

Letters

Pressurisation is the answer for fire escape routes to save lives

I'd like to back John Hopkinson's proposal that all building escape routes be kept clear and, ideally, pressurised to keep smoke out ('Burning questions', *Journal*, December 2009, page 26). Pressurisation is the only method of smoke control where the objective of the design is to keep fire smoke out of escape routes. Natural or power ventilation of escape routes still mean smoke entering them. Wall vents or smoke shafts have the added disadvantage of being very prone to external wind-induced positive pressures, effectively rendering them useless as a reliable smoke-control system.

Pressurisation, which can be retrofitted, has become the smoke control system of choice for high-rise buildings in countries outside the UK, where, sadly, there has long been a strong lobby against this method. This group has worked tirelessly to maintain the use of much less reliable natural ventilation systems – the 'open slats' mentioned in the article. There are many buildings now that have their escape routes protected by pressurisation, and BS9999 now insists on pressurisation of fire fighting stairs in buildings over 30 metres high, and of serving basements more than 10 metres deep.

We are awaiting an update of Approved Document B of the Building Regulations that would make BS9999 the referral standard for compliance. However, this update is not due until 2016. Here is a task for one of our trade organisations – HEVAC, for example, or even CIBSE.
Jim Wild, CEng, FIImechE

Cut the building performance greenwash in the *Journal*

The article about AECOM's work at the KPMG headquarters is downright misleading ('A measure and a half', December *Journal*, page 32). The strapline states that the design 'will exceed Part L (2006) requirements by more than 50 per cent'. The key facts panel states the HVAC and lighting as being '<50 per cent of the carbon emissions of the Part L notional building'. This in no way means that it exceeds

the requirements of Part L by 50 per cent. A typical air-conditioned office Target Emission Rate is likely to be around 40 to 42 kg CO₂/sq m. Based on the stated Building Emission Rate this would give a saving of around 12 to 15 per cent, which is not even close to the stated 50 per cent figure and only halfway to what would be required for Part L 2010 compliance. Why doesn't the article state the building's

in a few years' time when the energy performance is nothing like as is claimed.
Duncan Campbell

Sustainable energy is a local distribution issue too

I was disappointed that the debate on sustainable energy in December's *Journal* ('Greening the grid', page 20) did not cover the advantages of

locally-based distribution networks. In particular, the opportunities for local communities to form social enterprises and reinvest the earnings from renewable energy schemes into their communities. Surely this is the type of enterprise that could be supported now, instead of continued investment in rationalisation and centralisation of our existing electricity distribution system, which, due to the majority of energy involved being wasted, must surely be in question itself?

Paul McIntosh

Make fuller use of our green solutions

The government's target of three million greener, more affordable new homes by 2020 is commendable but there are millions of people who need a solution now.

As an industry, we already have comprehensive technical solutions to eradicate the situation where people have to choose between heating, eating and paying rent. It's critical that we continue to promote next-generation, cost-effective and energy-efficient products to those in

public – and private – housing, who can specify for change and a change for the better.

Neil Evans, general manager, Thermo-Floor

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Greening the grid

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Target Emission Rate and Building Emission Rate so that we can all see and understand the actual calculated benefits of the energy strategy employed?

It would also be useful to know the calculated carbon intensity of cooling supplied by the trigeneration system. Calculations I have completed have shown that, for small systems, cooling generated by this method is as carbon intensive as cooling from cooling towers, which can make it more environmentally friendly to switch off the CHP when there is waste heat being generated. Is the building client aware of how the building is actually going to perform or will they be very disappointed