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A Debate on the Different Building Control Systems

I Predict a Riot

Presentation To the:
Irish Building Control Institute
Bunratty
Co. Clare
22nd March 2007
Can local authorities really be any good?

Why not move to insurance based systems?

Surely we can trust the industry to police itself?

Was the introduction of competition about service or political dogma?

Are countries systems better related to their cultures?

Can we learn from others?

Who exactly is it we really serve: Industry? Government? Employer? People?
Issues

• Why should I have an opinion
• Why does Building Control exist
• Different Systems
  – Competition
  – Self Certification
  – Local Authority Control
• Need for Debate
Intro to Me
The Times they are a changing

• Building Control 28 Years
• Head of 4th Largest BC unit in British Isles
• President of Institute of Building Control
• Advisor to US Standards Company UL
• Chair of NIBC
• Member of Core Cities, LABC, LDSA
• Chair of NIBRAC
Current Staff Structure

- 69+ Staff
- Building Control Surveyors
  - Architects, Surveyors, Mechanical & Electrical, Structural & Fire Engineers
- Managers (MBA, MA MSc)
- IT & Training Specialists
- GIS Specialist
- Lawyer (Expert on Human Rights)
Workload for 2005/06

- 3100 Building Regulations Applications
- 1400 Regularisations
- 37,000 Inspections for Building Regulations
- 400 Entertainments Licences
- 54 Special Committee Meetings
- 900 During Performance Inspections
- 3000 VLA Surveys
- 9000 Property Certificates
- 200 Dangerous Structures
- 394 Street signs
- 60,000 Letter & Telephone Calls
- Income £3.2M (roughly £1m not Building Regulations)
Why Building Control

- Government policy to be done, done fairly, seen to be done
- Public assurance
- Public Protection
- Level Playing Field
- Remove compliance burden from client
- Create better buildings for the future
Approved Inspectors

This is the End of the World as we know it

- England & Wales
- Building Act 1984
- Choice of LA or AI
- AI registered by Government
- LA’s must set Fee bands
- Only LAs carry out enforcement
Approved Inspectors (E&W)

- Birmingham use good surveying staff to get work
- Belief if enforcement too hard lose job
  - BRE Report on non compliance
  - Barratt Homes failures were Approved Inspector
- Drop in Standards of Skill & Ability
- Other Council Services dropped to concentrate on money earning
- No capacity for LA’s to expand into other areas
- Loss of focus on who do you serve, not who is customer
- AI’s poaching LA staff, no training for new staff
- AI’s creaming lucrative work, LA left with dross or difficult work
- Not true competition, national decision made despite local excellence
- No desire to carry out wishes
- Belfast Experience
  - BHS roof replacement threat
  - Butler & Young: do work for 50% of fee
Certifier & Verifiers (Scotland)

Someone to watch over me

- Only just in 2005
- Partial Certification system
- Certifiers & Verifiers
- Architects/Builders Certify Work
- If not Certified LA’s do the job
- Thin Edge of Large Wedge !!!!!!!
- Government Audit of Providers
Self Certification

*Lunatics have taken over the asylum*

• Is there evidence of it working:
  – Turkey Earthquakes
  – Italy School Collapse
  – Israel Wedding Floor Hotel
  – Ireland; Disability/Thermal
  – FSA Barlow Clowes

• Govt: Intention to transform, no control

• Can we trust the industry to conform:
  – 6 x Plans in one day
  – Compliance with Planning conditions

• Why do you want to:
  – We take the difficult decisions clients don’t want to hear
  – Myth Designer know the Regs: New Part F

• Can it ever happen
  – Large scale Structural
  – CORGI as against NICEAC
LA Control (NI System)

- Monopoly: precious gift
- Stability: Recruit & retain good people
- Concentrate on doing the job
- Capacity to do other things
- Independent & Impartial
- Level Playing Field
- Works (Industry, Customers and Government)
  - Close to customers
  - Close to community
  - Close to political representatives
Watch, Learn & Adapt

Wonderful World

• Cultures should drive systems
• US system of writing regulations
• Move from enforce rules to policy implementation by facilitate/advise/solve/ensure/assure
• Build on the Scottish Audit System
• E&W Performance Indicators & Awards Ceremonies
• Birmingham Community Surveyors
• Edinburgh Integration of Business & Technical Staff
• Belfast:
  – Electronic Delivery of Services, Homeworking
  – Expansion of Services e.g: VLA
  – Provision of information
• Civil Servants must work with Providers not over them.
Make it Better

- Responsible & Accountable
- Remove Murphy Brentwood Shield
- Service Level Agreements
- Pre-submission Consultation as right
- Independant Audit (Govt/Industry based)
- Quality Checks (IIP, ISO, Chartermarks)
- Rewards and Sanctions
- Recognition for Good/Bad Clients
- American system of regulation writing
Building Control is not just Building Regulations?

- Building Regulations
- Dangerous Structures
- Derelict Buildings
- Entertainment Licensing
- Licence all Cinemas
- Petroleum Storage Licensing
- Amusement Arcades
- Property Certification
- Archives & Research
- Technical Helpline
- Street Naming & Numbering
- DDA Audits
- VLA Work
- Training & Development
- Committees & Panels (NI & UK Wide)
- Sex Shops
“Engineers of Opportunity, or Architects of Misfortune”

*We are the Champions*

- Valuation & Lands Agency Surveys
- Provide key construction data to government
- We run GIS and LPG systems
- DDA Surveys for Council
- Arterial Routes & Regeneration
- Ordnance Survey data/surveys
- Community Planning and SNAP
- Comprehensive Auditing System.

And

- We do the day job as well as all this
My Vision

• Must serve the public and government
• Be accountable to all customers
• Carry our own weight
• Be accessible to all
• Have the ability to transform
• Be impartial and open
• Work with industry to help achieve compliance
• Have can do/will do attitude
• Continually getting better
• *Must Always Add Value*
Summary

• Heard my opinion of different systems
• Hopefully open up the Debate
• Ireland is its own country
• Proud construction history
• Must design and implement its own system
• Must get its system right
• This is truly ‘Ireland's Call’