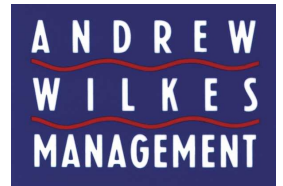


UK GEARS UP FOR ZERO-CARBON BUILDINGS

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The government has announced that a task force will look at how public sector buildings can be zero-carbon by 2018. It will also consult later this year on how to make non-domestic buildings zero-carbon by 2019.

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The target dates, which were set out in the chancellor's budget last week, were "a new aspiration" and should save around 75m tonnes of carbon over the next 30 years, according to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

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Chancellor Alistair Darling also announced incentives for setting up microgeneration for domestic and commercial buildings. Home owners will be able to install carbon saving technology like solar panels and build minor extensions without needing to go through a lengthy planning process.

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Occupiers of commercial properties that install equipment such as solar panels, wind turbines, and ground source heat pumps will from this year no longer be immediately liable for any potential increase in business rate value of these investments.

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The announcements came within a budget noted for few surprises for the construction sector. Encouragingly, the government intends to maintain spending plans for health, education and social housing.

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A positive impact on construction and building services should be the government's intention to "ring fence" 30% of public sector work for small to medium size businesses. This is an opportunity for SMEs to re-establish their presence in markets under threat to framework procurement and OJEU processes.

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Sustainability Consultancy work within our Environmental Responsibility Group is undertaking more and more appointments where Clients are seeking Low Carbon solutions and Renewable Energy technologies without an increase in overall capital costs. For more information, call Andrew Wilkes on 01905 613756 or email andrew.wilkes@andrewwilkes.co.uk.