

News

Calls for compulsory rainwater harvesting to avoid future water shortages



Kingspan has called on the Irish government to avoid future water shortages by making rainwater harvesting compulsory for all new build projects.

"It is incomprehensible that large parts of Ireland are suffering water shortages after the record levels of rainwater that have fallen in the last three years," said Charles Burns, commercial director of Kingspan Water.

The company said there would not have been a water shortage in Ireland in the last few weeks if more homes had rainwater harvesting technology installed. Homes would have been able to use the free rainwater for toilets which can use be-

tween three to seven litres for just one flush. "It would mean much less pressure on the mains water supply, and would cost home owners less in bills when water charges are introduced," Burns said.

"It is only when people suffer the loss of water at home that they begin to realise what a valuable commodity it is," he said, "and how we all take it for granted."

Burns said making the change would be simple. "All the government would have to do is change the building regulations to include rainwater harvesting in all new build projects. Minister Gormley made massive strides in improving the energy efficiency of new homes and he can do

the same for water efficiency."

"Suggestions by policy makers to solve the shortage by piping the river Shannon, or putting a whole new water system in place for Dublin are too costly and far fetched in the extreme. Whereas introducing regulations on rainwater harvesting would benefit the environment and the consumer and should happen without delay," he concluded.

Kingspan Water is part of the Kingspan Group PLC. It was established in 2009 and is part of the environmental division of the company.

(above) Charles Burns, commercial director of Kingspan Water

Athenry passive house nears completion

Work is nearing completion at a passive house near Athenry in Co Galway. Built by Galway-based Passive House Builders Ltd with a highly insulated timber frame system, the house has already scored an air-tightness result below the Passivhaus standard of 0.6 air changes per hour, but a final test had yet to be done as Construct Ireland went to print.

Cyril Mannion of Passive House Builders told Construct Ireland he expects the house to be certified by the Passivhaus Institut. The company is aiming to hit the Passivhaus standard with another of its builds as well - an externally insulated blockwork house in Oranmore, Co Galway.

Though the firm has worked on low energy buildings before - its past projects include a development of six A3 rated houses in Williamstown in 2007 - the Athenry home should be its first to be certified passive.

"We were among the first group of builders in the country to get an A3," Mannion said. "I became interested in passive then and have been researching for the past two years."

Mannion told Construct Ireland he wants the company to focus exclusively on building passive houses from now on. The firm is focusing on new builds, and



Mannion said he's hoping to offer passive insulated concrete formwork buildings in the future too. He said the company will leave the decision about whether to get certified by the Passivhaus Institut or not to its clients - he believes the real value of the passive standard is not in certification but in using the Passivhaus Planning Package (PHPP) as a design tool.

The timber frame passive house near Athenry has a wall build-up that includes 350mm of cellulose insulation, with a U-value of 0.11 W/m²K. Its roof boasts a U-value of 0.10 W/m²K. Passivhaus (or passive house) is a rigorous standard for thermal performance in buildings that enables occupants to remove the need for conventional space heating systems.

(left) Passive House Builders Ltd's house in Athenry is close to completion and the prospect of Passivhaus Institut certification

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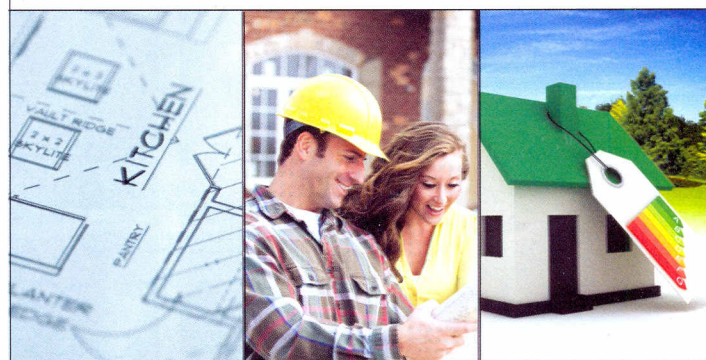


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