



External Affairs

September 2008

Review

Press and media coverage:

- 251 individual press mentions including:
 - Sunday Express
 - BBC Radio Somerset
 - BBC Look North
 - BBC Radio Wales
 - The Daily Record
 - London Evening Standard x2
 - The Sunday Telegraph
 - Radio GTFM
 - Meridian Tonight
 - The Daily Telegraph
 - Radio Plymouth Sound
 - The Financial Times

- Previous monthly individual press mentions:
 - January 82
 - February 100
 - March 126
 - April 239
 - May 306
 - June 140
 - July 253
 - August 141
 - September 251



Meetings with politicians:

- Richard Hyslop, FMB Public Affairs Manager and Maire Devlin, FMB Northern Ireland Director held a very productive meeting with John McCalister MLA (Ulster Unionist - South Down) in the Northern Ireland Assembly. Mr McCalister was very keen to meet with the FMB following the launch of our Building a Greener Britain research. The meeting also provided an opportunity to discuss the current state of the construction industry in Northern Ireland and in particular how FMB members were coping. Mr McCalister was particularly interested in two ideas that the FMB put to him; reforming the public sector procurement process and cutting VAT for all building repair and maintenance work. Mr McCalister actually took away a number of the FMB 'Cut the VAT' postcards to hand out to his colleagues and has promised to table a motion in the Northern Ireland Assembly urging the UK Government to cut VAT.

- FMB Northern Ireland Director Maire Devlin attended a meeting at Stormont Castle with Northern Ireland First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness. The meeting was held to

discuss the current state of the construction industry in Northern Ireland. Representing the small and medium sized builders, Maire was able to raise a number of very important issues including: tackling the existing housing stock, reducing VAT, simplifying the planning system, reform of stamp duty and reform of the public sector procurement process so that smaller builders can benefit from government and local authority

- The FMB was represented at this week's Labour Party Conference in Manchester by Brian Berry, FMB Director of External Affairs. Housing was one of the key issues being discussed at the fringe events including affordability and the need for more homes. Interestingly, Caroline Flint MP, Minister for Housing, acknowledged that the issue of cutting VAT on building repair and maintenance work needed to be discussed! The FMB will be following this up with the Minister as well as her concern about tackling rogue tradespeople. Brian Berry also had separate meetings with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), Royal Institution of British Architects (RIBA), Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), Drivers Jonas and ITV.
- The FMB was represented at this week's Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham by Richard Hyslop, FMB Public Affairs Manager; Brian Berry, FMB Director of External Affairs and Richard Diment, FMB Director General. While at conference representatives of the FMB attended many meetings relevant to FMB members, on topics ranging from the need to build more houses to the current crisis facing the construction industry. Brian Berry sat on a panel of housing experts at one fringe meeting organised by the NHBC.

The highlight of conference was a private dinner hosted by the FMB entitled, "The Rural Housing Agenda". The dinner was attended by: Brian Binley MP; Mark Isherwood AM, Shadow Housing Minister in the Welsh Assembly; Cllr Roger Bird and Julia Goodwin, Editor of House Beautiful Magazine. The FMB will be following up many of the issues raised at the dinner and already has a further meeting arranged at the Welsh Assembly with Mark Isherwood AM next week.

- The FMB was represented at this week's Liberal Democrat Party Conference in Bournemouth by Richard Hyslop, FMB Public Affairs Manager, Brian Berry, FMB Director of External Affairs and Richard Diment, FMB Director General. While at the conference representatives of the FMB attended many meetings relevant to FMB members, on topics ranging from the quality of our built environment to the current crisis facing the construction industry; a private meeting was also held between the FMB and RIBA (Royal Institution of British Architects). Attending these meetings gave the FMB an opportunity to raise the concerns of FMB members with senior politicians and representatives of other relevant organisations.

The highlight of the conference was a private policy dinner hosted by the FMB entitled, "Quality not Quantity - The Future of Britain's Housing". This dinner was attended by Adrian Harvey, Head of Public Affairs at CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment); Baroness Maddock; Richard Younger-Ross MP and Sunand Prasad, President of RIBA (Royal Institution of British Architects). Following the dinner the FMB will be working very closely with Mr Younger-Ross who has said that he is happy to table a number of questions in the House of Commons on behalf of the FMB. The FMB will also be working more closely with RIBA, particularly on the issue of VAT.

Campaigning:

- Following a [recent meeting](#) with the FMB, Liberal Democrat MSP Jim Tolson has tabled the following Motion in the Scottish Parliament:

S3M-2432 Jim Tolson (Dunfirmline West) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): Reduce VAT on Building Repairs - That the Parliament supports calls from the Federation of Master Builders for a reduction in the rate of value added tax (VAT) from 17.5 per cent to five per cent on building repair and improvement work to existing buildings; believes that cowboy builders flourish by evading VAT, that reducing the rate of VAT on domestic building work will significantly reduce their commercial advantage and that the financial incentive to choose a rogue builder will diminish; believes that reducing VAT on repairs and maintenance will help bring thousands of empty homes back into use across Scotland and help meet the 2012 obligation to abolish all unintentional homelessness; notes the increasing number of households across Scotland living in fuel poverty and believes that cutting VAT would also enable thousands of families to upgrade their homes to make them more energy efficient, and consequently calls on the UK Government to reduce VAT for building repairs and improvements.

- In the run up to the Liberal Democrat Party Conference, taking place in Bournemouth next week, the FMB has delivered a five point plan to Liberal Democrat Leader, Nick Clegg MP, to kick start the building industry. [More](#)
- In the run up to the Labour Party Conference, taking place in Manchester next week, the FMB has delivered a five point plan to the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown MP, to kick start the building industry. [More](#)
- In the run up to the Conservative Party Conference, taking place in Birmingham next week, the FMB has delivered a five point plan to the leader of the Conservative Party, David Cameron MP, to kick start the building industry. [More](#)
- Ahead of the Labour Party Conference, FMB North West Director Frances Shaw had the following [letter](#) published in the Manchester Evening News, highlighting the fact that there are currently 48,053 empty homes in the Greater Manchester area at present, and calling on the Labour Party to cut VAT on building repair and maintenance work so that they can be brought back into use.

FMB Comment:

- **Sensible, practical and fair, says FMB in response to OFT housebuilding inquiry**
Today's findings of the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) market inquiry into the housebuilding sector are a sensible package of the practical and fair says FMB. [More](#)
- **Builder prosecuted for use of logos**
Residents have been advised to ensure they carry out appropriate checks when appointing trades people to carry out work on their homes. [More](#)
- **Easier homes extensions will benefit householders and builders, says FMB**
Householders wanting to extend and improve their homes will benefit from changes to the planning system which come into force on 1 October, say the FMB. [More](#)

The FMB's response to these changes to the planning system was covered in The Daily Telegraph and The Times.

- **Britain's homes need a strategy, demands FMB**
Today's Government announcement to tackle fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency is right in principle but wrong in delivery, says the FMB. [More](#)

- **Apprenticeships are key to tackling skills shortage, says FMB**

More apprenticeships in the construction sector are the solution to the current skills shortage in the construction sector and not low level offenders with no experience, says the FMB. [More](#)

- **FMB welcomes decision by Tesco not to build eco-town at Hanley Grange**

News that Tesco has abandoned its plans to create an eco-town at Hanley Grange is the latest blow to the Government's controversial eco-town plans says the FMB. Already two other proposed eco-town projects have fallen by the wayside and in one scheme based in Peterborough the Government has been forced to pump 16 million GBP of public money into a zero-carbon exemplar housing scheme just to get it off the ground. [More](#)