



SURVEY DEPARTMENT

Summer 2010 NEWSLETTER

THE DEMISE OF HOME INFORMATION PACKS BUT THE ENERGY PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE LIVES ON

As expected the new coalition government has cancelled the need to provide a Home Information Pack, although the speed at which this manifesto proposal was implemented did take the industry by surprise. Most vendors though are pleased to see the end of this scheme. The Information Pack had been intended as a measure to speed up and aid certainty in the housing market but most vendors saw this as a costly inconvenience which was of little benefit.

Since the demise of the scheme there has been a marked increase in properties being brought to the market and this will aid purchaser choice and it is hoped will be a further stimulus to market activity.

The Energy Performance Certificate, however, is still mandatory. Whilst the Energy Rating is unlikely to be a prime consideration in the purchasing decision the Certificate does provide useful guidance for Householders who wish to consider their energy costs and this will be of more relevance as those costs continue to rise.

The onus to obtain the Certificate no longer rests with the selling agent. It is now the responsibility of the homeowner/vendor to obtain this but the document does not need to be in place at the start of the marketing process. Instead, provided the certificate has been obtained or at least ordered within 28 days this will satisfy the statutory requirements.

If you would like to commission an Energy Performance Certificate then please contact our Survey Department on 01565 751328.

**THE AREA'S LEADING INDEPENDENT ESTATE AGENCY
AND RESIDENTIAL SURVEYORS**



TOPICAL TIPS

Has the light come on yet?

Current generation low-energy light bulbs are considered to be 80% more efficient than conventional bulbs and governments globally are pushing to introduce them as a substitute. Here in the UK this is being driven by the removal of incandescent bulbs from the retail market.



Low-energy bulbs contain up to 5 milligrams of mercury which is required to produce the light, however the mercury from a single lamp is enough to pollute 30,000 litres of water beyond safe-drinking levels (source: Mercury Recycling plc). As a consequence, handling and disposal of used or damaged bulbs needs careful thought.

Under normal operating conditions a low-energy bulb should not break but in real life this is almost inevitable. Mercury, of course, is a highly toxic metal and in the UK the Health Protection Agency has some startling recommendations should this occur. This includes:-

- vacate the room and keep children and pets out of the affected area
- ventilate the room externally for at least 15 minutes before clean-up
- do not use a vacuum cleaner but clean up using rubber gloves and aim to avoid creating and inhaling airborne dust as much as possible
- dispose of the fragments in a double-wrapped plastic bag and treat as hazardous waste.

There must obviously be some concerns that the ordinary man and woman in the street will not adopt this advice and there is the on-going potential long-term problem of increasing levels of mercury finding their way into landfill sites.

As a consequence if you come across a broken light bulb of this type take care!

GREEN ROOFS FOR RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES?

The creation of green roofs, which involves constructing a flat roof with a waterproof barrier topped out by material which allows grasses and other sedums to grow on them are becoming increasingly popular in commercial and industrial projects but there is a prospect that there will be a cross-transfer of this technology into the domestic market due to substantial energy savings which they allow.

In the UK however we are still somewhat behind the rest of Europe where studies have shown that there can be a 3-10% saving on winter fuel bills whilst there is also a benefit in the summer where there is a substantial cooling, thereby reducing the need therefore for air-conditioning, etc.

A further benefit of green roofs is the reduction of rainwater run-off. This is becoming increasingly popular in some cities where the waste water network is struggling to cope with run-off volumes. A green roof usually reduces run-off by 75% or more as the rainwater is absorbed by the plants.

The speed of water run-off is also reduced thereby providing a natural control of flow into the drainage system. Additionally bio-filtration provided by green roofs also filters out water-borne pollutants such as heavy metals, which can occur naturally in rainwater.

Careful choice, design and planting on a green roof can enhance bio-diversity and provide additional habitat for wildlife species whilst reducing CO₂ and increasing oxygen levels.

They also have some benefits for acoustic installation too. Perhaps therefore as we become more environmentally aware there will be a return to housing with flat roofs in order to take advantage of these environmental benefits.

MARKET COMMENT

The ending of the requirement to provide a Home Information Pack has seen the return to the market of a number of vendors who wish to offer their existing home for sale prior to sourcing their new property.

The budget measures to increase VAT to 20% in January 2011 is also encouraging vendors to market now, thereby saving the VAT increase on their transfer costs and for the inevitable purchasers of white goods and furnishings etc.

As a consequence, there has been some increase in instructions and this surge of new entrance into the market should act as a stimulant during the second half of the year. Whether this results in any change in prices we will have to wait and see.

The **Survey Department of Gascoigne Halman** can provide that support to purchasers by carrying out Homebuyer Reports or Building Surveys. The department can be contacted for further advice on 01565 751328.

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