

BESA urges new PM to 'listen to engineers'

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[The Building Engineering Services Association \(BESA\)](#) has welcomed the appointment of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak as an opportunity to reset policy on net zero and energy security.

It urged his team to consult with the engineering community on the best way to speed up measures to adapt the built environment to deal with climate change and help manage rising energy costs.

“The recent turmoil in the financial markets proves that political leadership is important, and that the business community will swing in behind the UK if we make sensible decisions,” said BESA chief executive David Frise.

“Our sector is an important driver for economic growth, but it can also be a force for social good as our work provides safe and healthy spaces for people – while helping them reduce energy costs and cut carbon.”

As part of his campaign to be elected PM before Liz Truss, Sunak pledged to increase investment in measures to cut energy waste in homes and public buildings and BESA urged him to revisit those ideas now.

Upgrades

“We are ready and willing to work with the new government team to kickstart a comprehensive programme of building upgrades and retrofits that can help stabilise our economy and improve quality of life for millions,” said Frise.

At the [Association's annual conference last week](#) speakers noted growing pressure from clients, planners, and developers for the industry to focus on refurbishment and re-purposing of buildings rather than new build.

“The industry needs to get its head around the fact that refurbishment is where the market is moving,” said Frances Brown, associate director of consultancy Hoare Lea. “We now have developers and planners agreeing that we should not be building new but making the best of what we already have.

“Clients want us to make their existing buildings work better for them and continue to make them money.” She said this could be quickly achieved with the industry’s existing skills by transferring new build teams onto projects that focus on “continuous improvement”.

The Conference also noted the important role played by the new Building Safety Act, which could drive a new ‘culture’ of higher standards and better outcomes for building users, but agreed that it would have to be supported by a more robust planning system that underpinned net zero policies and focused on ‘whole life’ performance.

The return of Michael Gove to the Cabinet as Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Secretary was also welcomed by BESA. His re-appointment will give him the opportunity to complete his ‘unfinished business’ on building safety and housing reform, it said.