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Ventilation gets a look in when it comes to DER's

Ventilation has been, and continues to be undergoing somewhat of an image change, as there has been a significant shift in its role in the design of a building. Over recent years, new Building Regulations have started this dawn of change, forcing the adoption of newer, innovative technologies, and the shift is still very much in motion. Builders and specifiers now acknowledge a wider appreciation of how ventilation contributes to the overall effectiveness of a house or apartment. Furthermore, the energy impact of ventilation now features higher on a developers or designers list of priorities and now, more than ever, we must consider its environmental impact.

Michelle Sharp, Brand Manager at Greenwood Airvac, discusses ventilation's new look and the new challenges it faces.

The face of ventilation is changing and, two months into 2008, the momentum of these changes shows little sign of slowing. Over the last two years, the market has evolved significantly in terms of both appearance and its perception. As the construction industry in the UK continues to enter the next phase of its 'era of change' it will be interesting to see what further developments lie in store for ventilation, after all, as our buildings need to be airtight to conserve energy, the people inside them, as much as the buildings themselves still need to breathe. Previously considered more of a bolt-on component, a more structured approach has already been introduced to ventilation and has been adopted by the building industry, with increased recognition of its importance to the building as a whole.

Historically, ventilation has had intrinsically low value in terms of the design process, being driven by a very standard room requirement and having very little impact on the overall energy performance of a building, meaning that typical four and six inch fans were the norm. Today, ventilation is more than just the installation of a fan that keeps condensation and mould at bay; with modern homes becoming increasingly

more air tight, the role of ventilation in the overall performance of the home and the health of its inhabitants is now vital.

Today, it is common knowledge that making the right choice when it comes to new build ventilation can, in some instances, reduce the overall Dwelling Emission Rate (DER) of a new home in a cost effective way. We are now seeing much more use of highly efficient, continuously running systems that can deliver the savings for Part L or Dwelling Emission Rates (DERs) required. We have also seen the introduction of SAP Appendix Q products that allow specific product data to be used over default settings in the SAP calculation, thereby highlighting the market's most efficient systems

In the realms of a lifestyle society, its not just performance that wins the vote! Silence, style and performance are now key considerations when choosing a ventilation solution – or at least they should be! While the principle requirements for ventilation in domestic dwellings haven't changed ventilation is now much higher up the agenda when it comes to building design, so choosing a system that is perhaps more tuned to interior design trends and doesn't annoy the hell out of you when you get up in the middle of the night are key considerations that will please future homeowners, of course not to mention energy efficiency!! Extract fans are unlikely in the short term to carry an energy rating, much like those of washing machines and fridge freezers, but it all helps in the big scheme of things.

Ventilation's image change is not complete yet and the transformation will continue as new Building Regulations and the pressures of SAP are further integrated into the market. So what does the future hold? We are likely to see ventilation continue to evolve at the pace it has been for the last twelve months. Going forward, we hope that ventilation will continue to be viewed in this new light by the industry. One certainty is that energy efficiency will be a major determining factor when choosing a ventilation solution, with method/application coming a close second. That said, ventilation that is silent and attractive will continue to be important in the decision making process. Aesthetics have never played a more important role than they do now. Today's homeowners are more style conscious and price aware when it comes to home design and build, and therefore have higher expectations. Consumers refurbishing their own properties now demand more of their builders when it comes to the choice of building materials and components, as they are more

aware of the types of 'working products' they want in their homes. For new build, this means developers must take these things into consideration in the design and build of new homes, as well as meet Building Regulation specifications. Manufacturers must recognise this and produce products that tick all the boxes: performance, style and simplicity and of course values for money. Part L, with all its challenges, has created a number of commercial opportunities for those ventilation manufacturers that have the vision and a similar attitude to energy efficiency. It will be interesting to see who thrives in light of ventilation's 'new look'; those that can tick all the boxes and deliver on price, energy efficient performance, simplicity and an attractive and discrete solution look set to prosper. I think it's suffice to say, that ventilation has finally got a look in when it comes domestic buildings!