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## **Larkfleet urges focus on existing housing stock to meet green targets**

Following on from the announcement of the government's 10-point green action plan, the Prime Minister will today set out a further ambitious target – to reduce emissions by 69 percent by 2030 compared with 1990 levels. Measures to meet this reduction will include bringing forward the ban on gas boilers in homes. Karl Hick, Co-owner and Chairman of the Larkfleet Group is calling for a greater focus on retrofitting existing housing stock to avoid slowing new build production.

With a government source singling out gas boilers as “The big issue”, bringing their ban forward two years – to 2023 from 2025 – is seen as a significant step in meeting the new timeline. Currently 80 percent of UK homes are heated by gas boilers which contributes 14 percent of the country's harmful greenhouse gas emissions.

Karl Hick, Chairman of Lincolnshire based Larkfleet Homes said: “Decarbonising homes clearly has the potential to make significant inroads towards these important goals and the revised timescale.

“We applaud the government for its ambition and accept that these measures will result in yet more stringent regulations for new builds. We are already trialling a number of innovative solutions in an attempt to be able to achieve these goals but it's clear the supply and manufacturing side of our industry is simply not ready.

“One example that is becoming increasingly popular is air source heat pumps. However, they have a reputation for poor reliability. The servicing infrastructure is wholly inadequate and will require thousands of additional trained service personnel to back up its mass use.

“2025 was already massively challenging but 2023 I would suggest is impossible.

“We are committed to driving change, but government has to understand change isn't instant. Loading unrealistic challenges will result in housing supply collapsing and with these extra cost burdens, in lower value areas we'll see volumes disappearing.

“The previous code for sustainable homes was abandoned at level 3, as it was clear development north of Peterborough was just not viable and would lead to the acceleration of the north/south divide, meaning that there would be delivery of very few homes in many areas of the UK.

“Furthermore, to focus solely on new builds would be a mistake. The UK's housing stock is well documented as being draughty and poorly insulated. This results in them leaking heat at three times the rate of more energy efficient homes on the continent and in the UK at present regulations.

“A major program of retrofitting better insulation and energy efficient heat sources has been instigated, yet progress has been slow. Although retrofitting costs can be significant, the resulting benefits not only cut emissions but also lower bills and decrease the pressure on the NHS which currently spends £1.4bn a year treating conditions associated with poor housing.

“The Future Homes Standard will already ensure that new build homes are future-proof with low carbon heating and improved energy efficiency. Placing increasingly onerous demands on the industry.