

PLANS TO TARGET COWBOY BUILDERS WELCOMED

The announcement of Trading Standard's new specialist task force, set up to tackle 'rogue traders' and fraudsters, has been welcomed by the National Self Build & Renovation Centre, which has developed its own directory of recommended and reputable tradesman and in April, it will host a weekend event devoted to finding and working with tradesmen to help combat the growing problem of cowboy builders and other bogus tradesmen.

Following a number of successful pilot schemes over the last 18 months, which uncovered around £16m worth of fraud, the Government is to invest £7.5m in so-called 'scambuster' teams. The specialist Trading Standards teams will work alongside the police to target rogue traders, whose scams cost UK consumers billions of pounds each year.

The National Self Build & Renovation Centre in Swindon, opened by pioneering self build and renovation experts, BuildStore, is aware of the growing concerns people have about cowboy builders and dodgy workmen. The Centre has developed its own unique database of trade services across the UK, all backed by customer recommendations, and will host a special weekend event (26th & 27th April) dedicated to educating people on how to get the most out tradesmen and contractors.

Tim Doherty, Managing Director at the National Self Build & Renovation Centre, says that finding the right tradesmen and understanding the trade is vital to the success of any project:

"Choosing building tradesmen is one of the most important decisions you will make when planning your project. The Trade Referral Desk at the National Self Build & Renovation Centre can help you search for a reputable contractor – everything from plasterers and plumbers to scaffolders and stone masons. Our database of trade services, supported by the Federation of Master Builders, is complete with customer feedback and referrals, so you can find the right people to work on your project."

Tim goes on to explain that it's just as important to swot up on the different trades, so that once you've found your tradesman, know what to expect, be familiar with the terms of contract, and industry jargon. "Our Choosing Trades & Materials weekend will help to de-mystify the terminology and 'builder-speak', explain which trades to use for which job, and offer tips and advice to get the most out of contractors. Visitors can find out how to check the quality of work, use our database to locate recommended tradesmen in their area and can even have a go themselves, with workshops in plastering, tiling and bricklaying.

"Choosing to employ trade services for any project can be costly, so finding the right people for the job is essential. Getting recommendations from previous customers and doing some research to boost your knowledge will help you to get the most out of your tradesmen. Rogue traders will try all the tricks the book to save money, cut corners and rip you off. Doing a bit of a research and asking for previous customers details will alert you to any problems before you sign anything. The new scheme by Trading Standards team will help significantly in targeting these rogue traders, but it certainly doesn't hurt to do your homework as well. "

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

BuildStore, the company behind the National Self Build & Renovation Centre, offers an end-to-end service to the self builder and people wanting to renovate or convert an existing property. To capture this rapidly growing market, The National Self Build and Renovation Centre was opened in February 2007.

The 67,000 sq ft Centre is on a different scale to anything seen before in the UK self build and renovation sector. It has a dual role of helping to educate people interested in self building and renovating and ensuring those actively building can find all the services and materials they need.

Visitors can learn about the different stages of the self build and renovation process from the "Education Zone", which features six life-sized exhibits including, plant, groundworks, walls and roof structures. They can also find inspiration inside the Potton show home, and in the "Renovation Zone", discover techniques for renovating, with a full-sized house transformed from an 'old wreck' to a fully renovated home.

For visitors just starting their self build or renovation journey, the National Self Build & Renovation Centre can help them find a plot of land, renovation or conversion opportunities, with PlotSearch, consider finance options for their project with the in-house financial advisors, or simply get advice from the team of experts. Those actively involved in the process can take advantage of TradeCard, a unique card which offers discounted prices building materials and tool hire from leading merchants and suppliers. Plus, over 240 industry suppliers showcase their products and services in a dedicated "Trade Village", complete with a bar code system, allowing visitors to easily order brochures and further information, which will be sent to them at home.

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