

The Commercial Value of Sustainability
A CIMCIG Industry Report
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CIMCIG



Much has been said and written about the significant environmental impacts of the built environment and our need to dramatically change our patterns of consumption if we are to achieve the ambitious goal of an 80% reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2050. There is no shortage of policy interventions and private sector initiatives which aim to address a wide range of impacts in the way that we build and use our homes, schools, offices, and public buildings, and the infrastructure which supports and connects them.

What is often remarked upon is the plethora of initiatives and the potential for confusion within the construction industry as to how we design, build and operate low-impact buildings. As a result we are not making the progress that we ought to be making if we are to achieve our interim target of a 30% cut in CO₂ emissions from the built environment by 2020, let alone the more ambitious 2050 target.

The existing building stock, particularly our existing stock of homes accounting for 27% of UK CO₂ emissions, requires a major retrofit

programme with significant progress being achieved by 2020.

Higher environmental standards enshrined in regulation coupled with financial incentives, for example Feed in Tariffs for on-site energy generation, will undoubtedly make an impact, but the rate of change is too slow and consumers have not yet started to spend the sums of money required to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, let alone invest in on-site energy generation.



Photo Credit: Saint-Gobain Weber Limited

The research implies that a more concerted campaign is needed, to improve the amount and availability of information to homeowners, so that we can build consumer awareness and demand

for more comfortable and cheaper homes to own, against the backdrop of rising oil and gas prices and threats to our energy security.

The technical solutions to achieve our 2020 CO₂ targets from our housing stock currently exist, but there is low public awareness, high levels of apathy and limited financial incentives to encourage homeowners to upgrade their homes at the pace required.



Foreword – Ian Exall, Chairman CIMCIG



The opportunity lies not only with getting the supply side right, but also in creating consumer demand. Marketing and communication specialists, as well as those in the creative industries, have a clear opportunity to put into practice the techniques that will position low-energy homes as a desirable home improvement option. Perhaps we also need to look at other industries for inspiration so that we can develop the products and services that consumers want and which make them feel good about the improvements that they are making to their homes.

Communicating the benefits of owning and living in a low-carbon home will be just as significant as selecting and installing the right technical solutions. The time is right for marketing specialists to play their part in the transition to a low-carbon economy, generating new business for the construction industry.

We should also recognise the increasing importance that our housing stock will play in the life of an ageing population over the coming years. Encouraged by Government to remain in our own homes rather than move to care homes, we will want warm, comfortable and, above all, low-cost homes to live in as

we get older. Our health and well-being in old age is inextricably linked to the quality and affordability of our accommodation and in recognising this we need to position the upgrading of our existing housing stock as an environmental, economic and social imperative.

We know that in the coming years government spending and growth in real household disposable income will be restricted. We must, therefore, ensure that we spend our money wisely, starting with energy efficiency measures as we concentrate on using less as a precursor to other measures, for example on-site energy generation.

With rapid growth in the market for retrofitting existing homes comes a much needed stimulus to the construction industry and with it employment.

This first report from CIMCIG is a thought piece encouraging debate especially within the marketing and communication community and creative industries that supply the construction sector. It is a call to action to address the urgent need to improve the energy performance of our existing housing stock.

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