Published on *Adam Smith Institute* (http://www.adamsmith.org)

Energy snoopers [1]

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Daft Regulation of the month

Back in 2002, the EU passed a Directive requiring certificates of energy efficiency for new and for-sale buildings. Six years on, the UK implemented the Directive with a series of domestic regulations. One can debate the extent to which the State should enforce energy efficiency in this way but global warming, CO2, energy wastage, especially in public buildings, are real enough issues. The Directive does promote bureaucracy but it has its merits.

Less meritorious is the new proposed regulation ?Making Better Use of Energy Performance Data? for which the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) produced an Impact Assessment (IA) on 2nd March 2010. Apparently, the Data Protection Act prevents snoopers having access to the Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) of other people?s houses and that is something the DCLG wishes to correct. Public buildings already have to display their EPCs.

The DCLG is not responsible for energy or global warming policy nor is it known for intellectual clarity, being the cultural home of John Prescott. Only the DCLG could claim that, since householders do not have to pay for the CO2 they emit, they have no interest in reducing those emissions. What about the cost of the energy they consume? Allowing anyone, and especially Big Brother government, to go rummaging round the nation?s EPCs will, apparently, ?encourage householders and other building owners to improve the energy efficiency of their buildings?.

Just imagine how many bureaucrats it would take to examine every EPC of every building and then discuss the findings with every building owner. The costs, according to the IA, ?may result in no more than a few additional pence on the fee? but that is the provision of the data (already an excessive fee) not the cost of all the people the DCLG wants to have reviewing and taking action on the data. And does anyone imagine the data already supplied to government cannot be examined by government?

The IA for this new regulation reveals pointless, understated costs, no financial benefits to anyone and that the DCLG has lost the plot, namely that EPCs draw owners? attention to energy wastage which should in turn motivate us to make our homes more energy efficient.

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This blog is part of the ongoing series: Daft regulation of the month. The first port of call for any government that is really committed to cutting useless red tape. Click here[3]to find out more.

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[3] http://www.adamsmith.org/../../../../blog/regulation-and-industry/daft-regulation-of-the-month
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