

21 February 2007



## Home Information Pack Update: Towards 1 June

### Home Builders Federation Consultation response

We have consulted our members on the latest Home Information Pack documentation and co-ordinated the response detailed below.

#### Energy Performance Certificates

HBF welcomes the introduction of EPCs but has a series of concerns which need to be addressed, to ensure there are no delays in the delivery of much-needed new homes.

Our main concerns relate to software, timing, training and content/consistency issues: -

- Software to produce EPCs for new homes

An EPC for a new home will be based on SAP software whereas the EPC for an existing property will be based on RD SAP – two different software packages requiring different training/expertise.

- Timing for introduction of EPCs for new homes

The protocol for an 'Interim Energy Assessment' and the final 'Energy Performance Certificate' does not exist for new homes and software is only in draft format. This raises serious questions over whether it will be possible to provide either of these by 1<sup>st</sup> June 07 for the new homes market.

By way of illustration, this situation has to date prevented a major UK house builder from being involved in the HIPs area trials (despite being allocated funding).

- Training for new homes Energy Assessors

The EPC base information is due to be available on 27 March – will this leave enough time to train assessors for new homes before 1<sup>st</sup> June?

Most existing new homes SAP assessors are members of National Energy Services & Elmhurst (who are both members of FAERO). It is therefore important that both of these bodies are recognized for producing EPCs, otherwise home builders will have to pay for an EPC in addition to the SAP calculation that is done for building regulation approval. Such duplication of activity would also slow down the speed at which home builders can

market a property and would lead to a national shortage of Accredited Persons which will hold up delivery of new homes.

- Content/Consistency of EPC for new homes

We would also like to raise concerns relating to the prospective variation between an EPC conducted via the new homes SAP software and that of a surveyor who will presumably be using RD SAP to assess today's new home when it is sold on in the future. These are essentially two different software packages likely to produce different results. It would therefore be illogical for a new home with a SAP assessment to subsequently receive a RD SAP assessment when the original purchaser markets the property. Assessors should take into account the nature of any original assessment made and apply consistent methodology in such cases.

In addition, some areas of the EPC are not appropriate to new homes - e.g the second column would state areas requiring improvement but this would not make sense for a new home built to the latest building regulations requirements. Other aspects of the certificate could also be misleading for new homes, particularly where there are too many variables e.g the statement of actual fuel costs.

## **Searches**

HBF welcomes the proposals to speed up the time, cost and quality of searches and the transitional measures for the requirements of HIPs

- What is the longevity of a search on a new home? Eg if a property takes 5 years to sell will the search still be valid? This is particularly relevant in the Retirement Housing Market.