

Macron: Use more wood in our buildings

France

Charles Bremner Paris

President Macron has ordered that new public buildings financed by the French state must contain 50 per cent wood or other organic material by 2022 under an ambitious government plan for a greener urban life.

The government announcement, made yesterday, is part of a drive for sustainability by Mr Macron, who wants France to set an example in the face of climate change. The plan also includes the immediate creation of 100 "urban farms" in densely populated areas.

Julien Denormandie, 39, the minister for cities and housing, said the plan would promote low-carbon towns "that are capable of adapting to heatwaves

and floods. To show an example by the state, I am imposing on all the public entities that depend on me and which manage development...to construct buildings with material that is at least 50 per cent wood or from bio-sourced material." Bio-sourced material can include a vegetable component such as hemp or straw.

Paris has promised to include a high level of wood in all new construction for its 2024 Olympic games, Mr Denormandie said, adding: "There is no reason that what is possible for the Olympics should not also be possible for ordinary buildings." Paris Olympic buildings of up to eight storeys must be 100 per cent wood and if higher contain some wood in their structure.

The second new government priority

is the rapid expansion of the *végétalisation* of urban zones, led by the creation of farms. One hundred sites would be identified in priority areas, Mr Denormandie said.

The 2022 deadline did not surprise an industry that has been rushing under state pressure over the past few years to adopt wood, after resisting the trend led by the Nordic states and the Netherlands. Concrete is still king for structure in the building industry but architects and developers around the country have been embracing wood for commercial projects and housing.

Christophe Ouhayoun, an architect of the Olympic village whose firm has built an 11-floor all-wood apartment building in Strasbourg, called wood a "magic material" for housing. "It ena-

bles you to build carbon-free. It's fundamental for the planet," he said. Wood "stocks" carbon dioxide, while concrete imposes a heavy footprint, the French architects say.

Work has begun on a 16-storey 181ft all-wood building with 98 apartments in Bordeaux, which will be France's tallest wooden construction. Europe's tallest timber building under construction is the 18-storey 280ft Mjostarnet tower in Norway.

Building works covered by the new 50 per cent rule include urban development projects co-financed by the state and local government in Paris and 13 other cities. In two decades some €9 billion has been spent on the projects, which mix housing and business premises. Mr Macron, 42, is keen not to be

outshone by the Socialist Paris council, led by Anne Hidalgo, which is rushing to make the crowded capital one of the world's greenest cities.

Ms Hidalgo, who is standing for re-election as mayor next month, has announced a tree-planting scheme to create an "urban forest" with four "islands of freshness" to counter the heat generated in the most densely populated districts. The council is planning to have vegetation planted on every spare square foot, including traffic circles and roofs, so that 50 per cent of the city is covered by planted areas by 2030.

Farmers' unions have objected to the "urban farms", multi-storey constructions for growing fruit, vegetables and cereals that are being built in Paris and other cities with high subsidies.

Rescue workers among 38 dead in avalanches

Turkey

Hannah Lucinda Smith Istanbul

At least 38 people have been killed in two avalanches in Turkey, most of them rescue workers searching for a pair of victims missing after the first disaster.

The avalanches took place in the Karabet mountain pass between the villages of Bahcesaray and Catak in eastern Van province, near the Iranian border. The first, at 5.45pm on Tuesday, hit a minibus and a digger clearing snow from the road, which is at an altitude of 3,000 metres. Five people died.

Yesterday's avalanche hit at about midday. Gendarmes and firefighters were among the dead. Fifty-three people were injured, including Osman Ucar, the provincial director of the state search and rescue agency; Gulsen Orhan, an adviser to President Erdogan; and Galip Yakut, the mayor of Bahcesaray.

Hundreds of rescue workers have been drafted in from across the region and were working in temperatures of minus 20C, with snow still falling. Two vehicles and 750 specialist gendarmes were on their way yesterday after being flown in by military aircraft from Ankara. The Turkish Red Crescent has sent 350 people.

Winters are harsh in the mountains of eastern Turkey. In 1992, 97 people, 71 of them soldiers, were killed in an avalanche in Gormec, Sirk province, which is close to the latest disaster zone.



Crash landing A Pegasus Airlines Boeing 737 broke up yesterday after skidding off the runway as it arrived at Sabiha Gokcen airport in Istanbul, injuring 120 people

Pompeii's drains still work perfectly

Italy

Tom Kington Rome

A network of ancient storm drains deep under Pompeii are in such good condition that they are to be used again.

There are nearly 500 metres of the drains, which are big enough to hold a human and were little affected when the city was buried in ash and pumice by Mount Vesuvius's eruption in AD79. Experts who have explored them concluded that they were in working order.

"The entrances to the drains were blocked but since we have problems today with flooding from rain we will start using them again," Massimo Osanna, the director of the site, said. "The fact we can do this is testament to the excellent engineering skills at the time."

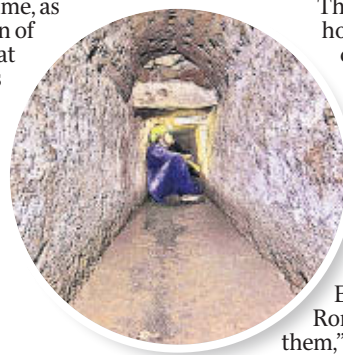
The drains run about 3m below ground from the Forum to outside the

city walls using the natural slope on which the city is built. Excavations in the last century stumbled across them, and since then workers installing electricity to the city have also come across the network.

Now the tunnels have been explored for the first time, as part of a new campaign of research and digging at Pompeii that has yielded amazing discoveries of mosaics and frescoes.

A second stretch of rain drains, also about 500m long, running from near

The drains suffered little damage when the city was buried



the city's theatre, will be investigated next.

In Rome the massive Roman-era Cloaca Maxima drain is still in use and the Aqua Virgo aqueduct still brings in water from the countryside to supply the Trevi fountain.

The Romans cannot, however, take all the credit for Pompeii's drains. "[They] date back to pre-Roman Pompeii, in the 2nd to 3rd century BC, when it was inhabited by the Samnites, and may even date back as far as the 6th century BC and the Etruscans, although the Romans surely updated them," Mr Osanna said.

Man on trial for using silicone mask to impersonate minister

Charles Bremner

A suspected fraudster has denied in court that he impersonated a French minister to extract millions of euros from rich and powerful donors.

Gilbert Chikli, 54, a French-Israeli citizen, mocked charges that he used a silicone mask in video calls to impersonate Jean-Yves Le Drian, then the defence minister, and led a gang that persuaded wealthy figures to pay ransoms or to fund anti-terrorist operations.

Three of more than 150 targets were duped in 2015 and 2016, prosecutors say. The Aga Khan, Ismaili Muslims' spiritual leader, made transfers totalling €20 million in 2016. Corinne Ment-

zelopoulos, 66, who owns the Château Margaux vineyards, was said to have lost €3 million and Inan Kirac, 83, a Turkish businessman, paid €38 million to the gang, the prosecutors said.

"I have nothing to do with this," Mr Chikli told the court on the first day of the trial, in which six other alleged gang members were also in the dock.

Shown photographs of the fake minister, Mr Chikli said: "He looks like 90 kilos and I'm 70. He's 1.6 metres tall and I'm 1.79. He doesn't have hair on his arms and I do."

The judge said: "That's the idea of usurping someone's identity. They are not saying you look like this man. He is trying to pass himself off as Jean-Yves Le Drian." The trial continues.