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comment

Rupert Bates

Whatever your political persuasion never before, across all parties, has there been such a shower of self-serving incompetence in the Houses of Parliament. The ineptitude beggars belief and at a time when character, integrity and backbone are most sorely needed.

What has become breathtakingly obvious through Covid – a tough gig admittedly – is that we are governed by the people least fit to govern. If you were recruiting candidates to run the country, the one place you wouldn't place your advertising would be Westminster notice boards.

Yes, some may have shifted some real estate in their time, or played at banking, butchering (the economy mostly) baking and candlestick making, but so many are now simply professional politicians with no experience of the real world.

Not in a gilded cage, never faced hardship kind of existence; just unable to navigate any commercial or common sense waters because they have rarely sailed them and using the benches of power to bicker like children – behaviour which would have them slung out of just about every boardroom in the land if they were a company director.

This is irrespective of the rights and wrongs of the response to the pandemic. Elected politicians are all company directors of UK plc with Boris Johnson the CEO. Just let that one sink in.

Now maybe there have been meetings behind closed doors with key business leaders to help shape responses to Covid-19. But if so, nobody has bothered to leak any minutes.

The more you look at the
calibre of people at the
helm of this industry...the
more you realise this
country could solve the
housing crisis, if it
weren't for politics

We listen to the rantings of the lunatics in the social media asylum and a lot of government policy appears to hinge on numbers of likes and retweets. But we don't tap into the colossal business resource on our doorstep.

Apologies. What's this magazine about? Oh yes, housebuilding. Now housing in this

country, in the widest sense of delivery of fit, affordable homes for all, is a disgrace. Why is that? Well politicians mostly.

A Conservative party convinced victory at the ballot box is dependent on corralling as many people as possible into homeownership meets local authorities convinced victory at the ballot box is dependent on stopping housebuilding at all costs in their parish. And if Jeremy Corbyn had been elected, we'd all in the interests of Marxism, sorry fairness, have been assigned equal-sized allotments and told to hum and hoe as a collective.

Planning, or to give it its full moniker – democracy gone mad – is such a farce that even if you try to gift houses to the homeless, you have to employ Franz Kafka as consultant for the inside track.

My job affords me the opportunity to talk to industry leaders across the sectors and the supply chain. I'm long enough in the tooth to spot PR spin at a thousand paces and the passion exuded is genuine and cemented with grit and integrity.

I don't know if the events of the last year have focused minds or amplified insight and endeavour, but there is a real sense of purpose, not just to make a buck, which let's face it we all strive for, but to make a difference.

Repeatedly across this month's interviews in Show House, social purpose is communicated as a business driver; life beyond the balance sheet, community, a longer-term play – a recognition that it is patently absurd that a country rich in the ability and wherewithal to build houses has a huge homelessness crisis. The biggest nets with the smallest holes will still see people slip through. But let the fishermen stitch them to hold as many in as possible. If red tape was single-use plastic imagine the outcry.

There is also a slow awakening that sustainability – however ill-defined and abused as a term – is not only deliverable, but makes absolute commercial sense too, as long as you remember it applies not just to the environment, but society and the economy.

And above all we've entered the age of collaboration. Housebuilding has always been close-knit and clubbable, but everywhere you look now there are partnerships in the broadest sense, sharing best practice, sharing solutions to shared problems.

The more you look at the calibre of people at the helm of this industry – and this is no apology for past, disastrous failures – the more you realise this country could solve the housing crisis, if it weren't for politics. I'm not inciting revolution, in fact just a lunch, any lunch, would do at the moment. 

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Redrow calls for shake up to apprenticeship system

Redrow has launched its annual report on attitudes toward apprenticeships and careers in construction. It reveals that more than a third (37%) of young people surveyed say that the pandemic has decreased the likelihood of them choosing university in the future. Now in its fifth year, the report analyses the barriers to entry-level recruitment into the housebuilding and construction sectors, and suggests recommendations to overcome them. Redrow canvassed 2,000 parents and young people, as well as over 100 of its apprentices. This year, it also investigated the impact Covid has had on plans to embark on further education.

The results reveal that more than a third (36%) of young people are concerned about their job prospects since the onset of the pandemic, and routes that combine working and education have a greater appeal, with 42% of respondents more likely to pursue on-the-job learning such as an apprenticeship. This was felt most significantly among young adults in London, where 57% of respondents reported being more likely to pursue on-the-job learning.

With less time spent in school, the proportion of young adults who have had information on apprenticeships outlined to them via school resources dropped from 63% in 2018 to 57% in 2021 – a four-year low. While, the percentage who say advice was not useful, or non-existent, has increased to a five-year high.

The majority of Redrow's own apprentices found out about the roles at Redrow via friends or family (44%), up from 38% last year, and 67% said they believe that schools do not promote apprenticeships in the same way they do other educational routes.

Gender stereotypes also still exist when encouraging and informing about construction careers. Only 33%



of female respondents had discussed construction careers at school compared to 46% of males. Redrow says that lockdowns have provided a unique opportunity for many parents and older children to reconnect and evaluate priorities. "With more time spent together, the influence of parents is stronger than ever," it says. But the research shows that preconceived notions about careers in construction are still held by a significant number of parents. Almost one in five (17%) believe that a career in construction does not require any qualifications beyond GCSEs. As a result, 11% would still actively discourage their child from pursuing a career in construction. Despite this, parents' views of apprenticeships are more promising. The majority (69%) say that they have discussed the prospect of their child undertaking an apprenticeship. This has increased from 65% in 2017. Karen Jones, HR director at Redrow, said: "The past 12 months have seen the nation rocked by the coronavirus pandemic, and the shockwaves are still being felt. Unemployment has reached its highest level in five years, and six out of 10 employers stopped

all new apprenticeships with immediate effect in April 2020. As a result, apprenticeships starts are down 18% on the year before. But as success from the vaccine rollout and lockdown restrictions clear the way for a roadmap for a gradual reopening of UK plc, businesses can now start thinking about a positive and productive future. It is vital that young people can play a vital part in 'building back better', and apprenticeships will be critical in tackling the skills gap and helping power the UK's economic recovery, as well as delivering much-needed homes and infrastructure.

"Educational routes that combine learning and earning will have an even greater appeal following this long period of social distancing we've experienced, and a more competitive jobs market. We believe that today's changing landscape offers a real opportunity to innovate the way that in which we attract young people into apprenticeships. To help elevate apprenticeships as an option for young people, we must first address the more negative attitudes held by some teachers and parents, while highlighting the benefits to young people nationwide."

Redrow's recommendations for improving perceptions of apprenticeships and careers in construction are:

- Expand the apprenticeship levy to allow larger firms to transfer more of their levy bill, and expand what the levy funds can be used for
- Introduce a living wage for apprenticeships that is calculated according to what employees and their families need to live, and that is reflective of the of part of the UK in which they live
- Make careers advice digital to help motivate and inspire students, which most of their time is spent online.

Buyer satisfaction rates up for a fourth year

The housebuilding industry has achieved a fourth successive year of improved customer satisfaction, with 91% of customers saying they would recommend their builder to a friend, according to the latest National New Home Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) from HBF, NHBC and Homes for Scotland.

HBF said this was the highest level recorded since the survey began in 2006. It was up by 2% on last year and represents a 7% improvement since 2016.

The survey, covering the 12-month period from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020, also revealed that more than 92% of those who bought a new-build home would do so again. The highest rating in the survey – five stars – was achieved by 42 housebuilders, up from 36 last year. A total of 76,300 surveys were sent out, down from last year's 99,919, reflecting the impact of coronavirus on sales completions; 62% of these

surveys were returned.

The survey showed that 88% of respondents were satisfied with the quality of their new home, while 82% were satisfied with their builder in terms of their home completing on time despite pandemic-induced delays. More than 70% of buyers said the number of snags they reported was less than or in line with what they expected, while 81% were happy with the service provided by the builder after occupation.

HBF's executive chairman Stewart Baseley said: "The survey demonstrates that the industry is delivering an excellent level of service in the opinion of over 90% of its customers. The fact that we have seen four successive years of improved satisfaction levels shows the clear focus builders have been putting on the customer. That this level of satisfaction has been delivered during a pandemic that

saw sites closed and builders unable to access homes for a period makes it even more of an achievement. The industry remains committed to maintaining the significant progress of recent years and fully supports moves to put an independent New Homes Ombudsman in place to strengthen customer protections and continue to drive up standards."

This year's five-star housebuilders are:

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Beal Developments
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Bloor Homes
CALA Homes
Cameron Homes
Castle Green Homes
Cavanna Homes
Churchill Retirement Living
Countryside Properties
Crest Nicholson

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Jones Homes
Kebbell Development
Keepmoat
Lagan Homes
Lioncourt Homes
Lovell
Mactaggart & Mickel Homes
McCarthy Stone
Miller Homes
Morris Homes
Redrow Homes
Riverdale Developments
Russell Armer
St Modwen Homes
Story Homes
Strata Group
Taylor Wimpey
Takeham Group
Vistry Homes
William Davis Homes



news in brief

■ Vistry Partnerships North East has been selected as the preferred developer for a new residential scheme in Sunderland city centre. It will build 275 homes on the site of the civic centre on Burdon Road, which will be vacated by Sunderland City Council later this year. Vistry's Linden Homes brand will deliver the residential components. The scheme will include open spaces and enhanced links to the city centre, Ashbrooke and Mowbray Park. Council leader Graeme Miller said: "We're delighted to have attracted such a strong field of proposals from developers who see the vast potential of this prominent city centre site. Its position, among a prestigious residential community, means that when this site is developed out, it will deliver a stunning new place to live that increases city centre population and footfall, supporting the daytime and evening economy. We're looking forward to seeing this site transformed into an attractive place to live, and playing its part in driving the development of a more dynamic, prosperous city centre, bringing more spending power into the heart of Sunderland." If the land sale is approved, Vistry is expected to submit a planning application for the homes in late autumn and that demolition of the old civic centre could get underway in early 2022.

Housebuilder Hill has been confirmed as a joint venture partner on the £940m regeneration of the Teviot Estate in Poplar, east London. The Poplar Housing and Regeneration Community Association (HARCA) selected Hill for the project that will see between 1,800 and 2,500 homes built, as well as new local public spaces and shops. The contract term is up to 20 years, with a development value of between £682m and £940m. The joint venture will appoint a masterplanner in the first half of this year to develop designs in consultation with residents, Tower Hamlets Council and other stakeholders. A formal planning application is expected mid-to-late 2022. The scheme was put out to tender in February last year and the housebuilder was formally appointed to the role with a contract notice published in late March.

Former Crest Nicholson CEO Stephen Stone has been appointed to the board of modular homes company Ilke. He has been brought in to boost its growth trajectory, with a particular focus on its new 'turnkey' development business where it buys and develops sites for local authorities and housing associations, as well as manufacturing and installing the homes. Stone added that the business was targeting sales of 2,000 homes per year in the medium term – the maximum possible from its North Yorkshire production facility. He said that, long term, the ambition was to move beyond 2,000 homes per year.

Wainhomes launches West Midlands division

Wainhomes has launched a West Midlands division based at Blythe Valley Innovation Centre in Solihull. It will be led by Andy Peters as managing director. He brings 16 years of experience leading the regional businesses of housebuilders including Barratt, Persimmon and Berkeley.

Wainhomes said it was targeting a steady expansion programme across the West Midlands, looking to deliver 500 homes per year by 2026, in Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Coventry and Staffordshire.

Warrington-based Wainhomes is also active in the north-west, Severn Valley and south-west.

Peters said: "We have been working incredibly hard during the recent months, setting the foundations for this exciting new part of the Wainhomes business and, with residential land already acquired, we expect to deliver our first completions in 2022. We have the funding and appetite to explore more opportunities, particularly in market towns and suburbs and are actively working with a number of landowners in the region.

"My aim is for Wainhomes to be the employer of choice in housebuilding across the West Midlands and we have some exciting roles available now. It is refreshing to launch a region from a genuine blank canvas."

New MD for Bargate

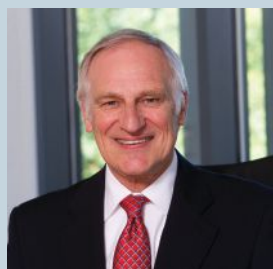
Bargate Homes has appointed Mark White as managing director, succeeding Gerard Price, who is stepping away from the business. Previously operations director, White was Bargate's first recruit when it was formed in 2006. He has been instrumental in the success and growth of the private Hampshire-based developer. His appointment coincides with Bargate's next growth phase, with the impending launch of eight new sites, totalling 950 new homes and a further 2000 in the pipeline. "We've delivered over 75 fantastic developments

during our journey together, and all of us at Bargate are proud to be the custodians of the successful brand we've created," said

White. "We have built an enviable reputation. I passionately believe in our ethos and look forward to growing the business and developing the next generation of Bargate leaders and employees."



Octagon's James retires after more than 40 years with the company



David James, co-founder of The Octagon Group, has retired after 41 years with the company, where he held the positions of managing director, chairman, and, for the past

five years, non-executive director.

Octagon was founded in 1980 with just eight employees, by James and co-founder Roger Wyatt. It is believed to be the first company to sell a new-build house for more than £1m. Based in East Molesey, Surrey, it opened branch offices in Mayfair and north London during the 1990s. In 2001, Wyatt stepped down as executive chairman, selling his shares to a bank and a management buyout, leaving James in overall charge. Following the financial crisis of 2008, the pair joined forces again to buy back all the shares from the bank, who at the time held a minority equity stake. The company returned to 100% ownership, a status that remains today.

Tim Banks, Octagon CEO, said: "I joined the company 23 years ago, and from day one David

has been a huge influence on my life and career to date. A superb mentor, both in business and my personal life, he has consistently supported and tutored me. Octagon are delivering exceptional results, and our new business plans are firmly in place for future expansion, no small part due to David's involvement at all levels."

David James said: "I am truly proud to have helped create this company, building a brand that is the envy of the housebuilding industry. It has developed many landmark buildings, designed and constructed in-house, thanks to the work of so many clever, hardworking, and talented people. Although retiring, I remain a shareholder and will continue to work closely in the management and refurbishment of my own portfolio of commercial properties as well as residential projects for my family property business where Octagon designs, builds, brands, and markets the homes.

"I am fully confident that Octagon's new management team, directed by accomplished CEO Tim Banks, will take the company to exciting and unexplored heights, a journey I will be watching carefully during my own downtime on the equally demanding banks of the River Test. I sincerely wish the company and all its employees every success in the future."

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news in focus

By Isla MacFarlane

I was close to stating that two people live in my property on my census form, before remembering that one of them is a cat. Apparently I'm not alone. In 1911, the Rigby family included their cat Tom as an eight-year old married mouse-catcher with 16 children. Tom's census was the first to query nationality and number of children; that same year feminist Emily Davison hid herself in a cupboard at the Palace of Westminster so she could mark herself as an occupant of the building. A census is a good measure not just of demographics, but of the national mood music.

More recent censuses have been curious about housing tenure, property type, gender and national identity, indicative of a government pre-occupied with the housing crisis, immigration and equality. Naturally, the three are intrinsically linked. A recent report from the RTPI called for gender to be factored into planning, to remedy women living in a world built for men. The emergence of sprawling car-dependent cities from the 1950s onwards has been particularly problematic for women, who, evidence suggests, drive less and walk more. Prioritising cars has compromised pedestrian infrastructure, resulting in narrow footpaths that aren't conducive to prams and pushchairs, and poor street lighting.

These design flaws reflect how few women have been involved in the creation of the built environment. However, times are changing, with more women crossing the threshold of the housing industry. Last year, research conducted by Direct Line found that more than twice as many women work in trade professions now than 10 years ago. French estate agency network Sextant Properties has said that its number of female applicants has doubled since 2014.

However, while women are getting more involved in building communities, fewer can afford a stake in one. According to data analysed by Online Mortgage Advisor, 31% of UK properties were affordable to men on the average salary of £34,068. This figure dropped to 21% for women, who pocket an average salary of £28,029. This gap will only widen as the financial fallout from the pandemic is disproportionately shouldered by women.

According to ONS data, most full-time workers still need to spend at least 7.8 times their annual earnings to buy a home. For new builds, that ratio shoots up, with buyers expecting to spend at least 9.6 times their annual earnings.

UK average house prices increased by 7.5% over the year to January 2021. However, the price of new builds rose 9%. Demand will only push this higher. On the day that marked one year since the UK first went into lockdown, government statistics revealed that not only were residential property transactions up in February by almost 50%, but they were at their highest February level for 10 years.

The census was created to answer the question, what does England need? The first census in 1801 needed to know how many men were around to fight in the Napoleonic wars. The next might ask how many women are considering a change of career.

Isla MacFarlane is editor of Showhouse.co.uk



Signing up for Gold

Signtouch, creator of a new immersive and interactive technology platform for the housebuilding and construction sectors, has just launched in the UK and to mark the occasion has become a Gold sponsor of this year's WhatHouse? Awards.

Signtouch has been developed in partnership with Samsung UK following three years in the planning. Described by Samsung as a 'game-changer', Signtouch is already set to become a digital solution of choice for sale centres, while keeping pace with any new and emerging technologies.

"With a unique customer interface and state-of-the-art touchscreen technology, Signtouch screens will offer real-time information and access to a branded dashboard linked to back to head office with unrivalled connectivity, saving both time and money," said Signtouch director Mark Cowin. "The customer can interact with all of your sales

and marketing collateral too – from interactive site development plans and detailed housetype layouts and floorplans, to bespoke home upgrade options and details of local amenities and public services."

With instant reporting, in-depth analysis and insights, housebuilders can ensure a competitive advantage and the most profitable sales centre, based on tangible information and effective demographic profiling. "As gold sponsors of this year's much-anticipated WhatHouse? Awards 2021, Signtouch and the rest of the team look forward to meeting housebuilders on the day and celebrating a sector we have been championing for over 20 years."



On the road to the Awards

RS Bonds Surety, a leading authority and advisory specialist in road and sewer bonds for the housebuilding industry, has become a

Bronze sponsor of the WhatHouse? Awards.

RS Bonds Surety is the only company in the UK that specialises solely and exclusively in the procurement

of road and sewer bonds on behalf of housebuilders.

"We combine an inherent technical and legal knowledge with a dedication to this specialist sector of the surety market to always achieve best value for our clients," said client relationship manager Amber Tomkinson. "As specialists in the agreements to which these bonds are required, we provide unique insight and perspective to both the surety provider and the developer. We use our extensive technical expertise, local authority and water company relations, combined with established contacts within the surety market, to help satisfy all site infrastructure bond requirements.

"We're very passionate about supporting the Awards, which give UK housebuilders the praise and recognition they deserve."



Connells sponsors the Awards for the third time

Connells Group, the largest high street estate agency and property services provider in the UK, is sponsoring the WhatHouse? Awards for the third successive year.

Following its recent acquisition of Countrywide, the Connells Group now has a national network of 1,200 branches across 85 local brands including Hamptons, William H Brown, Fox & Sons, Connells and John D Wood. The network combines residential sales, lettings and mortgage expertise with consumer and corporate services including new homes, land and planning, mortgage services, conveyancing, EPC provision, surveying, corporate lettings, asset management and auctions.

Connells Group works with some of the UK's leading housebuilders and is the UK's largest agency for new homes sales, selling circa

12,000 new homes a year, as well as a leading provider of land and property services to the affordable housing sector.

Roger Barrett, Connells Group land & new homes managing director, said: "We are delighted to be a Gold sponsor of the WhatHouse? Awards for the third year running. It is a greatly anticipated and enjoyed event, and we look forward to coming together as an industry once again this year, hopefully in person, to celebrate the very best in new homes and the well-earned accolades of all the winners."





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WHERE QUALITY LIVES



"We", "our", "us" refers to the Barratt Developments PLC Group brands and Site Managers. Our Group brands include Barratt Homes, Barratt London and David Wilson Homes. Trustpilot rating correct at time of going to press.

OUR SITE MANAGERS ARE NHBC PRIDE IN THE JOB WINNERS

To win an NHBC Pride in the Job Award is the highest accolade in the housebuilding industry. Each year, the NHBC join with leading experts to rigorously judge Site Managers from across the UK. We spoke to Kirk Raine, winner of the Supreme Award, to get a better understanding of the passion, dedication and leadership that's required in order to produce homes of exceptional quality.

How did you get into this role?

From the age of 12 I've always wanted to build houses. My father used to be in the industry so I've always loved building. I started off as an apprentice bricklayer and worked my way through the ranks, from Assistant Site Manager right the way through to Senior Project Manager. I've been doing site management now for 21 years – and I enjoy every minute of it!

What do you do day to day?

As a Site Manager, you're responsible from the moment the site compound is put in. You're working alongside the site team, customer care and all our contractors, just driving quality – I love my job every day.

Why do you enjoy working for Barratt Developments PLC?

Barratt Developments PLC is a great company to work for. They're a 5 Star housebuilder and the support is always there – the materials, the street scenes, the quality, everything you need from start to finish to make you a 5 Star builder. The Construction Director, Contracts Managers and all the team are fantastic to work for too, and I've



Kirk Raine – Supreme Award Winner

got some fantastic contractors who I've worked with for years.

How does it feel to have won the PITJ Supreme Award?

Winning this award has been absolutely fantastic – all the contractors, the customers, everyone on site celebrating. We've got over 200 customers on phase 2 and 3 at Doseley and the customer satisfaction is at 100%. Everyone's happy and that's what I want – smiling faces when people move in.

What does this award mean for the team?

Obviously winning this award is absolutely fantastic for myself, but what everyone's got to realise is it's actually a team award. I've got such a good team around me, and the respect is both ways with the contractors and all our staff – because every day is a pride in the job day.

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5 STAR QUALITY

We are proud to have been awarded the maximum 5 Stars from the Home Builders Federation and we are the only major national housebuilder to achieve this for 12 consecutive years**. Over 90% of our customers would recommend us to their friends, demonstrating our commitment to providing high-quality new homes around the UK.



**We are the only major national housebuilder to be awarded this key industry award 12 years in a row. Based on HBF star rating scheme from 2010 to 2021 derived from the NHBC national new homes survey at eight weeks, over 90% of Barratt Developments PLC group customers would recommend our brands to a friend.

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QUALITY CONTROL



Customer satisfaction with new build homes is at its highest; hopefully the newly created New Homes Quality Board and New Homes Ombudsman will keep it there, says **STEWART BASELEY**

With the anniversary of the first lockdown having come and gone, there is a greater sense of optimism in the air than there was a few months ago. While there is still a long road ahead, the vaccine roll-out and the government's road map for easing the country out of the third lockdown certainly provide hope that a return to a more normal way of life is finally within our grasp.

The outlook for the homebuilding industry also appears to be strong. Despite the pandemic, we saw significant demand for new build homes grow throughout 2020 and this has carried through to 2021. Furthermore, the government's decision to extend the stamp duty holiday has also helped matters by providing some much-needed breathing room and certainty for all those involved in the building, buying, and selling of residential property.

Good news has also come in the form of the results of the industry's 2019-2020 customer satisfaction survey scores (CSS) that we recently published. I was delighted to learn that 91% of the customers that responded said they would 'recommend their builder to a friend', the highest score achieved since the survey began in 2006 and the fourth year in a row that the industry has delivered improved scores. In addition, over 92% of those who bought a new build home said they would buy new again.

The successive improvements that we have seen are the result of an industry-wide focus on increasing quality and build standards and should be celebrated. However, it is important that we also reflect on this period with humility. After all, it was not that long ago that the CSS results painted a very different picture of the industry, with just 85% of customers willing to recommend their builder in 2017, down from the previous high of 90% in 2014/15.

This reduction in customer satisfaction scores took place against a backdrop of rapid increases in housing volumes (supply increased by 78% during 2013-2018) and at a time when the sector also faced considerable skills challenges. Inevitably, 2017 was dominated by regular media reports lamenting the standard of new build homes and we saw MPs become increasingly vocal about the issues being experienced by a small number of their constituents.

The pressure on the industry was compounded by the publication of two reports by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Excellence in the Built Environment (APPEBE) which focused on the quality of new homes and the options for redress available to consumers. The APPEBE's principal recommendation was the establishment of a New Homes Ombudsman (NHO), a proposal which was subsequently supported by government.

While I am sure we have made mistakes as an industry, we have not shied away from acknowledging

our past failings or from taking proactive action to rectify it. Quality has now been a key industry focus for several years, with the drive for improvement being driven from the very top of companies.

In 2016, we convened a 'New Build Quality Group' to explore the recommendations put forward by the APPEBE and establish how a New Homes Ombudsman could be implemented. HBF and its members have engaged with a broad range of stakeholders over the years, including government officials, warranty providers and consumer bodies to develop an appropriate framework. Consequently, I was delighted that the first step in bringing this all to fruition, the launch of the independent New Homes Quality Board (NHQB), took place in February of this year.

The NHQB will have responsibility for overseeing the quality and the customer service provided by developers to buyers from the sales and marketing of new homes until the end of the first two-years of ownership. It is chaired by Natalie Elphicke MP and its wider membership comprises representatives with experience from a range of sectors including consumer bodies, developers, providers of new home warranties and the lending industry.

It is because of the tremendous work in homebuilding companies right across the land that the CSS scores are now at their highest ever level, but we cannot afford to lose momentum now. The pressure on the industry is certainly continuing and thus 2021 will be characterised by a considerable focus on whether the NHQB is able to help continue the progress of the past few years.

As such, over the coming months the NHQB will oversee the implementation of a new industry code

of practice, that will replace the existing consumer codes; and appoint a New Homes Ombudsman Service (NHOS). The procurement process for a NHOS is currently underway, guided by the requirements of the Ombudsman Association, the body that accredits ombudsman bodies; while the new code is progressing on its 'consultation pathway'.

The new code will sit at the heart of the new arrangements and will aim to fill the gaps in existing protections with the major additional requirements being with regards to the two years immediately post occupation. Builders will need to have effective complaints procedures in place and be required to communicate with customers at set times during the handling of a complaint. Detailed work is also underway with the warranty providers on how their resolution services fit into the 'customer journey'.

The ambition remains to have the code agreed and an ombudsman appointed by the second half of the year, after which the arrangements will go live. There will then be a transition period for builders to register for the new arrangements.

While the framework will inevitably require some developers to make some changes to way their businesses operate, I truly believe it will provide all audiences with considerably more confidence in the housebuilding industry and the homes it provides. With homebuilding returning to the policy spotlight in a post-pandemic world, it is vital that we all work in partnership to ensure that the new regime is effective, successful, and most importantly, delivers for consumers. 

Stewart Baseley is executive chairman of the HBF



Redrow is a Five Star rated housebuilder in the latest CSS results

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COMPLETIONS ON TIME

Once you are selling plots, keep your utility provider up-to-date with your current completion programme. They will ensure delivery meets your project requirements.



by
Bridget Cordy

This month: **HELEN TODD & EMMA PLUMRIDGE** Stubbings Property Marketing



You won't spot its branding on many developments but over the last 11 years Stubbings has grown into a specialist marketing company with a team of 12.

The white-labelled marketing service for housebuilders, masterminded by Helen Todd and Emma Plumridge, has just landed them an instruction from BoKlok, a JV between Skanska and Ikea, which is breaking ground in Bristol for its first UK development.

"We are delighted that Stubbings is working with BoKlok as a key partner," says Helen Todd, founder of Stubbings. "We've been brought on board to work alongside BoKlok's existing team to assist with the entire sales and marketing function. From having an early involvement during planning through to launching the homes for sale, our role has already been vast and varied – and we've only just got started."

With an eye on the future, Todd started Stubbings in 2009. Her career began at a conveyancing firm before she joined the new homes team at Chancellors estate agency. That led to roles at Crest Nicholson and then Linden Homes where she was sales director. By the time the recession hit in 2008, Todd was "bored of the boardroom" and missing the buzz of frontline sales. She set up Stubbings and was looking for a business partner.

Meanwhile Emma Plumridge had gone straight into housebuilding, initially in the land team at David Wilson Homes and then Crest Nicholson (a different region to Todd). Plumridge then joined Thirlstone Homes before going on to run her own development business until the credit

crunch, when one of her backers had to withdraw funding.

So the timing was right when Todd and Plumridge were put in touch by a mutual friend. "We met at a little Italian restaurant round the corner from the office in Marlow," Plumridge recalls. "I still had a couple of sites I was selling, so I was winding down my own business as I was building up with Stubbings."

First instructions at Stubbings were opportunity led, notably when Wates Living Space instructed it to market schemes in Coventry and Manchester.

"For us, it's about opportunity," says Todd, "and knowing that we can make a difference for that client. We both have different strengths and weaknesses, which works really well together, but the core thing is that we always want to deliver excellence to both client and customer. That's in our DNA, that's us."

When Stubbings was appointed by Waterside Places of the Morgan Sindall Group on Brentford Lock West, it led to a long-term working relationship.

"That beginning with Waterside Places was a phenomenal scheme for us. It was multi RIBA-award-winning and just a fantastic project to take from 2010 all the way through to 2018. We continue to work with the Group through other partnerships: Slough Urban Renewal and Bournemouth Development Company. We continue

to work with the Morgan Sindall Group when they look to bid on other JVs with other councils, we're asked to come in on some to assist on the sales & marketing side. A bid process is a very intense time for several months so we can dig in, get that piece of work done for them and then either step away or, if the bid's successful, hopefully we'd continue on that journey."

Stubbings is a new homes consultancy rather than purely an estate agency although the roles overlap. As well as providing land and consultancy services, it also operates as an outsourced sales and marketing team.

Todd explains: "We'll always view a project as if it's our own and as if we're the ones sitting at the boardroom table, so it's our GDV that we're looking at. I've sat both sides of the fence, in agency and as sales director, so I know that selling new build needs a different skill set. If a client doesn't have an in-house sales and marketing operation, we can bring our whole team in. We have marketing researchers, PR, social media and marketing, so we can plug that gap without the client having to have that big overhead."

Todd adds: Since Covid, buyers are doing more and more research online. But I still believe that people buy from people, so our philosophy hasn't

changed. We're still firm believers in that old-fashioned technology of actually talking to somebody."

To support the local community, three Stubbings staff volunteer at a vaccine clinic in Maidenhead. Helen Todd is also involved in Maidenhead Hockey Club as a director, player, and U10's coach and is a school governor. Todd has two teenagers, while Plumridge's 16-year-old son, who's studying business, is so keen to learn he's been shadowing some of her recent training seminars.

Nearly all Stubbings instructions come from recommendation or repeat business. Among its latest projects is Daedalus Village, a joint venture between Wates and Homes England, where it has assisted with the bid process and scoping out the product range, mix and specification.

And with two five-star hotels part of another project, Novus Apartments, Stubbings worked with Slough Urban Renewal to explore space planning techniques used for hotels.

"We looked at economies of scale such as pod bathrooms," says Todd. "We could have only a finite number of bathroom types and had to make sure that each apartment worked. We went with Morgan Sindall Construction to the factory in Hull to see them being made and make any critiques with regard to mirrors or toilet roll positions, all the finite detail. You're always learning because there's always something new."

Plumridge agrees: "We've always got ideas on how we can move things forward and we're constantly working on different projects, so watch this space." 

"We'll always view a project as if it's our own and as if we're the ones sitting at the boardroom table, so it's our GDV that we're looking at."



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LRG acquires Gibbs Gillespie

Gibbs Gillespie, the independent estate agency with 13 branches across Middlesex, Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire, has been acquired by Leaders Romans Group (LRG). This move represents LRG's largest acquisition to date.

LRG intends to keep the Gibbs Gillespie name and grow it across neighbouring areas. In Uxbridge and Gerrards Cross, where Romans already trades, LRG will trade under both brands.

Former owners James Gibbs and Paul Gillespie will step away from the business following a transition period. All 144 full-time and 49 weekend staff will transfer with the business and retain their current positions.

Matthew Light, group mergers and acquisitions director at LRG, said: "We are pleased to be welcoming Gibbs Gillespie into the growing LRG family. The founders have built a fantastic



Left to Right: Kevin Shaw (Group Managing Director, LRG), Paul Gillespie (Former Owner, Gibbs Gillespie), Matthew Light (Group Mergers and Acquisitions Director, LRG)

business that serves the local area and community as a highly reputable provider of property and financial advice. Adding almost 200 employees who know the area inside out is a huge benefit for LRG as it expands inside the M25."

This marks the largest of four acquisitions by LRG this year, which also include single office businesses of Eurolet in Bishop's Stortford and Guardian Residential Lettings in Harlow. Earlier in the year LRG also expanded its presence in the East Midlands with its acquisition of Hill & Clark, a five-branch agency in Lincolnshire.

£100,000 raised by Savills director

A director in the Savills London development land team, Alex Soskin, has crossed the finish line in 'the world's toughest row': the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge.

The race covers over 3,000 miles, starting from La Gomera in the Canary Islands and finishing across the Atlantic in English Harbour, Antigua. Soskin and his team, Oardacity, finished the race after 40 days, 6 hours and 35 minutes at sea.

"The race was a battle with mother

nature," said Soskin. "I couldn't be prouder to have shared this incredible journey as Team Oardacity alongside three great mates Harry Hearn, Ed Batchelor and Tom Phillips. This wouldn't have been possible without the support of our families, friends, sponsors and all those who helped us along the way. We will forever be grateful."

The team raised an impressive £100,000 for the charities MIND and Christina Noble Children's Foundation.



Atlantic Campaigns

Connells acquires Countrywide

As part of their strategy of business development and branch network growth, Connells has now completed on their acquisition of Countrywide, bringing the Group to over 1,200 high street branches combines.

The acquisition "provides long-term financial



stability for Countrywide, freeing it from external debt, and bringing years of uncertainty to a close".

The deal will see Countrywide maintain its branch network and continue to operate in the same way, trading under its existing brand(s). Connells Group will be investing in technology and people to improve its service offerings.

"This is an extraordinary day in the proud history of both companies, bringing together a formidable team of property professionals to create the most successful business seen in our sector," said Connells Group CEO David Livesey (left). "Our companies have a long, shared history, competing healthily on the high street and in the industry. We look forward to welcoming all our new colleagues into Connells Group, working together on our exciting future and turning Countrywide around for our shared success."

Connells Group has also acquired Derbyshire estate agency, Hall & Benson, adding a further five branches to its network with services including land & new homes, sales, lettings, mortgages and surveys.

"We are delighted to welcome Hall & Benson to

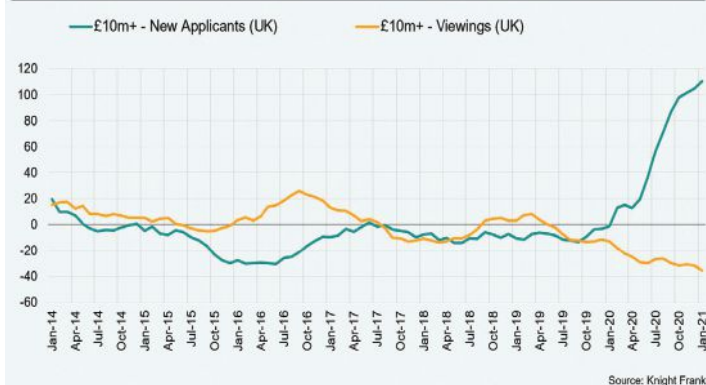


Connells Group. It's a business that we have long since admired and the acquisition forms just part of our growth strategy within Derbyshire," said David Plumtree (above), Connells Group estate agency chief executive. "It allows us to extend our presence in the local and wider market, and signals our ongoing commitment to high street estate agency and the continual development of our business."

Knight Frank reveals superprime market movement

Super-Prime Demand Rises despite travel restrictions

Annualised % change



Knight Frank's latest data shows the number of new prospective buyers registering for UK properties valued at more than £10m increased by 109% in the year to January compared to the previous 12 months. This was the highest such rise in more than 10 years, which Knight Frank says underlines how the decisive general election result in December 2019 boosted global demand for UK property. Conversely, over the same period the number of viewings fell by 36%, the steepest such decline in a decade, due to international travel restrictions. "Demand is as strong as ever so there is some frustration among overseas buyers who are unable to travel to the UK," said Paddy

Dring, global head of prime sales at Knight Frank. "The challenge is the quarantine rules. When the restrictions are relaxed we expect demand to return very quickly. The message for anyone thinking of selling is clear, be ready now to beat the rush when the flights resume." Knight Frank reports the total number of £10m-plus deals in London in 2020 was 93 compared to 99 in 2019, although the total for last year may rise as more data is added. The flat performance of prices in prime central London in recent months is expected to limit any disruption from a 2% surcharge for overseas buyers to be introduced in April.

Savills highlights Yorkshire housing demand

Following the chancellor's announcement that the new UK Infrastructure Bank will be located in Leeds, Savills believes the prospects for real estate in Yorkshire are strong across all asset classes but cautions a mismatch between housing demand and planning policy. Housebuilding targets are set to rise in Leeds and Bradford but Savills research shows housing demand is growing fastest for larger, suburban homes. Over two-thirds of homes built in Leeds in the year to June 2020 were flats, versus just 28% houses.

However, Savills's latest residential client survey reported 62% of respondents list access to a garden or outdoor space as a higher priority than before Covid-19. That rises to 80% for the under-40s. The survey also found 56% of respondents expect to work from home more often (rising to 81% for under 40s). Noting that either Leeds must identify more sites to deliver houses or developers will have to change the design of the flats they're building, Savills is urging developers and planners to work together to build



the homes the market wants, with more space both inside and outdoors. Additionally, from April, the value cap for the new Help to Buy will fall from £600,000 to £228,100 in Yorkshire & Humberside. To cater to this Help to Buy market, Savills

suggests housebuilders will need to deliver more affordable homes likely in the form of terraces rather than detached properties, and may also have to operate outside of more desirable areas of Harrogate and York in favour of cheaper alternatives.

Connells announces full-year results

Connells Group announced pre-tax profits of £51.8m in 2020, up from £50.1m in the previous year. Total revenue for the year was £375m down 12% on 2019. The Group reported sales of nearly 8,000 new homes during 2020. Total house sale exchanges were down by 16% set against a housing market that was shut for part of the year. "Although we started the year positively, the ongoing pandemic and closure of the housing market for two months in the first lockdown impacted business significantly in 2020. Consequently, our total Group revenue was down by over £50m year on year," says Connells Group CEO David Livesey. "Demonstrating our resilience and ability to react quickly to change, combined with a strong market, we recorded a healthy profit

that is marginally ahead of last year, once again showing the strength in our diversified business model." The Group's guiding principle throughout the pandemic was to do what is right for its people and customers, ensuring their health, safety and wellbeing. The Group cut back on capital and discretionary spending, the Executive Board waived its 2020 bonus entitlement, and the business use the government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme with 78% of its people placed on furlough. During this time, the Group paid all its people 100% of basic salary and commission. "We enter 2021 in good shape," said Livesey, "with Connells Group financially strong and well poised to meet the opportunities and any challenges in the market."

Mortgage approvals point to market buoyancy

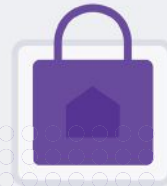
After the government's statistics showed property transactions were the highest January totals in a decade, national operations director at Just Mortgages and Spicerhaart, John Phillips, foresees the market this year going from strength to strength. "Despite a slight dip in transactions from December, January was another incredibly strong month for the housing market," said Phillips. "The market usually cools at the start of a new year, and coupled with another national lockdown, some may have feared for the housing market. However, the momentum in the sector is continuing to build with brokers still rushed off their feet. "Brexit appears to have had a negligible impact on the mortgage



market as approvals remained robust in January. The strength of borrowing demonstrates how the market is still defying the wider economic situation. With another lockdown imposed, savings for those lucky enough to still be in employment are rising, and faced with more time at home, there will be more and more people considering a move."

43%

of homes eligible for
Help to Buy in 2020
would now be above
2021 price caps.



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Bewley Homes: Strong foundations for future growth

As Bewley Homes celebrates its 30th year of trading the company looks firmly to the future.

Bewley built its first homes for sale in 1991, and to begin with, specialised in larger, bespoke houses with an emphasis on one-off properties or small schemes of two or three. During the intervening 30 years the business has grown and evolved, and currently focuses on sites of up to 450 units offering a range of property types.

Bewley's area of operation has also expanded embracing premium locations throughout Berkshire, Buckinghamshire,

Hampshire, South Oxfordshire and Surrey; prices today are typically within the range of £350,000 to £850,000.

In March 2021 Bewley Homes was awarded its fifth consecutive Gold Award for customer satisfaction from independent market research company In-House Research Ltd. Even more striking, however, was Bewley's net promoter score, which had risen from 60.4% in 2019/20 to 70.9% in 2020/21.

2021 OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT
FOR CUSTOMER SATISFACTION



A fitting achievement

Andrew Brooks, Bewley Homes' Managing Director, considers the score a fitting achievement given the efforts of the Bewley team during a uniquely challenging year. 'As for everyone in our industry, 2020 has been difficult' he says. 'We put in place very early on, specific measures to try to mitigate the overall impact of the pandemic on our business, customers and colleagues. This we know worked well, but it is always gratifying to know what the customers on the ground think. To achieve such a high net promoter score, as well as our fifth consecutive Gold Award and a consistently

'To achieve such a high net promoter score during 2020 is a major achievement'

high 95% customer recommend score, really demonstrates our commitment to customer service from everyone at Bewley. This is

something we will continue to work on throughout the coming year with the aim of raising those scores even higher.'

Our customers are kind enough to give us their direct feedback and this helps the

business to reflect as it evolves and moves forward. The Willsons, Lindsay, Terry and their three children, moved into a new four bedroom semi-detached property at Ash Lodge Park near Guildford, Surrey four days before Christmas. They love their new home,



Willson family

with its spacious, flexible accommodation, in particular the master bedroom suite at the top of the house which Lindsay describes as hers and Terry's 'own private sanctuary.' And the service they received? 'Faultless' says Terry. 'Everyone at Bewley Homes bent over backwards for us.'

Instant 'wow factor'

Curren and Rahul Sali and their five-month-old daughter moved into their new 'Cranleigh' three bedroom semi-detached home at Equestrian Walk, Aborfield Green, Berkshire in November, having fallen in love with the house from the moment they saw it. The Cranleigh is from Bewley's new Garden Village Collection, and the couple loved the traditional look of the house and

its interior layout placing the open plan kitchen/dining/family room at the heart of the home. 'We felt the house had the 'wow factor' from the moment we saw it' says Curren. 'And the sales team went above and beyond in the way they looked after us, which was very reassuring as we were first time buyers.'



Curren and Rahul Sali

Major expansion and recruitment for the business

Bewley Homes' 30th year also sees the company embarking on a major programme of expansion. Schemes in the pipeline will see Bewley developing in new locations such as Wiltshire as well as returning after many years to Buckinghamshire. Over the next couple of years the company will be developing two phases of Wilton Park, Beaconsfield; a major development in a prestigious location opening later this summer.

Andrew Brooks, Bewley Homes' Managing Director, thinks there has never been a better time to join the company. 'The reason we're winning awards and achieving such high customer satisfaction scores is down to our team' he says. 'Everyone in every department plays their part. And as we come through the pandemic we've all worked hard to prepare Bewley for growth, which means there will be lots of opportunity for anyone looking to join.'

That opportunity also includes joining a company with a strong commitment to its team's wellbeing. A great example of this has been a series of regular 'mindfulness' sessions provided recently by prominent YouTube fitness trainer Lucy Wyndham-Read. 'During the recent difficult times it has been very important to take a break and decompress' says Elaine Stratford, Sales and Marketing Director. 'The Bewley sessions were set up for all staff and have evolved to include many guests joining in and getting fit.'



Lucy Wyndham-Read

Bewley is currently looking to expand its technical, commercial, construction and land teams to gear up for its next phase of growth. Ambitious individuals keen to develop their career and share in the company's success should forward their CV to AngelaT@bewley.co.uk

'There is lots of opportunity for ambitious individuals looking to join the team'



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Microwave boilers mooted as replacement option for gas

Heat Wayv, a UK energy technology company, has unveiled the world's first microwave boiler. It is designed to be a zero-emissions replacement for gas boilers, in preparation for the phasing out of natural gas in new-build homes from 2025.

The company originally developed the microwave technology as a portable cooking device for military use and has now applied it to the heating of water. Co-founder Phil Stevens said: "The end of the gas boiler is inevitable and scheduled. But the proposed replacement technologies do not work for consumers as they are either too expensive to install or too expensive to run. We looked for a clean technology where the boiler would cost the consumer the same to buy, same to install and same to run as a gas boiler."

Stevens and co-founder Paul Atherton believe their product can provide a cheaper and simpler alternative to heat pumps for use in new homes, while also being straightforward to retrofit in existing homes.

Atherton said: "We believe this technology offers a more practical solution than hydrogen, with considerably less investment than the billions hydrogen will cost. But even if the hydrogen grid does become a reality, for the next 30 years, or however long it takes, this is a perfect bridging technology."

The company is in talks with housebuilders to trial the technology next year, and then to optimise it with a plan to sell the boilers through wholesalers in 2024. The concept is claimed to be 96% efficient, silent in operation, and low maintenance.

Atherton said: "There are really only three components and no mechanical moving parts – the pump comes in cassette form so it can simply be removed."

As an IoT device, the Heat Wayv boiler can be remotely monitored, maintained, and can be optimised and even upgraded, the founders say.

The Heat Wayv system is based on the technology

used in domestic microwave ovens. It is based around the patented Wayv Technology Stack – a solid-state, robust, RF framework that utilises configurable and controllable high-performance amplifiers to generate energy. Its microwave-emitting magnetron uses a specific frequency to transfer energy to individual water molecules and so heat up the volume of water.

The company says it uses "a combination of sequential pulse-width modulation and specialist materials to provide what is effectively continuous heating but at reduced power settings. The microwave boilers are designed and shielded in a far superior way to regular microwave ovens so that they can never interfere with household electronic equipment such as wifi routers."

The system preheats water to 20-22°C then raises it to 65°C for delivery at around nine litres a minute.

The boiler will initially be offered in two configurations. The Heat Wayv One is equivalent to a standard combi boiler in size, with a 40-litre holding tank, and, since it doesn't need an external vent, it can be fitted on any interior wall or retrofitted into any current system in less than a day, the firm says.

The HeatWayv Max, is a scaled-up unit incorporating a pressurised 280-litre internal hot water tank for larger households and is the size of a standard single double-height kitchen unit. The units are modular, enabling them to be configured in sizes from 5kW to 60kW, with the standard unit set at around 10.5kW, although the precise capacities are to be decided after the post-trial optimising process.

Atherton said: "The beauty of our microwave boiler platform is that it is completely compatible with existing home radiators, easy to install and maintain, but with zero emissions – as the UK and the world moves to renewable energy, we need to have appliances that are zero-emissions in the home,



but also connected so that the devices can work intelligently with the grid. It shouldn't take installers more than half a day to install, so they can comfortably fit two a day, if not more. We are saying you can go on a half-day course and once you've learned how to install the boiler, the opportunities with this technology could give a job for the next 25 years. We believe the gas boiler's ship has sailed."

UKGBC publishes net zero procurement and offsetting guidance

The UK Green Building Council (UKGBC) has published Renewable Energy Procurement and Carbon Offsetting Guidance for Net Zero Carbon Buildings, which aims to provide clarity for the property and construction industry on the procurement of high-quality renewable energy and carbon offsets for net zero buildings and organisations in the UK.

The guidance includes "a set of principles that should be used to evaluate the quality of renewable energy procurement routes, including how to create additionality – driving a material increase in the UK's renewable energy capacity". UKGBC said: "While carbon offsetting has frequently come under scrutiny for potential 'green-washing', the use of high-quality carbon offsets can be employed as part of a credible pathway to 1.5 degrees aligned net zero, if used responsibly. In line with UKGBC's guidance, carbon offsets should only be used

to compensate unavoidable emissions in a timeframe aligned to the point of pollution: annually for operational energy, and at the point of completion for construction."

The guidance outlines how the environmental integrity of an offset is determined, the existing carbon standards that provide this assurance of integrity, and how domestic carbon standards can play a role within organisational net zero strategies.

It is intended to be used by building developers, designers, owners, occupiers and policymakers. Given the complexities of certain elements, it will be of most use to energy procurement, facility management and sustainability professionals within these organisations. It is applicable to all building types, sizes, and ownership scopes where annual public disclosure of energy use, generation and carbon offsets is possible. The guidance has been

developed in collaboration with a task group of 32 industry experts and informed by a consultation run by UKGBC last year, which received feedback from 61 stakeholders. Julie Hirigoyen, chief executive at UKGBC, said: "Designing for reductions in whole life carbon and greater energy efficiency are just two pieces of a complex puzzle when it comes to our transition to net zero carbon buildings. The importance of the principles put forward in this guidance to evaluate the quality of renewable energy procurement routes, to calculate the residual emissions, and to offset those residual emissions in a meaningful way, is paramount to ensure the credibility of any net zero carbon building claim. This guidance marks an important step forward in helping the industry to deliver on our net zero targets, and ultimately respond to the climate crisis with buildings that are fit for the future."

Mace launches plans to phase out diesel power on site

Construction firm Mace Group has partnered with hydrogen tech firm AFC Energy to use hydrogen power to replace diesel generators on Mace's construction sites.

In addition to introducing AFC Energy's fuel cell system across Mace's construction sites, the two companies will work with plant hire companies and the UK government to promote the benefits of utilising hydrogen-based fuels to help the industry move away from the use of diesel across the construction industry, they said. The partnership is part of Mace's commitment to achieve a 10% year-on-year reduction in carbon emissions from its operations and to remove diesel generators from its sites by 2026.

"A sustainable construction industry and the need for improved urban air quality is driving growing contractor interest in transitioning away from diesel generators in meeting today's temporary power needs," said Adam Bond, CEO at AFC Energy. "AFC Energy's zero emission, hydrogen-fuelled power generator addresses this growing demand for cleaner power."

The provision of temporary power to construction sites is currently largely provided through the hiring of onsite diesel generators from plant hire businesses. The sector is regarded a major source of carbon emissions and air pollution. In London, for example, around 15% of the most harmful emissions such as PM2.5 are estimated to come from stationary diesel generators on construction sites.

Decarbonising the construction industry is likely to therefore require plant hire businesses to respond to demand for clean energy technologies such as hydrogen fuel cells to replace diesel generators, according to the two organisations.

Liverpool mixed-use scheme to feature eco homes

Developer Romal Capital has committed £100m to a mixed-use development in Liverpool's Central Docks area.

In its planning application to Liverpool City Council, the property developer will progress the work it completed on Quay Central and Park Central, having built 237 residential apartments and commercial tenancies, which were delivered last year.

The new scheme includes 330 sustainable 'smart' homes and retail space, as well as other amenities and public areas. It proposes a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments designed to attract occupiers ranging from professionals to young families. To reduce net carbon emissions, each home will feature power usage monitoring and solar panels installed in common areas.

Romal Capital aims to encourage the use of electric cars, with up to 20 EV charging stations to cater for the government's zero-emission vehicle initiative.

The proposed new public spaces include an active waterfront, floating

pontoon marina, a suspended 6m-wide cathedral-style bridge bordering the river canal for pedestrian and bike access, rooftop gardens and leisure space for al fresco dining. A new cultural square would be used for market days, music and entertainment. Greg Malouf, CEO at Romal Capital, said: "We are very excited about this scheme and its potential to transform this barren brownfield land into a thriving new waterfront neighbourhood. The combination of new smart homes, carefully selected retail and leisure outlets, and huge investment in new public realm will deliver a high quality lifestyle for its residents. New, high quality homes on this brownfield site means new jobs, greater investment and ultimately more people to enjoy this waterfront location. We hope this scheme acts as both a major catalyst and benchmark for future development within the area."

Romal Capital is working with principal landowner Peel L&P in developing the Liverpool Waters regeneration zone.

Citu lands financing for Leeds sustainable development

Developer Citu has agreed a £4m land deal with specialist lender Together. Together has so far invested more than £25m into Citu's projects in Yorkshire over the course of a 14-year partnership.

Chris Baguley, managing director at Together, said: "Our latest land finance deal will support Citu's admirable ambitions to tackle climate change by creating one of the UK's biggest sustainable urban developments. The first phase of the low-carbon and community-focused Climate Innovation District on the north bank of the River Aire in Leeds is now well underway, and we're delighted our finance is helping unlock more disused industrial space on the south bank to extend this thriving community."

The funded deal will allow Citu to accelerate the development of the scheme, after receiving "substantial demand" from new home purchasers.

The Scandinavian-inspired, timber-framed houses and apartments use up to 90% less energy to heat than the average UK modern house. They feature triple glazing, MVHR systems, rainwater collection and photovoltaic

panels, which will be connected to a smart grid supplying the community's electricity use.

Together has provided 26 property loans for Citu since 2007, most to revive disused buildings and urban brownfield sites.

Baguley added: "We've really bought into Citu's vision and have been incredibly impressed with their purpose and drive to change the way people in cities live and work. The relationship we have with Citu over many years is something that is really important to us."

Chris Thompson, Citu managing

director, said: "We are delighted to be continuing our collaboration with Together, whose support has been instrumental in helping to realise our business growth over the last 14 years."





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New Homes Earmarked for Coastal Town in multi-million-pound Development Project

The multi-million-pound re-development project in Portishead, near Bristol, will see 93 new homes created, including 29 affordable flats and two commercial units, as part of a regeneration project aimed at revamping its former docklands site and surrounding areas.

The project is being carried out by family-owned property developers, Prelon Developments Ltd, which completed phase one of the scheme in 2016.

The scheme is the latest in the surrounding areas of Portishead's former docklands, which has undergone massive transformation to meet the housing demands of its growing population.

A senior development facility in excess of £10m was provided by the team here at Shawbrook, which offers development finance to established mid-size construction firms and developers across the country. Iron Bridge Finance, the equity and mezzanine provider, contributed mezzanine finance towards the capital requirement for the development.

"This project will go a long way to satisfying the local demands for affordable housing in Portishead, which is once again a growing coastal town. The town has undergone some major re-generation in recent years, and we ourselves have already been involved in developing on this site in 2016."

Derek Press
Director of Prelon Developments Ltd





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Interview

with

LIAM MCAVOY

GEORGE SELL meets
Hyperoptic's
managing director of
business development



Some companies are difficult to leave, as Liam McAvoy, managing director, business development at fibreoptic broadband supplier Hyperoptic, can testify. But before he arrived at the firm, he had quite a varied route to get there.

"I was educated at Solent University in Southampton, where I did a business IT degree. Before that, my first job was as a desktop support engineer for a local insurance company in the summer holidays, which I really enjoyed," says McAvoy.

"From there I moved into installing car audio and car alarms, which was a great job, I met some really interesting people. Then I had stints working in a motorcycle clothing store, for Maplin Electronics, and then to Apple. I was part of the team that set up what's now known as the 'shop-in-shops', so if you go in to PC World or Curry's you'll see the Apple section. We were responsible for setting those up, which was phenomenal in terms of learning about politics and convincing people who had come in to spend £200 or £300 on a laptop to walk out with a £1200 MacBook. That was a good experience."

"I then moved into the world of immigration services. I got the opportunity to work with a company called Immigration Compliance. On a Friday night or a Sunday night, usually after a glass of wine, people would fill out an online enquiry form, expressing an interest in a free assessment to see if they would be eligible to go to Australia or Canada," he says.

"They would then get a phone call from me or one of my team. Our role was to find out if they were eligible, but most importantly to convince them to use our services to get their visa, and then to convince them to use our relocation services once we'd got the visa. That was a fascinating job, because most of the people filled out the form not being particularly serious about moving country. Convincing them was the first part of the job, which was a crazy challenge, but it involved educating them about them, their job prospects and so on. The key to that job was understanding people and their motivations.

"I worked there for five years. Within a year I was running the UK office, which grew from 15 people to more than 100 in the space of 18 months. We were getting leads from other countries but we weren't converting them well so I made the business case for a local presence in these countries, and set up our first office in South Africa, in Cape Town. After six months I did the same in the Philippines, followed by

Australia, Canada, New York and finally in Dublin. After the Irish office I wasn't feeling a challenge any more and wanted a career break. I didn't know what I wanted to do, but I wanted to take some time out, and I knew I didn't want to manage people."

This is where the current chapter of McAvoy's career begins: "I called up the sales recruitment agency we were using at the time, and they told me about Hyperoptic. At the first interview, they told me there was a piece of paper called a wayleave that gives us the right to install our infrastructure, and your job is to get that signed. They didn't tell me much more than that so I decided I'd give to six months and decide my next move. At the next interview, the chief sales officer really grilled me about why I wasn't going for a sales director role.

"It became quite a feisty conversation but I got a phone call a day later asking me to start as a business development manager. I did that role for six months. The CSO at the time was very commanding, shall we say, but incredibly intelligent. I really respected him and he got me into photography. I redrafted their sales processes and ended up managing a small team in west London for 18 months, and then the opportunity arose to go out and set up a sales operations team in Serbia, ►





where I stayed for a further 18 months. Then our CSO unfortunately passed away, so I came back and was in essence the acting CSO, while the search for his replacement took place. After that I felt like I'd come to the end of a journey and had nowhere to go with the company, so I told Dana Tobak, our CEO, that I was leaving to take six months in the jungle with my camera.

"She suggested a sabbatical whereby I would go to the jungle for six months and they'd hold my job open for me. So I agreed to that, with a two-month transition period while I handed over to the new CSO; and three days before I was due to go Dana told me about a new role, a business transformation role which involved joining the exec team. I said 'fine, I'll take it in six months,' to which she said 'no, I need you in three months'. So she convinced me to take a three month sabbatical and I rejoined after spending some time travelling around Serbia, Bosnia, Montenegro and Croatia. I spent 18 months in that role, then Boris Dragovic, our chief transformation and strategy officer, joined us. I spent six months working with him, and then found myself in the same position and handed my notice in again, with the six-month jungle trip back on the agenda. I spent some time overseeing the sales function, and then shortly before I was due to go Dana came up with another new role, as director for business development. This time she gave me six weeks instead of six months!

"So for the last two years I've been running the business development team, accountable for all the relationships with our clients, ranging from local authorities and housing associations, to M&E contractors and new-build developers. Our primary objective is to partner with landowners or building owners and to secure wayleaves for our right to install infrastructure."

"In terms of working with developers and housebuilders we pride ourselves on day-one connectivity. What this means is that on the first day residents move into their apartments, we're installed, we're live already, the router is switched on and ready to go – the resident can move in, log into the wifi and

order a pizza within two minutes. It's a phenomenal step forward for anyone who has ever moved house and had to wait six weeks for an engineer visit for their broadband, particularly in the current climate where working from home is critical.

"In order to ensure day-one connectivity, the earlier we can get involved with a development the better. The delivery of fibre isn't simple: we have to go through kilometres of unused or infrequently used ducting, there can be issues with blockages and traffic management, we need to close roads and so on – so, genuinely, the earlier the better, 12 months out if possible. We will partner with the developer or contractor, whoever is most relevant, work through the design drawings, fill in a network design that fits both the objectives of the developer and the experience they want to offer their residents, and agree what we are going to install.

"The most important thing is to order the fibre on time to ensure the teams have enough time to get the fibre to site. We offer onsite connectivity through the construction phase, so where you have a site office, it's advantageous for us and the developer to order fibre to that office, the connectivity is there, we can order the fibre way in advance of construction and the developer can use it for their own purpose during the construction phase as well."

McAvoy says that internet provision by housebuilders has come on a long way in recent years. "Now it's a requirement for developers to have 1GB services installed so what we are focused on is building out our proposition and our network coverage to understand how we can best partner with developers and understand their challenges. A good example of this is Barratt Homes. It was recently looking for the best connectivity and choice for its residents, and a lot of its regions were making a decision between GTC, Virgin and Openreach/Hyperoptic. So what we've done is agreed that we will install alongside, at the same time, Virgin and OpenReach. That means anyone moving into a Barratt home will have the choice of three infrastructures available to them, and an increased array of competitive prices that go with that."

And it's not just urban areas that get the benefit anymore, he says. "In our retrofit offering, our focus is on dense urban areas, but actually in the new-build world we've really extended our network coverage over the past couple of years so we do work with individual units. Last year, 50% of the new-build developments that we were involved in were single-dwelling units; they are not being built in dense urban areas, they are being built in rural locations. We look to understand the housing pipeline that a region is building. That allows us to balance the higher cost of a development that might be slightly further away from our network against the overall region."

McAvoy says: "We have a client called Sero Homes, which is working with Cardiff Council. We are trying a proof-of-concept with them where we're offering a connection to each unit, which will support the smart meters that they want to roll out. They are really trying to target energy consumption, but they had no connectivity base to start with. The smart meters they were using require an internet connection for each one – that would require the residents' engagement, in order to subscribe to a connection, for their smart meters to work. So what we have done is provide a connection to each unit to power the smart meters and in exchange we'll provide connectivity to the residents as well. There are a lot of thoughts and ideas round the internet of things and how we can innovate, but there is still education to be done around the available options and how they can work."

Summing up Hyperoptic's strengths, McAvoy says: "We really try to take a partnership approach with clients, to understand what it is they are trying to do, and what their needs are. People talk a lot about communal wifi, which sounds great, but do you really want people outside the lift on their laptop? Do you want people congregating in corridor areas, or do you actually want wifi coverage on a roof terrace? If that's all you need, why don't you save yourself a lot of effort and expense and find the best solution. When it comes to smart homes, developers did get their fingers burned by installing lots of hardware, things like Apple Ports, which quickly became outdated. What they've recognised now is that the IoT is really about software, and all they need to make that work is the underlying digital infrastructure, and then it becomes a very personal choice as to whether people want to use an app to warm their cars up and so on.

"While our client base grows every month, many of our client base have supported us since the early days. It makes me proud to read the unprompted comments on our social media posts. We recently had a great accolade from Galliard Homes who said we were their top performing utilities supplier. These comments are a great reminder of why we come to work and what we are trying to achieve. For us, working with the likes of Barratt and CALA Homes, it's all about supporting the client needs as they evolve, and making sure that our proposition and network coverage evolves with the client needs, while providing the level of customer service they expect. We're ready to meet the demands of what the next few years might hold." **SH**

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Captain's VLOG



When the pandemic hit, RML CEO Simon Kidney turned to vlogging to keep company morale high.

RUPERT BATES discovers how leading a successful company is as much about personnel as it is about product



Okay we're not talking the latest TikTok sensation or some viral video star, but during lockdowns Simon Kidney, CEO of Robinson Manufacturing Limited, the leading roof truss and floor joist business, became a vlogger of influence – crucially influence in all the right places across all the right spaces.

The ingenuity of the housebuilding industry – not to mention a raft of other businesses and individuals – has been extraordinary in the teeth of the pandemic.

When Covid-19 hit and housebuilding closed down, Kidney, like most, admitted to some “dark moments”, fear for the impact on family and personal circumstances, but also the wider family – his business and staff.

Kidney knows all about dealing with recessions; a successful career across many disciplines with Lloyds Banking Group before Robinson Manufacturing (RML) means he has always kept a balance sheet in the rim of his hard hat.

In 2015, Kidney, together with managing director Mark Smy, led a management buyout of RML from the company founder, Tim Robinson, who died in 2019, having started his original roof truss business in 1987 before forming RML 10 years later.

Kidney's banking instincts told him to diversify in preparation for another recessionary cycle. “I just didn't anticipate another one down to a pandemic which has no playbook – a unique and at times frightening challenge,” says Kidney.

“The first thing I tried to do was to get comfortable with uncertainty. You and your colleagues have worked so hard and invested so much emotional capital in driving a business forward, creating a £30m company with seven factories and 250 people, and are then hit with something you cannot control and with no experience of how to deal with it.”

Trading stopped and, like business leaders across the world, tough questions had to be asked, with little clue, only confusion, as to how it would all play out.

“I thought ‘my team need comfort and they need a constant message amid the storm’, which is why I turned into a vlogger. It was something I had no experience of or facility for, I just knew I had to do it,” says Kidney.

“Never underestimate the importance of the workplace stimulus, even if it is just to have a moan around the water cooler. That social engagement is vital and I tried to replicate it, having fun alone the way even if it meant the odd David Brent guitar moment!”

Kidney vlogged to his team with regular business updates, interspersed with humour and fun staff challenges and interactions.

Even if WFO (working from home) became the acronym of choice, Kidney recognises that, while some felt safer at home from a health perspective in the face of all sort of conflicting messaging from government and media platforms, for others WFO meant “falling out of your bed onto your desk with no break between work and home life”.

Kidney sent letters to his team, dealt with some incredibly emotional experiences, both personal and professional, and found fresh leadership skills forged in adversity.

“Inspire, Innovate, Deliver are three core values of our business,” says Kidney, who, away from the world of roof trusses, has always been heavily involved with rugby at all levels, as player, coach and administrator.

“Rugby has given me a set of values to live by: teamwork, respect, enjoyment and discipline, which you can apply to anything.”

A metaphorical ruffle of hair, a virtual hug or fist pump, asking how a teammate or work colleague is feeling,



you can't execute on a rugby field or in business if, says Kidney, “you are emotionally hacked”.

He extends the analogy: “If you lose a game, you've got another game; if today is a bad day, you've got tomorrow to improve.”

Kidney says housebuilding is currently in a “massive tailwind”; orders are up, diversification continues apace, but always buffeted by challenges, both familiar and new, be it supply chains, raw materials or pricing mechanics.

Kidney isn't just about the materials he manufactures and supplies; his is a whole of industry ambition – always questioning, always pioneering to improve not just the face of construction, but every major organ and limb.

He is also concerned, while bucking the trend with his own leadership team, that the drive to bring more women into construction has gone into reverse.

“I know we are brilliant at making trusses and joints. I know that because my people tell me, my suppliers tell me, my clients tell me and my figures tell me. But it is important to do more and always look to improve and innovate. What else can we be brilliant at, without diminishing our core offering?”

It is no surprise to learn that Kidney plays at outside-half, the No 10, in rugby, where leadership, motivation and a range of skill sets are key components. It is also no surprise to find that Kidney enjoys and excels at coaching the game too, as well as supporting grassroots rugby commercially.

Wood is such an empathetic, engaging material to work with, history in every grain, but ancient with the flex to modernise. While meeting the needs and exceeding the expectations of housebuilders with its timber-engineered products, backed up by



interview



Pringle Farm

a laser focus on customer care and commercial integrity, frames RML's work, there is plenty more going on elsewhere.

RML, based in Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, is part of Conspargo, identified by The Sunday Times Fast Track as 'One to Watch' last year and the group, headed by Kidney and Smy, includes Engineered Timber Floor Systems (ETFS) and Cheshire Roof Trusses. But the portfolio stretches beyond manufacturing to sports and leisure, including a rugby players agency called ProFifteen, headed by former All Black Sam Tuitupou.

Also under the Conspargo umbrella is The Yard @ Pringle Farm – a working farm near Huntingdon in Cambridgeshire that has been converted into holiday lets.

Kidney may be immersed in the world of new builds, but he loves heritage buildings, living in a 18th-

century house himself and clearly never tiring of timber.

"What fascinates me is what old buildings have lived through; the conversations heard," says Kidney.

Pringle Farm takes in a thatched cottage and a range of historic outbuildings, all lovingly restored with architectural integrity – a business opportunity yes, but also the chance through Pringle Heritage Developments to showcase how heritage and preservation work is as fundamental to our building future as brand-new projects.

A roof truss may seem little more than a wooden triangle. At one level it does the yeoman's work holding up the building; at another it is the canvas to paint on, so has every right to be expressive as well as functional as a key material.

This also explains why RML partners with the Create Streets Foundation, founded by Nicholas Boys Smith and its commitment to the highest standards of design and construction, be it renovation or brand-new, is further highlighted by RML's gold sponsorship of the WhatHouse? Awards.

"There is simply not enough housing stock and in particular affordable housing, where people want to live. The industry and the whole supply chain must play its part and not be conflicted."

Kidney sympathises with housebuilders fighting the vagaries of the planning system, having witnessed it first-hand with his own attempts to create an eco-park, complete with carbon neutral homes, powered by renewable energies.

"Instead, planners approve huge schemes of similar homes just to hit local targets."

Kidney, raised in Northampton, lives close to Cambridge. His school grades left a lot to be desired, but a talent for the French horn and a vacancy in the



Pringle Farm

university orchestra saw him accepted into Anglia Ruskin through clearing, landing on campus in 1995 with "£200, a pork pie and a bike."

I discover the Conspargo portfolio also includes The Three Tuns at Fen Drayton, which is thought to be the oldest pub in Cambridgeshire. The thatched Tudor tavern has tie beams with 15th-century mouldings, while there are 16th- and 17th-century additions including the fireplace and chimney. You just knew timber would frame this hostelry.

In a blog last month Kidney wrote of "a lifetime of economic and commercial challenges squeezed into 12 months".

He talks of the supply chain all in the same boat in the same perfect storm, juggling supply and demand to feed hungry housebuilders, fuelled by government incentives, wanting to complete record numbers in record time, while protecting margins and share price.

"From the forester to the estate agent, we are all influenced by the supply chain. But for your sanity you can only control the controllable."

"We must balance challenges with openness and transparency."

We must balance stress with recognition and reward. We must balance today's climate with the events of the last 12 months," says Kidney.

"We must balance communication."

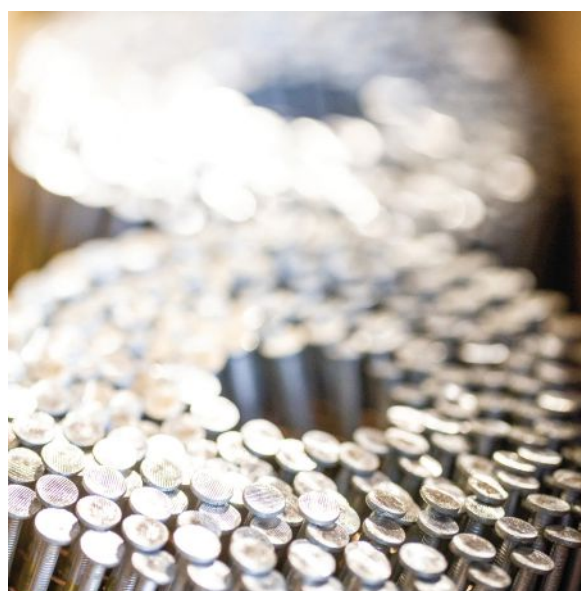
The human brain is mostly driven by kindness, the want to hold out a hand to help, or to place an arm round to support. In a 12-month period where everyone has been touched by various life-influencing events we must continue to engage, help, support and empathise. We must help each other. Together, with good solid partnerships, we will achieve. Together we can all achieve brilliance."

Kidney says that while we have been "mentally beaten up and our resilience tested, if you're still in the game, you're still winning."

As in business, as in rugby, as in life. To The Three Tuns Simon and don't spare the horses [sh](#)



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P45 **Feature: Hill & Clarion**

Rupert Bates discovers how partnership goes beyond individual schemes, to long-term placemaking for the wider community

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Simon Graham explores the issues created by policies that consistently favour home ownership over social rented housing

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Rupert Bates talks to Helen Moore about her mission at Orbit and how the pandemic is shaping it

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The shocking revelations from the Grenfell Inquiry expose an industry and regulatory culture in dire need of reform

P65 **News**



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Sycamore Gardens, Epsom from Hill and Clarion Housing Group

JOINED-UP THINKING

For Hill and Clarion Housing Group, partnership extends beyond the bounds of the individual scheme, to long-term placemaking for the wider local community. **RUPERT BATES** reports



Partnership and collaboration only go so far. After extolling the virtues of working together towards a common goal, Richard Cook, group director of development at Clarion Housing Group asked Greg Hill, deputy chief executive of Hill, if Cook's Newcastle United side could be gifted three Premier League points by Arsenal to help the Geordie battle to avoid relegation.

Arsenal fan Hill was having none of it, although he did concede given his team's propensity for unforced errors, it would probably happen at St James' Park next month anyway.

But there is plenty of team spirit elsewhere; "shared commonalities" between the two businesses, knowing what each company wants from every project, tapping into different, but complementary skill sets.

"Partnerships and JVs are a massive part of what we do and it is so important to take the long-term approach; it is not cycle management, it is core," says Hill.

From the complex to the more straightforward, from greenfield to brownfield remediation and regeneration, the schemes are rich and varied, with Hill's partnerships with Clarion Housing Group dating back to the Circle and Affinity Sutton brand days before the merger.

"Hill is a great example of the strengths of collaboration, finding solutions and if some problems may cause a bit of tension, we look at it from both sides of the table, make it work and move on. If you get greedy, that partnership will break," says Cook.

Both Cook and Hill agree that for joint ventures to work, they have to be so much more than simply transactional relationships. It is not about hitting S106 agreements to make up the numbers, but about a strategic plan that continues out the other side through management, legacy and community. ►



Merriellands, Dagenham from Clarion Housing Group

"We want to work with quality housebuilders where we can define our product and our purpose," says Cook.

A 30-year industry veteran, Cook, who joined Clarion two years ago, knows both sides of the fence, when it comes to private and public sectors, understanding how to tend and nurture each lawn.

Cook spent 11 years at George Wimpey (now Taylor Wimpey) before joining Mace. He then went on to become head of design and build delivery for the Athletes' Village at the London 2012 Olympics and, prior to joining Clarion, was head of residential at Lendlease.

"The Athletes' Village was something we were very proud of, building 2,800 homes in four years with a project value of £1.2bn and up to 5,500 workers onsite at any one time. It was the safest and most sustainable village in Olympic history."

Covid-19 has only served to amplify social inequality, especially around housing provision. While some see ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) as a greenwashed acronym, the innovators embrace it as a crusade.

"Investors, such as pension and sovereign wealth funds, are looking

much harder at the social value piece when it comes to financing developments, so ESG is only going to become more important for the industry as a whole to respond to and deliver on," says Cook, adding that with private equity funding circling around ESG then there must be a big commercial play too.

Hill stresses that commercial value and social value should be considered complementary – that partnership word again.

"It is about long-term reputation management as much as anything else. Our projects become embedded in their communities and continued investment is critical to benefit not just the schemes themselves, but the wider local economy, which drives up value for all," says Hill.

"As a privately owned business, we don't have investor pressure, but we set our own pressures, targets and goals."

Hill says the housebuilding sector is "a massive social investor without always realising it" considering what goes into a planning consent, as well as creating apprenticeships, local jobs and driving diversity in the workplace.

When Cook joined Clarion, with Latimer, the private development arm



Greg Hill



Richard Cook

of the group under his stewardship, he spoke of the company's strength and capacity to deliver at scale.

"To provide real opportunities for placemaking and creating thriving communities."

Covid-19 may have temporarily stalled ambition around delivery, but it has only strengthened the resolve of the likes of Hill, crowned Housebuilder of the Year at the 2020 WhatHouse? Awards, and Clarion to ensure they continue to partner and drive each other on in terms of quality of design and range of product, as well as enhancing lives in the wider social context. Clothed philanthropy can sleep with naked profit, allowing reinvestment in the next piece of placemaking.

Despite the name, Clarion does not always trumpet its achievements. As an industry, housing always has brickbats it must attend to, but Clarion, as the biggest social landlord in the country, creates thousands of jobs, as well as homes and in the game as long-term asset holders.

"We all need to step up to the environmental plate. We need to be driving change, not waiting for legislation to force it on us," says Cook.

Hill says it is vital that every company works out what they stand for and why and moves forward on that basis.

"We can't control what other businesses do, or the government or other external factors. Decide what matters to you, prioritise it and invest in it," says Hill.

"We knew as an industry we would be regulated on quality and are making good strides, but we can all do much more. Get swept up in the change or be part of the change, leading the charge. And if we get things wrong, deal with them swiftly and resolve them with a smile on your face."

Both are passionate about helping to alleviate the scourge of homelessness. Hill highlights the irony that pre-pandemic it was somehow morally palatable to have homeless people, but once housed in hotels and accommodation to offer protection from the virus, it is then deemed



Hill and Clarion at New Road, Rainham



The Cocoa Works, York by Latimer



Sycamore Gardens, Epsom



High Path, Merton from Hill and Clarion

reprehensible to kick them back out onto the streets when the Covid coast is clear.

Last year Hill launched its Foundation 200, a £12m project, donating 200 new, turnkey homes to homeless people.

Hill says the support for its charitable initiative has been “overwhelming”, but even building modular homes to shelter the homeless gets wrapped up in red tape and a knot of planning conditions. House the homeless, but not in my back yard.

“It has been a lot more difficult than expected,” says Hill, diplomatically.

Both agree that planning remains a huge hurdle and headache, no matter what you are building. “And you can only grow your business if you have the raw material and that raw material is a pipeline of permissioned land,” says Hill.

A lack of planning resource is clearly a factor, but there is also a sense with some local authorities that the pandemic has seen accountability kicked into the long grass. With so much stuck in the system, this will bite

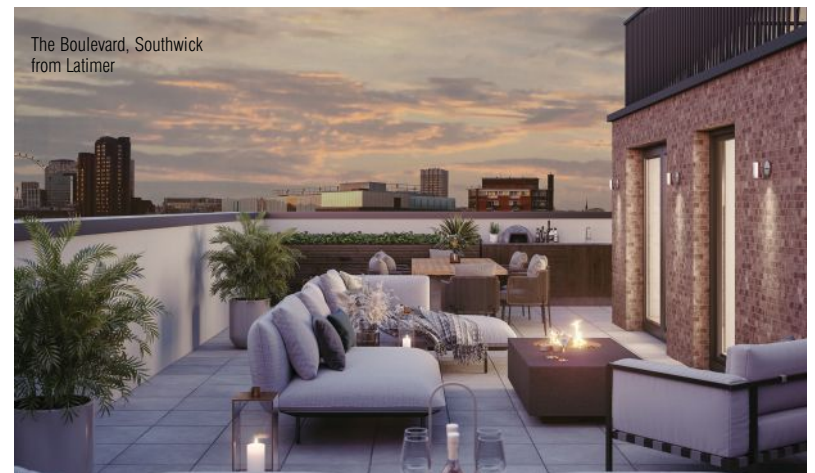
hard on numbers and pipelines in two to three years’ time.

Decision-making is also skewed by the raft of planning consultants out there and where the reporting lines are blurred, not to mention the fees to pay and sometimes multiple, often conflicting, local plans operating in parallel.

Cook, with Clarion Housing Group targeting 4,000 homes a year, finds the political will to drive delivery varies across the country, citing the cities of Leeds and Manchester as “great to engage with” when it comes to both social housing provision and private sale.

Hill rejects the defence that schemes are turned down for valid quality and design reasons, rather than for political expedience, with projects, recommended for approval, refused, despite clearly being head and shoulders above their neighbours and then triggering expensive and time-consuming appeal procedures.

Cook wants developments judged on community factors and not just



The Boulevard, Southwick from Latimer

architecture; the feel for the place, not just the look, raising the placemaking bar and making social sense of the wider infrastructure.

Yes, design principles need to be adhered to, but, ultimately, says Hill, architecture is subjective and it is also about how do the new residents move, eat, work, shop and learn.

“Getting the community right is so important and a big focus of ours, leaving the community in a better place, a great place and we should relish that challenge.”

Cook says trust plays its part too; that, as a developer, you are going to deliver, looking to enhance the communities, not the margins and doing what you say you are going to do, rather than watering down a proposal, hiding behind a viability excuse.

You are then welcome back and, in Clarion’s case, you are there for the long haul anyway. As the largest housing association in the country dating back more than 100 years and with over 350,000 people calling a Clarion home their own, you’re not going anywhere, with homes to

manage and communities to nurture as well as build.

Since arriving at Clarion Housing Group, Cook has focused on building his leadership team, as well as both project and development management disciplines and flexing the biceps of the Latimer private sale arm. There is much to do, but he is hugely enthused by the opportunities.

Clarion Housing Group was founded by 19th century entrepreneur William Sutton, born in London’s Cheapside in 1833 who founded the UK’s first door-to-door parcel delivery service – 150 years ahead of the likes of Amazon, DPD and DHL.

Sutton bequeathed his fortune to housing for the poor. Perhaps those delivery companies who have made fortunes from the pandemic could do the same.

A digression. Both Cook and Hill look forward to more site visits together in person and plenty more opportunities to partner together on future schemes. They’ll be in opposing camps when Newcastle and Arsenal meet – same social purpose but, for 90 minutes, very different goals. 



Watermeadow Place, Elstead by Latimer

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

TO DELIVER THRIVING COMMUNITIES

JAMIE HUNTER, DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR AT HILL, EXPLAINS THE BENEFITS OF WORKING TOGETHER ON JOINT VENTURES.



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IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH ORIGIN

"We've taken a collaborative approach since we first began 21 years ago - it's part of our DNA."

JAMIE HUNTER DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR AT HILL

"At Hill, we are proud of our joint venture developments and the partnerships that have enabled them. As a family owned and run business, we understand the importance of collaboration, communication and staying true to our vision and values. We've taken a collaborative approach since we first began 21 years ago - it's part of our DNA.

"So why choose Hill? We're a family owned company, which means we can take a longer term view - we don't have to meet external shareholder demands. We can make decisions quickly, as the family is directly involved in the business. We're also financially sound and very stable, with our own equity to invest and borrowing facilities in place.

"We have the skills that joint venture partners need. There's the building of course; in addition, we have expertise in obtaining planning, design, managing cash flow, and sales and marketing. Our partners often rely on our sales and marketing teams for branding, collateral and communication, which enables developments to be promoted more effectively.

"Customer satisfaction is another area where we excel. We're a Five-Star Homebuilder and are committed to giving our customers superb service and quality.

"We're also very transparent in how we work with our partners. Everything is done through an open book process, with third party checks to ensure complete transparency.

"Every project is different and we appreciate that every partner likes to work differently and has their own set of priorities. We collaborate with you to ensure that working with us is a really good experience.

"Our track record speaks for itself, with around 40 joint ventures successfully delivered or currently in progress. These include projects such as Fish Island Village (600 homes) and Motion (300 homes) with our partner Peabody, both in East London and selling well. Estate regeneration joint ventures are a big focus for us at the moment too - Clarion is one partner we've worked with on these. There are not many companies that work in this field and it can be very challenging, but we have the experience and expertise needed to make it succeed. It's an area that requires lots of collaboration with the local community, minimising disruption for existing residents, and careful planning.

"Whether you're a housing association, local authority or landowner, and whatever size your project is, we can partner with you to create an inspiring and rewarding development. Our largest to date has been 2,500 homes, but we're equally happy to work at a smaller scale.

"We will make your development better at every stage - better design, better management, a better return, and better homes for residents. We want to make the experience of working with us as positive as possible, and have enjoyed repeat business with many of our partners, which is a key driver for us."

If you'd like to find out more about working with us on a joint venture, please get in touch. We'd love to hear from you.



JAMIE HUNTER
DEVELOPMENT
DIRECTOR AT HILL





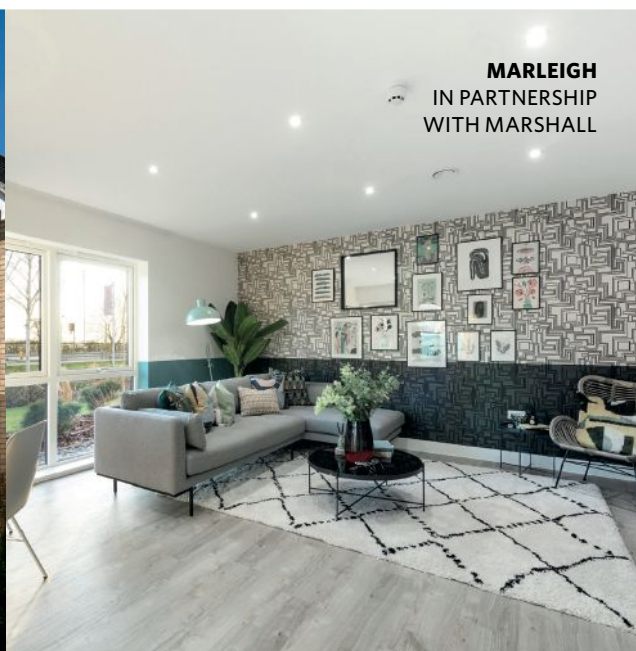
"We will make your development better at every stage – better design, better management, a better return, and better homes for the customers."

JAMIE HUNTER DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR AT HILL

FISH ISLAND
IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH PEABODY



RAYNERS GREEN
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MARLEIGH
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TIMBERWORKS
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"We want to make the experience of working with us as positive as possible, and have enjoyed repeat business with many of our partners, which is a key driver for us."

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THE POOR RELATION



Government policy consistently favours ownership models over social rented housing, but the importance of the sector and the need for such housing is as acute as ever, says **SIMON GRAHAM**

The past year has been dramatic, uncomfortable and strange for everyone. Words we never used before, like 'lockdown', 'furlough' and 'social distancing' are now part of common parlance. Brexit is also 'done' and we probably all know far more about the minutiae of fishing rights, level playing fields and trade dispute arbitration than we ever thought possible or desirable.

Brexit and Covid have had substantial impacts on the social

housing world. But the sector has also had dramas aplenty of its own of late, not least the building safety crisis, which Show House has covered in some depth and which will continue to cast a shadow for many years to come.

New government policies have added to the sense of dramatic and intense change, for during 2020/21 we discovered how this latest Conservative administration intends to direct housing and planning for the future.

For housing association board members and council Cabinet members for housing there have been endless 'tough choices' to make and meaty issues to consider.

A year ago, the social housing sector welcomed the announcement of a new £12.2bn Affordable Housing Programme for 2021-26 with relief, having feared worse from a government still new and unknown and suddenly dealing with the biggest economic, health and social challenge seen outside of wartime.

But, in reality, it was a standstill deal. At face value, it would allow social housing providers to keep delivering at roughly the pace of the previous few years. In the context that seemed positive, but it will do nothing to actually resolve England's housing crisis. Kate Henderson, the National Housing Federation's chief executive, and others had lobbied for £12.8bn a year. The whole five-year package fell short of that figure; less than a fifth, then, of what was needed. And half of the new AHP was committed to shared ownership programmes, skewing the budget even further away from the greatest need – more social rented homes.

As the year went on, Secretary of State Robert Jenrick's prioritising of home ownership at the expense of rented tenures became more evident. There was a consultation on First Homes, a kind of Starter Homes 'lite' policy, intended to give people large discounts on the market price of homes, with a minimum 25% of 'affordable' housing secured through planning obligations given over to this new vehicle.

Drastic changes were proposed to the tried and tested shared ownership product. The new model shared

ownership will see people able to buy with just a 10% initial stake and housing associations or other providers required to maintain the homes for the first 10 years after purchase. The new AHP also came with an ugly string attached – all grant-funded affordable rented homes will be subject to a Right to Shared Ownership.

Meanwhile, the housing market has been propped up with a stamp duty holiday, extended further in the March Budget, and a new government 'guarantee' on 95% mortgages (offsetting any lender loss caused by default on a mortgage of 80-95%).

There was no extra Budget help for the social housing sector or social renters, however, despite ample evidence that providing new affordable homes will be more challenging for the first half of the 2020s at least.

The new shared ownership model will make development and management of part buy, part rent more expensive for providers, for example, while the Right to Shared Ownership may well result in higher borrowing costs from lenders worried about the loan security implications.

Alongside First Homes eating into affordable housing planning gains, the government has reclassified sites for up to 40-50 homes as 'small sites' – exempt from providing social housing. The previous threshold for exemption was 10 homes. The extension of Permitted Development Rights will reduce new social housing opportunities as well, because these sites, too, are exempt from planning gains.

In London, where the need for more genuinely affordable housing is most acute, the housing grant budget has been cut from around half of the old AHP to about a third of the new one.

And while the new consolidated Infrastructure Levy proposed in the Planning White Paper (combining the Community Infrastructure Levy and S106 planning obligations) is promised to deliver 'at least' as much



affordable housing as the old system, the detail remains unknown, the Levy may not be ring-fenced for housing, and social landlords are wary.

The Future Homes Standard, consulted on last summer, will require all new homes from 2025 to produce 75-80% lower carbon emissions than are currently allowed. A quarter of homes delivered under the new AHP are also expected to use modern methods of construction under the grant conditions imposed. Social landlords must bring all existing stock up to an EPC 'C' rating by 2030 to support carbon net zero targets as well.

There are substantial extra costs for housing associations and councils in meeting the decarbonisation agenda and they will need to be managed at the same time as the multibillion-pound costs of building safety remediation and the expense of managing new consumer regulation standards, proposed in the Social Housing White Paper published last autumn.

Social landlords will worry, too, about what happens when the furlough scheme ends and the £20 a week Universal Credit uplift is removed later this year. Unemployment has risen by

almost 750,000 people during the Covid pandemic, even with all the help the government has offered. There will need to be a tremendous bounceback in economic activity once restrictions are fully lifted for all social tenants to keep their, often insecure, jobs next winter.

Against this extraordinarily tough backdrop, it is no wonder housing association boards are cautious about future development. L&Q's 'pause' on new land acquisitions and projects beyond its committed programme is into its second year and the country's leading housing association developer now expects to build around 3,000 new homes a year for the next five years, way down on its previous ambition of 10,000 homes a year. Optivo is cutting back from 1,500 new homes a year to 1,250, while Hyde Housing recently sold a portfolio of 422 shared ownership homes to financial services giant, M&G, to kick off a £500m partnership deal to produce 2,000 homes through M&G's new shared ownership fund.

Hyde's chief executive, Peter Denton, said: "If we don't find new sources of funding, we simply won't have the resources to keep developing at the same rate. This isn't just about Hyde – there's a real risk that housing associations will be forced to reduce the number of new affordable homes they build."

The burden of new financial obligations on social landlords is now acute. Combined with lower affordable housing planning gains and a standstill AHP, it will be remarkable if the volume of new affordable completions is maintained at the rates achieved during the late 2010s and remarkable if the government is hitting its 300,000 new homes a year target by 2025.

The planned £3.8bn decarbonisation fund and the extra £3.5bn for the



Building Safety Fund announced in February will be useful, if partial, supports, depending on how much of the money the social sector can bag. But housing association indebtedness will grow significantly during the 2020s and a continuing low interest rate environment, no certainty if inflation takes off, will be important.

To offset what feels like a gloomy prognosis, where can we find some points of light?

It may be a bizarre place to start, but the pandemic has accelerated many positive changes in affordable housing working practices. Flexible working, improved IT systems, changing office use, a stronger digital offer, better communication with residents – these are substantial gains the sector should build on. More than this, psychologically, the crisis has re-energised employees' active sense of social purpose as community work came to the fore.

The Planning White Paper's radical main ideas, aimed at simplifying, modernising and speeding up the

planning process, have real potential to improve what has been a long-term drag on the housing development industry. The return of consumer regulation and greater rigour in policing development and housing management standards is also not before time.

And there are a number of 'could have been worse' aspects to the last year's drama: the new AHP, Brexit, and the generally impressive way the social housing sector has dealt with the disruption of Covid.

Finally, we should not let this year pass without noting two major departures from the scene. David Montague, who transformed L&Q into a creative development powerhouse over 12 years as chief executive, quit in January, while Nick Walkley, who transformed the dynamism, scope and interventionism of Homes England, stepped down at the end of February.

Their successors, and everyone else involved in affordable housing, have a lot to occupy them for the next 12 months and beyond. **sh**





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St Anne's Quarter, Norwich



Since entering Orbit, Helen Moore has relished every minute of its social mission. **RUPERT BATES** discovers how the pandemic may shape the journey to come



Back in the 1960s two people were sitting on a park bench discussing how to tackle homelessness. The result over half a century later is one of the most progressive housing providers in the UK and one of the largest builders of affordable homes.

How ironic that the Orbit Group should have been founded on a park bench. Today the pair would have been masked up, two metres apart, if indeed they'd been allowed to meet at all; and despite the work of the likes of Orbit, infused with social purpose not social distance, housing poverty and inequality has only been amplified and exacerbated by the pandemic.

The last time I saw Helen Moore (left) we were touring one of the many stunning restoration projects carried out by her previous company, City & Country, where Moore was managing director. Prior to that Moore worked at Crest Nicholson and Countryside, so brings great experience and flair to her new position as group director of Orbit Homes.

Moore is never short of a word with huge enthusiasm for the industry, but, even via the medium of a video call, you could sense how she is warming to her new task – a social one, as much as a commercial one. ►

"At City & Country I dealt with some stunning properties and it was fabulous being involved with legacy; restoring historic buildings that had fallen into disrepair and leaving something great behind," says Moore.

Legacy is a core Orbit value too, but not forgetting the here and now. "Just because a home may be at the more affordable end of the market does not mean compromising on quality. Any new home at any price point is aspirational, exciting and a landmark in life's journey. Everyone deserves that opportunity to proudly call somewhere home."

She feels slightly embarrassed to admit that she was taken aback by the quality of the Orbit homes when she arrived. "I was blown away by how good the houses are. Our customers love them too – really attractive homes in lovely locations and well managed."

Orbit Homes is the housebuilding arm, but wholly embraces the Group sense of social purpose and the need to support the wider community in perpetuity.

"I love the fact that everyone here is thinking 'how can we drive more benefit to the community? What

impact is what we're doing having?' It is a great mindset to be in and so rewarding."

Moore was driven to join Orbit from the private sector to help shape the housebuilding arm of a housing association and is clearly loving every minute of it.

Moore doesn't do fluff and knows the hard-nosed commercial world in which she operates. But the beauty with companies like Orbit, she says, is that "the social value piece is not just a point of difference. It makes demonstrable business sense too."

"Don't lose the social importance of your work by being too commercially focused; equally, recognise that the right commercial approach drives both viability and social value. A combination of the two is a very powerful and successful hybrid."

Orbit also looks to partner with social enterprises through its supply chain where the pound spent can do so much more.

"Our approach is to work with businesses who deliver the quality we need and inherently live our values and, in doing so, we are able to deliver incredible impact and

make our core spend work harder as a result," says Moore.

"More points of difference make the story really compelling and provide more reasons to choose us, assigning a value to that choice. Our teams love the idea that they are making a positive impact beyond just the homes created. But whatever level of the market you are operating in, you need to get the best value for your product, so you can reinvest for the next project, creating jobs and supporting local economies."

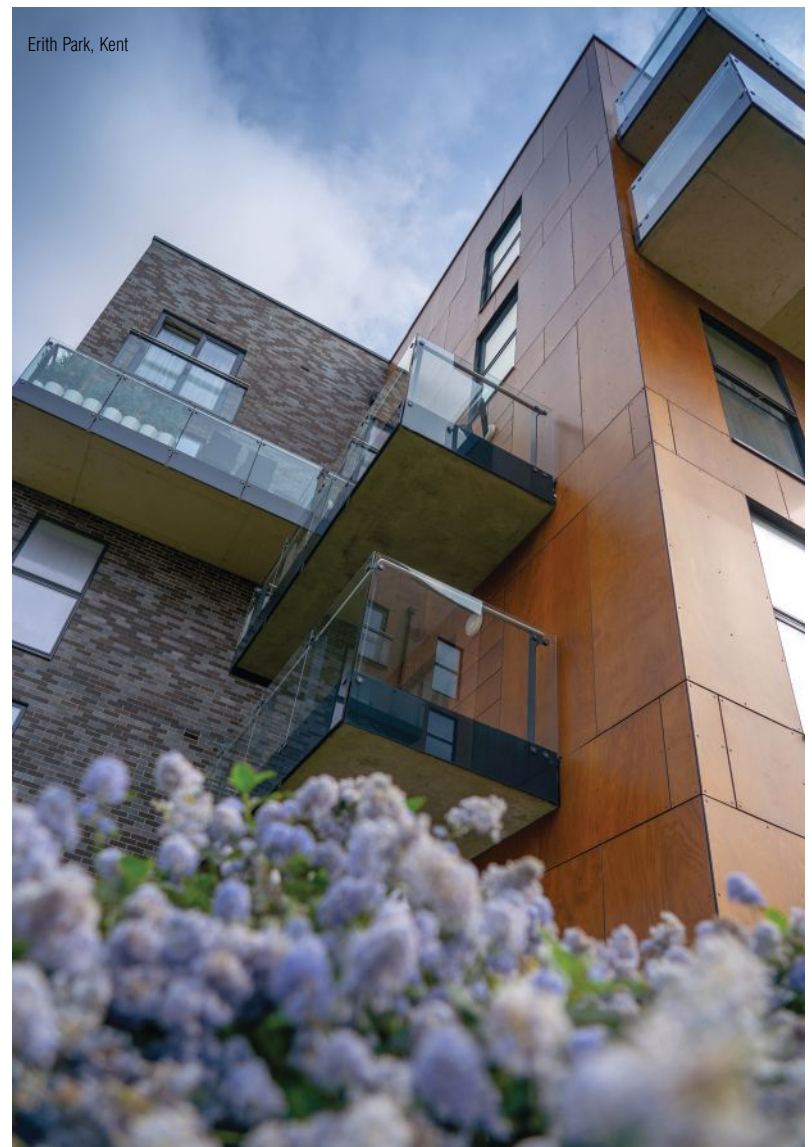
When it comes to hitting net zero carbon targets and other sustainability initiatives and imperatives, Moore says Orbit is well-placed to lead, drawing on its long-term relationship with customers, given the Group's role as a big social landlord.

Orbit's sphere of housing influence is huge, helping the homeless and victims of domestic abuse into safe accommodation, through the whole raft of tenures and rental models onto shared ownership and outright market sale, with Help to Buy on the menu.

Meanwhile Orbit Homes has adopted the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Safer by Design framework for all future new-build



Arden Quarter, Stratford upon Avon



Erith Park, Kent



The Hedgerows, Hailsham



Riverside Place, Rochester



“Our teams love the idea that they are making a positive impact beyond just the homes created”

homes – only the second housebuilder and first housing association to do so.

“We have such a diverse product range in the Group to help meet peoples’ housing needs whoever and wherever they are. Orbit recognises it is our duty to try and create solutions to all the challenges out there.”

Covid-19 has brought home society’s glaring inequalities, but also enlightened people about the value of cohesive communities.

“Housing is an incredibly important part of that; the right to proper, decent accommodation.”

Orbit is tenure blind, but the fact that the term still exists in the housing lexicon grates with Moore. It should be a given, not a piece of development terminology.

“Whether it is market sale or shared ownership, I have insisted they are sold and marketed in the same way with the same show home and the same high standards of design and specification. It is only peoples’ circumstances that are different – the process, whether you’re buying 100% of the biggest house or 25% of the smallest, should be just as exciting

and just as valued. It is where our emotive tag line ‘your place to thrive’ really resonates.”

Orbit’s Better Days initiatives support customers in improving their health, wellbeing and safety, providing advice and support, as well as creating opportunities to connect with others.

They are values that attract the right calibre of staff too. The private sector may usually be able to wave a bigger cheque, but increasingly candidates are looking for less cash and more conscience, quizzing their prospective bosses about the company’s social purpose and environmental agenda.

“They are asking ‘how does it make me feel doing what I do and how I go about my work?’” says Moore, who has recruited some faces familiar to her, as well as new ones, as she builds her team.

The pandemic has told her that agile, or flexible, working is here to stay, with being confined to home while setting about her new job helping not hindering her plans, ensuring she can converse and collaborate at the click of a video button with her teams and save on lost commuting hours. Although,

site visits remain hugely important as invariably “all the answers are onsite”.

“It is important to get that work/life balance right. Housebuilding is hard work and I couldn’t attract the best people here unless there was something for them to be proud of, doing something valuable and making a difference,” says Moore.

Whether working from home has met with the approval of one set of builders is a moot point. With years of experience on some of the finest residential restoration projects in the land, Moore is well-equipped to project manage the renovation of her own home.

“It meant I could snag as the work progressed. Yes, I did get what I wanted, but it was important not to upset the builders too much in case they didn’t come back!”

A straight-talking reputation for getting things done, but laced with passion, pride and purpose – social purpose. And one thing is certain; had Moore walked past that park bench she would have sat down and joined in the conversation. She probably would have sanded it down too. [sh](#)

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Hazardous material



The revelations from the Grenfell Inquiry are truly shocking, exposing an industry and regulatory culture in dire need of reform. **SIMON GRAHAM** reports

If the ever-increasing scale of the fire safety crisis in housing still surprises you, follow proceedings at the Grenfell Inquiry and it will surprise you no longer. What is unfolding is a scandal. It will be astonishing if serious consequences do not follow once the Inquiry has completed its work.

Was what happened at Grenfell somehow unique or was it symptomatic of systemic failure? As fire safety inspectors open up the external wall systems of more tall buildings and ever more safety issues are uncovered, the latter looks most likely, with the £15bn bill to put things right nationally supporting that conclusion.

The story being presented at the Grenfell Inquiry is one of over-reliance of clients on professional consultants; over-reliance of professional consultants on contractors and subcontractors; lax regulatory systems, official guidance and certification procedures; compromised or simply not very competent testing and certification bodies; and governments more concerned with 'cutting red tape' and freeing the market than effective safety regulation. Commercial interests appear to run ahead of safety concerns and accountability is someone else's concern.

The term 'value engineering' should be banned from the lexicon. It has crumbled into a byword for ill-judged cost saving and cut corners.

Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding was a 'value engineered' substitute at Grenfell for the much safer solid metal cladding originally specified. Rydon, the main contractor, was asked by the client landlord, Kensington & Chelsea TMO (KCTMO), to find savings of £800,000 on the contract price. Changing to ACM cladding was a key element in the cost reductions.

The companies involved in the supply chain for the external wall system during the refurbishment of Grenfell were aware of the regulatory restrictions around putting combustible materials on high rise blocks of flats. To be safe on high rises, combustible products could only be used in precise ways within specific wall systems that effectively overcame the fire risk.

At Arconic in France, the multinational that supplied the cladding, there were periodic bouts of hand-wringing from at least one senior member of staff during the 2010s that the firm's continued marketing of polyethylene-cored (PE) ACM panels.

The company knew as early as 2005 that the 'cassette' version of the product (used later at

Grenfell) performed badly in a fire, following a French fire test. They continued to market it using a test classification given to a different form of the same product, including targeting jurisdictions where regulations were looser, like the UK.

Celotex, the main supplier of insulation for the Grenfell refurbishment, and Kingspan, a market leader in wall insulation which supplied some of its K15 product at Grenfell, obtained official certifications from Local Authority Building Control (LABC) on the basis of test results that either did not accurately reflect the exact composition of the product subsequently sold into the market or were skewed by the overall testing conditions used.

With very careful checking of test results, certifications and marketing materials, professional consultants and clients might have recognised that these products should not be used on tower blocks except in very specific circumstances. But, from the evidence at the Inquiry, the marketing and the certifications helped create a level of misunderstanding and confusion in the market about how the specific products could be used.

The companies all argue that their products are safe when used in the correct context with a suitable overall external wall system, other tests have been passed, and they were not responsible for the design of the system at Grenfell, but simply for supplying their products.

Serious questions must be asked also of the testing and certification bodies responsible for enabling these products to be marketed in the way they were. The main testing and certification bodies – the British Research Establishment (BRE), LABC and British Board of Agreement (BBA) – are all privatised former government agencies. As commercial enterprises since the 1990s, they have had to make their own way. The Inquiry evidence suggests the system of provision and monitoring of official product certifications was less than foolproof. On the face of it, these bodies have either been compromised by commercial considerations, were easily manipulated or deceived, or simply not particularly competent. There are few other plausible explanations for the way they acted in relation to the products eventually used at Grenfell.

By the time you read this, Kensington & Chelsea Council and the KCTMO managers responsible for the refurbishment will be sitting in what has become a very hot seat. Finally, national civil servants and ministers will be grilled.

Saving the best till last is patently the wrong phrase, but it is hard to avoid the conclusion that,



in the end, everything about this sorry mess comes back to government decisions and their consequences. The deregulation of the construction industry in the 1980s, the privatisation of product testing and certification, cutting 'red tape', the lack of action after the fatal 2009 Lakanal House fire, the swingeing austerity imposed on councils during the 2010s forcing them to seek savings wherever they could, strict affordable home completion deadlines in order to claim grants, pressure to build quickly to meet government targets, lower grants pushing up borrowing.

Tough financial pressure exerted on social sector development, privatisation of government agencies, and laissez-faire for the private sector has been a disastrous combination in housing. The sound of stable doors being firmly bolted now by government alters that not one iota.

The Inquiry continues. 

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Cairn secures £55m funding package

Cairn Housing Association has secured a £55m funding package from Royal Bank of Scotland to refinance existing loans, enhance home interiors and grow its development pipeline. More than half of the funding has been earmarked to upgrade 1,200 kitchens and bathrooms, as well as improve the energy efficiency of 700 homes with renewable energy initiatives and new heating systems that will additionally reduce fuel poverty.

The remainder will be used to support the construction of more than 600 new homes across the Scottish Highlands and Central Belt, with

new developments in Aviemore, Thurso and Falkirk already underway. Cairn HA was established in 1989 and employs 190 staff. Operating across 24 local authorities in Scotland with a significant presence in the Central Belt and Highland regions.

Derek Adam, director of finance and people services at Cairn HA, said: "We are incredibly proud to provide quality, safe and affordable homes throughout Scotland, helping to enhance communities and foster strong relationships with a variety of key stakeholders and partners. The funding we have received from Royal Bank of Scotland has helped

accelerate our future growth plans as we press ahead with the development of significant new housing schemes across Scotland, creating much-needed affordable housing options. We're now primed for a strong future with confidence that we can upgrade the homes of our tenants."

David Horne, housing finance director at RBS, added: "Working with Derek and his team has been incredibly rewarding and builds on what has been a long-term partnership between Cairn HA and the Royal Bank of Scotland. Their commitment to providing high-quality, accessible homes and creating thriving

communities is evident and this will have a positive impact on the lives of the Association's tenants. We enabled a flexible funding structure that utilised our long-dated loan offering, which will allow Cairn HA to progress with their ambitious business objectives over the next 10 years and beyond, helping them increase their tenant portfolio even further." Last year, NatWest Group – the parent company of Royal Bank of Scotland – announced that it will be investing £3bn in social housing across the UK over the next three years, to support the construction of 20,000 homes.

Lovell to deliver Black Country homes

Investment from the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) has paved the way for developer Lovell to build more than 300 homes on sites in the Black Country. It will deliver 234 units at the site of a former foundry in Fountain Lane, Oldbury, and 71 homes on the former Cookley Works site on Leys Road, Brierley Hill. The WMCA investments – £3.95m for Fountain Lane and £1m for Cookley Works – will pay for the remediation of the sites, which have stood derelict for more than a decade, so they can be brought forward for residential development.

Andy Street (pictured), mayor of the West Midlands and chair of the WMCA, said: "Announcing two more major housing projects on brownfield land shows the commitment of the WMCA, alongside Sandwell and Dudley councils, Lovell and other partners to continue delivering for our communities during these difficult times. The pandemic has hit the West Midlands harder than most, but these two schemes, along with the many others we have funded in recent months, will help our regional economy bounce back after this crisis by providing vital jobs, affordable homes, apprenticeships and space for communities to grow. "It is vital we continue unlocking the region's brownfield land in this way to deliver much-needed affordable housing and employment across the region and protect our green belt from unnecessary development."

The Fountain Lane scheme will include one- and two-bedroom apartments, as well as two-, three- and four-bedroom houses, around half of which will be for affordable rent and shared ownership tenures.

The Cookley Works site will see 71 homes built including a mix of affordable rent and low cost home ownership.

Stuart Penn, regional managing director for Lovell, said: "It's thanks to the WMCA's Single Commissioning Framework that we're able to bring



forward schemes like these at both Fountain Lane and Leys Road and it's a pleasure to be able to regenerate these brownfield sites into thriving new places to call home. This framework allows strong working relationships with developers agreeing to meet the WMCA's land use and design criteria equally. When we emerge from the pandemic, there will be an even greater impetus to identify key, strategic sites that can support the region's regeneration. Despite recent events, this announcement comes at a critical time as we work together with the WMCA to deliver the Midlands' housing needs, vital to the wider economic recovery of the region."

Lovell has also partnered with Housing Plus Group to provide 45 affordable homes in South Staffordshire. Housing Plus Group has purchased the properties from Lovell Homes in a deal worth more than £6m. The two-, three- and four-bedroom properties will be located across two sites in the villages of Coven and Brewood.

Chris Jones, director of residential land at Harris Lamb, said: "Lovell Homes has a strong reputation for constructing high-specification homes in very desirable areas, while, as one of the largest housing providers in the area, Housing Plus Group is a major investor in communities and has pledged to help address the UK housing shortage by building 2,000 new homes for rent, shared ownership and outright sale by 2023. We have excellent relationships with both organisations, and we are delighted to have organised the sale between the two companies to help Housing Plus work towards its goal. Agreeing this deal has been a fantastic process thanks to the enthusiasm and professionalism on all sides."

Lesley Birch, development manager at Housing Plus Group, added: "This has been a very enjoyable and rewarding process securing these homes. Being able to add new properties of this calibre to our portfolio and working with Lovell Homes is something we are really excited about."

Onward Homes completes £215m bond issue

North-west housing association Onward Homes, which owns and manages more than 35,000 units, has raised £215m from its first bond issue.

Chief executive Bronwen Rapley said: “Our successful bond issue is the completion of a five-year process to create a single organisation from five separate housing associations. We are now realising the financial strength of our united organisation. The investment raised will underpin our business plan for the years ahead, to deliver considerable social, environmental and economic impact in the north-west. We are well positioned to make a significant contribution to a green and inclusive recovery in our region by building 500 new quality homes a year and investing in communities.”



Onward Homes CEO Bronwen Rapley (left) and executive director of finance Lisa Oxley (right)

Right to Buy proceeds diverted from new social housing

Money raised from the sale of council homes will be diverted away from building new social housing under new plans announced by the government.

A statement on the MCHLG website said the government intends to “allow local authorities the option to use Right to Buy receipts to provide properties for shared ownership as well as for social and affordable rent. Since the receipts consultation was issued, the government has announced the new First Homes scheme, which will enable first-time buyers to access discounts of at least 30% on new build properties in their area.”

While individual councils will in theory be able to choose to keep funding social housing instead, the MCHLG acknowledged concerns that there could be “a potential implicit pressure for councils to favour supplying shared ownership properties because of their lower debt costs”.

An estimated 40% of all homes sold under Right To Buy are now rented out by private landlords.

The number of council homes sold under the policy increased five-fold in six years after David Cameron’s government lifted a cap on the policy and increased discounts. As of June 2020, 85,645 homes have been sold through the policy since it was updated in 2012, but just 28,090 have been built to replace them.

Polly Neate, chief executive of Shelter, said: “We are already selling off more social homes than we build every year. Now the money from these sales will be funnelled into home ownership schemes that are far out of reach for average renting families, rather than building more of the secure and affordable social homes we so desperately need. With more than a million households on the waiting list, and potentially many more people facing homelessness in the aftermath of this pandemic, this new proposal is the last thing we need. The government should instead be focusing on building a new generation of social homes that could actually tackle the housing crisis.”

L&G grows affordable pipeline to 5,500 units

Legal & General Affordable Homes has increased its development pipeline to 5,500 homes across the UK, with a gross asset value approaching £1bn. It has also increased its team from five to 75 employees, with plans to hire another 20 by the end of the year.

The subsidiary of Legal & General Capital has secured 1,000 new homes in London; most recently contracting on 174 affordable homes in Hammersmith and Fulham. Half of these will be targeted to lower income households, in line with the local authority’s priority income groups. The affordable housing is part of a 1,800-home scheme, redeveloping a former M&S distribution centre, which is due to hand over in mid-2022. Other schemes in London include 76 homes in Hounslow, completing in August 2021; 213 affordable rented homes in Wembley; 90 affordable rented homes in Lambeth and 127 affordable rented and shared

ownership homes in Tower Hamlets.

Across the UK, L&G is bringing forward more than 2,200 homes in the south-east, 900 in the south-west and 1,400 homes in the Midlands and the north.

Ben Denton, chief executive of Legal & General Affordable Homes, said: “The pandemic has affected every corner of our lives and had a major impact on what we need from our homes, workplaces and communities. In particular, it has brought into even sharper relief the urgent need to provide stable and affordable homes for millions of households on low incomes.

“Since launching two years ago, Legal & General Affordable Homes has grown its development pipeline to 5,500 homes throughout the country to help meet the needs of local communities. We remain committed to deploying institutional capital at scale to address one of our greatest societal failings.”

SO Resi shares best practice through new sales agency arm

The award-winning team at SO Resi has launched an innovative new shared ownership sales agency for external parties, be it other housing associations, local authority housing providers, investment funds or private developers. In the spirit of sharing best practice, the team wants to share its approach to ensure greater access to affordable homes, especially for those looking to buy a home in the current economic climate.

SO Resi Agency will offer partners an extensive database of would-be buyers looking for shared ownership homes. The service the team can provide is twofold: from finding buyers to taking customers through to legal completion, utilising its internal processes to help get sales across the line. SO Resi, the shared ownership brand of Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing, has on average 50,000-60,000 visitors to its website every month.

The agency service will allow users to advertise their property on the SO Resi Agency website and access the teams' expertise including marketing and sales support.

Diana Alam, head of sales at Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing, comments: "With lending becoming more challenging at entry level, and an economic backdrop that presents challenges to homebuyers, more and more people are looking to shared ownership as a

way to get into the market, or upsize without the risk of taking on a burdensome mortgage. "We have been inundated with people interested in shared ownership, which is why we are excited to be launching a new sales agency dedicated to shared ownership housing. We are looking forward to sharing best practice, but more importantly providing buyers with access to more affordable homes and promoting the many benefits offered by shared ownership." Over the last six months, Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing has been working closely with ReSI Housing, a for-profit Registered Provider managed by Gresham House, a for-profit fund, and together the partnership has brought forward 138 new homes to the shared ownership market. It hopes to replicate this with other funds, housing associations and local authority providers to share best practice and more choice.

Alam adds: "We have already established a number of partnerships through SO Resi Agency, with high levels of reservations recorded for recently launched properties on behalf of our partners. Partnerships are vital in accelerating the delivery of affordable homes across the country, and we hope to continue to work with those in the industry to provide aspirational buyers with the opportunity to own their own home."

Abri assesses post-pandemic shared ownership market

Shared ownership now accounts for 34% of all new affordable housing supply but, says Stuart Hensby, associate director of sales and marketing at Abri Group, with much of the stock based in London yet with some indication of buyers turning their backs on the capital as a result of the pandemic, is supply meeting demand in the correct locations?

Hensby commented: "Being located in the south of England, we're in a prime location to be seeing the reported London exodus in action. Our enquiries certainly support the theory, but I think we're yet to see true, broad, quantifiable evidence of the longevity in the trend of urban flight.

"We have seen an influx of buyers from London looking down the A23 corridor at our Woodgate joint venture development in Pease Pottage, and helped by the stamp duty holiday extension we're expecting to see strong numbers for the year end. It's clear that people have re-evaluated their priorities over the last year, with more onus on their work/life balance. Everyone wants more – be that space, bedrooms or greenery – but that still comes at a cost, so people will buy what they can afford to.

"The changes in various affordable housing products, which come into effect this month, will likely shift people's priorities.

"We're already seeing higher LTV mortgage products return to the market, reaffirming confidence in the market, but with everyone on the hunt for the same boxes to be ticked, demand outstripping supply could push values up.

"I'm keen to see how shared ownership fares in the coming year; particularly the government's proposed changes of lower value thresholds and smaller staircasing increments. I hope it interests a wider pool of buyers. Greater affordability means more options, whether upsizing, rightsizing or buying for the first time.

"With the interest levels we've seen continuing, it's clear buyer confidence is high – let's hope it stays that way and we can continue building affordable homes in the right places."

Living Space Housing concludes second year of physical trading

Living Space Housing has concluded its second year of physical trading, hitting a turnover in excess of £21m.

The Solihull-based affordable housing specialist launched to the market in 2019 and is currently constructing seven residential developments across England, with a number of additional sites in the planning system. The combined construction value of its development portfolio is in excess of £72m, which equates to 580 affordable houses, apartments and bungalows.

The company's active management of its whole supply chain has enabled the rapid growth, with construction pausing for only three to five weeks during the first national coronavirus lockdown in spring 2020.

Steve Davies, managing director of Living Space Housing, said: "The affordable housing sector was impacted more significantly than the residential market as a whole in 2020, with the number of new homes delivered down by a third from the previous year. By working very closely with our supply chain we have been able to minimise the disruption brought on by the pandemic and break ground on a

new site every few months. We reassessed our business plan in mid-2020 and committed to significantly increase production output to help to meet the unprecedented demand."

Living Space's seven live developments comprise 51 homes at its flagship Malvern Oaks scheme in the village of Cradley, on the outskirts of Malvern, Herefordshire, which is being developed in conjunction with leading affordable housing provider Stonewater. Another 48 homes are being constructed for Stonewater at the former Victoria Carpets Sports Ground in Kidderminster, while 26 homes located off Britannia Way in central Telford, Shropshire are currently being delivered for Accord Housing Association. Elsewhere in Telford, 38 homes located off Park Road in the Malinslee ward of the town, and 39 homes on former Homes England land at Majestic Way are being delivered for The Wrekin Housing Group. In the Oxfordshire village of Milcombe, 40 affordable homes are being constructed for housing provider Paradigm, while 36 homes are being constructed in conjunction with Hightown Housing Association in the village of Moggerhanger, in central Bedfordshire.



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Welcome

Do you, or your clients, build the best new homes in Britain?

Then we proudly invite your online entries to the WhatHouse? Awards 2021 – the Oscars of the housebuilding industry – now in their 41st year and renowned as the most prestigious accolades in new homes.

A WhatHouse? Award is a highly respected symbol of prestige and excellence, giving winners the ultimate sales and marketing edge over their competitors and reassuring buyers they are purchasing from Britain's best housebuilders.

We were forced to praise and recognise our winners remotely last year due to the havoc wrought by Covid-19 and every housebuilder and every cog in the supply chain deserves huge congratulations for their efforts in adversity – a refusal to be bowed amid the huge trauma and unprecedented challenges of 2020.

What does 2021 hold? Housebuilding is an industry that cannot afford to be bowed, for there is much to be done and the list of challenges, in terms of delivery and reputation, is long and requires resolve and a robust facing up to responsibilities.

The WhatHouse? Awards honour enterprising, customer-focused housebuilders, large and small, as well as housing associations, working alongside an equally innovative supply chain to produce top-quality housing across the price range.



Our Awards sponsors are all leaders in their fields and best in class, hugely committed to and responsible for the success of the new-build market.

We look forward to receiving your online entries, showcasing all that is great about the housebuilding industry.

Good luck and thank you for your support.

Rupert Bates
Editorial Director
WhatHouse?

To view the 2020 Awards highlights go to: https://youtu.be/9URd_HVAzEI

ENTRY DEADLINE: 16 JULY 2021



WINNING

All winners will receive a plaque signifying a Gold, Silver or Bronze award for each category. The prestigious Housebuilder of the Year has only one award.

TAKING PART

Any number of online entries, including multiple entries in the same category, are invited from housebuilders, developers and housing associations, large and small. Judges are looking for information that clearly and concisely tells them of the quality of the product, backed up with photographs and why the entry is worthy of being considered for the industry's top accolades. Please refer to Conditions of Entry on page 8 for details of what is required in your online presentation.

THE JUDGING

When all online entries have been received, an extensive panel of property experts, including architects, surveyors, property writers and industry specialists, will prepare their own shortlists of the best entries in each category.

These shortlists are not published in advance of the presentation ceremony. Selected entries will then be visited where applicable and a detailed report drawn up before judges reach their final decisions. Up to three awards – Gold, Silver and Bronze – will be made in each category (apart from Category 1).

Where entries are deemed of insufficient merit, the number of awards may be reduced in that category.

Written reports detailing the judges' decisions will be made available online at the conclusion of the WhatHouse? Awards presentation ceremony. The judges' decisions are final and no correspondence will be entered into.

PUBLICITY

Award-winning housebuilders and developments, through an integrated PR campaign, will receive widespread national, local, trade, digital and social media coverage, promoting the builders of the best new homes in Britain, including a supplement in the industry's leading trade magazine, Show House, and extensive

online coverage on Showhouse.co.uk and WhatHouse.com.

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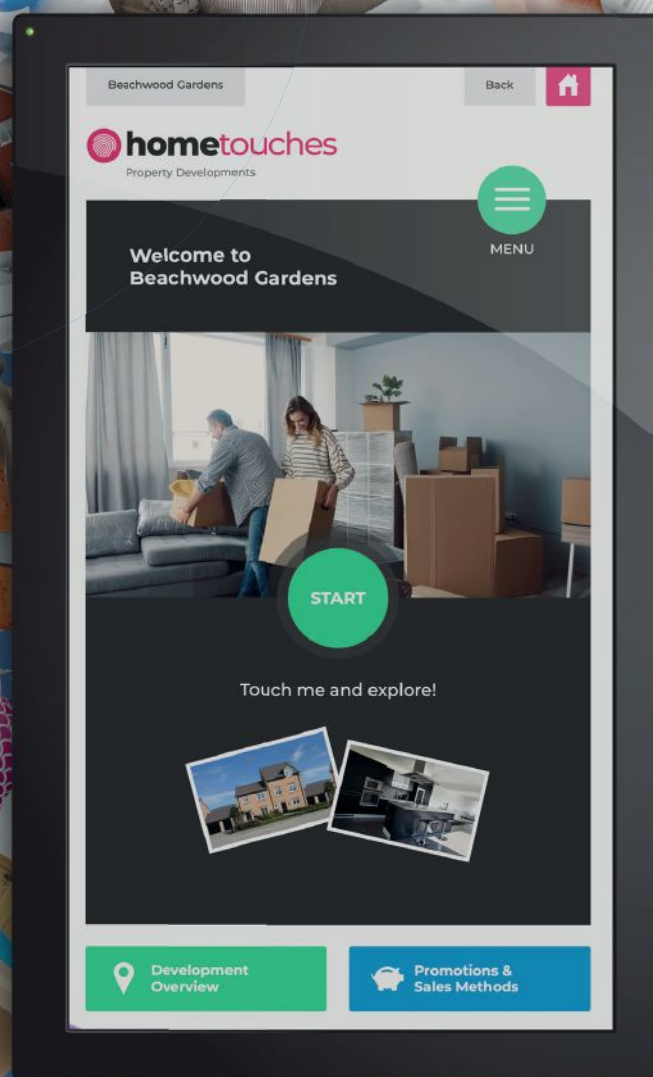


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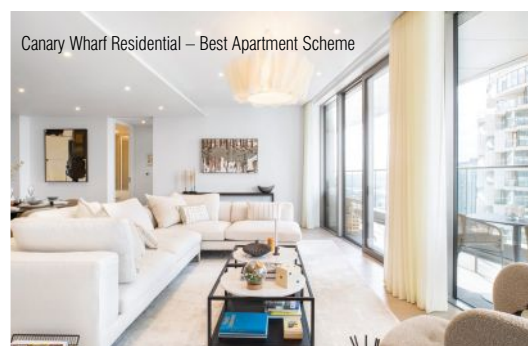
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CATEGORIES

1. Housebuilder of the Year

No entry is required for this category, as the award will be made exclusively from online entries received in categories 2, 3 and 4.

This is our top award and the most coveted prize in British housebuilding – the ultimate new homes accolade.

It is important that all housebuilders, large, medium and small, enter into either category 2, 3, or 4 to be eligible for the top award.

As well as the quality, design and range of the houses built, all aspects of the housebuilder's performance will be assessed, including: the influence of senior management, staff values, recruitment & training, sustainability initiatives, marketing, homebuying assistance schemes, aftersales service and customer care, etc.

This is not an award for the biggest or most conspicuous; it is an award for the best and is open to all housebuilders, large or small who enter categories 2, 3 and 4.

2. Best Large Housebuilder

(1,000 units or more a year.
Please state number)

This is an important category for all volume housebuilders in the UK to enter. If you do not enter your company into this category you will not be eligible to compete for Housebuilder of the Year.

As well as the quality, design and range of the houses built, all aspects of the housebuilder's performance will be assessed, including: the influence of senior management, staff values, recruitment & training, sustainability initiatives, social impact, marketing, homebuying assistance schemes, aftersales service and customer care, etc.

This award is only open to companies building at least 1,000 units a year.

All entrants in this category will automatically be considered for the Housebuilder of the Year award.

3. Best Medium Housebuilder

(100-999 units a year. Please state number)

This is an important category for all medium-size housebuilders in the UK to enter. If you do not enter your company into this category you will not be eligible to compete for Housebuilder of the Year.

As well as the quality, design and range of the houses built, all aspects of the housebuilder's performance will be assessed, including: the influence of senior management, staff values, recruitment & training, sustainability initiatives, social impact, marketing, homebuying assistance schemes, aftersales service and customer care, etc.

This award is only open to companies building between 100 and 999 units a year.

All entrants in this category will automatically be considered for the Housebuilder of the Year award.

4. Best Small Housebuilder

(Less than 100 units a year.
Please state number)

This is an important category for all small housebuilders in the UK to enter. If you do not enter your company into this category you will not be eligible to compete for Housebuilder of the Year.

As well as the quality, design and range of the houses built, all aspects of the housebuilder's performance will be assessed, including: the influence of senior management, staff values, recruitment & training, sustainability initiatives, social impact, marketing, homebuying assistance schemes, aftersales service and customer care, etc.

This award is only open to companies building less than 100 units a year.

This is an opportunity for brand new companies having recently completed their first developments, or established small, niche housebuilders.

All entrants in this category will automatically be considered for the Housebuilder of the Year award.

5. Housing Association of the Year

This award is open to all housing associations, large and small, with judges looking at all aspects of performance, including design and build, value for money, management and marketing.

Judges also want to see innovative solutions to assist buyers on to the home ownership ladder or into rented accommodation, according to needs and status. Housing associations should illustrate, through a mix of tenures and equity schemes, how they are spreading the affordable and social housing options as wide and as flexibly as possible. Joint ventures with private sector housebuilders can also be included in online entry submissions.

6. Best Build to Rent Project

This category recognises the significant growth of build to rent schemes in the private rented sector.

Entries should offer high standards of design, interactive social hubs, office space and leisure facilities and dedicated onsite management services to fulfil the needs of the development's tenants, be they single professionals or families.

Cutting-edge technology and innovative partnerships should also reflect the mobility and flexibility of the residents across a variety of needs.



Abri – Housing Association of the Year



Vistry Partnerships – Best Mixed Use Development



Gold Property Developments – Best Sustainable Development

As well as details of the scheme built specifically for rent, online entries should include a statement of management ethos, including customer care policies, focus on community vibe and any other supporting material relating to the functionality and design of the building that makes it worthy of winning an award in this exciting category.

Institutions and investors, who should be credited in entry submissions where applicable, are invited to encourage their developers to enter.

7. Best Starter Home Scheme

With ever-increasing mortgage criteria to meet, the judges are looking at starter homes – either standalone developments or within wider housing schemes – that not only offer quality, value-for-money properties for entry-level budgets, but also give first-time buyers a variety of options and initiatives to help them onto the first rung of the housing ladder.

Affordable housing schemes from housing associations, shared equity initiatives, mixed-tenure projects and joint ventures between private and public sector are all eligible.

8. Best House

The Best House award is for middle-market houses with that something extra – a high-quality family home of exceptional standard. Between the first-time buyer and the big-money executive lies a mass new homes market. What judges are looking for is a house that combines comfortable family living at a realistic price, but with the edge to lift it above its competitors. Not too big and not too small, both affordable and aspirational.

9. Best Apartment Scheme

This may be a block of one-bedroom apartments at a budget price for first-time buyers, a luxury waterfront apartment scheme, or a stylish high-rise development. Judges will be looking at the internal layout, elevational treatments and architectural innovation, while considering the relative price range and the overall quality of the scheme.

10. Best Luxury House

A one-off bespoke house on a single plot or a luxurious, individually designed property on a small, exclusive development. This is the brand new home that has everything – and a little bit more, that twist that lifts it above its peers. Luxury and quality, but value for money in an exalted price range. Entrants should provide details of price and size.

11. Best Renovation

This award recognises enterprising development of dated or derelict property. Exterior and interior appearance as well as interesting adaptation of original features will be considered. Before and after images are key.

12. Best Development

Is your site the Best Development in Britain? Judges will be looking for a stylish mix of original designs, top quality site layout and landscaping, a variety of external elevations and plenty of design flair inside and out. This is not an award for luxury, but an award for a mass-market development lifted above the ordinary by the quality of its component parts, be it geared to first-time buyers, the middle market, or a mix of properties across the price range.

13. Best Partnership Scheme

This award is designed to highlight the excellent partnerships, or joint ventures, forged between developers and other bodies, be they housing associations, local councils, retailers, energy companies or any other sectors or institutions partnering with housebuilders to meet housing demand.

14. Best Luxury Development

This category is for a top-of-the-range development of executive homes, with an unswerving commitment to design, finish, landscaping, security, sustainability and customer care. Top houses for top people at premium prices, be it swanky riverside apartments, or a millionaires' row of new-build mansions, set in luxurious surroundings. The development should offer value for money, albeit in an exalted price range.

15. Best Mixed Use Development

This category recognises the increasing importance and number of mixed-use schemes. Judges will be looking for developments with a range of different facilities and amenities and how they contribute to the economic and social enhancement of the neighbourhood.

The development could be a large urban scheme, or a smaller scale, local mixed-use project. All developments must have a residential element, combined with commercial, retail, leisure, or other relevant uses.

Book your tickets for the Gala Luncheon now at <https://tinyurl.com/lunchbooking>



Mount Anvil – Best Interior Design



Audley – Best Retirement Development



Inland Homes – Best Regeneration Scheme

16. Best Retirement Development

This award will be presented to the company that has produced the best overall package for elderly customers. The design of the development, including accessibility and adaptability, will be considered, as well as the quality of additional services and amenities in delivering outstanding homes and care facilities. The developer's overall commitment to the promotion and enhancement of retirement living is also important.

This category covers age-restricted housing, sheltered accommodation, assisted senior living, retirement villages and developments offering a full range of care options to residents.

17. Best Sustainable Development

This category will reward housebuilders developing schemes that are an exemplary response to cutting carbon emissions, be they large urban projects or rural housing of two or more homes. The development must be innovative and demonstrate sustainability from land acquisition through planning, design, supply chain, materials and building. The winning development will not only be energy efficient, but will also support biodiversity and the local community. The housebuilder should be committed to embracing sustainability throughout its business.

18. Best Regeneration Scheme

Awards for developers who demonstrate a commitment to the inner city and urban renewal, or rural regeneration, including new build on derelict land, brownfield sites or refurbishment of existing housing stock. Regeneration of brownfield sites remains at the forefront of the housing debate and this category should provide outstanding examples of the housebuilder as an engine of growth and renewal.

19. Best Interior Design

This category recognises both interior design and interior architecture – the quality of the internal layouts, as well as furnishing and specifying trends and interpretations. How has the space been best utilised and has the full potential of the finished product been expertly showcased to the consumer?

Interior designers and architects, who should be credited in entry submissions, are invited to encourage their housebuilder clients to enter.

20. Best Exterior Design

This category is for the best looker. A striking housetype, façade or development profile, oozing kerb appeal and style. It does not have to shout loudly or show a lavish face and could be in the vernacular style of the area, or thoroughly modern and mould-breaking architecture.

21. Best Public Realm

This category embraces every aspect of public realm, including the vital commitment to biodiversity across both urban and rural landscapes.

Judges are looking for the housing developments that support and enhance nature, wildlife and habitats, showcasing conservation and ecology and working in partnership with experts and other key stakeholders.

As well as the natural environment, entrants must also champion civic pride and public open space, be it through commissioned works of art, cultural attractions, parks or community projects.



Hayfield – Best Public Realm

"To win at the WhatHouse? Awards is a great achievement which reflects the hard work and dedication of everyone in the business. It underlines the high standards our teams deliver day-in and day-out."

David Thomas, Group Chief Executive, Barratt Developments



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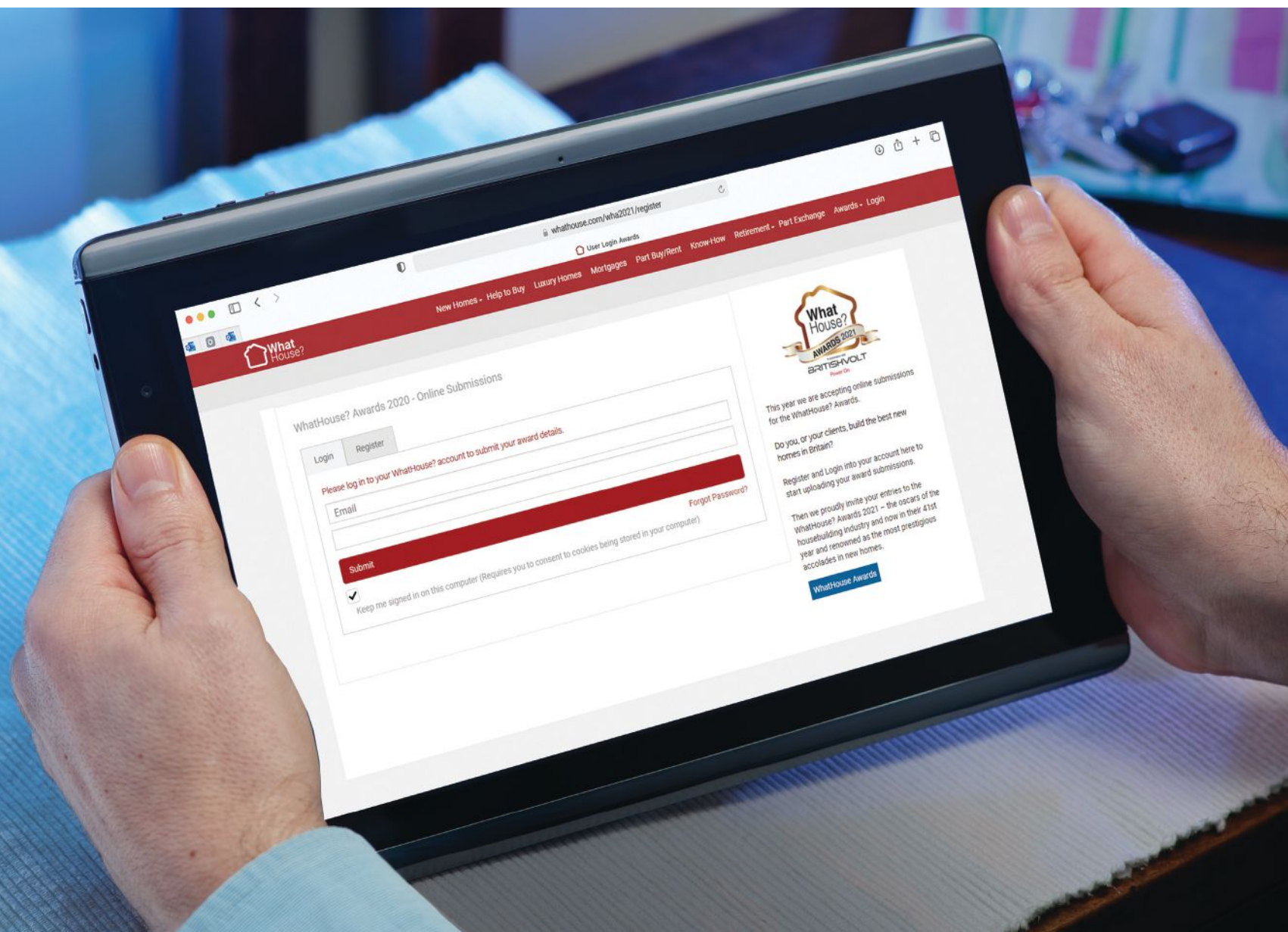


OFFICIAL ENTRY

This year we are only accepting online entries via the form on our website **www.showhouse.co.uk/what-house-awards**

Please follow the entry instructions included on the form but if you should require any assistance with this process, please email Derek Smith on ds@whathouse.com or Angela Greenwood on angela@whathouse.co.uk

Closing date for entries: Friday 16 July 2021



CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

1. All entries must be submitted using the online entry form available on www.whathouse.com/awards
2. The work entered in any category should have been largely completed or due for completion between 1 January 2020 and 30 June 2021. Individual units on a partially completed site, where the submitted work was completed between the above dates, are eligible. In categories where whole developments are entered, at least the first phase or a significant part of the development, must have been completed between the above dates. Essentially, there needs to be sufficient work completed for the judges to be able to form a considered opinion

HOW TO ENTER

3. All entries must be submitted online with the official entry form available on www.whathouse.com/awards. Written material, photographs and relevant plans should be uploaded as instructed on the form. Property prices, room sizes and total floor areas should also be given where appropriate.
4. The online entry forms must be completed in full and the conditions of entry strictly adhered to. Every individual entry will cost £450 + VAT payable by BACS or by an invoice that can be sent out to you. BACS payments can be accepted by sending the appropriate fee to Globespan Media Ltd, sort code 51-50-03, account number 66764491. One payment to cover multiple entries is acceptable and a receipt will be issued promptly afterwards.
5. All entries in categories 2, 3 & 4 will automatically be entered into Housebuilder of the Year for no extra charge.
6. Housebuilders may submit as many individual entries as they wish in all categories (except categories 2,3,4 & 5). Please note, if the same development or house is entered in more than one category, the entire online entry presentation must be duplicated, so there are separate, individual submissions for each entry. This does not apply to Categories 2, 3 and 4 where the entries will also be considered for Category 1 – Housebuilder of the Year.
7. Please note that an AV presentation will take place at the Awards luncheon. All online entries must therefore include a separate representative selection of hi-res pictures of the submitted unit or development.
8. The company logo you supply will be the one used on the winner's plaque in the event of a successful submission.
9. Entry to the WhatHouse? Awards will be taken to admit the right to publish photographs, descriptions and other particulars of participating schemes.

DESCRIPTION

10. Judges are looking for clearly presented online material, that concisely informs them of the product or work of the housebuilder and why the entrant is worthy of an award. There is no restriction on the number of words written within the entries, but it is advisable to keep them concise and to the point bearing in mind the object of the entry is to capture the judges' attention as quickly and succinctly as possible. The same applies for the accompanying photography, where any number of pictures can be uploaded within the entry and good quality images are important.

The online entry submissions are aids to help judges draw up their own shortlists in their respective categories, before selected entries are visited and detailed award-winner reports drawn up.

Please note that we do not publish shortlists in advance and the Awards results are only announced at the Presentation Luncheon on 19 November at the JW Marriott Grosvenor House hotel.

11. In Categories 2, 3, 4 and 5, extensive details of companies are required, giving judges the complete picture as to the product, size, make-up, philosophy, history and sphere of the company's operation, supported by relevant photographs and testimonials, as well as headline figures, results and data.
12. Please note, in all categories, existing sales brochures and videos are eligible to be uploaded to enhance an online entry.
13. In all categories, postal addresses and telephone numbers of sites submitted are required, as well as the name, email and telephone number of the person responsible for your award entry.
14. Products & Services. Housebuilders are encouraged to acknowledge key suppliers and products that have gone into the home, scheme or initiative and contributed to the award-winning potential of the entry. For example, the name of the interior design/architecture company in Category 19.
15. Please note, the name of the housebuilder appearing on your supplied company logo will be the name used on the WhatHouse? Award plaque in the event of a successful entry.

ONLINE ENTRY DEADLINE: FRIDAY 16 JULY 2021

FOR ALL AWARDS ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT DEREK SMITH

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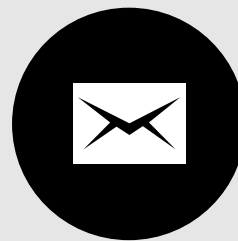
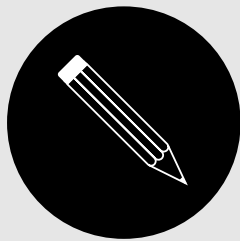


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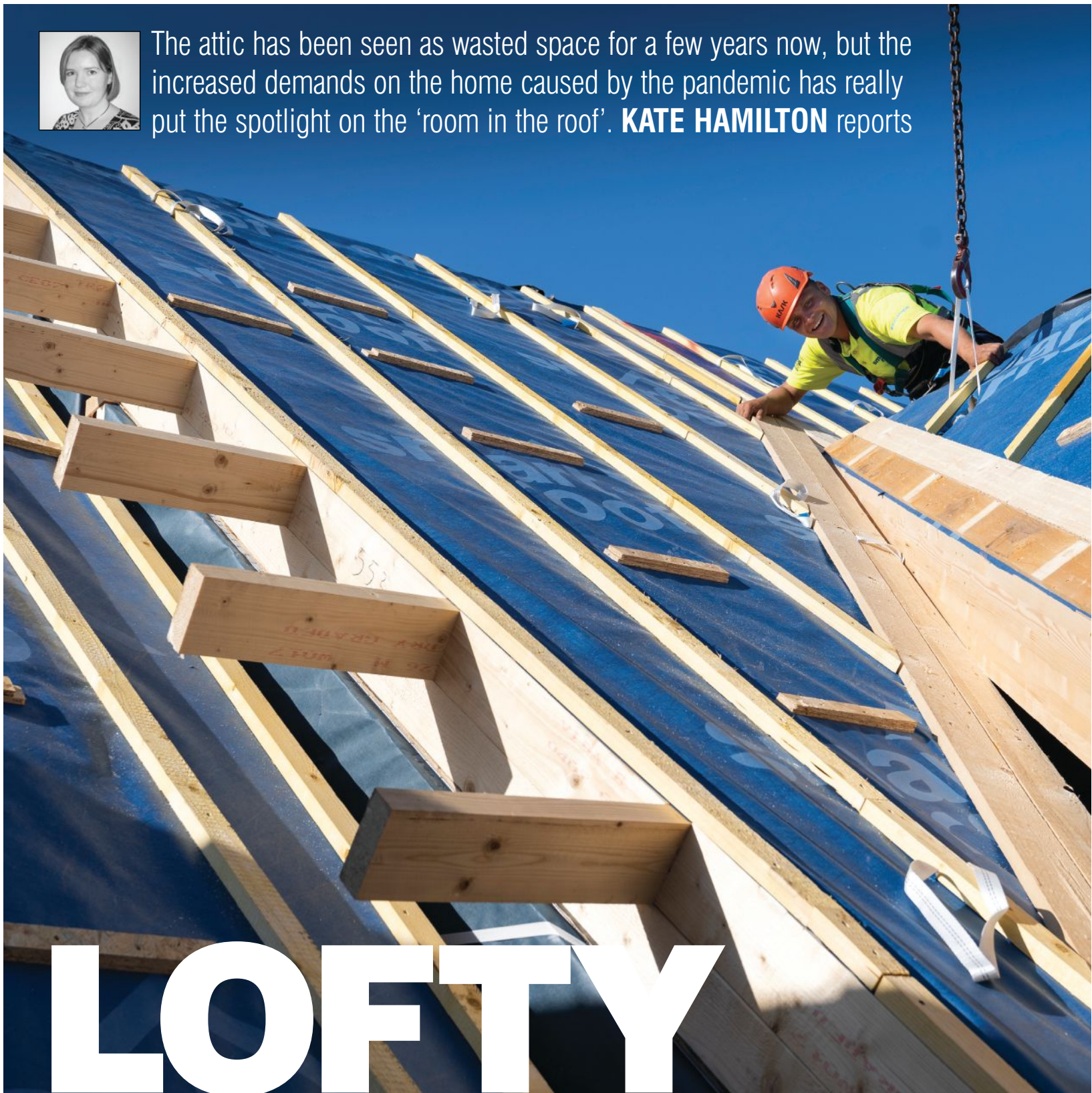
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The attic has been seen as wasted space for a few years now, but the increased demands on the home caused by the pandemic has really put the spotlight on the ‘room in the roof’. **KATE HAMILTON** reports



LOFTY AMBITIONS

ABOVE Smartroof has developed the ‘room in roof’ system to reduce overall build time, address the issue of skill shortages onsite and improve health and safety during the construction process

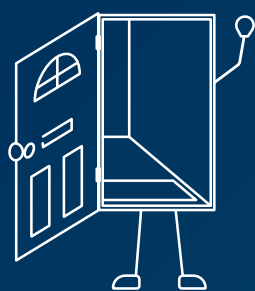
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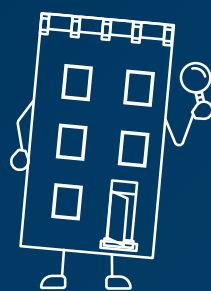
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Developers worked extremely hard to sustain their rate of building last year in a bid to overcome the backlog in developments due to lockdown, while simultaneously meeting significant increases in demand.

So it is no surprise that roofing solutions that support developers in achieving a faster, more efficient rate of building, without compromising on quality or visual appeal, are currently the most popular type of materials being required and installed.

Forticrete's large-format SL8 roof tiles are a prime example of a roofing product that's supporting the industry in fulfilling each of these requirements by offering superior coverage benefits, as just eight tiles are required per square metre versus the usual 10 per square metre for a traditional large-format roof tile.

This results in a 20% reduction in the number of tiles handled and laid, actively supporting developers in increasing the efficiency, productivity, quality and overall sustainability of their builds. As Forticrete's SL8 also features a thin leading edge to deliver enhanced aesthetics and superior coverage, these roof tiles continue to grow in popularity with its customers.

But while housebuilders were focusing on efficiency and aesthetics, the demands of the pandemic meant that buyers had only one thing on

their mind – more space. And one underutilised area that this can be easily gained is in the roof.

Launched in January 2021, and tried and tested by one of the largest UK housebuilders, the Ultrapanel 'room in roof' system provides a new take on modern methods of construction in house roofing.

Mass customisation techniques at high capacity ensure simultaneous volume production of various roof types with vaulted ceilings, mezzanine floor options, and the ability to accommodate dormer or inline windows.

Unlike other complete systems, Ultrapanel arrives on site, flat-packed and is built in a few hours without any need for cranes. Ultrapanel is manufactured by Ultraframe – which invented prefabricated roofing systems back in the 1980s – and has made over 1.5 million roofs to date. With incredibly short lead-times from a high-capacity factory, the Ultrapanel roofing system provides the opportunity for mass adoption of 'room in roof' designs in new homes across the UK.

Another manufacturer that specialises in 'room in roof' solutions is Smartroof. The company understands the unique challenges facing the construction industry, the Smartroof the team has over 50 years experience in 'room in roof' systems. Smartroof has

developed the 'room in roof' system to reduce overall build time, address the issue of skill shortages onsite and improve health and safety during the construction process. It also provides cost certainty and consistent quality.

Housebuilders will need to embrace newer and faster methods of construction, which in turn will enable them to comply with more stringent energy efficiency demands and help the UK meet its net zero targets. Smartroof has invested £1.2m in its Derbyshire offsite factory, which is set to increase its manufacturing capabilities by 150% – which equates to the facility producing Smartroofs for up to 25 plots per day.

The growth in remote homeworking and the need for dedicated working space – rather than the dining room table – will also mean housebuilders will be looking for ways to maximise available space and financial return.

"Between 10% and 15% of housebuilders are now constructing new-build properties with room-in-roof system solutions," explains Mark Gray, head of design and technical at Roofspace Solutions. "However, the vast majority of properties are still constructed using traditional roof trusses, which are installed onsite, and it is clear that there is still work to be done to educate on the benefits of offsite construction methods." ►

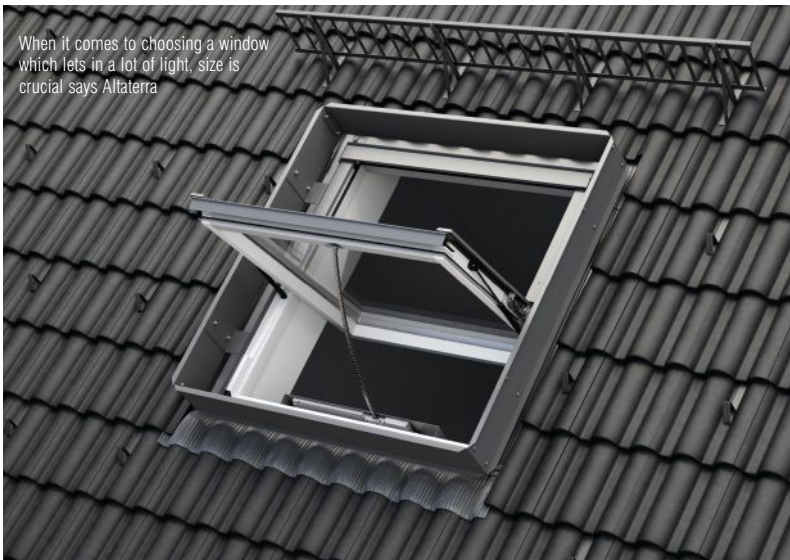
TOP LEFT Forticrete's Gemini concrete roofing tile was awarded the prestigious Millennium Products status by the Design Council

TOP RIGHT An offsite solution such as Smartroof can also reduce the detrimental impact of bad weather on build times

FAR LEFT For over 50 years, Forticrete has set the standard throughout the industry for delivering first-class product innovation and service

MIDDLE Dryseal is a tried and tested system with a first-class track record

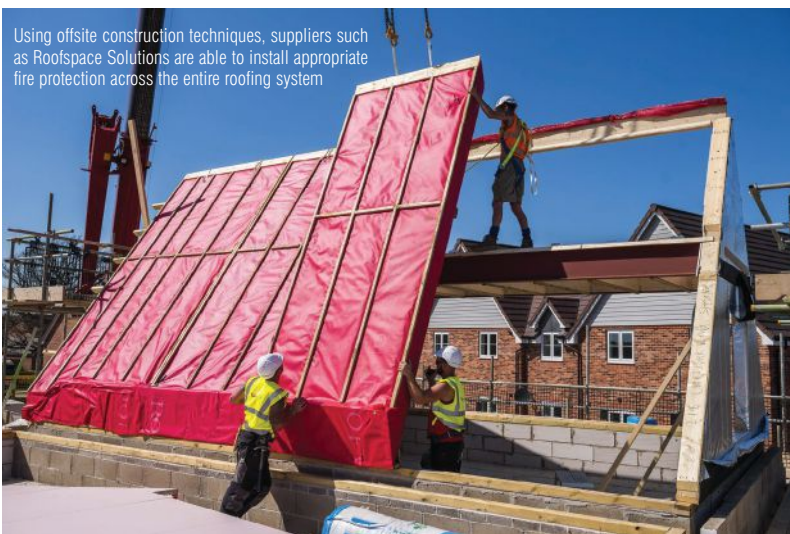
ABOVE The Ultrapanel 'Room in the Roof' system provides a new take on modern methods of construction in house roofing



When it comes to choosing a window which lets in a lot of light, size is crucial says Altaterra



Dryseal was specifically developed by Hambleside Danelaw Ltd in the 1990s to be a robust lightweight roof waterproofing system



Using offsite construction techniques, suppliers such as Roofspace Solutions are able to install appropriate fire protection across the entire roofing system



Roofspace's i-Roof solution provides a fully manufactured, room-in-roof solution for 2.5-storey houses, complete with insulation

Roofspace's i-Roof solution, for example, provides a fully manufactured, room-in-roof solution for 2.5-storey houses, complete with insulation. A repeatable manufacturing process delivers the same component, at the same output rate to an agreed quality standard, improving predictability and efficiency. Reducing the margin for error, can all result in a faster turnaround onsite, with less rework.

"This significantly reduces risk, both in terms of health and safety onsite as well as providing predictability over costs and installation timescales – with the manufacturer taking on the installation risk for a guaranteed price," continues Gray.

As well as a growing desire for more space, homeowners are also become increasingly aware of the benefits of natural light on their wellbeing, particularly during this extended period of lockdown where so much time has been spent indoors.

Newer flat roof windows with additional electronic openers and rain sensors add more light and ventilation into roofs. Dakea's Vertica Energy & Vision energy range from

Altaterra encourages more fresh air and light into a property.

"When it comes to choosing a window which lets in a lot of light, size is crucial," says Martin Panes – housebuilder manager for Altaterra, the sister company of Velux. "Bigger windows admit more daylight, but it is also worth considering smaller windows, as a better overall effect can be achieved when placed strategically.

"For example, using one roof window would allow daylight to light approximately 46% of a room," he continues "However, using two roof windows with a combined total surface area of the previous window would allow daylight to illuminate approximately 48% of a room. Four roof windows with the same combined total surface area distributed more evenly would allow daylight to illuminate approximately 65% of this room. One big window isn't necessarily better than a group of smaller windows."

Roof windows not only provide an energy-efficient solution to the property, but offer additional health benefits too, with allowing more natural lighting and ventilation

into areas that have slanted, or challenging roof space.

But the need for more space isn't limited to the roof alone. Many developers are now utilising spaces that were previously allocated for garages and storage areas for home offices – rooms that, traditionally, have flat roofs.

Dryseal is a tried and tested flat roof system with a first-class track record. Developed by Hambleside Danelaw in the 1990s to be a robust, lightweight, roof waterproofing system, Dryseal is aesthetically pleasing with great longevity and offering many plus points.

For example, Dryseal's bulk strength and weight are better than most metals, meaning that it can be easily adapted to waterproof and detail many types of roof. It also benefits from excellent fire retardancy, is lightweight and easy to handle, UV resistant and easy to install. It can also be readily repaired if damaged. Supplied with a 20-year product guarantee from Hambleside Danelaw, Dryseal is further guaranteed by the installer for workmanship and comes complete with an insured warranty.

All this of course means that roof specification has been turned on its head. It wasn't long ago when the main consideration when it came to roofing was the local aesthetic, cost and ease of build. Fast forward to the post-pandemic world and the priority of the roof is actually how it can be used directly underneath the tiles – as it now needs to work just as well for the homeowner as it does for the housebuilder. 

CONTACTS

Altaterra Limited
www.dakea.co.uk

Dryseal
www.dryseal.org

Forticrete
www.forticrete.co.uk

Roofspace Solutions
www.roofspacesolutions.co.uk

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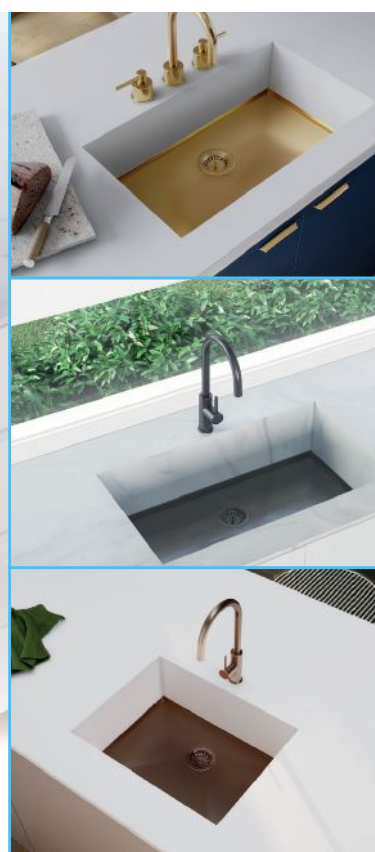
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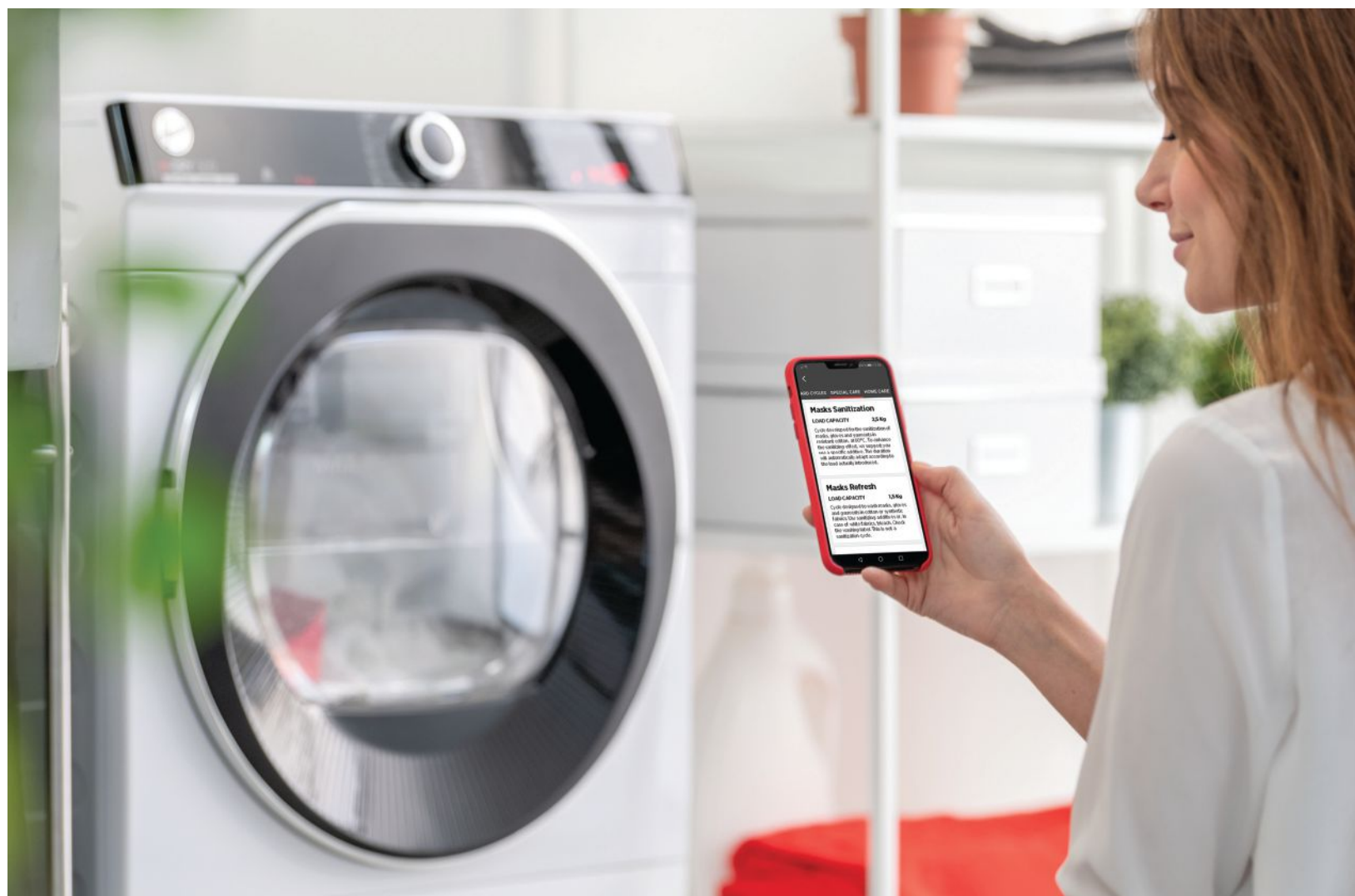
Haier

P89 **Haier**

Antony Peart, director of brand and communications for Haier UK & ROI, reveals how Covid has brought the company closer to the future

P95 **Inside Out**

Homeworking needs quiet, efficiency and attention to detail; today's appliances have these traits in spades, finds Kate Hamilton





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CONNECTING THE FUTURE



Antony Peart, director of brand and communications for Haier UK & ROI, tells **ISLA MACFARLANE** how the pandemic has brought the company closer to the future

With headquarters in China, Haier had something of a head start on 2020. With early insight into the pandemic that brought life as we knew it to a halt, the Group swiftly altered its business so it could keep marching forward.

"We were able to learn from and adapt to the pandemic quickly and put necessary processes in place to help ensure business operations were maintained," says Antony Peart, director of brand and communications for Haier UK & ROI. "What became apparent quite quickly is the importance of agility when it comes to servicing customer needs, and we facilitated a rapid switch over to digitise our processes and employee infrastructure where possible.

"Thanks to our pledge to the group's Rendanheyi philosophy, we strive for zero distance to the customer and our employees are central to this."

Haier also had a head start on how lockdowns would reorder their customers' kitchens. The Group commissioned research with YouGov during the first national lockdown, which yielded some surprising results.

As people swapped hours of commuting for cooking, appliances

came into sharper focus. Ovens, washing machines, hobs and fridge-freezers all saw more usage, and dishwashers moved to the top of the appliance 'wish list'. There was also a surge in demand for freezers in the early days of 2020, as people needed to store the frozen foods they'd stocked up on as lockdown loomed on the horizon. ▶



"Connected appliances now make up the large majority of our product portfolio and there's been a real shift in demand for added-value models which have capabilities beyond the unit," says Peart. "Thanks to the Haier hOn, Hoover Wizard and Candy Simply-Fi apps, consumers can download new programmes, access maintenance advice, create bespoke settings and both control and monitor the appliance away from the home, making them so much more than the unit that stands before them. The hOn app won a Red Dot Award in 2020."

A Candy washing machine in the pipeline, for example, features just an on/off button and is completely controlled via an app. "It will provide a completely bespoke user experience," said Peart.

Smart and connected appliances, particularly those that connect with apps, voice control and digital butlers, have come into their own over the last year.

"Capacity and energy efficiency have remained high on the agenda for both consumers and manufacturers and the latter is a definite selling point for new laundry models which are among the highest rated through the new classifications, launched 1 March 2021," he says. "We are very proud to have among the highest achievable ratings for our Haier SuperDrum Series 9, Hoover H-WASH 500 and Candy RapidÓ models, our most energy-efficient laundry products."

App-controlled appliances have changed the market exponentially. Haier has invested more than €60m in its smart home platform. With more than 2m registered users and 10m smart products in the market, the Haier Group has access to a wealth of user data, offering a wealth of information on how and when appliances are being used.

Data from connected models revealed that between 24 March and 19 April 2020, the weekly average number of laundry loads performed by Britons dropped 6% from the previous four weeks, as loungewear became the fashion du jour.

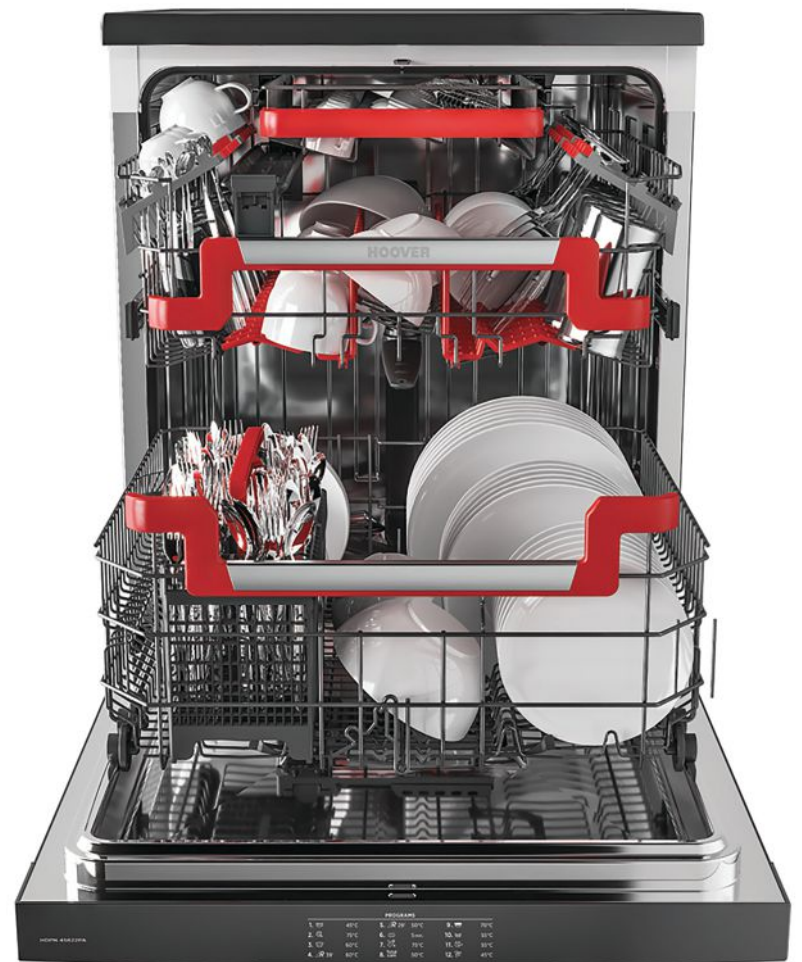
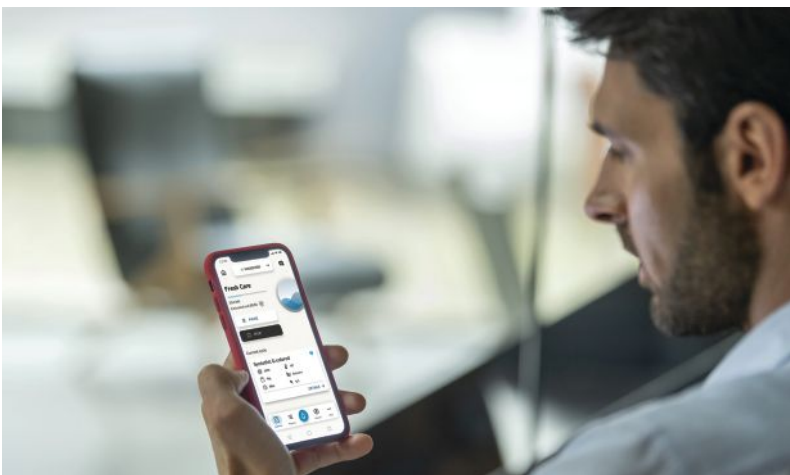
With restaurants shuttered, dishwasher usage grew to a weekly average of 6.2 cycles, up 21% versus the previous four weeks, and 25% versus the same period in 2019.

"According to Mintel, 55% of people did more home cooking as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak," says Peart. "Appliance expenditure has been buoyed by funds redirected from other non-essential sectors, like travel, clothing and entertainment; and connected ovens, such as those from our COLLECTION 3 range, provide meal inspiration with access to more than 200 recipes, as well as being controlled remotely through the Hoover Wizard app."

While the pandemic is often credited with altering customer behaviour, Peart believes that these trends were expedited, not created, by lockdowns.

Antony Peart





"The pandemic has allowed manufacturers such as ourselves to accelerate our plans and respond to the crisis in a meaningful way that's beneficial to our customers," he says. "It's without doubt that the capabilities of smart and connected appliances are without limits and, thanks to modern technology, they can be updated virtually, much the same as software on a smartphone."

"This way, at any point in time, consumers have the very latest functionality available; even though the initial investment in the appliance may have been some time ago."

"The pandemic also offered an opportunity for programme development and saw us develop two PPE sanitisation programmes. Launched in August 2020, the two programmes, 'Mask Sanitisation', lasting about 110 minutes at 60°C, and 'Mask Refresh', lasting 45 minutes at 40°C. They automatically set the right temperature, time and intensity of the wash, as well as indicating the correct dose of detergent to be used and the load capacity."

Since the merger of Candy Group and Haier Europe, Haier has had the world at its feet. "Thanks to our expansive brand portfolio we are able to offer a good, better, best proposition in the form of Candy, Hoover and Haier, covering all price segments from core to premium,"

says Peart. "This alone gives us a unique position in the market."

"As a global operator, we can utilise, activate and flex brand or market capabilities as required. For example, we have constructed a new refrigeration production facility in Romania to produce Haier, Hoover and Candy models. The new factory will employ nearly 800 people – at full capacity – for an expected production of 600,000 units after 2022. The factory design, which is based on a modular approach, will allow an expansion of up to 1 million units at full capacity."

"We have launched a new smart workplace in Italy to house our commercial divisions and expanded our UK headquarters in Warrington in order to establish a brand activation centre."

As the founder of the world's first vacuum cleaner in 1908 and the producer of the first semi-automatic washing machine in 1957, Haier has a wealth of knowledge and values programmed into its products, processes and people. Now, it has its sights set on offering 100% connected products by 2023.

"Our vision is to be the consumer's first choice for the smart home, our strategy is to delight consumers with a rich and relevant connected user experience and our target is to have 100% connected products by 2023," concludes Peart. [sh](#)



THE WAY YOU LIVE



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- Integrated pyrolytic cleaning system



Simon Rimmer

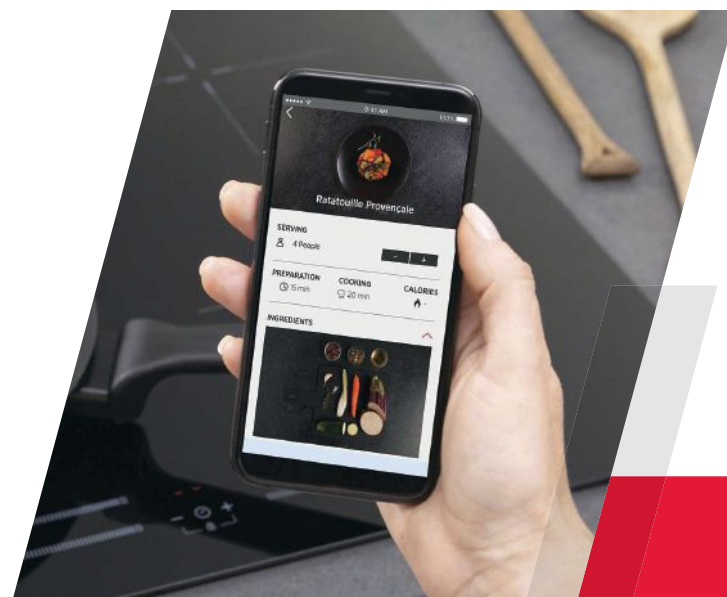
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A romantic scene of a man and a woman clinking wine glasses filled with red wine. The background is a blurred night cityscape with warm bokeh lights. The woman is wearing a white shirt and a gold necklace, and the man is in a dark suit.

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inside out | appliances

WORKING NINE TO FIVE



Our white goods and integrated appliances have always worked extremely hard. But, says **KATE HAMILTON**, now that the entire nation is working from home, these appliances need to work as quietly as they do efficiently



V-ZUG's Adora V6000 with heat pump dishwasher is top of the range, achieving an A rating in the newly refined energy label ratings this month

Noise. There is nothing worse than unwanted noise when you are trying to concentrate. And, with more and more people now working from their kitchen table this past 12 months, the noise that our everyday appliances emit has come under intense scrutiny.

"There is no doubt we have seen a shift in what is important in a product as a result of using our homes so much more," explains Anthony Sant, managing director of AO Business. "This has meant our customers will prioritise differently what they want from a product in order to create both a good working and home environment under one roof. In the past, noise would have been lower down on their list, but low background noise levels are really important for working. We're able to offer a variety of appliances to suit all customers' needs and their new home/work environments. With each appliance, we include an easy-to-find data sheet on every product page. This allows customers to be able to see important information about every product, including noise level (decibels), and enables them to choose the perfect appliance to suit their needs."

David Knight, managing director of V-ZUG UK, agrees. "We know that the impact of noise in the home is a growing consideration for homeowners, particularly with life in lockdown," he says. "And home appliances have a big role to play in

this. Therefore all V-ZUG appliances are engineered to be the most energy efficient and noise efficient that they can be. All of our dishwashers for example have noise levels of 43dBA or less, making them some of the quietest in the market. Our washing machines have a noise output of under 49dB(A) during the wash phase, and under 74dB(A) during the spin phase, making them super quiet, and our tumble dryers are also all of the quietest with noise levels of under 63dB(A). We've also had enquiries about the range hood noise, as this can be quite intrusive in the kitchen, so we're pleased to say that the majority of our range have an extracted air noise level of under 57dB(A)."

As a premium home appliance brand, V-ZUG is always aware of the impact of its appliances on both the environment and home life. Everything that it designs is to make life easier for users – and to do so in the most energy-efficient way possible.

In fact, prior to the noise priority, energy efficiency was the main priority for appliance manufacturers.

"We ensure our appliances only use as much energy as necessary," comments Mike Barnes, kitchen contracts director, BSH Home Appliances UK & Ireland. "For example, our innovative heat pump technology found in Bosch tumble dryers uses heated air to dry your clothes, reducing energy consumption. The same principle is extended to



AO Business has found that integrated appliances are a popular choice for most new builds



BSH appliances are equipped with technology intended to reduce water waste and ensure appliances are running efficiently

Many CDA extractors run at 60dbA or lower



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A large range cooker, such as this one from Smeg, can bring a real focal point to the kitchen



The Siemens side-by-side fridge freezer



Miele dishwashers were awarded a Proven Hygiene certificate in 2020



Rated A for energy and a Which? Best Buy, the WEG665 Washing Machine features Miele's intuitive two-phase dispensing detergent system

Bosch dishwashers, with features such as load sensor, which detects when you are washing a smaller load and uses the optimum water and electricity levels."

Some of BSH's dishwashers also have the PerfectDry feature, which uses a natural mineral called Zeolith to dry dishes during the cycle. This results in dry, clean dishes at the end of the programme without using any additional energy.

Meanwhile, in an industry first, some of Miele's models in the G7000 dishwasher range offer the option to use its new PowerDisk – a revolutionary, automatic dispensing system that delivers just the right amount of specially developed all-in-one detergent for up to 20 washes. This innovative AutoDos function provides superior wash performance while eliminating the need to manually add detergent for added convenience.

In addition, automatic load recognition technology means that Miele dishwashers can also detect the amount of crockery in the wash cabinet and will adjust the use of water and electricity accordingly. This avoids

the need to wait until the dishwasher is fully loaded before use and gives total peace of mind knowing that only the least amount of energy and water is being used, while also saving money.

"One of the main objections to having a dishwasher is around the misconception that they use lots of electricity and water," comments Phil Slater, head of project sales at Miele GB. "Miele dishwashers use as little as six litres of fresh water in a single wash – significantly less than filling a kitchen sink. Miele has reduced water consumption by 85% over the last 30 years and electricity use is also reduced to an all-time low.

"Miele is one of the first brands to be awarded the new Which? Eco Buy accreditation for four of its washing machine models. This means that these washing machines have been rigorously scrutinised to assess their sustainability credentials, which also includes water consumption."

Great strides indeed. But it has to be said that such improvements were often lost on the consumer due to an overly complicated energy-efficiency rating system. ►

"With modern appliances now more eco-friendly than ever, the way a product's energy efficiency is rated has changed," continues Sant. "Using recently introduced new measurements, current models will soon be rated simply from A to G – making it easy for customers, and specifiers, to see at a glance how economical their chosen appliance is. These new measurements spread the ratings more evenly across the scale, while allowing opportunities for even more innovations and cutting-edge features."

But, of course, there are other considerations too in addition to noise and energy efficiency. Namely, looks. The argument between freestanding models and integrated appliances has been raging for decades but, ultimately, it comes down to personal preference. At least, it did.

"We offer both [integrated and freestanding appliances] – and they can match" says John Davies, head of marketing at Smeg (UK). "It's really a personal preference, an iconic fridge or the presence of a large range cooker can bring a real focal point to the kitchen. That said, many people also look for clean lines, island living spaces and products that can be multifunctional, from microwaves to 'connected' steam ovens, coffee machines through to blast chillers and wine coolers. The built-in range offers more cooking flexibility due to the extra

choice, installed into furniture, often neatly hidden away."

So is a mix-and-match attitude the way forward when it comes to specifying appliances?

"It depends on the style of the kitchen," concludes Carrie Bell, consumer marketing manager for CDA. "An integrated dishwasher inevitably looks better than a freestanding model, but the popularity of US-style fridges and freezers means that consumers prefer to have their product on show. Either way, we believe that it is more important that the products are well made, well designed and reliable – not to mention quiet." 

CONTACTS

AO Business
www.ao-business.com

BSH Home Appliances UK & Ireland
www.bsh-group.com

CDA
www.cda.eu

Miele GB
www.miele.co.uk

Smeg (UK)
www.smeguk.com

V-ZUG
www.vzug.com



CDA has launched a range of seven new built-in dishwashers packed with features to deliver outstanding hygienic cleaning



V-ZUG's Supreme Line range of cooling appliances effortlessly stand out in a beautiful kitchen



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Bristol fashion from L&G

Legal & General Modular Homes has started on site at a major modular homes scheme in Lockleaze, Bristol. The scheme, which has been developed in conjunction with



Bristol City Council, is set to deliver 185 new homes, comprising two- to four- bedroom houses along with one- and two-bedroom apartments developed on land at Bonnington Walk.

All homes will achieve an energy performance certificate (EPC) standard A. The combination of air source heat pumps, photovoltaic cells and high-quality build standards will put the homes in the top 1% for energy performance meaning significant energy savings for their residents. 50% of the homes will be delivered as affordable housing and it is intended that these become part of Bristol City Council's affordable housing stock. Legal & General's modular housing business has continued to grow and is looking to hire an additional 350 employees across 2021, to deliver its growing pipeline, as well as supporting the UK's bounce back post Covid-19.

Rosie Toogood, CEO of Legal & General Modular Homes, said: "Acquiring and beginning construction on Lockleaze is an exciting milestone for the business as we see our modular homes becoming part of communities across the UK. The modular construction sector is transforming the way homes are built and addressing the housing shortage. This forms part of our purpose of investing society's capital for society's benefit. The housing crisis is a human crisis and only more important as part of the UK's post-pandemic recovery, and as people become more aware of the link between their health and wellbeing, and their homes and supporting communities."

The Bonnington Walk scheme has been brought forward in collaboration with Bristol City Council as part of the Bristol Housing Festival and consulted on widely by the local community. It represents an important new development in Bristol where Legal & General already has a significant interest through a £240m stake in the regeneration of Temple Quarter, a build-to-rent development and a proposed major mixed-use scheme on Temple Island. Together with Bonnington Walk, these schemes provide a springboard for a long-term partnership with Bristol City Council, helping it deliver a large proportion of the 16,000 new homes required across the city.

Durham boost for CoreHaus

CoreHaus has secured £50,000 from the County Durham Growth Fund to recruit a highly skilled team to start production in new premises of its modular homes which have already been successfully trialled in the region. The company recently set up a manufacturing facility in a 20,000ft² unit on Jade Business Park, Murton, near Seaham. The County Durham Growth Fund, overseen by Business Durham, the economic development arm of Durham County Council, is an £8.9m capital grant scheme providing funding to SMEs in County Durham to accelerate their growth.

CoreHaus managing director Scott Bibby said: "This grant allows CoreHaus to scale up within a larger factory than we might otherwise have secured and enables us to manage more of the production within our own premises."

The five-year plan will see CoreHaus producing around 1,000 modular homes a year, which will result in more than 100 people working across the business. These homes will be built using modern methods of construction (MMC) which will result in high quality homes, built faster, with

engineered precision and expected lower energy bills.

Sarah Slaven, interim managing director at Business Durham, the economic development arm of Durham County Council, said: "Supporting innovative companies like CoreHaus in growing sectors of the economy will be crucial in creating jobs and securing economic growth in the future."

CoreHaus is a joint venture company between Carlton & Co Group, the parent company behind north-east-based Homes by Carlton, and national social enterprise Fusion21, specialists in public procurement for the built environment.

The modular housing sector has been given a recent boost by national housing agency Homes England, which is accelerating the delivery of local authority housing schemes, encouraging greater use of modern methods of construction.

Housing associations looking to sign strategic partnership deals with Homes England to build large numbers of affordable homes will have to commit to using modern methods of construction to build out at least 25% of their pipeline.



Factory-built homes in Kent

Tech-enabled housebuilder TopHat has submitted plans to Medway Council to deliver factory-built apartments at its flagship site, Kitchener Barracks in Chatham, Kent.

The application includes plans to deliver a further 183 homes at Kitchener Barracks, as part of the scheme's third phase. In total, TopHat is delivering 302 homes at the 4.8-acre Kitchener Barracks site. The application includes proposals for the construction of three four-storey factory-built blocks of apartments, which will comprise 96 one and two-bedroom homes, with 32 of the new apartments affordable. All of the 96 apartments will be precision-engineered along production lines at TopHat's factory in south Derbyshire.

The new apartments will be the first TopHat has ever delivered and signals the company's move to delivering alternative residential assets for investors, such as build-to-rent and co-living schemes. The company is backed by a £75m investment from Goldman Sachs, the US investment bank that has been building its build-to-rent portfolio over the last few years.

By manufacturing its apartments offsite, TopHat is able to cut delivery times by half compared to traditional methods, making the company's approach appealing to developers of all types, but particularly in the build-to-rent and co-living markets.

"By diversifying our product range, we are now able to deliver a higher volume of homes to a wider range of partners. Our company continues

to grow, and I'm pleased that the quality of our homes is being recognised by significant partnerships with industry leaders such as BoKlok," said Krishan Pattni, chief design officer and founding director at TopHat.

"For investors in long-term, income-producing assets like affordable housing, build-to-rent and co-living, it is crucial to have certainty that a project will be delivered on time, so revenue streams can be accessed as early as possible and that the homes are cost- and maintenance-efficient throughout their use. Demographic trends are spurring on the growth of alternative residential asset classes; we, as a company, want to make sure we have products capable of catering to this increasing investor appetite."

Marketing without the snags

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Best regards,

Daniel Hill

Managing director
dh@whathouse.co.uk

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Finishing touches



A sharper focus on hygiene has sparked rising demand for touchless technology in new homes, says **ISLA MACFARLANE**

Over the last year, it has been constantly brought to our attention that our hands are unwitting vehicles for bacteria, viruses and other nasties, so it's hardly surprising that homebuyers are recoiling from touch.

Philip Dowds, managing director of OKTO Technologies, says: "We can no longer assume touching handles, buttons, knobs is safe for us; in fact, these items are potentially a hotbed of germs, with viruses able to live on the surface for many hours. Buyers are now demanding to live and to work in a low-touch environment – for example making your way through the reception of a building into your apartment, or using your kitchen or bathroom without touching a surface, all made possible through touchless technology.

"Touchless technology is here to stay, with the majority of large employers investing in touch-free workplace environments and residential developers adopting the same approach in communal living environments, helping them to gain a competitive advantage."

Coronavirus' legacy means that over 60% of consumers are expected to invest in touchless technology post-pandemic, according to Dowds.

"When combined with artificial intelligence and IoT sensors, technology can take instruction from references such as facial pattern, voice, gesture and eye tracking to enable a user to travel freely throughout a building without touch," says Dowds.

Once the preserve of commercial property, residential developments are now investing in going hands-free. Marylebone Square in London, has wiped out touchpoints in communal areas. Christopher Murray, managing director of Concord London, developer of Marylebone Square, says: "We have put in place extensive measures to keep residents safe, including touchless entry and lift calling, which can both be activated via mobile phone. This way, residents can get all the way to their front door without any touchpoints, supplementing the extensive cleaning in place."

According to Murray, buyers are increasingly keen not to leave any fingerprints on a development, making touchless technology an essential item. "This has certainly become more of a 'must-have' for purchasers who are keen to stay safe while becoming completely integrated," he says. "These kinds of measures certainly add tangible value when compared with similar developments."

"This was put in place in response to residents' demands, and we have seen that many potential

buyers have higher expectations for hygiene measures since the pandemic began. We have seen very positive feedback from previous and prospective purchasers and these measures are something we'll look to prioritise in all future developments."

Suppliers are also reporting rising demand for touchless tech. Louise Smith, regional specification sales manager at Bristan, says: "At Bristan, we definitely saw an increased demand for infrared taps when the pandemic started — not just in commercial settings, but within new-build developments too. More than ever before, the world became conscious of just how important hygiene is and handwashing was at the very top of people's agendas."

"Coupled with this, we've all spent much more time in our homes over the past year, so it's inevitable that homeowners are paying closer attention to their living spaces and how they can incorporate more practical design."

With growing demand for zero-contact kitchen and bathroom solutions, suppliers are turning their attention to the residential market. Roca recently introduced a range of touchless products, including basin mixers that activate automatically, electronic flush plates with movement sensors and mirrors with lights that switch on with a simple gesture.

Infrared sensors allow users to activate the water flow in taps, flush the loo or control the mirror light without the need for getting one's hands dirty.

"Homeowners have started to seek out bathroom and kitchen solutions that can make infection control

easier within their day-to-day living," says Smith. "And that's why housebuilders have started to turn to infrared taps within their new-build projects: their ability to offer a completely hands-free handwashing experience. Plus, the fact they've long been tried and tested in hospitals, care homes, schools and restaurants, which means that homeowners view them as a robust, trusted solution."

Such technology has additional benefits for the conscientious homeowner – namely, saving water.

"Over the past year, we saw an increased demand for cleanliness, but also for sustainable living solutions," says Smith. "Infrared taps have a built-in automatic switch off, which can prevent water wastage, making them an environmentally friendly choice. Traditional taps can easily be left on – especially with children around – so investing in infrared is a convenient solution."

While kinder to the environment, touchless technology has not always been easy on the eye. However, the recent surge in demand has inspired a redesign.

"Previously, infrared taps were predominantly found in commercial settings, so housebuilders have always been hesitant about their aesthetic appeal," admits Smith. "Bristan's infrared tap range, however, comes in three distinct designs that can seamlessly fit within a variety of bathroom designs."

As tastes become more sanitary, the proliferation of touchless technology could only be the beginning. Murray adds: "Housebuilders and developers will forever need to adapt as technology continues to evolve and as the world becomes more and more reliant on smart technology. More importantly, this kind of technology will allow buyers to feel safe and well in their homes."

"In terms of a post-Covid housing market, technology will not play a sole role. Developments will need to incorporate additional health and wellness features – with a huge focus on access on fresh air and ventilation. For example, our Marylebone Square development includes a five-storey central courtyard which brings fresh, filtered air from the outside in. This was developed ahead of the pandemic but will soon become a precedence for most buyers."

As society puts safety first, housebuilders will also have to make hygiene a priority. Homebuyers may wash their hands of those that don't. [sh](#)



Signtouch – a game changer for Housebuilders

The house-building sector and the customers we serve, can now benefit from game changing interactive technology thanks to Signtouch.

Set to revolutionise the industry, Signtouch is a brand new immersive and interactive technology platform for housing developments and construction projects.

Mark Cowin, the brainchild behind the innovative Signtouch said: “The past three years have been dedicated to really getting to understand the digital direction our industry should be taking. During this time Signtouch has developed a way-out of the 2D marketing hole we have been used to for so long.

“The beauty about Signtouch technology is that it allows you to host and organise all your current and future digital initiatives. We are, of course, constantly working on the current opportunities that technology offers and making demands of this technology to advance our industry still further.”

A unique customer interface and touchscreen technology developed in partnership with Samsung UK, Signtouch is all new visual display technology with state-of-the-art touchscreen functionality that allows you to provide a bespoke, interactive experience. With Signtouch the customer can explore all of your sales and marketing collateral, in a familiar and easy to operate touchscreen environment – from interactive site development plans and detailed

house-type layouts and floorplans, to bespoke home upgrade options and details of local amenities and public services.

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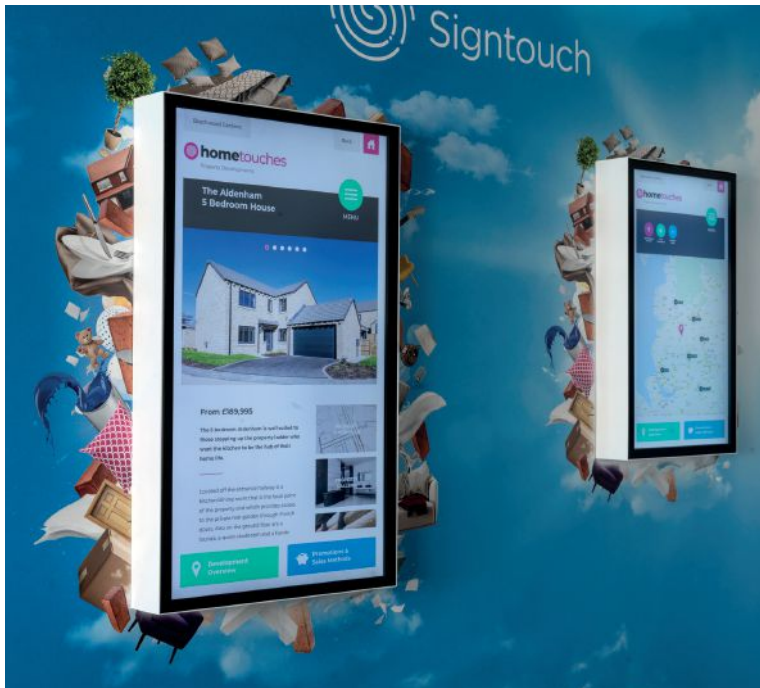
Revolutionary Data Insights only Signtouch can offer

Data, knowledge and insights are integral to understanding your audience and there is no other technology on the market that can offer this like Signtouch.

By tracking customer interactions and behaviour, you can now analyse and better understand your homebuyers, their needs and preferences which means you can adapt quickly to changing requirements. Signtouch has the capability to process and deliver data and real-time reports so that you can use the insights to inform and develop your approach to planning, designing, building and of course selling properties more profitably.

Mark Cowin added: “We have installed a Virtual Demo Experience which you can experience via Zoom, Teams, Skype etc., and I urge everyone to take advantage of this facility and experience first-hand the power and exciting capabilities of Signtouch. You will be able to interact with our latest Tizen-powered premium touch displays to fully appreciate the power and depth of functionality we can offer with this unique marketing tool.

“Rest assured that everything we do will continue to keep all our clients moving in the right digital direction.”



Here is what Samsung UK had to say!

Damon Crowhurst, Head of Display - Samsung Electronics UK

At Samsung we are proud of our drive toward future advancements in technology and satisfying the future requirements of business and individuals alike. What excites and motivates us all at Samsung is working with businesses and people that understand the transfer of information is an ever-evolving certainty.

Partnering with Signtouch is a unique opportunity for any business, and at Samsung we are incredibly excited to be involved in the Signtouch project. Advancements in architectural design and construction method, along with material and component development,

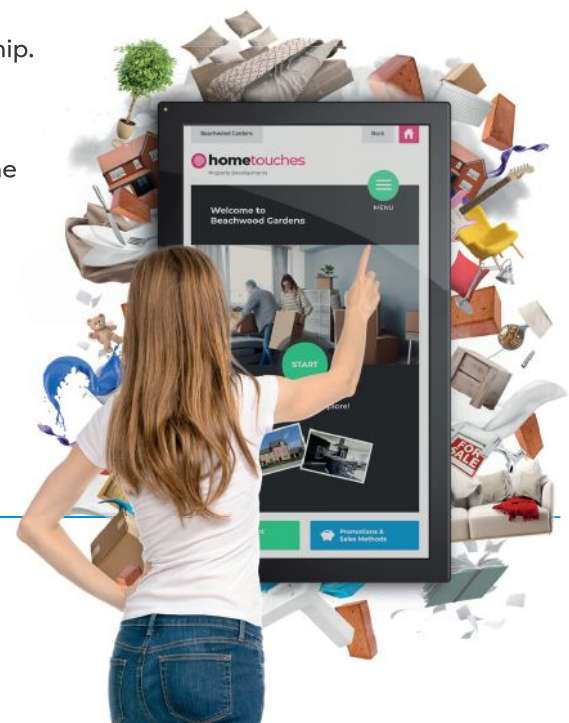
are synonymous with the house-building and construction industry; the retail experience, less so perhaps.

The interface between you and your client is of paramount importance and Samsung firmly believe that Signtouch offers your industry a managed and cost-effective way to advance this inter-face and further enhance this complex relationship. Partnering with Signtouch gives you access to, not only Samsung and our nationwide support structure, but to one of the world's most effective and respected global software database systems.

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Projects developed in partnership with Samsung UK

Fizzy Living first in UK to achieve WiredScore rating across portfolio

Fizzy Living has become the first company in the UK to achieve a WiredScore Home rating across its entire portfolio, with the majority of its locations achieving a Gold or Silver rating. Launched in May 2019, WiredScore Home is the digital connectivity rating scheme for the build-to-rent market that allows landlords to better communicate the superior in-home digital connectivity experience that their properties provide. It also ensures renters can find homes that meet their connectivity needs. Harry Downes, managing director of Fizzy Living, said: "We know the importance of excellent internet connection, which is why

we include high speed internet in the rent as standard for our residents. It is a non-negotiable for our residents so it's a non-negotiable for us. We are committed to providing a best-in-class renter experience so we're proud to have been recognised in this way by WiredScore."

According to a WiredScore report, since 2007, the number of adults spending an average of 24 hours online each week has doubled to 88%. Despite this, Ofcom has revealed that just 6% of UK premises have full fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) connections, which deliver ultrafast and consistent internet.



Blockchain network Coadjute partners with four property platforms

Coadjute, the blockchain network for the UK property market, has announced that conveyancing software firm Osprey Approach, property data provider company Search Acumen, and conveyancing firms AVRillo and PCS Legal have joined the digital network.

Coadjute's blockchain platform is an open network that connects businesses involved in property transactions. It tackles the slow, complex, and costly process of property transactions, which has been put under unprecedented strain in recent months, by enabling buyers, sellers to synchronise events and alerts in real-time, securely share messages and confidential documents, and gain access to third-party data and services. Dan Salmons, CEO at Coadjute, said: "By connecting their existing software and legal case management systems to other parties in the property market, Coadjute delivers real efficiencies to legal professionals who have better things to do. Our encrypted network enables them to securely share sensitive client data with ease, cutting time chasing for updates and making more time for legal review. We are proud to welcome AVRillo, Osprey Approach, PCS Legal and Search Acumen to the rapidly expanding Coadjute community."

Majority of Brits don't trust online property checks

Three quarters of Brits do not trust online checks when buying a property, according to research carried out by anti-money laundering specialists SmartSearch. The research reveals that 74% of Brits do not trust property documentation to be handled safely and securely online. Furthermore, over half (59%) of people do not trust a mortgage application to be carried out safely and securely online either. Surprisingly, more than two thirds (68%) of those aged 18-24 years old wouldn't trust an online mortgage, compared to 45% of those aged 35-54 years old. Hybrid or online estate agents enjoyed

a 10% surge in trade and a market growth of 2.7% in the last 12 months; however, online estate agency and online transactions are still a small part of the market.

John Dobson, CEO at SmartSearch, said: "Buying a property online is very convenient, especially during the current climate where people may be worried about conducting such transactions face to face. However, it is a big shake up to the industry and consumers alike. The last year has forced many of us to adapt to digital or automated services, but it seems the property market has some work to do to instil confidence in their consumers."

Call for construction firms to harness technology

The UK's slow-to-change-its-ways construction industry needs to harness the power of technology to flourish in a post-Brexit world, according to one industry specialist.

Dan Grimshaw from Beam Development says unless the majority of future new homes are constructed offsite, the government is unlikely to achieve its pledge to reach net zero carbon by 2050.

"Brexit was hailed as a means of transforming the UK into a technology superpower and that same ethos needs to carry on through into housebuilding," said Grimshaw. "To meet the government's net zero carbon promise and 300,000-homes-a-year target, the focus needs to be more on prefabrication and factory-based methods. The construction industry still has an old-fashioned way of doing things with practices leftover from the past. It's going to have to keep up or we'll get left behind."

SmartRent gets investment from USA to scale up smart home tech

SmartRent, a provider of smart home automation for property owners, managers, developers and residents, this month announced a strategic investment from Lennar Corporation, an American housebuilder.

The investment is a continuation of the company's commercial partnership with SmartRent and its proptech offering for housebuilders and homebuyers. As part of Lennar's investment, Eric Feder, president of LENX, Lennar's innovation and technology division, will join SmartRent's board of directors.

Using SmartRent's Self-Guided Touring technology, prospective homebuyers can schedule an onsite private, self-guided tour for a safe and simple way to tour show homes independently. Lennar relies on the Self-Guided Tours to allow

prospective homebuyers to experience its show homes in new communities across the country.

"Lennar is a pioneer in recognising new ways to build, showcase and equip a smart home," said Lucas Haldeman, CEO and co-founder of SmartRent. "We couldn't be more thrilled to partner with the company and have their support."

In addition to Self-Guided Tours, SmartRent offers fully-equipped smart home technologies married within one branded app for housebuilders to install in new homes. With remotely controlled access, temperature and lighting, sellers can stage their houses on the market as well as monitor for any security or leak concerns, and buyers are welcomed home with an intuitive and centralised smart home when they move in.

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by
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THE Marketeers

THIS MONTH:

Caryl Russell, sales and marketing director, and **Hannah Ryle**, marketing co-ordinator of **Castle Green Homes**

Rebranding a 35-year-old business is always challenging, but completing it within six weeks in the middle of a pandemic sounds almost impossible. But that's just what the team behind Castle Green Homes, formerly Macbryde Homes, accomplished late last year, and with a marketing department of just two.

The rebrand followed a management buy-out of Macbryde Homes, led by managing director Gwyn Jones with financial backing from former Redrow chair Steve Morgan's Bridgemere UK. The new name was chosen to reflect the company's 35-year heritage alongside its vision for a greener, more sustainable future and, between them, Caryl Russell and Hannah Ryle achieved the herculean task of changing all signage, literature, point of sale, website and other marketing material that went with the new identity, in a matter of weeks.

Russell joined the industry 26 years ago, starting out as sales consultant for Macbryde in Sale, Manchester, where her passion for selling homes was ignited. Working her way up through the ranks, she became a sales manager before her promotion to sales and marketing director made her the first female non-family member to sit on the board of directors. Russell now manages 14 sales consultants across 11 developments, with more to come. 'Newcomer' Ryle joined in August 2020 after being furloughed from her marketing role with the Emirates Group. With a degree in psychology,

Ryle initially worked with vulnerable young people, before changing career path and joining a digital marketing agency. Brought in to develop the in-house marketing strategy, she has played a fundamental role in orchestrating the rebrand and subsequent marketing.

Describing the buy-out as "the start of a new phase", Russell explains: "It felt appropriate to harness the ambition and optimism that came hand in hand, the renewed brand was a great way to invigorate the team to move forward with our plans."

Building on Macbryde's reputation, Russell believes that it is its professional and personal service to customers that has made the team one of north Wales' most respected housebuilders: "We hold a prestigious five-star rating in the HBF's customer satisfaction scheme and aim to hold on to this for many years to come."

For the 2020/21 financial year, the housebuilder is projected to complete 210 homes, equating to a turnover of around £50m but with ambitious growth plans: "We aim to quadruple in size over the next five years and we have the financial backing to do that. Our focus now is on becoming a major player in the housebuilding industry and we are already expanding into the north-west of England."

Ryle explains how the new name encapsulates the housebuilder's core values: "'Castle' conveys the heritage we have built up over the past three-and-a-half decades; while 'Green' underpins our aspiration



to deliver family homes in line with the government's 'green revolution' pledge."

Rebranding within weeks was challenging but the main obstacle was orchestrating external suppliers to meet their deadline, necessitating strong project management skills: "Castle Green is built on family ideologies, so the team truly came together as one to ensure the rebrand was a success."

On joining the firm in the early 1990s, Russell found that most advertising was print based, and expensive. Recalling a £2,000-plus spend for an ad in the Manchester Evening News, which had a much lower reach than is

currently possible through digital platforms, she says: "Since then the way we market to our customers has completely changed, with the digital age taking precedence."

Historically, all marketing was outsourced, which was becoming unsustainable thanks to ambitious growth plans, resulting in Ryle's appointment: "I like to think I provide structure and a vision for the brand going forward," says Ryle.

Ryle has noticed a "natural progression" in the way the team uses social media, creating a clear brand identity and steering towards more visual content and optimising the ►

latest developments across all platforms, with a heavy investment in CGI: "2021 will see a brand-new customer portal and completely revitalised website, as well as a series of brand videos to cement our brand identity in the housebuilding market."

The rebrand proved all-consuming for the team: "We launched the brand with an omni-channel approach, using everything from online portals, signage and radio to print-based marketing," says Russell, adding that 30 November was the chosen date, both to rebrand and maximise on the pre-Christmas period: "We created branded advent calendars with our new messaging and supplied these to all of our customers, past and present, as well as key stakeholders."

The move was supported by an inclusive digital marketing strategy, which brought huge success across social media. "We've seen a 790% increase in the accounts we reach as well as a 232% increase in content interactions, predominantly achieved through producing consumable content which our customers want to see." But Ryle doesn't rule out using print-based ads, and traditional methods often work wonders: "A new development wouldn't have any success without strong onsite signage, which is why having a strong brand identity is crucial for any homebuilder."

The pandemic forced the team to re-evaluate its sales techniques. Online meetings and 360-degree tours of all show homes helped buyers to proceed with reservations, but Russell says that the increase in customer demand from further afield will see them continuing to offer online reservations and meetings. Ryle is responsible for all in-house marketing, but the housebuilder uses agencies for its website and design, including a "phenomenal local designer",



Ambitious Creative, which supported the rebranding process.

Castle Green intends growing its sustainability pledges throughout 2021 as well as becoming a major player in the industry. It recently added four new sites in north Wales to its landbank, plus a key site in Warrington, Cheshire: "We aim to be building 800 homes per annum in five years and have plans to open an office in Preston Brook, Cheshire to facilitate our north-west growth and supplement our St Asaph headquarters," explains Russell.

Most traffic comes via the housebuilder's website, social media and online portals. Analytics help measure weekly and monthly insights, producing year-on-year comparisons going forward. An intelligent customer relationship management system tracks conversions from source,

allowing the team to attribute spend directly where leads arise. "We continue to A&B test, or split test, our campaigns, allowing us to measure the difference in performance of different versions of our marketing assets. This will help to ensure optimum success in future work," adds Ryle.

Russell thinks that the housebuilding industry has been slow to catch on to the benefits of digital compared with companies such as Nike, Jaguar Land Rover plus many retail brands, who create user-generated content and have the ability to make option choices online. During the rebrand's early stages the pair thought long and hard about the brands they wanted to align with: "John Lewis and Jaguar Land Rover are synonymous with high quality products and good service; we wanted to ensure that the Castle

Green brand represents similar qualities." Ryle was also determined to both "stand out from the crowd" and pioneer new technologies for the construction industry.

Currently writing their marketing strategy for the coming year, Ryle refuses to give away too many secrets: "All we can say is that we will be bigger and better and aim to firmly cement our place in the industry over the next 12-24 months. Watch this space!"

The pair are clearly a winning combination: "We often joke that Caryl is the 'Castle', with 26 years of sales experience, and I am the 'Green', the forward-thinking future. It's actually not a bad analogy and is probably why we work so well together."

Over a long and successful career, Russell has fulfilled most of her ambitions, but Ryle intends growing with the marketing department: "I'm so proud of everything we've achieved already in such a short space of time. I'd love to be group head of marketing for Castle Green in five years' time and maybe one day take the reins from Caryl and continue to represent women in the construction industry."

Dedicated to their shared mission, Russell explains the key to a great working relationship: "Hannah and I share a number of the same ideologies and passions. We both love to travel, having visited every continent bar Antarctica between us. We also consider ourselves as weekend gin connoisseurs – although we have a shared hatred for flavoured gin! We can't wait until the pandemic is over and we can reunite with our loved ones, as having strong family values transcends through Castle Green and everything we do." 



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by
David Smith

SHOWHOUSE IN THE CITY

The opening up of the economy is the big story at the moment, with all four nations of the UK moving, if not exactly in step, at least with broadly similar road maps. In England, schools returned on 8 March, outdoor meetings and many sports were permitted on 29 March, with non-essential retail and other activities – including essential haircuts – permitted from 12 April.

Ministers insist that the journey to even greater freedoms after 21 June, though perhaps not the freedom to holiday abroad, remains on track. What will the impact of this be on the housing market?

Economists at Jefferies International, the investment bank, have been using a range of measures since the pandemic hit to assess the scale of both the declines and the recoveries. One of the measures it monitors, housing searches on property websites, has been running at 166% of normal levels. Either we needed a distraction, or interest in housing has been running at high levels.

Jefferies, which thinks that the economy's bounce in the second and third quarters will surprise on the upside, likes the look of what it describes as "home improvement plays" like Kingfisher and Travis Perkins. It is also attracted to the potential in the builders. As it puts it: "Any domestic recovery would be highly beneficial to the UK housebuilders, with Persimmon one of our preferred plays." The firm also upgraded Crest Nicholson from a "hold" to a "buy".

Shares of the housebuilders are on a roll. Persimmon and Barratt Developments have doubled compared with their pandemic lows, while Taylor Wimpey and Bellway are up by around 80%.

The housing recovery continues to have legs. Twindig, the relatively new housing market firm whose chief executive is the former Jefferies analyst Anthony Codling, records that its housing activity index, which fell to a low of just 50 during the first national lockdown in spring 2020, rose by 0.3% to 89.3 at the end of March. It has not yet made up all the ground lost during the pandemic, but it is getting there.

According to Codling: "We have seen bullish housing market commentary from housebuilders Bellway and Crest Nicholson, both very much on

the front foot with expectations to remain there. Demand for new housing is strong and appears to be getting stronger as the spring selling season gets underway and the vaccines are rolled out."

Most measures still point to a lot of momentum in the market. Though mortgage approvals have come down from their highs at the end of last year, some of that reflects lags in the data, and the fact that we are still getting statistics from a time when the stamp duty reduction was expected to end on 31 March. As readers will know, it was extended in its present form to the end of June in the 3 March Budget, and in partial form until the end of September.

As it was, mortgage approvals in February, 87,700, were higher than in February 2020, according to Bank of England figures, while net mortgage borrowing, £6.2bn, was the highest for nearly five years; since March 2016. If figures like these last, the housing market will have shifted up to a new level. To remind you, in the distant days before the pandemic, the six months to February 2020, mortgage approvals averaged only 67,300 a month.

There is momentum, too, in the latest house prices index from e.surv and Acadata, using Land Registry completed transactions. For England and Wales, prices in February were up by a strong 8.6% on a year earlier. Take out the slower-moving London and South East markets, which may be suffering from a combination of an outflow of migrant workers and the working from home phenomenon – with people looking forward to rather less commuting in the future – and the rise was 10.7%. Prices in the South West showed a 15.3% 12-month gain, while those in the North West were up by 11.5%.

"What we have seen over the past few months is that demand regionally has been fuelled by changing housing preferences as a result of the pandemic and the lockdowns of the last year," says Richard Sexton, an e.surv director. "The regions have benefited as city dwellers have opted to embrace working from home with far less commuting. The pandemic has changed what many people want in a property and, in many cases, they are leaving big cities for smaller towns or more rural



areas. Lifestyle changes and the stamp duty change have worked together to underpin the price rises of the last year."

Are there any clouds on the horizon? A new report from the London School of Economics, 'The pandemic and the housing market: A British story', suggests that house prices could suffer a fall later in the year as the stamp duty reduction and the furlough scheme come to an end. But the report also said that house prices are well supported in the medium- and long-term by an excess of demand over supply.

Deutsche Bank's London-based economists predicted that prices should avoid a fall, but that they will slow. They argue that continually lower interest rates have provided support for prices even when, on traditional affordability measures like the house price-earning ratio, they have seemed stretch. But, with official interest rates at rock bottom (unless the Bank of England were to decide to go negative), that process may now be over. Over time, the only way is up for interest rates. But not for a while and, in the meantime, the market can make hay while the sun shines. 

David Smith is the economics editor of The Sunday Times

Springfield poised for new markets after profits boost

Scottish housebuilder Springfield Properties' chief executive Innes Smith said the firm is "on the lookout for opportunities" following a significant reduction in its net debt last year and a 40% rise in profits.

Announcing interim results for the six months to the end of November 2020, the company reported a 42.9% rise in pre-tax profits to £9m, up from £6.3m the previous year, and an 18% increase in turnover to £94.4m, from £79.8m.

Springfield said that after building and sales activity "rebounded strongly" following last year's Covid-19 lockdown, it had been able to reduce its net debt level from £68.8m in May last year to £33.2m by the start of December.

The company, which is listed on the London Stock Exchange's Alternative Investment Market, announced a 1.3p interim dividend for shareholders.

Smith said: "This has been an excellent six months for Springfield. We safely and efficiently resumed construction to complete the homes that had been scheduled for handover at the end of the previous financial year. Our sales offices reopened to significant interest, reflecting pent-up demand and

the increasing desirability for the type of housing Springfield provides, with spacious homes with private gardens and easy access to plenty of green space. As a result, we were able to deliver significant revenue growth and substantially reduce our net debt position, reflecting the operational gearing of the business."

He added: "Springfield has a large, high-quality land bank across almost all the key geographies in Scotland, which we continued to develop and received planning approval for over 450 homes.

We strengthened our operations by implementing a number of efficiency and rationalisation measures that will reduce our cost base going forward. We are also pleased to have agreed, post period, with Sigma Capital that we will be progressing our first housing for the private rental sector at our Bertha Park Village. With substantial visibility over our private and affordable housing revenue for the full year, we look forward to delivering significant growth for 2020-21, and expect to be slightly ahead of current market expectations."

Smith said that, while Springfield was "unashamedly loyal" to areas such as the north, Dundee and Perth, the firm was interested in



expanding into new areas of Scotland: "We are open to looking at other areas. We very much had the foot down on getting the debt down over the last six months, but I think we are looking at growing the business again. Our chairman, Sandy Adam, is an entrepreneur and is always looking to grow the business and that's why we went to the market. So we are on the lookout for opportunities and are very keen to continue the success we have had so far. We want to do it well and we do know the north, Dundee, and Perth very well but there are parts of the country that haven't experienced Springfield we could be looking at."

OakNorth loans Baxter Homes £5.5m for Lancashire scheme

Family-run housebuilder Baxter Homes has secured a £5.5m loan to fund the development of 19 new homes in Lancashire.

OakNorth Bank provided the funding to build four- and five-bedroom homes at Oak Hill Rise, Baxter Homes' new residential scheme in Garstang.

Founded in 2004 by Ian Baxter, Baxter Homes has been building homes across Lancashire for more than 15 years, completing projects across the Fylde Coast, Elswick, Great Eccleston and Garstang.

Ian Baxter said: "The last year has been incredibly challenging for the industry, with many construction sites closing or operating at limited capacity, which only puts more pressure on SME housebuilders like us. This is why we were grateful to have OakNorth Bank's support. They've worked with some of the largest and most-established housebuilders in the country, as well as numerous SME housebuilders, so know the industry well and have been able to share some of the best practice they've seen over the last year."

The capital from OakNorth Bank will be used to support multiple phases of its Oak Hill Rise project.

Chris Swarbrick, senior debt finance director at OakNorth Bank, added: "Under Ian's leadership, Baxter Homes has established an excellent reputation and has successfully completed a number of projects across Lancashire.

"In the 80s, SME housebuilders like Baxter Homes accounted for 80% of all new homes being built in the UK, with the remaining 20% being covered by the largest housebuilders. Today, it's the reverse, with SME housebuilders representing just a fifth of all new homes being built. This decrease was exacerbated by the financial crisis of 2008 when banks pulled back from lending to SME housebuilders and we're unfortunately seeing a similar trend now due to Covid-19. That is why at OakNorth Bank, we're doing everything we can to support SME housebuilders like Baxter Homes, to ensure they get access to the debt finance they need to continue bringing new homes to market."

Fortwell Capital unlocks Sheffield scheme with £31.5m loan

Fortwell Capital has completed a new £31.5m development loan to Blenheim Land & Properties, for a multi-phase residential scheme on the former Hallam Towers Hotel site in Sheffield.

The loan will enable the construction of both phases of the 117-unit scheme. Phase one is under construction, comprising a 15-storey tower with 103 one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments set within 3.2 acres of gated grounds, with panoramic views of the city and surrounding countryside; phase two will include 11 townhouses and three apartments adjacent to the main tower. The development represents Fortwell Capital's first ever deal in Sheffield, with the lender continuing to target high-quality housing developments in strong regional markets. The lender has now funded developments in six of the 10 largest cities in the UK.

Domis Construction, with which Fortwell Capital has a long-standing and successful relationship, has been appointed as the main contractor for the new Hallam Towers scheme. The project is being marketed and sold by Sheffield-based agency, and new homes specialist, Redbrik.

Nick White, associate director, Fortwell

Capital, commented: "Mass relocation of people and businesses out of London is a trend that has very much driven our origination strategy in recent years. Once the pandemic subsides we anticipate increasing numbers of people seeking a higher quality of life in Sheffield and other regional cities, creating a huge opportunity for developers to bring forward stunning new schemes like Hallam Towers.

"The size and scope of this facility aligns with our appetite for funding new modern developments in key cities that are growing economically, and where there is high and rising demand. We're looking forward to working with Blenheim Land & Properties in the months and years ahead." Chris Anderson, director, Blenheim Land & Properties commented: "We are ecstatic that we can finally announce and showcase what we've been working extremely hard on for the past five years. We are now in a position where we can see our vision for the site becoming a reality.

"The Fortwell team have an exceptional understanding of the local market and our development objectives. Their expertise and support will be critical to realising our vision of transforming this iconic site into the jewel in Sheffield's residential crown."

Paragon Bank lends £8m to support Derbyshire and East Sussex schemes

Paragon Bank's Development Finance team has lent more than £8m to two schemes in Derbyshire and East Sussex to support SME developers bring forward a total of 34 homes.



Paragon has provided a £3.2m funding facility to the Brookland Group to support with the development of 13 houses in Hartshorne, Derbyshire, and £5.1m to Greymoor Homes for 21 new homes in Wadhurst, East Sussex. Brookland Group director Simon Dawson said: "This is the second development on which we have worked with Paragon Bank and we have always been impressed with how efficient and straightforward the bank is to deal with. They always deliver on their commitments." Paragon Bank relationship director Oli Thompson said: "SME developers such as Brookland are vital to the supply of much-needed new housing across the UK. Paragon Bank is



committed to working with SME developers to provide the finance to bring these developments to market."

Graham Morris, Greymoor managing director, added: "We are delighted to be completing on our third deal with Paragon. Paragon is an excellent funding partner, with a deep understanding of the property market and construction in general, and professionals who are helpful and supportive."

Olive Jar Digital to target private sector following £6m investment by IW Capital

Digital consultancy Olive Jar Digital is preparing for growth following a £6m investment by IW Capital. Shawbrook Bank, the specialist lender to UK SMEs, supported IW Capital with a £1.5m leverage loan. Northampton-based Olive Jar specialises in digital transformation projects, helping businesses move away from laborious, manual and paper-based processes. Utilising a mixture of data, software and artificial intelligence (AI) capability, the firm builds efficient, user-friendly systems and programmes to transform clients' digital services and talent management. Now Olive Jar is preparing for expansion into the private sector as it aims to build on its already successful partnerships with the likes of the NHS and the Department for Education.

Douglas Lidgitt, investment director at IWC, said: "This investment is focused on enabling the organic growth of the company through continued expansion into new segments in a growing market. IW Capital is pleased to continue to work with the founders that have built the business to its current position and have a clear strategy for the next stage of development."

"This is our first transaction with Shawbrook, who acted quickly to support our investment in Olive Jar Digital with the flexible funding required. Shawbrook showcased the specialist knowledge and expertise required to support our acquisition and we look forward to working with them again in the not too distant future." Olive Jar Digital was launched in 2015 by co-founders Rajesh Thakrar and Olivia Nixey.

Both founders will be retained following the acquisition, with IW Capital maintaining majority ownership.

Rajesh Thakrar said: "I am truly excited about our new partnership with IW Capital and Shawbrook, where we can build on Olive Jar's great achievements and take it to the next level, while maintaining our passion for all things digital. This is a super opportunity for us to grow what we do well; transform digital services intuitively."

Olivia Nixey added: "I'm extremely proud of Olive Jar, the team that we have in place and what we have achieved so far together. I'm very much looking forward to working with IW Capital and Shawbrook to build on that success. This partnership enables Olive Jar to evolve even further, to move into new markets and to grow at a much faster pace. I look forward to a successful future together."

Steven Munt, director within Shawbrook's corporate lending team for London and the south, said: "This transaction presented an outstanding opportunity for Shawbrook to support an experienced sponsor and strong management team with a conservatively structured loan."

"Olive Jar's management has successfully grown the business to where it is today; but understood that additional funding and expertise was required in order to achieve the full potential of the business. We are eager to see how our funding will help Olive Jar Digital – with the support from IW Capital – evolve into a leading digital consultancy for the private sector in the UK."

Paragon Development Finance launches 70% GDV development funding

Paragon Development Finance has launched 70% gross development value (GDV) funding as it strengthens its support of UK SME housebuilders.

The increase in maximum GDV for residential development finance complements the existing product range and allows Paragon to support clients across a wider range of projects.

Paragon also recently launched a sub £1m lending product for smaller housebuilders, complementing the existing offering of up to £30m maximum loan size. Combined with the new 70% GDV product, these initiatives will assist SME housebuilders in their vital role to deliver the UK's housing needs.

Robert Orr, managing director of Paragon Development Finance, said: "UK SME housebuilders are developing much-needed new homes across the UK and access to finance from a committed, experienced and capable lender is vital. We always look at ways in which we can support customers and the move to 70% GDV funding is a further extension of that."

"As part of a successful, well-capitalised bank, all of our lending is completely off our own balance sheet, so customers have one point of contact and a seamless process with credit and due diligence. That is important to them as they look to get schemes off the ground."



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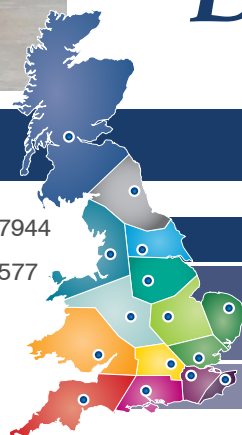


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product news

edited by Kate Hamilton (kh@globespanmedia.com)



Box clever

Franke's striking new Andy Chef accessories kit has been ergonomically designed to seamlessly transform its popular Box stainless steel range of sinks into a perfectly organised food preparation workstation. Ideal for keeping kitchen essentials conveniently close to hand and the hub of the home neat and organised, the designer kit features an eye-catching case, stainless steel strainer bowl, walnut chopping board and a chef's knife. It has been cleverly created to fit neatly inside the Box sink bowl for a sleek and discreet solution but will also look stunning when teamed with, and displayed alongside, any Franke sink. The perfect choice for compact kitchens where worktop space is often at a premium, this stylish, chef-quality accessories kit can also help create a streamlined, clutter-free aesthetic in open-plan kitchen-diners. Once users have finished chopping, dicing, slicing and rinsing, the washed tools can be neatly placed in their case for hygienic drying and tidy storage. www.franke.co.uk

In the navy

Reflecting the popularity of dark blue shades in kitchen design, TKC now offers the indigo colour across seven of its door ranges to offer customers a broader choice of traditional and contemporary kitchen styles. Already a key seller on TKC's Cartmel and Lucente Matt ranges, indigo has been added to the door styles of Oxford narrow framed shaker, the classic five-piece Cambridge timber shaker and the Vivo+ Matt slab door. It will also be part of the upcoming Newmarket and Stratto narrow framed shaker ranges, launching in March and May respectively.

Neil Taggart, marketing manager at TKC, commented: "Stockholding and speed of delivery are crucial to customers at the moment and we are in a position where we have more product choice in this fashionable colour and can respond quickly to customer orders without the turnaround time of paint-to-order."

The door ranges are available in a range of sizes, together with accessories including end posts, panels, curved doors, glazed doors, one-piece larder doors and pilasters. www.tkc.co.uk



Stands and delivers

PJH has enhanced its freestanding bath range within its Bathrooms to Love Collection with the addition of three new styles as well as new and improved specifications to four existing styles. Responding to the steady demand for classic bathroom style, PJH's new freestanding bathing collection enables stockists to offer the middle market a truly affordable range of high quality traditional baths. The new range also addresses space-saving, with a number of back-to-wall roll top baths including a clever corner solution. While full of old fashioned charm and elegance, the

latest design technologies and the use of high grade acrylic, give rise to modern features such as a flawless white finish, streamlined curves and edges, heat-retaining surfaces and a durable and long-lasting design.

For smaller bathrooms, the new Clevedon Corner roll top bath (pictured), featuring 'Raven's Claw' feet and a back-to-wall corner design, slots perfectly into a bathroom corner and is available in two lengths, 1500mm and 1700mm, with a width of 750mm and height of 650mm. www.partners.pjh.uk



Going dark

Merging comfort and style, black bathrooms are here to stay. The Black Sapphire Collection of dark sanitaryware by Imperial Bathrooms encompasses basins, toilets, bidets and accessories in myriad styles, enabling bathrooms to wholly embrace the darkness, as well as adding an unexpected edge to monochrome designs and broader palettes.

"Black and monochrome rooms soothe the eye and allow an overworked mind a moment of calm," commented Graeme Borchard, managing director at UK Bathrooms. "The Black Sapphire Collection from Imperial Bathrooms means that bathrooms can now fully commit to a black palette, and offers wider and bolder options for lovers of statement spaces."

The range incorporates four sanitaryware families, the first truly comprehensive collection of black bathroom ceramics. www.ukbathrooms.com



In shape

Wharf Worktops, one of the UK's leading independent manufacturers of seamless solid surfaces, is constantly investing in the future, as more customers up and down the country enjoy the benefits of its exclusive range of surface solutions.

With a focus on providing an exceptional customer experience, Wharf is reshaping the market's approach to worktop design, innovation and installation. In fact, worktops have taken centre stage in the home over the past 12 months, with growing demand for easy-clean, hygienic surfaces in light of the ongoing pandemic. As of today, Wharf Worktops company has perfected the art of producing very high quality seamless solid surface worktops delivered in a professional, customer-friendly style. www.wharfsolidssurface.co.uk



City sleek

Reginox UK, the leading sinks, taps and accessories manufacturer, has unveiled its latest addition to its stainless-steel sink range – the New York. The New York has been crafted from premium quality stainless steel with a matt inox finish. It's available in a wide range of different bowl sizes, all of which include an integral strainer and comfort waste as standard. Featuring an easy-to-clean design with tight corners with 10mm radius, the New York is easier and quicker than standard sinks to fit

and is visually minimalist in style. The New York can be fitted in three different ways – undermounted, flush with the work top or simply inset (surface mounted) installation – making it an incredibly versatile product and suitable for any modern kitchen. What sets the New York apart from everything else in this category is its incorporated flush waste outlet which is molded directly into the sink meaning there is no join, which reduces leaks as well as being more hygienic.

www.reginox.co.uk



Looking smart

Designed to offer an intuitive experience for consumers with busy lives, the brand new Whirlpool W Collection 4 Doors fridge-freezer (WQ91 FO1BX UK) benefits from 6TH SENSE Live connectivity, a capacity of 554 litres and customised smart space management. Finished in elegant black stainless steel, the freestanding, American-style fridge-freezer from Whirlpool can be controlled from anywhere, via a smartphone or tablet, thanks to the Whirlpool 6TH SENSE Live app. Users can adjust and monitor settings, activate special functions, such as the fast cooling mode, as well as access advice for easy maintenance. What's more, the app can help users effectively manage the contents of the fridge-freezer by notifying them when food needs to be used by or when drinks are chilled to perfection. The app can also provide food storage tips, drinks' recipes and populate a shopping list. The Whirlpool fridge-freezer also boasts incredible versatility and 33% more space for fresh fruit and vegetables, thanks to a dedicated compartment that can be adapted to individual consumer's needs. The Convertible Space compartment can be switched from fridge to freezer conditions with just one touch, offering users the ultimate solution in food storage, organisation and flexibility.

www.whirlpool.co.uk

The luxury look

The fashionable look of terrazzo flooring can be achieved with the benefit of easy installation and at a fraction of the cost of the traditional material with the BerryAlloc Pure luxury vinyl tile (LVT) flooring range, available from IDS. The Terrazzo Light Grey décor (pictured) authentically replicates traditionally laid terrazzo and will make a statement in both domestic and commercial interiors. The design is supplied in large format 612mm x 612mm x 5mm vinyl tiles which are compatible for use with water-piped underfloor heating systems. They are naturally warmer and 50% quieter underfoot than other LVT flooring due to the soft cushion surface being bonded onto a strong, durable SPC core. The pressed bevelled edges form tightly sealed joints making it ideal for bathrooms and kitchens. BerryAlloc Pure LVT flooring is fast and easy to install with the DreamClick system which supports 360-degree multidirectional installation.

Hardwearing and durable, the range offers the benefits of being water resistant, R11 slip resistant and eco-friendly, featuring 80% recyclable content.

www.idsurfaces.co.uk



On the panel

The Splashpanel range of PVC bathroom wall panelling has been extended with a new 600mm panel width providing greater flexibility and ease of installation in bathrooms and especially compact spaces such as cloakrooms, en suites and small shower rooms. The new Splashpanel Narrow panels measure 600mm x 2400mm x 10mm and are lighter



in weight than the standard panel sizes of 1,000 and 1,200mm. Installers benefit from them being very easy to lift, cut, handle and fit, especially when stairs or restricted spaces are involved. Six decors are available, reflecting the most popular finishes on the main Splashpanel range. They are White Marble Matt, White Marble Gloss, White Gloss, Grey Mosaic Gloss, Linea Grey Gloss and White Sparkle Gloss. Splashpanel surfaces are hygienic, grout-free, mould-resistant, easy to clean, FR rated and backed by a five-year domestic warranty.

www.panelstyle.co.uk

Fool proof

Dryrod damp-proofing rods from Safeguard Europe – the UK's leading specialist in damp and waterproofing, and masonry repair solutions – can be installed, inside and out, whatever the weather and allow contractors to deliver rising damp remedials precisely, quickly, and easily. The BBA-certified Dryrod damp-proofing rod is a patented synthetic rod made from advanced polymers containing a high-performance silane/siloxane material that leeches into mortar and masonry to form a DPC in brick, coursed stone, rubble infill and cavity walls.

Dryrod brings three immediate benefits to damp-proof course DPC remedials. First, they perform superbly and are very long-lasting, owing to the high-silicone content of the active ingredient – being 30 times more effective than budget damp-proofing materials. The longevity of Dryrod DPC protection has been certified by the BBA as being at least 20 years. The rods can be installed in wet walls that are very porous and either highly alkaline – such as in new mortar – or with low alkalinity (old mortar). The rods are also effective whether installed in warm or cold walls – even if the wall is freezing – making them suitable for installation at any time of year.

www.safeguardeurope.com



Down to Earth

British manufacturer Rangemaster continues to expand its offering with the launch of three new Earth-inspired colours, designed to complement the latest kitchen trends and embrace the outdoors. Available across seven range cooker families, the new Mineral Green, Stone Blue, and Charcoal Black increases the total number of colours in the portfolio to 17.

“The introduction of the Earth collection increases the total number of colours to 17 across our range cooker portfolio, paired with the seven collections and fuel types this allows us to provide huge variety and choice for consumers to suit any style of kitchen,” says Iskender Diker, sales and marketing director for Rangemaster appliances. “With deeper tones set to become an even bigger trend in kitchens this year, these three nature-inspired colours are designed to complement dark, dramatic cabinetry, or contrast with sleek, neutral tones and natural wood finishes. The ever-multifunctional kitchen offers the perfect canvas to bring nature indoors and, unsurprisingly, biophilic design is gaining traction in the design world as a way to connect with nature, make us feel good and benefit our health.”

www.rangemaster.co.uk



Kitchen legend

Franke has extended its portfolio of precision-engineered stainless steel sinks with the sleek and streamlined new Mythos Plus MYX range of inset models. It joins the hugely popular Mythos MYX collection, which was exceptionally well received by



retailers at KBB Birmingham last year where it was revealed as the successor to the bestselling Kubus undermount range. With their timeless, contemporary style, the new Mythos Plus MYX inset sinks feature the same refined design details and signature, streamlined aesthetic for which the Mythos MYX range has quickly become renowned. Compatible with any worktop material, Franke's stunning new Mythos Plus MYX inset sinks have a slim 6mm polished rim, which sits almost flush with the work surface for a sleek finish and can also be installed as flush mounted. These new inset models also benefit from an increased bowl depth of 200mm and tighter bowl radii of 25mm at the corner and 10mm at the base for easier cleaning and a more contemporary, streamlined finish. In addition, circular, flush-fitting waste covers with a radial brushed finish give the sinks a smoother base to help protect glasses and crockery.

www.franke.co.uk

Electric avenue

The newly upgraded Niva range of electric radiators from Vasco are easily controlled, and buyers can choose from a radio frequency version, which is not connected to your home internet, and comes with a compliant thermostat as standard. If you wish to control your electric radiator via the VASCO Climate Control app on your mobile phone you will need the E-Volve WiFi control version, this and the control unit can be ordered separately. The compact wifi module uses Bluetooth to communicate with a small temperature



sensor located in the same room as the radiator. A third version, which allows you to control the radiator with your home automation system, is also available. The Niva is a dry thermal panel electric radiator and does not contain any water; it heats up very quickly as it uses VASCO's new infrared technology to generate a comfortable, radiant heat. The upgraded electric Niva also allows you to control and limit the radiator's surface temperature, which is an extremely practical feature in rooms where safety is paramount, such as nurseries. It is far lighter than a water-filled radiator, making it much easier to install based on a plug-and-play principle.

www.vasco.eu

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Fisher & Paykel moves into new headquarters

Fisher & Paykel's long-planned project, which will see the company move from Milton Keynes to Northamptonshire, will enable the premium appliance brand to deliver products more safely, frequently and efficiently from a much larger facility located just a stone's throw from the M1. Measuring over 59,000ft² in size, the new property will have four dock level doors, doubling its fulfilment ability. A new cohesive warehouse and office layout will be joined in order to maintain strong communication between warehouse and office employees.

Fisher & Paykel's dedication to sustainability and protecting the environment is also a prominent factor in the brand's office move. The new headquarters includes the latest energy-saving and sustainable technologies including solar panels, PHEV and EV charging, water recovery and

LED lighting. The building is also positioned adjacent to a lake and newly planted woodland.

"Our long-awaited move to Northamptonshire will ensure disruption to deliveries will be minimised and also support our sustainable mindset," commented managing director David Woolcott. "I would like to thank our partners, CBRE, Aviva, Goodrich Consulting LLP, and the Fisher & Paykel team in the UK and New Zealand for making this project come to life. We look forward to moving in." www.fisherpaykel.com/uk

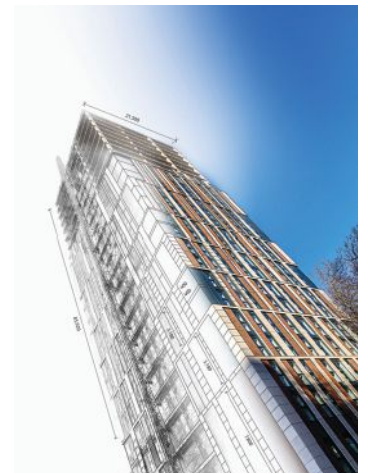


Ibstock showcases specification proposition

Ibstock, the UK's leading brick manufacturer, has affirmed its commitment to architects and specifiers by showcasing its specification proposition – a range of solutions and services designed to ensure a smooth and efficient specification process. Combining the strength of a market-leading range of products and systems with a range of high-quality design and technical support services, Ibstock can provide assistance throughout every stage of a project – from

concept to build. Digital content sits at the heart of the offering, giving architects and specifiers easy access to up-to-date, interactive content, including product brochures, technical data and inspirational case studies. In addition, Ibstock will also be providing a series of CPDs and webinars, relevant to unique aspects from across its specification offering. Alongside all of this, architects and specifiers also have access to Ibstock's expert in-house design and technical advisory team.

The first of the new content is already available and includes a mix of product- and service-focused materials. From a product perspective, the emphasis is on Ibstock's leading range of glazed bricks and handmade bricks to demonstrate the versatility of brick and its suitability for all types of project from traditional to ultra-modern. Ibstock will also be highlighting its extensive systems offering, including its Nexus brick-faced soffit and lintel systems and its MechSlip mechanical fix brick slip cladding system, both of which have recently secured BBA accreditation. ibstockbrick.co.uk



Kaldewei supports WWF initiative

Kaldewei has entered into a long-term partnership with the WWF in connection with an ocean conservation programme. Kaldewei, which is a member of the German Sustainable Building Council (DGNB), was also the first bathroom manufacturer who could offer an Environmental Product Declaration (EPD) issued by the Institut Bauen und Umwelt (IBU) for its products. That makes Kaldewei an industry pioneer with regard to promoting sustainable building.

"Our commitment to the environment doesn't end at the factory gates, but goes far beyond this, which is why, since 2017, as a leading German bathroom manufacturer, we have been working as a long-term partner with the WWF; specifically

supporting its ocean conservation programme in Vietnam," says managing director, Franz Kaldewei. "We're talking here about the Long An model project in the Mekong Delta that is combatting the causes of plastic waste in the world's oceans. The aim is to significantly reduce the amount of plastic that enters the ocean by separating and recycling plastic waste."

Thanks to Kaldewei's help, the preliminary studies and pilot measures has made this made possible and the WWF has been able to convince the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety (BMU) of the project's potential. As a result, the BMU has granted the WWF project funding until 2023. www.kaldewei.co.uk

New recruit for Saniflo UK

Saniflo UK has welcomed Simon Emmons as its new sales director. Based at the company's head office in Watford, he will strengthen the distribution network for the domestic range and oversee growth of commercial pumps and lifting stations and the Kinedo range of showers, trays and baths. Previously Emmons was sales and marketing director at Yale, the security hardware company, and prior to that he spent many years in the white goods sector, working for household names including Whirlpool, LG, CDA and Electrolux.

"It was business as usual for Saniflo last year with the company staying open to provide essential products and services to

frontline organisations," said Emmons. "In 2021, the company has not only seen a return to pre-epidemic business levels, but an increase in sales possibly due to pent-up demand as well as the strength of the construction sector. To manage anticipated growth, which has also been stimulated by the launch of new products including grease traps, submersible pumps and commercial lifting stations, my appointment is key and I'm delighted to be a part of the Saniflo team. I look forward to strengthening the distribution network for the domestic range and overseeing growth of commercial pumps and lifting stations and the Kinedo range of showers, trays and baths." www.saniflo.co.uk



All eyes on RAK Ceramics

Football fans tuning into watch their teams battle it out in the world's top leagues this spring were met with a familiar kbb name on pitchside advertising hoardings, as RAK Ceramics embarked on a high-profile brand visibility campaign. The RAK Ceramics logo was shown during Premier League, La Liga and Serie A football matches throughout March, with digital banners along the perimeter of the pitch showcasing the manufacturer's logo during TV broadcasting. The matches in England, Spain and Italy reached millions of football fans and exposed the RAK Ceramics brand to its target audience. The logo is in prime position behind the goals and along the full perimeter of the stadium, for a total of two to three minutes in each match. "To have such a high level of visibility at what is the world's most popular sport is brilliant exposure for the brand, which should result in more traffic through to our network of retailers here in the UK," commented Ben Bryden, sales and marketing director at RAK Ceramics UK. "Viewing figures for these matches are always high and even more so while fans are unable to support their teams in person due to the pandemic, which means more eyes on the RAK Ceramics logo than ever before."

www.rakceramics.com/uk



Sub-Zero & Wolf announces new warranties

Luxury kitchen appliance manufacturer Sub-Zero & Wolf has announced the launch of its new five-year parts and labour warranty, which will become effective on all new indoor products ordered on or after 1 April 2021. "I am delighted to offer this new five-year warranty, which demonstrates Sub-Zero & Wolf's strong commitment to outstanding quality in terms of performance, longevity and build quality," comments director Ricky Davies. "As a customer-first and customer-service-focused business we are proud to stand behind our products and this new warranty extension clearly supports our ethos."

All Sub-Zero and most Wolf appliances are hand-made and hand-finished in the USA by skilled craftsmen from the highest-grade materials. Each appliance is individually tested and designed to last a minimum of 20 years. By placing sustainability at the forefront Sub-Zero & Wolf aspires to lead in both food preservation and the preservation of the planet with efficiency and waste reduction in everything it does. Sub-Zero & Wolf's consumers will benefit from this new extended warranty by gaining peace of mind, especially at the all-important decision-making moment of choosing to invest in the luxury brand, while partners and retailers will benefit from offering their clients yet another reason to choose these iconic, aspirational appliances for their projects and homes.

subzero-wolf.co.uk



Michelmersh achieves three stars for new Brickmakers Quality Charter

The Brickmakers Quality Charter (BQC) is a new quality mark scheme by the Brick Development Association to promote responsible sourcing of clay bricks and to provide the supply chain with assurances of high-quality product, manufacturing and ethical standards. Michelmersh is dedicated to ensuring the highest standards of manufacturing and is extremely proud to have received certificate number one after a prompt submission with corresponding certifications, satisfying all eight critical assessment points (CAPs). The Group is therefore the first manufacturer to have been awarded the full three-star compliance.

"The integrity of finished brick facades is of utmost importance to us, which is why we feel the Brickmakers Quality Charter is instrumental in identifying the provenance of products and corresponding manufacturing standards," commented Frank Hanna, joint chief executive officer at Michelmersh. "It gives designers, contractors, end users and clients confidence that the products they specify are manufactured to the highest standards and ethics. With an increase in imported bricks showing insufficient origin information, and crucially, a lack of technical data relating to performance, the BQC gives ethical businesses, such as ourselves, the assurance that to hold a BQC credential is regarded as a recognisable stamp of a responsible brickmaker, creating a high-quality minimum standard across the industry."

www.mbhplc.co.uk

The New Homes Group and Mortgage Bureau form new partnership

The New Homes Group has announced a new partnership. Mortgage Bureau will be joining the New Build Mortgage Services family and this new partnership will see the two largest new-build brokers come together and create a major mortgage offering. The new partnership will provide nationwide coverage, throughout England, Scotland and Wales with 150 new build mortgage advisers and plans to grow to over 200. An experienced team of account directors delivering dedicated training and support to housebuilder clients will be backed up with sales support teams who are committed to working in a fast-paced environment and will manage more than 20,000 mortgage applications a year and over £4bn worth of lending from six offices.

Terry Higgins (pictured), managing director of The New Homes Group, commented: "Mortgage Bureau is not new to The New Homes Group; in fact, although a competitor, we have admired the way in which the business has operated, deploying many of the ethics we strongly believe in at The New Homes Group. It is already clear how very similar the two businesses are, dedicated to delivering a five-star service to our customers and our housebuilder clients. All of our mortgage service brands will continue to compete healthily against each other in the new build arena and have plans to continue to grow."

thenewhomesgroup.co.uk



Vandersanden appoints new CEO

After a career spanning 40 years, Jean-Pierre Wuytack will retire as CEO of brick manufacturer Vandersanden later this year. Rudi Peeters, currently CIO (chief information officer) at KBC bank in Belgium, will succeed Wuytack as CEO from 1 October. Under Peeters' leadership, Vandersanden aims to further accelerate its leading role in the sector in terms of innovation and sustainability.

After studying biology at the KU Leuven, Rudi Peeters started his career at KBC in 1986. Throughout these years, he was responsible for a varied range of areas, including ICT, electronic banking and marketing. In 2011, the bank appointed him ICT general manager (CIO).

"I have every confidence that, with Rudi, Vandersanden is in good hands," commented Wuytack. "He is the right person in the right place to take our company to the next level. It is with a certain pain in my heart that I approach my last months as CEO, but I can also say that I am proud of what we have achieved with Vandersanden. From within the family, I hope to continue to contribute to Vandersanden in the years to come and to support Rudi's leadership." www.vandersanden.com



Siemens launches virtual brochure

Siemens, the premium household appliance brand, has launched its first fully interactive virtual brochure. Bringing products to life using state-of-the-art CGI modelling, animation and cinematic storytelling, the virtual brochure presents an exciting alternative to printed marketing collateral. The virtual brochure, produced by Virtual Worlds, is a free-to-download app, available via the Google Play Store or App Store. It allows users to search for Siemens products, and then rotate, zoom and interact with them in a way that has simply not been possible until now. Every appliance can be explored in interactive 3D in close-up detail, and replayed as animated movies within the app. Launching with the Siemens StudioLine range of appliances, consumers will be able to see and interact with the latest products in greater detail. For example, products such as the new glassDraft Air downdraft extractor, which can be seamlessly integrated alongside the induction hob thanks to its slim, elegant glass design. siemens-home.bsh-group.com/uk



Knightsbridge goes green

Knightsbridge – one of the UK's leading manufacturers of wiring devices, accessories and lighting – is committing to a greener, brighter future with a move to sustainable packaging that is both 100% recyclable and made from 100% recycled materials. In the case of cardboard boxes, the company has teamed up with the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) to ensure its packaging comes from wholly recycled sources and is certified as such – look out for the FSC logo on these new materials. Where products were previously sold in plastic 'clamshells', these will now be sold in recyclable and biodegradable poly bags. The company also tasked its in-house recycling team to see what use could be made of materials received that would ordinarily go to waste. Its latest bright idea is converting incoming cardboard into 'stuffers' – the crinkle-cut packing that secures products within their outer cartons. The shift towards fully recycled and recyclable packaging falls within Knightsbridge's Committed to a Brighter Future initiative, which sees the company's determination to look after both customers and the environment turned into tangible, practical measure, rather than another round of corporate 'greenwash'. Other achievements realised under the scheme so far include a 95% reduction in single use plastics, 98% of packaging being biodegradable; and contributions in both goods and volunteers that have helped feed over 1000 people at the company's local food bank. www.mlaccessories.co.uk



Schmidt releases new brochure

Schmidt, France's leading manufacturer of home living solutions, has created a brand new brochure full of interior inspiration for kitchens, bedrooms, bathrooms and living spaces as well as standalone freestanding furniture to complete your design. Schmidt designs offer an eco-friendly option for developers, with intelligently sourced materials, a range of 100% recycled panels and sustainable production throughout.

"We are so proud to introduce our brand new brochure," says David Roy, country manager Schmidt UK. "As well as continuing in our commitment to sustainable living, we are also moving forward with a totally new way of thinking and working, offering our customers everything they need in order to complete their home interior project, whether it's one room or a whole house." www.home-design.schmidt



Wilsonart expands team

Wilsonart, the UK's largest manufacturer of laminate worktops and home to leading surface brands such as Bushboard, Wetwall and Mermaid Panels, has expanded its marketing team in the UK ahead of ambitious plans for growth and development in 2021. The market-leading company, based in County Durham, has appointed a marketing communications manager, and digital marketing specialist, to head up the bathroom arm of the business. Helen Dennett has joined the firm as UK marketing communications manager – Mermaid Panels, Wetwall and Bushboard Nuance; while Sasha Betty has been appointed as digital marketing specialist. The pair will oversee a trio of brands – Mermaid Panels, Wetwall and Bushboard's Nuance range – that serve the bathroom surfaces industry, with the team driving a primary focus towards the Mermaid Panels brand for 2021. www.wilsonart.co.uk





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CAREERS NEWS

Real estate bursary scheme launched

The Worshipful Company of Chartered Surveyors (WCCS) has announced the official launch of its real estate bursary scheme, aimed at supporting talented students from less advantaged and non-traditional backgrounds who take real estate-related university degrees.

Run in partnership with Pathways to Property, each bursary will each be supported by an industry 'Champion', who will pay £10,000 a year for three years to cover a student's university living expenses as well as offer ongoing mentoring.

The scheme was trialled last year with £150,000 to fund five students at Nottingham Trent, Reading, Sheffield Hallam, the University of Manchester, and Cambridge.

WCCS is now opening the scheme up to the wider property industry and hoping to sign up at least eight property businesses from across the sector to become Champions to fund a further bursaries, commencing in September 2021.

Ken Morgan, master of WCCS, said: "Talent is evenly spread across society, but opportunity is not – an issue that has only increased for many young people through the course of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Chartered Surveyors' Bursaries represent an opportunity to really make a difference, not only to the lives of gifted students and their families, but also to support the future health of the property industry as a whole.

Paddy Allen, chair of Pathways to Property, commented: "This partnership is a fantastic example of allies coming together to make real change in the industry and widening access to the sector through multiple different avenues."

Bellway apprentice celebrates awards success

From its 180 current apprentices, apprentice Raik Beyoglu was named as one of just five Highly Commended at Bellway's annual Apprentice of the Year Awards.

The 20-year-old is currently spending one day a week studying towards an NVQ in construction site management in the NHBC with the other four onsite at the company's QEII development in Welwyn Garden City, where he shadows multi-award-winning site manager Mark Todd, who has received a Pride in the Job award from the NHBC for the past five years.

Raik said: "I was very pleased to receive this commendation. A lot of hard work has gone into my time at Bellway and I am glad that it has been recognised. It is a very rewarding feeling to find out that I received nominations from people outside my immediate bubble of work colleagues.

"After finishing my A-Levels, I started working for Bellway

indirectly, through labouring with an agency. I sort of fell into the industry, but I soon realised it was meant to be and I hope to be doing this for a long time."

Rob Sapsford, construction director for Bellway North London said: "Raik has a bright future ahead of him in the construction industry."



Yorkshire site managers clinch company award

Linden Homes' site manager Gary Barker and assistant site manager Terry Palmer have sealed a coveted first place in the Best Standard Housing category at the recent Vistry Group Awards.

The pair, working at the Northfield Meadows development in Seamer, were praised for their commitment to health and safety in a year where the housing industry has risen to the many challenges arising from the Covid pandemic.

Vistry Group invited business units across all its brands to nominate a development to be considered for the SHE (Safety, Health & Environment) award. The judges then carried out an extensive review of the performance of each of the nominated developments before a visit from the company's SHE manager to interview the site manager.

The company then used these assessments to produce the shortlist of three finalists down. Barker and Palmer took the top spot at the virtual ceremony, rewarded with a trophy, framed certificate and a celebratory bottle of champagne.

Handing over the award, Vistry Homes Yorkshire regional managing director Scott Stothard said: "The past 12 months have not been without their challenges

across the new homes industry. However, our teams have risen admirably to those challenges, putting the health and safety of our people and customers at the very heart of the job.

"Gary and Terry have adapted to the changes presented by Covid admirably, in the way the site works on a day-to-day basis and dealing with external suppliers and other contacts. I am delighted that they – on behalf of their onsite team – have been recognised for their fantastic effort and achievement."



Net Zero will need 350,000 new industry jobs

A new CITB report has calculated that in order to achieve the government's commitment to Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, the construction industry will require the equivalent of 350,000 new roles to be created by 2028.

'Building Skills for Net Zero' says success will be the result of a mix of new skilled jobs, increased efficiencies in existing roles, and innovation in how the industry decarbonises the built environment.

Currently contributing approximately 40% of the UK's emissions, according to the UK Green Building Council (UKGBC), the industry faces a huge challenge, but also will have big opportunities to make itself more attractive to new recruits and upskill the existing workforce.

Modelling the skills profile of the workforce needed to deliver Net Zero using data from the Climate Change Committee (CCC), CITB has concluded that the decarbonisation target has created the demand for 86,000 construction project managers, 33,000 building envelope specialists and 59,000 plumbers and HVAC specialists.

CITB strategy and policy director Steve Radley said: "We can get there by being clear on the key skills we'll need, making sure we have the right courses and qualifications to deliver them and getting on with investing in them. Industry is already delivering what is needed, but it needs to happen at scale. The training sector must act now as employers' needs will change fast. A joined-up approach to skills across the built environment is key."



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JOB CENTRE: MARK FOSTER

Former Exeter Chiefs rugby player Mark Foster on the journey to his recent appointment as financial controller and funding analyst for Fruition Properties

Tell us a bit about your current role.

Together with Parul Scampion, the COO, I run the finance function for Fruition Properties and its associated companies. The role is incredibly diverse and encompasses financial reporting, tax, investor reporting and financial modelling. Having been in the role since Christmas, we have already undertaken a large amount of work in preparation for several new developments and another strong growth phase for Fruition. Having worked in professional services since retiring from rugby, I am loving the variety and commercial challenges that I am faced with as well as working with some incredibly talented people.

When did your career thoughts start, and did you always have a firm plan of a career path?

I was offered a professional rugby contract while still at school and decided that I would try my hand at that instead of university, going on to play and coach over the next 13 years. When I hit 30, and knowing rugby wasn't a forever career for me, I started working on my days off at an investment consultancy in Jersey (where I was player coach at the time).

Having declined a university place to study economics I always knew I wanted to work in financial services, so retired from rugby at 32 and went to work for First Names Group (now IQEQ). My mentor at the time encouraged me to continue my professional education (I had already done my Investment Management Certificate while playing rugby) and I chose to start my ACCA in my own time outside of work, driven by a thirst to understand how businesses functioned and were run.

Moving back to London after managing and advising on some real estate assets and SPVs in Jersey, I moved to the corporate tax function at a top 10 advisory firm and sat on the firm-wide real estate team, completing (after converting from ACCA) my ACA there. I then worked in real estate M&A tax in the private equity team at Deloitte before moving to Fruition.

How did learning and working fit in with all your rugby commitments?

It was really tough at the time. When teammates were out relaxing on days off or post-training, I would be studying or in the office working hard. If you are motivated, then it's easy. Rugby is your job and the time commitments are set, I just chose to

give myself the chance to have a good job post-rugby and do something I wanted to do as opposed to being forced to do something as so many players are.

Has your career working in finance brought with it notable challenges and achievements?

Before starting to study again, the last time I had taken exams was in 2002 (A-Levels), so going back to study three modules at a time for my ACA was tough while working long hours during the week. For two years I studied and took exams solidly but was lucky to have an amazing fiancée supporting me and some lifelong friends and colleagues around me to learn from. I remember getting my final results on Friday 13th and I am unashamed to say I sat in a pub in the city and cried when I found out I had passed. I think the pressure I felt far exceeded anything I faced during my rugby career and it certainly goes down as one of my proudest achievements.

What inspired you to take the role you have with Fruition?

A friend who had also worked in the same team as me at Deloitte introduced me to Parul. At the time I wanted to move out of professional services into a more commercial role that would stretch me and to move to a business that was growing fast that I could grow with. Having met with a number of people in the business, I couldn't wait to join. It's incredibly exciting to be a part of such a forward-thinking developer and, having been offered a few other jobs, I was inspired to join Fruition for a chance to work with such a great team and be able to add real value.

How was job-hunting over the last 12 months, with economic uncertainties and more reliance on

electronics rather than face-to-face meetings?

I found it surprisingly easy. I find that if you ask people for help or advice, they will generally go out of their way to help. My initial interview was over the phone and I was lucky enough to be able to meet at our offices between lockdowns – the evolution of virtual meetings means that face-to-face or over zoom are fairly similar. I was instantly struck with how passionate Mani (CEO of Fruition) and Parul were when I met them and knew almost instantly I wanted to work for Fruition.

For young people who are lining up their first job applications and interviews – can you offer them any advice on dos and don'ts?

Do your research and be honest with what you do and don't know. A strong work ethic and willingness to learn is such an asset and employers want you to continue to grow with the business; always look to be improving. If you don't get roles, speak to businesses and understand why. Find people who inspire you and are passionate; we spend so much of our lives in the office and I want to work with like-minded people who I can work hard with but also who I get on with on a personal level.





ilke Homes – Stephen Stone

Former Crest Nicholson chief executive Stephen Stone has joined ilke Homes' board following a successful year of growth that has seen the Yorkshire-based company grow its development-led pipeline to more than 1,000 homes.

During his 13 years at Crest as chief executive and later chairman, Stone led the FTSE 250 housebuilder's 2013 IPO and made notable predictions about the future skills crisis we are now seeing as well as the need for the sector to modernise. Stone wants to help councils, housing associations and pension funds investing in housing embrace more sustainable construction techniques.

"Stephen brings years of valuable experience and will play a key role in helping push the pedal down on growth, supporting new partnerships with major institutional partners, such as our recent deal with Man Group," commented Dave Sheridan, executive chairman at ilke Homes. Stephen Stone added: "I have been hugely impressed by the team's dedication to creating a genuinely positive impact and to building a business that has tremendous growth potential. Precision-engineering techniques – coupled with a factory-controlled environment – mean the company can deliver zero-carbon homes come rain or shine. This ultimately means more energy-efficient affordable homes for families to live in, with great quality and low running costs."

Orbit Homes – Liz Wilson

Orbit Homes has appointed Liz Wilson to the newly created role of head of design and specification. This new role aims to firmly put the customer at the heart of Orbit's new home designs. Wilson will work with Orbit Homes' design and architecture teams to focus on house type design and specification, spatial planning and interiors. She joins Orbit from over 10 years at City & Country where she headed up the interior design team.

Commenting on the appointment, group director of Orbit Homes Helen Moore said: "Having worked with Liz previously I knew she would be a great asset to our team. She has a unique approach, which resonates with what I am trying to achieve at Orbit – creating new homes in

which people aspire to live and where customers are treated equally no matter their tenure or budget. Liz really focuses on what makes a house a home and her input into our homes and interiors will help us deliver a truly sector-leading product across our entire newbuild portfolio." Wilson added: "I'm joining Orbit Homes at a great time. The business is in the process of launching its new standard design specifications and house types, having already made a firm commitment to RoSPA's Safer by design; it's really in a great place. My role is now how we build on that, and for me that's about collaborating across the group to create a great product for our customer while purchasing at best value so we can invest more in our services, homes and our communities."



Wavensmere Homes – Brad Critcher

Wavensmere Homes, a property developer based in the Midlands, has announced that Brad Critcher has been named as director of development.

This is a new role for the company following the huge success of the Nightingale Quarter in Derby and is indicative of the company's enthusiasm to secure further development opportunities across the greater Midlands area. Critcher brings more than 30 years' development experience gained across various sectors including retail, leisure, strategic land/residential and mixed use, having held senior development positions at Sainsbury's and Castlemore, and more recently at shopping centre REIT intu, where he led the team seeking to

identify and secure the diversification of the portfolio via the addition of compatible non retail uses.

Critcher commented: "I am incredibly excited to be joining the Wavensmere Homes team at this critical time. I believe its existing business model and talented management team is uniquely positioned to capitalise on the ever-changing property industry and the new opportunities and challenges that will unfold over the next few years."

James Dickens, managing director of Wavensmere Homes added: "Brad will give a new string to the Wavensmere bow; his knowledge and skill set will give us a competitive edge in repurposing city centre retail assets. Brad's extensive property and business development background will allow Wavensmere Homes to tap into new areas of the sector. We look forward to bringing Brad onboard at such an exciting time for the company following the success of Nightingale Quarter. We continue to concentrate primarily in and around the Midlands looking for new build opportunities; eyes are firmly set on the future and the growth of the company."

Hayfield – Ken Mulpeter

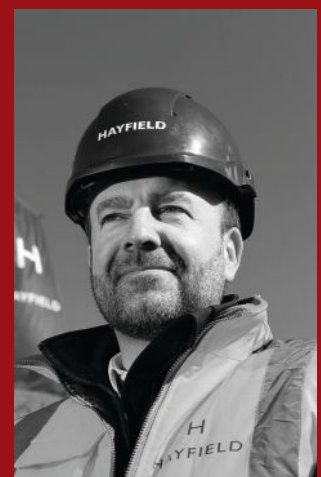
Hayfield has appointed Ken Mulpeter as production director to lead the delivery of £215m of construction activity. The multi-award-winning five-star homebuilder has over 500 luxury homes in progress across seven live sites.

Mulpeter joins from Avant Homes (Midlands), where he was responsible for the housebuilder's largest region with 15 live outlets. Prior to that, he was head of construction (Midlands and North) for St Modwen Homes, where he was accountable for all aspects of production across a wide region. Mulpeter has also previously worked for Accord Group as head of construction and has accumulated a total of 25 years' experience in the construction industry.

Andy Morris, operations director of Hayfield said: "Appointing a production director is a key milestone for the business, and this is the second senior recruit to join the construction team

within a matter of weeks. Ken shone out in an extremely talented field because of his experience of delivering a very high standard end product with excellent customer satisfaction results. We are all delighted that he has joined Hayfield and I look forward to working alongside him as we continue on our significant growth trajectory."

Ken Mulpeter added: "The reputation that Hayfield has established in only five years is the envy of all other SME housebuilders. I recall reading that the company had made history by being crowned the UK's Best Small Housebuilder at both the WhatHouse? and Housebuilder awards. Delivering significant growth for the business and upholding five-star customer service levels – while continuing to navigate the challenges of a global pandemic – will be a major undertaking. I am thrilled to have been selected for this role and I very much look forward to making a positive impact."



Kelvin Properties – Andrew Duncan

Andrew Duncan has been appointed land director at Kelvin Properties, leaving the same role at CALA Homes where he delivered projects including the 203-unit Pacific Quay site by Glasgow's River Clyde. The appointment is central to Kelvin Properties founder Stephen McKechnie's plans to cement the firm's reputation as one of Scotland's leading quality developers. "Andrew brings a wealth of experience to Kelvin Properties and will play a key role in the next exciting chapter for the business," McKechnie said. "To attract a director with his talent, ability and proven track record shows how far Kelvin Properties has come over the past 20 years. I am delighted he

shares our vision for placing the firm at the forefront of upmarket urban development in Scotland. In the modern marketplace, it is vital to be in a position to act on potential development sites quickly, and the addition of Andrew strengthens our ability to do just that. As an agile and forward-thinking developer, we are able to provide clear points of contact and more direct lines of communication, meaning necessary changes can be made faster which provides more scope for the communities we work within to have genuine influence." Duncan (left) said: "It is a privilege to join such an exciting and ambitious business, and I look forward to making a real impact on future projects across Scotland. Kelvin Properties is an ambitious and

entrepreneurial business that is well financed with lots of experience and a great track record. I am delighted to add my own experience to that mix and can't wait to get started in this next chapter for myself and the business."



Lovell – Paul Britt

Lovell has appointed Paul Britt (right) as technical manager as the Southern regional office expands its operation throughout the region. Based at the company's office in Exeter, Britt has extensive experience at all levels of the supply chain including over 10 years in the construction and housebuilding sector in the south west, with his most recent position as technical manager at Redrow Homes South West. With over 550 units under planning, it's an exciting time for the Lovell Southern region, with the business

starting a new residential project in Somerset, as well as contracting for LiveWest on a site in Exeter.

"I am really looking forward to this exciting challenge at Lovell," said Britt. "There's a huge opportunity to grow the business across the south-west region."

Regional managing director at Lovell, Andrew Johnston (left), added: "We are delighted to have Paul on board. He has extensive experience managing diverse teams and ensuring efficient delivery of projects. A number of the Lovell team worked with him at Midas Homes and he'll be a tremendous asset to the business."



Peveril Homes – James Smith

Peveril Homes has appointed a new managing director. James Smith, who has been at Peveril Homes for 23 years, and was most recently promoted from land director, says his immediate priority is the acquisition of new land across the Midlands. "I will ensure we continue to create beautiful quality homes for residents to build a life in," he commented. "I am extremely excited to be taking the business forward for the foreseeable future. There have been many highlights during my Peveril Homes' career, but the most prominent one for me is the fantastic team I work with. They're amazing and it's an honour to be part of this thriving business that genuinely cares about its homebuyers. Everyone who works at Peveril Homes strives to ensure our purchasers have a wonderful experience when joining the Peveril Homes family."

Peveril Homes has just released properties for sale at its latest development, Flagshaw Pastures in Kirk Langley, with further developments to follow in the coming months.



CallisonRTKL – Lydia Firminger

CallisonRTKL, the architecture, planning and design practice, has appointed multi-award-winning architect Lydia Firminger as associate principal. Joining from Kohn Pedersen Fox, Firminger brings over 17 years of expertise in the design and delivery of prestigious residential and mixed-use projects in London and Europe, with a particular focus on large-scale masterplans that create vibrant destinations. This includes work with Capco on a masterplan to curate Covent Garden; the multi-award-winning Floral Court and Earls Court Village for Capco; the nine-hectare mixed-use redevelopment of The Warwick Road Estate on behalf of The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and the 600-home regeneration at Royal Arsenal Riverside in Woolwich for Berkeley Group. "CallisonRTKL's philosophy of taking a holistic, people-led view to designing schemes positions it perfectly to seize new opportunities that require a fresh perspective," said Firminger. "Through creative thinking that considers the bigger picture, we can create integrated mixed-use solutions that blend old and new to provide truly exciting places, delivering value for all stakeholders."

Davidson Estates – Jonathan Smith

Davidson Estates has recruited an experienced property consultant to help handle the growth in new homes and land investments across Birmingham.

Jonathan Smith has been appointed as a new home and investment consultant at the expanding estate and letting agency, taking its total staffing up to six. Smith had most recently been working as a manager in CBRE's office lettings team in Guangzhou, China, where his clients included Marriott, Siemens, Universal Music and many others. He is fluent in Mandarin after 15 years of living and working in China, and had previously served as a manager in the property management team at Colliers International, looking after customer service, service standards and tenant relations. Ben Davidson, managing director of Davidson Estates, said: "We are delighted to welcome

Jonathan to our team and are sure that his experience in property will see him thrive as we continue to expand. While the economy has had its challenges in the last 12 months due to Covid-19, we're still seeing healthy growth in property development. Jonathan will be selling new homes through our Davidson Developments website, also pitching to developers for new sales and lettings contracts, and selling land and schemes with or without planning permission as part of our property investment consultancy. We also feel Jonathan's Mandarin could be useful, as we expect a continuation of foreign investment once lockdown restrictions have been lifted."



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CONSTRUCTION



“ I joined as an Estimator and during my 15 years I have been provided with a number of excellent career opportunities within different areas of the country. I was promoted from Estimator to Quantity Surveyor and then Commercial Manager. I was then appointed into my

first Directorship position within the South East region before securing my current role as Group Commercial/Construction Director in 2019. I now sit on the Operations Board of Directors. I'm very grateful for these fantastic career opportunities. My journey is a great example of how the business supports career progression if you work hard, believe in the business model and deliver results.”

Lee MacArthur

SALES



“ I started my career with Churchill as a Lodge Manager. I thoroughly enjoyed this role and was immediately sold on the lifestyle we offer and the difference it made to our Owners lives. I decided to move across to sales to further my career and one of the main reasons for this was because I felt

very passionate about what we were selling.

In 2017 I was delighted to take on more responsibility and was promoted to Area Sales Manager for the Midlands Region. My career began with Churchill in 2011 and I am so thankful for these wonderful career opportunities.”

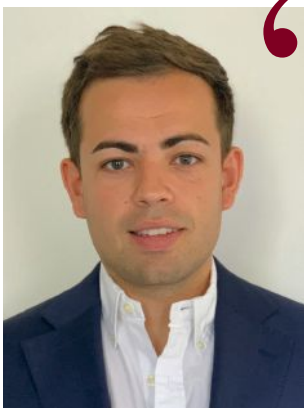
Kate Riley



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LAND



“ I started my role as a Graduate Land Buyer in 2017 which was both a role and development sector that was relatively new to me. Working within Land entails a great level of responsibility and expectation but with this comes opportunity. I am fortunate to be part of a

team which is led with such experience and clear direction that I am well placed to make the most of the opportunities available.

I will always be grateful for the faith Churchill placed in me during the early stages of my career, this inspired my confidence and first promotion to Land Buyer three years ago. With the support and guidance of my Colleagues, I am excited to have been promoted once again in 2021 to Senior Land Buyer.”

Harry Young

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