
Westminster Sustainable Business Forum

Bricks and Water 2: Property resilience for new and existing homes

Call for evidence

In 2018, the Westminster Sustainable Business Forum (WSBF) launched Bricks and Water, an evidence-based assessment of the challenges associated with sustainable housebuilding and water management in England. The report was well received throughout Parliament and was referenced earlier this year in the Committee on Climate Change's housing report: Fit for Future?¹

The Government's current ambitious programme of housebuilding presents a unique opportunity to ensure that new homes are designed sustainably and can deliver on the goal of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Requirements for water efficiency, flood resilience, and sustainable drainage are disparate across planning policy, building regulations and construction industry guidance. This work will focus on identifying best practice across these areas and incorporation into a mandatory Property Resilience Certificate (PRC) for new and existing homes (as recommended in Bricks and Water).

This document identifies the topics that the inquiry will focus on and identifies a number of initial questions on which we are seeking advice/gathering evidence. Policy Connect are currently accepting written evidence to some or all of the below questions. Submissions will be accepted until the 28th of February 2019.

Water efficiency and reuse

We recommended within Bricks and Water that 100lpppd should be considered the minimum water efficiency aspiration for all new dwellings. Our initial work indicates that consumption targets should be met using a 'fittings based' approach (where water consumption of fittings and appliances is rated), underpinned by a mandatory labelling scheme. The PRC should also consider additional methods to reduce consumption, such as metering, household leakage reduction and rainwater harvesting/greywater reuse.

1. Outside of building regulations (Approved Document G) should we be aware of any additional policy or guidance relating to water efficiency requirements for new homes?
2. How could a 'fittings based' approach linked to a mandatory labelling scheme be incorporated into building regulations?
3. Should water companies introduce compulsory metering for all domestic customers and how could the use of smart meters inform the understanding of household consumption?

¹ UK Housing: Fit for the future? Committee on Climate Change, February 2019

4. How can PCC be reduced below 100lpppd and what reuse measures (including rainwater harvesting or greywater recycling) would be required to achieve this? Should these requirements be incorporated into planning policy?
 5. Are you aware of any additional technologies that are available to increase efficiency or reduce consumption?
 6. How should credits for water efficiency, metering and water re-use be allocated within a PRC?
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Property-level flood resilience

The number of properties at risk of flooding will increase to 2.5 million by 2050 as a result of increased development, climate change trends, and the conversion of green space to hard surfacing. The PRC will seek to explore best practice on the assessment of flood risk and the most appropriate methods to ensure that at-risk homes are resilient to flood events in future.

1. Is the current method for assessment of the risks from flooding for new development (under the National Planning Policy Framework) appropriate?
 2. What level of flood risk assessment is appropriate to determine risk to existing homes from pluvial, fluvial and tidal sources of flooding within a PRC? Should other sources of flooding be considered?
 3. Is flood resistance (i.e. exclusion of floodwater) appropriate at the property-level?
 4. Is there consensus on best practice for property-level resilience?
 5. Once FloodRe is withdrawn, what evidence would the insurance industry need to transition to an insurance premium structure that fully reflects flood risk?
 6. How can forthcoming guidance (including the CIRIA code of practice) for assessment, specification and validation of flood resilience measures be incorporated into planning policy?
 7. Is there an approved range of resilience measures that can be adopted within a PRC and how should credits for these measures be allocated?
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Green infrastructure

Bricks and Water stressed the urgency in reversing the trend of building hard urban catchments, which contribute to overheating in our cities and increase the risk of surface water flooding. The use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) have benefits far beyond reducing discharge into the existing surface water drainage network.

1. Is the current hierarchy for disposal of surface water within the planning system appropriate?
 2. What are the enforcement mechanisms for controlling surface water volume and peak discharge?
 3. Should there be a mandatory requirements for inclusion of SuDS in new developments in England.
 4. How should developer rights to connect to traditional drainage systems be managed?
 5. What options are available to the homeowner for sustainable disposal of surface water from an individual property (such as installation of permeable paving or rainwater harvesting from roofs)?
 6. What are the opportunities for retrofit of SuDS?
 7. How should credits for sustainable disposal of surface water be allocated within a PRC?
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About the authors

The Westminster Sustainable Business Forum (WSBF) is a high-level coalition of key UK businesses, Parliamentarians, Civil Servants and other organisations. Providing a politically neutral environment for knowledge sharing and discussion on sustainability policy, we help to inform the wider sustainability agenda in government and are a trusted source of independent information and advice for policymakers.

We publish authoritative research reports; impact on government policy through our in-depth round table policy discussions and outputs; and inform the wider sustainability debate by convening Parliamentarians, senior Civil Servants, business experts and other stakeholders at our larger policy events and seminars. The WSBF works in the policy areas of construction, infrastructure, water, sustainable planning, green finance and natural capital. We are cross-party, independent and not-for-profit.

Please reply to Rob Allen, Policy Manager for the Westminster Sustainable Business Forum using the contact details below:

By email: robert.allen@policyconnect.org.uk

By post: Rob Allen, Policy Connect, 7-14 Great Dover Street, Southwark, SE1 4YR