

LABC – listening to the voice of the unheard

It's a strange world. People with axes to grind find it all too easy to voice their personal opinions and see them inflated into virtual facts. In an online, multi-media world we tend to see and hear the views of the minority. Of course everyone and every pressure group have the right to express opinions, but it seems a shame that the views of the silent majority don't get more credence. This is especially true when it comes to Building Regulations, writes Paul Overall, Chief Executive, LABC

At LABC we spend a lot of time talking with customers. We do this informally at our events and also more formally through customer panels. It is always an interesting opportunity. In recent months, as well as asking about their businesses and working relationships with LABC, I've made a special point to ask what they think about CLG's consultation on the Future of Building Control.

You won't be surprised to know that this last point results in blank faces. Customers don't know about it, and to be honest aren't interested.

They will talk about the Building Regulations. Start them off and they'll talk excitedly about this job and that problem. Everyone has

anecdotes and petty grievances. But when asked if they would rather not have Building Regulations or the current system and the answer – 99 times out of a 100 – is a resounding “no way”.

I was thinking about this whilst watching LABC's new film, *Building Business Partnerships*. In this film, Bob Phelan, of Canary Wharf Group PLC, explains why he has used LABC for more than 20 years. Essentially it is because he gets practical advice at a very early stage in the project. In effect he gets high level technical advice provided very quickly whilst he is still in the design phase. He has used this to help develop his implementation of a building type and produced over 14 million square feet of high quality commercial space.

On a smaller scale, Gary

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Roffe, a senior Project Manager for St James Developments, describes the depth of involvement he has with LABC working on an apartment project involving change of use, listed structures and new build. All through the project he encountered complex, unforeseen issues and used his relationship with LABC to identify new solutions in days or sometimes even on the same day.

Catch any of our customers off guard and they'll say that local authority building control departments are “a pain in the neck.” But ask them why they continue to work with LABC and not approved inspectors (and remember that seven out of 10 in the industry choose to work with LABC) and they'll all say that they prefer in-depth, independent advice – especially now that local authorities perform so outstandingly well in customer service.

As one senior director once said: “LABC is the best value way I know to protect our corporate backsides and deliver the best quality buildings to our customers. They cost very little and deliver so much more added value than any other service.”

Of course, these are contented customers and they don't bother to “sound off” about this and that. It's a shame really. However, you can hear them talk about their businesses by viewing our film. Simply go to www.labc.uk.com and you'll find our film link on the home page.

Canary Wharf, London

