

Consultation response submitted by ARUP

The Welsh Government must urgently revise Building Regulations to ensure that all new houses are built to 'near zero' energy standards.

Enhancing the building regulations alone will not solve the problem. The house builders will claim higher costs and shift business to England. Planning needs to play a role as well, giving greater certainty and faster decisions in favour of zero carbon schemes. In other words, make designing and building to zero carbon standards a less risky venture than designing and building properties to lower standards.

Wales must, on completion of a successful trial of SOLCER type (low carbon and energy positive) homes at scale, move to extending its energy efficiency requirements for new homes beyond 'near zero' carbon to a level of efficiency where surplus energy is produced.

In time, yes. But let's get 'near zero' embedded first. Give the house building industry confidence by publishing a timeline that says when new higher standards will be introduced, and make sure the timeline properly matches policy timescales to business planning cycles. It is essential to give long-term certainty beyond an Assembly term so as to maintain investment certainty and achieve the intended policy outcomes.

The two recommendations are concerned only with new build, and their implementation will therefore take very long time to have even the smallest impact on Welsh energy consumption and GHG emissions.

The much larger challenge is in reducing energy demand and GHG emissions from the existing housing stock. I would be happy to meet the committee to discuss in detail some ideas for accelerating the slow progress in this area.