



## From the Editor

### Sustainability - When words loose their meaning

*In a recent article entitled 'out with the new', Sir Digby Jones, Director General of the Confederation of British Industry, criticised the Modern Methods of Construction initiative (MMC) for its failure to achieve sustainable homes, in the true sense of the word. These comments were made in the context of the breaking news that the leading edge timber frame 'Caspar' Development in Leeds, which has been standing for less than 5 years, is to be demolished. The development has serious structural stability problems and it is feared it will collapse in high winds.*

*He pointed out that in the sixties and seventies, many systems built housing projects were popular with residents and seen as desirable places to live. However, over time they deteriorated, became difficult to maintain and difficult to let. He questioned whether the new generation of modern construction methods had learned from these lessons, or whether they are exacerbating the situation. He pointed out that MMC homes are often more difficult to refurbish and that many will be demolished after 40 or 50 years rather than being refurbished.*

*In concluding, he said that he would like to raise the bar to make all new build dwellings 'carbon neutral', with a target life of at least 200 years and to be able to sustain a 4° C rise in summer temperatures over that period.*

*Sir Digby Jones comments are also valid in the Irish context. Recent statements by South Dublin County Council Architect, Brian Brennan, to a timber frame conference, confirm the shocking lack of standards on site. Such buildings lack basic durability, often do not comply with building and fire regulations and sometimes pose such danger to the occupants that they are suitable for demolition on the day they are built. Despite the 'green labels' attached to these buildings by their influential promoters (the vast majority of which is bogus and unscientific) the stark reality is that these buildings cannot be called 'sustainable' in any sense. Building in this manner is in fact unsustainable.*

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