

INSIDE HOUSING

Getting a feature
(or a comment
piece) into
Inside Housing

Dealing with the press from a non-news
perspective



Peter Apps

- Deputy editor, Inside Housing
- Effectively editor responsible for our three main strands of non-commercial content: news, features and comment

Long reads: what we do



Typically two print features per week,
plus a news analysis



Analysis is usually a topical long read
with a clear news hook. This will be
decided on Thursday and filed by Friday
(really Monday). It's about 1,400 words
long and usually written in house

A couple of analysis examples:

News analysis

BRITISH STANDARD CODE OF PRACTICE
PART 1: Chapter IV (1982)
(BS 5832)

CODE OF BASIC DATA FOR THE
DESIGN OF BUILDINGS
Part 1: Fire precautions in flats and
maisonettes over 30 m in height

CHAPTER IV
PRECAUTIONS AGAINST FIRE

Part 1: Fire precautions in flats and
maisonettes over 30 m in height

THE COUNCIL FOR CODES OF PRACTICE
BRITISH STANDARDS INSTITUTION

"Stay put had become an article of faith and to depart from it was unthinkable."
These are the words of Grenfell Inquiry judge Sir Martin Moore-Bick. Peter Apps looks at where the idea came from and where we go now

INSIDE STORY

The Grenfell Inquiry judge Sir Martin Moore-Bick has said that the 'stay put' policy was an article of faith for many people involved in the Grenfell Tower fire. He said that the policy was based on the assumption that the fire would not spread to other flats in the tower.

News analysis

After 1 AG revealed it is likely to cut its surplus by £25m this year, Peter Apps asks what this means for the financial model which has defined the housing association sector since 2010

News analysis

What does it mean for the housing association sector when the financial model which has defined the sector since 2010 is likely to be cut by £25m this year? Peter Apps asks what this means for the financial model which has defined the housing association sector since 2010.

"We've got to be better at making sure the market doesn't fall off"

Downturn: what next?

News analysis

RESIDENT WARNING AND REMEDIATION RESPONSE

After the publication of the first phase of the Grenfell Inquiry report last week, the head of Housing team turns his attention to the second phase, and looks at the five key areas inquiry chair Sir Martin Moore-Bick will be investigating in his phase two report

Grenfell Inquiry: what to expect in phase two

HOUSING MANAGEMENT

There were 100,000 people living in Grenfell Tower at the time of the fire. The inquiry will look at how the housing management team handled the situation.

TESTING AND CERTIFICATION OF MATERIALS

The inquiry will also look at the testing and certification of materials used in the building.

News analysis

Catalyst's Ian McDermott is a dab hand at leading a company through changing times, Jack Simpson learns about his approach

Merger maestro

“You have to be able to see through situations that look entirely chaotic from the outside.”

What we
want from
you for
analysis:

Considered opinion. This is the time to get someone on the phone who can look at an issue from all sides, tell us the 30-year story etc

Speed. It's not quite the fast turnaround we have on news stories, but it is a two-day turnaround for the reporter

Data analysis, numbers, insight – all the stuff that helps us tell the story behind the story

Features: the process



The two features are less immediately topical. They will be filed to the editors two weeks before we come out. They address bigger, long-standing issues or 'off-diary' stories.



We write about half in-house and half come from freelancers

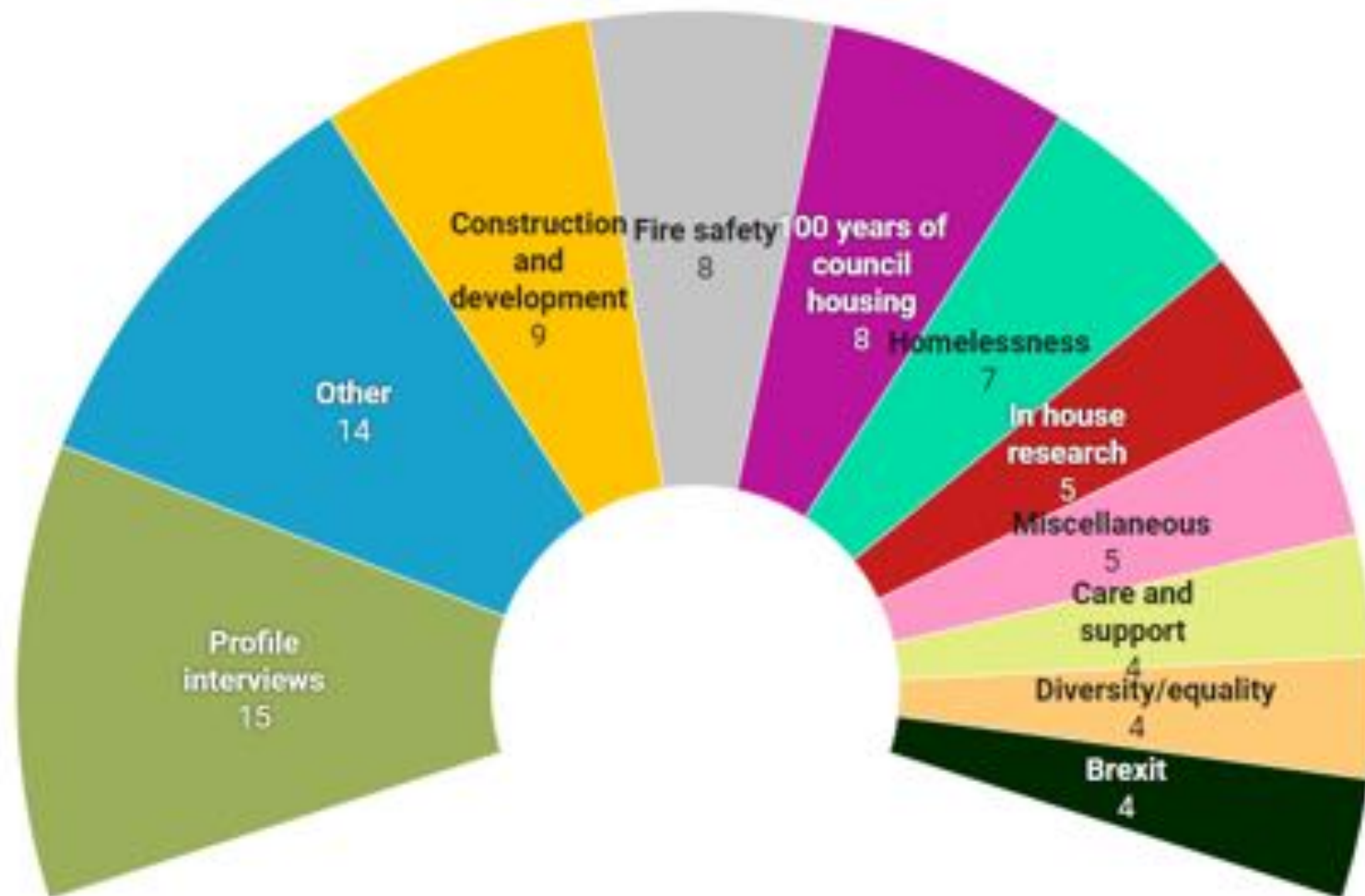
How do we decide our topics?

Chat between myself and the features editor. We pull together a plan. Will usually be thinking about six weeks in advance.

The whole team pitches ideas and we pick the best ones. Freelancers also pitch. We do get ideas from PR's pitches, but in reality this is a small percentage of our content.

We're looking for interesting stories which engage with a wider debate. Usually they will engage with a bigger agenda or at least have a story that is interesting to the wider sector.

Inside Housing feature topics 2019



What do we want from you:

Good pitches about stories which have a genuine relevance to a wider audience. Remember: as with news there is always a difference between things you are proud of and things which we will be interesting

Access – to interviewees, case studies, site visits etc

An ability to work within our deadlines – it's not as fast paced as the news desk but it's still tight

A tale of **three** towers



There are still more than 150 social housing blocks encased in ACM cladding. Peter Apps travels to Plymouth to find out how the removal work is going

Birmingham City Council has turned an unloved high-rise block into temporary housing for homeless people. Greater Hollandier finds out how it works

The temporary accommodation tower



Above: Inside view of the 100 units of Barry Jackson Tower. Right: Barry Jackson Tower in action. Birmingham, which has refurbished the tower for temporary accommodation





After spending two years on the regulator's naughty step amid a scandal over executive pay, Gentoo looks to have turned a corner. Peter Apps meets the new leadership to find out what comes next

Back from the brink

Things to avoid...

Trying to improve our pitches

Asking for copy approval, or putting up unnecessary barriers generally

Pitches that won't work: organisation birthdays, one off development schemes, new products

Special editions (some regional editions tbc)

MONTH	DATE (REG)	FEATURE
January	17 Jan	Repairs & Maintenance special issue
February	14 Feb	Procurement special issue
February	23 Feb	Scotland special issue
March	13 Mar	France special issue
April	1 Apr	Fire and gas safety special issue
April	24 Apr	Sustainability special issue
May	15 May	Technology special issue
June		Housing 2018 insight supplement
June	18 June	Housing 2020 Manchester special issue
July	1 July	Local government special issue
July	17 July	Construction & Development special issue
September	4 Sep	Asset management special
October	1 Oct	Innovation special
October	9 Oct	Chief executive salary survey
October	16 Oct	Care & Support special issue
November	20 Nov	Homes 2020 bumper issue
December	4 Dec	Homelessness special issue

How we work out our special edition content

Will speak to a couple of experts in the patch area (eg procurement people) to figure out what the key areas of interest are

We then work out either one or two features based on this

Regional editions aim for one profile interview and one 'state of the nation'

Specialist editions, one quirky or interesting, one 'state of the nation'

The great funding divide

Despite the rhetoric around the Northern Powerhouse, the North of England seems to be missing out on funding that could help deliver more homes. Luke Barratt finds out why the North-South divide is as acute as ever



Colette McKune is new to the job of chief executive at ForViva.

Doing

things

differently

But, as Gavriel Hollander finds out, she is not afraid to speak her mind



What we want from you for special editions

Similar principles: we want good ideas about this space. Remember – if you pitch an idea it doesn't have to be about you to include you

Particularly worth pitching in for profile interviews and regional stories for the regional editions, especially if they can be tied to a wider trend affecting the whole area

Remember our timescales: we will be considering these editions six weeks ahead and finalising the ideas a month in advance

Comment and opinion

On average we run 10 comment pieces per week (two a day)

This includes five IH50s, one leader and one column from Jules Birch

So in a normal week we take three pieces of reactive comment from the sector

Reactive comment

Most of this comes from comment pieces pitched by you guys (although we do also commission directly)

BUT I get around 20 pitches per week. So only one in every seven pitches makes it.

Some guidelines

Comment pieces should have something to say. You need to be making an argument. This is not a place for news stories that didn't make it.

'Best practice' and 'what we've achieved' comment pieces might satisfy your executives – but the statistics would not.

If you are selling products into the sector, writing a comment piece about how good or necessary your product is counts as advertising

A bad pitch

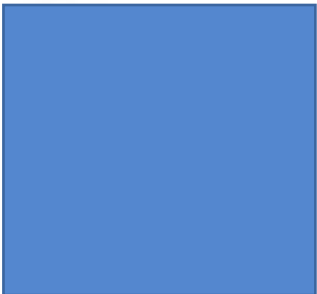
Hi Peter,

I hope you're having a good Friday and, like me, looking forward to the weekend?

I've got an article written by my client , a manufacturer of infrared heating panels which might appeal to your readership (and is somewhat topical).

Let me know if you could use?

Best wishes,



Another bad pitch



Jennifer Williams  @JenWilliamsMEN · 2h

Me staring at a spreadsheet of constituency profiles, an embargoed speech and half a front page: argh

PR: Hi Jennifer, I'm just following up about the world's first Christmas jumper referendum



9



4



57



Some good pitches:

- You need to think about giving us the chance to write an interesting headline: nobody is going to read it otherwise
- It's not about being controversial for the sake of it, it is about having something clear to say
- Try and make it topical – what is in the wider news at the moment, and how does it relate to the sector?

As housing associations we must be prepared to make decisions which do not make commercial sense

COMMENT Series by KEVIN RODGERS

For-profit providers would only be motivated by returns but as housing associations, we must sometimes embark on projects simply because they are right, writes Kevin Rodgers



Kevin Rodgers is chair of the National Housing Federation



Lifetime tenancies are from a bygone era - going back to them would be a backwards step

COMMENT Series by JO DANEEL

Housing associations have been moving away from fixed-term tenancies in the past three years, but in an era of low social housing supply this is not the right move, writes Jo Daneel



Jo Daneel is a housing expert



Picture: Getty

If the housing sector does not act on climate change we will be complicit

COMMENT Series by JULIAN ASHBY

The housing sector cares about climate change but does not have a plan for moving towards net zero emissions. This must change, writes Julian Ashby



Julian Ashby is the former chair of English Social Housing Federation



Picture: Getty

The Tony Blair Institute is wrong - we do need to build more homes to solve the housing crisis

COMMENT Series by JOHN PERRY

Last week's report suggesting supply is not the answer to the housing crisis is just the latest in a series to make this claim, but it remains misleading, writes John Perry



John Perry is an experienced housing expert and policy adviser at the National Institute of Housing



Picture: Getty

Overall messages:

Work with us to make good, interesting features. In the end, we want people to read them and enjoy them and so do you

Keep your pitches tight and to the point and don't be too rigid about changing them

Bear our deadlines in mind

Save your comment pitches for when you really want to enter a debate

And get in
touch
(ideally on a
Thursday)

Peter.apps@insidehousing.co.uk

@PeteApps

0207 772 8360