



all party parliamentary group
for healthy homes and buildings

EVIDENCE SESSION 2:

Building our Future Green Paper – Laying the Foundations for Healthy Homes and Buildings

What needs to be done to achieve a healthier Built Environment?

Tuesday 21st November 2017

14:00-15:00 Committee Room 6, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

NON-VERBATIM MINUTES

1. Welcome and introductions

Jim Shannon MP, Chair of the APPG for Healthy Homes and Buildings

The Chair welcomed attendees to the second evidence session of the HHB APPG Green Paper, and thanked those who offered written and oral evidence. The Green Paper is a significant and influential project and one which will shine a light on the need for Government support and action to improve the quality and standard of the homes and buildings we spend 90% of our time in. It is important that MPs and others take on board its findings and recommendations.

This meeting will focus on what needs to be done to achieve a healthier Built Environment, examining the cost benefits gained from living and working in healthier homes and buildings.

The Chair welcomed those in attendance to give oral evidence: Neil May, *UK Centre for Moisture in Buildings*, Ian Watson, *Building Research Establishment*, Marcella Ucci, *UK Indoor Environment Group*, Dr Grainne McGill, *MEARU*, Margaret Hamilton, *Arup*, Richard Twinn, *UK Green Buildings Council* and Christopher Watson, *CURDS*.

The final evidence session will be on the **12th December** with a focus on specific problems in our living and working environments which impact on our health and wellbeing such as acoustics, insulation, lighting and heat. The APPG will then seek to publish an APPG “White Paper” with policy recommendations to forward to Government and win cross party support.

The Chair thanked the sponsors of the group, SAINT-GOBAIN, BEAMA and Airtopia.

2. Overview of the session

Chris Yates (BEAMA)

Chris welcomed all to the second evidence session. BEAMA’s current priorities are on indoor air quality as well as energy efficiency; improving training for building control organisations and seeing indoor air quality as a government public health priority.

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Chris is committed to a balanced and holistic approach to healthy homes and buildings. Two key questions are:

- 1) How to reduce and negate health problems from poor quality healthy homes and buildings?
- 2) How to raise Government awareness of these issues?

3. Oral evidence

Neil May (UK Centre for Moisture in Buildings)

UKCMB has been conducting a research programme exploring the health impacts of moisture on buildings. More than a third of buildings suffer from damp or mould and there is strong evidence linking numerous diseases. However, there is no clear definition of damp and a 'reductionist' approach in assessing buildings' liveability fails to appreciate the complexities of human health.

UKCMB recommend the following measures:

- Establish rigorous definitions in research
- A new epistemology which considers probability, causality, system complexities, subjective and qualitative evidence

Neil emphasised that, even with uncertainty, moisture needs to be considered, noting the BSI white paper on moisture risk. He concluded by remarking that economic, social and environmental pressures make it difficult to improve buildings, but nevertheless the APPG should take a systems-based approach rather than identifying particular diseases linked to buildings.

Neil was asked to provide detail on UKCMB's research into mould testing and benchmarking.

In response, Neil explained that the 'new methodology' set out in UKCMB's research is already being used. It combines hard data with qualitative data. Context around improvements, such as the individuals living in buildings, and overriding building conditions, critical to consider. Specific intervention studies mostly show no improvement in health. New methodology should lead to a better, granular understanding.

Ian Watson (Building Research Establishment)

Gaps in building regulations need reviewing. BRE interested in existing and new housing stock. Modern homes expected to last 1000 years, therefore majority of homes for a long time already in existence. Detached suburban housing common. PRS, now larger than social housing in occupancy rates, generally improved. However, 15% of properties have defects. Socio-economic problems arising from poor housing in England cost £18.6bn per annum to deal with.

Ian was asked to explain BRE's position on how to increase public awareness of how to influence their built environment.

In response, Ian said that individual factors (e.g. smoking) are clearly important in health, and these should be improved in an integrated fashion with the building environment. Local government is

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important here; while it is required to review the social rented sector periodically, there is no such requirement for the PRS.

LAs are able to measure wellbeing, housing health & safety. Some introducing selective licensing schemes. All landlords must hold a license to legally operate, and the LA charges a fee for licensing. However, environmental health teams dwindling and more generally LAs lack sufficient resources to monitor housing quality effectively.

Tony Lloyd MP took the chair, replacing Jim Shannon MP

Dr Marcella Ucci (UK Indoor Environment Group)

Dr Ucci emphasised the importance that the HHB is multi-disciplinary and wide-ranging. Healthy homes affect all demographics. However, they are regulated through different government departments and LAs. To make buildings healthier, need a wide strategy, with trade-offs with energy efficiency agenda, housing market, and other factors. Recommend for:

- An independent and well researched systematic review of UK research and evidence on HHB
- Considering the recommendations of the UKIEG Challenges for Policy Makers report, which suggests a cross-departmental approach, aligning the local and national, with one lead government department co-ordinating approach.

Dr Ucci was asked to highlight which parts of the built environment production chain could benefit the most from engagement and education around healthy buildings.

In response, Dr Ucci said that, while, all elements of the built environment production chain can be better engaged, some e.g. builders and installers, including architects and housing associations, would benefit the most. Question is how to carry out building regulation in existing settings.

Dr Gráinne McGill (MEARU)

There are gaps in existing research, and little data on indoor pollution. In UK building regulations, there is a big gap between design expectations and end results; compliance is often not achieved. Academia and government departments are enough engaged. MEARU are looking at how to identify causal links.

Dr McGill recommended for:

- Multi-disciplinary action from built environment and medical communities, with significant investment from the Government
- Shift of economic and political prioritisation from Government reflecting the enormity of the task

Dr McGill was asked what steps she would take to address the problem of overheating in buildings.

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In response, Dr McGill said that overheating in buildings is a complex problem, in part due to the lack of a definition of overheating in buildings. Further research into why buildings overheat is needed, which might consider operation control of heating, expectations and understanding. There are wider issues to consider such as noise & security, living patterns and occupancy levels. There is a need to better understand the impact and needs of the end user.

Margaret Hamilton (ARUP)

There are 2000 heat related deaths in the UK each year, with 40% of housing stock at risk. Climate change and demographic change are important factors. Overall overheating is inadequately addressed. Design rates are often not achieved in practice.

Margaret was asked to elaborate on ARUP's suggestions to address over-heating.

In response, Margaret said that a new methodology for evaluating overheating is needed. Building regulations should be integrated into energy design, noise, which should all be considered together. The PRS should be held to higher standards.

Richard Twinn (UKGBC)

No single department for these issues, which need approaching in a co-ordinated fashion. This APPG is hence useful. Three main issues for the UKGBC are:

- 1) Building regulations: the building industry is aware of a big gap in design and as-built standards in energy efficiency. Better monitoring methodology is needed, which sees compliance as performance, and has an outcomes focus
- 2) Existing housing stock: for new builds, the marginal costs are very low for making standards higher. The challenge is improving existing buildings, which is significantly more costly. Tying to energy efficiency agenda hence has risks. Approach should be holistic, examining health benefits to society
- 3) Importance to end user. Buildings should be monitored, managed and maintained properly

Richard was asked to explain how non-domestic buildings' health could be improved.

In response, he pointed towards UKGBC's research, which attempts to bring together existing evidence and developing frameworks. One example is Wellbeing Labs which monitors retail and office spaces, measuring what buildings are doing and how they are improving.

Chris Watson (Academic-Practitioner Partnership)

Problems of older housing stock has dropped off the political agenda. In the PRS, 30%/1.6m dwellings do not meet the decent homes standard. Moreover, insecurity due to short term tenancies and uncertainty is a problem. Suggests long-term tenancies and increased resources for local authorities (which have lost 30% of environmental health posts since 2010).

Chris was asked how problems in the private rented sector could be overcome.

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In response, he recommended taking a long-term view at issues, with context setting around how debates take place. The last review of housing in UK was 40 years ago, therefore another review should be considered.

4. Thanks and date of next meeting

Tony Lloyd MP thanked all witnesses and attendees for their contributions. He reminded all that the next and final evidence session will take place on **Tuesday 12th December at 2pm in Committee Room 6.**

Gill Morris, secretariat lead for the APPG, thanked the sponsors BEAMA, Airtopia and SAINT-GOBAIN for their support making the APPG possible. She noted that the secretariat would be in touch shortly with the running order for the final evidence session.

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