

APRIL/MAY 2025

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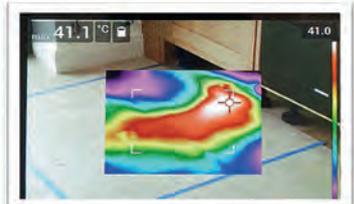
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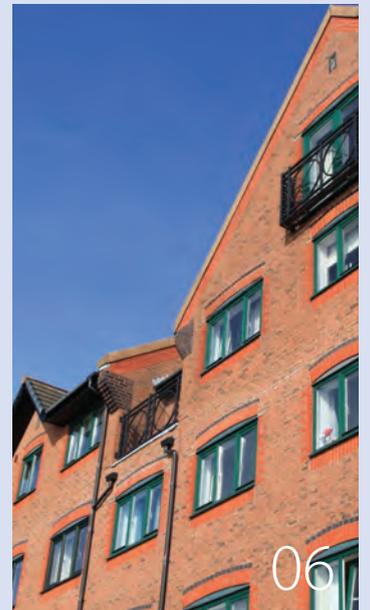
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Editor's Comment



Hello and welcome to your bi-monthly round up of the key issues and innovations for professionals managing social housing portfolios. We aim to cover the major issues they face – but also the solutions – which is why we picked arguably their most critical current issue to home in on for *HMM's* recent inaugural live industry round table.

We have run several in-depth, sponsored 'Building Insights LIVE' discussions for the other construction sector titles we publish, but this is the first time we have gathered a group of delegates together from the social housing sphere. And we chose the upcoming Social Housing (Regulation) Act, including Awaab's Law which is due this October, as the subject for this important discussion.

Excellently chaired by the forthright Matt Baird (of Spring Housing Association, and who also runs his own social housing specialist recruitment agency), the round table focused on the possible solutions for Healthy Homes, as much as the problems. The inescapable legacy of Awaab Ishak's death in 2020 hung over the event, truly a tragic episode and one that arguably had a similar impact to Grenfell in this sphere. It brought a new level of focus to the importance of addressing poor air quality in social homes, and how cultural sensitivities may sometimes need to be carefully balanced with the need to urgently address problems in buildings and with tenants.

As we report in this issue (on page 15), the round table heard how real-time updates on properties' condition could be, and should be provided, using IT and possibly even AI to help, including 'Internet of Things' methodologies. However, advanced approaches such as 'digital twin' 3D digital models of homes – the ultimate in real-time monitoring, diagnosis and possibly treatment, are going to be out of reach for most authorities' budgets.

More relevant now is educating both workforces and tenants on the realities of damp and mould, and best practice on how they need to be controlled, if not eradicated.

James Parker

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On the cover...

The rental sector is undergoing rapid transformation, driven by legislative reform, rising tenant demand, and growing corporate investment. Andy Jones of Leaders Romans Group explores the challenges and opportunities ahead. See page 06.



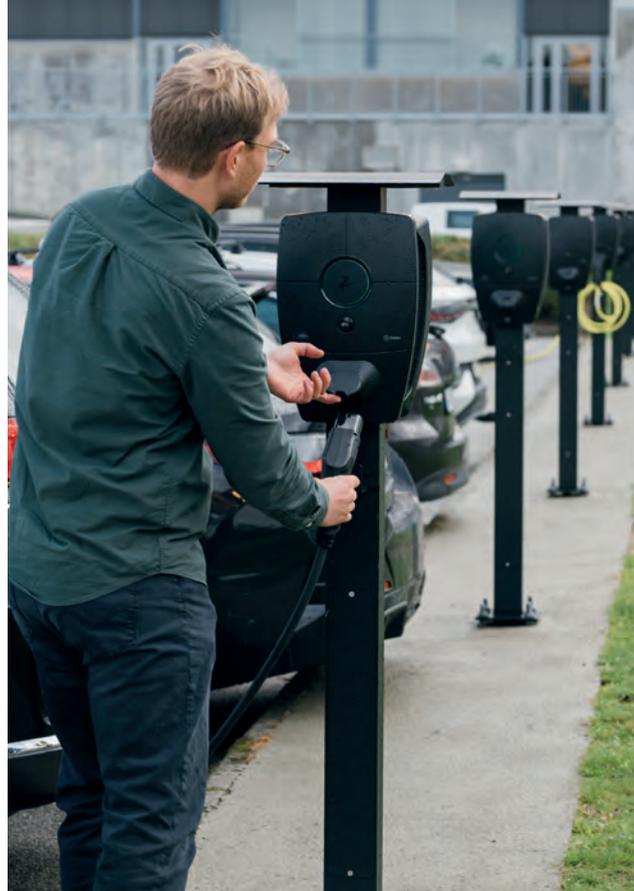


Navigating the EV Charging Revolution: A Guide for Housing Providers

As the UK races towards its net-zero goals, housing providers face a critical challenge: how to efficiently and cost-effectively provide EV charging for residents. With the impending ban on new petrol and diesel cars, the time to act is now. But what should you consider when choosing an EV charging solution?

Understanding the Unique Challenges

Housing providers, especially those managing multi-unit dwellings, face distinct hurdles. They may be limited by existing electrical capacity; face high installation or retrofitting costs; be concerned with access for all residents; or concerned about ongoing management and maintenance. Many of these challenges can be overcome by working with a charge point provider that understands the specific needs of housing suppliers.



10 considerations for housing providers when choosing an EV charging provider:

- ✎ **Funding & Grants** - Available through the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV), significantly reduce install cost and deployment times.
- ✎ **Fully funded deployment models**: Explore options available from Zaptec partners.
- ✎ **Intelligent Power Load Balancing**: Utilise capacity efficiently, e.g. 30 chargers on a single circuit, and contact the Distributed Network Operator in advance to help assess grid capacity.
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- ✎ **User-Friendly and easy management**: Intuitive user experience, such as easy to use apps for charge scheduling. Manage your charging portfolio with the Zaptec Portal.
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COMMENT

Embracing positive change

The rental sector is undergoing rapid transformation, driven by legislative reform, rising tenant demand, and growing corporate investment. Andy Jones of Leaders Romans Group explores the challenges and opportunities ahead.

A radical transformation is occurring in the rental sector. A significant increase in corporate investment is creating new opportunities, while changes in regulation and legislation, not least the Renters' Rights Bill, are posing some new challenges.

THE ROLE OF POLICY AND POLITICAL CHANGE

The new legislation, introduced in September 2024, builds on the draft legislation introduced in the last Parliament.

The previous legislation (the Conservative government's Renters' Reform Bill) did not make it onto the Statute Book, but had already made considerable progress through Parliament at the time of the general election. The work which preceded it – the white paper A Fairer Rented Private Sector and the consultation A Decent Homes Standard in the private rented sector – can be seen to have influenced today's Renters' Rights Bill.

At Leaders Romans Group we work with a wide range of landlords – from individual landlords who own a single investment property, to

institutional investors, who operate larger-scale investments across many geographic locations within the UK and of course in the growing Build to Rent (BTR) sector.

So we see the pressures of changing market conditions and imminent legislation across the sector. And while we are strongly in favour of high standards in health and safety, security of tenancies and fair rents, we see a major problem facing the sector as being one of supply and demand.

CHANGING TENANT PROFILES

According to the English Housing Survey, the number of households renting privately has increased by 93% in the last 15 years, while the number of owner-occupied households has grown by just 3%. The increased number of renting is not solely linked to mortgage rates or the economy, but is part of a longer term trend which also responds to the preference among younger generations for more flexibility. The same survey shows a new tenant demographic emerging: the number of renting households with dependent children has doubled since 2003/4, making up 30% of the sector and the

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number of 'comfortable renters' (middle-class & well-off) is expanding too, representing 44% of the rental sector.

The lack of supply to meet increased demand (coupled with inflation) has driven up prices. According to the ONS, average private rents in England increased by 8.5% in the 12 months to September 2024 and are now £1,336.

At the same time, the stock of homes for rent is down. According to Zoopla's Rental Market Report: September 2024, there is an average of 21 people competing for every rental property, more than double pre-pandemic levels.

THE GROWTH OF CORPORATE INVESTMENT

In the last five years, we have seen a substantial increase in 'professional' institutional investment in residential property investment, specifically Build to Rent (BTR). Surveyed in 2022, 70% global institutional investors stated that they anticipated being active in the suburban BTR market within the next five years: a substantial increase from the 42% currently active.

This intention is borne out in recent analysis by the British Property Federation (BPF) which shows that the Build to Rent (BTR) pipeline, which includes completed homes, those currently under construction and those in various stages of planning, now stands at over 273,700 units. It grew by 5% in the past year and the total number of completed units has now surpassed 120,000 units: a growth of 23% in completed stock over the past 12 months.

And BTR is no longer limited geographically. Completed homes in London reached 51,500 in Q3 2024, and the regions surpassed London, at 69,000 homes. Growth in the regions, at 31%, outpaced London by 13%.

And so the BTR suburban community has evolved. Providing desirable homes for families in fully-functioning serviced communities, this new product – which offers growing families considerable flexibility and a wide

range of options for a stress-free lifestyle, is undoubtedly the division of the property sector in which we will see the greatest growth over the next decade. The emergence of this sector of the market is described in our white paper BTR suburban communities: the next stage in the evolution of Build to Rent.

NEW SERVICES TO SUPPORT THE PROFESSIONAL LANDLORD

As the sector becomes more professionalised, new services are emerging to support these changes, particularly in terms of property investment and management. Platforms such as those offered by LRG are designed to streamline the property investment process, providing comprehensive support to investors, from market insights and property analysis to secure transactions and real-time data. Centralising these functions enables landlords (both individuals and corporate investors) to save time, reduce complexity and make more informed decisions.

Additionally, the focus on security and efficiency is paramount. By integrating features such as two-factor authentication (2FA) and encrypted document sharing, platforms ensure that transactions are secure, and user data is protected. This is especially important for professional landlords who are managing large portfolios and dealing with significant financial transactions.

A POSITIVE FUTURE FOR THE RENTAL SECTOR

The speed by which BTR is evolving suggests that the drastic shortage of rental properties will continue to lessen.

And while these changes will undoubtedly help 'professionalise' the sector, this is not the result of the emerging legislation: it is in spite of it. New models of BTR have evolved because of the high standards – environmental, social and governmental (ESG) along with financial transparency and insistence on a quality product – instigated by investors and developers.

The rental sector is carving a positive future for itself, one which must be supported by policy, not penalised by it. Fortunately, we have moved on from the politics of the previous Secretary of State, who declared: 'We need to shrink the private rented sector and get more people owning their own home.'

A combination of privately owned homes supplied by responsible individual landlords, complemented by increased institutionally-owned BTR units, is vital to meeting unprecedented demand.

Andy Jones is group director, corporate (investment sales, lettings & BTR) at Leaders Romans Group



"The rental sector is carving a positive future for itself, one which must be supported by policy, not penalised by it"

Andy Jones of Leaders Romans Group

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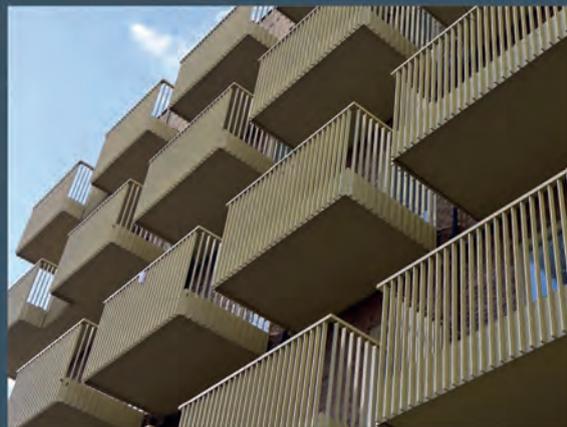
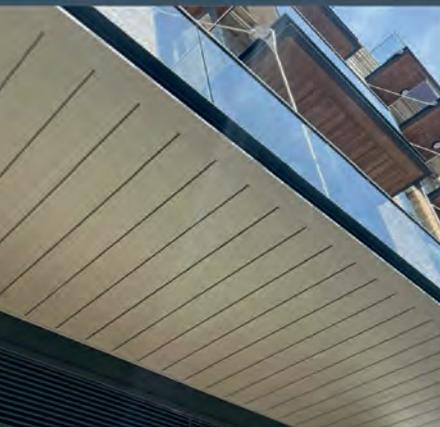


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LANDLORD LATEST



Platform Housing Group

Since 1967, Platform Housing Group has put a strong focus on providing affordable, safe homes – serving over 120,000 people since forming. With 2,000 dedicated colleagues, COO Marion Duffy explains how Platform is building a truly modern, customer-focused HA that’s fit for the future.

Platform Housing Group, established in 1967, provides homes for more than 120,000 people across the Midlands – spanning from Herefordshire to the Lincolnshire coast, and from the Derbyshire Dales to the Cotswolds. The organisation manages approximately 50,000 homes and employs around 2,000 colleagues who deliver locally-focused housing services.

Their portfolio includes homes for social and affordable rent, shared ownership, supported housing, extra care schemes, and retirement living across the region.

‘A TRULY MODERN HOUSING ASSOCIATION’

In April 2021, Platform Housing Group launched a five-year corporate strategy aimed at becoming a truly modern housing association. This strategy built on the strengths of its legacy organisations and set out to create a unified entity capable of meeting the evolving needs of customers and communities.

Since then, the sector has faced ongoing external challenges including the fallout from Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, rising energy costs, inflation, and the impact of climate change. Alongside these pressures, new legislation and regulatory reforms have further shaped the organisation’s operations.

In early 2023, we identified five key priority areas to focus on for the remainder of the strategy period:

- Improving customer services, including a reduction in complaints, compensation and an increase in customer satisfaction;
- Investment in existing homes, including the move to EPC ‘C’ and carbon neutral targets;
- Compliance in relation to requirements from the Regulator of Social Housing and other legislative and statutory expectations;
- Completion of our transformation processes;
- Employee retention, engagement and wellbeing.

COMMITMENT TO WELLBEING

At Platform Housing Group, we place a strong emphasis on supporting the wellbeing and engagement of customers and offer services including:

- Financial and employment advice
- Wellbeing and hardship funds
- Domestic abuse and safeguarding support
- Anti-social behaviour guidance
- Energy-saving and cost-of-living advice
- Winter warmth advice

We place customer voice at the centre of our operations, recognising that meaningful engagement is crucial for delivering the services residents expect and deserve. Customers play an active role in influencing and shaping services, helping the organisation identify what's working well and where improvements can be made.

There are several ways for customers to get involved, including:

- Customer Voice Panel
- Complaints Reviewers
- Digital Champions
- Scrutiny Panel
- Community Representatives
- Co-Creation Groups
- Customer Sounding Board
- Estate Inspectors

These roles ensure that the diverse perspectives of our customer base are reflected in service delivery and future planning.

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

We continue to invest in its communities through initiatives that deliver long-term social value. Our annual 'Christmas Kindness' campaign is a prime example, with the 2024 effort allocating £82,135 to grassroots projects and organisations that make a tangible difference in local lives. Highlights include:

SUPPORTING MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH AT LOUTH'S MEN SHED

We supported Louth's Men Shed in Lincolnshire, a safe and creative space where men can connect, combat isolation and improve their mental health. This initiative is vital in fostering a sense of belonging and purpose.

REMEMBERING THROUGH ART: THE SKEGNESS POPPY INSTALLATION

In collaboration with The Royal British Legion's Skegness branch, we funded a poignant poppy installation. This project united the community in remembrance, honouring the service and sacrifice of our armed forces.

PROVIDING SHELTER AT ST PAUL'S HOSTEL IN WORCESTER

Homelessness is one of society's most pressing challenges and one that we are keen to tackle. St Paul's offers safety, support and recovery for those facing homelessness, aligning with our mission of empowering communities. We have worked closely with St Paul's Hostel over the years, most recently teaming up with Worcester Community Trust to organise a Big Stew event in the hostel's kitchen.

TOYS ON THE TABLE

In Leicestershire, we supported Toys on the Table, a charity ensuring children wake up to a gift on Christmas morning. This volunteer driven organisation brings festive cheer to families in need making the holidays brighter for thousands.

FEEDING FAMILIES AT ASHBOURNE FOOD BANK

As the cost of living continues to rise, Ashbourne Food Bank continues to provide essential support to families. Through our campaign, we helped fund meals and Christmas gifts, offering a lifeline to those struggling during these challenging times.

BUILDING HOPE AT THE HUB IN ROSS ON WYE, HEREFORDSHIRE

The Hub in Ross on Wye provides a safe space and essential services to vulnerable individuals. Our support ensures their work continues to inspire



“As we look to the future, our focus remains firmly on delivering great customer experiences, maintaining strong performance, and investing in our homes and communities.”

Marion Duffy, chief operations officer at Platform Housing Group

and uplift the community, offering hope and practical assistance where it is most needed.

SUPPORTING VITAL COMMUNITY HUBS, CAFLO IN BIRMINGHAM

We provided crucial funding to the CAFLO Centre in Bromford and Hodge Hill, one of Birmingham's most deprived areas. Run by Community Actions for Local Opportunities – or CAFLO – the centre offers a lifeline to local residents with activities ranging from sports and leisure to food banks and mental wellbeing services. This partnership aims to create a warm, safe space that meets the community's needs, tackling unemployment and isolation while fostering a sense of togetherness.

ENHANCING RETIREMENT LIVING

Platform Housing Group has also invested in modernising its retirement living schemes. In 2024, Elizabeth Court Retirement Village in Lincolnshire underwent significant refurbishment to incorporate dementia-friendly and accessibility-enhancing design features – ranging from colour-coded floors and larger signage to automated doors and updated communal spaces.

Harling Court in Herefordshire similarly benefited from refreshed communal areas. In addition, 27 retirement sites have received upgraded alarm systems since April 2024, totaling a £1.2m investment to prepare for the national digital switchover. Each resident now has access to emergency pendants, with 24/7 monitoring and robust system back-up in place. Further alarm upgrades are also planned over the next 12 months.

FUTUREPROOFING OUR HOMES & SERVICES

Following the introduction of the Social Housing Act and resulting Consumer Standards, we have created a comprehensive action plan focused on the following priorities:

- Good quality data about all our homes;
- Robust health and safety assurance for our customers;
- Effective and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvement services;
- Recognising diverse needs and tailoring services appropriately;
- Providing customers with information about landlord services and performance;
- Having a fair allocations service;
- Working with partners to deal effectively with anti social behaviour, hate crime, safeguarding and domestic abuse;
- Responding effectively to and learning from complaints.

The aim of the Act was to improve the provision and regulation of social housing.

EMBRACING DIGITAL INNOVATION

At Platform Housing Group, we utilise both Microsoft Dynamics and a traditional integrated Housing Management System to report maintenance issues. Our customers can also log repairs directly via our self service portal on our website. Currently, we have an active project aimed at extending these self service facilities to include scheduling, changing and cancelling repair appointments.

This model – which is widely adopted by other housing associations – has proven to be the most effective and efficient method for reporting maintenance



requests to landlords. This operating model reflects a reactive approach based on a traditional service paradigm characterised by a break fix relationship with the customer. However, we are witnessing the emergence of predictive and prescriptive repair capabilities powered by cloud computing, IoT and machine learning AI models.

The long standing reactive 'break, fix, service' paradigm is gradually being supplemented, augmented and enhanced by a pre-emptive approach that is driven by innovation and customer demand. For instance, modern digital technologies now enable the prediction of issues such as damp and mould, boiler failure, over occupancy or fuel poverty. This seismic shift provides service providers with the opportunity to transform established ways of working, benefitting customers while reallocating reactive maintenance budgets to major works and planned investments. Additionally, the traditional vendors operating across the maintenance lifecycle are being disrupted by new entrants, accelerating the rate of change and transformation within forward thinking organisations.

At Platform, we have been early pioneers in advanced data governance, data management principles, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML) and Robotic Process Automation (RPA). Our work with AI and ML earned us the esteemed Housing Technology 2024 award, as well as being the winner at the Housing Innovation Awards 2024. This year we are finalists at the same conferences for further projects in this area. We are nominated for Best Digital Transformation, Best Digital Experience, Best Use of Data, Best Tec Partner and Most Innovative Approach to Tenant Communications. Our award entries highlight outstanding work in improving operations, repairs processing and repairs case management using Microsoft Dynamics and Power Platform. Over the past 12 months, the digitalisation and modernisation of our repairs logging and processing have delivered exceptional performance benefits across all key performance indicators, resulting in improved customer outcomes with customer satisfaction regularly exceeding targets.

Housing associations like ourselves are in a unique position to leverage the vast amounts of data we hold. With innovative thinking and a positive, adaptive culture, there is a real possibility of solving problems in a targeted and resource conscious manner. We have successfully used Machine Learning to identify customers at risk of becoming 'silent' and conducted hundreds of tenancy health checks, intervening where serious self neglect and isolation could have led to life threatening health issues. We have also deployed RPA to automate DWP Universal Credit checks and validations. Recently, we also used RPA to

implement Data Observability principles, providing robust assurances checking future rent charges which are merged onto rent increase letters as part of the annual rent uplift.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we look to the future, our focus remains firmly on delivering great customer experiences, maintaining strong performance, and investing in our homes and communities. One of our core priorities is to achieve and sustain a customer satisfaction level of 75% or higher in our transactional surveys. We are also working to reduce the number of complaints that escalate to Final Review by improving the quality and timeliness of our responses from the outset.

We recognise the importance of digital services in making it easier for customers to interact with us. That's why we are continuing to develop and improve our customer portal and mobile apps, ensuring they are user-friendly, efficient and accessible. Internally, we are investing in our people – every leader and manager across the Group will complete our in-house 'Leading for Results' programme. At the same time, we are embedding clear workforce planning across all teams to support our long-term growth and service delivery. A key ambition is for at least 70% of our colleagues to feel that our systems and processes genuinely support them in doing their jobs effectively.

Our commitment to investing in our homes is reflected in our plan to spend £171m over the next five years. Our development pipeline is structured to ensure sustainable growth, consisting of 40% land-led schemes, 50% strategic partnerships, and 10% Section 106 opportunities. We will continue to focus on providing efficient repairs and maintenance, aiming for an average response time of 12 days, underpinned by a robust gas replacement plan and guided by our Platform Standard design principles.

We're also committed to creating a more sustainable future. All of our existing homes will achieve EPC 'C' ratings by 2030, and we aim to generate £12m in social value as part of our wider contribution to the communities we serve. Financial resilience is another key area – we are targeting 'A' rated credit status and top quartile bond trading, alongside achieving value for money efficiencies throughout the organisation. Supporting all of this is our plan to create a dedicated data warehouse, enabling better insight, decision-making and delivery across our services as we continue to implement our core change programme.

Article by Marion Duffy, chief operations officer at Platform Housing Group

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Foundations for Healthy & Safe Housing: The Social Housing (Regulation) Act



The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 may have a somewhat clumsy title – due to its role creating a new regulatory framework on property maintenance – but another outcome of that is the Act being called the sector’s most significant reform in over a decade. Its passing was catalysed by the death of two-year old Awaab Ishak due to extreme mould in Rochdale social housing in 2020, but was in fact several years in the making. The resulting set of legislation gives new power to the Social Housing Regulator to deliver on the longstanding Healthy Homes agenda, focusing on housing safety including crucial aspects such as ventilation and air quality. This includes a new inspections regime for social landlords, and a new level of responsibility placed on them to ensure that their homes are healthy and safe.

The first part of the new Act’s secondary legislation to come into force is Awaab’s Law, due this October, comprising measures to prevent dangerous damp and mould occurring in social housing. This will include timeframes for landlords to deal with property ‘emergencies,’ i.e. severe damp and mould problems, and other hazards, but also requirements to work collaboratively with tenants to reach the goals.

Our recent, inaugural Building Insights LIVE round table for Housing Management and Maintenance, assessing the Act’s likely impact on the housing management and maintenance sector, was therefore well timed. Given the critical nature of the subject, we worked hard to assemble an informed yet diverse lineup, to thrash out the key issues and search for practical solutions in a lively session at London’s Institute of Directors, in March.

ROUND TABLE ATTENDEES

- Round Table Chair: Matt Baird, Co-Chair, Spring Housing / Baird & Co Recruitment
- Hony Premal, Chair, WISH (Women in Social Housing)
- Dr Douglas Booker, Lecturer in Indoor Air, University of Leeds
- Dr Hector Altamirano-Medina, Academic Director, UK Centre for Moisture in Buildings
- Billy Clifflen, Healthy Homes Manager, Riverside
- Andrew Burke, Deputy Secretary, NHMF
- Lee Reeve, Chief Innovation Officer, The Healthy Homes Hub & Halton Housing
- Sarah Garry, Chief Executive, Property Care Association
- Amy Bentall, Associate, Trowers & Hamblins LLP
- Dale Holroyd, Commercial Director, ZapCarbon
- Stephanie Goad, Chief Executive, Golding Homes

SPONSOR ATTENDEES

- David Bly, Cornerstone Management Services
- Luke Brooks, Senior Commercial Manager, Specialist Packed Products, Tarmac
- Ashley Welch, Pre-Contracts Manager, WMS Underfloor Heating





DIVERSE VIEWPOINTS

The panel came from all facets of the social housing spectrum, including housing associations, manufacturers, academics, associations and advocacy groups

“Contractors, landlords, customers, all need to work together as a partnership to solve this problem – it is our problem”

Hony Premlal, Women in Social Housing

The event was sponsored by three manufacturers from different strands of the supply chain, whose representatives also contributed valuable insights to the discussion. We are grateful to Tarmac, WMS Underfloor Heating and Cornerstone Management Services for their support, and to Luke Brooks, Ashley Welch, and David Bly for their respective contributions on behalf of their firms.

The discussion was expertly steered by our guest chair, Matt Baird, who also gave his perspectives from the sector as co-chair at Spring Housing Association. The panel looked at the strategies being employed by social landlords to not only comply with the Act but go beyond it, and rebuild trust dented by events like Grenfell and Rochdale. It also focused on the need for engagement between social landlords and tenants, and how better use of tech and data can effectively monitor living conditions, while causing less disruption.

Following industry research on Healthy Homes by *Housing Management & Maintenance* in 2024 and 2022, this discussion produced further essential learnings for social landlords, the supply chain, and anyone else interested in this crucial topic and pursuing best practice in future.

THE DISCUSSION

Discussing how the Act has changed the picture for landlords and tenants, the group put emphasis on the need for a collaborative approach to address damp and mould issues, with resident engagement a key priority. Delegates didn't shy away from the challenges of meeting new regulations such as skill shortages in the sector, and the need for a holistic approach to understand cultural factors and health inequalities as well as building issues.

Technology-based solutions such as using 'Internet of Things' connectivity and even 'digital twins' (3D digital models of existing homes) were highlighted as potential tools, but delegates pinpointed blockers including a lack of knowledge, and high associated costs. The discussion also touched on the need for better data management, and delved into solutions for how technology could best be deployed.

With several key representatives from the social housing world, the round table homed in on the real-world challenges and strategies. A key need expressed was for real-time updates on individual homes and residents to alert management to maintenance needs, the use of sensors and potentially AI and digital recognition for diagnosing problems, and an overall shift from mere compliance to holistic risk management. The lack of skilled professionals in HHSRAs was highlighted, as well as the key importance of learning from

failures, not just successes. Delegates also shared positive examples, and how resident satisfaction could be combined with cost savings, and highlighted a need for better knowledge sharing and collaboration among providers.

THE PROBLEM

Delegates generally accepted that the new regulations were a necessary and welcome thing. However, as David Bly from event sponsor Cornerstone Management Services told the panel, such measures were not the silver bullet for Healthy Homes. He said: “There are already a number of regulations in place, so why am I going out and seeing the same thing time and time again (in properties)?”

Bly added that he believed there was a problem around lack of knowledge in the sector on how to tackle damp and mould, and suggested that the first outcome of the new legislation would be that these shortcomings would simply be highlighted sooner, due to mistakes now being uncovered. He said there was a “disconnect” between the regulations and the behaviours of people “living or working in these buildings,” so that “even with Awaab's Law coming in, does it mean that we are going to make the same mistakes, but quicker?”

ISSUES OF TRUST

The round table agreed that tenant trust was a major issue – exacerbated by Grenfell and Rochdale, potentially reinforcing perceptions that landlords did not have their best interests at heart. Delegates raised long-standing issues around not only landlords entering properties, but also fears of being at risk of eviction if they were blamed for issues of damp and mould. The panel said it would take time to rebuild that trust, in the new Social Housing Act context.

Chair Matt Baird said several delegates had flagged to him that they were “still relying on tenants telling you when something's up,” but their mindset can be “don't complain to the landlord – they'll kick you out.” Baird said the sector relied on tenants feeling “they can tell us when something is wrong without there being repercussions on them.” While he accepted more ownership and accountability from landlords is required, tenants have to also take personal responsibility; “but that comes with education and acknowledgement, not you must do this, but giving the reasons why.”

Hony Premlal of Women in Social Housing (and ex-chair of Eldon Housing Association) said that in a climate of “lost trust,” the new Regulator introduced by the Act “had to bring meaningful change,” and praised the new legislation for bringing “accountability, transparency, and tenant involvement.” She however warned that it should “not be a tick box exercise to get compliance.”

The group agreed the Act was needed, Baird saying: “Something had to happen,” but added that with “huge demand on housing providers,” the “actual feasibility of putting it together is a whole another question.” He queried if failures are seen, whether it may be used as “another stick to beat housing providers with.”

Stephanie Goad from Golding Homes said that the Act was fundamental to a generally improving picture on Healthy Homes; from customers being “simply



WARNINGS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The round table chair Matt Baird (of Spring Housing) warned that the new Act could be used as “another stick to beat social housing providers with”

marginalised and ignored” in the sector previously, now engagement was vastly better. “We are talking about building safety [with tenants], making sure that the customers understand their buildings and what evacuation plan is in place. And they have been quite pleasantly shocked that we’re actually going out and making these efforts.”

SOLUTIONS

Potential solutions to issues of unhealthy homes, considering several potential causes including tenant lifestyles, were discussed by the panel. These ranged from IoT monitoring such as using sensors, to how to clean properties with mould, to tenant education.

Hony Premlal said that during Covid her housing association had installed IoT monitoring solutions due to the need to remote monitor properties, however a variety of issues emerged, of which one was the “massive cost for a small organisation.” In addition, she highlighted engagement with customers and tackling questions such as ‘why do I need a device in my home; are you checking up on me?’ She said housing officers needed to go and explain the rationale of the changes to tenants, as there was “a lot of resistance to putting those devices in.”

Premlal added that the volume of the data that resulted initially gave the HA a challenge of both understanding it, and different data systems not “talking to each other” in an efficient way. Fixing such issues was key to building partnerships and trust with customers, to “get them understanding the real need,” she said, particularly in the face of challenges such as cost of living and increased heating bills.

SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

The sponsors proposed questions to the group, beginning with David Bly of Cornerstone canvassing delegates on what they saw as being the main causes of damp and mould. He said that his firm was widely involved in educating tenants about the ramifications of drying clothes indoors, for example, and advocated an open, non-judgmental approach, setting out the issues clearly: “We try to change things using an approach of ‘did you know,’ i.e. did you know drying clothes indoors puts 4 litres of moisture into the air?”

Bly said that greater knowledge was also needed in the housing sector to correctly identify the causes, including distinguishing between damp and mould, and identifying more appropriate cleaning measures than a simple ‘wipe’. A holistic approach was essential: “There can be more than one symptom, so when you go in and fix one thing, are you really just ticking a small box?” He said this was often the case, and that most of the calls his firm had made were “ventilation related.”

However, he added that sometimes lifestyle issues were being painted as problems with the building: “if you get mould on your clothes in the cupboard or back of furniture, that’s nothing to do with the building. That’s not structural, that’s atmospheric.” Bly also cautioned against spraying mould with cleaning products, saying that this was likely to spread the problem, and instead

fungicides were advisable, but added “there’s no real defined knowledge here, in the form of guidance.”

Stephanie Goad countered by saying that when there was a “queue” of tenants waiting for remedies for their properties, there was pressure to “remove the hazard, while there may be a longer term structural solution.” She asked Bly whether the ‘mould wash’ approach was relevant in this common scenario, and he said that a “change of approach” was required, including getting the first companies on site [e.g. cleaners] to “gather information” such as via taking photos of mould before washing it off, so that the management body is “armed with the knowledge,” including on potential “patterns” which are being repeated in a property.

Sarah Garry said the Property Care Association had been facing a different challenge – from buildings themselves – whereby level thresholds, required for access in new builds, were “leading to damp and mould because they’re not properly waterproofed.” She said this was an example of the regulations “not talking to each other, and we want to do the right thing.” She also referred to the challenge to social housing organisation teams’ of needing to “make sure they know what they want,” in terms of managing Healthy Homes, such as “how much they want to outsource, and what level of knowledge does my team need?”

The bottom line of best practice is whether it can be objectively measured and verified, and the chair Matt Baird asked whether there was any specific accreditation on damp and mould treatment. (Without this, he said that managers “could speak to four or five different contractors, and every one would say something slightly different, making it very difficult to make an informed decision.”)

David Bly said generally, the answer was ‘no,’ and “the nearest we have is the Property Care Association, which has certified surveyors.” He added that there was no requirement for housing officers or managers to have qualifications on managing damp and mould, and cited examples of misguided refurbishments which had introduced damp and ventilation problems. He said “legal regulation” was needed “under a recognised body, so we can get a uniform approach.”

WMS Underfloor Heating posed the question of how the “indoor health benefits of underfloor heating could be brought to existing stock while tackling challenges like rehousing during retrofits or access refusal?” Billy Cliften of housing association Riverside said that while he saw underfloor heating as an “easy sell,” he wanted to know “what the specific cases are where it is going to work best, because, clearly, I’m not going to put this in everything.”

Ashley Welch of WMS admitted that “it’s not going to work in every home,” whereas “in new build, it’s very easy to put in.” Andrew Burke of the National Housing Maintenance Forum asked “what happens if people are turning the heating on and off, which is what a lot of people do? Does it work with the same efficiency?” Welch responded simply by saying “it’s about educating the users.”

Finally, Tarmac’s Luke Brooks asked: “With Awaab’s Law enforcing stricter response times for damp and mould issues, how can social landlords shift from reactive to preventative approaches?” Andrew Burke endorsed this strategy, and said: “The Housing Ombudsman has been making quite a push on the



fact that landlords need to get ahead of the curve; I think some are doing that.” He added that he had a “concern that a lot of the press and the Ombudsman generates is quite negative; the horror stories, because that’s what sells tabloids.” He advocated a more balanced approach, and encouraged “promotion of more of the good stuff; I think that would inspire people.”

Dale Holroyd of ZapCarbon said that a more preventative approach, including “mould-free property Key Performance Indicators” was preferred to a reactive one where “a lot of the focus is doing a survey, sending in contractors, getting the works done, closing the job, and repeating that cycle over and over again.” He advocated “having a standard within your organisation which actually tracks mould-free properties,” and also accepted there was a challenge of “all the moving parts you may deal with; a dozen different contractors, and potentially probably 200-300 repairs in 100 properties.” He concluded: “Everyone’s using different property management tools, and it’s very, very hard to actually track when repairs are completed, it’s just a constant moving target.”

Stephanie Goad of Golding Homes said that she liked the idea of ‘mould free KPIs,’ but said she “struggled with how we could get there with comprehensive data; in our stock condition surveys, we’ve got 96% that are five years or less, which is good, but that means most of my knowledge is going to be dated.” She added however that on the proactive front, Golding Homes is pursuing a ‘silent voices’ project to seek views from the “big cohort of customers we don’t hear from.” She added: “We might discover all sorts of stuff, but we’re going to proactively reach out to people.”

David Bly offered a final word on the importance of breathability in the building envelope, for achieving Healthy Homes, but that some modern buildings provided more issues than older homes in terms of air quality. He said that from being called out to properties following the 2007 floods, his firm had also been asked to investigate why some homes had a “moisture band a metre up a wall; it was because they can’t breathe.”

CONCLUSION: REDRESSING THE BALANCE

According to Stephanie Goad of Golding Homes, despite the Healthy Homes challenges revealed at our round table, there are also many examples of good practice that need celebrating: “There are a lot of issues, but there are also a lot of buildings which operate very well and customers having a healthy life. So I think we need to slightly redress the balance.”

Affordability of investing in the necessary technology, manpower and resident engagement will remain a major hurdle. Andrew Burke of the National Housing Maintenance Forum said that in the light of the upcoming Awaab’s Law legislation, “We need to try and help to manage expectations about what’s going to be affordable to deliver, and to what timescale.”

Generally, there was qualified positivity around the Act and the new regime for monitoring homes’ quality at our round table; Burke asserted however that with tenant trust having been “destroyed”, this would take time to rebuild. Collaboration, so often cited, but crucial to success here, was the key; as Hony Premal said: “Contractors, landlords, customers, all working together as a partnership to solve this problem – it is our problem.”

The event chair Matt Baird summed up the importance of the Building Insights LIVE round table, and celebrated the insights it generated: “To have a really wide mix of people around the table, I think there’s something there for anybody, be it a social landlord, be it government, or whoever, to kind of finally get chance to hear things from every perspective, and enable people to have those conversations, makes all the difference.”

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDUSTRY & GOVERNMENT

- **Billy Clifflen:** Help us be more strategic in defining what good looks like; there are brilliant ideas out there, but we need a strategic vision from the Government, that we can all align to.
- **Stephanie Goad:** Decent Homes is not a very high standard, so how within the bounds of affordability could we not have another race to the bottom, but create healthy homes?
- **Dale Holyroyd:** I don’t think that there’s a money problem, I think there’s a reactive maintenance problem; moving to a preventative model will pay for itself. We need the tools in place to allow landlords to model this, there needs to be some form of incentivisation.
- **Sarah Garry:** Looking at the building as a system is fundamental; landlords have lots of different regulations, and they don’t work together systemically. We need to think holistically about net zero, social issues, social issues, cost of living, health and well being, as well as our regulatory environment.
- **Douglas Booker:** Focus on the person-centered element; put effort into earning trust with residents, rebuilding some of those broken relationships. Technology has to be aligned with how people are actually living in these spaces.
- **Hony Premal:** It’s not about awarding penalties, it’s about raising standards, building trust; we need to see Government and housing come together to find a solution, and work with the people who are living in their homes.
- **Amy Bentall:** When Awaab’s Law comes into effect in October, we don’t want it to just be papering over the cracks. So can the language in the consultation be more specific about what landlords having to ‘fix the issue’ means?
- **Andrew Burke:** I’d like to see more promotion of solutions that work. We’ve gone through a phase where Government, the ombudsman, the regulator, and the media all wanted to name and shame.
- **Hector Altamirano-Medina** – Codesign is important; with our residents, but also with every single member of the institution, also education is key.
- **Lee Reeve:** We need a standardisation of property records; something like a car service log book.



Cornerstone at Foundations for Healthy and Safe Housing Round Table

12th March 2025, Institute of Directors

David Bly – Managing Director of Cornerstone Management Services Ltd, a company providing independent expert Property Health Surveys is proud to have sponsored this event with a number of key attendees available to discuss Property Health.

An overview of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act confirmed the importance of a new approach for Landlords to uphold safety for tenants and the delivery of healthy homes.

Determining whether the Act will achieve what the Social Housing White paper is set out to uphold will, in our opinion, deliver its intentions if a change in mindset is sought. This aligns to establishing a 'baseline' for our dwellings that fully recognises the existing building fabric, period, materials used and its geographical location because each aspect plays a part in establishing root causes of reported property health issues.

With a host of such causes and not a single defect, the journey to build trust commences with a greater understanding of the dwelling alongside the occupancy level. In

the absence of such, the current data and technology utilised today may not deliver Awaabs Law but moreover, could deliver the same problems within a shorter timeframe.

With many expert trades in a supply chain, the attendees confirmed there is likely to be more work needed to embrace all of them to uphold a synergistic approach. Trust is earned through delivering key services with a known impact of their intended delivery which unfortunately is not the case today.

A 'did you know' approach was mentioned as a key link to aiding the new journey and, as a recognised support mechanism for today's HHSRS assessments.

Each attendee shared their passion for achieving the same goals and, a positive overview of discussion inputs upheld the drive they have for improving our tenanted property industry sector.

David Bly
Managing Director
Cornerstone Management
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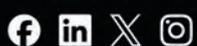
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24-26 June, NEC Birmingham

Connecting 30,000 industry professionals

InstallerSHOW is the UK's must-visit event focusing on sustainability in the built environment, bringing together more than 800 exhibitors and 30,000 visitors across three halls and three days at the NEC Birmingham in June 2025.

In addition to the wealth of technologies and services on show, including a raft of new product launches, InstallerSHOW incorporates multiple live content areas which offer an informative and engaging timetable featuring a roster of compelling hosts and speakers.

InstallerSHOW 2025 will include enhanced areas focusing on heating & plumbing, renewables, cooling, kitchens & bathrooms, surfaces, flooring & tiling, roofing, and tools & workwear, as well as new features such as InstallerELECTRIC and InstallerBUILD.

INSTALLERBUILD

InstallerSHOW is tackling the key issue of building sustainably and retrofitting buildings by launching InstallerBUILD at the 2025 event. Located in Hall 4, it is designed to foster collaboration between trades and specifiers as the industry heads towards net zero and a more sustainable built environment.

InstallerBUILD is the natural progression of the InstallerSHOW ethos of bringing industry communities together to work in tandem towards meeting shared goals – welcoming decision makers and influencers working on both commercial and residential buildings.

THE HAUS

InstallerBUILD will also feature The HAUS – a full scale two-storey house build. Designed by award-winning architects IF_DO and built using regenerative materials by Natural Building Systems, The HAUS will sit at the centre of InstallerBUILD, surrounded by manufacturers and suppliers who share the vision to showcase sustainability and shine a light on innovation.

The HAUS will be built using NBS's ADEPT integrated and demountable modular system to ensure it can be completed inside three days. ADEPT is designed for full adaptability and non-destructive disassembly to aid circularity and reuse. After InstallerSHOW, it will demonstrate its true capabilities through use in a real-world housing project.

Supplier partners on board include: A. Proctor Group, Abode, Ball & Young, Correla, Coram UK Holding, Classic Marble (Showers) Ltd, Egger Group, Fernox, FireAngel, Grant Westfield, Grundfos, Gutmann, Hager, Hafele, Jaga UK, Kitchen Link, NIBE Energy Systems, Parkside Architectural Tiles, Pro Tilers Tools, Theben, Triton, Spotnails, Solax Power, Sonas Bathrooms, Stevie Chargers, Voltsmart, Wienerberger.

INSTALLERROOFING

To support the rapidly growing solar market, Installer Roofing returns to the event. The zone will feature the latest in roofing, cladding, insulation and solar integration and visitors will get the opportunity to learn about cutting-edge insulation options that can save energy, reduce environmental impact, and ensure that their projects are sustainable.



From smart roofing systems to state-of-the-art installation techniques, InstallerSHOW will bring visitors the future of roofing technology and give practical guidance for installers keen to gain knowledge about the products and techniques that can help them grow their business, and stay ahead of the competition.

Roofing professionals can see tools and techniques up close as well as watch live demonstrations, see the latest products and solutions from exhibitors including: Marley, A Proctor Group, Weinerberger, Catnic, SIG Roofing, Hanson Plywood, Egger, Hableside Danelaw, Pentagon, Mapei, CT1, SR Timber, Langley, Swisspearl, Segen, FloPlast, Accuroof and Sandtoft.

INSTALLERTRADES

InstallerTRADES is InstallerSHOW's dedicated tools, workwear and van essentials zone, designed to give visitors the chance to see the latest products in action, and to hear about developments and launches from the leading brands in the sector. It has a dedicated home in Hall 3a of the NEC, alongside InstallerELECTRIC, and provides a focal point for tradespeople to meet with marquee brands, discover the latest products and technologies, and get hands-on with new innovations.

InstallerTRADES is about much more than just a run-of-the-mill trade show. It is an event within itself, putting tradespeople at the heart of an action-packed area designed to showcase everything the tools and workwear sector has to offer.

A MILESTONE CELEBRATION

2025 marks the 10th anniversary of InstallerSHOW. Since the first event in 2015, both exhibitor and visitor numbers have increased more than tenfold – all while retaining the sense of community and the festival feel of the show that have made it enduringly popular. To celebrate its 10th anniversary, there will be a number of special events and promotions throughout the three days, including a £10k giveaway for visitors.

Article supplied by InstallerSHOW



Bell wins retrofit contractor of the year at The Retrofit Academy Awards 2025

Bell has been awarded Retrofit Contractor of the Year at the 2025 Retrofit Academy CIC Awards ceremony in London. The panel, made up of industry leaders from businesses and academic institutions, recognised that Bell's excellent record of customer satisfaction and its consideration of all aspects of the retrofit journey has set it apart from other contractors.

Run by the UK's leading retrofit training and membership organisation, the awards are designed to recognise the best the retrofit industry has to offer and celebrate those blazing the trail



for retrofit in the UK.

In this category, the judges were looking for evidence that entrants were consistently delivering high-quality, large-scale PAS 2035 compliant projects, responding to challenging timescales while maintaining excellent levels of customer service and embracing innovation to help raise standards and increase delivery.

The judges commented that Bell's entry "shows the desire to push boundaries and takes into consideration every part of a retrofit journey for all stakeholders". They also commended Bell's high performance KPIs for customer satisfaction and the repeat business they receive. Investment that allows the company to carry out all the work for retrofit projects in-house was also noted, combined with the necessary internal upskilling to get the best out of employees. All of these factors helped ensure Bell was able to differentiate its strategy from competitors and secure this prestigious prize.

Steven Tucker, executive director of operations (east) at Bell received the award on behalf of the company and commented "We are delighted to have won this award as it represents the culmination of a lot of hard work across the business. We have set ourselves ambitious objectives to ensure we are delivering the best possible service and exceeding environmental



targets to bring residents and clients retrofitted properties that will stand the test of time. It's wonderful to have all that hard work and ambition recognised and it puts us in a great position to build on our success in the coming years."

To find out more about the retrofit services offered by Bell, go to the website.

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When it comes to housing repair and maintenance, **Bond It** has become a preferred choice for sealants, adhesives and so much more. This year marks the first ever appearance by Bond It at The Installer Show. The business, which is the UK's largest independent manufacturer of sealants, adhesives and building chemicals, will use its presence to highlight the impressive breadth of its offer to customers across a range of sectors – housing management and maintenance included. Kirstie Cooper commented: "The nature of Bond It's already extensive range continue to evolves".



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eBook to help navigate Awaab's Law

Ventilation manufacturer **Vent-Axia** has published a free eBook 'Ensuring Safe Housing Conditions: Focusing on Mould and Damp Conditions'. Aimed at social housing landlords the publication gives guidance on Awaab's Law to help landlords navigate the changes, tackle damp and mould, and create healthier homes for residents.

Initiated following the tragic death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak, due to a mouldy home, this crucial legislation will ensure social housing landlords investigate and resolve damp and mould issues within strict timeframes, helping to protect residents and prevent future tragedies.

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



Kent company wins big with prize draw

IronmongeryDirect is excited to announce the winner of its TradeXtra prize draw. David Marguet-Turner, owner and founder of DMT Facilities based in Broadstairs, Kent has been announced as the lucky winner of 150,000 loyalty points to spend with IronmongeryDirect's TradeXtra Rewards loyalty programme. IronmongeryDirect's TradeXtra Account provides customers with instant interest-free credit of up to £10,000 for up to 60 days, easy online account management, exclusive discounts and offers, and early access to promotions and prize draws – all with no annual fee or hidden costs.



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Reclaimed brick tiles see surge in demand

Brick tiles have become a firm favourite for architects, interior designers, homeowners, and developers looking to inject warmth, texture, and timeless appeal into their spaces. Whether it's an exposed feature wall in a London loft conversion or a rustic kitchen backsplash in a countryside cottage, these versatile tiles are taking centre stage. **Reclaimed Brick Company** have seen a sharp rise in orders for their handmade brick tiles, crafted from genuine reclaimed bricks salvaged from buildings across the UK. It's a trend driven by a unique mix of aesthetic, environmental, and practical benefits that brick tiles offer.



info@reclaimedbrickcompany.co.uk reclaimedbrickcompany.co.uk

Marmox marks 25 years with fresh innovations

Established by Harry Parsons and his wife back at the Millennium, working from their garage, Marmox has helped its ever-expanding customer base to benefit from a truly diverse selection of insulation materials and specialist bathroom products, with 2025 maintaining the momentum as the Kent based company introduces important new developments.

After leaving school in 1968, Harry then built on what he learned at Brixton School of Building through spells working for Waites, Wimpey and Costain before gaining an even broader education when the latter asked him to fill an urgent vacancy in Nigeria. There he ran the 'Small Contracts Department, undertaking projects across a vast area. That was followed by being appointed as Middle East Manager for a coatings company, working from Turkey as far south as Yemen, while he also yearned to one day start his own business.

He explained: "That step came when I flew into Cairo one night and was asked by my local agent to meet one Dr. Kamal the next morning. It turned out the learned doctor owned multiple businesses and showed me a number of products including a polyester resin and the coated XPS insulation which has come to be known as Multiboard. I was surprised to be told it sold well in Germany, but that the UK was a difficult market, so I arranged for him to send me some samples I could show around when I returned home."

Marmox occupied progressively bigger premises before moving to its present Chatham HQ at Caxton House in 2010, where a team pride themselves on customer service as well as quality.



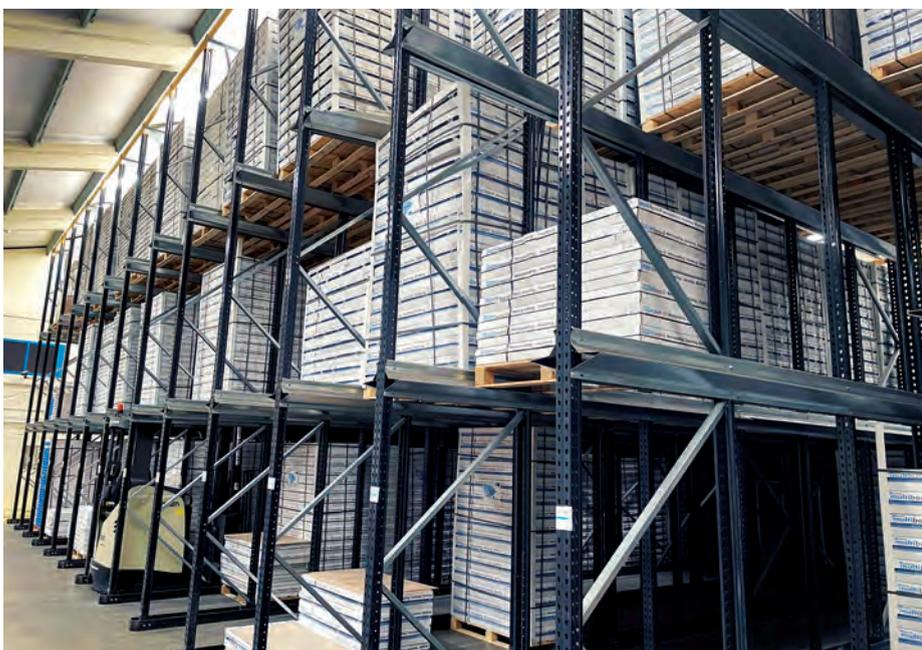
Having started in sales, son Jonathon is now director of business development while sister, Sarah Viney joined in 2008 to become managing director, seeing the company go from strength to strength.

Sarah observed: "While Marmox is a family business, most important is the fact that across the company, we have the right people in the right jobs and we've been so fortunate the majority of our staff have been with us from the very early days in one role or another. Our current finance

director, for instance, worked with our accountants when the business was first set up."

Referencing new products like Fireboard and a fire-resistant version of Thermoblock, she added: "Overall I'm really excited about the future: parts of the construction industry are growing strongly again and, in time, we expect a greater shift towards off-site fabrication, which our boards are absolutely ideally suited to."

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Harry Parsons

24-26 June, Manchester Central



Housing 2025

With Labour having put housing at the forefront of their priorities, there is acknowledgement from all that we need a deep structural shift on how we fund our existing homes, and build the targeted 1.5 million homes they have committed to in their first term. Join us at Housing 2025 to be a part of these conversations.

Ensuring quality, accessibility, and affordability across all tenures, we recognise that housing is more than just bricks and mortar. The solutions to today's housing crisis require innovative partnerships and funding to meet the needs of growing and differing tenures.

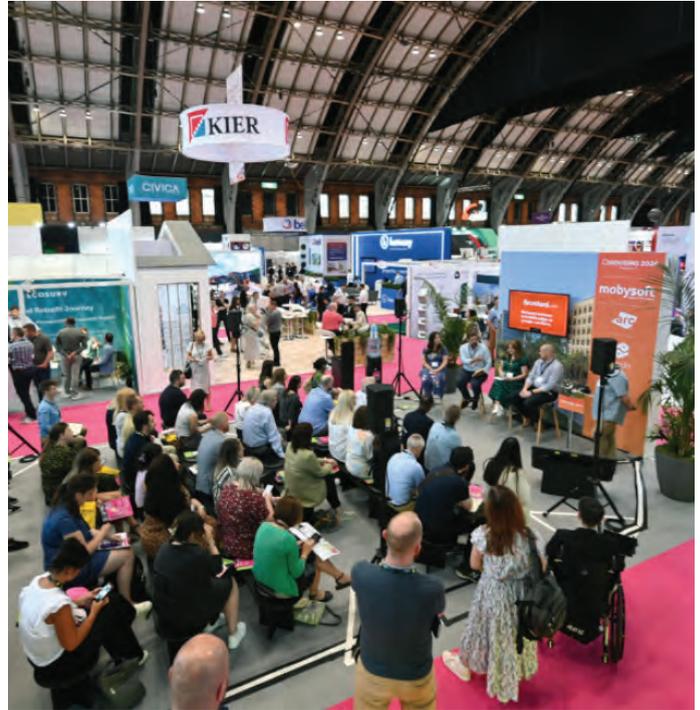
Housing enables attendees to access a breadth and depth of information and networking not available elsewhere. There has never been a more important time for the sector to come together.

Join over 9,000 attendees; listen, learn, digest and discuss and takeaway solutions to your communities. Housing has something for everyone. Housing is the only place that you will meet the breadth and depth of the audience designed to engender the most useful conversations for you and your teams.

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Join us at Housing this year and take the opportunity to network with fellow professionals, gain valuable insight from industry experts and increase your knowledge and professional development.

Housing 2025 promises to be an essential event for those involved in the sector, especially in light of the UK Government's commitments to tackle the ongoing housing crisis.



Housing enables attendees to access a breadth and depth of information and networking not available elsewhere

One year into the Labour government, and following the Spending Review, the sector can come together to understand how we can deliver the Government's housing ambitions.

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Transform uPVC with One Can

Bradite is promoting the benefits of its One Can product when used as a coating over uPVC.

Here, operations director Ben Mottershead answers some quick-fire questions on its application and suitability.

uPVC is particularly suitable as a substrate for doors and windows as it often requires little maintenance. However, as the material can stain or discolour and fade over time, painting uPVC is the perfect way to provide a quick update.

The two most important characteristics for painting on uPVC are adherence and weatherproofing. Not all paint formulations are suitable for use on uPVC because they do not adhere to the surface sufficiently strongly.

WHY IS ONE CAN PARTICULARLY SUITED FOR PAINTING UPVC IN THIS REGARD?

“The ambient cross-linking technology in One Can means the coating becomes harder and more durable as the reaction continues. While the paint applies smoothly with a low-odour, water-based finish, it dries to a robust and durable coating. This process occurs extremely quickly, One Can is touch dry in 30 minutes and recoats are possible after just one hour.”

HOW DOES ONE CAN MEET THIS WEATHERPROOFING REQUIREMENT?

“The binder used in One Can is based on a high-specification binder, which contains a monomer that is particularly water resistant. It also contains

proprietary wet adhesion promotion. Together, this means that One Can gives superb protection against the elements in the long-term, even as a water-based finish that is quick and easy to apply.”

WHAT OUTSIDE TEMPERATURE WILL GUARANTEE THE BEST RESULTS? HOW LONG WILL IT LIKELY TAKE FOR THE PAINT TO DRY?

“For best results, outside temperature should

be 8-10° or above, but it should be noted that the surface temperature will be considerably colder if applied at lower temperatures. One Can is surface dry within 30 minutes, and recoatable after just one hour – although exact timings will depend on the on-site conditions during application.”

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Rising demand for Yorkshire stone paving

Whether it's a classic English country garden, a high-end restoration project, or a contemporary property seeking a grounding, natural aesthetic, Yorkshire stone continues to prove why it has been the material of choice for centuries. Combining natural beauty, unbeatable durability, and local provenance, it is the ultimate in sustainable, timeless construction and landscaping. Britannia Stone are seeing increasing demand for their Yorkshire paving slabs and walling stone, not just from across the UK, but internationally too. Yorkshire stone speaks of heritage, craftsmanship, and permanence in a world of mass-produced, temporary materials.



info@britanniastone.co.uk www.britanniastone.co.uk

New Advanced Cascade Edge

Panasonic is launching its new Cascade Manager, Aquarea Cascade Edge, including P-Smart Edge and P-Smart Nexus. Collectively, they provide seamless control over heating, cooling, and domestic hot water (DHW) in a cascade system. These solutions have been designed to meet the growing demand for the management of energy-efficient heating and cooling in various applications, including central heating projects, small hotels, supermarkets, and restaurants. The new Aquarea Cascade Edge comes in two models PAW-A2W-CME4 (cascades up to 4 units) PAW-A2W-CME10 (cascades up to 10 units).



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Stelrad 'Green Compact' radiator series

Leading radiator manufacturer Stelrad Radiators continues to offer low carbon-emissions steel radiators, with an excellent response so far to this new approach to the reduction of carbon emissions in the production of steel radiators. The steel utilised in the manufacture of these Green Compact radiators is XCarb® recycled and renewably produced steel, which is made in an electric arc furnace with high recycled content and 100% renewable electricity. Using this low-emissions steel results in a 66% reduction in CO₂ emissions per tonne of steel, compared with using the same product made via the conventional steelmaking process.



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AKW launches new generation entry-level electric shower

AKW, one of the UK's leading providers of accessible showering solutions, has launched the new generation iSure Electric Shower, with design, operation and installation improvements to make it even easier to use and fit. The latest addition to AKW's new generation of electric showers range which launched in 2024, the iSure now features raised, independent dials which provide easily adjustable flow and non-thermostatic temperature control; it also offers an optional eco setting to support the reduction of energy consumption. The iSure is the ideal choice for specifiers and installers looking for a cost-effective, energy-efficient, entry-level showering solution that offers peace of mind to installers and users alike. Designed with safety in mind – The iSure is BEAB-approved with a modern, minimalist design which places a priority on safety, with rounded surfaces and edges to reduce the risk of injury in the event of a trip or fall, and a thermal cut-out device to protect it from overheating. Energy efficiency built in – When it comes to energy efficiency, the A-rated and WRAS-approved unit comes with an optional eco setting which reduces the level of energy consumed during operation. Cost effective and easy to install – With a competitive price point and the option of energy-efficient operation, the new generation iSure is set to become a firm favourite with installers.

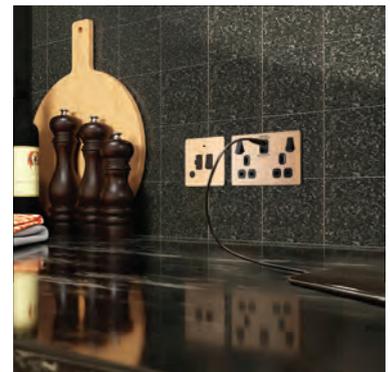
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BG Electrical – safe and stylish upgrades in older properties

Whether you are doing up an older property for yourself or for a customer, one of the first questions is whether the renovation project includes lighting circuits without earthing present. This may not be ideal by the latest standards, but it is not inherently unsafe or non-compliant legally and the property will have passed wiring inspections even with lighting circuits without earth wires. So, the question is what is best to do to ensure the most electrically efficient and aesthetically pleasing results. Thanks to BG Electrical (part of the **Luceco Group**), there are a host of responsible options. It just depends on homeowner preferences. As homeowners introduce solar, renewables and electrical vehicle charging, it is ever more important to ensure that expansions and alterations are safe for these additional features. Fortunately, BG Electrical has proven reliable range of circuit protection solutions that accommodate the changing market requirements – consisting of the latest Bi-directional RCD's & Double Pole RCBO devices, Circuit Breakers, and AFDD devices. But the fact is that not all home renovations – or older properties in general – will be ready or inclined to go down that complete electrical overhaul route. Which is where the BG Evolve decorative wiring accessories comes into their own. With this range, a contemporary and aesthetically exciting solution is entirely achievable thanks to a plastic Class 2 solution.

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www.housingmmonline.co.uk

Access to cost-effective accessible bathrooms

Balancing compliance and user needs is key to accessible bathroom design. Stuart Reynolds of AKW shares how smart product choices ensure cost-efficiency without compromising on tenant usability.

The key to success with any accessible bathroom installation lies in juggling the limitations of funding versus material and labour costs, physical space restrictions and longevity. The key challenges faced by social landlords looking at creating cost-effective, long-lasting accessible bathrooms include:

- **Cost and funding:** Minor adaptations, such as grab rails, are relatively straightforward to fund, however major bathroom adaptations require a means tested Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and occupational assessment. They also need an experienced install team to minimise costly delays.
- **Layout and space:** Retrofitting a bathroom to be accessible and fully compliant can be challenging when dealing with outdated existing designs, materials and infrastructure.
- **Futureproofing and adaptability:** To avoid repeated renovations, more and more social landlords are having to consider how their adaptations can be future-proofed.

Whether a bathroom needs minor or major adaptations, good design plays an important part in helping minimise the pain points for social landlords and improving the final tenant experience. In fact, according to a Foundations Independent Living Trust report, good design not only plays an important part in future-proofing housing stock but in reducing the need for further adaptations: "Some associations are using flexible designs, such as installing shower trays under baths, or fitting the anchor points for grab rails and shower seats, to allow rapid conversion when required."

DELIVERING COST-EFFECTIVE ACCESSIBLE BATHROOMS

Delivering cost-effective accessible bathrooms requires social landlords navigating effectively the pain points of strategic planning, regulatory compliance and material choice. Here are some things to bear in mind:

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Initial designs need to prioritise accessibility from the outset to avoid expensive retrofitting. If possible, the use of standardised layouts, with modular bathroom components is worth considering across properties to reduce material and labour costs. However, this only works up to a point – think of installing anti-slip flooring, lever taps and toilet flushes, electric showers with easy-to-use buttons and dials and TRV regulation – as each tenant accessibility needs will differ. Also, the layout of the bathroom should be optimised, so that it is functional, meeting minimum requirements for turning circles and fixture placement, for example.

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

Meeting Document M of the Building Regulations is fundamental to ensuring that an accessible bathroom meets access standards for the user, be that a turning circle of 1,500 mm for wheelchair users, specific height grab rails or sanitaryware etc. It is worth bearing in mind BS 8300-2:2018 standards that go beyond minimum compliance, and help social landlords create spaces that are genuinely usable for individuals with disabilities.



CAREFUL CHOICE OF MATERIALS

Choosing materials that are durable as well as suitable for the user is key. Easy wins in this area include the installation of non-slip vinyl flooring that is durable and affordable and reduces the risk of slips, moisture-resistant wall panels instead of tiles, which are cost-effective and easy to clean and corrosion-resistant grab rails that are low maintenance. Also, incorporating water-efficient fixtures, such as lower flow electric showers has sustainability as well as running-cost benefits.

IMPROVING BATHROOM ACCESSIBILITY THROUGH GOOD DESIGN

Websites are an excellent resource for those looking to learn best practice design advice and how to maximise cost efficiencies in installing accessible bathrooms or making adaptations. Here are some excerpts from online resources:

MANAGED MOVEMENT

Grab rails and shower seats with arm rests promote safer movement. For those with visual impairments use two colours where the light reflective value (LRV) difference between both colours is greater than 30. This creates

When it comes to creating cost efficient accessible tenant bathrooms that are Part M compliant and meet the needs of the users, design is vital

the most noticeable contrast between an object and its surroundings. Grab rails and shower seats are available in a range of colours to aid those with visual impairments. Also remember that colour contrast is best achieved with contrasting shades of the same colour rather than different colours.

SHOWERING SUCCESS

The controls need to be simple to understand and easy to use – and if needed, to use with one hand operation. There should also be obvious up and down buttons for temperature and flow control. Look for BEAB Care certified or approved by the Royal National Institute for the Blind showers. This is because they will reduce barriers to use for those with mobility or visual impairment issues. When it comes to water saving, some lower flow mixer showers use between 40% to 69% less water than those without a flow limiter.

WALL PANELS

Alongside the functionality and look of the space, wall panels achieve a high value appearance for considerably less than the cost of tiling and can enable a non-clinical finish to be obtained. They are also easy to maintain and can be fitted quickly using a standard toolkit, reducing bathroom downtime, and saving on using a specialist tiler.

When it comes to creating cost efficient accessible tenant bathrooms that are Part M compliant and meet the needs of the users, design is vital. However, with the right choice of fixtures and fittings, it is possible to create functional, long-lasting spaces that are cost-effective as well as looking good.

Stuart Reynolds is UK marketing and product management director at AKW





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Get retrofit right

Martin Hitchin of REHAU UK highlights how retrofitting window and door frames, alongside the necessary supply chain collaboration, is a vital component of improving thermal performance and meeting net zero targets across the sector.

The residential sector accounts for approximately 18% of the UK's carbon emissions, with social landlords owning 17% of the nation's housing stock. This means social housing accounts for roughly 3% of the nation's carbon footprint. Yet this is not the only concern – homes in the 1980s were not built to modern thermal performance and sustainability standards. Despite these concerns, the social housing sector must still meet legally mandatory UK decarbonisation benchmarks, including a 78% reduction in emissions by 2035 and net zero by 2050.

Additionally, the UK's Clean Growth Strategy requires social housing providers to attain Energy Performance Certificate C for rented properties by 2035, or 2030 for 'fuel poor' households. This legislative landscape presents clear obstacles for the social housing sector.

SEEING A PATH FORWARD

Despite this, funding is available to help progress the sector's sustainability goals, including the £1.5bn awarded in 2022 through the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, which was bolstered by an additional £1.25bn in 2023. Support can also come from the Home Upgrade Grant, the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and the Warm Homes Plan.

Social housing stakeholders must ask themselves what cost-effective components will have the greatest impact on a property's thermal performance. REHAU's latest white paper, 'Retrofit Right – Making Social Housing More Energy-Efficient', highlights how windows and door systems, as prominent sources of heat loss, play a crucial role in decarbonising existing social housing stock.

Carrying out 'medium retrofits' – fitting high-quality frames on existing homes – can markedly and cost-effectively improve thermal performance across social housing portfolios. However, this is reliant on an informed component specification process, which is key to ensuring existing funding works as hard as possible.

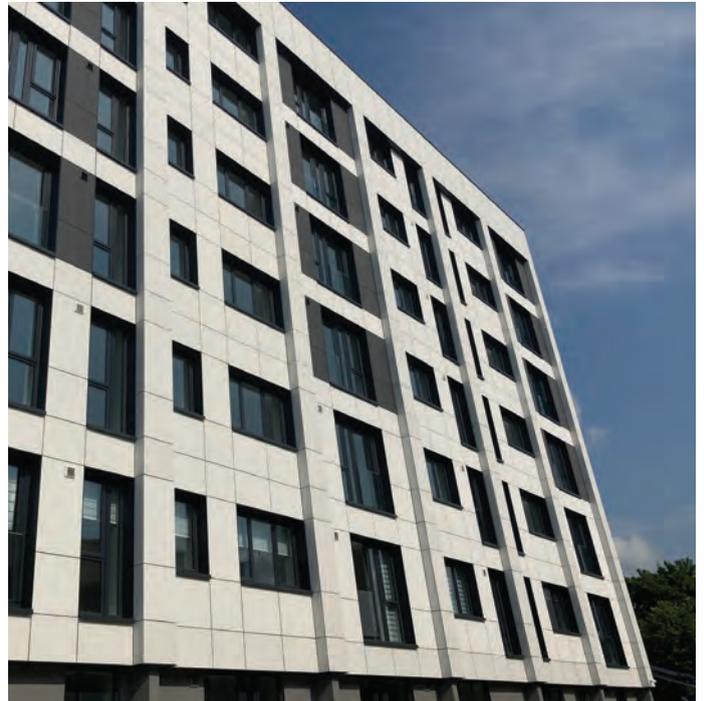
The report goes on to explore the thermal efficiency, noise attenuation, security, and ventilation standards to consider when specifying new frames. It advises specifiers to leverage third-party expertise for retrofitting projects to bridge knowledge gaps and ease workload burdens as construction activity increases.

Specifically, it emphasises that ensuring high-quality supply chains, including engaging installers and fabricators working to third-party certifications, is crucial for effective retrofitting works. Adherence to these accreditations and standards demonstrates to local authority and social housing stakeholders that projects will be completed on time, within budget, and with high-quality components.

PURSUIING POLYMER

In an environment where energy efficiency is crucial, the thermal performance of polymer frames stands out as a way to reduce carbon footprints. PVCu, the UK's most popular material for windows and doors due to its durability, affordability, and lightweight properties, has become one of the most sustainable construction materials available. Innovations in frame design have significantly improved the thermal performance of polymer systems, while also enhancing solar gain, condensation reduction, airtightness, indoor comfort and overall security.

PVCu frames can also now achieve the Building Research Establishment's



Social housing accounts for roughly 3% of the nation's carbon footprint

'A' rating under the Green Guide to Specification, a key resource for selecting construction materials based on their environmental impact.

Polymer's sustainability is further enhanced by its recycling capabilities, as it can be recycled up to 10 times before showing signs of degradation. Given the average lifespan of a PVCu frame is 35 years, combined with appropriate recycling infrastructure, polymer is a sustainable, long-lasting material.

GOING BEYOND THE POINT OF PURCHASE

Material considerations are key, but social housing stakeholders should not solely focus on point of purchase when selecting window and door systems for retrofitting works. The ongoing performance and adaptability of specific frames are crucial for ensuring energy-efficient properties and reducing building stock emissions. Local Authority and Housing association maintenance teams play an important role in this, as explored in 'Retrofit Right'.

In the event of further installation work including repairs or installing frame accessories, it is vital this can be completed quickly and cost-effectively. Indeed, these 'data-driven' digital technologies can streamline remedial works. With maintenance teams increasingly time-poor and overstretched, a protracted process of communication, property inspections, and material procurement will only exacerbate the situation. Consequently, ways of streamlining this process are likely to become of increasing interest to social housing project stakeholders as more upgrading works are greenlit.



Integrated into window and door systems, technologies such as digital ID cards and apps can offer a way forward. Quick access to key data through these innovations can provide maintenance teams with the information required while greatly reducing the need for time-consuming inspection or measurement appointments. Instead, expert frame specialists can be quickly contacted via an app, significantly shortening the process and allowing housing associations and local authorities to save money and resources by reducing the number of visits to affected properties. REHAU, for example, has developed a new digital technology that encompasses the complete life cycle of a window or door, thereby providing an important link to the “Golden Thread” within the Building Safety Act 2022.

FUTURE CONCERNS, CURRENT ACTION

Upgrading existing social housing stock is crucial to meet net zero and energy efficiency targets. With available funding and looming decarbonisation deadlines, the need for action is urgent. Local authority and housing association stakeholders must plan retrofits carefully, ensuring each step of specific projects is well-informed and cost-effective.

Replacing key components such as windows and doors is highly technical and requires adherence to strict regulations and performance criteria. As such, specifiers are advised to leverage third-party expertise for retrofitting projects to help bridge knowledge gaps and ease workload burdens for under-pressure local authority and housing association teams with stretched budgets. This combination of sector knowledge, social housing project experience, and access to high-quality fabricator and authorised partner installer networks is essential for sourcing components that can improve the thermal efficiency of social homes.

Martin Hitchin is CEO at REHAU UK

Scan the QR Code to download REHAU's latest report: Retrofit Right – Making Social Housing More Energy-Efficient



New Water Efficiency Standards for UK housing

The longer-term environmental impact of the UK's water deficit could cause further damage to the natural environment and restrict future development. Combining the increasing Per Capital Consumption (PCC) with the UK's growing population means that by 2050 the UK water deficit is predicted to be 5000 mega litres per day.

Future water plans include transporting water across the country and building new reservoirs. However, 65% of the water deficit will have to be met by a reduction in consumption. To help achieve this, all major water companies have been set PCC reduction targets of up to 11%.

At the recent Waterwise Conference, Helen Wakenham, Director of Water, Environment Agency stated that water efficiency 'should be embedded into the plans we have for housing'. She continued 'if water efficiency is embedded in our

homes and our products it becomes easy to do.'

ACHIEVING PCC TARGETS WITH WATER EFFICIENT HOMES

OFWAT have recognised that water efficient homes are the key reduce consumption and have established basic standards for new build homes. The Common Environmental Incentive includes low volume dual flush toilets, low flow taps and showers and water efficient washing machines and dishwashers.

However, there are cost effective upgrades to existing properties that reduce consumption and occupiers' water and energy bills.

A whole site flow regulator, modulate the flow entering customer premises, so limiting the amount used by the customer. Without a degradation of service or any behavioural change, there is a 'natural' reduction in consumption. As these products are fitted to the main water supply, and not each individual outlet they remove any risk of consumer interference and ensure that minimum standards of water supply are maintained as specified within the Water Industry Act and Water Fittings Regulations.

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Close the data gap

Rob Norton of PlanRadar highlights the urgent need for better digital data management to meet fire safety standards, explaining how Regulation 38 can close critical compliance gaps across the sector.



Almost eight years on from the tragic events of 14 June 2017, achieving uncompromising fire safety in residential buildings remains a thorny issue for the UK construction sector. One particularly sore topic is around the collation, management and provision of correct, up-to-date, whole life building information that is so crucial towards protecting residents in case of emergency.

Unfortunately, data gaps and information chasms persist across the built environment, particularly on legacy assets. Putting it bluntly, while these persist, so does risk not just to building occupants, but to everyone involved in the design, construction and management of an affected building.

While I want to acknowledge significant strides have been made over the last eight-years to improve building data hygiene, I fear there's still a long way to go before we realise Dame Judith Hackitt's 'Golden Thread'.

The term 'must try harder' springs to mind at this stage, as I don't think that the safety-first mindset is universally shared. And the industry needs to get a move on, as the Government wants to generate much needed economic growth based on ambitious housebuilding targets and retrofit programmes.

Any data omissions on new builds or retrofits will be seen as setbacks, with homes unable to be occupied until everything is all in one place. As you see it makes the case for adopting agreed, standard, industry-wide information protocols.

This is where the much-needed Regulation 38 comes into play.

Introduced under the Building Safety Act, Regulation 38 has become a vital process that can help resolve gaps within fire safety information at any stage of a project, from planning and design through construction, handover, operation and maintenance. It covers the critical details: fire protection systems, escape routes, and construction materials, ensuring essential fire safety information is made available to those responsible for the building's safety throughout its lifecycle.

This isn't just an admin exercise, but a useful mechanism which securely plugs the holes, ensuring fire safety information is precisely recorded, collated and delivered for inspection on completion. In essence, it's a fundamental safeguard that determines whether a building is truly fit for occupation.

However, it's not as widely used as it should be and, despite its importance, many contractors and subcontractors still struggle to understand its significance or integrate it into their operations.

PROBLEMATIC IMPLEMENTATION

The reason it's been so hard to get developers, contractors and builders to comply with fire safety standard documentation is predominantly caused by poor, patchy and obsolete data management.

Despite the wealth of best practice guidance available, project teams are still struggling with disorganised and incomplete records stored in multiple, nebulous (and often siloed) locations. A reliance on physical paper records and offline documents persists too.

That's all before you come to appreciate the sheer volume of data that management teams now have to contend with. Just think of the amount of data generated from Building Information Modelling (BIM) alone. It can all become overwhelming and this leads to increased human error, reduced accuracy, consistency and completeness.

Legacy tech stacks add yet another layer of complexity, especially for SMEs which lack the necessary resources to upgrade entire digital infrastructures and data management processes overnight. Incompatibility between old and new software reduces efficiency and leaves the door open for mistakes to be made.

Inevitably, this tangled web of problems results in compliance related issues which will cause costly delays and financial, legal and potentially reputational damage to the business. Yet there is an accessible mainstream solution, which will ensure successful compliance with Regulation 38, and more.

Regulation 38 has become a vital process that can help resolve gaps within fire safety information

GETTING DIGITAL WITH YOUR DATA

Digital information management tools have evolved considerably over the past decade, and advanced platforms now exist to transform how vital information around fire safety is identified, collected, stored, retrieved and shared. Even better, these digital tools standardise, through templated and automated processes, offering in-the-moment communication capabilities and seamless integration with existing systems.

If they're not game-changers, then they're certainly a game enhancer. Now fire safety compliance has become relatively effortless and even better, digital solutions can be flowed through the entire building lifecycle. For example, during the construction journey contractors can now collect and organise information in real time, photo-evidencing work done on a mobile device and storing it in one cloud-based bank.

The entire, once-onerous process is streamlined and what's more they're easy to use, suitable for any level of IT literacy. It's only the start as AI and AR become more advanced, with the potential to integrate into these platforms and empower project teams even more to achieve Regulation 38 at (almost) only the click of a few buttons.

SHIFTING THE NEEDLE

Plug-and-play software-as-a-service (SaaS) solutions, like PlanRadar, are really pushing the envelope when it comes to the regulatory-based solutions, and have made them affordable. This means that even SMEs can have a holistic option without breaking the bank.

The impact goes beyond innovation, hopefully encouraging that true cultural shift which, like Dame Judith Hackitt's 'Golden Thread', remains agonisingly out of our reach. Hopefully it will help operators in the sector not see Regulation 38



as a box ticking inconvenience but as a relatively easy to comply with safeguard that protects building occupants.

We all want to live in a safe built environment, but achieving it means committing to meeting regulatory requirements. Whilst there are no shortcuts, there are the tools on hand to help us get there quicker, so let's use them!

Rob Norton is UK director at PlanRadar

Stepping up to help disabled social housing tenants

Guidance from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities is calling for social housing providers to train staff in disability issues to better support impaired tenants.

One of the biggest concerns reported among the Department's Resident Panel for disability support and social housing was ability to move around their home and to go outside. The stress was heightened where tenants lived in HMOs with a lift: when the lift was not working, they felt trapped in their homes, impacting on their mental health & wellbeing.

Mobility innovator AAT GB is stepping up to the challenge with a raft of measures to educate social housing management and staff on ways they can help residents, whether they live in a flat, house or bungalow with steps outside.

The measures include running a free of charge training session on one way to address the limitation of lift/stairs/steps, via utilisation of a stairclimber (stairclimbing wheelchair). The session includes initial support advice for the tenant as to their options in terms of disability equipment/adaptations, demonstration of the equipment and its various options and accessories, and how it can safely be deployed to enable access without obstructing common parts.

Further, AAT is introducing an equipment management programme for social housing providers. When they purchase an AAT



stairclimber, the company will train staff, the recipient and carer(s) in how to use it and will set up the stairclimber for the user. When the tenant no longer needs it AAT will take the stairclimber back, service it, then repeat the process for the next recipient.

"More than half (54%) of social housing renters have a disabled member of the household and mobility is the most common impairment. Social housing providers have a duty of care for their tenants to enable them free access to and from their homes. Having appropriate training and measures in place to deal with the problem is therefore paramount and fundamental" says Peter Wingrave, AAT director.

"Our stairclimber is a unique solution in that it is portable, requires no installation and is not

fixed to the home in any way. It can therefore quickly ensure a tenant CAN get in and out of their home, and around it, safely, enabling them to live their daily life and reducing risk to their mental health."

AAT's S-Max can travel 300 steps from a single battery charge- equivalent to a 20-storey block of flats. The standard unit can be easily attach to most common wheelchairs; the Sella version incorporates an integral seat with support arms and harnessing for optimal safety for the passenger. Using this technique, the disabled tenant is safely able to get in and out of the building, into their home and into the outside space and beyond.

Use of stairclimbers in social housing- be it local authority or Housing Association- is increasingly popular up and down the country- proven in practice from East London to Yorkshire. They are a cost-effective, non-disruptive way of enabling the tenant to remain in their home, for the social housing provider to meet their legal obligations and to provide safe access/exit, whether short- or long-term. AAT stairclimbers have an impeccable safety record stretching back over 20 years.

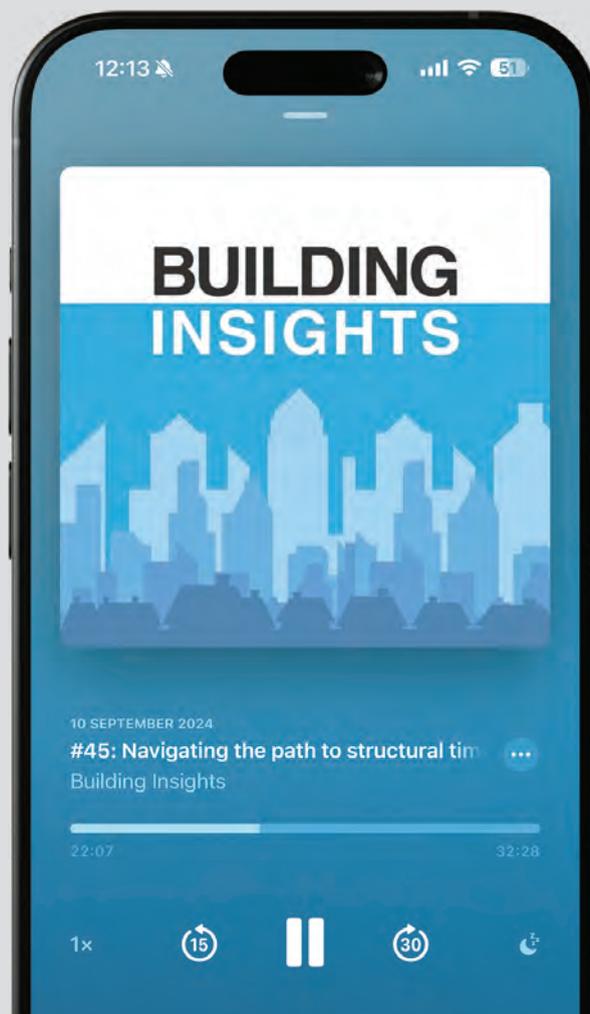
Full details of AAT's offering for professionals and the S-Max stairclimber can be found on the company's website.

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