

UK'S ENTHUSIASM FOR SELF-BUILD & RENOVATION NOT DIMMED BY COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

A survey by the National Self Build and Renovation Centre shows people's enthusiasm for building their own home in the UK has not been affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

An in-depth survey of would-be home owners to build or renovate their dream homes has found that their visions are still on track.

The National Self-Build & Renovation Centre (NSBRC), which is based in Swindon, Wiltshire, questioned 644 people looking to build their own home or renovate an existing property, and asked about factors as wide ranging as budget, priorities and motivations of those taking on these kinds of projects, as well as sustainable building practices.

Whilst the results show that more than half of those surveyed say the economic downturn has had some effect on their plans, it hasn't resulted in people changing their minds about their projects, with just two per cent saying they've shelved their intended build.

Adjustments such as being more 'hands on' to save on labour costs were cited by almost half (47%) of the people surveyed; and planning more energy-saving measures to lower costs in the longer term was also a key finding - with more than a third of respondents stating this as a direct response to the current economic conditions.

Harvey Fremlin, managing director of the NSBRC, says these findings are borne out by what he and his team see on a daily basis with the people who come through their doors.

“Sustainability and thinking about the energy use of the future is a key priority for our customers. The recent news of possible fuel rationing this winter shows more than ever how important it is to invest in sustainable, energy-efficient measures, and it's obvious to us from the conversations we have that people are absolutely clear on not compromising on this issue. It's really important to them.”

While it's tempting to think of self-build projects as ambitious and flamboyant, Harvey explains the kinds of builds and renovations seen on TV programmes such as Grand Designs are not what the majority of people are looking to achieve.

“Most self-builders actually have a relatively modest budget and an overall household income of less than £50k a year,” he said.

“As our survey shows, they just want a well-built, sustainable family home with their own particular needs in mind.”

The NSBRC was established in 2007 and has become a must-visit destination for anyone seeking to build their own home, make significant renovations to their existing property, or retrofit sustainability options.

Showcasing businesses working in all stages of building and renovation projects, as well as the latest technologies and innovations, it has been described as a 'permanent trade show' and is the only one of its kind in the UK. However, it is as much a place for education as it is for sourcing materials and systems.

“We're particularly proud of the workshops and training we offer both on site and online,” said Harvey. “It's so important that, as well as providing people with the material goods they need to build their own home, we help them become as knowledgeable as they can about the projects they're undertaking.

“Our survey found almost 70% of people embarking on this kind of project are at least 55 years old and 35% of them are retired. For many, this is their first self-build project and their intention is to build a home that will carry them through the rest of their lives, so it's vital they are as well-informed as possible, especially in light of the evidence that more and more people want to be hands-on in order to reduce overall cost.”

Workshops at the centre cover topics such as project management, building systems and internal finishes. November sees a focus on sustainability with events on eco-friendly builds and retrofits and a special workshop on 'Passivhaus' an approach to building which

is designed to deliver comfort, craftsmanship and a 90% reduction in energy use to heat a home.

“We’re really excited about these free workshops,” says Harvey, “and we’ve revised the sustainable home workshop on 12th November to reflect the current energy crisis. With costs spiraling and environmental impact ranking high on people’s priorities, it’s a chance to hear about government incentives, green investment opportunities around different technologies, and issues such as insulation and ventilation considerations.”

The event will now be split into two separate theatres to cater specifically for those renovating an existing property and people taking on a new build.

More information about the survey’s results and the NSBRC can be found in [THIS PDF LINK](#) and on the [NSBRC website](#), where workshop places can also be booked. The NSBRC is located near junction 16 of the M4 in Wiltshire.

ENDS

EDITOR’S NOTES:

Attached is an image of Harvey Fremlin, MD of the National Self Build and Renovation Centre in Swindon, Wiltshire. It’s the only permanent display centre dedicated to those who want to build or renovate their own homes and those businesses which can support them in that vision. It is also an employee-owned business, where all staff have shares via their Employee Ownership Trust and a genuine say in how the business is run to achieve their shared aim of helping people build better homes.

For more information, or to talk to Harvey Fremlin or book a visit to the centre for reviews or reporting purposes please contact media consultant Fiona Scott on 07789 270030 or email fiona@fionascott.co.uk

A few more survey findings:

Building a house from scratch is becoming more popular, with 79% of people embarking on a major project of this kind choosing to build a completely new home.

This is a rise from the 73% seen in the 2021 survey and is supported by another finding – the issue of choice and quality when looking to buy a new home.

The UK perception of a 'typical' new build is of a low quality property with minimal attention paid to environmental factors. This could explain the rise in self-built new homes, especially in light of 95% stating that, if they couldn't self-build, they would not buy a new-build property.

Achieving a better quality of build was the top motivation for self-building, according to the survey. Add to this the next two highest ranking motivations of creating a more sustainable and environmentally-friendly home and the ability to tailor a house to one's own specifications, and it becomes easier to see why more than 13,000 people in the UK embark on these kinds of projects every year.

Philip and Jan Oliver from Surrey took on their own self-build project for these exact reasons and now live in a home that is not only tailored to their needs but which has significantly increased in value since they finished their build.

"We wanted to achieve a beautiful, low energy house that would take us into our old age," says Philip, "and we now have a home which caters for our needs and has lots of lovely light space."

Philip and Jan visited the NSRBC several times visiting a variety of exhibitors giving them the opportunity to weigh up construction options. They found the training available at the Centre to be invaluable.

"For us, the training courses were the most enjoyable parts of our visits to the Centre and we would especially recommend them to anyone managing their own project."

While taking on a major renovation project or building a completely new home is a challenge, the survey found the journey can often be further complicated by barriers such as difficulties in finding suitable land at an affordable price and complications with issues such as local planning.

More than a third of respondents (36%) have been looking for a plot for more than three years and over 70% say they now feel a plot on a smaller settlement is a more realistic expectation.

However, those who start this journey appear to be determined to see it through and, along with being undeterred by economic factors, will compromise on the issues they see as less important in favour of being able to stick to their goals of an eco-friendly property tailored to their needs.

“These results really show just how resilient people are and how, even when we’re living through very challenging times, the kind of environment we create for ourselves and our ideas of what ‘home’ means are of fundamental importance to us,” says Harvey. “Even if people have to make some compromises because of limited finances or other factors, the determination to go ahead and find a way to make it happen in a sustainable and tailored way is undimmed. It’s incredibly encouraging.”