

SPRING 2026

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Industry research reveals current retrofit approaches

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# Editor's Comment



Our most recent *Housing Management & Maintenance* Building Insights LIVE round table brought experts on tackling damp, mould and moisture in social housing together with social housing providers, associations and suppliers, to discuss practical approaches and solutions for compliance with Awaab's Law.

With Awaab's now having been in force for a few months, we brought delegates back from the round table held a year ago, to see if the predictions pre-Regulation had come true. Delegates including Martin Hancock of Clarion were also able to share real world experience of compliance strategies, and review how providers were tackling the new 24-hour and 10-day timescales for identifying hazards.

This round table was sponsored by Tarmac, Cornerstone Management Services, and Ubbink, who all posed questions and solutions to the group from their different perspectives. A recurring theme was how to best use data from properties to assist compliance, but also the attendant issues around gaining residents' trust in gathering it. The way forward may be standardising as much property data as possible, but in the meantime, the sector needs to know some basics like what 'making safe' actually means in practice.

This was an important chance to review how the sector was tackling one of the most important safety challenges in social housing, catalysed by the tragic death of Awaab Ishak in December 2020. Our sponsors showed how there are some straightforward, proven, and preventative solutions to damp and mould. But before that, perhaps the sector needs to be better at sharing good practice, simply on strategies for dealing with reported emergencies and significant hazards.

Our event was one refreshing example of this knowledge sharing, and we will certainly be coming back to this subject, in different iterations, in coming years.

James Parker

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**On the cover...**



With millions of social homes still below an EPC rating of C, a data-led retrofit model is emerging to help landlords, Luke Gale at Wienerberger explains. See page 35.



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# Platform electrics manager shortlisted for Rising Star award



A member of Platform Housing Group has been shortlisted for a prestigious national award recognising innovation and leadership in community safety.

Worcester based Joe Henshaw, an electrical quality supervisor manager at Platform, has been named a finalist in the Rising Star category at the AICO Community Awards 2026.

The awards, organised by home life safety experts AICO, celebrate individuals and organisations making a difference to communities through leadership, innovation and commitment to safety.

Joe's nomination recognises his work in transforming electrical compliance processes across

Platform's homes, improving safety standards for residents while developing the skills and confidence of colleagues across the organisation.

Since stepping into the electrical quality supervisor leadership role, Joe has introduced new systems and processes to strengthen compliance assurance, improve efficiency and support better collaboration between internal teams and contractors.

This includes developing innovative digital tools to track compliance activity and creating structured professional development sessions for electricians and quality supervisors to improve knowledge sharing and technical standards.

The improvements have helped ensure homes meet the highest electrical safety standards while reducing administrative delays and allowing teams to focus on quality assurance and onsite inspections.

Joe was nominated by Phil Trickett, head of heating and compliance at Platform Housing Group, who praised his "leadership and commitment to raising standards."

The AICO Community Awards 2026 celebrate individuals and organisations who are making a positive impact across communities through leadership, collaboration and innovation.

Winners will be announced at the awards ceremony at the ICC Birmingham on 16 April 2026.

## Gloucestershire housing provider partnership invests £30m in energy-efficient home upgrades

More than £30m will be spent to "slash energy bills and carbon emissions for families across Gloucestershire" over the next three years.

A group of affordable housing providers known as the Gloucestershire Homes and Communities Partnership (GHCP) plans to invest the money into

making the more than 35,000 homes it manages across the county better for the environment and cheaper to run.

In the coming financial year alone, GHCP members are set to invest more than £22m in energy efficiency improvements. Stroud District Council will invest £6.3m, Two Rivers Housing £4.5m, Bromford Flagship £3.4m, Cheltenham Borough Council Housing Services £3.07m, Gloucester City Homes £2.66m, and Rooftop Housing Group £2.5m. Several partners have already committed further funding for 2027/28 and beyond.

Measures will include rooftop solar panels, better insulation and low-carbon heating systems, and "boosting training pathways for green jobs."

Alongside Two Rivers, the GHCP includes Bromford Flagship LiveWest (BFL), Cheltenham Borough Council Housing Services, Gloucester City Homes, GreenSquareAccord, Rooftop

Housing Group, and Stroud District Council, who together own 73% of all affordable housing in Gloucestershire. Cheltenham YMCA and Elim Housing have recently joined the partnership.

These organisations have "already invested millions into decarbonisation over the past few years, and it is hoped this further investment will help families cope with rising energy costs while tackling climate change," commented the partnership.

The GHCP is also working with Gloucestershire County Council and local suppliers to train people in green energy skills, creating jobs in everything from heat pump installation to solar panel fitting.

A careers day was held at Bromford Flagship's office in Tewkesbury, on 10 March. Alongside decarbonisation, GHCP members will "continue to work together on amplifying customer voice, improving supported housing, and delivering more affordable homes across the county."



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## ASK THE EXPERT

# Shelforce's social mission

James Parker speaks to Howard Trotter, business manager at Shelforce, about how the firm's ethical founding values help it address new safety regulations in a robust and integrity-focused way.

**S**helforce has been part of Birmingham City Council for decades, supplying windows and doors for social housing in the 1980s while delivering a strong social mission. The company started in 1839 as an institute for the blind, and was renamed Shelforce in the 80s. It now employs a workforce where around 75% of the team have disabilities, which creates a real sense of pride and purpose in the work they do. Many colleagues actually live in the communities they serve, "so the products we manufacture are going into homes just like their own," says the firm's Howard Trotter. "Quality, safety and reliability have always been fundamental to what we do, not just commercially but ethically," he says.

### HOW HAS THE FIRM COMBINED COMMERCIAL GROWTH WITH MAINTAINING THAT PEOPLE FOCUS WHICH RUNS THROUGH EVERYTHING THE FIRM DOES?

When we began transforming Shelforce into a commercial operation around 13 years ago, the key was protecting the values that already existed. The organisation has always been built on ethics such as honesty, integrity and

accountability, and those values are actively trained and reinforced across the business. Commercial growth has come from demonstrating that social value and product quality can go hand in hand. Our customers know we won't cut corners to win work, and that trust has been essential in building long-term relationships while continuing to invest in our people.

### WHAT IS THE FULL SCOPE OF AWAAB'S LAW, IN TERMS OF THE HAZARDS COVERED BEYOND DAMP & MOULD, AND WHAT HAS BEEN THE GENERAL IMPACT OF ITS INTRODUCTION WHEN IT COMES TO DOORS & WINDOWS?

There's a misconception that Awaab's Law is just about damp and mould, but in reality it covers 29 housing hazards. Damp and mould are simply the ones most people associate with it. Others include issues such as excess cold, ventilation, fire risks, and fall hazards. For the doors and windows sector that has brought a much sharper focus on safety features, from ventilation performance to window restrictors on upper floors. Housing providers must now prove these elements are properly specified, tested and installed, because they directly relate to resident safety.

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“Partnering with *Housing Management & Maintenance* gives us the opportunity to hear directly from housing managers

about how they are approaching compliance with Awaab’s Law”

Howard Trotter, business manager at Shelforce

#### HOW HAVE AWAAB’S LAW & THE BUILDING SAFETY ACT RESHAPED ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SOCIAL HOUSING PROVIDERS, MAKING THEM RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING SAFETY WITHIN PROPERTIES?

The biggest shift is accountability. Historically, responsibility could sometimes be passed along the supply chain, but the Building Safety Act has made it clear that the Accountable Person is the landlord. They are ultimately responsible for ensuring the building is safe. That has changed the culture significantly. Combined with Awaab’s Law, housing providers must now respond quickly to hazards and maintain detailed records proving products and systems are fit for purpose. It’s about transparency and traceability, making sure there is a clear line of responsibility for safety.

#### PRODUCT TESTING & INFORMATION: HOW THOROUGH DOES IT NEED TO BE, FOR EXAMPLE IN THE GOLDEN THREAD CONTEXT; AND HOW IS THE TEST EVIDENCE ITSELF VERIFIED AS BEING LEGITIMATE?

The Golden Thread requires very detailed, verifiable information about products throughout a building’s lifecycle. For doors and windows, that means clear evidence around things like thermal performance, security, fire resistance and safety features. It’s no longer acceptable to simply present paperwork saying something has been tested. The evidence must be robust and traceable, often supported by third-party certification and regular audits. Within regulated products such as fire doors, manufacturers are inspected annually to ensure that what is being produced matches the tested specification every single time.

#### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF COMBINING MANUFACTURING WITH A CLOSE INTERACTION WITH A LOCAL AUTHORITY, FOR EXAMPLE REGULAR PRODUCT QUALITY CHECKS?

Working closely with a local authority creates a much stronger feedback loop around quality. In Birmingham, the council’s asset management teams understand the products because they’ve seen them manufactured and know the test evidence behind them. They also reserve the right to take products off the line and test them independently. That keeps standards extremely high because everyone knows the scrutiny is real. It also builds confidence for the landlord, because they can see exactly how the product is made and know it will perform as specified.

#### HOW CAN THE QUALITY OF INSTALLATION BE GUARANTEED, TO ENSURE THE BALANCE BETWEEN INSTALLER FLEXIBILITY & PRODUCT PERFORMANCE IS ACHIEVED?

Installation is often where problems occur, so education and clear guidance are essential. We provide system-specific training for contractors and installers so they understand exactly what a compliant installation should look like. We also produce detailed installation guides aligned with British Standards, which installers must keep with them onsite. Importantly, housing officers and building safety teams are also trained to recognise a correct installation. When everyone involved understands the product and its role in safety, you greatly reduce the risk of installation failures.

#### COUNCILS ARE UNDER PRESSURE TO REDUCE COSTS, HOW CAN THEY BALANCE THE REQUIREMENTS OF PROCUREMENT FRAMEWORKS & BUDGETS WITH LONG-TERM RESIDENT SAFETY & COMPLIANCE RISK?

Ultimately, there isn’t really a choice, because Awaab’s Law and the Building Safety Act are legal requirements. Procurement teams have to think beyond



short-term price and consider long-term value and risk. If a product is cheaper but fails prematurely or doesn’t meet compliance standards, the long-term cost is far higher. The focus should be on durable products with proven testing and reliable performance in demanding environments like social housing. Investing properly at the outset protects residents and avoids costly replacement or compliance issues later.

#### HOW WILL AWAAB’S LAW CHANGE THE WAY HOUSING PROVIDERS MANAGE DOORS, WINDOWS & VENTILATION IN OCCUPIED SOCIAL HOMES IN THE NEAR FUTURE?

We’ll see a much more proactive approach to managing the building fabric. Housing providers will need accurate records showing exactly what products are installed, how they perform and when they were last inspected. Doors, windows and ventilation systems will become part of a broader safety strategy rather than simply maintenance items. Manufacturers who haven’t invested in proper testing and documentation may struggle, because housing providers will need clear evidence that products meet the required standards and contribute to a safe living environment.

#### WHAT ARE THE KEY FACTORS FOR EMPATHETIC & SUCCESSFUL TENANT ENGAGEMENT IN DOORS & WINDOWS RETROFITS TO BUILD TRUST & BE SUPPORTIVE?

Tenant engagement has become much more important. Residents are now more aware of their rights and the safety standards they should expect. The key is communication and transparency, explaining what work is being done, why it matters for safety, and what the process will involve. Where temporary moves or disruption are necessary, that needs to be handled with empathy and support. Tenants should feel part of the process rather than something being done to them, and that helps build trust and cooperation.

#### WHY DID SHELFORCE DECIDE TO PARTNER WITH *HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE* ON AUDIENCE RESEARCH AMONG SOCIAL HOUSING MANAGERS & DISCOVER THEIR STRATEGIES FOR COMPLIANCE WITH AWAAB’S LAW? WHAT INSIGHTS DO YOU HOPE TO GAIN?

We work closely with social housing providers every day, so we see the challenges they face in implementing new legislation. Partnering with *Housing Management & Maintenance* gives us the opportunity to hear directly from housing managers about how they are approaching compliance with Awaab’s Law. We’re particularly interested in understanding the practical barriers they’re encountering, from documentation and testing requirements to operational pressures. Those insights will help the industry share best practices and ultimately support housing providers in delivering safer homes for residents.

To listen to the full *Building Insights* podcast with Howard Trotter, scan the QR code



## COMMENT

# Nurturing the roots of innovation

After attending our decarbonisation round table and witnessing the ingenuity of SMEs in this space, Alison Skillen at RISE explains why they need wider support and promotion in the sector.

In October 2025 I attended the Building Insights LIVE round table discussion on decarbonising social housing, and it left me with a renewed sense of what's possible in this sector. What struck me most was that this wasn't another debate about policy frameworks or funding gaps (as important as those are) but rather the sheer ingenuity of the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) working in this space. These companies are developing some genuinely clever solutions, yet many are struggling to get their innovations in front of the people who need them most. I wanted to share what I learned, because I think there are some real lessons here for all of us trying to make retrofit work at scale.

## THE SME PARADOX

Here's the thing about SMEs in the retrofit sector: they're often the ones pushing boundaries of new retrofit technologies with a range of innovations including thermal imaging, AI-driven diagnostics, thermal batteries, shower heat recovery systems, and advanced monitoring technologies. They're nimble, they're innovative, and they're not weighed down by legacy systems. But – and this is a significant but – many of them simply don't understand how to navigate the complex world of social housing delivery.

The procurement landscape for local authorities is often complex. Multiple frameworks, lengthy tender processes, and compliance requirements; for a small company with limited resources, trying to pitch directly to a local authority can feel impossibly difficult. The preferred route for some, it turns out, is to position themselves as part of a larger delivery solution, working alongside Tier 1 or Tier 2 contractors who already have those relationships and understand the procurement dance.

But here's the catch: you need to know this is how the market works. Far too many SMEs don't. This is where a service like RISE (Retrofit information, support & expertise) comes in – helping SME suppliers to understand the full retrofit landscape, and supporting them as they take steps, either towards procurement directly with the social housing providers, or towards engagement with the larger, established contractors. It was reassuring to hear at the round table that this focus on breaking down the procurement barriers for SME suppliers is exactly what the sector is looking for.

## THE DEVIL'S IN THE DETAIL – OR RATHER, THE EPC POINTS

One of the most enlightening discussions centred on shower heat recovery systems. Now, I'll admit, when I first heard about these, I thought "nice idea, but does it really make a meaningful difference?" Turns out, I was asking the wrong question.

These systems can add two to three EPC points to a property. That might not sound significant, but consider this: homes often sit frustratingly close to the threshold of the next EPC band. A property might be languishing at the top end of a band, and those two or three points become incredibly valuable. They could be the difference between meeting scheme eligibility criteria or missing out entirely.



## Many SMEs simply don't understand how to navigate the complex world of delivery

But there's something even more significant at play here. We know that the real decarbonisation gains come from tackling space heating and hot water, far more than from upgrading to energy-efficient appliances. Hot water decarbonisation is particularly tricky – it's one of those challenges that doesn't have obvious, easy answers. So when you find a product that genuinely makes an impact in this area, it matters. It's not just valuable from an EPC perspective; it's valuable because it delivers measurable decarbonisation where we actually need it.

## WHEN INNOVATION DOESN'T TRANSLATE TO RETROFIT

Not every innovative solution is suited to every context, though, and the discussion on underfloor heating in retrofit projects proved to be a perfect example of this.

In new builds paired with heat pumps, underfloor heating makes perfect sense. It's efficient, it works beautifully with lower flow temperatures, and residents move into homes where it's already installed.



What I appreciated most about this round table was how engaging and practical it felt. We were digging into specific solutions, understanding their real-world applications, and thinking about how to connect innovation with delivery

Retrofit is an entirely different beast. The costs can be prohibitive. You're disrupting residents significantly – in many cases requiring temporary decanting. And even if you manage to navigate all of that, resident acceptance tends to be low. People are understandably reluctant to have their homes significantly disrupted for a heating system upgrade, even if you explain the long-term benefits.

The reality is that even if underfloor heating improves the performance of a heating system marginally, that benefit may be outweighed by the cost, disruption, and resistance from residents. It's a stark reminder that technical performance isn't everything – the human and practical factors matter just as much, if not more, in retrofit scenarios.

#### THE QUIET REVOLUTION IN MONITORING & DATA

Perhaps the most exciting developments aren't in new heating systems or insulation products, but in something less glamorous: monitoring and digital technologies.

Think about thermal performance monitoring, advanced airtightness testing, and pulse technology. These tools allow us to understand buildings far more accurately than we could before. Instead of making educated guesses about heat loss or system sizing, we can gather actual data about how a building performs and what it genuinely needs.

This has enormous implications. If you're planning to install a heat pump down the line, having accurate monitoring equipment in place now means you can size that system properly based on real demand, not theoretical calculations. That reduces risk, prevents oversizing (or undersizing), and ultimately leads to better outcomes.

Airtightness is another area where technology is making a real difference. Ventilation is absolutely critical when you improve a building's fabric – get it wrong, and you risk condensation, damp, and unhappy residents. We used to rely solely on blower door testing, which is effective but can be expensive and logistically challenging at scale. Now, pulse technology offers alternative approaches to demonstrate airtightness and inform ventilation strategies.

The beauty of these monitoring technologies is that they're relatively cost-effective and scalable. If we can deploy them more widely, we start to de-risk

entire retrofit portfolios. We move to knowing that measures will definitely be effective, because we have the data to prove it.

#### BRIDGING THE KNOWLEDGE GAP

All of this brings me back to where I started: knowledge sharing. The SMEs developing these solutions often don't realise the full value of what they're offering in the context of social housing schemes. They don't realise that two EPC points can be transformational, or how to position their products within a larger delivery framework. Meanwhile, housing professionals and larger contractors aren't always aware of the innovative solutions available. We tend to stick with what we know, what we've specified before.

There's a clear need for more structured knowledge exchange. We need platforms where SMEs can showcase innovative products – not just the ones that made it to this particular roundtable, but the full range of solutions being developed. We need to help smaller companies understand the procurement landscape and how to navigate it effectively. We need to accelerate the adoption curve by sharing what works (and what doesn't) more openly.

#### MOVING THE CONVERSATION FORWARD

What I appreciated most about this roundtable was how engaging and practical it felt. We were digging into specific solutions, understanding their real-world applications, and thinking about how to connect innovation with delivery.

The retrofit sector is at an interesting inflection point. We have ambitious targets, increasing pressure to deliver, and a growing ecosystem of innovative companies developing real solutions. What we need now is to connect these dots more effectively – to help SMEs understand the market they're trying to serve, to help housing providers discover the innovations that could transform their retrofit programmes, and to create feedback loops that drive continuous improvement.

The solutions are out there. We must continue to find them, share them, and then scale them up. Based on what I saw at the round table, I'm optimistic that we're moving in the right direction.

*Alison Skillen is project director at RISE*

# futurebuild

12 - 14 May 2026 | Excel, London



## Resilience, reuse & regenerative design

**F**uturebuild 2026 has unveiled an unashamedly provocative main conference programme, placing resilience firmly at the centre of the built environment conversation.

Taking place from 12-14 May 2026 at Excel London, big hitters representing UKGBC, RIBA, ACAN, Architects Declare and The Sustainable Development Foundation, among others, are set to explore how construction can move beyond business as usual and deliver genuinely resilient outcomes.

“In education, the ‘Three Rs’ define the fundamentals of learning: reading, (w)riting and (a)rithmetic. As the built environment faces accelerating climate, social and economic pressures, the question becomes more urgent. What are the critical Rs for our future?” says event director, Martin Hurn.

For Futurebuild 2026, the Arena Conference answers that question by focusing on Resilience, examined through the lens of Reuse and Regenerative design in the built and natural environment. Together, they form a deliberately challenging framework that asks whether the industry is prepared to fundamentally rethink how it designs, builds and operates.

“For Futurebuild, resilience means facing the realities of climate, nature and social change head on,” adds Martin Hurn. “In 2026, we’re doubling down on sustainability and innovation in the arena - and across the entire show - to connect strategy with delivery and ambition with action.”

Mitsubishi Electric are supporting the Arena Conference as the main sponsor and reinforcing the role of advanced building technologies in delivering resilient outcomes. The programme will address everything from circular economy policy and ethical practice to cultural change, innovation and the role of communities in delivering on decarbonisation and broader sustainability issues.

Day one sets the tone with a high-level exploration of the circular economy as a driver of growth, chaired by David Greenfield, President of The Chartered

Institute of Wastes Management (CIWM) and featuring Yetunde Abdul, Director of Industry Transformation at UKGBC. Speakers from Mace Group, the Green Alliance and the Green Construction Board are also joining the panel.

Other opening day line-ups include Chris Williamson, President of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), leading a headline discussion on reuse as a first principle in design, alongside the acclaimed architect, author and environmental campaigner, Duncan Baker-Brown.

Day two shifts the focus to regenerative design, exploring both mindset and method. A series of curated sessions will unpack what it means in practice, moving beyond static definitions towards systems thinking, circular resource flows and net positive outcomes for people and nature.

Day three broadens the lens to the economic and policy context shaping delivery, with sessions on climate action as the new normal, sustainable housing at scale, the UK Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard and visionary thinking from the next generation of built environment professionals.

Alongside the Main Conference and The National Retrofit Conference arenas, three seminar stages dedicated to buildings and materials, placemaking and energy will also be hosting a CPD-accredited knowledge programme packed with insightful content and curated by leading industry bodies. What’s more, with organisers strategically collaborating with UK Construction Week London and The Stone & Surfaces Show, visitors can access 700+ high profile speakers across 11 stages – making it Futurebuild’s richest content programme yet.

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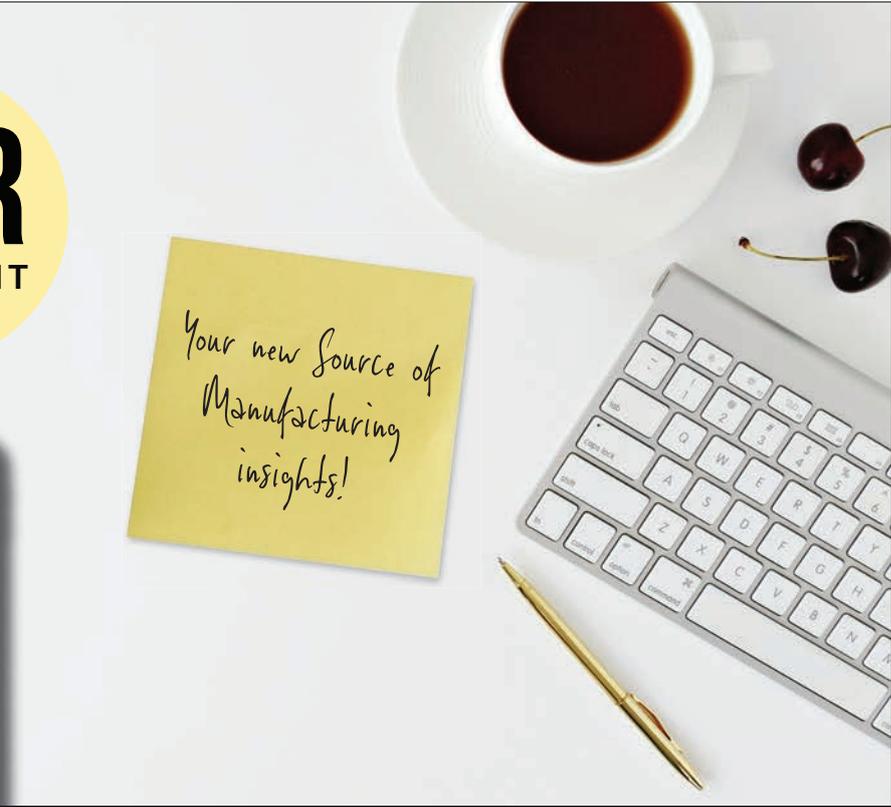
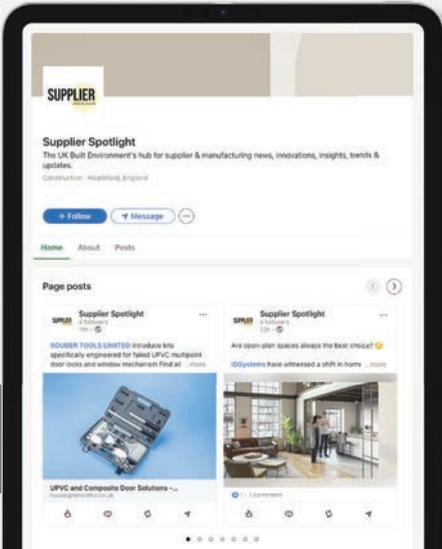
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# Reviewing Progress on Awaab's Law & The Social Housing Act

**A**waab's Law, the first part of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act, was brought into force in October 2025, bringing in a new regime for managing and addressing property hazards. Initially focusing on damp and mould, the legally-enforced regulation will eventually be broadened to encompass the full list of 29 hazards in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHRS), and therefore be a fundamental shift for virtually all aspects of managing social housing conditions.

Having staged a Building Insights LIVE round table in March 2025 on the likely impacts of the new regulation, we recently brought experts from the sector together once again to discuss how compliance was working in practice. Including several delegates from 2025, the group of consultants, experts working in moisture in buildings, supply chain representatives, and social housing providers, shared practical approaches and solutions for compliance with Awaab's Law.

This round table was sponsored by Tarmac, Cornerstone Management Services, and Ubbink, who all posed questions and solutions to the group from their respective positions in the industry, from helping open up discussion on alternative measures, to helping engage tenants and tackling skills issues.

Recommendations from 2025's event were reviewed, included better application and more standardisation of property data, what 'making properties safe' means in practice, and the need for greater education on the practicalities. The key to success, once Awaab's Law had fully bedded in, would be to move

from a focus on reacting to the new timeframes for addressing hazards, to a much more proactive approach to planned maintenance, supported by open communication with residents.

Delegates called for a strategic vision from the Government that would enable the industry to coalesce around solutions, and avoid a 'race to the bottom' with the emergence of a new Decent Homes Standard, with the focus being put on tackling hazards. Landlords needed to be 'incentivised' to have a robust maintenance strategy, said Dale Holroyd of ZapCarbon, and fellow returning delegate from 2025, Sarah Garry of the Property Care Association again advocated looking at the building as a 'system.' She said landlords "have lots of different regulations that don't work together systemically," meaning a piecemeal approach was dangerous, and more individual holistic strategies were essential.

A message reiterated from the 2025 event was the need to put codesign with residents higher up the agenda, as a means to proactively bring customers 'along for the ride,' and help them understand, for example, why decants may be needed. But this year, there was greater focus on harnessing the power of sharing data to help social housing management deal with hazards, but also comply effectively with their requirements.

## COLLECTIVE EFFORT

The round table of sector representatives, product suppliers and building experts pushed for more collaborative effort on understanding buildings





### COMBINE THE DATA EFFORT

Sarah Garry of the Property Care Association advocated “bringing together all of the data from housing organisations, so we are learning from each other”

### THE DEBATE

With the legislation still in its early days of being in force, delegates were able to exchange real world experience of compliance with damp and mould hazard compliance, from the 24 hours response requirement for emergency hazards, to the new 10 day “significant” hazards response window. Social housing landlords have been made directly accountable for these timescales, so it was important to use the opportunity to hear views on strategies for meeting such fast turnarounds.

Key points which were raised included the need for better resident education, standardised operational workflows, and better data sharing across social housing providers. However, barriers post-Awaab’s Law coming into force were also addressed, such as defining what the requirement of managers being ‘reasonably aware’ of hazards means, and certain challenges in taking forward the group’s 2025 recommendations.

In our previous round table Amy Bentall of law firm Trowers and Hamblins said that the consultation pre-introduction of the legislation had shortcomings on clarity, language in the consultation being more specific about what landlords ‘fixing the issue’ meant in practice. But Martin Hancock of Clarion Housing in our recent debate said that definitions and clarity were needed around what “making safe” actually meant, in order to ensure that teams had a precise goal to aim at.

### STRATEGIES FOR TACKLING AWAAB’S LAW

How were delegates seeing providers adjusting to the new regime, post-introduction of Awaab’s Law, where social housing teams need to resource and deploy staff to quickly assess and tackle risks of damp and mould? Sarah Garry of the Property Care Association, who train contractors and surveyors, said that contractors’ order books are “going through the roof”. Due to the volume of enquiries post-October, they were looking at a month’s lead time before getting an order to treat a property, and visiting it to do the work.

She said that many social housing providers were sending their in-house surveying teams on the PCA’s courses to equip them with knowledge on damp and mould as a result. There had been a “swing totally in the opposite direction” from BPA members to non-members, she said: “80% of our attendees are now

### ROUND TABLE ATTENDEES

- **James Parker**, Chair
- **Hony Premal**, Chair, WISH & Interim CEO, Causeway Irish Housing Association
- **Dr Douglas Booker**, Lecturer in Indoor Air, University of Leeds
- **Dr Hector Altamirano-Medina**, Academic Director, UK Centre for Moisture in Buildings
- **Andrew Burke**, Deputy Secretary, National Housing Maintenance Forum
- **Sarah Garry**, Chief Executive, Property Care Association
- **Dale Holroyd**, Commercial Director, ZapCarbon (Healthy Homes Department)
- **Holly Hickin**, Barrister, Trinity Chambers
- **Paul Smith**, Managing Director, Foundations UK
- **Andrew Cameron-Smith**, Communications Director, Healthy Homes Hub
- **Naomi Sadler**, Director, SEES (Sadler Energy & Environmental Services)
- **Martin Hancock**, Head of Repairs and Estate Services, Clarion Housing Group

### SPONSOR ATTENDEES

- **Dan Fitch**, Technical Sales Manager, Tarmac Group
- **David Bly**, Managing Director, Cornerstone Management Services
- **Craig Cundey**, Ventilation Product Lead, Ubbink

from social housing providers... this shows housing associations are trying to deal with as much as they can in-house.”

Martin Hancock explained that Clarion’s approach of sending operatives to identify and address hazards has intensified since October, and the focus is on resourcing and training. He admitted that while the timescales for identifying, reporting and initiating remedial work of hazards are now clear (i.e. 24 hours for emergency and 10 days for significant hazards), the deadlines for fully ‘fixing’ issues were not clear.

“Complex cases need to have started within 12 weeks,” Martin told the group, but “there are no set deadlines; that’s part of the challenge isn’t it, as every case is unique?” He added: “Some of those cases you can resolve with quick cleanups, some you can’t.” Naomi Sadler said that the social housing sector could learn from the private rented sector; “most of them have an agreement with tenants where they go into a property either every year or every other year to see the condition, regardless of whether something’s been reported.”

Sadler highlighted the issues around the robustness of ventilating new builds in social housing, as homes are quickly constructed toward Government targets, and “get more and more air-tight,” causing likely moisture buildup. “You’ve got all of these social houses that are suddenly being built, more moisture in the buildings because it’s raining constantly, and you’re not making sure that ventilation systems are being installed correctly.”

She said that the lack of testing of ventilation in private sector scenarios was a problem, and pinpointed the issue of “flexible ductwork” installed in new builds by electricians as an area of concern. Sadler asserted that housing associations “need to specify they want independent ventilation testing on every single house as proof that it’s installed correctly, so you know that you don’t need to rip that ceiling apart.”

David Bly of co-sponsor Cornerstone said that “nothing has changed” since Awaab’s Law, while admitting that it was “early days,” and the sector needed to ensure they “didn’t make the same mistakes, but quicker” as a result of the legislation (reiterating a point he made in the 2025 round table). He advocated a uniform framework for assessing and addressing damp and mould issues, and said there was a disconnect between knowledge levels and the realities of damp and mould.





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In terms of resourcing, Holly Hickin, whose legal practice works with a variety of landlords, noted that social housing providers they work with were sending their own surveying teams for training, to handle disrepair claims in-house. Dale Holroyd of ZapCarbon said that most organisations they work with “just don’t have the budget to throw more staff at the issue.” The importance of training and competence in building physics was also emphasised, with calls for better education and standards. The need for a holistic approach to upgrades, which included ventilation in particular, was also stressed.

#### CLARITY OF DEFINITIONS

Delegates shared views that there wasn’t yet enough clarity from the Government and the Social Housing Regulator on the precise definition of terms like “made safe,” and what the solutions to address identified hazards should be, rather than just the process of identifying them. In the absence of this, teams had to make their own parameters on what compliance looks like, and how to go beyond it. Martin Hancock from Clarion asserted: “We need clearer guidance on what ‘made safe’ is. What is being looked for so we can be sure, comply and go above and beyond.”

Holly Hicklin, as a barrister working in this area, confirmed that the regulation (Awaab’s Law is in fact a regulation which is enshrined in law) was the “first time that specific time frames have been introduced for this,” however we still “don’t have time frames on fixing the problems.” Dale Holroyd said that there “isn’t clarity on when a disrepair claim is going to be generated, which is why providers have customer care teams who have been told just to put everything through as an emergency.”

Naomi Sadler warned that while management were required to be “reasonably aware” of property risks, retrofit assessors “do not understand thermal bridging calculations, or hygrothermal performance of buildings.” She questioned if this would put the liability onto the landlord, and whether there was awareness of how specifications might affect an EPC rating on a MEES assessment? “As far as I know, Leeds University and Dublin are the only two that teach that subject.”

With housing portfolios representing a huge number of properties to tackle, but potentially with similar symptoms of damp and mould, experts believe there is a case for auditing for damp and mould and EPCs at the same time, as part of planned works.



#### THE SCALE PROBLEM

Dale Holdroyd of ZapCarbon asserted that good strategies are no use without “scalable resources and systems to be able to manage cases”

#### RESIDENTS’ ROLE

Engaging residents closely in projects in order to build trust, and ensure that access and visits are managed smoothly, is paramount. It’s also important to emphasise their role in helping to prevent damp and mould in homes, without criticising or pointing fingers, although sensor technology used sensitively and backed by education can help indicate to management where lifestyle is a factor. Craig Cundey of Ubbink illustrated one reason why, asking Martin of Clarion: “How often do your guys go out and they’ve got a perfectly good system, but it’s been turned off, and as a result, you’ve actually then caused the problem?”

Martin Hancock said that, giving the example of extractor fans being turned off, “It’s got to be done in a light way, it’s not a blame culture any more.” He added: “The shift has been to ‘It’s not your fault. You might not know this, but actually there are steps that will can take.” He says the reaction to this new more considerate approach has been positive, including the fact that “they can see we are taking things seriously, especially with faster reaction times.”

Clothes drying is a controversial area which can cause moisture and mould growth, and Naomi Sadler said it had been overlooked in designs. She said things would be different “if you actually provided homes with an area to dry your clothes, which was the point of the indoor drying credit, but most people thought that was a load of nonsense.” Sarah Garry summed up the trust issue, at least in the case of private landlords: “Tenants don’t always feel comfortable reporting issues, because they know they can be evicted and a new tenant can be in place in a few days time.” She said that while this is changing as a result of the upcoming Renters’ Rights Bill, “we’re not there yet.”

#### BREAKING THE SILOS

Dale Holroyd explained how the administrative challenge inherent to trying to align various trades or professionals dealing with a single hazard can create often insurmountable problems for providers large as well as small, and can also make it impossible to scale up the strategy. He said: “If we just put ourselves in the eyes of the ops manager, it’s relatively easy to come up with a solution if you’re managing 50, or 100 homes with one person managing one set of cases. The challenge comes when you have nine different people dealing with one case, whether it be a contractor, plumber, customer care team, someone using sensor data.” He explained that this was where data sharing often fell down, and became siloed.

Holroyd continued: “There’s all these disconnected bits of effort that the manager is having to deal with and having to track all of these interactions is what makes it almost impossible to scale.” While he conceded that Clarion “were doing some great work,” he added that “it’s hard to replicate in a smaller organisation where they don’t have the same set of resources, or don’t have an in-house team”.

Views were also shared that with the plethora of products available on the market to social housing teams with promises of being the ideal solutions to damp and mould, a national system of advice on products was needed. Martin Hancock said that Clarion’s 800 operatives just working on safeguarding properties and tenants were challenged by the fact that “every single manufacturer will tell you that their product does the job and is the best and the others are useless.”

Dale Holroyd: “It would be great to have a certified body that can say these are the products that you need,” but with the caveat that “there are certain products that are not suited for someone who’s a serious asthma sufferer, for example.” He added: “It’s definitely about meeting the homeowner or the tenant or resident where they’re at and then having a series of responses that you could use for that specific circumstance.”

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### COLLABORATE WITH RESIDENTS, NOT JUST PEERS

According to Hony Premlal, there was an essential need to “work more collaboratively with customers,” alongside agencies collaborating better

The challenge comes when you have nine different people dealing with one case, whether it be a contractor, plumber, customer care team, someone using sensor data.”

Holroyd continued: “There’s all these disconnected bits of effort that manager is having to deal with and having to track all of these interactions is what makes it almost impossible to scale.” While he conceded that Clarion “were doing some great work,” he added that “it’s hard to replicate in a smaller organisation where they don’t have the same set of resources, or don’t have an in-house team.”

### SOLUTIONS

#### VOLUMES, SKILLS & BREAKING BARRIERS

The second, ‘solutions’-focused session of the debate kicked off with questions to the panel by each of the three sponsors. David Bly of Cornerstone Management Services (who also attended the 2025 meeting), wanted to know what effect the new legislation was likely to have on the number of complaints made about damp and mould in landlords’ properties.

Paul Smith from Foundations UK stressed the wider health benefits as a means to help change the ‘complaints culture’: It’s “inevitably going to lead to more initially, but if over a period it can lead to a different approach, where there’s better understanding. If we can prevent it in the first place, we’re preventing costs to the NHS.” Naomi Sadler said the “where there’s blame, there’s a claim” factor would increase, with more tenants encouraged to make complaints, driven by imagery shared on social media in particular.

Second, Craig Cundey from Ubbink homed in on the difficult issue of the skills required in social housing teams in order to meet the potential numbers, and potentially challenging array of initial damp and mould hazard reports, asking whether the current social housing workforce had adequate skills to “fully understand the implications if called out to attend properties?”

Sarah Garry responded that the Building Safety Act had administered a “kick up the backside” to the industry, and there was a “series of work by CLC and the CITB to “set out what competence looks like in each of our trades.” She admitted that “some of this gets tricky because it crosses between trades,” echoing the views of Martin Hancock earlier: “It’s not as simple as one set of immovable competencies.”

Lastly, Dan Fitch from Tarmac Group outlined the benefits of breathable lime plaster for prevention of damp and mould internally, and asked delegates what they saw as the biggest “practical barriers” preventing landlords from implementing proven solutions.”

Naomi Sadler said that more work needed to be going into architects’ and other specifiers’ training around products, and the “practicalities of renovated

elements in Part L.” She said that when she has explained the role of ‘breathable’ products in such scenarios, “they just want to put Kingspan in; they will not consider using breathable insulations or plasters, and don’t understand impact on the structure.”

### EDUCATION & KNOWLEDGE

David Bly said that due to a lack of knowledge on the causes of and solutions for damp and mould, housing associations have an “absolute reliance on the skilled trades to provide best practice on tackling damp and mould, so they don’t have to challenge them.” Martin Hancock countered the idea that providers may need to contract trades relevant to treating damp and mould, saying Clarion aimed to do such work in-house wherever possible.

He explained further: “It’s harder to performance manage and guarantee quality of standards works when you’re contracting works out, including complex cases where they need that kind of touch.” Hancock said that education and knowledge in social housing teams was the “key barrier; it’s about knowing what’s available,” and gave the example of like-for-like replacement of extractor fans: “Is that exact same make a model suitable for that property? it might have been installed 15 years ago and the technology has changed so much.”

Sarah Garry said that post-Building Safety Act, the manufacturing side of industry needed a change of approach, to candidly say, “my product’s not the right product for you this time, you need to go and look over here.” She added: “I think we’ve still got this race to the bottom in sales culture.”

### DATA-BASED PROGRESS

Douglas Booker of the University of Leeds, in common with several other delegates, advocated better data sharing within the sector, in order to help grow good practice and inform other bodies on what is working. He said that while “health is the outcome we want from Awaab’s Law, demonstrating health impact is quite tough,” and combining data was key to provide a true picture. “Sharing across social housing providers, working with local authorities and universities, can be critical in generating a bigger set of health impact data.”

Booker said that academics working in the field of indoor air quality have “been talking for a long time of setting up something like an indoor air ‘observatory,’ obviously, which can both be a repository of all of the amazing data that’s coming out of research projects, to make the sum greater than the individual projects that are going on. He mentioned that such a national database had already been running for over 20 years in France, and UK projects which could contribute data included those with “some economic good news stories for providers.” Martin Hancock highlighted how Clarion was training up operatives to use data to preempt issues within properties.

### HOLISTIC APPROACHES

The discussion emphasised the importance of holistic approaches to the problem, to avoid unintended consequences of ‘quick fixes’ to damp and mould issues. These included structural assessments and resident engagement, to address the root causes of damp and mould, not just the symptoms.

Dale Holroyd said that a holistic approach to resourcing projects was also essential, as the “reactive maintenance frameworks” which were prevalent in the sector might be pragmatic, but were also not a good fit with the non-finite nature of damp and mould issues. “Reactive maintenance frameworks are designed around opening and closing jobs, and damp and mould isn’t an open and closed job problem. It’s like the layers of an onion that you have to work through.” He said that he could see more organisations “having someone manage one case from start to finish.”

### CONSULTING TENANTS

Key points raised by the delegates included the need for proactive measures, better communication, and education. Clarion reported a 25% increase in residents needing mental health support. The new law has led to more complaints and faster responses, but clarity on what constitutes an emergency is still lacking, it appears.

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Key points included the development of an app for knowledge sharing, the importance of continuous professional development, and the need for better training standards. The discussion highlighted the inadequacies of current training, the lack of enforcement of regulations, and the need for better collaboration between trades and organisations.

Dr Hector Altamirano-Medina from the UK Centre for Moisture in Buildings at University College London, reiterated his advocacy from the 2025 round table of using residents' experience in order to inform designs, and ensure they are engaged in the process. "We need co-creation with residents as well as scalable systems to manage cases effectively."

David Bly of Cornerstone also revisited a point he highlighted in the 2025 round table, the benefits of a tenant education programme around how their lifestyles and behaviours affect the healthiness of their home. Organised as a set of "did you know," this was helping to prevent problems occurring, and providers to "move away from reactive maintenance."

## CONCLUSION

The new accountability as well as focus given to managing the risks of damp and mould is long overdue, and is at least some constructive legacy from the tragic death of Awaab Ishak in December 2020. Our round tables have been a small part of the process of identifying the viable approaches to responding to hazards and engaging tenants. But they have also revealed that organisational behaviours are still holding progress and information sharing back, while clarity on what 'safety' looks like still requires further clarification.

Our delegates also showed how sensible, straightforward construction solutions exist to prevent moisture issues in the first place. However, despite the sector having had many months to prepare for Awaab's Law, progress is patchy, and the sharing of good practice and property data across different providers was hard to come by.

One key outcome of the discussion was an agreement that the group should come together again in 2027 and discuss practice as it evolves. This would also be a chance to collate research on creating healthy homes, to provide the sector with a repository of usable examples of practical measures and their relative effectiveness. Once more, thanks to our delegates and sponsors for contributing their expertise and time to this crucial topic for the whole social housing arena.



## ACADEMIC INPUT

Dr Douglas Booker of the University of Leeds said that because demonstrating health impacts is "quite tough," a cross-sector body of data was needed



## REVIEWING PROGRESS

The group discussed the sector's results so far in compliance with Awaab's Law, since coming into force in October 2025

## THE ROUND TABLE'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMPLIANCE

- **Dr Douglas Booker:** We need to better understand health as an outcome; that should be a KPI.
- **Holly Hickin:** We need to really work on relationships between landlords and tenants.
- **Craig Cundey:** If we all stick to a silo mentality of a box ticking exercise, we're never going to improve anything. At least start by sharing the knowledge.
- **Hony Premal:** We need more collaborative work with the customers, and different agencies need to work together easily – that doesn't happen often.
- **Naomi Sadler:** At least one member on the design team for new builds should have some form of certification on Awaab's Law, and it should be incorporated as standard CPD.
- **Dan Fitch:** Don't be afraid to share knowledge and maybe to expose yourself; everyone wants the same outcome.
- **Paul Smith:** Half of all tenancies are home to someone with a long-term condition or disability; their homes shouldn't be making them worse, so prevention is better than cure.
- **Sarah Garry:** Bring together all the data from the various social housing organisations, so we're learning from each other across the industry, not just specific regions.
- **Martin Hancock:** We need clearer guidance on what 'made safe is', so we can go above and beyond. Also, get some power behind gaining access, not relying on tenancy breaches.
- **Andrew Cameron-Smith:** Recognise and embrace the fact it's a cultural as much as a technological challenge.
- **Andrew Burke:** More about what solutions are being used, and how they are working, plus evidence. Too many people are reinventing the wheel, and there are lots of square wheels.
- **David Bly:** A 'did you know' framework for everybody to go to, because all will have input, even landlords; factual experience.
- **Dr Hector Altamirano-Medina:** In terms of knowledge, we don't work enough with residents; they know a lot about how to solve the problem, co-creation with residents is important.
- **Dale Holroyd:** You can have frameworks, education, better surveying skills, a clear template, and a certified list of products, services and solutions; none of that will work unless the organisations that are responsible for managing this have the scalable resources and systems to be able to manage cases.

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# Aico launches new 'Connected Home' City & Guilds Assured course



Aico, leading home life safety provider, is proud to announce the expansion of their award winning training courses with the launch of a brand new City & Guilds Assured course: The Connected Home.

Launching this February, the free, full-day course has been specifically designed for landlords and housing professionals. As the housing industry shifts towards data-driven solutions, this session explores how connected home hardware and software can provide meaningful data and actionable insights to strengthen compliance, protect residents, and support informed, proactive decision-making.

The course has been carefully refined through extensive pilot sessions with industry stakeholders, housing professionals, and internal colleagues. Feedback gathered during these sessions has ensured the content is both practical and relevant, with a strong focus on real-world challenges faced by housing providers. As a result, the training has been meticulously tailored to meet the sector's specific needs, while ensuring attendees remain up to date with the latest technologies in an evolving legislative landscape.

## BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN TECHNOLOGY & LEGISLATION

The recent introduction of Awaab's Law has brought increased attention to indoor air quality, damp and mould, and the importance of proactive property

maintenance. With housing legislation evolving rapidly across the UK, connected home technology is becoming an essential tool for housing providers looking to demonstrate compliance, identify issues early, and improve resident outcomes.

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# Arma metal pipe boxing for energy efficient heating

With carbon reduction and energy efficiency driving the installation of cleaner heating solutions, the need to conceal exterior pipework and associated components forms an essential part of the final solution, which helps improve aesthetics while adding a level of physical protection to the system.

Concealing exposed pipework can present a range of challenges for social landlords and contractors, as part of carbon reduction programmes, as the boxing not only has to be aesthetic and easy to install but must also be cost effective.

While most interior pipe casing and boxing projects can be addressed with pre-formed and pre-finished plywood boxing, for exterior pipework, this solution is not practical or recommended, due to its lack of weather resistance, which is where Encasement's Arma metal pipe boxing provides an ideal solution.

## COVERING & PROTECTING

De-carbonisation and the move toward net zero goals have already resulted in the growing use of low carbon district heating schemes, as well as air-source heat pump installations, and ground source loop arrays, so versatile and durable pipe protection is an essential consideration.



Retrofit heat networks typically require large quantities of lagged pipework to be secured to the exterior walls of properties, often rising several storeys on a residential block before the distribution pipework branches off to serve each flat.

For air source or ground source heat pump installations, the length of pipework required is usually considerably less than a large district heat network, but metal pipe boxing is used for precisely the same reasons - to conceal and protect pipework, which in most cases are located close to the ground and within easy reach.

Clearly, the location and routing of the pipework



is dependent on the specifics of each project, so the pipe boxing also needs to be adaptable to meet these different project layouts. Other aspects, such as ease of installation and the choice of finish are also considerations when specifying metal pipe boxing to conceal energy efficient heating system installations.

## EASE OF INSTALLATION & MAINTENANCE

As Arma metal boxing is bespoke manufactured from strong, lightweight and corrosion resistant aluminium, to the dimensions and requirement of individual projects, this not only helps simplify the installation, but helps provide an integrated finish while also protecting the pipework from damage or tampering.

Two fixing options are available for Arma profiles with either an external flange or concealed angle bracket, both of which can be readily secured to external walls with suitable fixings. Access for



routine inspection and maintenance can also be incorporated into the metal boxing with the use of hinged doors or removable panels.



## FINISHING – BLEND OR CONTRAST

PPC finishes in any BS or RAL paint colour can be specified to contrast or blend in with wall colours and surroundings, while a range of dedicated accessories is also available, which include internal and external corners, as well as joint covers and end caps.

A supply and install service from Encasement is also available on the Arma product range to provide specifiers and main contractors with a professional, expert solution that helps simplify the installation process.

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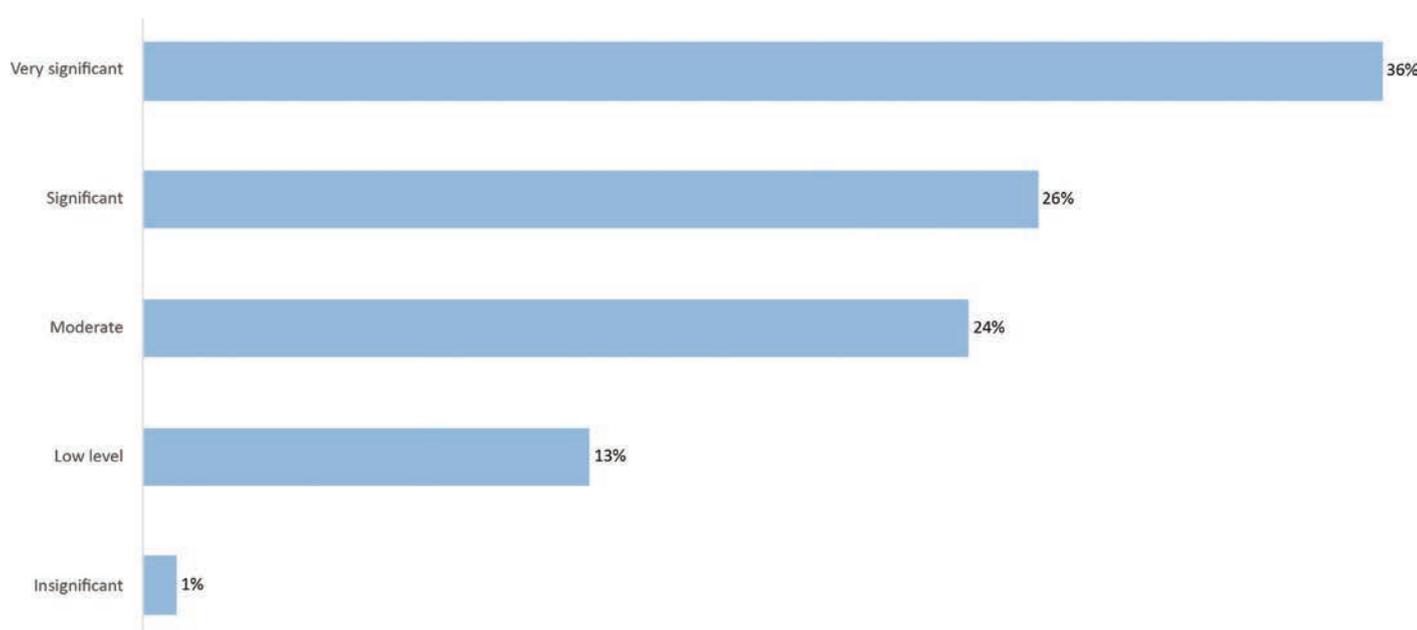
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## INDUSTRY VIEWFINDER

# Holistic Approaches to Low Carbon Retrofit at Scale



"How big a challenge is it to pursue a fully integrated whole-house deep retrofit approach?"

## INTRODUCTION

With the housing sector having embarked on tackling retrofits of the UK's approximately 4 million social and affordable rent homes – to save carbon and energy bills for tenants – it's time to take stock of progress on this mammoth task. 'Wave three' of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (now renamed the Warm Homes Fund) has allocated £1.29bn of funding for projects to introduce a series of combined retrofit measures to properties across the country, until September 2028. These are helping safeguard residents in around 140,000 homes against fuel poverty with better, more energy efficient fabric, as well as achieving large-scale moves away from fossil fuel-based heating.

The 'Warm Homes Plan' target of EPC 'C' remains for all privately rented as well as local-authority run homes by 2030, which will mean that the intensity of retrofits and upgrades is going to need to significantly increase to deliver the scale required. Tenant comfort and safety is increasingly a priority, so larger numbers of air-tight homes providing greater energy efficiency must be balanced with a focus on controlling moisture and ensuring ventilation, with damp and mould under greater scrutiny post-Awaab's Law.

Our research study, which was sponsored by Eurocell Group, MIRA Showers, Gemini Data Loggers, and Recoup Energy Solutions, sought to give a broad picture of how the sector is responding to large-scale retrofit challenges. The questions ranged from the solutions and approaches being chosen, to the obstacles to 'holistic' whole-house design which tackles the task in one fell swoop. What retrofit and new-build solutions are being adopted to meet environmental targets, improve thermal comfort, and ensure long-term occupant wellbeing? How are the key decisions on solutions being made – and how have strategies evolved since our last research survey on the topic in 2023?

Respondents included housing associations, local authorities, social housing organisations, and private landlords, and a good number (44%) were engaged in 'deep retrofit' projects, therefore at-scale low energy retrofits of properties based around a 'whole-house' approach which tackled fabric, renewables and all other factors simultaneously.

We were particularly keen to discover what's working, what had changed since 2024, and how the supply chain is assisting professionals. Our white paper provides the unique findings from this research, thereby shedding light



on current practices, innovation trends, and practical lessons for delivering resilient, low-carbon housing at scale.

**SURVEY FINDINGS: PRIORITIES**

The two key retrofit priorities of ‘EPC C’ and reducing carbon reductions were echoed in our survey responses; they were the top two priorities for respondents with 139 and 125 points respectively. Maintenance cost reductions was in third, with increased maintenance demands also one of the key barriers we canvassed social housing teams on. For residents, it was reassuring reducing bills (and therefore lowering risk of fuel poverty), was placed relatively high at number four.

As well as legal compliance, residents’ health and wellbeing were also central, with addressing damp and mould issues now legally regulated in the wake of Awaab Ishak’s death in 2020. Unfortunately, using resident feedback sat at the bottom of the list, but only just behind the much-advocated ‘one-hit’ whole-house retrofit approach, showing how many other practical concerns were confronting social housing teams. The persistent lack of trust among many tenants needed to be recognised and tackled, however, and using feedback is one way to help mend this.

For our respondents, damp and mould mitigation and resident health were seen as priorities, but only at numbers seven and eight in the list. The overarching problem of short-term cost, versus long-term savings, was illustrated by the fact that was high in the list at 96 points, while reducing operational expenditure was three spaces below it.

We asked who was involved in decision-making on retrofit projects; executive leadership had a significant number of votes; the same as repairs and maintenance at 43%. This was revealing, as it showed potentially why a focus on initial expenditure remained a key issue, and too high a priority for social housing organisations, with board decision-making being central to many choices within projects.

**CHALLENGES OF WHOLE-HOUSE RETROFIT**

Holistic and whole-house approaches to retrofitting housing are acknowledged as the most effective means of tackling the upgrades in ‘one-hit,’ and ensuring the balance is struck between different, often competing elements, and residents’ needs. Bearing in mind the inevitable challenges of achieving this in occupied properties, we wanted to gauge respondents’ views on how difficult achieving whole-house retrofit is at scale. The majority (62%) said

**As well as legal compliance, residents’ health and wellbeing were also central, with addressing damp and mould issues now legally regulated in the wake of Awaab Ishak’s death in 2020**

that it was either a ‘significant’ or ‘very ‘significant’ challenge, and only 13% said it was a ‘low level’ challenge.

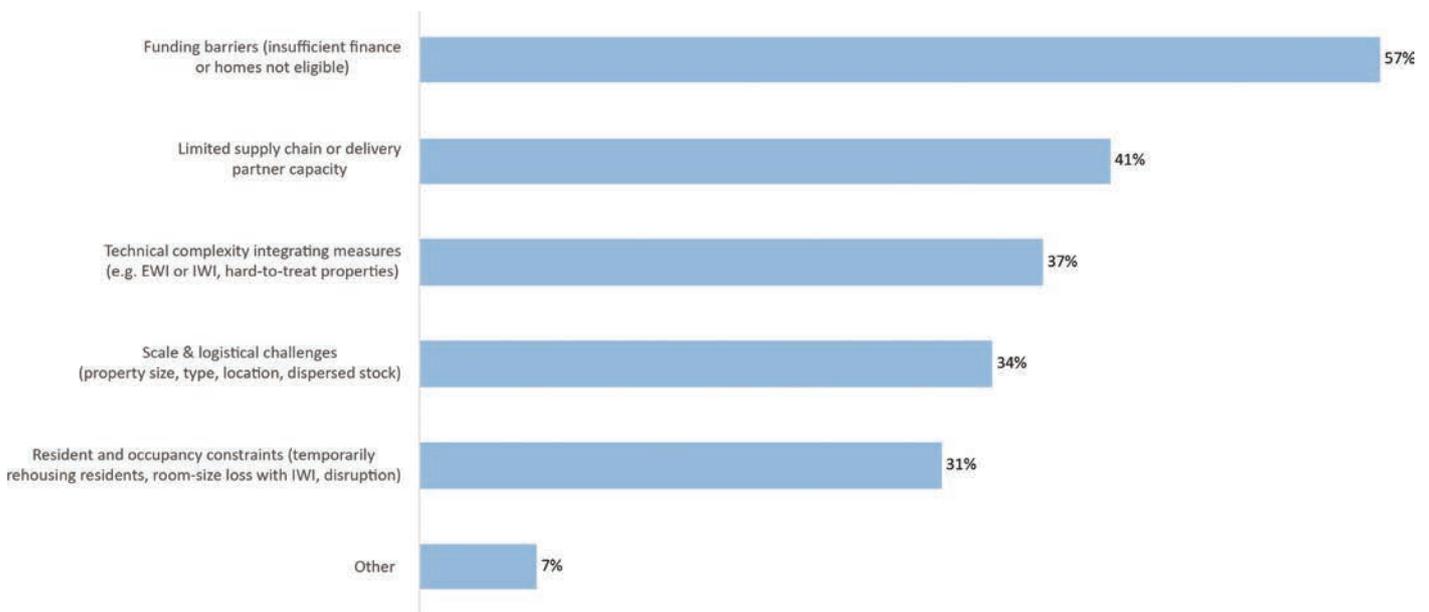
Due to constraints ranging from the need for resident decants to putting the necessary time and investment into design and build, whole-house is clearly not going to be the panacea for all authorities. Most of our respondents picked ‘funding barriers’ as their chief reason for ‘not delivering holistic whole-house retrofit,’ but this was also potentially due to projects’ ineligibility for funding. The second highest answer was ‘limited supply chain or delivery partner capacity,’ Supply of skilled installers of heat pumps has lagged behind demand, but this is unlikely to be the main reason for the supply chain capacity issues.

The ability of the supply chain to integrate effectively to achieve whole-house, one-hit retrofits was explicitly covered in the next question. Third in the list of reasons for housing organisations not delivering holistic retrofit at scale was ‘technical complexity of integrating measures.’ This was relative to constraints around residents (for example temporary decants, loss of floor space and disruption) being the bottom pick at 31%; possibly expected to be higher. The second from bottom was ‘scale and logistical challenges,’ around for example property size and type, as well as location and issues caused by having a geographically dispersed stock.

We asked whether the term ‘retrofit’ itself was an issue for their tenants, and most thought it was ‘confusing’ (37% of the total picked this). A lower figure of 28% said it was ‘understandable,’ but this was not a ringing endorsement. And 22% said it was ‘somewhat problematic.’ Clearly, the jury is out on whether ‘retrofit’ should be the blanket term for selling programmes which are designed to bring huge long-term benefits for tenants and their buildings.

**COMPARISONS WITH 2024**

In all of our three decarbonisation and retrofit oriented studies of housing professionals, (2023, 2024 and 2026) we asked what the sector’s biggest barriers



“What are the main reasons your organisation is not delivering holistic, whole-house retrofit at greater scale?”



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were for decarbonising the existing social housing stock in the UK. In all three, cost was the biggest issue to overcome for managers. The dominance of cost as an obstacle did seem to be proportionally reducing (from a score of 262 in 2003, to 208 in 2024, to 166 in 2026), potentially as other issues showed themselves to be greater challenges than previously.

There were a few potentially revealing disparities between the results in 2024 and the results in the previous studies, suggesting a changing context, and resulting shifting priorities for social housing teams.

Tenants refusing improvements was the third most commonly picked barrier for our survey cohort this year, and this was a higher position than 2024, when it was fourth from bottom (out of 11 factors). Clearly the right of tenants to refuse access had become a more prominent issue in the past two years, given its having climbed several places in our list.

In both 2023 and 2024 studies, and despite the availability of SHDF funding, “lack of Government support” was the second highest barrier cited, but this had dropped to third from bottom in 2026. Also reassuring was the dropping of “lack of internal skills” from the third placed barrier in 2024 to one from bottom in 2026, showing that our respondents believed that social housing teams had adequately upskilled so this was not one of the worst obstacles they were facing.

Less positive was the fairly high placing (at number five) of ‘lack of resident education’ as a barrier to tackle this year, revealing potentially that, as more and more retrofits were delivered, residents were not becoming more aware of the benefits of the measures. More has to be done in order both explain why they may have to be decanted temporarily, for example, but also why the works are needed, and the likely benefit for their affordability as well as comfort.

‘Supply chain issues’ scored a relatively high 96 points, which was only a negligible concern for our cohort in 2024, at the bottom of the list with only 26 points. Gaining access to homes, and the increased maintenance requirements caused by installing low energy retrofit technologies remained near the bottom list in 2026, as in 2024.

## METHODS & SOLUTIONS

Common retrofit measures include roof and wall insulation, draught reduction, improved windows, and low-carbon heating technologies such as heat pumps. However, installation costs remain a major barrier, particularly for technologies requiring additional upgrades to building fabric or heating systems.

## IAQ, VENTILATION & UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Ventilation design is a particularly important consideration, with indoor air quality a potential unintended negative consequence of fabric improvements. As homes become more airtight through insulation and draught reduction, adequate ventilation is required, also in order to control moisture and overheating. Mechanical extract ventilation systems are widely used, alongside passive solutions such as air bricks and trickle vents. In some cases, more advanced systems such as mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR) are installed.

The research corroborated the fact that retrofits can lead to such performance issues. Some housing providers reported recurring damp, mould, overheating, or indoor air quality concerns following upgrades, linked to a failure to provide adequate ventilation. Although 37% reported ‘no issues,’ 13% said that ‘more moisture had been introduced,’ and complaints about air quality were reported by 18%. More worryingly, 18% said that pre-existing damp and mould had returned post-retrofits, and a not-insignificant number (16%) said that overheating was now an issue.

The ventilation solutions which were being used were spread evenly across the respondents, with mechanical extract fans narrowly coming out on top. We asked ‘which ventilation solutions were commonly used’; mechanical extract fans were picked by 61% of respondents, whereas MVHR was only picked by 38%. Passive measures such as air bricks/trickle vents, and opening windows were picked by 59%. Also, hybrid and/or automated ventilation systems were a chosen solution for 23%.

## Respondents estimated the average cost of a whole-house retrofit for a typical three-bedroom home as £43,358, with most estimates ranging between £30,000 and £60,000

### COST INCREASES & ANTICIPATED SAVINGS

Respondents estimated the average cost of a whole-house retrofit for a typical three-bedroom home as £43,358, with most estimates ranging between £30,000 and £60,000. Despite these costs, retrofit measures are expected to reduce tenants’ energy bills by an average of around 37%.

These are very strong potential ROI figures for tenants, and also for the long-term resilience of their properties against rising energy prices. However, the substantial estimated cost uplift is going to be difficult, or potentially preventative for many authorities and individuals.

### TENANT ENGAGEMENT

Ensuring communication with residents is done sensitively and effectively is an important part of delivering retrofits, particularly given their legal freedom to refuse entry for retrofit work to take place. The research found that overall, providers saw improving communication with residents was the key to reducing complaints from residents post-retrofit (67% picked this), as well as educating them on how to operate their improved homes and associated tech. They commonly use in-person meetings (half of respondents), as well as phone calls and text messages (45%) and printed materials (33%) to explain upcoming work and provide guidance on new systems.

While demonstrations and workshops to explain the new retrofits were used, it was a low number (16%), although using apps and messaging was even lower at 13%. However, providers not currently having any ‘formal engagement’ was, concerningly, placed above these at 17%, although this may include organisations not currently planning or undergoing a retrofit. A response to the earlier question around potential post-retrofit issues found that 24% of respondents believed that “resident confusion or misuse” had occurred, potentially endangering the benefits of retrofit works.

### EVALUATING OUTCOMES

Housing providers reported several methods being used to evaluate retrofit outcomes, including tenant satisfaction (the most popular choice with 56% of respondents picking it). Alongside this others were using uplift in EPC ratings as a key measure (53%). Energy consumption data was a metric for only half of respondents, but measuring tenants’ lifestyles was a relatively high figure at 47%. Some also use sensor-based monitoring systems to track indoor environmental conditions, but many lacked sufficient resources or infrastructure to carry out comprehensive monitoring. However, most (46%) were carrying out annual monitoring of retrofits post-completion, whereas 25% were only doing a single monitoring exercise.

As well as standard spreadsheets and manual tracking, respondents were using a mix of bespoke asset management systems (35%), and Internet of Things (IoT) and sensor dashboards, within their mix of tools for monitoring the performance and effectiveness of their retrofits. Lack of ‘internal capacity’ was the number one constraint, with nearly half picking it, but lack of funding and issues with resident cooperation were also key (43% and 35%). Also, however, respondents candidly admitted that the lack of a ‘mandatory requirement’ to evaluate projects, plus the lack of best practice guidance, was making it difficult to make this a priority for organisations (25% and 23% respectively).

### SKILLS

There were clear signs that our survey cohort of housing professionals’ organisations were putting significant investment into inhouse retrofit skills as



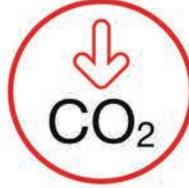
# Carbon vs Cost

## The Window Specification Challenge in Social Housing

Social Housing providers must balance EPC targets, carbon reduction and retrofit budgets when specifying windows across their housing stock. Recent research among Housing Associations, Local Authorities and landlords highlights the key challenges facing asset managers today:



Improving EPC performance across ageing housing stock



Delivering carbon reduction at scale



Managing tight retrofit budgets

The right window specification can help deliver all three

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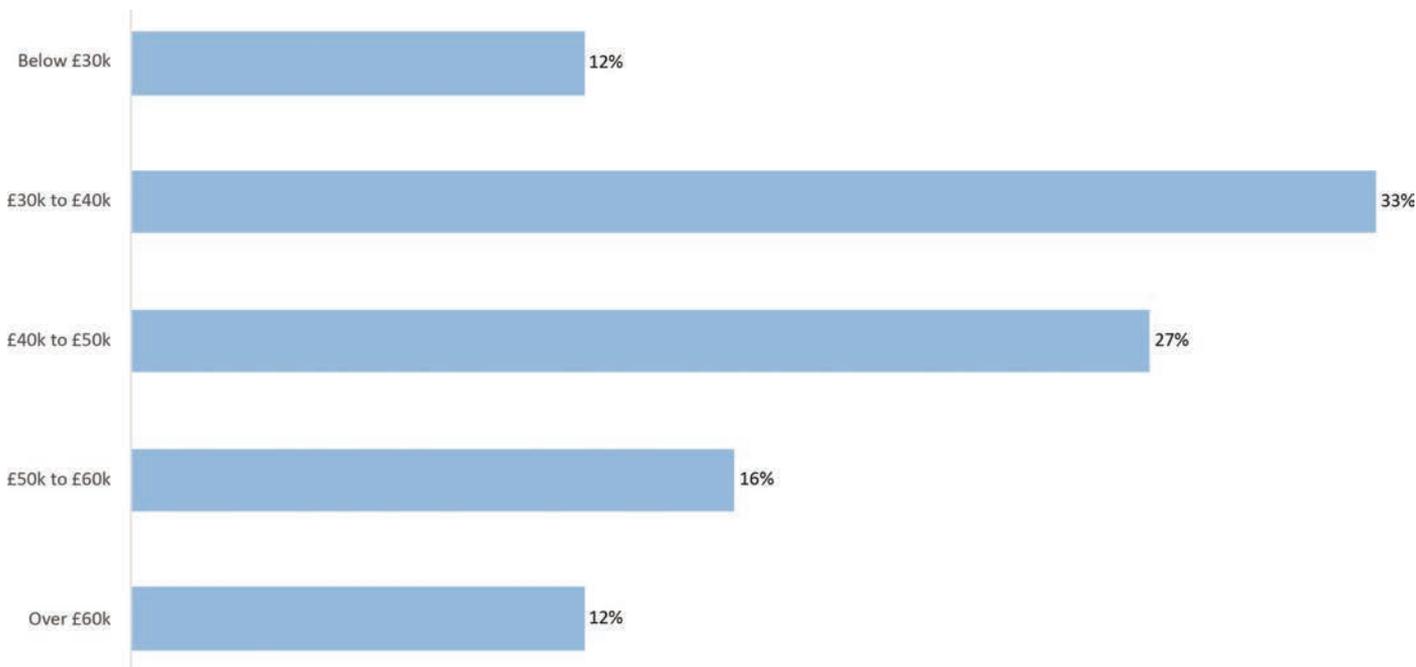


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“For a ‘standard’ (20th century) three bedroom house with cavity walls, what do you believe would be the estimated cost for a whole-house low energy retrofit?”



“What is the average bills saving you are anticipating for tenants?”

well as developing those of external contractors, although an important segment (35%) were doing no skills training at all. Most respondents we asked said that ventilation design & install was the key skill set they are developing, but skills in monitoring & evaluation and moisture diagnosis were also seen as priorities for training. Lower down the list were resident liaison, performance modelling, and building physics, and the new role of Retrofit Coordinator under PAS2035.

Although resident liaison was not seen as an acute priority skill to develop, a strong number of respondents (29%) said that they were doing this, but higher (by one percentage point) was ‘whole-house systems design’ which integrates M&E and fabric, showing the importance given to holistic design skills. Skills around IAQ and moisture were marginally less represented in training currently, and again Retrofit Coordinator was last in line, as an emerging skill to train.

**CONCLUSION**

Overall, the research highlights both progress and ongoing challenges in delivering large-scale housing retrofit programmes. Key barriers include funding limitations, skills shortages, supply chain capacity and tenant engagement. Addressing these issues will require stronger collaboration across the housing sector, government and construction industry, alongside increased investment in workforce training and resident support. The potential rewards for carbon savings and more importantly, resident resilience against fuel poverty, are huge, but the commitment to investment needs to be constant, and potentially means sacrifices in other areas.

*Thank you to our sponsors for their support of this white paper research report: Eurocell, MIRA Showers, Recoup Group and Gemini Data Loggers*





# InstallerSHOW 2026

The UK's built environment is entering a period of rapid change. With new building safety regulations, ambitious decarbonisation targets and the urgent need to upgrade existing housing stock, developers, housing providers and contractors face increasing pressure to deliver buildings that are safer, more efficient and more sustainable.

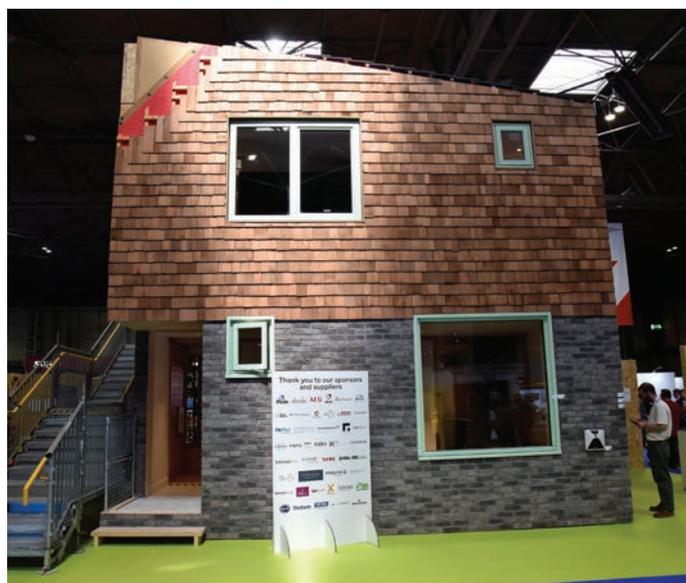
Against this backdrop, InstallerSHOW 2026 returns to the NEC Birmingham from 23-25 June, with a renewed focus through InstallerBUILD, the show's dedicated theme for the building sector.

InstallerSHOW has grown into the UK's largest event for the installation and built environment industries, bringing together more than 40,000 visitors and 900 exhibitors across three days of networking, innovation and industry insight. The event connects installers, manufacturers, developers, specifiers and housing professionals, creating a unique environment where the entire supply chain can come together.

InstallerBUILD provides a hub for professionals looking to explore the latest products, materials and techniques shaping modern building projects. Designed for builders, contractors, developers and specifiers, it focuses on the practical realities of delivering high quality buildings across both new build and retrofit environments.

Visitors will be able to discover innovations covering roofing, cladding, flooring, insulation and renewable technologies, alongside systems designed to improve performance, durability and sustainability. With the industry increasingly focused on energy efficiency and building safety, InstallerBUILD highlights solutions that help meet evolving regulatory and environmental demands.

A major highlight within InstallerBUILD is The HAUS, a full scale two storey house constructed inside the exhibition halls. Designed by award winning architects IF\_DO and built using regenerative materials by Natural Building Systems, the project explores modern methods of construction and demonstrates how sustainable design, circular building principles and integrated technologies could shape the homes of the future.



A major highlight within InstallerBUILD is The HAUS, a full scale two storey house constructed inside the exhibition halls

InstallerBUILD will also host a range of live demonstrations and competitions that bring craftsmanship and best practice to life on the show floor. The Flooring Demo, delivered in partnership with FITA and the Contract Flooring Association (CFA), will feature live installation demonstrations showcasing professional techniques and highlighting the importance of training and standards.

Meanwhile, the National Institute of Carpet and Floorlayers (NICF) will host the prestigious NICF Fitter of the Year competition, where leading flooring professionals will compete in front of a live audience, demonstrating the skill and precision required to deliver high quality installations.

Roofing professionals will also have their moment in the spotlight with the National Federation of Roofing Contractors (NFRC) and SIG Roofing hosting The Great British Slate Off, a live roofing competition celebrating craftsmanship and the next generation of roofing talent.

Beyond InstallerBUILD, InstallerSHOW offers a wider installation ecosystem, structured around four key show themes covering HVAC, plumbing and renewables, electrical technologies, construction and interiors.

For 2026, InstallerSHOW will also be co-located with the Professional Woodworking Expo and The Painting and Decorating Show, creating an expanded multi-trade environment with even more products, expertise and demonstrations from across the construction and finishing sectors.

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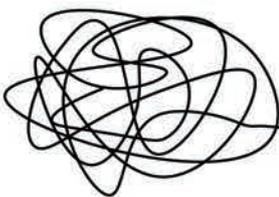
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# Retrofit made simpler

With millions of social homes still sitting below an EPC rating of C, a data-led retrofit model is emerging to help landlords tackle varied portfolios, as Luke Gale at Wienerberger explains.

Across the UK, the challenge facing social housing providers is clear. More than 2.5 million social homes have an EPC rating below C, with a significant proportion rating D or worse. Against a backdrop of tightening regulations, constrained budgets and growing expectations around tenant wellbeing, retrofit has moved from long-term ambition to immediate operational priority.

Yet while the need is well understood, delivery remains complex. Social landlords are tasked with upgrading diverse and often ageing stock, minimising disruption to residents, evidencing compliance, and ensuring that investment delivers long-term value rather than short-term fixes. For many organisations, the greatest challenge is not deciding whether to retrofit, but how to do so at scale, consistently, and with confidence.

It is within this context that structured retrofit delivery models are gaining attention. Rather than treating retrofit as a collection of disconnected measures, these approaches focus on governance, sequencing and performance – placing data, quality assurance and resident outcomes at the centre of decision making.

## FROM POLICY AMBITION TO PRACTICAL DELIVERY

The policy direction is unambiguous. Minimum energy efficiency standards, decarbonisation targets and emerging expectations around building safety and health are reshaping asset management strategies. However, social housing providers must translate these ambitions into programmes that work across thousands of homes, each with different construction types, conditions and resident needs.

A recurring issue has been the temptation to focus on visible symptoms – cold homes, condensation or rising energy bills – without fully understanding the underlying causes. Poor ventilation, fabric deficiencies or moisture imbalance can undermine even well-intentioned interventions if they are not identified early.

A delivery-led retrofit model begins by addressing this knowledge gap. Detailed and intrusive surveys and the use of sensor technology to gather data insights provide retrofit designers with an accurate picture of how properties actually perform. Temperature and humidity data, captured over time, can reveal patterns that a single site visit might miss, supporting more informed decisions about design, specification and sequencing of the works.



## DESIGNING RETROFIT AROUND REAL HOMES

One of the key lessons emerging from large-scale retrofit programmes is the importance of avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach. Social housing stock is highly varied, and solutions must reflect differences in construction, occupancy and location.

A structured design stage enables retrofit measures to be tailored to each property while remaining compliant with relevant standards and funding requirements. Crucially, this stage is not just about technical compliance, but about balancing performance, cost and disruption. By establishing a clear scope early on, landlords can reduce the risk of variation orders, delays and resident dissatisfaction later in the process.

Flexibility also plays an important role. Effective retrofit programmes recognise that no single manufacturer or system can address every challenge. The ability to specify complementary third-party solutions where appropriate allows housing providers to focus on outcomes rather than products, ensuring that each home receives the most suitable intervention.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE & RISK MANAGEMENT

For housing managers and maintenance professionals, retrofit introduces new layers of risk. Poor workmanship, incompatible systems or inadequate oversight can result in underperformance, resident complaints or long-term liability.

Embedding inspection and quality control at key stages of delivery is therefore critical. A phased inspection regime, covering installation, materials and workmanship, helps ensure that retrofit measures are delivered as designed. It also creates a clear audit trail, supporting compliance and internal governance.

This approach aligns closely with the needs of organisations managing large portfolios, where consistency and repeatability are essential. By standardising processes rather than solutions, landlords can maintain control across multiple sites while still responding to individual property requirements.

## MEASURING WHAT MATTERS AFTER INSTALLATION

Retrofit does not end at handover. Post-installation testing and performance monitoring are increasingly recognised as essential components of a successful programme. Without verification, it is difficult to demonstrate that the investment has delivered the intended benefits.



## As the sector moves from pilots to programmes, such models may prove essential in bridging the gap between policy ambition and practical delivery

Ongoing monitoring of internal conditions allows housing providers to assess whether homes are performing as expected and to intervene early if issues arise. For residents, this translates into greater comfort and reassurance. For landlords, it provides evidence to support funding claims, regulatory reporting and future asset planning.

Importantly, performance data also supports a broader understanding of how retrofit impacts tenant wellbeing. Improved thermal comfort, better air quality and reduced damp can contribute to healthier homes, supporting wider organisational objectives around health, safety and social value.

### SUPPORTING RESIDENTS THROUGH CHANGE

While retrofit is often discussed in technical terms, its success ultimately depends on resident experience. Disruption, confusion or a lack of communication can undermine even the most carefully planned programme.

Models that prioritise a single point of contact and clear communication channels can help build trust and reduce friction. By coordinating survey, design, installation and aftercare through an integrated framework, housing providers can offer residents a more coherent experience, while simplifying internal management.

This approach also supports fuel poverty objectives. Homes that are warmer in winter, cooler in summer and cheaper to run can make a tangible difference to household finances, particularly as energy costs remain volatile.

### A REPLICABLE MODEL FOR A NATIONAL CHALLENGE

The question is no longer whether retrofit will shape asset strategies, but how best to deliver it. Structured, end-to-end retrofit models offer one



possible answer. By combining detailed assessment, tailored design, rigorous quality control and ongoing performance monitoring, they provide a framework that can be replicated across portfolios while remaining responsive to individual homes.

As the sector moves from pilots to programmes, such models may prove essential in bridging the gap between policy ambition and practical delivery, helping social housing providers meet legislative requirements, manage risk and, most importantly, deliver healthier homes for the people who live in them.

*Luke Gale is channel marketing manager – housing, at Wienerberger*

## AkzoNobel teams up with local partners to give Langley Pavilion a new lease of life

AkzoNobel has unveiled the vibrant transformation delivered through its Dulux Let's Colour initiative in partnership with Viva Slough and Slough Borough Council that will see a number of Slough's underused community centres revitalised through the power of paint and colour. The bespoke colour scheme developed will be used across all Slough Council Community Centres involved in the project.

The Langley project was fully funded by Dulux, including donations of all paint and equipment, with additional support from AkzoNobel's corporate volunteer programme as part of its wider social commitments. Slough was chosen due to AkzoNobel's longstanding connection to the town, as the birthplace of one of the UK's most trusted brands, with Dulux's launch in 1931 and home to the company's UK headquarters.

This partnership is the latest to form part of Dulux's Let's Colour initiative, which continues the brand's mission to bring communities together through paint by working closely with partner organisations across the globe. Viva Slough is a community hub supporting the mental, physical and economic wellbeing of residents in Slough. Together, they share the same vision of positively impacting communities.

For further information on Dulux's community initiatives, visit the website.

0333 222 7171 [www.dulux.co.uk/en/sustainability/lets-colour](http://www.dulux.co.uk/en/sustainability/lets-colour)



## Eurocell launches SureSpec to set new compliance standards

SureSpec from Eurocell is the UK's first fully audited specification-to-installation model for windows and doors. It was developed to eliminate the "specification gap", the common industry failure where high-performance designs are substituted for products that don't meet the required spec during the construction process. The updated building regulations are unforgiving. With the Building Safety Regulator rejecting a large portion of Gateway 2 applications due to documentation gaps, and the Home Energy Model (HEM) requiring exact carbon data, generic or altered specifications are a major project risk. Unlike standard specifications that are often "recycled" or altered, SureSpec provides a locked framework in which Eurocell takes ownership of the entire delivery chain. It supports architects by providing NBS specifications with embedded carbon data, helps fabricators by delivering detailed, window-by-window manufacturing drawings that remove guesswork, and reduces risk for contractors through a mandatory on-site audit where Eurocell verifies that the final installation matches the original design intent. By removing drift between design and delivery, SureSpec ensures that what is specified is exactly what is manufactured, delivered and installed on each project. This provides a level of compliance assurance currently unmatched in the UK market.

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# Meeting the sector's decarbonisation goals

Robert Dreghorn at The Electric Heating Company outlines how electric heating solutions paired with efficiency upgrades can help local authorities, housing associations and private landlords reduce carbon, cut bills and future proof homes.

Heating UK homes remains a major source of emissions, placing social landlords at the centre of the country's decarbonisation challenge. In 2021, domestic heating accounted for around 18% of all UK greenhouse gas emissions, underscoring the urgency for large portfolios to transition away from fossil fuels to low carbon alternatives that improve tenant outcomes and reduce operational risk for providers. Government policy is clear: grow low carbon heating markets rapidly and end the installation of new fossil-fuel boilers by 2035, while working toward net zero by 2050 and EPC Band C by 2030 in rented homes, milestones highly relevant to local authorities (LAs), housing associations (HAs) and private landlords managing diverse stock types.

Electric heating, particularly heat pumps and complementary electric systems, offers a practical pathway to achieve these targets. Heat pumps commonly deliver over three units of heat for every unit of electricity consumed, making them substantially more efficient than gas boilers and capable of cutting household carbon emissions by roughly 70% today, with even larger reductions as the grid continues to decarbonise. Beyond carbon metrics, electric solutions reduce exposure to volatile global gas prices, helping social landlords stabilise tenant energy costs while aligning with funding and compliance frameworks.

For tenants, the benefits are immediate and tangible. Modelling using EPC and English Housing Survey data indicates that upgrading social homes to EPC A–C could save residents an average of £567 per household per year, equating to more than £700m annually across the sector, material relief for those most exposed to fuel poverty. Warmer homes also deliver long term health gains. Cold, damp housing is linked to preventable illness and avoidable mortality, with the NHS bearing significant costs each year; improving building fabric and deploying low carbon heating helps mitigate these impacts while enhancing comfort and control for residents.

From an operational standpoint, electric heating simplifies compliance and reduces ongoing maintenance burdens. Unlike gas systems, electric technologies do not require annual gas safety checks and generally involve fewer moving components, which can lower reactive maintenance events and reduce disruption in tenanted properties. Installation is also well suited to retrofit programmes in flats and high-rise blocks, where minimising invasive works and decanting is a priority. Historically, electric storage heaters became widespread in social stock due to straightforward installation and off-peak tariffs; while modern programmes should prioritise efficiency led upgrades, this earlier adoption illustrates how electric approaches can be delivered at scale within constrained estates.

Critically, the funding landscape now favours landlords who pursue whole-house efficiency and low carbon heat. The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) has progressed through multiple waves, allocating well over £1bn to improve homes below EPC C. By May 2025, more than 41,500 households had received measures such as insulation and heating upgrades, with almost all improved to EPC C or above where ratings were recorded, evidence that large portfolios can achieve meaningful efficiency gains within current policy structures. Complementary schemes, including the Boiler Upgrade Scheme (grants up to £7,500 for heat pumps), further reduce capital barriers for



## The funding landscape now favours landlords who pursue whole-house efficiency and low carbon heat

qualifying properties, while proposed minimum standards aim to lift renters into warmer, cheaper-to-run homes by 2030.

There is also a growing opportunity to turn retrofit investments into revenue. Network initiatives such as UK Power Networks' Flex Direct explore ways for social landlords to receive flexibility payments by reducing or shifting peak electricity demand. As estates adopt solar PV, batteries, and smart heating controls, aggregated flexibility services can provide new income streams that offset upgrade costs and support grid stability, aligning landlord finances with broader system needs.

A successful decarbonisation roadmap for social housing portfolios usually starts with fabric-first upgrades, loft, cavity or solid wall insulation, airtightness and ventilation improvements – followed by deployment of electric heating systems tailored to property archetypes and local grid capacity. The UK has already delivered millions of efficiency measures across public schemes, and continuing this momentum will be key to achieving equitable outcomes, particularly for vulnerable tenants and off-gas communities. Smart controls

## Government policy is clear: grow low carbon heating markets rapidly and end the installation of new fossil-fuel boilers by 2035

and room level zoning can optimise comfort and reduce waste, while portfolio level data helps landlords monitor performance, plan phased works, and evidence compliance.

A Welsh housing association upgrading mixed-tenure stock has deployed air-source heat pumps alongside targeted fabric improvements to reduce tenant bills and carbon, while maintaining individual dwelling control over heating and hot water. Early results indicate improved thermal comfort and reduced energy spend compared with legacy systems, supported by public funding and supplier partnerships; similar programmes are being replicated across the UK as landlords align housing quality with decarbonisation goals.

Across SHDF Wave 2.1 and 2.2, landlords reported tens of thousands of measures installed and rapid progress to EPC C, demonstrating that portfolio scale retrofit can be delivered through structured funding, data-led targeting, and resident engagement frameworks, an approach that other providers can adapt, regardless of stock profile or region.

In sum, electric heating – implemented within an efficiency first retrofit strategy – offers social landlords a robust, future proof route to decarbonisation. It enables compliance with 2030 EPC ambitions and the 2050 Net Zero pathway, reduces tenant bills and improves health outcomes, and opens new operational opportunities through flexibility markets.

For LAs, HAs and private landlords, the case for action is compelling: plan fabric upgrades, deploy low carbon electric heating at scale, integrate smart controls, and leverage available funding and network services to deliver warm, efficient, and resilient homes.

*Robert Dreghorn is the marketing consultant for The Electric Heating Company*



## End the Postcode Lottery with Beauflor Flooring

With the recent announcement that the revised Decent Homes Standard for England will not mandate floor coverings in all rooms of social housing, Beauflor asks whether the provision of flooring for tenants should really be a postcode lottery. While some forward-thinking social housing providers in England are including floor coverings throughout the homes they let, many others are still stripping out the attempts of previous tenants to improve the standard of their home and welcoming new tenants with bare floors. Unsurprisingly, these bare floors put tenants under financial strain to put right, or they are simply left living and sleeping in a home that has a negative impact on their well-being. Yet with Beauflor sheet vinyl floors, many provider concerns around the affordability of flooring can be answered, raising the quality of living for tenants and reducing the postcode lottery style provision they face today. It might even help providers end their 'rip-out' culture by eliminating hygiene and health and safety worries. Beauflor has a wide range of sheet vinyl floors suitable for social housing. Cost-effective, simple and fast to install, as well as water-resistant and durable, these floors are commonly found in bathrooms and kitchens of social housing but are just as appropriate for bedrooms, living spaces and hallways. Beauflor's options have a comfortable foam or textile 'cushion' backing that not only feels soft underfoot but is warm and quiet too.

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# Complete Wetroom Protection with Marmox

**W**etrooms are increasingly popular in modern housing, yet they present unique challenges for facility managers, maintenance teams, and housing providers. Poor waterproofing, inaccessible drains, uncontrolled condensation, and suboptimal material choices often lead to leaks, mould growth, and costly repairs. Marmox offers a complete wetroom system – including the redesigned Showerlay, Multiboards, Tileable Basins, and Niches – engineered to simplify installation, improve long-term durability, and reduce ongoing maintenance requirements. This ensures wetrooms remain practical, safe, and reliable for both residential and commercial properties.

The Showerlay forms the foundation of any Marmox wetroom, delivering a fully waterproof floor capable of withstanding heavy use in social housing, sheltered accommodation, and commercial buildings. Redesigned from the surface down, it features a fleece overhang of 100 mm, creating a dependable seal at tanking joints between floor and walls. Each panel can be trimmed on all sides by up to 100 mm, allowing straightforward adaptation to irregular or confined layouts, making it suitable for both new builds and retrofits. The updated drainage system includes point drains, which can be positioned centrally or offset, as well as linear drains, available in a tileable version for a seamless finish. All drains are designed for easy cleaning and low-maintenance operation. Coloured grilles – including black, white, copper, and gold – are available alongside stainless steel, allowing maintenance teams to match interior finishes without compromising performance or functionality.

Marmox Multiboards complement the floor system by providing lightweight, waterproof, and thermally insulated bases for walls and floors. Easily



cut to fit around plumbing, corners, or structural features, they are ideal for renovations, retrofits, and new builds. Their thermal properties reduce condensation, maintain surface warmth, and work effectively with underfloor heating systems to enhance occupant comfort while minimising the risk of damp-related problems. This combination of insulation and waterproofing supports long-term durability and simplifies ongoing maintenance, particularly in communal or high-traffic environments.

Tileable Basins provide practical, adaptable solutions for wetroom layouts. Available in four versions – Infinity (no visible drain), Linear Drain (discreet channel), Push Plug (traditional filling), and Flat (which doubles as a shelf) – all share the same dimensions (770 x 485 x 100 mm) and come with chrome or black bottle traps. These options allow housing providers to customise wetroom designs to specific building requirements while maintaining ease of cleaning, reliability, and everyday usability.

Niches offer integrated storage for toiletries or cleaning products. Available in 1200 x 400 x 150 mm and 600 x 300 x 100 mm sizes, they fit neatly into wetroom walls, reduce clutter, support hygiene, and improve accessibility for users.

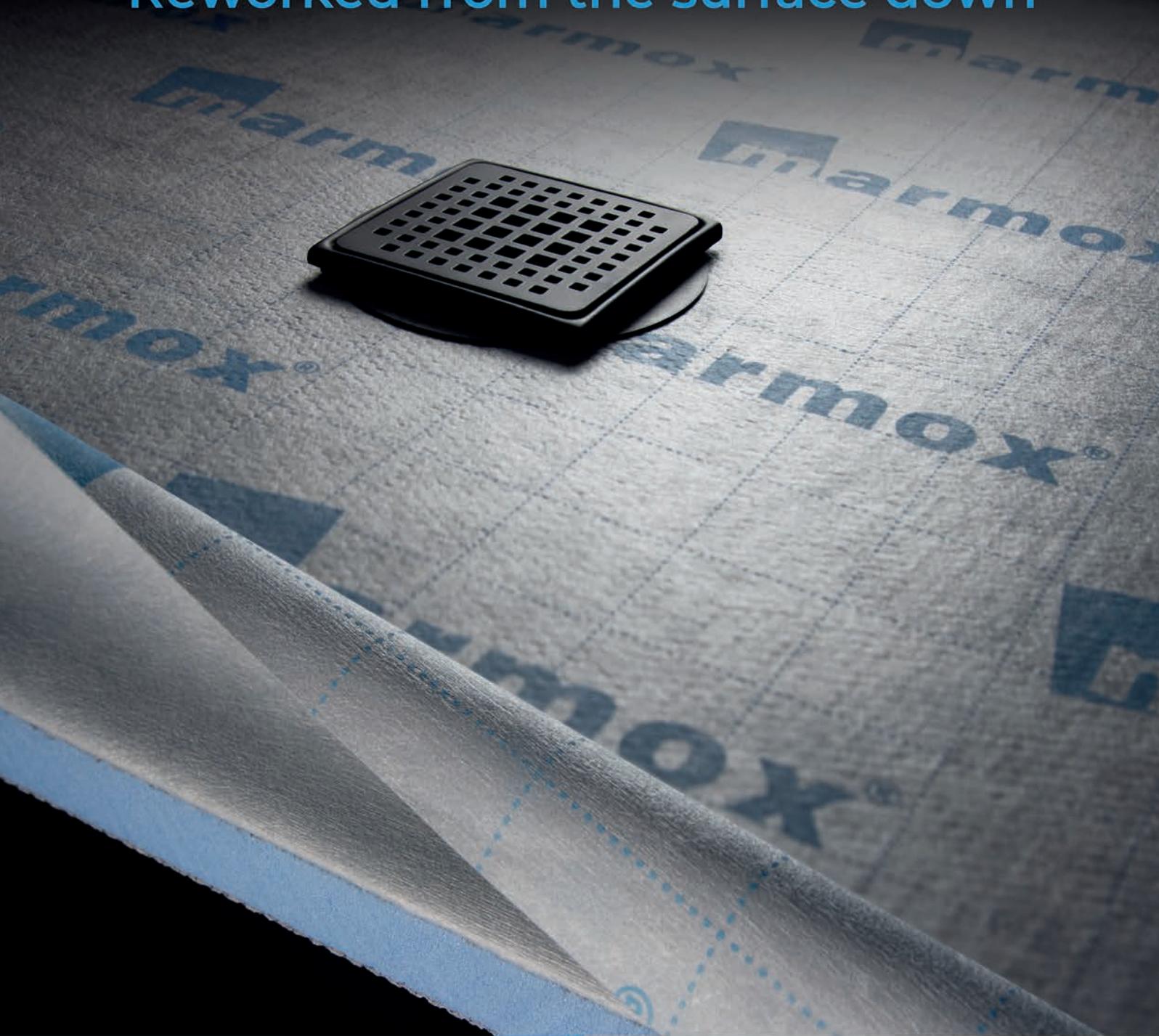
Together, Marmox Showerlays, Multiboards, basins, and niches form a comprehensive wetroom system that is practical, durable, and cost-effective. Installation is straightforward, ongoing maintenance is minimised, and wetrooms remain fully waterproof, thermally comfortable, and safe for occupants. Whether upgrading a housing block, refurbishing sheltered accommodation, or fitting commercial bathrooms, Marmox provides reliable solutions that deliver long-term performance, reduce maintenance costs, and enable property teams to manage facilities efficiently, safely, and confidently.

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# Showerlay Wetroom System Reworked from the surface down



Fully waterproof with flexible drainage to reduce maintenance risk.

## Make communal areas feel just like home with IVC Commercial

IVC Commercial's affordable flooring solutions for public areas in social housing deliver durability and homely design. With its Pioneer 70 and Isafe 70 dedicated flooring solutions for public areas in social housing, IVC Commercial helps providers to achieve a high-quality floor that upholds value requirements. The floors prioritise durability, safety and ease of maintenance across a range of welcoming residential designs. Pioneer 70 is an affordable heavy-duty floor that provides 18dB of impact sound reduction. Bringing improved acoustics to hallways and communal areas, the floor's 0.70 mm wear layer ensures it withstands the high levels of traffic expected in these areas. In a choice of 22 wood, stone and decorative effects, the collection is ideal for social housing where a welcoming design is important. It also benefits from Invertech and PUR shield for a more authentic look and easy maintenance. For areas where slip resistance is important, such as social housing for the elderly or assisted living accommodation, Isafe 70's PTV 36+ specification delivers. The floor's Hypergrip+ permanent technology delivers exceptional slip restraint and improves cleaning for a low maintenance finish that upholds its appearance. Again using IVC Commercial's 0.70 mm wear layer compact vinyl construction, Isafe 70 ensures a durable floor under heavy use. The collection is available in 12 wood effects, including herringbone, and 14 colour and material designs.

info@ivcgroup.com www.ivcgroup.com/en



## Navigator introduces renewables range

Leading heating and plumbing distributor Navigator continues to offer a range of quality products that offer installers and specifiers ease of installation and peace of mind at competitive prices. The range includes filters and pumps, hoses and clips, valves and inlets, filling loops and air vents, buffer tanks, isolation switches, copper and stainless steel pressfit connections, rubber mounts and feet, brackets and floor stands, heat pump cages, cable and pipe trunking – everything you could need to install heat pumps. For more information on the Thorsys range, email sales@navigatormsl.com



01234 781234 www.navigatormsl.com

## Nuaire launches 'A Guide to Awaab's Law'

Nuaire has published 'A Guide to Awaab's Law and the Future of Safe Housing Standards' designed to help social housing organisations comply with Awaab's Law. The legislation was introduced following the tragic death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak in 2020, caused by prolonged exposure to mould in his family's rented home. The guide explains the requirements to investigate and address damp and mould hazards set out in Awaab's Law, and the legally enforceable timescales set. It provides an overview of the changes, along with practical checklists and tailored ventilation advice to enable social housing providers to comply with the new law.



02920 858486 nuaire.co.uk/news/nuaire-launches-a-guide-to-awaabs-law

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# A plan for fuel poverty

David Patrick from Dimplex explores how electric heating and smart ventilation technologies can be easily integrated to deliver affordable warmth and comfort.

As household energy costs in the UK continue to rise, fuel poverty has become a widespread challenge for the UK housing sector. While warmth and comfort were once assumed to be basic outcomes of modern housing, both are increasingly out of reach for millions of tenants and addressing this challenge requires a fundamental rethink of how homes are designed, heated and ventilated.

## DESIGNING FOR AFFORDABLE WARMTH

Fuel poverty is often framed as a cost of energy issue, but the reality is more complex. According to National Energy Action, 6.1 million UK households are now living in fuel poverty, a figure that has risen from an estimated 4.5 million in late 2021.

This rise reflects not only volatile energy prices but also housing stock that is struggling to operate efficiently and manage moisture. In many homes, poor thermal performance goes hand in hand with inadequate ventilation, and the effects are compounded when occupants reduce heating or switch off ventilation units to save money. When a property becomes cold, a lack of effective air management can lead to damp and mould, undermining occupant health, damaging interiors and increasing long-term maintenance costs.

While insulation and airtightness upgrades remain essential, heating systems continue to play a vital role in whether a home can be kept warm affordably. Replacing fossil-fuelled systems with high-efficiency, smart electric space and water heating enables households to use cleaner electricity and gain greater control over energy use.

However, heating alone is not enough. As homes become more airtight in pursuit of efficiency, effective ventilation becomes essential to maintain indoor air quality without driving up heat loss. This is where decentralised mechanical extract ventilation (dMEV) fans add a vital third layer to the design strategy. By continuously extracting moisture and stale air at low energy consumption, dMEV systems help prevent condensation and mould whilst allowing heating systems to operate more efficiently.

Importantly, dMEV fans also provide targeted, demand-led ventilation without the heat penalties associated with intermittent or uncontrolled airflow. This balance between achieving thermal comfort and good indoor air quality supports healthier living conditions while keeping running costs low – a crucial consideration for households at risk of fuel poverty.

## BUILDING RESILIENCE INTO HOMES

To tackle fuel poverty, homes must be designed with efficient electric space and water heating, smart controls and low-energy ventilation considered together, not as individual additions.

When warmth, air quality and energy efficiency are built into a home's core design, occupants benefit from stable indoor comfort, reduced energy costs and improved wellbeing. By adopting this whole home approach that combines electric space and water heating with smart ventilation solutions, the housing sector has an opportunity to address fuel poverty. Creating homes that are not only compliant with standards but also deliver affordable thermal comfort and improved indoor air quality.

**ELECTRIFICATION IN ACTION**

The Llanrumney development in Cardiff is an example of how social landlords can successfully deliver low-carbon, affordable homes while maintaining operational simplicity and long-term performance.

The scheme, completed in July 2025 by Cardiff Community Housing Association (CCHA), includes 12 newly built homes, which are expertly designed to address fuel poverty and decarbonisation targets.

A key objective for the CCHA was to achieve EPC A ratings across each property by ensuring the provision of energy-efficient homes which are futureproofed against rising energy costs and ever evolving standards. To achieve this, an all-electric solution was specified, combining high heat retention (HHR) storage heaters and hot water heat pumps, alongside roof-mounted photovoltaic (PV) panels.

Each home is fitted with between five and eight HHR storage heaters, which store energy during off-peak periods and release heat gradually throughout the day. These efficient units provide tenants with the opportunity to reduce peak electricity demand and to be compatible with time-of-use tariffs. In addition,

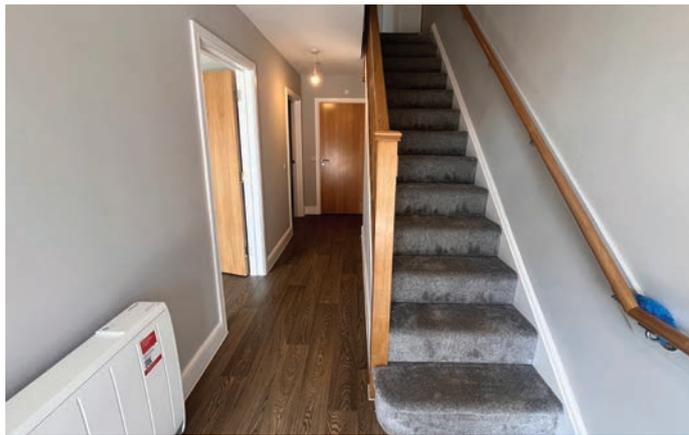


built-in smart controls allow residents to manage comfort, helping reduce unnecessary support callouts.

Hot water is provided by heat pumps, which extract heat from ambient air to produce domestic hot water. This reduces electrical demand while offering a familiar, low-maintenance solution well suited to social housing environments. The solar PV panels installed on each property further reduce each property's reliance on grid electricity.

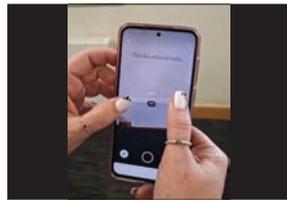
All 12 homes in the scheme achieved EPC A ratings, delivering tangible benefits for residents through lower running costs and improved comfort, offering social housing landlords a practical, scalable blueprint. It clearly demonstrates how proven electric heating and hot water technologies can deliver compliance, tenant satisfaction and long-term sustainability, helping social housing providers futureproof their stock, while supporting the UK's transition to net zero.

*David Patrick is head of specification marketing at Dimplex*



**Stelrad launches new AI Room Visualiser**

Stelrad has released its AI Room Visualiser software. It's free of charge and available on both the company's Home and Professional web sites. This new AI based device created in partnership with BIMStore works on both Android and Apple devices.



Anyone can have a go at using the new tool by heading for [www.stelrad.com/radiators/designer-radiators](http://www.stelrad.com/radiators/designer-radiators) – make sure you select all the variables – then the button will show. It's another sector leading option to make getting the right radiators simpler than ever.

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# MVHR: The missing link

Craig Cundey at Ubbink UK explains why MVHR systems are the missing link in delivering healthy, future proof social housing for both new build and retrofit.

As housing associations and local authorities continue to face mounting pressure to improve building performance, reduce fuel poverty, and eliminate the scourge of damp and mould, one technology stands out as quietly transformative: Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR).

Far from being a luxury self-build system, MVHR represents a practical, regulatory-compliant and resident-focused solution that addresses several of the most persistent challenges in social housing. In the context of tightening environmental targets, Awaab's Law and new funding opportunities under the UK Government's Warm Homes Plan, MVHR is no longer optional; it's essential.

Damp and mould are not merely cosmetic issues. The tragic case that led to Awaab's Law brought into focus how serious poor ventilation can be for social housing tenants, particularly for families and vulnerable individuals. MVHR systems directly tackle the underlying problem by continuously extracting moist stale air while replacing it with filtered fresh air.

Unlike traditional extractor fans or trickle vents, MVHR ensures constant air exchange across the entire dwelling. The effect is that the buildup of humidity and condensation is drastically reduced, helping to prevent the growth of mould spores from the outset. At the same time, MVHR improves indoor air quality by filtering out pollutants and allergens therefore contributing to better respiratory health and overall wellbeing of the occupants.

As homes become more airtight through retrofit and insulation upgrades, traditional forms of ventilation are becoming insufficient. MVHR bridges this gap by maintaining a healthy indoor environment without sacrificing energy efficiency. These systems recover up to 95% of the heat from extracted air and use it to warm incoming air, reducing energy bills by 20-30%, based on research and real-life projects, particularly valuable for tenants facing fuel poverty.

For landlords and local authorities, MVHR plays a critical role in improving energy performance ratings (EPC), helping housing stock reach the targeted Band C under the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund (formerly SHDF).

Recent regulation has set a clear expectation that landlords must ensure homes are free from damp and mould hazards, with ventilation systems always functioning properly. To comply with Awaab's Law and the Decent Homes Standard, landlords and occupants must adhere to maintenance schedules such as filter checks every three to six months either conducted by the occupant or landlord, annual professional servicing and full system re-commissioning every few years. An MVHR system when maintained correctly provides a reliable framework for compliance.

One of the most frequent concerns raised by housing managers is the space required to install MVHR, particularly in existing housing stock. However, manufacturers are responding with smart, more compact designs suitable for retrofit in social housing and smaller properties including flats and apartments.

For instance, smaller units from manufacturers are designed to fit neatly inside kitchen cupboards a game changer for developments where internal space is at a premium. Decentralised systems, which serve individual rooms like kitchens and bathrooms have also proven highly effective where central ducting is not practical. These innovations enable flexible installation without major disruption, making ventilation upgrades feasible even in occupied homes.

**Successful MVHR implementation relies on careful planning and resident involvement**



Government funding has created a golden opportunity for social housing providers to include MVHR within broader retrofit programmes. Under the Warm Homes Plan (2026) and subsequent funding waves, MVHR qualifies for support as a core energy-efficiency measure. Key schemes include:

- Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund (WH:SHF) – the main vehicle for upgrading social housing to EPC Band C, with £1.29bn allocated between 2025 and 2028
- ECO4 Scheme – open until 2026, supporting innovation measures and upgrades for lower-rated dwellings (EPC D-G)
- National Wealth Fund (NWF) – providing up to £1.65bn in guaranteed lending for social housing improvements
- Local Authority Grants – councils including Wandsworth and Greenwich have introduced supplementary funding for ventilation and energy performance measures.

Successful MVHR implementation relies on careful planning and resident involvement. Before installation, a ventilation survey should assess airflow paths, property constraints, and compatibility with existing heating systems. Combining MVHR with insulation and heating upgrades yields the best results enhancing both comfort and energy performance. Post installation engagement is crucial, providing tenants with clear instructions ensures the system is used effectively avoiding issues such as blocked vents or unused controls.

For local authorities and housing associations, MVHR offers a practical route to achieve multiple goals simultaneously: healthier homes, lower carbon emissions, happier residents, and regulatory compliance. It complements the decarbonisation agenda while responding directly to the urgent public health concerns that continue to dominate housing policy for both new build and retrofit.

As social landlords step forward to deliver future ready housing, MVHR stands as one of the most effective tools to ensure that every tenant can live in a home that is safe, warm, and dry – today and for decades to come.

*Craig Cundey is the ventilation product lead at Ubbink UK*

# Helping cash-strapped local authorities save thousands of pounds

**D**aniel Cheddie, founder and owner of Stronghold® Anchor, discusses removing the cost of scaffolding from high-rise maintenance and safety works.

Across the social housing sector, one challenge is becoming increasingly familiar. How do local authorities and housing associations deliver urgent safety-critical works in high-rise buildings when budgets are shrinking, access is difficult and residents rightly expect minimal disruption?

Having spent more than two decades working in fenestration, window installation and safe working at height, I've seen first-hand how access costs have quietly become one of the biggest barriers to progress. Too often, the cost and complexity of scaffolding delays essential window repairs, balcony upgrades and other facilities management tasks such as lift maintenance, or makes small but critical jobs financially unviable.

## WHEN SCAFFOLDING BECOMES THE PROBLEM

Scaffolding has its place, but in many refurbishment scenarios it's simply overkill. Replacing one or two failed windows on a high-rise elevation can trigger scaffold costs running into tens of thousands of pounds, alongside weeks of planning, permits and disruption. In dense urban environments, buildings backing onto waterways, rail lines or public highways introduce additional complications that can make external access impractical or impossible for scaffolders.

Emergency situations highlight the issue even more starkly. A damaged or failed window in an occupied block, school or supported living scheme presents an immediate risk to everyone. Waiting days for scaffold procurement and installation is time that social landlords simply don't have.

That is precisely the problem I set out to solve with Stronghold®, which removes these barriers in scenarios where scaffolding becomes impractical or impossibly expensive. There are no permits to wait for and no external structures to erect. With trained operatives, the system can be assembled in under ten minutes by two people, allowing work to begin safely and securely almost immediately.

## A SMARTER APPROACH TO HIGH-RISE WINDOW AND BALCONY WORKS

Stronghold is a self-contained internal safety system that allows window repairs and installations to be carried out entirely from inside the building. It safely spans openings of up to five metres, supports up to three engineers simultaneously and features secure anchor points that allow unrestricted movement while maintaining full harness protection.



Crucially for social housing providers, the system is fully tool-free and requires no drilling or fixings to walls or floors. That means zero damage to existing structures and no intrusive making-good works, an essential consideration in occupied homes.

It also enables a far more targeted approach. Instead of scaffolding an entire elevation or floor, teams can address only the windows or balconies that require attention, supporting phased refurbishment programmes that align with available budgets.

## DELIVERING REAL SAVINGS

The benefits are not theoretical; they are being delivered on social housing projects. Clarion Housing Group, for example, has used the Stronghold on projects and it has saved them thousands of pounds. At Lakeview, a dangerous kitchen window on the seventh floor required urgent replacement and traditional access options were quickly ruled out, with scaffolding for a single window estimated at around £6,000 and a MEWP was not viable due to restricted access.

Using Stronghold, the installation team were able to complete the work safely and efficiently

from inside the property. The system was installed in minutes within a small kitchen, providing full external reach while maintaining complete control of the replacement frame and tools through integrated tethering and harness attachment points. The result was a safe installation, significant cost savings and minimal disruption for the resident.

## BUDGET FLEXIBILITY WITHOUT COMPROMISING SAFETY

When access costs exceed the value of the work itself, the economics simply do not stack up. For local authorities dealing with tight budgets, short timelines and challenging access conditions, Stronghold offers a solution that prioritises safety, compliance and resident wellbeing, while delivering genuine financial and operational flexibility.

As the sector continues to grapple with competing demands and increasing scrutiny, solutions that reduce cost without compromising safety will be essential. From my perspective, removing unnecessary scaffolding from high-rise maintenance is not just a saving, it is a smarter way forward for social housing.

01992 302133 [www.stronghold-anchor.com](http://www.stronghold-anchor.com)

# How digital tools can help social landlords meet Awaab's Law

Ben Wallbank at Trimble explains why the compliance challenge is as much about data as it is about maintenance, and how digital technology can help housing providers stay ahead.



**A**waab's Law came into force at the end of October 2025, born out of the tragic death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak in 2020 due to respiratory issues caused by prolonged exposure to mould in his home. Applying directly to social housing landlords, including local authorities and housing associations, its impact cascades across the supply chain. Contractors, surveyors and maintenance providers now need to work within much tighter timeframes, all supported by accurate reporting and transparent communication.

## NEW LEVEL OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Strict response times now apply. Under phase one, which focuses on damp and mould, landlords must investigate complaints within 10 working days and, for serious cases, begin remedial works or take temporary measures to make the home safe within five working days. Category one emergencies demand even faster action, whereby the investigation and work must both take place within 24 hours, or tenants need to be rehoused if the hazard cannot be controlled.

Beyond speed, landlords must be able to prove compliance, not just that the work was done but that it was done correctly, on time and that every step was documented, dated and verified.

## REALITY OF MAINTENANCE MANAGEMENT

For local authority housing teams already managing ageing stock, limited budgets and multiple regulations, Awaab's Law adds further responsibility but also an opportunity to modernise. Many still rely on paper based inspections, spreadsheets and fragmented contractor systems, making it difficult to build a single view of compliance.

The new framework calls for a shift from reactive to evidence-led maintenance, requiring data consistency and connected systems to create a

clear audit trail across everyone involved in managing and maintaining homes. In many ways, Awaab's Law extends the 'golden thread' of data principle championed under the Building Safety Act, ensuring that every inspection, decision and action is traceable.

## TURNING INFORMATION INTO ASSURANCE

Connected digital systems can transform how landlords handle both reactive and preventative maintenance. Many contractors across the UK already use cloud-based field tools, which allow teams to capture photographs, notes and timestamps directly onsite, even offline, syncing automatically once connected. This creates a transparent, time stamped audit trail that can be reviewed and shared instantly.

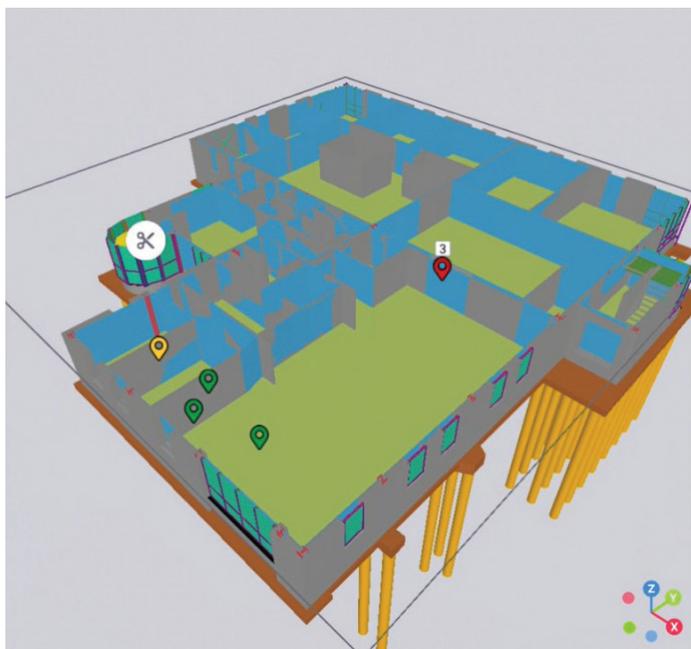
In practice, when a tenant reports damp or mould, every stage – from first inspection through to sign-off – can be tracked in one place, complete with images and updates. This approach also supports better communication between tenants and landlords, allowing faster updates and helping to rebuild trust through visible accountability.

## ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

When reviewing digital systems, landlords should look beyond basic functionality and ask how effectively each solution supports compliance.

Start with data security, does the provider hold recognised certifications and follow robust data protection protocols? Then consider workflow management – can it notify the right people when a serious hazard is raised, trigger relocation protocols where necessary and flag approaching or missed deadlines?

Onsite usability is equally important. A good system should allow field teams to log details directly into digital forms, capturing and tagging issue types, such



## When reviewing the digital systems on offer, landlords are advised to look beyond basic functionality

housing providers will need systems that not only store files but also the associated decision making history – who made what call, when and on what evidence.

### LANDLORDS MUST SET THE STANDARD

Many contractors and framework partners already use their own digital systems for inspection and reporting, but unless those systems align, the resulting data is fragmented, incomplete and difficult to audit.

It may be tempting for social landlords or councils to let contractors 'get on with it', but that approach risks losing oversight of compliance. Instead, it is advisable for housing providers to take the lead and establish a single, consistent method for data capture and reporting across their supply chain. That consistency turns multiple contractor inputs into one coherent audit trail, giving landlords a real-time view of risk, urgency and performance comparisons across assets.

### FROM COMPLIANCE TO CONFIDENCE

Awaab's Law may have been driven by tragedy, but its intent is to build a safer, more transparent housing system. For social landlords, that means moving beyond reactive repair towards measurable accountability, where every inspection, decision and repair is captured, evidenced and auditable.

Digital tools make that possible, transforming compliance from a paper or disconnected system into a process of continuous assurance. Ultimately, this isn't just about meeting statutory deadlines, it's about creating homes that are safe, healthy and demonstrably well managed.

*Ben Wallbank is digital strategy & partnerships manager EMEA at Trimble*

as visible mould growth, its location and severity, the responsible contractor, and photographic and GPS evidence.

The most effective tools also enable issues to be linked to 2D plans, 3D models or 360° images, providing clear visual context. This protects both landlord and tenant by establishing what was observed and when. If a complaint later escalates, those time-stamped images form defensible evidence that the problem was properly addressed.

Finally, consider data longevity. Compliance isn't just about capturing today's repair; it's about being able to access and interpret that data years later. With future phases of Awaab's Law set to cover structural and fire safety hazards,

## Magna Housing achieves Aico's Housing Professional Quality Standard

Magna Housing is proud to announce that it has become one of the first organisations to achieve Aico's Housing Professional Quality Standard, marking a significant milestone in its commitment to delivering exceptional safety, quality, and service for its customers.

Aico has now introduced the Housing Professional Quality Standard to recognise partnering organisations which demonstrate superior competency, best practice, and an ongoing commitment to professional development. By achieving this new status, Magna Housing has set the benchmark for excellence within the sector.

"We are absolutely delighted to be one of the first housing providers to receive this recognition from Aico," said Paul Purkis, compliance manager at Magna Housing. "This achievement reflects our dedication to consistently raising the bar for safety within our homes. It highlights not only the skill and expertise of our installation teams, but also our commitment to investing in industry-leading training and technologies that keep our customers safe."

Magna Housing is a forward-thinking, community-based housing association dedicated to creating great homes for people across the South West. With a strong commitment to safety,

sustainability, and innovation, Magna supports thousands of customers through high-quality services and well-maintained homes.

Working across Dorset and Somerset, Magna Housing praised the support of Aico, whose expert training has been instrumental to their success. Aico's continuous support has helped Magna to refine its approach to quality and compliance. Their commitment to sharing best practice and empowering organisations to raise standards has been invaluable. Magna Housing recognises the pivotal role Aico has played in helping them achieve this status.

Stephanie Lloyd-Foxe, head of building safety and compliance at Magna Housing offered high praise for Steve Bulley, describing him as "a highly respected figure in the housing safety sector. His support has made a meaningful difference to our team throughout this process. The depth of his knowledge, his practical approach, and his clear commitment to high standards helped guide us through the accreditation and strengthened the way we work. We're grateful for his guidance, professionalism, and continued commitment to improving customer safety."

The accreditation follows a rigorous assessment process that evaluated installation quality, compliance, training standards, customer service, and ongoing commitment to improvement.



By meeting these criteria, Magna Housing has demonstrated that its approach to installing Aico home life safety products is of the highest industry standard.

Steve Bulley, Aico's relationship manager for the South West, commented: "Magna Housing has shown exceptional dedication to quality and professionalism. Their commitment to achieving this standard illustrates the organisation's focus on safeguarding residents and delivering a first-class service. We are delighted to recognise them as a Housing Professional Quality Standard Installer."

This milestone forms part of Magna Housing's wider strategy to ensure every home meets the highest standards of safety, comfort, and sustainability. The organisation continues to work closely with industry partners, regulators, and customers to ensure all homes are equipped with reliable home life safety systems and are professionally maintained for long-term protection.

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# Building for water security

Following the dry summer of 2025, the Environment Agency has warned that even with average winter rainfall some areas in Britain will still be in drought next spring, and despite the prolonged rainfall of the beginning of 2026, the UK is still recovering.

The recent weather pattern variations can only compound the existing concerns about the anticipated UK water deficit. To offset the predicted daily deficit of 4017 mega litres per day by 2050, major water companies have been developing plans to upgrade the UK's water supply and reduce current usage from 150 litres per person per day to 110.

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%, most major UK water companies have announced their plans for Advanced metering infrastructure, where all new connections or meters will be replaced with the latest generation of smart meters.

## GROUNDBREAKER – THE BEST LOCATION FOR SMART METERS

Groundbreaker is an insulated, surface mounted enclosure for a secure water management system and smart water meter. This locates the meter above ground, providing a better environment for smart technology over traditional underground boundary boxes, extends signal transmission and allows easy meter exchange.

The unique location of the Groundbreaker water management system future proofs the network and minimises the risk of developing future leaks. The position of the meter allows 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.

In addition to new developments, Groundbreaker is ideal for redevelopment or refurbishment of properties that have architectural or water supply structures that make traditional metering options impractical.

This point of entry location makes it the perfect solution for installation in existing properties with shared supply or challenging architecture.



Its location on the building also means no street furniture or liability in the highway.

## SAVE WATER, SAVE ENERGY, SAVE MONEY

Stewart Clements, director of the Heating & Hotwater Industry Council (HHIC) explained: "It's important that those responsible for building new homes and for upgrading existing homes – including both social and private housing providers and landlords – recognise the different factors involved in minimising energy consumption and in making tomorrow's homes the efficient properties needed to achieve decarbonisation and reach the net zero target for 2050."

*"The energy used to heat water for devices and appliances emits an average of 87 5kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per household per year. This is equivalent to the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from driving more than 1,700 miles in an average family car."*

**Energy Saving Trust**

While water efficient appliances, i.e. dishwashers and washing machines, can reduce domestic water and energy usage, much of this hot water used in 'time critical' usage e.g. taking a shower or running the tap to rinse dishes.

## LO-FLO – ADDITIONAL WATER SAVING, BUILT IN

To further improve home water efficiency, major water companies are also rolling out flow regulating devices, such as Groundbreaker's LoFlo. These modulate the level of flow entering premises – regardless of network pressure, meaning a reduction in the level of water used by customers when 'variable use' appliances (i.e., showers, taps, hosepipes). As the flow of water into the premises is limited, then the amount used by the customer is also limited – but without providing a degradation of service, and more importantly not requiring any intervention or behavioural change on the part of the customer.

The NRv2 LoFlo can be easily and simply fitted to any meter installation or retrofitted on meter exchange or when upgrading or remediating underground meter chambers. Thus, allowing Water Companies to manage demand with little or no impact on consumers and at minimal cost to the water undertakers.

Whether it's new build or redevelopment, Groundbreaker has a range of products to design in water efficient homes.

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# The Benefits of Installing Leak Detection in Social Housing

**W**ater leaks are one of the most persistent and costly challenges in social housing. From hidden pipe failures to slow drips that go unnoticed for months, leaks can cause extensive damage to buildings, disrupt tenants' lives, and place a heavy financial burden on housing providers. Installing modern leak detection systems in social housing offers a practical, forward-thinking solution that delivers benefits across cost control, tenant wellbeing, sustainability, and long-term asset management.

LeakSAFE specialise in designing leak detection systems for buildings that will identify leaks as soon as they start and either automatically shut off the incoming water supply to the area where the leak is in progress or notify property managers that a leak has occurred. Some of LeakSAFE's products will also identify high humidity so the cause can be identified before mould becomes an issue.

With 14 years of experience, LeakSAFE are Specialist Partners or Approved Suppliers for all the major UK insurers. As well as working with insurers, LeakSAFE work with all types of commercial and private property owners and investors, advising at design and construction phase for new build projects and where systems need to be retrofitted.

## PREVENTING COSTLY PROPERTY DAMAGE

One of the most immediate benefits of leak detection is the prevention of structural damage. Undetected leaks can weaken walls, floors, and foundations, leading to damp, rot, and mould. Repairs to address this kind of damage are often expensive and disruptive, particularly in occupied homes where residents may need to be temporarily rehoused.

Leak detection systems identify abnormal water usage or moisture levels early, often before visible damage occurs. By alerting housing providers to issues in real time, repairs can be carried out quickly and at a much lower cost. Over time, this proactive approach significantly reduces expenditure on major repairs and insurance claims.

## IMPROVING TENANT HEALTH & WELLBEING

Damp and mould caused by leaks are strongly linked to respiratory problems, allergies, and other health issues. By preventing prolonged exposure to moisture and damp, leak detection systems help create healthier living environments. Early intervention means problems are resolved before mould has a chance to develop, supporting better indoor air quality and reducing health complaints.

## REDUCING WATER WASTE & SUPPORTING SUSTAINABILITY

Water efficiency is a growing priority, particularly as climate change places increasing pressure on



water resources. Leaks can waste thousands of litres of water per property each year, often without anyone realising.

Leak detection technology plays a vital role in reducing unnecessary water consumption. By identifying leaks quickly these systems help conserve water and support wider environmental goals. For social housing providers committed to sustainability targets and environmental responsibility, leak detection is a practical and measurable way to reduce their environmental footprint.

## LOWERING OPERATIONAL & MAINTENANCE COSTS

Reactive maintenance is one of the biggest cost drivers in social housing. Emergency call-outs, out-of-hours repairs, and large-scale remedial works all place strain on budgets and staff resources.

Leak detection systems shift maintenance from a reactive to a preventative model. Instead of responding to major failures, housing teams can plan targeted repairs based on accurate data and alerts. This reduces emergency interventions, improves workforce efficiency, and allows maintenance teams to prioritise work more effectively.



## MINIMISING DISRUPTION TO TENANTS

Leaks often cause significant disruption to residents' daily lives. Water damage can render kitchens or bathrooms unusable, while repairs may require noisy works, repeated visits, or temporary relocation.

Early detection minimises these disruptions. Small repairs can often be completed quickly with minimal intrusion contributing to higher tenant satisfaction and fewer complaints, which in turn reduces administrative and reputational pressures on housing providers.

## ENHANCING ASSET MANAGEMENT & LONG-TERM PLANNING

Social housing providers are responsible for managing large, ageing housing stocks. Understanding how buildings perform over time is essential for effective asset management and long-term investment planning.

Leak detection systems generate valuable data on water usage and system performance. This information can highlight recurring issues, identify high-risk properties, and inform decisions about pipe replacement or refurbishment programmes. By using data to guide investment, housing providers can make smarter, more cost-effective decisions that extend the lifespan of their assets.

## SUPPORTING COMPLIANCE & RISK MANAGEMENT

Regulatory expectations around building safety, housing quality, and tenant wellbeing continue to increase. Failure to address damp and mould issues has become a major compliance and reputational risk for social landlords.

Installing leak detection demonstrates a proactive commitment to risk management and tenant safety. It helps housing providers show that they are taking reasonable steps to prevent hazards, respond quickly to issues, and maintain homes to a high standard.

## A SMART INVESTMENT FOR THE FUTURE

While installing leak detection systems requires upfront investment, the long-term benefits far outweigh the initial costs. Reduced repair bills, lower water consumption, improved tenant health, and better asset protection all contribute to strong returns over time.

As social housing providers face increasing financial, environmental, and regulatory pressures, leak detection offers a practical, scalable solution. By embracing this technology, social landlords can protect their properties, support their tenants, and build a more resilient and sustainable housing stock for the future.

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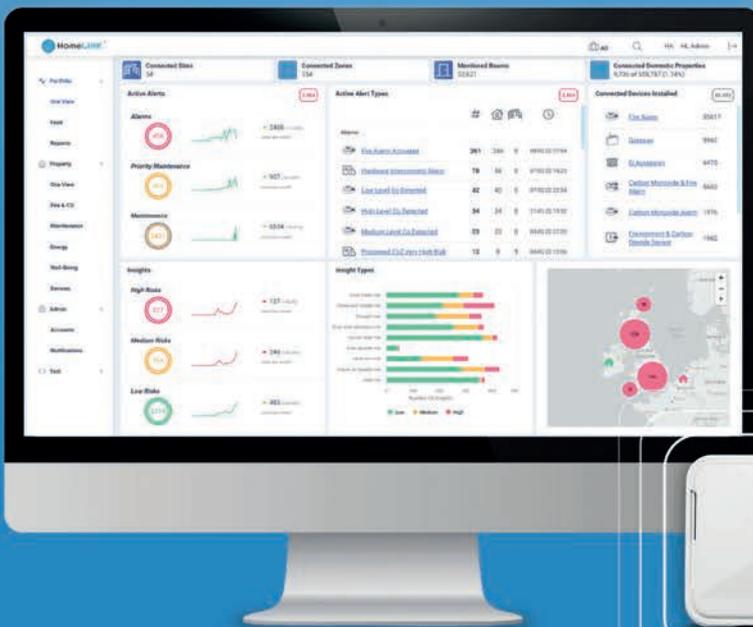
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A proven, scalable solution designed for **social housing providers** - reducing risk, improving compliance, and delivering ROI.

## The HomeLINK Connected Home Solution can help to:

- Identify **Damp & Mould** at the source
- Strengthen **Compliance & Asset Management**
- Support **Net Zero** targets
- Improve **Fire Safety**



HomeLINK Portal

Environmental Sensors collect data. The Gateway connects it. HomeLINK turns the data into insights.

