

Change is in the air with new sustainability standard

With their high efficiency and ability to harness free cooling, chilled beams and ceilings are likely to set the new sustainable efficiency standard, predicts **David Leatherbarrow**

ALMOST EVERY commercial and institutional building in London has been air conditioned since the 1960s. This has not simply been due to fashion or increased luxury; in fact, it has become a necessity due to the intensive use of buildings with high occupancy rates and heat generated from office equipment and lighting.

Add to this the trend in architectural design for fully glazed buildings which allow more solar radiated heat to penetrate the building, and it is easy to see how most modern buildings in cities no longer require any heating at all, except during exceptional winters or when resuming work after a winter break.

Times are changing

However, times are changing and this is having as significant impact on the design of our hvac systems. Air conditioning was not an issue when energy was rela-



Energy is no longer cheap and the environment can't sustain the impact of very high energy usage

tively cheap and the environmental and economic impact was not yet part of the agenda. Although the professional team did their best to reduce the building's energy footprint, everything was judged on an investment payback and most improvements were discounted. Saving energy did not save enough money to justify the capital investment.

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