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**The good, the bad and the ugly?**

**For the last two years (or more!) the ventilation industry has been quite literally bombarded with information about Building Regulations, Appendix Q and SAP. However, despite the understandable importance of continuous movement of air in and out of a building and the hugely significant matter of energy, what we see and what we hear are now major parts of the decision making process.**

**Never more so than now has design been as important as function, we live in a design-conscious society where appearance seems to be everything. It is becoming unacceptable to compromise on style in order to save time or money. Michelle Sharp, Brand Manager at Greenwood Airvac discusses the growing trend of looking beyond performance, into the realms of style and points out that ventilation has its place amongst the stylish bathroom accessories on offer to us today – yes ventilation really can have style appeal!**

Part F and Part L of the Building Regulations have been fully introduced, translated and are now being applied. In terms of ventilation, never before has there been a more transitory period in the industry, ventilation could be considered to be in the prime of its 'life', no longer ignored but considered, as we strive to conform as well as reduce our Carbon footprint at all stages of build. However, this 'shift' in the industry hasn't just involved compliance, the increased focus on interior design or 'styling' throughout the industry has also ensured that it's become just as important to consider style when specifying ventilation.

If you compare an extract fan from five years ago with some of the styles available today, you'd undoubtedly notice a significant difference in design. There's no getting

away from the fact that traditionally, kitchen and bathroom extract fans were big, bulky and let's face it, at times, just plain ugly. However, they were accepted as they were considered 'the norm' and their functionality considered more important than their appearance, also people just didn't know about or expect much else!

### **Sore thumb**

The old adage 'big is beautiful' certainly doesn't apply when it comes to an extract fan on the wall in the kitchen or bathroom. Discretion it seems is, at times, key and ventilation can now be blended into, or even compliment, the overall design of the room rather than standing out like a sore thumb. Slim, low profile products are being installed more and more. Curved, and quite simply styled fascias are becoming the new face of ventilation, with some even available to accept decorative inserts that match colours and themes of interior decoration themes.

### **'Invisible' ventilation**

Of course, as well as kitchen and bathroom extract fans, for new build in particular, there's the option of whole house ventilation, which could be said to be the ultimate in aesthetics – you can't see it at all.

Continuous whole house ventilation is offered through a range of systems, either extract only or supply and extract with heat recovery. Central systems are physically very discreet using one central unit mounted in a loft-space or cupboard and a network of ducts, which can be hidden in the fabric of the building, so all that is visible is a small ceiling vent in each room. Systems can be operated by remote switches, which use wireless technology. In all, ventilation is provided to whole dwelling and ceiling grilles are the only visible components in the room – again a more discreet option for today's homeowners.

### **Silence is golden**

Style appeal is not just about the look and finish of a fan. How jealous would your visitors be if they were using your bathroom and the fan just worked in the background without them noticing? No matter which ventilation solution is used, there's little doubt that the noise traditionally associated with it is a nuisance, to say

the least. There's nothing more annoying than that late night trip to the bathroom accompanied by the annoying 'whirring' sound of the extract fan, that goes on, it seems, forever. The temptation to switch it off in some circumstances is understandably considerable yet would have a significant impact on internal environment and air quality. Dwellings with no ventilation, but continued moisture generation from cooking and bathing will result in building degradation, and impact on occupant health, at significant cost to landlords around the country in social housing.

The new breed of silent, constant volume fan does not draw attention to itself, but continuously maintains a good indoor air quality. And to make reference to our old friend 'energy' - despite being on all the time, it actually consumes less energy than intermittent extract fans.

### **But what makes a silent fan?**

The extract fans that we all know and 'hate' usually operates at around 35db (decibels), which frankly is not a deafening sound, but in a quiet bathroom or WC is definitely a nuisance. A silent fan, available on today's market would operate at an incredible 10db. Now, two numbers don't really say anything – so what does that mean in the sound that you and I here? As a golden rule, when the decibel rating is increased/reduced by 10dB the sound that you hear is doubly as loud/quiet. To reduce the volume from 35db to 10db might be considered pure genius.

### **So, what do we know?**

In a nation of avid viewers of lifestyle programmes and DIY shows, everyone cares about their décor, and a fan that blends subtly into the background and looks sleek and stylish adds value to the proposition. Good looks shouldn't just be an added extra, they are now essential. Extra attention to the cosmetic appeal of a fan means that it is more likely to be left to perform its role efficiently if it doesn't draw unwelcome attention.

Today's technology ensures that ventilation needn't be noisy or obtrusive either, we really don't have to compromise to the extent that has been traditionally associated with ventilation.

It's not enough to conform to Building Regs, we must now ensure that the end user's *desires* are considered. Ventilation does not have to be a noisy, clumsy functional aspect of a home's interior anymore – in fact quiet the opposite – it can be so discreet and work in the background without you even noticing it. Have a look at the stylish and silent options available to you. Not only will you please your customers, you'll probably find yourself wanting one in your own home!

**Ends**