

Does the building sector need regulation to achieve sustainability?

Chloe Hampton from LSBU's Sustainable Communities Institute discusses the issues raised by the Government's move away from regulating sustainability in the building sector.

In the last nine months, the UK Government has made several decisions that have had a significant effect on the building sector. These include holding off the Zero Carbon Homes policy, discontinuing the Green deal and reducing incentives for renewable energy technologies.

These moves away from governmental regulation for sustainability in the built environment raise three important issues, the first being lack of security. Policy and incentives provide security and reduce risk for organisations that are developing sustainable innovations. Without legislation, organisations will be less inclined to take new approaches to practice sustainability.

Although the private sector is increasingly realising the value of sustainability, an unregulated industry runs the risk of organisations dodging responsibility. The industry looks to government regulation for guidance, but receives **little support** in addressing the sustainability challenge. The large environmental impact of the building industry means organisations need to act and accept responsibility, and proactive companies should provoke a bottom-up change.

Having said this, many would argue that the government is still responsible for regulating the industry. Sustainability legislation should

amend and enforce behaviours, but if government isn't exerting influence and driving sustainable development, then **the industry should be**. This raises the question of influence, and how the industry should respond given the lack of government interest. There are so many systematic factors hindering the development of the industry that it seems like an unfeasible task for industry professionals to take on without government support.

Understandably, numerous leaders and experts in the building sector are concerned that without a government commitment to legislation for sustainable development the industry will **fall to minimum standards** and hinder the kind of innovation that supports sustainability.

Regulation vs. self-regulation

At LSBU, we're bringing together influential voices in the sector to discuss whether the sector needs legislation to enshrine sustainable practice in our debate on **regulation versus self-regulation**.

Experts for regulation at the debate include Paul Overall, Chief Executive of the Local Authority Building Control and former principle policy advisor to



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the Government for 14 years. Award-winning civil engineer Nicole Lazarus from Bioregional will also bring her experience from working with public and private developers to argue for regulation.

Arguing for self-regulation will be Martin Townsend, Director of Sustainability at the Building research Establishment and former regulator for the Environment agency, as well as Mat Colmer, independent researcher and expert in built and urban environments.

The debate will be chaired by Paul King Managing Director of Sustainability at Lendlease.