HPH356

Ben Adam-Smith 00:00
This is House Planning Help episode 356. Hello, I'm Ben Adam-Smith and this is the podcast for you if you're interested in self build or retrofit, I'm exploring what houses we should be building in the 21st century, and trying to break down some of the major roadblocks that may get in our way. Coming up in this session, my guest is Kym Mead, and we're going to be exploring Passivhaus certification. What actually is it? How does it fit into the quality assurance process? And how do we work with a certifier? Or are they invisible to us because our design professionals are sorting all of this out? So we will explore this topic. And of course, at the end of it, you get a lovely plaque to go outside your house or wherever you would like to put it. And I remember putting ours up and thinking oh, yeah, that's quite nice that we are now identified, but it really is a great conversation starter, and one of two things happens. Either someone comes up and says, what, what is that? Why do you got that on your front door? And then that opens the door to discussing low energy buildings, or someone comes up very excited, 'Oh, my goodness, this is a Passivhaus, i've heard about this'. And then again, asked you all sorts of questions. So a nice conclusion to this journey. So let's get into this chat with Kym Mead and I started by asking him to tell me a little bit about his background.

Kym Mead 01:21
My background is architecture. I worked for numerous architectural practices in and around London and Hertfordshire. And I went to work for the BRE in the sort of the Passivhaus consultancy team. So it was working with Andrew Pill and Gavin Hodgson at the time, they both left us, pinches new and I took over the business there, introduced the CEPH training course that the BRE were running at the time, which Strathclyde University now run for BRE. And yeah, had a great time, great 4 or 5 years. I mean, I was traveling a lot. So in China, fantastic experience working in South Africa, fantastic experience in the US in Portland, Oregon. But we started, my wife and I started young family and traveling was no longer an option. So I decided to set up on my own initially offering architectural services and consultancy and Passivhaus certification. But I found that straightaway, I was busy, just Passivhaus certifying and from that point onwards, that's all I've been doing.

Ben Adam-Smith 02:25
That must be a little bit unusual, because not every Passivhaus certified would have that design background.

Kym Mead 02:31
No, in honesty, I think it's better with a more sort of an engineering background. Some of the problems that you need solving, maybe sit better if you have that professional background. But experience is key also and you've been doing it long enough that you can just see some of the issues that may arise anyway and you're not solving problems that you haven't solved before. So it's um yeah, yeah, it's absolutely fine.

Ben Adam-Smith 02:54
You were one of the first Passivhaus certifiers that we had in the UK. So how did you train for it?

Kym Mead 03:03
So yeah, initially, there was myself, Peter Warm, and Paul Smyth, and I did an internship at The Passivhaus Institute in Germany for three weeks in Darmstadt, which was, again, great fun. You got to work side by side with The Passivhaus Institute, cerfiying projects and learning on the job. It's changed now. It's more course driven. You have to go through the CEPH training course, first. Be a designer have a level of experience, work on certified projects. I'm not too sure what the criteria is whether it's like three domestic one non domestic or just have extensive experience. But then you apply, you can be invited along to the certifier course, sit the course, sit the exam, there's a period of monitoring, and then you're able to certify buildings as well.

Ben Adam-Smith 03:52
I suppose we should probably start to talk a little bit about certification. So what is it?

Kym Mead 03:58
Essentially, as I describe it to people, it's a helpful audit. We are independent, we sit independently from design through to construction. I always say it shouldn't be a draconian process from top to bottom where there's big scary certifier saying yay or nay. It should be a helpful process. We all want to get to that same point, that certified building, and we should all work collaboratively together. You find your way of working, each projects different with it's own sort of levels of experience and problems to solve as long as everyone's on the same page. It should be as painless as possible.

Ben Adam-Smith 04:36
If we're coming to you for the first time, what are you going to say to us first of all, and how are we going to go through the project together?

Kym Mead 04:45
So if I receive an inquiry, my first question is who's involved? Is the Passivhaus consultant involved? Have you run sort of initial checks through the PHPP, carried out the initial energy balance? How's it looking, how's it performing? And those kind of questions and you can gauge from those answers the level of experience within the team. Now, the way that I price projects isn't necessarily based on the levels of experience, I just know that if there is less experience, I'm gonna be a little bit more involved. If there's some very experienced people on the team, people I've worked with before, they know how I like to work, and I know how they work. And it's going to be a little bit more of a streamline process. I think now, as I mentioned, that pricing structure doesn't necessarily change, I go by the floor of the building necessarily, rather than the experience of the people involved.

Ben Adam-Smith 05:35
So we are talking generally houses possibly retrofits as well, what if I come to you and said Passivhaus Planning Package? What's that? You know, what would happen, then?

Kym Mead 05:44
I would be as informative as possible, perhaps direct them to to a few websites, maybe to speak with a consultant first, if their architect doesn't have the experience and knowledge, just looking to tiptoe into the world of Passivhaus. There is an initial design that should be looked at, because there could be some early improvements, which could save costs later on. But that's really the job of the consultant really, or the certified designer to be able to give that advice.

Ben Adam-Smith 06:13
What are you looking out for then?

Kym Mead 06:16
Common errors are overly glazing, we've kind of moved away from that now there is a lot of good literature out there from the Passivhaus Trust has initiated, but way back when people just assume Passivhaus, solar passive, we have to have itself orientated with a lot of glazing, but then you run into problems of overheating and that is a real issue at the minute. So yeah, it's looking at those things, the amount of glazing that you have, the orientation, build fabric, U values and things like that, that maybe people are sort of have initially, but you can probably look at without the building being modelled in PHPP. No, they probably won't get them.

Ben Adam-Smith 06:51
Just while we're mentioning overheating. Is it still that 10% of the year overheating is a pass? Or has that come down over time?

Kym Mead 07:01
No, the pass, the threshold is 10%. We advise pretty much across the board now that you know you should be getting below 5% really. Some designers, some architects, some clients try to future proof their building and maybe have a look at things in a slightly longer way than the sort of the weather data or the climate data that we have in PHPP. But really, you should be below 5% now

Ben Adam-Smith 07:26
Is it the client that's going to interact or because we've talked about designer a few times, they are going to be the ones that are going to bring you into our team?

Kym Mead 07:36
It can be client driven, it can be sort of designer driven, really. If it's the self build, I do get contacted by the clients directly and I think that they've probably received a steer from the design or the consultant or the architect to say you need to engage with a certifier. But maybe some of the larger projects or if the client's new to Passivhaus and they've been advised and persuaded by the designer, architect consultant, then sometimes they come from the consultants that we work with.

Ben Adam-Smith 08:03
Now, what are you doing, say on a day to day basis? What are the tasks that fall within those things that you're looking out for, like the glazing?

Kym Mead 08:14
More often than not looking at a PHPP from sort of initial checks, somebody's unsure whether they want to go down the Passivhaus route or commit financially or otherwise to Passivhaus certification, they might send you a PHPP and said we've modelled it, could you have a look for some small errors. The PHPP is a very informative tool anyway, you can see pretty much straightaway how the building is performing, and where what changes need to be made. I'm always dubious if it's very early stages and the is building just passing. Like to say to aim for 12 kilowatt hours per meter squared but I'll certify 15 when we get there. It rarely comes down the performance of the building as the design develops. The wiser, more experienced consultants will have some very conservative cold bridging, entered into the PHPP. Yes, and non high spec glazing, moderate insulation, that kind of thing. That you know that as a building develops, you can improve upon anyway. So yeah, the more experienced people out there will be we'll be doing that initially. Anyway.

Ben Adam-Smith 09:16
I imagine with bigger projects, there might be more of a case for a site visit. But is there any reason why we might want you to come to sites on a self build?

Kym Mead 09:26
I'm always happy to it's a conversation I would have up front with the client or the architect. If they would like me to that's fine. I will build something extra into the fee. It could just be their first Passivhaus and then need that reassurance on site, if their experience less need if it is sort of a one off dwelling. There's less need for the certifier to visit site if an experienced designer or Architect is already visiting site anyway. We do ask for extensive photos of various stages and the things that we're normally looking for are installation continuity, the airtight barriers, the penetrations through the air tightness barriers, delivery notes, making sure the correct installation has been installed. A common example always given training is we can design a building, they can have the levels of insulation that we need, but it comes to a contractor, contractors like to value engineer things, they may look at it and sort of thing actually, the leading time on that type of insulation is too long, I can get the same thickness of insulation, but the lambda value may be slightly different, which means it's going to perform slightly differently remodeler than PHPP. So, these things we need to watch out for, we need to make sure that contractors aware that any changes that need to be fed back to the design team, so we can check the levels of insullation and what looks exactly the same, but it might perform slightly differently, it might be slightly cheaper. So we just need to make sure about those things. Hence why we asked for delivery notes and proof of the type of insullation has been installed.

Ben Adam-Smith 10:56
It reminds me on some of our drawings, we'd have various different things specified as you'd expect on a technical design. But they'll always be little notes. If you want to change it, it's fine. But just come and tell us what you're going to do.

Kym Mead 11:10
It goes back to my point earlier, where it's a collaborative process, it shouldn't be sort of a draconian process, we're all there, I want to be as helpful as possible, I can't sort of say you need to use this type of insulation. But we all want to get to that same place. Everybody wants to get in the most painless

way possible. So if something does change, on site, any product, just feed it back to the design team so that I can win their checks and then feed back and more often than not, it's gonna be absolutely fine. No problem.

Ben Adam-Smith 11:35
What other evidence are you collecting?

Kym Mead 11:38
There's a lot, we need evidence on all of the glazing, the MVHR units, pretty much everything, drawing, orientation, photos of the orientation. It's quite an extensive list. Now, it isn't necessarily a difficult list to produce. It's more focusing people to be able to provide that information. It isn't a normal building regulations build where you have building control to come out sign things and have quick look and sign things off. Yeah, fine, there you go. We need to know exactly what's gone into the Passivhaus than the PHPP. And then the evidence to support that. So we can't just say, yeah, we've used insulation, again, as example, this bit of insulation is absolutely fine as well, I want to see the evidence of that. I photograph technical data sheet of the type of insulation to prove exactly what's been entered into the PHPP.

Ben Adam-Smith 12:31
Does this encourage a better job as well, I'm coming along, I'm going to be taking some photos of this.

Kym Mead 12:37
Yeah, I think it focuses people to the job in hand, and it's relaying the message that you know, there's a no blame culture in building a passivhaus, if something goes wrong, it's a construction site, things always go wrong. They're busy places lots of trades coming on and off, for example. If something goes wrong, just let someone know, let's fix it them and then someone's gonna get in trouble. It's better to fix it rather than hide it get through an air test and find out actually, there was a bit of a tear in an air barrier or something that could have been fixed quite easily. But it was hidden. And now it's been covered up and now we're starting to see it. And actually it's going to be quite costly to the remedial works for that to fix it. So yeah, it's just introducing this non blame collaborative process

Ben Adam-Smith 13:17
Is airtightness quite an easy one to check because someone's coming out for that doing the test, and then you'll get some paperwork?

Kym Mead 13:24
Yeah, it's a physical test. So you know, there's someone there with a fan, doing the pressurised and depressurised test. So it will, at that point show something up, something's not right, you can get some sort of thermal tests carried out through installation of bits of insulation to be missed from walls are quite useful. They were nice to have as opposed to a hard certification criteria of what I need to see. I wouldn't certify a building if without a sort of thermographic survey being carried out. But you know, it comes down to trust as well, I might ask for a little bit more information if I feel as though maybe, I don't want to use the word misled, but if there's I want some more information about certain area, and I can't quite get that information that I need it kind of have a couple of little orange flags go up and a little bit of

intuition kicks in and I'm not getting the information or something's not forthcoming, or somebody's been quite sort of elusive around certain areas, I can just dig a little bit and find out and normally you get there and so it could just be a misunderstanding or you know, things are absolutely fine. Or actually you just need to redo this just to make sure. You know there have been occasions where you we've opened up walls, we've had a look in the insulation just isn't as it should be, still need to do a little bit more work, exploratory work and find out actually we just need to pull all that, all that down and start again. It's unfortunate when that happens. It's largely not a malicious thing where people are trying to hide it is maybe lack of knowledge or lack of support. It comes back to that collaboration and communication which is key to delivering a Passivhaus that maybe that was lacking in the certain area then somebody's just carried on because they were under time pressures to produce that certain things. And it was just missed and it was put up quickly on a Friday afternoon or, or something like that. Is there anything we can do as clients to spot this as it's happening? Because we're probably the most likely to be on site? Yeah, absolutely. I think if something doesn't look right, it doesn't feel right. Just raise it. Even if it is sort of a conversation or question to the builder. He might say, oh, yeah, and I, we've done it like this, because we're going to be doing it like this in a minute. And then when it all comes together, it will look correct. It's always good to sort of be looking sort of a butting insulation, if there are gaps between sort of insulation boards, or there's a bit of slump, if it's more rockwool based insulations and it if it doesn't look right, raise the question, ask the question, that's the best advice I can give. It could just be that a quick explanation or something may suffice.

Ben Adam-Smith 15:54
Is there ever any post occupancy evaluation done, because we're not sure whether something has happened, or because the process is in place, it actually rarely gets to that?

Kym Mead 16:06
Yeah, I'd always encourage it. I wouldn't discourage it, if it's your own home, and you just want to know how it's performing, it's great if you can do that. And please share the results to Passivhaus Trust or, you know, the architects engineer that's that celebrate it, because more often than not they, they work and it's good feedback. There has been the occasion where sort of a Passivhaus is, is not performing as it should do. And we've gone in and we looked at the reasons why and it could be anything from sort of faults with the MVHR, whether that's human error, installation error, or just manufacture error, you know, these things happen, we can look at that, and we can go in and fix it.

Ben Adam-Smith 16:41
What are the red flags on that, then that would make you know, because living in a Passivhaus myself, I know, it's generally working, you get that feeling when you walk in the door, you don't get the draft. So there's an element of that. But say, for example, mine is a masonry construction and I wonder whether every single piece of insulation really is up against it, you know? So things like that, what difference does that actually make to the big picture?

Kym Mead 17:08
It does have an effect. If there is insulation in your walls, I'm sure the not because I checked and certified it as I'm sure that isn't the case. But you know, these things do happen over time I, there are a couple of cases now and certain things we're starting to see now Passivhaus is maturing in the UK, at

the services, essentially. It goes a little bit further than just replacing some filters, we need to actually service the MVHR units every four to five years to make sure that they're running and that the you know, that we commissioned or rebalanced. That should be happening. Now we're starting to see a few cases in social housing where the residents don't necessarily have access to the MVHR. But maybe their maintenance agreement with the local authority, people have moved on and things aren't getting serviced as they should be and it's starting to have effects on performance of these buildings. So this is something that we collectively as certifies and the Passivhaus Trust, that's what we're looking at now.

Ben Adam-Smith 18:04
So yeah, just going back to that example, then when you say it's having an effect on the performance, what are you meaning? Are they noticing the air is a bit funny?

18:12
Air quality, cold sports? Yeah, there's certain things, you know, people are comfortable in different temperatures anyway. Some people run a little warmer than others, and that don't feel the cold as much, but you shouldn't be feeling that cold in a Passivhaus. If there is then it, that there might be something wrong, I'd be somebody that just needs to be realigned or rechecked or looked at and, and more often than not, is because the MVHR need servicing. Yeah,

Ben Adam-Smith 18:40
Yeah, and they tell you that it's in the instructions as well. But we all know what life can be sometimes.

Kym Mead 18:46
We dont always clean our gutters either every year when we should do.

Ben Adam-Smith 18:51
So bit like with a driving test where he could create an argument, okay, you can drive but perhaps we should be checking every 20 years or so. Does certification lasts forever?

Kym Mead 19:03
That's a good question. So I certify on a date and on that date, final evidence commissioned, I have the airtightness and everything is certifiable. On the certificate there be a certain date, say on this date the building complies with the Passivhaus standard. Now, people live in houses differently, they may choose to have the doors and windows open more often than their next door neighbor. And the houses may perform slightly differently because of the way that they choose to live in the buildings. Now, if you own your house and you want to put new windows in or you want to extend it then it can be classed as a material change of use and it can null and void the certificate, the Passivhaus certification so that's something that we haven't really got to yet where people are extending existing Passivhauses but there is some literature in the PHPP manual that sort of highlights material change of use one concern, I have some of the larger projects that are being looked at now and designed now are maybe going towards gas boilers, which we shouldn't really be doing. But it's not my job as a certifier to say that you can't do that with the idea of maybe changing to a district heating system in five to 10 years or whatever. And that's why they're going with boilers as opposed to a heat pump now. My concern is that there could be some local authorities that are spending an awful lot of money on these buildings, every

Passivhaus certified that in five years, if they switched to sort of a district heating system that their Passivhaus certification could be voided because of that. So this is my concern was, so we're gonna have passivhauses, lots of them large projects, and then they're gonna switch the heating strategy, and it may null and void the certification, which will be shame.

Ben Adam-Smith 20:49
You know, these sorts of things are going to happen. What about, we're going to change the windows, I know, it's way down the road, and probably hasn't happened much with any of the Passivhauses. But is that the same argument? Or does it have to be done carefully, so that, look, I am doing it properly, I get my certification back.

Kym Mead 21:06
Yes, it needs to be done carefully. This is a slightly different performing windows, they are your primary heat source your windows, you could be affecting the overall performance, I would run the calculations again, just to see how things doing or maybe even prior to installing the windows, see how these performing windows are going to affect the overall PHPP calculation. You can go for recertification which is administration cost with PHI, it isn't the same process again, and you can have the building recertified. But you would need an up to date airtightness test and you would need a commissioning on the services again, I would have thought so yeah. It's the same, I mean, there was a project recently, and they certified to a Passivhaus. And they then a year later installed some PV. Now they recertified as a Passivhaus Plus. It was a recertification I sort of went through with The Passivhaus Institute. And again, there's additional costs of doing that. But you can sort of recertify a previously certified project if there has been material changes.

Ben Adam-Smith 22:08
Let's go more generally now and think about Passivhaus certifiers. So we talked right at the beginning about you being one of just three. And now there's more choice. So yes. Does it matter who we go to?

Kym Mead 22:19
It's personal preference. I mean, I'm lucky enough that I've been doing this a while now I have some repeat work, I work with designers and architects readily inserted over their projects. And I'm sure other certifiers can say the same. There is a wider a wider choice. Absolutely. I think there's 8-10 now certifiers in the UK, All with different levels of experience different backgrounds, I would recommend to anyone that well yeah go out to as many and get as many proposals as possible if you're looking to certify a project, Everyone's listed on the Passivhaus Trust website. So they're there and contactable. There are large organizations, small organizations like myself, which may play a part in cost. I always say I it's just me and a laptop in my kitchen and I tend to be competitive when it comes to pricing. And I'm quite proud of that fact, I like to keep things as if it's somebody's own personal money, if it's a self build, then I try to keep things as competitive as I possibly can.

Ben Adam-Smith 23:17
We like to hear that. Oh, what about the end of the process. And so we talked about all the evidence that you're getting together is it more or less when that airtightness test is done or what else needs to happen?

Kym Mead 23:28
So, I like to be appointed as early as possible maybe in and around planning just before just after, some initial checks and feedback can be provided. It could just be through experience or in other projects that I'm working at that time that I can relay some information. This is the part of the role of certifier, we do have experience. There probably isn't a problem now that we haven't faced at some point, we've been doing it long enough. And we're able to sort of highlight these areas, it could just be that what I consider a problem may be client driven, they may have nice sweeping views by the kitchen, which is north facing. And my advice would be to try and minimize some of that north facing glazing because quite a heat loss. But actually, they want to capture those views. Fine, there's absolutely nothing wrong with that, advice then I would give was, you're likely going to have to make it up in larger, more expensive walls and U values etc etc. So it's finding that balance in those initial checks which the consultant will be doing as well. When it comes to sort of stage four like to do a sort of a technical design stage sign off. At that point we should have all of the information on all of the windows, the insulation, everything should be fully detailed. There should be no no questions unanswered at that point. So when we get to site everyone has that level of reassurance that if the contractor builds as specified it will achieve the Passivhaus standard provided we meet the airtightness and all of the buildings commissioned and all the as built drawings are kind of re-evaluated. That's the happy place. We all like to be. Sometimes it doesn't always work that way. Yeah there are sort of question unanswered. And we should have at that point, the U values locked in the window specified and the MVHR. Certainly, there should be design freezes on the actual design. But sometimes things do change. And then we just we have to kind of deal with that as we go.

Ben Adam-Smith 25:15
And a lot of this is good practice, though as well, it's really good to have a solid plan that you know, you're just going to go on site and execute.

Kym Mead 25:21
Yeah, yeah, it should just be that easy shouldn't it? Building houses never is. It's not a sort of practical thing. It's an emotional thing as well, if you are self building, and you know, if it's your house, and you're investing money and into it, and you do want to make a last minute change, that's your right. And that's our job as certifier and consultants, and architects should just manage that. But if it is going to be an issue, explain the issue. And if they still want to go, and it may jeopardize the final pass of our certification, then that's okay, as well, that if you want to make that last minute change, it's your house. We just have to sort of give the self builder the information to be able to make their decisions.

Ben Adam-Smith 26:02
Yeah, it's quite interesting, isn't it? How sometimes it's the not knowing because you're doing these things for the first time? Yes, I want big windows, but then you don't realize big windows mean, probably you then have to invest in some shading, you're adding expense that you didn't need, but you maybe don't see that by just doing these sorts of things. So are there any instances where you come to an end you talked about you don't have to go to certification, I certainly know of a couple were probably involving a lot of glazing is what I'm thinking about. But for whatever reason, they got off the certified

track. And perhaps they have a very hot house because of it, you know, that kind of thing. I can certainly think of a couple of examples like that.

Kym Mead 26:46
Yeah, some of the earlier projects, the big drive was we need as much solar gains as possible. That's our primary heating, Passivhaus wants to reduce our running costs, etc. Because we just weren't focused on overheating sort of thing. The UK has got such a rubbish climate most of the year, that actually overheating just wasn't on our radar. But it it really is, and really was. And so while some of the earlier projects, were probably a greater risk of overheating than some of the projects that have been delivered now, you know, we have are in the Building Regulations now, which specifically deals with overheating, and these assessments need to happen. But I wasn't there 10-15 years ago. So yeah, there is always a risk, I've only ever once downgraded a Passivhaus and that was through air tightness, they just couldn't get down to below 0.6 air changes per hour. As hard as they tried. They did they just couldn't get there. So I certified at the low energy building standard, which is a very good standard still, but it's there for the the harder to treat/near misses, buildings that maybe maybe not orientated as favorably or their over shaded or what have you. I always say with a low energy building standard, it shouldn't be something that you aspire to build as such, you know, you should be going for Passivhaus classic. It's still a very good standard, but aspire for classic if you can't quite get there because of orientation, cost, budget, all of those things over shading, then that's the low energy building standard is there as well.

Ben Adam-Smith 28:15
Is there anything that you would like either designers or the self builders themselves to understand about what you do? Anything that you think you wish they would do that?

Kym Mead 28:29
Oh, how do I put this? Certification can be quite time intensive, there's a lot of information that we have to go through to make sure it's right. We don't want to be in a position where we get things wrong. We're all human, everyone's human. We are that extra pair of eyes, and we can pick out things through experience. And we do have to register the building with The Passive House Institute, they may have further questions. So you're always under time pressure when certifying and some of those time pressures are out of your control somewhat. So whilst we may have lots of questions, interrogate the building and make sure everything's lines up and stacks up when we issue the building to The Passivhaus Institute to get the serial number, they can spot check us, it's more of a spot check in the certifier than than the actual design, they may have some questions we may need to come back to, to the design team to sort of find a more rounded answer. So yeah, it's those things that happen maybe in the background that will also be shielding the design team from there are stresses and pressures on us. Not only delivering for the client, but The Passivhaus Institute who we're ultimately answering to as well. So yeah.

Ben Adam-Smith 29:38
What would you describe as the difference between a certified building and something that isn't certified but perhaps tried to follow the same ideas?

Kym Mead 29:47
I'm always wary when people sort of advertise Passivhaus principles. I'm not too sure what that means and I think it can mean various different things like we picked up some U values of zero, well we read something, 0.15 U value some walls and floors. And we've adopted those. We've adopted some Passivhaus principles, but we haven't got an MVHR. Or we have an MVHR and we're not too worried about the airtightness. That kind of piecemealing certain things but Passivhaus is a holistic assessment of absolutely everything. I'm always wary of Passivhaus principles, it feels like people are being a bit misleading. They're trying to sort of promote themselves on the back of something, but they haven't actually sort of adhered to the standard anyway. So we've been doing Passivhaus for long enough that it shouldn't necessarily be that challenging. If you don't want to, to certify a building. You know, that's up to you but then just don't say that you've adopted Passivhaus principles in your building, it says, Yeah, go for the certification or just build a really nice low energy building house.

Ben Adam-Smith 30:48
And how much is this likely to cost us?

Kym Mead 30:52
So costs can vary depending on the size of the house, and maybe sometimes the level of experience. I tend to focus my cost purely on the size of the development, rather than the level of experience from the team and that can range from somewhere between £2000-£3000, for a single, a modest size, single dwelling. Other certifiers may have a different fee structure. But that's that's tend to what I work to like I think I mentioned earlier, I tried to keep things as competitive as possible whilst also taking my time into account.

Ben Adam-Smith 31:23
And do you ever feel that certification might add some value to the house? It's probably pretty vague question. But it...

Kym Mead 31:32
We've heard things over the years that actually there have been some estate agents that have added 2-3% above market value on some dwellings when they go to market. So I don't know how that's quantified whether they've just kind of plucked that 2-3% from the air. But yeah, I do think they have value. I think there's a tried and tested in terms of performance, that data is there. And it's slowly becoming more and more, wouldn't say quite mainstream yet, but we're starting to affect certainly mainstream construction and regulations and policy and things like that.

Ben Adam-Smith 32:09
Is there anything else I should be mentioning around this topic of certification?

Kym Mead 32:16
Just if people do want to become a certifier, any designers and consultants out there, then it certainly encouraged it. There is a lot of work. I've not heard of her certify that isn't busy. And long may that continue. But yeah, just reach out to a certifier have a conversation and honest conversation. I know all the certifiers pretty much personally, and a good group of people. And I'm sure they have just an open

and honest conversation with anyone if they wanted to know more about it. One of the good things about the Passivhaus community in general, is everyone's very open and willing to share. Yeah, it's quite a nice place to work.

Ben Adam-Smith 32:51
Is there a final thought either repeating something that we've already mentioned, or just something else to add to the conversation just to close up on?

Kym Mead 33:02
A while ago, there was a performance gap. That was a huge issue for the UK and we were using certain tools, I won't mention it by name, but it's a three letter tool, to try and justify building performance when it is more of a regulatory tool of compliance tool. And it caused a few issues, we've kind of moved beyond that now, a little bit. Passivhaus does exactly what it says on the tin in the sense that if you want to build in the performs, it's a very robust assessment and it will more than pretty much all the time deliver what you require.

Ben Adam-Smith 33:39
Kym, thank you very much!

Kym Mead 33:40
You're very welcome. Thank you, Ben cheers!

Ben Adam-Smith 33:44
Head online take a look at the show notes for this episode houseplanninghelp.com/ 356, where we've got a summary for you just so you can reflect on the conversation once again and get straight to the key points. If you'd like to make comments or ask a question. Also, you can do that within the show notes or we'll give you social media links. We'll link you across to Mead consulting, once again, houseplanninghelp.com/ 356. My call to action is to check out The Hub and we work quite hard on this. Trying to think well what else do you need? How can we make life easier for you? And so that's why we put this all online. It's a digital resource that you can dig into at your own pace. We've got videos, we've got courses, we bring in experts to answer your questions, I try to share contacts where I can. We tried to do everything that we can possibly think of! So come and take a look find out what it's all about houseplanninghelp.com/join. Next time Judith Leary Joyce is my guest, and we'll find out why tackling a home retrofit didn't stop there. It actually motivated her to write a book. So that next time thanks so much for listening. The House Planning Help podcast is produced by Regen Media; content that matters.