



Too much sun is bad for your skin – but buildings are also at risk

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Property needs UV protection, too

From Mr Tony Walsh.

Sir, We ignored the warnings of a gap between power demand and capacity shortages ("Energy demand comes to a head", July 20) and as a result we cannot avoid the unpleasant effects of tight energy supplies.

Demand in power is rising as global warming sends temperatures soaring to record highs. The UK must decide now on the future mix of energy sources so the National Grid can cope with increases in demand.

Just like energy supply warnings were ignored, we are also turning a blind eye to some damaging aspects of climate change here in the British Isles. It is not just temperatures that are rising but also the level of harmful UV radiation we are exposed to. While the British public are told by healthcare experts to protect their skin from the effects of UV rays, because ignoring it has serious consequences, they are not aware that their business properties and homes need protecting, too. Paint and building materials such as plastic guttering, fascias and cladding, in common with most exterior building products, need UV protection to ensure their performance and a long life. Most plastic building products

already installed contain adequate protection from UV levels previously experienced in the UK.

But the amount of UV we are exposed to now has risen dramatically and therefore the amount of protection needed has increased. UV radiation figures now being recorded for Oxford and London were only previously seen in the south of France, and are increasing 2 per cent annually. Products break down and fail sooner unless they have the right level of protection, just like our skin. The higher the UV levels, the greater the damage and faster the breakdown. The cost of inaction could be high.

However, awareness comes before action, and property owners need to be made aware of the wider implications of how climate change affects them. Industry has the answer – products with much higher levels of UV protection. But until the government, businesses and the public are made aware of the consequences, there is little hope that the necessary steps to avoid the problem can be taken.

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