



Watts Bulletin

The technical companion to the Watts Pocket Handbook, keeping its readership abreast of industry news.

Watts Bulletin – September 2010

Editorial

Welcome to the September issue of Watts Bulletin. Having welcomed encouraging construction figures during the first half of this year, the industry now faces gloomy prospects for the autumn and winter months. If the latest forecast from the Construction Products Association is to be believed, there is little good news in the pipeline and early hopes of recovery were over-optimistic. The latest RICS construction market survey confirms that chartered surveyors around the country are far from upbeat about their prospects for the next few months, with the majority expecting a further decline in workloads for the foreseeable future. There is always another side to every story and with public sector estates departments now focused firmly on streamlining their property portfolios, it is to be hoped that they will recognise the wisdom of following the advice of the head of the Government's new property unit, and turn to the private sector for advice. This will not keep the construction sector in work but for those with expertise in strategic property solutions, it could provide much needed business in an ever more challenging market.

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Boost economy and get construction working, says CPA

Michael Ankers, Chief Executive of the Construction Products Association (CPA) is calling on the Government to invest in essential infrastructure to give the economy a shot in the arm and get the construction industry back to work.

Press reports earlier this month gave the latest projections from the CPA, which predict output will fall for the remainder of this year and will decline further during 2011. Latest figures on new orders for construction work show recovery in orders for private sector work go “nowhere near” what is needed to offset the anticipated 18% fall in public sector construction work over the next two years (source: Building).

The construction industry showed a strong performance, with increased activity during the first six months of 2010. However, the CPA claims that these figures represent a false dawn for the industry, resulting from a combination of fiscal stimulus, the improved performance of the housing sector, and the start of a number of major projects in the run up to the election – rather than a genuine recovery.

Michael Ankers told Building, “Whilst we can see the prospects for a pick-up in output in 2012 and the following two years, this recovery is going to be slow and hold back a more rapid growth in the wider economy. Even by 2014, output in the industry will not even have recovered to the levels it experienced in 2003.”

He is now calling on Government to recognise that spending cuts and tax rises alone will not secure long-term economic growth and to invest in essential infrastructure.

The latest RICS Construction Market survey confirmed the CPA’s findings, revealing that sentiment in the sector began to decline again in the second quarter of the year, due to fears over the scale of public spending cuts and ongoing uncertainty about prospects for the economy. The latest data shows more surveyors reporting a fall than a rise in total construction workloads, in stark comparison to the previous quarter in which 5% more surveyors reported rising, rather than falling, workloads. RICS chief economist, Simon Rubinsohn, believes spending cuts are already having an adverse effect on sentiment and although the cost of tradesmen and overheads continue to fall, raw material prices are rising – creating a difficult operating atmosphere.

For more information go to www.constructionproducts.org.uk



Sign up now for CRC, urges minister

Thousands of businesses have so far failed to register for the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) Scheme with the deadline looming.

Greg Barker, Climate Change Minister, has called on businesses eligible for the CRC scheme to register before the 30 September deadline. According to the minister, by mid-August, only 1,229 organisations had registered for the scheme, leaving thousands still to sign up. All users of more than 6,000 MWh of electricity a year – estimated at around 5,000 organisations – are required to participate fully in the scheme by monitoring and recording their CO² emissions and purchasing allowances equivalent to their emissions each year. Around 20,000 public and private sector organisations will be required to participate in the scheme in some way, but according to the Government, most will only be required to provide information about their electricity consumption.

The aim of the CRC is to help ensure that businesses and other organisations play their part in contributing to the UK target of emissions reductions of at least 34% on 1990 levels by 2020. Organisations failing to register by 30 September will be given a fixed fine of £5,000 followed by £500 for each subsequent working day for up to 80 working days.

Speaking in support of the scheme, introduced by the previous Government, Greg Barker said the CRC will encourage significant savings for business through greater energy efficiency and, equally important, will make energy consumption a boardroom issue. However, the minister added that the original complexity of the scheme may have deterred some organisations and called on companies to come forward with suggestions for making the scheme simpler in the future.

Help for landlords and tenants who are required to register for the CRC has been provided by an industry working party in the form of the second edition of a CRC Guide for Landlords and Tenants, published in August.

The guide has been issued following an industry wide consultation which aimed to achieve consensus on incorporating CRC in leases.

For more information go to www.bpf.org.uk



PassivHaus gains momentum as college building is certified

The new Rural Regeneration Centre at Hadlow College in Tonbridge, Kent has become the first certified PassivHaus education building in the UK.

The 345m² building, designed and constructed by Sussex-based company Eurobuild, showcases low carbon and renewable technology. Built to PassivHaus Standards it uses just 10% of the typical energy consumption of a modern building and, according to the college, is the first such building in the UK to be constructed using prefabricated materials.

The building is a sympathetic conversion of, and extension to, redundant calf sheds and comprises a number of seminar rooms, a main exhibition centre, computer suite, and training facilities. A visible energy monitoring display showcases the energy consumption of the building which includes a range of practical on-site technologies such as ground source heat pumps, a green roof and grey rainwater harvesting. The centre is designed to focus exclusively on researching, developing, influencing and supporting the sustainable rural regeneration agenda in the UK.

There are now more than 10,000 certified PassivHaus buildings in the world, which use a simple concept to reduce energy use. A highly insulated envelope makes PassivHaus buildings airtight and reduces energy consumption to such a level that a conventional heating system is rendered unnecessary. Instead, heat generated from the occupants and their day-to-day activities is recovered and used to maintain a comfortable temperature inside the building. A mechanical ventilation system is used to guarantee air quality and efficient heat recovery. Other notable examples of PassivHaus technology include the Denby Dale housing project in West Yorkshire and the Carnegie Village student accommodation development at Leeds Metropolitan University.

For more information go to www.hadlow.ac.uk



RICS promotes role of FM experts

The RICS is launching a campaign to help facilities management (FM) professionals demonstrate their role in improving strategic business performance.

With both private and public sector organisations under pressure to reduce costs and achieve best value from their property assets, FM professionals are taking the lead in translating organisational and real estate strategies into realistic, costed management plans. Facilities management is now being recognised as more than just a cost centre and FM professionals are increasingly taking on a strategic rather than purely operational role within many organisations. In recognition of the contribution that FM has to make, the RICS is to launch the 'Professionalising FM' campaign in October.

RICS has around 12,000 UK professionals operating in FM, and regards their role as critical in helping businesses realise their medium and long-term corporate targets.

The campaign will be launched with a live panel debate and a wide-ranging industry survey at the FM and estates management show, Total Workplace Management in London next month. Led by a group of influential FM professionals, the discussion to be held on 7 October will examine the future of FM as a core strategic function within business, and the role that different industry qualifications play in positioning it as a board-level discipline.

For more information go to www.rics.org



Cutting the cost of property via flexible working

The urgent need to cut the cost of running the public sector property portfolio has brought strategic property management to the fore, with the Home Office recently introducing flexible working at its Westminster headquarters.

The Central Government estate alone is estimated to cost around £25 billion to operate each year. As a result, property management in both central and local Government is under scrutiny, with departments and local authorities under pressure to cut running costs.

In July, John McCready, head of the Government's new property unit, said that Government should look to the private sector for ways to cut the annual bill for property running costs. McCready believes the real issue that must be tackled by Government departments is occupancy and he praised the private sector for transforming itself via increasingly efficient space utilisation (source: Building).

Leading from the front in the drive to reduce Government expenditure, the Home Office has recently introduced flexible working arrangements, allowing the department to free up space in other buildings and make valuable savings on its property budget. According to a new consortium that includes Watts and Mott MacDonald, set up this summer to advise public sector clients on space planning and flexible working, the first step towards maximising real estate is to identify any surplus accommodation. Optimum use of buildings is then made possible by the adoption of effective workspace strategies. By "working beyond walls" and looking at the way the three key overheads of any operation: people, premises and technology, impact on each other. The consortium claims it can achieve organisational change, not only through rationalisation and more efficient management of premises, but also by introducing more flexible working patterns for staff. This might include making best use of technology and hot-desking, as well as simple improvements such as sharing common areas and meeting space, and incorporating innovative storage solutions.

With swingeing cuts to public sector budgets now filtering through to construction consultants, contractors and suppliers, there is an opportunity here for both central and local government to make genuine organisational improvements, and reduce overheads while continuing to utilise the skills of construction and property advisers with expertise in this area. Mark Few, Director of Watts' Public Sector team, firmly believes that the capital investment required to achieve organisational change will be more than paid for via the savings made by improving business efficiency and making better use of public sector premises.

For more information contact Mark Few, Director of Watts' Public Sector team on 0207 280 8000.



RICS Selection Board – can you help?

If you are not a Chartered Surveyor but have an interest in helping a professional organisation identify the right people to improve its service delivery, the RICS would like to hear from you.

The RICS is looking for two people not associated with the Institution to join its Independent Appointments Selection Board (IASB). This will involve helping the organisation find the right people to help deliver the RICS business plan. Applicants will require experience in the appointment of senior individuals at board level for an international organisation, including undertaking best practice competence-based interviewing. Within the RICS, there is now a greater degree of selection to the non-regulatory boards consisting of both RICS members and independents and IASB members are involved in the appointment of these positions, as well as selecting all the members of the Regulatory Boards.

The initial appointment will be for up to three years and the Board will meet up to three times a year. Total commitment will be around 5-20 days, depending on the number of appointments. Independent non-executive board members will be entitled to receive a fee for attendance at meetings on a daily basis, currently £340 per day.

The closing date for applications is 4 October 2010, with interviews to be held at the beginning of November.



BRE and WRAP combine forces on waste

Tackling waste in construction will be easier in future as two web-based tools are made compatible.

The Building Research Establishment (BRE) and Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP) have announced that users of BRE SMARTwaste, the web-based tool used to prepare and implement Site Waste Management Plans, can now transfer their data directly to the WRAP Waste to Landfill Reporting Portal. In future, users will be able to monitor their individual progress against targets, run reports and benchmark their waste reduction performance.

SMARTWaste users will now be able to select the projects they wish to transfer data from, the time period they wish to cover and the associated spend, and forward this information directly to the Waste to Landfill Reporting Portal. The portal is a free resource set up by WRAP for the benefit of signatories to the Construction Commitments: Halving Waste to Landfill voluntary agreement. The portal enables users to enter and review waste data. The master user for each corporate account specifies their organisation's waste baseline and future reduction targets. The Portal homepage provides two sets of graphical results. The first shows the waste sent to landfill in each year in comparison with the baseline and target. The second details the amount of waste going to landfill over the last 12 months, benchmarked against all of the data in the portal for the same time period. In addition, reports can be generated which provide annual summaries of all or a subset of data either in isolation, or in comparison with an appropriate benchmark.

SMARTWaste is a free tool that has been developed by BRE to help the building industry prepare, implement and review Site Waste Management Plans (SWMPs) in full compliance with the legal requirements. It can also be used to meet the Code for Sustainable Homes, mandatory requirement for waste. Over 4,600 companies have registered to use SMARTWaste since its launch in June 2008. To date, SMARTWaste has measured over 5.8 million tonnes of waste.

Katherine Adams, BRE's SMARTWaste manager is pleased to be able to offer users the opportunity to transfer data automatically. "By making waste reporting easier for our users, they can clearly demonstrate their own achievements and commitment to reducing waste to landfill," she said.

For more information go to www.bre.co.uk or www.wrap.org.uk



Public Beta of Part L software now available

During the summer, there were fears that delays in software development could hold up the introduction of the new Part L of the Building Regulations.

In August, Integrated Environmental solutions (IES) made a Public Beta version of its iSAP and VE-SBEM Part L 2010 software available, allowing designers to get to grips with the changes being introduced prior to the final version of the software being published. IES is also offering online training for users of the new software in advance of the new regulations, which are scheduled to come into force on 1 October 2010.

In addition, due to the extent of the changes within Part L 2010, further required training in our VE-SBEM software is being offered online in advance of the new regulations being introduced. According to David McEwan, UK Director at IES, "This Public Beta version offers our customers a level of software completeness that...means they can start to pro-actively rough check any current project against the 2010 regulations and advise clients on implications and potential design issues."

The IES VE-SBEM Public Beta incorporates the SBEM 4.0c engine, while iSAP integrates with the latest version of JPA Designer incorporating SAP 9.90. They enable users to run both domestic and non-domestic Part L 2010 compliance calculations, generate BRUKL reports and produce Energy Performance Certificates. These are both fully working versions, although testing is still underway and as such results should only be used for rough and not final calculations until the approved version is released. IES is also completing 2010 development of its market leading VE-DSM tool which will also be released shortly.

The Public Beta of IES VE version 6.2 can be downloaded by emailing beta@iesve.com, stating name, company and contact details.

