

NHMF Study Tour Report

Berlin | 16 - 18th May 2025



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- Professor Jo Patterson, Director of Research at Cardiff Uni
- Thomas Wagner, Board Member at B&O Services Ltd
- Richard Bennion, Founder and Director at iON-Consultants

Thank you to our participants and hosts



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A message from the NHMF Committee Chair

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed to making the NHMF Berlin Study Tour 2025 such a memorable and impactful experience. With over 40 delegates representing more than 30 organisations—including housing associations, councils, commercial partners, academics, and sector bodies—we explored Berlin's approach to asset management, repairs, sustainability, and compliance.

Our generous hosts, including GdW, Gewobag, HOWOGE, B&O Services, and Housing Europe, provided invaluable insights into Germany's public housing landscape. We examined innovative contracting models, refurbishment strategies, and IT applications, while also learning about Germany's revised asbestos regulations—now more stringent than the UK's—and their implications for future compliance.

The tour also facilitated meaningful exchanges between TPAS England and German counterparts, and we were fortunate to enjoy a rich cultural backdrop, guided by Jonny Whitlam through Berlin's historic landmarks and vibrant neighbourhoods. The city's blend of history, architecture, and progressive housing policy offered a unique lens through which to reflect on our own sector's challenges and opportunities. Thank you again for your time, energy, and thoughtful contributions. Let's continue to build on this momentum and bring forward the ideas and inspiration gathered in Berlin to drive excellence across our work in the sector.

Stephanie Lloyd-Foxe, Magna HA
NHMF Committee Chair



Introduction | Context of the Tour

Julian Ransom BSc MRICS

For a number of years now, the National Housing Maintenance Forum (NHMF) organises a study tour trip to an area of interest and with particular relevance to current challenges in the UK Social Housing Sector. Previously we have visited, Sweden, Denmark, the Channel Islands, Austria (2022), as well as Ireland, Cardiff, Glasgow, London, Oxford and many others.

In 2024, we visited Sweden as guests of the City of Stockholm. As well as learning about the very different context of equivalent 'social housing' provision (not a term recognised or embraced by the Swedes), we got to witness their advanced preparedness in respect of the NZC (Net Zero Carbon) position, wide adoption of heat networks/heat pumps and related measures, and many wider sustainability agendas. Highlights included integrated ecological design at the district of Hammarby Sjostad, its latest incarnation at the Royal Seaport development (the largest in Europe), as well as the resident lead 'ElectriCITY' energy community initiative which we are now exploring as a potential pilot in the UK (watch this space). Thanks to our hosts and friends at The City of Stockholm, ElectriCITY, the KTH Royal Institute of Technology (University), National and Regional governmental housing bodies, and public housing companies (HA equivalent).

Study Tour delegates typically comprise the NMHF Committee, and invited guests/sector related organisations. For Berlin, with over 40 delegates/contributors, representing over 30 organisations, the mix included social housing providers (Housing Associations & Councils), research academics, commercial organisations, the Chartered Institute of Housing, and TPAS England. Please see the logos of those organisations represented upon the opening pages.

So why Berlin in 2025?

The focus for this year's trip was to visit a European neighbour with close parallels to the UK in both social housing provision and demographic terms and compare, contrast and examine alternate approaches employed which may provide useful insights back home. The primary themes included repairs, maintenance and refurbishment, efficient contracting, carbon reduction/sustainability, and the application of I.T.

Research quickly indicated that Germany, and Berlin specifically, provided a good comparison to the UK and coupled with their reputation for efficiency and a progressive, innovative approach, a valuable opportunity to learn and exchange ideas within the sector. Although employing interesting new build/development techniques, the focus for this trip and our exploration of processes employed was upon asset management, the repair and refurbishment of existing housing stock. As has been our experience across Europe, although not a term directly acknowledged in Germany, we also wished to look at their equivalent 'social housing' model, understand their accompanying challenges and share innovative solutions being adopted.

And of course, a visit to what is arguably one of the most interesting and vibrant cities in Europe, with palpable influences associated with two world wars, the continued legacy from an extended cold war and challenges associated with a divided, now re-unified nation and city.

Ben Virgo, Mike Turner and I undertook an initial liaison visit in October 2024, and are very grateful to all those in Berlin who assisted us with what transpired to be a most interesting, instructive and helpful study tour program. This notably included assistance, presentations and site visits from the GdW (the federal association of German housing and real estate companies) who also hosted much of the trip, Gewobag and HOWOGE two of the largest German public housing companies (Housing Association equivalents), B&O Services the largest sector service provider countrywide, and 'Housing Europe' - the European Federation for Public, Cooperative and Social Housing. We also facilitated meetings between TPAS England (Caritas Charles) and his German equivalents and benefitted from our excellent ex-pat historic city walking tour guide, [Jonny Whitlam](#).

Berlin is a truly beautiful city to visit, with many beautiful parks (the Tiergarten), inescapable history, world famous landmarks (former East and Western Bloc), a rich culture and much historic and modern architecture of note. We were very lucky to enjoy predominantly bright weather which showed the City off at its best.

There is too much from our visit to cover in detail, however, the following provides an engaging glimpse of some headlines, written by delegates and some of our German hosts, with which to appreciate key learning points and specific aspects of note. If you have any areas of particular interest, please contact myself, Ben, or Mike on behalf of the NHMF for presentation notes, German contacts and/or more detail.

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The European Housing Context

Dr Benjamin Teutmeyer, GdW

- Dr Benjamin Teutmeyer spoke on behalf of the GdW, Germany's federal association of German registered housing and real estate associations with over 3,000 members, mostly professional landlords.
- In Germany, rental housing dominates (58% nationally and over 80% in Berlin), unlike many European countries where ownership is more common.
- Post-WWII, Germany prioritized rapidly building quality rental homes for all income levels rather than homeownership.
- Other countries, like France and Belgium, focus more on homeownership with state benefits, but face challenges renovating/retro-fitting older housing amid climate goals.
- Housing Europe is a large network of 45 federations across 24 countries representing over 100 million homes; the UK left due to Brexit (but participation now encouraged anyway).
- Climate and energy policies are central to European housing debates, but investment is lacking despite political talk & related declared targets.
- Successful lobbying (e.g., on EU renovation rules) depends on collaboration across countries.
- EU initiatives like investment loans often favour very large projects, limiting access for many smaller housing associations.
- Tourism-driven short-term rentals have inflated rents and displaced low-income residents in cities like Lisbon and Paris. This is causing local resentment and political pressure.
- Germany's housing issues stem largely from halted social housing funding, causing stock loss. This compounded by rapid increase in building related cost inflation.
- Solutions require strong political will, funding, and strategic planning. The easing of financing conditions is one example initiative.



UK Housing Context

Mike Turner, Cardo

- The UK has **68 million people**, with **higher population** density than Germany. London is more densely populated than Berlin but has fewer apartments.
- The UK has a **younger population** (average age 40.7 years; London 36 years) compared to Germany (44.6 years).
- The UK has around **4 million social/affordable homes**, more than Germany's 1 million, though definitions of affordability differ.

Key challenges include:

- **Loss of social housing** due to **Right to Buy** policies—over **1 million homes lost**. Not an issue in Germany clearly.
- **1.3 million on housing waiting lists**, with **150,000 children in temporary housing**.
- **Not enough new homes built**; government aims for **1.5 million homes**, but affordability and resource to construct is uncertain.
- Rising costs: **£100 billion in housing association debt**; interest rate hikes adding **£500 million annually** to costs.
- **Old housing stock**, worsening issues like **damp, mould, and safety** (highlighted after the **Grenfell fire and the horrific demise of Awaab Ishak**).
- **Net Zero pressures** but struggling with current maintenance and safety demands upon available funds.
- **Skills shortages**, especially in construction, retrofitting, and trades.

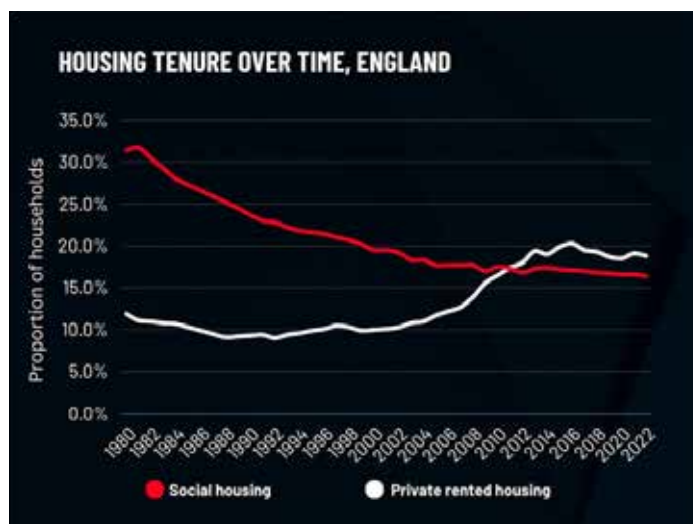
Our challenges mirror many the equivalent sector faces in Germany:

- Elongated/dysfunctional supply chains, an aging skilled workforce, difficulty around access for repairs, poor legacy stock quality, and the need for government-led/funded building.

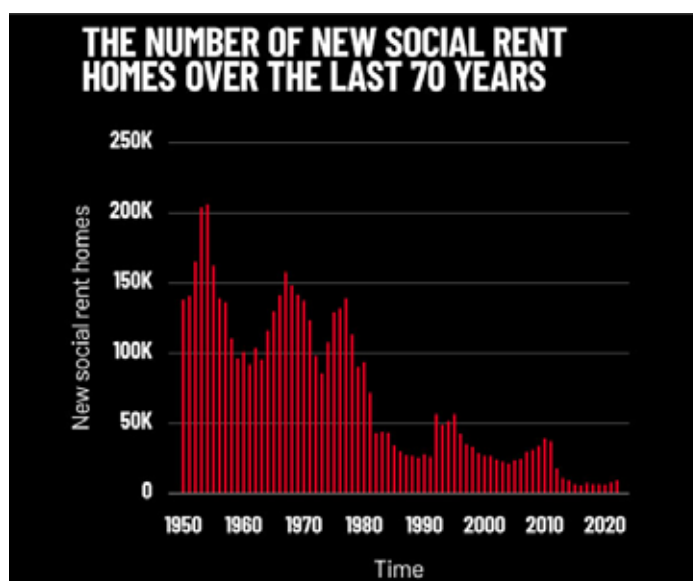
Conclusion: The UK faces deep systemic housing challenges, but there's an opportunity to learn from Germany and collaborate upon innovative solutions.



Decline in Social Housing in the UK



Reducing supply in the UK



Children in temporary accommodation in the UK



Observations

Dr Eve Blezard, CIH

This was my first study trip, and it's fair to say I took a lot from it. As someone with a research background and an interest in European approaches to housing, I found the opportunity to explore Berlin's urban history and social housing to be very helpful. This also helped understand the role of housing in the city's post-war rebuild and reunification.

The talks with HOWOGE and Gewobag benefited from that wider context, and then being able to visit sites helped connect policy, place, and people. I also felt that Dr. Özgür Öner's session helped frame everything in a wider European context, which then helped link place-based urban policy with housing systems.

The B&O presentation helped us explore the German approach to repairs, diagnostics, and the operational realities of delivering day-to-day services. As someone thinking about repair culture and service standards back home, I found it incredibly insightful. I expected to see good retrofit practice, but what stood out most was the framing of social housing as long-term infrastructure, rooted in place.

It was also an opportunity to meet others working through similar challenges, which helped me come away with both ideas and connections. I'm grateful to have been included – it was well-structured, well-paced, and thought-provoking throughout.



Country Context, Germany

Dr Benjamin Teutmeyer, GdW

Germany is a Nation of Renters – Rental Issues Are of High Relevance

In Germany, over 50% of the population lives in rental housing. Therefore, questions related to renting are of significant societal importance. The German constitution guarantees everyone the right to housing – those without income receive full state financing as part of basic social security. These homes must not exceed a certain size or rent level. People with low incomes receive support for paying their rent through various instruments.

Thus, housing and rental issues are a key aspect of Germany's social welfare system and, at the same time, a major economic factor.

GdW Companies Provide Affordable Housing – Price and Interest Rate Surges Threaten the Goal

The GdW (Federal Association of German Housing and Real Estate Companies) brings together member companies of all legal forms – public companies, cooperatives, private companies, as well as foundations and church-affiliated enterprises. They all bear full economic risk and can go bankrupt. This also applies to companies that are fully or partially publicly owned (by municipalities). These companies provide “social housing” and “affordable housing” – homes that the middle class can finance on their own. This type of housing construction has come under immense pressure due to the sharp rise in prices and interest rates in recent years. In Germany, government subsidies are provided for social housing for the lowest income groups and for high-end, climate-friendly apartments. However, “regular” housing construction for the broad middle of society is not subsidized – this is creating a serious problem.

Climate Protection and Housing Costs Are in Tension: Balancing Both Is the Great Challenge

In addition to the price and interest rate crisis of recent years, climate protection in the building sector is the greatest challenge for housing affordability. Climate-friendly new construction and renovations cost money. This tension can only be resolved through the highest possible efficiency of measures and by prioritizing government support for housing construction.



Observations

Caritas Charles, TPAS

I found the visit in May to Berlin fascinating and eye opening. With the current media perception in the UK being very negative around our sector I found that compared to Germany we have some positives that they lack and likewise we have some lessons to be learnt from them.

Positives

I found the German methodical systems led approach to be excellent in achieving positive outcomes at minimal cost especially in responsive repairs. As an engagement professional I found the protections guaranteed by law for tenants refreshing and the lack of a regulator and ombudsman surprising, something I would have liked to find out more about. Does the self-regulation backed by a stronger legal framework really work or does it stifle tenant voices?

Negatives

There was only really one that stuck with me and that may be a cultural difference in approach rather than a negative. I really felt a lack of a holistic approach and by that, I mean looking at housing as more than just a collection of services such as repairs and maintenance. We look more closely at the lived experience aspects and how that reflects service provision. Maybe because of the tragedies we have had as a country in social housing we are more sensitive to this, I didn't really feel it from our German friends but as I said this may be a cultural reflection.

It certainly made me think about how we as a sector need to look closely at how we shape our future.



Reconstruction and Berlin Context

Gabriele Meier, HOWOGE

Berlin's public housing sector is made up of several municipal housing associations, including degewo AG, GESOBAU AG, Gewobag, HOWOGE, STADT UND LAND, WBM, and Berlinovo. While HOWOGE primarily focuses on the eastern districts of Berlin, Gewobag's portfolio is centered in the western parts of the city. Both organisations play a vital role in shaping Berlin's urban landscape and ensuring affordable housing for its residents.

Berlin's history in the last 100 years reflects profound changes. In the early 20th century, Berlin's population growth resulted in urban development projects, such as the Berlin Modernism Housing Estates. After the destruction during World War II the city faced extensive reconstruction. The post-war period, especially the 1950s, was marked by rebuilding efforts in both East and West Berlin. During the 1960s and 1970s, large-scale building projects continued, shaping the modern cityscape. After reunification in 1990, Berlin entered a new era of growth and modernisation, which continues today. By the turn of the millennium, Berlin had established itself as a vibrant, global metropolis, constantly evolving and growing.

Today, HOWOGE's main focus is on investing in modernisation projects to meet climate targets. These include roof extensions (e.g., Franz-Schmidt-Straße 11-17), serial renovations (e.g., Zerbster Straße 80-84), and energy-efficient upgrades (e.g., Rhinstraße 2 and 4).

Our aim is to enhance sustainability, not only by improving energy efficiency, but also by actively reducing overall emissions. Despite high costs and reliance on external funding, we are committed to overcoming these challenges to deliver long-term ecological, economic, and social benefits for our tenants. We believe that through innovative approaches and persistent efforts, Berlin can continue to grow as a sustainable and livable city for everyone.



Berlin Municipal Housing Providers

Gabriele Meier, HOWOGE and Anthony Youett, Gewobag

Who They Are

- **HOWOGE:** Manages 82,000 homes (mainly East Berlin).
- **Gewobag:** Manages 75,000 homes across Berlin.
- Both are 2 of 6 city-owned housing companies, collectively housing ~1 million people.

Current Situation

- Berlin needs ~20,000 new homes yearly but only builds ~15,000.
- Construction processes are slow—6 to 10 years due to regulations. Planning elongated.

Targets & Challenges

- Gewobag aims for 1,200 new homes/year but often falls short (670 completed last year).
- Maintenance is challenging due to widely spread properties and the need for temporary relocations.
- A financial tension between new build and refurbishing existing housing stock.
- Retrofit and European NZC/Carbon reduction targets very challenging and so a significant component/ focus in respect of the refurbishment programmes overall.
- Hazardous materials like asbestos now under tighter regulation and adding considerable cost to refurbishment projects.
- Vacancy rates are extremely low (1.5–1.9%), with flats often re-let within a day. Nomination process more streamlined (lottery style as noted below).



Affordability

- Rents average **€6.17/m²**, about **50% below market rate**.
- Flats are allocated based on income eligibility (WBS certificate), with high demand and a lottery-style selection process.

Tenant & Community Focus

- Gewobag employs **1,400 staff**, including **156 in-house caretakers** (moving away from outsourcing).
- Operates a foundation (**Berliner Leben Stiftung**) for youth, culture, and community programs.

Design & Costs

- New homes average **75m²**, built at about **€4,500/m²**.
- Tenants often supply their own kitchens (which are modular and so regarded as white goods/occupant supplied & owned generally in Germany) to reduce costs.

Homelessness

- Rising (including significant number of Syrian and Ukrainian refugees), but Berlin lacks large-scale temporary housing; support is provided through social services in commercial spaces where possible.

Governance

- Publicly owned but operate financially independently.
- Decisions are made by management and approved by supervisory boards with city representatives, employees, tenants, and private members.



Observations

Professor Jo Patterson, Cardiff University and Transforming Homes

Throughout the last 15 years leading the delivery of whole house retrofits, particularly with the social housing sector and residents who live in retrofitted homes, it has become increasingly obvious that every stage of the process of delivery is critical to ensure a successful outcome - from planning, design, procurement, installation and maintenance and operation.

Without full commitment by all those involved, mistakes are made that result in, at the least, a reduction in performance and at worst failure of performance and a lack of trust by those who live in the homes of or the home as a whole.

Maintenance and operation often get forgotten, but is just as important as the other stages. Maintenance and operation continue for years beyond installation so therefore needs to be well managed and documented through cross organisational databases and processes embedded in the organisation.

The Transforming Homes project, funded through the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the UK is pushing beyond retrofit, by combining whole house energy retrofit with the use of biobased/non-extractive materials for insulation as well as design and space changes to homes that were built between 1920-1940. The maintenance and operational stages, and data to support it, are a key part of our design research and co-design process, to ensure that solutions proposed are practical and applicable in the real world throughout all stages of delivery.

It was an absolute pleasure to spend a couple of days with UK maintenance stakeholders visiting Berlin, sharing experiences and hearing from German counterparts on how maintenance is embedded into social housing processes. The use of Artificial Intelligence, digital twins and design is pushing efficiencies and performance forward. Similarities across the two nations exist, such as skills shortage, an aging population and lack of financial resource, whilst differences in Regulations and resident expectations could make the detail of transfer of solutions challenging but should be looked at carefully.

I very much hope to keep in touch and collaborate going forwards by supporting two way research activities

Thanks to the National Housing Maintenance Forum (NHMF) for the invite. Thanks to B&O Service and [GdW Bundesverband Wohnungswirtschaft](#) for the excellent presentations. It was a very enjoyable and informative couple of days!

Observations

Thomas Wagner, B&O Services

- Craftsmen's work must be optimized by AI and digital tools (especially regarding the lack of skilled workers)
- Carefree and functional living is a basic need and we need to make it happen for millions of people (tenants)
- UK and Germany face the similar challenges

From discussion:

Cooperations in Europe are an essential key to solve problems and challenges. There are a lot of changes which haven't been used yet. Working together to establish the best solutions for the tenants and to be in front of the rest of the market.

Example Pre & Post refurbishments (incl. asbestos)

Anthony Youett, Gewobag

Completed: „Westfeld“ – Interior



Zoom in: Asbestos



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Observations

Richard Bennion, iON-Consultants

I found the NHMF Study Tour to Berlin both insightful and inspiring. Among the most relevant aspects was the opportunity to directly compare UK and German approaches to social housing regulation, skills development and compliance. Germany's decentralised system, with its strong emphasis on tenant rights and affordability, contrasted sharply with the UK's centralised regulatory model—yet both countries face shared challenges, including ageing housing stock and workforce shortages. Of particular note was the introduction of Europe and Germany's asbestos regulations, which plans to improve standards in respect of airborne fibre thresholds and could foreshadow future developments in the UK.

Unexpected but highly valuable was the insight into Berlin's ambitious low-carbon retrofit agenda and the advanced digital systems in place at B&O Service AG. These innovations demonstrated how data-led planning and AI can drive meaningful improvements in efficiency and client satisfaction. The emphasis on youth training and apprenticeship investment resonated deeply, aligning with iON's own advocacy for skills development.

As asbestos management specialists, the relevance of new compliance standards which were highlighted by our German public housing sector hosts was significant.



For context, it's worth noting that while the UK has long led in responsible asbestos management, recent EU regulations now exceed UK standards in some areas. Germany's revised Hazardous Substances Ordinance (GefStoffV) came into force on 5th December 2024 and now requires asbestos inspections to be carried out before any renovation work begins on buildings constructed before 1993. These new regulations apply to both commercial and private properties, with those commissioning the work responsible for arranging inspections. Samples of material from walls, ceilings and floors must be analysed by accredited laboratories, and if asbestos is present, strict removal and containment procedures are required.

So far, so similar, however the new EU exposure limits that will now be enforced, include an occupational exposure limit set down to 10,000 fibres/m³. If thin fibres (<0.2 µm) are not measured, the limit is reduced further to 2,000 fibres/m³.

These regulations are not currently being adopted in the UK, but the cost and programming implication witnessed with our friends in Berlin offer a glimpse of what may be on the horizon over here. The HSE is currently reviewing the requirements to assess their potential impact on all aspects of asbestos removal. We will continue to monitor developments and provide the NHMF with timely updates.

Overall, the tour offered not only practical knowledge but also a fresh international lens through which to evaluate SHEQ management and sustainability practices—reinforcing iON's commitment to bringing global best practices to benefit UK customers.



'Take home' from the Tour (and where next year)

Julian Ransom BSc MRICS

Our many hosts in Germany/ Berlin were generous with their time in helping provide a fascinating opportunity to see and learn a great deal. What we saw, and the briefings provided, especially relevant given the close parallels which became apparent between our equivalent sector activity in respective countries. We share many fundamental challenges and so the approach to addressing these by our counterparts in Berlin all the more pertinent. Based upon the visits made, and arguably subjective in most cases, here are just a few of those headline 'take homes' from the visit:

- Headline: while there are clear differences, the **parallels between the German/ Berliner and UK housing market** (rents, over-crowding and demand), spiralling building costs, demographics (esp. aging population), need for property re-investment (incl. NZC), and skills shortage/ retention are remarkably similar. This provides a helpful sector comparison as to how our counterparts are tackling the same challenges.
- Headline: while already in advance of the UK, and with a challenging commitment to zero carbon by 2030, German public housing providers are focussing much time, resource and financial investment upon **ecological design/carbon reduction** as part of their retro-fit/refurbishment programmes. A farsighted approach.
- Headline: as witnessed during many European NHMF study trips, **potential 'stigma'** arguably associated with 'social housing' in the UK is far, far **less apparent** for equivalent 'public housing' provision in Berlin/ Germany. Perhaps due in part to the prevalence of rented accommodation (over 80% Berlin or 57% nationally in Germany), the reasons for this difference are subjective, but perhaps demand closer examination.
- Headline: The provision of **new social/public housing** on the necessary scale demanded, is reliant upon effective **financial support** by Government German and UK alike.
- Contrary to our expectation, the **extent of regulatory/governmental scrutiny**, prescription and audit appears far less than in the UK. A generalisation; but why? Arguably those to whom standards and strict compliance obligations apply are simply inclined to adhere to them Without the need for routine external scrutiny.
- Example: the lack of a regulator and ombudsman for tenant's rights surprised Caritas Charles (TPAS England), and posed the general question 'does self-regulation backed by a stronger legal framework really work or does it stifle tenant voices'.

- The application of the recently **enhanced European standard for airborne asbestos** fibres permissible (10x less than the UK currently), is causing significant delay and cost for refurbishment of existing dwellings/blocks. Is this a foretaste of the UK direction of travel for ACM compliance (the HSE report asbestos deaths are still NOT reducing from 5,000 per annum currently in UK)?
- Focus appears more generally toward contract and repairs/maintenance efficiencies, right first time and cost effectiveness, rather than the added 'social value' and wider tenant interaction-oriented service provision expectation more evident in the UK. This was not directly apparent from speaking with our German hosts, but may perhaps illustrate a broader cultural reflection.
- In some respects procurement and forms of contract employed in the UK are comparable or further advanced than our German counterparts. That said, the advantages associated with better performance evaluation, organisational efficiency and growing application of progressive software systems/AI are a focus for both.
- Lessons learned and approaches developed/applied by B&O Service in respect of apprenticeships, training and experienced/skilled labour retention are potentially applicable to the UK sector also.
- And perhaps last but not least, with thanks to the Berliners, if you haven't tried a decent Berlin Currywurst you really should!!

Just a few of my personal take homes from our German study trip Jules.

And so to Next Year:

We have of course already been researching the next most relevant potential location for the 2026 NHMF Study Tour. We are delighted to confirm that the Netherlands and the city of the Hague specifically will provide our study trip venue in May 2026. This visit is to incorporate the primary themes of our Berlin visit, but also embracing the advanced retrofit and decarbonisation initiatives exemplified in the Netherlands and by the City of The Hague's carbon reduction programme specifically (an annual 10,000+ domestic retrofit programme amongst other parallels). Ben and I will be visiting in November to meet the city of the Hague and larger housing associations/counterpart organisations and start collating the itinerary around UK relevant themes, project visits, and presentations.

..... so watch this space, keep the 13th to 15th May 2026 free in your diary, and do join us if you can.

Register interest by emailing: events@m3h.co.uk

For more information about our future events, click here: www.nhmf.co.uk/events



Testimonials

“The NHMF Study Tour to Berlin was an eye-opening and invaluable experience that deepened my understanding of international best practices and challenges in social housing, compliance, and sustainability.”

Richard Bennion

Founder & Director at iON-Consultants

“I would like to thank the NHMF for the opportunity to represent TPAS on this year’s study trip to Berlin. I found it both personally and professionally an eye-opening experience. The knowledge we gathered during our visit has enabled to look at our own sector in a new light. I recommend the study trips as a valuable learning experience.”

Caritas Charles

Senior Policy, Innovation and Insight Manager at TPAS

“The Berlin study trip was an incredibly rich learning experience—thoughtfully curated, genuinely thought-provoking, and filled with practical insight. It also gave me the chance to build valuable connections with peers and international partners that I know will strengthen my work going forward”

Eve Blezard

Policy Lead (Asset, Safety and Culture) at CIH

“I thought the study tour was very well organised. The itinerary over the two days was full and well targeted to the pertinent issues we also experience in the UK housing sector. Our German hosts were excellent and provided a detailed insight into their housing sector and how they deliver services. Both the face-to-face sessions and the guided site visits were interesting. There was even time for networking with colleagues. I would certainly recommend it.”

Lee Maskell

Equity Partner at FFT

LinkedIn Testimonials

Ben Virgo • 1st
Director at M3 | Housing Software | NHMF
now • 5

Very useful meeting with the National Association of housing companies (GdW) in Germany preparing for #NHMFStudyTour

Learn more from [Mike Turner](#) and [Julian Ransom](#) at #NHMF2025

GdW bundesverband deutscher wohnungs-und immobilienunternehmer e.V

Many thanks to @Benjamin



ION Consultants
1,317 followers
4mo • 5

[Richard](#) and [Julian](#) are excited to attend the 2025 NHMF Study Tour in Berlin next week! This three-day trip brings directors and senior managers working in social housing maintenance and asset management together to explore the city's latest innovations, share knowledge and build valuable networks.

Delegates will delve into European housing models and policy frameworks, learn from Germany's innovative approaches to asset management and maintenance, and discover common challenges, such as skills shortages, training gaps and the adoption of new technologies. Key highlights include site visits with leading Berlin housing providers, the GdW (NHMF equivalent), a review of planned and reactive repairs, and insights from Germany's largest social housing service contractor.

Together with [Ben Virgo](#) and [Mike Turner](#) from the National Housing Maintenance Forum (NHMF), Julian has been instrumental in organising this popular tour, and it looks set to be a great success. We're sure he and Richard will return with valuable insights and hope they have a wonderful time.



Caritas Charles • 2nd
Senior Policy Insight and Innovation Manager (Soc Eng) |
4mo • 5

Berlin

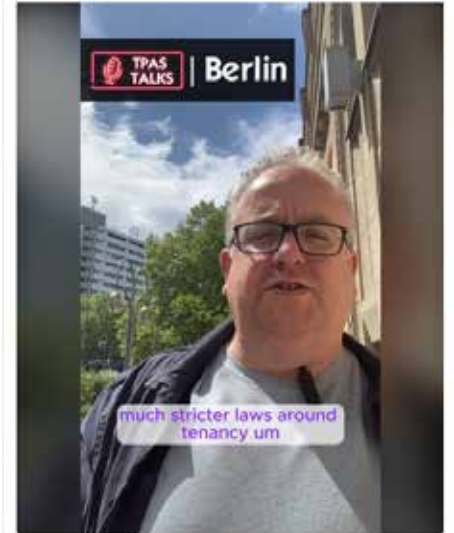
A summary of my time last week in Germany. Lots of similar issues to contend with and some real cultural differences in their approach to housing.

TPas England
1,671 followers
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"There is no stigma"

Take a look at what [Caritas Charles](#) learnt from his recent trip to Berlin with the National Housing Maintenance Forum (NHMF)

More to come!



National Housing Maintenance Forum (NHMF)
1,367 followers
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Thank you to today's study tour hosts GdW Bundesverband Wohnungswirtschaft, Germany's National Association of Housing Companies, for a deep dive into public and affordable housing in Berlin.

We have heard from two of the city's largest registered providers, [Gewobag Wohnungsbau-Aktiengesellschaft Berlin](#) and [HOWOGG Wohnungsbau-Gesellschaft mbH](#), about the challenges they face including their asset management strategies and methods of delivering planned and reactive repairs.

We are looking forward to continuing these inspiring conversations!

GdW Bundesverband Wohnungswirtschaft
14,851 followers
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Wiese Internationale Wohnungswirtschaft zu Gast beim GdW National Housing Maintenance Forum (NHMF) Study Tour 2025 in Berlin

Als der GdW durfte heute Gastgeber für die NHMF Study Tour 2025 sein - mit über 20 Vertreterinnen und Vertretern der Wohnungswirtschaft aus dem Vereinigten Königreich und Irland. Der Fokus: Instandhaltung, Asset Management und zukunftsweisender sozialer Wohnungsbau.

🔗 Gemeinsam mit unseren Mitgliedern nehmen Gewobag Wohnungsbau-Aktiengesellschaft Berlin und HOWOGG Wohnungsbau-Gesellschaft mbH teil. Die beiden sind in die Herausforderungen und Lösungen der kommunalen Wohnungswirtschaft in Berlin gegeben - von strategischer Bestandbewirtschaftung über Instandhaltungsprozesse bis hin zu digitaler Transformation.

🔗 Der internationale Austausch zeigt: Viele Herausforderungen im Wohnungswesen sind grenzübergreifend - umso wichtiger ist es, voneinander zu lernen und gemeinsam neue Wege zu gestalten.

Wir bedanken uns für das große Interesse und die inspirierenden Gespräche!



Dr Eve Bileard FHIA CHCM • 2nd
Policy Lead @CHC
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Wow what a few weeks! Since I went straight into a lovely half-term off with the boy after Berlin, I need to do a bit of a round-up!

I have posted about the National Housing Maintenance Forum (NHMF) Berlin study trip - which was so valuable and I will be doing a blog shortly - but we are also really exploring the learning from this in a Webinar next month with [TPas England](#) with [Caritas Charles](#) and [Mike Turner](#) with a big thanks to our fantastic events team and [Caritas Charles](#) for putting together a great webinar!

[https://www.fhia.ac.uk/news/2025/05/20/](#)

Just a few hours before I flew out to Berlin, I was part of a webinar with [Sarah Davis](#) that is the first in a new series exploring ways for social landlords to improve their complaint services. [https://www.fhia.ac.uk/news/2025/05/20/](#) with a big thanks to [Sarah Barnes](#) and [Amanda Best CHCM CMgr MCM](#) for sharing their insights.

I also spoke to CHC digital editor [Liam Turner](#) about my new board role at the Housing Studies Association, all things asset management and building safety for issue 45 of CHC Unlocked. [https://www.fhia.ac.uk/news/2025/05/20/](#)

I started the week recording a podcast with [Ian Tarantouk CHCM AFISM GHP](#), [Gemma Darville](#) and [Chris Gallagher AFISM, BSc \(Hons\)](#) - but you have to watch this space to learn more about that soon!

Today, it was great to meet [Leon Eckford](#) and learn more about the lived experience at [St Mungo's](#).

Later this week our CHC Repairs and maintenance Community is practice is coming up on Thursday 5th June - 10.30 am-12.30 pm with co-chairs [Annie Clark](#) and [Steve Tucker](#). As part of the session we're still looking for group members to take part in our "member spotlight", sharing what you've been doing in practice around Assets for Lease please reach out if you are interested.

Then next week will be the June meeting of our CHC Assets and Repairs Group on Friday 12th June at 9.30-11.30 am chaired by [Richard Modley](#). We'll be exploring current practice and policy updates on decency, quality, and net zero, with an update from CHC's Policy Manager for Net Zero and Climate Resilience [Matthew Scott](#).

Then on the 16th/17th June, I am looking forward to travelling to the University of Strathclyde as part of the Inclusive Living Alliance Conference as part of the ISA ECR network. [https://www.fhia.ac.uk/news/2025/05/20/](#)

Then, speaking of inclusive living I am chairing a webinar on diverse tenant voices, where I am pleased to be joined by [Karl Jackson](#) and [Amanda Lawrence](#) - we will explore how we can listen to diverse tenant voices to shape our approach and processes in the future as a sector.

[https://www.fhia.ac.uk/news/2025/05/20/](#)

But first, travelling to Coventry for a great colleague conference with all my wonderful Chartered Institute of Housing colleagues, who it will be great to catch up with in person.



Jo Patterson • 2nd
Professor at Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University
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Throughout the last 15 years of leading the delivery of whole house retrofits, it has been obvious that every stage of the process is critical to ensure a successful outcome - from planning, design, procurement, installation and maintenance and operation. Maintenance and operation often gets forgotten and is just as, if not more, important as the other stages.

It has been an absolute pleasure to spend a couple of days with UK #maintenance experts visiting Berlin, sharing experiences and hearing from German counterparts on how maintenance is embedded into social housing processes. The use of #AI, #digitaltwin and #design is pushing efficiencies and performance forward. Similarities across the nations exist, such skills shortage, an aging population and lack of financial resource, whilst differences in Regulations and resident expectations could make knowledge transfer a challenge.

Very much hoping to keep in touch and collaborate going forwards with supporting research activities through work at Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University and the Transforming Homes, Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) project.

Thanks to the National Housing Maintenance Forum (NHMF) for the invite. Thanks to BSG Service and GdW Bundesverband Wohnungswirtschaft for the excellent presentations. It was a very enjoyable and informative event!



Ben Virgo Strategic Director | Connecting people, systems, visions & purpose to support...
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As we reach our last day of the **#NHMFStudyTour BRINGING THE SECTOR + COUNTRIES TOGETHER...**
National Housing Maintenance Forum (NHMF)

yesterday we focused on the big picture: on Europe, Germany + Berlin (what's similar and what's not with the UK) and today on practical solutions and learning

THANKS FOR BEING PART OF IT
(We appreciate you all) 🙌 🇩🇪

A big thank you to the organisations in Germany that made this tour happen:

- GdW Bundesverband Wohnungswirtschaft
- HOWOGE Wohnungsbaugesellschaft mbH
- Gewobag Wohnungsbau-Aktiengesellschaft Berlin
- B&O Service

🇬🇧 🇩🇪

SPEAKERS:
especially our speakers:
 Dr. Benjamin Teutmeyer
 Mike Turner
 Gabriele Meier
 Anthony Youett
 Patrick König-Epheser
 Thomas Wagner
 Ozgur Oner
 Karo Nixon

ORGANISERS:
Thank you to our main organisers: Aimen Khalil, Julian Ransom, Mike Turner...
...and also Vivien Lutz, Jonathan Whitlam, Anthony Youett, Thilo Fahrman, Rhianon Blower Assoc CIPD, Charlotte Taylor + all at M3 (organising a study tour takes time and effort, although we do enjoy it)

DELEGATES + PARTNERS:
Of course most importantly thank you to our delegates including our Strategic Partners:

- Chartered Institute of Housing
- Tpas England
- Transforming Homes
- HAs + LAs + SPs (SEE COMMENTS for names) organisations include:

- Aster Group UK
- Basildon Borough Council
- Cardiff University / Prifysgol Caerdydd
- GreenSquareAccord
- Magna Housing Ltd
- Maldstone Borough Council
- Metropolitan Thames Valley
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- North Star Housing Group
- Peabody
- Poplar HARCA
- Riverside... more in comments



Ben Virgo and 71 others

20 comments • 14 reposts

Stephanie Lloyd-Foxe MBA MCMi M... Head of Building Safety and Compliance at Magna Housing ...
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Excited to be in Berlin on the **National Housing Maintenance Forum (NHMF)** study tour.

We have started the day hearing from our hosts GdW about the current challenges in the German housing market. A huge number of parallels with the challenges we face in the UK.

Over the next two days we will be learning about some of the potential solutions.

#bestpractice #nhmf



with Craig Oosthuizen and 8 others

Mike Turner Executive Director
4mo • Edited • 2nd • Follow •

In Germany after weeks of negotiations, the conservative CDU/CSU bloc and center-left SPD formed a new government and announced plans to boost housing construction to help ease the desperate shortage of affordable homes, particularly in Berlin. Does this sound familiar?

We are due to start the **National Housing Maintenance Forum (NHMF)** Study Tour tomorrow in Berlin and learn from our hosts **Gewobag Wohnungsbau-Aktiengesellschaft Berlin** **HOWOGE Wohnungsbaugesellschaft mbH**, **GDW** (National Association of housing companies in Germany) and **B&O Service** on how they are tackling the many challenges we are all facing to provide warmer, safer and affordable housing. Whilst reflecting on where we are in the UK I hope we can find answers through learning and sharing with others to create homes that are badly needed and alleviate the following

- Over 1 million people are on the waiting list for a home
- There are 150,000 children living in temporary accommodation
- Since the 1980s we have built less new homes each year on average
- We have the oldest housing stock in Europe that requires significant investment to meet today's as well as future needs

#socialhousing #assetmanagement #bestpractice #innovation #learning
Cardo Group #solutions #betterhomes





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Richard Bennion and **Julian Ransom** recently joined the NHMF Study Tour 2025 in Berlin to gain first-hand insights into Germany's social housing model. The tour revealed just how much the UK can learn from and offer our European counterparts.

Read more on their key findings regarding shared challenges and the innovations shaping the future of housing, from low-carbon retrofits to digital transformation and evolving regulation. https://lnkd.in/dq_TV4B5 ✓

We extend our thanks to **Ben Virgo**, **Mike Turner** and **Aimen K.**, who, along with Julian, curated an outstanding tour, and to our generous hosts, the **GdW Bundesverband Wohnungswirtschaft**, **HOWOGE Wohnungsbaugesellschaft mbH**, and **B&O Service**, for the warm welcome and insightful knowledge sharing.

National Housing Maintenance Forum (NHMF)

[#nhmf](#) [#studytour](#) [#socialhousing](#) [#asbestosmanagement](#) [#lowcarbonhousing](#) [#compliance](#) [#sustainability](#) [#vocationaltraining](#) [#housingpolicy](#)



👍 Ben Virgo MSc MA and 25 others

2 comments · 7 reposts