

Built Environment must seize green economy opportunities

Written by Karl

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The Institute for Sustainability, an independent charity, today called on built environment businesses to take advantage of the £500 billion that is predicted to be spent on retrofitting UK's domestic buildings over the next 40 years.

To support businesses across the supply chain the Institute has released a series of guides, entitled 'Building Opportunities for Business: Low Carbon Domestic Retrofit'.

The guides draw on leading academic and industry experts and provide practical and commercially focused advice and best practice to both trades and professions including architects, surveyors, builders, project managers, plumbers and electricians. You can access the guides via www.instituteforsustainability.org.uk/retrofitguides

Ian Short, Chief Executive at the Institute for Sustainability said: "Retrofitting buildings is one of the biggest jobs and growth opportunities in the UK. We have no choice but to make refurbishing our domestic housing stock a priority or we will not meet legal obligations to reduce CO2 emissions. To make such large-scale changes, we need equally significant transformation in the industry. Built environment businesses need to learn new ways of doing things but perhaps more importantly understand how the low carbon agenda can mean new business and a higher turnover".

The Institute's guides have been developed through its FLASH programme, part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and in collaboration with the Technology Strategy Board. The programme aims to support a step-change in the built environment industry by engaging London Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) with the commercial potential of low carbon building and retrofit – more than 600 businesses have joined FLASH to date. Through the Institute's strategic partnership with the Technology Strategy Board, members can access learning from the UK's leading retrofit demonstrator projects.

Initially launched to London Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), the guides cover the complete low carbon domestic retrofit process, including topics such as planning and managing low carbon retrofit projects; funding and procurement; managing energy, waste, water and on-going maintenance; and how to market retrofit services.

Ian Meikle, who leads the Technology Strategy Board's work on low impact buildings, said: "The Retrofit Guides draw heavily on experience gained through the Technology Strategy Board's Retrofit for the Future programme and they provide valuable insights into the practicalities of retrofitting energy efficiency measures in existing domestic properties. The challenge of significantly reducing carbon emissions from our houses is enormous, but so too is the resulting business opportunity. These guides will help companies respond to this opportunity and grow their business."

Peter Rickaby, Managing Editor, 'Low Carbon Domestic Retrofit Guides'; director of Rickaby Thompson Associates and partner to the Institute, said: "These guides will underpin the Government's forthcoming Green Deal, which is designed to promote retrofit, transform the building industry and facilitate our transition to a low carbon economy."

The Government recently announced the consultation period for the Green Deal incentive scheme. Coming into play in 2012, the Green Deal will incentivise homeowners and landlords, including Social Landlords, to improve the energy efficiency of their buildings and reduce heating bills. The scheme will also benefit UK business by potentially supporting at least 65,000 insulation and construction jobs by 2015.