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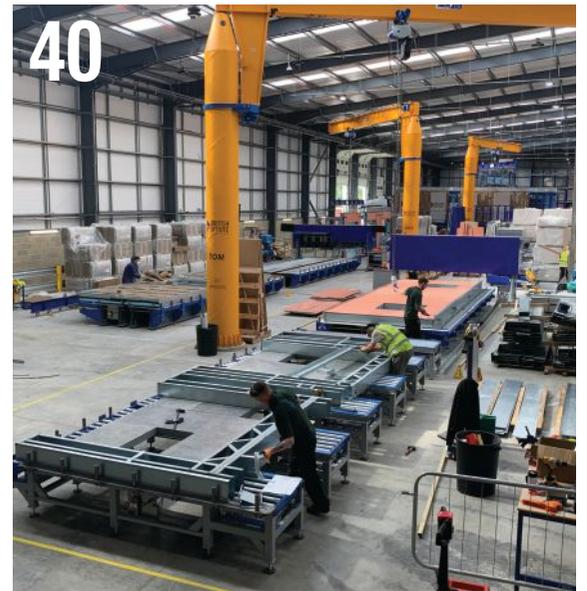
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SHJ cover: Conor Hughes, apprentice
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Rupert Bates

Let's talk green – groan. Okay, what about sustainability then? If you can define it, maybe I'll listen.

The language of the environment has always struggled to find the right words – and quite often the right people. Teenage Swedish activist Greta Thunberg polarises – or polar bears – opinion, while Extinction Rebellion, even though it has ticked the box marked 'raising awareness', has shot itself in the foot with some of its antics and, let's face it, a hessian flip-flop doesn't afford much protection from a bullet.

I shall now quote an extract from a book called 'The Green, Green Grass of Hell' with a character called Harry, the hero, or maybe villain, as editor of an eco-housing magazine.

"Harry was hack cliché writ large. Put helicopter, Michelin Star restaurant, or invitation to major sporting event in the subject box of an email and he'd read on. Put revolutionary new heat pump to save the planet and he'd hit the delete button before you could say green wash. Harry used cynicism and banter as a double bluff. The housing industry dismissed his 'couldn't care less about the environment' stance as pure bluster. How could one of the foremost writers on sustainable development around the world be anything other than the ultimate eco-warrior? To environmentalists he was carbon zero hero, wearing green underpants outside his trousers, stitched from recycled tyres. Harry's magazine had once run a front cover of a penguin in shades and swimming trunks supping a pina colada beside a melting Arctic ice cap."

Efficacy of technology, weight and complications of regulatory burden, not to mention financial viability, have rarely motivated volume builders to become jolly green giants. But if you can make a business both save its cheque book and salve its conscience, you have the recipe for proactive change, not reluctant compliance

No idea who Harry might be based on – he is portrayed as handsome and debonair with a weakness for lunch, if that affords any clues – but I do know the book is far from finished and been put on the back burner so often it is now called The Procrastination Chronicles.

Whether fact or fiction, whether you admire or condemn Harry's hypocrisy, we have certainly wallowed in green wash and been accessorised with eco-bling over the years – be it in housing, or many other industries.

Not any more. Housebuilders did a good job of kicking Zero Carbon 2016 into the long grass, but that lawn has now been mowed and inertia exposed as a snake in the eco-garden of Eden.

To be fair, efficacy of technology, weight and complications of regulatory burden, not to mention financial viability, have rarely motivated the volume builders to become jolly green giants. But if you can make a business both save its cheque book and salve its conscience, you have the recipe for proactive change, not reluctant compliance.

Time to bring in Sir David Attenborough. Some may, like the janitor in Scooby-Doo, shout at 'that meddling kid' Greta when she gets too preachy and uppity, but nobody, other than a mandrill in equatorial Africa during mating season, shouts at Sir David.

At 28, Joseph Daniels, founder and CEO of Etopia, is 10 years older than Thunberg and 66 years younger than Sir David. In an interview in this month's Show House, Daniels recalls Attenborough saying how for the first time he believed we can make the environment make economic sense.

Daniels himself goes further, committed to "make philanthropy economical, make the good the wanted, make the money-making the better thing".

Yes, still only words perhaps, but statements such as this from industry leaders hold far more weight and value than simply capping up the letters E, S and G in the latest annual report. Some businesses think ESG is a variation of a Chinese food additive, rather than standing for environmental, social and governance. But if you can't borrow money because investors don't like the cut of your carbon, you are stuffed.

We're back to words again. Lenders and borrowers alike now talk of ethical investment. What does that even mean? The opposite is unethical and, by strictest definition, morally wrong. Calling yourself 'ethical' is like putting the word 'honest' in your marketing literature. Do you really need to say it?

We label Sir David Attenborough an environmentalist. So, if you don't carry that tag, by definition again, you do not care about the environment; the world around you.

Whatever the arguments as to who is inflicting the damage and the extent of and repercussions of that damage, surely you don't have to be a 94-year-old natural history broadcaster to be labelled an environmentalist.

Hardly top of the worry list in the current climate, but this magazine has been wrestling with its monikers. We run 'sustainability' features and news pages. We are not alone in our casual green labels. But to make a real and lasting difference, maybe we need to drop the epithets. Otherwise, it will remain forever fringe and never mainstream.

Ultimately, it's about actions not words, but talking the right talk might trigger the right walk. [sh](#)

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Jenrick ditches ‘mutant algorithm’ in favour of focus on cities

Housing secretary Robert Jenrick has announced an increased focus on delivering homes in northern and Midlands cities. The government now plans to refocus housing numbers and affordable housing investment into major cities in the north and Midlands as it prepares to launch a revised planning formula for calculating housing need.

The change comes after a backlash from Conservative MPs regarding plans for the previous formula – described as a “mutant algorithm” – which would have focused housing in high value and rural areas in the south and south-east. The government announced it was ditching the so-called 80/20 rule, whereby 80% of housing investment goes in to high-value areas in London and the south-east, creating a new role for Homes England to accelerate housing delivery in the capital, and setting up a new Urban Centre Recovery Taskforce.

In a statement released in advance of the publication of the formula, the government said it was sticking to the target of building 300,000 homes a year, but would now be prioritising brownfield sites and urban areas. Jenrick said the plans will see the 20 largest cities in England encouraged to build more homes. He said the government would set up a £100m

Brownfield Land Release fund to encourage new homes on previously used sites.

He said: “This government wants to build more homes as a matter of social justice, for intergenerational fairness and to create jobs for working people. We are reforming our planning system to ensure it is simpler and more certain without compromising standards of design, quality and environmental protection.

“The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated and magnified patterns that already existed, creating a generational opportunity for the repurposing of offices and retail as housing and for urban renewal. We want this to be an opportunity for a new trajectory for our major cities – one which helps to forge a new country beyond Covid – which is more beautiful, healthier, more prosperous, more neighbourly and where more people have the security and dignity of a home of their own.

“A new expert Urban Centre Recovery Task Force has been set up to advise on the development and regeneration of our great town and city centres. The Task Force includes Peter Freeman, the visionary behind the redevelopment of Kings’ Cross and new chair of Homes England.”

The government also announced a £67m brownfield land fund for the

West Midlands and Greater Manchester Combined Authorities, and further £100m to pay for unlocking brownfield sites, in addition to the Brownfield Land Release fund.

The government’s initial proposals, published in August alongside the planning white paper, sparked a backlash from Conservative MPs when they realised it generated huge increases in housing numbers in high value areas in the south and south-east, including many rural constituencies, while reducing housebuilding targets in many urban and northern areas.

Former prime minister Theresa May was among around 50 MPs to criticise the proposals in a House of Commons debate in October, in which she dubbed the proposals “mechanistic and ill-conceived”.

Crispin Truman, chief executive of CPRE, the countryside charity, reacted to the proposals by saying: “Building more affordable homes on previously



developed land in more sustainable locations is something we’ve been calling for and is a win-win scenario for people and nature. But the problems with these planning proposals run much deeper than the housing algorithm, which are in need of a complete reboot, not just an update. Today’s announcement could be the start of a much-needed debate about how to ensure the right development in the right place across the whole country. The key test for these changes to the housing algorithm will be whether they help give local councils the ability to plan the quality, affordable homes we need, while preventing unnecessary loss of countryside and green spaces.”

Taylor Wimpey to cut 100 jobs in restructuring

Taylor Wimpey is set to make more than 100 redundancies as part of a restructuring programme designed to save £15m in costs from the business.

The cuts will see the removal of seven divisional managing directors, who currently sit below the firm’s regional chairs. As well as the restructuring of its London business, Taylor Wimpey will merge its major developments team into its strategic land business.

Taylor Wimpey, which employees nearly 6,000 people in the UK and Spain, said in a November trading update that it was “in consultation on a series of proposed changes that would generate annualised savings in the region of £15m from 2021”.

Chief executive Pete Redfern said at the time that the changes would see the firm’s central and east London businesses merged and the removal of an operational tier of management.

Khan selects Catalyst as delivery partner for major London scheme

London mayor Sadiq Khan has selected housing association Catalyst as development partner for a 934-home scheme on the former St Ann’s hospital site in Tottenham, north London.

The project has sparked controversy because local campaigners claim the Greater London Authority (GLA) bought the site from the NHS on the basis it would support proposals to turn it into an 800-home Community Land Trust (CLT).

But just 50 homes have been set aside to be placed into a CLT. The GLA said this would still make the scheme one of the largest community-led housing schemes in the capital, but London Assembly green party member Sian Berry said: “The mayor said that St Ann’s would be an ‘exemplar’ of community-led housing – but we’ve been left with just 50 homes out of more than 900. The community-led plan for St Ann’s, developed by StART Haringey, originally brought forward plans to make 100% of the homes affordable to the local community.

The GLA said around 60% of the remaining homes will be available at the London Affordable Rent level, with 20% available for shared ownership and 20% at the London Living Rent level. Khan said: “I’m pleased to be partnering with

Catalyst to develop this exciting project which will bring hundreds of genuinely affordable homes to this important site. My team and Catalyst are already working closely with the local community to ensure their needs are put at the heart of our plans for St Ann’s. I look forward to following the site’s progress and showing what can be done when the public sector takes a clear lead on redevelopment and builds the high-quality homes Londoners deserve.”

Philip Jenkins, group development director, at Catalyst said: “I’m delighted that Catalyst has been chosen by the GLA as the delivery partner for this landmark project that will deliver a significant number of much-needed affordable homes to the area. Placemaking is at the heart of what we do, and we’ll work closely with the community and key stakeholders to co-create and deliver a truly community-led redevelopment for local people, for our dedicated and highly-valued key workers and for future generations. As well as over 900 high-quality new homes, we’re committed to incorporating the site’s heritage, creating community and green space, and providing an accessible, attractive and connected hub that reflects the diversity of the area”.



news in brief

■ Skanska and IKEA's jointly owned modular housing business, BoKlok UK, has signed a deal with affordable housing provider Vivid to deliver homes. The partners aim to deliver 1000 new modular homes on sites throughout Hampshire, Surrey, Berkshire and West Sussex. The five-year agreement will see a joint approach to land, planning and the delivery of new modular homes. Graeme Culliton, BoKlok UK managing director and country manager, said: "This is an exciting opportunity for both BoKlok and Vivid. We share the same values and determination to bring more sustainability to the UK housing market. Working together allows us to accelerate our housing concept and build on the foundations we have already made in the south-west region." Mark Perry, chief executive at Vivid said: "We're delighted to announce we're working with BoKlok on this first of its kind partnership with a housing association, having admired its innovative developments, building both sustainable and high-quality homes."

■ Countryside has signed a deal with PRS specialist Sigma Capital to build a further 5,000 homes over the next three years. The deal builds on a similar 5,000-home agreement established in 2018, which has already seen more than 4,000 homes delivered. Countryside said the agreement will cover multiple regions in England. Iain McPherson, chief executive of Countryside Properties, said Sigma Capital shared Countryside's "commitment to delivering high quality, professionally managed rental homes for families across the country". Graham Barnet, chief executive of Sigma Capital Group, said: "Our partnership over the past six years has been a highly successful one, and this agreement will allow us to plan more effectively the further delivery of up to 5,000 new rental homes over the next three years."

■ Berkeley Group subsidiary St William has won planning consent for a 281-home scheme in north London, linked to Alexandra Palace by an underground tunnel. Called Clarendon, the three-block scheme in Hornsey, designed by Sheppard Robson, is the latest stage of a 1,700-home development spanning a 12-acre site at the former Hornsey Gasworks. The development includes a new community centre, food shop, cafe and 25,000ft² of commercial space. It will also include a new public square and a one-acre park. LDA Design was the landscape architect for the project.

London Square launches Square Roots affordable arm

Leading residential developer London Square is expanding into the affordable sector with the launch of housing provider Square Roots – with its first deal agreed in partnership with Hestia, the residential operating platform from the international business of Federated Hermes.

The development – Axion House – is located in Lewisham town centre and will be completed on behalf of Hestia. Building on Federated Hermes' established design and operational expertise to deliver affordable homes, the site was identified and acquired by Hestia from London Square and will deliver 141 new homes – 116 shared ownership and 25 London affordable rent – as well as commercial space, with landscaped public realm.

London Square obtained planning consent in 2019 and enabling works are currently being undertaken to support the launch of construction work onsite in spring 2021, with the first homes available in early 2024.

Adam Lawrence, chief executive, London Square, said: "The launch of Square Roots shows our commitment to providing much-needed new homes across all tenures in Greater London. Our partnership with Hestia has enabled the scheme to go ahead as 100% affordable homes, which is positive news for the local community and for the London Borough of Lewisham. "The scheme will offer well-designed homes in a well-connected location, either through shared ownership or by renting to people who want to work and live in the capital."

Will Gibby, director, fund management, at the international business of Federated Hermes, said: "Axion House fully aligns with Hestia's strategy and our wider



approach to responsible investing, enabling us to deliver a scheme that will provide affordable homes and impact positively on the environment and surrounding community. We look forward to working with Square Roots to drive forward this scheme and deliver essential, long-term homes in Lewisham."

London Square already has a delivery pipeline of over £500m in affordable housing in London. Square Roots reflects the continued expansion of the company, which has now completed a decade of development across the capital, evolving to respond to the demands on housing supply in the capital. The affordable brand will sit alongside the company's three existing divisions, with London Square Developments delivering private for sale homes, London Square Partners focusing on working with the public sector and London Square Works creating vibrant commercial, retail, leisure and community spaces, as part of the company's mixed-use schemes.

London Square has a £1.2bn land pipeline of 2,353 homes and has plans to more than double it to £2.6bn through further acquisitions. The company achieved its best sales results in its 10-year history in its latest annual results.



Abbey agrees cash takeover by majority shareholder

Housebuilder Abbey PLC has agreed to a cash takeover offer from its largest shareholder that values the housebuilder and plant hire firm at £328.8m.

Gallagher Holdings Ltd, owned by the Gallagher family, already owns 93.6% of the Hertfordshire-based housebuilder, so the offer of £15.75 per share applies to the remaining 4.4%, giving it a value of GBP14.4m.

In the half year to 31 October, its housebuilding division completed 291 sales (237 in the UK, 36 in Ireland and 18 in the Czech Republic) with a turnover of €105.45m, resulting in an

operating profit of €25.04m.

However, the group warned there are signs in the UK that supply chain and skilled labour shortages may emerge in the year ahead. In Ireland progress is steady and year end completions "are on track to be significantly ahead of last year," it said. M & J Engineers, its UK plant hire business, generated operating profits of €435,000 on a turnover of €7.56m. Abbey said turnover in this division continues to be "substantially behind year ago levels" and a difficult second half is in prospect. Abbey said it is planning "significant investment" in land in the year ahead.

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news in focus

By Isla MacFarlane

At the beginning of 2020, my inbox was bursting with optimistic predictions for the year ahead, which no one could have dreamed would end with the cancellation of Christmas. Having slammed the door on 2020, property professionals are dusting off their crystal balls, eager to share what they think 2021 might hold. Scanning their prophecies, it seems that the future isn't what it used to be.



Following a year that shook many to their core, buyers are no longer dreaming of open-plan layouts and shorter commutes. According to an analysis of google searches by Good Move, balconies, tennis courts and two-bedroom homes are now what gets buyers' hearts racing.

Meanwhile, an analysis by Jackson-Stops revealed that a strong-community environment is at the heart of many property searches. This, coupled with a nationwide surge in demand for country homes, has put the quintessential English village at the top of many buyers' wish lists. And the most important feature within that village? The pub, of course!

Dreams of an idyllic new life has driven demand to dizzying heights. House prices in November were 7.6% higher than in 2019. The market is being buoyed by longings for more space, rural landscapes and an expectation of working from home more often. And while agreed sales and new instructions to sell are at a five-month low, both remain at historically high levels and well above seasonal norms.

According to the latest government data, property transactions are continuing their upward trajectory, standing 19.3% higher than in November 2019. In the space of seven months, sales volumes have rebounded from the lowest level since records began to a five-year high.

However, while many have bought into the dream, few can afford it. While mortgage approvals are at a 13-year high, the latest analysis from the MCI Club has shown a significant drop in completions, with only 22% of purchases completing over the summer months. This compares starkly to the first quarter of the year when 60% of applied mortgages completed.

The stamp duty saving of £2,500 on a home costing £250,000 is now far outweighed by the average increase in property prices since July. Unsurprisingly, between July and December 2020, the proportion of first-time buyers in the market fell by 12% compared to the same period last year, according to figures from Reallymoving.

There are now just 78 deals from a handful of lenders that offer 10% deposit mortgages, as many high loan-to-value mortgages succumbed to the pandemic. Of the 86 mortgages available to FTBs, only 25 are actually available to all, a new study by Defaqto shows, and they are becoming more expensive. There are only eight intergenerational mortgage products today compared to 24 a year ago.

Opinions differ on how the property market will play out this year. However, if you lift the lid on this chocolate box existence that many Brits are dreaming of, you just don't know what you're going to get.

Isla MacFarlane is editor of Showhouse.co.uk

Beal Homes reveals new HQ plans

Humberside housebuilder Beal Homes has revealed plans for a new head office at Wykeland Group's Bridgehead business park. The family-owned housebuilder plans to move just 100 yards across the road from its existing home to a new £4.5m building next to the Porsche garage at Bridgehead.

A planning application has been submitted to East Riding of Yorkshire Council for the 19,000ft², two-storey building. Almost half of the new floorspace will be devoted to an expanded Design Lounge and areas dedicated to customer service, including to host launch events for new developments. With its own entrance, this will be a seven-day sales outlet, open during the day and evening.

The 1.1-acre site will also feature a show garden, reflecting the development of a recently launched Beal service helping buyers to make the most of their outdoor space with advice from a landscape design expert. Chief executive Richard Beal said: "We're very excited to put forward these plans and delighted to be working with Wykeland to deliver them. This is a major statement of our confidence in the future of the business and the housing market in Hull, East Yorkshire and Lincolnshire where we operate. This building will be both the headquarters of our business and a highly visible shop window and showroom for the quality of our homes and the outstanding customer experience we're known for.

"We have been considering the need for a bigger Design Lounge to support our

continuing growth for some time, but the events of recent months have accelerated our thinking. It's clear to us the process of buying a new home is continuing to change. Since March all visits to our marketing suites and show homes, as well as our development launches, have been by appointment-only. Our customers have completely embraced this, as well as welcoming the extensive Covid-secure safety measures we have put in place.

"This tells us homebuyers are receptive to pre-booked appointments in first-class surroundings where they can truly experience the quality of our homes and the exceptional range of fixtures, fittings and finishes we offer as part of our design service. The pandemic has also changed people's thinking about what they want from their home and private outdoor space, especially the desire for increased flexibility, including to provide for working from home. Our new head office will have the space and purpose-designed facilities to showcase fully the opportunity we offer to buyers to make their new home exactly as they want it to be, including altering internal layouts. It will also accommodate a new, greater range of customer options, such as furniture and soft furnishings."

Pending planning approval, construction is expected to begin in early 2021 with the new head office due to open in the first quarter of 2022. Beal plans to make its current head office on the opposite side of Boothferry Road available for sale or to let.

Duchy Homes joins Potters Hill scheme

Duchy Homes has been named as the third housebuilder to join a residential development in Sunderland.

The company has committed to acquire a 16.44-acre site at the Potters Hill scheme near Chapelgarth. The agreement to purchase the plot – which is expected to accommodate up to 179 homes – means that Duchy Homes joins Miller Homes and Story Homes on the 112-acre Sunderland site.

Duchy Homes' chief executive officer John Barnes said: "We are delighted to have exchanged contracts on land at Potters Hill, which we believe will be a fantastic development site for our high-quality family homes. Sunderland represents a really exciting market. We have seen the city's ambition to develop high-quality new communities, and have watched that bear fruit for other housebuilders in the area, who have enjoyed successful schemes. We truly believe that our own development at Potters Hill will be equally popular with families looking for a high-quality place to live and we're really excited to move forward."

Councillor Rebecca Atkinson, dynamic city cabinet member at Sunderland City Council, added: "Ensuring we have the range of homes that our residents, now and in the future, will need is a critical priority for this council. We are thrilled to see that yet another high-quality housing developer has been attracted to invest in Sunderland, creating homes that will allow us to attract a range of families to the city. South Sunderland – of which Potters Hill is a part – is becoming a hugely attractive place for families to live, and as more developers invest, its appeal only grows."





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by
Bridget Cordy



Joe Shorney left boarding school at 16 to become a trainee estate agent for a local independent firm; by 21 he'd launched that company's latest office in Solihull. He'd also returned to studying, with a part-time degree in real estate. Towards the end of his five-year course, he joined GBR Phoenix Beard to focus on commercial property agency.

This diverse experience, together with his qualifications, ensured he was well positioned when GBR Phoenix Beard was taken over by Savills in 2015. Then, three years ago, Shorney was asked to set up a residential development sales division for the Birmingham and Midlands region.

"I'm really proud of my career, especially at my age of 31, to have the responsibility and position within a company like Savills," says Shorney. "Being offered this role was a once in a lifetime opportunity and something that I couldn't miss out on."

"I think the senior executive management team also liked the fact that I'm really hungry and driven. And with more mixed-use developments coming forward, being able to advise our clients on the most appropriate uses, without compromising the residential element, is very important."

Towards the end of his degree, Shorney also embarked on his APC to become a chartered surveyor having been advised that the accreditation and global recognition of the RICS qualification was valuable if he wanted to get to the top.

Now based at Savills' Birmingham office, his team covers from Nottingham to the north Cotswolds,

acting for a wide variety of clients and selling new homes varying from £150,000 studio apartments to £3m luxury homes.

"One of the main parts of the role is residential consultancy and advising clients on optimising unit mix and specification, and engaging with our clients' wider professional teams, their architects or project management, to deliver the most market-facing scheme possible to maximise our clients' GDV and profitability.

"At Savills we have a market-leading research team we can tap into for the depth of market, where buyers are coming from, what price points are the most active, what do people want. It's not surprising that the coronavirus pandemic has caused buyers to shift their key requirements," says Shorney. "At the moment we're using that information to advise our clients on key trends such as working-from-home office provision, strong broadband and an emphasis on wellbeing and green open space.

"In terms of buyers moving from London, the connectivity with Birmingham is strong and obviously HS2 is going to be huge. We're seeing buyers relocating to Birmingham or its key affluent suburbs because companies are expanding their Birmingham

presence, so professionals see this as an evolving city with high quality residential developments and the affordability factor is a lot better than London."

Shorney hails from Birmingham and currently lives in Solihull with his wife, Laura, a chartered town planner. He's a keen runner and has a passion for cars and motorsport, especially F1. They both enjoy an outdoor lifestyle and were married in November, just before the second lockdown.

"In the light of Covid, we'd had to change our wedding three times. So we decided to have a small intimate ceremony in the Cotswolds, far from what we had originally planned but it couldn't have gone any better. And we're planning the main wedding experience for later in 2021 with all our friends.

"One of the good things to come out of lockdown was the acceleration of proptech and the ability to bring our clients' developments to our buyers in the comfort and safety of their homes. A lot of lessons were learned and now we've got a war-chest of tools at our disposal for promoting our clients' developments."

Savills employs a dedicated social media team for its main accounts; on Instagram it now has 133,000 followers. In addition, Shorney runs

his own personal profile business accounts, where he aims to add a personal touch.

"Social media has become a really important channel for us, which Savills takes very seriously and invests in. My own business social media accounts are still in their infancy but we've had good traction and we want our buyers to feel they can engage with us. It's about adapting to the times that we're in, doing everything that we can to be at the forefront."

As well as working closely with Savills' social media and research teams, Shorney works alongside its land team, advising on optimising schemes and new homes values. He also liaises with the company's China desk in London to promote new homes to south-east Asian buyers and has recently arranged substantial bulk deals for clients, totalling almost 200 units.

In his first three years in the role, Shorney has faced the headwinds of Covid-19 and Brexit uncertainty but he's proud of how his growing team of three has risen to the challenges.

"We've gone from strength to strength. I didn't furlough any of my team during lockdown because we were very busy and we wanted to be there for our clients. I think clients like the fact that we're a small team and we're all approachable.

"If my team ever has any issues, I'm always here to help. We tend to do a lot together because I'm very hands on, I'll roll my sleeves up, do viewings and negotiate deals. I enjoy selling, you've got to do that because that's part of being an agent, it's part of the buzz." 

"One of the good things to come out of lockdown was the acceleration of proptech and the ability to bring clients' developments to our buyers in the safety of their homes"

The Hyperoptic logo consists of the word "hyperoptic" in a lowercase, sans-serif font, with the "o" in "hyper" and the "o" in "optic" overlapping. The logo is positioned in the top right corner of the page, set against a white circular background.

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Colliers International grows residential new homes team

Colliers International is expanding its residential business with two senior hires joining the new homes team. Mike Bickerton joins as head of new homes and Nanette Hung as an associate director in the team with a focus on growing Colliers' foothold in the residential sales market. Both previously worked for the residential team at Cushman and Wakefield. Bickerton was previously a partner and head of new homes at the firm having worked there for 25 years and Hung joined three years ago from CBRE. Andrew White, head of residential at Colliers, said: "During the last 12 months we have reshaped and focused our team to ensure that we can offer clients access to the best experts and innovative thinkers around land sales, build to rent, international properties and new homes. "Despite 2020 being a difficult year for all businesses, we've managed to secure some significant deals across our service lines and expanding our team with additional experience and expertise from both Mike and Nanette will help to raise our profile in this sector." Bickerton added: "It's clear that the UK housing market is strong, resilient and growing. It's an exciting opportunity to join the Colliers team and leverage their unique platform to offer a truly seamless and cost-effective UK and global sales service to our clients."



Black Brick expects bumpy Q1

Black Brick's Camilla Dell and Caspar Harvard-Walls expect a bumpy Q1 this year, which they attribute to the expiry of the stamp duty holiday, the introduction of a 2% foreign buyers' surcharge, speculation over changes to capital gains tax in the spring budget, and adjustment to life outside the EU. Dell does not expect a significant downward impact on the market, with the return of foreign buyers likely to coincide with the new SDLT 2% surcharge for overseas purchases; although new developments specifically aimed at foreign buyers are thought likely see the tax absorbed into pricing, for example, at Canary Wharf and

Battersea Power Station. Despite the many challenges of 2020, the Black Brick team acquired £59,077,000 of property. Dell highlights four themes for this year and beyond as being the likely continuation of working from home, currency volatility, demand for outside space including communal gardens, and the 'greening' of the real estate sector. "Being green will overtake being swanky," said Dell, Black Brick managing partner, who believes developers will need to look at how they can incorporate this growing trend into their schemes and super-prime developments are likely to be marketed on this basis.



Rockwell appoints Johns & Co at Vetro, Canary Wharf

Rockwell has appointed Johns & Co to launch Vetro, 47 apartments on West India Dock Road with extensive views of the City, the Thames and beyond. Designed by architects SimpsonHaugh, the landmark building will feature traditional brick and extensive use of glass. Incorporating eight one-bedroom, 33 two-bedroom, and 6 duplex penthouse apartments, Vetro is close to shops, restaurants and Canary Wharf, and just a few minutes from the City. Chris Osmond, sales director at Johns & Co, said: "This landmark new building in the heart of Canary Wharf is unlike any other development in London. It's unique design and architecture means that on most of the floors there are only two apartments, giving residents a sense of privacy and space, which we expect will be hugely appealing to purchasers. Vetro is also exceptionally well-located just a short walk from the centre of Canary Wharf. It is also highly connected, with the DLR providing quick and easy access to the wider transport network." Amenities will focus on healthy living with an in-house gym, sauna, relaxation area and concierge service. There will also be a landscaped podium garden to provide outdoor space with extensive views for all residents to enjoy.



Savills reveals results of fourth 2020 buyer survey

During the second UK-wide lockdown, Savills surveyed more than 1,300 prime market sellers and prospective buyers, defining the prime market as broadly the top 5-10% by value. Responses showed that while there was slightly greater caution about the prospects of moving within the following three months, the lockdown had largely served to reaffirm widespread commitment



to moving before the end of 2021.

The great majority (81%) of decisions to buy or sell were made before the pandemic or the introduction of the stamp duty holiday, so failure to complete by the deadline was not considered by Savills to be a major factor for the prime market, with just 7% of £2m-plus buyers being "significantly concerned about beating the stamp duty deadline".

"While we expect transaction levels in the first half of next year to be concentrated in the first three months, this survey tells us is that decisions to move home are not made and broken in days and weeks," said Lucian Cook, head of residential research at Savills. "Eight in 10 of respondents made the decision to move either before the pandemic or during the first lockdown. This means decisions were made before the stamp duty holiday was announced, so a failure to move prior to 31 March is not expected to cause substantial fall-throughs."

Hamptons unveils new look

Hamptons has had a brand refresh with the introduction of a new logo across the company's network of 90 branches.

The new design, by creative agency I-AM, introduces a new typeface and a "colour palette of rich dark blue with a coral accent". Also incorporated is a new strapline, 'The Home Experts', which is designed to underline Hamptons' heritage and the complete service throughout a client's property journey.

Hamptons' international operation, which has over 100,000 overseas listings in 29 locations, will now sit alongside other divisions including sales, lettings and new homes. Lesley Cairns, managing director at Hamptons, said: "This is an exciting and pivotal moment in the lifespan of Hamptons. Last year we celebrated our 150th birthday with a year of celebration and also reflection and an opportunity to consider our impact over the next 150 years.

"As a business, we have never stood still and always adapted to meet the changing needs of our customers. Contemporary in design, the new look reflects the business today while adhering to the core values that set us and our customers apart when we first opened our doors in 1869. We're thrilled with the results and so proud of our new clothes."



Land director appointed at Connells

Connells Group has strengthened its land and new homes business with the appointment of Paul Quelch as land director.

Quelch brings 30 years' property experience to his role, the majority of which was spent at Connells, where he's held a variety of positions including branch manager, area director and land & new homes director.

Quelch was most recently at Spicerhaart, where he was land director for the North Region, and now rejoins Connells Group as land director across the Sequence brands of William H Brown, Allen & Harris and Brown & Merry.

In his new role, Quelch is tasked with forging new relationships with developers and landowners, promoting and acquiring strategic land opportunities, and focusing his expertise across the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

"I know how determined the Group is to grow market share by offering the highest quality services and I am

delighted to be part of a business which has a history of continuous commitment and investment into its land and new homes operation going back decades," said Quelch.

"Personally, I know and greatly respect the senior leaders in Sequence, and indeed Connells Group, and the way they have handled this most challenging of years, doing things properly and always putting staff first. Although I was tempted away a few years ago, I feel very lucky to have been welcomed back into the business. I look forward to being part of the land team at this exciting time."



Jackson-Stops predicts house price growth

Jackson-Stops expects marginal uplifts of around 2% in house prices this year, assuming no extension to the stamp duty holiday and that vaccines bring a move towards normality from the second half of the year. Should the SDLT relief be extended beyond March, they expect house price growth to rise by 3-4% across 2021.

Nick Leeming, chairman of Jackson-Stops, said: "Our sales figures between July and October (2020) show a 148% increase across our country markets. But we know this surge in transactions can only last so long. With the stamp duty holiday coming to an end, an additional 2% surcharge for non-UK buyers expected to be introduced in April and uncertainty around capital gains tax, measures must be put in place to prevent transactions falling off a cliff edge."

Jackson-Stops expects prices of new builds across the country to level off in 2021, with delays in construction timelines caused by Covid-19 creating an imbalance in supply and demand. High quality developments in more rural and coastal zones will be in high demand as buyers continue to prioritise greater access to open space and greenery. James Gibbs, director of Jackson-Stops' Exeter new homes division, said: "The demand we are currently seeing, coupled with a lack of supply of quality new homes, will counteract any negative impact from the end of the SDLT holiday. There is a clear desire from house-hunters to create home offices and for strong broadband connectivity to be built into their homes. Housebuilders are, of course, perfectly placed to cater to these needs, whether this is through providing ultrafast fibre optic broadband or dressing their show homes with home offices."



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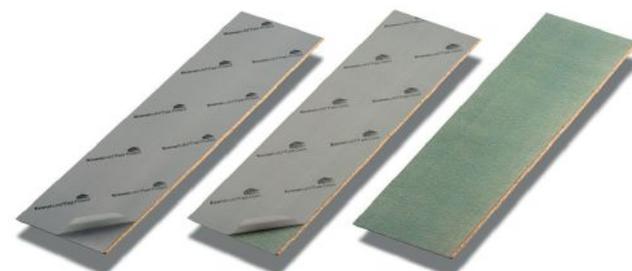
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Berkeley's Kidbrooke Village wins Sir David Attenborough Award

Cator Park at Kidbrooke Village, Berkeley's flagship net biodiversity gain project in the Royal Borough of Greenwich, has been awarded the Sir David Attenborough Award for Enhancing Biodiversity and the Overall President's Award at the recent Landscape Institute Awards.

Kidbrooke Village is set in 136 acres of green and open space, which comprises areas of grassland, meadow and wetland. In partnership with the Royal Borough of Greenwich, Berkeley has worked with

London Wildlife Trust and HTA Design to re-wild Cator Park, increasing biodiversity and encouraging birds, mammals and insects to nest among the ponds, wetlands, trees and wildflowers. The park also has a new play area developed in collaboration with APES Adventure Playground Engineers (designers of the Olympic Park Playground). On completion, Berkeley says Kidbrooke Village will have achieved a net biodiversity gain of more than 200%. It is the first of Berkeley Group's 40 net

biodiversity gain projects to reach maturity. Together these projects will create 480 acres of new or improved natural habitats.

The Sir David Attenborough Award for Enhancing Biodiversity celebrates projects which emphasise the enhancement or connectivity of habitats for biodiversity, while the Overall President's Award recognises the best landscape scheme of the year as selected by the President of the Landscape Institute.

Karl Whiteman, divisional managing director at Berkeley East Thames, said: "Berkeley has made a commitment to ensure all our new developments create a net biodiversity gain, and it's fantastic to see this come to fruition at Cator Park and Kidbrooke Village. Thanks to our partnership with the Royal Borough of Greenwich, HTA Design and London Wildlife Trust, Cator Park is a fantastic haven for nature, where new species are thriving. The park is a beautiful, biodiverse space that is loved by the community, and we are delighted to see its impact recognised with this new award."

James Lord, partner at HTA Design, said: "I'm over the moon that Cator Park has won the prestigious Sir David Attenborough for Enhancing Biodiversity and the overall President's Award. Cator Park is a celebration of the outdoors, blending play provision with the natural ecology and heritage of the site. Bringing wildlife back into the city and people and nature together, Cator Park demonstrates how the development of brownfield sites can contribute to wider biodiversity gains within cities and build sustainable communities. Many congratulations to the team at Berkeley, London Wildlife Trust, HTA Design and everyone else who worked so hard to make the project such a success."



GROHE scoops trio of sustainability accolades

Bathroom products manufacturer GROHE has recently won three international sustainability awards. The company was named one of the 50 Sustainability & Climate Leaders, and was a double winner at the German Sustainability Awards 2021.

The German Sustainability Awards 2021 honours GROHE's commitment to resource efficiency within the value chain and the sustainability impact of GROHE Blue water use system.

As part of its global initiative, GROHE is driving sustainability based on the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. The company says that sustainability must be understood as a continuous, never-ending journey

"We at GROHE have a doer mentality: we don't talk too much, we basically implement," is how Thomas Fuhr, Leader Fittings LIXIL International

and Co-CEO Grohe AG, describes how sustainability is implemented and translated into concrete action at GROHE in a new documentary. The short film is part of the global sustainability and climate protection initiative '50 Sustainability & Climate Leaders', for which GROHE was selected along with 49 other international companies. As pioneers in their respective industries, the companies portrayed demonstrate how they are actively committed to a sustainable future.

"Showing appreciation for our efforts by awarding us one of the most important sustainability prizes in Europe honours us to a high degree. At GROHE, everything revolves around the most valuable and, simultaneously, scarcest resource: water. Acting in a way that saves resources and minimises our ecological footprint therefore has

to be a matter of course for us," said Fuhr. As well as water-saving measures, since April 2020, GROHE has been one of the first leading manufacturers in the sanitary industry to produce CO₂-neutral products. With recycling rates of more than 90%, the brand is approaching a circular economy.

"Even though we have achieved a great deal in recent years, we are aware that we must continue to strengthen our commitment in order to shape the future of water in a sustainable manner. For us, sustainability is a continuous journey that we must continue with courage. I am proud that we are doing this as a team and that each individual at GROHE is making their contribution. Only like this can we pave the way to a sustainable economy, meet global challenges and improve people's quality of life," concluded Fuhr.

UKGBC announces 2021 Future Leaders cohort

The UKGBC has announced the 2021 cohort of its Future Leaders programme. In its eighth year, the five-month programme brings together high-potential professionals from the built environment industry to take part in “a unique programme of leadership and innovation”. The programme starts with a two-day innovation workshop in January, with a retreat in March, and presentations to industry leaders in June. The programme “takes participants on a journey to develop skills in personal leadership, collaborative thinking, business idea development, innovation and storytelling”. Future Leaders provides a forum for tomorrow’s leaders to grapple with the critical issues that the sector will face in the future, and challenges participants to work collaboratively to address these. Programme graduates can join the Future Leaders alumni network, which brings opportunities for continued professional development and access to thought-leaders right across the built environment value chain.

The 2021 Future Leaders:

Eleanor Boyce, social value consultant, Arup
 Bex Gill, senior structural engineer, Arup
 Antonietta Canta, senior energy engineer, Arup
 Jack Morris, consultant, Carbon Intelligence
 Tom Williams, associate, chapmanbdsp
 Tania Guerra González, principal mechanical engineer, chapmanbdsp
 Natalie Gardner, regeneration project manager, Clarion Housing Group
 Clotilde Robin, associate, Expedition Engineering
 Amira Hashemi, sustainability manager, Frasers Property
 Rodrigo Cruz Bastillo, senior financial analyst, Grosvenor
 Henry Hunter, asset manager, Grosvenor
 Sophie Winterbotham, head of supplier management, Grosvenor
 Laura Batty, senior technical research engineer, Heyne Tillett Steel
 Chloe Source, head of facilities management, HSBC
 Anna Foden, senior sustainability manager, ISG
 Jessica Herman, sustainability executive, JLL
 Joana Malato, senior sustainability communications consultant, JLL
 Doug Fearon, senior technical manager, Joseph Homes
 Alastair Gaisford, development manager, Mount Anvil
 Claire Murray, graduate – sustainability, Multiplex
 Gavin Cook, engineering manager – digital energy, Schneider Electric
 Anjna Farmah, property development manager, TfL
 Leanne Catterall, retail asset manager, The Crown Estate
 Marketa Nosalova, development Manager, Town
 Lucy Rees, Sustainability Advisor, UKGBC
 Matthew Black, Project Officer – Advancing Net Zero, WorldGBC

Elfrida Hamilton-Russell, head of learning and leadership at UKGBC, said: “With all eyes on the UK ahead of COP26, there has never been a more urgent time to invest in the development of tomorrow’s leaders who can radically transform our built environment for the better. This latest cohort will develop the skills and mindset needed to drive positive change. We look forward to nurturing their talent and connecting them to the programme’s powerful alumni network.”

Edinburgh zero carbon quarter to include 1,700 homes

A major development in Edinburgh has received planning consent. The 43-acre scheme, near Edinburgh Park Station, will include 1,737 residential units, made up of private rented homes, build-to-rent, affordable homes, and a 170-bedroom aparthotel.

The zero carbon quarter is being built by local developers Parabola and aims to be a sustainable environment with low levels of car parking, a large public park, play areas and gardens.

Tony Hordon, managing director of Parabola, said: “We are delighted to reach this key milestone in the development of Edinburgh Park to create a zero carbon, sustainable, vibrant new quarter of our city. At the heart of this application – one of the largest and most detailed considered by the council in the past decade – is our commitment to create a new community which

provides a variety of high quality homes to meet the growing needs of the city including a vital element of affordable accommodation.

The residential component will complement the range of other uses to create a new urban quarter of the city creating an exemplar with a commitment to wellbeing at its core.”

Peter Millican, founder and chairman of Parabola, added: “This is another great step forward in creating a unique quarter for the city of Edinburgh. Parabola is pleased that we continue to deliver a place to work, live and relax; at Edinburgh Park that will be an important element in building back a better city. This has been some six years in the making and therefore such a wonderful milestone and reflection of the work the team has delivered over this period.”



Government confirms £6.7bn warm homes package in Energy White Paper

The UK government has released its Energy White Paper, detailing steps to deliver “overwhelmingly decarbonised power in the 2030s”.

The paper builds on the prime minister’s Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution and the National Infrastructure Strategy (NIS) in outlining how the nation plans to transform its power and heating systems to support the net-zero emissions target for 2050.

It includes a £6.7bn support system for fuel-poor households that will run for six years. The package is designed to save families in old inefficient homes up to £400. In addition, the Warm Home Discount Scheme to 2026 will be delivered to cover 750,000 UK householders by giving them £150 off of

electricity bills each winter. The White Paper also confirms that the £2bn Green Homes Grant announced in the summer will be extended by a further year.

Installations of electric heat pumps are scheduled to grow from 30,000 per year to 600,000 by 2038. The White Paper also raises ambitions on industrial clusters, pledging to deliver four low-carbon clusters by 2030 and at least one net-zero variant by 2040.

Business and energy secretary Alok Sharma said: “Today’s plan establishes a decisive and permanent shift away from our dependence on fossil fuels, towards cleaner energy sources that will put our country at the forefront of the global green industrial revolution. Through a major programme

of investment and reform, we are determined to both decarbonise our economy in the most cost-effective way, while creating new sunrise industries and revitalising our industrial heartlands that will support new green jobs for generations to come. “At every step of the way, we will place affordability and fairness at the heart of our reforms – unleashing a wave of competition so consumers get the best deals possible on their bills, while protecting the vulnerable and fuel poor with additional financial support. With this long-term plan, we are turning climate ambition into climate action – putting the UK firmly on the course to net-zero to end our contribution to climate change as we build back greener.”

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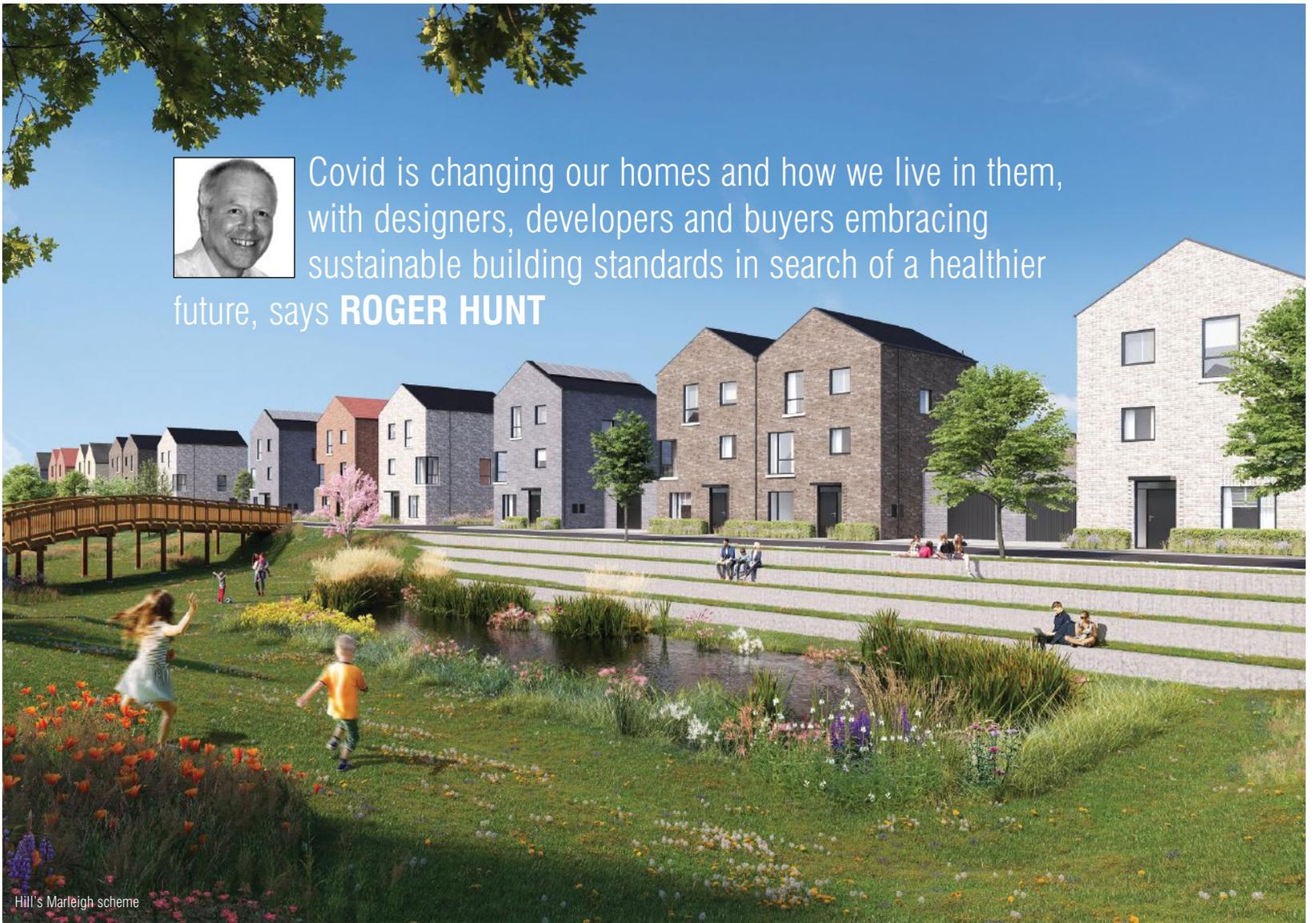
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Covid is changing our homes and how we live in them, with designers, developers and buyers embracing sustainable building standards in search of a healthier future, says **ROGER HUNT**



Hill's Marleigh scheme

THE HOUSE THE VIRUS BUILT



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Withiers

Covid-19 is accelerating change in what we want from our homes, where we want to live and how housing schemes are designed. Consequently, it is no surprise that the pandemic has provided a greater appreciation of what makes a good home and a realisation that this correlates closely with current sustainability goals.

A recent report from international law firm Withiers, 'The future of real estate: work, home and social', is clear that people will expect their homes to deliver much more. This is because they will no longer serve a purely domestic purpose but will become places that must fulfil home, work and social needs. According to the leading business and property experts featured in the report, new home buyers will drive demand for sustainability in new homes and settlements, and developers may have to deliver on sustainability and environmental promises as never before.

"The pandemic has certainly highlighted the importance of design elements, such as ventilation, flexible space for homeworking and schooling, access to outdoor space and biodiversity, in creating healthy homes," believes Brendan Ritchie, head of sustainability at the Hill Group.

This view is reinforced by a recent Design Council report, 'A Public Vision for the Home of 2030'. It found that sustainability was a significant factor to people: 79% of English adults surveyed thought it important that their future homes are environmentally friendly and part of the solution to climate change.

Elli Thomas, lead programme manager at the Design Council, believes that spending so much time indoors shows just how important it is to have a home that meets our basic needs, although it is not only the quality of internal spaces that should be considered in the context of Covid. "Other principles in our report highlight the broader range of issues that are critical to people's wellbeing, particularly during a pandemic. Having contact with neighbours, having quality private or shared gardens, and being located in a neighbourhood with the right amenities, have all gained a deeper significance during this unprecedented time."

Karen Roake, sales and marketing director at Troy Homes, says the shift to remote working – and to



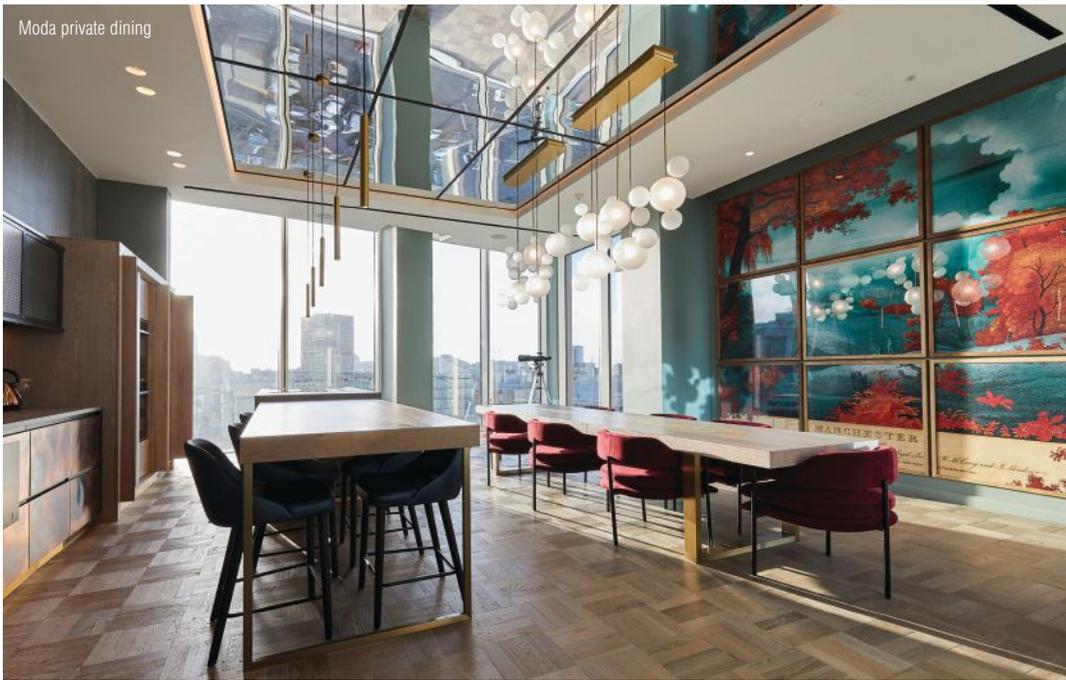
Elta Fans

"The pandemic has certainly highlighted the importance of design elements, such as ventilation, flexible space for homeworking and schooling, access to outdoor space and biodiversity, in creating healthy homes"

some extent, remote living – has exposed the flaws of people's homes. "From poor internet connections and frustratingly slow download speeds to cramped makeshift office setups and lack of outdoor space, these weaknesses will feel even more stifling when you realise that this may be the new norm."

Olga Turner Baker, CEO and co-founder of Ekkist, a consultancy firm specialising in design and certification services for wellbeing, references research undertaken in 2014 at Cambridge University. This found that new build homes in the UK were the smallest in Europe, at an average of just 76m². "Many of us have only truly appreciated the practical implications of this when under lockdown; there simply isn't sufficient space in many family homes to allow for separate daily activities to occur simultaneously in harmony. As a result, we believe family homes with flexible spaces will become ever more important."

Roake echoes this view, pointing out that separate studies with ample storage, are rarely seen across new builds today, yet will be crucial for the homes of the future. "These spaces will provide a tranquil and



Moda private dining



Gira intelligent systems



The Design Council found that sustainability was a significant factor to people

private area to work in, away from the noise and bustle of home life.”

At House by Urban Splash, director Jonathan Falkingham explains how the pandemic has accelerated the changes in priorities and lifestyles Urban Splash has sought to pre-empt. This has brought a new urgency to transform the way the company designs its homes, neighbourhoods and public realm.

In 2018, Urban Splash partnered with one of Japan’s most sustainable housebuilders, Sekisui House – a world leader in zero carbon homes – to raise the bar and establish a new normal in terms of quality, sustainability and accessibility. Its recently launched Live Well By Design manifesto is a public declaration of intent to deliver.

“We have made a pledge to make all future neighbourhoods ‘green and blue’. ‘Green’ by harnessing Sekisui’s ‘Go Hon No Ki’ approach, planting native and indigenous trees and plants to invite local species into neighbourhoods. ‘Blue’ by using the rainwater that we usually drain away to feed ponds, rivers and green verges. People who live



Stiebel Eltron

near water are measurably happier and healthier,” says Falkingham.

Another company to have seen the importance of well-designed neighbourhoods is igloo Regeneration. The construction of The Ironworks, a short walk from Leeds city centre, is taking place as the desire for sustainable homes close to where people work is growing. With the rising appeal of the ‘15-minute neighbourhood’ and working from home a feature of life, the scheme is surrounded by some of Leeds’ most established independent cafes, pubs and restaurants. The homes offer open-plan living areas and larger than average windows and balconies as standard features.

“Covid has magnified the importance of community for many people as they spend more time local to their home,” asserts Chris Brown, founder and executive chair at igloo Regeneration. “Our investment in building communities, as well as building homes is really paying off at the moment. For those people working from home, living in a vibrant neighbourhood, where they can nip round the corner to get a decent takeaway coffee, helps replace one of the pleasures that they’ve lost from not going into an office every day.”

Mark McManus, managing director at building services and renewable energies specialist Stiebel Eltron UK, explains that, although the pandemic has proved that airtight, sustainably designed homes are more desirable than ever, new problems come with increased airtightness. “It’s key that effective ventilation is the focus for design in the post-Covid home with airtightness in mind. This will help balance good sustainability with enhanced wellbeing – mirroring the commercial ventilation systems in offices with an at-home equivalent that provides comparable air quality and comfort”.

Good indoor air quality and ventilation in buildings are essential because of the airborne transmission of Covid-19. The pandemic has made the invisible visible to the public, believes Richard Paine, marketing director at Vent-Axia. “With people spending up to 90% of their time indoors, and with growing evidence of pathogens moving around our buildings, there has never been a more important time to make sure a building has effective ventilation since it helps reduce Covid-19 transmission rates indoors.”



'Port Loop' House by Urban Splash

Thom Bartley



Gira intelligent systems



Troy Homes



Vent-Axia Sentinel Kinetic Advance

This is not the only factor relating to ventilation, notes John Bradley, managing director at Elta Fans residential division. "One of the many consequences of Covid-19 has been an increase in occupancy levels and durations within homes. Whether this is a case of more individuals living under the same roof, or people spending more time in their homes due to remote working, this has a direct impact on the likelihood of condensation occurring. Put simply, more people, spending more time indoors, generates more moisture."

Technology will clearly play an increasing role in keeping people healthy. At intelligent system provider Gira UK, managing director Mark Booth explains how sensor technology to detect presence in the home means lighting and other systems can be turned on automatically, minimising touching shared switches and control panels. "Thanks to the degree of personalisation possible, it's easy to create 'scenes'. For example, automated sequences of events so that the

air-conditioning cycle can immediately come on after the bathroom or WC is used."

The pandemic has encouraged the rental brand Moda Living to innovate on the tech front to keep the virus out of its neighbourhoods. This is achieved in three core ways: thermal screening with an instant pass or fail temperature check; people-counting cameras to manage social distancing and resident volume in communal spaces; and IoT sensors that track the usage of assets in the building to inform a data-driven cleaning regime. This technology allows tracking of usage and occupancy in real-time of shared spaces like the gym, roof terrace, co-working desks and library to manage social distancing for residents' health and safety.

At Marleigh on the eastern fringe of Cambridge, Hill is working with the Active Building Centre to support the delivery of five innovative 'active homes'. These will be built to Passivhaus standards and include MVHR, air source heat pumps and integrated intelligent energy management controls.

"We'll be conducting post-occupancy evaluations on these homes, and on two 'non-active' homes representative of the rest of the development. This will allow us to evaluate both the qualitative and quantitative data from occupants to measure their health and environmental conditions as well as energy usage," explains Hill Group's Brendan Ritchie. "Through this type of pioneering research, we can ensure that the homes we build not only mitigate their impact on the environment but also enhance the health and wellbeing of residents." ^{sh}

CONTACTS

Design Council: designcouncil.org.uk

Ekkist: ekkist.co

Elta Fans: eltafans.com

Gira UK: gira.com

Stiebel Eltron UK: stiebel-eltron.co.uk

Vent-Axia: vent-axia.com

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Interview

with

MARTIN PANES

GEORGE SELL

meets the
national



housebuilding manager for Altaterra, with a career path that has taken him from planes to panes

When I was a young boy, growing up in a small Cornish town, I used to have my hair cut by a man called Jimmy Barber. His father-in-law was Wally Woods, the local carpenter. I have had a soft spot for nominative determinism ever since, so I was delighted that my first Supply Chain interview for 2021 was with Martin Panes, who happens to be national housebuilding manager for loft, roof and skylight window manufacturer Altaterra.

However, Panes' career path took him through various other sectors before reaching his current destination.

"When I left school I became an apprentice engineer for an aircraft parts manufacturing business, which was producing things such as the legs for the AV-8B, the Harrier Jump Jet," says Panes. "I was involved in CNC engineering for that sort of equipment. While I was there I began to think: I don't want to be doing this, in the same place, in a factory, for the next 40 years, and I fancied a go at sales, so that was my next challenge.

"I went looking for something that had a technical slant, so I joined a company called Bostik Findley, where I spent eight years. Within that sales role I started looking at products for the insulation sector, such as adhesives and coatings for industrial insulation."

It was his next move that first brought Panes into contact with the housebuilding sector.

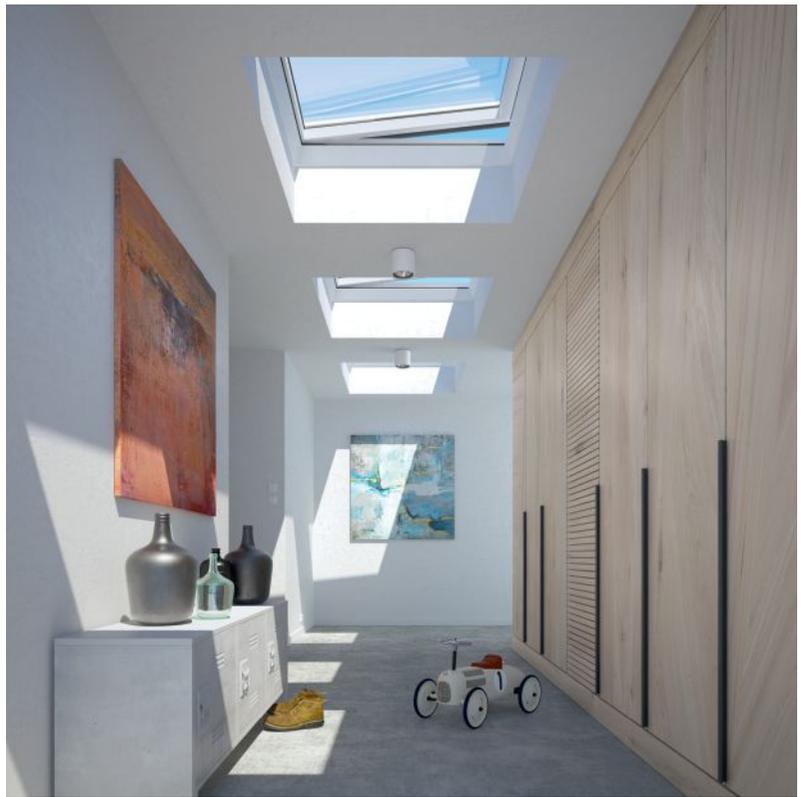
"From there I moved to Esover, which was a joint venture between British Gypsum and Saint-Gobain, the French group. I was brought in there to be the national specification and architects manager. That business was insulation products for housebuilders and developers, and the housebuilding side really took off.

"There were a few things which were changing at the time, including Part L of the Building Regulations, so Saint-Gobain Esover wanted to grow that division. I took on a team of people across the country and we started doing more and specification, and a lot more housebuilding business. It was quite an innovative role as we had the opportunity to design new products if they were fit for market. About half way through my time there, the Part E regulation came in, relating to soundproofing, and a lot of the housebuilders were scratching their heads wondering how they were going to meet the standard.

"Glass fibre insulation has an inherent acoustic value, so if you sandwich it at a certain density between two pieces of plasterboard it will improve the acoustic performance," says Panes. "So we started working with a couple of housebuilders – Bellway Homes was one of the big advocates for us to start testing. We produced new product for the party wall, which wasn't revolutionary to us, but was revolutionary to Robust Detail and NHBC. They didn't understand how adding insulation would improve the fabric of the building acoustically. After a huge amount of testing we convinced them of the benefits, which was a great move for the company and my team. We then went out to all the housebuilders and launched the product, sales went really well and it was great for the housebuilders because they didn't have to do anything different, they just built the party wall and put the new product between the two leaves. We secured national agreements with the likes of Barratt, Redrow and Persimmon."

He continues: "I moved on from there with my managing director and a couple of staff to another insulation manufacturer called Superglass, and was there for several years in a similar role. From there I moved to SIG, the insulation and plasterboard ►





supplier, which wanted to build a housebuilding division. I built a team there to do national deals for a wide range of products.

"Then after a very brief spell at another company, which didn't have a management style I could work with, I joined Altaterra, and the Dakea loft, roof and skylight window brand. It was an interesting move – Dakea is part of VKR, a market leader with a massive range of products all over the world. We are the VKR B brand – we supply a competitive product, with materials which are excellent quality. There is a 20-year guarantee on our materials, which is transferred from the housebuilder to the homeowner. There are codes on each window so we know when it was manufactured and can honour that guarantee. It's an excellent product – it's easy to install, and once it's installed nothing goes wrong with it, as long as the customer cleans it occasionally and oils the hinges, we have no problems. The company has been producing roof windows for 80 years and is a global leader."

In light of how people have been working during 2020, Panes and his team have been ahead of their

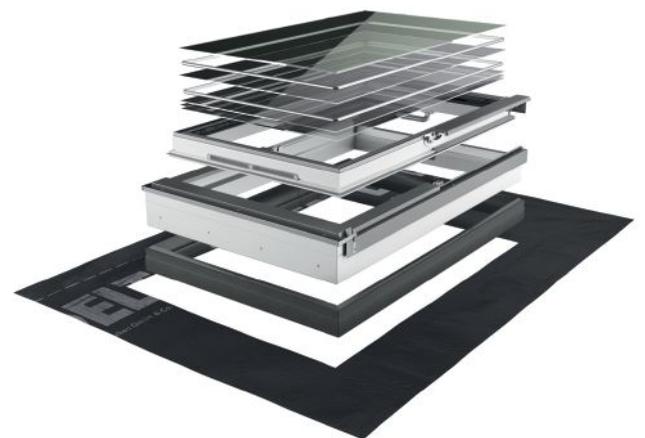
time: "Our head office is in Hungary, and we have sales offices in Hungary for all the countries we supply; in the UK we've been doing remote working for Altaterra for 10 years. We do everything on Teams, and we are used to working this way, so Covid hasn't affected us too much in that respect. But we have seen that a lot of other people are working from home, and they are paying more attention to their home environment. Housebuilders and homeowners are all thinking, 'how can we get more light in?'"

"If you've got more natural light you don't need to switch the lights on, and that's great news for us, because we've got products readily available which will do that, and we are driving those into housebuilders. We've seen an increase in interest since lockdown started. Sometimes we do joint presentations with Velux, our sister company, and we are looking at housebuilders designs in such a way that our architects and designers will take the design apart and put it back together in a way that will let the most natural light in."

Panes continues: "It can be as simple as if you've got a solid front door, a small hallway and a set of stair leading to three bedrooms and a bathroom, we can look at putting a roof window in so the landing isn't dark. The additional benefit is that not only does the product let natural light in, there is additional ventilation from the windows. On a hot day, when everybody is working from home, the ventilation from the roof window will vent any hot, stuffy air out of the room."

The Dakea product is proving popular with residential developers: "We deal with a lot of the top 20 housebuilders, including Linden and Galliford Try Partnerships, who were taken over by Bovis and is now called Vistry – we supply all that group. Persimmon is another that we have been supplying for many years, and then there are regional housebuilders, and there are many of them."

"Most housebuilders will have roof windows on some of their designs, but we are advising them on



how to get extra natural light and ventilation into the homes, because a lot of people are spending 70% or 80% of their time indoors. We're seeing more open-plan kitchen and dining areas now, often in flat roof extensions, and we have got flat roofs in our portfolio, which open electronically. Natural light and ventilation not only make people feel better, but make the building cheaper to run. There is definitely an increased interest in fresh air and light in new-builds, Passivhaus design, and so on because it helps the environment people are living in."

Panes concludes by summing up the appeal of the Dakea product: "Our windows are really easy to install, so even if we take on a new housebuilder with sites around the country, not only will we supply them with a product that is easy to install, but we have a team of people who will go out on their first installation and make sure they know what they are doing. Once it's installed correctly we never have to go back." ^{Sh}



If you would like to feature in Supply Chain, please contact George Sell at georgesell@me.com with a brief description of your company and the name of the potential interviewee.

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MMC



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Off on the

right foot



Built on Weston Homes' foundations, British Offsite has a solid footing as it looks to integrate MMC with the mainstream market. **RUPERT BATES** finds out more

The advertisement first appeared in Show House last November. British Offsite – Made in Britain – was the proud message displayed on the large building panel hanging from the crane above more traditional marketing images of a bedroom, bathroom and kitchen.

British Offsite offers ‘hybrid modular construction solutions’ but we were told nothing else on the advertisement. Who is this new kid on the MMC block?

I had been given the heads up before the launch of British Offsite. It was shared over lunch in between lockdowns, over monkfish and tiger prawn masala at Scott’s in Mayfair. My dining companions were Bob Weston, founder, chairman and managing director of Weston Homes and his son Shaun Weston, managing director of British Offsite, as they unveiled the new business.

Trumpets and fanfare were in short supply in 2020; no opportunity or indeed much inclination to flag wave or celebrate fresh initiatives. I’d imagine, in normal times, Weston would have gone to town on the launch of British Offsite, with canapes served on factory-fashioned super structures, but the wine more likely to be made in Burgundy rather than Britain. Modern methods of construction; ancient methods of consumption.

The fact that such a sizeable, established – Weston was formed in 1987 – and respected housebuilder has developed a large offsite manufacturing facility, with its Great Notley factory outside Braintree in Essex stretching to 75,000ft², feels like a significant moment in the evolution of the modular movement.

While recognising the clear advantages around speed, precision and performance of a factory-built product, the language around the growth of MMC has not always been helpful, with the more vociferous acolytes quick to condemn traditional construction as an anachronism, best consigned to history.

Indeed, the ‘modernise or die’ mantra was never the right one. It is about evolution, not an ‘off with their old heads’ revolution, however tempting it is to claim a silver bullet, or maybe grey guillotine, solution to the housing shortage.

Shaun Weston, with degrees in both automotive engineering and construction management making him an ideal ‘next gen’ hybrid to drive the housebuilding industry forward, talks of the Japanese principles of Kaizen, as practiced by the likes of car manufacturer Toyota. It is the quest for continuous improvement, but gradual and often,



Shaun Weston



Bob Weston



rather than with giant leaps of faith and finance.

“It is about a ‘little and often’ change strategy. It makes delivery realistic and immediate; tackles cultural barriers that exist in the industry, as well as reducing risk to existing productivity,” says Shaun Weston.

It may be a philosophy. However, as Bob Weston knows well, Shaun is impatient, ever curious and innovative, but calling on his father’s experience to keep him tethered to the ground when necessary, lest he fly too close to the sun.

British Offsite may be all about the latest technology, state-of-the-art machinery, best value and an exceptional in-house design and manufacturing service to its clients’ projects. But the freshly badged company, born of the Weston Group, is resolutely hybrid in thought and deed, which in turn allows modern methods to be integrated into existing and traditional projects and processes.

The super structures, the uni-panels – unitised steel frame system infill panels – are the factory heroes. But British Offsite offers a full product range, assembled and quality-control tested before delivery to site, be it kitchen worktops, bathroom vanity units, or wardrobe systems.

Its four-step process is: design, manufacturing, delivery and

installation, and aftercare. British Offsite’s first client is of course Weston Homes, with clearly huge pride circulating between the Braintree factory, the Weston Innovation Centre – the group’s new £40m state-of-the-art headquarters in Takeley – and its London office in Portman Square, when the first modular units landed at Weston schemes.

Edinburgh Way in Harlow, Essex, an 11-storey development, is a £3m Weston project value for British Offsite, including uni-panels, a permanent slab framework and traditional masonry façade support systems, as well as windows and doors, while the interior fit out includes ‘Gen2’ bathrooms, as well as wardrobes with mirrored sliding doors and CNC-machined quartz kitchen worktops.

One British Offsite Instagram post shouted: ‘Uni-panel in the hole. 30 minutes from truck to finished install. Superior air tightness, fire resistance and dimensional accuracy over traditional installations.’

The uni-panel, as a superstructure, means scaffolding and brickwork can be completed much faster than with traditional reinforced concrete frames, making structures watertight quicker and ready for internal fittings.

“It improves the first fork in the ground to first keys handover time by 15-20%. It includes all insulation materials, cavity trays and masonry ▶

supports, fire stopping and windows and doors,” says Weston, with an ability to produce a uni-panel every 30 minutes, or one apartment’s worth every 90 minutes.

“In a factory we can micro-manage quality, but while also increasing the speed of delivery. For fireproofing, for example, that is absolutely critical, with complete traceability on every coded component.”

Since conception British Offsite has built a best-in-class manufacturing capability, formulated from the most advanced machinery and highly trained workforce,

“We use a simple, focused supply chain, making our construction solutions some of the most competitive on the market.”

British Offsite, with further investment to expand its manufacturing capacity this year, is looking to provide products, services and solutions to other housebuilders, housing associations and local authorities.

British of flag, but very much international of procurement, over the years Bob Weston and his team have travelled the world for the best value for money products, drawing on a global supply chain.

Father and son – although it’s always Bob and Shaun in the workplace – share a passion for cars, be it restoring or racing them, and an ability to build.

Bob Weston remembers making a poker at school using a forge, hammer and anvil, while a generation later,

admittedly with the distinct advantage of a well-stocked workshop at home, Shaun, aged 14, was happy cutting and welding to ensure his carpentry homework was best in class.

While Bob, naturally offering paternal guidance, has always been conscious of Shaun choosing his own path, it seems DNA had already mapped out his son’s career.

“British Offsite has its own balance sheet and P&L. But if Shaun wants a new computer system for the factory for instance, he, like anyone on my team, has to justify it,” says Bob Weston.

It is a fascinating dynamic, as it is when any family works together. Shaun ponders that relationship. “If I need to talk strategy it is Bob. If I want to share more ‘out there’ ideas, it’s dad.”

What is very clear is that this isn’t father the luddite, son the reformer. Bob Weston has been a free thinker all his life, but with business decisions always predicated on commercially driven solutions delivering quality products at accessible price points.

The journey from lathe to laptop has been relatively plain sailing for the industry veteran, who studied electronic engineering at Colchester Institute and even had a spell as a computer operator at the University of Essex.

Both Bob and Shaun Weston relish the twin challenges of construction and engineering, now overlaid with digitalisation and, where appropriate, customisation and standard



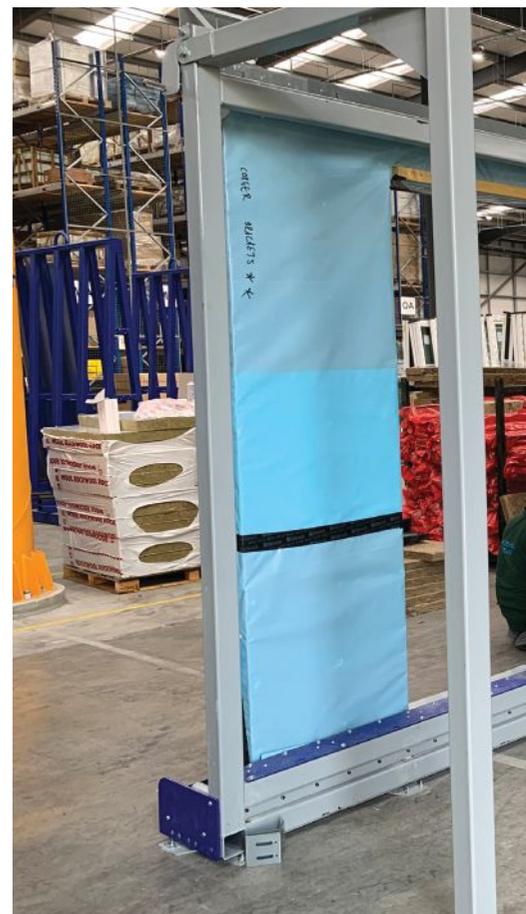
manufacturing processes, which are modular must-haves. But a production line can still mould bespoke faces.

It is not just the products, but the people, with a fresh well of talent to draw from, and new jobs and disciplines at various skill levels, from panel beater to robot.

Suddenly the more familiar vacancies sit alongside the likes of assembly operatives, systems analysts and fitting technicians.

Supply chain partnerships and trust are paramount no matter the method of construction, with RAK Ceramics, Knauf Insulation, Fascino bathrooms, Egger, AluK windows and doors, Illbruck, Globe Tooling, Alloy Fabweld architectural metal work and Senco, among British Offsite’s partners.

What hasn’t evolved and continues to frustrate in the traditional construction world is planning, with Weston Homes set for a High Court battle this year challenging housing secretary Robert Jenrick’s decision to refuse Weston’s £271m Anglia Square scheme in Norwich, which would have pumped significant investment into the Norfolk city, creating up to 1,250 new homes, as well as amenities and jobs.





In 2018 Norwich City Council voted in favour of the development, but it was called in by the Secretary of State, largely on heritage grounds, with a public inquiry held and Jenrick going against his planning inspector's recommendation to approve. Weston Homes is contending that Jenrick acted unlawfully in refusing it.

"At a time of extreme economic hardship and with Norwich on the edge of a deep recession the Secretary of State chose to refuse a massive investment opportunity for the city. His decision flies in the face of government policy on housing delivery and encouraging brownfield-land regeneration in order to protect the green belt," says Bob Weston.

"The decision also seriously jeopardises the £15m of government Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) money already allocated to accelerate the development of the site. Just as one body offers one of the highest levels of HIF funding in the country, the Secretary of State turns the scheme being offered funding away."

"We intend to fight Robert Jenrick's undemocratic and commercially unjustified decision in the High Court and seek to get his ruling overturned. The Secretary of State has gone against local democracy and the recommendations of a public inquiry, choosing to side with the NIMBY brigade who would rather see Norwich City Centre

die than support a future for the city's economy.

"How does Boris Johnson, who is very vocal that housebuilders need to 'build, build, build' to hit the government's annual housing delivery target of 300,000 homes justify Jenrick's anti-urban renewal and anti-housebuilder decision?"

"I thought he liked to position himself as 'Boz-the-Builder'. Instead, his short-sighted housing secretary is setting the prime minister up as the enemy of the housebuilding industry. The message it sends out to all housebuilders is don't invest, don't make planning applications, don't plan for the future because this Conservative government doesn't support housing or the economy."

MMC sells itself on its speed, but planning is just as likely to apply the handbrake on modular proposals as it does on mainstream housing projects, not to mention the issues around mortgages and insurance.

'Modernise or die' certainly applies to planning. A developer can be bold, committed to change and to driving the industry forward. But no matter the method, a builder can achieve nothing without that most important raw material – permissioned land.

If some less enlightened planning committees had their way, that British Offsite panel in the Show House advertisement would hang from the crane forever and a day. Not if the Westons have anything to do with it. [sh](#)



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With housing and labour shortages, sustainability demands and Covid and Brexit pressures creating a climate for change, could 2021 finally be the year when MMC moves into the mainstream and fulfils its long-held promise? **GILL OLIVER** reports

Move with the times



As budgets and supply chains are slashed, and health and safety issues ratcheted up, there's ever-mounting pressure to build faster but better.

In what seems like the ultimate paradox, modular is emerging as the obvious solution. Not only to help the industry recover from Covid, but also to meet the existing and ever-more-urgent need for new homes that are higher-quality, as well as sustainable.

Right now, though, it's the pressing need for more social housing stock that's the single biggest driver, amplified by a raft of government announcements supporting the offsite sector.

The pandemic has forced councils to pay out vast sums to temporarily house the homeless in often poor-quality B&B accommodation, something that's proving a powerful incentive to find rapid solutions to what are, of course, long-term housing stock problems.

Given the speed with which modular housing can be provided, coupled with sizeable cost savings and the promise of lower utility bills for tenants, it's a no-brainer for a growing number of housing authorities and councils.

Sara Cundill, marketing and brand manager of East Yorkshire-based

Module-AR (M-AR), describes the MMC sector as "picking up pace" as the government, councils and others find themselves in a corner.

"There's a massive need for social housing and modular is a solution – that's why there's such a spotlight on MMC," she says

M-AR opened a second factory at the end of last year to cope with increased demand. Operating alongside the firm's existing plant in Melton, its new 100,000ft² facility in Hull will allow the company to triple its output to reach 750 homes a year, rising to 1,000 homes within two years. M-AR's own expansion plans follow a string of framework and contract wins, including a place on the 15-year £573m Central Housing Investment Consortium (CHIC) housing programme and the £400m Procure Plus off-site housing framework.

It's not all roses, though. The sector is still battling a certain amount of negative perception, especially around quality and longevity: "Because they've seen post-war pre-fabs, that's what they sometimes think of, but it's entirely different now," M-AR's Cundill points out.

The way to counter this, she believes, is to work on demystifying the process:



Module-AR



Module-AR



Module-AR

"We build with a steel frame and all of our materials are exactly the same as you'd find in a builders' merchant or traditional building site," says Cundill. "To those who don't understand modular, it can come across like it's a magical system when it's absolutely not – we're just taking it indoors."

Another obstacle is the reluctance, bordering on hostility, of some legacy housebuilders when it comes to MMC. If that's down to a fear of losing out to MMC upstarts, it's wide of the mark, given that there's more than enough work to go around, Cundill observes.

"There's a solution for every problem and it's not a one-size-fits-all," she adds. "We're not saying modular is



Mark Perry, VIVID



Module-AR



Mark Eburne

the only way to build. With some projects, modular is not the best solution and it's better done as a hybrid, or traditional build.

"Rather than trying to force a square peg into a round hole, our attitude is there's a good solution for everything and that's not necessarily always going to be modular."

Increasingly, though, the naysayers are in the rear-view mirror and even the most cursory of glances shows that most of the big housebuilders are enthusiastic about this new technology and keen to embrace it, if not directly and completely, then by dipping a toe in the water or teaming up with a modular specialist.

Since there is still the need to boost all-important consumer confidence, the sector is sure to benefit from the injection of glamour and brand-recognition brought by IKEA and Skanska owned BoKlok UK. Working with housing association VIVID, BoKlok will deliver 300 new modular homes per year on sites across Hampshire, Surrey, Berkshire and West Sussex, under a five-year agreement.

Citing the advantages of offsite precision-engineered homes that harness sustainable technologies, VIVID's chief executive Mark Perry describes VIVID and BoKlok as being aligned in their "forward-thinking approach" and sees BoKlok as the right partner, particularly when it comes to the drive for net-zero carbon.

The Scandinavian-style homes are also due to land in the heart of Bristol, via the BoKlok on the Brook scheme of 173 units which include one- and two-bedroom apartments plus two- and three-bedroom houses, with prices starting from £150,000. Not only do they benefit from that effortless IKEA chic, they also feature the usual modular attributes such as money-saving enhanced insulation and other sustainable aspects which will become ever-more crucial as we hurtle towards the government's net-zero target.

Delivering good-looking, high-performance and long-lasting modular homes is becoming easier as the

supply chain broadens and becomes more visible.

This includes the likes of Northern Ireland-based Creagh Concrete, which aims to "change the way people think about concrete". It supplies pre-cast concrete frames made offsite and then craned into position, plus concrete panels, stairs, landings and floors. There's the choice of external finishes that can match virtually any build type but, of course, the real trump card is the fact it's made inside a factory. That means production schedules are never delayed by weather conditions, and there are potential cost savings.

Sigmat, which manufactures cold-rolled steel components and structural steel frames from its manufacturing hub in Leeds, is gearing up for what it believes will be a "landmark year" as demand for MMC solutions continues to grow. As one of the early innovators of MMC, it's ploughed investment into R&D and its light gauge steel frame (LGSF) products form a crucial part of residential developments stretching from Bristol to Scarborough and Edinburgh.

Sigmat's chief executive, Mark Eburne, says construction will look very different post-pandemic, and that the events of last year confirmed the urgent need for a new way of building homes.

"With sustainability right at the top of the building agenda, we know LGSF ►





Louis Allwright,
Ideal Modular Homes



Ideal Modular Homes



Creagh Concrete



Ideal Modular Homes



Ideal Modular Homes

modular homes can be manufactured in just four days and installed onsite in eight hours – cutting total delivery programme time by up to 50%.

One of eight modular housing suppliers, along with the likes of Cygnum Timber Frame and Ilke Homes, Ideal Modular Homes has been appointed to a new dynamic purchasing system offered as part of Great Places Housing Group's £750m Innovation Chain North (ICN) procurement framework. In August, it scooped a share of a five-year £300m new-build housing contract with the Royal Borough of Greenwich, which will see 750 modular affordable council homes across 60 sites.

To win the bid, Ideal teamed up with award-winning architects shedkm, whose director Alex Flint believes the stylish new homes in Greenwich will “change the perception towards offsite manufacturing, through carefully crafted and long-lasting materials, and considered internal layouts”.

And at a recent conference, Ideal Modular Homes' senior project manager Louis Allwright pointed out the practical aspects of modular – although construction time is halved, quality and robustness is maximised. One of his main messages was that by collaborating with top architects, affordable housing can be sustainable as well as beautiful.

He added: “It's important, especially following the pandemic, that we're highlighting the capacity within the industry and the role that modular and offsite construction can play in the drive to build high-quality homes quickly, to meet rising demand in the housing sector.”

Maybe, just maybe, 2021 will be the year we truly embrace building faster and smarter. [sh](#)

out-performs traditional methods on every level,” he says. “As more developers familiarise themselves with the huge benefits of LGSF construction, we anticipate our market share will continue to strengthen throughout 2021 and beyond.”

He adds that where building sites have reopened, just 60% of workers can safely return under social distancing rules. In contrast, MMC tends to need less operatives onsite and is therefore less impacted.

With tighter immigration rules post-Brexit and the fall-out from Covid exacerbating existing labour shortages and the fact that LGSF construction is 30% faster than traditional methods, he sees it as the obvious solution to meeting the increasingly urgent demand for high-quality housing.

The genuinely high standard of MMC products and volumetric modular homes, many of which are winning awards and plaudits in equal measure, is changing perceptions among the trade and the public.

Ever since it burst onto the scene in late 2018/early 2019 and opened its 70,000ft² factory in Liverpool, Ideal Modular Homes has been shaking up the housebuilding industry. Ideal's



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We'll make heaven



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Etopia Corby



Project Etopia has set itself high standards for shaping future housing and, with a driven and determined Joseph Daniels at the helm, there is every likelihood it will succeed.

RUPERT BATES reports

Not sure what your cynical correspondent was expecting or hoping for. When you first meet Joseph Daniels, a young entrepreneur hogging the housing headlines and blazing a preternatural trail across the industry, it is tempting to seek the flaws.

Applaud the hero then expose his square feet of clay. Build 'em up; knock 'em down. As a nation we're very good at it.

Youthful ambition, especially when seared with a philanthropic crust, is a tough trait to criticise. But did I secretly want to find the beliefs of the 28-year-old founder of the Project Etopia Group full of hot air, even if mechanically ventilated?

Etopia deliberately sounds very close to Utopia, which only fuels cynicism even if you have to admire the confidence.

But after an hour of high octane, highly articulate talk, you know what – Etopia could be pretty close to Utopia, Nirvana, Shangri-La or whatever you want to call your paradise. Certainly, in the context of an affordable, accessible, scaleable housing solution. So why not shoot for the stars and that garden city of Eden?

Daniels' drive was born of adversity – such extreme adversity that, aged 21, it

led to a suicide attempt. At 15, Daniels, north London born before moving out to Essex and back, was homeless.

While living on the streets, he asked himself why London, capital of one of the world's most prosperous and advanced countries, had such a profound level of homelessness.

"I looked up Liverpool Street and there were Lamborghinis next to people who could not afford to eat," says Daniels.

"It sounds a cliché, but the suicide attempt was the ultimate crossroads. It couldn't get any worse."

So, he vowed to get it better. School hadn't suited him, but that was more to do with attitude than aptitude and it transpired Daniels was an 'accelerated person'.

"Maybe I was on the spectrum, maybe it was ADHD. Call it what you will, but my mind was racing at a million miles an hour and I was easily bored."

He signed up for various courses and it became accelerated learning, be it engineering, computer programming, web design or architecture; he absorbed it all – fast.

"And all that acquired knowledge cascaded into the idea behind Project Etopia."

How could he help lift the blight of poverty through a mechanism of placemaking with all the good, clean tech, while never losing sight of the people?

It was a philosophy, but with a robust, practical methodology. Daniels is no buddha on a mountain, rocking to mantras; he has rolled his sleeves up and got on with it in an extraordinary way.

He quickly understood the hard commercials. You need an economic output that delivers at scale, but crucially affordable and accessible and to the benefit, not detriment, of the environment.

Daniels took out a loan and headed to the Chinese province of Jiangsu, for he knew if you pulled apart most modern gadgets – large or small – "one of its tech components would have touched the province".

There's that learning curve accelerating again. Next on his tour was Africa and a project in a Namibian shanty town; not in search of technology, but to demonstrate what the application of technology could do for the poorest people on earth.

Some backpackers return with little more than a penitent tattoo and a vague, substance-fogged notion of changing the world. Daniels has set about changing it.

Etopia is an ECI-tech company. E for Energy, C for Construction and I for Internet of things (IoT). Welcome to Joseph and his ECI-technicolour dream coat.

The letters are forming nicely to spell out net zero building systems that deliver a zero-carbon solution wherever in the world you plug them in.

Renewable energy is focused on storage and distribution, be it solar, air source heat pumps, mechanical ventilation heat recovery (MVHR), or battery. An innovative 4Wall hyperSIP panel is among Etopia's construction innovations, while it is partnering with GB Sol to develop a solar integrated cladding system.

"Construction is the skeleton; energy the lungs and the third piece is the IoT. It is not just about building efficiently ►



and sustainably, but how do you quantify and measure performance going forward and how that can impact and enhance lifestyles.”

Be it the electronics in your home, your finances, your children’s school reports, your EV car charging battery, let any apps operate off a single platform. “Interactive data points with the consumer’s ability to control them.”

Etopia builds its own developments, with its first residential scheme The Avenue, Priors Hall Park, Corby in Northamptonshire delivering an average EPC rating of 105/100, while its first ever project in 2015 was a smart eco-school building in Essex.

“We also want to plug into other developers, with all the net zero building benefits we can bring – your project powered by Etopia.”

Expect more game engine technology too being used to test designs, as well as planning and performance, in simulated, immersive environments, including augmented and virtual reality platforms.

There are plenty of theories around the scrapping of the Zero Carbon homes 2016 policy, but layers of complication and regulation added to risk and a fear that housing volumes could never be achieved.

“In the past, the ambition to hit big housing numbers has been let down by the technologies being used and an inability to quantify performance.

“Many housebuilders, especially SMEs, don’t have the time or resources to invest in factories, so they need to plug into an assured, guaranteed system and we are also working with banks and other lenders to deliver on green finance too.”

The list of councils declaring a climate change emergency continues to rise, so, says Daniels, planning policy simply has to align with climate change policy.

Etopia has been referred to as the ‘Tesla’ of the housing market. Daniels

acknowledges the compliment but stresses this is not about breaking the market. It’s about encouraging industry collaboration and how, as a housing tech company, Etopia can work with housebuilders, large and small, as well as providing net zero solutions for housing associations and local authorities.

“Between us all we can do amazing things to create and deliver an efficient housing system that benefits both the consumer and the planet. It doesn’t matter how many we are. Nobody can singularly deliver 300,000 homes a year. There are always macro-economics at play, as well as local needs, community interests and aesthetics best delivered by SMEs on their home patches,” says Daniels.

“This will never be a one product market. We are not here to take over; we are here to help bridge the deficit. There is no reason why developers and tech providers can’t speak the same language and integrate and interoperate. It is about so much more than construction now.”

Etopia is, itself, looking at building around 6,000 homes a year by 2024, with UK modular production currently coming out of factories in Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, and Tiverton, Devon, and a global ambition to reach 20,000 a year across the world by 2025.

Its modular homes will be a mix of standard house types, as well as custom builds, even if designs called The Green Life – ‘honest, natural and functional’ – the edgy and industrial Urban Lifestyle and the minimalist Xen-like Mindful Simplicity hardly sound standard. Offsite homes currently hold a 5% share of the UK housing market, compared to 45% in some Scandinavian countries and 10% in Germany.

And with the homes, comes the power; not just for the house, but for charging community assets and providing data.



“Your house is not just an asset, it’s a tool that can be smart and net zero.”

Daniels attended a talk by Sir David Attenborough. “He said something that really resonated with me. ‘For the first time we can make the environment make economic sense.’ Daniels wants “to make philanthropy economical, make the good the wanted, make the money making the better thing”.

By now you have warmed to his ambition, no longer scoffing at it and you want Daniels to succeed in his desire to become ‘Britain’s first clean tech unicorn’ – a private start up with a value of over \$1bn.

His trajectory suggests a growing commercial beast, but an animal that will always be net zero, giving back, investing in communities and enabling people.

“What is easily replicable should not be rubbish. If it works in terms of cost, speed and the planet, what is your excuse not to do it?”

From a financial perspective, says Daniels, it is about converting green money into ESG green investment that realises the value of a green asset, measuring both embodied carbon and operational carbon and



“Between us all we can do amazing things to create and deliver an efficient housing system that benefits both the consumer and planet... We are not here to take over; we are here to help bridge the deficit”

the lifecycle and recycling efficiencies of the materials.

“Take plastic. It is incredibly efficient to recycle for very little energy. Plastic is not the devil; it’s the throwing way of it that’s the devil.”

Competition will prove a natural catalyst for change and continuous improvement, with new products replacing old ones.

“As well as policy and accreditation pressure, there are a lot of highly motivated, intelligent people putting their minds to solving the climate crisis. It is much harder to green wash these days.”

As Project Etopia nets the UN Sustainable Development goals around the likes of poverty, health, climate action and economic growth,

the statistics remain startling, with building and construction responsible for 36% of global final energy use and nearly 40% of energy-related CO₂ emissions. Meanwhile the global market value of renewable energy, construction and IOT stands at around US\$229tn (£169tn).

Project Etopia has partnered with Samsung to deliver on the IoT play and Daniels sees the next housebuilding battlefield as connectivity – not only creating green spaces and homes, but how consumers interact with that space and run their lives through new technologies.

“Samsung have assets in millions of people’s hands. So why not develop with them?”

Etopia’s homes will integrate Samsung’s heat pumps for air cooling and water heating and cooling, replacing traditional combustion boilers with energy-efficient hydro units, that can be connected to solar panels.

Daniels is quick to praise those mentors and investors “who have taken a punt on me”, led by Etopia chairman Lord Stanley Fink, formerly CEO of Man Group and a past Conservative party treasurer, with his son Alex Fink, who has advised a number of leading fintech and proptech businesses, the company’s chief strategy and operations officer.

Among Project Etopia’s investors are property tycoons the Reuben brothers, who put £19m into the business in 2019.

Daniels has brought in plenty of mainstream housebuilding smarts, with development director James Pikett previously with the Berkeley Group and commercial director Russell Brooker formerly with Taylor Wimpey.

UK CEO Mark Lewis was in the RAF for 22 years, serving in various conflict zones, before acquiring an air conditioning company. Dan Tofield,

CEO of the eSmart division of the business, was previously head of enterprise networks at Samsung Electronics.

Meanwhile Rosanna Lawn draws on her “fascination with people and the planet and a passion to educate others in sustainability while creating environments for positive disruption” in her role as Etopia’s global brand and strategic partnership director. Lawn was the co-founder of the CREation Property Network, as well as YOO Living.

Daniels also now chairs the Smart Construction group within the UK Business Council for Sustainable Development and his determination to help SME housebuilders and their supply chains hit net zero status is absolute.

“SMEs collectively can be really powerful and a force for green change, as well as delivering local jobs and community engagement. You don’t need to sacrifice quality for beauty either and great architecture and homes looking good remains hugely important.”

With such business passion and pace in his life, surely there is no time for anything else. Think again. Daniels loves his mixed martial arts (MMA), but not for its own sake. He owns the Cage Warriors Academy (South East) run out of Colchester, Essex – as much about keeping kids off the streets, instilling discipline and control, as training and fitness.

Etopia bills itself as ‘more than just a housebuilder’. You can say that again. So when Daniels says he wants to build smart, connected, eco-cities, that don’t contribute to climate change and help solve the global housing crisis, his dream – out of Africa, China and Essex, with New York, the Middle East and Asia on the radar – could be realised.

To borrow from the 28-year-old’s own language: that would be dope man. 

ilke Homes and whg partner to deliver 43 homes in Southam, Warwickshire

Leading modular housing company ilke Homes has signed a deal with Midlands' landlord whg to deliver 43 factory-built homes in Warwickshire. The 100% affordable housing development will use modern methods of construction and will see ilke Homes provide the land for development in addition to manufacturing the 43 brand-new affordable homes for whg. ilke Homes secured the site from a private landowner and will, subject to planning, develop the site for 43-homes.

The homes will be manufactured at ilke Homes' 250,000ft² factory in Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, before being completed on the site in Southam. The controlled factory environment

allows ilke Homes to benchmark quality at numerous stages of production, ensuring that homes have superior energy-efficiency and can be run on a little as £1-a-day. All the homes will be equipped with fully fitted kitchens, bathrooms and bedrooms – underpinned with accreditations from NHBC, the leading home construction warranty and insurance provider.

Tom Heathcote, executive director of development at ilke Homes, said: "Thanks to our modular technology, we will deliver up to 43 high-quality homes for the local Southam community, which will be some of the most sustainable in the UK. By packaging up private land with turnkey development solutions in

partnership with housing associations such as whg, we can quickly scale-up the delivery of high-quality, energy-efficient affordable housing across the country."

Rebecca Bennett Casserly, corporate director of development at whg, said: "We are delighted to have completed the purchase of this site, facilitated by ilke's new business model. This will not only support the delivery of affordable housing in an area of great need but also help us deliver on our ambitions for the wider adoption of modern methods of construction. We have been researching modular homes for some time and are looking forward to working with ilke Homes as we venture into our first scheme of scale."

Look to timber to save time and money, says Paramount Timber Frame

Using timber frame over traditional masonry construction would see the government's target of building 300,000 homes a year reached far more effectively and sustainably, says Paramount Timber Frame, thanks to timber frame's offsite manufacture. Building with timber is cost effective, with timber frame coming in at around a 2.8% cost saving over traditional masonry. Timber frame construction times are also shorter, according to a study by Rider Levett Bucknall: the build time for an average timber frame home was only 41 weeks compared to 49 weeks for masonry. This time saving equates to further cost savings on labour as well as improved cash flow by completing projects sooner.

Timber is also sustainable. When used instead of the more traditional building materials, a single cubic metre of timber will save around 0.8 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions, while up to 90% of the timber used in the UK comes from certified sustainable sources such as the FSC and the PEFC.

"The time has come for the industry to switch to timber frame more aggressively," said Richard Swayne, director of Paramount Timber Frame. "The benefits for using timber instead of traditional masonry methods are tenfold. At Paramount Timber Frame, we know there is intense need for delivering high quality, good value housing and fast. Switching to timber frame is how we start to build for tomorrow. To not only alleviate the housing crises, but to evolve the industry to becoming more sustainable, for both the environment and society."



MMC need to meet housebuilding targets, says Nationwide

In order to meet the government target of 300,000 home a year by 2025, Nationwide Windows says that the way we deliver those homes has to change. New methods of construction may be needed to combat the combined pressures of housing demand, Covid, Brexit and industry labour shortages, says Adrian Pavey, commercial director at Nationwide Windows.

“Put the pressures of increasing numbers against the historic labour shortage within the construction industry and the way we deliver these new homes needs to change,” said Pavey. “There’s no quick fix for the labour shortages. Historically, this has been worsening over the last 20 years. The problem is an ageing workforce, with a big percentage within 10 years of retirement age combined with fewer young people coming through the ranks as these careers

haven’t attracted the number of school leavers needed. Covid-19 restrictions for working onsite have given us a renewed opportunity to look at ways to build the same number of homes, while reducing the reliance onsite workers. “It all points to offsite building as being a solution. It’s not news to us, we have been promoting offsite construction over many years. For glazing, it makes perfect sense with the windows and doors being installed under factory conditions for consistent quality.”

Pavey added: “There are other cost and time benefits to housebuilders including a reduction in the need for scaffolding and working at height. Onsite storage for windows and doors is not needed, which means fewer chances for damage and breakages, as well as the reduction in manual handling of windows and doors into individual plots. At Nationwide Windows we add in an extra step to commission the windows and doors onsite. Every window and door is checked for

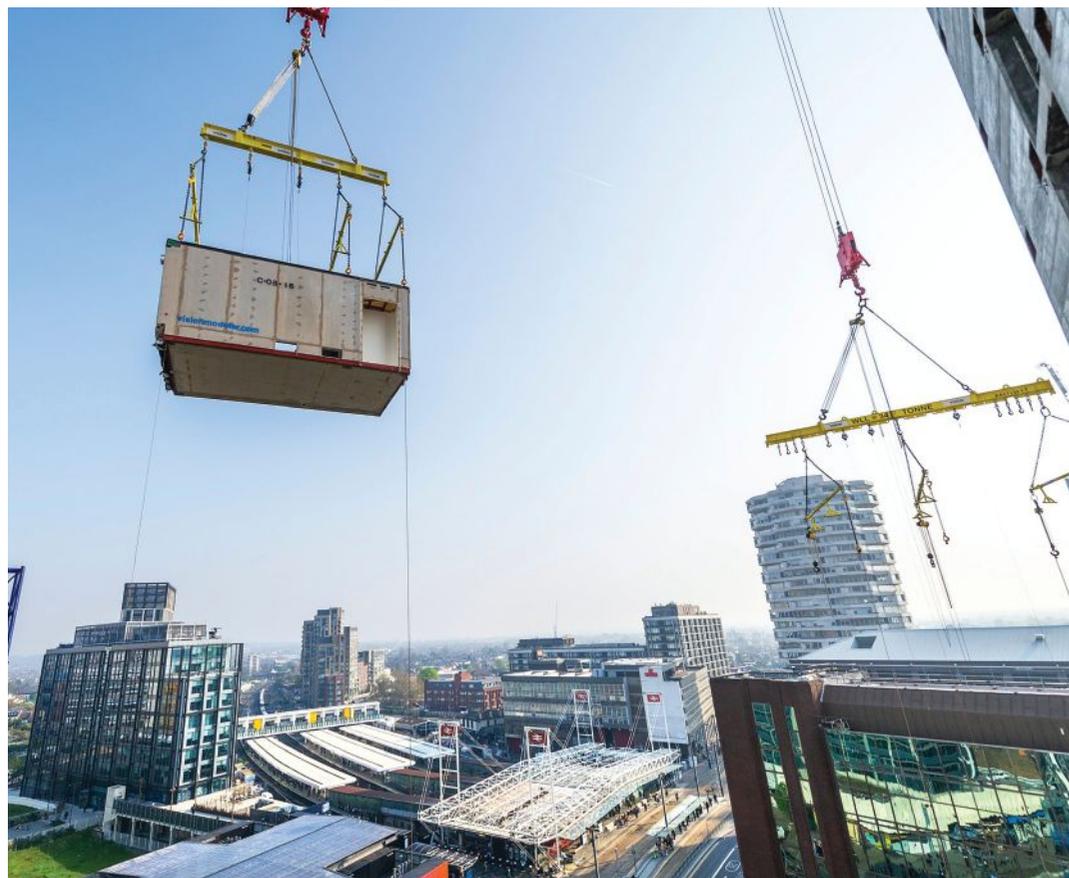


quality, which gives housebuilders the best of both offsite and onsite installation.”

Britlift scales new heights

Britlift lifting equipment is being utilised across the construction sector and providing an invaluable service specifically to the offsite construction sector. Having recently supplied the likes of Vision Modular, Extra Space Solutions, Ideal Modular Homes, Offsite Solutions, Modular-AR, Dandara Homes, and Galliford Try, Britlift is the partner of choice for bespoke lifting equipment to the offsite and traditional construction sectors. As specialists in lifting engineering, Britlift can design, manufacture, test and certify the perfect solution for your lifting requirement.

Britlift also offers an off-the-shelf modular spreader beam range, which can be dispatched within 24 hours and can be configured in a multitude of ways to offer between two and 10 points of lift. A recently announced new global distribution partnership with Unique Group (Water Weights), means Britlift modular spreader beams will be sold across the world, taking the Britlift brand, products and services to Canada, India, Netherlands, Singapore, UAE and USA. Britlift will now be able to supply modular spreader beams off-the-shelf in capacities ranging from four tonnes to 250 tonnes on a next-day service.



NHBC Foundation reveals new report on the history and future of MMC

An in-depth new NHBC Foundation report on how the role of modern methods of construction (MMC) has evolved within the housebuilding industry has been released. ‘Modern methods of construction: building on experience’ examines notable periods of transformation in the industry and explores the elements of design, as well as the social and economic influences, that fuel change. The report also looks at the history of non-traditional housing through a range of different technologies and advancements since the 19th century and how builders and developers can harness technological advances to respond to the increasing demand for new homes. The report says housebuilders can avoid the mistakes of the past. The industry can harness technological advances to respond to pressing housing need, while still delivering homes that are good looking, long-lasting and better performing for homeowners. NHBC’s head of standards, innovation and research, Richard Smith, said: “As we navigate the Covid-19 pandemic and come out of the EU, there is an opportunity to innovate. This new report looks at the best features of homes from the past to inform the homes of the future. We really hope that ‘Modern methods of construction: building on experience’ will ultimately be an enabler of change for the industry.”



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Hill Group Head Office, Waltham Abbey

CASE STUDY

“I enjoy every part of my work at Hill”

“I have been a part of the Hill family for nearly 10 years now and have enjoyed every challenge it has brought me. My role as the Head of Estimating affords me the opportunity to lead a key function within Hill, gaining greater exposure to influential stakeholders that help shape the direction of the company.

I joined the company as a Trainee Estimator, despite not really understanding what it was the job entailed. It was undoubtedly one of the best decisions I have made and allowed me to apply my skill set in accounting within the challenging context of construction.

Hill looks for individuals who are organised, hands on and confident. I didn't have any industry experience so it was more about my personality and if I was right for the role. Through hard work and endless support as part of The Management Trainee Programme, I received regular coaching and mentoring, access to tailored management training and secondment placements within the company.

I have been presented with so many fantastic opportunities, along with some great challenges too. It is rewarding to take such pride in the work we do, and I am excited to continue to progress my career within this supportive and forward-thinking company.”



THE HILL FACT FILE

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WhatHouse? 2020

When established?

1999

How many employees?

653

How many new homes built annually?

2,000

Annual turnover?

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Projected annual turnover by 2025?

More than £1bn

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...for it is a road housebuilders must travel. **RUPERT BATES** talks to battery giant Britishvolt about the new homes industry's challenges and opportunities



We've all witnessed it. A child rips open a Christmas present to unveil a shiny new toy racing car; remote control excitedly to hand and... nothing happens. Batteries not included.

Batteries are as frustrating as they are necessary. Technology kicks on, but battery power, whether it is fuel for your laptop or phone, appears stuck in the dark ages, buried, like those spare AAAs, in the back of the drawer, but rarely the right size at the right time for the right gadget. You know you have measured out your life in batteries when you realise the Duracell Bunny is now nearly 50 years old.

The humble, oft-maligned battery is about to undergo a huge brand makeover and the right battery for your electric car will become a lifestyle and work imperative.

It presents not just a massive challenge for housebuilders, but a massive opportunity; a game-changer if the industry embraces it.

Step forward Britishvolt. Its announcement last month was too big to miss, even through the blizzard of Covid-19 news. The company announced it will build Britain's first battery gigaplant – a £2.6bn project – in Blyth, Northumberland, one of the UK's

biggest ever industrial investments and the largest in the north-east since the arrival of Nissan in 1984, with 3000 jobs and up to 5000 more in the wider supply chain created, as it looks to produce more than 300,000 lithium-ion electric vehicle batteries a year in "the world's cleanest and greenest battery facility". Meanwhile Britishvolt's headquarters and R&D centre will be at the Mira Technology Park in Nuneaton, Warwickshire – very much automotive terrain.

"At Blyth we can begin producing lithium-ion batteries for future electrified vehicles in just three years. It is crucial for the UK automotive industry and for the entire economy that we are able to power the future," says Orral Nadjari, founder and CEO of Britishvolt, raising funds from both private and institutional investment, as well as looking for government grants, with ISG appointed as lead contractor.

The Britishvolt gigaplant will be built on a 95-hectare site and will use renewable energy, including the potential for hydro-electric power generated in Norway and transmitted under the North Sea.

That's all very impressive, but surely one to rev the engines of the automotive world, not the

housebuilding industry. Well, it's both and a chance for new homes to drive from the front row of the renewable energy grid; not be a reluctant passenger moaning about the speed limits and seat belts of regulation on the road to a net zero carbon economy.

The stakes are high and the clock ticking, with gas boilers outlawed in new homes from 2025, although there remains deadline confusion around the Future Homes Standard timeframes as part of the government's 'Green Industrial Revolution'.

But the message is a robust commitment to move away from fossil fuels towards heat pumps and other renewable energy sources as quickly as possible.

Meanwhile, in the garage, there is a ban on new petrol and diesel cars (ICE) from 2030, while hybrid (HEV) cars will be off the road from 2035.

'Buy a house you can't heat and a car you can't drive' won't be the smartest marketing slogan.

Zero carbon homes from 2016 was fended off by the housebuilding industry amid strong lobbying, underpowered technology and government nerves around housing supply.

But this energy revolution is one that housebuilders can pioneer, promote and profit from, says Peter Rolton, chairman of Britishvolt.

Rolton has the 'hybrid' know-how and experience to drive relationships between batteries and builders, knowing how both operate, singing the body electric.

A renowned built environment engineer, Rolton is chairman of the Rolton Group, so strategising the implementation of infrastructure and renewable energy into new housing

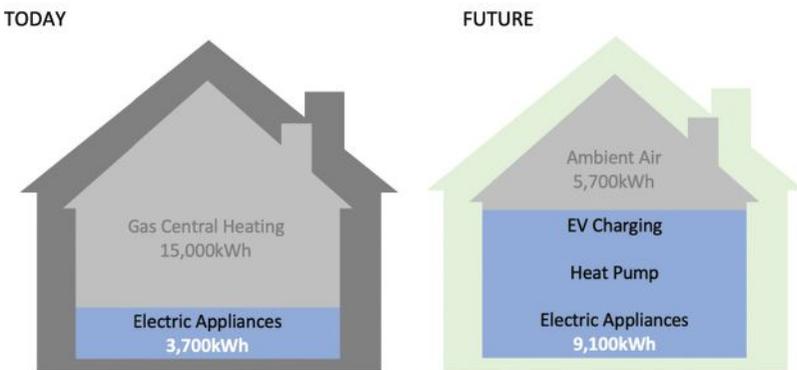


Orral Nadjari

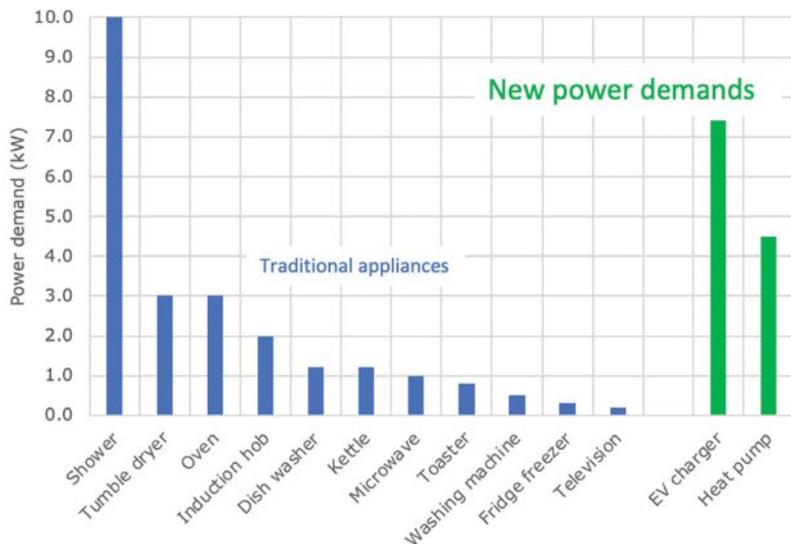


Peter Rolton

Energy – forecasted ~2.5x increase in typical annual home electricity consumption, including shift to renewable sources.



Power – power demands of typical traditional and new power consuming equipment in the home





Isobel Sheldon



Ian Braime



‘This is a great opportunity for housebuilders to be at the forefront of sustainable energy technology and delivery.’



Britishvolt high energy 2.5MWh, 1MW input / output fully integrated Battery Energy Storage System

developments is in his DNA, with electric vehicle (EV) charging points the new kids on the grid.

“The right battery power and grid infrastructure can mean the difference between a new site being viable or not,” says Rolton.

Whether it is geo-technical surveying, land remediation or foundation designs, Rolton and his team have seen what lies beneath – identifying anything from Roman ruins to foot-and-mouth disease over the years. But when it comes to due diligence, his company has never been asked by a housebuilder what the grid connection is.

“They assume they will get one and it will be okay for the homes they are proposing.” For an industry that prides itself on its strategic land and pipelines, that’s hardly strategic thinking.

Housebuilders are not just going to have to change their beliefs, but their ways. “This is about a strategic vision for your site that incorporates sustainable energy delivery inside the house and on the street,” says Rolton. “No longer is it a free design service, with pictures of hot water cylinders and radiators, from a gas boiler manufacturer if you buy their kit. The era of chucking the energy solution at the local plumber is over.”

Heat pumps and all things renewable may be the fix and the fashion, but get the installation wrong, underestimate the technical complexities and, warns Rolton, “it will end very badly”.

“This is a great opportunity for housebuilders to be at the forefront of sustainable energy technology and delivery.”

Housebuilders are passively aware there is regulatory change afoot, but you suspect the letters EV are under AOB on board agendas.

“EV is not about a plastic duct in the drive, or a spare circuit breaker. You have to think about capacity to the homes and the diversity of supply.

Some local authorities are now asking for an EV strategy as part of a planning application.”

The power has to be fast and efficient, be it communal points at the entrance to a development, or on individual plots.

Invariably a housebuilder’s defence to the charge of inertia is ‘will customers be prepared to pay for it because it is an added cost?’

“People will pay for it because it is not only the way the new generation wants to live; it is how they must live. It is not just a nice to have. It’s a have to have.”

The impact on a housebuilder’s business and how it builds and operates will be radical and unavoidable. So, says Ian Braime, Britishvolt’s sales director, rather than ticking the ‘gas boiler out’, ‘heat pump in’ boxes to achieve the bare minimum, try to get ahead of the conversation as a sustainable energy champion, adding a warm glow to both the CSR (corporate social responsibility) and ESG (environmental, social & governance) lines in the annual report.

“The government is forcing it and consumer behaviour is demanding it. That’s a powerful combination,” says Braime.

The assembled team at Britishvolt is a powerful combination too. Alongside Nadjari and Rolton, other board members include chief strategy officer Isobel Sheldon, awarded an OBE in the last New Year’s Honours list and a highly experienced name and innovator in battery technology, as well as automotive specialist Charles Morgan, grandson of the founder of the Morgan Motor Company, the iconic sports car brand.

The company has all the necessary science and R&D to develop leading battery cell technology for electric vehicles and energy storage markets, not to mention an understanding of the full lifecycle of the product and the need to futureproof power supply.

But it’s not about simply commoditising the battery as the EV revolution takes hold and new entrants potentially flood the market with cheap batteries, trumpeting overnight expertise as they frantically google ‘lithium-ion’. Britishvolt can also do the integration, deployment and grid implementation, configuring what is best for a site and the housebuilder, making sure it fits together, works properly and satisfies budgets.

“If not, we are in danger of seeing new housing developments built that are unfit for purpose, with not enough energy capacity. If the infrastructure and diversity of supply is not right, you’ll have homeowners upgrading their cars and asking their local electrician to stick a bigger charger on the wall. Then ‘bang’ and half the street goes out,” says Rolton.

“Smart housebuilders will seize the commercial opportunity, but need to understand how to access it, turning more sites viable and maximising the upside by building homes that sell for more.”

It wasn’t that long ago that broadband was seen by the industry as a ‘not my problem’ additional hassle. Now a fast internet connection is non-negotiable and top of buyers’ must-have lists.

EV charge home. [sh](#)

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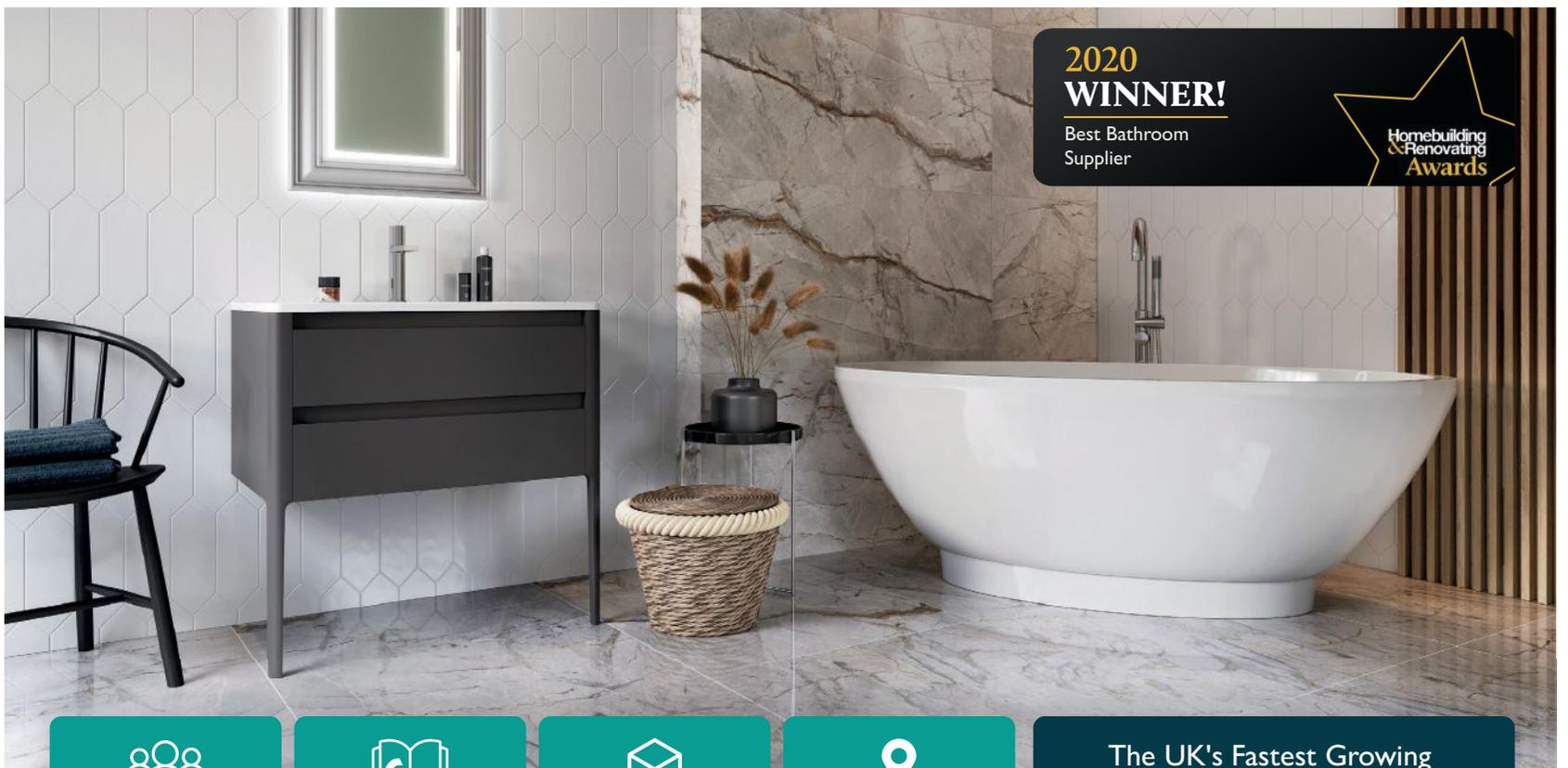
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The pandemic has changed the way that people think about, and use, their homes. But, asks **KATE HAMILTON**, how does this translate into the bathroom of 2021?



Spectra walk-in shower panel with chrome steady bars by ACATA

CLEAN

SLATE

If two things have come out of the pandemic, it is the importance of hygiene and our homes.

"The home has never been so important," says Sophie Weston, channel marketing manager at Geberit. "Now, more than ever, we're spending more time within our own four walls, so it's essential that the home provides more than just a place to live. It should bring joy, peace, comfort and shelter from the stresses of the outside world."

But just how does this private sanctuary look in terms of bathroom design?

"It's long been known that nature has an intrinsic link to our health and wellbeing," continues Weston. "But with more of us actively seeking the benefits of the great outdoors, biophilic design is set to be huge in the home this year. In the bathroom, consider natural materials like wood, slate and stone over high-gloss for furniture and cabinets."

Geberit offers many furniture options with wooden finishes, including Smyle, Selnova Square, Citterio and ONE, which are available in rich Dark Oak, Hickory Wood, and Walnut finishes to bring warmth and comfort to the space, while providing durable and practical storage solutions.

Meanwhile HiB is also expecting an upturn in natural bathroom furniture.

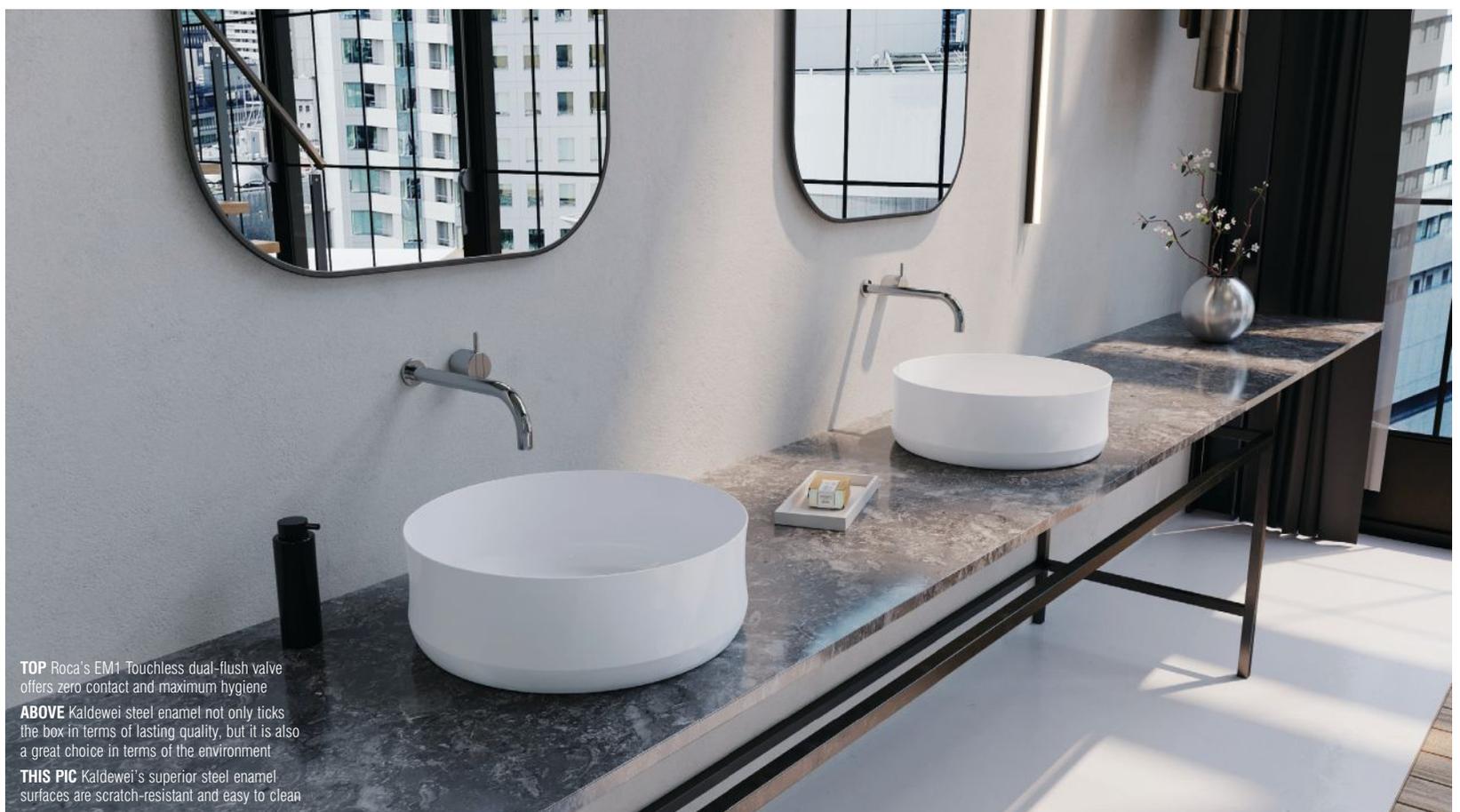
"We predict that in 2021, customers will be opting for trends that will allow them to feel more connected to the great outdoors," says sales director

Ash Chilver. "This past year has seen many of us spending more time at home and we foresee that people will look to use a nature-inspired palette in their bathroom design. As we head into 2021, it is predicted that wall-hung furniture in natural-effect finishes will continue to be popular for those looking to make rooms feel spacious and calming, with wood finishes and light tones creating a light and airy atmosphere."

Another interesting trend is that people now seem to be prepared to invest in quality bathroom products. While holidays are off the table, quality bathrooms are in...

"We are already seeing a number of consumer behaviour changes coming from the pandemic," explains Paul Harman, Hansgrohe UK's national sales manager – projects UK & Ireland. "People want more conscious consumption – they want things to last longer and they want to act more sustainably. This is having an obvious knock-on effect on products and we will continue to see growth in products that can deliver uncompromised quality and performance while boasting green, water-saving credentials."

Steve Lee, chairman and CEO of AQATA, agrees: "We have noticed that customers have moved away from selecting the cheaper option and are more inclined to invest in high-quality products. The styles they are selecting have changed too;



TOP Roca's EM1 Touchless dual-flush valve offers zero contact and maximum hygiene

ABOVE Kaldewei steel enamel not only ticks the box in terms of lasting quality, but it is also a great choice in terms of the environment

THIS PIC Kaldewei's superior steel enamel surfaces are scratch-resistant and easy to clean



ABOVE HiB's new Angled Grab Rail with toilet roll holder, shelf and anti-slip mat is the ideal multifunctional accessory for the bathroom. This multipurpose solution is available in right- and left-handed options with a premium finish to complement most bathrooms

RIGHT ABOVE Duravit's Starck f shower toilet uses bacteria eliminating HygieneGlaze

RIGHT Roca has developed a Smart Shower that uses smart technology to provide a truly unique showering experience

BELOW Duravit's Starck f shower toilet can be controlled remotely with an app



the trend is for more frameless, fluted and minimalist enclosures. Colour also plays a part in their selection. We have seen an increase in options such as gold and matte black finishes. In fact, the main key trend for the coming year will be the introduction of new colours."

Utopia is also predicting that colour will be making a comeback, and as a result has greatly extended the colour options for its Symmetry, YOU, i-Line and Geo furniture collections. In all, 11 new finishes have been introduced taking the overall selection to 24 door finishes, the widest choice ever available at Utopia. The new colours are Azure Blue, Blush, Burnt Copper, Coastal Oak, Glacier Grey, Glacier Grey Gloss, Latte, Pewter Fusion, Silver Fusion, Sea Green and Storm Grey. Of these, Azure Blue, Blush, Sea Green and Storm Grey are the brand new super matt, soft touch door finishes, featuring an innovative material technology that results in a luxurious feel with the added benefit of repelling grease marks such as fingerprints.

"With this greatly enhanced colour palette, we are offering an incredible range of colour combinations from dazzling new on-trend options through to tried-and-tested favourites," comments Helen Clark, Utopia's head of marketing. "Our newly extended Visualise interactive planning tool on the Utopia website allows consumers to experiment with their own choices

quickly and easily until they find their ultimate combination."

But it's not just furniture that is seeing a colour, and texture, revival. Both can also now be found on the walls of the bathroom thanks to a new range of wall coverings from Mermaid Panels. As well as offering a design statement, these panels are also very practical to install.

"Our Mermaid Elite range of panels are made with a waterproof core and a post-formed edge, meaning there's no need for trims or grouting, resulting in a completely seamless and premium-looking finish," explains UK marketing communications manager Helen Dennett. "Its range of multiple decors and textures completely remove design barriers, allowing architects, designers, housebuilders and specifiers to have creative freedom when planning bathrooms. Plus, they offer much quicker installation compared to tiles, which can save construction sites valuable time and there is no need to get a specialist tiler in to fit the panels. The end product results in a high-end bathroom, with both style and functionality, guaranteed to impress potential homeowners."

The lack of grout also offers a hygienic surface that is easy to clean – a benefit that is also right at the top of buyers' wishlists at the moment.

"One of the major changes for 2021 will involve hygiene," explains Adam Teal, head of sales at Kaldewei UK. ▶

"Products from washbowls to shower trays, baths to sinks now more than ever before need to be easy to clean and not harbour dirt."

Kaldewei's superior steel enamel surfaces are scratch-resistant and easy to clean, making them a more hygienic alternative. Its products are guaranteed to maintain their performance and good looks for many, many years making them a reliable long-term investment, supported by its 30-year guarantee.

RAK Ceramics has also introduced an anti-bacterial glaze for sanitaryware and other surfaces.

"The RAK-Sanit gives peace of mind regarding bathroom hygiene," explains sales and marketing director Ben Bryden. "Hygiene and ease of cleaning are always important in the bathroom but perhaps even more as a result of the pandemic. Features such as anti-bacterial glazes on sanitaryware and surfaces are likely to be much more in demand as we move into 2021 and beyond. The launch of RAK-Sanit is therefore timely, offering a wide range of solutions for floors, walls and sanitaryware, made with glazes that inhibit the growth of bacteria, thus reducing the possibility of contagion and contributing to a healthier, hygienic bathroom environment."

One of the key trends at the forefront this year, and which will continue into 2021, is the demand for touchless

bathroom technology. Roca's touchless solutions are suitable for both domestic and commercial use, providing an extra layer of hygiene and safety within the bathroom. Featuring infrared sensors, touchless products allow users to activate the water flow in taps, the flush of the WC or the mirror light using a simple movement without the need for contact, avoiding the spreading of viruses and the growth of bacteria.

Continuing the demand for enhanced hygiene, the company is also predicting that shower toilets will be another big trend in 2021.

"Roca's In-Wash Inspira smart WC incorporates innovative technology for exceptional personal hygiene that provides complete cleaning, care and comfort," explains David Bromell, Roca's head of marketing. "The In-Tank was one of the first WCs that did not require the installation of a separation cistern as it is actually integrated into the bowl. These two exciting products have now come together to deliver an easy to use, simple to install and forward-thinking In-Wash with In-Tank rimless WC."

Shower toilets are beginning to be more understood by the mass market as a result of the pandemic as homeowners are starting to understand their multi-faceted nature and the value of the hygienic benefits they can offer.

The GROHE Sensia Arena is equipped with automatic flush functionality and precise motion sensors that prompt the lid to automatically open upon approaching and close when you leave. A personalised cleansing experience can also be made possible via a smartphone app or remote control. Users can select their preferred temperature, spray pattern, pressure and much more, and even save their preferred settings as a profile. All members of the household and guests



THIS PIC The GROHE Sensia Arena is equipped with automatic flush functionality and precise motion sensors

BELOW LEFT RAK Ceramics has launched RAK-Sanit, the company's own health and safety revolution

BOTTOM LEFT Nadia fitted furniture in new Azure Blue from Utopia

BOTTOM MIDDLE For added reassurance, HiB's shower seat with support leg offers a high quality solution with a desirable compact design. The foldable system is available in a choice of white and dark grey finishes and can be securely fixed to hold up to 23 stone (150kgs)



are therefore able to experience a spa-like toilet experience without ever having to touch anything with their hands – significantly helping to reduce the potential spread of germs and viruses around the home.

Such product innovations are a direct result of us all having to adapt and change much faster than we would have done under less stressful circumstances.

"One of the key elements to surviving in a tough environment is flexibility and being able to adapt your business to the changing market," concludes Martin Carroll, managing director of Duravit UK. "We've all realised that sometimes the traditional business models of the past are not the ones

which we will see moving forwards. As you might expect, products which are linked to hygiene and creating a calm, tranquil space for your bathroom will be key for 2021." 

CONTACTS

AQATA
www.aqata.co.uk

Duravit UK
www.duravit.co.uk

Geberit
www.geberit.co.uk

GROHE
www.grohe.co.uk

Hansgrohe UK
www.hansgrohe.co.uk

HiB
www.hib.co.uk

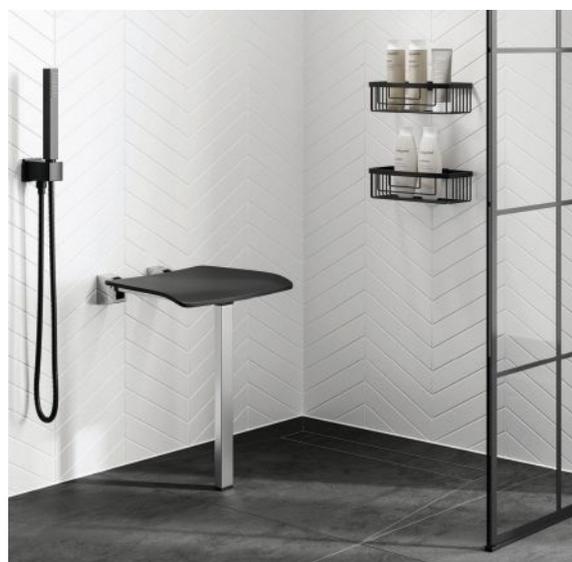
Kaldewei
www.kaldewei.co.uk

Mermaid Panels
www.mermaidpanels.co.uk

RAK Ceramics UK
www.rakceramics.com/uk

Roca
www.uk.roca.com

Utopia
www.utopiagroup.com



TIME TO GET HUNG-UP ON THE BATHROOM SPACE

Today, more than ever, the key to enhancing buyer appeal is not just planning ahead, but designing ahead too. As buyers increasingly seek out washrooms that are not only functional but inspirational, it's never been more important for developers to add real value to new projects.

Sophie Weston, channel marketing manager at Geberit, looks at the role of wall-hung bathroom technology in creating a stand-out space.

Wall-hung technology is an ingenious solution and one that is out of sight but very much front of mind for a growing number of UK developers. Offering a space-saving alternative to traditional close coupled toilets, wall-hung toilets maximise the bathroom space whilst offering a sleek, streamlined design.



↑ Geberit wall-hung toilets

SPACE-SAVING SOLUTIONS

By concealing the cistern behind a stud wall, a wall-hung toilet reduces the outward projection of the furniture to create the illusion of space. And, where space is paramount, opting for wall-hung ceramics can really help liberate the design process – complementing wall-hung ceramics with compact design choices can make even the smallest room appear bigger.

But it's not just all about space. Hygiene and ease of cleaning is now a huge consideration for homeowners - and lifting the toilet from the footprint of the floor is an effective way to make cleaning much easier and, with no hard to reach areas, dirt and dust accumulation is significantly reduced.

And for that extra design versatility, wall-hung furniture offers the opportunity to add the finishing touches to a project with the option of adding stylish flush plate finishes such as textured rustic wood or slate designs to shades that blend harmoniously into any décor style.



↑ Geberit wall-hung toilets make cleaning much easier

WORKING WITH GEBERIT

Whether you're new to the Geberit brand or an existing partner, we understand the importance of meeting the ever-changing business requirements across our sectors. Our bathroom collections provide housebuilders with a wealth of opportunities to offer a host of added-value specification packages and upgrades.

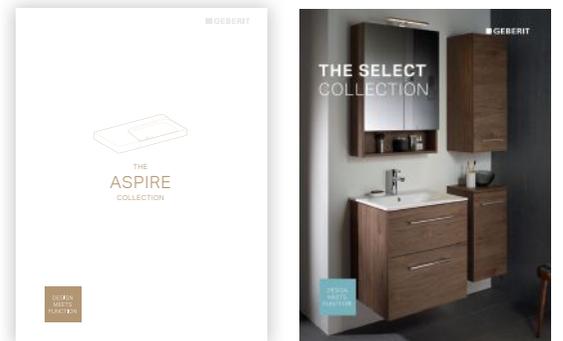
Our Geberit Select collection, launched last year, offers housebuilders functional, affordable and on-trend design possibilities across the basic-mid bathroom sector, with our Aspire collection offering developers the choice of luxury, high-end bathroom ranges.

GEBERIT INNOVATIONS

Geberit's team of designers have created a range of bathroom solutions that optimise any room size without compromising on style. With more than 200 models available, Geberit's Duofix wall-hung frame system, together with our range of wall-hung ceramic furniture across both our Select and Aspire collections, offers developers a world design possibilities for any project.

A Geberit wall-hung bathroom means that developers can create a space that will stand the test of time. From incorporating odour extraction technology or touchless flush plates to future proofing the bathroom with superior acoustic flush performance and adjustable seat heights, opting for wall-hung offers developers the opportunity to create an innovative, design-led solution. And, with millions of Geberit concealed installations around the world, you can guarantee we have just the right product for you.

For more information visit [geberit.co.uk/wallhungreport](https://www.geberit.co.uk/wallhungreport)



↑ Geberit Aspire and Select collections



↑ Geberit's Duofix wall-hung frame system



↑ Geberit flush plates

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LEADING LIGHTS



Lighting can be the difference between a house and a home.
KATE HAMILTON reports

All homes now have 100% LED lighting says Tp24



LEFT Green Lighting's decorative range adds all-important personality into a room

THIS PIC Green Lighting's new Eco800 Dimmable downlight is the company's most popular product with housebuilders

BELOW Many customers would love to choose their lights and have the builder fit them before they move in, believes Tp24

Lighting is a necessity for performing day-to-day tasks but it is also now a vital part of the overall aesthetics of a house. Homeowners looking to create a welcoming ambience in their homes are seeking out the latest trends and access to a wider range of decorative lighting.

"With the increase in decorative lighting trends, housebuilders need to think more about how their customers may want to make their new home unique," says Sara Mason-Parker, sales and marketing manager for Green Lighting. "Currently there are only limited amounts of lights being installed, with the majority being a generic pendant. It would be beneficial for developers to realise the potential of offering a range of decorative lighting that can be installed ready for the customer moving in."

Shaun Davis, managing director for Tp24 LED Lighting, agrees: "Their [housebuilders] primary aim is to provide a light source in each room that the customer can utilise to provide the light level that they want. The builder is simply providing the minimum requirement. This is usually just one or maybe two ceiling pendants in each room. Apart from the show house, very few homes come with all lights fitted. There might be a spot bar in the kitchen, and flush fitting or down lights in the bathrooms and WC, but very little else comes as standard. Since the heyday of options

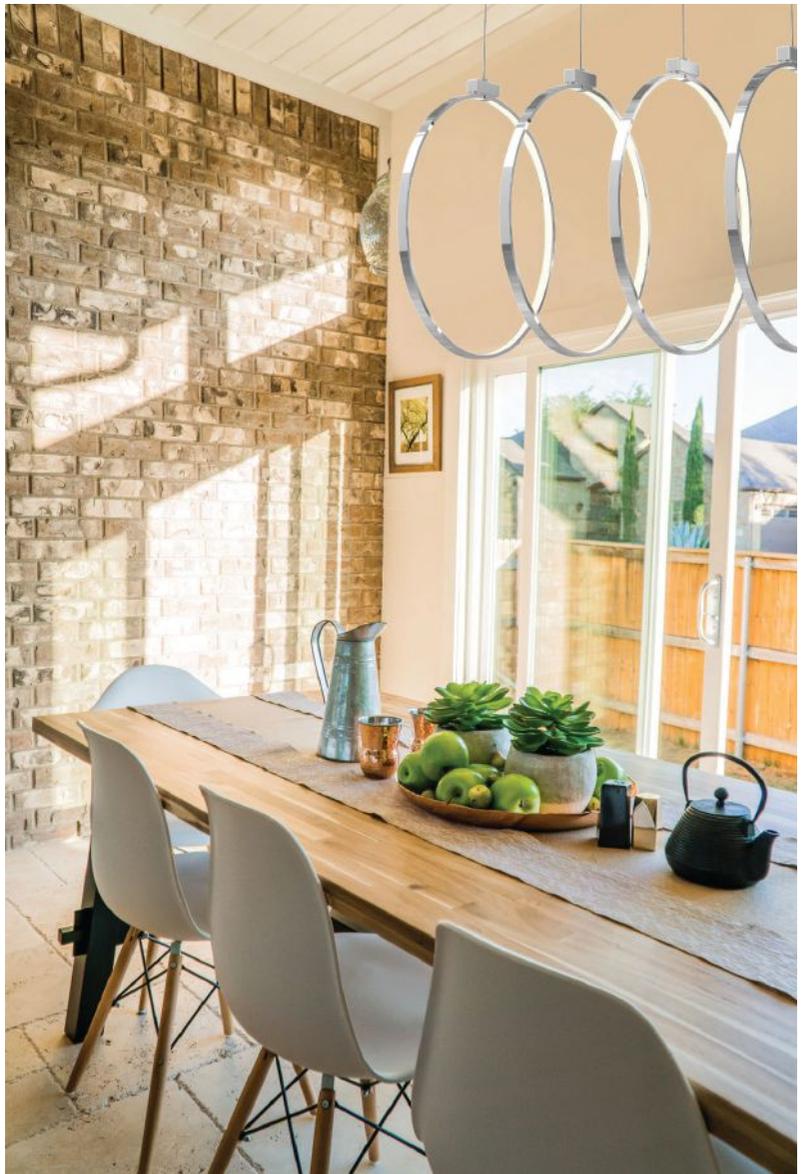
before the financial crisis, very few of the major developers are offering much in the way of options and, unfortunately, lighting is now behind fitting the outdoor tap in terms of required extras."

Lighting can seriously enhance a home and is such a missed opportunity for differentiating one new home from another. However, much of the problem is that everyone has different tastes, different room usage and requirements so lighting is not simply a one-size-fits-all choice. New home purchasers have lots of things to decide upon and extras to buy so they need the choices that are right for them.

However, one thing that can always be agreed on is the need for energy-efficient lighting. LED lamps are the most economical form of lighting and have fast become the spec on all new developments.

"Due to building regulations, low-energy lighting is becoming the norm, with housebuilders specifying particular lamps, usually LED, in their new build properties," continues Mason-Parker. "Developers do need to be careful, however, that their specification is being followed and that contractors are not installing cheaper, less-efficient lamps as this could result in the property not meeting building regulations regarding power consumption."

Green Lighting's new Eco800 Dimmable downlight is the company's most popular product with





RIGHT The LED for status display is available with eight colour settings, the Gira push-button sensor 4 aluminium black with LED blue is shown

BELOW Versatile and functional, the Gira push-button sensor 4 is a high-quality KNX operating device. Its clear surface, square shape and contemporary finishes are a perfect match for modern and harmonious interior design

BOTTOM The new Gira push-button sensor 4 has a high-quality modern design, with strong materials and aesthetic appeal



“Compared with regular incandescent and halogen lamps, LED lamps use about 10% of the energy, so it is a massive saving”

you would have to use LED to meet the standards, in all other situations 75% of light fittings have to be low energy for the building regulations. As all homes now have 100% LED lighting it's not a sales advantage over other developers, but it is definitely useful for people moving from older properties or wanting to reduce their electricity bills.”

And in this age of high-tech devices there are now other ways that homeowners can reduce their lighting bills: with intelligent controls.

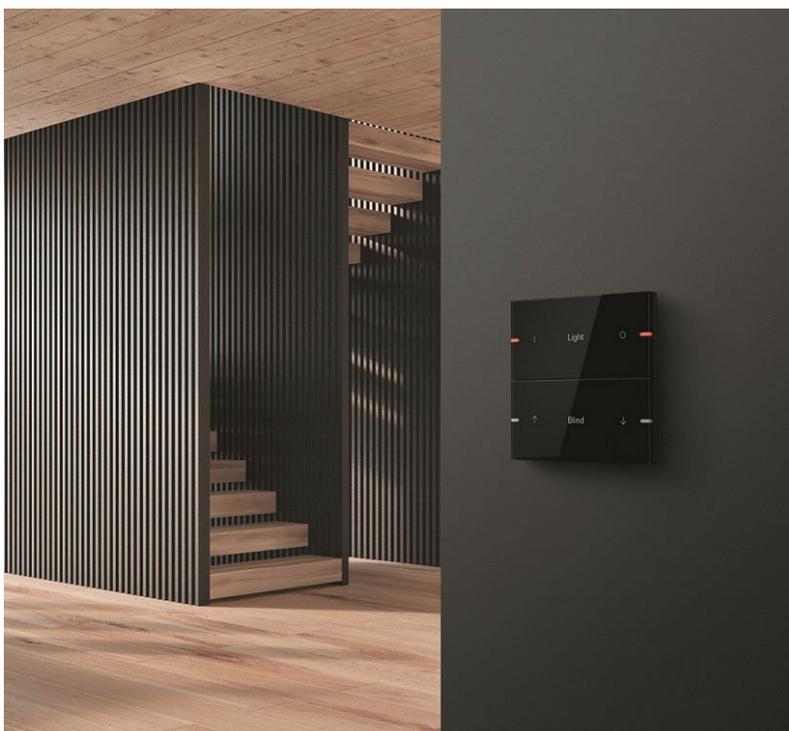
“There are many examples of an intelligent lighting system that helps with energy management; however, it is important to be conscious of energy use and so being able to view the level of energy being consumed is a massive benefit,” explains Mark Booth, managing director of Gira UK. “For example, the Gira HomeServer continuously records and stores the values for the consumption of electricity, water, gas or heating oil. Using clear diagrams, residents can view the development and adjust or correct it as needed. Strong deviations from the average consumption can be recognised quickly via an energy marker with all data clearly displayed.”

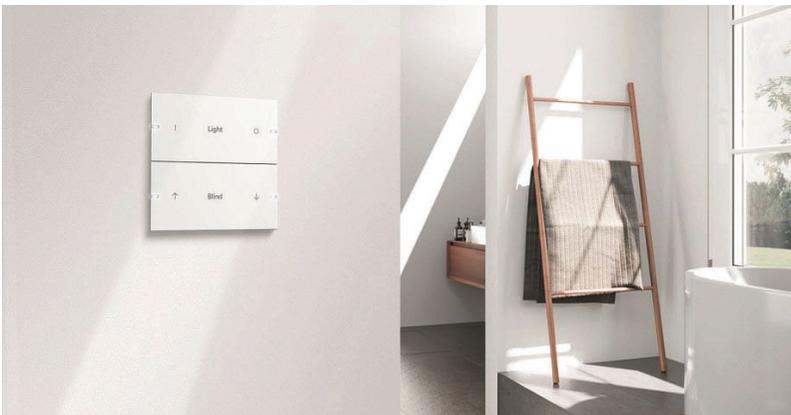
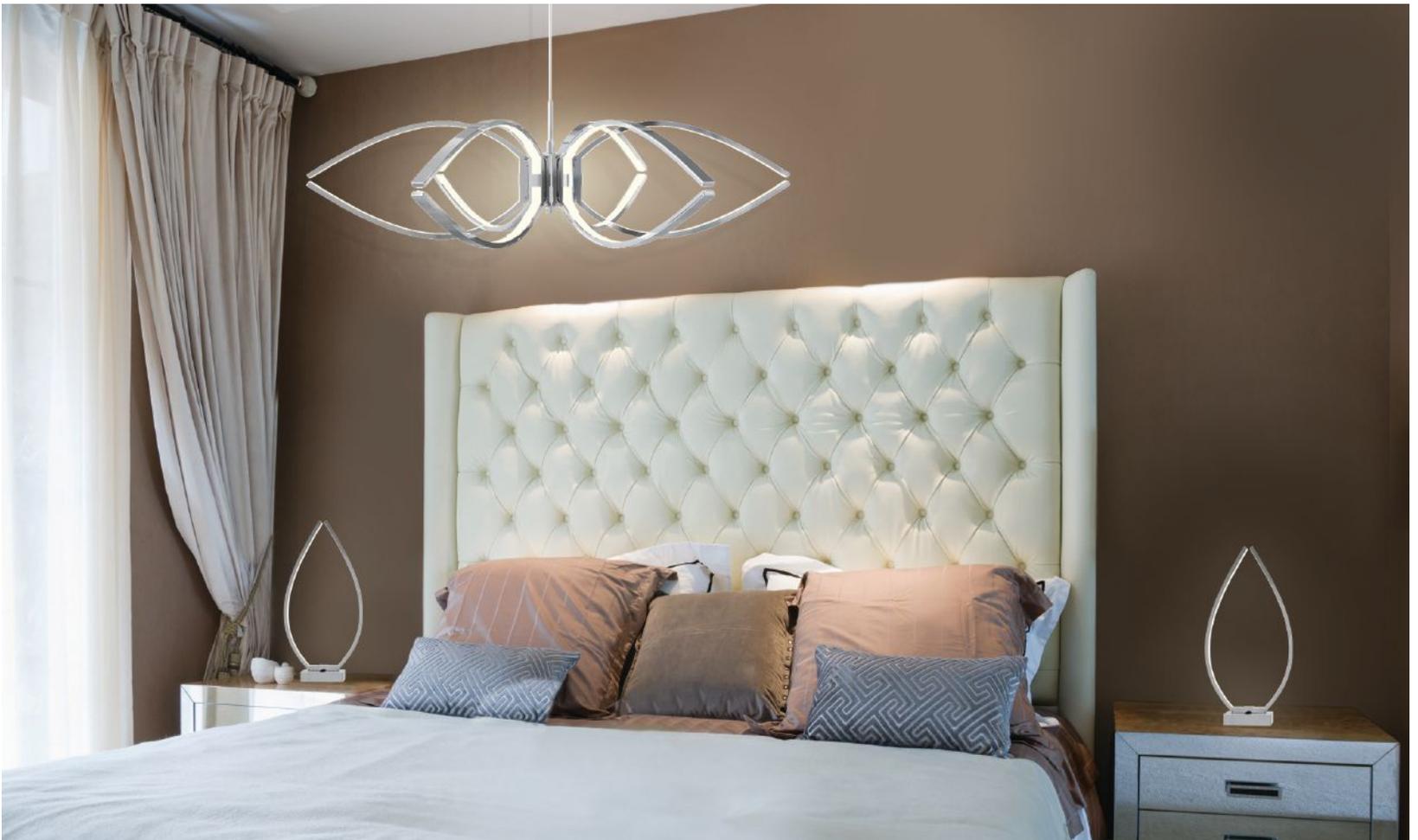
As homeowners and building managers discover the benefits of automating lighting and linking it to different devices as the internet of things takes off, they will enjoy a uniquely tailored environment. ▶

housebuilders. Currently the most cost-effective downlight on the market, it emits 800 lumens, is easy to fix and costs just £8.35. These IP65 downlights can be installed in any room, giving a bright open feel. Contractors also prefer the design, with Green Lighting's easy-to-install screwless connectors saving time and therefore money. The D-Lux Downlight range is tried and tested with modern methods of construction and are both 30- and 60-minute fire rated in standard, I-joist and posi-joist constructions.

Meanwhile Tp24 LED Lighting started using LED lamps in its fittings in November 2006, and all of its fittings have been exclusively LED since 2009.

“Compared with regular incandescent and halogen lamps, LED lamps use about 10% of the energy so it is a massive saving,” says Davis. “In an eco-house design





“The increased emphasis on health and hygiene in the light of the pandemic means that offering multiple options to control lighting such as voice control or via app is set to be very important next year – especially as more and more people are investing in smart home technology,” continues Booth. “Smart lighting will be a growing part of the market in 2021, and will accelerate throughout the decade, so that controlling the home remotely will become an everyday norm.”

There will also likely be more opportunities at the top of the market for combining the best of traditional push-button control with the latest sensor technology indoors so that lighting and other functions can be easily managed from a control panel, which is ideal for a busy family

kitchen. For example, it is now possible to operate lighting and blinds, moderate the temperature and humidity via sensor technology and, thanks to an external temperature sensor, underfloor heating will automatically begin to function on a chilly evening or frosty morning.

“When up to eight functions can be effortlessly controlled from one clever combination switch and sensor, this demonstrates the rising demand for premium design with intuitive control and operation – giving end users more time to focus on relaxing or working in comfort and empowering designers to create practical and aesthetical schemes,” concludes Booth.

Because, as important as light is, the way that you control it in 2021 is equally so. 

ABOVE Tp24’s bestselling products are its lighting packages

LEFT The Gira pushbutton sensor 4 can be used as a decor accent and also blends harmoniously into your interiors

RIGHT Green Lighting supplies a vast choice of decorative lighting to housebuilders and interior designers



CONTACTS

Gira
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Green Lighting
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SAFE HAVENS



Housing associations have largely weathered the Covid storm to date, an experience, says **SIMON GRAHAM**, that may help them battle other challenges ahead

Everything is relative. Talk to any housing association chief executive about 2020 and they will tell you they had a tough or challenging year. Talk to any lender to the sector and they will tell you how well housing associations have weathered the pandemic and how resilient they have proved. There is no contradiction, of course; it just depends on your perspective.

This was one of the interesting nuggets coming out of the Social Housing Annual Conference in December. The heads-down, crisis-management, all-hands-to-the-pump housing association response to the pandemic, all-consuming to those

involved, is seen outside the sector as highly successful. The pandemic has also provided a very helpful, much-improved understanding on the part of lenders of just what a safe bet for their money housing associations are.

The conference was full of sentiments like “the sector is well placed to cope” (the Regulator of Social Housing), “the sector has been more resilient than might have been expected” (JLL), “banks see the sector as relatively protected” (Lloyds), and “social housing is low risk, with implicit government support, zero loss, very good management, highly regulated by a proven regulator, and strong social relevance” (Sumitomo Mitsui

Banking Corporation). Excellent ports in the storm, then, compared to retail or hospitality, for example.

Speakers were similarly sanguine about the other dominant story of 2020: the UK’s full exit from the European Union. By and large, the view was that social housing has had four years to get ready for this; it’s been stress-tested robustly, housing associations have upped their liquidity, are broadly on top of the digital data risks, and have plans in place to manage any issues around building component supplies.

Such concerns as were expressed around these two huge topics tended to focus on the macro-economic future rather than the sector’s operational response so far, and what happens when the massive government financial support packages are unwound.

There were big worries about the housing market in 2021. Richard Petty of JLL described it as “defying gravity” so far, with an expected plummet in transactions held off at least partly by government support including the stamp duty holiday. S&P, the rating agency, identified sales income as one of the main impending risks.

The impact of recession and unemployment on housing association residents was also on people’s minds. The Office for Budget Responsibility has projected a 4% economic contraction with a Brexit trade deal or a 6% contraction with ‘no deal’, and unemployment rising to 2.6 million people as government support is withdrawn. Incomes will be squeezed through to the middle of the decade; as Miatta Fahnbulleh, chief executive of the New Economics Foundation, noted: “This comes on the back of a

decade where average incomes have barely changed since 2008.” She went on to say that NEF research suggested 2.5 million more people could soon be living below the Minimum Income Standard and “a third of people in the country may not be able to afford the basics”.

Former housing minister, Gavin Barwell, now on the board of Clarion, England’s largest housing association, said research with residents during the pandemic indicated that two thirds had had a material change in their circumstances, for example being furloughed or shielding. He reiterated chancellor Rishi Sunak’s point, that we are only at the start of the economic crisis.

Housing associations were pleasantly surprised by their ability to keep rent arrears under control during 2020, again partly as a result of government supports around employment and improved Universal Credit. But the UC supplements will disappear at the end of this financial year as will the furlough scheme in April (unless extended again). So has the anticipated spike in arrears simply been delayed?

This is hugely important because the stability of housing association revenues is crucial to lender confidence and one thing everyone agrees on is that the sector is going to be heavily reliant on more debt over the coming years.

According to the Regulator, housing association Financial Forecast Returns suggest outright sales down by 30% over the next four years. That means smaller profits to plough back into building new affordable rented homes, compounded probably by a less buoyant housing market and possible





LEFT: St Michael's Courtyard, West Croydon. London Square Partners and Clarion

BELOW: Network Homes

impairments on land values. Added to this will be the enormous costs of investing in existing assets to manage building safety, zero carbon and the new, as yet undefined, requirements of Decent Homes 2.

A quick sift through the 2020 Financial Statements of some of the larger housing associations shows that, in most cases, operating margins are already on the way down and surpluses are under pressure. And those accounts only go up to the end of March 2020, before any real effects from the pandemic, before a downturn in building for outright sale, and before the latest (but almost certainly not the last) escalations in the costs of remediating taller buildings.

In fact, perhaps the most shocking session of the conference was a granular dissection of those costs and the sheer complexity of managing the building safety agenda.

The chair of London's G15 group of large housing associations, Helen Evans, said those 12 associations alone had over 2,000 buildings requiring satisfactory external wall system forms before lenders would accept mortgages on them. Any leaseholders living in them are effectively unable to sell their homes in the meantime and, so far, 90% of buildings opened up for investigation need remedial work.

With only 300 qualified engineers able to carry out those inspections, there are long delays in getting them done and associations are paying 'waking watch' costs of thousands of pounds a week until any necessary work is completed.

The G15 associations already have £2.5bn in their business plans just to

remediate buildings over 18 metres and there is now a focus on buildings over 11 metres tall. The £1bn government support fund barely scratches the surface of the problem. Many of these buildings are also beyond their structural warranty period and the six-year limit on litigation against the original constructors.

If housing associations are left to manage this problem predominantly on their own, there will be severe knock-on impacts for new supply, just at a time when far more social housing will be needed to deal with the economic effects of the pandemic and Brexit.

Meanwhile, the government's ability to ride to the rescue with a much bigger support fund or significantly increased grants for social housing is constrained by exactly the same macro-economic factors. And, as Gavin Barwell pointed out, the tax take will come under even more pressure from structural changes in the economy. Less commuting to offices, fewer offices and the move to electric cars equals less fuel duty and office business rates, for example. At some point, other taxes will be needed to compensate.

Overall, the Regulator expects the sector to borrow a further £41bn over the next five years. Housing associations are pretty much banking on interest rates staying low to allow them to square the circle of continuing to invest in new supply while managing the heavy costs of making their existing stock fit for the future (and present in some cases). If interest rates were to rise much, some extremely difficult decisions would be needed about what to delay or not do.



As Karin Erlander of S&P Ratings said: "Housing associations can carry a lot of debt because of predictable and stable cashflows." The risk to sales income and the likelihood of rising arrears means associations are walking a cashflow tightrope.

More positively, speakers noted that the volume of lenders into the sector has risen substantially over recent years as capital markets have cottoned on to the safe haven nature of the beast, and increased competition helps keep borrowing costs down. The latest government affordable housing guarantee scheme of £3bn should also keep interest rates low. Associations benefit too from being able to at least partially switch large capital expenditure on both new and

existing homes on and off if they have to. More collaboration between housing associations on big issues, like zero carbon and development, could also reduce costs and risks.

It is interesting that a year in which housing associations felt bludgeoned by events outside their control ended with them generally having improved their customer services and rent arrears controls, being far better at granular stress-testing of their finances, working far more flexibly and with lower corporate overheads, and being better recognised as a truly 'good bet' by the lending industry. Although none of the deep-seated challenges have gone away, and some seem set to intensify, that is not a bad place in which to start 2021. [sh](#)



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Capital expenditure



London's housing providers are facing a cut in their affordable homes funding, so, asks **SIMON GRAHAM**, can the mayor and the housebuilders still make the numbers work?

London is getting £4bn for housing over the next five years, a third of the overall £12bn Affordable Housing Programme (AHP). That compares to almost £5bn for the 2016-21 programme, around half the total grant available.

Is London paying the price for mayor Sadiq Khan's noisy opposition to many of the government's policies or are ministers just holding good to their promise to 'level up' the country?

Either way round, Londoners and London's housing associations are about to suffer the consequences. As Show House pointed out when the government announced the geographical split of cash for the next AHP, £4bn over five years will barely scratch the surface of London's housing needs and will certainly do nothing to improve the capital's housing crisis.

The funding guidance issued by the mayor towards the end of last year is a forlorn attempt to make a silk purse from a sow's ear. While government policy skews the national AHP even further towards funding home ownership, Khan has done his best to subvert that by skewing his own programme in London more towards rent.

Half of London's money will fund social rent homes. This marks a significant change on what went before. The London Affordable Rent product – slightly more expensive but as close to social rent as the government allowed Khan to get in 2016 – has gone, in favour of the now-allowed old style and cheaper social rents.

The knock-on impact is that less of the programme will be going towards shared ownership and London Living Rent – the latter being a Rent to Buy product with low rents intended to enable the renter to save a deposit and go on to buy their home. Khan also makes it clear the government is forcing him to introduce the Right to Shared Ownership for the new social rent homes built. It would not be his choice.

There are question marks both over the ability of social tenants to afford to buy their home and the financial viability for housing associations in implementing sizeable programmes under the new shared ownership model. Several councils and housing associations have already stepped back

from building shared ownership in the central Zones 1 and 2 of the capital because it is unaffordably expensive. The chances are London will be seeing many fewer shared ownership homes built as we head towards the middle of this decade.

But finance will also be the big question on housing association directors' lips when thinking about large volumes of social rent. For the last 10 years, since the introduction of Affordable Rents and the slashing of grant rates, the money has simply not been there to make building social rent homes on any kind of scale viable.

The funding guidance is also full of new standards housing providers must meet if they are to receive grant from the mayor – five building safety standards, nine on design and quality, six new environmental requirements and five on equality and diversity.

Most of these flow along broadly similar lines to policies many of the larger housing associations are following anyway as they push towards zero carbon homes and implementing the recommendations of the Hackitt Review on building safety. But that doesn't mean they are cost free. The mayor making them contractual requirements of grant funding is likely to bring forward costs that might otherwise be spread over a longer period.

The mayor has also stipulated that grant for estate regeneration schemes will now only be paid for additional housing and not for replacing existing homes, unless they can clearly be shown to be obsolete. This is another significant and potentially costly shift housing providers will need to absorb.

It is as well, then, that the policy on grant rates is also changing. Instead of the generally fixed amounts given for different products under the last programme, bids for grant will now be based on a viability assessment for each scheme, with the grant ask basically filling the gap once the provider has calculated what they can raise from cross-subsidy, internal reserves, loans and any other sources. Decisions on which bids to fund will be taken on a 'best value' basis, looking at average grant per home required.

It is inevitable, given the extra costs inherent in the mayor's guidance, that grant rates on many projects will need to be considerably higher than they have been if London is to see much new



affordable housing built over the next five years.

Yet Sadiq Khan still expects the new London AHP to yield around 82,000 homes, against 90,000 under the current programme. Given the smaller overall funding package, that suggests an average grant per home hardly different between the two programmes. Which suggests, in turn, there is still a circle to be somehow squared here.

Housing associations are not in the position they were to pick up the extra tabs constantly being thrown at them at present. Surpluses and margins are falling, and massive ongoing uncertainties around building safety, Covid costs, Brexit, the housing market, zero carbon, section 106 and many other issues are making boards far more cautious about how much risk they are prepared to run.

Most London associations have enjoyed a good relationship with the mayor's team in recent years. That is important, because dialogue and compromise will be needed to get the mayor anywhere close to his 82,000 home target with his funding conditions broadly intact. [sh](#)

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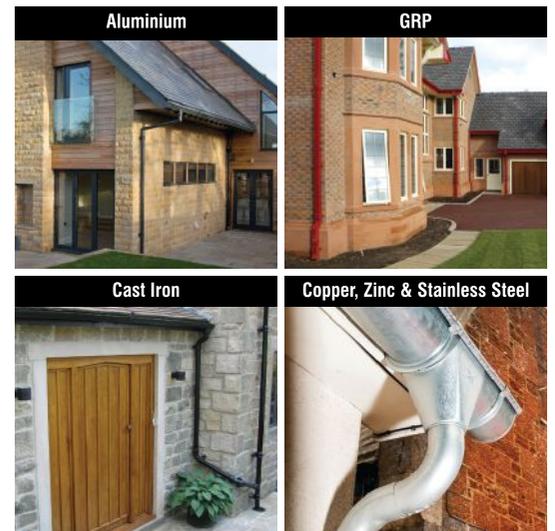
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Fyne Homes secures funding package

Argyll and Bute-based housing association Fyne Homes Limited has secured a £10m funding package from Royal Bank of Scotland to refinance existing loans and enable future growth plans within the business.

Headquartered in Rothesay on the Isle of Bute, Fyne Homes provides housing for residents in the Isle of Bute, Cowal, Mid-Argyll and Kintyre regions. It owns and manages more than 1,600 properties.

Over the next three years, part of the funding will go towards delivering 30 new homes in Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and on the Isle of Bute. More than £3m of the funding has also been earmarked to enable a major repairs programme, which will include the upgrade of central heating systems and wall insulation solutions, helping properties become more energy efficient.

Fyne Homes CEO Colin Renfrew said: "The significant funding boost from Royal Bank of Scotland will help us upgrade hundreds of homes in our current property portfolio as well as deliver new units as we see a rise in

demand across the region. We are incredibly proud of how Fyne Homes has grown since 1979, and we're excited for the future knowing we are in a strong position financially. The excellent communication and support from the team at Royal Bank of Scotland has been appreciated and we look forward to continuing this relationship."

In 2020 NatWest Group, the parent of Royal Bank of Scotland, said it will invest £3bn in social housing across the UK over the next three years, to support the construction of 20,000 homes.

Rachel Mallarky, associate director at Royal Bank of Scotland, said: "Colin and his team deliver an invaluable service in the Argyll and Bute region and it has been rewarding to help Fyne Homes embark on a new chapter. It's evident that the team are all very passionate about the business, it has been a pleasure working with them to help the association build new homes and help make existing properties more energy efficient, and we wish them the very best for the future."

Homes England opens bidding for Affordable Homes Programme

Homes England has opened bidding for the continuous market engagement (CME) section of the next five-year Affordable Homes Programme.

Housing associations, local authorities and developers looking to access grant through the CME route can now bid for a share of the £7.39bn being made available for the delivery of affordable homes outside London between 2021 and 2026.

The CME route offers funding to providers on a scheme-by-scheme basis. The rest of the AHP funding will be available to Homes England's strategic partners, which will receive long-term funding for their entire development programmes.

Homes England expects to begin accepting proposals for strategic partnerships early this year.

All schemes funded through the CME route must start onsite by 30 September 2025 and be completed by March 2026.

Homes England said it will assess CME applications against cost minimisation, the primary metric for which is grant per home, and deliverability, to ensure bidders can deliver a scheme within the CME timeframe.

It will also consider prospective schemes' alignment with government objectives, including the use of MMC, use of the National Design Guide and working with local SME contractors.

The entire 2021/26 AHP is worth £11.5bn, of which the Greater London Authority will deliver £4bn. Around half of the homes being delivered outside London will be for shared ownership or other 'routes to homeownership' products, while the rest will be for affordable rent or social rent. In London, 50% of the homes being delivered through the GLA's scheme are to be for social rent.

Guinness Partnership buys Gloucestershire modular scheme

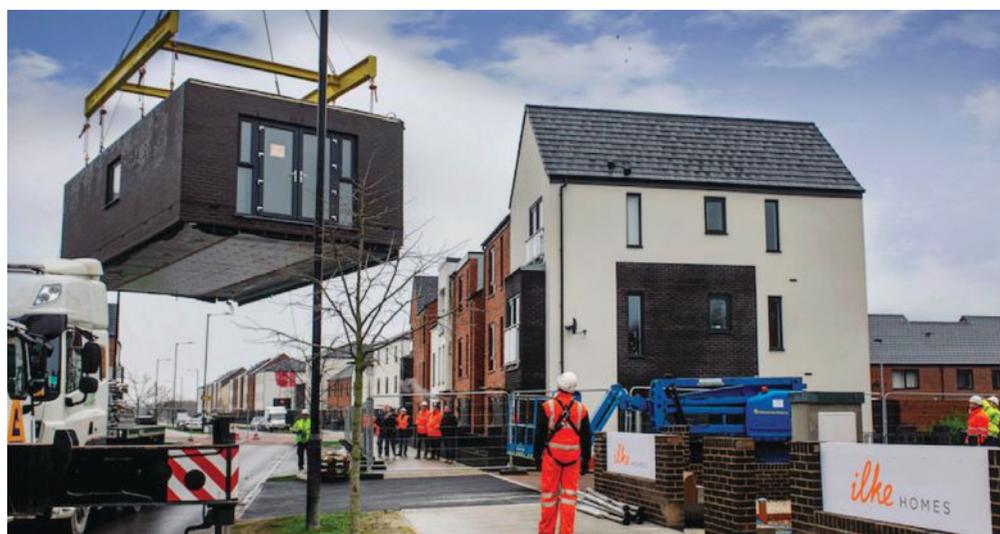
The Guinness Partnership has acquired a 57-home affordable housing scheme from modular housing manufacturer ilke Homes. The site in Drybrook, Gloucestershire, is expected to be completed by December 2021. All of the homes will be manufactured at ilke Homes' 250,000ft² factory in Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, before being delivered to the Mannings Farm site.

The partnership marks ilke Homes' fifth scheme as a full turnkey developer. In 2019, ilke Homes struck a deal with Homes England, investing £30m into the modular housing company to help boost its factory production capacity. The deal with Guinness Partnership follows the announcement of ilke Homes' £31m deal with global asset manager Man Group, which will see the delivery of 227 factory-built homes in Grantham, Lincolnshire.

Matthew Bench, executive director of partnerships at ilke Homes, said: "We're delighted to be working with the Guinness Partnership on an ilke Homes' full turnkey development, leading the development process at every step and using ilke Homes' modular housing technology to deliver beautiful,

sustainable homes for the local community. It has been an unprecedented year for ilke Homes as our business goes from strength to strength. Building partnerships with many of the biggest housing associations further underpins the confidence in our sector."

Ed Barnes, development director for the south at The Guinness Partnership, added: "We are delighted to be working with ilke Homes using modern methods of construction to increase and speed up the supply of affordable housing in the Forest of Dean."



Springfield starts work on Scottish homes

Springfield Properties has started construction on the first phase of 114 affordable homes in Dalmarnock for West of Scotland Housing Association (WSHA).

The homes, built as part of an £18.2m partnership with WSHA, will transform the former goods yard opposite the train station, a site that has been vacant for around 60 years. Springfield is building the social rented and mid-market rent homes that range in size from one to five bedrooms and, once complete, will be surrounded by open communal areas and flexible commercial spaces. The developers have planning permission to build a total of 237 homes on the site and the company are in negotiations with another provider to deliver the remaining 123 homes.

Springfield managing director of affordable housing,

Tom Leggeat, said: "We're excited to get started on this development and proud to be contributing to Dalmarnock's regeneration. It's an important programme that will stimulate growth in this area in the West of Scotland as well as provide much-needed affordable housing in Glasgow. These homes will rejuvenate a neglected pocket of land and bring new, highly energy-efficient housing to the people who need them. They are well positioned, with great commuter links to the centre of Glasgow and residents will have plenty of outdoor space.

"At Springfield, we believe everyone deserves a good place to live. We know we can build more homes for more people by working with strong partners who have the same vision. We are pleased to be partnering with West of Scotland Housing

Association for the first time and look forward to delivering well-designed attractive, highly energy-efficient homes that will have a positive impact on the area."

Andrew Kubski, director of development and asset management at West of Scotland Housing Association, added: "We are excited that construction has started on our 114 homes in Dalmarnock that will transform the streetscape of this section of Dalmarnock Road and also see the creation of our first ever mid-market rent homes. We are grateful for the funding provided by Glasgow City Council and our own lenders that allows us to create high-quality, energy-efficient homes for our tenants in partnership with Springfield Properties." Springfield expects to complete and hand over the first homes to WSHA in 2022.

Caddick and Together partner for Sheffield homes

Caddick Group has partnered with Together Housing to deliver an £11.5m affordable housing development in Sheffield.

The Ferrars Road scheme will feature 93 new affordable homes, made up of 19 two-bedroom, 70 three-bedroom, and four four-bedroom houses, supported by funding from Homes England.

The homes have been designed by Yorkshire architects Watson Batty and will feature traditional architectural exterior elements. Construction is due to commence early in 2021, with the first homes being ready for tenants from 2022. Together Housing will take ownership and management of the site upon completion.

Caddick Group CEO Johnny Caddick said: "We're delighted to be working with Together Housing to bring forward this important project, which is set to help so many individuals and families to find their new homes at affordable prices. Working with Together Housing to deliver this scheme demonstrates the breadth of what

we offer as a group and the collaboration required for these types of projects."

Together Housing was announced as one of the government's housing agency strategic partners in January 2019, receiving £53m to help develop 1,152 additional affordable home starts by March 2022.

Kevin Ruth, deputy chief executive for Together Housing, added: "We're excited to have teamed up with Caddick Group, whose holistic approach to development aligns with our ambition to tackle the housing crisis by delivering more affordable housing as part of our strategic partnership with Homes England."



Riverside Group completes £150m bond issuance

Liverpool-based provider The Riverside Group has completed a £150m private bond issuance with Pricoa Private Capital.

The placement is split into two deferred issuances, with the first £50m Series A note issuance to be closed in March 2021, with a maturity in 2041.

The second £100m Series B note issuance is to be closed in September 2021, with a maturity in 2051. The deal was arranged by HSBC UK and law firm Devonshires advised Riverside. Addleshaw Goddard advised London-based Pricoa.

The deal attracted significant attention from both domestic and international investors, but was ultimately priced with an all-in coupon of 2% for the shorter term Series A Notes and 2.5% for the longer term Series B Notes, both of which are on a secured basis.

Emma Turner, head of treasury and corporate finance at Riverside, said: "We are delighted to have been able to secure this significant investment from an international funder of the stature of Pricoa. The business proposition from Pricoa,

and the other commercial offerings from other institutional investors, demonstrates the appetite to invest in Riverside and the social housing sector more widely."

Gary Grigor, banking partner at Devonshires, said: "This substantial investment by Pricoa is hugely significant. Not only does it show the commercial appetite to support Riverside's ongoing business objectives, but also the ongoing desire to invest in social housing sector in the UK as a whole at relatively low margins."

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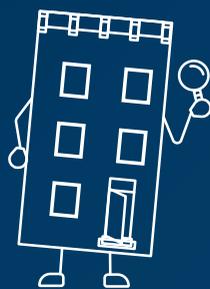
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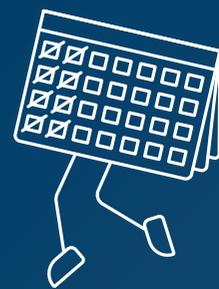
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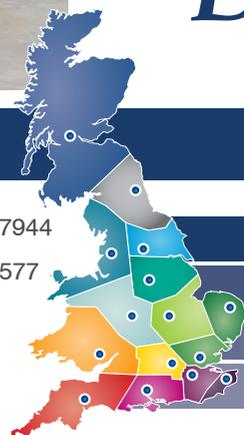


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Life LINES



Proptech helped people be less lonely this Christmas... it could prove vital in the months to come, says **ISLA MACFARLANE**

An 85-year-old lady, who had thought gyms were the preserve of Lycra-loving youth, grinned in disbelief when she was told that she had just completed 18 squats. Her triumph was the result of eGym, a marriage of cutting-edge technology and smart engineering, which was being trialled at her retirement village.

"If you ever get rid of this, I will hunt you down," she told Tom Lord, chief operating officer of Inspired Villages.

"I thought, fine, we're keeping that then," laughs Lord, and the equipment has been in place ever since. The eGym equipment, which creates personalised training regimes that focus on improving strength, is just one of the many proptech solutions being used in retirement villages to improve the wellbeing of its residents.

Over a period of three months, Inspired Villages found that residents who used eGym equipment recorded an impressive 35% increase in strength. Gym usage also jumped from 10% of residents to 50%.

"That really helps us to ensure that, firstly, people are engaging in activity, which is proven to keep them well for longer, but also that increase in strength will reduce the risk of having a fall, and means that people are going to enjoy healthier years of life," says Lord.

Before 2020 dawned, technology in retirement homes was a useful, perhaps novel, tool. However, in the wake of a deadly pandemic that forced many into isolation, it became an essential lifeline. For those having to shield, proptech offers a sword to fight back.

"We are smashing the taboo that tech-infused living is exclusive to the Millennial generation," says Jason Leek, CEO of Riverstone. "As referenced by Riverstone's Boomer & Beyond Research last year, the reality is that the over-65s are just as tech savvy as anyone else. It's great to see both developers and proptech companies recognising the scale of the opportunity with tailored products and services that enable people to live well for longer."

When access to gyms was curtailed, exercise classes went online via Zoom, along with wine tastings, quiz nights and festive fun such as

wreathmaking. Inspired Villages embraced social media, taking over a company page with 250 followers in March, which has since fostered a following of 18,000. The 'virtual village' is used to create online events, reminisce over old times and block loneliness.

"We used the virtual village to seek out people that are lonely this Christmas as part of our 'inspire friendships' initiative," says Lord. "We identified 1,000 people across the UK who said they would appreciate receiving a Christmas card this year, so we've just sent out 1,000 Christmas cards to lonely older people across the UK."

In a bleak midwinter, portals that allowed families to come together felt like nothing short of a Christmas miracle. A new housing scheme, Cornell Court in Essex, launched in November with flats all fitted out with a 'virtual concierge' service and video carephones, which allow residents to interact with the outside world at the touch of a screen.

The extra-care scheme, run by L&Q Living, is the first social housing scheme in the country to include this technology as standard and to use the internet of things to connect several devices within each property.

Charlie Culshaw, director of L&Q Living, says: "We hope that this technology can allow vulnerable people who are limiting their contact with others during the pandemic to connect remotely with their loved ones in ways they were unable to before."

However, as anyone who has tried to help an elderly relative conquer Zoom in the last year may attest, encouraging the use of technology isn't always easy.

Mark Dickinson, CEO at Lifestory, says: "Since lockdown, the internet and digital technology have become invaluable tools allowing us to carry on with our day-to-day activities from our homes. However, as

the recent BT Skills for Tomorrow research reveals, for the over-70s, this can prove more challenging.

"Although many of our PegasusLife and Renaissance Retirement owners are already confident and well-versed with digital technology, we wanted to assist those less confident to ensure they did not face online isolation as well as physical isolation. We have enabled them, as much as possible, during lockdown, to gain digital skills they may not already have had in order to access online communication platforms, to stay in touch with friends and family, the outside world and to keep active both mentally and physically."

To help gain these digital skills, Lifestory has produced a series of 'Stay Connected' step-by-step guides for owners who are less familiar with communication platforms like Facebook, Skype and Zoom. Anchor Hanover has a similar scheme to help residents untangle the world wide web.

Anchor Hanover has also used Memoride, which connects Google Street View to a motion sensor and sees residents virtual cycling along roads and lanes they know, like a pedal-powered time machine. It is one of only 130 care homes worldwide to use this technology.

Mark Curran, development director at Anchor Hanover, said: "Our Get Connected scheme, which we had in place to assist residents with setting up wifi and other technology, such as smartphones, has been developed to provide residents with tablets free of charge, which they can use to stay connected with family and friends online for the duration of the pandemic."

While lockdown may have powered a surge in technology among retirement communities, it's clear that these life-changing solutions aren't just for Christmas.

Culshaw adds: "While the coronavirus pandemic has highlighted more than ever the need for this type of technology, the benefits go far beyond residents being able to see and speak to their families and organise the vast majority of tasks from home. We have seen how the Alcove system allows residents to live more independently in their day-to-day lives." [sh](#)



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New proptech tool promises to cut 'time to own' by third

An AI-powered platform, which aims to cut the 'time to own' for aspiring homeowners by nearly a third, has launched.

This is the figure RenterBuyer, fresh from the Pi Labs PropTech VC accelerator fund, has arrived at during extensive testing with real first-time buyers over the past 12 months.

The platform is free to aspiring homeowners, who enter financial information, any deposit they may have accumulated and the rough value of the property they are looking to purchase. RenterBuyer's proprietary algorithm then creates a Purchase Readiness (PR) score and provides an estimate of how quickly the user in question can own their home. The higher the PR score; the quicker the buyer is likely to own. Users get information, checklists, tailored offers and can also connect with advisers to assist with mortgage finance and property search.

Alongside the Open Banking and AI-powered tools, RenterBuyer also offers aspiring homeowners an extensive practical checklist of things they can do to reduce their time to own. These range from how to record rent payments on their credit file and opening a credit union account to earning extra cash through a side hustle on Fiverr and putting money into a Lifetime ISA. Through the tailored offers section, users can also access a number of first-time buyer schemes available, including mortgage, savings and credit improvement products. It also features Ray, an intelligent personal digital coach who offers 24/7 advice. Ray's goal is to break down the often complex and confusing phrases that are all too common in the world of home ownership.

Japanese modular giant Daiwa House eyes European market

Daiwa House, Japanese provider of pre-fab homes, has bought a stake in Dutch modular builder Jan Snel. "Daiwa House Industry Co is pleased to announce we entered into a share purchase agreement with the current shareholders of Flexbuild Holding B.V. on 18 December 2020," Daiwa said in a statement. Flexbuild is the holding company of the Jan Snel Group, which sells and rents modular building products in the Netherlands.

"Upon closing of the transaction, we will make Flexbuild and its operating company Jan Snel into our subsidiaries with this agreement," it said. "This will serve as a stepping stone in our full-fledged entry into Europe to begin industrialised building business. We established Daiwa House Europe in the Netherlands in March 2020. We have now entered into this share purchase agreement with Flexbuild through Daiwa House Europe."

Tech start-up develops Covid bio-safety risk management tool for buildings

A technology start-up has been awarded an additional Innovate UK grant to continue its development of an AI-driven bio-safety assessment tool for Covid-19 and other infectious diseases.

Data Innovation.AI, based in Edinburgh, is investing further in the development of its WorkSafeAI solution – a tool designed to ensure that the £130bn of new commercial property built in the UK every year is pre-assessed for pandemic safety.

Robert Walker, CAO at Data Innovation.AI, said: "Covid-19

has revealed risks inherent in large structures where people congregate for work, business and leisure. In the same way we design buildings for fire safety, air quality and water safety, we must now consider the continuous health of occupants, including infections transmitted through the workplace. "As we return to our workplaces, these bio-safety issues will become ever more important, and we just need to look at the southern hemisphere which has largely avoided its flu season due to the same measures being used to counter Covid-19."

Virgin Money partners with Twenty7Tec for API integration

Virgin Money has announced its API integration with technology experts Twenty7tec. The partnership will streamline the search and application process for intermediaries by removing the need to re-key data in multiple places.

The integration will be the first of its kind from a top 10 lender. Users can apply for a Decision in Principle from Virgin via the integration, as well as submit a full mortgage application and make payments without needing to visit the Virgin Money portal.

Intermediaries will also benefit from being able to view case tracking and case notes, which will help them manage cases and support their customers. It will also

reduce the propensity for human error, therefore improving packaging and turnaround times for the intermediary and customer.

James Tucker, CEO of Twenty7Tec, said: "Virgin Money has a great track record for innovating in the mortgage market and playing a huge role in delivering better customer service, so we're over the moon to help them with this integration. As a result of this deal, Virgin Money Customers will experience a seamless experience from beginning to end – something which the Virgin brand is so closely allied with. We're proud to be their partner in making the mortgage experience a little better for everyone involved."

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THE Marketeers

THIS MONTH:

Sarah McCready, head of placemaking and communications, Barking Riverside Limited

On the banks of the Thames in east London, Barking Riverside has been described as one of Europe's most exciting projects. Head of placemaking and communications Sarah McCready is at the forefront of getting the message across.

A former MasterChef finalist back in 2015, McCready is clearly passionate about food but equally passionate about her current mission.

"My role includes leading on the marketing side of the business, developing a strong brand for Barking Riverside as a destination and overseeing an internal team and a group of consultants to deliver placemarketing," she explains, adding that her main goal is to make the vision a reality, not just for prospective buyers, but also for commercial partners, visitors and locals.

A joint venture between housing association L&Q and the Mayor of London, master developer Barking Riverside Limited, BRL, is "transforming a former industrial site into a new London district that everyone can be proud of," says McCready.

"We drive forward the place, providing a platform for residents, new and existing, to co-create their neighbourhood. Our job is to help build a place where communities can grow and flourish."

Covering 443-acres, an area larger than Hyde Park, Barking Riverside aims to become a vibrant neighbourhood of over 10,000 homes, along with commercial and leisure space, public open spaces and

riverside walks. Bellway Homes and L&Q are the plot developers with whom McCready works closely.

The Oxford graduate joined the BRL team in 2018 and was promoted into her current role in 2019. She recently oversaw a major rebrand and explains the inspiration behind it: "The existing community at Barking Riverside gives the area so much of its personality and we take an asset-based approach in using this to design the place. We try to capture this uniqueness through our marketing."

The recent new brand was the culmination of almost a year's work, including extensive engagement with stakeholders plus plenty of research.

"For me, Barking Riverside is a once-in-a-lifetime project, which is complicated, complex and unparalleled in size and scope."

The project has grown enormously since the original brand launch, necessitating, McCready explains, "a need to update the brand to really reflect the true spirit of Barking Riverside".

She was aiming for a brand that had to be easy to manage by multiple stakeholders and plot developers involved, yet sophisticated enough to work in multiple ways for different audiences and applications, so her first steps were to build an identity and establish it internally. "We have now successfully launched the brand digitally, across our active social media channels, where we receive a huge amount of engagement from local and future residents, and on our new website."



However, McCready has her eye on an even wider market: "Ultimately, the brand will have a big presence physically across Barking Riverside, online, nationally and, eventually, internationally. Getting this right now will contribute to a cohesive sense of place, and a feeling of belonging for current and future residents."

She wants the end result to become a benchmark for how other master developers approach branding for major placemaking projects: "It will demonstrate how a place brand can positively reflect both the spirit and values of what is already here, and what the future promises."

At the heart of McCready's approach is her belief that placemaking and marketing are intrinsically linked: "You can't market a place without really understanding what that place can become and achieve."

But she accepts that placemaking means different things to different people. "When we talk about placemaking at Barking Riverside, we mean the interventions and projects that will help people live here with purpose, belonging and pride. A cohesive, authentic brand identity becomes very important in strengthening those feelings of belonging and reflecting the collective ►

pride we know people feel in a community as strong and as spirited as this one.”

And with multiple investments at the development, the team has plenty to shout about. Currently under construction is a new London Overground station, extending the Gospel Oak to Barking Line, and work will soon start on a new pier for Uber Boat by Thames Clippers, both of which will dramatically increase connectivity into central London. Ultimately, seven new schools will be delivered, four are already open, and other facilities include an Ecology Centre and an innovative new health hub.

“Many master developers would view a site like Barking Riverside as a blank canvas. However, we are conscious not to alienate local communities. Crucially the sense of place that is created is more likely to feel real and authentic if we use the assets already here in the area, and work with residents, local organisations and leading experts to agree how best to extend and elevate these.”

Describing the project as “a unique place”, a generic marketing approach was never going to resonate with multiple audiences.

“We really needed to distil down and identify what makes this enterprising, spirited and above all, human, place quite so special. We set out to create a new brand messaging platform, which would help identify what this place is now, and what it could become.”

The core message is ‘a place like no other, Barking Riverside is a place to be, become and belong’ and out of this the team’s “bold and playful graphic identity” was born.

“Our message is reflected in every aspect of our brand; from our confident and proud logo mark, to the huge range of vibrant textures we use



and our colour palette. We feel the graphic identity and the imagery and applications we are working on are less typical for the industry, truly reflecting the exceptional and unique offer that Barking Riverside provides.”

Authentic photography and videography are another of McCready’s passions: “We want our images and videos to capture the diversity and character of the community, so we only ever use imagery that shows real Riversiders – never stock images.

“Nothing captures the spirit of the area like using local photographers and videographers who are embedded in the community – so we always work with local people where possible.”

McCready accepts that traditional marketing is still important for certain groups; however, she laughs: “We also like to spin traditional marketing on its head!”

Events are crucial to the development’s success and in

November 2019 the team brought an award-winning laser light show in partnership with Lumen Art Projects, an incubator of technology-led arts, to the project office.

“The artwork was extremely interactive, really hitting the mark for our local demographic, but also prestigious enough to attract a really broad audience. It was a mini-festival, attracting over 800 people, nearly 60% of whom had never been to Barking Riverside, and gaining us a quantity of more lifestyle-driven press coverage,” says McCready, who was delighted with the end result. “Attracting that sort of new footfall is completely invaluable in terms of marketing, really putting us on the cultural radar.”

As master developer, McCready describes her team as “proud custodians” who she feels are best placed to be the people who are building an authentic brand intended to last the development’s lifetime. Describing her internal team as “tight”,

it also leads a team of consultancies. Faust PR support on PR and events, plus Spinach Design, which led the brand identity. A bank of local photographers and designers also includes some Barking Riverside residents, which McCready believes ensures extra authenticity when it comes to marketing.

Barking Riverside certainly keeps McCready busy but, in her spare time, food remains her passion. Alongside her notable MasterChef success, at one time she also ran her own street-food business.

“I’m known for my particular love for Mexican cuisine. I’m also taking my wine qualifications and have enjoyed hosting wine tastings over Zoom during lock down.”

When she’s not cooking, or trying out a new foodie destination, McCready enjoys spending time with a canine companion: “My husband and I can be found walking my Papillon puppy, Dijon, in north London.” 



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by
David Smith

SHOWHOUSE IN THE CITY



The new year has brought, as well as another national lockdown and grim data on the spread of the new variant of the coronavirus, more evidence of an extraordinarily strong housing market. Bank of England figures showed that mortgage approvals in November – the month of the previous lockdown – reached 104,969, their strongest for 13 years. Not since August 2007, the month before the run on Northern Rock, has mortgage activity been so strong.

The evidence on approvals was in line with other indicators that showed that the market ended 2020 in fine fettle. Admittedly, the extent to which the government would turn the clock back to March and April was not known then, though in one crucial respect this lockdown is different.

The housing market remains open, which has been welcomed. According to Jeremy Leaf, a north London estate agent and former RICS' residential chairman: "We will be returning to the protocols that we previously adopted and there will be a clear distinction between occupied and unoccupied properties."

And, he added: "While the property market remains open for business, the new lockdown will have some impact on surveyors, removals firms etc and in the circumstances, it would be prudent for the chancellor to reconsider the stamp duty deadline."

Stamp duty has become almost as big an issue in the market as Covid-19. The cut announced by Rishi Sunak in July has led to a predictable bunching of transactions and the fear is that, without this means of support, the market will find itself like that Wile E Coyote cartoon character: he carries on running over a cliff, only to find that there is nothing holding him up anymore.

That is certainly the view of Samuel Tombs, UK economist with Pantheon Macroeconomics. "The housing market has gone into overdrive, as people attempt to take advantage of the temporary stamp duty land tax holiday," he says. "But the market looks set to fall into a deep slumber after the SDLT threshold returns to £125,000 at the end of March, from £500,000, unless government policies change. Anyone seeking to take advantage

of the temporary SDLT cut probably will need to have a mortgage application approved before the end of January, given the time it usually takes for a home purchase to complete."

Tombs adds the interesting point about who has been driving the mini boom. As he puts it: "The range of people buying homes has narrowed. Existing homeowners who already have amassed significant housing equity, and first-time buyers with very large deposits, appear to be behind the market's momentum."

He is not the only one to fear for the market. The EY Item Club uses the Treasury's model of the economy and, according to Howard Archer, its chief economist: "We suspect elevated housing market activity and robust prices will prove unsustainable sooner rather than later – although, in the immediate future, activity may still benefit from many potential buyers looking to make a move in time to complete before the stamp duty threshold increase ends."

He expects house prices to be 5% lower by the middle of the year than now because "the housing market is likely to come under mounting near-term pressure amid rising Covid-19 cases and lockdown restrictions, while there is likely to be a significant rise in unemployment". The fading of the pent-up demand effect from the earlier lockdown will also be a factor, he adds.

A chancellor who has cut stamp duty once could, of course, always do so again, and that is a possibility when he unveils his budget on 3 March. But the July cut was in response to a slump in transactions following the spring closure of the market and it has been criticised for fuelling a strong rise in house prices.

You can go around in circles on these things but, paradoxically, the housing market's strong reaction to the stamp duty cut has reduced the argument for repeating the does, particularly from a chancellor who will soon be looking for ways to bring the budget deficit down to manageable levels.

Where does this leave the housing market? Assuming the stamp duty reduction is not rolled over, though the chancellor could opt for a phased return to the previous tax-free allowance, it looks like a race against time.

In the spring, the vaccination programme should provide the basis for a return to more normal life, but also for a decisive bounce in economic activity, and another unleashing of pent-up demand. The housing market will benefit from that, possibly quite considerably. That economic bounce should also put more confidence back into the job market.

Estate agents Knight Frank, in its UK residential market outlook, note the short-term worries and the fact that buyers will assume that a search started now will not be completed by the 31 March stamp duty deadline. But, they also say, there are still reasons to be optimistic.

"While the end of the stamp duty holiday in March will clearly have an impact on transaction numbers, the effect will be reduced if the pandemic has entered the endgame," they say. "Some buyers and sellers may hesitate in coming weeks, but sentiment will ultimately improve over the course of the year."

For Knight Frank that adds up to a 1% rise in house prices this year, and stronger activity in the second half than the first. Nobody should be too unhappy with that. ^{sh}

David Smith is the economics editor of The Sunday Times

Shawbrook Bank acquires RateSetter's development finance team and £167m loan portfolio

Shawbrook Bank has completed the strategic acquisition of RateSetter's peer-to-peer funded development finance business. The deal includes the purchase of a development finance loan portfolio with facilities totalling £167m.

The acquisition of the team and portfolio from RateSetter increases both the scale and capacity of Shawbrook's existing development finance business while signposting the Bank's continued commitment to this important market.

Terry Woodley (right), managing director of the development finance business at Shawbrook, said: "This is a fantastic acquisition and one that complements our existing development finance operations. "Over the last four years we have consistently responded to the funding needs of established regional property developers, enabling us to create a development finance business which has subsequently grown rapidly in size, reputation and confidence.

"Customers in this market require specialist fit-for-purpose funding products, delivered consistently and by experienced people who understand the dynamics of a build and the wider property market. "The RateSetter business has been built by serving the needs of property developers in a key part of the market that remains underserved by traditional lenders. Naturally, this expands the market opportunity for the Bank, and we are thrilled to welcome the RateSetter development finance team and new customers to Shawbrook."

"Our ambition is to become the UK's specialist SME lender of choice. By applying our specialist lending principles and high levels of service to an immediately adjacent segment of the development finance market, where loan sizes typically start at £1m, we fully expect the acquisition of the RateSetter business to quickly deliver both scale and synergies.

"I'm looking forward to working with the team and to continue building Shawbrook's reach and reputation within this vital sector."

The addition of the RateSetter business including the associated loan portfolio will add more than 100 new active clients to Shawbrook's existing development finance customer base. The deal also increases the Bank's capacity and distribution reach with an experienced team moving across from RateSetter.

Peter Behrens, RateSetter's chief commercial officer, added: "This



transaction demonstrates the enduring quality of RateSetter's loan assets. I am pleased that our property finance team can go to a new home where they will complement the Shawbrook team and continue to grow the franchise they have built."

Hilltop Credit Partners completes £15m loan for Buckinghamshire scheme

Funds advised by Hilltop have completed a £15m loan to Gage Properties for the acquisition and development of nine units within the Taplow Riverside development by Berkeley Homes in south Buckinghamshire.

Of the nine units, two will be conversions of the Old Boat House, an existing office facility, into large semi-detached houses; six will be new-build terrace houses; and one will be a refurbishment of an existing onsite cottage. Each house will come with its own private boat mooring. Gavin Essex, project sponsor and managing director of Gage Properties, said: "Taplow is our largest site acquisition to date, and our second to be funded by Hilltop Credit Partners. The development

is a particularly exciting opportunity to add an aspirational element to an already popular development. We have worked with Hilltop previously and their commitment to their clients made choosing them again an easy decision."

Paul Oberschneider, founder and CEO at Hilltop commented: "Gage have proven a pleasure to work with previously, thoroughly innovative, professional and dedicated. This new development is truly gorgeous; while falling outside of the 'affordable' bracket, I have no doubt whatsoever about its success.

"With this announcement, Hilltop has facilitated construction of 176 residential units across England to date."

Legal & General expands build to rent offering in Birmingham

Legal & General has announced, on behalf of its Build to Rent (BTR) and Access Development Partnership, that it has agreed the funding of a £100m development site at Hockley Mills, within the Jewellery Quarter Conservation Area in Birmingham town centre. Marking the 16th BTR site and second in Birmingham for the Legal & General BTR Fund, the Hockley Mills development takes its total investment in the sector to £2.1bn.

The scheme will deliver 395 one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments, alongside a new entrance to the Jewellery Quarter train station, 116

car parking spaces and 28,000ft² of flexible commercial space for retail, leisure and offices.

Dan Batterton, senior fund manager, BTR, LGIM Real Assets, said: "In the space of the last few years, the BTR sector has really come into its own. It has cemented its position in the UK as an asset class and successfully evolved away from the private rented sector. Showing its resilience and relative counter cyclical nature of the residential sector, BTR has remained largely unaffected throughout the coronavirus pandemic, as occupancy, rent collection and demand has remained high."

Gatehouse Bank plc sells property portfolio to Goldman Sachs for circa £150m

Gatehouse Bank plc has sold its Thistle build to rent property portfolio to Goldman Sachs Merchant Banking Division and Pitmore for a total consideration of circa £150m. The deal, the largest transaction of its nature in the UK to date, comprises a portfolio of 918 units, predominantly two-and-three-bedroom homes across north-west England. Charles Haresnape, Gatehouse Bank's CEO, said: "Thistle has not only been a highly performing investment throughout, it has also proved resilient during the Covid-19 pandemic, which is a key consideration in this market. As such, a strategic decision was made to exit Thistle and crystallise returns for the investors. The marketing process generated a high level of world-class institutional investor interest and we are pleased to announce a deal has been finalised with Goldman Sachs." Thistle, a single-family home (SFH) private rental sector (PRS) fund launched in 2014, is a joint venture between challenger bank Gatehouse, and

Sigma Capital Group plc with a total investment in the region of £110m. The portfolio is made up of 918 units on 15 sites across the north-west, predominantly the Greater Manchester and Liverpool areas. Developments are strategically located in areas of high demand from families seeking to rent quality property with access to schooling, transport networks and ample amenities. Thistle's occupancy is at 99.8%, with rental collection rates of around 98%. Advisors to Gatehouse on the deal were PwC and CBRE, with Dentons providing legal representation. Goldman Sachs and Pitmore were advised by Savills, with Herbert Smith Freehills and Jones Day providing legal representation. Peter Burns, residential capital markets leader at CBRE, said of the deal: "The unique nature of this portfolio meant that it was a highly competitive process, further demonstrating the significant weight of capital looking to enter the single family BTR sector. We are very proud to have drawn upon our national teams and

networks to support Gatehouse on this landmark transaction." Barclays will be providing loan finance to Goldman Sachs to support the purchase. Graham Chilver, relationship director at Barclays Corporate Real Estate, said: "We are pleased to have been able to support Goldman Sachs in the purchase of this strongly-performing portfolio. Having funded these assets since development, the decision to extend our involvement was an obvious fit with our ongoing commitment to the real estate sector in the UK. We look forward to working with Goldman Sachs going forward, while also continuing our successful relationship with Gatehouse Bank." PwC and CBRE are now working with Gatehouse to source a new capital partner – maintaining the same investment composition and seeking to grow its single-family PRS portfolio to more than 3,000 units over the next five years through forward-funding direct from developers.

Leaseholders given increased right to extend

Millions of leaseholders will be given the right to extend their lease by a maximum term of 990 years at zero ground rent, the housing secretary Robert Jenrick has announced. Under current rules, leaseholders of flats can extend their lease at a zero 'peppercorn' ground rent, but usually only for 90 years. Leaseholders can also face high charges to extend their lease. For leasehold house owners, which face slightly different rules, they can also face barriers when they

look to extend their leases. The changes mean both house and flat leaseholders will now be able to extend their lease to a new standard 990 years with a ground rent at zero. A cap will also be introduced on ground rent payable when a leaseholder chooses to either extend their lease or become the freeholder. An online calculator will be introduced to make it simpler for leaseholders to find out how much it will cost them to buy their freehold or extend their lease.

The government is also abolishing prohibitive costs like 'marriage value' and set the calculation rates to ensure this is fairer, cheaper and more transparent. Jenrick said: "Across the country people are struggling to realise the dream of owning their own home but find the reality of being a leaseholder far too bureaucratic, burdensome and expensive. "We want to reinforce the security that home ownership brings by changing forever the way we own homes and end some of the worst practices faced by homeowners. These reforms provide fairness for 4.5 million leaseholders and chart a course to a new system altogether." The government is also establishing a Commonhold Council – a partnership of leasehold groups, industry and government – that will prepare homeowners and the market for the widespread take-up of commonhold. The commonhold model is widely used around the world and allows homeowners to own their property on a freehold basis, giving them greater control over the costs of home ownership. Blocks are jointly owned and managed, meaning when someone buys a flat or a house, it is truly theirs and any decisions about

its future are theirs too. Professor Nick Hopkins, commissioner for property law at the Law Commission said: "We are pleased to see government taking its first decisive step towards the implementation of the Law Commission's recommendations to make enfranchisement cheaper and simpler. The creation of the Commonhold Council should help to reinvigorate commonhold, ensuring homeowners will be able to call their homes their own." Further measures will be introduced to protect the elderly. The government has previously committed to restricting ground rents to zero for new leases to make the process fairer for leaseholders. This will also now apply to retirement leasehold properties, so purchasers of these homes have the same rights as other homeowners. Leaseholders will also be able to voluntarily agree to a restriction on future development of their property to avoid paying 'development value'. Legislation will be brought forward in the upcoming session of Parliament, to set future ground rents to zero. A response to the remaining Law Commission recommendations, including commonhold, will be brought forward in due course.



product news

edited by Kate Hamilton (kh@globespanmedia.com)

Jet set

Latest research from Waterwise estimates that over two billion litres of water is used each day across Britain through showering – the equivalent to almost 800 Olympic-size swimming pools. With the Environment Agency predicting an extra 3.6 billion litres of water will be required each day by 2050 to meet the nation's rising demand, Methven has improved its showering technology to deliver a new generation of high quality, visually appealing chrome showers that feature a contemporary construction while also providing the lowest flow rates available.

This includes systems such as Methven's unique, contemporary range of chrome Satinjet handsets, shower roses and fixed shower heads, which offer a flow rate as low as 5.7 litres a minute, without compromising on the overall showering power and experience. This is achieved through its unique twin-jet technology, which creates optimum water droplet size and pressure, delivering over 300,000 droplets per second. The result is an immersive, full-body showering experience that provides individuals with the highest standards in performance every single time, while using less water. www.methven.com/uk



On tap

Demonstrating Carron Phoenix's ability to combine of-the-moment style and value for money, the Sift filter tap, available in in three finishes of matt black, brushed nickel and chrome, combines quality filtration with fashionable looks. The Sift filter tap joins the Dante Tri-

Pure and the Dante filter tap in Carron's portfolio giving consumers a wider choice of product and price points in the filter tap segment, which the company tips for growth as consumers move away from drinking bottled water. With a height of 397mm and spout reach of 216mm, Sift features the swan-neck style of a J-spout design, together with easy-operation dual-paddle levers, lending itself to traditional and modern-styled kitchens. The tap includes a perlator, which delivers a champagne-style water flow and is suitable for medium pressure systems. The limescale-reduction filter system is located in the cabinet underneath and improves the taste of water through the reduction of limescale, odour and sediment. The Sift has a five-year guarantee and retail prices range from £299 for chrome, £320 for brushed nickel and £345 for matt black (pictured). www.carron.com



Bespoke bathing

Drummonds has launched a design collaboration with interior designer Susie Atkinson, the name behind many award-winning international projects. The new Whitewater Bath is a refreshing reinterpretation of the classic cast iron slipper bath. With an elegant silhouette and tapered feet, it features curved, contoured sides as well as a gently raised edge, achieving the combination of comfort and style. Drummonds' craftsmen worked closely with Atkinson to finesse every element, from initial sketches through to the finished product. Atkinson said: "I wanted to design a bath that is both elegant and supremely comfortable. The bath has particularly graceful proportions and is designed to create impact in both large and more compact bathrooms."

It takes Drummonds several weeks to make a single bath; a traditional process involving casting the raw metal, shot-blasting and enamelling with the lengthy dry-frit process, which gives a snow white, incredibly durable enamel surface. The Whitewater is made to order, with four bespoke finish options: painted (pictured), polished, primed or raw metal. drummonds-uk.com

Best of both

The Royal Modular 2.0 from KEUCO is a stylish modern cabinet that combines state-of-the-art technology, such as intelligent LED lighting, with adaptable storage and modern design elements. With widths of 500mm to 2100mm, options of two heights and two depths, recessed or wall mounted and optional illumination, this cabinet can be designed to fit any bathroom wall and match any size of washbasin. Intelligent LED lighting is integrated horizontally at the top and bottom of each cabinet, and the lights are easily adjusted to provide a brighter daylight white light when needed, for example, when shaving or applying make-up; and a softer gentle warm yellow shade for other times of the day. The cabinet has mirrors on both sides of the doors, the shelves within the interior of the cabinet are made with tinted glass, while the rear of the cabinet is white glass, making it easy to see the contents. www.keuco.com





American dream

Reginox UK has announced an extension to its best-selling New York range with the addition of the New Jersey sink. Crafted from premium quality stainless steel with a matt inox finish, the New Jersey sink has a modern design with an internal and external, radius of 10mm, and a deep-drawn plug. Available in different bowl sizes – single and 1.5 – both of which include an integral strainer and comfort waste as standard. The narrower horizontal depth (37mm instead of 40mm) makes the New Jersey even easier to fit than its New York neighbour.

www.reginox.co.uk

Quiet reflection

The focal point in every bathroom, RAK Ceramics range of mirrors and cabinets offers design, function and versatility. LED Illumination, heated glass and soft-close hinges are just a few of the standard features the range has to offer, as well as touch sensor technology for cleanliness and hygiene, shaving sockets for convenience, demister pads to ensure the glass is mist-free. Bluetooth connectivity means the mirror can be paired with a mobile telephone, tablet or digital music player to make the bathroom a personal domain. RAK Ceramics shaving mirrors have a magnetic switch, with the light coming on when the mirror is pulled towards the user and off again when the mirror is stowed for tidiness. Finally, built-in LED lighting in mirrors and under cabinets provides more

consistent lighting while reducing energy consumption and carbon footprint.
www.rakceramics.com/uk/



Front of house

Baumann-owned bathroom furniture manufacturer Badea has introduced 20 new door fronts to its range, taking the total now available to 32. In addition, the German manufacturer has launched 12 new carcass colours, five new basin tops and 11 new handles, including three top-mounted versions. A new website together with printed sales literature, featuring new photography and comprehensive bathroom design information, complete the makeover and continue to be developed. Badea has been manufacturing bathroom furniture for over 20 years; the range comes in a variety of textures and styles and has the same sleek and contemporary design as the group's kitchen ranges: BAUFORMAT and burger.

www.badea-badmoebel.de/en/



Switched on

In a move to offer contractors and customers yet more choice in wiring accessories, Knightsbridge has launched a comprehensive range of rounded edge products with a polished chrome finish.

Polished chrome finishes are visually striking and fit with most décor styles, including vintage/period, deco and contemporary. The portfolio of accessories provides huge flexibility, allowing matching switches, sockets and ancillaries to provide a consistent look and feel in areas such as kitchens, bathrooms and living rooms. Several products have black, grey or white inserts to provide subtle design cues. Black and grey inserts are typically chosen for more modern and contemporary settings, while white inserts are often favoured for a more traditional or timeless look and feel. Switches and sockets comprise a large proportion of the line-up, complemented by grid and modular faceplates, dimmers, TV, telephone and network outlets, and blanking plates.

www.mlaccessories.co.uk



Off the wall

Phantom Marble is one of the 84 decors in the Showerwall bathroom wall panelling range, offering design freedom for traditional and contemporary schemes. Reflecting the design move to dark, luxurious marbles in the bathroom, Phantom Marble offers a richly veined design mirroring the look and feel of high-end marble but with the benefits inherent in laminate material for high performance, cleaning, installation and cost effectiveness. Showerwall bathroom wall panels are ideal for use in shower enclosures, around baths, behind basins and to create statement feature walls. The lightweight panels are fast and simple to install and are available in three sizes of 600mm, 900mm or 1200mm x 2440mm. Showerwall's HPL panels are available with the Proclick panel locking system for a seamless decorative finish and offer the assurance of a 15-year guarantee.



Voyage of discovery

VitrA's expansive Voyage collection is a 130-piece range by renowned Israeli designer Arik Levy, characterised by flowing, sculptural sanitaryware and adaptable wooden storage. Sanitaryware is modern and elegant, circular or oval basins merged with round-cornered rectangular trays, which invoke a calming feel thanks to the smoothness of the shapes and the craft involved in combining the forms. Voyage basins blur the boundaries of the wet and the dry, with the tray surrounding the bowl creating a mid-point between the two and initiating a new dialogue between countertop and bowl. Voyage is entirely wall hung, an innovation that makes it incredibly versatile and entirely customisable to specific spaces and needs. Storage focuses on simple timber boxes – inspired by the time designer Arik Levy spent living in Japan – units and wall panels that can be placed horizontally or vertically, in five natural tones including light and dark oak as well as white, grey and forest green. www.ukbathrooms.com



Bending backwards

Fisher & Paykel's renowned DishDrawer and CoolDrawer provide an array of functions that make life easier. When placed at bench height, the need to bend down to fill the dishwasher, the salt, rinse aid or detergent is significantly reduced. Helen Haider, head of marketing at Fisher & Paykel commented: "People want innovative yet easy-to-use appliances and at Fisher & Paykel we have developed appliances in drawers to provide our customers with ergonomic products for their kitchen. Modular in their design, the DishDrawer and CoolDrawer give you the freedom to design a kitchen that is perfectly matched to the way you live. Where dishes can be loaded easily at waist height, placed conveniently under preparation spaces, configured side by side, one atop the other, or distributed around the kitchen to best suit your needs. Our drawer appliances are an innovation born of a deep understanding for the life lived around appliances." www.fisherpaykel.com



Super bowl

Leisure Sinks has added to its Eaton inset collection to its range of modern stainless steel sinks. Boasting a satin bowl finish and bright drainer, the models are perfect for the domestic and contract markets. The Eaton collection celebrates Leisure Sinks' long-standing heritage as a British manufacturer, and pays homage to the factory in Long Eaton, Nottinghamshire, where the company has been manufacturing its sinks for more than 87 years. There are two inset models available, each featuring striking lines and softly curved bowls. The single bowl EA9501 is manufactured from 0.6mm 18/10 stainless

steel and measures 950mm x 508mm. It has a generous main bowl size of 420mm x 350mm x 150mm, with the option of a left- or right-handed drainer. Completing the new collection is the 1.5-bowl EA9502, which measures 950mm x 508mm and is manufactured from 0.7mm 18/10 stainless steel. Boasting a reversible drainer, the main bowl measures 340mm x 410mm x 150mm, while the second bowl is 175mm x 320mm x 80mm in size. Guaranteed to make a bold impression in any kitchen, the Eaton collection comes with a 10-year warranty, with models available for purchase separately, or as part of a sink-and-tap pack. www.leisuresinks.co.uk



Electric avenues

In recent years the demand for more economical and environmentally friendly heating solutions has been rising and electric heating has evolved into an energy-efficient, user-friendly and durable solution. As a market leader in designer radiators, Vasco is strongly committed to providing electric heating solutions by designing and manufacturing a wide range of innovative systems, to create an optimum indoor climate. Vasco's design radiators can now be controlled in three ways: manually with an RF thermostat, via home automation or via Vasco's Climate Control app. The app enables users to control the indoor climate with

ease. The new E-Volve wifi module, controls electric radiators via a home's wifi network as well as underfloor heating and ventilation, so all work together as efficiently as possible. The compact module communicates via Bluetooth; users place a small temperature sensor in the room and away from any drafts that may alter the temperature reading. The configuration takes place via the Climate Control app on a smartphone, the system takes into account current weather conditions, plus previous measurements and settings. This allows the user to set four standard custom scenarios: get up, go away, go home and sleep mode. www.vasco.eu



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www.aqualisa.co.uk/taps



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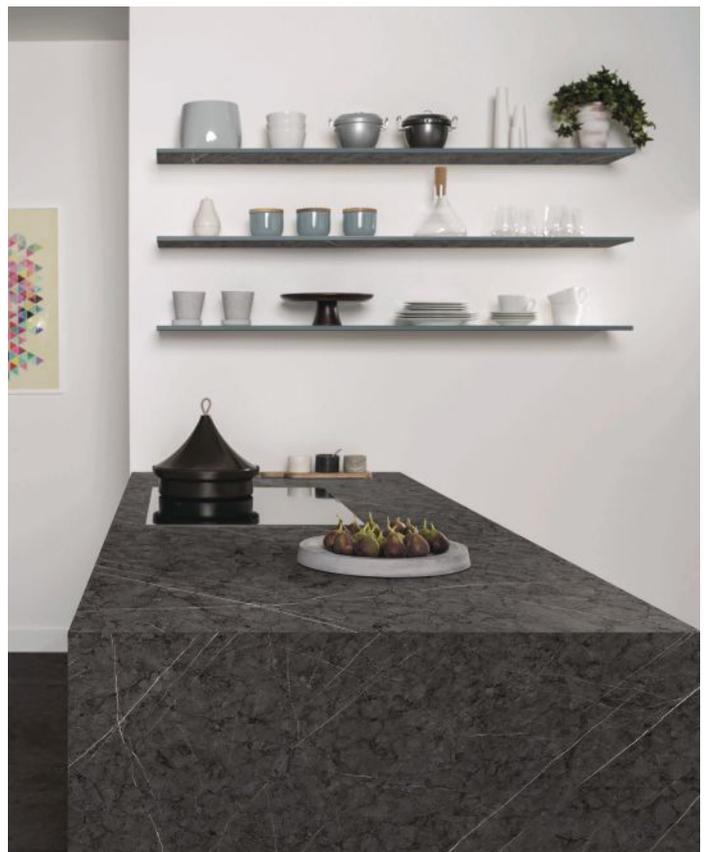
CENTRAL™

1810 launches ordering platform

The 1810 Company has launched a market-leading online ordering platform – the 1810 HUB. The mobile app can be downloaded free of charge onto PCs, laptops, tablets plus Apple and Android devices. It is accessible 24/7 making it a completely flexible and versatile account management tool while delivering a totally seamless customer experience. The 1810 HUB is fully compatible with industry management software systems such as EQ Software and Compusoft. Together with the efficient and simple ordering system, the 1810 HUB will automatically notify registered users of special offers ensuring customers are kept up to date with the latest offers

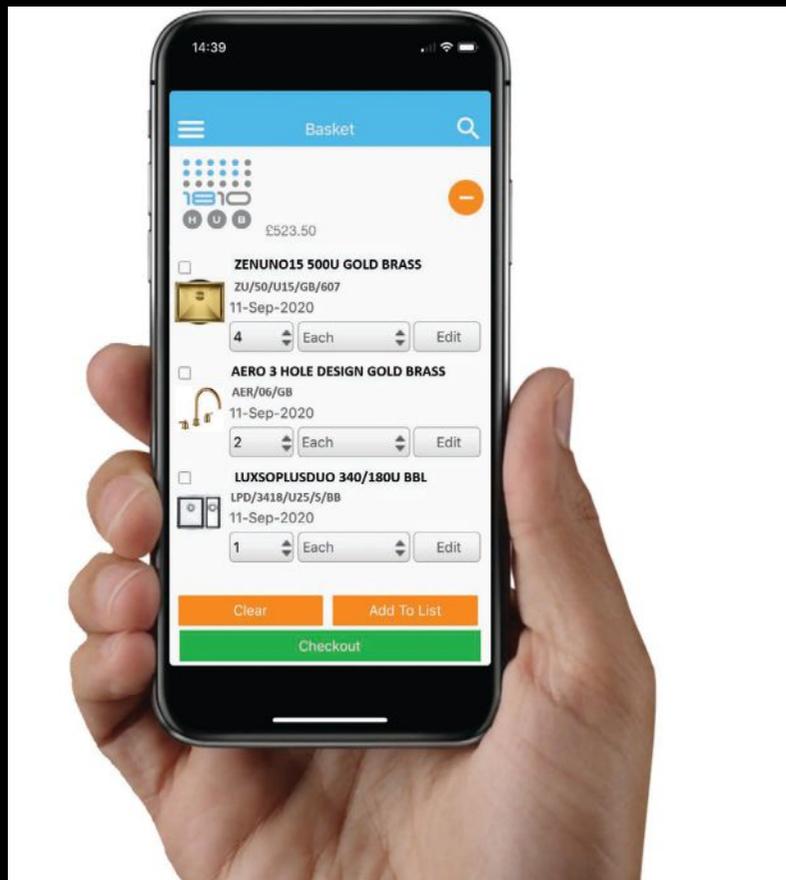
and multibuy promotions. Multiple users are permitted with each account ensuring maximum convenience and flexibility for the customers' entire workforce.

Gareth Williams, managing director of The 1810 Company explained: "The 1810 HUB has been in development for some time and we are delighted to now be in a position to launch it to our customer base. It is simple to use and extremely accurate. It will allow our customers 24/7 access, meaning they can place orders, view favourites and order history, compile shopping lists during the day and send when convenient, check stock and even make payments whenever or wherever is convenient." www.the1810company.co.uk



Bushboard offers digital training

Bushboard, industry leader in the production and distribution of innovative and trend-led surfaces and panels for the kitchen and bathroom, has partnered with e-learning platform Cortexa to offer its first digital training module. The training course, which is an easily digestible 20-minute video, explains the attributes of Bushboard's Evolve worktops, one of the brand's most popular worksurface solutions for both the contracts market and private residential projects, along with best practice guidance on the installation process. The training module is available now and can be accessed by members of the British Institute of KBB Installation's online learning resource, BIKBBI Campus. In addition, the training module also features on the digital learning platforms of key industry bodies and suppliers such as the Builders Merchants Federation and the Chartered Institute of Plumbing and Engineering as well as Bradford's Building Supplies, Chandlers Building Supplies, Howarth Timber & Building Supplies and Saint-Gobain brands such as Jewson, all of whom host the module on their independent training platforms. "In 2020, it has been more important than ever to pledge and demonstrate support for our supply chain partners", says Nick Jones, sales leader UK at Wilsonart. "The publishing of our first installer training module is a significant achievement for us and is the first of many steps we will be taking to continue to drive support for the installer community and make Bushboard the surface brand of choice for convenience, design quality and customer support." www.bushboard.co.uk



Norbord leads the way with carbon negative status

Norbord now holds a net carbon negative status across all its products and operations, locking up more CO₂ than it emits. Leading the way in tackling the issue of climate change, the company's four European sites and three product ranges sequester a total of 1.1 million tonnes of carbon annually. While carbon neutrality means that an activity releases net zero carbon emissions into the atmosphere, carbon negativity signifies

that an activity goes beyond achieving net zero carbon emissions. This creates an environmental benefit by not releasing carbon dioxide that would ordinarily be released into the atmosphere. As timber is the main component of Norbord's products, carbon is sequestered and locked up for the life of the board. The confirmation of Norbord's carbon negative status comes after more than a year of analysis and independent verification.

www.norbord.co.uk/carbon-negative



Abode recognised for investing in people

Abode has been awarded 'We Invest in People' standard accreditation from Investors In People (IIP), in recognition of its dedication to putting people first and ensuring Abode is a great place to work for all staff. Promoting what it takes to lead, support and manage people well for sustainable results, the IIP assessment took place in October and found that Abode employees were engaged and empowered by the business, with staff referring to the



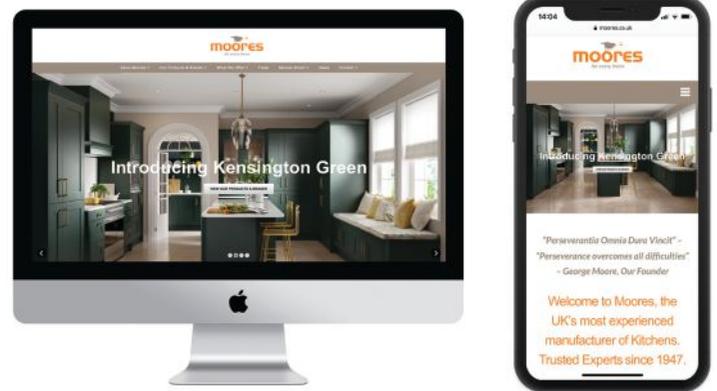
culture as supportive and 'like a family'. The company's commitment to empowering and involving its people, building capability and leading and inspiring were among the top strengths identified by assessors, who spent time talking to Abode employees, as well as senior management before finalising their report. On leadership, one Abode colleague commented: "We get regular updates; the communication lines are much better than they have ever been. We have really grown as a business and there are lots of things in place now for us." Commenting on the IIP accreditation, Abode managing director Matthew Pitt said: "Abode is a business built on its people. Our knowledge, flexibility and service ethos are part of our DNA. Customers buy from us partly because we are easy to deal with and that is all down to our brilliant team of staff." www.abode.eu

Moore's launches new website

British kitchen manufacturer Moore's has launched a dynamic new website with a completely enhanced and easy-to-navigate user experience. The new, modernised platform now features MiView, a 24/7 online kitchen visualiser and order portal that has been specifically designed to make life easier for housebuilders by streamlining the ordering process. In addition to providing a useful resource for product, pricing and order tracking, MiView also acts as a sophisticated survey and design software tool that housebuilders can use with their customers in real time. "Just like great kitchen design where everything has its place, we believe that the same can be said for our new website," said Julie Holliday, head of marketing at Moore's. "In addition to an updated look and feel, we made sure that the new site could be seen as a helpful source of support for housebuilders during these uncertain times when many are spending much more time at home and therefore becoming more reliant on online platforms to conduct business. MiView enables our customers to track the progress of their orders, check details, render their kitchens, and review invoices at any time of the day."

In addition to MiView, the new site also features a brand new 360° Virtual Showroom, which allows users to take an inspirational journey of Moore's' kitchen collections. There are also other new and exciting pages dedicated to the brand's impressive environmental credentials, recognised industry awards and customer testimonials.

www.moore's.co.uk



Davies-Jones joins Abode

Joanne Davies-Jones has joined the team at interior design firm Abode. Davies-Jones has worked in the housebuilding industry for over 23 years, specialising in the interior design sector for more than eight of those. "I am delighted to have joined the team at Abode," said Davies-Jones, who will continue to concentrate on working with clients in the south. "Abode's experience and knowledge within the industry is of a very high standard and I can honestly say I haven't worked for such an organised, professional and friendly company. I'm very happy to be part of the team." www.interiorsbyabode.com



Designer Contracts digs deep for ChildLine

Designer Contracts, the UK's largest flooring contractor, stepped in once more to sponsor the services of leading children's charity ChildLine

for one day. December 3rd marked the fourth time the company has supported the charity's running costs for a day, the second time in 2020. ChildLine needs £30,000 per day to operate its vital counselling services; Designer Contracts also donated a day's running costs in April 2020 to help the charity with a much-needed cash injection during the pandemic, enabling it to switch its call handlers from a central facility to working from home.

"We have sponsored the services of ChildLine for one day for the past three years. We do this on the 3rd December as this marks our company's formation date," explained Peter Kelsey, managing director at Designer Contracts. "This year has been a particularly challenging one for many charities who have faced a number of difficulties during the crisis, so we were delighted to offer our additional support." Designer Contracts, which was recently named as a finalist in the 2020 Lloyds Bank Business Awards, operates across 15 UK regional facilities. As well as flooring, the company provides curtains and blinds, furniture and lighting, and operates a show home interior design services division. www.DesignerContracts.com

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Easy Bathrooms makes Fast Track 100

Contract bathroom supplier, Easy Bathrooms, has won a place on the annual Sunday Times Virgin Atlantic Fast Track 100, as the UK's 64th fastest-growing company. The brand, which has a national footprint of 65 stores, reported sales of £33.3m for the year end November 2019. However, in the last 12 months, Easy Bathrooms has grown sales to in excess of £45m, opened 23 new showrooms – including 16 since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March – and increased staff numbers to 420 people nationally, making it an even stronger contender for the 2021 table. Sir Richard Branson, founder of Virgin Atlantic and Virgin Group, which has supported Fast Track 100 for all 24 years, said: “While we are living in extremely uncertain and challenging times, there is one thing I am certain of: entrepreneurs are the dreamers, the doers, and the innovators that have the power to have a positive impact on society. There are so many inspiring examples of this on the Fast Track 100 league table showing this is just as true, if not more so, in 2020 as it ever has been.”

2020's Fast Track 100 achieved, on average, sales growth of 73% a year over three years to a combined total of £4.4bn. The companies are all profitable, and together they employ 32,000 staff, having more than tripled their combined workforce over the period. www.easybathrooms.com



Tobermore completes production facility

Leading paving and walling manufacturer Tobermore has celebrated the completion of a new state-of-the-art production facility. The £10m factory is now live and operational creating dozens of local jobs and significantly increasing manufacturing capacity. Earlier in 2020, Tobermore announced £30m investment and the creation of 95 jobs to fulfil ambitious growth plans. The company has ramped up production in response to a surge in market demand for its hard landscaping products. The new plant, which opened this week, has a gross internal floor area (GIFA) of 4,416m² and has created dozens of local jobs across many departments including production, despatch sales and administration. This is Tobermore's fourth block paving manufacturing facility and is projected to increase production capacity by over 30%.

The Northern Ireland based company prides itself on investing in world-class machinery that produces products of unrivalled quality. The latest factory houses another impressive HESS block paving machine, which guarantees quality and efficiency. David Henderson, managing director of Tobermore, commented on the investment: “I am extremely proud that our new factory is now operational. This is an astonishing achievement. This new plant will give us significant increased capacity to make another one million square metres of block paving per year.” www.tobermore.co.uk



HiB goes extra mile to raise money

Leading bathroom supplier HiB has celebrated reaching its fundraising target after finishing a 30,000-mile charity challenge. The company, which in 2020 celebrated its 30th anniversary, pledged to complete the huge distance virtually to raise £15,000 for Alzheimer's Research UK and the National Autistic Society. Since last January, staff from across HiB have been running, walking and cycling in their local areas to keep the miles rolling in and increase the total distance travelled. The company's virtual route around the world began at HiB's Tamworth distribution site, and followed a route over the Atlantic Ocean to the USA, South America, Australia, Asia, India and Europe, finishing at HiB's London head office. Along the way, teams marked reaching different challenge milestones by taking part in special events that celebrated the traditions, cuisines and cultures of some of the destinations. As well as the companywide 30,000-mile target, some employees undertook their own personal mileage challenges, with some individuals travelling an incredible 2,000 miles during the year. Donations and sponsorships for the challenge exceeded the original £15,000 target, with the final total to be split between the two chosen charities.

Robert Ginsberg, managing director at HiB, said: “As part of our 30-year anniversary we wanted to complete a huge companywide challenge that everyone could get involved with and raise money for good causes. The response from across the company has been fantastic and many staff members have gone above and beyond in their contribution to making it a success.” www.hib.co.uk



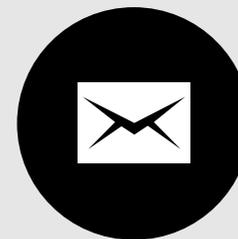
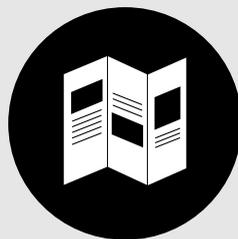
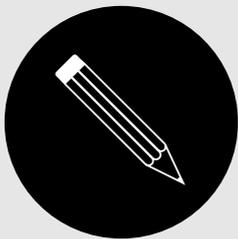
Fisher & Paykel designs for older generation

There are many factors to consider when producing appliances that will suit the older population, especially with those who live in retirement homes. The design ideas behind Fisher & Paykel appliances are founded in ergonomics and intuition and the appliance brand strives to be the most human-centered in the world. “Fisher & Paykel is dedicated to creating real products for real people,” commented Mark Elmore (pictured), vice



president design and brand. “With a motive to design appliances that are ergonomically orientated around making the lives of homeowners easier, F&P has created a range of appliances that perfectly slot into our lifestyles with no hassle. At Fisher & Paykel we design for real people, and for how they live. We ensure that all the design innovations go into our products, but the interface stays simple and intuitive. The older generation are still busy and active and do not have time to read user manuals. They, like the rest of us, want to be able to use an appliance straight away. Our ovens are designed to make cooking in the kitchen easier; our new touchscreen ovens have 16 pre-programmed cooking modes, which the older generation will be able to use easily, and the interface is really easy to navigate.” www.fisherpaykel.com/uk

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Driven to a new career in housebuilding

Having been furloughed in his role in the automotive industry, 27-year-old Aaron Chapple, moved to the housebuilding industry – and has been surprised and delighted at how transferable his skills have been in his new job at Vistry Group. His previous role was at the Marsh Barton estate in Exeter, home to the highest volume of car showrooms in the whole of Europe, and he has been a sales consultant for BMW, Lexus and Toyota. Chapple commented: “I’m a trained panel beater and sprayer so the path to the automotive industry fell naturally to me and working in the sales department is where I felt comfortable.” Having worked onsite with a friend’s father, a builder, he concluded it was time for a career change, and he applied for the sales consultant position and started with Vistry in September. He said: “While it’s a very different industry, what’s really surprised me is how many aspects of the job are similar. Not only are they both expensive, and emotional, purchases for customers to make; they both require clear communication between the company and buyer, and involve dealing with people on a daily basis, which I just love. I’m so pleased I’ve made this change.” Emma Smith, sales and marketing director at Vistry, said: “Aaron is a great addition to the team and we’ve been delighted how transferable his skills have been from the automotive industry. It’s wonderful that Aaron has seen this year as an opportunity and adapted, while still staying true to his career in sales.”



College pool resources for free job training

All 20 further education colleges across the West Midlands have joined forces to help more than 5,000 local people who have lost their jobs during the coronavirus pandemic back into work.

A new free training programme called Reignite Your Future, funded by the West Midlands Combined Authority, will help them gain jobs in one of the region’s growth sectors, including construction, digital, health and social care, engineering and logistics.

Any adult living in the West Midlands can join short, sector-based work academy programmes, which usually last up to six weeks and come with a guaranteed interview for everyone who completes the course.

At a virtual launch with all the colleges, Andy Street, mayor of the West Midlands, said: “Retraining and upskilling are critical

to our region’s economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. Our local colleges have been leading the way on training in recent years, particularly in the construction, digital, engineering, warehousing and health and social care sectors.”

With an opportunity to learn new skills after losing her job, Iman Khan, aged 28, took up the opportunity to learn new skills as part of a programme with RMF Construction in Solihull, and has been offered a new job as a plant operative/groundworker.

She said: “I wanted to gain more training and this programme has allowed me to pursue my passion. They have an incredible team of trainers and the facilities are absolutely amazing. I want to be a good influence and role model to my daughter and any women looking to get into construction.”



New Year Honours at Optivo

Optivo chief executive Paul Hackett, and Optivo ‘involved resident’ Monica Barnes, have both been recognised in the New Year Honours list. Hackett has received a CBE, having transformed the previously failing housing association over the past 10 years. He was also chair of the G15 group of London housing associations between 2017 and 2019. Barnes has spent over a decade in successful approaches to tenant involvement and is chair of Optivo’s Resident Strategy Group. She said: “This is a lovely honour, but it’s also dedicated to my family and friends both past and present. My aunt had an opportunity to come to the UK in

1954 as part of the Windrush generation and took me with her. Housing was a major issue at the time. My own personal experiences and being an involved resident at Optivo have helped me fully appreciate the importance of good housing for people’s emotional, social and physical wellbeing.” Hackett added: “I’m delighted Monica’s been recognised for her unswerving commitment to ensuring residents’ voices are heard. [She is] a remarkable person who’s dedicated her life to others and this honour is well deserved. I’m truly humbled to receive the CBE. This award is a recognition of the hard work of many staff and residents who’ve

helped Optivo become the organisation it is today and our efforts to become a sector-leader in resident involvement.”



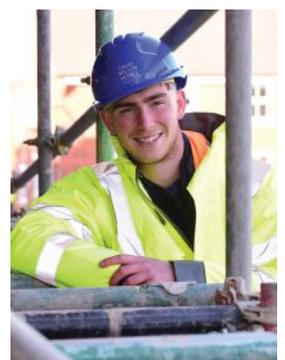
Brothers in bricks

Construction apprentice Conor Hughes from Telford is currently studying NVQ Level 2 and 3 Bricklaying at Stephenson College in Coalville, whilst also working with the David Wilson Homes site team at its Bentley Fields development in Uttoxeter. Hughes said: “I became a primary school teacher after leaving school, but I changed my mind after my brother joined Barratt as a bricklayer. I’d always wanted to learn a trade but I didn’t really know how to start but the Barratt Homes apprenticeship scheme is amazing.”

Apprentices can focus on the work, fully immersing themselves in the trade, commercial, or technical side of housebuilding.

“I’m enjoying working outdoors and being shown the ropes by the bricklaying gang, which means I’m learning my trade faster than if I were to be just in a classroom. Going out on site is completely different to learning in an office or a classroom, not only is it faster and more efficient, but I get to earn respect from my colleagues.”

Hughes previously completed BTECs in teaching and performing sport to become a PE teacher at a primary school. Now, he spends eight weeks on site in Uttoxeter and two weeks at college learning the theory of bricklaying and completing coursework.





Newland Homes

Two members of the senior team at Newland Homes have acquired new roles within the company as the south-west-based housing developer continues to expand its operations. Tom Sheppard has been promoted to planning director from associate design director, while Jeremy Drew assumes the overarching role of developments director. Sheppard first joined Newland Homes in 2003 having worked previously for national housebuilders, spending five years with the private company before a short time with another smaller developer. Drew re-recruited Sheppard just two years later in 2010, in what was a challenging time for the development industry following the recession, but from which Newland Homes emerged resilient. Sheppard leads an in-house team at Newland Homes, responsible for all aspects of planning, design and project management.

"I'm steadfast in my belief that relationship building is at the heart of everything we do," said Sheppard. "As a team, we build a rapport with people with the aim of creating developments which will leave a lasting legacy for an area. I'm extremely proud when I visit our past developments, and hugely excited when I consider the opportunity that future sites present. I'm chuffed to bits to be recognised with this new role." Drew added: "With an outstanding team and an amazing company ethic, we create a superb product. Like all great team members, Tom's personal qualities add value to this process and his promotion is truly deserved. Sustainability is high on Newland Homes' agenda, and my role has enabled me to promote a greener way of thinking, which now permeates all aspects of our business, and is progressing towards low and zero carbon products."

Crest Nicholson – Ralph Hawkins

Crest Nicholson has announced the appointment of Ralph Hawkins as the new divisional managing director for Crest Nicholson South West. Hawkins joined the team at the start of December 2020, bringing his wealth of industry understanding and operational expertise to his new role. Hawkins has a vast experience in housebuilding, having been in the industry since 1982. He previously worked at the Taylor Wimpey Bristol office, first as land director and from January 2016 as managing director. Prior to Taylor Wimpey, he had nearly 10 years of experience working as development director at Barratt Homes, Bristol. In his new role, Hawkins will work to continue to grow and build on Crest Nicholson's success in the south-west region.

"Crest Nicholson is an outstanding company, with a passion for not just building homes, but also for creating vibrant sustainable communities," he commented. "I look forward to sharing my experience with the team and



continuing to grow Crest Nicholson as a major housebuilder within the region." Tom Nicholson, chief operating officer at Crest Nicholson, added: "I am delighted to be able to welcome Ralph to the Crest Nicholson team. His experience and skillset will be a great asset to the south-west division, and I look forward to working with him in delivering on our strategy of margin and volume growth."

Hill Group – Andy Mullins



Hill Group has appointed the NHBC's former head of inspection and head of major projects, Andy Mullins, as head of quality – a newly created role that will augment Hill's long-standing commitment to exceptional build standards. With over 40 years of experience in housebuilding and construction,

Mullins will play a pivotal role in maintaining best practice across the Group and will focus on the entire build and sales process, from the commercial team through to customer service. Against the backdrop of a changing regulatory environment, Mullins will be responsible for embedding Group-wide processes and ensuring a consistent approach to procedures and build quality across the 6,000 homes currently under construction and 9,000 homes in the pipeline.

Andy Hill, chief executive of the Hill Group, commented: "We have built our reputation on consistently setting the highest standards across all of our developments and as we evolve and grow, we are determined not to lose sight of our values, heritage and our commitment to quality. In this constantly evolving legislative environment, we not only want to meet the expectations of our customers, regulators and partners, but continue to exceed them. Andy's unrivalled experience in this field makes him a great asset to the company and I am delighted to welcome him to the team."

SFHA – Helen Forsyth

The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations' (SFHA) new chair, Helen Forsyth, has taken up her position at what SFHA said is a "critical time" for the social housing sector. Forsyth has become SFHA chair as the federation continues its work to ensure the social housing sector's role in the post-Covid recovery is recognised by the Scottish government as well as to secure sustained investment in affordable housing after the current programme ends in March 2021. Forsyth brings extensive experience to SFHA's board. She worked in the health, social care and third sectors before moving into the social housing sector in 1995. She was chief executive of two Scottish housing associations, including Berwickshire Housing Association, where she led the organisation for over a decade. She is passionate about improving the lives of vulnerable people and ensuring everyone has a high-quality secure home.

"There is no doubt that housing associations and cooperatives are facing challenges like never before due to the effects of Covid-19," she commented. "However, one of the strengths of Scotland's social housing sector is that it is resilient, and SFHA will do everything we can to support our members throughout the duration of the pandemic. I look forward to working with SFHA members, my fellow board directors and staff to ensure that Scotland's social housing sector can continue to thrive."



United Trust Bank (UTB) – Achi Ejikeme

United Trust Bank (UTB) is continuing to expand its development finance division with the appointment of a new senior manager supporting housebuilders and developers in the south and east of England. Achi Ejikeme has joined UTB from Oaknorth Bank as a senior manager – property development and has nearly 15 years of experience in property finance. Ejikeme worked for Lloyds Bank for seven years dealing with a wide range of customers operating in the property sector including national and SME housebuilders as well as institutional residential and commercial property investor clients.

Prior to joining Oaknorth, he spent 18 months with Secure Trust Bank.

Adam Bovingdon, senior director – property development, United Trust Bank, commented: "We're continuing to expand the property development team at United Trust Bank by recruiting experienced property finance professionals with the skills and drive to support SME developers and housebuilders across the country. Achi brings with him nearly 15 years of experience working with a wide range of customers on a variety of development projects and most importantly he shares our passion for delivering outstanding customer service. He is a valuable addition to the UTB team."



Strawberry Star – Steven Beveridge

Strawberry Star, has promoted Steven Beveridge to CEO, as the international property group expands its offer in the UK real estate industry. Beveridge joined Strawberry Star as CFO earlier this year, and following a restructuring of the business was promoted to the position of CEO in November 2020. He will now steer the organisation to realising its ambitious vision of delivering 2,000 additional new homes by 2025, and expanding its market reach. Having built up a unique developer/operator end-to-end platform in the UK over the last 13 years, Strawberry Star is strongly positioned in a key growth area of UK real estate. "Structural undersupply of good quality housing is a fundamental truth of the UK market that will persist for many years to come," he commented. "I believe the Strawberry Star platform has a compelling offer now but also, crucially, a means to deliver quality homes through its consented pipeline in and around London. Furthermore, we are currently gearing up to launch an innovative and complementary build to rent product in the new year."



Heronlea Group – Benjamin Richardson

Hertfordshire-based Heronlea Group has strengthened its team with the appointment of a new operations director. Benjamin Richardson joins the group at a busy time despite the challenges of this year, which sees the family-run company acquiring land and gaining planning permission for a number of new sites, as well as launching several developments.

Jason Rishover, CEO of Heronlea Group, commented: "We are delighted to welcome Benjamin to the team, where he will be a tremendous asset to the business. Benjamin has considerable experience within the new homes market and extensive knowledge of our region. Next year we have significant expansion plans and Benjamin's appointment is instrumental in our continued success of the business."

Richardson added: "I am thrilled to be joining Heronlea Group, at such an exciting time. I am looking forward to steering the company to

further success next year, and beyond, and helping the company build on its reputation for design, quality, customer satisfaction and attention to detail."



Larkfleet Group

Larkfleet Group has appointed former Kier Living director, Rob Crossland, as its new construction director, while the group's senior land manager, David Morris, has been promoted to land director. Crossland joins Larkfleet Group from Kier Living, a housing arm of the Kier Group, having spent 11 years there – beginning as a construction manager and leaving as construction director. In his role at Larkfleet Group, Crossland will be responsible for leading the construction team in safety, quality and customer satisfaction; and ensuring developments are built to time and budget.

"It's great to be joining Larkfleet Group, a growing business with ambitions to become a national housebuilder," he explained. "I'll do everything I can to help the team get there, working closely with colleagues and stakeholders alike to bring some of the lessons I've learnt to the table from over 20 years in the construction industry."

Meanwhile, David Morris, Larkfleet Group's senior land manager has been promoted to land director. In his role he will oversee the Group's land portfolio, working with both internal and external stakeholders to bring forward sites – as well as source and coordinate new land opportunities. Morris began working at Larkfleet Group in 2016 as senior land manager, and prior to that was the strategic planning manager at Persimmon Homes.

Britain's Best Retirement Housebuilder Built on Integrity and Trust



AWARD-WINNING PRODUCT

Not only have we once again received the Home Builders Federation (HBF) 5-star rating for Customer Service but we have achieved the highest Customer satisfaction score in the industry across all housebuilders. This is an important sign that we are delivering what our Customers need, and that each department is working together to create a market leading product.



KEEPING EVERYONE SAFE

The health and safety of our visitors, Owners and Colleagues is our top priority and we have put numerous measures in place to keep everyone safe. We stringently follow the Government guidelines and at Churchill we believe we have dealt with this pandemic in a proactive, safe and cautious way.



THE CHURCHILL FAMILY

Each Colleague, no matter what their role, stands to promote an independent lifestyle, creating the best possible product, whilst living and breathing our Churchill values. Working at Churchill means you don't just have a job, you have a family.



COMMITMENT TO OUR COMMUNITIES

Through the Churchill Foundation we can make a difference within the communities where we operate. The Foundation enables us to harness the fundraising power of the Company, Colleagues, Owners and suppliers and ultimately allows us to support a number of charitable causes.

Since the Churchill Foundation was set up in 2015 we have raised over £1.6 million.



WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

We pride ourselves in building high quality retirement apartments in desirable locations across the UK, for those looking for an independent, safe and secure lifestyle. Our Customers and Colleagues are always at the heart of what we do.

Our success has been driven by a streamlined focus on providing a clearly defined product to a market we understand based on experience and research.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR CHURCHILL?

Although we are in a challenging market, we are always looking to the future. We will continue to grow, invest in our Colleagues, Customers and the community and with our industry experience and consistent approach we are excited to see what the future holds for Churchill Retirement Living.

To be a part of our success story visit our website:
churchillretirement.co.uk/careers



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