

Sustainable Homes

Beyond EcoHomes

It's time for more associations to make the link between residents and resources

The recent announcement of an eco-village in Northampton has been welcomed by all those who care about sustainability in housing. The development takes in to account all the social factors needed to be truly sustainable: resident consultation; good, liveable design and a commercial centre as well as housing. Beyond that, it is also environmentally friendly, with all 1000 homes being built to EcoHomes 'excellent', innovative techniques such as CHP and a focus on pedestrian rather than car accessibility.

Yet this type of scheme is the exception rather than the norm, and recent work by Sustainable Homes has revealed that often the environmental side of sustainability is being left out. Associations are

achieving the 'social' side of sustainability – setting up admirable initiatives such as residents' loan schemes, training opportunities etc, but stopping short of the environmental aspects.

The connection is tangible. Paul King, Campaign Director for the WWF's One Million Sustainable Homes campaign, says he is often asked why the WWF is involved in 'greening' the housing stock: "The answer is simple. There is no point in us going to great lengths to protect the habitats of endangered species if, when we get back to the UK, people are buying timber which has come from other endangered habitats. Nor can we allow climate change to destroy our environment. Homes are major areas where improvements can be made."

There are many reasons why achieving environmental sustainability can be hard for housing associations, but examples like the one above show what can be achieved with the right skills and funding.



Green shoots of sustainable development. Notting Hill HA's Gold Lane development.

INSIDE

EcoHomes one year on
page 2/3

Focus on Timber
page 2/3

A round-up of what's new and useful
page 4

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Cash to create Living Spaces

Resident and community groups may be eligible for a cash injection of up to £25,000 to improve their environment and access to play areas, as part of a £30m ODPM scheme.

Part of the Government's

Sustainable Communities Plan, Living Spaces provides funds and support to Community Groups wanting to create or improve play areas, gardens, parks, and other spaces near to where they live.

More than £1m worth of grants

have already been distributed to groups such Trojan Court Tenants Association for their estate, owned and managed by Octavia Housing and Care. They consulted with local children who were able to choose which play equipment they wanted on their estate.

As well as providing grants, Living Spaces also helps local groups by providing practical support and expert advice on how to deliver projects successfully.

Visit www.living-spaces.org.uk or call 0845 600 3190.

Children on the Trojan Court Estate after choosing their favourite playground design from a display.



NEW Good Practice Guide: Free Refurbishment Update

A supplement to Sustainable Homes' Good Practice Guide & Directory is now available.

This time the focus is on improving the sustainability of existing stock, with case studies illustrating good practice in sustainable refurbishment. Scheme details, cost information, developers' comments and contact details are provided for each of the case studies from RSLs



and Local Authorities across the UK. The supplement will be available on both www.greenstreet.org.uk and www.sustainablehomes.co.uk, or to request your copy email Sarah Butler subtler@hastoe.com

Sustainable Development for all

Sustainable Homes has completed its pilot sustainable development training for housing associations. We are now preparing to roll out the training to a larger number of associations. If you would like your organisation to take part in these please contact Jo Koenig jkoenig@hastoe.com or Tel. 020 8973 0422.

Are you up to date?

Make sure you receive our new monthly e-bulletin – send your email address to us info@sustainablehomes.co.uk

EcoHomes one year on: is it working?

Sustainable Homes has conducted research for a new guide on the differing attitudes of private developers and housing associations towards the rating.

Over 450 questionnaires were sent to developers and housing associations, with a response rate of around 10%. Here are some of the findings:

Housing associations

- 70% of associations think that EcoHomes will improve the quality of life for residents.
- Nearly 50% of housing associations said that environmentally friendly products were difficult to obtain – with FSC-certified timber being a particular worry.

Can private developers communicate better?

- Nearly 60% of associations had

experienced 'great difficulty' in communicating with lead contractors about EcoHomes, compared with only 37% of private developers.

But...

- 60% of private developers said they had difficulty in communicating with their own staff about the implications of EcoHomes.
- 75% of private developers, where associations were the lead developer, said there was a lack of will in their own organisations.
- Over 50% of developers feel there is a lack of an end market.

This research will inform our forthcoming Guide to building EcoHomes, aimed at both private developers and housing associations, to be published later



this year. For more information contact Jo Koenig jkoenig@hastoe.com Tel. 020 8973 0422.



Environmental construction in progress (photo: Integer)

EcoHomes success: "Excellent" rating for Toynbee HA's Denmark Place

Focus on timber

Associations have been telling us through our research that finding sustainable timber can be problematic. Here are some solutions to the most common problems:

- **There are not enough suppliers:** the number is growing though, for example, specialist suppliers to the social housing market, Bereco, now supply timber frame windows. A complete list is on the FSC website.
- **The timber is too expensive:** research from our Guide to EcoHomes and IGP project, the One Planet Buyers Group, has shown that the on-cost can lie between 0 and 10%.
- **I have supply chain concerns:** the market is growing, but schemes such as CERTIM, run by Timbmet, focus on providing free bespoke certified timber solutions for your particular project, or business as a whole.



- **I don't know which scheme is best:** an analysis of eight forest certification schemes released by FERN, the European Union forest campaign group, recognises the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) as the most independent, rigorous and credible forest certification system. You get more EcoHomes points for using FSC certified timber, slightly fewer for using the PEFC certification scheme, and none for any of the other schemes.
- **What about local timber?** There's an event in May held by the Forestry Commission Scotland and the Scottish Forest Industries Cluster exploring

certification of Scottish timber. Email gladys.cummings@forestry.gsi.gov.uk for details.

- **It doesn't make any difference to residents:** in terms of direct difference – true. But destruction of forests by unsustainably sourced timber means harm not only for the people and species that depend on them, but for us all in terms of the global environment. For ideas on how to communicate with residents about timber windows contact us.
- **How can I find out more?** FSC run free training courses and have a free consultancy service. Download FERN's

new report Footprints in the Forest from their website www.fern.org. Check out what the FSC has to offer you on www.fsc-uk.info, or find out about the free consultancy at www.timbmet.com. CPD training for wood certification at www.trada.co.uk.

From the wood to the window – know your choices



Barker Report and you: Environmental Digest

Over to the government to make an environmental policy, according to the latest report by Kate Barker, Review of Housing Supply. In it she writes:

"UK economic well-being could be improved by increasing the supply of housing. Set against this, consideration needs to be given to the associated environmental costs. This gives rise to difficult choices, and the Government needs to weigh carefully its different policy objectives to determine its overall approach to housing. Making a real difference to housing supply may require a robust set of policies."

Another key recommendation is that Government should set higher affordable housing targets.

Does this mean more environmentally friendly housing from the RSL sector?

Watch this space...

For more information visit www.barkerreview.org.uk

UK's most sustainable house builders

Looking to partner with a sustainable private developer? A WWF survey could help you. The report, Building Towards Sustainability, compiled in conjunction with Insight Investment as part of the WWF's One Million Sustainable Homes campaign, analyses the sustainability performance of the UK's 13 largest house building firms.

Based on a range of sustainability factors, two firms, Countryside Properties and Berkley Group, emerge as clear leaders in the field. Each 'scores' a rating of more than 70% on the WWF's sustainability index, against an overall survey average of 35%.

Paul King, director of WWF's One Million Sustainable Homes campaign, said: "Responsible house builders should consider how their developments can contribute to creating a more sustainable future for local communities, as well as for society and the environment more widely. Our homes have significant environmental, social and economic impacts throughout their lifetime – and this, coupled with the current shortage of good quality housing in the UK, means that the need for more sustainable homes is urgent." Visit www.wwf.org.uk/sustainablehomes

Jon Rouse backs sustainability

As Jon Rouse prepares to leave CABE and join the Housing Corporation as their new Chief Executive, he told us his stance on sustainable refurbishment:

"Our housing stock is now the oldest in Europe. The majority of this existing stock has a significant impact on the environment as a result of inefficient energy use. There is an urgent need for renewal. While it is essential to reduce emissions from existing homes, it is also essential to build new homes that minimise the impact on the environment."

Visit www.greenstreet.org.uk – a one stop shop for sustainable refurbishments.



Courses and Resources – a round-up of what's new and useful

As you may know, Sustainable Homes has taken on a higher profile co-ordination role on behalf of the Housing Corporation, and Clare Wilson has been appointed as Sustainability Co-ordinator. We are happy to



Clare Wilson in her post

report that Clare is now in post and busy taking this role forward.

A key element of the role will be to ensure that all the help and resources developed under the Housing Corporation's Innovation and Good Practice

(IGP) programme are co-ordinated and promoted to the social housing sector in a coherent way, along with all the other resources available to encourage sustainable development. This means that Sustainable Homes will have an even wider and more comprehensive knowledge at its fingertips, and will be able to help you more effectively.

In turn it will assist in resources being targeted and taken up effectively.

If you would like further information on the Co-ordination role or the activities of Sustainable Homes, please contact Clare Wilson cwilson@hastoe.com; Tel. 020 8973 0424.

Group together for cheaper products

Concerned about meeting EcoHomes targets and the costs of sustainable building products?

Then the One Planet Products Buyers Group could be your solution. Supported by Housing Corporation's IGP grant, the WWF, and SEEDA, BioRegional has concluded that such a group will reduce costs and enable sharing of experience. It is proposed that One

Planet Products will act as a non profit making broker and specialise in sourcing sustainable building products suitable for refurbishment and new build. Membership will be open to public and private organisations.

A pilot is proposed for London and SEEDA regions. To discuss the first 20 products and the concept, contact Simon Corbey 020 8404 6103 sc@bioregional.com

New Routes to Sustainability

The Routes to Sustainability website has been redesigned and improved with new functions and an easy-to-use search facility to help you develop your own route to sustainability. Supported by the

Housing Corporation's IGP grant, the website provides a map of all of the support, tools and help available to you on sustainability issues.

Together with the manual and training course Routes to

Sustainability helps you make those first steps in delivering more sustainable housing and creating more sustainable communities.



Also being developed is a technology section to help you identify those technologies that can help you deliver Affordable Warmth,

Decent Homes and sustainable development.

Visit www.routestosustainability.org.uk email info@practicalenvironment.co.uk

DIARY DATES

30 April

Richmond upon Thames Building Responsibly Group

Richmond upon Thames
Contact: Paul Clay Tel 020 8831 6150 p.clay@btcv.org.uk

18 May

Social Housing: Advanced Building Design and Consultancy

(Free to eligible housing associations)
Construction Resources, London
www.constructionresources.com

Throughout May

Wood Solutions to Sustainable Construction

Various locations in Scotland
Contact: gladys.cummings@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

11 and 12 May

Towards Sustainable Construction – Why Become Sustainable?

London
www.ciria.org/conferences_sustainability_working_fair.htm

19 May

Costing the Earth? Valuing More Sustainable Construction

(free)
Ipswich
www.ciria.org/cief_event_190504.htm

19 May

Energy Efficiency: European Directives and UK Legislation

London
Contact: Selena Hannagan on 020 8969 1008 www.ecinormenergy.com

19 May

Hydropower in South East England

Guildford, Surrey (free)
Contact: Ian Bacon, TV Energy on 01635 817420 info@tvenergy.org

9 & 21 June

Sustainable Refurbishment Days

Construction Resources, London
Contact: Philip Windle on 020 7450 2211

12th June

Green Construction Day – part of London Sustainability Week

Creekside Development Centre, Deptford
Contact: Paul Liptrott at The Green Register pauill@sustainable-energy.org.uk

23/30 June (Both days)

Ecological Building and Services – Green Register Introductory Course.

Construction Resources, London
Contact: Paul Liptrott pauill@sustainable-energy.org.uk

Sustainable Homes

For more information on the work of Sustainable Homes contact us:

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