



Letter to Editor Contract Journal

Sir,

I refer to your recent article which claimed that the credit crunch could mark the death of sustainability in the construction sector.

While it is certainly true that the industry is seeing belt-tightening - and the inevitable questioning of costs once considered standard - I think that it is crucial for people to realise sustainability, even at level six, does not have to be costly.

It is often assumed that while level four can be achieved through construction details and quality, level six requires the introduction of an element of renewable-energy technology into a project, and thus raises the price. The reality is that a material such as steel, which utilises the benefits of off-site construction can actually provide level four at a lower price construction, most notably by utilising the cost saving of a shorter build time. To this end, the additional cost of renewables in a steel-framed project will be offset by the cost savings associated with steel construction – providing increased sustainability with little economic impact.

Ultimately, like any innovation, the high standards of level six will be seen initially as costly and aspirational, and move quickly to be seen as a standard requirement. The falling price of renewable-energy technology (with increased demand and technological development) is a case in point for this, as is the ever-faster build times being recorded through off-site steel-framing.

The credit crunch will undoubtedly have an effect on the market, but let's hope that the change is not a shift away from protecting the future of the environment, but a shift to looking at build techniques that are both more sustainable and more efficient.

Yours,

Dr Bassam Burgan

Chair, Steel Homes Group