

selfbuilder + homemaker

JUL/AUG 2024

Better safe than sorry

Giles Fallan on how to choose the right building insurance for you

Scandi style

Paul and his Swedish partner achieved a family home with copious amounts of natural light

HOT STUFF

John Lawless on how the latest radiators combine art with function

Family fortune

Philip Westcott's dream of living close to his grandchildren in Surrey came true – in the form of a bungalow rescued and extended with the help of his builder son

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FROM THE EDITOR...

So, Labour has taken the reins of power, armed with a very large majority which should mean that it is able to enact a good number of the plans that it has in mind. And they have a lot on their wish list in terms of ideas designed to 'unlock' sites and build hundreds of thousands of homes. While it may not all intersect with the most pressing issues for self-builders (have they heard of Right to Build, for example?), a lot of it does.

The early announcement of the recruitment of 300 new planning officers to try and make a dent in the backlog may not thrill you (particularly when you hear that around 3,000 officers retired or moved jobs between 2010 and 2020), but it is a start.

Labour wants to build the 'magic' number of 1.5 million homes, largely in the private sector, and this is pretty much the same as the Tories' ill-fated 300,000 homes over five years – which didn't get close in any of their years.

Angela Rayner and team have their work cut out getting the major housebuilders to move forward on sites, so they might not have time to kick councils on their Right to Build lists, to make sure that self-build keeps motoring.

Grey belt is one thing (and a good idea), but the great British pursuit of self-build needs to be supported, along with everything else.

JAMES PARKER



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LONDON.HOMEBUILDINGSHOW.CO.UK

NATIONAL SELF BUILD & RENOVATION SHOW

11 - 12 OCTOBER, SWINDON
WWW.NSBRC.CO.UK



ON THE COVER...

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REGULARS

06

Home Styling: A fusion of function & art

Far more than a functional necessity, 'designer' radiators can allow you to combine creativity with common-sense heating functionality – Best Heating's John Lawless explains

08

Selfbuilder Diaries

Completing a full home renovation a few years ago gave Wayne and Kandi the urge to take on a bigger project, but spending three years and counting living in two caravans with their four children and dog hasn't been plain sailing

12

Ask the Expert:

Protect yourself to ensure project success

In a challenging economy, protecting your project from risks has never been more important. Giles Fallan of BuildSafe shares how the right self-build insurance can help give you confidence to make your dream home a reality

16

Interior Inspiration: Living rooms

Being the space where most of us head to at the end of a busy day, the living room is one of the key spaces where you're going to relax and enjoy the home you've created. Find inspiration for how to furnish and decorate it with our selection of products and furnishings

19

Show Preview: Screwfix Live

PRODUCT FEATURES

31

Navigating the world of wastewater

Sequencing Batch Reactor technology should be the way forward for wastewater management, as David Stagg of Graf UK explains

41

The benefits of offsite manufactured timber systems

The Structural Timber Association talks through the superior accuracy and control involved in using timber-based offsite technology and how this can provide self-builders with the ultimate solution

47

Integrating aesthetics and sustainability

Dan Redfern of Marley predicts that integrating renewable technology on the roof will be a key solution for self-builders seeking the balance between sustainable yet still aesthetically pleasing homes

56

Futureproofing homes forever

For many customers, the ability to continue to live in the same house as they age is a huge driver. Vaila Morrison of Stannah discusses the home lift types available to fully futureproof your home

65

Passivhaus comforts, 'automatically'

Tyron Cosway of Loxone looks at the role building automation can play in maximising the comfort and liveability of low energy Passivhaus designs



CONTENTS JUL/AUG 2024

PRODUCTS

FINANCE & INSURANCE	28
SITE PREPARATION	
Drainage & Septic Tanks	28
Groundworks	28
Wastewater	30
STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS	
Floors	39
Waterproofing/Basements	40
Structural Timber	40
BUILDING ENVELOPE	
Doors & Windows	42
Glass & Glazing	42
Roofing	47
Rooflights	43
HEATING, VENTILATION & SERVICES	
Radiators	42
INSULATION	53
INTERIORS	
Bathrooms & Kitchens	66
Lifts	57
Stairs & Staircases	53
FUTUREPROOFING YOUR HOME	55
SAFETY, SECURITY & SMART HOMES	
Connected Homes	63
OUTDOOR LIVING	
Fencing	66

CASE STUDIES

20

A calculated risk

Despite the risks associated with buying a dated bungalow in the South Downs National Park over 200 miles away from his home, Philip Westcott was prepared to take the chance thanks to the advice of his building-savvy son

32

Having the vision

Alissa and David Talbot transformed their cramped London maisonette into a beautiful and practical home to house their growing family

48

To the manar born

France's loss was Scotland's gain when a couple decided to abandon ideas to renovate a French chateau and took on Manar House, another renovation in Inverurie instead

58

Scandi style

Paul Berry and his Swedish partner Pernilla have built a Scandinavian-inspired contemporary family home in Surrey with copious natural light

A FUSION OF FUNCTION & ART

Far more than a functional necessity, Best Heating's John Lawless explores how 'designer' radiators can allow you to combine creativity with common-sense heating functionality

Home is where the heart is, and every element within it should resonate with a homeowner's sense of style and individuality. Gone are the days when radiators were mere functional necessities, tucked away to serve the sole purpose of heating.

Today, homeowners are revolutionising spaces throughout their homes by choosing designer radiators that double as stunning pieces of art. This shift isn't just about staying warm – it's about making a style statement that transforms heating into something far 'cooler' than ever before.

THE EVOLUTION OF RADIATORS

Traditionally, radiators were the unsung heroes of home heating – often hidden behind couches or under windows – with their primary role being to combat the cold.

They were practical, yes, but not something people would often marvel at.

Fast forward to today, and the story has changed. Homeowners are exploring the aesthetic potential of radiators, recognising them as key design elements that can enhance the visual appeal of any room of their home.

THE RISE OF DESIGNER RADIATORS

Designer radiators bring with them a blend of form and function that was previously unimaginable. These aren't just radiators – they're conversation starters, focal points, and expressions of your personal taste.

Available in a myriad of styles, from sleek and modern to vintage and ornate, these radiators cater to diverse aesthetic preferences and tastes.

One of the most compelling aspects of designer radiators is their ability to fit seamlessly into any decor scheme. Whether you're aiming for a minimalist look with clean lines and muted tones or a more eclectic vibe with bold patterns and vibrant colours, there's a designer radiator to match.

This versatility makes it easy for homeowners to replace existing radiators with ones that not only perform their heating duties but also enhance the room's overall aesthetic.



MAKING HEATING COOLER WITH COLOUR

Colour is a powerful tool in design, capable of transforming the ambience of any space. Designer radiators take full advantage of this, offering a spectrum of colour options that allow homeowners to make bold statements or subtle enhancements.

Imagine a striking black radiator against a crisp white wall, exuding modern sophistication, or a vibrant (and unexpected) red rad that adds a pop of excitement to an otherwise neutral room.

The trend of coloured radiators has made heating a 'cool' element of an interior. It allows for creativity and personalisation, giving homeowners the freedom to play with colour in unexpected ways.

Beyond the primary function of warming up a room, many more modern radiators contribute to a room's mood and feel. A soft pastel radiator can evoke tranquillity in a bedroom, while a bright,



It's about making a style statement that transforms heating into something far 'cooler'

metallic finish can inject energy into a living space.

ENHANCING HOME AESTHETICS

The aesthetic value of designer radiators goes beyond their colour and shape. Their placement and integration into the room's design are key. Vertical radiators, for instance, are perfect for narrow spaces or as a stylish addition to hallways. Horizontal models can be aligned under windows or along longer walls, maximising space while adding a touch of elegance.

Replacing an old, conventional radiator with a designer model can completely change the look and feel of a room. It's akin to adding a piece of fine furniture or a work of art. This transformation doesn't just stop at visual appeal – designer radiators can also increase the perceived value of a home, making them a smart investment for those looking to sell in the future.

THE ART OF CHOOSING THE RIGHT RADIATOR

Selecting the perfect radiator involves considering several factors beyond mere aesthetics. Homeowners should think about the heat output required for the space, ensuring the radiator is both beautiful and functional. The size and orientation of the radiator are crucial too – it's about finding the right balance between form and function.

Moreover, the material of the radiator can also influence its look and efficiency. Options range from traditional cast iron, which offers a classic look and excellent heat retention, to sleek stainless steel or aluminium models that provide a modern edge and quick heating capabilities.

PERSONALISED STYLE & FUNCTIONALITY

Incorporating a designer radiator into your home is about more than just selecting a model that looks good. It's about reflecting your personal style

and enhancing the overall atmosphere of your space. The process should be thoughtful, considering how the radiator will interact with other elements in the room – from furniture and flooring to lighting and artwork.

Designer radiators offer an exciting opportunity for homeowners to rethink their approach to home heating. By treating radiators as design pieces, they can elevate their interiors, infuse their spaces with personality, and enjoy the dual benefits of warmth and style.

This trend signifies a broader shift towards seeing every element of the home as an opportunity for creativity and self-expression. Whether you're revamping a single room or undertaking a complete home makeover, considering a designer radiator could be the transformative touch your space needs.

John Lawless is content manager at BestHeating.com

selfbuilder Diaries

Completing a full home renovation a few years ago gave Wayne and Kandi the urge to take on a bigger project, but spending three years and counting living in two caravans with their four children and dog hasn't been plain sailing



Despite high winds, torrential rain and freezing temperatures, work continued during the winter

We are Wayne and Kandi from Manston, a small village in the south east of Kent. We have embarked on the journey of a lifetime – our first self-build home! Wayne is project managing the build alongside running a very busy marine engineering business.

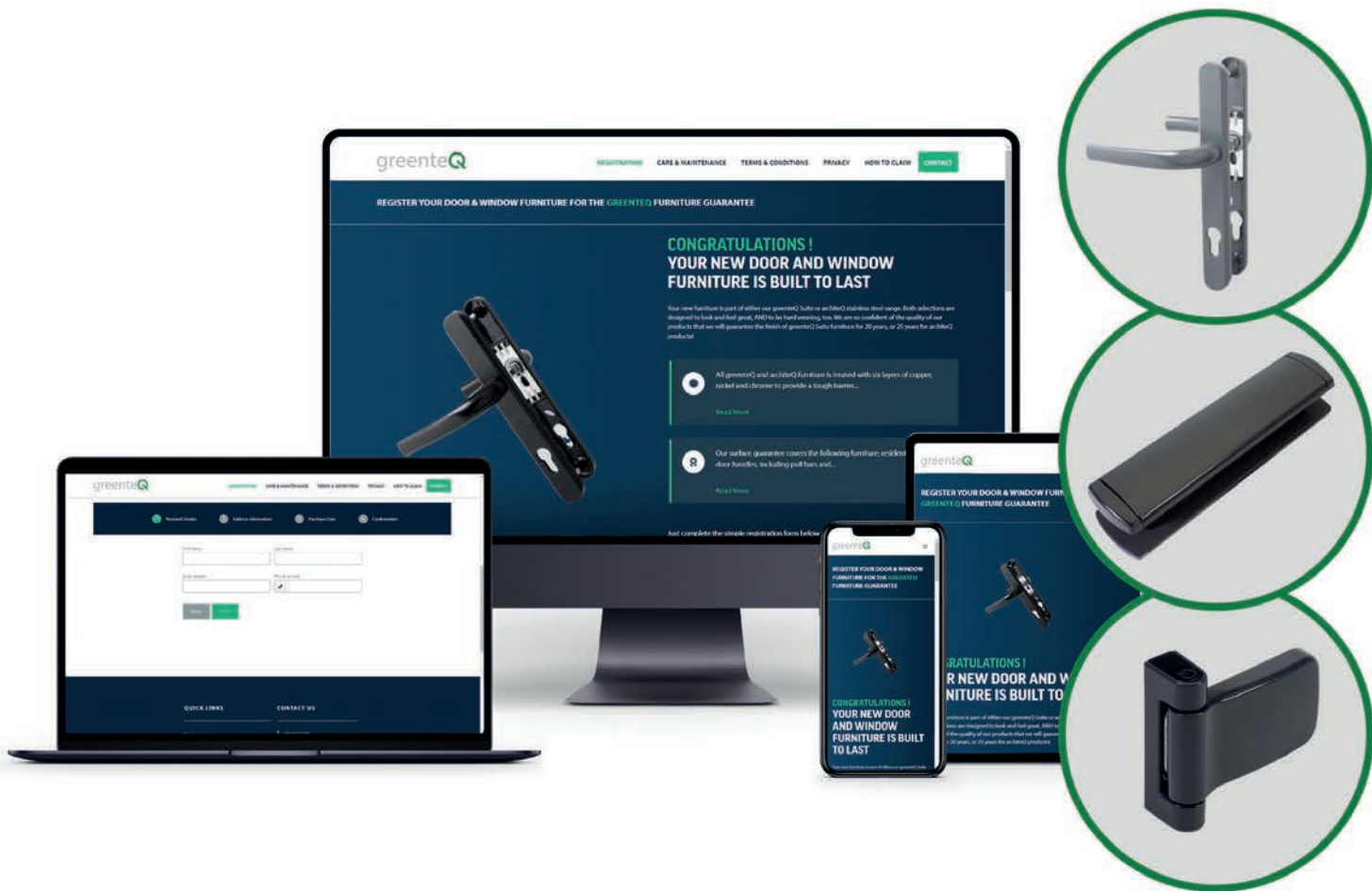
WHERE WE STARTED

We had always dreamt of building our home – I think it's most people's dream but very few get the opportunity to make it reality. Back in 2018 we bought a run down four bedroom semi in need of a full renovation that we completed during

Covid. This gave us the itch to take on something really big. So out of the blue, we sold our home and moved into two static caravans while trying to make a decision on what our next move was going to be.

We were incredibly lucky to find the

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perfect plot of land to build our dream home on. This is where all the fun began! Wayne loves a challenging project and from the very start had decided he wanted to do a big part of the build himself. After driving around looking at different homes and trawling the internet for ideas we came up with our list of 'must haves'. We teamed up with a great local architect, Luke Strange, and he sketched what we wanted first time round, incorporating a mix of traditional features with a modern twist that would still leave us in keeping with our surroundings.

After a few tweaks to the design internally we submitted our application in February 2023, and to our surprise, the plans were approved within eight weeks with no problems or amendments needed. At the end of August we broke ground, embarking on an archaeological dig. However, with nothing found we were able to move straight on to digging the footings and removing the oversite concrete slab. This part of the project happened so fast, and progress was good. It wasn't long before the bricklayers arrived on site and had the first few courses down ready for us to get the block and beam floor on. The weather was on our side, it being dry and warm into October, but then winter hit.



A LONG WINTER

This is where things slowed down, since November we have battled with the weather from week to week. Despite high winds, torrential rain and freezing temperatures, work did carry on during the winter, but not at the rate we would have hoped for. We have spent many nights lying awake listening to the rain hoping it doesn't cause damage to any work already done.

Fast forward to now and the weather has finally turned, after the wettest winter for years. We are just about to complete the roof and are preparing for cladding and installation of windows so we can get the scaffolding down. Internally, we are preparing for screed and about

to start first fixing the plumbing and electrical installation. With the long drawn out winter behind us we are now able to get really stuck in, and we are really hoping to meet our deadline of Christmas 2024.

To date, this has been a massive challenge alongside an already busy lifestyle with four children and a dog. Living in two static caravans for almost three years has presented its own challenges, but the process overall is very rewarding. My advice to anyone else taking on such a project is whatever you think you're going to spend, you need to add a minimum of 10% for unforeseen costs. Secondly, price check everything and don't be afraid to try and negotiate a deal – if you rely on someone else sourcing your materials then it's going to cost you 20+% more.

We have found a whole community of self-builders and home improvement enthusiasts online, and it has been great to share stories and experiences with people in a similar position. We have used it to document our build so we have something to look back on for years to come. If you're interested in seeing our progress, you can follow us on Instagram @self_build_with_the_maddoxs and see the project through to the end with us!

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Protect yourself to ensure project success



In a challenging economy, protecting your project from risks has never been more important. Giles Fallan of BuildSafe shares how the right self-build insurance can help give you confidence to make your dream home a reality

According to the National Self Build Association (NaCSBA), one in three people in the UK want to build their own home. To help make self-building more attainable, the UK Government launched their Help to Build loan in 2021, aiming to enable 40,000 self-built new homes every year. Yet despite this government data shows self-builds have been declining in recent years, with registrations of interest down 34%, planning applications down 12% and permissions down 23% in 2022.

SO, WHAT IS STOPPING PEOPLE CHOOSING THE SELF-BUILD ROUTE?

Understandably, many self-builders are first timers – and navigating finance, planning and the build can be daunting processes. Concerns around the complexity of acquiring land and navigating planning permissions, as well as the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, are often cited as barriers to choosing self-build, and reasons for project delays.

As well as government loan support, the increased options offered by pre-

fabrication and modern methods of construction mean self-building is arguably more attainable than ever. But undoubtedly it is also a challenging economic period, and conversations around materials costs, project delays and the number of insolvencies among building companies is a concern for those looking to plan a project.

Knowing that your project is protected is now more important than ever.

Many potential self-builders may not realise that having the correct self-build insurance will not only help you secure the best finance option available to you, but it can also help you feel confident and protected to get your project off the ground.

HOW CAN SELF-BUILDERS INSURE THEMSELVES FOR SUCCESS?

Self-build insurance or warranty protects you and your contractors during construction, as well as your home at every stage of the build and 10-year cover against major structural damage after completion.

A self-build insurance policy will often include the following, but this is by no means a definitive list:

- Contractors All Risk: covers incidents such as fire, theft, vandalism, flood and storm damage.
- Employers' Liability: some self-builders may not be aware you are deemed the employer for insurance purposes, and so liable for all workers and subcontractors' welfare, making this cover a key protection.
- Public liability: protection in the case of damage to your build from a person outside the site, as well in the case of damage, injury or loss that is suffered by third parties or the public. It is advisable to get this in place as soon as land is purchased.
- Legal Expenses Insurance.
- Contract Works: repair or replace any part of the build in the event of damage or structural defects.

Getting the right cover for your unique project is key. Specialist insurers can help alleviate your concerns, for example it might be that protection against third party insolvency or loss of deposit is a priority for you and insurers can look to secure that.

IS SELF-BUILD INSURANCE REQUIRED FOR EVERY PROJECT?

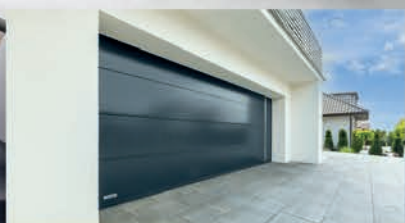
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ASK THE EXPERT

a self-build structural warranty covers any new build, conversion or major refurbishment of a residential home.

Navigating the regulatory and contractual obligations and knowing whether you have the correct cover in place may seem daunting. This is where getting support from an expert team who have decades of experience working with self-build projects is vital.

Self-builders may sometimes be unaware of specific requirements to have cover. For those looking to secure a loan it is very clear as lenders will ask for insurance. What you may not know is that lenders also require a self-build warranty to sell a property under 10 years old. So even if you are self-financing your build, it is important to have it in place, not only to protect you and your home but also for future buyers.

You are always advised to put your cover in place before a project starts, but it is also possible to get late registration and retrospective cover. Even if your build is already in progress insurance brokers can guide you through the



process to ensure you have the cover you need.

IS THE INSURANCE PROCESS TIME CONSUMING?

As a self-builder, insurers understand that you don't want to spend your time

filling in forms and chasing for updates. Working with an expert insurance provider ensures the process is hassle free. Their expert teams can manage the entire process, enabling you to focus on the day to day running of your project.

The right broker will not only aim to find the best price for the most appropriate cover to meet your requirement, they'll also help you navigate all insurance requirements through your projects. From arranging the contract and site inspection required by the policy on your behalf, to organising warranty certificates once building control have certified the development as complete, they can – and should – be with you every step of the way.

Confidence is key, and the right insurance broker will help you understand how to protect your project, giving you the assurances you need to take the next step and make your self-built dream a reality.

Giles Fallan is CEO of BuildSafe

Self build hub celebrate a decade of employee ownership

The National Self Build & Renovation Centre (NSBRC), has reached a notable milestone.

The unique Swindon based business is celebrating ten years of employee ownership, with a new company (The Homebuilding Centre Ltd) having been formed back in 2014 to operate the much-loved venue, which is dedicated to offering independent homebuilding advice and support.

Ten years on, the NSBRC's twenty employees now own 80% of the flourishing business, through a combination of direct shares, and shares held in an Employee Ownership Trust (EOT). The remaining shares are held by Capital for Colleagues, an investment group who specialise in transitioning businesses to an employee owned model.

On Friday 28th June the team held



a special dinner, making full use of the Centre's space and stunning backdrop of full-sized show houses, with over one hundred guests in attendance – each of whom have played a part in the NSBRC's journey and success over the past decade. Popular BBC News presenter and journalist, Martine Croxall, hosted the evening, providing an insightful and highly-topical address on the importance of transparency

and trust in the media. Martine also introduced other guest speakers including James de le Vingne, CEO of the Employee Ownership Association.

The evening concluded with a surprise awards ceremony, where the NSBRC team recognised and thanked several of their key suppliers and supporters who have helped the business across the last decade.

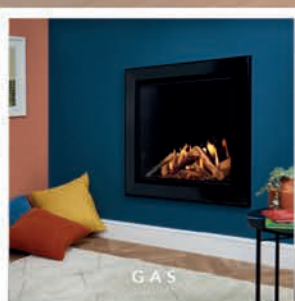
Martine Croxall said: "It was a treat to be invited to host the NSBRC's celebration evening. The hard work of the first ten years of employee ownership and the team spirit they've created meant the atmosphere during dinner and the awards ceremony was joyful! Harvey and the other employee owners should be very proud of what they've achieved."

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INTERIOR INSPIRATION: LIVING ROOMS

Being the space where most of us head to at the end of a busy day, the living room is one of the key spaces where you're going to relax and enjoy the home you've created. Find inspiration for how to furnish and decorate it with our selection of products and furnishings

1. Decadently stylish, the four seater **Lucca sofa** from **Oak Furniture Land** is fully upholstered in buttery soft Italian leather. Available in cool and earthy tones, the range will easily match your home's style. The scooped arms with intricate quilting give a distinctive point of visual interest, and the deep-set seating and extra lumbar support mean you can lounge away in comfort. Price: £1894.99

www.oakfurnitureland.co.uk

2. Prioritising comfort, this sophisticated **Kingston beanbag** from **icon** is designed with the softest cord, making it perfect for lounging. Boasting a comfortable seat with soft curves, Kingston will mould around your body so when it's time to move, you won't want to! Lightweight and portable, the beanbag makes a perfect addition to your lounge, offering a comfortable and flexible seating option. Price: £59.99
linktr.ee/icon_hq



3. Make a statement with the unique style, comfort and luxury of **Peppermill Interiors' St Moritz Yeti Armchair**. The luxurious chair is made from a soft yet durable sheepskin fur, offering maximum comfort. Durable wooden legs and arms balance the maximalist design with a sleek, natural finish. Available in two colour options; deluxe creamy neutral (pictured) and two-tone grey. Price: £995 www.peppermillinteriors.com

4. The **Frances TV Stand** from **daals** is a perfect blend of beauty and practicality. Measuring 200 cm wide, the unit can accommodate TVs up to 80 inches and offers ample storage with cupboards on either side and two central shelves. The hand-woven rattan door fronts complement the wood grain effect finish and slatted legs, delivering a Scandi look. Price: £199.99 www.daals.co.uk

5. Lighting is a crucial element of any

room, and particularly the living room where relaxing and unwinding is of the utmost importance. The **Solara layered linen and aged brass floor lamp** from **lights&lamps** features a layered linen pendant which evokes a serene ambience. The slender brass base and classic shade in a neutral coloured fabric makes an elegant and dynamic piece. Price: £315 www.lightsandlamps.com

6. The **Industrial Rebar Coffee Table** from **Vincent and Barn** is spacious and open with lots of storage potential – fill the shelf with stacks of books and magazines, and keep the top a clutter-free space. Increase the storage potential further by using decorative baskets to hide household clutter on the bottom shelf. This large industrial style table will be the centrepiece of your living room. Price: £269 www.vincentandbarn.co.uk



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More brands, more stands, more fun

Screwfix LIVE, the “omnichannel” retailer’s flagship event dedicated to trade and DIY enthusiasts, is coming back to Farnborough in September.

The free-to-enter show is returning to Farnborough International Exhibition & Conference Centre from Friday 27 September – Sunday 29 September 2024 with even more exclusive show deals and leading suppliers. Visitors who register for the event can pick up a free goodie bag worth over £40.

With more than 180 leading trade brands under one roof, customers and families will enjoy three days of live product demonstrations, entertainment for kids and adults, special guests in attendance and so much more.

Last year, Screwfix LIVE celebrated its 10th anniversary with a record-breaking event. Over 19,500 visitors attended across the weekend, and had the chance to meet and greet celebrity guests including football legend John Barnes, TV presenter and Olympic champion Samantha Quek, and comedian Iain Stirling.

Screwfix LIVE will also host the final of Screwfix Top Tradesperson on Friday 27 September. The competition is now in its 15th year and champions tradespeople across the UK and Republic of Ireland. 10 skilled finalists will face a panel of industry experts, including 2023



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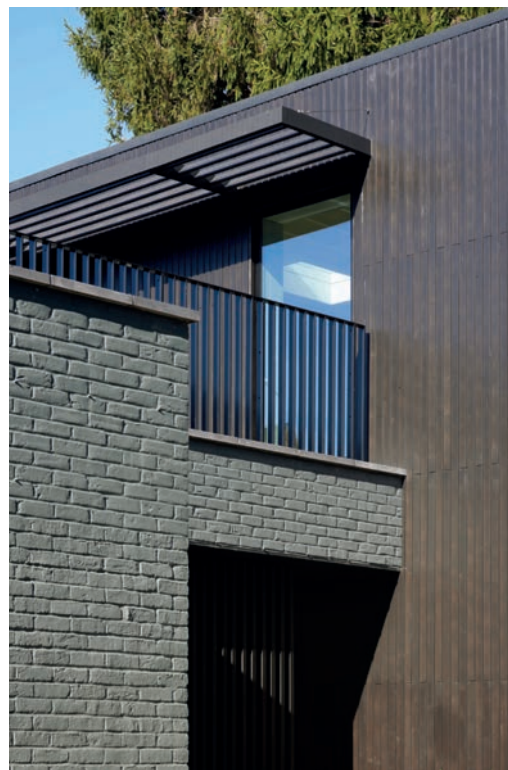
CASE STUDY

A CALCULATED RISK

Despite the risks associated with buying a dated bungalow in the South Downs National Park over 200 miles away from his home, Philip Westcott was prepared to take the chance thanks to the advice of his building-savvy son

TEXT JAYNE DOWLE IMAGES RICH CHIVERS





Searching high and low for a plot to build a house where he could be closer to his grandchildren and his beloved sailing boat in Chichester harbour, Philip Westcott had almost given up on his dream.

After 12 months looking, and scouring the property portals yet again, he finally spotted the perfect plot, nestled in a commanding position just south of the pretty Surrey town of Haslemere in the South Downs National Park.

The problem was, the plot contained a 1960s bungalow well past its prime. As a legal professional Philip admits it took a calculated risk to go ahead and buy, given National Park planning rules might prevent him from building the contemporary home he wished for.

Philip, a semi-retired lawyer practising as one of only around 800 Notaries Public in the UK – specialist practitioners who can draw up deeds and act as intermediaries – and his son Jeremy (director of his own Portsmouth-based construction company, Westcott Construction), were intrigued by the possibilities the fifth of an acre plot offered.

"I admit I was a bit doubtful at first, because of what it was," says Philip. "It hadn't had much done to it for years, the owner had lived there alone after his wife had died. I couldn't quite see how it could deliver the modern, low-maintenance house I had in mind."

However, he was impressed by property conversions Jeremy had completed in the past – "in fact I was amazed at the transformations" – so he did feel confident to step forward and see what was possible.

Now, five years after Philip signed on the dotted line and completed contracts, clad in

fashionable Russwood cedar cladding stained grey, with brickwork painted in Dulux Masonry paint mixed to basalt grey (RAL 7012) to match, this new version of Farfield House is totally unrecognisable from what stood here before.

Jeremy recommended architect Paul Cashin, who has a practice in Winchester and had worked on many projects in the South Downs. As soon as Philip met Paul he was convinced that he was the man for the job, and went ahead and purchased the bungalow in May 2019 for £670,000.

This was a big leap of faith. Philip would be relocating more than 200 miles from his previous home in Market Rasen, Lincolnshire, where he had lived for 25 years, renting nearby whilst his new home was built.

"In addition to the fact my son had recommended him, at a very early stage, Paul met with me at the property," Philip recalls. "It was a bright sunny day. We stood on the back lawn as it then was, and as we chatted through, he asked me what it was I wanted and he came up with a design." It was this early understanding and enthusiasm that impressed Paul's putative client and got him the job.

Philip admits that everything he now knows about sustainable building methods (in particular, retaining as much of an original structure as possible to keep the carbon footprint low) he's learned during this build. However he says it was always his aim not to "knock the whole thing down and start again."

Paul proposed a house over two storeys that would retain the original bungalow, adding an extra storey to include an open-plan kitchen/dining/living room leading onto a terrace to

LOW POINT

"When we got bogged down a bit with Covid during the build, living in a rental place became quite expensive. More money was going out in rent than I would have liked, a four-figure sum every month."

— Philip Westcott



HIGH POINT

"Seeing it completed; strangely the first room that was fully completed was the family bathroom. In the original bungalow it was a typical 1970s avocado bathroom, and it was very dark in there/ The day I came into the house and the bathroom had been done, I thought, wow that's fabulous, so modern and light, with everything flowing together."

— Philip Westcott

maximise the surrounding views of the Downs, and so Philip could enjoy the trees which encircle the property. The new house would be in the form of two blocks – the existing one-storey building and a new, two-storey extension using the ground floor of the bungalow, connected by a glass hallway, echoing the entrance that existed before the remodel. There is a third block for a stand-alone garage.

The major challenge was pulling off such a contemporary design in a National Park. "We had a difficult planning stage," architect Paul admits. The house is on a private, no-through road of substantial properties set in relatively large plots. "Quiet, without being isolated," Philip says. Planners were keen not to interrupt the established look and feel of the area.

The initial design had to be changed by moving the new extension with its upper storey to the back of the plot to reduce the visual impact facing the road. Paul negotiated this through pre-application engagement with local planning officers at Chichester District Council, working also with the South Downs National Park Authority. "This required a good relationship with the planning officers, a few site visits, and ultimately a minor compromise that did not reduce the project scope or ambition," Paul says. His approach was to explain things using a series of storyboards, as this "enables people to grab the ideas simply."

Surprisingly, external treatments were not subject to tight planning strictures, other than that materials used externally should appear natural.

As much of the existing house as possible was reused; this impressed the planners, kept expenditure down to a build cost of £450,000, and meant the overall build was indeed as sustainable as possible. The extension is designed to rise above the original masonry walls on a timber frame, with steel columns to support the weight.

One big plus was that the bungalow and its garage had what is known as a gabled 'cut roof,' having been built on site rather than shipped in prefabricated sections when the bungalow was built. This meant it could be easily dismantled tile by tile and replaced with a striking modern flat roof that is insulated heavily with Celotex PIR rigid board insulation. This was important to keep the house energy-efficient; it was not possible to add further insulation inside the existing cavity walls. Placing insulation between the beams, and an extra layer underneath the roof itself, provided an effective solution in terms of cost and labour – as opposed to adding internal or external wall insulation.

To ensure optimum energy efficiency, all the windows were replaced with composite-framed timber and aluminium double-glazing. A gas boiler powers radiators at ground level with



wet underfloor heating on the first floor, with a Saltfire ST3 7.3 kWh woodburner in the 34 square metre living room.

In the single storey part, the house retains the original U-shape of the bungalow. The porch, with a bay each containing a bedroom either side, is glazed with a slatted timber screen for privacy. It opens into the hall, with four bedrooms (the fourth is also used by Philip as a study, and two are ensuite), plus a family bathroom leading off.

Up the staircase, which features a sleek handrail recessed in the wall, is a living room and open-plan kitchen/dining room which feature exposed beams to add interest and texture to the ceiling, and a rooflight over the dining table. This area opens through glass doors onto the balustraded first-floor terrace, which in turn features a reinforced glass panel to flood light into the hallway below. In total, the living space is now 176 sqm; the ground floor is 126 sqm with 50 sqm added on the first floor.

"The garden was also a product of its time," says Philip. "It had clearly been someone's passion, but by the time of my purchase was clearly overgrown and would need to be remodelled to fit in with the remodelling of the house." To achieve this – and to keep outdoor areas low-maintenance – areas were laid to gravel with stone paths.

After living in his previous home for a quarter of a century, Philip had grown quite unaccustomed to making major interior design decisions. However, he knew he wanted a simple, uncluttered and Scandinavian-inspired look for his new home, so took advice from Paul and Jeremy. Engineered American White

Ash flooring throughout and the soft tones of birch – the kitchen units, IKEA's METHOD range in Light Ash, with a hardwearing melamine surface – and pewter work surfaces help to create a natural laid-back feel to this contemporary home surrounded by greenery on all sides.

To minimise the effects of solar gain in warmer months a brise soleil was added over the large, south-facing windows and doors in the kitchen/dining/living area. However, Philip says his blinds do a better job of keeping out strong sunlight and heat at the height of summer: "Architecturally, brise soleil is attractive, but from a practical view it's limited. Once I'd put internal blinds into the kitchen/dining room it was much more effective. I'm very glad that I had a blind box built in as this has given me the option to have the blinds hung seamlessly. It's much harder to add them afterwards."

At 74, Philip, who lives alone, is fit and active, enjoying not just sailing – he loves the fact that the journey "from house to boat" in Chichester is about 45 minutes – but also cycling and walking.

He admits that this project was always intended to become his "retirement" home, but did he consider any future-proofing measures to ensure that he can still live alone as the years advance?

"Not especially," he admits. "One of my friends suggested to me in the design stage that I put a lift in. I declined that. I'm a reasonably positive kind of person, and hopefully have many years ahead of me mentally and physically able. I don't think about such things really, but heaven forbid a stairlift!"

Paul and his team prepared detailed plans for

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Clad in fashionable Russwood cedar cladding stained grey, with brick painted in basalt grey to match, this new version of Farfield House is unrecognisable

the build at the outset. The whole project was managed by Jeremy.

The build began in early 2020. "It was just at the outset of the pandemic, which was a terrible time to start," says Philip. "There were restrictions on movement, it was difficult to get materials, it took much longer than anticipated – even with my son in charge – and I finally moved in in November 2022."

During the build, Philip rented a historic converted granary about 20 minutes' drive from his new home, so he could easily keep a check on site progress. Although the granary itself was "quite small, quite dark" a major plus point was that it came with a large detached garage. He was able to store securely all the furniture and household items he had shipped down from Lincolnshire. The sale of his previous home funded his new-build.

Philip not living onsite meant that the build went as smoothly as possible, despite the delays caused by the pandemic, says Paul: "If the contractor has free rein of the building the project will go quicker, it definitely helps as the scheme of work does not have to take their needs into account."

When Philip is at home – and he says he still gets "a great sense of joy returning to the house" – the rooms are definitely full of

people now. Jeremy and his family live close by and Philip's other son, Ben, is in Wales and between them they have five children aged from six to 11. "The layout of the house is perfect both for one-off lunches with the family and longer stays," Philip explains. "Very often we will have Christmas together, and that's certainly a challenge, with the sheer number of grandchildren running around."

Yet it's a house that works when it's also just Philip relaxing or working at home. His favourite spot is the kitchen/dining area, with its ever-changing views over his neighbour's paddock, towards Blackdown: "Despite having a self-contained study, I spent a lot of time there as it's a great place to be at all times especially during daylight hours summer or winter."

Philip's house is so calm and peaceful – most of the time – he's almost forgotten the trepidation he set out with. "I could see that with some clever work we could transform a tired old bungalow into a minimal low energy, contemporary home that would suit me and my wider family," he says.

Philip concludes: "The completed project has transformed a tired and dated 1960s bungalow into an inviting piece of modern architecture that – at first glance – appears to be a bespoke new-build house." ■



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Navigating the world of wastewater

Sequencing Batch Reactor technology should be the way forward for wastewater management, says David Stagg of Graf UK

The world of wastewater treatment has become a dynamic, complex, and challenging one. Nutrient neutrality that requires reductions in nitrates and phosphates, reducing ammonia levels in effluent, and carbon dosing are just some of the factors that self-builders need to be aware of.

It is no longer simply a choice between that most basic of wastewater solutions – the cesspool, the ‘happy medium’ – the septic tank, or the ultimate – the wastewater treatment plant.

Now there are choices for wastewater treatment plants too – between conventional flow/activated sludge systems and those employing advanced Sequencing Batch Reactor (SBR) technology.

One of the main differences between these disparate systems is that SBR combines various processes during the treatment cycle in a single treatment zone in a chronological sequence which rules out the need for a clarifier/secondary chamber.

SBR systems operate in batch cycles which generally run two or four times every 24 hours to ensure the treatment process is identical every time. This produces high-quality effluent.

Traditional continuous flow systems operate on a ‘what goes in, comes out,’ basis, so during periods of heavy loading/inflow, the effluent travels through the system much more quickly, potentially reducing the effluent quality.

The technology that SBR uses was implemented decades ago for Scandinavia, where reducing and monitoring phosphate and nitrate levels is common practice. More than 5,000 wastewater treatment systems with this technology have already been installed throughout Europe to meet these challenging discharge constraints, achieving an independently tested 0.4 mg/l of phosphate removal with dosing and 1.6 mg/l without dosing for domestic systems up to 50 population. Denitrification is used to reduce nitrates, achieving 7.9 mg/l.



The SBR process is a modern method for cleaning wastewater. Its operational flexibility and excellent process control opportunities, combined with the need to meet the increasingly stringent environmental discharge standards, means it is becoming the system of choice for well-informed self-builders.

Bespoke designs utilising advanced SBR technology are allowing these informed homemakers to meet requirements for decreasing discharge levels of phosphate, nitrate, and ammonia.

SBR technology can be utilised in recycled and recyclable plastic tanks which are eco-friendly and designed for installation using (depending on the ground conditions) granular backfill, which is not only more cost-effective than concrete but also quicker to install. The system is also cheaper for self-builders to run, with lower power consumption from 0.59 kWh/d which equates to approximately £50 per year, based on a cost of £0.25 per kW.

A SBR system is operated by air power generated by a blower/compressor, which means there are no moving parts or electrical components inside the tank itself. This reduces maintenance and replacement costs and makes for a healthier, more efficient operation.

Depending on the objective, the system can control oxygen levels entering the treatment zone allowing nitrification and denitrification treatment processes, as well as varying the duration, frequency, and arrangement of the cycle phases. The plant can therefore easily be customised.

Another benefit of this more advanced system is it comes with underload detection as standard, which allows it to operate efficiently with up to 75% underload – a benefit particularly for second homes which are often left unoccupied for long periods of time. If the system is likely to drop below the 75% underload threshold, carbon dosing makes up the shortfall, as well as enhancing the treatment performance, to ensure low-odour and even odourless treatment and extended times between tank emptying.

SBR technology also differs to conventional systems in that no growth bodies are necessary, as the SBR process does not require the plastic media which can clog and escape from the tank, polluting the environment.

As an alternative to standard batch cycle timings, SBR systems can also be operated depending on the fill level, according to the inflow. If the system’s ‘buffer’ recognises that only a small amount of wastewater has entered, it can automatically switch to economy mode.

The SBR process gives self-builders much greater control over the treatment process, which can be monitored and adjusted when needed. While it avoids the need for traditional tertiary/secondary treatment (such as reed beds which may become less effective over time and during the colder winter months), advanced tertiary treatment stages, such as UV, chlorination, and specialist sand filtration processes, are possible with the latest SBR technology.

Whatever the treatment processes, it is essential the system is commissioned by trained specialists who should also be responsible for its maintenance and servicing. Some manufacturers offer this service for free, as well as extended warranties on the technology of their SBR systems when the purchaser takes up a service agreement with an accredited service provider.

David Stagg is technical product specialist for Graf UK

CASE STUDY

HAVING THE VISION

Alissa and David Talbot transformed their cramped London maisonette into a beautiful and practical home to house their growing family

TEXT ALEXANDRA PRATT IMAGES JOE WHITMORE/CARTA NOVA



It was the summer of 2021 and Alissa and David were living in London when they decided they wanted to stop renting, and put down some roots.

"We took advantage of the stamp duty holiday," says Alissa, who works as an account director. "We liked north London and started looking for somewhere that was walkable to a nice high street."

They found just that in a three-bedroom maisonette on the first floor of a Victorian terrace. The location was ideal, but the flat was very tired. "It had clearly been a rental," recalls Alissa. "Apart from the period features such as fireplaces, everything was beige and unloved."

Despite so little initial appeal, the flat did have the potential to be improved, and this was further underlined by the planning permission attached to the attic. Alissa and David instructed a structural engineer before completing the purchase of their new home to ensure a loft conversion was feasible. Once they cleared this hurdle, the couple started looking for an

architect to help them realise their dream of a more spacious home, remodelled according to their own needs, with a master suite in the attic.

Although David (who works in public affairs), and Alissa spoke to several architects, some were less than enthusiastic about the project. Then they found Eva Vatzeva, director of Carta Nova online.

"We loved her aesthetic," says Alissa. "Eva shared our vision. Her design and her approach were what we needed." Their brief to Eva was to brighten the flat, open up some of the rooms and modernise it, creating a calming and joyful space. In particular, as both Alissa and David work from home at times, they needed an office that could easily be used as a guest room. They also wanted an open-plan kitchen, dining and living room on the main floor.

To achieve all this, they knocked down the wall between the kitchen and the master bedroom, creating a room with windows to the east and west that is now flooded with light. The original living room is now the office and





the second bedroom is a nursery. The tiny box room – scarcely big enough for a bed – has been opened up to the entrance hallway through an archway, creating an impression of light and space for anyone coming into the flat, as well as a useful place for outdoor shoes, buggies and wet coats.

“We call it the mud room,” laughs Alissa. “Previously, it had no value, but now it’s a useable space.” Having a dedicated place for all the paraphernalia of life reduces everyday stress and the flat has a calm, intuitive layout that makes much more sense for a growing family.

The biggest change David and Alissa made was the conversion of the loft, but this presented challenges from the start. The existing planning permission expired quickly after the sale was completed and the local planning department refused a new application.

“Alissa and David’s original vision for a spacious loft master suite running the width of the flat didn’t meet planning requirements. So we created a more imaginative and – crucially – more flexible plan that met all of their needs,” explains Eva. “The new loft extension consists of two dormers connected seamlessly by an eaves skylight. The larger dormer is home to a bright master bedroom with an ensuite bathroom in the smaller dormer.”

“The double dormer was Eva’s work-around,” says Alissa. “It has the feel of a single large

space, but structurally it’s two.”

With this hurdle successfully cleared, Alissa and David were not expecting another to follow, but the delay of several months caused by the planning refusal resulted in a “drastic” rise in quotes for the building work. This Alissa attributes to the conflict in Ukraine, although prices had been rising for some time following Covid-related supply chain problems around the globe.

“Our quotes went up by £50,000 - £60,000,” says Alissa. “We had to find compromises elsewhere to save costs.” Those trade-offs included not renovating a bathroom and keeping the existing kitchen cabinetry, which fortunately remained in good condition.

“That was a low point,” admits Alissa. “There was nothing tangible to see at that stage and we even considered just doing the project in two stages to see if costs would fall. In the end, we went ahead with the full project, as we felt it would be too disruptive to prolong it.”

Despite the stress of decision-making, the couple were delighted to discover they were expecting a child. Baby Scarlett arrived just three months after they moved into their newly renovated flat in December 2022, and Alissa spent much of her pregnancy living with her in-laws while the flat was stripped back to the studs.

With cost savings in mind, it became David



and Alissa's job to project manage, despite originally wanting Eva to do this. However, "Eva was such a good partner, she understood our priorities and her connection made the process easier," recalls Alissa.

The couple were also very happy with their builders, who were appointed by Eva. "The experience of being present as the consulting architect while the works took place onsite was exciting for all of us. I gave them useful guides beforehand, and I was available for them during the entire construction phase," says Eva. "We appointed trusted builders that I've worked with before, so I knew we could rely on their expertise and quality of work. The conversation between the contractor and clients was smooth and straightforward, and they felt confident knowing I was there if needed."

One of the underlying goals of the project was the desire to complete it as sustainably as possible, within David and Alissa's financial constraints. The loft and windows are well insulated to keep heating costs as low as possible and, along with reusing the existing kitchen cabinets, Alissa and David managed to avoid plastic-based materials entirely.

"While their sustainability choices may not be groundbreaking, they are a thoughtful and realistic benchmark for a lot of families who find themselves renovating period properties on a similar budget," says Eva.

Alissa also insisted on non-toxic paint, timber flooring and a natural wool carpet on the stairs and in the new master suite. Not only does it help to delineate the spaces, but it's also a cosy element in the design.

"Period features also make a big difference," says Alissa. "I like mixing period and new and I ensured there was a good proportion of vintage pieces in the furnishings, some of which have been reupholstered. I didn't want it to look too 'catalogue.'" The bright and colourful nursery works perfectly with some reconditioned Victorian furniture. Alissa also chose new fittings carefully, with an emphasis on quality and modern classics. The light fixtures from SoHo Home in particular are "really beautiful," says Alissa.

Although the heating system did not require an upgrade, David and Alissa also decided not to install air conditioning, "which is a regret," says Alissa. "It's not eco-friendly, but we need to use electrics to cool the flat. Air conditioning is too big to install afterwards."

Despite being very organised, Alissa still found the need to make all the little decisions overwhelming, especially around delivery and lead times.

"We were so fortunate to have Eva, especially as we were living away and working full-time. Eva combines the technical understanding of the planning process as an architect but also has the imagination and style to help you design and furnish the interior. She does all this with a warmth; we needed an architect who believed in our project (plenty did not, it must be said) and who could answer any and all of our many questions, fears and hopes with good grace."

One area where Alissa found costs ran away from her was in the kitchen. Despite keeping the original cabinetry, the couple did add an island, with a smart countertop from Cosentino,



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called Dekton. Derived from natural minerals, a proprietary ultra compaction process creates a surface that has no defects, or porosity.

"The one we chose was very expensive," says Alissa. "But we had set our hearts on it and nothing else was as beautiful. However, we now use it every day and it has become the centrepiece of our house."

With cost control in mind, Alissa and David were conscious of not 'over developing' the flat.

"We didn't want to over-invest, as it is not big enough to be our forever home," explains Alissa. "David and I were on the same page with

design and aesthetics, so we really considered the expenditure."

After so many challenges, moving in was a real high point for Alissa and David. Alissa in particular found she felt rewarded for key decisions they had made relating to the layout and for sticking to their guns on what they wanted.

"We're really proud of what we have brought to life," Alissa says. "We look around and think 'wow, we really did that!'"

The flat is a light-filled, welcoming, adaptable home, replacing the cramped old layout of two

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1700W

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ALISSA & DAVID'S TOP TIPS

- ★ Try to determine what items will cost in advance. Inventory what you already have and what you want. We didn't consider that we have very expensive taste!
- ★ Ensure your builder comes very highly recommended; ours made the process so much less stressful.

bedrooms, one bathroom, a box room, and a small separate kitchen and living room. For Alissa, the biggest success of the project is the converted loft, which was always the priority, thanks to the space it brings to their home.

"My favourite thing about the flat now is the view from the loft bed," says Alissa. "It looks into the green belt, so it is just trees. It changes all the time and there's tons of wildlife. It's very beautiful, it feels like you are in a nest."

Looking back, after a year of living in their new home and baby Scarlett now approaching

toddler age, it seems the best decision David and Alissa made was simply to do the project in the first place. A once outdated and cramped flat on just one floor of an old building is now a warm, bright, flexible and generous home for a growing family.

"Our best build decision was to take the punt," says Alissa. "It all started with making the loft into the primary bedroom and creating open-plan living. It now feels bigger than it is. It's so rewarding to transform your vision into a success." ■



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Engineered solutions are taking over



Natural timber is gorgeous; and has been the building material for eons! It still has a huge place in our heart even amongst the multitude of new technological advances in the construction industry. Timber is a natural product and, like all products of nature including us, it is neither consistent nor guaranteed free of defects. Prone to warping, twisting and splitting, sawn timber is still widely used. **West Fraser** leads the way in the manufacture of innovative timber panel products and has done for decades.

Today's wood panel products are among the best-known examples of engineered wood. SterlingOSB Zero, the leading brand of OSB, is a vital component in many so-called 'Modern Methods of Construction'.

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Shielding basement structure using Wykamol/Triton system

The comprehensive product range offered by waterproofing and timber treatment specialist Triton Systems, part of the **Wykamol Group**, has proved to be the perfect fit for a Kent self-builder undertaking his first self-build project in challenging ground conditions. The solution recommended by Wykamol Group's technical team is typical of the manufacturer's double indemnity approach, employing both tanking and internal drainage products, ensuring any water which does penetrate the structure is safely removed: in this case by gravity rather than using a sump pump. Internally, the walls are lined with the BBA approved Wykamol-Triton's CM8 Waterproofing Membrane, while a layer of CM20 will be laid across the top of the floor slab. Both of these products are made from high density polyethylene and are installed with their 8 mm or 20 mm studs against the face of the concrete. They will drain into the manufacturer's Aquachannel which will be installed around the entire perimeter of the basement and conduct any water outside to connect with the land drains. Sureproof Ultra comprises a very stable polyethylene film offering a consistent reaction to longitudinal and transverse forces, having been developed for the waterproofing of basements, foundations, walls and flat or ventilated roof structures. The self-adhesive material is self-sealing and forms an effective barrier against methane and radon while being resistant to chemicals and physical damage.

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The benefits of offsite manufactured timber systems

The Structural Timber Association talks through the superior accuracy and control involved in using timber-based offsite technology and how this can provide self-builders with the ultimate solution



Any structural method created in a factory away from the building site comes under the bracket of offsite manufacture. It is a broad term covering a number of options, namely, timber frame, SIPs (structural insulated panel systems) and oak frame, all benefiting from enhanced energy efficiency, short construction timescales and guaranteed build quality. Along with vastly reduced running costs, it is clear that there are compelling reasons to specify one of these systems for your self-build project.

OFFSITE MANUFACTURE EXPLAINED

Intelligent, integrated construction systems such as closed panel timber

frame, SIPs and volumetric modular options are now driving innovation in the timber industry, thus giving you more choice than the classic kit systems and panelised solutions.

Fundamentally, offsite construction describes structural systems that are factory-manufactured to an advanced level to allow for onsite assembly (as opposed to construction) via controlled installation processes. Exact levels of prefabrication can vary, from factory-fitted insulation and pre-cut service channels through to panels that come complete with windows and doors already installed. Even internal finishes and external cladding can be pre-applied – especially where volumetric modular

construction techniques are used.

SIX REASONS TO CHOOSE OFFSITE CONSTRUCTION

1. SPEED OF CONSTRUCTION

The high degree of factory prefabrication enables a rapid build process, which will not be adversely affected by inclement weather and buildings can easily be watertight in around seven to 10 days.

2. BUILD COST AND PROGRAMME CERTAINTY

Scheduling and costing are more predictable with offsite construction as the design and planning are all carried out with precision before any systems reach site. Onsite installation of panels is



a prepared process making it more timely than with traditional building methods.

3. QUALITY ASSURANCE

Manufacturing sites have stringent quality control processes and procedures in place which ensures the precision manufacture of the structural elements, making sure you get a modern, high-performance structural envelope for your new home.

4. ENERGY USAGE

Offsite manufactured systems offer a thermally efficient, highly airtight structure which can vastly reduce energy consumption during the life of the building. Some systems come with the insulation pre-installed in the panel as with SIPs, and U-values below regulations can easily be reached, as well as Passivhaus standards.

5. DESIGN FLEXIBILITY

Just because your home is effectively built in a factory, doesn't mean that design is inhibited. Most designs will be able to be accommodated by your timber system manufacturer – but it is really important to engage early with your architect and preferred supplier to ensure your expectations can be met. Plus with a wide range of innovative products and cladding solutions, structural timber systems can meet the aspirations of both architects and self-builders.

6. SUSTAINABILITY

Timber is the only truly sustainable building material. All Structural Timber Association members use timber from Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) or Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified sources, ensuring responsible forest management – with five trees planted for every one removed.

Utilising an offsite manufactured timber system for your project does not hinder your design aspirations, as although systems are designed and engineered to exacting specifications, the design itself can still be innovative and striking. Not to mention the performance assurance you will have when backed by the STA's



Quality Assurance Scheme, STA Assure.

Providing confidence in the use of structural timber and determining member competency and compliance, the scheme is recognised by warranty providers, as well as other key stakeholders. By using an STA member to deliver your self-build project you will be assured that they meet or even exceed current standards and regulatory requirements. We have members who focus solely on the self build market and will support you through the whole design and build process.

Timber-based offsite technology is not necessarily perfect for every project, of course and you will need to ascertain this with your architect and system provider. However, when you look at all the benefits and measure value, offsite manufactured structural timber systems are a cost-effective option.



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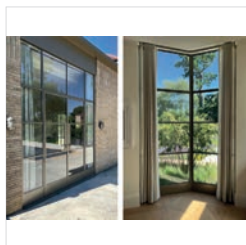
K3 radiators have come into their own in recent years as the number of low temperature, renewable heating systems has grown – in particular in self build homes.

In these situations, K3 radiators from **Stelrad**, with three panels and three sets of fins, providing 50% more metal heating surface than a standard K2 for example, but from the same size radiator footprint – offer a solution.

For more information on the choice of radiators available and for selection and fitting tips head for the Stelrad website or go to the Stelrad videos on YouTube.

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Govette Windows wins at SWA Awards 2024



Govette Windows has won the Best Domestic Project category at the **Steel Window Association** Awards for work on a house extension in Weybridge, Surrey. John Ramshaw, Technical Editor of Architecture Today and judge for the Steel Window Association Awards, explained: "Govette worked hard to ensure that the windows and doors met the exacting performance and aesthetic demands of both the architect and client – and this really shows in the finished building. A worthy winner."

Commenting on the choice of steel frames, the owner of the property, (Sarah Stirrett), said: "Govette Windows was fantastic to deal throughout – they really reassured me over thermal performance of steel systems at the beginning. Overall, it's been a lovely job throughout."

www.steel-window-association.co.uk

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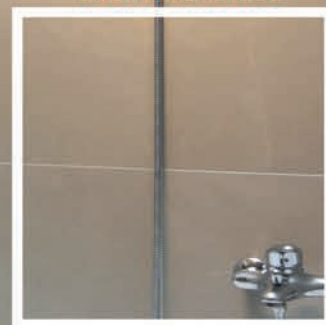
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Smart glass skylights replace the need for mechanical blinds, providing a solution that requires less cleaning and maintenance in hard to reach areas.

Smart Glass



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Discover the Collards' journey to creating their dream home

VELFAC®



See how Sarah and Rob Collard built their contemporary family home, Collard Towers, using VELFAC windows and doors for energy efficiency and stunning views.

Sarah and Rob Collard, seasoned self-builders, have designed and constructed two family homes. Initially, they built their dream home after demolishing an existing house on a purchased plot. This home was featured on Channel 4's "Build the Dream." However, their desire for another plot in the same village led them to build "Collard Towers."

THE PROJECT

A FOCUS ON OPEN PLAN, LOW ENERGY LIVING

The new, smaller plot offered a secluded location with a south-facing garden and stunning countryside views. With more experience, they aimed for a contemporary, energy-efficient home with open-plan living spaces, incorporating VELFAC triple-glazed windows and doors. These windows, chosen for their slim, durable frames,

enhanced natural light, solar gain benefits, and competitive pricing, were integral to their design.

EXPLOITING VELFAC FRAME VERSATILITY

Externally, the house features black window and door frames, while internally, the frames are white in bedrooms and bathrooms and black in shared spaces. A standout feature is the entrance hall with a large black-framed VELFAC window screen that illuminates the hallway and oak staircase.

Sarah and Rob, a marketing consultant and chartered engineer, managed the project, including window design and energy efficiency calculations. They collaborated with Cambridgeshire VELFAC distributor Viewnique, praising their smooth service. Despite challenges, they are delighted with Collard Towers, often marvelling at their beautifully planned home.

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Top tips when building with structural timber

Structural timber really is a great option for selfbuild projects as it's sustainable, economical, thermally efficient and can be constructed quickly.

WHY PURCHASE DIRECT FROM A MANUFACTURER?

One of the main benefits is the systems are manufactured off-site which allows for controlled, precision engineering to exacting standards and in line with quality assurance procedures.



WILL MY COMPLETED HOME HAVE LOW ENERGY BILLS?

High levels of thermal insulation are relatively easy to achieve with structural timber systems, meaning your home is energy efficient with low running costs.

IS IT QUICKER TO BUILD THAN TRADITIONAL METHODS?

The panels/kits can be delivered to site 'just in time' upon completion of site foundations, with then just a couple of weeks required to erect the house to the wind and watertight stage.

ARE THERE ACCREDITED MANUFACTURERS?

YES – the Structural Timber Association (STA) is the go-to trade association with self build specialists. Its Quality Assurance Scheme gives you the confidence that members meet or exceed current regulations and



standards due to the independent audit process.

ARE ALL SYSTEMS THE SAME?

There are two main systems - timber frame and SIPs, so make sure you understand the benefits of both. STA have specialist members for both types of system.

IS STRUCTURAL TIMBER RESTRICTIVE ON DESIGN?

There are no limitations to structural timber designs with versatility being a key benefit. Also there are a wide range of finishes that can be used to give your selfbuild that individual look.

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www.structuraltimber.co.uk/selfbuild



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Integrating aesthetics and sustainability

Dan Redfern of Marley predicts that integrating renewable technology on the roof will be a key solution for self-builders seeking the balance between sustainable yet still aesthetically pleasing homes

Of the 200,000 new homes being built in the UK, around 10% include solar PV on the roof. However, this figure is continuing to rise dramatically, as homeowners seek out lower cost energy sources and renewable technologies for a more energy efficient future.

For the self-build market, this drive for sustainability must also balance aesthetic considerations, with the legislative pressures to deliver eye-catching and low carbon homes of the future.

The self-build market, much like housebuilders, is currently facing a series of challenges when it comes to constructing new homes.

Interest rate rises over the past year which have led to dearer mortgages for many, combined with high inflation levels that are only now beginning to decline, have contributed to a challenging economic landscape and the onset of a current cost-of-living crisis. The result is more cautious consumers.

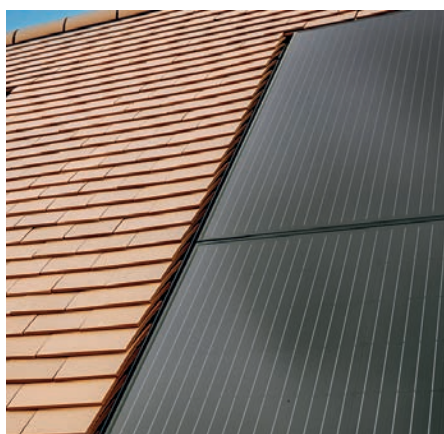
The amendments to Part L of the Building Regulations ahead of 2025's Future Homes Standard, means increased legislative pressure is on the housebuilding sector to develop and build energy efficient homes that satisfy carbon reduction targets.

But, just as importantly, those building their own homes must also remain laser focused on creating properties that combine the right level of sustainability investment to help future proof their property, without compromising on creating an aesthetically pleasing design.

The inclusion of renewable technology solutions such as heat pumps and better insulation are among the practical ways self-builders are tackling the energy efficiency challenge.

WORKING TOGETHER

Efforts to combine attractive aesthetics with proven, affordable, and accepted



renewable technologies, mean many self-builders are drawn to the benefits of an integrated solar PV roofing solution. When panels are installed as part of an integrated roof system, the powerful combination can produce outstanding kerbside appeal.

While some may have had concerns about the past appearance of bulky, on-roof solar panels, today's options have moved on.

Simply replacing a section of roof tiles affords the space for a solar PV array to become a fully connected and sleek part of the overall roof aesthetic. There is also the construction cost benefit derived from specifying fewer roof tiles. This is particularly relevant in the light of solar PV system costs that have also reduced dramatically over the past decade.

From an installation perspective, integrated solar panels can be included at the same time as the rest of the clay or concrete roof tiles and without a specialist contractor. This ensures construction turnaround times stay on track and are even improved.

And, with a Marley full roof system, the reassurance of a 15-year guarantee, available with solar PV, should not be underestimated. Five years more than the current NHBC standard, this protection level can be a compelling sales advantage when marketing the sustainability credentials of the property.

BUYER INTEREST

For those still unconvinced of the growth of solar PV, our own research has highlighted that almost half of UK households (49%) have considered installing solar panels on their roof. For the overwhelming majority, their primary motivation was to reduce their energy bills because of the hikes in energy cost in recent years, followed by a wish to generate their own power (63%) and to decrease their carbon emissions (46%).

Providing homeowners with the means to access cheaper and flexible energy sources such as solar is a growing consumer expectation as they seek not only lower energy costs, but also access a sustainable solution as climate change concerns only grow more intense.

Companies such as Marley can support self-builders through the creation and availability of a high performing renewable energy package. Integrated solar panel systems, EV charging technology, hybrid inverters and battery storage can be implemented to provide power from the roof, through the home, to the road.

Dan Redfern is head of marketing communications at Marley



CASE STUDY

TO THE MANAR BORN

France's loss was Scotland's gain when a couple decided to abandon ideas to renovate a French chateau and took on Manar House in Inverurie instead

TEXT NIK HUNTER IMAGES ELLIOT ROBERTS





Christina and Dean Horspool have always had big ideas, and one of them was to buy a chateau in France to renovate. They had travelled around the country when they were younger, camping in the grounds of grand chateaus and dreamt of having one of their own. "Unfortunately, the finances didn't add up – and we don't speak French!" says Christina wryly.

However, after living in a town house in central Aberdeen for around eight years they finally decided it was time to take the plunge and move. "We adored our three-storey town house which we had completely renovated," Christina recalls. "However, with our daughters, Chloe and Amelie, under the age of two it wasn't a practical family home. We needed to look at how to make life easier – a driveway, a larger garden."

When Christina and Dean spotted Manar House in Inverurie on the market in 2019, the finances still weren't on target, but the property was not dissimilar to a French chateau. "It was way over our budget, but this was the dream, and I made an appointment to view. It was a horrible day, but soon as we got here, we knew. It was beautiful, it just needed someone to put it back together."

It seemed like fate, and Christina and Dean made an offer which was accepted. But house buying often isn't simple and putting it back together was indeed the main issue as the instant the house was under offer the lead was stolen off the roof. Immediately, the couple were dealing with a house that was now not only derelict but not watertight either. "There

was water pouring through the ceilings and everything we wanted to save and rescue like the original coving was getting wet." This also meant that the house was pulled out of the sale and put into an auction. After a nerve-wracking auction, the couple finally completed the purchase and started on rescuing the property. The dream, however, was fast disappearing and to add more fuel to the fire, the pandemic was coming.

"It was a very strange Christmas that year," Christina recalls. "The house was pulled out of the sale in October, and we had to wait until January for the auction, then didn't collect the keys until February so we got the roofers in the same day to get started on making it watertight." However, although Dean and Christina had a few weeks before they actually moved in, they knew they had to work fast. "It was becoming clear that something major was going to happen with Covid and we wanted to be in the property rather than unable to move into it."

When the pandemic hit, Christina was still working full-time in charge of a team of 100 in a consultancy while Dean was working in asset integrity and they had to work from home. The family moved into one room with a sofa, two desks, a fridge freezer and a microwave. This one room became a playroom/office/living room and bedroom, and the couple's two young daughters were stuck at home in a house that was in reality, a building site. "I recall giving a speech for an energy industry conference which

LOW POINT

"The leak in the girls' bedroom; thank goodness for Instagram and gin!"

— Christina Horspool



HIGH POINT

"Sharing the house with our family and friends. Everybody who could has rolled their sleeves up and helped us."

— Christina Horspool

was being broadcast live to thousands and I was sat on our bed with my laptop on a chest of drawers. I'd put a map up behind me to make it look more like an office and not a storage room!" However, this bizarre situation did spur on the couple's plans as Christina remembers: "It was an adventure with real highs and real lows. However, there's nothing like living somewhere to make you want to make it better!"

With that in mind, once the house was watertight, the couple had to decide what to do next as Christina explains: "We were aware from the outset that it was too big for a family of four. Hugh Gordon, the first owner, had 10 children so it worked for him but not for us. We knew it needed to be loved by more than just our family, so it had to be a home and a business."

The initial plan was to renovate the family's living accommodation and then work on the business aspect which originally had been an event venue with accommodation in the wing of the property. However, with the uptake in staycations after Covid, Christina and Dean decided to create three five-star apartments in the wing which would in turn, provide the income needed to renovate the rest of the house.

Fortunately, the apartment wing didn't require any structural renovations, but it was suffering from serious dry rot, missing floors and walls in a severe state of dilapidation. "Luckily the walls that were really badly damaged were partition walls not the lathe and plaster ones; we think they were probably additions from the 70s and the wing was probably the worst in that sense."

As no-one was allowed into the property during the pandemic, the couple had to apply

for retrospective planning permission for the renovations. "We've never renovated a listing building before and I definitely would not recommend going down the retrospective route – it was incredibly stressful."

Fortunately, Dean had done his homework as Christina explains: "Dean had done a bit of a research before we offered on the house and before the lead had been stolen so we knew roughly what work might be required and what sort of costs we'd be taking on." Dean also looked into what contractors were recommended for this type of work and had received quotes and availability schedules. With this knowledge the couple chose a builder and contractor who were recognised by Aberdeenshire Council for their work on listed buildings. "Having the advice of the contractors was so important. That was why everything we had done was done to what was expected by the planners. Our builder and contractor advised us on everything from the harling (rough cast wall finish) to how we treated the inside."

While Covid provided the couple with lots of additional challenges, one upside was that their DIY skill set improved immeasurably! "Covid did force us to do more of the work ourselves. Anything we could do that wasn't skilled or that we could learn quickly online meant donning our dust masks and getting fired in. I actually think Dean could offer a painting and decorating service now!"

A combination of YouTube tutorials and guidance from Graeme the builder meant that Dean was able to do the pointing on the exposed stonework throughout the house which was handy, as there's a lot of it. "The stonework



that has been left uncovered was uncovered because the wall was rotten. However, once we found it, it was such a beautiful feature to display that we decided to keep as much as we could."

It's a feature that adds character to the property and shows the real fabric of the building. Likewise, the original fireplaces which the couple have uncovered in abundance. "Every time we seemed to take a wall down, we'd find a fireplace." As none of these had the original surrounds, Dean sourced replacements from eBay and Marketplace. "None of the fires in the bedrooms are working at the moment but they could be if we wanted to. In the main part of the house the surrounds were all insitu."

As there had been some renovations over the years, most of the plumbing was in the right place but the main issue the couple are now having is trying to reconcile their thoughts on clean energy and sustainability in a listed building. "The house runs on LPG, and the only oil we have now is for the Aga; for now, we have an efficient zoned heating system but we will have to look at other options in the future."

While Christina is constantly negotiating the listed building consent of the house, she is trying everything to create a more sustainable future for the property. "As we can't change the single glazed windows, we've ended up doing it the old-fashioned way." By this she means using the original shutters, buying good quality curtains, using a wood burner and having lots of blankets. "Fortunately, on the grounds there's an endless supply of sustainable wood and whatever falls is chopped and dried."

Throughout the apartments she's sourced local soaps and refillables and she's working

with nearby businesses such as Barra Berries and the local greengrocers for the welcome packs. "As we have a big Instagram following (@houseofhorspool), we try to connect with local, regional and national businesses to increase the awareness of small organisations and brands that have quality products and are working hard on their sustainability." From carpets to paints to furniture, Dean and Christina try to source the most sustainable options they can find, and everything interior design-wise throughout the house has been carefully curated.

This Instagram following has its benefits too. After refurbishing Amelie and Chloe's bedroom there was a huge storm which caused a leak in their room. "I was very vocal on Instagram about how fed up I was, and posted 'please bring gin'," says Christina. "Later that day, a guy walks up the drive from Little Brown Dog Spirits and says he's bringing gin for Christina! We had a gin tasting quite soon after – that's how you meet the local businesses! We hadn't heard of them before and now we mention them to all our guests!"

With the luxury apartments now complete and open for business, Christina is focused on refurbishing the rest of the house which is no small feat, especially as she's keen to get everything just right. "Dean is my superstar sourcer, I tell him what I'm looking for and he manages to source amazing quality pieces. We've been taking our time purchasing the chandeliers as we want to choose styles that will stand the test of time. The one in the hall is apparently from the London Palladium and I'm going to believe that!"

This elegant chandelier is the perfect finishing touch to the beautifully refurbished entrance

CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

BUILDER & MAIN CONTRACTOR

Graeme W Cheyne Builders
graemecheynebuilders.co.uk

FLOORING (Stair runner, main & service, rugs, bedrooms)

Alternative Flooring
alternativeflooring.com

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Everything interior design-wise throughout the house has been carefully curated by Dean and Christina

hall. And, whilst the flagstones in the front part are original, sadly the flags in the rear part had been cemented so a new parquet floor has been laid on top. In the drawing room, the original flooring has also been salvaged and elsewhere in the property Christina has been working with Alternative Flooring to create made-to-measure rugs to fit around the columns. "I contacted them early in the renovations. Their products are made from British wool and their sustainability ethos really stood out from the crowd."

The latest room to benefit from a makeover is the fabulously quirky, jungle-themed dining room which has been several years in the planning. "We've had the pleasure of working with some great design companies to create the spaces we now have such as Woodchip and Magnolia in the main hallway and billiard room, to Paint and Paper Library in the dining room and drawing room/yoga studio." Working with their talented teams has allowed Christina to bring her visions to life. "Most of our wallpapers are nature themed as we wanted to keep bringing the countryside in."

There is certainly plenty of countryside around

Christina and Dean's home and it's something they are keen to share. "Our plans have evolved as we see how the world changes." Whilst the house and grounds lend themselves perfectly to events, the couple are keen to embrace variety and accommodate several different ones. "The yoga festival we hosted was a success, and we had some Italian guests staying recently who are actors and are keen to put on a show here – perhaps in the grounds?" The house has recently been opened for exclusive use which has proved popular with golf/whisky tours and weddings. And, with the option of a butler and private chef, guests can enjoy the complete, luxurious, country house experience.

Christina and Dean are also working with local farmers, hosting Highland cows and Highland ponies in their fields. "I'd like this to be a community hub and cultural space and we're just figuring out what that looks like and what people want. We want to live here; we want to work here but we want to be mindful of our neighbours. We want the community to be involved and to put Inverurie on the map a little bit." ■

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Stannah

Futureproofing homes forever

For many customers, the ability to continuing to live in the same house as they age is a huge driver. Vaila Morrison of Stannah discusses the home lift types available to fully futureproof your home

In the 1980s, people moved home on average every eight years; in 2017, this rose to 21 years. With people moving house less often, there's been a rising trend for buying or building 'forever homes' they will live in for many years.

Our home is our sanctuary, and it's worth futureproofing the spaces to ensure you can live there and navigate it safely for as long as possible. The wonderful news is that a futureproofed, functional home can still be fashionable.

Futureproofing should not feel like a compromise on your style. It should be an asset that makes you feel liberated and adds value, both financially and emotionally, to your life. While thinking about reduced mobility or ability as we age is something most of us tend to put to one side, futureproofing isn't just relevant to older age; all ages can benefit from good, inclusive home design.

One key way to futureproof is to invest in a lift. Not only is a lift for futureproofing, but it is also the ultimate 'statement,' a lifestyle choice, and a practical feature – often boosting the value of a home.

TYPES OF LIFTS FOR A HOME

Properties come in all shapes and sizes – and so do lifts. In a new dwelling, a lift can be part of an architect's plans. In an existing home, there is a need to place the lift around the current house layout.

The choices available for self-builders

looking to futureproof forever homes are seemingly endless, but broadly fall into the following categories:

DOMESTIC PLATFORM LIFTS

Platform lifts can carry up to five people over two or more floors and provide an enduring benefit to your property, enhancing life and bringing the ultimate convenience. A choice of door and platform/cabin arrangements and sizes means there's a wide range of options. As platform lifts require building work separate from the cost of installation, you'll need an architect or builder to help ensure a seamless installation.

THROUGH-FLOOR LIFTS

A through-floor lift runs on a track that goes through a hole in the ceiling (called the aperture). These lifts are best suited to smaller spaces and provide access for up to two people travelling between the ground and the first floor. Due to their compact arrangement, they can often fit in even the smallest spaces; with minimal building work requirements and quick install time, they are a growing popular alternative to a stairlift.

RESIDENTIAL DUMBWAITERS

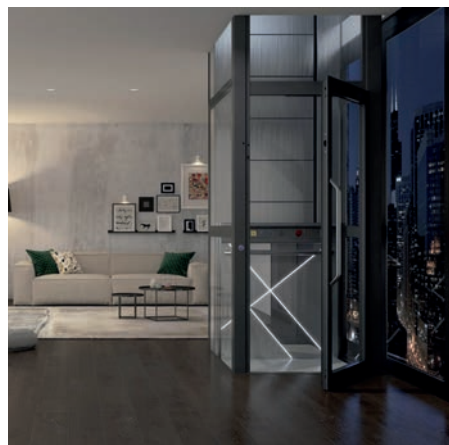
Service lifts/dumbwaiters are the answer if food, groceries, and goods need to be transported between floors. They are particularly ideal for properties with three or more floors or where the kitchen, garage, and/or dining area are on different levels.

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A LIFT

Narrow your search by deciding whether you want your lift to take people or goods only, how many floors it needs to travel between, and your available space.

From a cost point of view, you need to put aside £15-£25k in your budget for the supply and installation of a lift to move people or £6-7k for a dumbwaiter.

When considering the location of your lift, it's always a good idea to locate a



lift for people next to the stairs and in a central location. That way, it will be easily accessible from every part of the home.

It may seem a better idea to fit in a smaller lift, but go for the largest you can. Ideally, create a space that is big enough for a wheelchair and another person. That way, you will also be able to use the lift to transport furniture and other larger items between floors.

If the lift is designed into a building project from the start, you'll be able to design around the desired lift's footprint. For an existing home, you will need to get a survey and speak to a lift company for guidance.

Even if you decide a lift isn't an option for now, you can futureproof it by designing a space where it can be installed later. Whatever you decide, there are products available to suit every home.

Our homes are probably the biggest single investment we'll ever make, so it seems only sensible to think about making them work for us. This means making them sustainable in the broadest sense: investing sustainably so we don't have to throw large amounts of money at them or rush into inappropriate adaptations in times of crisis.

Vaila Morrison is inclusive design expert at Stannah



Future-proof your home in style with a home lift you can trust

No doubt you imagine growing old in your dream home, enjoying a comfortable retirement in the place you've always imagined and finally built... Which is why it's never too early to think about how you'll use your house in the years to come, especially considering that almost half of UK adults develop mobility issues in later life. That's why more and more people are choosing to future-proof their homes now, giving them the peace of mind that they can continue living in their dream homes for many years to come.

One of the most popular future-proofing adaptations is installing a home lift. By upgrading your home with a stylish lift now, or by adding one into the design when building your house, you can ensure that there will be no need to move going forward. In fact, installing a well-chosen home lift early on means that you and your family will benefit straight away.

Whether you have elderly family members or young children, a home lift ensures that every floor of your house is easily reachable, making daily activities smoother and more inclusive for everyone. Forget the struggle of carrying heavy items up and down the stairs; a home lift makes day to day tasks effortless.

Unlike mobility aids like stair lifts, grab handles, and ramps, which can look unattractive and out of place, especially when they're not yet required, home lifts have come a long way. The latest home lifts complement and enhance the overall look of your



home, fitting seamlessly into any property and significantly increasing its value.

At Terry Lifts, we offer a wide range of lifts with a variety of features, meaning you can select the perfect one for you now, and in the future. Perhaps you're looking for a compact lift with a minimal footprint or a larger lift that can carry a wheelchair or up to three people. All our models can be customised to suit your taste. And with over 50 years of experience designing and manufacturing public access and domestic home lifts here in the UK, you can trust they both meet the highest quality and safety standards and exceed regulatory compliance.

We know space is one of the main challenges in choosing a home lift. So, for more than ten years, we have offered our best-selling product, the Lifestyle Home Lift, which fits discreetly into a corner. However, our newest design, the Affinity Home Lift, has an even smaller footprint especially designed to fit in spaces previously thought impossible, such as alcoves or stairwells. This means it can be installed where others can't, solving a significant dilemma and making

this contemporary, two-person, two-stop standing home lift an exciting development for architects, house builders, and self-builders, not to mention homeowners.

As with all Terry home lifts, its attractive and feature rich design help to make it stylish, modern and discreet, complementing contemporary interior design. With laminated safety glass as standard, pressure-sensitive surfaces, safe edges, and easy-to-use manual lowering, every feature has been carefully designed to blend style and comfort with unmatched flexibility. Our products are engineered to safely and comfortably transport you between floors, allowing you to maintain independence and fully enjoy your home.

By planning to install a home lift now - whether in the design of your new home or as part of a major refurbishment or makeover - you'll be putting into place something that will serve you both now, and for years to come. Doesn't that sound like a good move?

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CASE STUDY

SCANDI STYLE

Paul Berry and his Swedish partner Pernilla have built a Scandinavian-inspired contemporary family home in Surrey with copious natural light

TEXT DEBBIE JEFFERY IMAGES JONATHAN REID



REAR

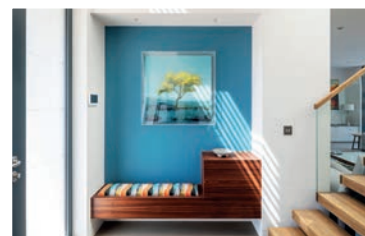
A detached, three-bedroom single-storey bungalow has been replaced with a four-bedroom L-shaped contemporary house on two storeys, with an outdoor cooking area to the rear.





NORTHERN LIGHT

Inspired by Scandinavian chalets, the house features an asymmetrical pitched slate roof, and a combination of slate, render and timber cladding



"We were actually living in New York when we first started our self-build project," says Paul Berry, who moved from the UK to America with his wife, Pernilla, when she was offered a job there. The couple and their two boys (now aged 14 and 18) bought a rambling old colonial house to renovate in the States, and owned a single-storey bungalow back in Surrey, which they rented out.

"We've had experience of extending and renovating several homes," says Paul, "so when we decided to return to the UK for our sons' education, the idea of redeveloping the old bungalow was appealing."

Pernilla is Swedish, and the couple were keen to engage an architect who could deliver a design which would embrace Scandinavian values and architectural cues. At this stage, they were considering adding another storey to the existing bungalow, and contacted Concept Eight Architects in January 2020 while they were still living in New York.

"I used Google and the RIBA website to find an architect," says Paul. "It was difficult working from abroad, but after researching five potential practices we were impressed by the contemporary designs on Concept Eight's website. They're a young, enthusiastic design team who understood exactly what we were looking for."

Mufajel Chowdhury is the director and founding partner of the award-winning practice, which specialises in residential architecture of all scales. "We always advise our clients not to rush the design stage," he explains. "Investing time

leads to fewer changes during the build, and a much smoother process, with more control from a budget perspective."

Paul flew over from America several times to meet with Mufajel prior to the family returning to the UK in the summer of 2020, and the practice produced various potential designs. Some proposed radical modifications to the bungalow, and others involved knocking it down and building a replacement house from scratch.

"We had quite an extensive wish list, which would have been difficult to meet by simply modifying the existing bungalow, and renovating would also have meant paying VAT," says Paul. "In the end, we concluded that we needed to knock it down and rebuild to get what we really wanted."

Various iterations followed, resulting in the final design for a detached 320 m² four-bedroom house over two storeys. "We sent our architect a few pictures for inspiration: chalet-style Scandinavian houses with wood cladding, high ceilings, and plenty of glass," recalls Paul, who also requested a central, glazed atrium, and a grand entrance with a feature staircase.

"I'd slept in a cramped box-room in my teens, and wanted our boys to have large, apartment-style bedrooms, so Mufajel designed raised mezzanine sleeping platforms with steep staircases to free up the space below as study and lounge areas."

The planners had requested that the new house should stand on the same front and rear boundary lines as the original bungalow, and although the couple had envisaged building further back into the garden, they decided not

STAIRCASE FEATURE

Supplied by the builder, the timber and glass feature staircase is visible throughout the ground floor spaces and is lit from above by three rooflights

LOW POINT

"The sheer number of decisions that needed to be made towards the end of the project"

HIGH POINT

"Specifying everything for the way we wanted to live"



TOP TIP

"Plan ahead as much as possible and try to nail down the details"

KITCHEN

Paul sourced the unusual lights for the dropped timber-lined ceiling in the kitchen; a bench forms a window seat

DINING

Above the dining table, shadows are cast by the glazed atrium, and colour introduced by the timber and ceramic artwork

to contest this decision to avoid holding up the planning process.

"One of the most important factors is to identify and understand the site, so a detailed appraisal is something that we start with on all projects," explains architect Mufajel. "Then it's about how someone feels in our spaces, as much as how the buildings look, and we try to really understand how a family wants to live in the house."

"This often involves an open plan layout and the use of glass to engage with the garden, looking at the vertical and horizontal circulation, and placing emphasis on flow and light from the moment you enter the house."

The original design for a glass atrium was slightly adapted to appease neighbours and avoid overlooking, but overall the planning process proved straightforward. "We were designing the house to live in, rather than to resell at a profit, and opening up the atrium did steal potential floor space," says Paul. "High ceilings, spacious bedrooms, and an open plan layout were more important to us than cramming in multiple tiny rooms, though, and we love the final layout."

Once planning approval had been granted, Concept Eight Architects continued to project manage the build and advise throughout the process, providing a list of several potential building contractors. After meeting with them, Paul and Pernilla chose to employ LS Builders. "We got on extremely well, and they had such a positive attitude," says Paul. "When we saw some of their other projects, which were really top end, we knew they'd do a good job."

Pernilla, Paul and their sons returned to the UK in 2020, right in the middle of the Covid pandemic, and moved into the old bungalow for eight weeks during the planning phase, sleeping on mattresses on the floor because their furniture was in storage. They then rented a property during the build, initially for a 12 month period.

The existing bungalow on their plot was demolished in February 2021, and the site cleared. "It was hard to watch our investment being knocked down and realising that all we had left was a garden," admits Paul.

Beam and block flooring was laid on a combination of the bungalow's original footings and freshly excavated concrete strip foundations, and Concept Eight Architects oversaw the project in conjunction with the builder, undertaking site visits with Paul every two weeks.

Louisa O'Rourke, a director at the architectural practice, had taken on the role of lead architect and interior designer once the project design started in earnest. "One of the reasons that Paul and Pernilla appointed us was because we offer both architectural and interior design services in-house, which allows for a much more holistic process," she explains. "Most of the team – including the main builders, the kitchen, joinery, and glazing suppliers – was assembled by Concept Eight in a one-stop-shop approach to the delivery of the project by a tried and tested wider team."

Constructed in cavity blockwork, the contemporary house has been externally clad in a palette of render and stained Siberian larch. The roof is of natural slate, with sections of



LIVING IN STYLE

A contemporary two-sided fireplace was chosen to work with the large sliding door which leads into the cinema room

external walling clad in slate tiles.

"Although we didn't agree a fixed price, we were fortunate that our builders managed to order most items before Covid supply issues occurred and material costs rocketed," says Paul. "Six months later, and we would probably have paid around 50% more for the build."

Aluminium slim frame glazing was installed, with UV glass and integrated electric blinds operated by solar power. "Pernilla insisted on triple glazing, and they're pretty hefty windows," says Paul. "With so much glass in the design, we had to be careful it didn't turn into a greenhouse, but actually the house is extremely comfortable and holds a fairly constant temperature all year round."

Additional frameless glass was supplied by one of the builder's contacts in Lithuania as a way to save money and remain within budget. The kitchen cut-out window is one huge sheet of glass and was transported to the UK, together with glass panels for the atrium.

"Everything was manually lifted without cranes, and it took about 10 people using scaffolding to install the heavy glass panels above the dining table, which are around 10 metres up," says Paul. "I just shut my eyes and hoped for the best, but fortunately everything slotted into place."

The proposed size of the hallway window to the front elevation was reduced as a means to save money on the build, and the architect designed stylish louvred timber privacy panels for the glass, which may be removed for cleaning. In the hallway, the original plan for a large, four-metre glass roof panel was replaced

by three rooflights as a more economical option.

"We needed to watch the budget, and didn't choose to install integrated technology, although we do have an alarm system with CCTV," says Paul. "We also have an air source heat pump, which powers the underfloor heating, but was noisier than expected. This was resolved by installing a (costly) soundproof cabinet, and we also have a mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system, which provides air-filtered ventilation throughout the house."

Paul was able to be on site most days and found the interior fit-out to be the most stressful part of the project. "Every time I turned up on site, I got hit with around 30 questions and decisions which needed to be made immediately. There's only so much you can pre-plan and anticipate, but our builders and architects were extremely accommodating and made some changes as we went along."

When it came to the interiors, Pernilla and Paul worked with project architect Louisa, who presented the couple with various options for every room. "Once again we had a wish list and wanted a fairly blank canvas to be able to display our artwork," says Paul. "Being Scandinavian, Pernilla prefers a muted palette of greys and blues, and brighter colours were then added with the art."

Simple engineered oak flooring was laid over the underfloor heating, and the family looked at hundreds of pictures on Pinterest for interior inspiration. Finding the perfect kitchen cabinets for their home proved challenging, and eventually Paul saw a picture of an American open plan kitchen with wood veneer panelling

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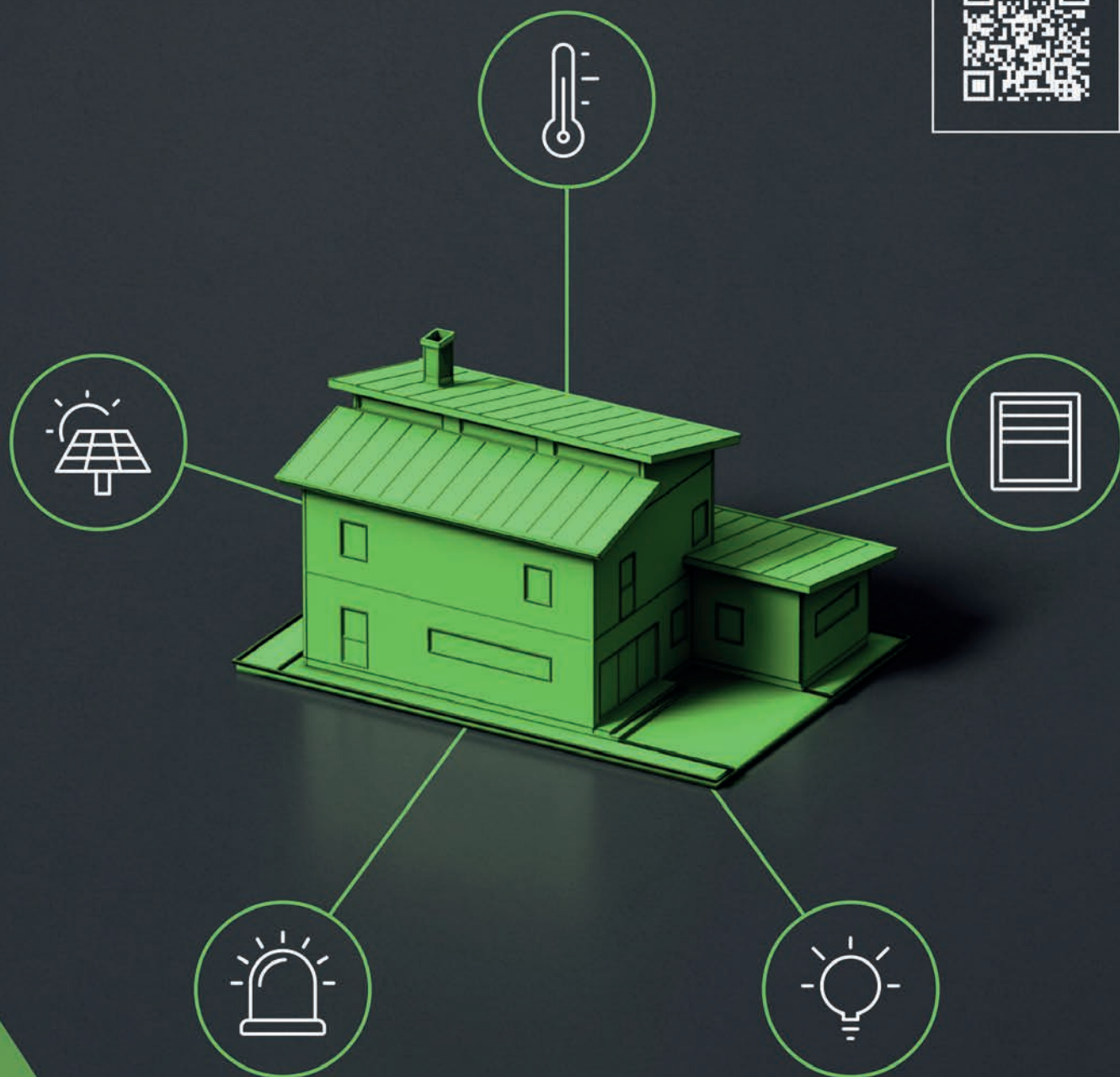
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offset by white stone counters.

Lead architect Louisa then worked with award-winning Espresso Design, who create what have been described by the *Sunday Times* Style magazine as ‘the world’s coolest kitchens.’

Designing a kitchen to celebrate the architectural style of the new build property resulted in bespoke furniture in a custom lacquer colour, with grain-matched Rosewood veneer island units, Istone Calcatta worktops, and a Caesarstone Black Tempal floating breakfast bar. “The company produced 3D computer models of the kitchen, and it was exactly what we wanted,” says Paul.

A striking open plan feature staircase was supplied by the builder, and creates a focal point in the heart of the ground floor. Acoustic panelling was installed to dampen noise and prevent the atrium from becoming an echo chamber.

“We needed to get a three month extension on our rental property because Covid meant that our project was inevitably running slightly late,” says Paul. “Once the house was in a habitable state, we did a partial possession in March 2022 and the builders continued to finish off and

complete the landscaping.”

A porous resin driveway has been laid to the front for better drainage, with an outdoor cooking area, barbecue, and seating in the back garden. “We plan to add a pergola and create a covering so that we can use the space in all weathers,” says Paul, who also employed LS Builders to construct a 30 m² stand-alone garden studio/den for his sons and their friends in the rear garden, with sliding glass doors and exterior cladding to match the main house.

“My initial budget guess was way off, and we ended up doubling it,” says Paul of their eventual £1.1m build. “The overall build and bungalow purchase costs just about break-even on today’s house valuation, so we’ve probably not made a huge profit, but that was never our aim.

“Over the years, we’ve extended and modified various homes, but only now have we really achieved what we wanted. This is exactly how we’d hoped to live and will still be ideal for just the two of us after the boys leave home. To be able to build our own home has been an incredibly creative and collaborative experience.” ■

Passivhaus comforts, 'automatically'

Tyron Cosway of Loxone looks at the role building automation can play in maximising the comfort and liveability of low energy Passivhaus designs

As the demand for sustainable living solutions rises, the concept of Passivhaus design has garnered significant attention among self-builders and renovators in the UK and across Europe. Combining meticulous design standards with smart technology, 'passive' houses can offer unparalleled energy efficiency and comfort for self-build.

However, the concept can rely heavily on the occupants to fully achieve the targets of low energy consumption, constant comfort temperatures, and overall performance of the building. This is where intelligent building automation is perfect for Passivhaus design as the system takes the benefits of the building concept to the next level by seamlessly integrating the whole of the home into one system, co-ordinating each element to work in the most efficient way possible – all while the owners don't have to worry about a thing. This ensures a home is not only energy-efficient but also intelligently responsive to its occupants' needs.

WHAT IS A PASSIVHAUS?

A Passivhaus home adheres to rigorous design standards aimed at minimising energy consumption while maintaining optimal indoor comfort. These homes utilise superior insulation, high-performance windows, and strategic ventilation to achieve exceptional energy efficiency.

By reducing energy demand for heating and cooling, Passivhaus-designed homes contribute significantly to environmental sustainability and have vastly lower utility costs.

HOW DOES BUILDING AUTOMATION HELP?

There can be a lot of manual intervention needed when living in a Passivhaus. For example, lowering external blinds to prevent solar radiation warming a room beyond a comfortable temperature, boosting the extraction in



the kitchen when cooking, or adjusting the mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR) based on CO₂ levels when entertaining.

There are many technologies added to a Passivhaus that need to be controlled, and that is why opting for a holistic building automation system would enhance the inherent benefits of a passive house through intelligent and coordinated control. Self-builders pursuing Passivhaus-certified building should consider how all these technologies will need to be controlled, and how they will work together – or in the worst case how they would conflict in their operation.

Self-builders should research for a truly intelligent system that would simply take care of all this for them. There are systems on the market that would always know where the sun is in relation to each window, factor in the temperature

in each room, and then decide whether the blind on that specific window should be lowered or not. That way, you truly get the most out of the investment you've made in pursuing the Passivhaus standard. The result is a home that maintains ideal temperatures and air quality with minimal human intervention, further reducing energy consumption and improving overall comfort.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

One of the primary advantages of a passive house is its low environmental impact. According to the Passivhaus Trust, a certified new passive house built today will result in significantly fewer lifetime emissions compared to conventional new builds.

There are many self-builders out there that will adopt aspects of the standard, but perhaps not get the grading from the trust itself. Don't let that put you off from

still achieving exceptional performance of your building. By harnessing renewable energy sources like solar power and maximising their efficiency, passive houses can achieve substantial reductions in carbon footprint.

Opting for a holistic home automation system ensures that energy from these sources is used optimally, storing excess energy in smart ways and reducing reliance on non-renewable sources.

ENHANCING HEALTH & WELLBEING

Passive houses are designed with the occupant's health and wellbeing in mind. The continuous supply of fresh air through advanced ventilation systems helps maintain excellent indoor air quality, reducing the risk of respiratory issues and other health problems.

Moreover, the consistent indoor temperatures provided by superior insulation and smart heating systems contribute to a comfortable living environment year-round. Make sure you find a system that can interface with your heating, cooling, and MVHR so that you don't end up with competing systems. You wouldn't want the heating system to go into overdrive trying to reach a comfortable temperature, but it doesn't realise that the ventilation is in boost mode to extract humid air because

you're entertaining and so naturally more people in a space increases the CO₂ levels – these systems should work in harmony, not in isolation from each other. There are very few systems on the market that actively monitor all of this for you and adjust indoor conditions to maintain the perfect balance of temperature and humidity.

COST SAVINGS & LONG-TERM VALUE

While the initial cost of building a passive house can be higher than traditional homes, the long-term savings are substantial. Reduced energy bills and lower maintenance costs make passive houses a wise investment.

Respect that investment by getting a professionally installed home automation system to enhance these savings by ensuring that energy is used efficiently and only when necessary. By automating routine tasks such as adjusting blinds and controlling heating, such systems will reduce the need for manual intervention, saving both time and money for homeowners.

CASE STUDIES

Casa Sophia exemplifies the synergy between passive house principles and building automation technology. Automated shading, heating, and

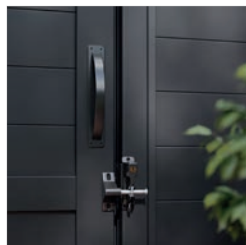
cooling work in harmony with the house's passive design to provide a living environment that is both sustainable and comfortable. The result is a home that not only meets but exceeds the stringent criteria of the Passivhaus standard.

Lilu's House is another shining example of passive house efficiency augmented with intelligent automation. This residence integrates renewable energy sources and smart automation to achieve remarkable energy efficiency. The intelligent control system adjusts heating, ventilation, and lighting according to the time of day and occupancy, ensuring that energy consumption is minimised without sacrificing comfort.

For self-builders and renovators seeking to create sustainable, comfortable, and efficient homes, integrating building automation is a great way to do so, especially for passive houses. The solution needs to maximise energy efficiency, enhance occupant wellbeing, and provide long-term cost savings. Embrace the future of sustainable living by doing your research and your passive house build justice – and experience the ultimate in smart, eco-friendly home design.

Tyron Cosway is UK branch manager for Loxone

New Durapost® sleek aluminium fence range



The new DuraPost® SLEEK aluminium range from **Birkdale** is a contemporary and durable fence panel solution that is incredibly easy to install thanks to its modular structure. It is available in two high-quality design options, the SLEEK Privacy Panel and the SLEEK Screen Panel, with a matching SLEEK Aluminium Gate also available. The DuraPost® SLEEK Privacy Panel is a contemporary take on the classic tongue and groove timber panel, while the SLEEK Screen Panel emulates a classic slatted fence

panel design. Unlike timber, the SLEEK panels are highly durable and low-maintenance, extruded from 6063 aluminium and powder coated Sahara Black as standard to ensure longevity of finish.

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enduura® kitchen from Keller



Keller has delivered a first for the kitchen market; a bio-based kitchen. enduura® is exceptional because the material used is not readily available in the market. By bringing together complementary suppliers, Keller has created a bio-based interior panel suitable for mass production, from their own manufacturing facility in Bergen op Zoom, The Netherlands. With the introduction of the biobased kitchen, DKG takes an important step towards its goal: 100% bio-based products by 2030. The base material

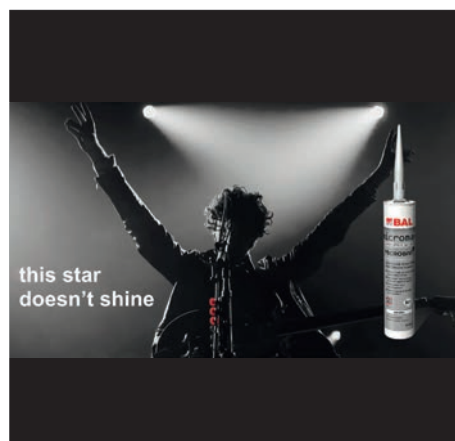
is MDF which comprises residual streams from the wood industry. This means that no trees are cut down for its production, thus avoiding extra CO₂ emissions.

www.kellerkitchens.com

BAL launches new Grout-Effect Sealant

BAL – market-leaders for full tiling solutions – have launched a new innovative “Grout-Effect Sealant” for seamless transitions. BAL Micromax Grout-Effect Sealant is formulated with a unique technology which provides a textured, matt-finish that blends perfectly with your grout – no more shiny, stand-out high gloss sealant! Colour-matched to BAL Micromax3 ECO Grouts, it provides a uniform finish in colour AND texture, across all joints; whether they are grouted tile joints, sealed perimeter joints, movement joints or internal corners. BAL Micromax Grout-Effect Sealant is waterproof with excellent adhesion and is perfect for sealing between tiles and other materials including sanitary, acrylic, fibreglass, glass, glazed tiles, porcelain and painted surfaces in dry and wet interior and exterior environments. It can even be used in high-traffic areas and is also perfect for external tiling installations for example when sealing between 20 cm porcelain tiles and drain grates. BAL Grout-Effect Sealant is also formulated with long-lasting Microban® antimicrobial protection against black mould – which provides market-leading protection for hygiene areas when subject to the usual cleaning regimes. BAL Micromax Grout-Effect Sealant will be available from BAL stockists, with a total of 25 contrasting or complementary colour tones, providing a seamless colour-matched grout and sealant solution for every tile colour or type.

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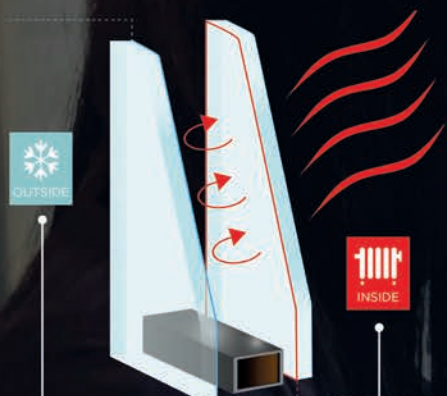
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