



## **THE TIMES; EMPTY HOMES**

Sir,

While refurbishing homes that lie empty may indeed offer environmental benefits (report, Mar 15), Lorna Blackwood's article is wide of the mark in its assertion that embodied energy accounts for nearly three times as much as the building's lifetime emissions. The report to which she refers actually states that embodied carbon accounts for between 10 and 28 per cent of a home's emissions over its lifetime.

Furthermore, The Empty Homes Agency's report is itself very limited in the figures it uses to support its claims. The Agency's report compares the CO2 emissions of a refurbished property with three 'case study' new homes, which were built using traditional methods. If it had instead considered modern techniques, such as steel-framed homes, then the benefits of new houses would have been considerably more, given the substantial environmental advantages of off-site construction.

I do not wish to be too critical of the Agency, though. The construction industry needs to reconsider how it meets the challenges of sustainability, given it currently produces half a tonne of waste for every person in the UK and is responsible for ten per cent of road traffic. Anyone stimulating a debate within the industry should be encouraged.

Dr Bassam Burgan,

Chair,

Steel Homes Group