



ROBERT PRICE WELCOMES WELSH HOUSING MINISTER

HOW Robert Price Builders’ Merchants is working with house-builders, contractors and social housing providers to train and upskill their staff to respond to the carbon challenge was the focus of a visit by Jane Bryant MS, a Cabinet Secretary, in February.

The Welsh Government’s Minister for Housing & Local Government visited the Newport branch of Robert Price to learn how South Wales’ largest independent merchant is helping its customers to equip themselves in the low- and zero-carbon techniques and applications necessary on the road to net zero by 2050.

Jane Bryant, the MS for Newport West, was welcomed by William Godfrey (Managing Director) and David Pattison (Sales Director) into the dedicated Sustainable Energy Centre. The Minister toured the Centre and chatted to branch staff who explained the range of materials & products featured there.

Among the exhibits being showcased, Ms Bryant saw displays of:

- Marley roof-integrated solar tiles
- Sonnen solar panel battery storage
- and the latest range of Daikin heat pumps.

David Pattison (Sales Director) outlined the range and frequency of training provided to the trade about (for example) installing heat pumps that takes place in Robert Price’s training academy.

Concluding her visit, Jane Bryant MS, thanked Messrs Godfrey and Pattison for recognising an urgent need to help Welsh builders and contractors - and other



David Pattison (Sales Director), Jane Bryant MS (Cabinet Secretary) and Eve Bruten (SEC Co-ordinator)



William Godfrey signing the BMF Apprenticeship Pledge with the Minister during National Apprenticeship Week

partners like housing associations - to educate themselves on the low- and zero-carbon options available in today’s market.

The Cabinet Secretary was encouraged to see a local employer embracing new technologies and construction methods to assist house-building and property RMI businesses to grow a skilled workforce and offer long-term quality jobs.

She praised the merchant for supporting Welsh SMEs that seek to upskill their workforce with the knowledge and practical training required to build modern, good quality housing that is designed more sustainably and uses less energy & water in their construction.

Robert Price opened its Sustainable Energy Centre in 2022 to respond to the growing demand for product information and training in sustainable building technologies. Eve Bruten (Sustainable Energy Centre Co-ordinator) explained: “Social housing providers and construction companies told us they wanted to learn more about the decarbonisation products available - but there was nowhere open to them that provided joined-up solutions”.

“Working with specialist manufacturers, we decided to set up the Sustainable Energy Centre. We have the required product solutions & systems on display in this permanent, purpose-built showroom. Our investment means Robert Price can serve local markets better as we now hold regular open days, training events and seminars. The Centre has completed tens of thousands of hours of training to builders, developers, social housing providers and local councils.”

Jane Bryant’s visit was another in a rolling programme of ministerial or constituency visits that our members host - either arranged locally by themselves - or by Brett Amphlett as part of the BMF’s lobbying. The aim is to show elected members the role, value and importance of merchants in delivering for customers and communities throughout all four home nations.

We hope that given her day-to-day responsibilities for housing of all types & tenures, and various ownership models, the Cabinet Secretary can take forward some of the examples and efforts that merchants like Robert Price are doing to inform and shape future Welsh Government policy.