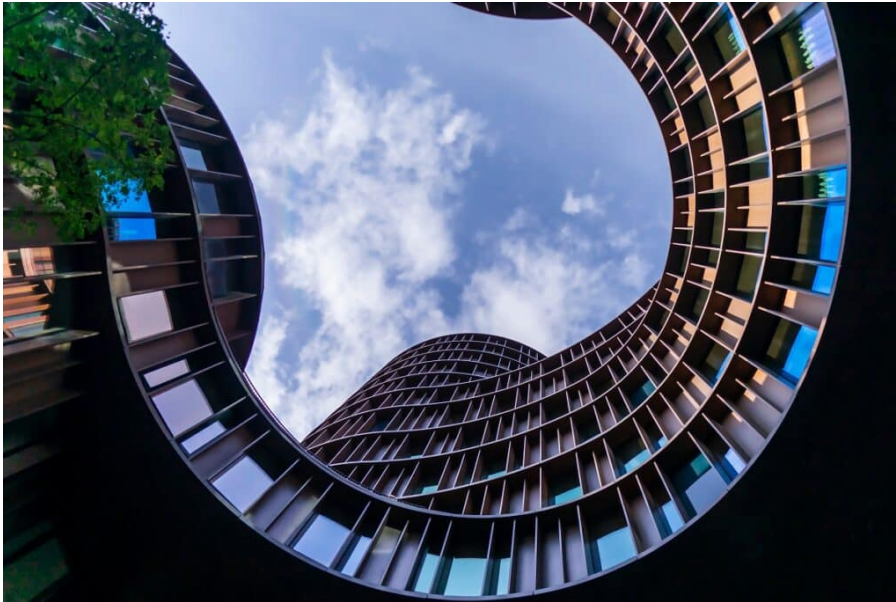


BESA President calls for building retrofits to support Truss plan

3 years ago



The UK must now embark on a comprehensive programme of energy efficiency and low carbon building improvements to ensure the government's Energy Price Guarantee scheme paves the way for a long-term solution to the energy crisis, according to the President of the [Building Engineering Services Association \(BESA\)](#).

Rab Fletcher said the Prime Minister deserved praise for taking "bold action" to help consumers and businesses deal with record energy costs in the short-term but called for work to start immediately on long-term solutions that would "properly fix the problem".

"The taxpayer funded energy price cap is buying us time, but we must not waste it. We should immediately set about ensuring we become far more resilient to future price shocks - or this will be a very expensive missed opportunity," he said.

He echoed the advice of the Climate Change Committee (CCC) and the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) who recommended policy changes to support building efficiency upgrades, low-carbon heating, and renewable power. Fletcher said these would help to reduce our dependence on imported energy and go some way towards reducing the cost to taxpayers of Liz Truss's rescue package.

"The building services industry can provide the engineering expertise to support the now urgently needed national programme of building retrofits to improve energy efficiency and integrate low carbon systems," he said.

Root causes

The Prime Minister said she was determined to tackle "the root causes of high prices so we are never in

the same position again” and announced a review of energy regulation to address “supply and affordability for the long-term”.

Fletcher said one simple step would be to adjust the energy levy system.

“Currently, the levy on electricity bills is 20% higher than on gas, which means renewable energy is, perversely, more heavily taxed. Rebalancing the levy would make it fairer and drive down the cost of electricity to the end user while incentivising the transition to an all-electric system powered by renewables, which is now the cheapest form of electricity generation,” he said.

The need to retrofit and re-purpose buildings had also been highlighted by this summer’s heatwave, added Fletcher.

“Retrofitting buildings to make them more resilient to climate change and more energy efficient can be done relatively cheaply and quickly, but it would be even cheaper and quicker to re-purpose some of our buildings.

“For example, the pandemic has had a huge impact on occupancy levels in commercial buildings. Research from the property industry shows that two thirds of desks in UK offices are regularly unused and even on the busiest days offices are more than half empty.

“We need to seize this opportunity to take a more flexible approach that makes better use of the space we already have to deliver financial savings and reduce energy use and carbon emissions.”

He said the “new economic landscape” created by record high energy prices was an opportunity to drive built environment investment in a way that also meets the Prime Minister’s desire to be “pro-business and pro-growth”.

“She may be opposed to a windfall tax, but energy firms are making big profits so they should be under considerable pressure to plough record amounts into expanding renewable power and energy efficiency,” said Fletcher.