

Taking up the slack

By Paul Everall CBE
LABC Chief Executive



Paul Everall discusses the recession and how it has affected the building control sector

As I write this, I cannot help but wonder how LABC's many customers are faring in this dreadful recession. Some of you must be going through dire times, and I do feel for you. Building control departments in local authorities have not been immune from the pain, with some having to make staff redundant or not replace leavers – for building control, income is directly linked to the number and value of projects coming forward. But I know that many companies in the industry have had to lay off hundreds of people, and that must be awful.

Are we through the worst?

There appear to be mixed views, some seeing "green shoots" whilst others fearing a "double-dip" recession. I tend to be a "glass half full" man so I am inclined to believe those people who tell me that more construction activity is starting to take place, and certainly attending our Regional Building Excellence Awards in the first half of the year I have been impressed by the numbers attending and by the spirit of optimism often prevalent.

But slacker times can provide opportunities. For example, I am encouraging local authorities to put any spare resource they may have into searching out unauthorised work – for

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anything we can achieve in squeezing out cowboy builders must help legitimate businesses.

Another opportunity is training. People said we must have been mad to launch LABC Training as the recession loomed, but after only a year we have obtained an established position in the market. So far we have concentrated mainly on in-house training for local authority surveyors, but in the autumn we intend to expand into customer training.

For even if you would prefer the regulatory world not to change, that is not the case. The new Part G, with its requirements for water efficiency, come into force in October, and LABC is running a series of half-day seminars to brief people on these - and on the Code for Sustainable Homes with which many social landlords require compliance. Consultation has commenced on proposed changes to Parts F and L in 2010, and LABC will be playing a major part next year in educating everyone on their consequences. And the tragic fire in Camberwell earlier this year brings home to us once again the need never to overlook fire safety, and to keep up to speed with changes such as BS9999.

So do please look at our website to see whether any of the courses we offer might be of help to you.

