



SUSTAINABLE TRADITIONAL  
BUILDINGS ALLIANCE

## **STBA Advisory Group 19<sup>th</sup> February 2019 - Future Priorities Discussion**

### **Summary**

Our 2019 Advisory Group meeting in February included an update of our work in 2018 followed by guest speaker, Simon Ayers, who gave a presentation on the Trustmark quality assurance scheme for PAS 2035.

The second half of the meeting was dedicated to discussions with our members about priorities for the coming year.

### **The skills gap – members' concerns**

The lack of knowledge across the retrofit and maintenance industry is of widespread concern amongst our Members and Supporting Organisations. Without appropriate skills, ongoing training and quality assurance, any benefits from improvements to policy will be futile.

The lack of training spans across all those involved with the refurbishment, upkeep and retrofit of our buildings – builders, plumbers, electricians, surveyors, architects, energy efficiency consultants, lecturers, Building Control and the insurance industry. This workforce enters the industry via difference routes – standard career path, family businesses, career changes.

### **The skills gap – STBA action**

Whilst the focus of the STBA is on older buildings, the principles of building physics, context, sustainability and health are common to the whole of the built environment. Education programmes should, therefore, include information about all types of buildings and provide ongoing access to cohesive guidance and training.

We would like to prepare a road-map of the training and education that is available so that the areas of concern can be addressed.

### **Who is ultimately responsible for buildings – members' comments**

Even with highly skilled people available, property owners will still be tempted by the promise of 'getting the job done' at a lower price. It is, therefore, important that owners and occupants are empowered with the information they need to take responsibility and make appropriate choices. However, much of the current guidance available suggests 'asking an expert' and home owners are lulled into a false sense of security by credentials that may or may not be relevant for their project.

One of the proposals receiving widespread interest is a Building Passport. This would document information about a property – type, structure and age as well as any subsequent work carried out (when, who by and the materials used, etc). It could include surveys, EPCs and guarantees. There is also potential for links so that the owner/occupier can access the appropriate guidance for their type of building.



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## **Who is ultimately responsible for buildings – STBA action**

Taking the members' comments into consideration, the STBA will continue to highlight the importance of the accurate assessment of a building as a first step. We have identified two opportunities for encouraging/enforcing a meaningful, whole-house survey. This will enable property owners (and those carrying out building works) to be better informed about their buildings and make appropriate decisions about their future.

The first of these is at the time of an EPC assessment. Energy Performance Certificates were originally introduced as a benchmarking and compliance tool. However, they are now being used in government policy and programmes to drive improvements in the energy efficiency performance of buildings. As a result, EPCs are increasingly being used as retrofit design tools - a purpose for which they were not intended and for which they are inadequate. We are continuing to have discussions with BEIS to ensure that EPCs are improved and to become part of a wider energy or sustainability assessment.

The second opportunity for a whole-house survey/assessment is pre-retrofit. We are currently developing survey templates as part of a pilot scheme with Melin Homes under the BEIS Building Thermal Efficiency Innovation Fund initiative. In addition to thermal performance, the survey templates will cover the condition of the building fabric and services, ventilation and indoor air quality as well as context and heritage value. Following further testing, the process and supporting methodology will be released as a toolkit for industry use across the UK.

### Actual Meeting Notes:

#### *1. The paramount importance of training - especially before any widespread changes to the building stock (need for pause):*

- *General construction*
- *Clients*
- *Building Control*
  - *Local Authority*
  - *Al's (may need a different approach)*
- *Education - an attitude shift is required*
- *Note varying routes to joining the refurbishment industry*
  - *Standard career path*
  - *Family businesses*
  - *Career changers*

#### *2. Public Engagement - to get across key STBA messages*

- *General support for engaging with the public to get across the concept of vernacular heritage, and that old buildings need bespoke care to remain sustainable*
- *Property owners to take responsibility*
- *The importance of maintenance*
- *General support for the Property Passport (also aids consumer protection)*
- *Insurers - lack of understanding of technical risk.*