

By STEWART DELGARNO, chairman of the UK Timber Frame Association

The UK housebuilding industry is in a bit of an eco-frenzy. Almost from nowhere, it seems, the global warming agenda has appeared, and the race is on to design and build the UK's first commercially viable and technically robust zero carbon homes.

By 2016, the Government wants to see all new homes being zero carbon, and those that are will qualify for a reduction in stamp duty.

Housebuilders know that this is a big challenge. It takes them out of their natural territory into issues of energy supply and distribution, and it puts extra scrutiny on technical areas of housebuilding like airtightness. But it's a challenge the UKTFA has welcomed. From our point of view, it's about time that we started offering real incentives to those progressive housebuilders and developers who are building greener homes – often timber frame homes.

We know that it's already possible to reach levels 5 and 6 of the Code for Sustainable Homes by using timber frame in volume housebuilding. That's why I believe high quality, low and zero carbon homes can become a mainstream reality well before 2016.

When it comes to volume housebuilding, you can't get a greener building material than timber frame.

It's organic, non-toxic and naturally renewable. It's carbon neutral, even allowing for transport.

It's worth pointing out too that the UK timber frame industry plays no part in the deforestation that is such a terrible and dramatic threat to our planet as 99% of all UK timber frame homes are built using softwood from sustainably managed forests in Europe. In Europe we are committed to planting more trees than we harvest.

To find out more, go to the UKTFA website at <http://www.timber-frame.org>.