

JUNE/JULY 2025

HOUSING

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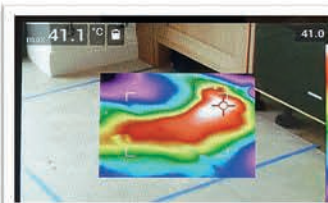
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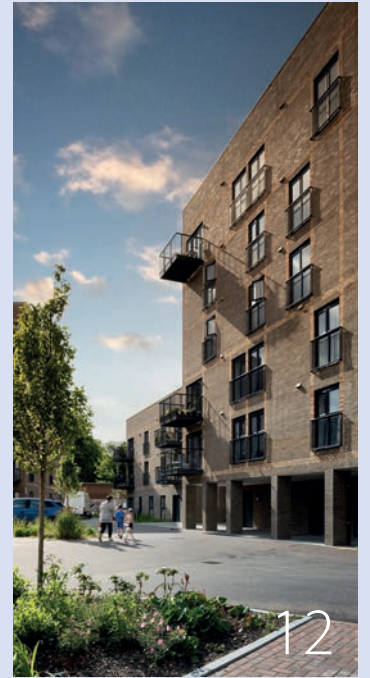


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Editor's Comment



It's something of a rarity in these challenging times, but it's fair to say that Chancellor Reeves' Spending Review saw the sector genuinely delighted – an overused word which is appropriate for once.

Rachel Reeves revealed that the Government would be finding an extra £39bn of funding for an Affordable Housing Programme focusing on “social and affordable” homes over the next decade.

She paid tribute to Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing Angela Rayner, for pushing through the “biggest cash injection in social and affordable homes in 50 years.” There had been predictions of a £25bn uplift in investment, but this is over £10bn more, showing how aware the Government is of not only the depth of the housing crisis, but of the challenges hitting social housing providers.

Reeves also promised an extra £10bn of investments in housebuilding including from Homes England, as well as a rent settlement that doubled the duration to 10 years and fixing rents to one per cent above the CPI index.

Kate Henderson, chief executive of the National Housing Federation, said it was a “transformational package that delivers the right conditions for a decade of renewal and growth.” And Robert Nettleton, chief executive of Bromford Flagship, one of England's biggest ‘housing association housebuilders’ delivering 1,770 homes in 2024-5 said: “Rachel Reeves has listened to the sector and delivered the funding scale and certainty that will unlock development and enable housing associations to deliver at scale and pace.

“The return to rent convergence alongside 10-year funding certainty means we can plan, borrow and invest with confidence.” Hard to fault the ambition, unless you're an enemy of tax-funded public service.

James Parker

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On the cover...

Kensa's Dr Stuart Gadsden, looks back at the commendable progress social housing has made in decarbonising properties, what lessons there are for private housing and why policy certainty is key for maintaining momentum. See page 20.





Future-Proofing Apartment Blocks with Smart EV Charging

Why long-term thinking matters
when installing EV chargers in
shared residential spaces



The complexity of shared charging

Electric vehicles are on the rise, and residents increasingly expect charging access at home. For housing providers, especially in apartment blocks, this raises a big challenge: how to install charging without overloading supply or incurring spiraling costs.

"Shared 3-phase supplies make apartment blocks very different from houses," explains Justin Savage, Head of Built Environment at Zaptec UK. "Using basic home chargers without system-wide load control is a mistake that could cost thousands later."

Designed for multifamily developments

Zaptec Pro is a professional EV charging system built for shared environments. It uses a single cable daisy-chain install and smart load balancing, so multiple chargers can be added without upgrading the grid.

It's MID certified—unlike many residential chargers—making it suitable for accurate, legally compliant billing in shared or public settings.

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By removing the need for extra distribution boards and limiting cable runs, Zaptec Pro can cut installation costs by up to 80% and reduce environmental impact by 30%.

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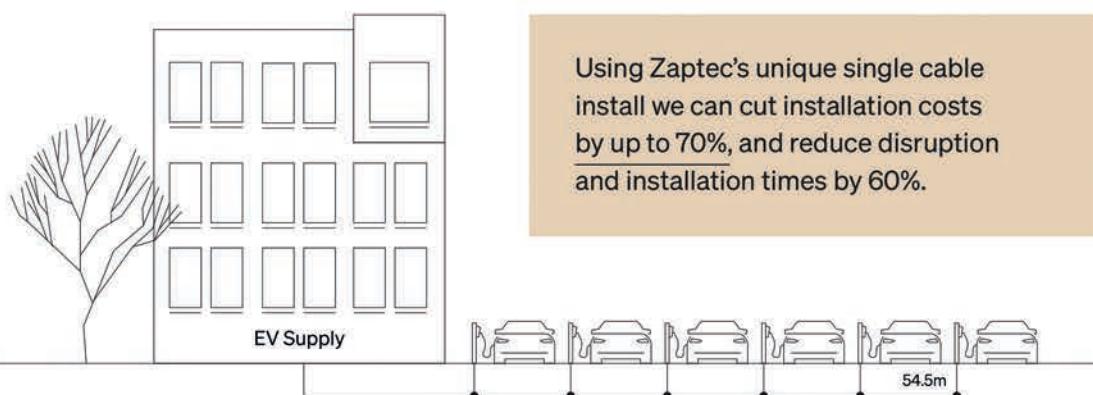
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Justin Savage

Head of Built Environment,
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CIH delegates detail what Long Term Housing Strategy must include

Although unaware of the Chancellor's subsequent injection of £39bn for social and affordable housing in her Spending Review, delegates at CIH Brighton were campaigning for a new 'Long Term Housing Strategy' that would ensure that social housing investment is deployed in the right areas.

The Government had in fact announced it would be providing such a strategy in July 2024, but it has now launched an 'Affordable Homes Programme' instead, but which is to include 'social' homes. Helen Armstrong Christie, head of housing at Wokingham Borough Council said that the industry had last had a national 'long-term housing strategy' in 1998, and "a lot has happened since we last had a strategy," and the context "is very fast moving."

She explained that the Government's aim for the Strategy at the launch was to "change the standard method of how we calculate housing needs to better reflect the supply and communities." All housing providers (local authorities or RPs) would have to provide and operate a 30 year business plan. She said this "reset was very overdue."

Sarah Finnegan, head of policy at the National Housing Federation said that the NHF had long campaigned for such a long-term strategy, since late 2021. It concluded that the previous government had "significant control over the sector, but no long-term plan."

The NHF called for a comprehensive strategy that is "really clear on what it wants to achieve," she said, including "the complex interplay between housing and the wider economy, public finances, and demand-side levers like the tax system." And it should be developed "in partnership with external stakeholders, homeowners, residents, business, and really clear on how it will deliver and progress will be tracked."

Finnegan continued: "It needs to be more than an MHCLG strategy; housing links to so many other parts of Government, from the Departments of Work and Pensions to Net Zero. We really wanted to see that cross-Government co-ordination."

As well as a 10-year rent agreement (granted by the Government in the Spending Review), the NHF was also calling for "revenue funding to protect and grow supported housing," and "fair and equal access to funding for building remediation works." She also said that "significant investment in social homes through a big, ambitious affordable homes programme" (also given the green light by Chancellor Rachel Reeves). She said the NHF had worked with CHI to lobby government, and said it was a "huge opportunity to transform housing."

Gerraint Oakley, chief development and growth officer at Platform Housing outlined some of the real-world challenges of development and planning, in particular long delays in acquiring and building out sites. He cited a scheme in the Peak District for 43 affordable homes that took 14 months from site



Rachael Williamson warned: "We have had this crisis for so long that it has become business as usual."

acquisition to completion. Oakley asked the large CIH audience if anybody thought the Government would achieve its 1.5 million homes target, and no hands went up.

He said: "One of the things we need to open up as a sector is working with external partners; we work in particular with the volume housebuilders. It's getting more and more difficult to do with SMEs." Oakley mentioned that equity and funding models including for-profit organisations "needed to be looked at."

He gave the stark insight that there were currently 17,000 unsold Section 106 homes in the UK. "It's not necessarily the case that HAs can't afford to buy them; they're doing their decarbonisation, damp and mould, managing customer complaints, everything else they do. To get that right as well as well is a real challenge."

Oakley concluded that the sector needed "consistency, or we can't do it at scale." He said his organisation doesn't buy some Section 106 homes it gets offered: "If you're building a new development near a town which works very successfully for a family with two cars, it doesn't necessarily work for a family in social rent who don't have a car and can't access education or healthcare."

He said that "we need the top five housebuilders to be successful, but if we want to substantially change the numbers we build, we have to speak to everybody about it." His advice to Government was:

"Don't speak to the oligopoly if you want to solve the housing crisis, and long-term infrastructure planning alongside unlocking housing in key areas by speaking to the sector."

Following Oakley was the CIH's newly appointed director of policy, communications and external affairs Rachael Williamson. She gave an interesting insight, reflecting on the advocacy work the institute had been doing with Government and other bodies like NHF in the run up to the Spending Review.

Williamson said: "We want to be more ambitious and thinking ahead over the next nine or 10 years, that goes a long way from where we've been, with sticking-plaster responses to the housing crisis."

She warned: "We have had this crisis for so long that it has become business as usual." The reality is councils going bankrupt because of extortionate housing cost pressures, we know we need a strategy to get us out of it."

Williamson said "while we welcome the focus on social and affordable, we need to focus on making the other tenures work; people move around, as their children get older they don't necessarily stay in one place. We need to look at incentives for people to move on with confidence."

She added: "The PRS is a really tricky sector be a landlord in, and the Government needs to include it in the strategy," and advocated cross-party working on the strategy."

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Orbit welcomes Rutherford as new chief property officer

Orbit has appointed Scott Rutherford as its new chief property officer. Scott joins the not-for-profit housing group with over 25 years' experience, latterly as property services director at Travelodge, where he was responsible for construction, maintenance, refurbishment and asset management for the brand across the UK and Spain.

At Orbit, Scott will oversee asset management, repairs, maintenance, safety, and estate management across the organisation's 46,000+ homes. He will also be responsible for key initiatives that support the delivery of Orbit's Everyday Excellence programme and its overall 2030 strategy ambitions. This will include the transformation of Orbit's repairs service to deliver a 'right first time' experience for customers and supporting its decarbonisation journey by improving the energy efficiency of customers' homes.

Scott commented: "I'm excited by Orbit's commitment to provide the best possible experience for customers and at the heart of this is providing safe, warm, affordable homes that our customers love. I am looking forward to joining the team and working with them, as well as our customers, to drive the positive property improvements that will ensure Orbit delivers high-quality and sustainable homes."

Phil Andrew, chief executive of Orbit Group added: "We're thrilled to welcome Scott to Orbit as our new Chief Property Officer and member of the Executive Team. His deep understanding of property management from outside the sector and passion for driving positive change will be invaluable as we continue to enhance our services and make meaningful progress on our 2030 strategy, and strive to provide amongst the best customer experience of any housing association in the country."



"I'm excited by Orbit's commitment to provide the best possible experience for customers and at the heart of this is providing safe, warm, affordable homes that our customers love."

Scott Rutherford, chief property officer at Orbit

Dagenham fines landlord Hussain

A Dagenham landlord has been fined more than £20,000 after repeatedly failing to comply with a planning enforcement notice issued by Barking and Dagenham Council.

In 2004, Ijaz Hussain purchased the property at 92 Burnside Road, Dagenham, originally a single-family dwelling. In May 2020, the council's Planning Enforcement Team discovered that the property had been unlawfully subdivided into two self-contained flats and rented out to tenants – without

the required planning permission. Hussain was advised of the breach and invited to either submit a retrospective planning application or restore the property to its original condition. When no action was taken, an Enforcement Notice was served in December 2021, requiring the removal of the second kitchen and internal modifications within six months.

Despite appealing the notice, the Planning Inspectorate dismissed the appeal and upheld the notice in April 2023. A follow-up inspection in January 2024 confirmed that the property remained in breach.

Legal proceedings began in April 2024, and following several delays in the court process,

on 3 June 2025, Hussain appeared at Romford Magistrates' Court, where he changed his plea to guilty. He was fined £10,000, ordered to pay a £4,000 victim surcharge, and £6,142 in legal costs to Barking and Dagenham Council, a total of £20,142, payable within three months.

Councillor Syed Ghani, cabinet member for enforcement and community safety said: "This case demonstrates that while we are always willing to work with residents to resolve planning issues, we will not tolerate those who ignore the law. Our Planning Enforcement Team is committed to ensuring that housing standards are upheld and that our communities are protected from unlawful development."

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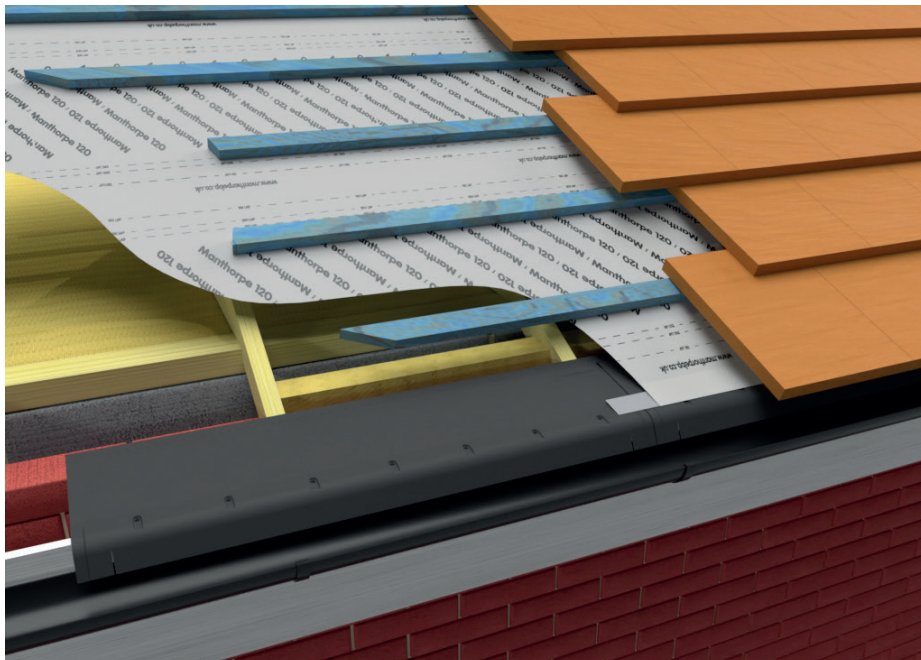
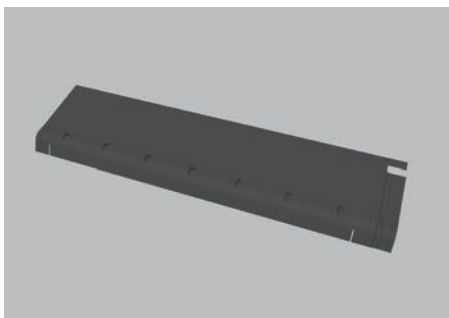
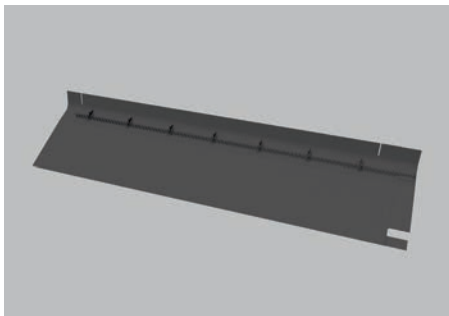
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Eaves detailing and ventilation



A roof eaves is the lowest area of a pitched roof and must shed all the water that the roof collects over its entire surface into the gutters. As such, it is important to design and construct the eaves correctly, to ensure that it will remain durable and prevent water ingress into the structure.

Traditionally, underlay support behind the fascia was provided by a timber detail, usually plywood. However, in modern construction, time and cost efficiencies are key objectives, and the best way to achieve these are by using well designed proprietary products. Here at Manthorpe, we have over 35 years of experience developing

roofing products and solutions that deliver a variety of benefits to the construction industry. Our design team has come up with the perfect eaves solutions in our 2 in 1 Ventilator and 3 in 1 Ventilator products.

These products combine an underlay support tray, to prevent the underlay sagging behind the fascia, with an over fascia ventilator and insect grille under the support tray to provide 10,000 mm² per metre of air flow into the roof space. The 3 in 1 Ventilator has the addition of an integral eaves bird comb filler for use with profiled roof tiles.

The support tray is sufficiently robust to properly support the underlay, whilst the front edge is

angled to aid water run-off into the gutter and is thickened to provide a robust support for the eaves course tiles.

There are clear and stable fixing points into the top of the fascia, with drainage gullies around each point to prevent water ingress. Further fixing points are incorporated for secure fixing to the rafters. The support tray is wide enough for use at low pitches and is ingeniously designed with a live hinge between the front edge and support tray to enable the ventilators to be used on all roof pitches from 15° up to 70°.

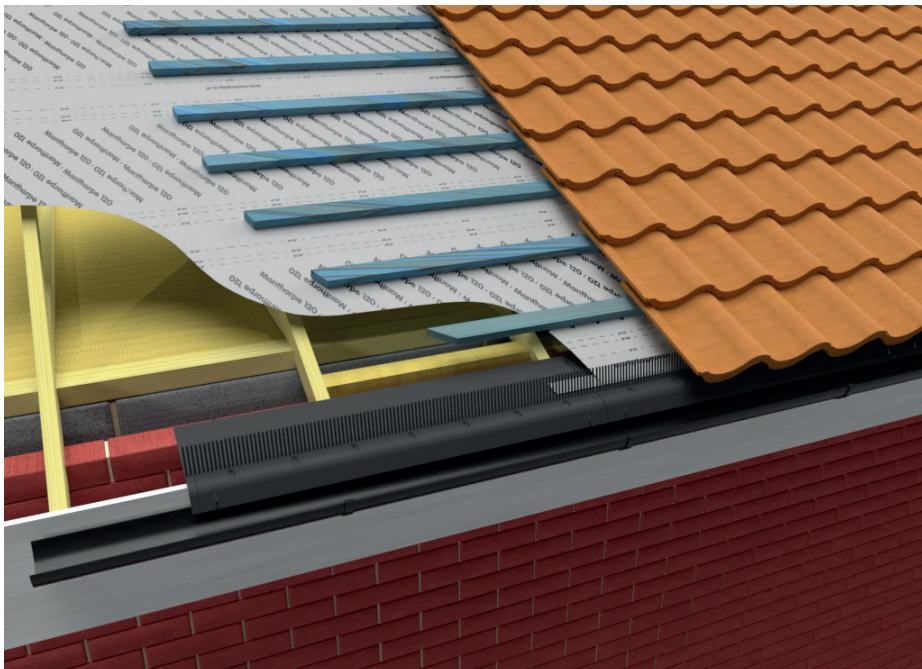
The 2 in 1 and 3 in 1 Ventilators are suitable for use on refurbishment projects as well as fast installation on new buildings. They are supplied in a 1 metre coverage length for ease of estimating and ordering, plus side interlocks to provide fully supported overlaps between each unit.

The underlay can be taped to the underlay support tray to prevent the underlay flapping in the wind using either integral fixing tape or double-sided underlay tape.

Even for roofs where eaves ventilation is not deemed necessary, using the 2 in 1 or 3 in 1 ventilator is still far more cost effective in supporting the underlay than purchasing plywood, with all the additional labour and time in cutting it to fit and installing it.

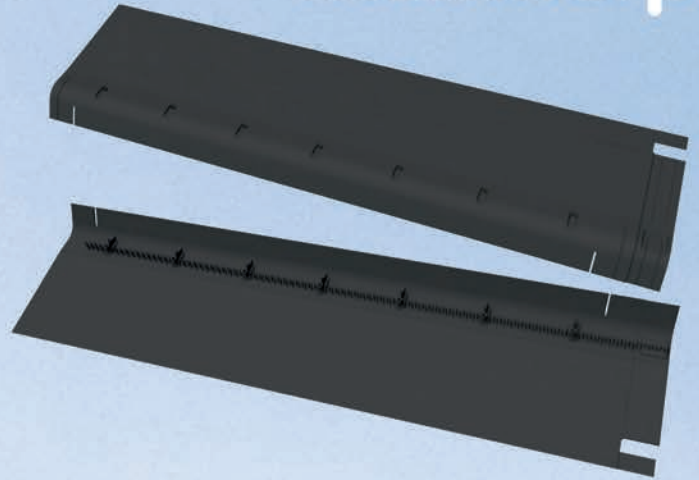
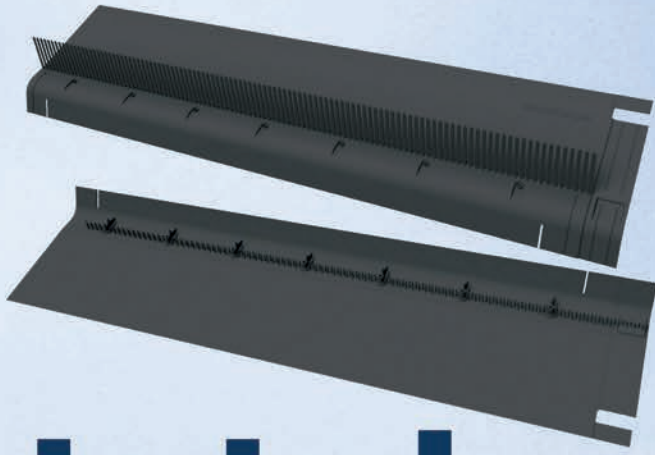
Once installed, the Manthorpe 2 in 1 and 3 in 1 ventilators allow access to the gutters for maintenance or future retro-fitting.

In summary, Manthorpe 2 in 1 and 3 in 1 Ventilators provide a fast to install, economical, and robust solution for roof eaves in refurbishment and new build projects.



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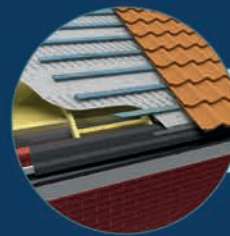


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Ben Hulme of Ben Hulme Roofing





Unlocking the right mix

A former prison site in Portsmouth has found a new purpose, in a combination of new build and refurbishment for a 'tenure blind' mix of luxury flats and affordable homes – by two housebuilders. Roseanne Field reports.

Located on one of the main three roads running through Portsmouth, the former Kingston Prison had been left derelict since its closure in 2013. Despite being purchased in 2014 by developer City and Country, a long road of planning issues and debate over what should be done with the site lay ahead.

Several ideas were discussed, with the developer initially suggesting a museum, before then proposing an exclusively private residential development. However, with housing waiting lists high in the city Portsmouth City Council insisted affordable housing must be included within the proposed development.

City and Country had originally purchased the site as part of a portfolio of 10 prisons it was looking to redevelop. However, getting the numbers to stack up on this particular site to justify developing it was proving difficult, particularly with the council standing firm that it must include affordable housing. On top of this, the main prison building – built in 1877 – as well as various elements around it are Grade II listed.

South east-based affordable housing provider VIVID had caught wind of the discussions, with Portsmouth being one of their target areas. “We track developments in that area, looking for opportunities where we can step in,” explains VIVID group development and new business director, Tristan Samuels.

VIVID is a registered provider (RP) and developer, with around 36,000 homes currently under management and 80 projects under development.

The team keep abreast of ongoing projects and planning applications, simultaneously building a good working relationship with local authorities. With development being “a bit of a luxury” for RPs according to Samuels, he credits VIVID’s success to the successful management of their existing stock.

As well as keeping an eye on upcoming developments, the company looks at locations where the housing need is high. Portsmouth and its surrounding areas, including Gosport and Southampton, are areas VIVID is particularly interested in, due to their unique mix of characteristics. “They’re what we describe as northern cities on the south coast,” explains Samuels. “They’re low value areas, with high need, but the build costs are in line with the rest of Hampshire so they’re quite hard to make work.”

It was this that gave them their ‘in’ on the Kingston Place development, with the local authority – Portsmouth City Council – and City and Country at a bit of a stalemate. “City and Country said they couldn’t deliver affordable housing because of the value, so we stepped in and said we’d take it on,” Samuels explains. “Being an RP, we were able to show we weren’t just there to make a profit. We’re here because there’s a social and community value asset. They trusted we were going to do what we said we were going to do.”



A MIX OF TENURES

The overall Kingston Place development comprises the new build elements that VIVID, working in partnership with housebuilder Drew Smith (part of Vistry Group) completed, making up the affordable housing portion, and the 83 luxury apartments that were sold privately, completed by St Cross Homes. The private apartments are within the former prison building, while VIVID's affordable housing is exclusively new build.

The former prison sits at the centre of the site with four new build elements located around the perimeter within the listed prison walls, and one building constructed outside on the former prison car park. In total VIVID built 183 new homes, 110 of which were for social rent and 73 shared ownership. The blocks vary in height with the largest standing at seven storeys, and the flats are all either one or two bedroom.

Planning the landscaping on the site was divided between VIVID and St Cross Homes, with VIVID ensuring all their flats would overlook a courtyard-style green space. However while green space was important, it was also essential to the company that every flat had at least one parking space, with parking in the city being "one of Portsmouth's biggest problems," Samuels says. While the parking provision takes up what could have been green space, he explains how it wasn't the primary focus with the site backing on to the large Kingston Cemetery. "It was more about ensuring the development was fit for purpose and had usable space internally, noting that they had plenty of space to go just outside the wall."

When deciding on both unit and bedroom numbers, VIVID works closely with the council while also "thinking about it from a mixed and balanced community perspective," Samuels explains. The company engages with the council, taking note of what their current housing needs are, as well as what the planners want, and what it feels offers the best mix of tenures. "We're thinking about what families in there want – communities that support each other. If you get all single living people, you don't really get that."

With the shared ownership units – all of which were reserved before the development was completed – Samuels says VIVID looks at what's selling well in the local market. "That's definitely more demand-led." The overall number of units for the entire development was also somewhat controlled by Historic

England and what they would allow within the confines of the listed structures, as well as what would work for VIVID with the Homes England grant funding they received.

The company is a strategic partner with Homes England, which allows them to utilise grant funding by bidding on an amount and explaining what percentage will be used for social rent and what percentage for shared ownership. "It's a good position and we value that relationship with Homes England because it allows us to make decisions quickly," explains Samuels. As a general rule on grant funded schemes, VIVID aims to split the funding by putting two thirds towards social rent and one third to shared ownership, while then also incorporating a mix of private tenures to create "mixed and balanced communities."

A COMPLEX SITE

As well as the prison building and walls, the former engineers' workshop and entrance complex – comprising a gate tower, detached gate piers and the Chief Warder's and Governor's houses – are also Grade II listed, and justifiably so: "It's a special building," says Samuels. However, this coupled with its use as a maximum security prison meant they didn't know what they might find, both within the building and the grounds. "Everyone was on tenterhooks for most of that," Samuels admits.

The site itself, in particular the constraints of working within the prison walls, was one of the project's biggest challenges. "It's a very restrictive space, so trying to work in a very tight environment, with all the site compounds and everything, proved to be quite tricky from a logistics perspective," explains Samuels. The listed walls meant entrances to the site couldn't be widened so getting HGVs on and offsite required a one-way system.

The design of the new build was heavily influenced by the historic prison building, both in terms of overall aesthetic but also regarding heights and the overall site layout. "We had to figure out where we could put height and how you could move around the buildings as there were views through the existing gate and entrances that they were looking to protect," Samuels explains.

There was some general remediation work with ground contamination being a regular obstacle in this area, says Samuels. However, this didn't cause too





much of a headache as the construction didn't involve digging down too deep, with all parking at ground level. "The cost of basement parking on a site without high values just doesn't work," he explains.

The site also had an impact on the materials used in the construction, and a subtle approach was called for. "It's one of those sites where we couldn't have got away with anything too flamboyant," Samuels says. A few of the walls had to be temporarily altered to allow for construction to take place, under the condition that the replacement blocks would be identical to the originals, down to where they were sourced from. The new build elements were constructed using a Metsec frame and a brick facade, with the brick chosen to contrast with yet complement the cladding on the original buildings.

Although working with Historic England can involve a lot of back and forth, Samuels says that on schemes such as Kingston Place "you can absolutely see the value and it looks really good.

We have a high quality and attractive scheme that we can all be proud of."

PUTTING RESIDENTS FIRST

VIVID puts a focus on prioritising the safety as well as comfort of residents, and sustainability and security were both key. All VIVID schemes are now designed with PV panels as standard, although the Kingston Place scheme was designed before they brought this into practice.

The development includes gas boilers and each unit has an EPC B rating. By 2030 the company intends to upgrade all its existing stock to EPC C, and by 2050 it aims to have implemented its carbon zero plan.

As well as pushing for a higher EPC rating, Samuels explains the company tends to prioritise a fabric first approach to increasing buildings' performance. "If they perform well but wouldn't get an A we're happy that from an emissions perspective they're high performing." As well as including PVs, VIVID also now uses air source heat pumps as standard and insulates beyond the levels required by Building Control, as is the case at Kingston Place.

Every apartment includes fibre broadband and is well ventilated. "We think about the quality of the build and design life," says Samuels. "I think the most important thing is they are 'tenure blind' – you wouldn't look at our schemes and say 'that's affordable,' the quality is the same."

The company also prioritises choosing a good design life when choosing individual products, and Samuels explains how focusing on little things can be

"Being an RP, we were able to show we weren't just there to make a profit"

Tristan Samuels, VIVID

just as important in creating a happy environment for everyone. "Bin stores and things like that are where you can get problems if you get it wrong, that's where you'll get anti-social behaviour and issues with how the building is used," he says. The company also considers elements such as front door security, windows with safety latches for children, balustrade locations and widths, and even things like pigeon netting. "You're thinking longer term about the wellbeing of the families and communities – if you can get it right early on then people will own it, they're proud of the space and that makes a big difference."

The development was finished in October 2023, after a brief delay towards the end of the project due to site logistics and getting final things such as Section 278 works tied up. Samuels says overall it was one of the more complicated projects the company has worked on, due not only to the logistical issues but also because this project was an anomaly for VIVID in that they took on the D&B contract, usually preferring to work with various partners to develop schemes.

With residents having been in the apartments for almost a year, Samuels admits there hasn't been a huge amount of feedback from them: "when residents are happy, they don't want to talk to us!" There have been a few minor snagging issues with things such as door locks but, he says, the way housing providers react to that is just as important. Drew Smith as a construction brand was shut down and there were some staff redundancies which has affected them closing out the defects in a timely manner."

Overall, Samuels believes VIVID's "partnering approach" was key to getting this complex project over the line. "We work closely with all the local authorities in our area and have strong relationships with most of them," he says. "Local authorities and registered providers like us have similar values, the outcome we want is the same – good quality housing that's affordable for local people. By working with Portsmouth to get this through we've got a brilliant product that they're proud of as much as we are."



Intergas launches Funded Hybrid Installation Initiative for housing associations

Intergas has unveiled an exciting new initiative aimed at Housing Associations and Social Housing providers: the Intergas Sustainable Housing Solutions Initiative. This revolutionary scheme is designed to empower housing providers with cutting-edge sustainable heating solutions, ensuring reduced energy consumption and lower carbon emissions for their customers.

Under this scheme, housing associations can benefit from the Intergas Xtend Hybrid System, an innovative system capable of reducing gas consumption by up to an impressive 82.5%. The Xtend Hybrid System has the added capability of retrofitting to an existing, compliant, ERP boiler.

HOW THE SCHEME WORKS

This initiative aims to support the housing sector's transition to cleaner, more affordable energy by providing housing associations with access to subsidised Intergas Xtend Hybrid Systems and additional support for their customers. Here's what participants will receive:

- **A Cutting-Edge Heating System:** The Xtend Hybrid System delivers unmatched energy efficiency thanks to the agile system that will alternate between the boiler and the heat pump, ensuring comfort levels are maintained and the most energy-efficient combination of appliances used.
- **Customer Support:** A monetary contribution towards the occupier's energy consumption for a three-month period, helping your customers transition to this new, energy-efficient system.
- **Expert Support:** A skilled Intergas technical engineer will support the contractor during the installation and commissioning process, ensuring a smooth and professional setup operation.

To meet the UK government's net-zero carbon targets by 2050, landlords and property managers will need to adopt greener heating technologies. Hybrid systems like the Xtend represents a practical and cost-effective way to begin this transition. They offer a solution that works well for a diverse range of properties while delivering significant savings and maintaining tenant satisfaction.

If you're ready to upgrade your rental property's heating system without removing the current ErP boiler, consider a hybrid solution today. It's an investment that not only future proofs your property but also aligns with the growing demand for sustainable living.



Hybrid systems deliver impressive energy efficiencies. By combining an air source heat pump (ASHP) with a boiler, the system ensures gas is only used when needed. For example, with the Xtend, landlords can reduce gas consumption by up to 82.5%, resulting in substantial savings on energy bills for you and your customers. This can also make the property more appealing to environmentally conscious renters.

Heating accounts for 14% of the UK's carbon emissions, with 85% of homes still relying on gas boilers. Installing hybrid systems can immediately reduce this impact. The ASHP component generates energy using the outside air, achieving zero emissions during operation. Over time, as properties are retrofitted to improve insulation, the reliance on gas can decrease further, with the option to transition to a stand-alone heat pump for 100% sustainable heating.

If the property already has a compliant ErP gas boiler, there's no need for an expensive boiler replacement when switching to a hybrid system. The Xtend, for instance, can be retrofitted to an existing boiler, saving both time and money. Additionally, the installation process is simplified with the Xtend Monobloc as it doesn't require F-Gas certification, which further reduces overall costs.

A common concern with standalone heat pumps is their limited efficiency in poorly insulated homes or during colder months. Hybrid systems resolve this by working together with the gas boiler to

maintain consistent comfort levels even in winter, ensuring occupiers always have reliable heating and hot water. This feature makes hybrid heating suitable for a wide variety of properties, from modern homes to older buildings with less efficient insulation.

Occupiers often worry about the noise associated with air source heat pumps. Fortunately, the carefully engineered design of the Xtend system ensures quiet operation. With the outdoor unit operating at just 34 dB(A) at five metres (softer than a whisper), it delivers the benefits of renewable energy without disrupting the tenant's environment.

The time to act is now. Reduce energy costs, protect the environment, and ensure tenant comfort with hybrid heating.

Step into the future of sustainable housing with Intergas. Together, we can revolutionise how we heat homes while protecting the planet.

Housing Associations looking to improve their customer satisfaction, reduce carbon emissions, and lower energy costs are encouraged to register for the scheme by 31 October 2025. Don't miss this opportunity to lead the way toward sustainable housing.

For more information and to register your interest, please contact Intergas or visit the website.

marketing@intergas-heating.co.uk
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Terms and conditions apply. Scheme ends 31 October 2025

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Social housing is the UK's unsung hero for sustainability and green heating

With the Warm Homes Social Housing Fund allocations confirmed, Kensa's Dr Stuart Gadsden looks back at the progress social housing has made in decarbonising properties, what lessons there are for private housing, and how treating retrofit as 'infrastructure' is key for the future.

Social housing is delivering one of the UK's quiet climate success stories – reducing carbon emissions from homes while cutting energy bills and upgrading some of the country's most challenging building stock.

As much of the private housing sector continues to debate the 'how' and 'when' of retrofit, usually settling on individual improvements here and there, social landlords have simply got on with it, embracing coordinated, building-wide approaches to energy efficiency and low-carbon heating. From high-rise flats to dispersed estates, the sector has taken on the complexity of decarbonising at scale and delivered tangible results.

These upgrades are improving energy performance and comfort for residents and helping to address fuel poverty. Today, nearly three-quarters of social

housing in England is rated EPC A to C. While the EPC system has its flaws, it remains a useful marker of progress and a clear sign that strategic investment in insulation, heating, and ventilation is paying off.

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

This progress hasn't happened by chance. It's the result of long-term planning, purpose-driven investment, and targeted government support. Previous funding schemes like the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) and now the £1.29bn Warm Homes Social Housing Fund (WH:SHF) have helped social landlords prepare, plan, and move beyond piecemeal upgrades to deliver coordinated, whole-building retrofit programmes.





By approaching energy upgrades and heat decarbonisation at scale, providers have delivered long-term performance upgrades, turning ageing housing stock into some of the country's most efficient and comfortable retrofit homes.

WHY SOCIAL HOUSING IS GETTING IT RIGHT

Planning and delivering upgrades at scale, whether for entire buildings or estates, reduces disruption, secures economies of scale, and delivers long-term improvements to both homes and assets.

In contrast, private homes are often upgraded one at a time, which limits impact and increases costs. Whole-building or estate-wide programmes deliver more consistent outcomes, improve comfort for more people, and reduce the overall installation cost per property.

Crucially, social housing has shown that treating retrofits like infrastructure, not just repairs, can accelerate heat decarbonisation and help meet net-zero goals without leaving anyone behind.

REAL-WORLD RETROFIT: LESSONS FROM THE FRONT LINE

Kensa has supported housing providers across the UK to deliver impactful heating upgrades using the networked ground source heat pump system. Designed to serve entire blocks of flats or entire estates efficiently, the system is now heating and lowering energy costs for thousands of social homes, including around 30 UK tower blocks.

Two recent projects show the difference integrating this kind of system into a whole-building retrofit can make:

At the Sutton Dwellings Estate in Chelsea, central London, Clarion Housing retrofitted 81 Edwardian-era flats across four blocks, placing networked ground source heat pumps at its heart. The challenge was to modernise a heritage site in a dense, urban setting. By designing the retrofit as a complete system, with heating and fabric working together, the project delivered modern, low-carbon homes that preserved the building's historic character and improved energy performance.

In Thurrock, Essex, three 1960s tower blocks, containing 273 flats in total, had outdated night storage heaters replaced with networked heat pumps alongside insulation improvements. Many residents had faced eye-watering

heating bills, but post-upgrade, these costs fell by as much as 66%. The retrofit resolved long-standing inefficiencies and provided a long-term, affordable heating solution that benefitted every resident.

These aren't isolated improvements, they're examples of what's possible when heating and building upgrades are treated as a system, not as standalone fixes, and it's something that the sector has been so good at doing.

THE OPPORTUNITY AND THE RISK

There's still a long way to go. Despite the sector's commendable progress, thousands of homes still need upgrades. Funding and policy certainty will be essential to maintain momentum.

The WH:SHF will help transform many more social homes, including high-rise and other "complex to decarbonise" properties. But with no further funding rounds expected before 2028, many housing providers face uncertainty just when long-term planning is needed most.

For councils and housing associations with net zero plans and EPC targets, clarity on what comes next is critical, not just to hit targets but also to deliver long-term savings and ensure residents continue to benefit from warm, efficient homes.

SCALING UP ACROSS THE UK

Social housing has shown how to decarbonise homes effectively, affordably, and at scale. If a similar whole-building, or even street-by-street, approach was applied to private housing, it would enable large-scale delivery of energy efficiency upgrades and clean heat initiatives, increase UK heat pump installations and deliver energy savings for millions of people.

Retrofit is central to the UK's net zero strategy, and the lessons from social housing provide a practical roadmap for others to follow. To meet climate targets, cut energy bills, and improve building performance, there needs to be a shift from individual measures to long-term, building-wide solutions. Social housing is showing how it's done, and now the rest of the housing sector needs to follow.

Dr Stuart Gadsden is Commercial Director at Kensa

New additions to compact radiator range

Stelrad has announced that it has launched a range of 200 mm and 1,200 mm high radiators in a variety of sizes. The new radiator sizes offer a helpful additional range to slot into specifications and installations up and down the country. The new 200 mm sized radiators are available in K3 and K4 sizes and are floor mounted only, supplied with feet. Available in white, have a ten-year warranty and are ideal for installations where space is limited. The 1,200 mm sized radiators come in K2 format and in five different sizes. They are wall mounted only and come with a centre tap fitting. Also available in white and with a ten-year warranty.



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The Housing Management & Maintenance (HMM) website is an online provider of past and present news items dedicated to keep professionals within this sector updated with a wide range of topics including legislation, projects, products and more. housingmmonline.co.uk is a one-stop source for all the latest press releases providing any visitor with access to information about products and services that they may require. From the website, you can find links to digital issues that have live links to advertisers' sites, as well as email alerts to keep you as informed as possible.



www.housingmmonline.co.uk

DAB Pumps unveils new ESYTANK line-up for seamless pressure boosting

For installers looking for a compact, dedicated water tank to pair with the ESYBOX Mini³, DAB has delivered. The new ESYTank 300 Mini brings purpose-built potable water storage to smaller domestic and light commercial pressure-boosting jobs – without compromising on performance. Designed to store and supply water in residential settings, the original ESYTank 500 was a hit with users of the ESYBOX, with its ESYDock for quick installation and its modular design that allowed additional tanks to be added on three sides. But until now, there has not been a dedicated tank for the ESYBOX Mini³, leaving installers with fewer options when specifying compact pressure-boosting systems. That changes with the release of the ESYTank 300 Mini. Smaller in height than the ESYTank 500, the ESYTank 300 can be used with both the ESYBOX and the ESYBOX Mini³, storing drinking water and boosting mains pressure for taps, showers, garden use and household appliances. It fits easily through smaller doors like those leading to cellars, and comes with all the accessories required for fast installation. It has a rectangular base for compact siting, a filling valve with float, overflow and the option for remote monitoring via DAB's DConnect platform (allowing installers to check system performance and receive alerts from anywhere). It comes in both a CAT 3 and CAT 5 version, which has an AB-type air gap system with auxiliary DN50 outlet to prevent contamination of the water supply.



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The great retrofit challenge

Retrofitting the UK's ageing homes is now an urgent priority. Simon Storer of the Insulation Manufacturers Association highlights the challenges and opportunities of meeting evolving safety, sustainability, and efficiency standards through effective insulation solutions.

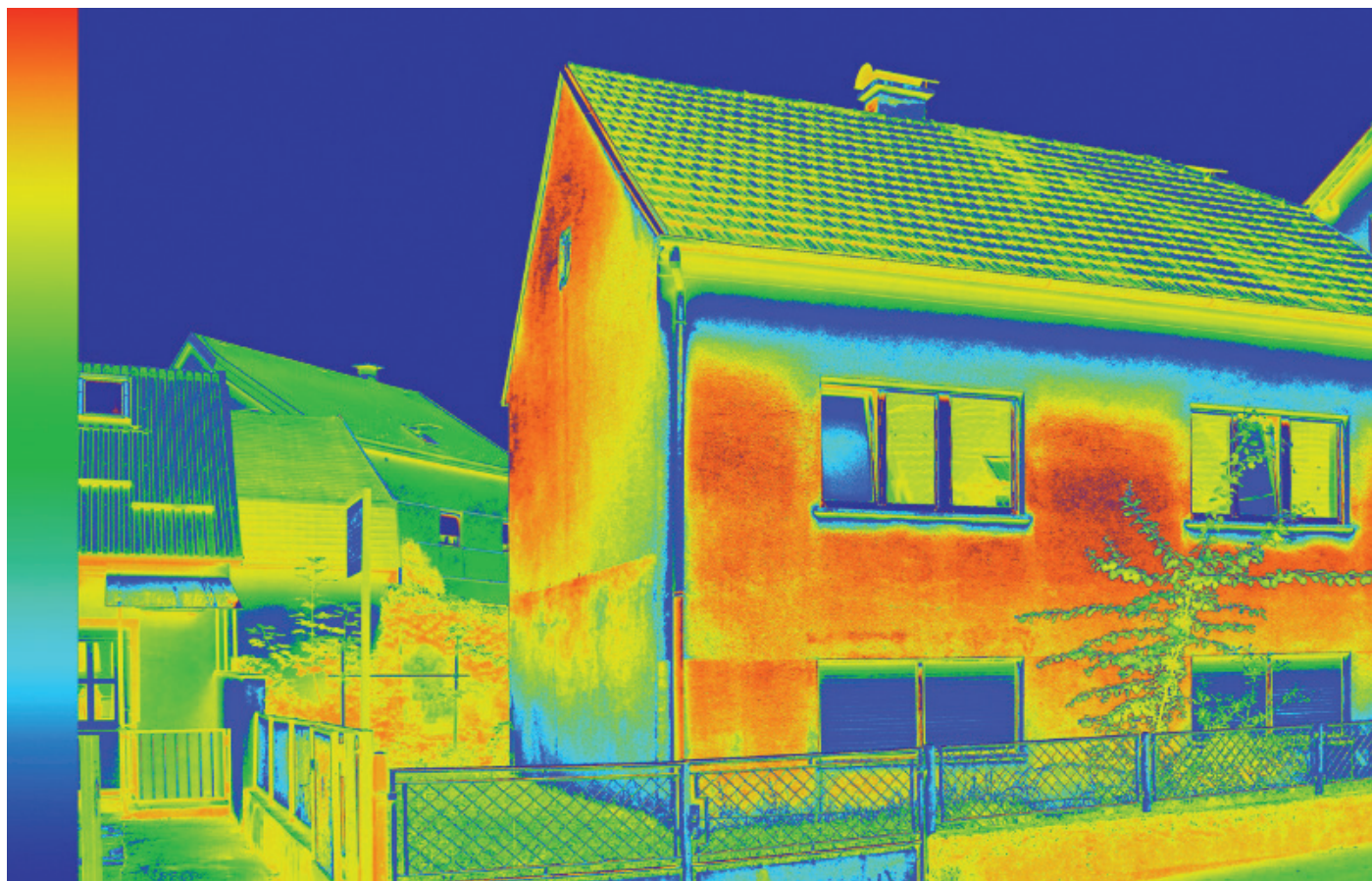
It is well known that the UK has some of the least energy efficient and worst maintained homes in Europe, with nearly six million houses built before 1919 and over half built before the first insulation requirements were added to the Building Regulations in 1965. These ageing, poorly insulated homes lose substantial heat and are in varying states of repair. But the sheer volume and variability of the UK's older building stock requires tailored retrofitting approaches, not a simple one-size-fits-all solution.

A SHIFTING REGULATORY LANDSCAPE

In contrast, higher standards for energy efficiency have been introduced for new build housing: the new and updated Part L of the Building Regulations for England came into force in June 2022, followed by new energy efficiency

updates in Scotland and Wales in November and December 2022. The Future Homes Standard is currently under consultation. While these standards are not yet good enough and more will need to be done to meet the net zero challenge, there is very little to promote and deliver the improvements needed for existing buildings.

The Government's Warm Homes Plan represents a potentially important step forward. With £3.4bn allocated over three years (roughly £1.1bn annually) the plan introduces grants and low-interest loans to support investments in insulation, solar panels, batteries, and low-carbon heating systems. These measures aim to lower energy bills and reduce emissions, helping to address the UK's notoriously inefficient housing stock. If we are to move to a net zero carbon country by 2050 (2045 in Scotland), it will be vital to make



The sheer volume and variability of the UK's older building stock requires tailored retrofitting approaches, not a simple one-size-fits-all solution

improvements to homes and other buildings to reduce emissions. This means installing a whole range of energy saving measures; from better insulation and more efficient appliances to replacing fossil fuelled boilers with low carbon alternatives such as heat pumps.

FABRIC FIRST APPROACH

PIR and PUR insulation has an invaluable role in upgrading our underperforming housing stock and ensuring a sustainable future. Good insulation is essential and is one of the simplest and most cost-effective ways to reduce energy demand and cut CO₂. Lower U-values in walls, floors and roofs will result in less heat lost, and better thermal performance, which in turn will help to deliver the standards required.

Highly effective and versatile, polyisocyanurate (PIR) and polyurethane (PUR) are some of the most effective insulation products available and provide versatile solutions in the form of boards, blocks, cavity injected, composite panels, and spray or panel insulation. These versatile products ensure that heat loss from properties is substantially reduced, meaning enhanced energy efficiency.

HEALTHY HOMES

Well insulated buildings can also yield significant benefits for the lives of their users and occupants. The importance of thermal comfort, providing pleasant internal conditions during the winter and summer months, is a prime example. This factor is seen to influence performance and productivity, as well as the physical and mental health of building users.

Another social benefit associated with better insulation is the reduction and potential elimination of fuel poverty. This issue is alleviated as a greater proportion of heat is retained more effectively in homes when

incorporating superior fabric efficiencies. The provision of an enhanced building envelope results in a reduced overall fuel demand needed to achieve equivalent, sustained warmth over the winter months than for a building with lesser thermal performance.

GOOD PRACTICE & DETAILING

To upgrade buildings to the standards required, it will be essential to establish its existing condition and carry out an accurate energy audit by a competent assessor, who can provide appropriate energy improvement measures. Factors such as the building's design, location and construction materials may influence the best solution; correct detailing, materials and process are all important considerations as is pre-installation preparation and other remedial work such as ensuring gutters and downpipes do not leak. An adequate ventilation scheme should also be introduced as improved airtightness will alter the air flow and internal building environment.

With the need for retrofit on the increase it is most important that work is carried out with a holistic approach following a comprehensive set of standards: assessment, compliance, installation and commissioning, to ensure the building performs as intended and that works are carried out in the correct order.

Professional co-ordination coupled with consumer motivation, can deliver a successful retrofit. But good design and workmanship necessitates a proper level of quality assurance throughout the process, and good detailing is important for new-build and retrofit alike.

Moreover, to ensure thermal performance is achieved, all contractors need to make sure the levels of site supervision are of a good standard, the manufacturer's installation instructions are followed and installation instructions around potential cold thermal bridges and detailing are achieved.

Upgrading and retrofitting our ageing housing stock with high performance insulation plays a crucial role in lowering heating demand, cutting CO₂ emissions whilst simultaneously tackling fuel poverty and improving comfort and wellbeing. Only through such concerted improvement efforts can we not only minimise environmental impact but also create a lasting asset for future generations.

Simon Storer is chief executive of the Insulation Manufacturers Association

What's smart about burying a smart meter?

Smart meters are seen as a significant part of the solution to reducing domestic water usage. Thames Water have recorded post installation savings of 12-17%. However, existing infrastructure does not provide the best environment for this new technology.

Following multiple trials, all water companies are now working on plans for Advanced metering infrastructure, where all new connections or meters use the latest generation of smart meters. The issues raised in the early trials has led much of the UK water industry to recognise that the new technology meters need a better environment than the traditional hole in the ground.

Experience has shown that the most effective method of installing the advanced metering infrastructure is to locate the meter above ground. The Groundbreaker water management system co-locates the water meter on the exterior wall of the dwelling, alongside gas and electric meters, providing a perfect location for high technology meters.

In addition to providing a better environment for the meter, locating the meter above ground has the additional benefits of readability for the consumer, extended signal transmission and easy meter exchange. Whilst developers see the short-term advantage of lower unit costs for traditional boundary boxes, the ongoing costs of reading meters and maintaining supplies can be higher for supply and housing management.

FUTURE PROOFING THE NETWORK

Above ground meter housings do have a higher unit cost than traditional boundary boxes. However, when factoring in installation cost the differential is under £15 per unit and that's before considering the long-term reliability of boundary boxes. The House Builders Federation have determined that 53% of underground installations require re-work. With an average repair cost of £268.27, the average re-work cost per boundary box installed is approaching £150.

These failures lead to leakage and water waste. WRc estimate 1 in 600 property connections suffer from leakage. Working on a predicted 90-day repair timeline, this leads to an estimated loss of 36 m³. By comparison the Groundbreaker System has no recorded re-work costs, where the unit was correctly installed – future proofing the network and minimising the risk of re-work and developing future leaks.

DESIGNING OUT LEAK PATHS

A leak on a pipe joint upstream of the water meter results in lost revenue to the water provider as well as the loss of a precious resource. With Boundary boxes there is a lack of visibility of this leakage and requires assessments of losses from water meter data and investigations in the field to listen for leakage.

The unique location of the Groundbreaker water management has the additional benefit of



allowing for an unjointed water supply, hence maintaining the integrity of the supply. The use of an uninterrupted supply has been recognised as best practice by Water UK and the Home Builders Federation. This minimises the risk of future leakage on the service pipe.

Steve Leigh, managing director of Groundbreaker commented: "Portsmouth Water have demanded surface mounted meter housings as the standard required for all new properties for over 15 years. Working with them we have established the effectiveness and reliability of Groundbreaker." So for future proofing water supply and reducing management costs of water supply, working with developers to install above ground meters is the long term solution.

01379 741993 groundbreaker.co.uk

MxPro 5 delivers tailored fire protection

Three next-generation Advanced MxPro 5 fire panels have been installed across a multi-building residential development on Westminster Bridge Road, London, delivering reliable protection for residents. Integrated Fire Safety Systems Ltd (IFSS) was responsible for all aspects of the fire alarm installation across the buildings.

The team designed a Category L2 fire system using three Advanced MxPro 5 single-loop panels, each managing 24 devices including multisensors and detectors. IFSS configured the system to transmit clear, building-specific information via a GSM monitoring unit.



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5-year warranty on CAST-powered products

C-TEC has announced that all its CAST-powered products will have a new 5 year warranty from 1 May 2025. CAST (C-TEC Addressable System Technology) is C-TEC's own proprietary life-safety system protocol. With features designed to facilitate fast installation, servicing, maintenance and operation, CAST powers all the manufacturer's flagship systems. Hence the new warranty will cover not only its XFP and ZFP CAST addressable fire systems but its EVAC-ALERT BS 8629 evacuation alert system, its HUSH-PRO BS 5839-6 Grade C residential fire alarm systems and its new range of CAST-PRO combined detection and alarm devices.



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Raven Housing Trust collaborates with Aico to enhance fire safety in sheltered and temporary accommodation

Raven Housing Trust is partnering with Aico, the European market leader in home life safety, to upgrade fire protection systems in 432 dwellings across its sheltered and temporary accommodation. This major investment underscores Raven Housing Trust's commitment to the safety and well-being of its residents.

Recognising the critical importance of robust fire safety measures in sheltered and temporary accommodation, Raven Housing Trust is committed to installing systems to the highest specification, compliant with BS 5839-6 standards.

ENHANCING PROTECTION ACROSS HOUSING

This three-year programme will see AJS Ltd, an electrical contractor outsourced by Raven Housing Trust, install Aico's fire and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms. This installation will take place across 432 individual temporary dwellings, ensuring that residents receive the earliest possible warning of a fire or CO event. Separately, Raven Housing Trust's Direct Labour Organisation will be undertaking upgrades to sheltered accommodation sites and general needs properties to LD1 and LD2 specifications, respectively, during change of tenancy or rewiring works. The sheltered accommodation upgrade will also integrate the existing Warden Call systems, providing enhanced safety and rapid response capabilities within these facilities.

Aico's Relationship Manager for the South East, Paul Barrett, will work closely with Christian Hirschfeld from Raven Housing Trust, alongside other teams involved in this project, providing product expertise and guidance.



"We have chosen Aico as our manufacturer for this project due to their reputation for high-quality products and innovative technology," stated Christian Hirschfeld, Electrical Manager at Raven Housing Trust. "Aico's commitment to safety and reliability makes them an ideal partner for our homes, ensuring that we provide the best possible protection for our residents."

AICO'S 3000 SERIES INSTALLATION

The upgrade will involve the installation of specific, high-performance Aico alarms tailored to different areas within the temporary dwellings:

- The Ei3028 Multi-Sensor Heat and CO Alarm will be installed in kitchens where boilers are present.
- The Ei3024 Multi-Sensor Fire Alarm will be used in kitchens without boilers.
- The Ei3016 Optical Smoke Alarm will provide coverage in circulation areas, living areas, and bedrooms.

All alarms will be interconnected using the Ei3000MRF module, which allows for wireless interconnection via radio frequency. This means that if one alarm is activated, all alarms will sound, providing full-circle protection and allowing for an immediate response. At each of the sheltered accommodation sites, Aico's Ei414 RadioLINK+

Fire/CO Alarm Interface will be implemented to seamlessly connect the new fire alarm system with the existing Warden Call setup, enabling immediate alerts and assistance for residents in the event of a fire or CO emergency.

TRAINING AND ONGOING SUPPORT

Paul will further support the team by delivering Aico's award-winning Expert Installer training course. This CPD-accredited course will equip Raven Housing Trust with the essential knowledge and skills needed to correctly and efficiently site and install Aico's safety systems. Once complete, the team will extend their knowledge by completing Aico's Domestic Fire and CO Alarm Systems City & Guilds assured training held at their headquarters in Oswestry.

Paul Barrett commented on the project: "Christian and his team are taking the lead in installing Aico products to comply with BS 5839-6 using our Grade D1 Ei3000 Series alarms and LD1 specification. It has been a pleasure getting to know Raven Housing Trust over the years, and I am sure our trusted partnership will continue long into the future."

Learn more about Aico's innovative alarms by visiting the website.

01691 664100 www.aico.co.uk



Renewed liveability

Post-Grenfell, the fire safety agenda puts the focus on facade design. Sandra Rubiano of AESG says recladding is a chance to improve sustainability, and overall liveability, and go beyond compliance.



In recent years, the post-Grenfell regulatory landscape has rightly placed fire safety as the primary driver for the design of facades within the social housing sector.

Likewise, with the introduction of the Building Safety Act reshaping the facade landscape – and particularly for residential buildings over 18 metres – there's greater accountability on building owners and a more rigorous approach to managing fire risks required.

While safety remains the essential starting point, there is now a growing expectation that housing providers go further, addressing energy efficiency, embodied carbon and aesthetics in parallel. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge lies in balancing the often-competing demands of cost, regulation and architectural integrity, particularly when retrofitting existing buildings. The opportunity, however, is in delivering facade solutions that are not only compliant but genuinely transformational.

LEARNING FROM GLOBAL BEST PRACTICE

Countries like Denmark and Germany provide clear evidence of what is possible when facade design is elevated 'beyond compliance.' In Denmark, there is a national culture of resource-conscious design, where durability, material efficiency and lifecycle performance are embedded into every stage of development. Germany, meanwhile, pioneered the Passivhaus standard, a model for ultra-low-energy buildings that rely heavily on high-performance facades to achieve their efficiency.

In Denmark, there is a national culture of resource-conscious design, where durability, material efficiency and lifecycle performance are embedded into every stage of development

These international examples show that innovation in facades can unlock measurable improvements not just in energy performance but in resident comfort, building resilience and long-term maintenance costs. They also demonstrate the value of viewing facades as holistic systems – not a collection of parts but a key interface between people, buildings and the environment.

DECARBONISATION & THE NET ZERO OPPORTUNITY

With decarbonisation now a strategic priority for the UK housing sector, retrofitting facades has the potential to become a cornerstone of a provider's net zero strategy. In fact, facade performance can make or break the energy profile of a building, particularly in older social housing stock where thermal bridging and inadequate insulation are common.



Germany pioneered the Passivhaus standard, a model for ultra-low-energy buildings that rely heavily on high-performance facades to achieve their efficiency

PUTTING RESIDENTS AT THE CENTRE

With the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 also emphasising resident engagement, transparent communication is critical in any recladding project.

Residents need to understand not just what is changing but why and how it will benefit them in the long term. A well-considered facade upgrade can reduce energy bills, improve thermal comfort, and significantly reduce a building's environmental impact. Those outcomes need to be part of the conversation from the outset. Thermal modelling tools can also help bring those benefits to life, offering tangible evidence of improvements and making technical design decisions more relatable.

SETTING A NEW STANDARD

Facade retrofit should not be viewed solely as a safety obligation. It's an opportunity to set new standards for building performance, sustainability and resident engagement. The most successful projects will come from integrated, multidisciplinary thinking, where fire safety, energy efficiency, architectural expression and long-term resilience are considered together, not in isolation.

With the right tools and expertise already in place, the opportunity is clear: to retrofit not just for compliance, but for climate, comfort, and community. If we draw together international best practices and align them with the UK's unique housing challenges, we can redefine what facade retrofit looks like: not just making buildings safer but making them better in every sense.

Sandra Rubiano is associate director of facades at AESG

Today's modelling tools can forecast how various facade upgrades will affect seasonal energy use, highlight opportunities to reduce embodied carbon, and even assess circularity through end-of-life planning. These capabilities should be seen not as extras, but as essential tools for designing buildings that are truly future-ready.

A new generation of facade systems also supports this ambition. Materials with improved fire resistance and lower embodied carbon, prefabricated panels that minimise on-site disruption, and smart detailing that optimises performance are all making sustainable upgrades more accessible. By embracing such systems, and going beyond minimum standards, housing providers can deliver facades that are not only compliant but also maintainable, futureproof and aligned to broader climate goals.

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Beauflor expands social housing flooring options with Polaris

Beauflor's Polaris is a cushion vinyl collection that's designed and made in Belgium to cope with the rigours of communal and residential use in social housing schemes. With a collection of 16 stylish wood plank designs, as well as the option for modern concrete, Polaris is a cushion vinyl floor that brings durability and quality to general and private accommodation areas in social housing. Designed and made in Belgium by Beauflor, this collection is a high quality response to the need for affordable flooring. All Polaris designs feature Beauflor's Natural Look texture and matt finish for a great looking floor. With trending grey woods such as Monterey Oak and Fumed Oak, as well as warming wood tones like Cameo, Natural Oak and Lime Oak, rooms can enjoy a home-like floor that has all the practical advantages of cushion vinyl flooring. Impervious to water, easy to clean using normal household cleaners and with a durable wear layer (0.35 mm) that's protected with Premium Coating for better resistance to scratches and stains; Polaris is easy for tenants to live with. These factors also help to provide a lasting floor finish (classes 23/32/41) that can overcome concerns about the ongoing cost of providing floor coverings in domestic areas. Polaris is also R10 rated for slip resistance providing assurance underfoot and meets Bfl-s1 standard for resistance to fire. Polaris is fast to install and can be loose laid in most domestic areas (up to 20 m²).

info@beauflor.com www.beauflor.com

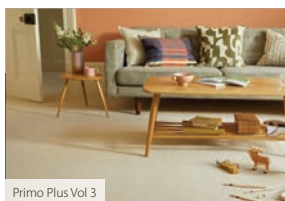


Part one of new summer portfolio

Designer Contracts has released the first of a two-part launch of new and revitalised products for Spring/Summer 2025. Wave one features an all-new domestic vinyl collection and three additions to its extensive carpet portfolio. The ranges combine to offer further environmental credentials and a host of fashionable new colours.

Commercial director Louise Walters said: "Our teams have worked hard over the past few months to develop a raft of new and updated products that reflect both our customers' need for value and consistency of supply – and the end users evolving expectation of sustainable benefits and fashionable options."

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Primo Plus Vol 3

A 'walk-in' the park

When creating a wet room, tanking may seem like a less inspiring functional necessity but underestimate its importance at your peril. Leaks from a poorly tanked wet room or walk-in shower can result in unpleasant odours and ugly marks. In more severe cases, the resultant damp and flooding can present serious health risks and even undermine the structural integrity of a property. To help the trade tank wet rooms with exceptional speed and efficiency as well as with maximum peace of mind, Bond It has the solution – its high performance tanking slurry. Once applied, Bond It tanking slurry is fully effective after just two coats.

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Defying damp: Solving social housing's mould problem

From October 2025, social landlords must rapidly address serious damp and mould risks. Luke Brooks of Tarmac shows how lime plaster systems are effective as a 'people-first' alternative.



Social landlords will already be well aware of Section 42 of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, known as Awaab's Law, which was passed as part of the Government's mission to transform the safety and quality of social housing.

From October 2025, all social landlords will be forced to investigate and fix dangerous damp and mould in set time periods, as well as repair all emergency hazards within 24 hours. Measures to address other dangerous hazards will then be introduced under a step-by-step approach to make the law stronger.

Failure to comply could lead to court action, a major shift which should help to drive a better approach to achieving quality in social housing in all sites across the UK.

HIGHLIGHTING THE PROBLEM

Social landlords already have a duty to keep their homes fit for human habitation and to remedy disrepair, including making sure that homes meet the Decent Homes Standard, but damp and mould unfortunately remains a common issue in the sector.

Awaab's Law honours two-year-old Awaab Ishak, who tragically died following prolonged exposure to damp and mould, but it "will set clearer and stronger laws to ensure that tenants are living in safe homes", according to the Government.

Findings published by the Government in 2023 following Awaab Ishak's death show that around 3-4% of the four million social housing homes in



England had at least some notable damp and mould, 1-2% had serious (HHSRS category 2) damp and mould problems, and a further 0.2% had the most serious (HHSRS category 1 level) problems, which would fail the Decent Homes Standard. The most recent English Housing Survey found damp problems in 7% of social homes in 2023-24, an increase of 3% since 2019.

Significant improvements have already been made under various funding programmes, but more work is needed ahead of the new legislation.

LIME PLASTER – COVERING THE ISSUES

Of course, social landlords can use a number of improvements across the home to improve energy performance and reduce the risk of damp and mould. The WMCA programme included fixing leaking roofs, windows and doors, adding new insulation measures and improving heating systems. Roof space ventilation and bathroom fans also help to remove condensation and tackle damp issues, while retrospective damp proof measures such as the installation of a damp proof course are also an option, albeit costly and time-consuming, with no guarantee of a successful outcome.

Damp and mould is caused by excess moisture remaining on walls, thus creating the perfect conditions for mould growth. Solid brick and stone walls are particularly prone to this as the cold surface of the wall encourages airborne moisture from cooking, washing or exhaled breath to condense. The lack of a damp proof course will only add to the issue. However, another increasingly common option that spans the property is the use of modern, breathable lime plaster.

Lime plasters have a number of positive attributes, including the ability to remove moisture from the air when there is too much, and release it back when the air gets too dry, creating a healthier environment that allows the walls to breathe out moisture and reduce mould growth. This is made possible thanks to the microporous structure, which enables controlled vapour diffusion and offers resistance to liquid water penetration.

In contrast, conventional gypsum plaster is hygroscopic, which means that any moisture from the atmosphere or substrate is absorbed and retained. Without correct insulation measures, this can contribute to damp and black

The most recent English Housing Survey found damp problems in 7% of social homes in 2023-24, an increase of 3% since 2019

mould. Widespread installation of double glazing may have improved heat retention and offer sound insulation across our ageing social housing stock, but it can also diminish ventilation and increase humidity levels; one limitation of gypsum plaster.

Lime plasters are designed for older buildings, which are common in social housing, and can even make older buildings warmer and easier to heat. Due to the use of expanded perlite, Limelite renovating plasters, for example, deliver thermal conductivity value on average three times lower than gypsum plasters, which improves the insulation properties of the wall.

ADDED BENEFITS

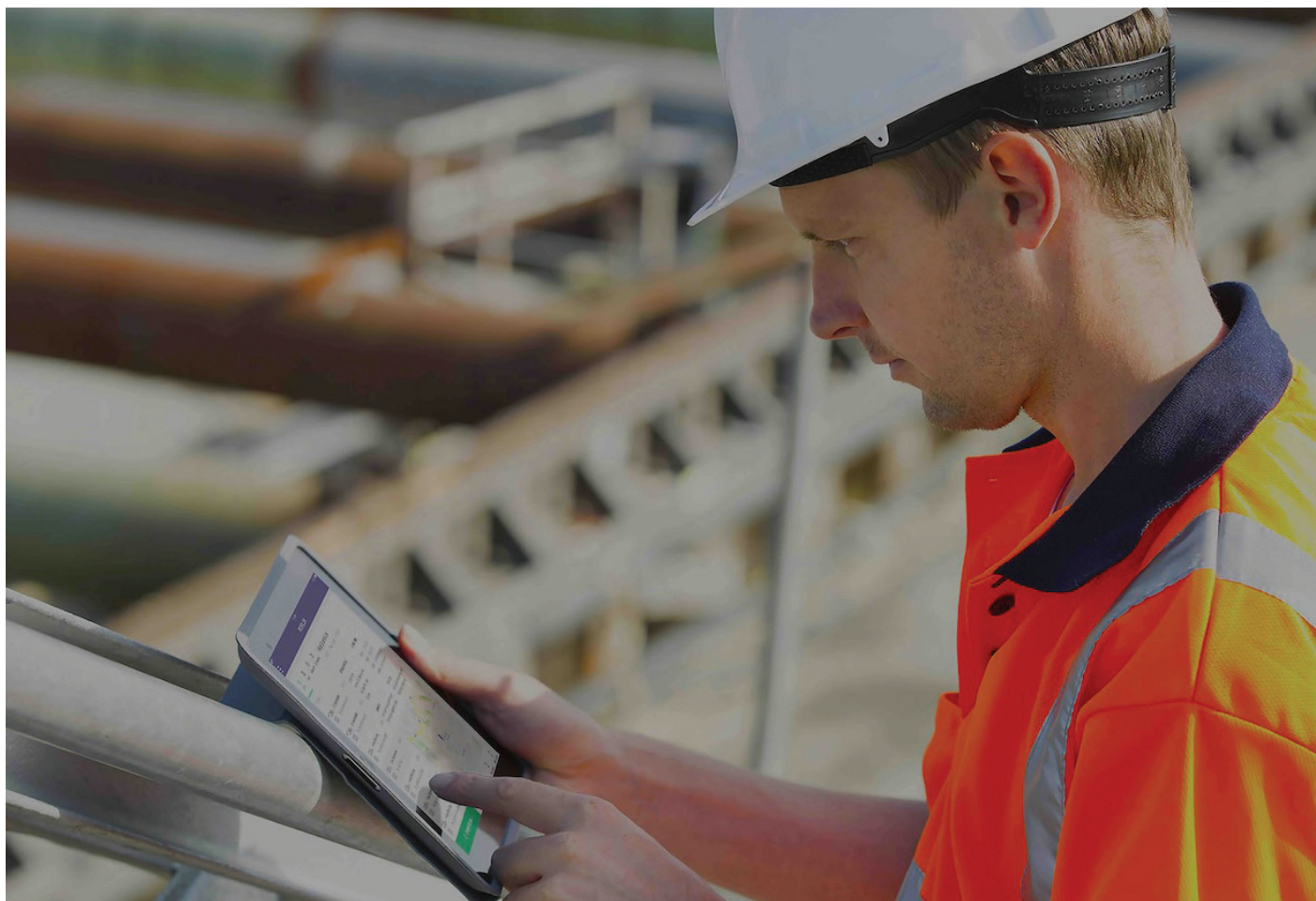
There are benefits for contractors too. Lime plaster is often misunderstood as being difficult to apply, but in fact can be particularly user-friendly and easy to handle. Modern lime plaster systems have been designed with various skill levels in mind, resulting in a more user-friendly process. Systems can be less than half the weight of a sand and cement plaster, and can also be applied to both modern and traditional substrates, including masonry, block, stone and wooden lath. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly for contractors, lime plasters are quick drying, with modern plasters having the capability of drying in as little as 24 hours.

The path to success comes down to correct material choice. With enhanced understanding of lime plasters and access to premium products, social landlords have another effective tool in their armoury against damp, ahead of the introduction of new legislation. For occupiers, that can only be a good thing.

Luke Brooks is senior commercial manager, specialist packed products at Tarmac

Technology's critical role in tackling housing repairs

As housing repairs surge and insourcing rises, Dave Carr of Propeller, explains why embracing technology is essential for social landlords and their contractors.



Housing providers in England are spending record amounts on repairs and maintenance, with expenditure exceeding £8.8bn in 2023-2024, according to the Regulator of Social Housing. Rising volumes of responsive and compliance repairs, fire remediation, and building safety work are behind the surge.

As tenants' expectations increase, financial pressures mount, and regulatory demands tighten, including the enforcement of Awaab's Law from October 2025, the sector must improve efficiency. Underperforming repairs and maintenance operations not only waste time and money but compromise tenants' safety and wellbeing.

THE INEFFICIENCY CYCLE

Manual job scheduling and poor contractor management are among the biggest causes of inefficiency in repairs and maintenance.

Relying on Excel spreadsheets to organise visits is time consuming, prone to errors and often fails to allocate the right resources. Engineers may be assigned to jobs that do not match their skillset or they are not prepared for, increasing the risk of incomplete repairs. More complex jobs, requiring the coordination of multiple trades, are often put on the back

burner, causing further backlogs. Inefficiency then filters through a repairs and maintenance operation, and snowballs, as performance is not properly monitored. If service level agreements are not met, contractors are rarely held accountable and remedial actions often lack the urgency needed to drive real improvements.

THE SHIFT TO DIRECT LABOUR ORGANISATIONS (DLOS)

To regain control and improve service levels, an increasing number of social landlords are bringing repairs and maintenance in-house through DLOs. By reducing reliance on private contractors, DLOs can improve cost efficiency, enhance tenant satisfaction and help achieve compliance with new regulations, including Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).

But for DLOs to be effective, adopting new technology is no longer optional – it is essential. Relying on outdated repairs and maintenance management processes will hinder progress and fail to resolve long-standing issues plaguing the sector.

Selecting the right type of technology is crucial too. If it is going to take a year to fully integrate a new system, it is not fit for purpose, especially for a DLO that needs to mobilise quickly.



REACHING FOR THE CLOUDS

Specialist cloud-based job management software will enable a DLO to hit the ground running and streamline repairs and maintenance processes. Opting for a system delivered by SaaS (Software as a Service) means the software is accessed through the web rather than installed on a computer or server. The provider manages the infrastructure, security and updates, and can easily add new functionality when needed.

This SaaS model enables the software to be cost-effectively implemented and requires no specialist IT skills to operate. New systems can be up and running in a week and fully integrated within two months.

THE POWER OF AI

Advances in artificial intelligence (AI) are also enabling greater efficiency across several areas. Visits for compliance, servicing or responsive repairs can be scheduled in bulk allowing thousands of appointments to be organised at once. AI-powered algorithms plan the most efficient routes for available engineers, optimising scheduling based on priority, availability, location and skillset. Not only does this functionality increase the chance of a first-time fix but boosts productivity and reduces travel costs.

Automation also improves communication with tenants. Appointments can be scheduled up to 120 days in advance with the flexibility to rearrange as needed, reducing no access rates.

TECH-DRIVEN TRANSPARENCY

With TSMs setting new requirements for social landlords to improve service quality and accountability, technology has a crucial role to play.

Engineers have instant access to essential information such as asbestos registers, previous repairs, and appliance conditions. This data can be viewed

Record spending on repairs, rising compliance demands, and growing tenant expectations, mean that social landlords can't rest on their laurels

via a mobile app, updated in real time and consolidated into an online analytics dashboard. The information is presented in statistical charts providing real-time visibility across key areas such as compliance, engineer performance, no access reasons, and customer satisfaction scores. This centralised reporting framework increases transparency, helping social lands to meet new regulatory requirements while continuously improving service delivery.

Each visit can also be analysed in terms of time taken, actions carried out, and costs, enabling social landlords to monitor a DLO's performance more effectively and remediate quickly if issues arise. Performance trends can be assessed over time to further optimise resources and improve productivity.

NO STANDING STILL

Record spending on repairs, rising compliance demands, and growing tenant expectations, mean that social landlords can't rest on their laurels. With the number of DLOs expected to increase in response, the need for cloud-based job management software will intensify too. Adopting this technology will enable in-house operations to be up and running quickly, driving efficiency and reducing costs while delivering better outcomes for tenants.

Dave Carr is managing director of Propeller



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Lets get ready for Awaab's Law

David Bly – Managing Director of Cornerstone Management Services Ltd, a company providing independent expert Property Health Surveys recognises the challenges for upholding property health conditions for the long term.

Awaab's Law will be with us in October and, in the absence of also reviewing current processes for dealing with reports of damp, condensation or mould, are we ready to change our thought process alongside recognising cost effectiveness with smarter decision making.

With many surveys to date for these reported issues, our data clearly indicates 91% were dry structures of which, 99% suffered inadequate ventilation that, in the absence of SMART Knowledge, will continue to be a key contributor for repeat outbreaks.

Cornerstone recognise mould is a symptom of a problem and, has a host of root causes and not a single defect therefore, developing a greater understanding of the dwelling, its location and orientation alongside occupancy levels, are key start points for a defined analysis that leads to a compliant solution. In the absence of such, current data and technology utilised today may not uphold Awaab's Law and moreover, could deliver the same problems within a shorter timeframe.



With many expert trades in a supply chain, the importance for a uniform approach is key if we are to learn more of our property types, living standards, everyday atmospheric moisture generation for recognised improvements upheld by defined protocols. Trust is earned through delivering such 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. Why? Because it is fair to say HHSRS assesses recognised immediate impacts whereby damp, condensation and mould are timely developments hence a greater understanding of any root causes, effective repairs, any planned retrofits and notable any future Net Zero commitments.



To support a desired rethink and increase the knowledge of all involved from answering complaints through to managing and undertaking repairs, Cornerstone have developed a unique 1-day CPD accredited damp, condensation, mould and ventilation masterclass with a key emphasis on inviting your trades personnel also.

You will learn more about:

- Mould being a symptom
- Damp being a physical issue
- Metering and surveying equipment interpretation
- Everyday normal moisture generation
- Ventilation adequacy and compliance
- Replacing 'blame' with 'did you know'

For more information, contact us today to book your opportunity at your chosen venue...

Cornerstone are fortunate enough to have some of the UK's most experienced consultants and surveyors within their designated fields. Find out more about our experts and see how they can help!

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