

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2025

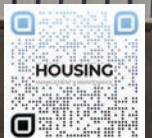
# HOUSING

MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

## BALCONY SAFETY IN HIGH DENSITY – REIMAGINED

Alideck explores how aluminium balcony systems are becoming an integral part of safer building design

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## Editor's Comment



On 27th October, Phase 1 of Awaab's Law takes effect, requiring social landlords to address a wide range of property hazards within new timeframes which will be challenging for many, if not all registered providers.

The big question, as I learned from attending the joint NFH and CIH-run Housing Community Summit in Liverpool, is that it's not damp and mould, but 29 stated hazards in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System that are needed to be addressed to comply with the new legislation. It is a long time since the 2004 Housing Act, but it laid down the extensive list, which range from damp and mould growth, excess cold and heat, and asbestos, other breathable fibres and chemicals, to fire, structural collapse, and noise, not to mention a range of fall risks.

What we do know is that what are deemed emergency repairs must be investigated and 'actioned' within 24 hours, and 'significant' hazards have to be investigated within 10 days. While Awaab's Law is apparently going to apply to all of the hazards in the HHSRS (with the exception of overcrowding), the difference is that they can be more swiftly assessed, not requiring the full HHSRS approach, but that doesn't mean it's easy.

The Government says that instead, a "person-centred approach" will involve a "more straightforward assessment which considers the tenant's circumstances when assessing the risks presented by a hazard." This moves away from the approach of requiring a hazard to be at 'category 1' level before action is taken, potentially meaning a much wider set of actions will be needed. As the Government says, "a tenant with age or health related vulnerabilities may be at significant risk from a home affected by damp and mould, even if it were scored as a category 2 under the HHSRS.

Without more sophisticated data which can tally a hazard with a person's changing characteristics at a granular and flexible level of detail, it's hard to see how this will be "straightforward." When it comes to enforcement, Awaab's will be processed by a local council if it's under their jurisdiction, and are able to complete the repairs more quickly. This could be good news, but there's a lot of learning to be done. Hopefully some will have come through the works by our second round table on the outcomes of the new law, which is scheduled for early February 2026.

James Parker

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### On the cover...

Alideck explores how aluminium balcony systems are becoming an integral part of safer building design. See page 29.





# Platform joins Homes for Nature Campaign to champion wildlife friendly new homes

**A** Midlands based housing association, Platform Housing Group, is proud to announce its commitment to the Homes for Nature initiative, an industry leading campaign developed by the Future Homes Hub.

This bold, voluntary pledge aims to embed wildlife supportive features, such as bird nesting bricks or boxes and hedgehog highways, as standard in all new planning applications from September 2024 running through to at least 2030, with annual progress reports.

As part of this scheme, Platform will integrate at least one bird nesting brick or box per new home, alongside hedgehog highways connecting gardens and green spaces. Platform's ambitions also extend beyond the requirements of the pledge with further action and measures that demonstrate its long term commitment to biodiversity. This includes new biodiversity training and workshops helping the

social landlord to shape its ambitious new strategic approach to biodiversity. Where feasible it will also be installing supplementary green features on its new developments such as bat roosts, insect bricks, nature friendly sustainable drainage systems and pollinator friendly landscaping to further enhance biodiversity.

Homes for Nature was established to complement the existing Biodiversity Net Gain regulations, which mandate a minimum 10% enhancement in biodiversity. The campaign represents a collective industry response to declining wildlife populations, especially species like swifts and hedgehogs. With more than 28 major homebuilders already signed up – jointly responsible for building more than 100,000 homes annually – it represents a cornerstone effort to install a minimum of 300,000 bird nesting features across the UK in the coming years.



As a member of the Future Homes Hub, Platform will also collaborate closely with organisations such as the RSPB, Action for Swifts, Hedgehog Street and the NHBC, supporting the development of technical and homeowner guidance to ensure effective and meaningful implementation.

## Women and Manual Trades and Procure Plus support a new initiative empowering women into housing maintenance careers

Women and Manual Trades (WaMT) and Procure Plus are proud to support the 'City & Guilds Women's Maintenance Programme' – a new initiative opening doors for women in housing maintenance.

In collaboration with Build Salford, Frameworks Social Enterprise CIC, and Salix Homes, and funded by the City & Guilds Foundation, the programme provides female residents of housing associations with practical training and the tools to access skilled, local employment.

The bespoke programme supports seven women through eight days of intensive off-the-job training over two weeks, followed by a four-day immersive work experience placement.

Developed in direct consultation with housing associations, the curriculum focuses on essential, in-demand maintenance skills, ensuring participants gain practical, career ready experience.

Procure Plus Holdings and Women and Manual Trades (WaMT), part of Procure Plus's subsidiary charity, have provided Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to all participants, supporting their learning during the course and work placements.

The initiative is being delivered as a pilot, with the aim of developing a scalable model that WaMT



can roll out more widely to support more women into skilled trades careers.

Procure Plus is committed to maximising social

value, ensuring procurement delivers real benefits for communities, creating pathways into work, and addressing skills gaps in housing maintenance.

# A sense of community at Liverpool summit

In September the social housing sector gathered for the second time in Liverpool under the combined banner of the Housing Community Summit, put together by the National Housing Federation and the Chartered Institute of Housing.

A huge range of operational, interpersonal and resident issues affecting housing management were discussed, including a whole conference stream devoted to AI. As well as more focused sessions, panellists and delegates didn't shy away from the major political headwinds, such as the rise of Reform and public discontent about immigration, and Government changes affecting the event itself and the resulting debates.

Ruth Curtis, a former policy head at HM Treasury and now chief executive of the Resolution Foundation, was standing in for the recently departed Angela Rayner who had been due to give a keynote. Curtis was left to highlight the context of how living standards had "collapsed" in the UK over the past 20 years in 'non-pensioner' groups, saying it was a "broad-based" finding across demographics, impacting social housing need directly. Disposable incomes in private renting groups had grown by only 4% in those two decades, she said, with owner-occupiers seeing a much higher 14% growth, although PRS households had grown to 23% of the total by 2025.

Despite the vital nature of this context-setting, Rayner was a glaring absence having recently resigned from the Government as Housing Secretary (as well as Deputy PM), to be replaced by Steve Reed, who had too much on his plate to come to Liverpool that week. Curtis mentioned the

worrying figures (for the incoming Reed) that there had been a "dramatic decline" in new social home completions since the early 1990s – in 2024 only 16% of new affordable/below market rent homes were for social rent – a fall of 87% since the early 90s, she said.

Delegates on the main stage however gave a positive report on Rayner, including crediting her for pushing through the £39bn housing 'settlement' agreed by Chancellor Rachel Reeves. Kate Henderson, chair of the National Housing Federation said that the former Housing Secretary "negotiated super hard" in order to secure the settlement for developing housing stock.

There was also praise for the Government's commitment to transforming social rent delivery to at least 60% of new affordable homes. Rory Stewart, former Conservative Minister, said that Steve Reed "had potential, with a record of building housing, but keeping him there would be really important," with a high turnover of Housing Secretaries in recent years.

In the Q&A, Ruth Curtice said that the £39m settlement meaning £4bn a year over 10 years if the investment was sustained, was "a lot," but the "big shift was making a big chunk of affordable homes built into social housing." The chair Kirsty Wark asked the audience to vote on whether they thought the industry had "enough skills and planners for delivering 1.5 million homes," and predictably not a single hand went up.

Henderson said that on the major challenge of upgrading existing homes, "detail was coming" on the new Decent Homes Standard, and the aligned



new Energy Efficiency Standard, which will drive future retrofits. Gavin Smart, chief executive of the CIH said that with several of the 'arms length management organisations' (ALMOs) now "going back inhouse" under the Labour government, this was "regrettable, as they did some really good work."

Other key sessions at the event included examples of retrofit projects which fully engaged residents, despite authorities and residents sometimes being "very cautious," and that gaining trust was challenging. In a question and answer session Abbie Peel at the Home Group housing association admitted they were "really behind on knowing our communities, but upped our game in regeneration projects." Sandy Livingston, executive director at Onward Homes said: "It's when we start stepping back that the trust goes."

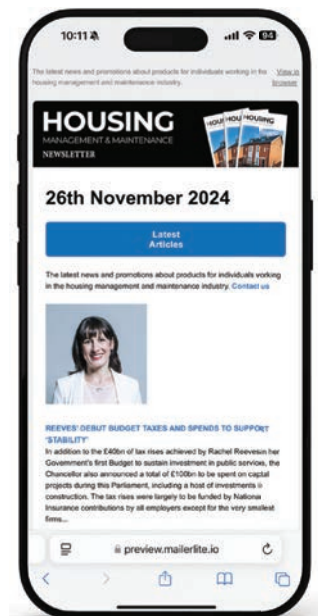
In a comment echoed by many other delegates, Peel said that with this knowledge project taking four years to get off the ground, "dynamic information" was needed which can adapt to new circumstances over time. Gerraint Oakley of Platform Housing Group said that the sector "needed to mention successes, and go back and see if we did what we said we would do."

One of the key messages across the AI-focused sessions was that with Awaab's Law looming on 27 October, encompassing 29 HHSRS 'emergency hazards,' the "clock is ticking," and in the light of the challenge, "why wouldn't you use technology," in the words of AI platform CEO Ryan Dempsey (of TCW). However he cautioned that "AI will get it wrong if you don't control it; there is a big problem coming with people fighting against it, it won't long before your residents will be getting AI to write a bulletproof 'disrepair' letter." Hasan Okyar Bayraktar, senior vice president, commercial of Plentific commented that "the most important thing is the prompt you give AI," as AI's imperatives may not align with tenants' own issues." He added that the "core of what they do is focusing on the 5% of data that is the 'exception to the normal,' and therefore presents potential risk.

The event was notable for a series of striking video clips which were broadcast to delegates, showing how individual tenants' lives had been improved dramatically by providers' inventions. They showed the importance not only of efficient and effective building maintenance, but also the essential empathy to help engage and support residents and provide tailored results.







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## Peabody announces new director



Jonathan Cooper has been appointed the new director of asset investment and fire remediation at Peabody, the not-for-profit housing association.

Jonathan will take the lead on looking after residents' homes, including planning and delivering improvement works and accelerated fire safety upgrades.

He will play an integral role in the senior leadership team of Peabody's investment directorate, planning Peabody's investment in residents' homes over the next 30 years.

His work will support the organisation's wider strategy of providing better services and creating homes and places that last.

Peabody is spending more than £1m every day to keep homes safe, warm and well maintained, with a total of £431m spent on homes, including £71m on building safety last year.

As a chartered building surveyor and construction manager, Jonathan brings with him a wealth of experience in a diverse mix of buildings, planning and delivering large-scale programmes of repairs and improvements.

The appointment follows the welcome announcement in the recent government spending review that social housing providers will be given equal access to the government's fund for cladding remediation work on tall buildings.

# Plans unveiled for supported housing community at Seaham Garden Village



**P**lans for 211 new supported housing apartments at the heart of the Seaham Garden Village have been submitted for approval.

The new homes, designed to help people with differing levels of care and support needs to live well and independently, have been put forward by affordable housing developer Karbon Homes, as part of its development of 750 affordable homes at the new garden village.

This much-needed specialist accommodation will include a 118-unit extra care scheme and two apartment blocks for over 55s.

The extra care scheme is set across four storeys, laid out around a central private courtyard area, landscaped and designed to a high specification with appropriate facilities. Residents will also benefit from a private communal lounge and a private rooftop terrace with sea views.

Three of the extra care apartments will be suitable for bariatric care and 18 will be designed for those living with dementia. The courtyard will be fully secure for the safety of those 18 households.

The scheme will also include a cafe, hairdressing and treatment rooms, and multi-use spaces for activities, all of which will be open to residents living in the neighbouring apartment blocks.

These 211 new homes will be connected to the garden village's new ultra-low carbon mine water heating network, an initiative from Durham County

Council, the Mining Remediation Authority and Karbon Homes, being delivered by Vital Energi.

This will be the fourth phase of homes Karbon has commenced work on to date, all of which are being delivered by lead contractor Esh Construction.

Homes already under construction consist of a mix of family homes and flats, a number of which will be available for social rent and affordable rent, with the remaining available for affordable routes into home ownership through shared ownership and rent to buy.

The 78-hectare garden village, located on the A182 going into Seaham town centre received Garden Village status from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in 2019.

1,500 homes will be built on the site in total, alongside a commercial centre with a shop, a health and well being hub and a new school. Planning for the school was recently approved by Durham County Council, with construction set to start shortly.

The delivery of Seaham Garden Village is being supported by funding from Homes England, through Karbon's Strategic Partnership with the government's housing delivery agency.

Alongside the affordable homes, 750 homes are being developed by national housebuilders Taylor Wimpey and Miller Homes for outright sale.



## 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 very soon 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'

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# Planning approved for Windmill Court regeneration



Leading housing association Sovereign Network Group (SNG) has secured planning permission to redevelop its Windmill Court site in Mortimer Common, near Reading, into 24 high-quality affordable homes.

The scheme will transform the former over-55s accommodation, which had become outdated, into a modern development of houses and maisonettes, all with private outdoor space and parking. The homes will be delivered in a quiet, attractive location on the edge of the village, designed to meet local housing needs while enhancing the area.

The 24 homes will be a mix of 11 Shared Ownership and 13 for social rent, ensuring a range of affordable options for local people. All properties will be built to SNG's Homes and Place Standard,

meaning they will meet high expectations on comfort, space, and energy efficiency. Features will include air source heat pumps and solar panels, ensuring residents benefit from lower running costs and more sustainable homes.

SNG engaged at length with local stakeholders to ensure the site serves the needs of the local community. The planning process took an extended period of time to resolve, reflecting the complexity of the site's existing use and the negotiations needed with the council to release historic covenants.

Approval now means the scheme can progress and deliver new homes for the local community that are fit for modern day living. Four households who previously lived at Windmill Court have already expressed interest in returning once the new homes

are complete. SNG expect to start on site by the end of 2025, with final completions anticipated by late 2027.

Located just seven miles from Reading, Mortimer Common is a thriving West Berkshire village with a strong community identity, local amenities and excellent transport connections, including a nearby railway station on the Reading to Basingstoke line. This attractive setting makes the new homes at Windmill Court particularly well placed to meet demand for affordable housing in the area.

This regeneration is part of SNG's wider ambition to deliver 2,500 homes a year across London and the South of England, creating sustainable places where people want to live.

## Pinnacle Group appointed to manage BluePine Living's affordable housing portfolio

Pinnacle Group has announced that it has been appointed as the housing management partner for BluePine Living, a new affordable housing platform backed by institutional capital and committed to delivering high-quality homes across England.

BluePine Living is investing in homes for social rent, affordable rent and shared ownership, with a focus on sustainability, customer service and long-term community impact.

Pinnacle will provide full service housing management across the portfolio, ensuring residents benefit from responsive services, well maintained homes and a seamless customer experience.

Pinnacle currently manages homes or provides services to 11 For Profit Registered Providers (FPRPs) and is set to contract with several more, representing nearly a quarter of all FPRPs registered with the Regulator of Social Housing.

Pinnacle offers institutional grade services tailored to institutional investors, combining deep



sector knowledge, regulatory compliance and high performance with a commitment to delivering the best possible outcomes for residents.

The partnership will initially support homes in

Worcestershire, Suffolk and Warwickshire with further developments planned across England. Pinnacle's role will include tenancy management, repairs coordination and community engagement.



## Next-generation charging for modern living: Zaptec Go 2 leads the way for housing providers

As the housing sector accelerates toward low-carbon living, the need for robust, compliant, and future-ready EV charging is greater than ever.

### Award-winning and future-ready

Zaptec Go 2 is setting new standards in UK housing. Recently named Best Home Charging Solution at the EVIE Awards 2025 and Best External Product at the Housebuilder Product Awards, it is also a finalist for Best Product at the Housebuilder Awards 2025. As the UK's first V2G-ready AC charger, Zaptec Go 2 combines smart technology, grid-ready features, and full regulatory compliance. Whether for new developments or upgrades, it is a durable, future-proof solution for modern living.

### Compliance and accurate billing

With regulatory changes approaching, such as MID (Measuring Instruments Directive) metering already mandated across the EU and arriving in the UK by 2027, housing providers must act now to avoid costly retrofits. Zaptec Go 2 is MID-certified from day one, ensuring precise, tamper-proof billing and full compliance with both current and future regulations. This is especially important for multi-resident environments, where transparent billing builds trust and efficiency.

### Connected, flexible, and easy to manage

Zaptec Go 2 is engineered for seamless integration and scalability. With OCPP (Open Charge Point Protocol) connectivity and built-in 4G, it is ready for remote management, real-time updates, and integration with major back-office systems and smart charging apps. Installation and management are straightforward, even across large or geographically dispersed portfolios.

### Ready for tomorrow's energy landscape

Zaptec Go 2 is more than a charger. It is a gateway to the future of energy. Solar integration lets housing developments prioritise renewables, reduce costs, and boost sustainability. With V2G (Vehicle-to-Grid) capability, residents' EVs can support grid stability and unlock new value for both providers and communities.

### Scalable solutions for real-world impact

Imagine a development where every resident enjoys fair, regulation-ready charging. V2G and solar-ready features let residents use their vehicles as energy banks or maximise renewable power. For smaller shared car parks or housing association upgrades, Zaptec Go 2 offers a robust, easy-

- ✓ MID-certified – ready for 2027 UK regulations
- ✓ Future-proofed: Solar and V2G ready

to-install solution. For larger, more complex sites, Zaptec Pro delivers advanced power management.

Backed by a five-year guarantee, Zaptec Go 2 reflects Zaptec's commitment to quality and long-term support. For housing associations and local authorities, this means lower risk, less hassle, and a solution you can trust for years to come.

### The bottom line

For housing providers seeking a future-proof, feature-rich EV charging solution, Zaptec Go 2 delivers unmatched value, compliance, and flexibility. Now officially recognised as the UK's Best Home Charging Solution, Zaptec Go 2 is ready to power the next generation of modern living, from everyday installations to tomorrow's energy challenges.



Scan the QR code to learn more about Zaptec

# Housing Ombudsman's Annual Complaint Review shows signs of cautious optimism amid rising complaint volumes

The Housing Ombudsman have published their Annual Complaints Review 2024-25. This found complaints are still rising, but some encouraging signs that landlord handling is improving.

There was a two percentage point fall in the overall maladministration rate, a 7% drop for complaint handling and a 9% decrease in fault handling anti-social behaviour.

There were also over 800 more findings made where the landlord took reasonable steps to put things right itself, rather than being ordered by the Ombudsman.

Complaints performance remains mixed across social landlords. There were 120 landlords where 75% or more complaints were upheld. There were also 131 landlords who received at least one finding of severe maladministration, some several times.

But the Housing Ombudsman have seen 16 landlords significantly improve their performance this year, and two landlords, North Devon Homes and Pickering and Feren Homes, where they investigated several complaints without finding any failings.

The Ombudsman said: "Despite this encouraging direction of travel, the overall maladministration rate still sits too high at 71%. Poor property condition continues to dominate our casework with a 43% increase in findings – far above the overall rise in investigations, with no improvement in the maladministration rate." The Ombudsmans findings show local authority landlords facing acute pressures in handling housing complaints, alongside medium-sized housing associations.

The impact on residents' lives and welfare of poor services and conditions is apparent in

the investigations.

This includes a household living for two years with bin bags covering a hole in their living room ceiling, with the risk of asbestos.

Another resident lived for three years without functioning heating and hot water. A child had their bedroom window boarded up for four years, with the family worried about excessive cold.

Overall, the Housing Ombudsman made 26,901 interventions to put things right, with 40% of compensation related to leaks, damp, and mould.

The Ombudsman encourage landlords to learn from this review. Their Centre for Learning has eLearning modules and workshops to give housing professionals free access to materials to improve services. The Centre for Learning also contains case studies, reports, podcasts and more on key topics the sector is facing.

## Orbit announces two internal promotions to the executive team



Lisa Astle

Orbit has announced the appointment of two internal promotions to its executive team, who will drive its people and reputation strategies.

Lisa Astle, previously director of communications and brand for Orbit, has been promoted to chief reputation officer, while Catrinel Stanila, previously Orbit's HR director, steps into the role of chief people officer. Both will report directly to the group chief executive, Phil Andrew.

In her new role as chief reputation officer,

Lisa Astle will lead Orbit's overarching communications and reputation strategy. Her remit will include customer and external communications, external affairs, digital communications and marketing, design and film, internal colleague communications and the continued evolution of Orbit's employer brand.

Prior to joining Orbit five years ago, Lisa led internal, external, corporate and investor relations communications for Halfords Group and spent

Catrinel Stanila



25 years in leading communications agencies working with national brands across the public and private sector.

Cat Stanila steps up as chief people officer and will lead Orbit's people strategy, focusing on three key areas: HR operations, business partnering, and the overall colleague experience. Cat brings over 20 years of senior HR experience across international and UK-based roles in the automotive and utilities sectors.



# There's an Ecodan for every home

The Ecodan multi-award-winning range of air source heat pumps, cylinders and controls from Mitsubishi Electric is the smart choice for seamless installations. You can explore the full range all in one place, giving you more choice and flexibility.



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ROOM  
CONTROLLER**



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5kW, 6kW, 8.5kW,  
11.2kW, 14kW



\*Certified  
for ultra-low  
noise levels



**ECODAN  
R290**  
5kW, 6kW,  
\*8.5kW, \*10kW, \*12kW



**PRE-PLUMBED  
SLIMLINE**  
150L, 170L



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## COMMENT

# Reimagining the Private Rented Sector

Mark Foxcroft at Devonshires examines how sweeping reforms are reshaping the Private Rented Sector, demanding higher standards, professional management, and shifting power toward institutional landlords.

The UK's Private Rented Sector (PRS) is facing a seismic shift. Long characterised by fragmented ownership and inconsistent standards, the PRS is now the focus of a concerted Government effort to professionalise its operations, management, and regulatory framework to make it more akin to the Social Housing Sector (SHS). Unlike the SHS, which has long operated under a proactive regulatory regime, the PRS has historically faced much more light touch regulation.

The Government hopes to professionalise the PRS by introducing or enhancing several key pillars. This includes improving standards and regulation, professionalising management, boosting predictability and transparency, and encouraging institutional investment. For tenants, this should mean better service, more secure housing and higher quality homes. For the market, it promises stability and long term investment, which will help to meet housing demand. For the Government, it supports broader housing policy goals around affordability, safety and sustainability.

Overall, this focus on the PRS is unsurprising given its market size. The Government's recent "English Private Landlord Survey 2024" showed the number of PRS households rising from 3.1 million to 4.7 million between 2008-09 and 2023-24 to become England's second largest tenure.

## REFORMING THE PRS

The professionalisation of the PRS is not a new concept. It gained momentum with the formerly named Renters' Reform Bill, first announced in 2022, and further with subsequent Government consultations.

This Bill transitioned into the Renters' Rights Bill, which is expected to become law in Autumn. The aim remains the same, as the Government seeks to rebalance the relationship between landlords and private tenants.

The Bill marks a critical turning point for the industry, seeking as it does to close the gap between private and social housing by creating a fairer, more transparent, more regulated, and reshaped rental market. It will increase landlord accountability and enhance tenant rights.

The Bill seeks to do this with numerous new measures, including a new mandatory redress scheme and a PRS Landlord Ombudsman. Providing "quick, fair, impartial and binding resolution for tenants' complaints about their landlord", these would bring tenant landlord complaint resolution on par with the more established social housing tenant redress practices and require PRS Landlords to have in place robust complaints procedures.

Alongside this, a new PRS Database is proposed. Landlords will be legally required to register details about themselves and their properties, with the database showing any offences or penalties they have incurred.

There are also plans to abolish 'no fault' evictions to reassure, as the MHCLG has stated: "tenants then can challenge bad practice without the fear of retaliatory eviction, as landlords will need to provide a valid cause to end a tenancy early".



While this is laudable, the reality is that the removal of no fault evictions will mean the already strained County Court possession process will come under further pressure due to additional time needed for possession hearings. This may ultimately lead to a worse situation for both PRS landlords and tenants, with cases dragging on for many months.

At the same time, landlords will have to reckon with the extension of Awaab's Law to the PRS. This will set clear legal expectations of the timeframes within which PRS landlords must take action to make homes safe where they contain serious hazards. Moreover, this Bill and ongoing consultation on a reformed Decent Homes Standard for social and privately rented homes (ending on 10 September) seek to establish the minimum housing standards these tenants can expect from landlords. This will create safer homes.

Finally, the currently open LAFRA 2024 consultation on strengthening leaseholder protections over charges and services (closing on 26 September) seeks to regulate and introduce mandatory qualifications for managing agents. This upskilling of managing agents, who play a vital and ever growing role in the management of PRS stock, will further embed professionalism, hopefully addressing one of private tenants' major gripes: dissatisfaction with the agent that manages their property and with whom they have most contact.

Taken together, these reforms represent the most significant overhaul of the PRS in decades, with consequences for the market and smaller landlords therein.

## THE FUTURE OF THE PRS

The reforms are expected to affect smaller landlords disproportionately, with their less sizeable portfolios and often more limited resources to meet





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**“These reforms represent the most significant overhaul of the PRS in decades”**

Mark Foxcroft

requirements. Maintaining profitability over the years has become increasingly difficult due to new tax laws, increased legal obligations and compliance, and increasing costs; this is set to continue with new requirements surrounding damp and mould, fire risk, and electrical and gas safety. The trickle of smaller landlords leaving the market is already approaching a stampede, with financial advisors all too happy to point towards other wealth management products.

By contrast, larger landlords and institutional investors will find themselves better equipped to adapt. With dedicated property management teams and access to economies of scale, they can navigate these regulatory changes more effectively. This dynamic is driving a shift in ownership structures, with many landlords now operating through limited companies, a trend that has grown from 36% to 66% over the last five years.

The likely result is a consolidation of the market, where large, professional landlords dominate, and smaller, individual landlords either exit or partner with management agencies. This shift is already visible in the Build to Rent (BTR) sector.

BTR developments are purpose built rental properties, often managed by institutional investors. They offer high quality housing, professional management, and amenities that appeal to modern tenants. According to Savills, the UK's BTR stock reached 127,000 homes in Q1 2025 (up by 16% compared with Q1 2024), with 50,000 more under construction and 110,000 in planning.

While BTR currently represents just 2% of the UK PRS, its footprint is growing, especially in urban centres like Manchester, where it accounts for nearly 25% of rental stock and there is significant room for expansion.

Labour's target of 300,000 new homes annually by the late 2020s hinges on a mixed tenure approach, with BTR playing a central role. However, challenges remain, including building safety delays and planning bottlenecks, which threaten housing delivery targets.

#### **A WORSENING HOUSING CRISIS**

While professionalisation rightly aims to improve housing standards and tenant protection, it may inadvertently exacerbate the housing crisis. As smaller landlords exit and regulatory burdens increase, rental stock may decline, particularly in the short term. This is confirmed by RICS, which sees “landlords continue to leave the sector” as the number of rental properties coming to market fell sharply for the 11th straight month in June 2025. Meanwhile, BTR developments take time to build, creating a mismatch between supply and demand.

The Zoopla Market Report (June 2025) notes a 21% rent increase over three years, with rents rising 2.8% over the 12 months to April 2025. Crucially, demand remains 60% above pre pandemic levels, underscoring the urgency of increasing supply.

Without rent controls, rising rents could undermine the Renters' Rights Bill's ambitions. The Government must balance regulations with support for housing delivery to avoid deepening affordability issues.

#### **A SECTOR REIMAGINED**

It is crucial to prepare for the evolution of the PRS. It will be vital to understand the multitude of legislative reforms, review and upgrade property standards, and strengthen documentation and processes. For PRS landlords of all sizes, conversations are needed to consider professional management, reassess financial and ownership structures, and prepare for market consolidation.

*Mark Foxcroft is a partner at Devonshires*



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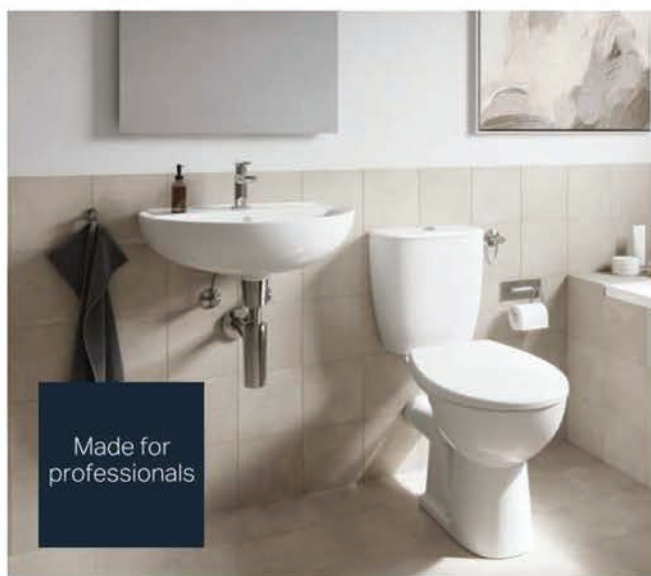


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# HOMES UK 2025

**H**OMES UK is on 25-26 November 2025, at ExCeL in London. It's the largest free to attend conference and exhibition of its kind. HOMES UK brings together thousands of housing professionals at the very moment the Autumn Budget is announced, creating a unique opportunity to examine its implications in real time. Together, we'll explore both the opportunities and challenges in the wake of the Chancellor's announcements, and how the sector can accelerate delivery, build more homes, and improve the quality and sustainability of existing stock.

In the face of the UK housing crisis and limited resources, it's more important than ever to learn from each other and establish the partnerships necessary to achieve more together.

HOMES UK is designed to help housing and asset management, development and sustainability professionals find the solutions and connections they need to rise to the challenge."

Co-located with Unlock Net Zero Live, focusing on the practical reality of the transition to a net zero future, the leading net zero knowledge portal – which now has over 70,000 subscribers – will be brought to life through our dedicated exhibition and interactive learning and networking opportunities.

Unlock Net Zero Live brings the UK housing and built environment sectors together to push forward bold conversations and practical solutions to decarbonise our homes and places at both pace and scale.

To deliver warm, energy efficient homes alongside meeting the UK's net zero and climate change targets, we need collective, urgent action across all sectors.

## SIX STAGES OF LEARNING

Expert analysis and guidance on Labour's policy ambitions – housing targets, remediation acceleration, Awaab's Law and more.

Benefit from a comprehensive programme addressing your top sector challenges. HOMES UK and Unlock Net Zero Live is the destination event for anyone in asset management, development, sustainability or tenant engagement. Come and hear from Government bodies, inspiring keynotes, expert advisors, international and peer-led case studies, offering practical solutions to the latest issues. Whether you are looking for a big picture snapshot of the sector or opportunities to tailor your agenda and drill into the detail, there is something here for everyone!

## HEAR FROM GOVERNMENT

Gain clarity from sector regulators and government bodies on delivering multiple priorities – across new and existing homes.

This is a free opportunity for the whole housing and wider living sector to come together following the Autumn Budget to better understand the opportunities of the new government to increase affordable housing supply and improve the quality and sustainability of existing homes.

## UNRIVALLED NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

Inspiring networking events to help you make relevant connections among the thousands of attendees.



HOMES UK is attended by thousands of housing and built environment professionals, tenants and residents. To help you make the most of this potential, we have a new and improved networking programme with opportunities to make connections with key audience segments. Connect with like minded professionals and grow your network in drink receptions, workshops, and more!

To register for your ticket, please scan the QR Code.

*Article supplied by Homes UK*



# Moving from data overwhelm to informed action on damp and mould

As housing providers turn to technology-led solutions to help them meet Awaab's Law compliance, it can be hard to cut through the noise. There are a plethora of sensor manufacturers, all offering multiple options for housing data collection – but is just collecting data enough?

## NOT JUST SENSORS, NOT JUST DATA

ZapCarbon is a trusted partner in the housing sector, having worked alongside housing associations since 2012, providing services and developing technologies that are affordable, effective and easy to work with.

Their ZapIQ home intelligence system enables landlords to monitor, assess, prioritise and rapidly respond to mould risk and poor air quality in residential buildings.

Importantly, its primary focus is to help landlords move from a place of data overwhelm to insight-driven action, while optimising resources and keeping costs down.



## THE ZAPIQ SENSORS AND PORTAL

ZapIQ's rapid-install sensors have been developed in collaboration with housing associations to solve specific environmental problems in tenanted properties. Over 30,000 of these sensors have already been installed in UK homes, and the results have been impressive. Unique features include:

- Multi-room monitoring for more accurate data
- Rapid install, in under 4 minutes
- Significantly more affordable than others on the market
- 24/7 data: temperature, humidity and air quality
- Long battery life (10+ years)
- Uses a 5G SIM: no app or plugs required

The ZapIQ portal has been developed to help housing providers keep track of risk. With unique customisable reporting, easy data exports, automatic alerts and API access to data sets, the system enables landlords to not just detect

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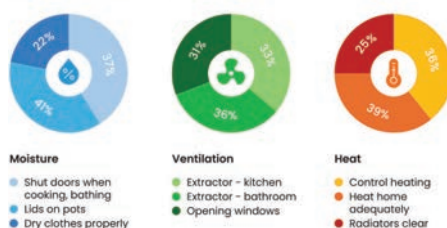


problems, but to identify the root cause of damp and mould, prioritise the properties that are most at risk, and monitor the effectiveness of repairs.

## AI TO HELP PREDICT, PREVENT, COMPLY

The company has now introduced ZapIQ AI Mould Risk Forecasting – a new predictive technology designed to help housing providers focus on the homes that need urgent attention the most.

### Resident Engagement



Through thousands of home visits, they have been able to draw powerful correlations between patterns within in-home sensor data, and what staff actually see on the ground.

From this, they have built a machine-learning system that can accurately predict mould prevalence and growth rates. The system uses data from over

15,000 real homes, and has been rigorously verified by university researchers.

The outputs from the ZapIQ AI system help reduce mould-remediation costs by preventing problems before they escalate. They also provide clear guidance and prioritisation for which homes are likely to experience highest rates of mould growth.

With over 85% prediction accuracy in its current form, it's already proving to be a game changer for compliance, efficiency, and resident well-being.

## COME AND TALK TO US AT HOMES UK STAND NUMBER H334

ZapCarbon is currently piloting the system with several housing organisations, refining the approach to deliver maximum value in real-world conditions. By identifying high-risk cases early, its AI system gives asset teams the clarity to act faster, protect residents, and save money – whilst reducing wasted resources on unnecessary visits.

If you would like to know more about how ZapCarbon could help your organisation, get in touch with us to start the conversation.

0845 052 3682 [zapinfo@zapcarbon.com](mailto:zapinfo@zapcarbon.com)  
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# Precise control for affordable warmth

David Patrick of Dimplex discusses how electric space and water heating solutions can be integrated into a home's core design to deliver 'affordable warmth' for tenants.

National Energy Action estimates that there are currently 6.1 million UK households in fuel poverty, meaning they're unable to afford adequate heating to keep their homes warm and support good health. This is in comparison to the charity's estimate of 4.5 million UK households in fuel poverty in October 2021. Not only does this mean that millions of people are struggling to achieve thermal comfort, but it may also have an incidental effect on other vital services.

Although numerous measures can enhance the energy efficiency of both existing homes and new builds in the UK, the heating system remains a critical factor in keeping household energy costs to a minimum and occupants enjoying a thermally comfortable indoor environment.

With rising bills and both current and incoming standards in mind, to create homes that offer occupants built-in affordable warmth, new as well as many

existing fossil fuelled home heating systems must be replaced with efficient, smart electric space heating technologies that use renewable electricity to deliver thermal comfort and reduce energy costs.

## SMART SPACE HEATING

One solution is smart whole home space electric heating systems, which are designed to optimise energy usage, enhance end user comfort and provide greater control, all while addressing the evolving regulatory landscape and the urgent need to reduce energy bills.

While they are designed to perform and function similarly to traditional wet filled radiators, electric radiators are much easier to install compared to their traditional counterparts. The units also arrive on site pre-filled with thermal fluids/oil, or they are designed as infrared or dry heat units. This benefit further



## Precision temperature control is vital to maximising energy efficiency

simplifies the installation process as there's no need to handle fluids or fill the units onsite. Additionally, electric radiator and panel heater systems eliminate the need for ongoing maintenance, such as flushing systems, bleeding and balancing radiators, or annual servicing.

There are two types of installed electric heaters, the first being direct acting units, which use standard rate electricity for instant heat. The other solution is smart high heat retention (HHR) storage heaters, which support energy diversity by absorbing off-peak energy supplied at a lower price for slow release later, to provide reliable day and night heating. These heaters are among the most economical electric heating solutions, offering high efficiency and supporting grid flexibility, especially where heat pumps aren't suitable.

With an emerging trend of misselling in the sector, it's crucial to understand the impact that product selection will have on residents' bills and, therefore, accessibility to affordable warmth. Any direct acting heating system, such as a panel heater, electric or aluminium radiator, will cost more to run than an HHR unit. This is because the storage capability allows these units to use cheaper electricity, meaning they are the only type of electric heater recognised in SAP to be up to 27% cheaper to run than a standard storage heater system and up to 47% cheaper to run than the direct acting unit mentioned above.

### TAKING FULL CONTROL

Precision temperature control is vital to maximising energy efficiency, and smart home heating systems are designed to deliver precisely that. By heating only occupied rooms to the desired temperature, unnecessary energy consumption can be avoided, and no energy is wasted heating unoccupied spaces.

Ensuring accessibility for a range of end users, look for solutions which offer easy to use, intuitive controls with clear display screens, providing confidence to set and amend the system to suit each individual's lifestyle and needs. Some also allow for remote control through a smart device, allowing for adjustments when outside the property.

*David Patrick is head of specification marketing at Dimplex*





# Things aren't what they used to be – proactive IoT

Lorna Given of MRI Software explores how Internet of Things (IoT) solutions are enhancing building efficiency, safety, and compliance through real time data and proactive maintenance approaches.



As housing providers across the UK face increasing pressure to improve building performance, maintain compliance, and protect tenant wellbeing, smart technology is emerging as a powerful ally.

The Internet of Things (IoT) is no longer a futuristic concept, but is now a practical, impactful tool that can reshape the way social housing is managed. From energy efficiency to damp prevention, IoT offers housing professionals the opportunity to make data driven decisions, reduce operational costs, and build safer communities.

## IOT IN SOCIAL HOUSING

Managing large and often ageing housing portfolios presents ongoing challenges, from damp and leaks to compliance risks. Traditional methods rely heavily on manual checks and tenant reports, often leading to reactive maintenance cycles.

IoT changes the game by enabling a shift from reactive to proactive property management. Smart sensors can be installed throughout buildings to monitor temperature, humidity, water usage, air quality, occupancy, and more. These sensors transmit data in real time to central platforms, allowing providers to identify trends, anticipate problems, and intervene early. For example, temperature and humidity sensors can detect conditions that may foster mould

growth; an issue that has come under sharp scrutiny following the introduction of Awaab's Law this autumn, which demands faster, more effective responses to housing disrepair.

## BEYOND DAMP & MOULD

While damp and mould continue to dominate headlines, IoT applications go much further. Leak detection systems can prevent major water damage. Legionella sensors can automate compliance with health and safety standards. Emergency lighting systems can be monitored remotely to ensure regulatory checks are completed without physical inspections. When combined with environmental and occupancy data, IoT can also optimise energy usage, ensuring buildings aren't needlessly heated or lit during unoccupied periods.

Environmental monitoring alone can improve building efficiency by over 35%, reducing both emissions and costs. In an era of tightening budgets and climate accountability, that's a compelling figure.

## WHY IOT ISN'T YET MAINSTREAM

Despite its benefits, IoT adoption in social housing remains limited. Many organisations are caught in reactive cycles due to poor data quality, unclear internal ownership, and limited resources. These constraints hinder the



## Organisations can transition from reactive maintenance to proactive care

implementation of proactive strategies that could alleviate long term burdens.

However, the key to overcoming these barriers lies in simplicity. It's not about launching a full scale digital overhaul overnight. Instead, success often starts with one clear, high impact use case.

Delays in adopting IoT solutions can lead to inefficiencies. For example, buildings may consume energy unnecessarily during unoccupied periods. By integrating occupancy sensors with environmental data, providers can identify and address such inefficiencies. Similarly, automated Legionella monitoring and emergency lighting checks can replace manual processes, saving time and resources.

### START WITH WHAT MATTERS MOST

For housing providers looking to begin their IoT journey, it's wise to start small.

In terms of priorities, organisations should focus on a single, high impact issue, such as damp & mould in vulnerable properties. This targeted approach allows teams to build confidence and demonstrate value.

Even partial or imperfect data sets can still uncover trends and point the way towards wider improvements. It's not about waiting for the ideal conditions but learning from what you have.

Pilot programmes are a valuable tool. A small scale rollout, even in just 12 homes, can produce actionable insights within weeks. These insights help secure buy-in from stakeholders and provide the basis for cost benefit analysis, which in turn justifies broader investment. It's also a great way to identify and resolve technical or logistical issues before scaling.

### ESTABLISHING CLEAR OWNERSHIP & EXPECTATIONS

Successful IoT projects require defined roles and responsibilities. Whether led by digital teams, asset managers, or compliance officers, clear ownership ensures

accountability and sustained progress.

Don't aim for perfection from day one. Early wins, such as preventing a major leak or avoiding a costly inspection, can justify further investment.

Equally important is cross department collaboration. Data collected by IoT devices has relevance across the organisation, from facilities teams to health and safety officers. Establishing clear communication channels and shared goals can amplify impact and reduce duplication of effort.

### A SHIFT IN MINDSET

Implementing IoT is not about adding complexity but about enabling better decision making. Real time visibility into property conditions empowers housing providers to act proactively, improving tenant wellbeing and operational efficiency. Without measurement, control is unattainable; IoT bridges that gap.

Embracing IoT means trusting data, evolving workflows, and being open to innovation. Organisations that succeed often foster a culture of experimentation, where teams are encouraged to test, learn, and iterate quickly rather than waiting for perfect conditions.

### A TARGETED APPROACH TO DAMP PREVENTION

One housing association piloted IoT sensors in a subset of older properties prone to damp. Within weeks, the system identified several high risk units, allowing for timely intervention. This not only improved tenant satisfaction but also reduced repair costs and legal risks. The success of this pilot has informed a broader rollout strategy.

### BUILDING A RESILIENT COMMUNITY

IoT offers a powerful tool for housing associations, local authorities, and private landlords to enhance property management. By starting small, leveraging data, and fostering internal collaboration, organisations can transition from reactive maintenance to proactive care; ultimately creating safer, more efficient homes for all.

*Lorna Given is director of product management at MRI Software*



## Stelrad sees award of gold medal

Leading radiator manufacturer **Stelrad Radiators** is proud to announce its latest achievement in sustainability, having been awarded a Gold Medal in the 2025 EcoVadis assessment. This places Stelrad among the top 5% of companies assessed globally over the past 12 months. The EcoVadis Platform is a global platform designed to enable companies to manage their ESG – environmental, social, governance risks and drive impacts by guiding the sustainability of companies and supply chains. Please head over to the website for more information.



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## Dulux unveils Rhythm of Blues™ collection

For 2026, **Dulux** is asking architects, specifiers and designers to dance to the Rhythm of Blues™ with its new trio of shades. For the first time ever, Dulux has selected a colour family of the year. The harmonious collection of signature indigos reflects various moods, making them suitable for any setting. The Dulux Colours of the Year 2026 are three versatile blues: light Mellow Flow™, dark Slow Swing™ and vibrant Free Groove™. They were chosen following the company's extensive annual trend research and provide architects, specifiers and designers with a selection of shades that reflect the mood of every environment.



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## ROCKWOOL's new product range

**ROCKWOOL** has announced the first products to launch from its new global centre of excellence for fire-stopping at Hams Hall. The company has used its deep fire expertise and state-of-the-art manufacturing facility to develop a new in-house fire-stopping range including coated batt, sealants, collars and wraps. The new FirePro range has been tested and classified to the most recent fire resistance standards (including BS EN 1366-4, BS EN 1366-3 and BS EN 13501-2) that will become mandatory in 2029, ensuring the range is ready a full four years early and helping customers to get ahead and future-proof their specifications.



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## Flooring that helps homes reduce environmental impact

**Beauflor®** provides cost-effective and durable sheet vinyl flooring for social and affordable homes that delivers value throughout the life cycle and that can help projects to be more sustainable. As housing providers place increasing focus on the sustainability of specifications, Beauflor sheet vinyl can offer tangible advantages when it comes to the choice of flooring, even when managing tight budgets and high expectations. Firstly, the durability of Beauflor's sheet vinyl can provide a long domestic life and with a water-resistant and easy to clean surface that doesn't harbour dirt and bacteria, there's no need to replace them at change of tenancy. This means a longer replacement cycle and reduced consumption of flooring over the lifetime of housing stock. Selected Beauflor sheet vinyl floors are also available with a textile backing that can eliminate glue and subfloor preparation in all rooms, including living spaces. With less installation material needed and faster fitting over a range of floors, textile backed options offer cost advantages. The clean uplift offered by these floors also means they are easier to remove when replacement is needed. In terms of product composition, Beauflor Twilight is a cushion vinyl floor that uses PVC (the main material in all sheet vinyl floors) derived from 100% bio-circular attributed resources. Switching to this material means a 40% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions over the floor's production.

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## HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

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## Housing Management & Maintenance

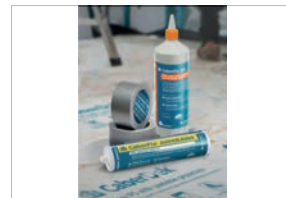
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## Go Beyond Social Housing Standards with Beauflor

**Beauflor®** sheet vinyl floors go beyond standards to improve the quality of social housing. In social housing projects ensuring your choice of floor complies with health and safety regulations is an essential part of the specification process. With Beauflor sheet vinyl flooring for social housing, no matter which floor you choose you are guaranteed full health and safety compliance. Beauflor sheet vinyl floors are made in Belgium to be an affordable option for social housing projects that is fully compliant with all health and safety requirements. Importantly, they can be used to provide a durable, easy to maintain, hygienic and slip-resistant surface that helps to provide tenants with a supportive home environment. With almost four in five tenants moving into their homes with either partial or no floor coverings and a lack of covering affecting tenants physical and mental wellbeing, Beauflor sheet vinyl floors are an affordable way for providers to improve the quality of accommodation. Beauflor sheet vinyl is safe and sure underfoot, thanks to a minimum R10 slip-resistance. Accessibility too can be improved, with a surface that's smooth enough for the easy and unrestricted passage of wheelchairs and mobility aids. Floors are also easy to maintain and hygienic, with no joints for dirt to build-up and a surface that can be wiped or moped. Tested for impact and airborne sound, they can also help to make accommodation quieter and more comfortable.

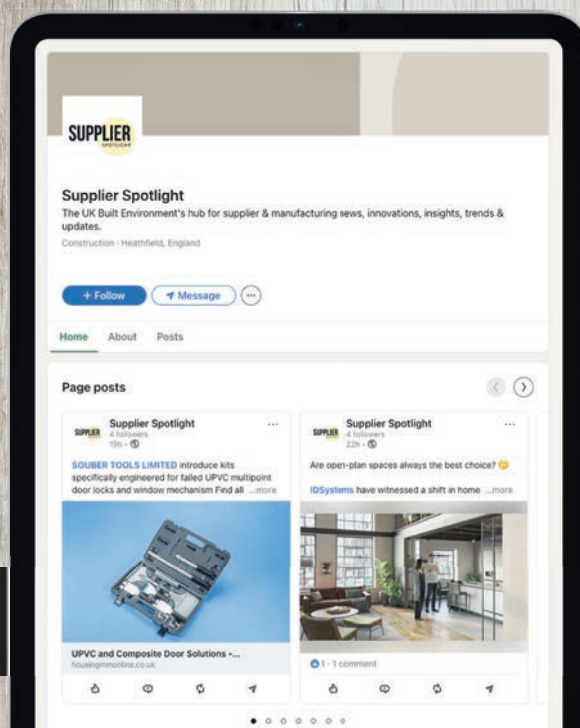
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# Comprehensive solutions

Mike Vaczi from SOPREMA UK explores how working with roofing providers who can deliver a 'comprehensive' offer means better outcomes for landlords, via integrated solutions.



Housing providers face mounting pressures to deliver quality homes while managing increasingly tight budgets and complex regulatory requirements. When it comes to roofing and waterproofing projects, the traditional approach of sourcing materials and services separately can create risks, inefficiencies and unexpected costs that stretch already limited resources.

However, many landlords are discovering significant benefits from partnering with manufacturers who can provide comprehensive support throughout the entire project lifecycle. This 'full system' approach addresses everything from initial surveys and specification development through to installation training, ongoing support, and extended warranties.

Indeed, the complexity of modern waterproofing extends far beyond simply selecting appropriate materials. Today's projects must balance performance requirements with sustainability objectives, navigate evolving Building Regulations, and ensure long-term durability in challenging environments. Increasingly, success depends on understanding how different components interact within complete systems, rather than viewing products in isolation.

For housing providers, whether in the private or public sector, this complexity creates acute challenges. Limited in-house technical expertise, pressure to minimise disruption to residents, and the need to demonstrate value for money all combine to make roofing projects potentially problematic. Here, working with a single provider who can coordinate all aspects of the project offers a solution that addresses these concerns while potentially delivering better outcomes.

Our recent experience demonstrates the practical benefits of this integrated solution. For example, the Everglades development in Hounslow is a 33-home affordable housing scheme commissioned by the local authority. The project required a complex roofing solution incorporating green roofing areas, solar

panels, and varying thermal performance requirements across different building types. We collaborated closely with the main contractor on all design aspects, providing comprehensive system specification, onsite support throughout installation, and ultimately delivering a watertight solution with a 40 year warranty.

## COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT

Effective roofing projects begin with a thorough assessment of existing conditions and careful development of specs. Manufacturers with full service capabilities can conduct detailed site surveys using advanced technologies, including drone inspections that provide safer and more efficient assessment of large or difficult to access roofs.

This assessment process identifies potential water ingress points and evaluates site specific conditions that influence material selection. Understanding factors such as building movement, drainage requirements, and environmental exposure allows for more accurate specification of appropriate waterproofing systems.

This process also benefits from manufacturers having access to technical drawings, data sheets and calculation services. For instance, drainage calculations can determine appropriate outlet sizing and placement, while thermal modelling can assess moisture movement and validate insulation performance. Such technical support means that specifications will meet both performance requirements and regulatory compliance from the outset.

For complex projects requiring bespoke solutions, manufacturers with comprehensive capabilities can develop integrated systems that address multiple performance criteria simultaneously. This might involve combining waterproofing, insulation and green roofing elements within a single coordinated system.





### INSTALLATION SUPPORT & QUALITY ASSURANCE

Once specifications are finalised, an Approved Contractor can provide extensive installation support. This includes detailed installation guidelines, training, and ongoing technical support throughout the construction process.

Professional installation training is particularly valuable for social housing projects, as it will lead to consistent quality across multiple similar buildings, which can significantly impact long-term performance. Training programmes can cover product handling, application techniques and quality control measures, which help to minimise installation errors that could compromise system performance.

During construction, on-site support and guidance help contractors address challenges as they arise. This might include inspections, quality control checks and troubleshooting assistance to ensure waterproofing systems are installed correctly and perform as intended. This real time support can prevent issues that might otherwise require costly remedial work later.

Meanwhile, testing and certification services provide additional assurance that completed installations meet specified performance standards, subject to

## Effective roofing projects in housing begin with a thorough assessment of existing conditions

build up. Independent verification of system performance helps demonstrate compliance with Building Regulations and instils confidence in investments delivering their expected outcomes over the long term.

### LONG-TERM WARRANTIES & ONGOING SUPPORT

Perhaps one of the most significant advantages of working with a comprehensive roofing provider is access to extended warranty coverage that can span 20 or even 30 years. These warranties provide financial protection against premature failure while demonstrating the manufacturer's confidence in their systems and installation processes.

However, warranty coverage is only as valuable as the company providing it. Manufacturers with established track records and proven full service capabilities are better positioned to honour warranty commitments over extended periods, which provides peace of mind to social housing providers.

Ongoing maintenance support can further extend system performance and help maximise return on investment. This might include planned inspection programmes, maintenance guidance and access to technical support for any issues that arise during the warranty period. For social housing providers managing large portfolios, this ongoing relationship can provide valuable continuity and expertise.

Crucially, the benefits of comprehensive roofing partnerships extend beyond individual projects to support broader strategic objectives. Reduced project complexity, improved risk management and enhanced long-term performance all contribute to better outcomes for residents while helping housing providers demonstrate effective stewardship of public resources. As the sector continues to face increasing pressures, these integrated solutions offer a practical route to achieving better results while managing costs and risks more effectively.

*Mike Vaczi is technical director at SOPREMA UK*







# Balcony safety in high density – reimaged

Neil Windas of Alideck explores how aluminium balcony systems are becoming an integral part of safer building design, supporting robust fire and smoke protection strategies in high density residential developments.

**I**n today's compliance-driven landscape, the balcony is no longer simply an external feature, or a design-led aesthetic amenity. With the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) now firmly embedded, the safety performance of balconies, particularly their role in limiting fire and smoke spread, has become a priority for architects designing multi occupancy and high rise buildings.

Following recent changes to building regulations, including updates to Approved Document B and the ban on combustible materials in and on external walls, on buildings over 11 m in England, the pressure is on to specify components that contribute positively to overall fire safety. Balconies, historically a route for fire escalation due to the use of combustible decking, now play a critical role in resident protection when specified correctly.

## RISKS OF LEGACY BALCONY DESIGN

Several high profile fire incidents over the last decade have highlighted how quickly flames and smoke can spread vertically and horizontally via balconies. In many past cases, balconies were constructed with combustible materials such as timber or polymer based composite decking, which acted as fuel in external fire scenarios.

Once ignited, these materials are difficult for fire services to contain the blaze. Even when the fire itself is managed, smoke inhalation, responsible for the majority of fire related deaths, remains a serious threat to occupants.

This reinforces the need for materials and balcony configurations that resist combustion and actively reduce smoke production.

## REASONS FOR ALUMINIUM

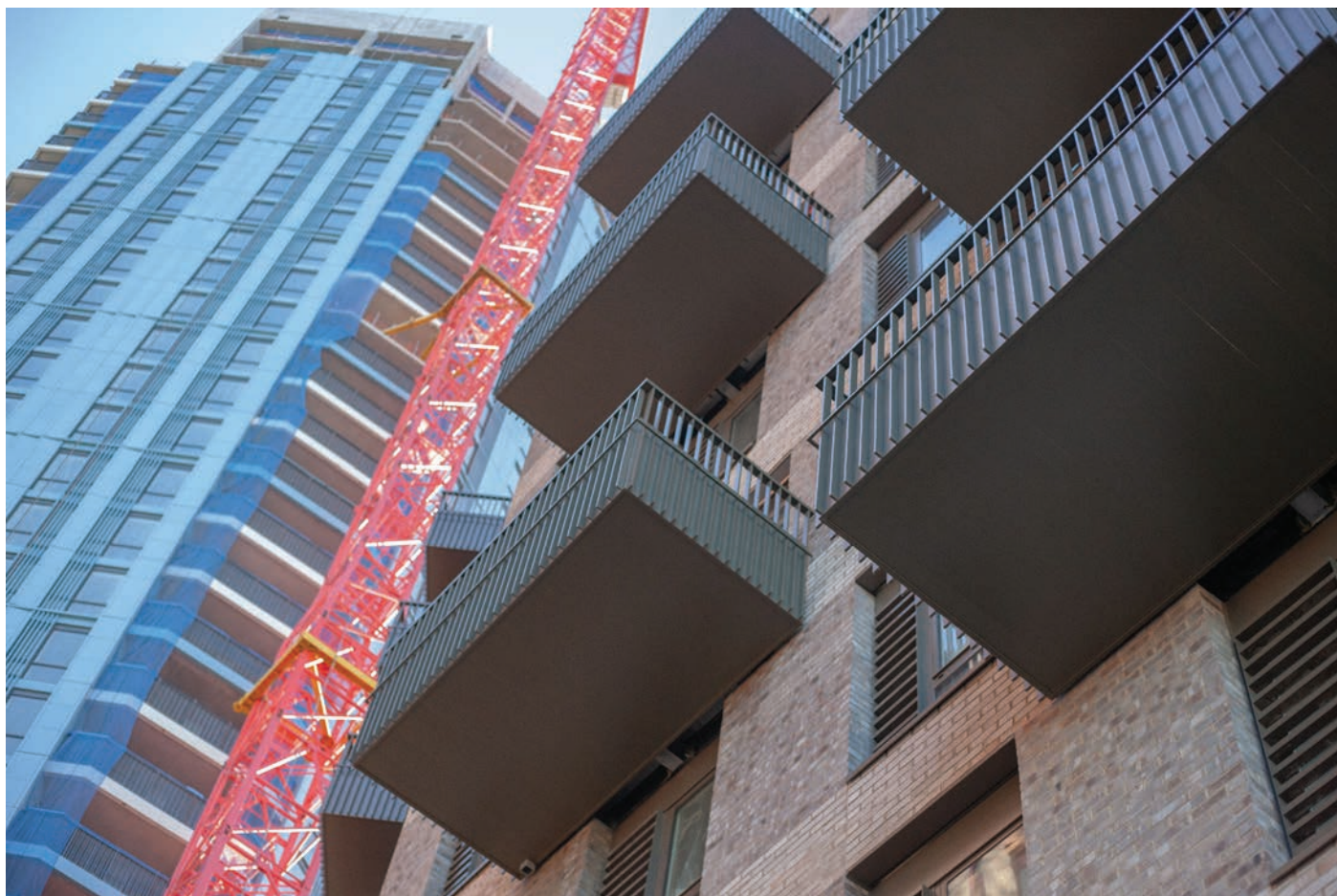
Material choice is central to mitigating these risks. Aluminium, increasingly used across decking, soffits, and balustrade systems, offers a non-combustible alternative that meets A1 or A2-s1, d0 Euroclass ratings depending on finish and coating. Crucially, aluminium doesn't burn, melt, or emit significant levels of smoke, offering a safer specification for architects working on buildings subject to new fire regulations.

In high rise and high density housing schemes, the adoption of aluminium systems is helping create a more consistent, fire safe envelope. It also offers long term durability and ease of maintenance, an important factor in lifecycle cost assessments and environmental performance considerations.

## DESIGNING FOR SAFETY

While combustibility remains a key consideration for balcony components, overall system design can also support better safety outcomes. For example, the way decking and drainage are specified has implications for long term durability and maintenance, two factors that contribute indirectly to resident safety and compliance.





Balcony systems that allow for efficient water drainage help prevent pooling and the buildup of organic debris, which in some legacy designs has contributed to faster surface deterioration or maintenance challenges. Selecting balcony profiles that reduce water retention also supports structural longevity, particularly when paired with noncombustible soffits and cladding that are engineered for durability.

Although fire performance is primarily dictated by material selection, choosing well ventilated, robust systems that minimise degradation can help ensure the balcony continues to perform safely throughout its lifecycle.

#### **FACADE FIRE STRATEGIES**

Balconies are now considered an extension of the external wall system under UK Building Regulations. This means architects must ensure complete alignment between facade and balcony components in terms of combustibility, fire stopping, and drainage.

Where aluminium is used across multiple balcony elements, it contributes to a unified approach to compliance, particularly important when developing fire strategy documentation or demonstrating due diligence during the Gateway Two application process. As a result, balcony design must now be discussed early in project planning, with input from fire consultants, engineers, and specification partners.

One example of a fully integrated, fire safe balcony system in action is the Manor Road Quarter project in Canning Town, London. This large-scale residential development features hundreds of balconies across multiple buildings. The design team undertook a comprehensive approach to fire safety, specifying a complete aluminium system from deck boards and drainage to soffits and balustrades.

By using non-combustible components across all visible and hidden balcony elements, the project addressed both regulatory obligations and long term safety goals. The system was designed to meet Euroclass requirements, while also supporting a visually cohesive and low maintenance external finish. The Manor Road development highlights how fire compliance and high design standards can go hand-in-hand when specification is led by safety from the outset.



#### **PROTECTING RESIDENTS**

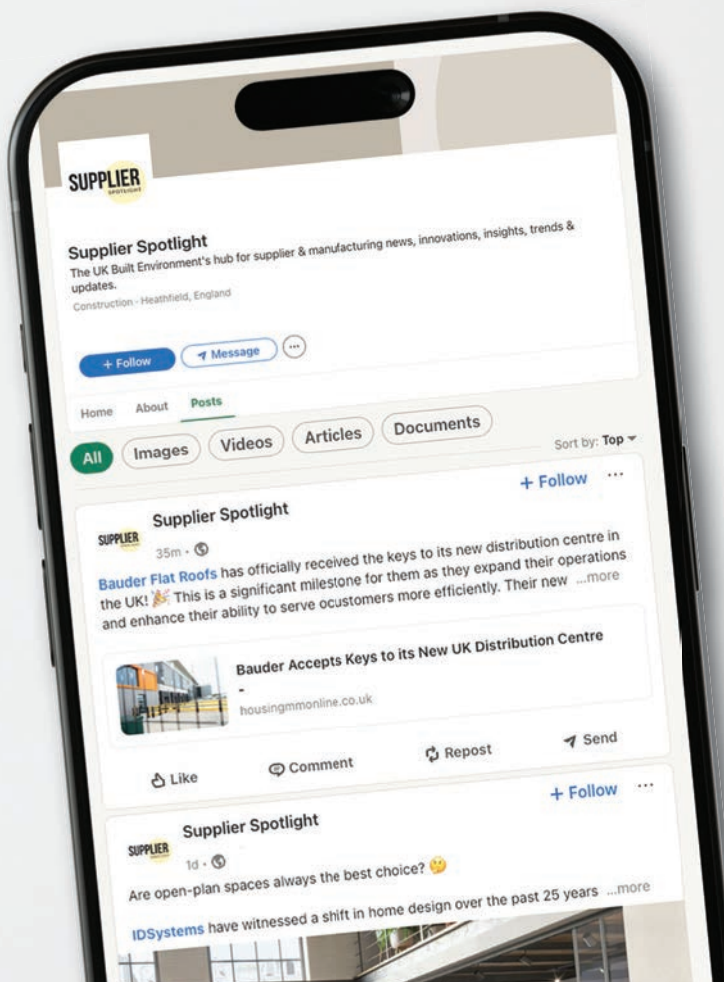
As the Building Safety Regulator continues to influence the construction process, particularly the accountability of designers under the new Dutyholder roles, architects are expected to demonstrate that every component contributes to the overall safety of the building.

By approaching balcony design as an extension of the fire strategy, and by specifying noncombustible materials such as aluminium, landlords can play a key role in limiting risk and improving resident protection. From initial concept through to installation, material led decisions now have the power to prevent tragedies, and reassure both building owners and tenants.

*Neil Windas is commercial director at Alideck*

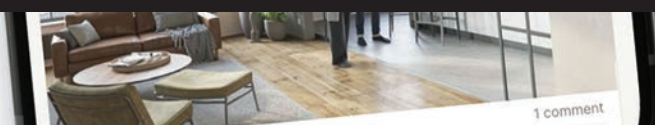


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