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# **Engineers of Opportunity or Architects of Misfortune**

## **A Debate on the Different Building Control Systems**

*I Predict a Riot*

Presentation To the:  
Irish Building Control Institute  
Bunratty  
Co. Clare

22<sup>nd</sup> March 2007



Can local authorities really be any good ?

Why not move to insurance based systems ?

Surely we can trust the industry to police itself ?

Was the introduction of competition about service or political dogma ?

Are countries systems better related to their cultures ?

Can we learn from others ?

Who exactly is it we really serve:

Industry ?

Government ?

Employer ?

People ?



# Issues

- Why should I have an opinion
- Why does Building Control exist
- Different Systems
  - Competition
  - Self Certification
  - Local Authority Control
- Need for Debate

# **Intro to Me**

**The Times they are a changing**

- **Building Control 28 Years**
- **Head of 4th Largest BC unit in British Isles**
- **President of Institute of Building Control**
- **Advisor to US Standards Company UL**
- **Chair of NIBC**
- **Member of Core Cities, LABC, LDSA**
- **Chair of NIBRAC**

# Current Staff Structure



- 69+ Staff
- Building Control Surveyors
  - Architects, Surveyors, Mechanical & Electrical, Structural & Fire Engineers
- Managers (MBA, MA MSc)
- IT & Training Specialists
- GIS Specialist
- Lawyer (Expert on Human Rights)

# Workload for 2005/06



- 3100 Building Regulations Applications
- 1400 Regularisations
- 37,000 Inspections for Building Regulations
- 400 Entertainments Licences
- 54 Special Committee Meetings
- 900 During Performance Inspections
- 3000 VLA Surveys
- 9000 Property Certificates
- 200 Dangerous Structures
- 394 Street signs
- 60,000 Letter & Telephone Calls
- Income £3.2M (roughly £1m not Building Regulations)

# Why Building Control



- Government policy to be done, done fairly, seen to be done
- Public assurance
- Public Protection
- Level Playing Field
- Remove compliance burden from client
- Create better buildings for the future



# Approved Inspectors

*This is the End of the World as we know it*

- England & Wales
- Building Act 1984
- Choice of LA or AI
- AI registered by Government
- LA's must set Fee bands
- Only LAs carry out enforcement

# Approved Inspectors (E&W)

- Birmingham use good surveying staff to get work
- Belief if enforcement too hard lose job
  - BRE Report on non compliance
  - Barratt Homes failures were Approved Inspector
- Drop in Standards of Skill & Ability
- Other Council Services dropped to concentrate on money earning
- No capacity for LA's to expand into other areas
- Loss of focus on who do you serve, not who is customer
- AI's poaching LA staff, no training for new staff
- AI's creaming lucrative work, LA left with dross or difficult work
- Not true competition, national decision made despite local excellence
- No desire to carry out wishes
- Belfast Experience
  - BHS roof replacement threat
  - Butler & Young: do work for 50% of fee

# **Certifier & Verifiers (Scotland)**

*Someone to watch over me*

- Only just in 2005
- Partial Certification system
- Certifiers & Verifiers
- Architects/Builders Certify Work
- If not Certified LA's do the job
- Thin Edge of Large Wedge !!!!!!!
- Government Audit of Providers

# Self Certification

*Lunatics have taken over the asylum*

- Is there evidence of it working:
  - Turkey Earthquakes
  - Italy School Collapse
  - Israel Wedding Floor Hotel
  - Ireland; Disability/Thermal
  - FSA Barlow Clowes
- Govt: Intention to transform, no control
- Can we trust the industry to conform:
  - 6 x Plans in one day
  - Compliance with Planning conditions
- Why do you want to:
  - We take the difficult decisions clients don't want to hear
  - Myth Designer know the Regs: New Part F
- Can it ever happen
  - Large scale Structural
  - CORGI as against NICEAC



# LA Control (NI System)

- Monopoly: precious gift
- Stability: Recruit & retain good people
- Concentrate on doing the job
- Capacity to do other things
- Independent & Impartial
- Level Playing Field
- Works (Industry, Customers and Government)
  - Close to customers
  - Close to community
  - Close to political representatives

# Watch, Learn & Adapt

*Wonderful World*

- Cultures should drive systems
- US system of writing regulations
- Move from enforce rules to policy implementation by facilitate/advise/solve/ensure/assure
- Build on the Scottish Audit System
- E&W Performance Indicators & Awards Ceremonies
- Birmingham Community Surveyors
- Edinburgh Integration of Business & Technical Staff
- Belfast:
  - Electronic Delivery of Services, Homeworking
  - Expansion of Services e.g: VLA
  - Provision of information
- Civil Servants must work with Providers not over them.



# Make it Better

- Responsible & Accountable
- Remove Murphy Brentwood Shield
- Service Level Agreements
- Pre-submission Consultation as right
- Independant Audit (Govt/Industry based)
- Quality Checks (IIP, ISO, Chartermarks)
- Rewards and Sanctions
- Recognition for Good/Bad Clients
- American system of regulation writing

# Building Control is not just Building Regulations?

- Building Regulations
- Dangerous Structures
- Derelict Buildings
- Entertainment Licensing
- Licence all Cinemas
- Petroleum Storage Licensing
- Amusement Arcades
- Property Certification
- Archives & Research
- Technical Helpline
- Street Naming & Numbering
- DDA Audits
- VLA Work
- Training & Development
- Committees & Panels (NI & UK Wide)
- Sex Shops



# “Engineers of Opportunity, or Architects of Misfortune”

*We are the Champions*

- Valuation & Lands Agency Surveys
- Provide key construction data to government
- We run GIS and LPG systems
- DDA Surveys for Council
- Arterial Routes & Regeneration
- Ordnance Survey data/surveys
- Community Planning and SNAP
- Comprehensive Auditing System.

And

- We do the day job as well as all this

# My Vision



- Must serve the public and government
- Be accountable to all customers
- Carry our own weight
- Be accessible to all
- Have the ability to transform
- Be impartial and open
- Work with industry to help achieve compliance
- Have can do/will do attitude
- Continually getting better
- ***Must Always Add Value***

# Summary



- Heard my opinion of different systems
- Hopefully open up the Debate
- Ireland is its own country
- Proud construction history
- Must design and implement its own system
- Must get its system right
- ***This is truly 'Ireland's Call'***