



So, who's in charge here?

It has been humbling – and perhaps a salutary reminder of our vulnerability as a species – to discover over the past few months that despite our wealth, sophistication and technology we remain part of the natural world.

A microscopic virus has almost brought us to our knees. Sadly, the lessons of our vulnerability are being learned not just by society at large but by individuals, with many people becoming ill and dying from the coronavirus.

Business and the economy are obviously being affected as well. As we grapple with the wider health crisis many businesses will go to the wall, despite (and in some cases because of) government action. As with individuals weakened by pre-existing medical conditions who have proven to be the least able to cope with viral infection, so too it is businesses that were struggling already that are going to be the ones that fail.

That seems likely to happen across the economy, with few sectors proving to be immune.

Construction and housebuilding are no less prone to the problems than any other part of the economy. While it is clear that Chancellor Rishi Sunak wants to 'get Britain building', his vision for the sector has been temporarily delayed.

The chancellor is only too well aware that the construction industry is a big contributor to the UK economy. In 2018, the construction sector (commercial and housing combined) contributed £117 billion to the UK economy.

While the government announcement on 26 March 2020 effectively shut down much of the housing market, those seeking to buy and move into a new-build home were given a degree of flexibility since unoccupied newly built homes posed a lesser risk than occupied resale homes.

(Source: www.gov.uk/guidance/government-advice-on-home-moving-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak).

At Larkfleet our primary concern is the safety of our staff, contractors and customers. So, we are taking appropriate action to safeguard their health.

What the government said about buying homes which are unoccupied

Here's what the government said in its statement before the lockdown was eased:

“Where the property being moved into is vacant, then you can continue with this transaction although you should follow the guidance in this document on home removals.”

Clearly developers have to amend the protocols that they have in place to manage the process in accordance with the government's guidelines. This is clearly positive news for people looking to complete on their new home purchases, and even those looking to buy newly built homes.

What Larkfleet Homes is doing to help buyers

To help those enquiring about new homes, we are able to offer all existing and potential customers the opportunity to view our show homes via high quality virtual tours. This is still the case following the easing of lockdown.

Support for the self-employed

It was good to see the Chancellor extend to freelancers and the self-employed the support being offered to companies to help pay wage bills. Many in the construction industry are self-employed contractors and it seems only reasonable that they should receive the same protections as those who are employed by bigger companies.

At Larkfleet our primary concern is the safety of our staff, contractors and customers. So, we are taking appropriate action to safeguard their health. Where possible, we are doing this while also seeking to meet our commitments to deliver new homes on schedule for our customers.

Events of the past few months have clearly shown that humanity is not 'in charge' of its own destiny. But as we work our way through the crisis, we must get back to normal economic activity as swiftly as possible.

At Larkfleet, we will take a lead in this. But we also look to government to play its part.





Larkfleet Group has appointed a new Chief Executive as it prepares to triple in size over the next five years.



John Anderson took up the reins on 1st July. He replaces Karl Hick, the Founder of Larkfleet Group – owner of Larkfleet Homes and Allison Homes – who will step up to the position of Chairman.

Mr Anderson said: “I am delighted to have been appointed to this exciting role. Working closely with Karl and the team, my aim is to build on the core strengths that already exist in the group to

help drive performance and quality and expand Larkfleet into a premier, customer focused nationwide home builder.”

“I will build on Karl’s excellent reputation for achieving an engaged workforce, with core values, and a culture of employee and customer wellbeing. These are essential goals for evolving and agile businesses in today’s highly competitive marketplace.”

Mr Anderson has wide ranging experience covering all aspects of general management in housebuilding and the residential development sector, land acquisition, mixed use property development, and corporate turnaround and recovery, throughout the UK.

He spent the last 10 years at FTSE 250 Kier Group where he was most recently Executive Director responsible for the group’s home building business Kier Living. Prior to that he held various senior positions including CEO of Princegate Estates Plc, Managing Director of Taywood Lifestyle Homes (part of the Taylor Woodrow Group) and Group Sales and Marketing Director, Taylor Woodrow Group.

Mr Hick said: “I am thrilled to have appointed a CEO of John’s calibre. His vast experience, in director level roles makes him the ideal candidate to take Larkfleet Group from a successful regional housebuilder, to an outstanding national home builder. We are looking to take the company into new regions, recruiting new teams – with our focus remaining firmly on the customer.

“John will focus on the housebuilding side of the business, while I will continue to run R&D for the sustainable energy and construction innovation divisions.

“This is a hugely exciting time for Larkfleet Group and we are looking forward to taking our architect-designed, energy efficient homes to the whole of the UK. In spite of the pandemic, we are looking to grow substantially over the next 10 years. This will be through mixed tenure developments and affordable housing, but our mission remains the same – to produce high quality sustainable developments using innovative technology and construction methods, delivered to exceed our customers’ expectations.”

Larkfleet Homes seeks approval for 68 homes in Corby Glen

Larkfleet Homes is planning to build 68 architect-designed homes in Corby Glen, nine miles south east of Grantham in the South Kesteven district of Lincolnshire.

The development will include 48 open market properties and 20 affordable homes on land next to the fire station, off Bourne Road.

Larkfleet Homes carried out a full public consultation before lodging its final planning application.

The company will contribute cash to help schools and other services, which will be made under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act.

As part of its planning application, the company said:

“Larkfleet recognises that new housing generates a need for more school places. Larkfleet works with the relevant authorities to address any potential impact of the proposed development on local schools.”

Larkfleet Homes gets thumbs up for Moulton Chapel housing development

Planners approved Larkfleet Homes’ proposal for 86 homes on land off Roman Road in Moulton Chapel, in the South Holland district of Lincolnshire.

The development will comprise

- 8 x 2 bedroom homes
- 35 x 3 bedroom homes
- 38 x 4 bedroom homes
- 5 x 5 bedroom homes

including a range of affordable housing.

Larkfleet Homes’ Planning Manager Hannah Guy said: **“We are delighted to have received approval for this development. We are working with the council on Section 106 donations and an archaeological survey**

that has to be carried out as part of the planning permission.”





Larkfleet Group appoints a new Chief Financial Officer and makes a series of senior promotions in its homebuilding division.



Larkfleet Group, has appointed **Alastair Gordon-Stewart** to the position of Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in a move to help prepare the business for growth.

Mr Gordon-Stewart qualified as a chartered accountant at KPMG London, before moving to FTSE 250 contractor Kier Group where he held a number of senior finance roles including Finance Director at both Kier Property and Kier Living.

During his time at Kier Group he managed a housing and property development investment portfolio of £1 billion and helped raise £0.5 billion of development finance on this portfolio.

Alastair said: "I'm absolutely delighted to join Larkfleet Group. It is a company that I believe has huge potential for medium and long term growth.

"It is a pleasure to join the group's talented team and to help steer

the company through its next phase of expansion."

Karl Hick, the Chairman of Larkfleet Group, said: "I am delighted to welcome Alastair to the position of CFO. He brings a wealth of property and finance experience, which will prove invaluable as we prepare to fully reopen our business and proceed with our many planned housing developments."

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Alastair Gordon-Stewart
Larkfleet Group CFO

In addition to the appointment of a new group-level CFO, Larkfleet Homes has made a number of senior level promotions.

Leigh Wagg has been promoted to Construction Director, Larkfleet Homes Norfolk & Suffolk

Lee Pittam becomes Director of Technical, Larkfleet Homes

Paul Pearson has been promoted to Director of Commercial, Larkfleet Homes

Mr Wagg is also supporting Larkfleet Homes as Acting Construction Director prior to the launch of the first site in the Norfolk & Suffolk division.

Mr Wagg said: "I'm very excited about my new role. I worked my way up from labourer to Construction Manager during my time at Persimmon Homes, grew my health and safety and site planning knowledge at Avant Homes and since joining Larkfleet Homes my responsibilities have grown to include setting targets, objectives and responsibilities for all the staff in my team.

"My new role also means that I am now responsible for recommending policy and procedure improvements and reporting to clients and board members on project progress. It's a great step forward for my career at Larkfleet Homes and I'm delighted to have been given the opportunity."

Mr Pittam said: "I joined Larkfleet in 2016 to further my career in the housebuilding industry and into management. The prospect of joining a firm where my 20 years' experience and expertise in the construction industry could be passed on to others, and where I could grow my management skills, were key factors in my decision to join Larkfleet.

"My previous experience in civil and structural engineering in the residential, commercial and industrial sectors has allowed me to gain the necessary experience to problem solve and value engineer our developments to provide cost effective designs and innovations.

"In my new role I will be responsible for the management of the technical department. The challenge of educating and training the next generation of technical staff is a key element of the job role that appeals to me."

"The appointment of a new CFO as well as several senior level promotions consolidates our already strong team and puts us in a position of strength as the housing market reopens."

Karl Hick – Larkfleet Group Chairman

Mr Pearson said:

"I will now be overseeing the commercial activities of the Larkfleet Homes and Allison Homes developments from the Bourne head office."

"This will involve everything from land appraisals through to the awarding of new development orders, the building of effective relationships with the suppliers and subcontractors to understand their perspectives and to use the knowledge and relationships to strengthen our commercial position."

Mr Hick added: "The appointment of a new CFO as well as several senior level promotions consolidates our already strong team and puts us in a position of strength as the housing market reopens."



Larkfleet Group leads industry talks at House of Commons

Larkfleet Group recently held another of its very successful Parliamentary dinners at the House of Commons, hosted by the MP for Sleaford & North Hykeham Dr Caroline Johnson.

Chaired by Larkfleet Group's Founder Karl Hick, in one of the Commons' splendid dining rooms beside the River Thames – before the Government's latest advice on social distancing took effect – more than 20 guests enjoyed a three course meal before discussing a wide range of topics related to the housing sector, including the latest developments in the emerging COVID-19 pandemic, current Government levels of support for housebuilding and the broader construction industry landscape post-Brexit, with a focus on Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire.

Mr Hick said: "These brainstorming sessions, with some of the best minds in the industry are always insightful and informative. By collaborating in this way, each of us learns a huge amount that's applicable to what we do. I've certainly come away with many new ideas for Larkfleet Group which is always looking for new and innovative ways to create fantastic new homes with a true community feel."

The guests included Councillor Kelham Cooke, the Leader of South Kesteven District Council and Councillor Wayne Fitzgerald, the Deputy Leader of Peterborough City Council, along with a number of Larkfleet's key clients and senior executives.

Politicians and business leaders plan a way forward for housebuilders following Covid-19

More than 70 business leaders and construction industry professionals, from across the Midlands and East of England, met at a virtual conference to discuss the future of housebuilding.

The event – titled 'Covid-19 – meeting the challenges of housebuilding recovery' – was hosted by The Larkfleet Group of Companies.

Speakers at the event – now in its fifth year – included Larkfleet Group Chairman **Karl Hick**, **Andrew Lewer** MBE, MP for Northampton South, **Ben Rudd**, Associate Director, Development, at Savills, and Kelham Cooke, the Leader of South Kesteven District Council.

In a series of presentations and discussion sessions, the conference examined the recovery challenges facing the housebuilding industry. Topics discussed included the proposed changes to the planning system, how district councils can assist with the delivery of housing targets and the state of the land market.

Karl Hick opened by raising several important issues. He said: "The government has been clear that recovery in the construction industry is fundamental in terms of boosting the economy, providing jobs and delivering new homes.

"We welcome the Business and Planning Bill, including measures to extend planning permission deadlines so that projects put on hold because of Covid-19 can still be delivered, as well as the new flexible working hours on construction sites to enable us to get our teams back to work safely.

"However, we need to work together to urge the government to extend the Help to Buy scheme. It would be fair to say 80 per cent of sales relate to HTB, so sales would drop to 20 per cent without it. This would be disastrous for the housebuilding industry, the economy and people desperate to buy a new home – and would derail the government's recovery plans."

Andrew Lewer also chairs the All-Party Parliamentary Group for SME House Builders, which was set up look at the issues home builders are facing, via the planning process, in delivering the government's target of 300,000 new houses a year. It aims to provide answers to parliament and government on how England can provide more and better new homes, primarily through SME builders and developers.

Mr Lewer started by thanking Mr Hick for his contribution to the all-party group.

He said: "Lobbying by the big builders is focused on them, so SME housebuilders

need their own voice. We have nearly 200 participants from all over the country coming to parliamentary meetings, so we are gathering a body of evidence from the people who are actually involved in delivering housing.

Cllr Kelham Cooke, Leader of South Kesteven District Council said: "In January, we adopted the South Kesteven Local Plan, which set out the need to deliver an average of 650 homes a year by 2036 – or 14,000 homes within that period. This represents an increase of nearly 25% of homes in our district. Clearly this is an immense challenge, but it is one I am determined to meet.

Ben Rudd from Savills said that post-lockdown "many housebuilders have been trying to do land sales with a Covid clause, allowing them to terminate if conditions worsen during the buying stage."

Mr Rudd said that many sales are completing now lockdown has been eased, due to pent-up demand.

He added: "People are considering their home and office environment more. This may suggest a move from city centre apartments to more rural homes and family houses."

Sam Hart, Director of Sales at Larkfleet Homes, said: "The market has held

up and we've seen a bounce-back in inquiries and reservations. Whether this will continue, we will have to see. We need Help to Buy to be extended. This initiative is not just about first-time buyers, but second-timers too. Help to Buy will be the key driver to keep the market stable so that we can continue delivering homes for all."

Karl Hick concluded the conference by referencing further challenges facing the housebuilding industry.

He said: "I think one of the issues, as we come into Brexit is that some reports said it would cost up to £200 billion to manage the divorce and that would have been possible with the funding we had pre-Covid. But now that we have a massive shortfall as a result of coronavirus, does the government borrow another £200 billion? What will be the repercussions of the Chinese dispute for the UK economy? Combined with coronavirus, these factors mean we have a perfect storm coming and it is a big concern."

He added that national, globally-acclaimed projects such as HS2 and the expansion of Heathrow airport are "massively important to keep UK PLC stable internally and open for business externally".