sets out the steps being

taken to avoid or minimise habitat impact, along with a predicted post-development habitat map, showing the required biodiversity uplifts. This needs to include a bespoke habitat management and monitoring plan for the long term too.

If the forecasted onsite biodiversity uplift doesn't reach 10% net gain, then an offsite plan will also have to be submitted to replace or contribute to onsite net gain.

Although the government's BNG planning guidance is designed to be easily accessible, Defra advises getting ecologist support to complete these strategic documents and all the necessary groundwork.

That's because BNG success hinges upon harnessing environmental science at every step of this process.

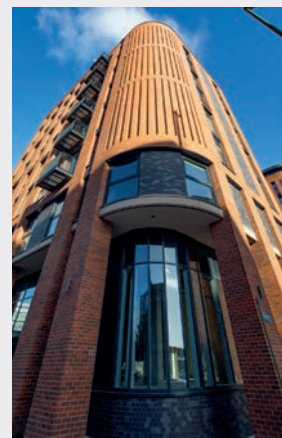
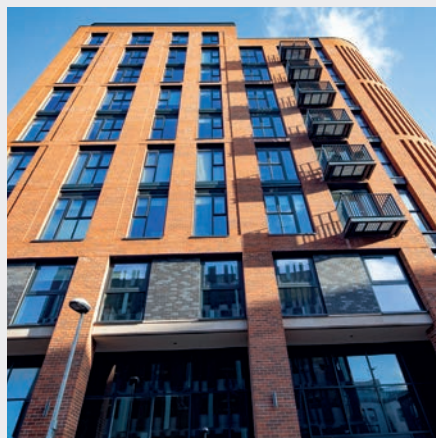
Without highly accurate biodiversity data, and the necessary experience and expertise to translate data insights into effective net gain strategies, housebuilders run the risk of development work delays – bringing extended project timelines and significant cost implications. Therefore, it is vital that a scientific approach is taken from the outset.

Taking such an approach provides confidence to housebuilders that BNG plans are backed by data and validated by a team of ecologists.

Although investing in a scientific support service may bring initial costs, embracing credible guidance will not only help developers meet industry-wide regulations smoothly, but also help demonstrate a true 'nature first' approach to sustainable development, backed up with genuine expertise.

Paul Brown is head of remote sensing, GIS & spatial data science at Fera Science

Trio of Senior products used in new Nottingham residential scheme



Three is the magic number for Senior Architectural Systems as solutions from the manufacturer's extensive range of aluminium windows, doors and curtain walling help complete The Barnum – a new residential development on Nottingham's Queen's Road.

Designed by Franklin Ellis Architects, and built by main contractor Graham Construction, the new nine storey building has been developed by Blockworks, a joint venture between Bloc Group and Network Rail. The project, which is one of the largest recent developments in the city, has been built on

what was a vacant site next to Nottingham's railway station, helping to regenerate the wider area and provide a boost to the local rental market.

Senior collaborated with specialist installer Duplus Architectural Systems to specify three of its most popular products, including its award-winning PURe® window system which has been installed throughout the 345 individual apartments. Producing exceptionally low U-values thanks to its patented thermal design, both tilt/turn and casement window styles have been used.

Safety and security throughout the development has also been enhanced through the use of Senior's SPW501 aluminium commercial door. This high performance, thermally broken polyamide aluminium framing system is ideal for busy environments and is available in multiple configurations and designs. On the ground floor communal areas, the facade design has benefitted from Senior's slimline SF52 aluminium curtain wall system.

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FUTURE HOMES STANDARD IS A STARTING POINT

The upcoming Future Homes Standard represents an important step towards more sustainable housing but should be viewed as a foundation rather than a 'ceiling' according to Simon Garbett of Wienerberger

There's little doubt that the homebuilding industry still has a mountain to climb in achieving its net zero targets. In late 2023, the first update of the UK Net Zero Whole Life Carbon Roadmap – the built environment's action plan to 2050 developed by the UK Green Building Council (UKGBC) – revealed a significant lack of progress and policy gaps in the sector's net zero journey. One of the most noteworthy acts of legislation, the forthcoming Future Homes Standard, aims to change this by ensuring new homes built from 2025 produce 75-80% less carbon emissions than homes delivered under the previous regulations. However, following its industry consultation, the standard has not made quite the impact that was hoped.

An industry letter drafted by the Good Homes Alliance, Bioregional, the Low Energy Transformation Initiative, the UK Green Building Council, plus 250 other industry leaders, was recently sent to the UK Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities. The letter stated that the Future Homes Standard is 'not a definitive Future Homes Standard, but rather a positive step towards it,' and requested further iteration to ensure a higher specification is met by 2028.

It's clear the industry remains at the beginning of its journey and while legislative landmarks like the Future Homes Standard are welcome, they are merely the foundation, rather than a ceiling. The FHS identifies some key renewable components but does not provide guidance on how to combine and optimise these different systems together effectively. To unlock its full potential, the industry must adopt a more holistic and integrated approach, whether legislation dictates this or not.

AS SUSTAINABLE AS THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

Specifying more sustainable materials and renewable technologies is a welcome



starting point – but a building is only as sustainable as the sum of all its parts, both inside and out. A higher standard should be used to inform the next iteration of Building Regulations by 2028.

Homebuilders looking to make a difference and 'go beyond' legislation should be exploring complementary technologies that work in harmony with each other to provide greater sustainability benefits. An example is the synergy between integrated in-roof solar photovoltaic systems and air source heat pumps. When specified together for new builds, harnessing solar power could allow homeowners to primarily run heat pumps from this renewable electricity source, significantly reducing reliance on the grid.

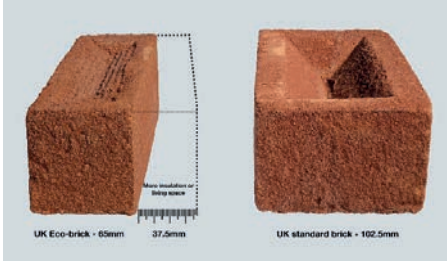
Intelligent monitoring and control are key to such integrated builds, managing the system to maximise self-consumption of solar power and further drive down

emissions and energy costs. Such a system could seamlessly divert solar electricity to heat water cylinders during the day for use in the evenings without drawing from the grid.

However, renewable technologies can only achieve their full impact if implemented in conjunction with a 'fabric first' approach, optimising the entire building envelope. No matter how efficient the heating system is, a poorly insulated and draughty home will bleed energy and money.

'Eco-bricks' assist in this fabric first method. With a slimmer brick profile, they allow for a 31% reduction in upfront embodied carbon compared to standard bricks, while boosting thermal performance thanks to their ability to accommodate more insulation.

Upfront investment into insulation and airtightness pays dividends over decades of lower energy costs.



AN INTEGRATED, HOLISTIC APPROACH ACROSS THE ENTIRE HOME IS NEEDED FROM THE VERY START OF THE DESIGN AND BUILD PROCESS

It provides flexibility for the future too. As heating systems evolve, an already efficient and solar-powered building can adapt easily. Cutting corners on insulation or renewable generation commits that building to always consuming excessive energy, regardless of future improvements.

DIGITALISATION, ELECTRIFICATION & ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The intersection of digitalisation, electrification and energy efficiency will be vital for decarbonising housing at the pace required. Combining ultra-efficient building envelopes with solutions like in-roof solar PV, air source heat pumps and intelligent control unlocks enormous sustainability potential.

A key missing piece from the Future Homes Standard is guidance on how to effectively integrate and optimise the various renewable technologies and energy efficient components as a cohesive system. While the legislation identifies important products like air source heat pumps, solar PV, battery storage and wastewater heat recovery, it does not address how these can be seamlessly linked together. From a consumer perspective, there needs to be an intelligent way to manage and coordinate these components to ensure they operate

efficiently in tandem, rather than as isolated widgets. Without a holistic, integrated approach, we risk delivering more expensive homes that simply layer on disparate technologies haphazardly.

The Future Homes Standard is a step in the right direction, but for construction to reach net zero we must go beyond just ticking standardised renewable technology boxes. An integrated, holistic approach across the entire home is needed from the very start of the design and build process.

While any new legislation guiding industry on the right path is welcome, often it does not go far enough on its own and homebuilders should always be aiming to build beyond minimum requirements. More coordinated policies incentivising this integrated approach across the entire residential sector will be required to drive the necessary transformation.

With the urgency of climate change and keeping energy affordable for all, optimising both the building fabric and renewable systems from the outset ensures new homes are truly future-proofed and sustainable over their whole lifecycle.

Simon Garbett is category manager for roofing at Wienerberger

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Freefoam in top 9% of companies rated for sustainability by EcoVadis



Kevin Cronin – Freefoam Chief Operating Office and part of the Sustainability Team

Freefoam Building Products Ltd was recently assessed by EcoVadis, a globally recognized sustainability rating platform. Freefoam has not only retained the prestigious Silver medal, its sustainable business practices have been rated as better than 91% of companies assessed across the world in 2024. EcoVadis is an evidence-based assessment that audits a company's sustainability management system. It rates the maturity of your policies, commitments, actions, reporting and certifications across four key themes (Environment, Ethics, Labor and Human Rights, and Sustainable Procurement). Freefoam, a leading manufacturer of fascias, soffits, rainwater systems and external cladding, exceeded the average industry score across all assessment themes. Freefoam's overall performance improved by 13%, moving from 'Good' to 'Advanced'. Freefoam's approach to sustainability ('Building a Sustainable Future') is rooted in the principles of the Circular Economy, carbon reduction, continuous improvement, good governance – and a focus on people. When it comes to the Circular Economy, the company prioritises the re-use and circulation of resources, retaining economic value, and eliminating waste – focusing on its own business and its supply chain. Learn about Freefoam's sustainability initiatives at freefoam.com/professional/sustainability-archive

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BREAKING BARRIERS TO SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE

In the face of escalating urban flooding challenges across the UK, Richard Eddy of Polypipe Building Products looks how to break down the barriers to introducing sustainable drainage systems in housebuilding projects.

With the UK's sewerage infrastructure straining under the pressures of ageing and the intensified rainfall due to climate change, the urgency for innovative and effective drainage solutions has never been greater.

Put simply, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) prevent urban flooding by lessening the amount of rainwater that rushes into sewers when it pours while also cleaning the water naturally, removing contaminants. They do this by using natural methods to deal with rainfall, holding onto the water and letting it soak into the earth or releasing it gradually – instead of just funnelling rainwater into sewers and rivers like traditional drainage does.

This method not only eases the burden on our sewer infrastructure but also helps to boost city greenery and wildlife by integrating features like green roofs, rain gardens and porous paths. These elements not only have aesthetic and environmental benefits, but also help to cool cities down, offsetting the 'heat island' effect where built-up areas are significantly warmer than their surroundings.

All of this means that SuDS could not only play a critical role in managing urban flood risks, but in ensuring that water is handled in a way that benefits the environment too.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS

Despite the fact that SuDS has been available for decades – and is a proven approach to mitigating flood risks by managing rainwater at its source – their adoption within new build developments has been surprisingly slow. This is despite the fact that Ofwat's Code for Adoption guidance, which was introduced in 2021, was aimed specifically to bolster



the uptake of SuDS in new construction projects. This raises questions around the barriers to widespread adoption.

One significant barrier to broader SuDS implementation lies in the housebuilding community's apprehension, and knowledge gap. Misgivings range from concerns over the complexity of SuDS installation, to a lack of definitive clarity surrounding the definition and requirements of their integration into projects. Such hurdles are further compounded by a notable gap in the availability of information and resources aimed at explaining SuDS for builders and developers.

The forthcoming enforcement of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 in England, which mandates the incorporation of SuDS in all new residential developments larger than

100 m², represents a watershed moment. This legislative shift, already in effect in Wales since 2019, signals an urgent need for the housebuilding sector to adapt swiftly. Yet, the introduction of this mandate also highlights the importance of recognising the unique characteristics of each development site to ensure the successful implementation of SuDS.

Tailoring sustainable drainage solutions to specific site conditions – taking into account factors like soil type, topography and the existing infrastructure – is essential for maximising their effectiveness. The early integration of SuDS planning and design stages into development projects not only facilitates compliance but also enhances the long-term resilience and sustainability of urban areas against increasing flooding risks.

ONE SIGNIFICANT BARRIER TO BROADER SUDS IMPLEMENTATION LIES IN THE HOUSEBUILDING COMMUNITY'S APPREHENSION AND KNOWLEDGE GAP

COLLABORATION IS KEY

Leading innovators in the drainage solution sector are poised to support housebuilders in addressing the complexities associated with adopting SuDS. Through a combination of educational initiatives, custom product solutions, and expert guidance, these innovators are committed to facilitating a smoother transition to sustainable drainage practices for developers. Collaboration among stakeholders, including local authorities, environmental agencies and drainage specialists, is crucial in overcoming the challenges of implementing SuDS effectively.

With ongoing urban expansion across the UK, especially in regions marked by significant growth, the drainage sector's role in supporting housebuilders and developers becomes increasingly greater.

Sustainable drainage systems don't merely offer a means to comply with emerging regulations but also an opportunity for developers to differentiate their projects in a competitive market. By emphasising the environmental benefits of SuDS, housebuilders can appeal to a growing demographic of



environmentally conscious buyers, thereby enhancing the marketability of their developments.

SAFEGUARDING URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

The adoption of SuDS into new housing projects represents a forward-thinking approach to urban development, one that prioritises the wellbeing of communities and the environment. The benefits of such systems extend beyond flood mitigation, encompassing improved water quality,

enhanced biodiversity, and the creation of more aesthetically pleasing landscapes.

The transition towards sustainable drainage is not merely a regulatory obligation but a strategic opportunity for the UK's housebuilding industry. By embracing SuDS, developers can play a pivotal role in transforming urban landscapes into resilient, sustainable and attractive living spaces. However, those in the drainage sector need to be committed to leading this charge, offering the expertise, innovative solutions and support necessary to make sustainable urban drainage a reality for developers – and residents – across the nation.

As the UK tackles an increase in urban flooding while also being confronted with the challenges of climate change and urbanisation, exploring all avenues is critical. However, the widespread adoption of SuDS could play a key role not only in safeguarding communities, but in protecting the environment in the long term, too.

Richard Eddy is category manager of underground & utilities at Polypipe Building Products

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Hydro International incorporates future-proof design as standard for its Hydro-Brake® Optimum vortex flow controls

Hydro International, an industry leader in water management products and services, is redefining the standard for hydraulic efficiency and adjustability with an upgrade to their most popular and highest performing flow control. From today their Hydro-Brake® Optimum Hydraulic Efficient vortex flow controls will now incorporate an adjustable inlet as standard.

The adjustable inlet will enable engineers to future proof their drainage design with up to plus or minus 20% change in design flow should additional developments or urban creep cause an increase in flows, saving the cost of a replacement flow control.

When using our free Online Design Tool (hydro-int.design), the adjustable intake will be automatically included on units designed with the default 'Hydraulic Efficient' objective. The tool will output a unique triple head / discharge curve showing the maximum and minimum flow rate range. The initial setting of the designed unit will be the centre line, shown in blue. Post-installation, the unit can be adjusted to any flow rate within the minimum / maximum range.

Using the Online Design Tool, engineers designing in a Hydro-Brake® Optimum are able to select from a range of different objectives to meet their design requirements. These objectives include:

- Hydraulic Efficient – this design passes forwards as much flow as possible early in a storm event, enabling engineers to reduce the amount of upstream storage volume required. Now with the adjustable inlet as standard.
- Minimise Blockage Risk – this option makes the inlet and outlet openings as

large as possible while still delivering the same design flow.

- Linear Discharge Profile – this design generates a discharge as close to linear as possible, providing similar hydraulic performance to an orifice plate, but with

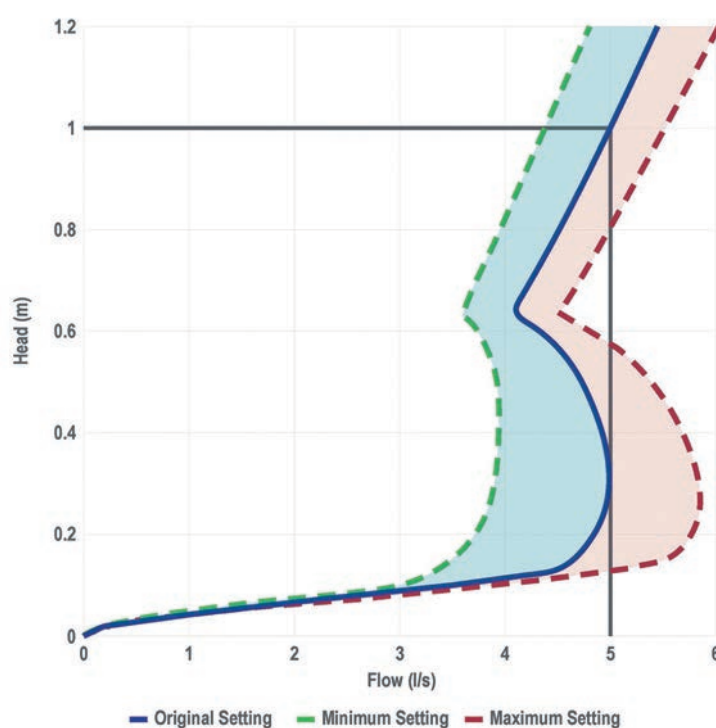
internal clearances approximately two to four times larger.

Engineers designing Hydro-Brake® Optimum units in modelling software such as Autodesk, Site3D and Causeway Flow, should contact Hydro International for the triple head / discharge curve and design outputs.

Ben Puddy, Product Manager for Hydro International, comments, "With the ability to adjust flows post-installation as standard, Hydro-Brake® Optimum can help designers be prepared for the effects of climate change, urban creep, or changes in regulations. In addition, saving money with the ability to adjust to future flow rates, without the expense of fully refitting the system and ensuring projects can be delivered on time, every time. At Hydro International, we have 40 years' worth of expertise which has gone into development of this feature, ensuring risk is mitigated."

With over 40 years of research and development into developing Hydro-Brake® vortex flow controls and other water management products and services, Hydro International leverages its expertise to deliver exceptional flood protection and sustainable drainage systems, ensuring it is at the forefront of industry development, time and time again.

To find out more about this forward-looking vortex flow control, visit the website or try some designs on the Online Design Tool: hydro-int.design.



www.hydro-int.com/optimum-fp

Modutherm launches Juniper HP Plus



Modutherm has expanded its popular range of sustainable heating and hot water products with the launch of the Juniper HP Plus indoor heat pump water heater. Available in left or right-handed versions, the Juniper HP Plus cleverly integrates an efficient air source heat pump with a high-quality stainless steel cylinder for powerful and convenient hot water production – perfect for electric-only residential or light commercial projects. The unit transforms 'free' energy from the outside air or waste heat from within the property into a low-cost, renewable domestic hot water source. For larger properties, or where there's a need for additional domestic hot water, multiple Juniper HP Plus water heaters can be installed in parallel.

0345 521 5666 www.modutherm.co.uk

Stelrad announces first sale of new green rads



Leading radiator manufacturer **Stelrad Radiators** has announced its first sale of the brand-new Stelrad Green Series range. Purchased online, the radiator – the first of many – was picked at the National Distribution Centre and despatched just days after new Stelrad Green Compact went on sale.

The purchaser has reported that the selection was driven by a desire to be more eco-friendly and that he was happy to pay a little bit more for a product that will contribute towards lower CO₂ in the atmosphere. To find out more about this exciting new range and the new partnership with Tata Steel, head for the Stelrad website.

0800 876 6813 www.stelrad.com

The SuDS Certified SPEL ESR System



With a SuDS Mitigation Index of TSS 0.8, Metals: 0.6, and Hydrocarbons 0.9 The SPEL ESR System delivers class-leading treatment, it's certified to the British Water test protocol and to BS EN858. SPEL has over 60 years of experience in manufacturing Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP), and today produces high-performance SuDS water quality systems and tank-based pollution control devices. From the pioneering 'Onion' septic tank in 1975, SPEL's innovation evolved through the PPG3-based oil separators with the Environment Agency in the late 1980s, to today's range of certified SuDS water quality systems.

01743 445200 spelproducts.co.uk

Introducing the new Titon HRV Cool Plus™



Titon, a leading supplier of indoor air quality solutions, announces the launch of the HRV Cool Plus™, specifically designed to provide cooling in warmer weather conditions and tackle residential overheating. Titon's HRV Cool Plus™ is engineered to seamlessly integrate into heat recovery ventilation (MVHR) systems, delivering cooling and filtered air to enhance user comfort. With its integrated cooling module, the cutting-edge unit pre-cools incoming fresh air during warmer months, ensuring a comfortable indoor environment. Providing up to 3.3kW total cooling capacity (subject to volume flow and relative humidity), it ensures optimal performance even in demanding conditions.

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For general enquiries go to <https://bit.ly/grafuksts> or scan the QR code.



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Altecnic release new 2024/25 general product guide

Altecnic Ltd, one of the UK's leading suppliers of hydronic solutions, has launched its 2024/25 General Product Guide, debuting 100 new products, and an expanded heat pump section showcasing a range of new products designed and manufactured in support of the energy transition.

The 2024/25 General Product Guide introduces the new Apartment Control Assembly Plus™ valve assembly. The valve assembly offers a combination of functionality and efficiency to allow the easy monitoring and control of water supply to a range of residential and commercial multi-occupancy developments.

Among the new products featured in the guide is an evolution of the Caleffi Series 116 Thermal Balancing Valve, newly equipped with a check valve and thermal disinfection function. Providing 3 functions in a single valve, the 116 Series increases system energy efficiency by automatically maintaining set temperatures, the thermal disinfection function allows for system temperatures to be raised above 55-60°C, while the check valve built into the body helps to avoid unwanted medium return.

The expanded heat pump section features new products to assist in the energy transition to incorporate renewables into existing systems such as the Caleffi Series 548 Wall Mounted Buffer Tanks for Hybrid Systems. Ensuring optimal performance and efficiency of heat pump systems the multi-award winning



Caleffi XF semi-automatic self-cleaning magnetic dirt separator is now available with pre-formed insulation.

The new brochure also showcases notable product releases from 2023 for the first time, including the innovative CALEFFI XS® under boiler filter and Altecnic Dry Trap Tundish. The Caleffi XS® is a compact and versatile magnetic filter with built-in isolation that is designed to protect heating and cooling systems. The building regulations compliant Altecnic Dry Trap Tundish features an anti-splash design and prevents the need to install both a tundish and dry trap as the internal spring-loaded disc mechanism prevents odours escaping.

Available in both digital* and print formats,

the new product guide has been proudly produced in the United Kingdom by a certified Carbon Balanced print partner, under the World Land Trust Organisation. This means the production process, transport & all material used is fully carbon balanced.

Gary Perry, managing director at Altecnic, commented: "At Altecnic, we are dedicated to innovation and customer satisfaction. Our 2024/25 General Product Guide reflects our ongoing commitment to providing cutting-edge solutions that address the dynamic needs of our industry to provide sustainable comfort in support of the energy transition. With the addition of over 100 new products designed to meet the needs of our customers coupled with our industry leading product support and knowledge sharing, Altecnic continues to be the partner of choice for hydronic solutions."

To order a hard-copy version of the 2024 General Product Guide, please email or contact your local ASM.

Altecnic's mission statement is to deliver the highest quality products and services to its customers, through manufacturing excellence, innovation and education. Their extensive range of products and services are chosen by trade merchants, original equipment manufacturers, plumbing and heating engineers and specifiers.

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Titon
ventilation systems

Altecnic launch new compact anti-freeze valve, iStop® PLUS

With a compact design and the ability to install the valves vertically in parallel providing a solution for the most restricted spaces.

Altecnic, one of the UK's leading suppliers in hydronic solutions and part of the Caleffi Group, has launched the new compact anti-freeze valve, the iStop® PLUS into the UK market.

Setting the standard in efficiency and convenience, the iStop® PLUS boasts a compact size, as well as a sensor on the side, differing to traditional anti-freeze valves, offering remarkably small dimensions without compromising performance.

Key features of the iStop® PLUS include:

- Compact size.
- Installation in restricted spaces.
- Ability to vertically install the valves in parallel.
- Extreme sensitivity to water temperature.
- Ability to work with high temperatures.

Its innovative design, featuring an off-axis sensor configuration, enables installation even in the most restricted spaces, catering to the diverse needs of modern installations. Furthermore, the iStop® PLUS has been designed to allow for a pair of valves to be installed vertically in parallel, meaning that installers can seamlessly install valve pairs



without the need for minimum spacing. This flexibility not only streamlines installation processes but also optimises space utilisation. Less space is also required for drainage

underneath the valve, making it suitable for connection to self-contained heat pumps with connections for pipes at the bottom of the casing.

Equipped with an exceptional sensitivity to water temperature, the iStop® Plus boasts heightened responsiveness to ensure prompt and precise performance, enhancing system reliability and user confidence. With this, the new anti-freeze valve is engineered to withstand high water temperatures of up to 90°C. This durability allows the valve to operate with any heat pump and underscores Altecnic's commitment to delivering products of high quality and performance.

Gary Perry, managing director at Altecnic, commented: "With the iStop® Plus, we are introducing a solution that addresses the evolving needs of modern installations that installers are faced with. Its compact size, coupled with its ability to function in restricted spaces, offers flexibility and ease of use."

"At Altecnic, we strive to innovate, quality solutions that meet and exceed the expectations of our customers so that they can remain ahead in our industry as the shift towards Net-Zero solutions continues."

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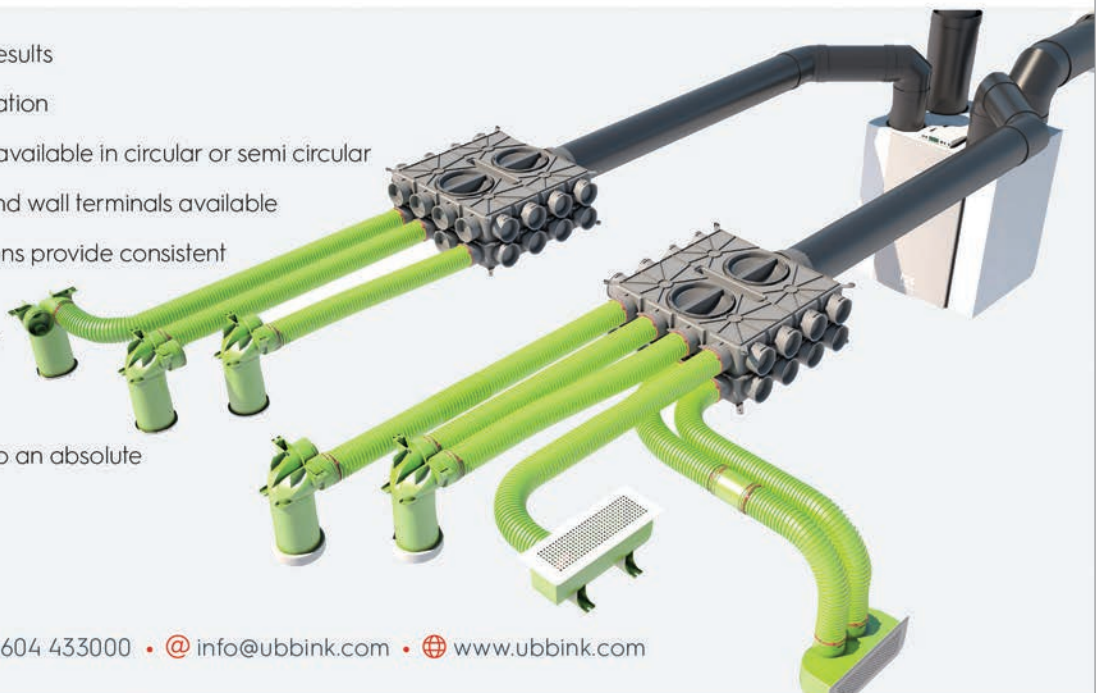
www.altecnic.co.uk/istop%2%AEplus-compact-antifreeze-valve-series108

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Pulse Fibre transforms Vertus buildings with lightning-fast connectivity



As fast and reliable internet connectivity becomes increasingly crucial, Pulse Fibre is proud to showcase its recent introduction of full-fibre internet in three award-winning Vertus residential developments in London: Newfoundland, 10 George Street, and 8 Water Street. The projects showcase the unparalleled benefits developers can enjoy with Pulse Fibre.

The goal was to provide the 1,139 residents of the developments with faster and a more reliable internet service, by introducing Gigabit specification full-fibre. The residents at 8 Water Street had been experiencing connectivity outages for four days from a previous fibre supplier with no resolution in

sight. Pulse Fibre recognised the urgency of the situation and were on hand straight away to provide a solution.

Pulse Fibre was able to be on site and work to reconnect residents the very next day after being made aware of the residents' outage frustrations. The partnership then continued with the rapid installation at 10 George Street, before moving on to Newfoundland. Instant activation removed any further downtime or waiting, providing residents with immediate access to the high-speed, reliable internet required.

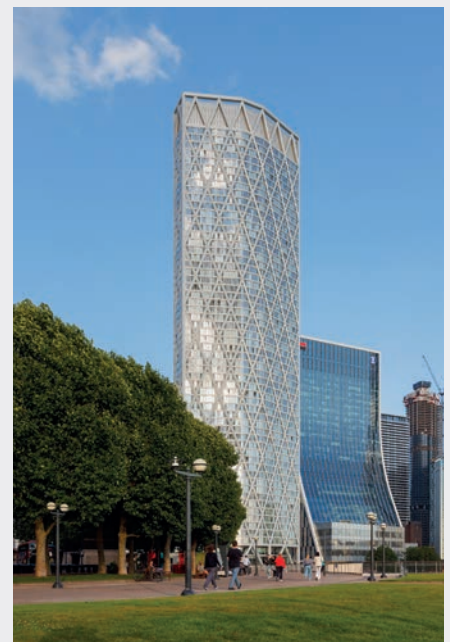
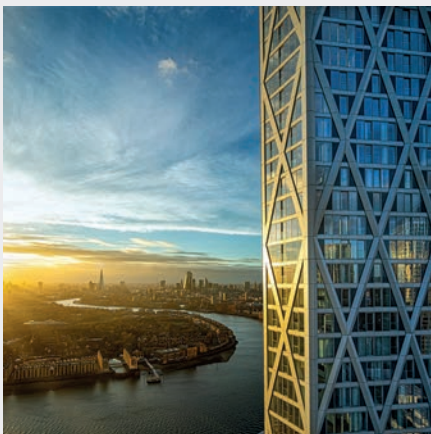
Vertus building managers also benefit from access to Pulse Fibre's Portal, a digital platform that allows Vertus to efficiently and effectively manage connections for residents. Functions such as providing instant activation for upcoming tenants, and deactivating connections once a resident has moved out, providing building managers with the necessary level of control and oversight to manage properties successfully.

Reece Dopson at Pulse Fibre commented on the project: "Vertus is a shining example of what Pulse Fibre can offer customers and developers alike."

Robert Buckingham at Pulse Fibre commented on the project: "Working closely with the Vertus management team has been a privilege. Together, we achieved more than just meeting the project goals, we exceeded them, and we remain committed to providing reliable and lightning-fast internet."

The developments at Vertus exemplifies Pulse Fibre's unwavering commitment to delivering an exceptional service and it looks forward to continuing to provide reliable, lightning-fast internet solutions.

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THE WOW FACTOR OF BATHROOM WALL PANELS

Have you ever thought about using decorative wall panels for shower spaces, utility rooms or cloakrooms? Amanda Mills of Kinedo presents the case for using wall panels to create stunning bathroom spaces in particular.



Wall panels are one of the relative newcomers for bathrooms when you think of creating a watertight space. Useful in the shower, around the bath and in cloakrooms or utility rooms – thanks to their waterproof characteristics – another huge benefit is the speed of installation. Depending on the nature of the job, a set of panels can be beautifully fitted in just a couple of hours. Of course, if a previous installation requires removal that will add time to the job, but for those in a hurry, wall panels can even be installed over the top of old tiles.

For a housebuilder, there is an enormous time saving to be had by specifying wall panels over traditional tile. Anecdotally, they are up to five times faster to install and there is no need for grout. With the plethora of styles and patterns to choose from, it's not even a compromise on style these days. And the lack of grout is not just a benefit to the installer, it means the end user is able to say goodbye to discoloured grout and mould in their property.

Along with the world of easy cleaning, panels are highly durable, scratch resistant, and designed to withstand

the inevitable knocks and bumps that are part of everyday life. Panels with a polyethylene core sandwiched between slim printed aluminium panels and coated with a durable varnish finish will provide a very long-lasting solution. With the correct use they are also stain-resistant which means they will stay looking pristine for many years. With warranties of up to 10-years typical for wall panels, peace of mind is guaranteed for both housebuilders, installers and home owners alike.

In today's climate of expensive heating bills, shower panels also provide thermal

SHOWER PANELS ALSO PROVIDE THERMAL INSULATION WHICH MEANS THEY ARE NOT WARM TO THE TOUCH BUT THE HEATING CAN BE TURNED DOWN A NOTCH

insulation, which means that they are not warm to the touch but potentially that in the areas where they are installed the heating can be turned down a notch or two.

Panels that are slim and lightweight are also easy on the installer – an important consideration when weighing up manual handling risks on new build sites (and for renovation projects come to that). Most can be cut to size on site using standard plumbing tools and are usually simple to install in six simple steps. It's always worth finding and following manufacturers' instructions which will be in the delivery box.

There are six simple installation steps:

- Starting with a clear space or the tiled area, set up the aluminium profile size by measuring to the top point of the installation area and cut the profile to the right size using a hack saw or angle grinder.
- Screw the resized profile into the corner of the installation area.
- Measure and cut the first panel to size using a rail saw, then remove the



backing plastic and add the sticky tabs and polymer glue to the rear of the panel (referring to the instruction booklet for tab and glue positioning).

- Measure and cut the end profile, add clear silicone and slide on to the panel. Using a sucker, manipulate the glued panel and profile onto the wall

and into the central profile.

- Repeat the process with all other panels.
- Once all panels are in place, seal up where the panels meet the shower tray (or skirting boards, basins and cupboards if in whole room installations).

Of course, just like tiles, there are a myriad of colours, styles and patterns which can be used to create a beautiful focal point in any bathroom. There are even mix and match panel options available. Think wood panelling on the bottom half of the panel and tile-styles on the top half for a classic option. Metallics, marbles, tiles, trees, leaves, wood, herringbone – whether it is a modern, traditional or classic bathroom there is a style to suit.

Wall panels are cost-effective, easy to clean, durable, waterproof and simple to install. So, why not give them a whirl?

Amanda Mills is marketing manager for Kinedo (the shower brand of Saniflo)

Introducing HiB's Adorn furniture range: Ideal for housebuilding developments and projects

HiB's new Adorn furniture range presents an ideal solution for modern bathrooms in housing developments and projects. The new range, which was launched this Spring, combines contemporary style with practical design features, to offer a look that is right on trend.

Developed for durability, the Adorn range includes robust metal drawer boxes that ensure



longevity and practicality. A notable feature is the useful hidden drawer, which provides additional storage space for essentials without compromising on style.

Elegantly, curved corners and an arch-top groove detail on the drawer fronts, make Adorn an eye-catching range, and with wall-hung compact units available in 60 cm and 80 cm widths, it is ideal for various space requirements.

"Adorn marks the next revolution in Novum furniture design," says Rob Pattern, HiB Novum and Sanitaryware category manager. "By seamlessly combining quality, functionality, and design—featuring elements like metal drawer boxes and a hidden drawer that we know housebuilders and homeowners will love—we are offering a practical and stylish solution that enhances bathroom spaces."

Adorn is available in three matt finishes: Terracotta, Olive and Mushroom and the range also features matching back to wall units. Additionally, the Adorn range is compatible with HiB's Edale furniture basin and vessel basin countertop combinations, allowing for personalised touches to suit individual styles and preferences.

Emily Sprason, HiB's contracts sales adviser said: "We are really excited to offer the new Adorn range to our customers because it offers the functionality and durability to withstand everyday use in the bathroom, but it also offers



a truly stunning design that complements so many of the current trends. It really is a fantastic solution for UK bathroom projects."

For more information about the Adorn furniture range and to view the latest HiB Novum brochure, visit the website.

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Elegant floors from Bjelin grace a London home

Bjelin has made possible a tasteful renovation of a 1920s London home, using 90 m² of VEJBY 3.0 XL flooring. The transformation of the house allowed the owners to realise their dream of bringing their love of Scandinavian design to the heart of England.

Bjelin hardened wood floors are made with oak, ash or walnut from sustainable sources of timber with FSC® certification. The unique Woodura® technology makes the manufacturing process much more efficient and environmentally friendly in terms of timber usage than traditional processes. Indeed only a tenth of the material normally used in hardwood flooring is required in the manufacture of Bjelin products.

From an aesthetic point of view, every Woodura Plank 3.0 is different, and the beauty of the natural woodgrain is maximised. It also creates a stronger and more durable surface with a hardness three times greater than a traditional solid wood floor.

On this project the flooring was chosen late in the process after the building plans had taken shape and the wall colours had been decided.

"We knew we wanted wooden floors," explains Sandra, the owner. Following a visit to distributor V4's showroom in Woking, she and her husband settled on Woodura Planks 3.0, because of their aesthetic and functional appeal, ease of installation and durability.

"My husband laid the floor himself, with the help of a friend who's a carpenter, and



they found it easy to install," says Sandra. "Only the house's age, with few straight lines, provided some challenges."

VEJBY 3.0 XL in the Misty White colour offered the perfect combination of light wood beauty and practical maintenance, complementing the owners' desire for a bright and airy atmosphere.

They find that the light-coloured, brushed surface is both attractive and also comfortable to walk on, creating a welcoming atmosphere in their home.

Bjelin Hardened Wood floors are customised for both the residential and the commercial sectors. The products are available in a full range of sizes, including Small panels, measuring 1170 x 151 x 9.2 mm to fit easily into cars and vans, along with Medium panels of 2000 x 151 x 9.2 mm, complementing the wide XL (2200 x 206 mm) and XXL (2378 x 271 mm) floor planks.

uk-sales@bjelin.com
www.bjelin.com

Out of the blue with Designer Contracts



Designer Contracts has boosted its blue book collection with a new eco-carpet made entirely with yarn from ethically sourced, internationally accredited plastic bottles. Eco-Abode is one of the latest additions to the company's popular blue book ranges which offer exclusive-value floorcoverings from top

manufacturers under the Designer Contract's name. Also new to its blue book collection is the entry level carpet range, Promise. Completing the blue book line-up is a colour revamp for the company's enduring Sensation Original range which will now be called Sensation Original Vol. 2. New colours added are Soft Orchid, Laguna, Mother of Pearl, and Eau de Nil.

01246 854577 www.designercontracts.com

F. Ball launches new smoothing compound



F. Ball and Co. Ltd. has drawn upon the latest cement formulation technology to create a 'best-in-class' high flow smoothing compound: Stopgap 1400. A fast-setting, two-component smoothing compound, with superior self-smoothing properties, Stopgap 1400 is walk-on hard from just 90 minutes after application and ready to receive floorcoverings from 12 hours.

Stopgap 1400 can be applied between 2 - 10 mm thick to a wide range of absorbent and non-absorbent subfloors, including sand/cement and calcium sulphate (e.g. anhydrite) screeds, concrete, plywood, granolithic, sound asphalt, terrazzo, epoxy and polyurethane resins, ceramic and quarry tiles, as well as Stopgap waterproof surface membranes.

01538 361 633 www.f-ball.co.uk

Keller Kitchens' new contract partners



Keller Kitchens has announced a new strategic partnership for the company's kitchen contract channel in the UK. Arcos Interiors of Bristol has been appointed as Keller's exclusive contract partner for the South West of England. Headed up by Christian Ford, Arcos Interiors boasts 30 years' experience in the industry and the new partnership offers a full turnkey service for

developers in the region encompassing experienced project management – from design to handover – and excellent customer care thereafter. The alliance has hit the ground running after jointly being specified for five major projects all to be delivered over the next year – 2024/25.

www.kellerkitchens.com

Bring steel windows and doors into the kitchen



Open plan kitchens are hugely popular as they allow more natural light into the space. However, there's a lot to be said for separate spaces, so the development of broken plan kitchens arrived. Steel windows incorporate the best of both worlds with internal partitions to break up the space, as well as external windows that maximise the area for light to enter the kitchen. Members of the **Steel Window Association** offer a UK wide service for the repair and replacement of various types of old metal

windows, doors and screens, as well as being able to manufacture new fenestration which fully meets building regulations.

www.steel-window-association.co.uk



Stocksigns shows the way to signage compliance for high-rise development

Following the introduction of the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, property maintenance company, General Maintenance, needed to source new wayfinding signage for a London apartment complex. **Stocksigns** was the ideal provider, able to supply compliant signs with a premium finish that aligned with the prestigious aesthetic of the building. Under the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, high-rise residential buildings with a roof height of over eleven metres or more must be fitted with clear wayfinding signage that can be read easily in all conditions. This was introduced as a response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, which concluded that poor wayfinding signage had hindered rescue attempts by the emergency services. Tim Green, managing director of general maintenance, was commissioned by the managing agent to survey, supply and install the new signage. In doing so, he contacted Stocksigns to supply the signage. Account manager, Neil Jones from Stocksigns suggested a bespoke acrylic signage design that complied with the graphic and wayfinding requirements of the legislation but also offered personalised branding and detailing that complemented the luxury style of the buildings. Tim said: "Neil and the Stocksigns team were very knowledgeable and excelled at thinking creatively about how to deliver compliant and appealing signage."

01737 774072 www.stocksigns.co.uk



Turn outside spaces into high value areas with Everscape

Parkside Architectural Tiles has launched Everscape™, a collection of outdoor-ready porcelain tiles, as well as technical accessories, designed to withstand the rigours of all-weather use. For multi-storey rentable homes, private residential developments and commercial properties looking to maximise return on outside space, Everscape™ outdoor porcelain tiles brings a high-quality approach to patios, terraces, balconies and more. Landscape architects, designers and contractors working on outdoor commercial and residential projects, can use Everscape to find a tiling solution that will deliver durability in all-weathers. Not only tiles, but with outdoor grouts, adhesives, preparation products, fabricated metal treads and strips, trims and pedestals; Everscape is a complete solution for creating beautiful outdoor spaces. Frost, stain and fire resistant, Everscape tiles need little upkeep and are available in elegant and simple designs that bring a high-quality look to outdoor areas. One of the highlights of the range is Kemble, a smart and sophisticated limestone look tile in three warm shades. Available in square and rectangular formats, Kemble can be used both inside (1 cm deep) and outside (Everscape 2 cm specification), creating a fluid transition and extending habitable and usable space.

0116 276 2532 parkside.co.uk

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A. Proctor Group's new Proctor Air® membrane awarded BBA certificate

Following its successful launch in 2024, Proctor Air has now been issued with a BBA certificate.

Specifiers, Housebuilders and Roofing Contractors therefore have the all important verification from an independent third-party that the membrane performs as claimed.

As a fourth generation family business with a history of technical innovation and promoting good practice, the A. Proctor Group Ltd advocates working with certification bodies like the British Board of Agrément to bring new product technologies to the market.

Proctor Air fits that category, being a roofing membrane designed for the future. It simplifies pitched roof constructions thanks to being both air permeable and vapour permeable. In addition, its water holdout performance and wind uplift resistance ensure it is able to cope with the more frequent extreme weather driven by climate change.

"An Agrément certificate assesses a construction product's fitness for purpose," said Iain Fairington, technical director at A. Proctor Group.

"Having a BBA certificate for Proctor Air shows we have had the product tested and assessed in relation to its intended use."

A. Proctor Group enjoyed a collaborative relationship with the BBA while getting Proctor Air certified. Monthly meetings with the designated BBA project manager ensured both parties could update each other on progress, and maintain ongoing dialogue with regard to testing schedules and product sample needs.

Certification showing that a third-party has tested and verified the performance of a product gives the construction industry confidence that a manufacturer's claims are genuine and accurate.

Proctor Air has an Sd value of 0.015 m and a vapour resistance of 0.075 MNs/g, making it one of the highest performing vapour and air permeable membranes on the market.



It is an air permeable low resistance (APLR) underlay, which provides a more uniform flow of air through the roof space than normal vents.

A unique feature within Proctor Air's BBA is the inclusion of the use of Proctor Air below PV panels. These would be treated similarly to a tight fitting outer covering.

For more information visit the website.

01250 872 261
proctorgroup.com/products/proctor-air



A. Proctor Group joins the CORC and the Association of Master Roofers

The A. Proctor Group has become a member of both the Confederation of Roofing Contractors (CORC) and the Association of Master Roofers.

For nearly 50 years, the Group has provided the construction industry with technically advanced thermal, acoustic and membrane products. A history of technical innovation and promoting good practice has led to close links with industry, allowing the Group to keep pace with the evolving requirements of the construction industry.

Being members of the two organisations will further develop those links. As a fourth generation family business, the A. Proctor Group recognises the importance of respecting tradition and preparing for the future, and wants to be involved in educating the next generation of roofing professionals.

"Good communication is essential to a healthy and sustainable construction industry," said Keira Proctor, managing director of the A. Proctor Group. "Joining the CORC and the Association of Master Roofers gives us the opportunity to better understand the requirements of roofing contractors. Accordingly, we can explain the benefits of our existing products, and new solutions we develop in future."

01250 872 261 proctorgroup.com



BUILDING INSIGHTS

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HIGH PERFORMANCE IN THE FRAME WITH OSB

With the need for more sustainable building materials currently critical, Rebecca Goldsmith of MEDITE SMARTPLY explains why OSB structural panels can streamline the fabric-first approach for high performance building envelopes



The updated Part F and Part L requirements of the Building Regulations are considered a crucial stepping-stone to the Future Homes Standard in 2025, which will see a new build house have 75% lower CO₂ emissions than one built to today's standards. To meet these requirements, timber frame construction provides distinct sustainability benefits. Timber is a natural, renewable and low carbon material which along with its versatility, flexibility, and rapid build times make it a highly attractive option for new residential projects.

A key area will be addressing the thermal performance and the design of a building's envelope. This heightened focus on the building fabric presents both challenges and opportunities. As a route to more thermally-efficient building

envelopes, it will become critical to ensure buildings are airtight. Timber frame manufacturers that can provide high-performance, airtight envelope solutions will be well-positioned to meet these changing regulations and capitalise on the move towards low-energy construction.

A THERMAL ENVELOPE SOLUTION

To meet the evolving energy efficiency standards, there is an innovative solution to simplify the path to airtight building envelopes. The increasing demand for double sheathed timber frames in both structural applications and the development of offsite closed panels, led to innovation for producing two certified airtight OSB/3 panels with airtightness engineered into the panel substrate.

As a solution for walls and ceilings, an airtight panel with integrated vapour control and air barrier can be used as the airtight layer on the warm side of the insulation in timber frame construction systems, helping to create an airtight building envelope. Each panel features alternating layers of wood strands coated with a formaldehyde-free resin and wax binder system to deliver outstanding levels of airtightness. A specialist coating is then applied to ensure vapour resistance and provide a high performance OSB solution for super-insulated and passive buildings, and thereby enabling the elimination of a traditional additional vapour control membrane from the construction.

By seamlessly integrating air and vapour barriers into high-performance OSB panels, this streamlines the

installation process, minimising the risk of air leakage that often plagues traditional timber frame structures.

For flooring and roofing, a tongue and groove, load bearing OSB/3 panel can provide improved durability and slip resistance in all site conditions. Similar to airtight panels, it can be used as an airtight layer, contributing to sustainable building practices as well as reducing the energy consumption for heating.

These cutting-edge solutions not only simplify construction but also ensure a certified, proven approach to creating airtight building envelopes that will pave the way for low-carbon, energy-efficient homes of the future.

A HOME FOR THE FUTURE

Testament to the benefits of OSB with built-in vapour and air barrier properties is an exciting regeneration project in Cardiff. Lowfield Timber Frames specified SMARTPLY AIRTIGHT panels alongside their timber kits for a development of 12, two-bedroom houses in the Heath district of Cardiff.

Built to demanding Passivhaus standards, the homes offer improved health and wellbeing conditions for occupants whilst requiring very low levels of energy for space heating or cooling. Additionally, using timber frame for the



A KEY AREA WILL BE ADDRESSING THE THERMAL PERFORMANCE AND THE DESIGN OF A BUILDING'S ENVELOPE

construction lowers the carbon footprint of the development.

One of the principal benefits of a Passivhaus build is the significant reduction in energy consumption during the operating life of the structure. This will ultimately lead to reduced energy costs, heating bills, and even lower carbon emissions for the planet.

Showcasing an impressive level of airtightness, the average air test result for the 12 homes in this development came in at below 0.5 ACH. Furthermore, a Larsen truss panel (a lightweight wall extension which creates extra wall space to house insulation) was also used in the project. It was 330 mm deep with the finished wall make-up being closer to 500 mm, allowing for thicker insulation.

Timber frame construction offers housebuilders a clear advantage in meeting the stringent airtightness levels and energy efficiency requirements of the Future Homes Standard. By utilising OSB that features integrated air barrier properties, timber frame manufacturers can deliver airtight, energy-efficient building envelopes needed to comply with these new regulations and put us on a path to net zero.

Rebecca Goldsmith is product manager at MEDITE SMARTPLY

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