



BUILDING CONTROL NEWSLETTER



September 2009 ISSUE 15

Welcome to the September edition of the Forest of Dean District Council Building Control newsletter.

If you have picked up this newsletter in our office or have seen a copy of a colleague's, and you are interested in a regular copy then we can add your details to our mailing list. Please send your details to building.control@fdean.gov.uk Otherwise please visit www.fdean.gov.uk and follow the links to Building Control where our newsletter can be found online.

Seminar updates

This month's seminar will be by Midland Energy Services, on SAP, SBEM, and Air leakage and testing. This seminar is open to all at a cost of £5 per head payable on the day and will include a buffet style lunch. The date for this seminar is the 4th of September, a flyer has been sent out but it's never too late to come along so contact me ASAP on the usual email to book your place. CPD will be available and the seminar should be no longer than 1-½ hours.

We also have CPD certificates for those of you who came on previous courses, which will be handed out on the day.

Future Seminars include:

Part L compliance by Southern Energy Services.

Air Tightness Testing by Chiltern Dynamics.

Klober Principles of the breathing roof.

Health and Safety and Sustainability by Liquid Plastics

New Council Website

A new website is currently being developed by our IT section, and should be going live very soon, this will enable easier access to Building Control on line services.

The Party Wall Act an over view.

The following extract gives an over view of the party Wall act and has been added to our new website.

The Party Wall Act 1996 came into effect on 1 July 1997 to provide guidelines for preventing or resolving disputes between neighbours regarding their party walls. If you intend to carry out work that affects a wall between you and your neighbour, for example:

- Work to an existing wall or structure shared with another property
- Building a free standing wall or a wall of a building that is up to or astride your boundary
- Excavating near a neighbouring building;

then you must find out if the Party Wall Act is relevant in your case. If the work you carry out is covered by the Act, then you must follow the relevant procedures to inform your neighbours that such work is to take place.

Informing your neighbours

If the work you are undertaking is covered by the Act, then you must inform your neighbours with at least the following information:

- Your name and address
- The buildings address if different from your own
- A clear statement that your notice of intention to undertake the work is under the provisions of the Party Wall Act.
- Full details of your proposal
- When you propose to start the work

You must serve the notice at least two months before you start the work on party walls or one month for party fence walls of excavations that are close to your neighbours walls. The notice is only valid for one year.

After the notice is served

Once you have served a notice on your neighbour they can:

- Give written consent within 14 days for the work to take place
- Serve a counter notice requiring additional work to be carried out
- Object to the work being done. If after 14 days your neighbour has not replied to your notice, a dispute is deemed to have arisen.

If you receive a counter notice requiring extra work to be carried out, you must respond to it within 14 days. If you fail to respond to this counter notice a dispute will be regarded as having arisen.

Resolving disputes

If either you or your neighbour have objected to the others notice and the dispute cannot be settled by way of a friendly discussion, then the problem should be resolved by the appointment of surveyor. A surveyor may be appointed by both parties or each party may appoint their own surveyor. The surveyor or surveyors will draw up a document which will include:

- A description of the work that is to be carried out
 - When and how the work is to be carried out
 - A description of the condition of the neighbour's property prior to the work commencing
 - Conditions allowing the surveyor(s) access to inspect the work as it is carried out
- The surveyor will decide who pays the fee for drawing up the document, although it is usual for the person undertaking the work to pay all costs.

Conclusion

As most buildings or building work will be close enough to the neighbour's property to be covered by the Act, it is essential that all those involved in the construction process understand the purpose and effects of the Act.

For further information and an explanatory booklet which is available free of charge

Download The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister guide on the [Party Wall Act](#).

Building Control Customer Survey Results

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS SEPTEMBER 08 – JULY 09

In order to assess how the building control team are delivering building control services to our customers, we have undertaken a 10 month survey which commenced on 1st September 2008 and was completed on 1st July 2009.

500 questionnaires were sent out with completion certificates for large projects, extensions and new buildings. 105 completed questionnaires were returned.

A summary of the results is as follows:

Assistance given to customers by building control staff: The results indicate that 55% of customers thought the assistance was excellent, 35% thought it was good and 9% thought it was satisfactory. There were no dissatisfied customers.

We have a very pro active approach in ensuring we give our every assistance to customers from pre application advice, submission of an application, works on site and through to our issuing of their completion certificate.

Promptness with which phone messages & letters were responded to by

building control staff: The results indicate that 70% of customers were very satisfied with the promptness of how our staff had dealt with their phone messages and letters and 24% were fairly satisfied. There were no dissatisfied customers.

All building control staff ensure they respond in a positive way to all phone calls, return all phone messages normally the same day or the following day at the latest. All letters are replied to within 3 working days. We are one of the only building control sections in the country to have ISO 9001 2000 quality management accreditation for our building control administration.

The time taken to make a decision on building regulations applications:

The results indicate that 69% of customers were very satisfied with the time we took to make a decision on their building regulations application and 28% were fairly satisfied. There were no dissatisfied customers.

Building control surveyors will normally discuss the application with a customer and tailor a service to suit the customer. We will issue conditional and stage approvals where appropriate and rejections are only issued as a last resort.

The response to requests for site visits by building control staff: The results indicate that 76% of customers were very satisfied with our response with their requests for site visits and 14% were fairly satisfied. There were no dissatisfied customers.

Building control surveyors will normally inspect the site the same day a request is made (providing the request is before 10am)

The number of site inspections: The results indicate that 80% of customers were very satisfied with the number of site inspections we carried out and 14% were fairly satisfied. There were 2% of dissatisfied customers.

Building control surveyors will normally inspect at statutory stages of works, and we will carry out additional inspections at our discretion on large/complicated schemes or where requested by customers.

The level of technical competence of building control staff: The results indicate that 85% of customers were very satisfied with our level of technical competence and 10% were fairly satisfied. There were 2% of dissatisfied customers.

The current four building control surveyors are professionally qualified and they have in excess of 80 years combined technical experience in building control. We will give customers an enlightened and practical view of the complicated building regulation documents. We have written our own technical guidance documents for extensions, new dwellings and loft conversions which is now being used by other authorities. All surveyors regularly attend relevant technical seminars and courses for their own continuous professional development.

The general courtesy and professionalism of building control staff: The results indicate that 92% of customers were very satisfied with the general courtesy and professionalism of our building control staff, 4% were fairly satisfied and 2% were dissatisfied.

As we are in direct competition with several approved inspectors working in and around the Forest of Dean and surrounding areas, we have to ensure we provide a first class level of service to our customers who have high expectations and standards. If we fail in our level of service, the customers can and will go to an approved inspector and the council will lose important fee income and repeat customers for the future.

Further Comments:

We have received 19 written comments, 17 of which were very positive in their nature towards our service delivery and staff. (These can be seen on the detailed survey summary attached to this report)

Conclusions:

The building control team has worked hard to achieve the level of satisfaction reflected in the survey. We have reviewed the customer survey to identify any failures in our service delivery, which we will analyze and use the results to improve the way we do things.

Survey of Building Control Services

We are asking those who have recently completed works under the Building Regulations about their experience of the service provided by the Building Control Section. We would be grateful if you would complete this questionnaire. This will help us to identify the things we do well, and those that can be improved. Your replies will help us to provide you with a better service. This survey is also available on the Forest of Dean District Council website <http://www.fdean.gov.uk/> from the Building Control webpage.

1. When did you submit your application for Building Regulations approval?

47%	Up to 3 years ago	36%	3 - 5 years ago	17%	6 - 10 years ago	0%	11 - 15 years ago
-----	-------------------	-----	-----------------	-----	------------------	----	-------------------

2. Did you contact the Building Control Section to discuss your proposals prior to submitting your application?

54% Yes (please continue to question 3) 46% No (please continue to question 4)

3. If YES, do you consider that the assistance given to you was:

56%	Excellent	35%	Good	9%	Satisfactory	0%	Poor	0%	Very unsatisfactory
-----	-----------	-----	------	----	--------------	----	------	----	---------------------

4. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following areas:

Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know
----------------	------------------	------------------------------------	---------------------	-------------------	------------

Promptness with which phone messages and letters to Building Control were responded to	70%	24%	4%	0%	0%	2%
The time taken to reach a decision on your Building Regulations applications	69%	28%	3%	0%	0%	0%
The response to requests for site visits by Building Control staff	76%	14%	4%	0%	0%	6%
The number of site inspections	80%	14%	2%	0%	2%	2%
The level of technical competence of the Building Control staff	85%	10%	0%	2%	0%	3%
The general courtesy and professionalism of the staff of the Building Control section dealing with your project	92%	4%	0%	2%	0%	2%

5. Are there any further comments you wish to make on the service you received from Building Control Services? (Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS)

100%

Building Control Services – Comments

- Very helpful and professional
- Mr Giovanelli was very prompt and provided excellent advice
- All queries answered very promptly, good advice given at appointment times, generally very helpful staff. Thank you
- A special thank you to Simon Drake. Prompt and more than helpful
- Very good. Thanks
- Found Simon Drake very helpful
- Simon Drake was helpful and pleasant to deal with
- Was not given consistent and clear advise about the certification required for the job. The building control guidelines implied that further inspections of certification may be required but Building Control staff could not say who I should contact to obtain this
- New policy of charging inspection and application fee at same time is likely to result in our using private building regs service in future
- Very helpful
- Very good/professional service
- Excellent service many thanks
- All the staff we dealt with were very friendly and helpful and informative
- I found Mr Aldo Giovanelli most helpful and very professional
- I have found Rob Dickinson and the two officers who have visited the site very helpful and approachable
- Sensible interpretation of regulations to suit site characteristics particularly refreshing
- Contact was handled firstly through the architect and then through our builders
- Mr Gwynne was courteous and most helpful

Just for fun.

Have you a funny picture or story that you would like to share with us?

Please send your pictures to simon.drake@fdean.gov.uk

These workmen are installing bollards to stop nurses from parking on the pavement outside the Royal Hospital in Belfast .

They are cleaning up at the end of the day. How long do you think it will be before they realise that they can't go home?

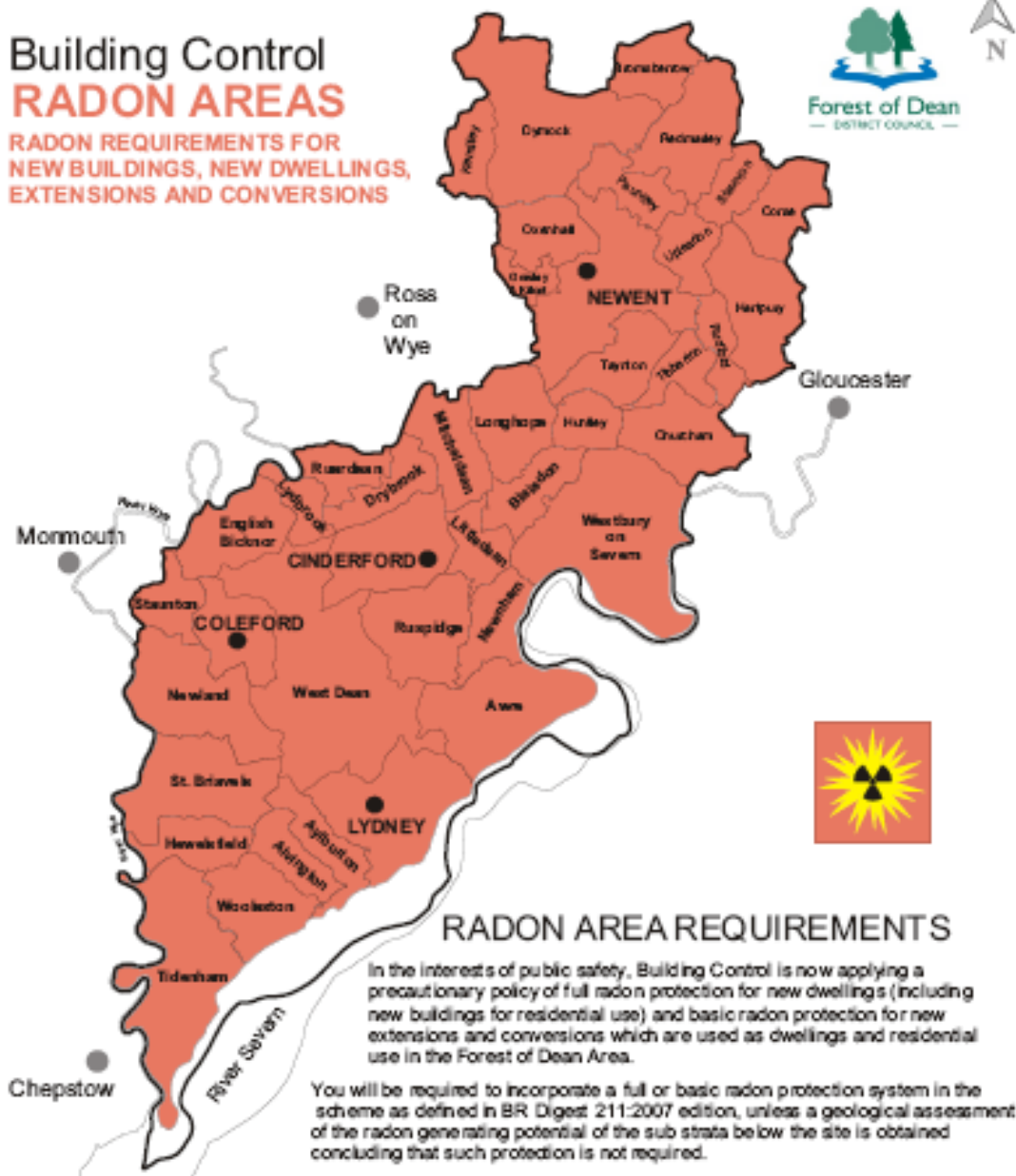




If you have any building regulation related questions please let us know.

Building Control RADON AREAS

RADON REQUIREMENTS FOR
NEW BUILDINGS, NEW DWELLINGS,
EXTENSIONS AND CONVERSIONS



RADON AREA REQUIREMENTS

In the interests of public safety, Building Control is now applying a precautionary policy of full radon protection for new dwellings (including new buildings for residential use) and basic radon protection for new extensions and conversions which are used as dwellings and residential use in the Forest of Dean Area.

You will be required to incorporate a full or basic radon protection system in the scheme as defined in BR Digest 211:2007 edition, unless a geological assessment of the radon generating potential of the sub strata below the site is obtained concluding that such protection is not required.

A Radon Protection Measures geological assessment can be obtained from the British Geological Survey, Keyworth, Nottingham, NG12 5GG Telephone 0115 936 3143, or e-mail: enquiry@bgs.ac.uk

For homes with a full postal address including a post code then you can obtain a Radon Risk Report (£3.00 +vat) online from www.ukradon.com.

A range of practical and cost effective solutions have been developed by the Building Research Establishment to help reduce radon levels and to prevent radon entry into the building. These details can be obtained from their web site: <http://www.bre.co.uk/radon/protect.html> & details are also available on the Councils web site at: www.fdean.gov.uk



If you need any further help or advice please see our web site at www.fdean.gov.uk or contact Building Control on 01594 812352. If you want to speak to the Health Protection Agency about radon please phone the radon hotline: 01235 831600.

Revised July 2009