



think about whether renovating sash windows rather than replacing them could be just as green.

Aidan Dear, owner of specialist sash window restorations company Momentum, Kingsbridge Road, Newbury, said that the thinking behind eco-friendly homes was starting to shift because people were now looking beyond just energy-efficiency and more at what materials were used and the life-expectancy of products.

“We would always look to restore the original windows rather than replace them and, if the wood is not too decayed, we can bring them back to their former glory,” he said. “This is obviously the most environmentally-friendly way.”

Website Sash-Style.co.uk has launched a campaign to ‘save our sashes’. It says that the claims of energy-efficient design and low maintenance of uPVC windows are indisputable but these advantages are not exclusive to them.

“You can have both the style of your old sashes and most of the advantages of the new developments, by upgrading your existing windows.

“It is quite common to come across original sash windows still going strong in houses built in the last century.”

Working with English Heritage, Momentum was behind the recent restoration of the south-west canonry at Christ Church College, Oxford.

By restoring the sash window, Aidan said that he can eradicate rattles, virtually eliminate draughts, reduce external noise and, all-importantly, increase energy efficiency.

The renovation process includes routing out grooves in the top, mid and bottom rails, and then pile carriers and the correct-sized weather pile are installed, making the seal an integral part of the window.

New parting and staff beads that incorporate the weather pile complete the seal. This ensures all gaps around the sashes are filled, creating a fully-sealed yet smoothly-operating window.

As utility bills have increased and the Government has introduced energy ratings for homes, more owners are concerned about heat loss. So can wooden windows compete with the credentials of plastic ones? Aidan said that they can: “By using the

Save our sashes

Any homeowner who has original sash windows will probably feel they have a difficult decision to make. On the one hand they look beautiful and are part of the character of the house; on the other, they rattle and let in draughts. You don’t need a thermal image picture of your property to know just how much heat is escaping via the 3mm glass, you can feel the chill in the room when you walk into it.

It is estimated that tens of thousands of antique windows are being replaced

Rachel Horner talks to restoration experts about how to bring period windows into the 21st century

every year in favour of uPVC ones – and there can be no denying the energy-saving credentials of modern replacements. One Newbury business owner, however, would like people to

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Window dressing



Want the privacy of a net curtain but not the out-of-date look? The modern take is a pretty chiffon or cotton panel, like this summer palace ecru with rod pocket heading (above), 145cm x 240cm, £100 from Laura Ashley's ready-made selection



Windows within a recess or right next to a wall are difficult to dress and the expanse of fabric when curtains are pulled can restrict the light that comes into the room. Blinds are a good alternative, like this Roman design (above), 80cm x 150cm £65, or 120cm x 150cm, from Laura Ashley

For uPVC conservatory windows and French doors, opt for specialist blinds that won't interfere with the handles and opening and closing, such as these from the Hillarys Perfect Fit range (right), from £103. The blind sits flush against the window and is held in place with discreet brackets



For single-glazed or draughty windows, the Natural Curtain Company offers thermal lining on all of its hand-made curtains. These thermal-lined, tab top drapes in cotton velvet cost from £191



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Weatherseal Brush Pile system, you can greatly reduce the loss of heat through the windows but if you have them double glazed this will give as good a level of energy-efficiency as uPVC, although the whole frame will need to be replaced, so it is about a balance."

The energy rating of your property is only one element of selling your home and, while period features top many buyers' wish-lists, this doesn't always apply to windows. Security features of modern replacements and the fact there is no painting required can add to the saleability.

However, Aidan believes that original windows, if maintained, are also a good selling point. He said: "It really comes down to a personal choice. The windows are the eyes of the house and, for me, how it was designed is how it is supposed to look. Replacement windows will change the appearance of the house.

"We can add security features to period windows, too. One of the projects I have just finished was for a family home. The parents were concerned that the original glass, if broken, would shatter into shards and their young boy could get hurt.

"I restored the windows and replaced the panes with safety glass. It did slightly effect the look, but it was down to their choice and what mattered to them the most was safety.

"Whatever the issues, there is a way of keeping sashes and solving the problems. Our system can be installed into casement windows and the Weatherseal Brush Pile system is suitable for listed buildings and conservation areas where replacement windows are deemed unacceptable."

For more advice about sash windows, telephone Aidan Dear on (01635) 582741 or log on to www.gain-momentum.com