

Firms sign up as fire safety early adopters

The country's biggest housebuilder and second-biggest contractor are among firms that have signed up to the government's early adopters programme to trial new systems ahead of further changes to the Building Regulations in the wake of the Hackitt review, writes Will Ing.

Last month, within its response to Dame Judith Hackitt's review of building regulations and fire safety, the government announced Barratt had been joined by Wates, social housing firm Peabody and United Living as part of an initiative to trial planned changes.

The four follow Kier, which joined the early adopters programme in July along with Willmott Dixon and housing associations L&Q and Salix Homes.

The firms will work with the Joint Regulators Group (JRG), which is looking at ways to actively monitor building safety in the construction industry following last year's Grenfell tower fire in west London.

The JRG includes existing regulators and public bodies such as the Health and Safety Executive and the National Fire Chiefs Council, which will work with firms to look at how safety standards in construction can be better regulated.

The firms are also trying new

KEY CHANGES

Housing secretary James Brokenshire has identified four areas for change:

- Creation of a stronger regulatory and accountability framework
- Clearer standards and guidance to help builders and product manufacturers better understand what is required to keep a building safe
- A stronger voice for residents, including more effective routes for escalation and swift redress when things go wrong
- Fostering a culture change in the industry by taking on incompetent firms through enforcement action and possibly legislation

document management systems for buildings in their portfolios and trialling technologies to manage supply chains and establish a record of a building's make-up.

This includes using BIM to manage the supply chain and maintain a "golden thread" of information, a key recommendation of last year's Hackitt review.

The government also said progress had been made by the competence steering group set up in June. This group of industry representatives is tasked with developing proposals for

a regulator to ensure those working on buildings are competent.

The government said just before Christmas that it would fully implement the recommendations made by Hackitt in her review in the wake of 2017's Grenfell Tower fire.

In his foreword to the government's response, housing secretary James Brokenshire said he is pushing for a "culture change" towards a more safety-orientated construction industry.

"My plan for stronger, tougher rules will make sure there is no hiding place for those who flout building safety rules," he added.

This means government will challenge unsatisfactory firms, including through support of local authority enforcement action. It could also mean the government legislates to ensure the competence of those carrying out building work.

The government's response to Hackitt also said a standards committee would be established to advise on product standards.

A number of key areas are still due to be consulted on, including the scope of buildings to be covered by the new regulatory framework and duty holder responsibilities. The government has promised an initial consultation before the spring.



NOBODY EXCEPT A SELECT NUMBER OF ZEALOTS OR ATTENTION-SEEKERS REALLY THINKS THAT A 'NO-DEAL BREXIT' OUTCOME WORKS

RICHARD STEER, P26

NEWS IN BRIEF

Civils activity booms

A strong performance for civil engineering activity last month was offset by a slowdown in the growth of housing and commercial, according to the latest IHS Markit/CIPS data. Overall, construction grew for the ninth consecutive month.

Profit plunges at Heatherwick Studio

Coal Drops Yard architect Heatherwick Studio saw pre-tax profit plunge in the year to March 2018, falling 82% to £1.7m on turnover down 30% to £19m.

Everton FC stadium plans progress

Premier League football club Everton said a detailed planning application for its new stadium, drawn up by US architect Dan Meis with Sheppard Robson, will be submitted in the second half of this year. It will be built on the banks of the River Mersey and will hold up to 62,000 fans.

CBEs for John Pawson and John Wood

Architect John Pawson, whose firm designed the interior of the new Design Museum, and John Wood, chair of Gateshead-based contractor Tolent, both received CBEs in this year's New Year's Honours List.

Graham wins £25m Gramophone job

Graham Construction has won the £25m second phase of the Gramophone Works office scheme next to the Grand Union Canal in west London for developer Resolution Property.



Budding work

It has emerged Skanska and QS Alinea are both working on Foster + Partners' Tulip tower in the City of London. Gherkin contractor Skanska is listed as construction consultant on the 305m-tall building while others on the job include planning consultant DP9 and heritage consultant Tavernor. The scheme is to be built next to Foster's Gherkin. Construction could start in 2020 and complete in 2025, according to client Jacob J Safra, the billionaire banker who owns the Gherkin. But Historic Royal Palaces, the charity that manages the Tower of London, wants the project rejected because of its impact on the nearby landmark. Historic England has also objected.