



Construction expert calls for Government commitment to sustainable housing

'Clearer timetable needed to prevent avoidable impact on environment'

Dr Bassam Burgan, Deputy Director of Steel Construction Institute (SCI) and chair of the Steel Homes Group, has called upon the Government to provide a clearer timescale for the introduction of rules on the sustainability of new housing developments.

Dr Burgan believes the industry needs clarity on how to address the issue of sustainability as soon as possible, in order to address the avoidable impact on the environment by the construction industry.

The Government launched the Code for Sustainable Homes in December 2006, with a sliding scale aimed at encouraging developers to aspire to more environmentally-friendly construction. But with no timescale set down for mandatory regulations, outside of a suggestion the Code could be brought in line with the Building Regulations from 2010, there has been limited practical response within the industry.

Dr Burgan said, "I certainly welcomed the Code but more than a year after it was announced I don't feel the industry knows exactly what to do with it. The public sector has had a clear timetable laid down for it, but without a similar plan for the private sector, many people are confused – and many others are simply forgetting the Code."

"My worry is that as long as it is a voluntary target, with no set timetable, it is little more than a gesture by the government. The recently announced mandatory rating against the Code which comes into effect next May is certainly a move in the right direction".

"The construction industry is responsible for a substantial amount of environmental pollution: it produces half a tonne of waste for every person in the UK and is responsible for ten per cent of road traffic."

"But this doesn't have to be the case. If the industry made better use of 'off-site' construction techniques, using steel-framed homes, then the UK would be getting an improved and sustainable end product. "

Dr Burgan continued, "The Government needs to force the industry's hand: it could even make its 'three-star rating' mandatory soon, but smaller builders need time to prepare for that, and that is why we need a timescale."

“Everyone talks about wanting to be green and to protect the environment for our grandchildren – let’s see who is willing to back that talk with action.”

Dr Burgan’s comments follow the Steel Homes Group launch of its latest publication, addressing the *‘Sustainability of steel in housing and residential buildings’*. The publication looks at the requirements for sustainability in construction, and presents the benefits of using steel technologies. It is available from The Steel Homes Group (tel 01344 636525).

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