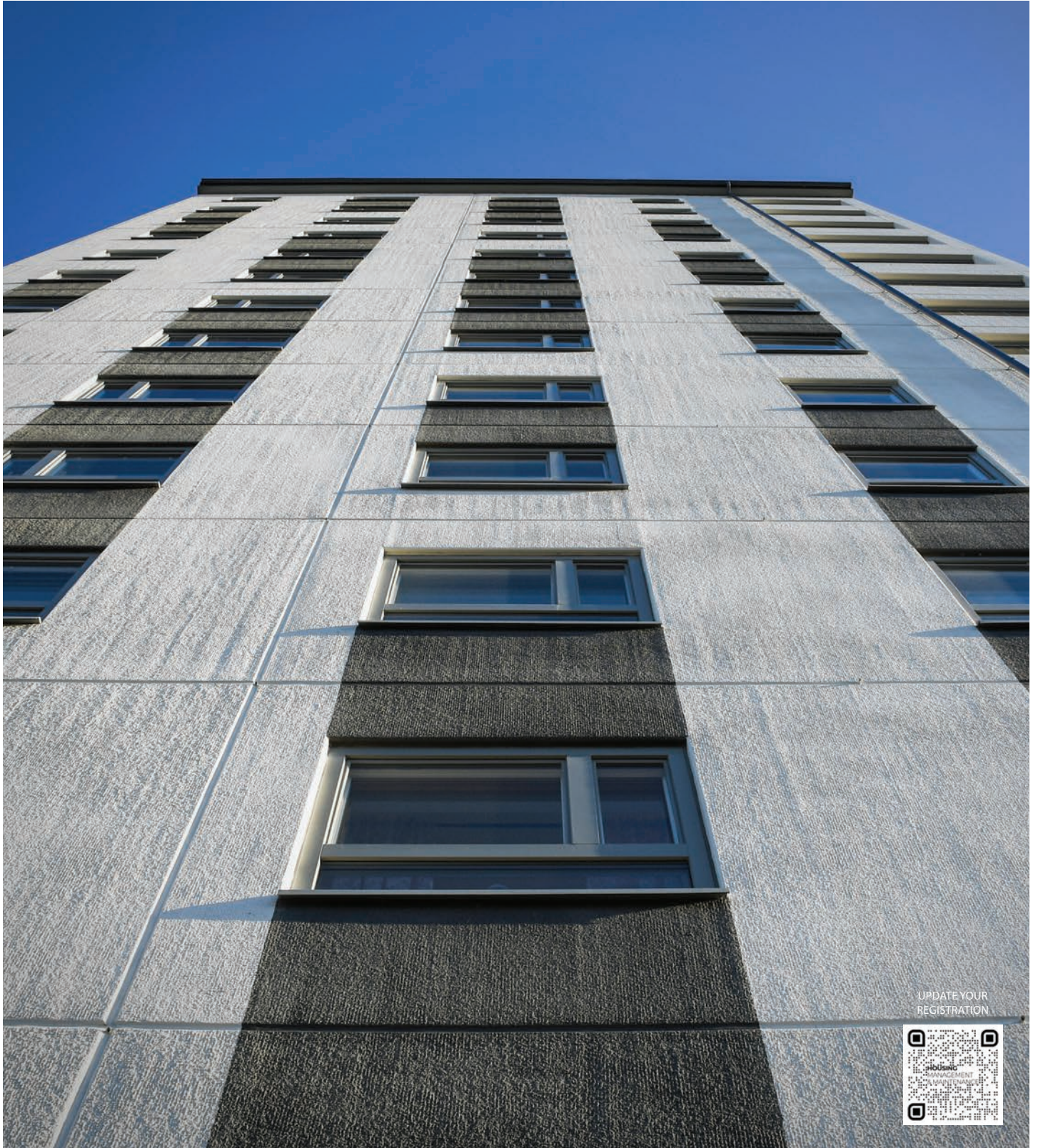


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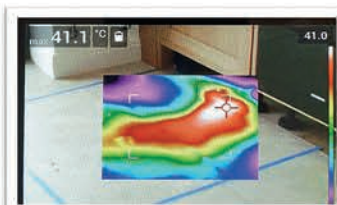
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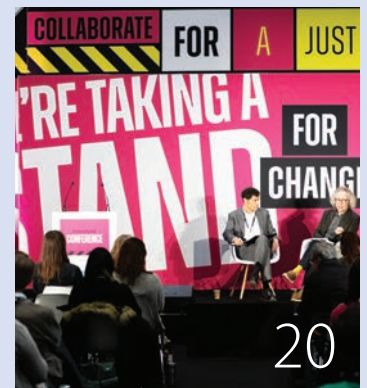


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Editor's Comment



Hello, I would firstly like to introduce myself as the new editor of *Housing Management & Maintenance*, a role which I am proud to take as part of our excellent team here at netMAGmedia.

I'm an experienced editor of trade magazines (I also oversee two other leading titles in the construction sector, namely *Architects' Datafile* and *Housebuilder & Developer*). However, I'm learning fast about the many innovations that the social housing sector is continually pursuing to better manage and maintain their stock, and put the interests of tenants first.

I look forward to delving more into the sector's key issues as I steer the title going forward, and working with the industry, such as via our exciting programme of sponsored round tables coming up this year. The first, to be held in London in March, is on the very hot topic of the impact of the Social Housing Regulation Act.

We are also looking at how the use of the Golden Thread post-Building Safety Act can optimise maintenance at our April round table event, and then opportunities from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, in October. These events will feature Matt Baird as chair, well known in the sector as a recruiter and host of the Social Housing Round Table podcast; he has the knowledge to guide the discussions towards the topics that really matter day-to-day to professionals managing portfolios.

Awaab's Law, which will this October be the first part of the Social Housing Regulation Act to come into force – has thrown the health impacts of social housing into sharp relief. Coming on the back of Grenfell and the Building Safety Act, it is another major shift that will drive improvements in management of properties. The new legislation doubles down on making the UK's social homes safer than ever before.

Although Grenfell Tower may be coming down (to the dismay of resident groups) there are milestones in place to hopefully ensure its legacy is a better future.

James Parker

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On the cover...

Lewis Couth of Walker Morris discusses how local authorities can leverage legal tools like remediation orders under the Building Safety Act 2022 to address unsafe cladding and protect residents. See page 27.





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Supported homeless scheme given green light in Salford

Plans for the construction of 25 affordable homes across two locations in Salford providing supported accommodation for young people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, have been approved at Salford City Council's Planning and Transportation Regulatory Panel.

The first development, at Bridgewater Street, Little Hulton, will comprise three two-bedroom and four three-bedroom family homes, which have a traditional terrace layout with off-street parking and secure rear gardens.

The site will also feature eight one-bedroom apartments for young people, aged 18 to 25, who are, or are at risk of, becoming homeless. The new affordable housing will be owned and managed by Dérive, Salford City Council's wholly-owned housing company.

The second development approved was Tully Street South, in Higher Broughton which will house a new development for young people who are, or at risk of becoming homeless. The 10 self-contained apartments will feature single occupancy bedrooms, together with a bathroom, living/kitchen/dining area and storage spaces.

Tully Street South's development will also be owned and managed by Dérive and will be delivered under the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP), a Government led scheme that aims to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

These developments are part of our commitment to increasing the number of good quality, affordable homes, with support for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Salford City Mayor Paul Dennett said:



Impression of planned developments at Tully Street South and Bridgewater Street

“The approval of both these affordable homes developments is a significant step forward in our plans to provide the affordable and social homes which local people need and deserve.

“There is real need for schemes such as these in our city, with over 5,000 households on the city's housing register and over 6,000 homeless presentations made to the council in 2023-24. It's vital we continue to work to provide truly affordable housing in our city.”

Dennett added: “Housing is so important for the wellbeing of everyone. Without a stable, secure, affordable place to live everything else suffers, from health to education to employment prospects. It is due to this appreciation of the holistic benefits of good housing that we have put so much energy and resources into Dérive, our wholly owned development company and the resulting developments such as Bridgewater Street and Tully Street South.”

VIVID hands over schemes totalling 235 homes

VIVID has successfully completed the handover of several key schemes from developer Foreman Homes.

The Hampshire-based developments include Berry Way in Park Gate, Millers Walk in Eastleigh, and within Whiteley Meadows. In total, VIVID has taken ownership of 235 homes, ranging from one-bed flats to five-bed family houses.

These new homes, which are a mixture of social rent and shared ownership, offer much-needed affordable accommodation to the people of Hampshire.

Tristan Samuels, new business and development director at VIVID, stated: “We are committed to providing as many people as possible with



the opportunity to have a place to call home. Strong partnerships, such as ours with Foreman Homes, are crucial in achieving this goal. We are delighted to have completed the handover of these developments and look forward to welcoming our new customers into their homes.”

Karl Handscombe, construction director at

Foreman Homes said: “Our work with VIVID is something we're very proud of at Foreman Homes. We recognise the part that affordable housing plays in making sure that everyone has access to safe, affordable, and high-quality living spaces and we're proud to support this with each development we partner on.”

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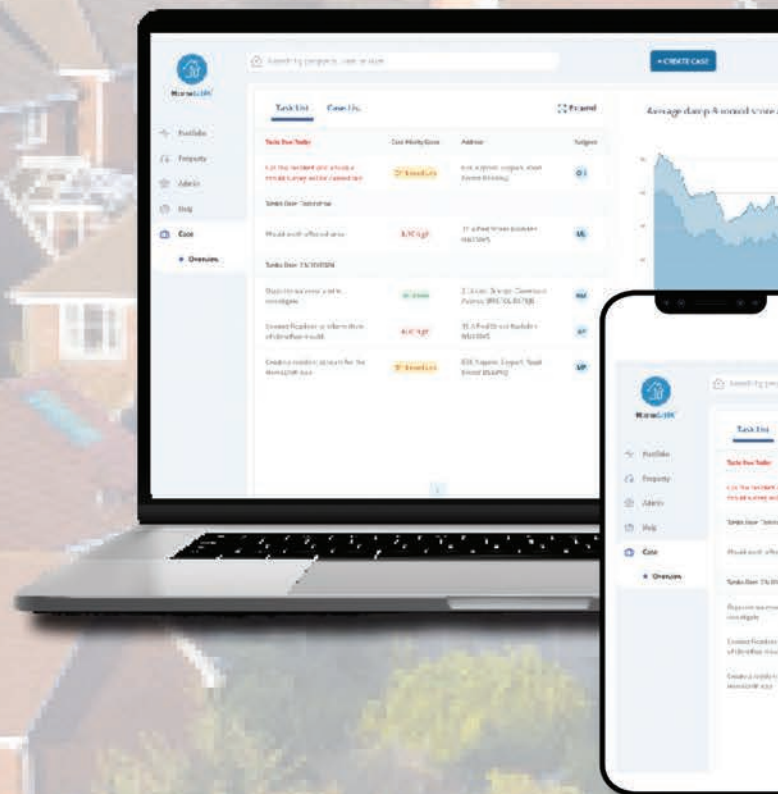
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Fourth generation of 'disruptor' supplier framework announced

Social housing procurement services provider Procurement for Housing has confirmed 17 suppliers which have been appointed to the latest Social Housing Emerging Disruptors (SHED) framework, which supports local authorities and housing associations to procure "non-traditional solutions from 'micro businesses' and SMEs."

This fourth generation of the SHED framework, which is worth up to £100m over three years, offers a wide range of innovative services, from thermal inspection drones and video repairs reporting for tenants to robotic underfloor insulation and real time data to improve damp and mould.

PfH said it has "once again worked with the Disruptive Innovators Network to discover the most innovative firms working in property technology today."

The company set up the first SHED framework four years ago, in response to feedback from housing associations and councils about "how difficult it was to procure emerging services from innovative start-ups."

PfH said: "Many fledgling firms with fresh ways to tackle old issues such as damp and mould, net zero and building safety couldn't break into the market because of tender bureaucracy. They didn't have the resources to commit to the lengthy public procurement application process."

Even when SMEs were able to bid, procurement managers didn't have the specialist knowledge to specify niche services. Although the market should lead the way, companies couldn't scale their solutions because landlords were unable to procure them compliantly."

PfH has addressed these issues by ensuring the SHED "is flexible and light touch in terms of bidding paperwork." A portal then allows social landlords to do a quick desk-based selection process, identifying the supplier that best meets



their needs, and PfH's team provides pricing information and supports the contracting process.

Neil Butters, head of procurement at PfH said: "We had a range of firms bidding for the SHED this year and the 17 winners offer a wide variety of services. That's a sign of where the social housing sector is right now and the myriad of problems and competing priorities it faces. The market is responding to those challenges and our job with the SHED is to nurture both the SME supply chain and innovative procurement in the sector – both key goals of the new Procurement Act."

Annemarie Roberts, property lead at the Disruptive Innovators Network said: "Housing directors are inundated with the problems and risks of today, and often they don't have time to explore how technology and AI can support them. The sector is operating in a massively challenging environment, and one of the ways to meet increasing expectations and standards is to deploy innovative solutions. The SHED framework can help housing providers break this cycle, spot the best tech for their business and adopt it at scale."

For more info about the SHED4 framework visit procurementforhousing.co.uk/shed-frameworks

Sales falling but delivery on the rise

The social housing sales and demolitions data published in February by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government shows that there were 17,504 social housing sales in 2023-24, a 28% decrease on the previous year.

During the same period, there were 13,964 sales of low-cost rental dwellings, an annual decrease of 25% and the lowest number since 2013-14. Low-cost home ownership sales decreased by 37% to 3,540, the lowest level since 2012-13. Demolitions also saw a 12% increase, rising to 3,625 in 2023-24.

There were 62,289 affordable homes delivered in England in 2023-24, a decrease of 2% on the previous year, but the second highest number

since 2014-5. 9,866 new affordable housing completions for social rent also reached the highest level since 2013-14.

John Guest, national head of social housing and partner at RSM UK, said: "The slowdown of social housing sales last year is positive news for supply and will provide registered providers (RPs) with some respite maintaining existing stock and work towards government's 2030 target for EPC ratings. But, when compared with new affordable housing completions for social rent (9,866), there is still a net loss of social housing sales. RPs therefore continue to face a challenging balancing act of managing tight margins, meeting demand and ensuring quality and safe existing stock."

"However, affordable homes are on the rise with 62,289 delivered in 23-24, the second highest delivery level in the last ten years. This shows things are moving in the right direction and the sector is addressing housing needs and delivering new stock, broadly in line with the government's planning overhaul to deliver 1.5m new homes."

He added: "There are still some concerns about the viability of building 66,100 affordable each year, especially with incoming increases to employers' National Insurance contributions which will further squeeze budgets. In order to realise this number, the sector needs more funding and clarity on the government's five-year rent settlement plans. This will provide RPs with greater financial stability and certainty to plan, invest and build confidently to meet the government's targets."



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£4.4m investment confirmed for Hartlepool housing upgrades

Hundreds of homes across Hartlepool are benefitting from a major investment programme, with customers receiving a range of internal upgrades.

Over the last 12 months Karbon Homes has worked with specialist regeneration contractor RE:GEN Group to carry out the improvement works to 267 of its homes across the town.

Steven Colby, head of planned investment at Karbon Homes, said: "We're really pleased with the results of this major investment work so far – a proactive programme which has helped ensure our homes in Hartlepool are great quality and provide our current and future customers with a great place to live.

"We have a fantastic working relationship with RE:GEN, having partnered with them on many successful investment projects similar to this, and we've worked closely with the team and our customers to design a programme that helps minimise disturbance as much as we can."

Upgrades have included kitchen and bathroom replacements, electrical rewires and heating upgrades. Alongside the contracted works, through Karbon Homes' Unlocking Social Value programme RE:GEN has supported the nearby Belle Vue Centre.

While renting a space in the community centre as a site office, the onsite team noticed that the youth club kitchen, from which youth workers provide meals for over 200 children a week from the local area, was no longer fit for purpose and in need of an upgrade.



Colleagues from Karbon Homes and RE:GEN with representatives from the Belle Vue Centre

RE:GEN donated and fully fitted a new kitchen and appliances, with help from supply chain partners Fortify Electrical, Albisson Painting and Decorating and Tees Valley Flooring.

The centre also secured £1445 to fund equipment

for a new sensory room in the nursery. The room is providing much needed stimulation for the children, particularly SEN children within the nursery. It's also become a high demand facility for other local organisations.

Platform Housing Group announces first director overseeing sustainability

Platform Housing Group has confirmed the appointment of Lianne Taylor as its first ever director of sustainability.

The role will see Lianne overseeing the implementation of sustainability strategies across the Group as well as collaborating with stakeholders and supply chains in the transition towards net zero. "Importantly, her role will help cultivate a culture to decarbonise," said Platform Housing Group.

Lianne has almost 20 years' experience working within the built environment; her previous role was as Head of Environmental Sustainability at GRAHAM, a company that specialises in building, civil engineering, interior fit out, facilities management and investments, operating from 23 regional offices.

Lianne said: "Platform's commitment and dedication to implement positive change and a greener future for its customers and communities

aligns with both my personal and professional objectives. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the delivery of social housing by reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with our homes while enhancing the quality of life experienced by our customers."

Ian Joynson, chief investment officer at Platform Housing Group said: "This is Platform's first ever Director of Sustainability, a role that represents a critical step in our commitment to achieving Net Zero. Lianne is a dedicated sustainability professional with a strong track record in advancing sustainability and ESG. We are delighted to welcome her to Platform."

Lianne concluded: "My aim is to not only advance Platform's sustainability goals but also to contribute to wider action and innovation. I look forward to contributing to the



Group's vision of delivering great services and empowering communities."

Lianne is a fellow of the Energy Institute, a Full and Chartered Member of IEMA – The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment – and holds a Masters Degree in Environmental Management; last year Lianne also undertook a post graduate certificate in hydrogen energy systems.



Zaptec EV charging solutions

40% of all new vehicles sold in 2024 were battery electric vehicles (BEVs) or plug-in hybrids (PHEVs). With more residents than ever requiring EV charging – and UK Government regulations expanding – now is the time to meet home and shared parking requirements.



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Both chargers include a standard five-year guarantee and are backed by dedicated UK customer support.



Zaptec Go

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Zaptec Pro

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While some charge point manufacturers offer paid-for management software, Zaptec includes the easy and intuitive Zaptec Portal completely free of charge. It offers detailed monitoring, real-time insights, user database control, user authentication, and integration with payment solutions.





COMMENT

Turbocharging housing or hitting roadblocks?

Despite planning reforms aimed at delivering 1.5 million homes by 2029, challenges persist. Lawrence Turner of Boyer explores the impact of Chancellor Rachel Reeves' recent announcements.

In her high profile January speech the Chancellor Rachel Reeves outlined plans to go 'further and faster' to deliver the Government's Plan for Change. Her announcement included a commitment to several high profile schemes including the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor, the redevelopment of Old Trafford in Manchester, and an increase of housing around transport hubs.

At Boyer, our first reaction was to welcome the Government's latest announcement on planning reforms and its commitment to introducing the Planning and Infrastructure Bill this spring. But we are all too aware that this is no mean feat: as the Home Builders Federation (HBF) recently reported, new build completions saw a "significant decline," to just 198,610 in 2024, illustrating a substantial gap between the current situation and the Government's ambitions to enable 1.5 million new homes by mid-2029.

We support the promotion of new homes near to transport hubs, forming the most sustainable patterns of development. We agree that planning applications for housing in such sustainable locations should receive a default 'yes' response.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF CHANGE

It is worth considering that the means necessary to considerably increase housing delivery must reflect the immensity of the challenge. And there's lots to learn from the past in this respect: many politicians – Liz Truss springs to mind – refer to 'cutting red tape' to deliver much-needed change. But it is important to consider why the red tape exists – what it is intended to protect, and how the system will function in its absence?

For example, in introducing 'devolution' to push 'strategic' planning decisions up a tier, how will local communities react? In using Simplified Planning Zones to fast-track planning applications for data centres and associated infrastructure, will the necessary scrutiny be lost?

HOW WILL THE REFORM BE RECEIVED AT THE LOCAL LEVEL?

While we recognise that meeting the Government's ambitious housebuilding pledge necessitates further planning reform to tackle the housing crisis, this

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reform also needs to be driven at a local level. It is, therefore important that the Government critically assesses the implications of these reforms on local authority responses to housing delivery.

Given the dynamics of local politics, it is inevitable that some local authorities may simply project an image of co-operation with the Government's objectives; and a closer examination may reveal potential resistance at the planning committee level. Particularly concerning is the likelihood that some planning committees may oppose developments that contradict their long-held positions on green belt release, or the status quo around the number of homes councillors believe is politically acceptable in their towns and cities. Or, that some authorities leverage neighbourhood planning as a political tool to undermine housing delivery, limiting housing supply further.

HOW WILL LOCALS RESPOND TO CENTRALISED DECISION-MAKING?

In such scenarios, it is plausible that the Government will need to intervene and 'call in' applications, favouring high-profile schemes to underscore the principle that housing needs must prevail over local opposition. This shift away from appeasing NIMBYs, which was prevalent in the previous administration, could prompt planning committees to reconsider their stances on development. Changing the mindset of some local authorities is fundamental to the creation of a positive planning environment that provides developers with greater certainty in the planning system, encouraging increased investment and growth for our towns and cities.

DEVOLUTION – OR NOT?

Both the English Devolution Bill and future Planning and Infrastructure Bill promise further devolution. We understand that responsibility for strategic planning is to be removed from a local level and bestowed at a higher (regional) level. But is this transfer of power upwards actually devolution? Likewise, the introduction of a suite of National Development Management Policies which local authorities will be required to adhere to, limiting the opportunity to address these issues on a local level – or, is it a sacrifice worth making, essential to speed up decision-making and deliver homes more quickly?

Additionally, the geographical coverage of devolution appears unclear, and potentially chaotic. The last Labour Government put in place Regional Spatial Strategies to oversee strategic planning, ensuring that coverage was universal and plan-making was undertaken at a regional level. The current proposal for devolution is a sub-regional approach, which seems an over-concession to local politics. Relying on local authorities to decide amongst themselves

whether and how they form combined mayoral authorities does not represent an objective start to plan-making. This will inevitably lead to situations where local politics trump proper strategic planning, leading to situations where some local authorities fall between two regional bodies, while retaining their strategic planning powers at a local authority level. Clarification is urgently required on this if we are to restore a degree of certainty to local planning authorities, investors and developers.

Devolution (defined by the Government as 'decision making moved closer to the citizen') would, ironically, have a greater presence in those local authorities who had retained the status quo, as opposed to those whose planning powers were transferred to a higher level.

This patchwork approach to devolution may lead to a peculiar disparity in planning powers. Currently, the London Combined Authority possesses these powers, while Manchester, for example, is in the process of acquiring them. Meanwhile, other devolved assemblies will, initially at least, have less autonomy over planning matters. The question remains: will these powers reside at the national, or local level?

CHALLENGES TO THE DEVELOPMENT PIPELINE REMAIN

However, even with further planning reforms, the construction industry faces formidable challenges; current workforce shortages in the construction industry pose significant barriers to the Government's plan to turbocharge house building. The Government has promised funding for 300 additional planners. Irrespective of the fact that this would allow for less than 0.5 planners per local authority – and considerably less so if devolved bodies also require strategic planning expertise – it is not only planners that are required to enable development to take place.

At a local authority level alone, planning positively requires input from conservation officers, ecology officers, highways to name a few. Beyond planning, development requires a huge range of skills, from construction workers to sales and marketing. In many circumstances, government support will be needed to ensure that the necessary skills are available.

To effectively address the housing crisis, it is therefore imperative that the details of the forthcoming planning reforms include measures to increase capacity and skills within supply chains and supporting industries.

UNCERTAINTY REMAINS

Despite many positives, the change in government has created considerable uncertainty in planning and development. Local authorities are still grappling with the transitional arrangements of the NPPF and how best to progress their local plans. Developers, although hopeful about increased planning success, face uncertainty in implementing their planning permissions, grappling with challenges such as financial viability and a limited supply chain.

If the Government can bring local authorities and local people with them, we are optimistic that these reforms will not only address the urgent housing crisis but also elevate the standard of living for local communities. However, there are some significant hurdles in the path to achieving this success.

Lawrence Turner is director of Boyer



The HBF recently reported new build completions saw a "significant" decline to just 198,610 in 2024

Lawrence Turner



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The Evolution of Remote Management & Digital Monitoring

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

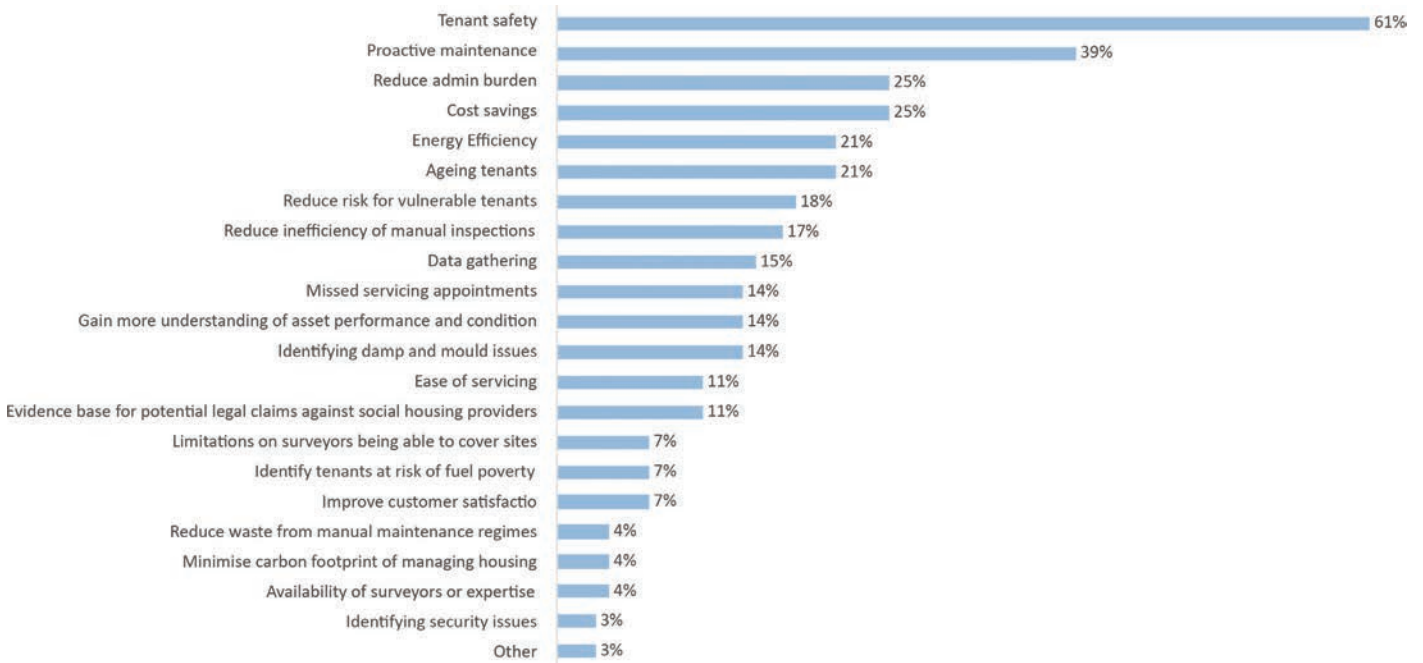
Harnessing digital innovations for the remote management of social housing stock can bring unprecedented efficiencies for providers as well as benefits for tenants, including monitoring key safety, health and security factors. Not only can maintenance efficiency benefit hugely from such approaches, so can enhancing tenant safety and wellbeing. While it was essential to quickly identify a means of remotely keeping tabs on buildings' condition during the pandemic, leading to an upsurge in remote monitoring adoption, there are a host of reasons why providers and landlords are looking to continue the approach going forward, from wellbeing and efficiency of properties to skills shortages and cost issues.

Implementation of these technologies in social housing presents unique challenges and opportunities, keeping assets in good condition for the benefit of tenants and landlords using a range of IT solutions, including smart sensors and app-based data from tenants. In addition, being able to monitor and assess the condition of properties without disrupting residents, and in a less resource-intensive way has a range of attractions. However this also means a change of

approach in management and adoption of new and unfamiliar systems, both for providers and tenants.

Housing Management & Maintenance undertook a programme of research with housing professionals in the sector in 2021, examining how they are adopting and adapting to the new age of remote management and digital monitoring systems in the social housing sector. Three years later we conducted a new study to discover how their views and experience have evolved over time helps us to see where improvements have occurred and what challenges remain.

The research we undertook in 2021 was in a different context, with many sites and individual properties being inaccessible due to Covid restrictions present at the time. This was a key driver for the uptake of remote monitoring in social housing, but while the pandemic has receded, providers remain challenged by inefficient and problematic manual methods of ensuring properties are functioning healthily and efficiently. They are seeking ways to reduce admin and tenant disruption, while increasing tenant safety and wellbeing with more proactive, digitally supported approaches which also provide them with essential data on their assets.



What are the key factors driving adoption of digital remote monitoring systems in social housing?

61% of respondents were using remote management in their social housing property portfolios, chiefly for electricity usage, and monitoring security systems including cameras and alarms

The results of a subsequent research study we undertook in 2024 on the subject help clarify some of the key trends in the sector post-pandemic, around technological advancements behind remote monitoring, the demands in the sector, and practical implementation. It is a more wide-ranging study that aims to provide a holistic understanding of the potentially transformative impact of remote management and digital monitoring in social housing, including canvassing views on smart building systems, Internet of Things (IoT) devices, and data analytics platforms.

Overall, the research forms part of a nuanced understanding of the evolving landscape of remote management and digital monitoring in social housing, by collating first-hand expertise and experience from professionals. It explores how technology approaches are being embraced in practice, including real-world experience sharing to identify the gaps in progress as well as successes. The end result is a useful contribution to the debate around improving operational efficiency and resident wellbeing in social housing settings.

INTRODUCTION

In the UK, remote monitoring of social housing has been increasingly explored as a way to improve the quality of living, reduce costs, and streamline management. As local councils, housing associations, and other housing providers face rising demand for social housing and limited budgets, remote monitoring offers innovative solutions. This can range from improving tenant safety and wellbeing to ensuring that buildings are energy efficient, and well maintained.

Remote monitoring is currently being used in social housing portfolios across the UK, and realising some of the benefits listed below, but there is much potential for greater innovation, particularly as the Internet of Things (IoT) and the possibility of pursuing predictive maintenance with engaged tenants develops in future years. By avoiding the traditional spot-check approach of surveyors visiting properties, and moving to an ongoing smart data approach to monitoring a range of systems and conditions in properties, a truly realistic picture is built up of the maintenance needs in each case. In addition, tenant satisfaction as well as wellbeing can be raised, while avoiding legal penalties on the housing provider for poor performance. However, there are a range of challenges and problems in adopting this new approach, as we discovered in our research.

THE PROPERTY PORTFOLIO PROBLEM

Challenges of maintenance of social housing, from simple repairs to overhauling properties suffering from damp and mould, have always posed challenges to managers, not just tackling the number of properties involved in many landlords' portfolios, but in responding promptly and effectively to alerts from residents.

Much of the UK's social housing stock is ageing, and the cost of remediating it on health and performance grounds therefore becomes more expensive every year that goes by, as buildings need more frequent, in-depth repair. This ranges from outdated plumbing and electrical systems to structural issues which may have emerged over decades.

Managers face a more stringent and demanding regulatory regime, including standards and penalties, leading to higher costs of compliance, working with the necessary consultants. These measures are pursued for good reasons, but place more challenges at the foot of professionals already grappling with many issues.

Macro-economic factors such as inflation and material costs are proving a stubborn problem in the construction industry, as are labour costs as the skills crisis continues unabated. There are a range of construction sectors feeling the pinch, which means there is further competition for resources. Lastly, climate change and more linked extreme weather events are making the need for rigorous maintenance more pressing, as heavy, prolonged rain can make internal damp and mould worse, and extreme temperatures put a strain on heating and cooling systems. Proactive and preventative maintenance measures help to address these, but they come at a commensurate cost.

A CHANGE OF MINDSET

Despite the benefits, there are a range of crucial factors in the social housing sector that complicate things, but which also provide further reasons for changing the traditional approach to maintenance. The social housing sector is experiencing a significant rise in maintenance and repair costs, with an increase of 15% reported from 2023 to 2024, which has been partly put down to the much higher priority being given to tackling damp and mould remediation in the wake of the death of Awaab Ishak in social housing in Rochdale. However, understanding the reasons behind these costs is crucial to developing strategies to reduce them at housing associations and local authorities, and in central Government.

The Covid pandemic only exacerbated many of the pre-existing issues of accessing properties. This was pinpointed in 2021, when Ian Murray, managing director at water management maintenance firm Plexus Innovation highlighted the finding that the past 18 months had shown "difficulty in gaining access to facilities to take manual compliance measurements."

Murray's firm is investing heavily in remote monitoring to assist it in contracts where ensuring water systems are safe are a key priority. He said there was an increased desire to remove the "monthly inconvenience associated with manual compliance measurements" for tenants who often "currently have to wait at home and allow potentially unwelcome access."

However, Murray added that beyond this issue of inconvenience, systems were needed that minimised the risk of important maintenance not having been carried out accurately, or not at all, while being easy for tenants to participate in. Further benefits include the potential to minimise the carbon footprint associated with manual compliance measurement onsite, for example across "fragmented geography," and the ability to continually monitor properties to gain a real time understanding of asset performance and condition, while potentially removing some of the admin burden and reducing costs.

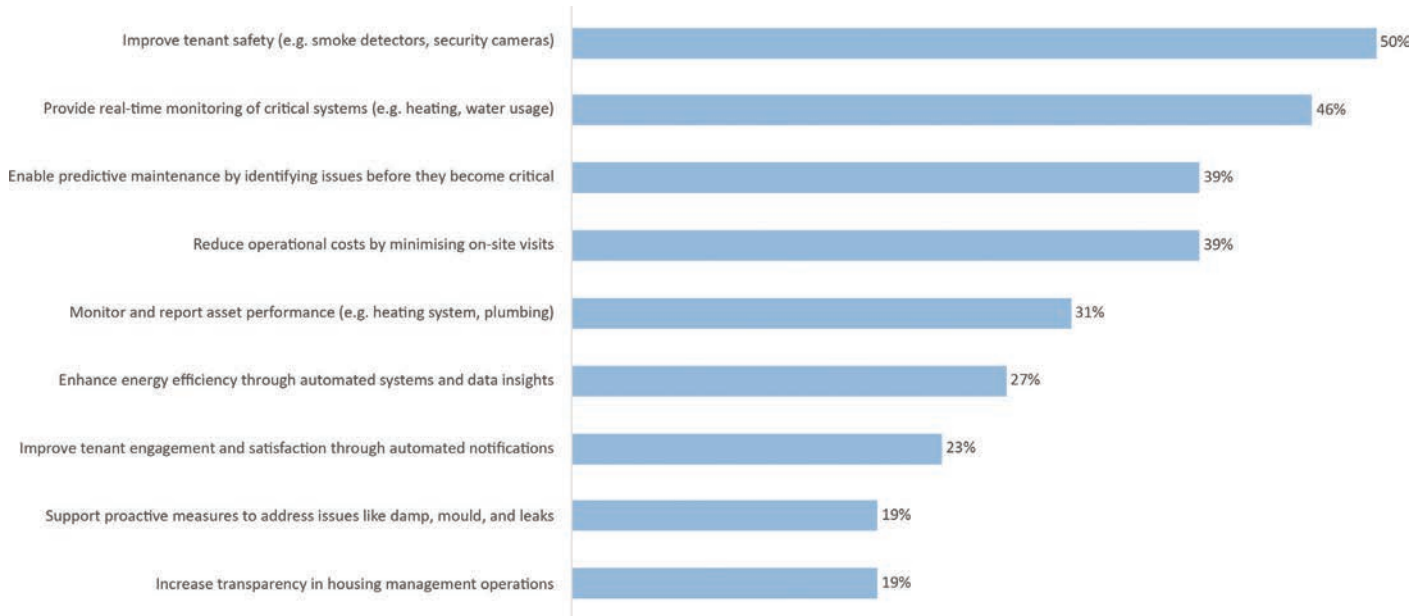
While management are acutely aware of the need to protect tenants and staff from the risk of legionella in such cases, relying on random, periodic checks as per the traditional route is far less effective than the ability to do this in real time on each property. It would also enable management to optimise and reduce energy costs, while checking things like taps left running, water leaks, water heaters under stress and failing assets, all of which could enable early intervention that saves time, money, disruption and stress.

Currently, says Murray, there is a norm of missed appointments and wasted time, cost and human resource, such as resulting from tenants who "don't or can't wait in for your team," but innovations are in play that could see this becoming a thing of the past.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY & MAINTENANCE

Optimising maintenance and repairs is probably the key reason for social housing providers to install remote monitoring; many social housing providers are now installing IoT sensors in key areas like plumbing, heating systems, and appliances. For instance, sensors can detect issues such as water leaks, boiler failures, or HVAC breakdowns. Early detection means that repairs can be carried out before small issues turn into larger, more costly problems.

As part of predictive maintenance, data from sensors can be analysed to alert providers to when predictive maintenance is needed, allowing for proactive repairs to be done rather than reacting to breakdowns. This can save on emergency call-out costs and reduce the number of tenant complaints.



What role do IoT-enabled devices play in enhancing remote management capabilities in social housing?

With the UK Government pushing for energy efficiency, smart meters in social housing allow both tenants and landlords to monitor and manage energy usage more effectively. For example, real-time data can be used to identify energy wastage, especially in older social housing stock. In addition, smart controls of heating such as the Nest thermostat (or similar smart heating controls), are being used in social housing to manage properties' temperature and reduce energy consumption. These systems can be remotely monitored and adjusted, allowing for better temperature control and reducing heating costs.

SECURITY, SAFETY & WELFARE

Social housing can often be located in urban or high-density areas where crime is likely, so remote monitoring of common areas via CCTV is becoming common. It can help deter crime, ensure tenant safety, and help authorities respond quickly if incidents occur. This also benefits landlords by reducing costs related to security personnel. Smart access control systems, such as remote entry systems are also used in social housing to increase security and help identify anti-social behaviour and prevent unauthorised access. Lastly, remote fire alarms and carbon monoxide detectors can be installed to notify emergency services and housing managers instantly if there's a problem. These systems can potentially save lives by ensuring prompt action.

The key issue for our survey respondents was knowledge gaps around data security and privacy

Particularly in supported or sheltered housing, IoT devices can be used to assist telecare and monitor tenants' health and wellbeing remotely. For example, smart devices can alert caregivers or housing managers if an elderly tenant falls, does not move for a certain period, or has a health emergency, reducing the manpower need and disruption from constant check-ins. Remote monitoring can be used to track changes in tenant behaviour or social interaction patterns. This could help social housing providers to identify tenants who might need additional support services, particularly if there are concerns about mental health or isolation.

DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

The many benefits of collating data within analytics platforms for social housing platforms – where all data from individual monitoring systems can sit, can help guide strategic decisions on building upgrades, resource allocation, and planning new housing projects. The data parameters which can be captured include energy consumption, building tenant health and satisfaction, and the detail available enables very robust and rigorous management approaches to be supported.

For larger local authority and housing association providers (such as Peabody, Clarion Housing, or L&Q for example), the use of data collected through remote monitoring helps meet the challenge of managing vast portfolios, ensuring the most efficient allocation of resources, improved service delivery, and better long-term planning are provided.

CHALLENGES & CONSIDERATIONS

Clear communication with tenants about what data is being collected and why is essential, in particular where it may overlap with collection of tenants' personal information (privacy is governed by data protection standards including GDPR). Individual 'firewalls' for each tenant may be the best practice approach taken, to protect their data in a robust way. A further challenge is the potential cost barriers with investments potentially not seeing a return for providers for some time, although remote monitoring can save costs such as via preventative maintenance, over the longer term. The upfront investment in technology required can be a barrier, especially for smaller housing associations or councils, although there are grants or funding available from government or local authorities which can assist in remote monitoring projects. Smart technology can also help to meet government sustainability and energy efficiency targets.

There is one further challenge; the 'digital divide' between younger and older tenants, with the latter likely to be less able and familiar with digital devices and smart technology. Providers and suppliers need to be aware that because younger tenants may be able to adopt and engage with new monitoring apps, IoT devices, and monitoring data, it may require much more investment in support for older tenants. Older tenants may struggle to adapt to new systems, particularly in areas of digital literacy, and extra support will be needed in this case.

Some of the questions in our previous industry research directly referenced the issues around the pandemic, and so we didn't reproduce these for our 2024 research, however we did incorporate some of the factors from the 2021 study

Only a third of respondents said they had concerns around credibility of data, but this is clearly still a significant minority and the issue needs addressing

into our questions for professionals as they remained current going forward. The majority of our respondents said they worked for housing associations (52%), while 14% were private landlords, 14% charities, and 5% were local authority-specific. Most respondents described themselves as housing managers (covering housing, projects, properties and other areas including developments), while 32% were at director level.

The majority (61%) of our respondents were using remote management in their social housing property portfolios, chiefly for the areas of electricity usage, and monitoring security systems (including cameras and alarms). A large proportion of our cohort were looking after portfolios from between 10 and 50 units (39%), but 28% were at the larger scale, overseeing between 250 and 10,000 properties.

We asked what the key factors were driving adoption of digital remote monitoring systems in social housing. Probably confirming assumptions was the leading finding that tenant safety was the main driver for investing in high-tech options for gathering data on properties' condition, with 61% choosing this option. Next in the list was proactive maintenance, some way behind but still a respectable, and expected high score at 39%. A quarter of respondents were both looking to reduce the admin burden by using remote monitoring, as well as save cost. Energy efficiency, and tackling the issue of ageing tenants came below this, with 21% choosing these drivers.

Somewhat interesting was 'identifying security issues,' placed at the very bottom, with only 3%, but other more understandable reasons given were 'availability of surveyors or other expertise' (for managing properties), and 'reducing the carbon footprint/reducing waste (these all had 4%). And 7%, a low but revealing figure, said they were using remote monitoring as part of aims to 'improve customer satisfaction.'

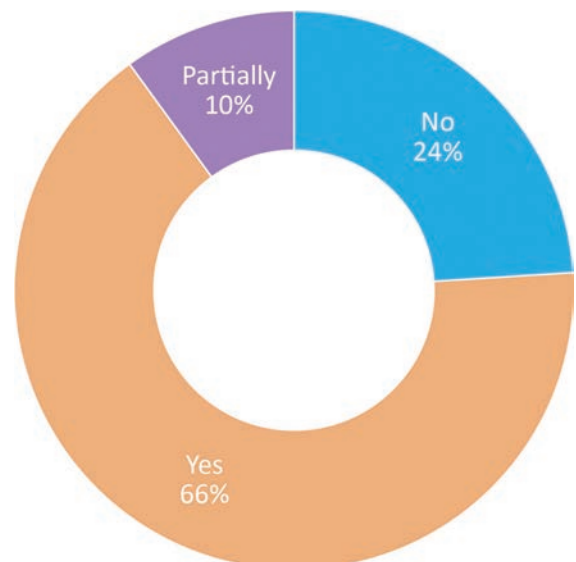
The reasons for our survey cohort in the 2021 study (undertaken immediately after the UK lockdowns) were a very different distribution, with Covid 19 being chosen by 74% as a key reason for using remote monitoring. While tenant safety had assumed the top spot in 2024, in 2021, in the face of a protocol remaining in force for no face-to-face contact, safety was only third in the list at 28%, behind 'worker convenience/reduction of hours.'

In 2021, we discovered that cost was the biggest barrier for uptake, with 45% of our sample choosing it as a key blocker for remote management and monitoring, and the 'lack of human touch' was seen as a major issue too, with 39% picking it, perhaps a further factor that was alienating residents in the post-Covid landscape. Finally, 'unreliable technology' and 'unwilling tenants' were also issues – with scores of 31% and 23% respectively.

GAPS & ISSUES

We also asked these social housing professionals what gaps they perceived in their knowledge of remote monitoring. The key issue was knowledge gaps around data security and privacy, which they must bridge with the help of consultants and others to feel comfortable with remote monitoring – 44% said they had gaps here. However, not far behind was integrating systems with existing infrastructure, being chosen by 37%, and the compatibility of devices being used (particularly important when IoT methods are being used). And nearly a third believed that establishing the cost versus benefit on projects was something they were lacking ability and knowledge to do currently.

What issues had our research group experienced using the various IoT devices sensors required in their projects? While 30% reassuringly said they had not experienced problems, many (33%) said that 'lack of standardisation across devices and sensors' was an issue, and an equal 22% thought that 'integration challenges with legacy building management systems,' 'incompatibility with



Do you believe systems can effectively monitor sites without having to intrude & enter into properties?

existing software platforms or applications,' and 'connectivity issues between different IoT devices – e.g. Wi-Fi or Bluetooth – were challenges. Less of a problem were 'difficulty in scaling devices across a wide range of property types' and 'complexity of integrating multiple systems' (only 11% chose these).

There was more reassurance on the matter of data credibility from remote monitoring – we asked if they had concerns about the 'independence of the data provided by remote monitoring systems,' and only a third of respondents said they had concerns, however this is clearly still a significant minority showing it's an issue that needs addressing.

In addition, two-thirds of respondents believed that remote monitoring systems enabled them to effectively monitor sites without having to enter properties and intrude into residents' lives. Despite this, there were key challenges identified for residents from their part in managing digital and smart monitoring. These were led by 'wireless monitoring and WiFi signal issues' (picked by 40%), lack of digital literacy (28%), and battery replacement in devices (20%). However, a decent number (20%) said there were no issues.

CONCLUSION

While our research delved into some of the important findings around current practice and awareness of remote monitoring in the industry, it's important to look at the likely future trends in the area, and how technology is leading the way.

More social housing providers are looking to move towards 'integrated' monitoring platforms where building management systems, energy monitoring, tenant welfare, and maintenance all connect to one central hub, which can greatly improve efficiency by streamlining operations. And, as in so many other spheres, increased use of AI is being seen in remote monitoring of social housing properties. As AI technology advances, housing providers are exploring its potential to automate decision-making based on the data collected from sensors and other monitoring systems – this could lead to faster response times and predictive maintenance.

Given the UK's commitment to reducing carbon emissions, remote monitoring systems will be increasingly critical in managing energy consumption in social housing, improving sustainability, and helping to meet government targets. With the ongoing cost of living crisis, such systems are also, with the right tenant engagement, key to helping residents tackle the ongoing cost of living crisis, and reduce the risks of fuel poverty.

For the full white paper report on the survey, visit insights.netmagmedia.co.uk

04-06 March, Excel London

Why Futurebuild 2025 is a must-attend for housing professionals

As the push towards net-zero accelerates, the refurbishment and retrofit sectors stand at a pivotal point of sustainable transformation in the built environment. Futurebuild 2025, taking place from March 04-06 at London Excel, offers an unmissable opportunity for housing professionals to engage with the latest innovations and strategies driving sustainability. Here's why attending this year's event is essential for those committed to advancing retrofit and refurbishment practices.

NATIONAL RETROFIT CONFERENCE

Co-located with Futurebuild 2025 is the National Retrofit Conference, designed to address the pressing challenges and opportunities in upgrading existing housing stock. The conference, sponsored by Sustainable Building Services, delivers rich content across three days, as detailed below.

- Day 1 (Leadership, Innovation, and Skills): Highlights include the session on The Warm Homes Programme exploring successful strategies to combat fuel poverty and enhance energy efficiency. Additionally, 'Leadership in Retrofitting – Driving Change Across Cities and Regions' will discuss actionable strategies for achieving ambitious net-zero goals.
- Day 2 is labelled 'Retrofit Done Right at Scale.' Sessions such as 'Data-Driven Retrofit – Leveraging Insights for Effective Change' emphasise the role of data integration in large-scale retrofit initiatives. And 'People First Retrofit' focuses on creating healthy, comfortable living spaces while achieving sustainability goals.
- Day 3 is 'Community-Led Retrofit'. Discussions on EPC Reform and Community-Led Retrofit will showcase how grassroots initiatives and policy evolution can redefine scalability in retrofit practices.



For professionals working in the housing management and maintenance spheres, Futurebuild 2025 offers more than an event – it's an essential platform to learn from industry leaders and gain actionable insights

THE BIG RETROFIT CHALLENGE

A highlight for retrofit professionals at Futurebuild is the Big Retrofit Challenge, a dynamic competition where finalists present groundbreaking tools and strategies to overcome barriers in retrofitting. This interactive event offers direct exposure to pioneering solutions that could reshape retrofit practices.

IMPACT STAGES

Futurebuild 2025 features five Impact Stages tailored to critical aspects of sustainable housebuilding and retrofit:

- Buildings Impact Stage (Sponsored by HG Matthews): Learn how to elevate older homes to Passivhaus standards and enhance energy efficiency with insights from Innovate UK, Passivhaus Trust and many more.





- **Materials Impact Stage** (Sponsored by Aggregate Industries): Explore how circular economy principles, like material passports and supply chain transparency, can minimise waste in refurbishment projects. Partners include Halliwell and Madaster UK.
- **Energy Impact Stage** (Sponsored by Kensa): Delve into renewable energy solutions, including air source heat pumps and energy management systems, with contributions from the Thermal Storage UK and Celsius Energy.
- **Placemaking Impact Stage** (Sponsored by Hahn Plastics): Examine how retrofitted homes can contribute to sustainable urban design, with guidance from the Woodland Trust and Anglian Water.

- **FutureX Digital Disruptors Impact Stage** (Sponsored by One Click LCA): Discover cutting-edge technologies, such as AI-driven construction tools and smart energy systems, designed to optimise retrofit and refurbishment projects.

KEY ARENA SESSIONS

Beyond the retrofit-specific sessions, the Futurebuild Arena offers broader strategic insights which are relevant to the sector. Some highlights coming up at the 2025 include:

- “The Government is Promoting the Circular Economy – How Far Can We Go?” (Day 1): Discusses circular economy strategies critical for sustainable refurbishment.
- “Tackling the Polycrisis – Can We Fix Housing, Climate, Nature, and Health?” (Day 2): This key session will examine ‘integrated solutions for sustainable housing.’
- “Implementing the UK Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard (UKNZCBS)” (Day 3): Provides guidance on aligning retrofit projects with net-zero building standards.

Lastly, attendees can hear from industry leaders in the Futurebuild Arena, such as Brogan MacDonald, head of sustainability (building structures) at Ramboll, Katherine Adams, director at Reusefully, and Stephen King, head of infrastructure & planning at London Councils.

WHY ATTEND FUTUREBUILD 2025?

For professionals working in the housing management and maintenance spheres, Futurebuild 2025 offers more than just an event – it’s an essential platform to learn from industry leaders and gain actionable insights, discover innovative products, and stay ahead of industry changes and trends. Scan the QR code to register for your free ticket.



Article supplied by Futurebuild

Marmox Thermoblocks and Fireboard on show at Futurebuild

With both an energy and a housing crisis looming large across the UK, it is appropriate that Marmox has opted to dedicate its stand F42 at this year’s Futurebuild – taking place at the Excel from March 04-06 to showcase their Multiboard range together with the A1 non-combustible certified Fireboard.

The A1 non-combustible certified Fireboard can serve as a weatherproof render-backer or be used internally across walls and ceilings to take a plaster finish, while providing sound absorption properties, along with thermal insulation. The 600 x 1,200 mm Fireboards are available in thicknesses of 20 mm, 50 mm and 100 mm and with the polymer modified mortar honeycomb coating applied to both faces. With a nominal density of 150 kg/m³ the boards’ core material offers a compressive strength of 90 kPa (9 tonnes/m²), while its high insulation performance will help combat thermal-bridging and the formation of surface condensation, as well as having the potential to cut energy bills.

Marmox Multiboard, a lightweight tile backer board option, used for waterproofing, dry-lining and to provide thermal insulation has a unique patented surface, which allows heavier tiles to be safely and securely fixed to walls.

Being completely impermeable to water, it is doubly useful in areas prone to moisture, making it a good option for anyone looking for a kitchen or bathroom tile board. Multiboard can



be used to insulate and waterproof walls, floors and ceilings. Even the thinnest boards will be useful when used with underfloor heating wire to reduce heating costs.

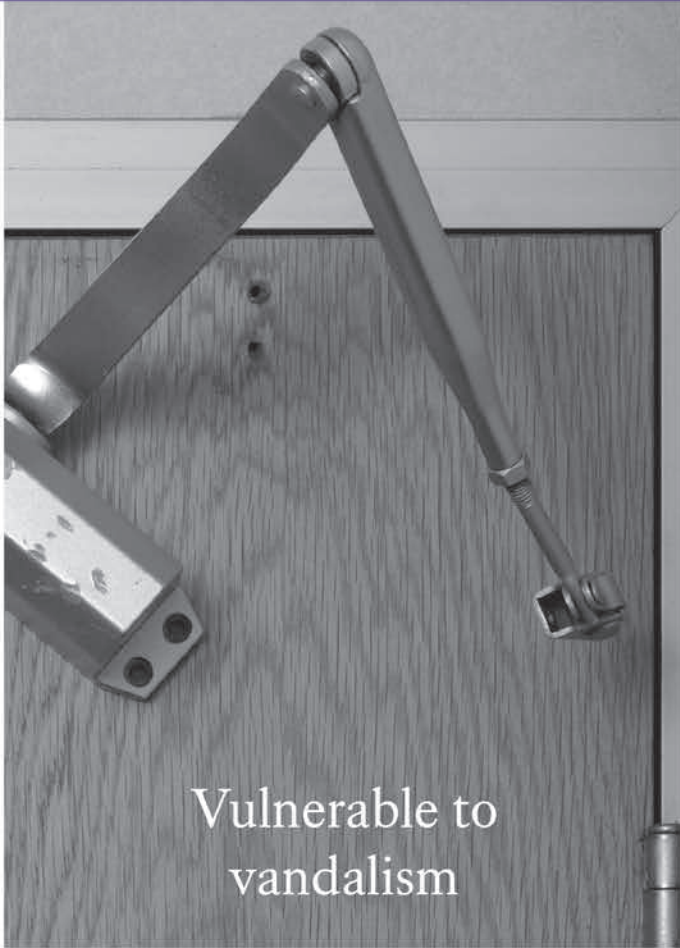
The marketing manager for Marmox, Grant Terry says: “The most important thing is that unlike everyone else, we’re specified to be used externally.

“For an alternative insulated, waterproof render board, this is a great product to use”.

Grant Terry also commented: “As a regular exhibitor at Futurebuild and other major trade shows, we endeavour to ensure the products we showcase are as relevant as possible to both specifiers and installation specialists and this year will include a preview of the New Fireproof Thermoblocks.”

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Government setting date for Awaab's Law

Vent-Axia has welcomed the UK Government setting a date of October 2025 for Awaab's Law to be introduced across the social housing sector. Awaab's Law is part of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act and is set to impose strict requirements on social housing landlords to investigate and resolve issues of damp and mould within specified timeframes, helping residents gain faster repairs and reducing health risks. It marks the biggest change in social housing rules in a decade. "Effective ventilation is vital to improve indoor air quality and tackle condensation and mould," said Natasha King, product manager at Vent-Axia.



Natasha King

0344 856 0590 www.vent-axia.com/social-housing

Airtech improves Indoor Air Quality

Airtech has helped a Mid-Devon social housing resident to improve the indoor air quality (IAQ) and combat mould in their home. Mid-Devon District Council had a resident with persistent mould so asked for Airtech's help to find a solution. In response, Airtech supplied and installed its Positive Input Ventilation (PIV) and bathroom extractor fan solutions in the property to improve the IAQ and tackle the condensation and mould. The value of Airtech's products and services is clear: condensation and mould solutions accompanied by enhanced performance with increased energy efficiency bring rock-solid peace of mind.



info@airtechsolutions.co.uk www.airtechsolutions.co.uk

Beauflor gives Blacktex a boost

Blacktex cushion vinyl from Beauflor brings private and social housing a fast and easy flooring option and with brand-new designs for 2025, one that now reflects the latest in home interior style. The popular collection comes in a range of 56 wood and stone looks, including 24 new for this year. Introduced designs include the classic style of Oakland and Gambel Oak wood planks, the limestone of Pamplona and the elegant, polished concrete of Beton Cire. Whatever the decor, Blacktex brings a floor with numerous advantages, refreshing homes with a welcoming look and a comfortable and practical surface. With a textile backing that means it can be installed over old floor coverings without glue (up to 35m²), Blacktex can be used to quickly refurbish rooms. Not just kitchens and bathrooms, but living areas, bedrooms and hallways can all benefit from the floor's easy fitting. With multiple width options (2m, 3m and 4m), Blacktex also reduces installation waste. The floor's Premium Coating reduces the chances of permanent stains and marks and makes maintenance easier for owners and tenants, preserving the floor's look and enhancing its durability. Along with its water-resistant construction, the floor's R10 slip-restraint and a Class 32 general commercial wear rating make for a hardwearing floor finish that withstands family use and which can even avoid flooring replacement between tenancies.



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David Bly – Managing Director of Cornerstone Management Services Ltd, a company providing independent expert property health Surveys, is of the opinion more can be done.

With constant year-on-year damp, condensation and mould in many homes it could be argued there needs to be 'reset' with regard to how structures are assessed prior to and post any improvements plus, the 'adequacy' of internal atmospheric management protocols aligned to upholding a healthy dwelling.

'Blame' is not an option and, can be replaced with 'did you know' since many residents may not be aware of the impact of some everyday activities on the internal conditions as a whole.

Whether landlords are doing enough is noted but, they may well be doing all they can within their infrastructure plus existing knowledge base resulting in more needing to be done.



It is Cornerstone's opinion, any improvements must embrace the structural type, period, age and orientation plus existing permeance as they can all play an active role in maintaining desired structural health. And, with a drive for Net Zero and many Retrofits underway, a greater understanding of these ongoing issues and root causes will aid the journeys.

New legislation calling for timely responses to reported issues alongside defined 'better decision making' will not only reduce annual spend but will uphold the strong desire for cost effective remediations for the long term.

This can be achieved by re-thinking how complaints are recorded, how responses are managed and how credible knowledge in a recognised format can be utilised and delivered to residents with a greater understanding for improved conformity.

An innovative approach will instil landlords with confidence their improvements concluded in a defined approach whilst providing bespoke guidance for residents for an improved healthier internal living condition, will deliver a transformed stock management protocol for maintaining a host of structure types and their geographical locations.

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for improving Structural Health**

The skinny on insulation

The growing demand for thin internal wall insulation ('Tiwi') addresses space constraints in retrofit projects, offering effective solutions for condensation and mould while meeting low U-value requirements, as James Erskine of CorkSol explains.



A term many may have been hearing more recently, is Tiwi, referring to thin internal wall insulation. To meet low U-value requirements, wall insulation materials like mineral wool, fibreglass or foam have typically increased wall thickness by 50 to 100 mm, decreasing valuable floor space for residents. With 1.1 million people across the UK already living in houses without enough space, according to census data, this is quickly becoming a less attractive option, especially when it comes to retrofit projects to combat issues with condensation and mould.

A UK Government report revealed the estimated number of homes in England with damp and mould could be as many as 6.5 million households. This begs the question, why are so many UK homes not built to cope with the weather conditions we experience here? A general answer can be found in the 1900s, where England experienced several 'housing booms', growing the number of homes drastically in short periods of time. Examples of this can be seen after the Second World War when there was a big push to rebuild homes, and during Thatcher's era with the introduction of the Right to Buy scheme, which allowed council tenants to purchase their homes at discounted prices.

Houses built in the UK before the 20th century were typically constructed with solid brick walls and little to no insulation, which isn't effective for retaining heat. These homes were designed primarily to improve immediate living conditions, and were built to be breathable rather than airtight. In the past few decades a lot of regulations have come into play that have shifted focus to building envelopes and the importance of trying to achieve continuous insulation.

British homes are often compact and built with limited interior space, which can discourage adding thick wall insulation or other weather-proofing measures that reduce space.

Newer construction methods have started to address these issues with better insulation, double or triple glazing, and airtight building techniques. But the UK's diverse housing stock, especially with so many older buildings, means modernising for weather resilience is a gradual process and retrofitting older homes can be tricky, but not necessarily as challenging as demolishing existing buildings and starting anew.

Thin interior wall insulation options are becoming more popular, saving space and downtime, and improving U-values

Additional interior wall insulation is usually specified if a house is suffering from cold internal temperatures, condensation on walls and damp or mould issues. The usual 'go to' solution most often seen in these scenarios would be replacing the plaster board with foam or foil backed panels. This process would involve clearing the inside of the house of belongings and people, arranging temporary housing and storage, removing existing plaster boards and replacing them with more insulating options. These boards that feature foil or foam will be thicker to account for the additional insulative materials, encroaching the space in the room. As well as solid wall homes, properties started to be built with a cavity wall. Insulation can be injected through the exterior wall by drilling holes into the outside of a structure and injecting expanding foam into the gap between walls. The holes in the mortar joints are then filled to restore the wall's appearance, with the foam inside the cavity offering an additional layer to maintain inside temperatures.

However, weather in the UK can cause multiple problems with rising damp and mould, and unfortunately, the addition of foam creates a bridge for the rain to soak through, and without the wall cavity, the gap is bridged. Where water would have previously run off into the cavity gap, it can now infiltrate the interior wall, causing a whole host of issues detrimental to health. Thin interior wall insulation options are becoming more popular, saving space and downtime, and improving U-values. Solutions are available that require very little disruption to daily life; only 6 mm thick, and able to be plastered almost straight away. And, as long as the room is prepared properly, furniture and belongings can stay – pulled away from the walls, and fixings like light switches, radiators, skirting boards and plug sockets can be taped up and left in situ.

James Erskine is sales manager of CorkSol

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How to navigate remediation orders & access the right support

Lewis Couth of Walker Morris discusses how local authorities can leverage crucial legal tools such as remediation orders under the Building Safety Act, to help them address unsafe cladding.

Local authorities continue to face the challenge of ensuring that building owners address unsafe cladding issues across their authorities, with the Government expecting all buildings with unsafe cladding to be remediated by the end of 2029, otherwise “landlords will be liable for severe penalties.” Despite the urgency of these fire safety concerns, not all building owners are willing or financially able to cover the costs required to carry out the necessary remedial work.

To tackle this requires collaborative work to ensure landlords comply with their legal obligations and remediate defective buildings as fast as possible. Where landlords are not doing so, the Building Safety Act 2022 – a seminal and far-reaching piece of legislation that came into place after the Grenfell Tower tragedy – has introduced wide-ranging powers, including remediation orders, that the Government “expects” local authorities to use.

WHAT IS A REMEDIATION ORDER?

Remediation orders are vital for improving building safety and accountability in the UK, addressing past failures while ensuring building owners, developers, or landlords bear responsibility for remediation. They provide leaseholder protection and help restore public trust in the safety of the housing stock.

APPLICATION FOR A REMEDIATION ORDER

Local authorities in England can apply for a remediation order to ensure that a “relevant landlord” (usually the building owner) who has failed to remediate their buildings, does so. The order, granted by a First-Tier Tribunal, provides a specified date by which essential fire safety works on buildings must be completed by. A landlord who fails to comply with a remediation order may be in contempt of court and face a fine and/or imprisonment for up to two years.

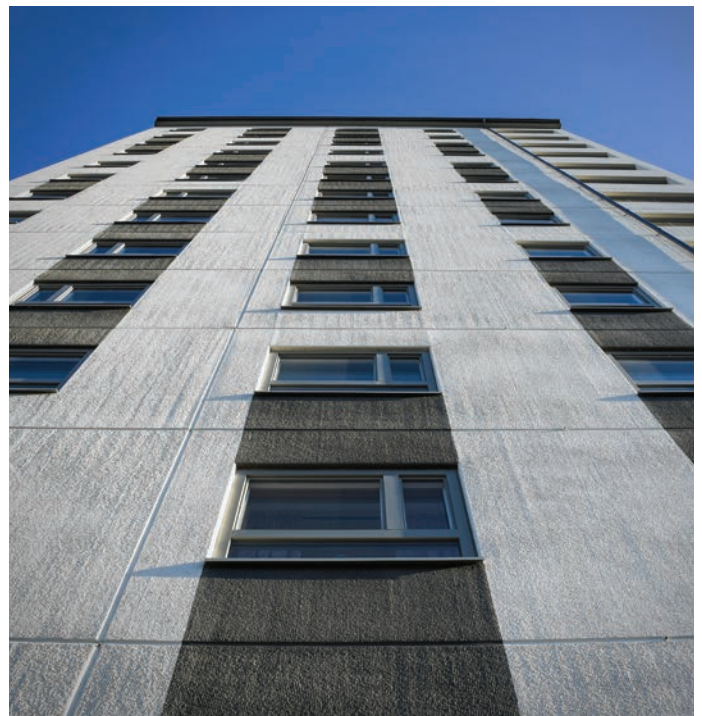
While local authorities have long had powers under the Housing Act 2004 to look to compel a landlord to carry out works, the recent remediation order granted in favour of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (represented by Walker Morris) highlights that it can be a powerful enforcement tool available to local authorities where previous notices served by a local authority have not been complied with.

THE REMEDIATION ENFORCEMENT SUPPORT FUND

To ensure safety and compliance, the Government has introduced a fund aimed at supporting local authorities to address critical building safety issues, the Remediation Enforcement Support Fund.

The application process for the fund is divided into two stages, and it is strongly recommended that local authorities seek legal advice to ensure their applications are legally sound. Local authorities risk missing out on necessary funds to address critical remedial issues if they are not legally sound.

This initiative helps address a previous barrier local authorities faced in providing them with funds to pursue a remediation order application. In the past, they would have been required to source this independently.



Remediation orders are vital for improving building safety and accountability in the UK, addressing past failures while ensuring building owners, developers, or landlords bear responsibility for remediation

FUNDING ELIGIBILITY & OPTIONS

Local authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities in England are eligible to apply for support in specific building safety legal cases that meet defined criteria, such as addressing building defects that pose a risk of fire spread. The decision to apply must be independently made by the LAs and FRAs, as the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will not provide guidance or advice.

Two funding options are available to local authorities to support building safety legal cases. Option one offers up to £5,000 for initial legal advice from

The Government has introduced a fund aimed at supporting local authorities to address critical building safety issues: the Remediation Enforcement Support Fund

third-party professionals to assess the feasibility of a claim, such as determining if there is a strong case or who is responsible for remediation. This funding is provided as a lump sum. Option two provides up to £100,000 for third-party expert services to actively pursue the legal case, such as hiring legal experts to file and argue the case, with payments reimbursed quarterly in arrears. The local authorities themselves must cover any additional costs exceeding these funding limits.

The application window for the Remediation Enforcement Support Fund opened in December 2024 and will close in February 2026, providing regulators with over a year to submit their applications.

Both funding options are available for buildings in England that are over 11 metres (or five storeys) high and contain at least two dwellings, with safety defects that pose a fire risk. The building must also be one that the local authority has independently chosen to pursue based on previous assessment/enforcement work.

SUMMARY

The introduction of the Remediation Enforcement Support Fund marks a step forward in supporting local authorities to ensure that unsafe cladding is addressed. By providing financial support and empowering local authorities with stronger legal tools, the initiative aims to overcome the challenge of a funding shortfall to commence proceedings. With the target of remediating all unsafe buildings by 2029, this approach reinforces a commitment to ensuring residents' safety and holding landlords accountable for their responsibilities.

Lewis Couth is real estate team partner at Walker Morris



Reducing carbon in steel construction

With increasing pressure from central government and local authorities to minimise the carbon emissions and environmental impact of construction projects, voestalpine Metsec has introduced a reduced carbon steel option for its renowned light gauge steel construction solutions, including the pre-panellised loadbearing solution, Metframe, SFS, Purlins and its range of internal non-loadbearing stud, track and MF ceilings.

Branded Metsec Decarb, the steel is produced in new, state of the art electric arc furnaces and is a true move towards a reduced carbon future for the construction industry, containing less than half the amount of carbon dioxide per tonne for the same quality of steel.

Andy Hackett, general manager of voestalpine Metsec's Dry Lining Division, states: "Together with our commitment to Net Zero Carbon operations by 2035, Metsec Decarb underlines our commitment to providing specifiers, developers and clients with a very real opportunity to reduce a project's carbon footprint and enhance its sustainability credentials.

"Metsec Decarb is a bona fide lower embodied carbon steel. It does not rely on greenwashing, carbon offsetting, allocation of green energy or mass balance approach to achieve this, providing real peace of mind for the designer."



voestalpine Metsec construction systems and products are backed by comprehensive verified manufacturer statements and Environmental Product Declarations, which

can be included in the final project's carbon assessments.

metsec.SFS@voestalpine.com www.metsec.com



BUILDING INSIGHTS

A PODCAST FOR THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY
LISTEN AT [INSIGHTS.NETMAGMEDIA.CO.UK/PODCASTS](https://insights.netmagmedia.co.uk/podcasts)



A future driven by data

As the UK Government confronts a colossal £49bn maintenance backlog, Ryan Donoghue of AJ Digital explores how 'retrospective digitisation' aligned with digital twin technology can revolutionise building management and prevent future problems.



Retrospective digitisation offers a powerful solution for tackling the maintenance backlog, but it's equally important to introduce proactive strategies to prevent future problems from accumulating – and it all starts with standardised digital information.

Traditionally, building maintenance has relied heavily on fragmented, incomplete and sometimes paper-based documentation. As a result, floor plans, maintenance schedules and asset information are often scattered across physical files, making it difficult to access, update and share critical data. This lack of centralised, readily available information has over time created a significant barrier to efficient maintenance planning and execution.

The National Audit Office (NAO) report suggests that the true backlog is likely to be even higher than reported due to a lack of standardised data. This issue is prevalent across our industry, meaning it is difficult to quantify maintenance requirements, costs or benefits across portfolios. This also means that building owners and operators are unable to respond efficiently in situations such as recalls on unsafe products.

Retrospective digitisation bridges this gap by transforming existing records into a standardised, accessible digital format for Operation and Maintenance Manuals and Health and Safety files. This process can be taken further by carrying out laser scanning, a technology which creates a highly accurate 3D point cloud of the building, capturing its existing geometry and layout.

Such a centralised digital platform facilitates seamless communication and collaboration between maintenance teams, building occupants and external contractors, because all stakeholders always have access to the latest information, ensuring everyone is on the same page.

This can be taken further again by generating detailed 3D models using the

laser scan data, providing a virtual object-based representation of the building. Existing building documents, maintenance records and asset information can then be integrated with the 3D model, creating the basis for a comprehensive digital twin.

With an accurate digital model, maintenance teams can then plan renovations, upgrades, and repairs with greater accuracy. Clash detection software can further identify potential conflicts between existing building elements and planned modifications, minimising rework and delays.

A digital twin serves as a virtual replica of the physical building, offering a wealth of benefits for maintenance and operations. It provides a clear and comprehensive view of the entire building, enabling facility managers to identify potential issues, prioritise maintenance needs and allocate resources effectively.

By analysing historical maintenance data and building usage patterns, the digital twin can also predict potential equipment failures and recommend proactive maintenance interventions. This data-driven approach minimises downtime and optimises maintenance costs. In addition, the digital twin provides a platform for running simulations and analysing various maintenance scenarios. This allows facility managers to make informed decisions based on real-time data and projected outcomes.

ALIGNING WITH SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

It is interesting to see that the NAO report highlights the Government's commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050. A digital twin can significantly contribute to this goal by enabling energy modelling and performance analysis. This is a process where the digital model can be used to simulate the impact of different energy-saving measures, such as

Retrospective digitisation plays a vital role by analysing historical maintenance

upgrading HVAC systems or installing renewable energy sources. This data-driven approach helps identify the most effective strategies for reducing energy consumption.

By integrating sensor data with the digital twin, facility managers can also monitor usage patterns and identify potential inefficiencies. This allows for targeted interventions to reduce waste.

AJ Digital has always put these kinds of processes into practice. Our recent work with a leading co-working company, illustrates the transformative power of retrospective digitisation. Our client faced challenges with an outdated building infrastructure, inefficient climate control systems and a lack of readily available building data.

Our solution involved laser scanning existing buildings to create accurate 3D models, developing a digital twin platform for centralised data management and implementing digital O&M manuals and health and safety files to deliver streamlined operation.

This approach enabled our client to simplify renovation planning with precise 3D models, improve operational efficiency with digital manuals and readily accessible data and make data-driven decisions for optimising energy and water usage.

Addressing the Government's current maintenance backlog is crucial, but it's equally important to implement proactive strategies to prevent future backlogs from accumulating.

Retrospective digitisation can play a vital role in this by analysing historical maintenance data and identifying recurring issues. This proactive approach minimises downtime, extends the lifespan of building assets and reduces overall maintenance costs.

The digital twin will also enable facility managers to conduct lifecycle cost analyses for various building components and systems. This analysis helps determine the most cost-effective maintenance strategies over the long term,



considering factors such as repair costs, replacement costs and energy efficiency.

When considering building upgrades or renovations, the digital twin will further provide a platform for evaluating different options and their potential impacts. For example, the model can be used to simulate the impact of energy-efficient upgrades on energy consumption and operating costs.

THE FUTURE OF BUILDING MANAGEMENT

All this means that the future of building management lies in a data-driven approach, where digital twins serve as the central hub for all building information. By using the power of data and technology, we can transform how we maintain, operate and manage our built environment.

Advancements in artificial intelligence and machine learning will also enable predictive analytics capabilities, allowing for even more accurate predictions of equipment failures and proactive maintenance interventions in the future.

The NAO report serves as a stark reminder of the critical need to address the growing maintenance backlog in public sector buildings – and we can see that retrospective digitisation offers a powerful solution for tackling this challenge, and transforming building management practices.

Ryan Donoghue is head of digital engineering at AJ Digital

'Fabric First' principles should be applied to water usage

Fabric First' is a practice recognised in the building industry, to improve the energy efficiency performance of homes.

Historically, the environmental impact of water usage has been largely ignored. However recent environmental concerns and energy costs have highlighted the link between water and the environment. The recent surges in energy prices have focused attention on the cost.

Heidi Mottram, CEO of Northumbrian Water highlighted the fact that on average 25% of energy used in the home is to heat water. While water efficient appliances, i.e. dishwashers and washing machines, can reduce domestic water and energy usage, much of this hot water used in 'time critical' usage e.g. taking a shower or running the tap to rinse dishes.

To date, much of the water industry's focus has been on adapting customer behaviour. However, Britain's grey sky and regular rainfall

makes it harder to embed behaviour change. A change in the 'fabric' of the water network may be the solution.

Our water companies are regulated to provide a minimum standard of pressure and flow of water, but in many areas due to network structure and gravity fed systems supply is much greater. So, run a hose for five minutes at the bottom of the hill, and your lawn will be greener than the gardener that does the same at the top. These 'time controlled' uses could be reduced if all households received the same acceptable, 'standardised' supply.

Groundbreaker's NRv2 LoFlo/E is a surprisingly simple method of working towards current water usage reduction targets. NRv2 LoFlo/E regulates the level of flow entering customer premises – regardless of network pressure, meaning a reduction in the level of water used by customers when 'variable use' appliances are used. As the flow of water into the premises is limited, then the amount used by the customer is also limited – but without providing a degradation of service, and more importantly not requiring any intervention or behavioural change on the part of the customer, leading to 'natural' reduction in per capital consumption.

The NRv2 LoFlo/E can be easily and simply fitted to any meter installation or retrofitted on meter exchange or when upgrading or remediating underground meter chambers.



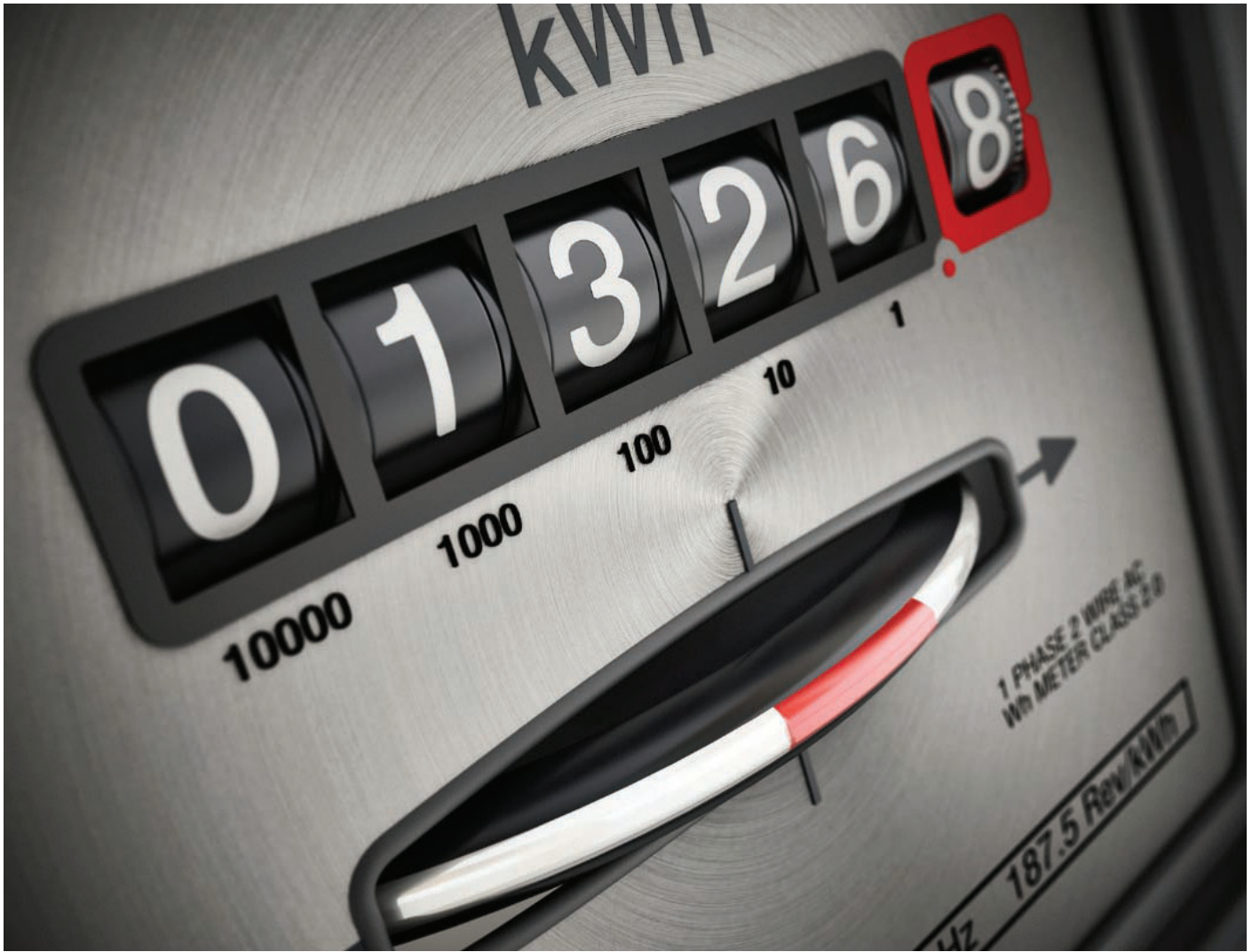
Allowing water providers to manage demand with little or no impact on consumers and at minimal cost to the water undertakers.

'A simple solution at approximately £20 per household, fitted on the normal meter exchange/upgrade cycle could achieve in excess of 20% of consumption reduction targets in 10 years.'

A number of flow modulation ranges are available which enable the perfect balance between usage reduction and service provision. As an added benefit, the NRv2 LoFlo/E can also provide whole site protection against contamination by back flow – effectively a three-in-one solution.

01379 741993 www.groundbreaker.co.uk





An electric shock

David Barrett of EHC discusses the major change coming in June which will affect over 900,000 electricity meters in UK homes with night storage heaters, and what this means for landlords.

The Radio Teleswitch Service (RTS) is a nationwide system that has allowed electricity suppliers to remotely control when meters switch between peak and off-peak tariffs. This has enabled the use of economy 7 tariffs, where electricity is cheaper during the night when demand is lower.

However, the RTS infrastructure is now being decommissioned on 30 June and the service will no longer be available. Meters that currently rely on RTS to access off-peak tariffs will need to be upgraded to smart meters in order to continue benefiting from cheaper night-time electricity rates.

If tenants don't arrange to have a smart meter installed, they will be stuck on the more expensive peak electricity tariff 24 hours a day. This could lead to a significant increase in their heating and hot water costs, especially for those using night storage heaters or off-peak immersion heaters.

As a housing provider, this change presents both challenges and opportunities and you have a responsibility to ensure your tenants have access to affordable and reliable heating. The end of the RTS poses two key challenges that you'll need to address, as follows:

- **Tenant engagement:** You'll need to proactively communicate with your tenants about the upcoming changes and encourage them to have smart meters installed before the RTS service ends. Many tenants may be unaware of the implications, so raising awareness will be key.
- **Smart meter availability:** Unfortunately, smart meters rely on mobile phone signals to operate, and in some areas, the coverage may be poor. This could prevent some tenants from being able to have a smart meter installed, leaving them stuck on the more expensive peak tariff.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MODERNISATION

While the end of the RTS presents challenges, it also creates opportunities for housing providers to modernise their tenants' heating and hot water systems. By being proactive, you can help your tenants avoid higher energy bills and improve the energy efficiency of your properties.

One option is to upgrade night storage heaters to modern heat retention radiators. These highly efficient heaters do not rely on off-peak tariffs, so they

can be used with older RTS meters. This could be a good solution for tenants who are unable to have a smart meter installed.

Heat retention radiators feature a state-of-the-art controller that allows for easy manual or wireless temperature and time control. These intelligent temperature control systems are designed to reduce energy bills and maximise controllability. The heat-retentive stones inside the radiator first warm up, then distribute heat across the front surface and channel it upwards, quickly warming the surrounding air while also providing radiant heat.

For hot water heating, you could look at replacing older hot water cylinders with new, energy-efficient models, or consider installing zero-carbon electric boilers to provide hot water without the need for off-peak tariffs.

SEEK SUPPORT & ADVICE

As you navigate these changes, it's important to seek support and advice from experts in the field. Companies can provide guidance on upgrading heating



While the end of the RTS presents challenges, it also creates opportunities for housing providers to modernise their tenants' heating and hot water systems

systems, as well as information on the latest energy-efficient technologies and funding opportunities that may be available.

By working proactively to address the end of the Radio Teleswitch Service, you can help ensure your tenants continue to have access to affordable and reliable heating, while also improving the overall energy efficiency of your properties.

David Barrett is CEO at Electric Heating Company (EHC)



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Secure specifications

As housing security needs evolve, Rhys McNichol of Videx Security highlights the importance of investing in high-quality, professionally installed systems over less reliable, lower cost alternatives.

In the housing industry, the demand for high-quality, professionally installed and maintained security systems is paramount. As security and door entry technology evolves, ensuring that systems effectively protect both properties and residents becomes increasingly challenging. The market is flooded with inexpensive, mass-produced security products that, while appealing due to their low cost and flashy features, often lack the reliability and durability necessary for long-term protection.

THE RISKS OF LOW-COST SECURITY SOLUTIONS

Opting for low-cost, off-the-shelf security solutions can pose significant risks. These products are often manufactured with minimal quality control, leading to dangerous vulnerabilities such as system failures, false alarms and susceptibility to cyber attacks.

What's more, these systems may not comply with industry standards, such as SecuredByDesign, the official UK police security initiative that aims to enhance the security of buildings and their immediate surroundings, which could potentially lead to legal and insurance complications.

The initial savings from purchasing a cheaper system can quickly be outweighed by the costs associated with system malfunctions, frequent maintenance and premature replacements. In essence, what seems like a cost-effective choice often turns into a false economy.

THE VALUE OF PROFESSIONAL INSTALLATION & MAINTENANCE

Professionally installed and maintained security systems offer a stark contrast to their low-cost counterparts. These systems are designed with a focus on reliability, longevity and compliance with industry standards. Professional installers possess the expertise to assess a property's unique security needs and implement a system tailored to address specific vulnerabilities.

Additionally, professional systems often come with ongoing maintenance and support services, ensuring that any issues are promptly addressed and that the system remains up-to-date with the latest security features. This proactive approach minimises the risk of system failures and extends the lifespan of the equipment.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS IN PROFESSIONAL SECURITY SYSTEMS

The security industry has seen significant technological advancements in recent years, particularly in IP-based intercom systems and GSM door entry and access control offerings. Cloud-based solutions now allow housing providers to manage access remotely, reducing the need for onsite interventions. These advancements not only enhance security but also offer greater convenience and efficiency in managing property access.

When considering security system investments, housing providers should engage with reputable brands that have a proven track record in producing specialised security products. They should also choose systems known for their reliability and value, even if they come at a higher initial cost, to avoid higher maintenance and replacement expenses in the future. User accessibility is also key – the system must be user-friendly for all residents, including the elderly and disabled. Solutions that are adaptable for future developments and upgrades should also be a priority as this ensures that the manufacturer will continue to support the product for years to come.

A notable example is a large Scottish housing association that partnered with Videx to upgrade the access control system across multiple properties. The project involved installing a GSM solution that required no access to



individual dwellings, significantly reducing installation time and inconvenience for residents. Calls from the communal entrance panel were routed directly to residents' phones, allowing them to grant access from anywhere. This system not only enhanced security and convenience but also streamlined access management for the housing association, ensuring a cost-effective and sustainable security upgrade.

THE ROLE OF SECURITY PROFESSIONALS IN INDUSTRY EDUCATION

Security professionals have a crucial role in educating the housing sector about the importance of investing in robust security solutions. By demonstrating how reliable systems reduce unauthorised access, improve tenant safety and minimise costly repairs, professionals can guide housing associations toward making informed decisions. Hosting onsite security assessments and providing training for housing staff further ensures that security investments are properly utilised and maintained.

In an era where security threats are continually developing, investing in high-quality, professionally installed and maintained security systems is paramount for the housing industry. While low-cost alternatives may offer immediate financial appeal, they often fall short in providing the comprehensive protection that modern housing developments and commercial properties require. By partnering with trusted, experienced providers, housing associations can ensure the safety and satisfaction of their residents, safeguarding both people and properties for the long term.

Rhys McNichol is projects manager UK & Ireland at Videx Security

Registration is now live for InstallerSHOW 2025

InstallerSHOW - 24-26 June 2025, NEC Birmingham - is leading the charge towards sustainable building and retrofitting with the launch of InstallerBUILD in 2025.

InstallerBUILD will tackle the key issues of building sustainably and retrofitting our buildings, encouraging collaboration between trades and specifiers as we head towards Net Zero and a more sustainable built environment.



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The HAUS, a full scale two-storey house build, will serve as the heartbeat of InstallerBUILD, surrounded by manufacturers and suppliers who share the vision to showcase sustainability and shine a light on innovation.

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The Geobear logo is positioned in the top right corner of the image. It features the word "geobear" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font with a unique, rounded style. The background of the entire top half of the advertisement is a brick wall with a white outline of a house. A vertical crack runs through the center of the house outline, and three green rectangular patches are placed within the house's walls, representing the repair process.

Subsidence repair without relocating tenants

Structural movement due to subsidence is a major headache for Housing Associations and Local Councils. In many cases, the cost of alternative accommodation is greater than the repair itself.

Using Geobear's geopolymer injection method to resolve subsidence and minimise structural movement reduces the complexity and cost. Importantly, the impact on tenants is negligible with them remaining in their homes whilst repairs are conducted.

Improve lives, reduce costs, save environment

- **No alternative accommodation costs**
- **Maintain standard of living for tenants**
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* Carbon Footprint Ltd produced a report concluding Geobear solutions release 53% less emissions than alternative methods

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The Geobear logo is repeated in the bottom right corner, featuring the word "geobear" in its characteristic white, lowercase, sans-serif font.