

Why a Method-Statement ?

Some have asked how a construction professional like myself, with a lifetime of experience, could allow himself to be misled into accepting what is now proven to be an astonishingly inept cavity wall insulation job; bearing in mind my latter years have included trouble-shooting both construction failures and fraud.

We all have to trust people and I am no different to anyone else. That is part of life and everyone of us does it unconsciously every day of the week. Besides you cannot readily inspect CWI work and in any case it never occurred to me there would be any cause for concern. I believed in the system, now I know better. And now you know better. As someone once said, experience is something you often get after you needed it.

Once CWI work is completed, those companies enjoy the luxury of their work being buried for all time. They have inspections, I had one, but they are just window-dressing. No overalls, no knee-pads, no look-see camera, no boroscope and no thermal imaging. All they do is stand and stare at one elevation from a safe distance. No drill pattern checking, no air-brick checking, no combustion appliance checking. Providing there is no grief off the punter, away they go and on paper it all looks squeaky: An irresistible opportunity for the unethical.

I discovered a serious void in my CWI by chance after two years and contacted Hillserve Limited. They totally ignored me. I tried CIGA the Cavity Insulation Guarantee Agency. They totally ignored me as well. I ultimately had no choice but to serve notice under the County Court Acts on Hillserve Limited and they then responded but I found myself dealing with British Gas. Their behaviour has been obtuse and chaotic ever since.

In all these circumstances it would obviously be extremely foolish of me to permit British Gas a free hand in dealing with the situation: Fool me once, shame on them. Fool me twice, shame on me. What would you have done ?

There can only be one way forward in this unusual contractual situation. Everything must be on paper. I am a highly qualified and experienced professional dealing with people who evidently rely on browbeating to achieve the results they want. They cannot browbeat on paper. I was not trained to browbeat and have to rely wholly on technical merit. The result I want is what I paid for. Nothing more and nothing less.

However, there is an obvious difficulty with this kind of work. I need to be absolutely certain that I really do get what I paid for. I need to be absolutely certain while the work is being redone, that it is being redone correctly. That is the dilemma with CWI and I know from long experience there is only one way to be certain. I must have direct control over the situation. Therefore that is what will happen. I do not trust British Gas for obvious reasons.

British Gas has belatedly admitted they have let me down but they continue to do so in their efforts which are focused on circumventing my strategy of consumer self-protection. They have let themselves and their industry down even more. That is a gamble they elected to take, perhaps in the hope of mitigating loss.

Ironically they may now have inadvertently done many other consumers a favour. I am in no doubt whatsoever that many other homes have had inept CWI work carried out, blown-in mineral wool in particular. I do not know about other types of fill. If your home has been done, even if you work for one of the organisations involved, the chances are that yours is as bad. How do you feel about that ? Would you feel let down and cheated ? Well, you now have a simple method to check for yourself if you wish.

It was a perfect day when my CWI was done. As a construction professional I ensured nothing could hinder efficient and effective progress. Every courtesy was extended and there was nothing to suggest anything could go wrong. Given the now proven serious shortfall of insulation we need first to look for reasons. I now have access to some data on the process but not enough. I would have more, a lot more.

British gas will obviously and understandably want to make their own inspection to confirm my results and of course I will allow that once I have a method-statement in writing that they commit to beforehand.

Inspection of course will be the first item on their list. I will need to know who, what, why, how, where and when. I need to manage the application of that process on my home to forestall further abuse of my home. My job now is to make sure British Gas do their job. Project management is well represented on my CV.

I am not interested in blaming anyone but it should be obvious to everyone that it is pointless proceeding any further until a complete analysis has been made of the situation. I do not just mean checking as I have done. Anyone can do that if properly equipped.

Unless everyone – especially me - knows and fully understands *why* the situation is so seriously bad, it stands to reason that no accurate diagnosis can be made in favour of preventing the same problems arising again. That is common sense. That is a key objective and a method-statement is pre-requisite to ensure an ordered approach to the whole project.

At this point in time it is already clear following completion of all the top-down window-board inspections that the work will all have to be done again, once British Gas has had chance to confirm my own findings.

If I was investigating this situation as a commission I would be calling first for all information that the British Board of Agrément (BBA) relied on when they saw fit to issue a certificate in favour of the process. The unfortunate product manufacturer, also affected by this, could perhaps arrange access to this data so I can check if there is any weakness in the certified model.

I have no doubt that the alleged 'stringent' technical standards referred to on the website of the moribund CIGA are in fact one and the same as the suspect BBA certification or pure fiction. If they do have standards I need to see those as well; I did ask CIGA ages ago but was ignored.

I would also be calling for details of operative (card-carrying) training so that can be investigated likewise. We can string together all data and see if there are any obvious weaknesses which have led to this complete breakdown in the process.

Ultimately British Gas *et al* will probably blame pilot-error (the old chestnut) to spare their blushes. If they do that then we should all be asking how pilot-error will be averted in future. Unless of course we get genuinely impartial inspectors introduced by a wholly independent agency, like the new Gas Safe Register. If we can do it for gas we can do it for energy-conservation which is becoming increasingly important; some argue vital. Well, it either is or it is not.

At some point in time remedial work will be required. With no personal previous experience of CWI remedial work I need to obtain independent advice on this and will be researching the subject. The priority is to ensure my cavities are properly filled. I am adamant they will be as I sincerely believe in the process of energy conservation where it is feasible. I also believe in justice.

I would do the work myself if all necessary equipment and the equipment supervisor was made available, therefore all options are open. I want a complete list of remedial work options for consideration in the method-statement. One will be chosen and agreed then British Gas can make a start, beginning with an inspection.

As many of you already know, in order to break the endless cycle of inaction, British Gas were given a generous window of opportunity before christmas (a deadline) to produce a commitment to a method-statement, failing which I said I would proceed to investigation stage.

British Gas allowed that deadline to pass without any such commitment being offered, so my investigation is now well in hand. I will fully complete this stage as I said I would.

British Gas will ultimately be given another window of opportunity to produce an acceptable method-statement once my investigation work is completed.

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This sordid episode has all the hallmarks of a new PPI scandal involving cavity wall insulation. Some people are being mis-sold cavity wall insulation based on a false promise and a false premise. I certainly was. There is no way my patchy cavity wall insulation will deliver the promised savings. There is no way it complies with BBA certification. There is no way it complies with the Building Regulations.