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UPDATE

A new green deal

In December 2015, at the conclusion of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21), the Paris Agreement adopted by 195 countries and the European Union was described as a “turning point for the world”.

The agreement set an important challenge – to limit the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C and preferably to 1.5°C, requiring a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The reaction has been positive, especially from organisations such as the Breakthrough Energy Coalition, launched at COP21, which will provide funding to help accelerate the pace and scale of investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency retrofitting.

The UK government has stated it is determined “to keep energy bills as low as possible”, which has resulted in cuts to its financial support for renewable energy and energy efficiency retrofits. In addition, over the course of 2015 a number of standards such as the Code for Sustainable Homes and zero-carbon buildings were scrapped (see p.14).

Energy security is a key policy issue in the UK, with a pressing need to increase new energy sources – principally shale gas, nuclear, and offshore wind – to offset the reduction in supply capacity due to the proposed phase-out of coal-fired power stations by 2025 and reduce the reliance on imported energy.

The government has taken a number of positive steps in response to this, including the introduction of the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard under the Energy Efficiency Regulations, and the implementation of the Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme, which have both helped to raise awareness of energy performance.



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On the horizon are replacements for the Energy Company Obligation and Green Deal schemes and the proposed simplification of business energy tax. Of note is the UK’s world-leading Climate Change Act 2008, which sets long-term, legally binding targets to reduce carbon emissions by 80% by 2050, compared to 1990 levels.

Also of note is the industry’s response to this, which has been reassuringly forward-thinking, particularly from the property investment and construction community in relation to optimising buildings’ operational energy performance and supporting low-carbon energy generation.

In conclusion, the government faces a challenging conundrum – how to improve energy security while maintaining affordability and how to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to limit global warming to 2°C or below. This requires innovative thinking and support from the private sector, which is where chartered surveyors can help.

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Making space

In October last year, the Chief Building Surveyors Society (CBSS) merged with the Society for Public Architecture, Construction, Engineering and Surveying (SPACES) to make a stronger, multidisciplinary society. SPACES had itself been formed earlier in the year to bring together the Society of Construction and Architecture in Local Authorities and the Society of Mechanical and Electrical Engineers.

CBSS was founded in 1972, and the first annual general meeting was held at the Royal Institute of British Architects.

The original purpose was to provide a forum for surveyors working in local government

who were primarily engaged in the maintenance of public buildings. The primary drivers for the merger were to promote and share best practice in the strategic maintenance of public buildings and make the professional experience and knowledge of its members more widely available.

While membership of the CBSS was originally intended for those working in local authorities, it has more recently been opened up to staff at consultancies working in the public sector.

Over the past 40 years, members have become more widely involved in the stewardship of public

buildings, including asset management planning, facilities and estate management, design and modernisation. CBSS has also evolved in response to ongoing changes such as outsourcing, delegation of budgets, efficiency agendas, and reducing energy use and carbon emissions.

Meeting regularly at both national and regional level, the society has addressed and survived the changes of organisation and responsibilities in local government, a widening of roles in departments due to the integration of teams and the disaggregation of financial budgets. These have

led to major changes in the management of the property function and also to typically smaller in-house property department teams.

The vote to join SPACES represents the coming together of those working in building design, management and maintenance of public buildings, who will now be better able to grow and thrive.

Links with RICS will be maintained through a member of the Building Surveying Professional Group Board who will also take on a key role in a Surveyors Interest Group at SPACES.

Further details of the society are available at

• www.thespaces.org.uk