

HOUSE CONVEYANCING

radon

TO TEST COSTS LESS

THAN A GUESS

Fortunately few events are as stressful as buying and selling a house and increasingly the task is made more difficult by the question of radon being raised during the legal process, specifically in CON29.

Unfortunately the task is complicated by conflicting advice and recommendations ranging from geographic and geologic searches, to the withholding of sums of money if the property is in a designated part of the country. All of these involve expense and risk blighting areas of the country needlessly. None give reassurance other than a statistical probability. Isolated high levels of radon can crop up in the most unlikely places and low levels can be measured in property in supposedly high areas.

Yet the answer is obvious – conduct a test at the time of conveyancing in much the same way as for drains, wiring, gas appliances and woodworm etc..

Official advice has consistently been that only a long-term radon test of 3 months or more will be sufficiently accurate. Whilst it is undoubtedly true that the longer the test the better (in order to even out seasonal variations) it ignores the fact that shorter tests exist and if conducted correctly are able to provide an accurate quick screening of a building. A prospective purchaser is not normally concerned with the precise radon level within a building, but wishes to know if the biggest purchase being made in their lifetime is likely to be injurious to the family!

The Radon Council publishes the names of organisations that can provide short-term tests of the order of 7 days (an acceptable timescale in conveyancing), as well as longer term tests, in its List Of Approved Contractors. Several million of these tests have been used effectively in the US and other countries for the past 20 years, their accuracy and protocol has been endorsed by many international laboratories. It recommends that short-term tests of less than 4 days duration should be avoided.

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