

The Government has recently produced a paper on "combating Cowboy Builders"

In 1996 the Office of Fair Trading in Great Britain received over 90,000 complaints related to building, maintenance, repairs and double-glazing. These were mainly concerned with shoddy workmanship, the use of inappropriate materials, over-charging and illegal trading methods. Cowboy builders are harming the construction industry and may be discouraging people from undertaking building work.

If you intend to undertake a large project we would recommend that you employ the services of a competent architect or professional designer who may be able to save you money by providing a more economic design. They will be familiar with Building Regulations and Planning requirements and can offer you a site supervision service.

If you feel your job is so small that you don't require a professional seek independent impartial advice from someone in the industry whom you know and trust.

How to select a suitable builder:-

- **A list of suitable builders** can be obtained from The Federation of Master Builders and the Construction Employers Federation.
- **Select a number of builders** and establish their track record – ask what previous jobs they have done – look at examples of their work – ask if you can speak to former customers (ask them if the builder is tidy, punctual, meets deadlines and if they would use him again).
- **Obtain itemised quotations** in writing from at least three builders and have them checked by your professional advisor – ensure you are being quoted "like for like" (a detailed specification may be appropriate).
- **Ask the builder:-**
 - About his expertise in your particular type of project
 - How he wants to be paid – on completion or in stages

- Will he give you itemised invoices?
- Is he happy for you to hold some of the money until the job is satisfactorily completed?
- Will he give you a final completion date?
- Will he accept a penalty clause on failure to complete on time?
- Will he agree to independent arbitration should there be any dispute?

- and get the answers in writing.

Make sure:

You have **all the necessary statutory approvals** –

- Planning,
- Building Control,
- water, sewerage etc.

You have a **written contract covering** -

- the extent of the work to be done by the builder
- how much will it cost
- when the work will be completed

You do not pay for work in advance of it being done

You get a **Completion Certificate from Building Control**

