



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

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Minister moves to Implement Fire Services Review Report

The Minister for the Environment and Local Government, Martin Cullen T.D. has moved to implement the recommendations of the Report on the Review of Fire Safety and Fire Services in Ireland that come within the ambit of his department. To develop the implementation process, the Minister appointed Mr. JJ O'Dwyer as facilitator to meet with all the stakeholders.

It is still the position of the IBCI Council that the entire building control system was not adequately considered during the review process. That being the case, Council finds it difficult to accept that the report's recommendations in this regard

have been properly thought through.

The position of the Council was made clear in written submissions to the DOELG. The Institute has now been recognised as a stakeholder in the process and invited to take part in the discussions to move the implementation process forward. Given that the process is moving on, Council decided to take up the invitation to engage in the process to represent the interests of building control.

To date, the IBCI has taken part in two stakeholder meetings. The last of these was in the form of a workshop where each stakeholder outlined their concerns about the implementa-

tion process.

At the workshop, the IBCI delegation insisted that if things are to progress, a full examination of the existing building control system must be undertaken before a final solution is proposed. In addition, building control would have to be recognised as an essential part of any future service reflected in the words "Building Control" being incorporated into the title of any authority having responsibility for it.

The delegation also outlined the need to have suitably qualified professional staff to operate the system. The facilitator's report is expected before Christmas.

IBCI Council Election 2002

The Council of the Institute for the current year was elected at the AGM held on 5th September last, immediately after the Building Control Seminar in Tullamore.

The Council is made up of nine 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: Philip O'Brien

Vice-president and Membership Secretary: Michael O'Neill

Treasurer: Tom Johnson

Correspondence Secretary: Pat O'Donnell.

The remaining members of the Council are:

Joe Boyle, Jim Briscoe, Johnny MacGettigan, Danny McGovern, Fineen O'Driscoll, and Kevin Sheridan.

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

Consortium of European Building Control Autumn Meeting

The autumn meeting of the Consortium of European Building Control was held in Helsinki from 6th to 8th October and was hosted by the Finnish Society of Building Inspectors.

Members of the Consortium must be either a representative organisation that promotes the interests of building control or a government department active in the development of legislation associated with the health and safety aspects of the built environment. During the Helsinki meeting, a motion was passed to increase the current membership by adding representative bodies from Slovenia, Croatia and Latvia.

The theme of the Helsinki meeting was *Timber Framed Buildings—Innovation and Current Research*. This topic was particularly suitable for the location where the vast majority of buildings are constructed from timber.

On the first day, the hosts organised a trip to see how timber is used in Finland in the construction of a variety of building types. This involved a bus trip to the town of Lahti, located 100km north of Helsinki.

First we visited a single dwelling designed by the famous Finnish architect Alvar Aalto and built for the composer Kokkonen.

Our hosts then took us to the Harrala—Talot Timber Frame House factory where we were given a tour of the works. The factory produces houses in kit form. The typical construction uses a 200mm timber stud insulated over its full thickness. The internal face consists of plasterboard over a vapour barrier.

All services are located in the panel at the factory so as to minimise the risk of the vapour barrier being punctured on site. A waterproofed plasterboard is used to sheet the outer face of the wall panel. To complete the construction, two sets of timber battens are fixed to the panel and Finnish spruce timber cladding is applied. No chemical preservatives are used in the process and the outer cladding is painted in the factory before delivery. The typical u-value of the wall panel is 0.19. The factory can produce three full house kits per day which can then be erected on site in one day.

The tour visited the Sibelius Concert Hall in Lahti where tall timber columns supported a timber beam roof and glazed timber framed curtain walling. The concert hall was constructed of timber diaphragm walls filled with sand to provide mass. Echo chambers on either side of the hall provide state of the art acoustic performance.

Meeting Agenda:

Monday 7th October

Morning:
Minutes of previous meeting
Matters arising
Report of CEBC Policy Committee
Discussion on CEBC Portfolio
Election of Slovenia, Croatia and Latvia
Treasurers report
Proposed CEBC Fire Safety Engineering Conference
European Survey Documentation
Report on CEN Conference in Malta
CEBC survey information required on

- Ballustrading in Sports Ground Stairs
- Fire Safety Engineering in Industrial Buildings

Afternoon:

Presentations:

The Finnish Building Control System

The City of Helsinki Townscape Commission: an Architect's view of Building Control

Presentation on the CEBC website by Construct and Build

Tuesday 8th October

Morning:

Introduction by Olav Berge, Norway
Timber frame in Scandinavia
Latest innovations and challenges in Timber Framed buildings – Wood-focus, the Finnish wood industry organisation

European Technical Approval for Timber Framed Buildings

Defects in timber frame housing in Denmark

Afternoon:

Tour de Table where all countries outline the changes that are taking place in the Building Control systems in their respective countries

Finnish Building Control System

The Finnish Building Control system is linked to the planning process which results in the issuing of a building permit. Technical details are not looked at in detail, but the applicant must employ an approved designer.

The building permit lasts for 3 years. The Local Municipality must be informed of the start of the job.

The builder is required to call a "start up meeting" which is attended by the building inspector, representatives of the fire and health authorities, the designer, the site manager and assistants. Here it must be established that there are adequate qualified personnel in place to supervise the construction.

The building is inspected when completed.

A Letter from the IBCI President

I am honoured to be chosen by Council to act as President of the Irish Building Control Institute.

Let me start by congratulating my predecessor, Tom Johnson, for the excellent work that he put into the job during his term. I would also take this opportunity to thank the members of the IBCI Council for their support and the time and effort they put into representing the interests of all involved in building control around the country.

Building control in Ireland is facing into a period of change. The Minister for the Environment and Local Government has moved to implement the recommendations of the report on Fire Safety and Fire Services in Ireland. This will affect

how building control is structured at both national and local level. Although not consulted during the review, the role of IBCI as a stakeholder has now been acknowledged. Council members have recently been engaged in the discussions on implementation in the hope that we can influence the inevitable changes in a positive way for all our members.

Through its membership of the Consortium of European Building Control, IBCI maintains contact with building professionals working in other countries across Europe. We are proud of our involvement to date and will continue to use our membership to further the aims of the Institute and to examine current trends in the practice of building control.

After a slow start, our website is now under construction. When up and running, it is my firm hope that it will provide IBCI with a useful tool both for keeping our members informed and raising the profile of the Institute at home and abroad.

In finishing, I would call upon all IBCI members to take a more active interest in the work of the Institute. All are invited to contribute to the IBCI News. Let us know what your thoughts are so that Council can better represent your views. Working together, it is my hope that we can improve the profile of Irish Building Control both at home and abroad.

Philip O'Brien
IBCI President

Part M & the Case for Lifetime Adaptable Housing

Government housing strategy has stated that "local authorities, as the initiators of housing projects, must take full account of the changing nature of the needs for which they have to cater in the planning and design of new accommodation".

The "lifetime homes" concept was developed in 1991 by a group of housing experts who came together as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Lifetime Homes Group.

Lifetime homes are dwellings that are designed either to meet the changing needs occurring throughout one family's lifetime - raising small children, having grandparents come to stay or having mobility difficulties in old age - or to meet the varying needs of numerous changes of occupier in the same house.

Lifetime homes are accessible, flexible and adaptable. They incorporate 16 design features such

as level access, wider doors and corridors and a downstairs toilet, whilst making provision for such future installations as lifts and showers.

According to recent projections, much of Ireland's housing needs for the next century will be provided over the next 10 years. Some 500,000 new homes will be needed by 2010. Getting it right at this stage, particularly in terms of lifetime adaptability and sustainability, is critical.

It is conservatively estimated that 1 in 10 Irish people have a disability that impacts on their ability to use their home and the surrounding environment. The ESRI have suggested that half of all disabled people in the Republic of Ireland are aged 60 and over. It is also predicted that average life expectancy in Ireland will increase from 76 to 82 over the next 20 years. Not only will people live longer,

but also a far greater percentage of the population will be older.

The main features of lifetime homes include:

- No steps at entrances
- Wider doors and corridors
- Low level light switches
- Downstairs toilet
- Easy opening doors and windows
- Good living space throughout
- Accessible bathrooms
- Easy to operate taps and fittings

The additional standards, over and above those included in Part M, have little or no cost implications. Perhaps it is time to go all the way and incorporate the full range of these issues into the requirements of the Building Regulations.

Danny McGovern S.E.E.,
Cavan County Council



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

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,

With reference to the article in the IBCI News in August 2002, regarding the Review of Fire Safety and Fire Services in Ireland, this practice made a written submission to Farrell Grant Sparks and attended the public consultation.

We are of the opinion that building control should be a stand-alone department and not part of the proposed Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services Authority. Building Control has a very defined role to play in the construction industry. Farrell Grant Sparks were not requested in their brief to comment on Building Control.

The suggestion in the article that non-professional staff would carry out Building Control duties is a step backwards at a time when we are all attempting to move the construction industry in Ireland into a more progressive gear for future developments.

Proof of this is seen in Dublin. When Dublin city and county had Building Bye-Law inspectors carrying out mandatory inspections, standards were maintained. Under the present system of Building Regulations, standards have dropped dramatically. We need a stand alone Building Control Department. Contact with the new authority could be maintained by having a representative from

building control sit on the new Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services Authority.

Robert M. Foley
Architect
Dublin

Dear Sir,

As an engineer working in a private practice that is sometimes involved in the construction of new houses, I must say there is a great need for some form of increased building control in Ireland. Under the present system, certification of compliance is not a legal obligation and no certification of any benefit is being given to house purchasers.

At the moment, house purchasers are being given a certificate by someone working on behalf of the builder. These certificates include the phrase, "I have not supervised the building and certification is based only on a visual survey on a particular date".

What often happens when a purchaser's engineer sees something wrong with a house at present is that the builder offers to give his own engineer's certificate. The purchaser's priority at that point in time is to get a roof over his/her head. The end result is that the purchaser may feel they have little choice but to take the house as is

**IRISH BUILDING
CONTROL INSTITUTE**



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

**IBCI News,
P.O. Box 3667,
Ballsbridge,
Dublin 4.**

and reluctantly accepts the builder's certificate, which may be incomplete and/or even misleading.

I feel this is not acceptable. If a contractor is putting a product, i.e., a house, on the market, he should be legally bound to have a quality control system in place and to give the purchaser a certificate that the building complies with the Building Regulations. A copy of the said certificate should also be sent to the Local Authority Building Control Department.

If the quality control inspections find anything wrong with the house, provision could be made in the certificate to outline any defects found. This would enable an intending purchaser to make an informed judgement regarding the house.

Dan Mulvihill
Consulting Engineer
Cork

If you would like to contribute, please send your letter to the usual address. Please note that letters may be edited to fit the space available.