

PRESS RELEASE

29th July 2004

FIRE PROOF CONCRETE

The announcement of the Royal Assent being given for the Fire & Rescue Services Bill (July 22nd) was welcomed by the Traditional Housing Bureau (THB). The Bill will focus more attention on “fire safety” and the threat posed by “environmental disasters such as serious flooding” but the THB is calling for more recognition to be given to the construction method of homes and how this can contribute to reducing the damage caused by fire and floods.

Barry Holmes, Executive Director of the THB highlights the risks: “UK Government research suggests that socially excluded households are 31 times more likely to suffer fires than other households. If in the future the majority of affordable houses are to be constructed using lightweight modular techniques, as currently being promoted by the Housing Corporation, English Partnerships and the ODPM, the additional risk to life and the resulting economic cost to property could be immense, especially as there appears to be little real impact in reducing domestic fire property losses despite public and private fire safety campaigns.”

With fire material damage costing £1.4 billion in the UK in 2002 and rising each year the THB is calling for the strengthening of Fire & Rescue Services Bill to address the economic cost of fire. This is being addressed in Scotland, in part, by the proposal to change the objectives of the Scottish Fire Brigade to reduce

death and injury, damage to property and the environment, from fire and other emergencies.

Executive Director Barry Holmes explains how brick and block construction can help to limit fire damage and potentially contribute to saving lives: “The walls of a house built of solid and durable brick and block have greater fire resistance than the regulations require, and typically better than a lightweight timber frame alternative, and as a consequence will survive better in the event of a fire, leaving a structure that can be more easily restored.”

The situation is similar in the event of extreme flooding, and with more homes being built on flood plains the THB believes the increased risk to homes that this poses, again, should have a direct bearing on the construction method chosen. Barry Holmes again: “Interior decoration and plaster will be damaged but the structure itself will remain sound, and is not subject to the concerns over rotting that can affect other materials, ready to be replastered and repainted. Industrial dryers can also be brought in to speed up the process as brick and block walls will not warp if dried out quickly.”

Brick and block construction provides the most durable construction method to outlast fires and extreme flooding ensuring that, in most circumstances, the structure remains standing resulting in less cost to the public purse in terms of fire and rescue services and providing a better financial investment for homeowners.

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