

20 October 2016

THE CARBON COST OF LISTED BUILDINGS

Award-winning dissertation by Middleton's Ben Horne identifies methods to improve energy performance in the UK's 500,000 listed buildings.

Middleton's Ben Horne has been awarded the Rural Land Management Dissertation Prize by Harper Adams University for his investigation into 'Improving Energy Performance in Listed Buildings'. Ben, who covers the Hampshire and South West region for Middleton's country division, recently completed an MSc in Rural Estate and Land Management at Harper Adams.

As Ben says, "Despite the Government's date to meet carbon reduction targets creeping ever closer, there is little pressure, encouragement or even guidance for the owners of the UK's 500,000 listed buildings to improve energy performance."

"Increasing owner awareness of the long-term benefits of energy-saving, combined with more flexibility in planning laws to allow changes to be made perhaps through a points style system, would be logical first steps to address energy wastage in listed buildings."

Objectives of the research.

Ben set three objectives for his research:

- a. To identify the level of awareness of energy performance and use of energy saving measures amongst listed building owners
- b. To identify barriers to take up of energy saving measures amongst listed building owners
- c. To identify methods and measures to improve awareness and take up

"Awareness of energy performance amongst listed building owners is poor, and this correlates with an equally poor level of implementation of energy saving measures, despite the fact that the issue of saving energy to reduce household bills does resonate widely. There is a clear willingness amongst listed building owners to address poor energy performance, and this willingness could be embraced through targeted incentives and policy adjustment for listed buildings."

"Upfront costs are preventative but could be reduced through incentives, while Government planning policy actually prevents take-up. My research found that planning authorities' management of the protection of historic architecture is a common cause of a lack of energy saving (and carbon reducing) measures in the home. Advances in technology, combined with flexibility in policy for example, might well allow for adjustments to be made without damaging historic architecture."

"Where measures have been fitted, reducing the cost of providing energy in the home is the main motivating factor. If Government and industry want to promote energy saving, they should adopt 'reducing bills' as the key message, accepting that the consequential effect will be a reduction in emissions rather than the other way around."

"The greatest barrier to adopting energy-saving measures is the upfront cost of implementation. The withdrawal of the Government's 'Green Deal' without replacement means this key barrier is not currently being addressed. "

MIDDLETON

ADVISORS

Ben Horne's research concluded that:

- Incentives and 'passive' interventions would encourage uptake and improve awareness and the employment of energy saving measures in listed buildings.
- More active measures to improve uptake such as enforced EPCs or increased council tax for inefficient buildings would meet strong resistance.
- There is willingness amongst owners to pay for surveys that advise of what can be done to reduce energy use and ultimately save money and reduce emissions.
- Addressing the upfront costs of energy saving measures through reviewing incentives would be effective.
- With around 500,000 listed buildings in the UK such an adjustment to policy and a refocusing of current incentives could help to meet Government targets.
- Further research is required to address the stalemate between local authorities protecting historical architecture and listed building owners wanting to reduce large energy bills by implementing energy saving measures.

Harper Adams (<http://www.harper-adams.ac.uk/>) has worked closely with the rural sector since its foundation in 1901 as an agricultural college. It introduced degree courses in 1981 and was awarded full University title in 2012. It now caters for 2,500 undergraduates studying for degrees in agriculture, animal health and veterinary nursing, agricultural engineering, estate and countryside management and business management. The University also offers a range of masters courses (MSc and MBA) and research opportunities at PhD and post-doctoral levels.

Press enquiries:

Deborah Battsek, pr@deborahbattsek.com

Amanda Sharpe, amanda@deborahbattsek.com