



**We wish all
our readers a
Merry Christmas
and a
Happy New Year**

Inside this issue:

Minister Dempsey Opens IBCI Conference	1
IBCI Council Elections	1
Draft Report on Review of Fire Services	2
A Message from the IBCI President	3
CEBC Autumn Meeting in Paris	3
IBCI Membership Survey	3
On site.... Problems with Part M	4

Minister Dempsey Opens IBCI Conference in Letterkenny

Noel Dempsey, T.D. Minister for the Environment and Local Government, officially opened the IBCI National Building Control Conference in Letterkenny on 11th October.

The Minister began his address by restating his commitment to a more effective Building Control system. "The enforcement of the Building Regulations is, for me, a top national and local priority, in the interests of consumer protection and public safety," the Minister said.

Speaking directly to those of us at the "coal face of the enforcement process", he said, "the effectiveness of the building code very



much depends on your commitment to ensuring reasonable standards at local level."

The Minister asked all building control staff to carry out a consistent pattern of inspections and to take the necessary action to bring sub-standard work up to the required level. Referring to the latest statistics, he told the delegates he was deter-

mined that all local authorities undertake the 12% to 15% target level of inspections.

Stating that "all of the Building Regulations from A to M are important in their own right and are of course, in some respects, interdependent", the Minister asked that particular attention be paid to Part M and the requirements for access for people with disabilities.

Without giving away any details, Mr. Dempsey outlined his intention to submit a new Building Control Bill, 2002 to Government for approval. He said it was his intention to:

(Continued on page 2)

IBCI Council Election 2001

The Council of the Institute for the coming year was elected at the AGM held during the National Building Control Conference in Letterkenny.

The Council is made up of eight elected members plus the immediate past president. Council elects its own officers at their first meeting. This year

the officers elected are as follows:

President: Tom Johnson

Vice-president and PRO: Philip O'Brien

Treasurer: Jim Briscoe

Membership Secretary: Michael O'Neill

Further Education Offi-

cer: Johnny MacGettigan

Correspondence Secretary: Pat O'Donnell

The remaining members of the Council are: Fineen O'Driscoll, Joe Boyle and Danny McGovern.

A message from the new IBCI President, Tom Johnson appears on page 3.

Minister Dempsey Opens IBCI Conference in Letterkenny

(Continued from page 1)

- Revise the Fire Safety Certification procedures to ensure greater compliance
- Secure more widespread compliance with the provisions relating to access for people with disabilities
- Broaden the circumstances in which a building control authority can secure a High Court injunction to stop work
- Allow building control authorities the option of prosecuting all offences including

breaches of Building Regulations as summary offences rather than as indictable offences via the DPP.

The Minister concluded his comments by saying, "Legislation on its own, no matter how well drafted is useless without an effective Building Control system to implement it.

Thanking IBCI President Johnny MacGettigan for the invitation to address the conference, Mr. Dempsey formally declared the conference open.

The conference proved to be a great success and Council would like to express its thanks to the Conference Committee and its director Fineen O'Driscoll.



Minister Dempsey and outgoing IBCI President Johnny MacGettigan at the opening of the conference in Letterkenny

Draft Report of the Review of Fire Services and Fire Safety in Ireland

The Department of the Environment and Local Government appointed consultants Farrell Grant Sparks to carry out a review of the Fire Services and Fire Safety in Ireland. The review has been ongoing for much of this year and has recently appeared in the form of a draft report. While Building Control is mentioned in several sections of this report, the IBCI were not consulted at any stage during its preparation and were not even supplied with a copy of the draft report.

The Council of the IBCI feel that the consultants have not properly analysed Ireland's building control system in this review. It seems to warrant only token consideration in the large 100 page document. To give only cursory consideration to Building Control is wrong and the IBCI has highlighted this by sending a detailed response to the consultants Farrell, Grant, Sparks. In addition, the Council has written to the Minister for the Environment and Local Government and to his officials in the DOELG enclosing copies of our response for their consideration.

It is fair to say that Building Control

is now at a crossroads. Since the IBCI was formed in 1991 with the advent of the Building Regulations, nearly all the founder members of the Institute have moved on to work in other areas or into private sector employment. Much expertise in Building Control has been lost as a result. Many new faces have appeared, but can they be retained to work in Building Control?

A proper structure countrywide with genuine career prospects is vital for the maintenance of an adequate Building Control system in Ireland. Building Regulations were made for the health, safety and welfare of people in and about buildings, to provide for the needs of disabled persons, to secure the conservation of fuel and energy and to promote good building practice. These are serious matters and it is not acceptable that ten years after national Building Regulations were introduced some counties still have no Building Control.

The IBCI agree that a review of the Building Control system is needed. The whole philosophy of a non-approval Building Control system

with only random monitoring needs to be examined. Allowing completely different systems and structures to evolve throughout the country has not been a success and has led to what can only be described as token Building Control in many areas.

The consultant's draft report suggests that Building Control inspection and enforcement be primarily carried out by a new technician grade building control officer. The IBCI Council believe that this proposal is seriously flawed. Expertise and experience in building control is essential in the areas of inspection and enforcement. Expert witnesses giving evidence on behalf of a Building Control Authority in the District, Circuit or High Courts need professional backgrounds and experience if cases are to be brought to successful conclusions.

As stated earlier, the IBCI Council has sent a detailed response to this draft report to the consultants, the Minister and the DOELG. Further developments and/or any replies to our submission will be reported in future editions of IBCI News.

A Message from the IBCI President

It is an honour and a privilege for me to preside with my fellow Council members over the Irish Building Control Institute for the next year 2002. I would hope to harness the enthusiasm and the abilities of the Council members to advance the profile and importance of Building Control in Ireland.

It is the intention of the Institute over the next year to promote Building Control and service our members by way of:

1. Periodic newsletters
2. Submissions to DOELG and the Building Regulations Advisory Body
3. Regional seminars/workshops

4. Issuing Membership Certificates
5. Hosting the May, 2002 meeting of the Consortium of European Building Control in Dublin.

It is also hoped to get more involvement and feedback from the membership by way of completed questionnaires, articles for the newsletter and observations on the regulations and technical guidance documents. These could be coordinated into the Institutes submissions and general correspondence to the DOELG regarding Building Control matters. The IBCI Council has already begun this work with a detailed response to the draft report on the Review

of Fire Services and Fire safety in Ireland.

I hope we can all work together to advance the cause of Building Control in Ireland.



Tom Johnson, IBCI President

Consortium of European Building Control Autumn Meeting

The autumn meeting of the Consortium of European Building Control was held in Paris on 1st and 2nd October. The meeting was hosted by Bureau Veritas at their offices located in the La Defense area of the French capital.

As a forum for debating issues affecting building control throughout Europe, the CEBC comprises representative organisations from thirteen European

nations.

On the first day, the hosts gave a presentation on the system of Building Control in France. There was also the usual "tour de table" where each member organisation outlined points of interest relating to Building Control in their respective countries.

The second day was given over to presentations on the use of fire safety engineered solutions for

more complex buildings. This included a site visit to a modern 40 storey building in the area to get an insight into how its designers provided for the fire safety of the building occupants.

The next meeting of the CEBC is scheduled for Dublin in May, 2002 and will be hosted by the IBCI. Further details will be reported in the spring edition of the IBCI News.

IBCI Membership Survey

The IBCI Council would like to express their thanks to the many members who completed and returned the survey forms sent out with the last edition of IBCI News.

At their first meeting, the new Council decided to make a special effort to consolidate our membership during the coming year. Under the direction of Membership

Secretary, Michael O'Neill, the survey will be the basis for a new database of members.

One of the first tasks to be undertaken is the printing of membership certificates. It is hoped to issue these to all IBCI members as early as possible in the new year.

If you haven't returned your com-

pleted form yet, there's still time, so why not do it right away. If you have also forgotten to pay your 2001 subscription, please forward it as well.

Help us to look after your interests by supporting the work of the IBCI. If you recently started working in building control and you are not a member, why not join now.



The Council of the Institute
wish all our members a
Happy Christmas
and a Prosperous New Year

On site.... Problems with Part M

Since 1st January, 2001 dwelling designers have been required to incorporate provisions to make their dwellings visitable. By this time, the numbers of dwellings under construction to which Part M (2000) applies is steadily growing countrywide. It is sad to report, however, that Building Control staff in the field are finding many designers have still not taken the recommendations of the revised technical guidance document on board.

Requests for information are being answered with an array of excuses why a particular dwelling should not need to comply. "I don't know any disabled people", or "nobody in my family uses a wheelchair" are two favourites of the general public.

Some people quote earlier planning references for the site in an attempt to hide the fact that the relevant planning permission was applied for in 2001. Others seek to provide level access at a side or rear entrance, rather than the main entrance as recommended in the guidance. What you're likely to hear is, "Don't you know that out in the country it's the back door that's the main entrance to a house".

If the message of access for all and the wisdom of building-in lifetime adaptability is to be ef-

fectively communicated to the house building public, those involved in the design of dwellings need to be familiar with the Regulations.

Much good work was done by the professional institutes to inform their members of the Part M changes. Unfortunately, many of those who prepare drawings for planning applications nationwide are not professionals and are ill informed about these and other requirements.

Either the designers need to be regulated in some way, or a Building Control system incorporating the approval of designs prior to construction is required.

Ventilation Requirements

Some of our readers contacted us about the information on ventilation included in the "On Site" section of the last edition of IBCI News. In particular, the part about mechanical ventilation to internal sanitary accommodation being required to have a fifteen minute overrun was questioned. One reader felt that the overrun requirement was included in the 1991 edition, but dropped in the 1997 document.

Section 1.15 on page 7 of the current TGD F deals with "non-

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If you would like to contribute an article to the IBCI Newsletter, or comment on anything contained in this issue, please write to:

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occupiable internal rooms". The reader is directed to the information contained in Table 2 which is found on page 9 of the document.

In Table 2, mechanical extract ventilation is qualified by footnotes (1) and (2). Note 1 reads, *"This ventilation shall have at least a 15 minute overrun and shall be activated either automatically or manually (e.g. by the operation of a light switch)."*

We hope this clears up any questions on this topic.

If you have any questions regarding any building control issue, send them to the IBCI News at P.O. Box 3667, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4 and we'll try to answer them for you.