



Taking Cover – the ICW Group podcast

Hosted by – David Elliott (DE).

(DE) Hello everyone and a very warm welcome to the Taking Cover podcast with ICW Group.

Today we are discussing the updates to the UK Building Regulations with Neil Horsfall and Guy Briggs from ICW Building Control.

ICW Group is one of the UK's largest providers of residential and commercial building warranties and now also offers building control services. ICW Building Control is a division of ICW Group that offers CICAIR licensed building control services to builders, developers, architects and homeowners across England and Wales.

Neil Horsfall is Managing Director of ICW Building Control. Neil give us an idea of what your role entails and where you are based.

(Neil) Hi, I'm based at our head office in up in South Shields just outside Newcastle. As Managing Director of the business it is my role to have a full oversight, and mainly to concentrate on making sure that we are operating within our licence.

(DE) OK and we've got Guy Briggs who is Operations Director for ICW Building Control. Again welcome Guy – can you give us a run down of what you do?

(Guy) Yes so I deal with the opposite side of the business to Neil, I have a more hands on approach with the team of surveyors that we have up and down the country who carry out the service for clients and who provide the pre-application advice service for architects. On the other side of my job is to make sure that we follow our ISO 9001 process to make sure that everything is done correctly.

(DE) So you are kept busy the two of you. Earlier this year saw the introduction of important updates to the building regulations and today Neil & Guy will share their experience and talk us through what this means for building projects.

To recap on what the Building Regulations are – these are the requirements for the design and construction of buildings. If you're building something new, or making big changes to an existing building, you will need to comply with building regulations. Significant changes to the building regulations were introduced this year and today we discuss some of the implications for builders and developers.

(DE) Guy, can you give us an overview of the building regulation changes that we are discussing today?

(Guy) Yes so there are two sides to the story. England have their own changes which are already in place, the updates to the approved documents. They are focussed on new houses or on houses that are being converted to flats. There's more requirements from Government on builders and homeowners to raise that min standard.

The same thing is to apply in Wales as well where we operate under our licence. They are a little bit behind with legislation. Essentially new approved documents, new requirements and a new culture to learn on construction sites as we develop and evolve within our industry.

(DE) And Neil, when did these building regulations change?

(Neil) The new guidance actually came into force on 15th June for use in England. This means that any initial notice or full plan submission after that date will be checked against the new compliance documents. But that being said, any initial notices that have been served prior to that date will remain under the old guidance, providing that work starts on every plot before 15th June 2023.

(DE) And is that the same for Wales?

No as Guy said there they are a little bit behind us and their changes come into force on 23rd November 2022 with the same period of 12 months thereafter.

(DE) Neil, are there transitional arrangements for the new regulations?

(Neil) Yes if the Initial Notice was served before the 15th June, any plots starting within 12 months will be allowed to continue under the same guidance. If anything is aimed to start after 15th June 2022, we would have to reapply the new guidance.

So let's say you've got a site of 40 houses, if 20 of them start in the first 12 months then that's fine. But anything starting after 15th June 2023, we would have to do a full resubmission and a full plan check under the new guidance.

(DE) Ok perfect and Guy let's get down to the nuts and bolts of everything, which Building Regulations are affected?

(Guy) So this is the bit that scares most architects and most builders, because we're going to get a bit technical. I'm going to talk about Part F, Part L, Part O and Part S – or FLOS.

But to break it down to make it more simplistic when I'm talking to architects I'm saying look, part F is for ventilation. There are subtle changes within part F so it's not really reinventing the wheel. It's essentially increasing slightly more on what they would have done before with background ventilation and just making sure things are commissioned for extract fans.

Part L – that's probably one that's hit most social media platforms most lately, because that's probably going to have the most cost implications for most people. It deals with insulation and technologies to heat or cool your home. So conservation of fuel and power that's probably the big one.

The most interesting one is overheating, part O, because to get away from the bureaucracy of asking for more information at design, construction and completion stage, in reality we could be seeing houses being built with shading on the outside similar to what they're doing in Europe. So basically the character and appearance of some houses may look different on the outside or may have different technologies on the inside to make sure it complies with part O.

(Neil) I think that's quite topical having just come through a heatwave and the trouble that people are having sleeping even in older houses. We are starting to look at how people are going to live in houses.

(DE) Yes really timely. Just as we are seeing the heatwave is just transitioning at the moment.

(Guy) Yes completely and I think over the next 10 years, it's going to become the norm of seeing these different looks of houses. The historians can go - oh I know when that house was built because that's when the new part O came in!

But anyway I sidetracked, apologies for that! The last one is part S – Electric Vehicle Charging. I know the planning authorities are enforcing that already through planning permission, but we are supporting that in our own way through the building regulations. So that's a good one because it's a small document but it packs a lot of information. In a nutshell we need to start putting car charging points in because the government are starting to phase out petrol and diesel to favour alternative technologies which are electric because that's going to be one way of decarbonising our whole infrastructure. So that's going to be quite an interesting one in terms of where they are going to be placed and how much is it going to cost long-term.

(DE) Really interesting, it feels like these regulations are opening a new chapter in building and developing and really we will be seeing buildings that even look slightly different in the future.

(Guy) Yes completely. You can take these buildings right back to the Victorian times, we can look at the pathology of a building and date it, work out who lived there and why they moved there. From the railway age to erris bricks being built. Well now this is our time, this is why electrical points were put in, this is why walls were insulated from the inside or the wall structure is made thicker because you need to comply with part L. So there is going to be more flexibility in achieving compliance if people are starting to absorb the new technologies out there. And it's that new technology that is going to be, for homeowners who aren't in the nitty gritty, that's going to be the culture shift. But with the building regs we've got to ensure that all those user manuals are passed on, that they're taught how to use them efficiently. It's going back to the days when – you probably remember it Neil, trickle ventilation. Homeowners don't want trickle ventilation because it's going to make their house cold. Well no these are tiny strips along window frames and you turn up, especially working for the council, and there may be damp problems and the act of opening the background ventilation or the trickle vents and hey ho the mould disappeared. So it is education and culture change.

(DE) And I was going to ask why are building regulations being updated, but I suppose we have different priorities now to 20-30 years ago when we were building houses.

(Guy) Yes I've got some stats here based on England and Wales. Transport carbon emissions at 27%, energy supply – 21%, housing has a big carbon footprint of 15% . So we can hit the housing market, existing stock if they want to put an extension on to new builds, then we can improve the carbon footprint of our whole industry and decarbonise our country as such which globally is going to make an impact. And also, if we can be leaders in this field across European countries, other countries can look towards us to pave the way for how things should be done. And if we get things wrong, well we are still making positive changes and you can be rest assured that there will be new changes coming along to improve it even further.

(DE) It's fascinating that the housebuilding world could really be helping to reduce climate change and really playing it's part in the race towards net zero as well.

(Guy) I agree with you, the end product will, the longevity of everything will do. Buildings will be more airtight and will be able to control the heat and energy inside the building more effectively. But I think as an industry collectively there's something we've got to be looking at - where does the timber coming from, where does the cement come from, there's a much bigger question so the creation of these materials, the manufacturers are working really hard to make it more sustainable. The whole supply chain of materials to construction is improving, and that's a global push as well.

(DE) Yes and it's great to see. Neil – can you give us an idea of how long the building regulations are enforceable for?

(Neil) Yes so outside of the transition period and the new changes, under the Building Act 1984, from the date of the initial notice submission works should commence within a 3 years period. Anything that goes on longer than that the initial notice would have been ceased, and therefore any changes or amended building regs would then be applicable to that project.

(DE) And Guy do you see any other changes coming on the horizon in terms of building regulations?

(Guy) These changes that are happening now are another little step before 2025 happens. We don't know exactly what 2025 is going to look for under the building regulations, but there are drafts and information coming from government suggesting that gas boilers or LPG boilers or oil boilers are going to be phased out on new build houses. So what we're experiencing now is that little stepping stone to basically trying to get the industry to take little steps because when it gets to 2025 they are going to draw a line in the sand potentially and we've got to be fully invested with new technologies and the new way of living to benefit everybody.

(DE) OK and Neil it probably sounds as if we're talking about new builds a lot but do old buildings need to comply with new regulations?

(Neil) Yes they do. When changes are coming in we have to consider historical buildings and those that are listed. When they were built they didn't have the same thermal insulation or sound, but the documents do offer up some great advice and guidance around these kinds of buildings.

(DE) You're sitting at the heart of the construction industry day in day out, what other issues do you see coming down the track, what are the big things that are in line for the industry at the minute?

(Neil) So I think the biggest change that's going to hit construction is the introduction to the Building Safety Regulator. The HSE will now become the building control body, and they are going to become a statutory consultation. This will happen at planning stage. This is going to cover buildings in scope so high rise 18m buildings etc. The HSE are going to give permission to build so they are going to be looking at the life safety aspect. So fire compartmentation etc. You will need that approval prior to building. Massive changes coming.

(DE) Big changes coming down the track – others that we can look at in our podcast in future episodes hopefully. You are both a mine of information and thanks for your time today. If our listeners have any questions on the building regulations, please get in touch and one of our team will be happy to help.



If you're planning on starting a new project and have a requirement for structural warranty or building control services, you can request a quote from ICW by visiting [i-c-w.co.uk](https://www.icw.co.uk).

Thanks so much for tuning in and listening today and look out for future episodes of the Taking Cover podcast on the ICW website.

(This ICW podcast was hosted by David Elliott and produced by Aaron Abernethy for ICW.)

(Full details of the transitional arrangements can be found in Circular Letter 01/2021 as published on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk). The same transitional arrangements will apply in Wales and there is information available on the Welsh government website at <https://gov.wales/building-regulations-etc-amendment-wales-regulations-2022-wgc-0032022.html>)