



Water Act 2014

The Water Act 2014 received Royal Assent on 14 May 2014. The purpose of the act is to reform the water industry to make it more innovative and responsive to customers and to increase the resilience of water supplies to natural hazards such as drought and floods. The new legislation will also bring forward measures to address the availability and affordability of insurance for those households at high flood risk and ensure a smooth transition to the free market over the longer term.

The main measures of interest to construction include:

- developing a national water supply network by making it easier for water companies to buy and sell water from each other;
- enabling ministers to set the level to which a water company needs to plan to cope with droughts;
- enabling developers and new water or sewage companies to connect new building developments to the water mains and sewerage system;
- providing Ofwat a new over-arching duty to take greater account of long-term resilience and changes to improve Ofwat's regulation of the water industry;
- improving the way water resource management and drought planning are managed and;
- encouraging the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) by clarifying that building and maintenance of SuDS can be a function of sewerage undertakers.

Part P - Third party electrical work verification

From 6 April 2014 a person who is registered with a third party certification scheme for electrical installations in dwellings will be able to check domestic electrical work that is undertaken by others and certify it compliant with the Building Regulations.

The lease-and-recycle mind set

A circular economy is one which captures materials so that today's goods are re-manufactured or reused to become tomorrow's goods, rather than go to landfill. For example, this could mean that manufacturers lease building components, such as air conditioning chillers, and commit to their end of life recycling. A poster guide to the circular economy has been published by the [UK Contractor's Group](#) to help raise awareness of the issue among its members.

Some companies are already trialling circular economy initiatives. In the UK, lighting manufacturer Philips is leasing an LED lighting scheme to the National Union of Students' headquarters at Macadam House, London, under a [cradle to cradle Pay-](#)

[per-Lux](#) arrangement. Under the scheme Philips retains responsibility for the performance of the lighting over 15 years and the NUS pays for the energy consumed through a quarterly fee. It allows the organisation to take advantage of LED lighting to minimise its energy costs without a major capital outlay. The solution also means that any lamps that are replaced during the life of the contract will make use of the latest LED lighting technologies.

The health costs of poor housing in London

While there has been a long-recognised relationship between poor housing and poor health, until recently, it has not been possible to estimate the associated cost to society. A new [BRE Trust study](#) has found that 15% of households in London can be classified as 'poor housing' and that reducing the worst health and safety hazards in these properties could save the NHS around £56m per year in treatment costs for housing related problems, such as respiratory and cardiovascular disease and falls around the home.

Results of the research show that while there has been significant progress made in improving the energy efficiency of our housing stock, an unacceptable number of households are likely to experience fuel poverty and overcrowding as a result of increasingly high housing costs in London.

The research found that there is proportionately slightly less poor housing in London than in the rest of England. This is predominantly due to the fact that the capital has a higher proportion of homes that are purpose-built flats which tend to be newer, more energy efficient and in better repair than other types of home across the country. However, housing conditions vary considerably both between and within boroughs, and there are parts of the city where conditions are significantly worse than the national and London average.

The new information is already helping local authorities to justify expenditure on housing refurbishment and target the most cost-effective improvements for vulnerable people in unhealthy housing. It also provides a valuable resource for housing managers in the public and private sector, landlords, property owners and health professionals.

Energy investment report

The DECC has published its [Energy Investment Report](#) which provides some interesting insights into the energy investment situation. In the 2013 National Infrastructure Plan, energy projects accounted for nearly 60% of the UK's total infrastructure pipeline (£218bn of £377 bn). DECC analysis reveals that some £110 bn of electricity infrastructure investment is needed between 2013 and 2020. DECC point out that nearly £14bn was invested in 2013 against this target. Since 2010 the coalition Government claim to have spent £45 bn of investment in electricity infrastructure. One particular feature of this energy investment has been the increase in renewables. The DECC points out that average annual investment has doubled from £3bn to £8bn in this parliament.

Within the report, the job generating potential of the energy sector is emphasised. For instance, one of the reasons for the fall in household energy usage in the last ten years has been the activities of the energy efficiency sector which accounts now for some 100,000 jobs.

Green deal improvements

From June 2014, there will be a new [Green Deal Home Improvement Fund](#) (GDHIF) which will allow householders two offers which in total may be up to £7,600. Up to £1,000 is available for those who install a range of items including a condensing boiler, flat roof insulation or waste heat recovery. A further £6,000 can be made available towards the cost of internal or external wall insulation. To be eligible for the GDHIF scheme, customer must apply for the voucher before work starts and the measures must also be recommended in either an Energy Performance Certificate or a Green Deal Assessment Report within the last 24 months.

This follows on from the announcement that 24 local authorities are to receive a share of £88 million to help deliver the Government's Green Deal. This money means that Green Deal Communities Funding will be quadrupled. The scheme will be rolled out on a street-by-street basis and will aim to help around 32,000 households install energy efficient improvements such as solid wall insulation and new heating systems.

The low carbon workplace

The Threadneedle Low-Carbon Workplace Trust (LCW) has launched its first ever low-carbon refurbished building, putting into practice a new model of landlord-tenant relationship in which LCW takes an active role in helping occupiers to manage energy usage down on an ongoing basis. This building, "The Billings" located in Guildford, is a 160-year-old former printing press, was selected as an ideal refit opportunity partly thanks to the thermal properties of its high-ceilinged rooms and thick walls. With the refit complete LCW's exclusive Carbon Adviser, Low Carbon Workplace Ltd, a subsidiary of the Carbon Trust, is providing advice to the tenants of the building, Investec Wealth and Investment to achieve as much as a 60% operational carbon reduction over the industry standard.

Low Carbon Workplace (LCW) Ltd helps occupiers on an ongoing basis to actively manage their energy costs, monitoring usage and occupancy patterns before advising on how to meet energy efficiency targets - the tenant winning with lower bills and lower carbon emissions. Achieving the building's low carbon targets makes the occupier eligible for certification to the [Low Carbon Workplace Standard](#), a new environmental benchmark specifically designed for the workplace. The managing director of LCW said " Low carbon buildings need low carbon occupiers to be able to perform to their design intent in energy efficiency terms. Landlords are often criticised for a 'let and forget' mentality, not helping their occupiers reduce their energy costs once they are in the building. We will play an active role in helping our occupiers monitor and reduce their energy usage, cutting their costs and carbon footprint".