

SURVEYORS CALL FOR EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT OF BUILDING REGULATIONS

UK EXPERT SAYS BRITISH MODEL OF INDEPENDENT INSPECTIONS PROTECTS CONSUMERS

APARTMENT OWNERS URGED TO SEEK ADVICE BEFORE TAKING OWNERSHIP OF DEVELOPMENTS

Friday 21st October 2011. The Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland has called on the Government to introduce legislation to ensure strict enforcement of building regulations.

The Society said the legislation should include provision for qualified independent building inspectors to be appointed for all building works to ensure full compliance with building regulations in all aspects of new construction.

The SCSi said that the current policy of self-certification has failed to ensure a satisfactory standard of construction due to a lack of regular inspections and enforcement procedures where developments are in breach of regulations. The Society pointed out that in most of Europe and the UK there is a far more stringent approach to ensuring compliance with building regulations than is currently the case in Ireland.

Professor Malcolm Hollis, the leading authority in the UK on building defect recognition - who is addressing the Society's annual conference in Dublin later today - said that the key issue in Ireland appears to be the lack of independent assessment of the design together with detailed checking of the building work. He said this was essential in order to protect occupants and ensure the value of new properties.

Professor Hollis, who is Professor of Building Pathology at the University of Reading said; "It appears that the lack of legislation requiring mandatory inspections and enforcement in Ireland has resulted in cases where new construction did not achieve the required standards. We have already seen the result of this in relation to fire safety. But the health and wellbeing of occupants can also be put at risk through failures to achieve required standards for ventilation, waterproofing, drainage, heating and energy conservation".

"Building regulations have been compiled to protect the lives and health of occupiers and to ensure a reliable performance from the finished building. In the UK, approved independent inspectors work with the developer before, during and after construction to ensure a stringent approach to ensuring compliance in accordance with the building regulations. A similar system could work in Ireland", he said.

The Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland also called on the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government to ensure that the resources are available to significantly increase the number of random inspections of developments which are carried out. Under the current system only 10 to 15% of developments are inspected.

John Curtin, President of the Society said; "It is crucial that Local Authorities can appoint qualified professionals to ensure that the construction of the developments is carried out to the required standards in the interests of consumer protection. The Society recommends that the public service embargo is relaxed for local authorities in these special cases".

"Furthermore, in light of the recent September deadline for the transfer of Multi Unit Developments from the developer to the Owner's Management Company, the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland recommends that apartment owners contact the relevant professionals before taking ownership of the common areas from the developer to ensure they meet building regulations", Curtin said.

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The Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland was formed in April 2011 as a result of a merger between the Society of Chartered Surveyors (SCS) and the Irish Auctioneers & Valuers Institute (IAVI). It also works in partnership with the RICS, the global professional body for Chartered Surveyors with over 100,000 members worldwide.